

Prison Ministry Commission

The Prison Ministry Commission was involved in several activities throughout the year.

Christmas Stockings for Prisoners' Children

A commission member and several seamstresses, made over 275 large Christmas stockings for the children of incarcerated parents. Then, in November, the commission began soliciting donations from community businesses, parishes, and individuals. This activity culminated in a stocking stuffing party attended by approximately 20 people from different denominations. About 200 stockings were distributed at the Lexington-Fayette County Detention Center and 75 at Blackburn Correctional Complex. This was our first year to provide stockings to Blackburn.

Ministries at Detention Centers

Two members of the commission along with 2 members of the Eastern Orthodox Church continued ministry to female inmates at Lexington-Fayette County Detention Center. Their programs included Bible Study and a listening ministry.

For about 2 years, we have had a listening ministry led by a priest and layperson at the Mason County Detention Center. In their weekly visits, they saw between 8-12 people. They were available to anyone who wanted to come and the individual prisoners set the agenda. Sometimes, they suggested services in the community, such as Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous. The ministry this year expanded to two visits a week with one being a Eucharist using the Book of Common Prayer. Between 10 and 40 attended the services. A few gospel hymns were sung and the people were given an opportunity to talk about whatever was on their minds. Although it was difficult to arrange, one inmate was baptized.

Pen Pals for Prisoners

The commission sponsors a program in which people write letters to individual prisoners about every 2 weeks. The Pen Pals follow a set of guidelines provided by the commission and their return address is that of their parish.

Camp Haven

Again this year, the Commission received a grant from ECUSA for Camp Haven, a day camp for prisoners' children. The Camp took place June 22-26 at Mission House. People generously volunteered and others gave donations of money and materials.

The children, ages 7-12, were recruited from prisoners at Lexington-Fayette Detention Center and Blackburn Correctional Complex. The Amachi Program also provided referrals. The children were served breakfast before the activities began. The morning schedules included reading of stories pertaining to issues of prisoners' children, arts and crafts, and discussion groups. The afternoon schedules consisted of lunch, swimming, games, transplanting plants into pots which they had decorated, and a nature experience led by Fr. Johnnie Ross.

On the Thursday night of camp, there was a Caregivers' Night Out. While the caregivers were treated to delicious finger sandwiches and snacks, and facials, hand massages, nail care, and back massages, the children were at another location enjoying games and pizza. The caregivers were

able to make friends and offer support to each other. Everyone considered the Caregivers' Night Out a success.

In the evening of the last day, there was a cookout for the children and their families. Approximately 60 people attended. The Commission and the staff of Camp Haven appreciated the efforts of individuals and parishes in making our day camp a success once again.

Jail-Prison Ministry Conference

On November 21, we held our Jail and Prison Ministry Conference at Mission House. Dr. Robert Lawson spoke about recent developments in the criminal justice system. He also addressed issues such as the "three strikes" and drug laws. There was a panel discussion about what a person should know if he/she plans to volunteer in a jail or prison. Finally, there were presentations by representatives of Pyramid Professional Resources and Catholic Charities. They impressed upon us the need for services when people are released from jail or prison.

Other Activities

In December, we had an exhibit about Camp Haven and other prison ministries at a religious service which advocated the restoration of voting rights for ex-offenders.

Because of her work with our diocese's prison ministry, our chairperson was appointed to represent the Kentucky Council of Churches on the Governor's Reentry Task Force. This entity will examine and recommend policy changes and community services that will help reduce recidivism. It is also hopeful that more churches will be inspired to become involved in criminal justice issues and jail and prison ministry.

Plans for 2010

For 2010, we plan to continue and expand the ministries already begun.

Camp Haven will be August 2-6 at St. Raphael Episcopal Church. We will be serving children ages 8-10. Each day will have a different theme. For example, one day will be music and art, another will be sports, and another will be nature. We will continue to read stories pertaining to the children's issues, to provide arts and craft activities, and we plan to add field trips.

We will explore ministry to incarcerated juveniles.

The commission is seeking additional members to assist in our ministry. Ministry is done inside and outside the jails and prisons with prisoners and their families. If anyone is interested in serving on the commission or becoming involved in prison or jail ministry, contact Billie Jones Stockton at billiestockton@insightbb.com or 859-583-3530.

Respectfully submitted,
Billie Jones Stockton
Chairperson, Prison Ministry Commission

