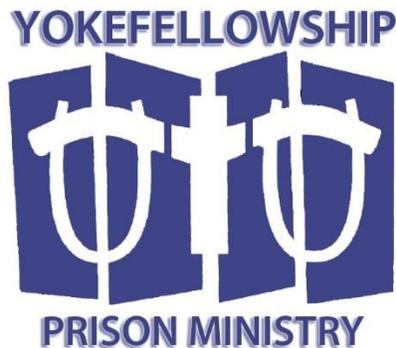


Yokefellowship Prison Ministry Volunteer Handbook



(Central Office)
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Carl Geissinger, Executive Director

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and
burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
Jesus – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV*

How to Use This Handbook

Welcome to Yokefellowship Prison Ministry! If you are reading this handbook you have likely made the decision to be a Yokefellow volunteer or you are already a Yokefellow volunteer. For those who are new to Yokefellowship, we are excited about introducing you to Yokefellowship and helping to prepare you for some awesome ministry experiences. For volunteers who have been with Yokefellowship for awhile, please add to your learning as you review sections you covered in the past and also note that there is a new section on mentoring.

The handbook is divided into four parts. Parts 1 and 2 are to thoroughly equip all of our volunteers. Parts 3 and 4 are ministry-specific.

- **Part 1** (pages 1-7) gives you the organizational background you need to know as a Yokefellow volunteer – how we got started, what we believe, how we are structured, etc.
- **Part 2** (pages 8-13) describes the basics of being a Yokefellow volunteer – things that all Yokefellow volunteers need to know.
- **Part 3** (pages 14-19) is for Yokefellow volunteers who wish to or are ministering to those inside correctional facilities, whether or not they themselves actually go into the institution to do so.
- **Part 4** (pages 20-24) is for Yokefellow volunteers who wish to or are mentoring those who were once incarcerated.

We pray that this handbook will not only equip you but will inspire you to share the life changing power of Christ with at-risk youths, inmates, and returning citizens as our mission states:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

Part 1

What You Need to Know About **YOKEFELLOWSHIP PRISON MINISTRY**

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MISSION STATEMENT

Yokefellowship's mission statement is "helping *at-risk youth, inmates and returning citizens YOKE themselves to Christ for salvation and changed lives.*"

STATEMENT OF FAITH

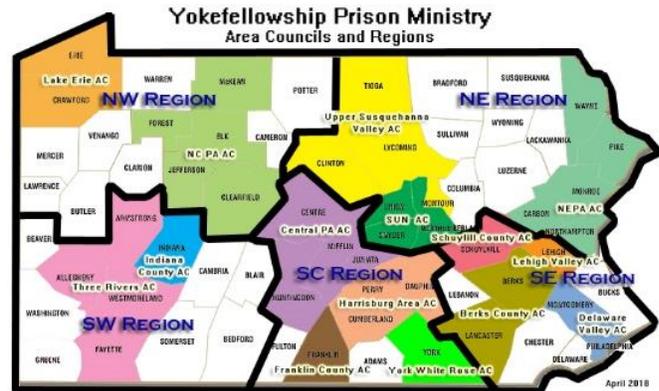
We in Yokefellowship Prison Ministry believe:

- God - There is one eternal, almighty, and perfect God in essence, revealed in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are faithful to the biblical revelation that in one sense God is one and in a different sense He is three. Deut 6:4, Matt 3:16-17, Matt 28:19
- Jesus Christ - Jesus Christ is true God and true Man, born of a virgin, died for our sins, rose from the dead, and will return in glory and power. Matt 1:20, Matt 16:27, Rom 1:3-4,
- The Holy Spirit - When a person becomes born again, by believing and receiving Jesus Christ, God resides in that person through the Holy Spirit. All the divine attributes ascribed to the Father and the Son are equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Gen 1:26, Acts 2:28, 1 Cor 3:16
- The Word - The Bible is the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God given through the Holy Spirit for the purpose of teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. 2 Tim 3:16-17, Heb 4:12-13, 2 Pet 1:20-21
- The Fall - God created mankind in His own image, but through the fall in the Garden of Eden man was removed from the Garden and separated from God. Thus, we are all sinners and cannot earn God's favor on our own. Gen 3, Rom 3:23
- The Plan – God's original plan to give mankind eternal life was rejected by Adam and Eve. In God's redemptive plan, man is rescued from death by the priceless shed blood of Jesus Christ. His atoning death on the cross ended the separation for all those who come to Him. Rom 4:23-25, Eph 2:8, 1 Pet 3:18
- The Way – Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through Him. Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved. John 14:6, John 20:31, Acts 4:10-12
- The Call – Everyone who is reconciled to God through Christ Jesus is called to be a minister of reconciliation – an ambassador of Christ. As Yokefellows, we are called to provide a ministry of reconciliation to those who are or were incarcerated, always showing love and respect to all persons. Matt 5:16, 2 Cor 5:20, Eph 6:17-20
- The Body of Christ – All believers are members of the body of Christ. With Christ as the "head," every member is called to have a personal relationship with Him, to be His disciple, to love one another, and to use our gifts for the body. John 12:26, 1 Cor 12:27, Col 1:18
- The New Covenant – Those who yoke themselves to Christ are no longer part of the Old Covenant. Though the OT law is good in that it showed us our need for Christ and how to please God, Christians live by and are under a new covenant of grace alone. Having been released from the law, we are to live by grace and our lives are to continually reflect the glory of God. Gal 3:13-14, Gal 3:19, 1 Tim 1:8
- The Reward - For taking the message of God's transforming love and forgiveness to captives and sharing the grace that has been given to us, great will be our reward in heaven. Matt 5:12, Matt 25:34-36, 1 Pet 1:3-5

YOKEFELLOWSHIP'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Yokefellowship is a 501c3 umbrella organization with local Area Council (AC) affiliates. Yokefellowship has a tri-level structure:

- Area Councils** enter into a Covenant Agreement with Yokefellowship and perform the ministry. Each AC has its own governing body; recruits, trains, and assigns volunteers; has its own treasury and budget; and is asked to contribute 25% of its net income to the parent overarching ministry. ACs are members of Yokefellowship. Voting delegates from each AC attend the Yokefellowship Annual Membership Meeting where they elect Yokefellowship Board of Director members, review accomplishments, and conduct other business brought before the membership.
- Regional Advisory Councils (RAC)** facilitate communications between the Yokefellowship Board and the ACs as well as promote the ministry within their geographical boundaries. Two representatives from each AC serve on the RAC and the chairperson of the RAC is a member of the Yokefellowship Board of Directors. Currently there are five regions in Pennsylvania. Each region is assigned a Regional Director.
- Yokefellowship Board of Directors** governs the organization.



YOKEFELLOWSHIP STAFF

Yokefellowship Executive Director – Rev Carl Geissinger is our Executive Director, serving since 2018. The position is currently a part time position. Yokefellowship has been blessed with a long line of faithful and committed servants of God who have served as Executive Directors: Rev John Mostoller (1986-1990), Rev Don Ripple (1990-1994), Wayne Benjamin (1994-2001), Rev John Rush (2001-2011), Rev Larry Coleman (2011-2013), Rev David Bowen (2013-2018). It is evident that God's hands have been upon the ministry since D. Elton Trueblood started his "movement" in 1955 which led to the formation of Yokefellowship in 1986.

Regional Directors – There are currently four Regional Directors, all serving part time: Sean Atkinson serving the SW and NW regions, Mike Knott serving the SC region, Nessie Whaley serving the NE region, and William Jones serving the SC region. The primary functions of the Regional Directors are to strengthen and support Area Councils and to develop new ministry opportunities within the region in which he/she is assigned. All these positions are part time and are filled by either paid or volunteer staff. Staff resumes are available at yokefellowship.net.

YOKEFELLOWSHIP'S DEEP ROOTS

Yokefellowship grew out of a fellowship movement started by D. Elton Trueblood (1900-1994), a renowned Quaker, author, speaker, and theologian. Trueblood believed being a Christian was synonymous to being yoked with Christ (MATT 11:28-30) and that we need to heed the call of PHILIPPIANS 4:3 to help others, "Yes, I ask you loyal yokefellow....". Regarding incarceration, Trueblood stated,

"Separation from the world for a while is justified if new life emerges. But Yokefellows know that new life does not emerge of itself. It comes only if there is consistent and loving effort to give embodiment to the divine potential in each person made in God's image. That is why we work; we are trying to combine the warm heart and the clear head. We are well aware of the possibility of failure, but we never give up, because the prize is one of real magnitude. If one person is truly changed, all of the effort expended is worthwhile."



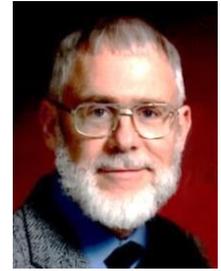
In 1955, Trueblood gave an address in Washington DC to a group of chaplains from the federal prisons. He emphasized the power of the small disciplined spiritual group to affect a change for the better in the lives of participants. Two chaplains, one from Tacoma, WA, and the other from Lewisburg, PA saw the possibilities and soon, working independently of each other, established Yokefellowship groups in their prisons. Thus two organizations formed from Trueblood's movement. In 1986 they merged to form Yokefellowship Prison Ministry as it is today. Visit yokefellowship.net for more info.

THE YOKE AND THE CROSS

by David Bowen, Yokefellowship Executive Director, July 2013 – June 2018

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

MATTHEW 11:28-30 NIV



The logo of Yokefellowship includes the cross and the yoke. What is the difference between the yoke and the cross? Are these two metaphors for the same reality or do they represent two aspects of one relationship? Jesus says in MATT 16:24, "*If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" In MATT 11:29 Jesus says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me...." Are those the same thing?

THE CROSS REPRESENTS DEATH

When Jesus called His first disciples, the cross was "the emblem of suffering and shame". The Romans who crucified Jesus and some of His earliest disciples were not looking for a more humane method of execution. They were trying to maximize pain and shame. That is what the cross symbolized: pain, shame, and death. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor-theologian, wrote, "When Jesus Christ calls a man, He bids him *'Come and die'*". Jesus says, "*Deny yourself*". The world says, "Affirm yourself, assert yourself, actualize yourself. Be your own person. Do your own thing. It's all about you."

The Apostle Paul said, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me....*" (GAL 2:20). It is only those who have truly died to self who are able to live for Christ. Life in Christ is not about my security, my comfort, my pleasure, my ambitions. It is all about knowing and doing the will of God. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*" - not "my kingdom come, my will be done". The cross represents death to the self-centered life that we may become Christ-centered seeking to know, love, and serve Him.

THE YOKE REPRESENTS SERVICE

And that brings us to the "yoke". The story is told that long ago in the land of Israel in the little village of Nazareth there was a carpenter's shop and that over the door there hung a sign that read: "Joseph and Sons—Our Yokes Fit Well". Jesus knew all about yokes. He grew up helping Joseph make them in the carpenter's shop. He knew the importance of a good fit and could say, "*My yoke is easy and My burden is light*". What was a yoke? It was a tool or instrument made to bring animals (usually oxen) under the control of their master so the master could use the animals to serve him by pulling a plow, wagon, or some other load. So the yoke symbolizes service - accepting Jesus as our Master and submitting to His control so that He can use us to accomplish His will and His purposes.

The key verses for Yokefellowship are MATT 11:28-30. When Jesus says, "*Take My yoke upon you*", what does that mean? It means to learn from Him how to live life His way. That is what "discipleship" is all about. It means learning to know Jesus, to love Jesus, and live for Jesus. Jesus says, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (JOHN 15:10-14). So to "take His yoke" upon us and "learn from Him" means to learn His commandments and obey them. That is the evidence that we genuinely love Him.

When Jesus says, "*Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.... and you will find rest for your souls*", what are the labor and the load He is talking about? It is the heavy load of guilt, grief, pain and shame that we carry as a result of our sin. The good news of the gospel is that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 TIM 1:15). Jesus Himself said that His purpose in coming to this world was to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). When Jesus saves us, He gives us "rest" from both the guilt and power of sin.

The motto of Yokefellowship Prison Ministry is "Helping at-risk youth, inmates, and ex-offenders yoke themselves to Christ for salvation and changed lives". The old hymn "Rock of Ages" says: "Be of sin the double cure, Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r." The Apostle Paul tells us that the gospel is "*the power of God unto salvation*" (ROMANS 1:16). God not only forgives us for our sins (1 JOHN 1:9), but He also sets us free from the power or control of sin over our lives (ROM 6:1-23) so that we can be "*more than conquerors through Him who loved us*" (ROMANS 8:37) or in Jesus' own words, "*....if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed*" (JOHN 8:36).

It is the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit in us that enables men and women to live "changed lives". Yokefellowship means getting together in small groups (in prison or out of prison) to "learn of Him" how to live life His way to His glory—living "changed lives". Yokefellowship is "*bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ*" (GAL 6:2) which is that we should love one another as He has loved us (JOHN 13:34). Yokefellowship is all about building relationships - our relationship to God through the Lord Jesus Christ and our relationships to other people so that His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth even as it is in heaven. That is our desire and that is our vision in Yokefellowship Prison Ministry.

MARKS OF A YOKEFELLOW

The following attributes of discipleship are highly valued and taught as “marks” of a Yokefellow:

COMMITMENT - A Yokefellow is a disciple of the divine Lord, Christ, and is committed to the work of His kingdom among men. A disciple’s belief is not a closed affair, but one that is open to truth and is unafraid of inquiry or scrutiny. A disciple knows that, to be vital, his faith must grow; it must likewise be made relevant to his life and work.

WITNESS - A Yokefellow is one who knows that faith in Christ is not a private affair; to be kept it must be shared.

MINISTRY - A Yokefellow is one who is willing to be used by the Holy Spirit as a means of opening the doors of people’s lives to God’s love and grace.

FELLOWSHIP - It is impossible to be a Christian and to choose to be a Christian in isolation. A Yokefellow finds or produces a redemptive Christian fellowship.

DISCIPLINE* - A Yokefellow voluntarily accepts:

Discipline of Prayer - pray daily.

Discipline of Scripture - read reverently and thoughtfully a portion of Scripture daily, following a definite plan.

The Discipline of Worship - to share, at least weekly, in the public worship of God.

Discipline of Money - give a definite portion of my income to the promotion of Christ’s cause and as an act of worship.

Discipline of Time - use my time as a sacred gift, not to be wasted, striving to make my daily work, whatever it may be, a Christian vocation.

Discipline of Service - daily lift some human burden.

Discipline of Study - develop mental powers by careful reading and study.

*The disciplines are often referred to as the Yokefellowship’s Seven Spiritual Disciplines. A “Study and Discussion Guide for Yokefellowship Disciplines” can be downloaded from yokefellowship.net

THE ESSENCE OF YOKEFELLOWSHIP

The Yokefellowship model sees God’s Word and God’s will being discovered in the dialogue in the small group. That dialogue focuses on three essential goals –

1. building sound, *caring fellowship*,
2. *disciplined living*, and
3. *intentional ministry*.



The Base

Caring Fellowship - The first goal of a Yokefellowship group is to create a warm, accepting and caring fellowship where persons feel comfortable and free to participate.

This is Christ at work in the midst. His Spirit is present, bringing a sense of love, understanding and care to the group. He creates a unity in which discussion, sharing and mutual support work toward the stimulation of spiritual growth. Without this essential atmosphere, the group is little more than a glorified discussion group.

Left Leg

Disciplined Living – Jesus’ word of invitation to “take my yoke and learn of me” in essence is a call to discipleship. The Word tells the story: Disciple – learner; Discipline – commitment to learn; Christian Discipleship – learning Jesus’ way.

Yokefellows seek to challenge persons to exercise their discipleship by seven basic disciplines of the Christian faith. (see above*). A Yokefellowship group receives a call to accept these disciplines and practices them.

Right Leg

Intentional Ministry – All who follow Jesus are ministers of His Kingdom. Jesus’ yoke is also His mission – to redeem all of life and to transform persons and society into a divine community.

D. Elton Trueblood, founder of the Yokefellows international movement describes it as ministry in the common life, i.e., make every aspect of life an arena in which we interpret and apply the ways of the Lord.

The Leader’s Role - The leader of a Yokefellowship group seeks to make these dynamics real in the lives of the members. This is accomplished by: 1) knowing how to create a dynamic caring group, 2) knowing how to challenge persons to accept the Christian discipline, and 3) helping persons to discover their gifts and their place in Christ’s work.

YOKEFELLOWSHIP'S SMALL GROUP APPROACH

Yokefellowship was founded upon a small group approach through ministry. Yokefellowship groups within prison walls, as well as those outside prison walls, are structured to include two simultaneous journeys – the journey inward and the journey outward. The journey inward involves growing in our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The outward journey involves love for all our brothers and sisters around us.

Yokefellowship is committed to changing people's lives through personal discipline and committed small groups where problems and faith are shared. There are many ministries willing to provide worship services, revivals, and Bible studies for prisoners, but Yokefellowship emphasizes giving participants not only the opportunity to share the pain, the loneliness, and the isolation within an ongoing, redemptive fellowship but also to learn how to lead a disciplined life.

EFFECTIVE SMALL GROUP STRATEGIES

Getting started

- Arrange chairs in circle where possible. Everyone is equal in position and is clearly visible.
- Begin with prayer – by an inmate or returning citizen if possible.
- Group singing if possible. It's amazing how group singing can build a sense of community among a diverse group of people.
- Review the Yokefellowship scripture – Matt 11:28-30. There are thousands of sermons within and each week you can share a different emphasis.
- Introduce new members to make them feel welcome. This also helps build fellowship within the group
- Ground rules – confidentiality, honesty and respect (when one person talks, everyone listens.)

Participants

- Small group size ranges from 4 -12 members. Optimum size 4-5. Recognize as group size grows, impact shrinks - the less each individual has an opportunity to be heard, trust gets smaller and people open up less, and the less people open up, the less they will grow.
- Don't concern yourself with the number of people that show up. It's not numbers that are important.
- Work on developing new volunteer small group leaders to form new groups. You can apprentice new volunteers into existing groups and let them split off when your group grows.

Small Group Discussion

- Be prepared with topic - accompanying scripture and thought-provoking questions. But recognize that the Holy Spirit may take the group to a different topic. Discussion leaders must be flexible – not static or controlling. An immediate need may surface during prayer time or be shared by an inmate at any point of the session.
- If using handouts, get permission.
- Allow participants to volunteer reading Bible passages. Avoid calling on individuals to read.
- Give everyone an opportunity to respond.

The goal of
Yokefellowship's
small groups is

1. *to connect people to God,*
2. *to connect people to one another, and*
3. *to raise up disciples*

in a relational manner.

- Listen actively and creatively. Questions don't necessarily need answers. A valid response to a question is to say to the group, "What do you think about this?"
- Select relevant and meaningful topics.
- Do not expect to go it alone. You can draw upon the past and present experiences of the group. Often the most powerful words are from those who have been there and suffered serious worldly consequences.
- If discussion is not working, stop to pray.
- Always be sensitive to the needs and comments of the participants.
- Be prepared to grow as much, if not more, than those to whom you are ministering.

Small Group Dynamics

- Recognize a small group is more than just the sum of the dynamics of each member's participation. There is the bonus effect of the interaction between the participants.
- Recognize that each individual has their own needs, way of expressing those needs, and ways of seeking fulfillment.
- The core of a small group ministry is relationships. Within a group there are sometimes alliances and antagonisms, sometimes temporary and some semi-permanent. This dynamic adds to the need for awareness and sensitivity of the group leader.

Closing

- Give at least a five minutes notice before terminating. Be prompt in terminating.
- Summarize the highlights of the session and briefly restate all points of view expressed by the group
- Give special recognition to the group and to individuals for participation and for making special contributions or progress.
- End the meeting with a Yokefellowship circle of prayer. Traditionally, in these prayer circles, participants cross their arms in front of them then hold hands with the persons beside them as they pray.

HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICTS WITHIN A SMALL GROUP

If you are involved in prison ministry, sooner or later, you will be faced with a situation where two or more individuals, either inmates or volunteers or the combination of both, disagree. If you are fortunate, everyone will disagree agreeably. But that is not always the case, even in a Christian small group setting.

Below is a small group exercise that Executive Director David Bowen prepared after just such an experience. Fortunately, he was able to defuse the initially volatile situation, and not only defuse it but, Holy Spirit led, use it as a real-life learning experience on how to resolve conflicts God's way.

Here is the scenario:

Inmate #1 addresses Inmate #2: "I've got to get something off my chest! You've been gossiping about me on the block and around the jail." Inmate #2 responds in anger, "You're lying. That's not true!" They both begin to talk at the same time, getting louder and louder. Your other volunteer in your group has served faithfully as a volunteer for 28 years, but he is very hard of hearing now and really doesn't understand what's being said but he knows it's bad and he is looking at you to handle the situation. There are eight other inmates present in your group waiting for you to do something. What are you going to do?

Here are some questions to discuss as a group to help you prepare for such a situation:

1. What are your options? List at least three or more.
2. What is your best option in this situation?
3. How would you involve the other inmates present in the circle?
4. What Scripture would be appropriate and helpful in this situation?
5. Would you give everyone present a "home-work" assignment for the next meeting? If so, what would that assignment be?
6. What instruction about "confidentiality" would you give the group before dismissing?
7. How would you conclude the group session?

Scripture Reference to Help Resolution

1. You have offended your brother—Matthew 5:23-24
2. Your brother has offended you—Matthew 18:15-17
3. The importance of necessity of forgiveness—Matthew 6:12-15 and 18:21-35
4. The spirit in which we approach conflict situations—Galatians 6:1-3
5. Focus on confession (James 5:16), not accusation (Revelation 12:9-10)
6. Practice love (John 13:34-35; 1 Peter 1:22; Proverbs 10:12; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13)
7. Ignore a fault (Proverbs 19:11)

The Keys to Conflict Resolution

Humility and Love

1 Peter 5:5-7

Five Basic Principles to Resolving Conflict

by Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*

Glorify God (1 Cor 10:31) the primary motive and goal to all conflict resolution and mediation.

Get the log out of your eye (Matt.7:5) facing up to your own attitudes, faults, and responsibilities before pointing out what others have done wrong. Overlooking the minor offenses of others and honestly admitting our own faults, which often encourages similar responses from our opponents.

Gently restore (Matt.18:15; Gal. 6:1). This involves constructive confrontation. When others fail to accept responsibility for their actions, we may need to confront them in a gracious yet firm manner. If they refuse to respond, we may need to involve respected friends, church leaders, or other neutral individuals who can help restore peace.

Go and be reconciled (Matt.5:24). Finally, peacemaking involves a commitment to restoring damaged relationships and developing agreements that are just and satisfactory to everyone involved. Forgiveness and cooperative negotiation clear away the debris left by conflict and make possible reconciliation and genuine peace.

FOUNDATION: Gospel of Jesus Christ. God has provided a way for us to overcome our innate weakness as peacemakers and learn to respond to conflict constructively. His solution is the gospel, the good news that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Through the gospel our sins are forgiven. Through the gospel God enables us to learn how to resist temptation, obey his commands, and live a life that honors him. Through the gospel, the foundational G's, the Lord enables us to live out the above Four G's of peacemaking.

Part 2

What You Need to Know About **BEING A YOKEFELLOWSHIP VOLUNTEER**

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WHO ARE YOKEFELLOWS

by John N. Mostoller, former Executive Director (1986-1990), updated by David Bowen



The person who becomes involved with Yokefellowship Prison Ministry is a unique individual. He or she has accepted the challenge and invitation of Jesus to "take my yoke upon you and learn of me!" They are persons committed to the discipline of "the yoke" and are concerned that life should be lived in service to others in the likeness of their Lord. They believe in the "intentional" ministry of offering all of

the common ventures of life to God for His use and glory.

Yokefellows come from all walks of life and are convinced that through friendship and fellowship with the men and women in prison they can make a difference in their lives by showing concern and love. They witness to the power and love of Jesus Christ and model in their speech, conduct, and attitude His grace.

Yokefellows represent the community of faith (the church) and come from many denominational backgrounds and affiliations. They seek to be non-sectarian in their presenting of religious values and honor all sincere and earnest professions of faith in Christ in keeping with Yokefellowship's Statement of Faith.

Yokefellows are committed to the dynamics of the small group and seek to use the principles of group inter-action as the most effective means of spiritual growth. They are willing to enroll bi-annually in a Yokefellowship workshop or training seminar to improve their skills in guiding discussion, listening, confronting in love, and relating the Christian faith to the prison situation.

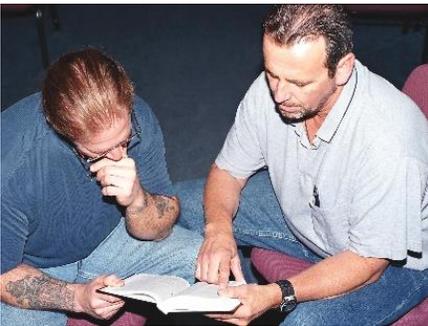
Yokefellows demonstrate the fundamental Christian respect for persons regardless of age, race, sex, or status. They show due courtesy in relating to their fellow volunteers, inmates, and prison staff.

Yokefellows are faithful to be present at all meetings they have promised to attend and set the example of loyalty and dependability for the group they lead.

Knowing that they are privileged to work in an institution they honor the rules of that institution and abide by the guidelines established for them by the authorities of the institution.

In every way **Yokefellows** relate to their ministry as a precious and meaningful "in-reach" to the lives in prison, and seek by all means to make it a truly redemptive presence in an otherwise dark depressive situation

VOLUNTEER'S PURPOSE



The goal of a Yokefellow volunteer is to lead those whom we counsel to deeper spiritual growth and development. We also have the responsibility to help them meet their emotional needs and thus reduce the tension that builds up in an institutional setting and upon release. Remember, you are not a psychologist, therapist, doctor, or other professor, but a minister to their spiritual needs. You are to encourage at-risk youth, inmates, and returning citizens in all areas, but specialize in your area of expertise.



VOLUNTEER CATEGORIES

Ministry Volunteers have contact either directly inside correctional facilities or after release or indirectly via other means such as email, phone, letters, etc. Ministry Volunteers must have a servant's heart, understand the needs and challenges of those to whom they minister, and be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves (Matt 10:16).

Ministry Support Volunteers perform program and fundraising tasks that do not require contact with inmates or ex-offenders. These volunteers need to know and be able to answer questions regarding Yokefellowship and Yokefellowship's ministry approach. These volunteers perform such tasks as fundraising, making presentations, providing volunteer support or training, etc.

Administrative Volunteers perform administrative and/or clerical functions and do not have to interface with the public or with those we serve. Therefore, they do not need to be knowledgeable of nor trained in neither Yokefellowship's ministry approach nor prison culture. These volunteers perform such tasks as office work, record keeping, and organizing events.

YOKEFELLOWSHIP VOLUNTEER POLICIES

The following volunteer policies have been adopted by the Yokefellowship Board of Directors:

Policies for All Volunteers

Volunteer Application - Individuals interested in volunteering with Yokefellowship shall submit a Yokefellowship Volunteer Application, complete with three character references, including their pastor. Potential volunteers are encouraged to share their personal testimony.

Statement of Faith - All volunteers shall be in total agreement with the Yokefellowship Statement of Faith. (See page 2)

Living Out Yokefellowship Values and Principles - All Yokefellowship Volunteers shall follow the guiding principles of Yokefellowship as defined by our founder. (See pages 4-5.)

Volunteer-in-Training Period - All new volunteers shall participate in a mandatory training period, during which time they will be assigned a coach and may have some restrictions as to their volunteer activities. At the end of the mandatory training period they shall be assessed for preparedness for ministry.

Certification - All volunteers, with the exception of those who only perform administrative tasks, shall participate in bi-annual Certification Events in order to prepare and equip them for, as well as enhance, their ministry experience. (See page 12)

Conduct – Others - All Yokefellowship volunteers shall be respectful at all times of those they serve, those they serve with, and those they serve under. Should conflicts arise with others, either directly or indirectly involved in Yokefellowship, volunteers shall willingly submit to a Yokefellowship approved biblical conflict resolution process and graciously accept the outcome thereof.

Lifestyle - All Yokefellowship volunteers shall strive to live godly lives in obedience to the Word. While recognizing that we all fall short, volunteers actively participating in or condoning ongoing sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), shall be barred from all Yokefellowship ministry activities until they have demonstrated, to the satisfaction of those under whom they serve, that they have repented and turned from that sin. Examples of such activity, include, but are not limited to addictions and immoral sexual relationships. Addiction in biblical terminology is a bondage in which the individual is enslaved to a sin and is therefore unable to escape by his own power (Romans 6). An immoral sexual relationship is any sexual relationship that exists outside of the biblically defined covenant marriage (Malachi 2:14) relationship between a man and his wife (Genesis 2:24).

Other Affiliations - No volunteer shall participate in or belong to any group or organization that swears its members to secrecy. As Christians, we are taught to live and walk in the light of Christ. Anything not able to be shared with other Christians would be considered darkness. John 3:21

Additional Policies for In-Prison Volunteers

Yokefellowship Do's and Don'ts - Volunteers who minister to those who are incarcerated shall abide by the Yokefellowship In-Prison Volunteer Do's and Don'ts. (See page 16.)

Past Convictions - Individuals who wish to volunteer inside any correctional facility must formally disclose any and all past criminal convictions to the institution in which they desire to serve. Restrictions and limitations on gaining access are determined by each institution and vary from institution to institution with regard to type of offense and time elapsed since conviction. Those prohibited from serving within an institution due to past convictions may be eligible to volunteer in other capacities within Yokefellowship.

One example of restrictions that vary from institution to institution is the restriction of those convicted of engaging in sexual activity by force, threat of force, or without the consent of the victim. A federal act to eliminate rape within confinement facilities, known as the Prison Rape Elimination Act, was passed in 2003. Any facility that participates in federal programs must comply with the Act that prohibits the hiring/contracting with anyone who has been convicted of such crimes (Section 115,17). The PA Department of Corrections expanded the restriction to include volunteers. Therefore, those convicted of such crimes are not permitted to volunteer in any DOC facility. Many county facilities have done the same.

Additional Policies for Mentoring Volunteers

Yokefellowship Do's and Don'ts - Volunteers who minister to those who were or are soon to be released from a correctional institution shall abide by the Yokefellowship Mentor Do's and Don'ts (See page 22).



VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Preparation for Ministry -

STUDY - Show yourself approved unto God. Make sure your motives for serving are pure.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 2 Tim. 2:15

SEEK - Seek the wisdom of God.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. James 1:5

SUBMIT - Submit to the Holy Spirit and to those in authority.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians. 5:18

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesian. 5:21

STEADFAST -Be steadfast in prayer for: civil authorities, chaplains, other volunteers, inmates, and inmate families.

Respecting the Community of Faith –

The Yokefellowship Statement of Faith lists the essential beliefs of Yokefellowship. Beyond these foundational beliefs, Yokefellow volunteers must exercise respect and humility regarding other Christian doctrines.

While each volunteer will understandably hold true to their personal and congregational beliefs, apart from the Yokefellowship foundational beliefs, they must not let denominational differences, non-essential doctrines and current issues divide believers or turn away nonbelievers.

Topics such as eternal security, praise choruses versus hymns, KJV versus NIV can be divisive and turn people from the body of Christ. It's a delicate balance at times yet Yokefellow volunteers must be courteous at all times and do their best to preserve the peace in the Body (Romans 12:18.)

Yokefellow volunteers must be mature in their faith and work cooperatively and collaboratively with others who bring their Christian beliefs to a common table.

VOLUNTEERS THAT ARE ASSETS

TEAM PLAYERS – We're working together for the good of the inmates.

SERVANTS – “Here I am, send me to where I am needed.”

DEPENDABLE – Let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no.”

RESPECTFUL – Respectful and are obedient to authority.



VOLUNTEERS THAT ARE LIABILITIES

ONE-WAY COMMUNICATOR: Presents the Word in a one way fits all manner. Doesn't listen to inmates' pain and questions so he can make the Word come alive and apply it to their lives.

EGO-SEEKERS: “If there is anyone who knows how to do it right, it's me.”

BETTER THAN THEM: “I'm the good guy and you're the bad guys and I'm going to teach you how to be like me.”

BEEEN THERE, DONE THAT: “I can't wait to tell you all about my past.” (But isn't real about day-to-day struggles.)

TROPHY SEEKER: “How many can I get saved.”

YOKEFELLOWSHIP VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION



*Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still;
teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.
Prov 9:9,10*

Overview

Ministry and Ministry Support Volunteers are required to be certified. Administrative Volunteers do not need to be certified. See Volunteer Categories on page 9.

Certification is good for two years and volunteers have four opportunities to be certified during that two-year period. Local Area Councils are to provide annual trainings. Attending the Yokefellowship Annual Conference also qualifies for certification. Yokefellowship staff, or an authorized substitute, will work with local leaders to present the training.

Certificates bearing the Yokefellowship corporate seal and cards will be issued to those completing the program. The names, contact information with the date of training, the venue, and the trainer's name are to be submitted to the Yokefellowship Central Office.

There are three levels of training:

- **Basic ministry** training for all Ministry volunteers. Training covers topics such as: the need; Biblical foundations; small group structure, dynamics, and approach; the Yokefellowship seven spiritual disciplines; Yokefellowship policies for all volunteers; and criminal thinking.
- **In-prison ministry** training for all volunteers who minister, either directly or indirectly, to those who are incarcerated. Training covers topics such as: ministry and security do's and don'ts; jail and prison culture; and effective ministry behind bars.
- **Mentor ministry** training for all volunteers who minister, either directly or indirectly, to those who have been incarcerated. Training covers topics such as: addictive personality and behavior, co-dependency; parole and probation functions; covers topics such as: effective prison ministry. The certification program is approximately three hours. Each Area Council sets their date in cooperation with the Yokefellowship central office schedule.

Benefits to Volunteers

Yokefellowship training helps volunteers develop ministry knowledge, skills, and awareness. During the training, topics relevant to all areas of prison ministry as well as ministry trends that could potentially affect their ministry will be presented. The more volunteers know about prison culture and the challenges faced by returning citizens, the more effective they will be.

Prison ministry is a dynamic ministry – always changing, only the Word of God remains unchanged. Just as we come to a deeper understanding of Scripture with each new meditation, we come to a deeper understanding of the ministry God has called us to when we attend periodic training events.

Certification provides a volunteer a stronger voice. If a *certified* volunteer experiences problems within an institution or with probation and parole, Yokefellowship central office, if requested by the Area Council, will review the situation and attempt to mediate or make an appeal to a higher level, especially if the volunteer did not violate any security issues.

Certification demonstrates a volunteer's commitment to Yokefellowship. Taking time to attend trainings sends a message that the volunteer is committed to doing what they do with growing excellence.

Yokefellowship's Volunteer Certification Program provides volunteers with the assurance that Yokefellowship values each and every volunteer. Significant time, energy and resources are invested into the training and certification process.

Yokefellowship's Volunteer Certification program also provides volunteers with an opportunity to express their needs, concerns and suggestions with the Yokefellowship Executive Director or authorized representative who will be participating in the training.

Finally, coming together for training provides opportunities for volunteers to meet and learn from each other.



SUGGESTED VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Yokefellowship Annual Conference

All Yokefellow volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend Yokefellowship's Annual Conference. The conferences have typically been events where Yokefellow volunteers and others interested in prison ministry gather together to hone their skills, share experiences, and learn about ministry-related issues and trends. Along with updates on Yokefellowship happenings and opportunities, dynamic highly-respected professionals in the field of justice, corrections, rehabilitation and ministry share their expertise through presentations, panel discussions, workshops and one-on-one conversations with attendees. Time is also available for fellowship and learning about Yokefellowship ministries in other institutions. Attendees leave with greater knowledge and a renewed energy for the ministry.

Yokefellowship Regional Conferences

Each of Yokefellowship's Regional Advisory Councils are encouraged to have a regional conference in order to grow and attract new volunteers and new ministry opportunities within their region. Volunteers are encouraged to attend their own, as well as, neighboring regional conferences.

Books

In-Prison Volunteers

Prison Ministry – Understanding Prison Culture Inside and Out, Lennie Spitale, Brodman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 2002

Ministry to the Incarcerated, Henry G. Covert, Loyola Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1995

Life Recovery Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 1998 (NLT)

Serendipity Bible for Study Groups, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Littleton, CO, 1988 (NIV)

Doing Life: Reflections of Men and Women Serving Life Sentences, Howard Zehr, Good Books, Intercourse, PA 17534

Transcending: Reflections of Crime Victims, Howard Zehr, Good Books, Intercourse, PA 17534

Mentoring Volunteers

Mentoring 101, John Maxwell

Learning to Follow Jesus, Daniel McNaughton

Website



"Introducing YPM" video on Website Home Page – yokefellowship.net

Part 3

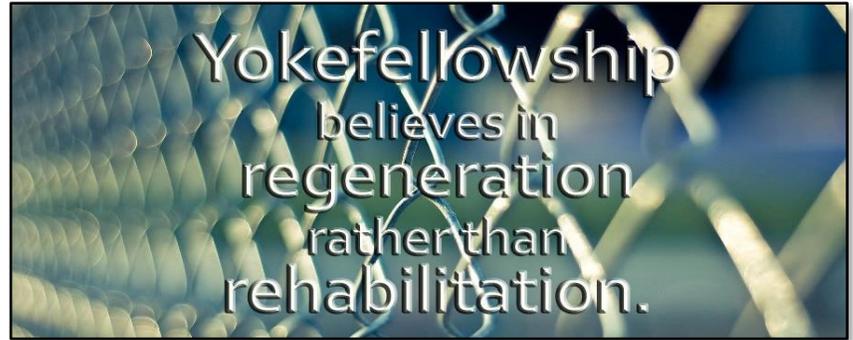
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YOKEFELLOWSHIP IN-PRISON MINISTRY PRESENCE

Yokefellowship has been actively involved in prison ministry in Pennsylvania for over 65 years. Currently, there are fifteen (15) affiliates, know as Area Councils, across the state.

Below are the statistics from our In-Prison ministry as of March 2020, prior to the shutdown of ministries inside of correctional facilities due to Covid 19. At that time, there were:



44
Number of county and state correctional institutions in which Yokefellow volunteers ministered.

356
Number of Yokefellowship volunteers performing a variety of tasks, primarily ministering inside prison walls. (Some counted multiple times due to multiple sessions.)

104
Number of ministries: 60 weekly, 18 once a month, 18 twice a month, 3 three times a month, 4 every three weeks and 1 annually (Christmas)

~1,650
Number of inmates attending Yokefellowship events on a monthly basis. (Some inmates were counted more than once as they attend multiple Yokefellowship events.)

INSTITUTIONS IN WHICH YOKEFELLOWSHIP SERVED (AS OF MARCH 15, 2020)

PA Department of Correction Institutions



Benner Township
Cambridge Springs
Camp Hill
Coal Township
Fayette
Forest
Frackville
Houtzdale

Huntingdon
Mahanoy
Muncy
Pine Grove
Phoenix
Rockview
Smithfield

PA County Institutions (28/65)

Armstrong County Jail
Berks County Jail System
Carbon County Correctional Facility
Centre County Correctional Facility
Chester County Prison
Clearfield County Prison
Clinton County Correctional Facility
Dauphin County Prison
Elk County Prison
Franklin County Jail
Indiana County Prison
Lehigh County Jail
Lehigh County Community Corrections
Lycoming County Prison & Pre-Release
Mifflin County Correctional Facility

Montgomery County Prison
Northampton County Jail
Northumberland County Jail
Perry County Prison
Phil. Ind. Correctional Center
Phil Riverside Correctional Center
Pike County Prison
Schuylkill County Prison
Snyder County Prison
Tioga County Prison
Union County Prison
Wayne County Jail
Westmoreland County Prison



Chester County Prison

MINISTRY – DO’S AND DON’TS

Do pray before you enter the facility.

Do be respectful of inmates at all times. Even narrow prejudices or slight feelings of superiority will negate your presence and purpose.

Do be yourself and express your feelings honestly and genuinely.

Do be objective, disapproving when it is warranted, as well as praising, supporting and encouraging when it is warranted. Always speak the truth in love.

Do keep all conversations with inmates confidential unless you believe that the life or the safety of the inmate or others may be in jeopardy.

Do let inmates know, prior to any possible disclosure of information related to past crimes, that religious volunteers are not afforded confidentiality privilege. If they share information about unsolved crimes and **if you are subpoenaed**, you would be required to testify against them. Be sensitive to where conversations may be heading.

DON’T use personal physical contact with inmates other than a handshake. Avoid being alone with an inmate of the opposite sex.

DON’T ask an inmate why they are incarcerated. It interferes with and is irrelevant to the ministry.

DON’T offer legal or **any** professional advice to inmates. Your role is to provide spiritual support and guidance and nothing more. Going beyond this role will jeopardize you, the inmate, and the ministry.

DON’T expect thanks or be misled by flattery. Remember, **it is not about you**. Given their past and the difficulties inmates experience, you may even experience hostility at times. Don’t be shocked; retain your composure at all times.

NEVER make a promise you cannot keep. Learning to trust others may be a key factor in an inmate’s rehabilitation.

REMEMBER God’s forgiving and transforming grace is everywhere, regardless of the intensity of sin and perceived hopelessness.



SECURITY - DO’S AND DON’TS

Do ask for and comprehend the facility’s security rules for volunteers. Every facility is different. Volunteer status can be immediately revoked for even the slightest violation of rules, willful or otherwise. Volunteer status is a privilege that must never be tested. In some cases, the entire ministry may be jeopardized.

Do know and understand what is considered contraband in your facility. Seemingly ordinary items such as chewing gum and spiral notebooks may pose security threats.

Do dress conservatively, especially if you are ministering to members of the opposite sex. What may be modest to you may be otherwise to those deprived of contact with members of the opposite sex. Follow facility guidelines.

Do be respectful of facility staff at all times and obey them promptly and without argument. Clarification can be obtained after the fact.

DON’T share personal contact information with inmates. While some inmates are genuinely interested in knowing you, some may be looking for ways to exploit or manipulate you. Be safe by sharing nothing. Volunteers should always be cautious when sharing information about family and loved ones.

DON’T take any actions or distribute any materials without securing written permission from the chaplain or the authorities. One-time permission may be granted for some ministry related materials. Giving a Bible to an inmate would be considered distributing contraband. The rule of thumb is “Nothing in, Nothing out.”

DON’T be conned or manipulated no matter how innocent your response may seem. Never be a middleman by passing along notes, letters, conversations, etc., either inside or outside the facility.

CONSIDERATIONS ON GENDER IN YOKEFELLOWSHIP

by David Bowen, Yokefellowship Executive Director, July 2013 – June 2018

The question is often asked, "Can women volunteer in male prisons and men volunteer in female prisons?" By PA Department of Corrections' policy, the short answer is yes. However, having served in prison ministry for more than forty years as a pastor, as a chaplain, and as a volunteer, there are some observations that I believe are appropriate and helpful to consider.

Spiritual and Emotional Maturity - Yokefellow volunteers must be spiritually and emotionally mature in order to effectively minister to inmates, many of whom are emotionally vulnerable and needy due to painful and difficult life experiences.

One of our primary goals is to help inmates build or rebuild their personal relationships, beginning with their relationship to God. In so doing, we often share our own personal experiences and struggles. If a volunteer has not completely matured and healed from his or her struggles, this sharing, unbeknownst to them, would expose their emotional vulnerability and put them at risk of developing unhealthy relationships, innocently or otherwise, with others. This can even lead to a romantic attraction.

Spiritually and emotionally immature volunteers may also seek emotional fulfillment by helping others. Without outwardly sharing their vulnerability, they are at high-risk of becoming too emotionally involved with inmates. This too can lead to a romantic attraction.

The consequences of either scenario go far beyond the ministry effectiveness of the volunteer. Volunteers that violate appropriate standards of behavior have been suspended from volunteering by the DOC and county jails. (See Reasons for Dismissal.) This also hurts the people involved, reflects poorly on the good name of Yokefellowship and dishonors the Lord Jesus and the work of His kingdom.

For the above reasons, Yokefellowship recommends that men minister with men and women with women, while we do recognize that spiritually and emotionally mature volunteers can and have been effective in ministering to members of the opposite gender. Yokefellowship encourages husbands and wives to serve together as healthy, strong marriages are a much-needed role model in prison. Together or separately, Yokefellowship recognizes that a godly woman's perspective and perception can be very helpful to male inmates, and a godly man's perspective and perception can be very helpful to female inmates. Much caution, however, needs to be exercised as our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Modesty – One very important and often neglected aspect of Christ-like character is modesty, especially

as it relates to dress. Male inmates especially are very influenced by what they see and smell. When female volunteers dress in such a way as to call attention to their breasts and legs, either by partial exposure or by tight-fitting clothing, it creates real moral challenges for men who are trying to honor the Lord in their thoughts as well as their behavior (Matthew 5:27-29). Male volunteers can also dress and behave in such a way as to call attention to flesh ("the hulk") rather than the spirit.

Volunteers must be extremely sensitive to the visual as well as olfactory impact of their presence upon those who are sensory deprived, some for many years. What is acceptable in society today is highly sensory and is not appropriate for volunteers in a prison setting.

The most important aspect of modesty as a Christian virtue is humility. The Apostle Peter reminds us to "...be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility...." Why? Because "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5-6) When we dress, behave or speak in such a way as to draw attention to our own natural attractiveness and charm rather than to exalt and exemplify the grace and graciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are unfaithful to Him.

As Yokefellow volunteers we must speak, behave and dress in ways that demonstrate Christ-like virtue and character, rather than call attention to ourselves. The attraction must always be to Him and not to us.

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 1 Corinthians 8:9

"Everything is permissible" - but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" - but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others... Do not cause anyone to stumble. 1 Corinthians 10:23, 32

YOKEFELLOWSHIP PEN PAL GUIDELINES

Writing to an inmate and sharing the love and light of Christ can be a very rewarding spiritual experience. For those who are unable to minister inside a correctional facility, this may be the perfect opportunity to make a positive impact on an inmate's life. But, it is a ministry that one should only enter into with spiritual and emotional maturity, commitment, and an awareness of possible con games. The ministry goal should be to provide fellowship, discipleship, friendship, and encouragement.

The Yokefellowship Christian Pen Pal program is an optional program for Area Councils. The intent is not to have the program driven by requests from inmates, but rather to match interested volunteers with an inmate as their interest is expressed. The program is meant to be a discipleship program with volunteers writing to Christian inmates, and not an evangelistic program.

If you are interested in being a Yokefellowship Christian Pen Pal, contact your local Area Council's Council Director to see if they have or are able to start a Christian Pen Pal ministry.

Prior to matching any volunteer with an inmate, the Area Council's Council Director must contact the chaplain from any institution in which the inmate has been incarcerated. The inmate can only be matched with a volunteer if the chaplain does not advise against it.

Below are the ministry's Pen Pal Do's and Don'ts:

Do If you are currently volunteering inside a correctional facility, do find out from the institution in which the inmate is incarcerated, whether or not being a pen pal is permitted and if doing so could potentially jeopardize your status as an in-prison volunteer. (All volunteers in PA State Correctional Institutions are prohibited from corresponding with, visiting, receiving phone calls from, or placing money in accounts of inmates confined in PA State Correctional Institutions and the Boot Camp without written approval of the Facility Manager. See PA DOC Procedures Manual, Policy 1.1.6. Section 1.D.2.d. available on their website. See also Reasons for Dismissal.)

Do find out from the institution in which the inmate requesting a pen pal is incarcerated what can and cannot be included in your letters. This can vary from institution to institution. Do not assume they are the same.

Do, in your first letter, let the inmate know how often you intend to write so they will know what to expect. Expectations, for inmates, is a big thing. Be an example of faithfulness and dependability.



Do carefully consider not writing to more than one inmate in the same prison as this can cause problems between the inmates.

Do be careful about sharing personal information about yourself and others. Only share what will be helpful in ministering to your pen pal's needs.

Do always write the truth in love.

Do talk with your Yokefellowship leader(s) or staff if you suspect even the slightest hint of impropriety.

Don't, under any circumstance, send money to your pen pal or their family. You are a source of spiritual support. If you send money you will likely lose your spiritual effectiveness and be seen as a source of financial support. Institutions provide basic necessities for all inmates and inmates in some institutions are able to have jobs.

Don't share your home address. Use your Area Council's or church's address as a return address for all correspondence.

Don't use your full name. Only use your first name and last initial.

Don't question your pen pal about their crime. This is a personal matter and should be left for your pen pal to tell you if and when they choose. If you have a problem with some crimes, let your Area Council Director know in advance so they can let the chaplain know before assigning you a pen pal. Please note that some correctional facility websites list inmates' charges.

REASONS FOR DISMISSALS FROM PA DOC INSTITUTIONS

Volunteering in an institution is a tremendous privilege that can easily be rescinded if rules are broken. The following is a partial list of reasons why the PA Department of Corrections terminated volunteers. The list was compiled 4/10/09. A volunteer was terminated because:

- he picked up an inmate with his vehicle from an institution upon the inmate's release.
- she came up "hot" twice on an ion drug scanner.
- she refused to disclose her social security number on her application.
- he assisted an inmate in selling his artwork.
- she put money on an inmate's account.
- he served as his power of attorney for an inmate.
- she brought a toothbrush into the institution to give to an inmate.
- he used the opportunity of leading a Bible Study to propagate his own narrow religious doctrinal views.
- he continued to visit an inmate who had been transferred to a different institution without first obtaining written permission from both institutions.
- the monitoring of a volunteer's phone calls revealed that she had developed a romantic relationship with an inmate.
- he arranged for his church to send inmates money.
- she sought to send inmates money using her maiden name to avoid detection.
- he failed to disclose on his Centralized Clearance Form the number under which he was previously incarcerated in the PA DOC.
- she sent correspondence to an inmate who faithfully attended her program in the prison.
- he brought sacred oils into the institution without receiving prior permission to do so.
- she accepted telephone calls from inmates and corresponded with them by mail.
- he still owed thousands of dollars in court fines.
- she failed to disclose on her Centralized Clearance Form the names of two inmates with whom she had previously visited as a Religious Advisor.
- she turned her Bible Study over to inmates to do whatever they wanted (preaching, teaching, etc.) instead of her.
- he, in spite of being reminded that it was inappropriate to hug inmates, continued to hug them anyway.
- he loaned an inmate, paroled from the institution in which he served, money upon his release from prison to purchase a house trailer.
- she lied to the Volunteer Coordinator by denying that she had included personal notes in mailing she sent to three inmates.

Be sure to check with the institution in which you serve to get a list of rules for volunteers. While all PA DOC rules are the same, each county institution has its own rules.

BEING AWARE OF THE CON GAME

Why inmates want to play con games –

- makes their life a bit easier,
- gives them power, and
- blackmail.

How you can get trapped –

- you identify with inmates as friends, forgetting where you are,
- you begin to trust inmates,
- you begin to do favors for the inmate, bending small rules,
- you dress unprofessionally, and
- you make inappropriate comments, aligning with the inmate and against the system,

What to watch –

- "Can we talk in private?"
- "You're the only one that cares."
- improper inmate touch or compliments,
- inmate asks for special favors, offers gifts (poems, picture), does extra work, and
- inmate tries to get personal

Avoiding being conned –

- always look and act professionally,
- know the rules,
- be aware that it could happen to you: anyone can be conned,
- deny special favors, and
- report incidents immediately.

Part 4

What You Need to Know About BEING A MENTORING VOLUNTEER

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WHAT IS MENTORING

Part of the mission of Yokefellowship Prison Ministry is to yoke returning citizens to Christ for salvation and changed lives. A growing movement in this ministry is to help returning citizens successfully reenter society. Mentoring is one of the key pieces of this “aftercare” movement.

Mentoring Relationship Definition - The Yokefellowship mentoring relationship is an intentional relationship where the mentor and mentee meet at least once a month in-person and weekly through other forms of communication, and where the mentor’s primary focus is to help the mentee experience the life-changing power found through faith in Jesus Christ.

The desired mentoring relationship is between two individuals, or “one-on-one,” relationships. Mentoring may also be done through small groups. All mentoring requires both a tender heart and thick skin. The mentor’s role is not to fix the problems for the mentee, but through an intentional relationship and active listening, the mentor helps the mentee find solutions and grow in a dynamic relationship with Jesus and the church.

MENTOR QUALIFICATIONS AND MORE

In addition to meeting all the existing Yokefellowship volunteer requirements (Part II of Handbook) those interested in mentoring must:

- be spiritually and emotionally mature as demonstrated by:
 - the respect and recommendation of their pastor and several other Christians who are actively involved in ministry,
 - a visible life of integrity and obedience to the Word of God,
 - their ability to balance truth, love, and mercy in their relationships;
- be active in a Christian church;
- be non-judgmental;
- have pure motives for wanting to be a mentor;
- have relevant life experiences and skills to share with their mentee(s);
- have sufficient strength of character not to be negatively influenced by others;
- be familiar with addictive personalities and behaviors, co-dependency, criminal thinking, parole’s functions, and other topics common to returning citizens;
- know how to be an active listener; and
- be free from alcohol, drugs, and sexual addictions. Should there be a history of such addictions, there must be a minimum of one year of freedom.

MENTEE QUALIFICATIONS AND MORE

A Yokefellow Mentee is an at-risk youth, inmate or returning citizen who desires a relationship with and is willing to be accountable to a Yokefellow Mentor and who has met all mentee qualifications. Applicants go through an interview process to assure they meet the following requirements:

- they recognize their mentor will be a follower of Christ;
- they desire also to be a follower of Christ;
- they are willing to transition into a church;
- they are willing to be a student and a learner, i.e., a disciple; and
- they are open and honest about their past.

Dismissal - A mentee shall be immediately dismissed from the program should they demonstrate aggressive or threatening communication and/or behavior towards a mentor or should the Mentor Coordinator consider them to be a risk to the reputation of the ministry.

Jesus invested much of his earthly ministry in training twelve young men who would be key leaders in the church after his death, resurrection and ascension. This is an example of group mentoring. The apostle Paul mentored Timothy and Titus as he went about his work as an evangelist and church planter. This is an example of one-on-one mentoring, though both examples were of a higher intensity.

Group Mentoring - Yokefellowship small group approach to ministry should be used in all group mentoring sessions. Group mentoring is not as intense as one-on-one relationships. These groups have also been referred to as “Yokefellowship on the Outside”, following the pattern that has been set by 55 plus years of small group gatherings held inside correctional facilities.

One-on-One Mentoring – This relationship is between an individual who is an inmate or returning citizen and a Christian brother or sister who will walk beside them and help them grow into the life that God has for them.

Mentor Training – In addition to general volunteer training, mentors must also receive mentor-specific training initially and minimally bi-annually. Mentors shall also participate in Mentor Support Group sessions when offered by the Mentor Coordinator.

Mentor Accountability – Mentors are accountable to the leadership of the Area Council in which they serve, to the Mentor Coordinator, and to the Yokefellowship Executive Director. Mentors must meet regularly with the Mentor Coordinator at least quarterly.

Mentor Limitations – It is imperative that a mentor understands their role and sets personal boundaries to ensure a healthy and long-term relationship. Personal boundaries are to be set prior to the match being finalized. Whenever possible, a mentor should formulate or become part of a team of individuals, both secular and sacred, who are willing to work together to address the social as well as spiritual needs of the mentee. The mentor shall be familiar with the human and social services in the mentee’s community such that they can direct their mentee to these resources

Mentor Dismissal – Mentors may be dismissed for failure to attend trainings or Mentor Support Group sessions or should the Mentor Coordinator consider them a detriment to the program.

MENTORING DO'S AND DON'TS

Do's

Do pray for your mentee, yourself and the relationship. (A prayer journal will show you and your mentee how God answered your prayers).

Do clearly define your boundaries as to time and availability initially and be free to say “no” at any time. This will ensure a healthy and long-lasting relationship. Do not give in to pressure or manipulation. Do what you can and leave the rest to God. Remember, you are not God.

Do get your mentee's permission beforehand if you want to speak to their parole officer.

Do be real. Your greatest value is sharing who you are, your faith and your life's lessons.

Do always speak the truth in love. The balance of truth and love is essential.

Do be a friend, not a parent, teacher or supervisor.

Do guard against falling into the same negative thinking or behaviors as your mentee. For example, if your mentee tends to argue, respond in kindness and gently help them learn to do the same.

Do be an active listener. Here are a few tips:

- Turn off all devices.
- Don't think of your response while your mentee is talking.
- Don't move on to another topic or activity before your mentee is done talking.
- Ask questions for clarity.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Be aware of body language and emotions.

Do put yourself into your mentee's shoes. Try to fully understand their experience and thinking so you can give them proper feedback; their behavior makes sense to them based on how they view the world.

Do encourage rather than demand. Encouragement is the key agent of change. Your relationship must be built on an attitude of complete acceptance. It is only when you give your mentee the freedom to choose not to grow that they can freely choose growth.

Do be consistent in your contacts. Adequately prepare and be on time for any meetings or outings.

Do help your mentee make decisions and set goals. Do not make decisions or set goals for them even if they want you to do so. Instead, discuss the pros and cons of each choice and remind them that making no choice is still a decision – of living with the consequences of indecisiveness. Deciding for them prevents them from taking responsibility for their own choices and behavior.

Do, as appropriate, keep discussions involving private information confidential.

Do understand it is your moral responsibility to report to a professional, such as a parole or enforcement officer, any acts or potential acts of harm that the mentee has or that the mentor has reason to believe the mentee may commit against another individual or to the mentee themselves.

Do be responsible for your own well-being and the well-being of your loved ones. This may involve taking specific precautions to protect yourself and others.

Do report any aggressive or threatening communication and/or behavior from a mentee to a Yokefellowship leader.

Do contact a Yokefellowship leader if you have questions or problems.

Don'ts

Don't give professional advice unless you are that professional. You are not your mentee's mental health therapist, medical doctor, or lawyer.

Don't try to rescue the mentee from the consequences of bad decisions or behavior. Consequences are the most powerful motivator for behavior change.

Don't make promises for yourself or others that you are not positive will be done. Broken promises can jeopardize your relationship.

Don't agree when your mentee talks negatively about others, especially authorities. Always be positive. Conflicts can be opportunities to teach biblical principles and show them a godly perspective's on trials and forgiveness.

Don't enter into business dealings with your mentee. Entering into business dealings will add facets to the relationship that are not beneficial and can jeopardize the relationship.

Don't pressure your mentee to give their testimony in public. It may be exciting for others to hear about their dramatic life change, but it is not always in their best interest to do so. A good rule of thumb is to have at least one year of freedom prior to any public testimony.

Don't major on the minors. Addressing the “minors” up front would not only be futile but would likely harm your relationship. Guide and teach your mentee but allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, convicting them as they walk their life journey.

Don't feel like you have to have all the answers or do everything your mentee asks. You are not responsible for solving all their problems. Often just being empathic and supportive helps and this then helps them learn to self-talk through the next problem.

Don't contact friends or relatives on behalf of mentee. Encourage your mentee to reconcile with others when possible and beneficial. You are not to be a mediator.

Don't be the mentee's banker. As much as possible, help your mentee find ways to earn money, to work through financial challenges, and to prioritize their needs. Never loan more than you can afford to lose. There may be difficult circumstances in which you just give them money. Be sure they know what is a loan and what is a gift. Money complicates relationships.

Don't have inappropriate physical contact or “flirtatious” conversations, or any kind of sexual jesting with your mentee, regardless of their gender. In most cases, mentors are paired with mentees of the same gender, but, even so it is possible that one or both struggles with homosexual desires. Never assume there will not be a sexual temptation.

Don't get caught up on controversial Biblical doctrines. Your relationships should be based on faith in Jesus. Regardless on the mentee's maturity, keep the focus on Jesus.

MENTOR COORDINATOR

The Yokefellowship Mentor Coordinator is there to help Area Councils and individual volunteers when requested. The Yokefellowship Mentor Coordinator shall:

- take the lead and assist in the development and promotion of Yokefellowship's mentoring program;
- assure all mentees are being properly recruited and screened at the Area Council level;
- assure all mentors are being properly recruited, screened, trained, and monitored at the Area Council level;
- assist Area Councils in implementing and managing their mentoring program;
- help Area Councils troubleshoot mentoring relationship issues when needed; and
- if there is an individual who is interested in a mentoring relationship and who does not live in a geographical area served by an Area Council, explore the possibility of a nearby Area Council accepting them into their program.

ESTABLISHING MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Matching Process – All those interested in participating in the program will be screened to assure they meet the respective qualifications and have potential to benefit from the ministry. Mentors shall also be screened to assure they would not, in any way, be a negative influence on a mentee or become a liability to the ministry.

Information shared during the mentee's screening process, including the reasons for incarceration, will be verified and shared with potential mentors during the matching process. Information shared with potential mentors will not include the name of the individual. While it is Yokefellowship's policy that in-prison volunteers not ask why an inmate is incarcerated as it may interfere with and is irrelevant to their ministry, it is imperative that mentors know the reasons for their mentee's incarceration as they are not protected by physical barriers and are alone responsible for their personal well-being and the well-being of their loved ones. Furthermore, knowing past convictions is both relevant and necessary in addressing errors in thinking and subsequent actions during the mentoring process.

Both mentor and mentee must be active in the matching process.

Dissolution of the Match – The Mentor Coordinator may dissolve the match when:

- the mentee and/or mentor no longer wish to participate;
- the mentee or the mentor is no longer able to participate;
- it shall be deemed no longer beneficial for the mentor, mentee or both; or
- it shall be deemed no longer beneficial to the ministry.

Based upon the reason for dissolution, the mentor and mentee may be eligible for a new match.

Confidentiality – Mentors must not share their mentee's personal matters with others with the exceptions of Area Council mentoring leaders and the Mentor Coordinator when there is a need for counsel, or in the Mentoring Support Group. Names of mentees shall not be shared during Mentor Support Group sessions.

All of Yokefellowship's mentoring staff are to be committed to confidentiality with the exception of when they have sufficient reason to believe the mentee has harmed or has intentions of harming others or themselves.

Yokefellow volunteers in most county prisons are able to build relationships with inmates while in prison and then maintain those relationships upon release. Due to the fraternization policy in the state prisons, this is a bit more complicated. In recent years, the PA Department of Corrections (PA DOC) has allowed for mentoring of returning citizens by DOC volunteers. Know what is allowed at the prison where you serve and know the boundaries.

Connecting with Mentee - Volunteers should not give their phone number to inmates, so how do we connect with inmates upon release?

- Social Media; if the volunteer is on Facebook, or other social media, you can let that be known to the inmate, or search for them upon release.
- In some cases, inmates know what their phone number or address will be upon release, if so, the volunteer can get that information before they are released.
- Church; the volunteers can let the inmates know where they go to church and the times of services. This can then be a first meeting point.
- In some cases, it might be OK for the volunteer to give his or her cell number to an inmate who will be getting out soon. Know what the facility allows on this regard, know the risks and judge wisely on this matter.

Note to In-Prison Volunteers - Generally, Yokefellow volunteers who minister in the prisons are busy. So, in many cases, it might be best to have other volunteers serve as mentors. These mentoring volunteers can then focus their energies entirely on mentoring.

Volunteers ministering in state prisons should connect returning citizens who desire mentors with mentors through Area Councils. These connections can be made by either reaching out to the Yokefellowship Executive Director, the Mentor Coordinator or a Yokefellow volunteer where the returning citizen will be living. In some cases, it may be possible to start that relationship before the inmate is released. There are also opportunities to be a Spiritual Advisors for inmates in the PA DOC. This would be mentoring on the inside. The Spiritual Advisor must be someone who is not a volunteer at that institution. This is another potential avenue of ministry and in some cases, chaplains are actively looking for Spiritual Advisors in the institutions where they serve.

EFFECTIVE MENTORING STRATEGIES

The following are helpful strategies to improve your mentoring experience and effectiveness:

1. Think of yourself as a “learning facilitator” rather than the person with all the answers. Help your mentee find people and other resources that go beyond your experience and wisdom on a topic.
2. Emphasize questions over advice giving. Use probes that help your mentee think more broadly and deeply. If they talk only about facts, ask about feelings. If they focus on feelings, ask them to review the facts. If they seem stuck in an immediate crisis, help them see the big picture.
3. When requested, share your own experiences and the lessons you have learned. Emphasize how your experiences could be different from their experiences and are merely examples. Limit your urge to solve the problem for them.
4. Resist the temptation to control the relationship and steer its outcomes; your mentee is responsible for their own growth.
5. Build your mentee’s confidence through supportive feedback.
6. Encourage, inspire, and challenge your mentee to achieve their goals.
7. Help your mentee reflect on successful strategies they have used in the past that could apply to new challenges.
8. The mentor should involve his or her church in the mentoring process or the church with which the mentee has chosen to affiliate.
9. The mentor could explore working with the mentees Probation/Parole Officer in cultivating an environment for successful reentry.
10. Be spontaneous now and then. Beyond your planned conversations, call or e-mail “out of the blue” just to leave an encouraging word or piece of new information.
11. Reflect on your mentoring practice. Request feedback from your mentee.
12. Enjoy the privilege of being a mentor. Know that your efforts will likely have a significant impact on your mentee’s development as well as your own.

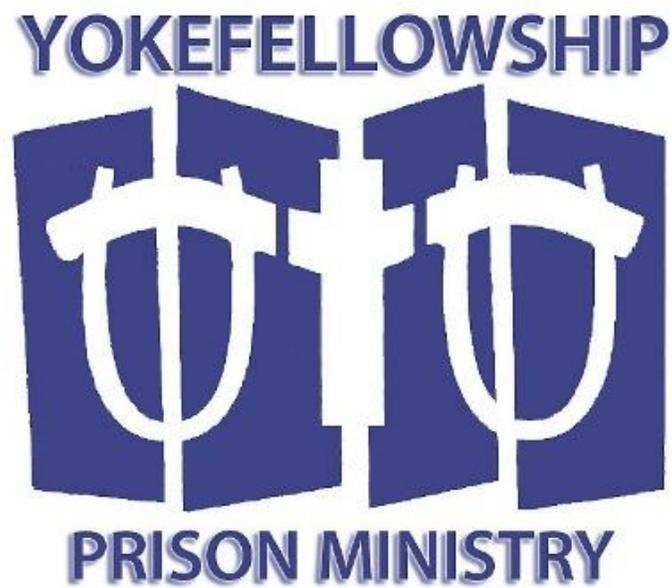
CONCLUSION

Mentoring will come with many challenges. The needs of inmates and returning citizens can often feel overwhelming. It will be important for mentors to understand their role and set boundaries. The mentor’s role is to provide spiritual guidance, not fix all the problems of the mentee. Mentors should be wise, seasoned persons who know how to love and teach without being used, or sucked into the drama of another person’s life.

Notes

Yokefellowship Prison Ministry

Volunteer Handbook



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