

# JAIL MINISTRY OTSEGO AND SCHOHARIE COUNTIES

*Helping troubled lives find hope and wholeness in the Christian walk*

JMOC Newsletter

Spring 2022



Recently I came across the following quote by Simon Sinek: “**People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.**” That got me thinking why do we do what we do in the Jail Ministry of Otsego and Schoharie Counties.

In this newsletter I want to share with you why for nearly 63 years the jail ministry has been reaching out to individuals housed in the Otsego County Jail and more recently in the past 2 years the Schoharie County Jail.

*I was in prison and you came to visit me ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:36, 40)*

Our desire has been to share the life transforming message of the Gospel to those housed in both county jails.

If Jesus were on earth today, would we find Him in the prisons, talking and dining with criminals and outcasts? Of course we would. He would be there "to seek and to save the lost!" That is also our desire.

The Apostle Paul encourages us in Ephesians 5:1-2

*Therefore be imitators of God, as His dear children. And live and act lovingly, as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up to death on our behalf as an offering and sacrifice to God.*

This is why for the past 26 years I have been involved in this ministry to the incarcerated. I choose to be an imitator of Christ as stated above. I want those we minister to in both jails to come to know the love and forgiveness of God and enter unto a relationship with Him that I have known for the past 58 years.

During my time with this ministry, I have had the wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel with many individuals and see their lives transformed. One of those individuals you will be meeting later in this newsletter. Don gave his life to Christ while attending our services at the Otsego County Jail. He continues to live a Christ-centered life and was recently invited to join our jail ministry board.

In the remainder of this letter, I have asked my board members also to share why they are involved in this jail ministry.

Thank you so much for your prayers and faithful support.

Ameen Aswad  
Executive Director

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*Simon Sinek*

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## In Otsego County:

Ameen Aswad  
Interim Chaplain



In Otsego County we still face many challenges with two sections of the jail being shut down and only being allowed to do Sunday services via Zoom for those who want to attend. Our Wednesday Bible Studies and One-on-One counseling sessions are temporarily on hold. Please pray that the door will soon be open for us to get back to doing in-person ministry on Sundays and Wednesday.

## In Schoharie County:

Rev. Cyd Collischonn, MA.,  
Chaplain, Schoharie County Jail



Momentum! Moving forward. When we hear that word, we think of something speeding up, going faster as momentum is gained. However, momentum does not always move at lightening speed. A turtle can have momentum, as well as the hare. (the turtle won that race on a slow momentum, didn't it- just sayin').

This month brings momentum. Attendance for the one-on-one ministry at the Schoharie County Jail remains steady at two or three per week. Sunday church services seem to be gaining. We have seen as many as five in several services, and we truly give God the glory as lives are being impacted by the good news of Jesus Christ!

We are also adding a new person to the team, As an ordained minister, she has served in jail ministries in other areas and has a calling to minister specifically to women. She and her church very much want to become involved in this ministry. She has cleared the hurdles of the background check and we'll be integrating her into the team

Jesus encouraged momentum in ministry as he gave the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples...." (Matthew 28:19 NIV.).

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Recently, I was asked why I serve in this ministry as a chaplain. My first answer is because God called me into this ministry. My second answer focuses on the Great Commission in Matthew 28 which I try to obey. Jesus did not make the mission field about a location, He made it about discipling people who were lost and without hope. My third answer for serving is that every soul should have the opportunity to hear the truth and love of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins that He alone can give. This is true for the person sitting in a church dressed to impress, the frightened person in my counseling office, and the person behind the cold, steel locked jail doors wearing an orange jumpsuit,

## Board Member:

John Clow



I have been a member of the Board for 10 plus years. I along with my wife, Jeanne, secure the volunteers and prepare the monthly schedules for services in the jail. My editing skills have been used for many of our written pieces for the public. I also periodically offer in-person Sunday Services in the jail. My primary reason for being involved in the jail ministry harkens back to God's command in both the Old and New Testaments that his followers should serve the lowly and forgotten in the society. Certainly, the jail inmates are a part of that group. I have been gratified to see that the inmates who participate in our programs are eager to hear the Gospel message that God loves them and provides salvation for them through Jesus Christ.

## Aftercare Ministry:

Diane DeDominicis  
Aftercare Coordinator



The jail ministry's aftercare team continues to assist those who have recently been released from jail or prison in a variety of ways. We provide inexpensive cell phones so they can keep in touch with their parole officers, purchase some basic clothing items such as socks and undergarments and most importantly, let them know that we are praying for them and care about their well-being. By providing for some of their most basic needs, we send the message that they are not forgotten. God still loves them and cares about them and so do we.

My own personal message.... I believe so strongly in the need to care for individual people. Sending donations to a large organization is not enough for me. I want to see the face of people in need and be able to tell them that I care about THEM personally. Each one matters to me as a person. God has shown me such great love and has given me the desire to share His love with others. My hope and prayer is that I can show those we serve that God loves them, too.

## JMOC Treasurer:

David Rutenber



I became a part of this ministry in September 2019 as a Board Member and serve as the Treasurer. At that season of my life, I missed using my talents and gifts in accounting and finance, where I had originally started in my professional career. When asked to consider volunteering with JMOC, it seemed like a perfect opportunity to use these talents again. The added blessing was it would help further God's work; satisfying another desire I had, to be used by God. Thinking about why I am involved with JMOC, Hebrews 13:3 comes to mind – “Remember those in prison, as if you were there

yourself.” (NLT) I can pray consistently and fervently for those that find themselves in jail and for our ministry to them. I can do my part to keep the finances orderly and strong so that others are able to use their gifts in this ministry to the jails. And I do pray that we may all witness lives changed by the power of Christ.

## JMOC Secretary:

Laurie Laymon



I have been on the JMOC Board for 5 1/2 years, currently the Secretary. I enjoy serving in this ministry knowing that we're providing not just physical needs for the inmates but most importantly their spiritual needs. My own spiritual walk has been deepened by hearing great testimonies from former inmates that have turned their lives around after committing their lives to Jesus.

## Board Member:

Carol DeClue



I am a retired social worker who ardently believes in the grace of God. I prayed for an opportunity to be involved with people that were hurting who needed someone to pray with. Less than twenty four hours Kurt Funke mentioned about JMOC needing a social worker. I met with Ameen and could not help but become inspired with Ameen's steadfast vision of service projects for JMOC. But, before I could utter the first prayer with anyone at the jail, the pandemic hit. Do you believe in the power of faith? That is why I stay involved with JMOC as I don't really know what my role is right now other than being the designated social worker. That is where faith comes in. I don't know how God plans on using me for this ministry. I have witnessed in JMOC the prayers that are

answered and the prayers "on hold" that we need faith in waiting for answers. So, as I wait for answers, I am learning from and building my faith with my fellow JMOC volunteers.

## Board Member:

Don Rifanburg



I've only been on the JMOC Board for more than a month so I'm new at this. I am a part of the jail ministry because I was incarcerated in the Otsego County Jail where I became acquainted with the ministry and the people that are Involved with it. Over the years of support and encouragement, I became aware of the good things that they did and are doing in the lives of people coming in and out of jail. I did not know of the love and kindness that was shown to me by this wonderful group of people. I now have that chance to return that love and kindness to others that are in the county jail or prison that will soon be coming out. We need to show them that there is a better way of life and

that starts with putting Jesus into our lives and turning our lives over to God.

## Board Member:

Kurt Funke



Many years ago my heart was opened by the Holy Spirit to serve God as a pastor. Since that time some 20 years ago, God has directed my footsteps to ministerial outreach at the Otsego County Jail through JMOC. I originally went there because of the example and enthusiasm of two friends of mine, Pastor Mark and Pastor Jeff. They were both very involved in the JMOC ministry and as I listened to them describe the joy that they felt in serving the prisoners, God moved me to also give it a try. Now it has been 15 years that I have felt the blessing of God's hand upon me as I worked

alongside my fellow ministers of the Gospel in JMOC. What a joy it is to bring the Good News of hope in Christ to incarcerated men and women who may have been wondering if God could love and forgive people like them. To see the changes that they display after beginning to take their faith seriously, and watching the wondrous way God shapes them into new persons in Christ, has made my experience at the jail so amazing and rewarding all these years. I thank God for the blessings this path of serving him has brought to me.

**Your prayers and financial support are greatly appreciated.**

**We would love to come and share this ministry with your church or missions group.**