



Catholic Prison & Jail Ministry



PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY MEETING JUNE 2017

What is Prison & Jail Ministry?

by Prison Ministry – Volunteer Group

Volunteer ministers share the mission of the Catholic Church with people who are incarcerated in state prisons or county jails. Visiting the imprisoned is one of the corporal Works of Mercy (Matthew 25). Ministers share the hope of the Bible message that our God is a God of mercy and love; that there is hope for restorative justice; and that each prisoner has a chance to change one's life.

Fourteen clusters in Maine have regular ministry programs serving the following facilities: Kennebec County Facility, Aroostook County Jail, Maine State Prison, Bolduc Correctional Facility, Cumberland County Jail, Women's Re-Entry Center at Maine Correctional Center, Somerset County Jail, Washington County Jail, Androscoggin County Jail, Downeast Correctional Facility, and Penobscot County Jail.

The ministries are different depending upon the facility. In general, the ministries combine one or more of the following: faith sharing, Bible study, and communion service. Men and women are ministered to separately. Jail ministries tend to see people only once or just a few times, while prison ministers have inmates that they will see for many months or years. Some ministries are weekly and some are monthly.

Serving others helps grow our own faith. Volunteer ministers usually stay in the ministry for many years, as they feel their faith in Jesus develops deeper and their ability to be compassionate grows.

Prison Ministry – Volunteer Group

Bishop Deeley seeks ways to strengthen jail and prison ministries throughout the Diocese of Portland. In June 2017, Parish Social Ministry (Catholic Charities Maine) organized the first gathering of these dedicated ministers in Maine. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the development of a volunteer sub-committee to recruit more prison and jail ministers. We have developed this flyer as a way of promoting the ministry in the parishes across the state of Maine.

Volunteering in Jails or Prison is Safe

For people who are considering becoming a volunteer at a prison or jail ministry, there may be concerns regarding volunteer safety. The media feeds the fear and often portrays inmates as monsters, focusing on the sensational. The majority of prisoners are non-violent and it is highly unlikely that a volunteer would come in contact with a dangerous criminal. Inmates are people. They are happy to have someone visit them and take an interest in them. They are usually courteous and grateful to know that someone cares about them.

Our Mission Statement

To promote the recruitment, training, and retention of volunteers to serve in the Diocesan Prison Ministry effort, with Matthew 25:36 [I was ... in prison and you visited me] as our guide and standard.

A Message from Bishop Deeley



Thank you to all who serve in correctional ministries – volunteers, chaplains, deacons and priests. This diocese continues to provide the love and mercy of Jesus Christ to those in need at Maine's prisons and jails. Each of you has done profound work with every person to whom you have ministered and, collectively, the Church's response in Maine is quite amazing. It is through these personal encounters and stories that people are introduced to the work for which God has called them and, as a result, prison ministry is growing. Spreading the Good News of Jesus is how we share the hope in our faith with others. We pray this hope for all who serve, all who are discerning serving, all inmates, and all families of inmates. Bishop Robert Deeley †

What Happens at Prison Ministry

Contributions from Volunteer Sub-Committee Members

Maine Correctional Center

This center has several units: men's (people serving 5-6 year sentences), a drug recovery program (handling about 70 people), women's, and intake for the entire state prison system (stay is 10-16 weeks while an evaluation is done). The women units are further divided into the general section with 70-80 inmates with sentences of 1 year to life, an over-flow unit, a segregation unit, and a resource center. The resource center is a new minimum security area preparing the women for life outside the prison.

The volunteers visit weekly on Saturday evenings and go into four areas: men's, drug recovery, women's, and intake, with two volunteers for each area. While, in general, the volunteers are cycled through each of the areas, not all are scheduled in with the intake inmates. The hour-long services consist of the readings of the week, Eucharist and a discussion. The normal schedule for volunteers is to meet at 6, have service at 7, then regroup at 8 before leaving. Currently, the priests in Cluster 23 make themselves available for confessions as needed and hold Masses at the center once a month.



Training consists of training by the Maine Correctional Center, group training, on-the-job ministry training – new volunteers are paired with experienced volunteers and information sent via email. Each volunteer has a lector's guide. Recruitment is word of mouth. The volunteers have been encouraged to talk about the ministry as a way of recruitment. There are now about 40 in the group and is large enough to get sufficient volunteers by word-of-mouth.



Somerset County Jail

Jail ministry for Somerset County Jail is held on the first Friday of every month. We meet with the male inmates separately from the female inmates. There are four general population "pods" – three for men, one for women – and a special administrative pod for more serious or violent inmates. The general population pods send all interested men as one group to the chapel for our monthly visit. For some, this is the only time they can see some of their fellow inmates from other pods.

The women's group typically meets after then men's group. Our ministry consists of three to five volunteers meeting with as many inmates as desire to attend. We read the Liturgy of the Word from the upcoming Sunday and share insights from the readings. Often the course of the conversation is guided by the Holy Spirit and meets the specific needs of at least one inmate in attendance. We are working to offer the sacraments on a more regular basis in the future.

Penobscot County Jail.

This jail houses inmates for up to a year. The facility has units for men, women, maximum security and protective custody. The ministry, through St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Bangor, goes in every Sunday following the 8:30 a.m. Mass. There is no formal schedule for the ministers (whoever is available that week attends). There are six or seven volunteers all together.

The group is broken up in to 2 people to the men, 2 people to the women and one each to max and protective custody. In max and pc, the meetings are one-on-one. The volunteers choose which area they are comfortable going into. Eucharist is included. Training is by the Penobscot County Jail and on-the job ministry. Currently, more volunteers are needed. One does not have to be a Eucharist Minister to be involved with the jail ministry.



Catholic
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For more information contact
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Chose two or three contributions for your bulletin insert. Include your own ministry information in replacement for one of the three above.