

## SCREENING VOLUNTEERS

OK – you have a volunteer to help in your ministry setting. Now what? There are a number of steps that you should follow with your prospective team member.

1. Program information / packet: It is a good idea to provide the volunteer with information about the particular ministry area that will be involved in the position they are interested in. This is also the time to give them a copy of their ministry description. If they are new to the parish make sure they get a copy of any parish mission statements or other printed materials.
2. Application / references: There should be a standard volunteer application form used for all parish ministries. This form would ask for some basic information – name, address, phone, e-mail, birth date, education background, volunteer interests, references, etc.
3. Interview: Use the following guidelines for interviewing volunteers:
  - Interview in person and privately.
  - Provide the prospective volunteer with a list of questions that will be asked during the interview, so they can be reflected upon adequately. Ask about their:
    - a. Personal religious experience
    - b. Prior training
    - c. Prior experience
    - d. Hobbies and other special interests
    - e. Try to understand their expectations with key questions such as:
      1. My primary reason for wanting to \_\_\_ is:
      2. When it comes to this role:
        - My Fear is that:
        - My hope is that:
        - I am excited about:
      3. I feel that I offer the following talents to make me able to share this ministry:
      4. I feel that I need the following things to make me better able to \_\_\_\_\_
    - f. Ministry preferences
  - Do not place the volunteer merely according to the area of greatest need.
  - A period of observation should follow the interview.
  - Obtain feedback for likely coworkers on the prospective volunteer.
4. Placement: After the interview you have the following options:
  - Accept the applicant;
  - Refuse the applicant, but direct them to another ministry;
  - Refuse the applicant and do not direct them to another ministry;
  - Move on out;

## SCREENING VOLUNTEERS

- Wait – if you have doubts just wait.
5. Follow up: There are a few items you need to remember to do:
- Be sure to check the references the volunteer has given.
  - Arrange for the volunteer to attend a Safe Conduct Protocol workshop.
  - Arrange for the volunteer to attend any other necessary training.

## PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING



Adults learn differently than children. Adults learn differently than teenagers. Be sure to use these principles for adult learning when designing your training sessions.

1. Adults learn best when they are treated with hospitality and respect.

We should be aware of the environment; the way participants are greeted, and make everyone feel welcome.

2. Adults learn best when their experience is honored as important ... even revelatory.

We must invite adults to reflect on their experience and offer it throughout the learning process for the enrichment of all.

3. Adults learn best when they have had the opportunity to participate in the planning of the learning activity.

We should use surveys, past evaluations, phone calls, and planning committees as ways to invite participants to have a voice in their learning.

4. Adults learn best when they are physically comfortable and can easily interact with others.

We should provide an environment with enough space and light, comfortable chairs, breaks, and refreshments to underscore our respect for them.

5. Adults learn best when they have an opportunity to discuss their insights with other adults.

We should offer opportunities for organized small group interaction.

## PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

6. Adults learn best when there is a variety of learning activities.

We should use lectures, questions, panel discussions, debates, and round table conversations because variety is the spice of life.

7. Adults learn best when they are presented with an action challenge.

We should engage adults in the learning process through problem solving, reflection questions, and simulations.

8. Adults learn best when they can see results.

We should demonstrate the practical application of material, which touches the immediate experience of the individual.

9. Adults learn best when they evaluate.

We should provide adults with tools to evaluate their own progress as well as the effectiveness of the program.

10. Adults learn best when they are provided the encouragement and the means to continue a learning experience on their own.

We should encourage adults who have been excited by a session to continue to pursue the topics on their own by providing resources and bibliographies.



## KEEPING AND MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS

Former President Harry Truman is quoted as saying, “Leaders are people who can get others to do what they don’t want to do – and make them like doing it.” Perhaps nowhere in the realm of leadership are there such tremendous obstacles to motivating others than when the task involves motivating volunteers. Conversely, however, nowhere do such powerful resources for motivation exist as those in the religious community.

To keep volunteers in ministry is truly an art in itself. It requires mountains of time and a heart full of love. At its core, ministry is about relationships. When it comes to the volunteers, this finds its expression in support, hospitality, and appreciation.



- **Support**: Supporting your volunteers means that you make sure that they....
  - Know where to go with a problem.
  - Know it is okay to ask for help.
  - Are held accountable.
  - Have others who care in a time of need.
  - Have others who celebrate with them in times of joy.



- **Hospitality**: Being hospitable to your volunteers means making sure that they know their presence is important and creating a place where they are comfortable and cared for. You can do this by...

## KEEPING AND MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS

- Maintaining an area for them.
- Sending cards on special occasions.
- Recognizing personal needs and problems.
- Accommodating personal needs and problems.
- Enabling them to grow in their ministry.
- Enabling them to outgrow their ministry.
- Sending newsworthy information to the press.
- Nominating them for community awards.
- Create pleasant surroundings.
- Promoting a volunteer of the month award.
- Remembering someone who has been absent.
- Maintaining safe working conditions.
- Saying thank-you.
- Smiling.
- Mentioning them in newsletter or bulletin.



- **Appreciation:** There are hundreds of ways to say thank-you to your volunteers. The most important thing to just do it! Some easy ways of showing volunteers that they are special include...
  - Formal commissioning.
  - Appreciation dinner.
  - Awards or certificates.
  - Publishing volunteer names.

Remember to make your individual affirmation / appreciation of your volunteers “smart.”

- “S” – specific.
- “M” – meaningful.
- “A” – authentic.
- “R” – relevant.
- “T” – timely.



## Worksheet: Questions to Consider in Planning Support for Volunteers

1. What commissioning or procedure will you develop to formally authorize your volunteers as they begin their service?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Does each volunteer know who will be their supervisor or mentor? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How regularly will the supervisor/mentor and volunteer meet? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What areas of the ministry/ job description will the volunteer and supervisor/mentor discuss?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What approaches will you use to provide support for the volunteer? (check as many as you plan to use)  
 personal visit     notes     phone call     birthday card     anniversary card  
 newsletter     simple gifts     in-service     reflection day     apprec. dinner  
 recognition in bulletin     encourage their input in job description & program  
 handbook of policies and practices     thanks to family/spouse for sharing them  
 ask their evaluation of the ministry     exit interview when they leave  
other: \_\_\_\_\_  
details: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you scheduled above ways of support into your own calendar/ schedule? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Will you integrate support-guidance or peer groups into the job description schedule?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What type of print and audio-visual resources will you provide for your volunteers use in their work? (*Have you checked media resource center list?*) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What periodicals does your parish subscribe to that would be useful to your volunteers?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Does your public library have any periodicals/ resources that would be helpful?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What resources exist in your parish and surrounding community that could assist you volunteers in their work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What approach will you take in gathering information about the volunteer's performance? (ex: input from clients serviced; peers; mentor, etc) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***Catholic Diocese of Cleveland***  
***Prison Ministries***



**Prison Ministry Mission Statement**

**Incarcerated & Their Families**

**Mission Statement**

The Ministry to the Incarcerated of the Diocese of Cleveland is a collaborative response to the Gospel: Matthew 25: "When I was in prison you visited me." Called by the Holy Spirit, we extend the hope of reconciling love in our relationships with the offender, the victim and their families.

**General Description**

<https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/offices/parish-life/incarcerated-their-families>

Through the Diocesan Ministry to the Incarcerated and the LEAF Ministry to family and friends of the incarcerated, we care for those imprisoned.

The Ministry to the Incarcerated of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland is a collaborative response to the Gospel: Matthew 25: "When I was in prison you visited me." Called by the Holy Spirit, we extend the hope of reconciling love in our relationships with the offender, the victim and their families.

LEAF Ministry (Listening, Encouraging and Assisting Families of the incarcerated) was started from listening to inmates as they worried about their families on the outside. LEAF ministers to inmates' families dealing with loneliness, shame and confusion in learning the corrections system. The LEAF Ministry team knows first hand the pain of having a loved one in prison, so there is no reason to walk alone. Meetings are a safe place where people gather to share their joys, their trials and their daily little victories with others on the same journey. LEAF offers an attentive ear, genuine concern, and thoughtful suggestions for dealing with an incarcerated family member.

For more information, please contact the Secretariat for Parish Life and Development at (216) 696-6525 or (800) 869-6525 ext. 3500.

**Volunteer Welcome Page:**

<http://www.clevelandprisonministry.org/welcome/volunteer/>

***Catholic Diocese of Cleveland***  
***Prison Ministries***

**Volunteer Film about the ministry: <https://youtu.be/70UTBC7qiF8>**

## **LEAF Ministry**

LEAF Ministry (Listening, Encouraging and Assisting Families of the incarcerated) was started from listening to inmates as they worried about their families on the outside.

The LEAF Ministry is an outreach ministry to families and friends of the incarcerated. Our meetings are a safe place where people gather to share their joys, their trials and their daily little victories with others on the same journey. Although we are a ministry with limited finances and unable to offer substantial financial help, we will offer those who contact us an attentive ear, genuine concern and thoughtful suggestions for solving problems.

Our ministry was born from listening. We heard the cry of inmates as they worried about their families on the outside. We heard the pleas for assistance from those on the outside as they became separated from their loved ones and struggled with loneliness, shame and confusion in learning the corrections system. Many of us on the ministry team know first-hand the pain of having a loved one in prison; so there is no reason to walk alone.

By using a network of existing resources those in need will be directed to people, agencies and organizations with the expertise and means to help. Our information is general and is not intended as a substitute for, or a replacement of, professional advice and counsel.

The Leaf Ministry is part of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland outreach to the incarcerated and their families. We welcome families from outside the Diocese with their understanding that our services will be limited or specific to incarceration in Ohio.

For more information, visit our website: [leafministry.org](http://leafministry.org)

# DIOCESAN MINISTRY TO THE INCARCERATED

## MISSION STATEMENT

**The Ministry to the Incarcerated of the Diocese of Cleveland  
is a collaborative response to the Gospel: Matthew 25:  
“When I was in prison you visited me.”  
Called by the Holy Spirit, we extend the hope of reconciling love  
in our relationships with the offender, the victim and their families.**

### 1. MINISTRY TO PRISONERS

*This ministry needs to be implemented in a way that is ecumenically sensitive and respectful of the diversity of our population: men, women, the mentally and physically challenged, those from various cultures, language groups, and races--African American, Hispanic, Eastern European, Arab, etc. In providing the following recommended services for prisoners, the regulations of the correctional institution must be followed--these differ from place to place.*

#### 1. SPIRITUAL/ PASTORAL

##### 1. AT THE TIME OF IMPRISONMENT (where feasible)

1. Initial meeting with prisoner to acquaint with pastoral service
  1. Determine desire for sacraments
  2. Acquaint them with schedule: Mass, bible study, etc.  
Help them to know how to access these services, how to get onto the schedule, etc.
  3. Determine desire for visitors
  4. Obtain name of parish (if there is one)
2. Provision of bible, Catholic literature, articles, other materials
3. All of the above needs to be available in both Spanish and English
4. It is especially important for women that this first visit is from a woman.
5. *For those who do not speak English, it would help to have a translator present.*

## 2. DURING TIME OF IMPRISONMENT

1. Sacraments: Eucharist and Penance
2. Try to connect them to their existing parish if this seems possible
  - c. Preparation for the sacraments (RCIA?)  
(Research is being done on the diocesan policy regarding those who request the sacrament of Baptism while in jail)
4. Bible Study groups/discussion groups-- encourage them to join existing groups, consider beginning groups that respond to need, use existing programs, i.e. Residents Encounter Christ, etc.
5. Bibles, spiritual books, articles
6. Pastoral visits from volunteers (where permitted)
7. Letters from volunteers in parishes--communication could be done through the parish rather than direct
8. Prayer support for those in prison
9. All needs to be provided in both Spanish and English--this is where cultural, racial, language, gender sensitivity is important
10. Marriage Encounter, Life in the Spirit, Kairos Retreat, Cursillo, Residents Encounter Christ, or other retreat/reflection type of experiences

## 3. AFTER IMPRISONMENT

1. After-imprisonment support group
2. Follow-up with spiritual guide
3. Connection with a parish (if possible)

## 2. SOCIAL/PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL

### 1. AT THE TIME OF IMPRISONMENT

(In some institutions there is provision for an orientation visit--in others this could be done on the first visit)

- a. Supplies needed (stamps, toothpaste, etc)
3. Discuss/assess their emotional needs to cope with imprisonment
4. Identify those in need of emotional support/presence/those that seem high risk
5. Determine the need for the presence of a minister in the courtroom during the time of sentencing
6. Assess their physical needs/health needs
7. Discuss needs of family
8. If possible help to make a connection with another prisoner from the Catholic community

## 2. DURING THE TIME OF IMPRISONMENT

1. Needed supplies (indigence packs--watch especially for women since the poverty rate is higher in this group)
2. Visitors/correspondents--where this is permitted
3. Xmas boxes or gifts for other holidays for prisoners who otherwise will receive nothing
4. Activities/discussions
5. Counseling where needed *especially for females, the services of the Rape Crisis Center and Domestic Violence counselors*
6. Tutoring/classes/skill training
7. AA groups, AA literature
8. Self-esteem classes
9. Anger management classes
10. Employment skills classes
11. Vocational training
12. Parenting classes
13. Legal aid especially *for women who are concerned with child custody cases*
14. Health care that addresses needs
15. Drug rehabilitation
16. Pre-Release comprehensive needs assessment that would help to determine where the prisoner will need help when released
17. Assistance with a parole plan

## 3. AFTER IMPRISONMENT

1. Assistance with housing
2. Assistance with employment/job training/locating job
3. Financial assistance
4. Basic Needs: clothing, transportation
5. Counseling where needed
6. Tutoring/classes/skill training
7. AA groups, AA literature
8. Self-esteem classes
9. Anger management classes
10. Employment skills classes
11. Vocational training
12. Parenting classes
13. Legal aid especially in child custody cases
14. Health care that addresses needs
15. Drug rehabilitation
16. Emotional support to prevent relapse
17. Re-orientation to being with family

### 3. TRAINING OF MINISTERS, VOLUNTEERS AND TEAMS

1. Identification of Ministers/volunteers for those in prison and just released
  1. Priests for sacramental ministry
  2. Pastoral ministers for visiting, bible study, classes, orientation
  3. Assignment of ministers (priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, Eucharistic ministers) to each of the jails, prisons, detention centers in the diocese
  4. Volunteers as visitors, activity organizers, letter writers
  5. Responsibility for recruitment of volunteers and ministers, especially women
  6. Identification of those for special ministry: women, Hispanic and Asian, deaf, blind, mentally handicapped
  7. Identification of volunteer lawyers for appeal cases (these would be contacted through the minister)
  
2. Training of ministers and volunteers for prison ministry. . .for incarcerated women. . .for special needs groups
  - a. Inclusion in formation programs of the diocese for those in ministry
  2. Workshops for those in ministry (jail, prison, detention centers)
  3. Professional organization membership for those in ministry
  4. Available resources (periodicals, books, pamphlets, videos) for those doing prison ministry
  5. Training for those doing volunteer work
  6. Collaboration with programs offered by other faith groups, diocese
  7. Mentoring program for women
  
3. *Identifying a coordinating office or person and a budget for the purpose of developing, scheduling, and providing training, initiating and coordinating interfaith collaboration, coordinating ministry to families, providing ongoing ministers and volunteers*

## **II. MINISTRY TO THE FAMILIES OF PRISONERS**

### **1. SPIRITUAL/PASTORAL**

#### **1. AT THE TIME OF IMPRISONMENT (where feasible/advisable)**

\*note: although listed here--these needs may become evident later in the process--some families refuse to acknowledge that a family member is in prison until later

1. Initial meeting with the family to
  1. Let them know of the ministry
  2. To determine their connection to a parish
  3. To provide pastoral counseling, support
2. Connect with their parish community, pastor if possible and acceptable to family
3. Make phone number available to the diocese

#### **2. DURING THE TIME OF IMPRISONMENT**

- a. Continued connection to parish
2. Prayer Groups, Bible study groups for families
3. Pastoral visits, pastoral counseling
4. Preparation for the sacraments, religious education of the children
5. Support for the wake, funeral of a family member

#### **3. AFTER IMPRISONMENT**

1. Continued contact initiated by the parish, pastor, minister, volunteer with the family after person is released
2. Support group, discussion group, prayer group

### **B. SOCIAL/PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL**

#### **1. AT THE TIME OF IMPRISONMENT**

1. Determine the economic status of the family as to housing, employment, education, food, health, etc. (Some of these needs may be taken care of by the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the Parish)
2. Determine the emotional state of the family and the need for counseling, for drug and alcohol counseling, etc.
3. Determine the strength of the support system which is already in place for the family
4. Determine the need for legal assistance
5. Assess the need for someone to accompany them to court, to sentencing, etc.
6. Make contact with various agencies who may be helpful, with the parish (if that is acceptable)

## 2. DURING THE TIME OF IMPRISONMENT

1. Assist with the procurement of housing, employment, job training, food, health, and education assistance where the family is in need (Vincent de Paul may help)
2. Refer and secure emotional, drug and alcohol counseling, etc.
3. Make connection with a support group for the family, i.e. FURE(Cleveland)/CURE, WAIT, Angel Tree Network
4. Determine and provide (where necessary) transportation assistance for family members in visiting prisoner
5. (If possible and advisable) inform the school of the children so that they can get assistance and support through groups
6. Provide legal aid where necessary especially with child custody, support
7. Provide activities for the children, role models if advisable, i.e. Big Brothers or Sisters

## 3. AFTER IMPRISONMENT

1. Continue assistance with housing (locating, application, financing) as long as necessary
2. Continue assistance with employment, training, etc.
3. Financial assistance where needed
4. Support groups, discussion groups
5. Contact person or family from the parish
6. Transitional support in re-establishing family
7. Possible parenting support, marriage counseling
8. Emotional support to prevent relapse

## C. TRAINING OF MINISTERS AND VOLUNTEERS

### 1. Identification of ministers/volunteers for families of those in prison

1. Visitors, contact with the families
2. Facilitators for groups, counselors, agencies
3. Big Brothers and Sisters
4. Those willing to transport
5. Responsibility for recruitment and training of volunteers

### 2. Training of ministers and volunteers

1. Inclusion in formation programs of the diocese for those in

- ministry
- 2. Workshops for those presently in ministry
- 3. Professional organizational membership for those in ministry
- 4. Training for those doing volunteer work
- 5. Collaboration with programs offered by other faith groups, diocese

### III. EDUCATION FOR PRISON MINISTRY

1. INCORPORATION OF THIS MINISTRY AND ITS PRINCIPLES INTO THE FORMATION PROGRAMS OF THE DIOCESE
  1. Programs included:
    1. Colleges/Universities/Ministry Program
    - b. Seminary
    3. Continuing Education for Ministry
    4. Diaconate
    5. Pastoral Ministry
    6. Youth Ministry
    7. Eucharistic Ministers
    8. Volunteers
  2. Content of the curriculum (explanation paragraph on minister)
    1. Spirituality/prayer/liturgy
    2. Catholic social teaching
    3. Life in the Prison System
    4. Life of the Family of the Imprisoned
    5. Needs of particular groups: Women, African American, Hispanic, Sex Offenders, Gays/Lesbians, Persons with Drug and Alcohol Addictions, Persons with AIDS, Geriatric, Mentally Ill, Mentally Retarded.
    6. The Prison System: structure, regulations
    7. Engaging the broader Catholic Community
    8. Agencies/networking
    9. Listening and Communication Skills
    10. Understanding of other faiths (ecumenical)
    11. Mentoring skills
    12. Spirituality of the Minister (support of the person in ministry)
    13. Discernment Process which would help the person determine their readiness for this ministry
  3. Prison Experience
    1. Making a visit to prison
    2. Attending family support groups
    3. Meeting with families

4. Pastoral Experience Internship
  5. Dialogue with those who have been in prison
4. Volunteer Training Program
    - a. Develop a plan for the training of volunteers
    2. Plan an appreciation/recognition program for all volunteers and ministers involved in prison ministry
    3. Ongoing training for volunteers, opportunities for prayer together, for support for various groups
  5. Outreach to those who work in the prisons
    1. Opportunities for prayer, reflection on scripture
    2. Retreat Program for those in prison work

## **B. THE BROADER CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

1. The Broader Catholic Community
  1. “The Church in the City”--make the relationship with this ministry
  - b. Homilies
  3. Resource material
  4. Articles in Diocesan Newspaper
  5. Invitations to be involved: visiting, letter writing, supplies
  6. Support of families in the parish (where possible)
  7. Parish Workshops; Speakers Bureau
  8. District Meetings
  9. Curriculum of High School - Catholic Social Teaching
  10. Curriculum of Higher Education-Catholic Social Teaching at John Carroll, Notre Dame College, Ursuline, CPL
2. Groups and Organizations
  1. National Council of Catholic Women
  2. Holy Name Society
  3. Knights of Columbus
  4. Small Christian Communities
  5. St. Vincent de Paul Society
  6. Newman Ministries
  7. Legion of Mary
  8. Parish Prayer Groups
3. Diocesan Offices

## **IV. ADVOCACY AND THE IMPRISONED**

We are called to also view the Criminal Justice System as to how it impacts on the

people involved, both the offender and their families as well as the victims and their families. There is a need for respect and rights for the offender as a human being as well as a need for safety in the community and respect for the victims.

1. EDUCATION, ORGANIZATION, AND ADVOCACY FOR DUE PROCESS AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF INMATES AND JUSTICE AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR FAMILIES

1. The Offender and Their Families: Issues of concern

1. Parole Reform
2. Rehabilitative Programs in Prison
3. Sentencing Reform
4. Alternatives to Incarceration
5. Better access to families of inmates
6. Support in the community for families of inmates
7. Better support for returning ex-offenders
8. Other issues

2. To advocate for the victims and families of victims that they receive support in the community and compensation for their losses

3. To advocate for a model of reconciliation and restoration instead of the present emphasis on vengeance and punishment

**Restorative Justice** defines accountability for offenders in terms of taking responsibility for actions, and taking action to repair the harm caused to the victim and the community. Restorative Justice provides for active participation by the victim, the offender, and the community in the process of repairing the fabric of community peace.

Restorative Justice  
Virginia Mackey

## **B. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER GROUPS**

1. Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry
  1. Community Re-Entry
  2. Women's Re-Entry
  3. Friend to Friend Program
2. Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association
3. HUMADOP, Inc.  
(Hispanic Urban Ministry Alcohol and Drug Abuse Outreach Program)
4. CURE  
(Citizens United for the Reform of Errants)
5. FUR  
(Families United for Reform) Heidi Cecil
6. Olivet Baptist Church Prison Ministry - Rev. Mark Olds
7. Veteran's Administration

**Revised: July 23, 1999**

PRISON MINISTRY VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM  
CUYAHOGA/LAKE/GEAUGA COUNTIES  
CENTER FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP  
NOVEMBER 16-17, 2001  
NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 1, 2001

LORAIN/MEDINA COUNTY  
JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2002  
PLACE St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Columbia Station  
DATES January 12, 19, 26 and February 2 (9:30-3:00)

SUMMIT/WAYNE/ASHLAND COUNTIES  
MARCH/APRIL, 2002  
PLACE Summit County Jail

CULMINATION EVENT  
JUNE, 2002  
A SERVICE OF HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN OUR COMMUNITY  
BLESSING OF BIBLES  
RECOGNITION OF THOSE WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN TRAINING

COORDINATOR FOR THE VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM  
LINDA CATANZARO

OUTLINE OF VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM (detailed outline “additions”  
indicating materials which should be covered in the presentations of the speakers.

## **CUYAHOGA COUNTY**

This workshop series, sponsored by the Catholic Ministry to the Incarcerated, is planned both for volunteers involved and those who may be interested in future ministry to the incarcerated. Presentations will be informational and practical bringing together the experience of those in ministry, those involved in corrections and rehabilitation, members of the justice community, those who have been incarcerated and their families. The workshops will consider ministry to juveniles, to incarcerated men and women, to those with special needs, and to their families.

### **Weekend One: November 16-17, 2001**

#### **SESSION ONE:**

#### **WHAT IS PRISON MINISTRY?**

*Are you being called to visit the incarcerated? Personal stories, stories of conversion of the visitor and the inmate. . .*

(This session would contain many personal stories)

What is our mission?

The message

In what way is the message communicated  
 With whom is the minister communicating  
 Who is the Minister?  
 Qualities  
 Prayer of the minister  
 Personal Care  
 Stress  
 Boundaries/fear/vulnerability

### **Presentation Ideas**

- discuss the lack of equality between the minister and the incarcerated person—how can we minister to someone in such a different situation from ours
- emphasize the personal stories, the stories of conversion, those of the minister and the inmate
- openness to the Spirit, obedience to the Spirit and the call of Jesus
  - this is a call—Jesus chooses us to minister
  - emphasize the qualities of the minister: a responsible person, person knowledgeable of his/her faith, aware of boundaries; aware of and not drawn into non-Christian cults and organizations, sensitive to the needs of the inmates but not manipulated by them
  - our role as evangelizers, bearers of the Good News to all of the inmates, not just to Christians and Catholics
- what the minister does, what is expected, how do you avoid emotional over-involvement
- where could I be ministering, what are forms of ministry, how do I get approval from the institution
- see “Ministry to the Imprisoned” by Sr. Joan Campbell
  - reflection on the attitudes needed for ministry
  - make comparison to the “dark night of the soul” which can lead to fuller union with God
  - are there opportunities to write to prisoners—how can we involve the homebound? Are there ways we can assist families of those incarcerated? Are there ways to help with Mass or with Bible Study
  - may be good to include information on the Friend to Friend ministry
    - how can we help people deal with “fear of the incarcerated”
- discuss discernment; how do I go about determining if this is how God is calling me to minister
- can I commit my times, my emotions to this ministry
- include many personal stories of prison ministry
- the value of humility in this ministry
- look at “what is prison ministry” from the viewpoint of the person who is incarcerated—from the viewpoint of the family members of the incarcerated

- it would help those doing prison ministry if there were an office/a resource person to whom they could refer when they need advice
- God uses the minister as his flesh, eyes, ears, and hands
- how does the prison volunteer minister to those who work in the prisons, recognize their service, support them
- understanding of the prison staff, their responsibilities, feelings and concerns
- include conduct toward CO's and staff—may determine the ability of the volunteer to be present

Presenters: Priest minister  
 Prison Chaplain  
 Deacon prison minister

Schedule: 5:30 Registration  
 6:00 Supper  
 6:45 Welcome/introductions  
 7:00-8:15 Presentation  
 8:15 Break  
 8:30 Mass

## **SESSION TWO**

### **THE SCRIPTURAL, THEOLOGICAL, SACRAMENTAL BASIS OF MINISTRY TO THE INCARCERATED**

*What are our Bishops saying about Prison Ministry? What is the Gospel message?*

(This session would be based on the Bishop's statement on Crime and Criminal Justice)

The Scriptural Foundations

Found in both the Old and New Testament

Sacramental and Historical Heritage

The sacrament of Penance

Taking responsibility

Making amends

Reintegration into the community

Punishment-justice-mercy

Catholic Social Teaching and prison ministry

### **Presentation Ideas**

- imprisonment as an opportunity to come to terms with self and God, making positive use of this time
- emphasis on God's forgiveness and promise to forget our transgressions
- there are moral issues that must be presented, i.e. the church's teaching on the sanctity of life
- this ministry is about total and perfect love
- the minister needs to be ready to talk about (and defend) this ministry to others in the community

- unpack the bishops’ pastoral in this session—make this the main emphasis
- relate this area to restorative justice and the emphasis there
- regardless of the crime, the inmate is a human being—this must always be reflected in the attitude of the minister
- stress the role of scripture on the road to inner healing for inmates
- emphasize Catholic witness to society on issues of social justice, the death penalty, etc.
- treat the whole picture of sacramental ministry (not only the Sacrament of Penance)
- how do we deal with the sacrament of Penance and people’s desire for the sacrament when there is not a priest present/available
- Diocesan guidelines for receiving Eucharist
- how to proceed if an inmate wishes to explore Catholicism, the RCIA program in prisons, be confirmed, etc.
- “confessions” received by non-sacramental ministers—responsibility regarding the sacrament, confidentiality, response
- how can we extend this ministry into our parish communities—through homily or prayer presentations

Presenters: Religious Sister, Theologian, Minister  
 Priest Chaplain

Schedule: 8:30-9:00	Coffee, donuts
9:00-11:00	Introduction, Prayer Presentation
11:00-11:15	Break

**SESSION THREE-FOUR  
 THE INCARCERATED PERSON**

*What are the needs, the concerns of the incarcerated person? --the man, the woman, the juvenile offender...how can the volunteer respond?*

(perhaps focus on men in this session)  
 (Who is she/he)

- A person
  - Dignity
  - Feelings
  - Fear
  - Shame
  - Anger
  - Concerns
  - Loss of freedom
  - Accused/convicted of a crime
- A member of a family/community
- A person of faith/lapsed from faith/of different faiths
- A person with special needs
  - Physical

Cultural  
 Emotional  
 Psychological  
 The Juvenile Offender  
 Their needs  
 Their story

**Possible Ideas**

- inmates wrestle for a “self” which will work in the prison environment/dignity is history
- hearing life stories helps one to understand what led to prison
- stress that volunteers may encounter the hostile attitude prevalent in our addressing the attitudes of our culture toward the incarcerated
- understanding if there is a history of substance abuse and/or mental health issues
- addressing cultural/language differences and modes of behaviors
- special issues/concerns for incarcerated men
  
- need to understand what conditions/situations “formed” the inmate
- dealing with the fear and shame of incarcerated and the psychological side of returning to the outside
- importance of using compassion with the inmate
- addressing the importance of fatherhood
- helping the inmate move from a false sense of values to better values
- what the inmate may be facing: rejection, fear, loneliness, love and the sensitive feelings about themselves and their status
- recognizing possible anger of inmate at the justice system and concerns about getting out of jail
- stressing inmates family concerns and lack of concrete plans upon their release
- incarcerated person is a child of God and entitled to being treated with dignity and respect
- importance of listening to former inmates
- example of Paul
- stressing the nurturing needs of incarcerated men as well as incarcerated women
- issues of self-esteem and connection for the incarcerated person
- understanding the “why” of sin/crime while still taking responsibility for it

Schedule: The Juvenile Offender  
 11:15-12:15

Presenters: Superintendent Cuyahoga County Juvenile Det. Center  
 Chaplin Cuyahoga Juvenile

12:15-1:00 Lunch

Schedule: Who is the Incarcerated Person?  
1:00-2:30

Presenters: A Panel of those who have been incarcerated and those who work in the prison/jail  
Cuyahoga County Jail volunteer  
Lake County Volunteer  
Family Members of the Incarcerated  
Former inmates

**THE INCARCERATED WOMAN**

Who is the incarcerated woman?  
(see above)

Mothers in prison

Concerns Custody and care of children  
Contact with children Impact on children  
Influence on the future of children

Women coming out of prison  
Ways to assist

Schedule: 2:30-2:45 Break  
2:45-4:15 The Incarcerated Woman  
4:15-4:30 Evaluation

Presenters: Video  
Former Inmate  
Lutheran Metro Ministries—Reentry Program  
Women who have been incarcerated

**Possible Ideas:**

- shame and self-esteem issues
- “How are my children?” and “What is happening to my kids?”
- incarcerated woman could be anyone but very likely has been abused and abandoned often
- need for love and positive role models while incarce
- issue of after care for women/ often returning to environment of drugs and abuse/inappropriate relationships
- addressing the greater likelihood of abandonment by spouse while in prison
- the need for mothers to communicate with their children while in prison
- how do we assist them when they get out of prison?
- issue of single women in prison who have been exploited and have to go it alone without a committed helpmate

**Weekend Two: November 30-December 1, 2001**

**SESSION FIVE:**

**DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION, THE TWELVE-STEP PROGRAM AND THE CYCLE OF CRIME**

Why do people continue in a pattern of behavior that is so harmful to them and society? What can help?

- statistics regarding the occurrence of drug and alcohol abuse in the prison population
- what is addiction
- how does a person begin that pattern
- what impact does addiction have on the life of the person, family -what is the “thought pattern” of a person who suffers from addiction
- how does a person deal with addiction
- what is a twelve step program and how is it helpful to a person who is addicted

**THE CYCLE OF CRIME**

- recidivism-explain the cycle of crime
- how prevalent is this cycle in the life of people
- are some people more prone to this cycle than others
- what impact does this pattern have on the person, on the family
- what helps in breaking this cycle
- how are the correctional institutions addressing this issue
- the justice system (society in general)
- how might the prison minister help

Schedule:     5:30   Registration  
                  6:00   Supper  
                  6:45   Prayer  
                  7:00   Recall of Weekend One  
                  7:15-9:15 Presentation

Presenters:   Catholic Charities Services—Counselling, Drug and Alcohol  
                  Lake County Jail—Captain Director of the County Jail

**SESSION SIX:**

**PRISON MINISTRY: A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE AND PRAYER**

*How do I talk with an incarcerated person/their family members? How do I help them deal with loss? How do I pray with them?*

**Communication Skills**

Ways to communicate

Listening

Dealing with Grief and transition

At the loss of freedom

At the loss of contact with family and friends

Transition into the institution

Transition from one institution to another

Transition into the community

**Presentation Ideas**

- what does the minister need to be aware of when listening to a prisoner
- the person to person relationship is where Jesus is encountered in the flesh
- a consistent message of Christian healing and renewal are important
- how does the minister find a level of “pressure” that is appropriate providing support to the inmate, and being clear about what one can give and how much, and being “ok” about not being able to make the kind of difference one would like, with the time and energy one may not have available
- listening actively and going to be a friend-presence rather than to fix, distract or advise
- importance of confidentiality for ministers
- understanding the “legal language” of the inmate
- understanding each inmate and their unique story/walking with them- not necessarily taking the role of advocate for them
- how does the minister get to be where the inmate is?
- understanding the many loss issues of inmates and grieving cycle
- overcoming the fear of prison ministry
- dealing with the losses of incarceration—freedom, family, dignity, sense of self-worth, privacy, etc.
- transition—from society to incarceration, from freedom to imprisonment, from one institution to another

Schedule

8:30-9:00 Coffee, Donuts

9:00 Prayer

9:15-10:30 Communication, Listening, Grief

Presenters: Lay Ecclesial Minister, Grief Counselor, Prison Minister

**PRAYER**

What is prayer?

Forms of Prayer

Centering prayer

Devotional prayer

Biblical prayer

Personal/Communal Prayer

Use of Prepared materials  
 Becoming comfortable with prayer  
 Prayer with those of another faith: Christian/Muslim/Jewish  
 Prayer with people with coming from a different culture  
 Preparing for a Communion Service for Catholics  
 Preparation for and Reception of the Sacraments

Schedule: 10:30-10:45 Break  
 10:45-12:15 Prayer

Presenters: Religious Sister  
 Scripture Scholar  
 Baptist Minister  
 Deacon Prison Minister

### **Presentation Ideas**

- Bible studies and teaching inmates how to pray and the benefits of prayer
- sessions praying the rosary
- -importance of talking and listening to God
- -how does the minister distinguish between his or her own prayer/devotional life and “basic prayer” offered to inmates
- -should be aware that prayer is a way of communication
- -teaching simple forms of prayer
- -establish the need for prayer life of the minister/identify strengths of his/her prayer life
- you can't persevere in ministry without a vibrant prayer life
- prayer changes hearts – more than mere words
- using different forms of prayer with the inmates/ what forms have worked well in prison environments?
- the importance of drawing on the inmates strengths in regard to their prayer life/ how do they pray?/ having them to participate in planning and executing
- prayer services help to empower them, build self-esteem and brings them close to God (example: Spirituality Group at NEPRC)
- the expression of their own (inmates) spirituality is critical and life-giving for ministers and fellow inmates/ always remember to draw on the inmates spiritual strengths/ they need to be re-awaked by the minister/ they are always present, but perhaps hidden (example: Spirituality Group at NEPRC)
- learning as a minister the “how to” in regard to praying with inmates, especially inmates of different faiths
- all have a sense of prayer, mostly Bible prayer

**SESSION SEVEN:**

**BEYOND THE PRISON WALLS**

How do we help a person come back into the community? What resources are needed and available for the incarcerated, their families?

Services available in the community

Resources      How to access those resources

Transition

Into the community    Into the family    Into the faith community

The faith community supporting those leaving prison

Schedule:      12:15-1:00      Lunch  
                         1:00-2:00      Beyond Prison Walls

Presenters:    Catholic Charities, community services  
                         Catholic Charities, Mental Health  
                         Former inmate and present social worker  
                         Lutheran Metro Ministry Re-Entry

Presentation Ideas:

- use “Unity in Diversity” be utilized in this session?
- importance of follow through upon release/ many will return to the circle they came from- the cycle of abuse, neglect, and abandonment continues
- -importance of transitional housing/ many who have “served their time” have no home to go to
- -a list of resources (local) should be available to all those who are close to release- are these available?
- -caution against “reinventing the wheel” – use good resources where they are already in place and working

**SESSION EIGHT:**

**THE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

How does the legal system deal with the accused, the guilty? What is a jail, a prison, parole, probation. . .? What are particular concerns of incarcerated persons who have children?

The legal system

Courts	Sentencing	Terms
Parole/Parole Board	Probation	Jails and Prisons
Child Custody		

Schedule:      2:00-2:15      Break  
                         2:15-4:15      Presentation

Presenters:    Judge, Re-Entry Courty, Cuyahoga County

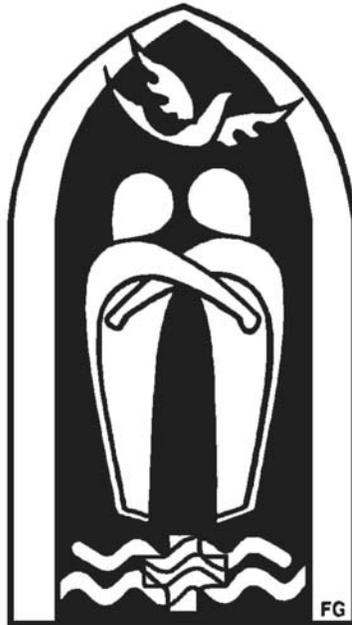
Director, Cuyahoga County Jail  
Person who has gone through a special court

**Presentation Ideas**

- how do we help first time offenders to learn about the court system?
- ministers need help in understanding the legal system in “laymen terms”
- rehabilitation happens in the heart and soul, not in prison
- there is a need to work with facilities to avoid problems of possible revocation of privileges
- what is the treatment of people from different cultures? what is being done to meet the cultural needs of prisoners?
- legal and custody issues of children which impact incarcerated parents  
how do we meet the needs of children whose parents are incarcerated  
since statistics are showing that they are at risk for future incarceration themselves?

Revised: 10-15-06

# Prison Ministry Volunteer Handbook



## MINISTRY TO THE INCARCERATED

Diocese of Cleveland  
Secretariat for Parish Life and Development  
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Cleveland, Ohio 44114  
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## **DIOCESAN MINISTRY TO THE INCARCERATED MISSION STATEMENT**

**The Ministry to the Incarcerated of the Diocese of Cleveland is a collaborative response to the Gospel message in Matthew 25: “When I was in prison you visited me.” Called by the Holy Spirit, we extend the hope of reconciling love in our relationships with the offender, the victim and their families.**

Ministry to the Incarcerated is implemented in a way that is ecumenically sensitive and respectful of the diversity of our population: men, women, the mentally and physically challenged, those from various cultures, language groups, and races – Hispanic, African-American, Eastern European, Arab, etc. In providing services for prisoners, the regulations of the correctional institution must be followed. **These regulations differ from place to place.**

### **1. Introduction**

- a. This Volunteer Handbook with fundamental guidelines and a brief history of the Diocesan Ministry to the Incarcerated is designed to help new prison ministry volunteers get acclimated to prison ministry as it is the same (or different) from other types of ministry.
- b. It is a reference tool that recognizes that prison ministry happens in a variety of different settings, i.e., prisons, county or city jails, Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCF), juvenile facilities, etc., and it is imperative that volunteers follow the administrative rules and directives of wardens in the institutions where they serve. These institutional rules may change from year-to-year, but must always be respected and followed.
- c. It is hoped that this Handbook will also be helpful to experienced prison ministry volunteers as a source of information and continuing inspiration for the valuable service they provide to those who are incarcerated.

### **2. General Information about Ministry to the Incarcerated**

- a. In the fall of 1997, a group of diocesan leaders were invited by Auxiliary Bishop A. James Quinn to meet with two deacons to hear of the hope they had to begin a diocesan ministry to the incarcerated. The focus of the meeting was to identify the concerns, challenges and hopes for this ministry.
- b. The need existed in all eight counties of the Diocese, but particularly in Lorain County where three state institutions existed, and in Cuyahoga County with a jail population of 2000 inmates. The Parish Life Secretariat offered to coordinate the development of the ministry. With the assistance of a number of volunteers – including formerly incarcerated, family members, clergy currently doing the ministry, law enforcement representatives, etc. – a

- committee was formed whose responsibility was to plan and establish the Diocesan Ministry to the Incarcerated.
- c. In March of 2000, Bishop Anthony M. Pilla and the three Cleveland auxiliary bishops began visits to the prisons and jails in the Diocese in response to the Holy Father's request for the observance of the Jubilee Year. The Parish Life Secretariat coordinated these visits. The ministry plan continued to be refined and grant funding was sought to assist in the training of prison ministers.
  - d. Training workshops were offered in various parts of the diocese during the winter and spring of 2001-2002. Approximately 150 persons received twenty-two hours of presentations and training, and many went on to be approved as volunteers in the various correctional facilities within the diocese: city or county jails; juvenile facilities; and state prisons and correctional institutions.
  - e. The training workshops were recorded and made available to those who wanted to join the ministry in the ensuing years. Since the beginning of the ministry, annual continuing education and formation offerings have served to keep the prison ministers informed about the correctional system and dedicated in their service. A dedicated web site provides additional means of communication.
  - f. Prison ministry volunteers share in the mission of the Catholic Church by being models of the Christian life and carrying the message of the Gospel to all those encountered in the correctional setting.
  - g. Volunteer ministers are messengers of hope – hope in God's mercy and love, hope for restorative justice, hope for a second chance to change one's life.
  - h. The Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person should permeate all of our outreach, remembering that we are following the example of Jesus Christ who sought to uplift those he encountered throughout his earthly ministry.
  - i. The chaplains and volunteers who serve in correctional facilities provide spiritual support and guidance to inmates and should obtain appropriate ecclesial Church authorization to minister in this regard.
  - j. An inmate has a right to access a minister of his or her religious belief, but a prison ministry volunteer has a right to minister in the jail or prison **ONLY** if they remain in compliance with all jail security rules. Failure to comply will result in dismissal from the program.
  - k. Volunteer ministers are responsible at all times to the chaplain or designated prison ministry representative at the facility. All questions or concerns should be addressed to them first. They will be responsible for resolving the situation with staff and/or administration.
  - l. A function of the prison ministry volunteer is to establish a relationship with the incarcerated person in a caring way and then listen patiently. **DO NOT**

- ASK** why the inmate is in jail and expect an account of the offense.
- m. A great deal of the prisoner's style of relating to you will depend on their awareness (or lack of awareness) of God, the Church, or their family relationships.
  - n. Many of their previous relationships have been built on using other people, or being used. Do not be surprised if they try some of this manipulation on you.
  - o. As caring persons, we will have feelings of sadness, concern, and joy which we need to learn to keep in perspective as we experience attempts at manipulation by prisoners and staff.
  - p. The volunteer minister may be put off by the behavior or values of the inmate. We might be tempted to judge and convey that judgment consciously or unconsciously to the inmate. A volunteer's seeking counsel from an experienced prison chaplain can be invaluable in keeping focused on the ministerial function of the work.
  - q. Be sure to obtain the names and phone numbers of the chaplain or responsible person to whom you need to report absences, questions, problems, etc.
  - r. **Volunteer ministers must realize that it's essential that they are faithful to their commitments and consistent in their service.** In an emergency, arrangements should be made for a substitute to minister in your place. The chaplain or contact person must always be notified about an absence or substitution.

**Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Numbers:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Religious Articles

- a. Each institution handles the distribution of Bibles (in English and Spanish) and other spiritual reading according to their own rules. Please check with the Catholic chaplain for the procedure in your facility.
- b. In many institutions, rosaries, medals, scapulars and other religious articles are considered contraband and will be confiscated. There are many pamphlets and small booklets available on devotional practices like the rosary, novenas, etc. – check with your chaplain for availability.

### 4. Sacramental Policies

- a. The Catholic chaplain is responsible for the sacramental and Catholic worship services conducted in the correctional facility. Volunteer ministers may be called upon to assist in various ways under the direction of the chaplain. When in doubt, ask what the policies and procedures are.
- b. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered only to those who are Catholic. When an inmate requests Confession, ask first if they are Catholic. If they are not, then pray with them and aid them in making a **silent** confession to God and asking God's forgiveness.
- c. If they are Catholic, follow the procedures at your institution for passing on their name to the Catholic priest. Assure the inmate that you will do so, though it may take a period of time for a priest to respond. Be sure to treat this request with utmost care and follow-through.
- d. Each institution will have a unique physical setting and circumstances for the celebration of the Eucharist and services of Word and/or Holy Communion. In addition, constraints caused by reduced prison/jail staffing may have an impact on whether correctional officers are available to escort inmates to services.
- e. Check with the Catholic chaplain about the schedule for Mass and whether you can assist with the procedures for the liturgical supplies needed for the services, e.g., bread, wine, oils, utensils, containers, CD players, songbooks, etc.
- f. Volunteer prison ministers must be certified to do so within the Church if they are to function as Catechists or Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist.
- g. Eucharist is given only to Roman Catholics. If you are able to bring Holy Communion to inmates, try to find a quiet location, take time for a brief penitential rite, recite the Lamb of God, and conclude with a prayer – the Our Father is always appropriate. If they are not Catholic, an inmate may receive a blessing.

- h. The Eucharistic Minister should not refuse the Sacrament to an inmate who attends a Communion service and comes forward for Holy Communion, if the Eucharist Minister has explained briefly that those who come forward should profess the Catholic faith, that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and that one must have true sorrow for sin. The following statement is recommended prior to the distribution of Holy Communion:

***The reception of Holy Communion is a very sacred action. It is receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Baptized Catholics who are sorry for their sins may receive Holy Communion for their spiritual nourishment and for a deeper share in the life of Jesus Christ.***

- i. The incarcerated should be given special pastoral concern. Their freedom is restricted. Ministry to them should be generous, prudent and always compassionate.
- j. Inmates often want to attend the funeral of immediate family – parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses or children. Again, each correctional facility will have a procedure for whether this is ever possible and who can authorize the permission. The reduced availability of correctional staffing needed to accompany an inmate will make it very unlikely that they could attend a funeral.
- k. It's generally unwise for inmates to marry while incarcerated. Refer the question to the Catholic chaplain if an inmate should make a request about marriage.
- l. Some correctional facilities have the ability to conduct an RCIA process for inmates desiring to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Check with your Catholic chaplain to see if this is possible.
- m. Anointing of the Sick is always done by a priest. Refer the question to the Catholic chaplain if an inmate should make a request to be anointed.

## **5. Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations**

- a. Catholic chaplains and prison ministry volunteers minister cooperatively with chaplains of many different Christian and non-Christian denominations. We do so with respect and charity. Our ecumenical and interfaith cooperation is a witness to God's love for all people.
- b. While many faith groups are ecumenical in spirit and respectful of others' beliefs, some may believe that Catholics are "lost" and will aggressively proselytize the inmates.
- c. Ecumenical guidelines relating to worship services, pulpit sharing, the

- sacraments, funerals, etc. are available from the Catholic chaplain in each institution. If ecumenical information is not available, call the Diocesan Interfaith and Ecumenical officer for guidance.
- d. Remember, as Catholic volunteer ministers we minister to all inmates with charity.

## **6. Needs of the Inmates**

- a. Most institutions use a system called “kites” to respond to an inmate’s request for something they need. The Catholic chaplain at your institution will explain how this procedure is handled.
- b. A common request from inmates is for eyeglasses (reading glasses) and each facility has a procedure that must be followed to insure the safety of ministry volunteers, staff members and inmates alike. Please check with the chaplain for the details of how your facility handles this.
- c. Inmates are often worried about the practical problems that are being faced by their families on the outside, e.g., housing, utility bills, food, clothing for children, etc. In some cases, chaplains may have access to funds to assist with these emergencies or the facility’s social worker may have resources. Find out the policy at your institution before making any offers of assistance.
- d. If an inmate has a complaint about their medical care, they should either speak with the social worker at the facility, or ask a family member to contact the facility’s medical services director.
- e. If an inmate is (or was) in any type of treatment program, the volunteer minister should encourage and support their continued participation.
- f. Previous use of alcohol or other drugs will affect an inmate’s response to the volunteer and the Gospel message. Common responses may be anger at having their supply cut off, or sadness or grief because they no longer have the chemicals to cope with life.
- g. The volunteer minister should encourage inmates to try to make healthy friendships or contact with a “good” group of inmates who are trying to better themselves.
- h. Every jail and prison unit has alcohol and drugs, legal and illegal. Volunteers may unwittingly become involved in the alcohol/drug trade when they’re asked to do a “favor” for an inmate by bringing something into the unit that will turn out to be a contraband chemical. We all want to be helpful and nice, but must guard against any request for “favors.”
- i. Perhaps the most difficult type of offender to work with is the one who appears to be listening, responding appropriately and taking in all the

information with interest and enthusiasm – seeming to accept the Gospel message. Be alert to the motivation of such offenders, who may be:

- i. Trying to convince the volunteer that they have learned something or accept what they've heard, when they actually are setting up the volunteer for manipulation later on.
- ii. Giving a response based on what they expect is wanted or pleasing to the volunteer, when in reality the inmate may be incapable of grasping the material, concerned with being judged negatively, or simply giving assent to whatever is being presented.
- iii. Having language or reading problems that prevent them from understanding the material or participating in the discussion.

## **7. Security Concerns**

- a. SECURITY IS VERY IMPORTANT IN ALL INSTITUTIONS – ALWAYS FOLLOW THE RULES! The staff's job is to keep prisoners locked up. Volunteers are "guests" who try to help inmates cope with their situation and provide them access to religious services.
- b. The volunteer needs to comply with whatever clearance procedures are expected before entering the facility. This includes preliminary paperwork, security clearance, i.e., background checks, and administrative documentation.
- c. Deputies, correction officers and administration must always be supported in the presence of the incarcerated who will at times criticize the system. Volunteers do not have the background to understand the staff's problems or strategies. While accepting the feelings of the incarcerated, the volunteer should be supportive of the staff person's role.
- d. A volunteer minister should always support the staff and accept their authority. Great harm can be done by a volunteer minister who fails to support the staff or who publicly rejects their authority.
- e. Rules and regulations of each institution must always be supported. If a volunteer finds a pattern of activity unfair, he or she should discuss it with the chaplain or person assigned as mentor first, rather than confront a staff member.
- f. No issue or matter relating to the institution or any inmate is to be discussed for publication in print, on television, or on the internet without the permission of the administration.
- g. Volunteers should not give their home address, telephone number, or email address to anyone who is incarcerated. Check with the chaplain for the correct procedure if communication by mail is allowed.

- h. Nothing may be given to an incarcerated person without clearance from the administrator of the institution. The best policy is NEVER BRING ANYTHING INTO OR OUT OF THE INSTITUTION. Gum, candy, pencils, cell phones, hand sanitizer, etc., can be considered contraband and be subject to confiscation and disciplinary action. Remember as a general rule – nothing in, nothing out!
- i. Personal items (e.g., purses) should not be brought into a jail or prison. Please check with the institution for specific rules.
- j. A volunteer may never pass notes or other forms of communication from one person to another without the permission of staff. Any unusual movement of the persons during a session must be cleared first.
- k. Within the facility, the incarcerated can be very clever about finding out information or sending messages to other inmates. One might suggest to them that they use appropriate channels to communicate.
- l. Do not commit yourself to do favors on the “outside” for inmates, such as writing letters for them, making telephone calls, sending packages, or ordering materials. Do not agree to transact any business dealings outside the unit for the inmate.
- m. Anyone doing any type of programming in the facility, e.g., prison ministry, GED classes, twelve-step programs, etc., must be aware of, and conform to, the schedules within the individual institution.
- n. Given the different backgrounds of the inmates and the fact that they are deprived of appropriate sexual activity while incarcerated, they can be vulnerable in relationships and may attempt manipulative behaviors.
- o. Appropriate feminine and masculine dress and decorum for a correctional facility is highly recommended.
- p. Working in a team provides the most safety and protection; your work or activities should be planned and well coordinated.
- q. If working alone, work in an open area that can be observed easily by prison staff. Avoid, if at all possible, being in an isolated, unobservable area of the unit. Sometimes this can't be avoided if you are visiting or praying with an inmate in administrative segregation. Always seek permission of staff for an appropriate space.
- r. Inmates may have mild to serious mental health issues; they may even be on “suicide watch.” Contact a staff member (or the social worker, if the facility employs one) to report any conversation or behavior by the inmate that appears to be harmful or dangerous to themselves or to others.
- s. The unit's administrative safety procedures usually have been developed over time, through staff experience, and in response to disturbances that have

threatened the safety of the staff. Discuss any questions with your chaplain supervisor and report any safety concerns to correctional staff.

## **8. Confidentiality**

- a. Inmates have the right to expect that our conversations with them are private and confidential. We are not to discuss their personal information outside the jail or prison.
- b. There are exceptions when information must be reported to the chaplain or correction staff. These are:
  - if the inmate is considering suicide;
  - if the inmate is aware of an escape plot;
  - if the inmate is being physically abused by another inmate or staff member;
  - if the inmate is aware of ongoing child abuse in the “free” world.
- c. While newspaper reports make the alleged crimes “public information,” the volunteer is frequently in a good position to see the facts of the situation differently and often gets quizzed on the sensational aspects of a case.
- d. Great care should be used to NEVER DIVULGE PRIVATE INFORMATION regarding the incarcerated or their families under any circumstances. Personal privacy and confidentiality are paramount in establishing trust and in maintaining a personal relationship.

## **9. Pastoral Concerns**

- a. Counseling in the prison or jail context is not what one would get from a professional or licensed counselor. Pastoral counseling refers to that wisdom that is shared from one Christian to another by virtue of being on the spiritual journey longer than the other.
- b. A few practical tips learned from pastoral experience:
  - i. Meet offenders where they are by doing more listening than talking.
  - ii. Be confident about God’s ability to meet their need.
  - iii. Test what you share to make sure the offender understands.
  - iv. Do not make commitments you cannot keep.
  - v. Who you are is the message, not what you say.
- c. The time of incarceration can be a valuable time for many incarcerated persons to look at their lives, their values and frequently their spiritual journeys. The more we are in tune with our own spirituality, the more effective we will be in walking with the incarcerated in theirs.

- d. Prison ministry can get us in touch with some raw emotions – our own insecurities, hurts, addictions or denials – that are potential obstacles in the redemptive process. Am I aware of them? Have I worked through them?
- e. Some questions to take to your own prayer and reflection time:
  - i. What type of relationship with God do I have? - Judge? Savior? Friend?
  - ii. Am I aware of my weaknesses and vulnerabilities? How do I deal with periods of dryness, challenges, and questions in my spiritual journey?
  - iii. How do I see myself witnessing to Gospel values? Can I witness in a way that is convincing and not off-putting to people whose lifestyle seems in contradiction to Gospel values?
  - iv. How do I relate to others? A wide variety of people will be encountered in the jail or prison setting. It would be helpful to know how you best relate in exploring your ministry expectations: large group, small group, one-on-one; adults or youth; men or women?
  - v. How do I envision my role as volunteer? Do I want to convert the inmates? Do I see myself as needing to have all the answers?
  - vi. Do I have a sense of myself? Am I comfortable with myself? How do I handle stress? Do I have a clear support system?
- f. Your spiritual life will deepen as you pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit working through your unique and healing presence in the correction facility.
- g. Just be yourself and attend to what you are asked to do. Keep developing the strengths of listening and relating.
- h. Good communication is essential in any ministry, especially to the incarcerated. It would be good to reflect on the following:
  - i. Never diminish anyone's human dignity. Avoid arguments and finding fault.
  - ii. Be an interested listener to their story; don't rush to interject comments.
  - iii. Recognize individual uniqueness and worth. Help the other person get what is best for them by supporting them to help themselves.
- i. With all of the intensity in the correctional setting, it's important that the volunteer keeps centered and focused on the ministry, so as not to feed into manipulation or control issues.
- j. Ongoing communication with someone who understands the ministry will help the volunteer to keep a balanced perspective. Avoid becoming overwhelmed by the frustrations of the system or by burning out. It's imperative to set clear limits and to have a support system that helps you to renew your spirit.

- k. A sense of humor will probably be one of your biggest assets. Try not to take yourself too seriously. Let go and let God.

## **10. Pen Pal Ministry**

After checking with the jail or prison chaplain or mentor, those who begin writing to someone who is incarcerated need to keep the following in mind:

- a. Use a post office box or public place, e.g., parish address, to receive mail.
- b. Friendships are always a gradual process; do not share too much too fast.
- c. Keep any friendship that develops honest and realistic.
- d. If letters take on a romantic twist, be clear about your expectations, even if it means terminating an exchange with the inmate.
- e. Do not make promises that you cannot keep.
- f. Stay in touch with the chaplain or mentor regarding how the correspondence is going.

## **11. Conclusion**

In ministry to the incarcerated, we are asking some hard questions:

- Do I really believe in God's unconditional love for everyone?
- Do I really believe that God can change anyone?
- Do I really believe that God's grace is sufficient for all?

Prison is not a place where we go to see things accomplished or to see people "saved." We come to the prison or jail firm in our belief that:

- Christ lived to show us how to live and died to save us.
- Prison ministry is a Gospel mandate and my involvement will make a difference.
- God's total love, concern and acceptance of me, also shines on those inside.

God's love is freely given and freely received by those who desire it.

## 12. Appendix

### TIPS ON WRITING TO THOSE WHO ARE INCARCERATED

Thank you for your willingness to write to an inmate. You must be a very special person. Very few people would be willing to share their time with these men and women who have become the castaways of our society. The fact remains – they are human beings. Loneliness is one of the greatest challenges they face each day. Mail call may be the lowest point of their day, but your letter can be the ray of sunshine they need. It can make all the difference in the world. Studies have shown that those inmates who have folks on the outside taking an interest in them have a much lower recidivism (return to prison) rate than those who do not. So, thank you for this selfless act which is more than the price of a stamp. It is an act of faith – a belief that you can reach out and make a positive difference in another person's life.

We hope these helpful hints will enhance this letter writing experience for you.

#### **First Letter:**

Write a little background about yourself – your interests and hobbies, what you like to do in your spare time, your studies, work, pets, your favorite movies, what music you like, what type of books you enjoy, your spiritual and religious experiences etc.

**Do not share personal information – i.e., where you live, the names of your family members, etc. Do not give out your telephone number(s) or e-mail address. Use the parish mailing address – not your own – the inmate can write to you in care of the parish.**

Be upfront about your ability to write on a regular basis. If you are only able to write once a month, let that person know so that he or she doesn't look for your letter and feel that you are not interested.

Do **NOT** include gifts in your letter. If you want to make your letters more interesting, we offer some suggestions on the last page. Items such as candy, stamps, money, etc. are considered contraband and will never reach the inmate. They can also cause additional problems.

Greeting cards can be a good way to make initial contact. There are so many friendship-type cards available just to say "hello" to the prisoner. This can take the pressure off of you worrying about what to write that first time. Prisoners are happy to get your cards and letters; these are precious gifts and a source of encouragement.

## **Follow-up Letters:**

Maintaining an ongoing correspondence with a prisoner can be a mutually rewarding experience. Your uplifting words of encouragement can make their prison sentence more bearable. Encourage them in their endeavors such as getting an education while in prison, learning a trade, becoming more spiritual, etc. Share your faith experiences with your new friend.

Try not to be judgmental. Keep a cheery tone to your letters. You will find that most prisoners are sincerely lonely. Many times the inmate will volunteer information about themselves, including what crimes they may have committed. It is best not to ask for these personal details.

In sharing your love of God with the inmate, it would be good to start with the basics. Some may have an extensive background of religious training while others may not have any. Your purpose is not to convert this person to Catholicism, although, over time, the person could become interested in the Catholic faith. Rather, your mission should be to give this person hope and familiarize them with God's love and forgiveness.

Many persons who are incarcerated have been raised in various faith traditions that preach hell and damnation. In your writings it will help the inmate if you can focus on God's love and forgiveness – citing examples from Scripture such as Jesus, the Good Shepherd or the parable about the Prodigal Son. It can also have a uniting effect if you can admit your own shortcomings (though you do not need to list them) and tell the inmate that Jesus died for all of us and that we **all** need God's love and grace. Some inmates feel excluded from society through their actions and poor choices; rather than concentrating on the negatives it would serve a better purpose to focus on the positives, such as:

- Asking what fields of interest the inmate enjoys.
- Check to see if the person has hobbies or talents.
- Encourage your inmate to pursue interests that may serve them well after they are released.
- Emphasize the importance of classes and education; stress that they should take advantage of all programs that are offered which will show their desire to improve.
- Particularly, call attention to the importance of anger management, without being judgmental. Often inmates can be the target of ridicule and unjust treatment by prison guards and other inmates, but they must maintain a demeanor of acceptance. It isn't easy but the consequences of failure are quite dire.
- All of these tips can be coordinated with your own faith experiences. You can offer anecdotes about how you felt God intervened when you needed help or

- answered your prayers. You can also attribute your own talents as blessings from God and explain that God has bestowed certain abilities on each one of us; help the inmate to find their own gifts from God.
- Help the inmate compose a list of blessings; assist them in finding ways that can give them a measure of peace in the midst of turmoil. Suggest journaling, meditation, yoga, centering prayer, etc. If you are not familiar with any stress-relieving techniques, consider it a challenge to discover some which will be beneficial to you and your friend.
  - Realize that each person is a child of God and be certain to convey that message as often as possible. Offer hope – whether the inmate looks toward the future when release may be possible or the inmate knows that the incarceration will be a lengthy stay. Many inmates do find peace and purpose while incarcerated but it doesn't come naturally – they must work on it every day.

Finally, you may come to an awareness that you are not enjoying this endeavor at all. Remember, all prisoners are not the same. As with any group of people there are vast differences in personalities and cultures. If you find that you don't relate well with one individual, don't let that stop you from writing to another. As with any person you meet on the outside, each one has his or her own particular qualities that may be appealing or unappealing to your own sense of taste. You will find every denomination, race, educational background and class inside prison walls. Do not beat yourself up if you choose to end a pen-pal relationship – just give the person some notice that something has come up and you will no longer be able to write to them. You could attempt to find someone else to take over, but do be upfront of what the person can expect. These are individuals who already have had much taken away from them; be gentle and kind.

### **Items You Should Non Include With Your Letters**

All prisons/jails have **STRICT** rules about the contents of mail that can be received by an inmate. Sending an inmate unauthorized materials may result in your letter never being received by the inmate. There are as many rules as to what **CAN** and **CANNOT** be sent to a prisoner as there are prisons. However, there are some things that **ALL** prisons will restrict. Below is a list of several items you should **NOT** send with your letter.

- Polaroid or laminated pictures
- Cards with yarn or ribbon.
- Cards that are padded.
- Oversized cards larger than 8x10.
- Laminated cards.
- Maps.

- Letters in foreign languages.
- Sticker or adhesive signs.
- Excessive magazine and newspaper clippings or photos.
- Metal or spiral bound notebooks or calendars.
- Pornography or nude pictures.
- Stamps - Cash
- Materials with gang signs.
- Liquor or items that contain alcohol.
- Personal items (find out the rules first).
- Anything that might be considered a weapon.
- Internet URL references. (remove all email addresses or web site information)
- Books or Magazines (must come directly from the publisher)

### **Items That Are Welcomed With Your Letters**

These items are usually welcomed by prisoners and are good ideas for making your letters more interesting.

- Colorful Post Cards.
- Jokes.
- Poems.
- Colorful one-page calendars.
- Cartoon Humor
- Articles on current events.
- Letters on colorful stationery
- Colorful pictures from the Internet (remove all URL information).
- Crossword Puzzles (on single sheets).
- Newspaper or magazine clippings (not too many at one time).
- Birthday or Holiday Cards.
- Books (direct from the publisher or retailer).
- Magazines (direct from the publisher).