



JAIL MINISTRY OF OTSEGO AND SCHOHARIE COUNTIES

Helping troubled lives find hope and wholeness in the Christian walk

Summer Newsletter

July 2020

A Word From the Director

Dear Pastors and Friends,



For the past 60 years the Jail Ministry of Otsego County has been taking the Gospel and God's presence into our county jail. Through the Sunday chapel services, Wednesday Bible studies and One on One counseling sessions we have seen the Gospel and God's presence break bonds, heal the sick, open prison doors and change lives. We believe the Gospel is for everyone no matter their race or religion. The Gospel has the power to transform the lives of every inmate we reach out to.

For the past six months the ministry in the jail has been placed on hold due to much needed jail renovations and the inmates being boarded out to other county facilities. Then Covid-19 came upon us which has kept our team from entering the jail. The renovations have been completed and the inmates are back in our county facility. We are waiting to hear any day now from the Sheriff's department when we will be able to resume our ministry. Please pray that this will happen soon.

Another piece of good news is that the Schoharie County Sheriff's department has asked us to provide ministry programs in their new county jail. Please pray for our team of trained volunteers as they eagerly await to begin ministering to those housed in that facility. We could use more Christian volunteers in Schoharie County to join our team. Also, we are in need of finances to purchase Bibles and other literature to give out to the inmates. If you can help us with a financial contribution we would greatly appreciate it. Please mark in the memo section of your check Schoharie County Jail Ministry. You can also give online at our newly designed website at www.jmoconline.org.

Lastly, we are planning to implement an "Inside Out Dads" program in both facilities. **According to the U.S. Census Bureau 19.5 million children, more than 1 in 4, live without a father in the home.** This Biblically-based program prepares incarcerated fathers for a successful reentry and reconnects them with their children and introduces them to the transforming power of the Gospel. I believe this program can reduce the number of children in foster care and see them returned to their parents. As soon as meeting restrictions are lifted we will be hosting a training for members of our team to teach this program in both county jails. There are some start up costs for the training and materials. If you can help us meet these expenses please earmark your contribution for the dad's program or you can also give online at our website.

Again thank you so much for your prayers and financial support. We could not do what we do without the help of God's people.

*God's
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Jeremy Riddle*

Contact Us

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www.jmoconline.org

Here is an example of how the Gospel along with your prayers and financial support are transforming lives

In the Words of a Former Inmate. . .

If I could say one thing about the jail ministry, it would be **Romans 5: 2-5**. *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into his grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*



My name is Don Rifanburg. I first got to know the members of the Jail Ministry of Otsego County in 2008 while I was incarcerated at the Otsego County Correctional Facility waiting to be sentenced. The eight and a half months I spent there gave me a new start and a new outlook on life.

For all the people that gave up on me, there was, and still is, one small group of people that gave me hope and peace, kindness, and most of all love. Yes love, the Agape love of Christ. People say that people can't change their lives. That's very true, but the people of the jail ministry can give us the tools to change our lives. It's in our lowest times that we need to ask ourselves, "Is this what I want out of life? Can I change? Can I let go of myself long enough to ask for help? Can I, and will I, let people show me how God can change my life?"

I am grateful for the ten and a half years I spent in prison, for it was there that I was introduced to Prison Fellowship Ministries. It was a time of transformation to a world of love and kindness from people that taught me that only *one* person can put us down; only *one* person can take our joy and make us feel lost. That person is *one's self!*

I have been out of prison for twenty months and am doing well. The jail ministry, and the Crossroads Inn where I resided when I was released, have been there for me, nurturing me, supporting me, encouraging me, loving me. They have helped me turn my life around. I have a good job, a church I attend regularly and am a part of, and I am loved. If I could speak to others who might know that lost, hopeless feeling, I would say, "don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to let go of yourself. Be willing to take the good that is offered to you, and apply it to your everyday life."

May God's love and peace be with all who struggle."

In honor of a faithful servant



Lona Smith has been a member of the jail ministry team since 1993. She has served faithfully in a 'variety ministries' on this team. Lona played an important part and still does in Don's life while in the jail and during time in prison and now that he is back home. At our recent board meeting she submitted her resignation as a member of the Board of Directors. She will be greatly missed on our board. She has been a great asset to me. Although Lona is stepping off the board she is not leaving this ministry. She still wants to minister in the jail and be active in the Aftercare Ministry. Lona along with Diane DeDominicis will be heading up this ministry. We look forward to the great things God is going to do through Lona and Diane as we expect this ministry to grow in the days ahead.

Meet our new Chaplain for the Schoharie County Jail Ministry



Rev. Cyd Collischonn is a licensed minister with the Assemblies of God. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology: Addictions and Recovery & Master's Degree in Pastoral Counseling: Marriage & Family Therapy from Liberty University. She is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors and is board certified in Life Coaching through the Board of Christian Life Coaching. She also currently holds diplomas in Pastoral Counseling and Advanced Christian Life Coaching.

Pastor Cyd has been with Calvary Assembly of God on Mineral Springs Road since 2003 and has served in a number of volunteer roles during her time here, including Director of Creative Arts. She is currently employed by the church as a counselor & life coach. She has been married to her husband, Rev. Dr. Robert Collischonn for over 40 years. They have a grown son who serves in the United States Marine Corps Reserves.

For more information on how you can get involved with the Jail Ministry of Schoharie County Cyd can be reached at cyd@cagcobleskill.org.

The latest word from Chaplain Cyd is that our Schoharie team recently attended the Sheriff's department's required PREA training and were given a tour of the new jail. The inmates are due to arrive July 10th, depending on COVID 19. The Administrator hopes to allow our team to begin with One on One counseling and mid week Bible studies and the full Sunday services may have to wait for a later time.

At our recent board meeting Chaplain Cyd was added to our board by a unanimous vote. We are really excited to have Chaplain Cyd on our board. We believe with all her experience and qualifications she will be a great asset to our team.

Update from Chaplain Kurt Funke on the Otsego County Jail Ministry



The latest information Chaplain Kurt received from the Jail Administrator was that even though inmates are being taken back into the newly renovated jail, due to regulations concerning COVID precautions, our jail ministry volunteers are currently not allowed into the facility to serve them. The only staff allowed in are Jail staff and medical staff. Hopefully this will change soon and we can begin anew our ministry programming. The mental health staff is currently doing zoom meetings with the inmates. They do not have a tentative date that the jail will reopen but look forward to having our ministry returning to the facility to meet with the individuals that wish to have your services. They are very thankful for our services and hope to see us soon.

Items for Prayer

1. Pray that our programs will resume shortly in both jails and that God would create a hunger among the inmates for our services.
2. Pray for our board of directors, Chaplains and volunteer team that God would give us wisdom how to move forward during this time.
3. Pray for the new "Inside Out Dads" program that God will provide the needed resources and staff so we can begin this program in both jails.
4. Pray for our Aftercare ministry that we will get more referrals so that we can help those coming out of jail and prison get their needs met.

If you would like someone from our team to come and share about the jail ministry at your church or group please contact Ameen Aswad at 607-282-2521.