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newsletter and are greatly appreciated by the ministry. Ron affirms, "I have been blessed to give several seminars to groups that have had an interest in beginning a prison outreach. I gave two seminars at our General Mennonite Conference Assembly and I am blessed to have been invited to numerous churches to speak about the work being done through Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry and other ministries to inmates. I continue to preach the gospel every fifth week at New Light Praise & Worship Center and from time to time at some Baptist, Methodist, and non-denominational churches as well."

"With everything I do, my heart is sold out to Jesus on behalf of the men incarcerated in the jails and prisons throughout the US, but especially the ones in VA. After being sentenced to four five-year sentences and making parole only to be incarcerated again for a sentence of 13 years, I have an idea what these men are going through. I know what will keep them out of prison, and what Satan will use to get them back into prison. If God can save a wretch like me, then there is hope for others who feel hopeless. During my incarceration, from time to time, ex-inmates would come in to preach and give their testimonies of how they came to God in prison.



The ministry board 2021

They explained where God had taken them, and I could identify with their stories. Likewise, many men come up to me and they identify with what God is doing in my life. They see more clearly that God loves them, and that His grace is as sufficient for them as it has been for me."

If you know someone who is incarcerated and needs encouragement, **become a pen pal** and share the gospel with him or her. Also, tell them to get involved with the local ministry where they are being held and allow God to do a marvelous work in them, as He has in so many others. I am now a member of Living Word Christian Fellowship in Lowesville, VA. I preach there when ask.

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Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry

How the ministry began

A ministry to inmates and their families for incarceration and life afterwards



Chaplain Ron Baker

What You May Not Know About Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry

In March of 2021, Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry will begin its 34th year of service to the Lord in the jails and prisons. The idea for this ministry came to Brother Ron Baker while he was incarcerated. He felt the Lord calling him to return to the prisons when he got out. He wanted to share what the Lord was doing in his life with the inmates and their families. At first, only a few people were interested in encouraging him, but not many were willing to take the time to form a ministry board for support. Others told him no one would pay attention to someone with such a sordid past. This almost led to the ministry never getting started.

At the time of Ron's release, before he could get the ministry going, there were so many well-meaning Christians telling him God was not calling him as a minister that he actually gave up on the idea. After falling back into sin and re-entering prison, God got his attention again, and this time Ron was assured of his calling. While trying to find a church he could fit into—one that preached the full Word of God—he finally settled in a local church where he stayed and later served as a pastor for seven years.

After Ron's release he started out by going into the jails since he could not get approved for entrance into the prisons until he had completed parole. In the meantime, he joined Prison Fellowship, which trained him in all aspects of prison ministry. In fact, he eventually took every training course they offered. They were very influential in getting Ron into the prison he had been paroled from (Staunton CC) as a regular volunteer.



**Lisa Miller the
secretary/treasurer**

Initially, the prison officials were very skeptical of an ex-offender coming in to volunteer. They reasoned that the harm that could be done could outweigh the good that might come from it. He was finally approved thanks to the Lord working out the details. Several years later, after witnessing his faithful service, the ex-warden (who had been promoted by that time) stated that Ron had turned out to be an exception. He was happy he had given him a chance to witness to the men. What an endorsement! In addition, the DCE School at SCC invited him to be the guest speaker when all the men graduated from the various trade schools and GED courses. God did a marvelous work in allowing Ron to be accepted by most of the administration where he had been incarcerated. During this time and even while he was incarcerated they had seen the evidence of Christ working in his life.

After the Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry was established, the VA Mennonite Church Conference, from which Ron received his ordination, began to stress the importance of accountability with the ministry. Ron was, at first, licensed for many years of service and eventually ordained for special ministries as a prison chaplain. During this time, Ron served in the church as a pastor and worked with the prison outreach simultaneously. A board of directors was set up in spite of there being very little financial support then. The members did not meet regularly, but they were in place to bring accountability primarily to the ministry's finances.

For several years Ron supported the ministry mostly from his own earnings from plumbing, odd jobs, and selling pigs to keep the ministry going. After a while however, donations trickled in from a few individuals and a couple of churches, and the ministry grew. Ron proved he was sincere over time and the VA Mennonite Conference began to support him and his prison ministry. Another board was set up since most of the people from the previous one were no longer active.

In 2002, for the first time, donations covered the budget for the entire year. However before that, there were a lot of years of not being sure where the money would come from to make a trip to the prison and back. Ron recalls, "I remember a time I was getting ready to go to Staunton and I had enough gas to get there, but not enough to get back. I prayed saying, 'Lord, I am going to SCC and I am expecting you to get me back.' About 3 hours before I was to leave a man came by and bought two pigs from me; at that time I was able to fill both tanks in my truck and even get a bite to eat." God has brought this ministry a long way, and with the help of more churches, businesses, and individuals, we will be able to reach even more inmates and families with the hope of restoration in Jesus.

When Staunton closed its doors for the last service it was a very sad time for this ministry, but Ron has been in contact with many of the men who were moved to other prisons. There have been hundreds of pen pals corresponding with him over the years. He continues to keep up this ministry of encouragement today. In addition, the ministry began to publish a simple newsletter as well. The purpose of the newsletter was to let supporters know what goals their gifts were accomplishing. Initially, it was a one-page, front and back, black-and-white printed newsletter. This grew to a two-page, front and back report with Ron's ministry schedule. The newsletter has seen even more improvements over the years and with the help of several editors, is quite remarkable. A copier was donated and the ministry also purchased a color copier, so that anyone who is interested can receive a copy of the color newsletter. Since then we have had other newer printers.

The articles from various inmates who share their testimonies, poems, stories of family members being saved, and more are published in the