



The General Conference
Sabbath School &
Personal Ministries



TO

PRISON
MINISTRIES

SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH 

Prison Ministries is created by the General Conference Sabbath School & Personal Ministries Department

Principal Contributor: Cleveland Houser

Editor: May-Ellen Colon

Design: Linda McDonald

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PRISON MINISTRIES

Demographics

In the USA one out of every 31 adults is incarcerated, on parole, probation or under correctional supervision. Over 2.3 million inmates are confined to state, federal, and local jails. Correctional supervision of offenders and ex-offenders exceeds 7 million. The prison population has grown at a rate higher than 3.4 percent since 1995. The women's prison population has increased by 138 percent.

There are more inmates confined to the California Department of Corrections than the total number of prisoners in France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands combined.¹ U.S. Correctional Departments have built over 1,000 prisons in the last 20 years.² More money is spent each year to keep individuals confined to prison than money invested in education for American children. And the cost of housing an inmate continues to skyrocket. States spend \$22,000 to \$62,000 a year to keep one person confined in prison. (Google "Cop in the Hood, Cost of Incarceration" for more information.) Yet the recidivism rate is as high as 78 percent in some states.³ The consistent return of inmates to the Department of Corrections appears to make it a lucrative institution. Prisons have become economic icons throughout our country.

The prison population will continue to flourish as long as the Criminal Justice System's major focus is on punitive enactments rather than the possibility of redemption. Once inmates are confined, they are no longer a redemptive concern but a security concern. The rehabilitation of inmates has become an extinct commodity. During the inmate's assigned tenure to the Department of Corrections, rehabilitative services and the acquiring of skills necessary to curtail recidivism are minimal. The Department of Corrections' job is to house inmates, not to rehabilitate them. Rehabilitation is not and perhaps never will be part of the equation.

Consequently, prisons can be dark, gloomy holes with no exit signs unless Prison Ministries volunteers are willing to take

Jesus—the Light of the world—inside the prisons. Christ, and not policy, changes the behavioral patterns of inmates. Inmates who embrace religion and who are sincere to their calling very seldom recidivate. The redeeming power of Jesus re-orientes the offender's personality and changes his master motives. Thus he becomes a new creature in Christ.

Prison Ministries - Relevant and Necessary?

The litigious society in which we live dictates to legislators and prison officials the need to rid society of an individual guilty of felonious behavior. The physical depositories are known as prisons, which are considered to be instruments of control. The word “correction” signifies a change in behavior and suggests rehabilitation. However, this is a misnomer. In reality the attitude is simply out of sight, out of mind. Although an individual has been eliminated from society for a season (and 98.6 percent of incarcerated felons eventually return to society) the work of regeneration must be initiated within the hearts of offenders behind the walls lest they return to society worse off than they were at the time of incarceration.

The church has not been in sync with the significance and the relevancy of ministering behind the walls. Maybe that's because it is not a glorious ministry—or is it because inmates don't pay tithe to the church, or have no apparent accountability to church hierarchy? Perhaps for all these reasons, ministry to inmates has been put on a back burner with little interest in making it a priority in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The significance of Prison Ministries is clearly stated in Matthew 25:35-40: “For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me” (KJV).

Matthew 25 presents the fact that when we open the door to the needy and suffering we are welcoming unseen angels and inviting the companionship of heavenly beings. Christ says, "It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison. While you were feasting at your bountifully spread table, I was famishing in the hovel or the empty street. While you were at ease in your luxurious home, I had not where to lay My head. While you crowded your wardrobe with rich apparel, I was destitute. While you pursued your pleasures, I languished in prison."⁴

Jesus reaffirmed the importance of Prison Ministries and its relevancy to the church when He hung on the cross between two thieves. In fact, He was a prison chaplain on Death Row where He changed the sentence of one thief to receiving eternal life. He died a criminal death on a cruel Roman instrument of torture called a cross, which was reserved for the vilest of offenders. He took upon Himself a death sentence so that prisoners behind the walls, as well as prisoners of sin, might have the opportunity to be paroled into the Kingdom of God. He has a natural affinity for prisoners and the disenfranchised.

We are the best communicators of God's grace to those who are behind prison walls. We are the conduit pipes in which His love flows to those who have been ostracized by society. Jesus admonishes us to throw out the nets and fish. The net will reveal a vast variety of fish. It is not the duty of Christ's workers to clean any of the fish that have been caught in the net. That is the job of the Holy Spirit.

Inmates who are caught in the Gospel net will respond to God's invitation in various ways. Some inmates will respond to the invitation to hear about Jesus just to get out of the monotonous drudgery of being locked up in a cell for countless hours. Others will respond because they hear that some females are coming into the prison and perhaps this is a way to establish an acquaintance. Others will respond to the call purely for male companionship with friends whom they anticipate will be there. However, there will be some who will come because they love the Lord and are eager to hear a word from the Lord's messengers. In spite of their motives for coming to the worship services, the transforming power of the

Gospel, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, can subdue the vilest of sinners and make them soldiers of the cross.

Jesus commands us “to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6, KJV). We are “To preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound” (Isaiah 61:1, KJV).

Setting the captives free and opening the prison doors does not suggest that they will exit the prison the moment they accept Christ. However, it does suggest that when inmates accept Jesus their minds are no longer imprisoned but set free. The shackles have been loosed, the burdens lifted, the yokes broken, and the power of the saving Gospel of Christ has made them new creatures.

Prisons: Valleys of Dry Bones

Ezekiel gives the best description of the religious, social, and emotional temperaments of prisons when he said, “The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which [was] full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, [there were] very many in the open valley; and, lo, [they were] very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:1-4, KJV).

A prison is a valley of dry bones. Some of these bones [inmates] are very dry, and many have been disconnected from God. They have been isolated from society, caged up like animals, treated like lepers, labeled as misfits, branded with an X for the rest of their lives. As Dr. G. Murdoch, a professor at Andrews Theological Seminary, would say in the common vernacular, “They are considered the least of the leastest.” This valley of bones suggests hopelessness. Prisoners feel like they are on an island of loneliness, forgotten and doomed to perish, unless someone from the free world comes and brings them hope.

America's prisons have proven themselves to be unsafe places which Satan claims as his dominion. Satan knows that Christ has a special love and a natural affinity for prisoners. Consequently, he devises every scheme imaginable to keep the veil of darkness over their heads. It is his desire that the veil of darkness will never be lifted and prisoners will forever be enslaved to sinful practices. Yet in reality Christ lifted the veil on Calvary and made Satan's claims of dominion of non-effect and his kingdom defunct.

Prison Subculture

Every prison has its dominant sub cultural influence. A subculture in a prison is a city within a city. Inmate sub cultural vices and influences are not lessened by being incarcerated. The vices that transpire on the outside of the prison transpire on the inside as well. The inmate population is filled with men and women with both noble and not so noble intentions. Denial, manipulation, dishonesty, and the violation of human rights follow them inside the prison. Façades and the appearance of being macho are developed as survival mechanisms in a subculture that often lends itself to violence.

Every prison subculture has a code of conduct developed by those who have had long prison tenures. The code of conduct simply means mind your own business. In prison respecting this code will extend your life, and ignoring it will abbreviate your life. Not minding your own business ("snitching") is an intolerable offense among prisoners. Snitching can best be described as signing your own death wish.

The drug culture is wide spread inside prisons whether the prisoner is a dealer or a consumer. The proliferation of the drug culture behind prison walls is aided by family members, disloyal employees, and ingenious smuggling methods through the mail system. Every prison subculture has drug dealers and users. Only drugs of the purest forms are sold in prison. A number of inmates run drug operations from behind the walls by phone.

Inmates also smuggle sugar, bread, fruit, and other items from the dining hall to make a prison brand of alcohol. This brand of alcohol changes by name from state to state. Prisoners make distilleries and hide them in some inconspicuous place. The confiscated

items are placed in the distillery to ferment. After fermentation, the brew is sold to the prison population for a modest price. Prisoners have made alcohol that is 85 percent proof or higher. Prison wardens would prefer for prisoners to be strung out on drugs than to be inebriated. Prisoners who are intoxicated present a serious management problem. Prison-made alcohol is a continuous subcultural problem that exists in all correctional facilities.

Today's prisons are being saturated by gangs and gang violence. Some prisons are known for their gang concentration. Gangs are so entrenched in some prisons that they have become a management challenge for prison staff and administrators. Every gang affiliation is present in some correctional facility across America. In the culture in which inmates live, gangs give them a sense of family and protection.

Same-sex relationships, gang rape, and sexual exchanges for money or for other purposes are all too common in inmate subcultures. Prisoners who have been in the system for a number of years have taken advantage of many new buddies. Some inmates have been the victims of excessive gang rapes that have resulted in traumatic medical problems.

Often inmates are their own worst enemies. Murder, assault, rape, theft, con games, and other subversive activities are just a few examples of how inmates victimize each other.

Prisons are supposed to be cashless economies. Yet green money (cash) is present in all prisons. It was documented that one inmate hid \$10,000 in a shoe box in his cell. At this same maximum security prison approximately \$250,000 was circulating behind the walls. Poker games and loan sharks are a vital part of this economy. Loan sharks make 100-200 percent on the money they loan to other inmates. Inmates run stores out of their cells called commissaries. They make their money by selling to other inmates or through barter trades.

The dining hall can be the most violent spot in the prison community. Inmates try to sit in the dining hall with their backs to the wall. Watching their backs and being vigilant is essential to their survival. Most inmates try to eat in about 10 minutes. Some of the

most atrocious killings have occurred in the dining hall. What should be a place of enjoyment is a nightmare for many inmates.

Manipulation and self-serving motives takes priority in a culture where each inmate is committed to survival. It is common for inmates to hoard things and to distrust other inmates, as well as staff and the administration. Why? Broken promises and the failure to follow through by the “powers that be” have created this atmosphere of distrust. Therefore, self-preservation becomes their first law of survival. Survival in a culture where you have “associates” rather than friends presents its challenges. The multiplicity of personalities mingling together complicates things. Inmates have to create an atmosphere of toleration among each other as a stepping stone for any kind of relationship building. Because so many inmates have burned all bridges with their families and find themselves with no connection to the outside world, they are forced to turn to the inside world for companionship. Being thrust into such a lonely position and surviving in their new environment can, at best, be unpleasant and unnerving.

Once an individual is incarcerated personhood dissipates and the number factor emerges. John Doe is no longer John Doe; he is 113348. He now must respond accordingly. Inmates quickly discover that any opportunity to change prevailing attitudes and to be better people when they return to society appears to be fading away. Hopes of self-development skills, education, and trades are slowly removed and fade into oblivion. Unless there is an inner spark that creates a personal desire to make something positive out of life, inmates will drift with the tide. The only basis of a positive life for an inmate is an encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Statistics prove that inmates who participate in religious activities are involved in fewer disciplinary actions and are less likely to recidivate than those who do not participate in religious activities. To conclude that all inmates are hopeless would be a gross error. Many inmates have been exposed to Jesus at some point in their lives by attending church with someone in their family. There are men and women behind the walls whose knowledge of the Scriptures is simply amazing. God needs ambassadors to encourage those who know about Jesus, and to deliver the good news of the Gospel to those who are trapped in the grasp of Satan.

Ministry to Inmates

In order to minister to inmates, it is essential that we learn how to communicate with them. Ministering to inmates requires good eye contact. This allows you to learn a lot about the inmate with whom you are conversing, and will help you assess his or her needs. The eye is the window to the soul. Good eye contact will play a major role in convincing the inmates of your sincerity and will help determine the magnitude of your influence as you introduce them to Jesus.

Good eye contact enables you to pay strict attention to what the inmate is saying and helps you to engage in active listening rather than defensive listening. Always listen for ideas and underlying feelings expressed by the inmate. Be aware also of what the inmate says that lacks clarity so you can avoid being manipulated and getting caught in the trap of compromise. Keep your mind on what the inmate is saying and make a conscious effort to evaluate the logic of what is being said.

While communicating with inmates don't be overly eager to correct them when illogical comments are made. This is the product of defensive listening. Defensive listening will alienate rather than establish the bond of trust you will need to win the confidence of the inmates, so you can share the love of Christ in the most efficient manner. Often their ideas are not going to be congruent with your theological ideology, but resist the temptation to interrupt them because you are going to have many opportunities to *share* your point of view. Sharing prohibits dogmatism and unpleasant encounters. Sharing is a magnetic agent and dogmatism is a repelling agent.

Avoid argumentative encounters with inmates. Always speak the truth in love, following the example of Jesus. In all your conversations with inmates make Jesus first, best and last.

In your ministry to inmates don't let their appearance be a hindrance to being objective in your mission. Some inmates will be ill-kept physically. Their grooming will be subpar. Their personal hygiene will not include the use of cleansing agents, water, or anything to disguise unpleasant smells. Their speech and delivery may not be the accepted patterns of grammar and communication.

Weave through the visible, seek understanding, and accept the inmate as a child of God, just as God accepts you without any inhibitions in spite of your past or present. Let the love of Christ that flows through you provide you with the insight to look beyond the inmate's faults and provide for his/her needs. If the inmates allow Christ to take over, He will clean them up and fit them for heaven.

It is advantageous to be fair and honest when you minister to inmates. They will respect you if you maintain a high level of integrity. Inmates are not accustomed to fair treatment. As long as you are fair, inmates won't have a problem with you being frank and honest with them. Just be yourself. They can detect a phony 50 miles away. After all, they know this game extremely well. They always want you to be above board and real, even if this seems like an oxymoron in an adverse society.

Workers must be friendly without being overly friendly. This is especially true of the opposite sex. Inmates have a way of reading something into nothing. A smile or a compliment can be misconstrued by the inmate. If you receive a compliment, say thank you and advance the conversation to another level where the focus will be on Christ. Never let words from inmates cause you to be stern and hardcore, but be courteous and kind just like Jesus would be. This can be accomplished without giving the inmate any intimation of a possibility of an intimate relationship. Be very cautious about one sided love affairs with inmates. These affairs are counterproductive, ultra-risky, and 99 percent of the time they fail or result in an unpleasant liability.

Always avoid the manipulative gestures of inmates. Confront any manipulative behavior of inmates and make them aware of your knowledge of the situation at hand. If you give in to one manipulative act, it sets the stage for you giving in again, and this continues until a serious compromising blunder will occur. Hence, when any concerns arise, remember that the chaplain at the prison is your supervisor. If you have any doubts about anything, ask him/her. It is no crime to ask, but it may be one if you don't.

It is evident that ministering to inmates is a commission that comes from God. This is also a privilege given to the Prison Ministries worker by the Department of Corrections Facilities. Conse-

quently, prison workers must obey the rules of the prison as they minister to inmates. Correctional policies, protocols and rules may vary from state to state, and in-house rules and protocols differ from prison to prison. Prison Ministries workers are part of an unpaid staff of the Department of Corrections. For this reason they are expected to obey the rules and policies of their assigned institutions.

Being cognizant of the rules and regulations at any correctional facility is a must. Approval must be given by the warden of the prison if you desire to bring any items into the facility. Shun any opportunity to compromise the rules to bring unapproved items into the prison or to take items out of the prison. Only carry keys, ID badges, materials, and other permitted equipment needed to minister to the inmates. Decline any opportunity to exchange phone numbers and addresses. Such could prove to be fatal if this information ends up in the wrong hands.

Be confidential. Avoid breaching the confidence of an inmate unless it involves the safety of another inmate, or is a security risk for the institution. Confidentiality does not mean keeping secrets, but it does denote respecting the inmate's position, ideas, and concepts without making a public display of what has been shared. Refrain from talking about one inmate to another. This could create an unpleasant situation for security, staff, and other inmates.

Upon entering the prison, follow the directives given by security and proceed to the designated area for the services. Unauthorized wandering around in prison is extremely risky. While walking back to the designated area of service, never be shocked or intimidated by what you see or hear. There is an eleventh commandment among inmates which says, "Thou shalt not hurt a free world visitor." Many inmates are mindful of the fact that free world visitors are their connection to the outside world and their vessels of hope through Christ. They are not willing that this connection be severed.

Working with security is not always an easy thing to do. Whenever something does not transpire the way it should, the Prison Ministries worker has an advocate inside the prison through whom to channel all complaints and concerns. The worker's advocate is usually the chaplain or the volunteer

coordinator. This person will address the worker's concerns to the appropriate personnel and help to bring a resolution to the existing dilemma. Even if security personnel are not cordial and in the wrong, do not engage in any kind of argumentative discussion because 90 percent of the time the experience will be unpleasant. Moreover, the Prison Ministries worker or the entire team may be branded as trouble makers, not only at this institution but at other correctional institutions as well. Please remember to use the designated advocate for your Prison Ministries team.

An astronomical quantity of good can transpire in a correctional institution. Prison Ministries workers will spiritually stimulate, encourage, and educate as they share God's love with those who have been trapped in Satan's bonds. Inmates may or may not be conscious of the shining light of Jesus that His workers bring into penal institutions. It is because of this that God sends ambassadors to the prisons to speak for Him. God has commissioned His workers to go into the prisons. Therefore, speak with confidence and be sure about the Gospel that is being preached. Remember that God said it, we believe it, and that will settle it.

Inmate Attitudes Toward Religion

Several things contribute to the development of inmate attitudes toward religion. In many of their experiences, God had to allow them to be put in isolation in order for them to receive a revelation from Him. God saved Jonah in the belly of a very big fish. Sometimes He saves the inmate in the cell of a jail. Inmates have consistently testified that when God allowed them to be locked up, it was the best thing that ever happened to them. They concluded that through incarceration God saved them. Trials and extenuating circumstances surrounding their incarceration have caused many inmates to reflect, and to change the way they live. This process may be rapid or gradual.

There are inmates who are strong enough to resist ridicule from other inmates and stand for Christ. There are others who have no interest in spiritual matters. Numerous inmates are under the stronghold of Satan. He refuses to turn them loose. Truly he claims the prisons as his stronghold—and aims to continue to imprison those under his captivity. Scores of inmates are caught up

in the sub cultural vices of their environment. Things of God are not their primary interest. The social vices of the prison are strong enough to severely interfere with any spiritual inclinations that an inmate might have toward religion.

Security levels in correctional facilities play a significant role in the willingness of inmates to participate in religious activities. For example, inmates whose security levels range from medium to maximum are more apt to welcome the opportunity to get out of their cells to attend religious services than inmates with minimum security levels. Their motives may be impure for getting out of their cells, but God specializes in changing impurity to purity and restoring the soul to a rightful relationship with Him.

Inmates who reside at minimum security institutions tend to have a diminished religious fervor regarding their relationship with God. It is not their failure to recognize their need for God, but the added freedom granted to minimum security inmates. They find other things to do that take the place of religion. Minimum security inmates have the ability to work for private and government institutions outside the prisons and to go on passes. They might have access to green money, can freely walk back and forth from the picnic area to the visiting gallery, and have free world clothes. All this makes them feel less of a need for religion.

Prison has afforded countless inmates the opportunity to sit down and think about the destructive course of their lives and to seek help from God. Some inmates may give the appearance of being super macho, but underneath that façade is a soul crying out for help. Only Jesus can fill this need. Jesus has made a difference in the lives of the most ruthless sinners. Inmates on death row have given their lives to Christ and have been baptized in the power of the Trinity. The power of Christ can break every yoke of bondage and deliver the soul of every inmate from the iron grip of Satan. There is no cultivated or inherited tendency that the inmate cannot overcome through Christ.

Starting Prison Ministries

Prison Ministries is a ministry that is fostered by the Personal Ministries Department at all levels in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (local church, conference, union, division, and General

Conference). The Prison Ministries Coordinator, if not the Personal Ministries Director, operates under the auspices of the Personal Ministries Department at whatever level of the church he/she works. Every Prison Ministries Coordinator must be consecrated, faithful, and determined. He/she will exclude self, love Christ, trust in God's promises, and carry the zeal of Christ as he/she labors for the incarcerated.

Prison Ministries workers must be one who can love inmates in spite of their failure to act in accordance with the law, and who can empathize with the inmates they are seeking to help. Workers must be willing to make Prison Ministries a priority. This ministry requires sacrifice and a conviction that they would rather be at the prison, laboring for the souls of inmates, than to be serving anywhere else in the world. As Prison Ministries workers lead others to Christ, hopefully they will continue to grow spiritually themselves.

To form a Prison Ministries team, the Prison Ministries Coordinator makes a public call before the entire church, soliciting the help of individuals who are interested in sharing the love of Christ with the incarcerated. The coordinator then develops a team, including alternates to safeguard against member burnout. Usually the Prison Ministries team is composed of 5 to 25 members. The coordinator organizes for service by training and teaching the team how to work with inmates. Each team member must be informed of volunteer and visitation policies at the anticipated institution of labor. It is the responsibility of the Prison Ministries Coordinator to secure a copy of these policies from the Department of Corrections in the city and state where services will be provided. The team members must be familiar with the rules and regulations pertaining to the ministry they will provide.

After the team has been thoroughly trained, the coordinator develops a proposal to be presented to the chaplain, volunteer coordinator, jail superintendent, or warden regarding the anticipated services that can be provided at the designated institution. The proposal should be developed in a manner that would entail religious, social, and emotional components. Diversity has a broader appeal, and it is an entering wedge when the doors are shut for religious programming. Services that can effectively be offered include:

- literacy programs
- GED preparation
- teaching general life skills
- teaching parenting skills
- AA meetings
- specific types of counseling, including family, career, and vocational

Prisons are overflowing with those who dropped out of high school in the 10th grade or before. Nearly 50 percent of the prison population is functionally illiterate. Consequently, offering literacy programs is often a logical entry point. Once the door is opened by providing institutional needs not designated as religious, opportunities will usually emerge for the team to provide religious services for the inmates as well.

Although the Prison Ministries Coordinator will have familiarized the team with Department of Corrections volunteer policies, the prison where the team will be working will provide training germane to the rules and regulations pertaining to that particular institution. They will do background checks, provide ID badges, and assign the team a time to conduct their services. Once a designated time has been given to enter the prison, be on time and be consistent. Failure to keep appointments can result in termination of the opportunity to provide services.

Organization is vital for effective Prison Ministries. Appoint a coordinator who will be responsible for making assignments, for communicating with Department of Corrections and Jail Facilities personnel, and for being the spokesman for the church regarding Prison Ministries issues. In addition, an assistant coordinator should be appointed who will evaluate the work of the Prison Ministries team, make reports, plan weekly programs, supervise the religious services, and make sure that the team follows Department of Corrections Policy. A musically gifted person should also be appointed who will be responsible for coordinating weekly music for the services and scheduling musicians to lead out in praise and worship. The team will be rounded out by having several members who can serve as Bible teachers/lay preachers to

preach and teach the Word of God. These individuals should be good Bible students who are totally consecrated to God.

When ministering to the inmates during worship, don't talk down to them. Relate to them as equals. Allow for class interaction and testimonies. The teacher/preacher should guide the meeting. Never let inmates control the worship service. Reciprocal courtesy is expected between the teacher and the inmates. Try to start on time and end on time because in a correctional institution, timing is critical.

Diversification in Prison Ministries

Every church member can help with Prison Ministries. It is not a requirement for everyone involved in this ministry to go behind prison walls to participate. The slamming of doors behind you, entering a domain of murders, robbers, rapists, and sadistic killers can be a frightening experience for the bravest of us. And certainly it is not a common desire.

Prison Ministries has been diversified so that it can also be engaged in at the local church. Here are some areas of Prison Ministries that are available for total church participation:

- **Personal Hygiene Kits Ministry:** Make up personal hygiene kits and supply them to the chaplain for indigent inmates.
- **Clothing Ministry:** Supply clothes for inmates who are being released from prison. Help the chaplain and the counseling staff to be aware of this ministry.
- **Van Ministry:** Transport inmates' spouses and children to the prisons to see their loved ones. This ministry is for families who live at a distance and who have no transportation. Ask the chaplain to inform the inmates of this service. Keep logs, addresses, and phone numbers of those who benefit from this ministry. Share religious literature with them.
- **Literature Ministry:** Support Prison Ministries with money to keep the ministry supplied with Bibles, tracts, Bible studies, and other needed materials.

- **Prayer Ministry:** Organize a group of prayer warriors who consistently pray for the Prison Ministries team each week.
- **Support Groups:** Start support groups for wives, fiancés, and families of inmates. Families are serving time with their loved ones. Hold support group meetings at your church once a week for one hour. Free childcare should be provided.
- **Ministry to Children of Inmates:**
 - **Angel Tree Program:** Provide gifts to inmates' children during the holiday season.
 - **Summer Camp:** Send children of inmates to summer camp and introduce them to Jesus.
 - **Tutorial Services:** Tutor children of inmates after school to help them improve academically.
- **Pen Pal Ministry:** Correspond with inmates who are without family or who do not receive correspondence from the outside world. Keep all correspondence above board. Don't write letters that would suggest an intimate relationship. Give out no phone numbers, addresses, or names except for a pen name. Use the address of the church or a P.O. Box address.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of prison ministries that can be done outside the walls of the prison. Jesus needs church members to prayerfully consider how they can step up to the plate and participate with Him in this all-important ministry.

Endnotes:

¹ From National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS). For more information, Google this site. Also Google: "U.S. Continues to Be World Leader in Rate of Incarceration," and check www.prisonpolicies.org.

² See Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics.

³ See National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

⁴ For more information, Google: Randall G. Sheldon; Prison Industrial Complex; and "California's Crowded Prisons."

⁵ See The Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics for latest information.

⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, pp.639-640.

Women in Prison: Ministry Handbook

by **Sunny M. Lockwood**

General Conference Ministerial Association

Ministry performed on behalf of women in prison is the focus of this book, which will take you through every step of this ministry. Anyone looking for a challenge to a way to begin a new ministry will enjoy this book. Perhaps you are already involved in ministry to women and looking for new ideas and resources. The opportunities for service within women's jails and prisons are varied. Many times the only limitations are the imaginations of those who would minister.

To order, go to www.ministerialassociation.com or call 301-680-6508

Prisons can be dark, gloomy places unless Prison Ministries volunteers are willing to share Jesus – the Light of the world. If your church would like to become involved with this vital ministry, this book is your guide to getting started. It covers the steps to starting a ministry, inmate attitudes toward religion, prison subculture, ideas for outreach, and much more. If you want to communicate God's grace to those behind prison walls, *Keys to Prison Ministries* is your complete toolkit.

For lots more Personal Ministries resources visit www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org. This website has an extensive library of downloadable articles and activities to enhance the preparation of Personal Ministries leaders.

PERSONAL MINISTRIES LEAFLETS

- How to Run a Church-Based Bible School
- The Missionary Program for the Local Church
- Motivating Members to Witness
- Giving Personal Bible Studies
- Small Group Ministry
- Personal Witnessing
- Methods of Door-to-Door Visitation
- Gaining Decisions for Christ and His Truth
- The Work of the Personal Ministries Leader
- Reaching People Where They Are
- Health Evangelism
- Reclaiming the Missing
- Sermon Preparation
- Public Evangelism
- Principles of Church Growth
- Adventist Community Services
- Prison Ministries

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