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LA CROSSE COUNTY
JAIL MINISTRY

Volume 7, Number 1 Winter 2013

Greetings in this New Year

Dear Friends of La Crosse Jail Ministry:

We have just come through the holiday season, and the year 2012 has drawn to a close. Honestly, it was a tough year, as Americans nationwide have endured economic downturn, natural disasters, and tragedy. Locally, we've tightened our belts and continued to pitch in to help those among us most deserving of our compassion. But there is a sector of our society that many do not view as deserving of our collective compassion—inmates. And if we look at them through the eyes of the world, they are not deserving.

Every year during the holidays, together as a community we step out of our own perspectives and look at the world through God's eyes. For a brief season, we see the real person and the need behind situations, and we are moved by a spirit of giving to show compassion. However, those of you who support the La Crosse Jail Ministry year round have continued to look at the broken through God's eyes long after the tinsel is all taken down and the spirit of giving has departed. When he looks at the La Crosse County Jail, he doesn't see a hopeless junkie beyond redemption—he sees an anguished mother in the clutches of a fierce addiction, desperate to live right but powerless to do it on her own. He sees a poverty stricken man with a past prison record, unable to provide for his family because no one would hire him. And he sees the faithful volunteers who extend his compassion and hope to the broken, in programs and classes week after week, year round—all made possible by your support.

Yes, let's continue to remember the example of the good samaritan and stop to help the broken in our path. But just as importantly, let's follow the example of the widow who gave three pennies to the offering box at the temple. She gave when she couldn't afford it—so it must have happened right after the holidays. But her gift revealed an important truth about her heart—her deep and selfless compassion.

Ultimately, it is our heart that matters—and it's been said that "where our treasure goes, our heart will follow." Will you let your heart be moved this year towards those undeserving of your compassion, but will you show them compassion anyway? And will you express your compassion with a gift to the La Crosse Jail Ministry? We could really use your help this time of year—and we're grateful to know your kind and generous hearts continue to support us as we serve.

This is my last letter to you. As of this month, I will pass on the president's chair to Larry Clark, a retired police officer and now staff minister at Mt. Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church. With his qualifications, I leave the Jail Ministry Board in good hands. I have been grateful to serve on behalf of inmates in La Crosse County, and grateful to have your support. Thank you for your compassion.

Yours in Service,
Alexandra Sanders, Outgoing President, La Crosse Jail Ministry



A Daily Prayer for Justice and Mercy

Jesus, united with the Father and the Holy Spirit, give us your compassion for those in prison.

Mend in mercy the broken in mind and memory. Soften the hard of heart, the captives of anger. Free the innocent; parole the trustworthy. Awaken the repentance that restores hope. May prisoners' families persevere in their love.

Jesus, heal the victims of crime. They live with the scars. Lift to eternal peace those who die. Grant victims' families the forgiveness that heals.

Give wisdom to lawmakers and to those who judge. Instill prudence and patience in those who guard.

Make those in prison ministry bearers of your light, for all of us are in need of your mercy!

Amen.

(Prayer courtesy of PNCEA/Prison Ministries, www.pncea.org)

La Crosse County Jail Ministry Gift Form—Your Support is Welcome!



Please cut and mail

Please consider helping Jail Ministry with a tax-deductible donation.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

YES, I would like to make a donation to Jail Ministry in the amount of:

_____ \$100 _____ \$75 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other \$ _____

This gift is "in memory of" _____

This gift is "in honor of" _____

Please make checks payable to:
Jail Ministry
P.O. Box 2675
La Crosse, WI 54602-2675

The Chaplain's Corner



Tom Skemp

We have so much good information for this newsletter that there isn't much room for me—which is probably for the best.

If you are interested in receiving our twice-a-year newsletter electronically please send me an email at tskemp@lacrossecounty.org. It'll help us save on postage. Also, you can read all of our newsletters at our website, lacrossejailministry.org.

I can be reached via email or on the phone at 608-785-9772. Mail and donations sent to 333 Vine St. La Crosse, WI 54601 will always reach me as well. God Bless and thank you for all that you do for some of God's neediest children.

Chaplain Intern Reflection

This last year I signed up for an extended unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at Gundersen Lutheran. One of my placement sites was the La Crosse County Jail under our Chaplain's direction. My assignment was to visit with women in the jail one on one on Sunday afternoons.

I wasn't sure what exactly to expect when I started. I knew I would be visiting with women at one of the lowest times in their life. It was a challenge to think how I could best minister to them. I was there because I believe God loves them and I wanted to bring that love to them through me.

So what is the best way to do that? After some trial and error and then through my training and Tom's guidance I began to figure it out. I learned they didn't need someone to come in with all the answers, telling them what to do, think and believe. They needed someone to listen to them

The Hole

They call it "the Hole"—the jails own detention, So bright with its light—but so dark with depression,

At 8 a.m. they take your mattress and blanket away,

Then you lay on the freezing concrete all day.

You think to yourself—and ask yourself why,

If you let it get the best of you—you'll break down and cry.

You'll be sure you're going to lose your mind,

Just read the walls and a few others you'll find.

You'll talk to yourself—and sing to the floor,

On the verge of insanity—so you cling to the door.

It's a dark and dreary little place,

Never again will you want your own space.

What's this place that takes this toll?

It's a depressing and punishing place we call "The Hole".

—Robin

with compassion and without judgment. They needed someone to help them process. They needed someone to respect their choice of faith and their preferred faith tradition.

They almost all wanted prayer; it was a way for them to hear I heard them and was bringing their requests, their pain, their needs and wants to God. There were a few that didn't want me to pray for them during our meetings. I never prayed without asking their permission and some would not want it because of the emotions it would bring to the service. Some were just not comfortable with praying one on one out loud and for a few they just didn't believe in it. Whatever the reason, I knew I needed to respect it.

Even though I wasn't sure what to expect, I would never have expected that I would be so blessed by these women. As I listened to

Seeing is Believing

Seeing is believing? I saw him for the first time since the last time.

My heart hurts. My heart hurts to see him worry.

Seeing is believing. I love him and want to comfort him. He was looking for me, and I was looking for him. He still has my heart and it hurts. He held the book in his hand. He wanted me to see. I believe that he believes.

A smile comes to me. It is there in my heart. All that matters now is that Gods got him now, and that is good for me.

"Father I trust in you and all you have for me, make my husband a man of your word and let him know love and give love through your grave.

Let him put nothing before your honor and glory. I ask for a God fearing man with patience of a young child. Give me a husband that serves only you. That experiences your love in a way a child knows his father."

In Jesus Name, I pray.

Amen.

their struggles and what they are learning, I saw myself in them. I related to their struggles and learning right along with them. Many are spending an extended amount of time reading their Bible and what they were learning amazed me. I was humbled by the fact that they would trust me with the hardest parts of their life as well as sharing their relationship with God. I would come to encourage them and they would encourage me. My faith has grown in leaps and bounds as I've seen God show up in their lives.

This ministry has truly been life changing for me and I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve in this way thanks to our chaplain and Gundersen Lutheran. If you are interested in the program you can find more information at www.gundluth.org/ourservices/otherservices/allservices/pastoralcare.

La Crosse County Jail Ministry



Small group discussion with K-pod.

The Mom's Prayer Group

In the fall of 2011, a Mom's Prayer group was started in the Women's Jail. It was originally started as a pilot program to see how well it would be received, and has proved to be successful and in high demand among the women. Female volunteers saw the need for the group develop as they went in to offer bible studies with the women and prayer requests were taken at the end. Time after time, incarcerated moms would break down in tears asking for prayer for their children. Many of these children were in foster care or living in other states with distant relatives. The whereabouts of some were even unknown to the mothers. Since the requests were usually taken at the end of class there was little time to stop and pray with the women right then, but the needs were so great that it was felt time needed to be set aside to minister individually to the broken hearts of these mothers through prayer.

But how to do it? Ask Jail Program Coordinator Mike Kiefer, and he'll tell you that scheduling new groups can be a challenge since there is already so much going on at the Jail, but both he and Chaplain Skemp saw the need for something to help these mothers cope and grieve their losses in a positive way as they went through deeply painful hearings for termination of parental rights, loss of custody, and other events. The format that was chosen for the group would need to be effective both for group use and for individuals, since deeply personal needs would be presented in a group setting. After careful thought, the format that was chosen was the non-denominational Moms in Prayer Prison Program model. The focus is on the act of praying itself, using scriptural promises. Meeting weekly, the structure enables everyone to be heard, allowing women to practice praying for themselves and for one another in an emotionally safe environment. Over the last year, we have seen big answered prayers (family reconciliations, forgiveness of abusers) and smaller—but no less miraculous—prayers for courage, comfort, peace, and desired sentencing outcomes get answered as well. The program has also been useful in helping to keep tensions down in a very stressful environment, where the female jail population is now at an all time high. It's a privilege to serve these women. I can't help but think of an old hymn line that goes: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our griefs and pains to bear, what a privilege to carry everything to Him in prayer." How true that is.

Yours in service,
Alexandra Sanders, President

I Found Him

*I found Him
Or maybe he found me
Who is that?
Who that be?
The Father created me
The Son saved me
The Holy Spirit, teach me who I am to be.
One moment in time is all he really needs.
One into two
Two in to three
Of I could give Him four and then a little more
I will be well on my way to a brighter day
Now he will be the one to lead.*

Jail House Burrito

- One bag Flamin' Hot Cheetos
- One bag Jalapeno Cheetos
- One package chicken ranch
- One package beef sticks
- One package saltines
- One package jalapeno cheese
- 1/3 cup hot water

- Tear up beef sticks. Crush Cheetos and ranch and pour into plastic or Cheetos bag.
- Add some of chicken seasoning mix. Add about a 1/3 hot water and mush together. Wrap in towel for approximately 15 minutes. Squeeze cheese onto burrito and serve with crackers.

*Remember—seasoning from Ramen Noodles are good to spice up any of your jailhouse "entrees."

Block B

Jail House Chicken Burrito

- Two packages of chicken Ramen
- One bag jalapeno Cheetos, crushed
- Two mayonnaise packets
- One package chicken
- Four-six tortillas
- Make the Ramen according to package directions. Then, drain a small amount of water off and add crushed Cheetos, mayonnaise, and the chicken. Mix well and fill tortillas. Enjoy!