

Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry Newsletter

March/April
2025

Changing lives from the inside out!

The ministry is so very happy to announce this month starts our 40th year of service to the Lord.

March is the anniversary of the beginning of Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry. Here is the Chaplain's testimony.

In 1978, after having been out of God's will for a long time, I was incarcerated for using and distributing controlled substances. I had turned to drugs to dim the reality of a failed marriage and the subsequent unlawful abduction of my two children by their mother. I had been awarded custody about one year prior to their abduction. She had remarried and wanted to visit the children. I agreed that it was a good idea, but after the third visit, she did not bring the children back. She called to tell me I would never see my children again.

I contacted the local and state officials, but no one would help me. She had moved to another state and I had no idea where she was. After a time of trying to do things through the proper legal channels, I became very frustrated at the lack of concern from law enforcement.

I began to try to drown my problems in alcohol, but that did not help at all. I moved on to speed because it had the effect of keeping me awake and messed up so that I wouldn't dream about my children. After depending on drugs for a while, I realized it would be profitable to buy drugs in larger quantities and sell them for money. I really had believed I would be getting my drugs for free.

As it turned out, I discovered

nothing is really free and I paid a terrible price. I lost all consciousness of right and wrong. I had not been a very moral man before, but I became much worse with the constant use of alcohol and drugs. I found I could justify everything I did. Since the law didn't care about my problems, I didn't care about the law. I got involved with people who used drugs and had very little contact with people that did not use them.

Eventually, my heart became totally hardened and all I cared about was being high. It showed in my work and my family life. I avoided being around my mother because of my condition. Most of my time was spent either searching for drugs or selling them so that I could get money to buy stronger drugs. Naturally, this chaos in my life, along with a complete disrespect for the law, landed me in court and finally, in prison. God, in His mercy, had given me a chance to escape the lifestyle of drugs, but I continued to choose it anyway. I ended up with four 5-year sentences which I was mercifully allowed to serve concurrently. This was miraculous as these offenses should have earned me much longer sentences.

I had accepted the Lord as my Savior as a young child and began my journey back to Him in jail, but I still did not turn over all my sin to God. I continued making destructive choices that I thought would not lead to incarceration again. I did not even think about the

Almighty wanting me to turn over my entire life to Him. So I left prison only to return to a life full of sin. Without Christ's direction, I was soon right back into a life of crime.

This time, I was incarcerated with a 13-year sentence, but as a parole violator, it would be a long time before I would see the outside of the prison fence. During those years, I really got into the Word. I began to notice a real concern in the hearts of the individuals working in the prison ministries. I watched how unselfishly they gave their time to bring the Word of God to sinners like me. I was "one of the least of these," but was not yet His servant.

I had felt God call me to the prison ministry during my first incarceration, but had put it aside out of shame. Satan whispered, "How could Jesus ever use someone as sinful as you?" He did not say this to me in a supernatural voice; he used the voices of people I knew as friends, the people I looked up to as being more in tune with the Father's will than I was.

After three times of being refused parole, I fell on my knees before God. He showed me that He wanted me to give up all my sin to Him so that He could use me in His service. Once I took this step, I was awarded parole. Through His power, I returned to the prisons to minister. This work eventually became Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry.

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Bible studies

**Ministry training
seminars available
for local churches.**

¹⁰ “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted but the sorrow of the world produces death.” 2 Corinthians 7:10

I receive letters all of the time where inmates have committed horrendous crimes, and, with them only just getting to jail and not even been to court yet, they say God will deliver them from this time. Now I have no doubt God can and will deliver believers from out sin, once we turn our lives over to Jesus and receive Him as our Lord and Savior. Many of these people have either no knowledge of God or very little and think just because they pick up a Bible and read a little and pray, that God is going to release them right away. Some of these people fool themselves into thinking God will just forget their past crime since the Bible says when we repent and ask for forgiveness, God will forgive us. That is true, but there are stipulations that go with that statement. Number one ¹⁰ “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to

salvation, not to be regretted but the sorrow of the world produces death.” 2 Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow is about changing one's mind and behavior, rather than being consumed by regrets. It involves mourning for sin, turning away from it, and finding forgiveness in Christ. Being sorry one got caught is not true repentance, but these uninformed people, not understanding the Bible, misunderstand God's plan for their lives. They made a mess in life and God wants time to straighten their lives out for them. So if they get sentenced but continue seeking God after they get over being mad or disappointed with God for not allowing them to go home right away, they just might be saved

Then there are some who pretend to be changed. They take lots of Bible lessons and think the DOC is going to take that

into consideration, but the DOC discounted that a long time ago. However some of these pretending people who continue taking Bible studies and having to read the Bible might just start being changed! Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" So by them reading and studying the Word of God for their lessons, God builds their faith and eventually they become a child of God. Unfortunately there are many who do not get what they want from God and rebel against His Holy Word. They reject Jesus and His Salvation. This is not only true in the prisons. Many people on the street start coming to church to be delivered from a situation, only to return to their sinful lives thinking things will be better. "As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly" Proverbs 26:11

God continues to bless and use Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry after all of these years.

Through the full 39 years of being allowed to serve the Lord through Rehoboth Jail and Prison ministry, God continues to draw me closer to Him as I seek Him with all of my heart. The closer I get, the more I see areas in my life that need God's touch. People mention things that allow me to see a need to work on areas in my life. That lets me know, after all of these all of these years, I am not where I need to be. There are certain areas of my life that are apparent to others that are in need for lots of work and God continues to allow them to acknowledge those faults to me. Sometimes I get upset, which I should not because no matter how that person means what they say, that area in my life needs work. God can help us change, but we have to acknowledge the short coming. "GOD grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." This is called the Serenity prayer which allows us to know we have to acknowledge there is a problem and then determine what we can do about it and what might need lots of prayer to make a difference. I love the scripture: ³ "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?" ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your

own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Matthew 7:3-5 While we are aware of sin in other's lives and we need to encourage others to come closer to Jesus, we all must realize we have also not arrived yet!

As I look back at our meager beginning, it was only God who got us through, with seemingly little interest by others, toward working with inmates, and with no support other than my weekly job. You might think one would give up, but it was not me but God who kept me excited about going to the prisons alone several times a week. Only God provided the means to travel and He gave me the energy and enthusiasm to keep me encouraged. As He found me faithful, only through the Spirit He put in me, eventually small donations started coming in for fuel to travel, which was a wonderful blessing. Then a board was formed and a budget established. Eventually I no longer worked for anyone. God allowed me to establish the ability to work for myself. Plumbing was the main work. However my past experience in various construction and painting allowed me to work in other areas as well. I did lawn work, helped in tree work, painted, and even did carpentry work with a man who was a great carpenter. I did roofing and many other jobs. If I felt the job was too much for me, I would get a professional to work with and I always

guaranteed all of my work. God was so good to me! Everything for which we needed funds, travel, rent money, other bills needing payment, God would give me work. I never lacked for anything, since God was providing all of my needs through His riches in glory, through Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:19 This ministry have never felt like a burden since God has kept me encouraged. God even allowed us to add a division to the ministry that multiplied our outreach many times over in 2018. That is when the Bible Readers Outreach Ministry joined us. When ministries were no longer allowed to go into the prisons because of covid, our ministry was just as active mailing out Bible lessons and Bibles and other study materials. One sad thing I experienced was my failing health. By the time the prisons opened back up for volunteers, I found my ability to walk longer distances and the lack of being able to catch my breath at a point that I felt God might be telling me something. It was time for me to continue my ministry from home. The letter writing ministry, newsletter, and keeping track of the volunteers we have going into the prisons seem to be keeping me busy, and I no longer have to drive after dark which seems to have also become a problem. In all of this, I give all honor, glory, and praise to God for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful outreach to sinners such as I.

Here is some of how the ministry began.

In March of 2025, Rehoboth Jail & Prison Ministry will begin its 40th year of service to the Lord in the Virginia 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 reentering 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. 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 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 raising 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.

There are articles from various inmates who share their testimonies, poems, stories of family members being saved, and more are published in the newsletter and are greatly appreciated by the ministry. Ron affirms, "I have been blessed to give several seminars to groups in the past that have had shown 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 was preaching 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 and women 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 total 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. That always meant more to use that normal preachers since we knew these men knew what we were going through and what we needed.

Taken from the "How The Ministry God Began" Brochure.

Bible Readers Outreach Ministries:

In Dec 2024 we mailed out 216 Bible lessons, enrolled 13 new students, mailed 14 Bibles cost of \$325.93, 9 Bible dictionaries/Concordances at \$145.73, no Old testament Vernon Mcgee concordances at \$00.00; Misc. office materials (paper, envelopes, ink, cardstock) \$95.19 and Stamps \$7.69 for a total of \$574.54

For the Fiscal year of 2024 we mailed out 2,869 Bible lessons, enrolled 300 new students, mailed 102 Bibles cost of \$2,747.70, 67 Bible dictionaries/Concordances at \$1,104.59, 25 Old testament Vernon Mcgee concordances at \$537.75; Misc. office materials (paper, envelopes, ink, cardstock) \$2,432.29 and Stamps \$5,497.67 for a total of \$12,320.00

In Jan 2025 we mailed out 196 Bible lessons, enrolled 35 new students, mailed 6 Bibles cost of \$172.76, 1 Bible dictionaries/Concordances at \$11.80, 1 Old testament Vernon Mcgee concordances at \$10.15; Misc. office materials (paper, envelopes, ink, cardstock) \$310.95 and Stamps \$479.55 for a total of \$985.215

Rehoboth Jail & prison Pen Pal Outreach

In Dec. 2024 I wrote 137 in 2023 but in 2024 53 letter and new letters received 39 in 2023 and 2024 11 new request during that month for volunteer pen pal . 1 New volunteers to write inmates.

In Jan 2025 I wrote 40 letters and we received 8 new request for a pen pal. 1 volunteer took on 5 new inmates to write.

We still need pen pal for women and men and we could us a couple volunteers for Hispanic inmates who do not read or write in English. I have to translate the letter into English and try to translate the return letter from English to Spanish. Keep us in your prayers.

Here are some of the payer needs for this ministry.

We want to thank everyone for their prayers for our needs and remind those who are not aware of our needs of things to bring before the Lord.

As we mention in most mailing and newsletters, we need PEN PALS to write, men to men and women to write women. We could also use a few people to write in Spanish. We have not

gotten any news volunteers in almost a year and we get new requests for a pen pal every week.

We need prayer, as I keep mentioning, for more inmates to sign up for the Bible studies at both prisons we go into, especially Dillwyn.

We need prayer for one of the board members who wants to

starting a bible study/prayer group at Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation (VCBR) where they do not have church services or Bible studies, although they do have a chapel. Because of misconduct by some of the residents using the services for purposes other than they were meant for, the administration just stopped the services rather than

just not allow those inmates to use the facility. The government would rather just shut something down, which could benefit the men and women at this program, especially when they have served the time the judge gave them and now they are being held in a civil commitment program until a phycologist determines they can be released back into society.

"Increasing God's Presence and Joy"

Seek God...Jeremiah 29, 11-13, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."

Think Jesus...Hebrews 12, 1-2; Colossians 3, 1-4, "Fixing your eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of Faith. For the joy sat before him he endured the cross,

scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Be Thankful...Psalms 100, 1-5, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his covets with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."

Examine Conscience...1 John, 8-10, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive

us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Trust Promises, Psalm 16:11, 89:15-16, 90:14, Isaiah 9:6, Luke 2:10-11, 10:21, John 15:9-11, Acts 2:25 and 28, Jude 1:24, To him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy."

Obey God, 1 John 5:3 and 2:3,

"We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands."

Ask God, James 1:2-7, "But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."

Written by my friend, an inmate I wrote to in Arkansas.

Mission Statement:

To establish and strengthen the Christian life of inmates and their families by providing opportunities for worship, instruction, nurturing of children, fellowship, service, mutual aid, brotherly counsel, and to establish and strengthen the Christian life of evangelism.

To bring the Gospel to the unsaved and to lead them to faith in Christ followed by membership in the body of Christ.

All donations of any kind are tax deductible under United States Code Section 170(c)(2).

All giving constitutes your express agreement to relinquish control in accordance with IRS regulation."

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