



Your gift is greatly appreciated!

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



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

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**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

**Serving the Incarcerated**



What programs go on in the jail that our ministry supports?

- Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous
- Bible Studies.
- Catholic Mass/Confession
- Counseling
- Indigent Inmate Program
- Mom's Prayer Group
- Lutheran Services
- Storybook Program
- Scripture Reflection
- Spiritual Resources – Bibles, Torahs, Korans, Study Guides, Devotionals
- SMART Recovery
- Transportation Support
- Worship/Church Services

Lastly a Chaplain to coordinate and provide all of these services! If you would like to learn more our Chaplain Tom Skemp is available to speak to your church or civic group. His presentation can be extended or shortened to fit your group's needs. Feel free to contact him at (608) 785-9772.

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## The Chaplain's Corner



Continuing on from last newsletter, here is the start of list of some of the specific duties of correctional chaplains:

1. Chaplains provide Marriage Counseling when needed both to those already married and to those contemplating marriage.
2. Chaplains perform Liturgical Duties for their own religious denominations
3. Chaplains are primary advisors on and implementers of Religious Program Policy, clarifying issues involving various faith practices, religious articles, religious diets and other religious standards and insuring that these are permitted to the fullest extent possible within usually restrictive corrections environs.

More to come next time.

*to work even better. I've learned that people from all over the area - from all walks of life - have found themselves in the jail. I've learned from the women themselves that they're there because of "men, alcohol and drugs" - which holds several valuable life lessons. There have even been some especially precious moments when I've run into a former inmate around town - and they stopped to say some version of "Thank you for your prayers" and "I have a job, a good place to live - and I'm going to school now." But perhaps the biggest take-away from the past two years is what a privilege it is to be a part of this community of volunteers - who care so much about all of La Crosse's inhabitants. This whole experience has been humbling, inspiring, and motivating. I'm very much looking forward to the next two years!*

## Jail Ministry Volunteer

*A little over two years ago a friend from church said "Hey I have a great idea" ... and shortly after that I found myself sitting in the conference room and getting my photo-ID picture taken. Reflecting back on the two dozen or so weekly Bible studies since then - I'm filled with gratitude for the experiences and lessons learned from this volunteer opportunity. I've met wonderful people from all over our community who give of their time, energy and resources to minister to and bless those in the jail. I've learned things I never knew about our justice system - how great it is when it works - and how important it is for all of us to be informed and involved if we want it*



## Jail Childcare Ministry Group

We volunteer once or twice a month caring for children while friends, relatives or neighbors are video-conferencing with an inmate. The children sometimes visit for a short time but then lose their focus in the video visit and need something else to keep them occupied.

Our role of providing child care then comes into play. We spend quality time with the children playing games, reading books, building with blocks, doing art projects, and sometimes just talking. We also interact with people just passing by to go in for drug or alcohol testing; many of them just want to chat. We try to be good listeners with the children and with the adults. Occasionally we get the opportunity to provide useful advice, help with the money kiosk, or just provide some words of encouragement. As volunteers we are not able to change the situation that brought them there for their visit, but it feels like we do touch the lives of children and adults in a small way. Listening, being caring and compassionate, spending quality time, and providing information regarding resources are so important to people who are going through a very stressful time.

Recently we had the opportunity to tour the jail with Chaplain Tom Skemp. That was very informative and enabled us as volunteers to better understand and serve the people who visit inmates. It made us better appreciate the jail environment, what the jail staff deal with on a daily basis, what severe issues some of the inmates have, how medical care is provided, educational provisions, community services, volunteer services and the list goes on. We were able to talk to some of the staff and see and hear first-hand what their jobs entail. The tour gave us a better understanding of the entire process for the staff, the inmates, and visitors.

If you have an interest in serving others as volunteers in the Jail Visitation Childcare Program, just contact Chaplain Skemp to get additional information about joining the group. It is a very gratifying and fulfilling experience. The children will bring you much joy!!

## Lock'em up for the Common Good

Viterbo's students are required to have 25 hours of 'learning' in order to graduate. This is not just volunteering but a reflective exercise where the students seek to move beyond sympathy to empathy. Chaplain Tom schedules 20 to 40 students per semester who sit with inmates during library hours. As for most people, this is the first time the students have been in jail. They enjoy talking with the inmates, many of whom are quite the storytellers. Sometimes there are shocking moments when students hear, "This was a good year. I've only been in here three times." Or actually meet a former Viterbo student who, as admitted, "made some bad choices." One student found someone from her home town, way across the state. But basically the core empathetic moment occurs when the students see the inmates as "just like me," but lacking healthy lifestyles and good friends. The visit is followed by service hours spent at a range of human service agencies, including Salvation Army, Place of Grace, St. Clare Health Mission, Sacred Grounds, the Franciscan Hospitality Center, as well as a line-up of classroom speakers, including, Captain Anderson, Chaplain Skemp, Steve Josephson, Jane Klekamp, Jason Larsen, Tristine Bauman, ex-offenders from the Circle of Support, New Horizons, Western's PROVEN, Workforce Connections, and others whose organizations and individual experiences make real what it is like to be among the displaced and marginalized here in Greater La Crosse.