

A
MESSAGE OF HOPE,
comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

“A New Year, A Renewed Focus” by Kyle Murphy

As we look forward to this New Year 2022, we are excited and honored to be able to share that Message of Hope Jail and Prison Ministry has been in ministry now for a decade! What a blessing it has been to have witnessed firsthand all the mighty and marvelous ways in which God has moved in the lives of those we fellowship with. We are so grateful to have been here to see the transformations that have come about through a relationship with Jesus. Thank you to each of you who are a part of this ministry. Now, before moving onto anything else, we want to take a moment to wish you a...

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

In looking back over the last ten years, my thoughts go first to Roger Distler. Roger, who passed away in October 2018, was the individual whom God worked through to call me into prison ministry. It was alongside Roger that I first stepped onto the grounds of Macomb Correctional Facility back in May 2012 and a passion was ignited within me. From that, Message of Hope Jail and Prison Ministry was born, and through this ministry I have been blessed to have met so many wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ.

When Message of Hope began in 2012, our main emphasis was on bringing a message of hope, comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ to our friends inside, specifically those battling with addiction. We focused our efforts on providing Next Step Christian Recovery (formerly The James Group) classes to those who desired to overcome their addictions through establishing or reestablishing a relationship with Jesus Christ. Over the years we have undergone many changes, slowly adding more areas of service when we were made aware of potential or specific needs. The greatest changes have come about though over these past two years. Much of the ministry we were doing came to a halt due to COVID-19 and the restrictions that were put into place to keep everyone safe.

As some of you are aware, in February 2019 classes were halted at Macomb Correctional Facility due to a flu outbreak, and shortly thereafter, all programs were halted as results of the coronavirus – at Macomb, Carson City, and throughout MDOC. In an effort to continue to provide a message of hope, we shifted our focus over these last two years to attempt to be an encouragement to each of you through additional correspondence. This has been in the form of birthday and holiday cards, encouragement cards, and more frequent newsletters.

In addition, we have continued providing correspondence courses as well as accepting submissions to our Voices for Christ program. In all honesty, we had anticipated seeing a major increase in enrollment in our correspondence courses and submissions to Voices for Christ with the lockdown being in place. We have been surprised that not only was there not an increase, but neither of these ministries is being utilized much at all at this point. As a sidenote, I should mention – as has always been the case – we do have a handful or so of you who are *extremely* faithful in completing your correspondence course lessons and returning them.

We want to take this opportunity to applaud and congratulate you for your diligence and for your willingness to partner with us in an effort to further your spiritual growth and relationship with God. Your commitment is an encouragement to us!!

Due largely to the dramatic changes we have witnessed over the past year or so in ministry opportunities coupled with the expressed interests of those we serve (or lack of interest in regard to some of the services provided through Message of Hope), much discussion has ensued amongst our Board of Directors as to the direction and future of the ministry. During the same timeframe as these discussions have been taking place, I have been on my own spiritual journey and in prayer and meditation as to where I can best be put to use in bringing glory to God. Currently (and since Message of Hope began), much of the administration and all of the day-to-day oversight of the ministry has been done by me. These past several months, God has been placing a new calling on my heart which would result in a need to shift some of my focus, time and efforts in a different direction than where His path has brought me over these last ten years.

All of this reflection and discussion has led to our decision to scale back some of what we have been doing through Message of Hope. Our hope is that we can refocus our efforts in those specific areas that have been and are being most widely received and appreciated in order to make the biggest impact possible in the name of Jesus. This will also allow me to stay in balance with serving through Message of Hope as well as other areas where God is calling me to and allow for Message of Hope to best serve all of you whom we love.

So, what does this all mean?

As we move into this New Year, our Board of Directors has prayerfully decided to move forward with our Encouragement Team and Card Ministry as well as continue to provide newsletters. On the other hand, the Voices for Christ ministry will be discontinued and we will begin phasing out the Correspondence Course ministry. For those of you who are currently enrolled in the correspondence courses, we encourage you to keep working on the lessons. Our instructors will stay with you through the completion of the course you are enrolled in. Following that, for anyone interested in continuing in their studies through mail correspondence, we would recommend Crossroads Prison Ministries. We have heard wonderful things about their ministry in the past and can provide their mailing address to anyone who is interested!

We have also decided to not relaunch the Next Step Christian Recovery program. As some of you know, I rescinded my volunteer status well over a year ago to be able to correspond with you all on a more personal level during this lockdown. That being the case, even if classes would have returned, I would not have been able to attend in person anymore. For those desiring to continue working on their recovery, we would recommend enrolling in Celebrate Recovery. We have highlighted that ministry numerous times in the past and are avid supporters of the CR program!

As has been the case over these last two years, we look forward to continuing to share a message of hope, comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ with you through our Encouragement Team and Card Ministry. Please know that each piece of mail you receive from us is a reminder that we love you and hold you dear to our hearts. In this, our 10th year in ministry, we look forward to continuing to strengthen our bonds with one another and with God. We love you, and again, we wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

Blessing

“The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

(Numbers 6:24-26: Romans 15:13 NIV)