

# **The Jail Ministry of Schoharie County**

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL FOR IN JAIL MINISTRY**

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the jail ministry is to assist the inmates of correctional facilities in Schoharie County and their families in entering into or coming to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, receiving thereby His assurance of eternal life and the transforming power of His Spirit to live improved and more purposeful lives in this world. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." We are not the Holy Spirit. He is the one who convicts inmates of their sin. We are not their lawyers. They are the appointed advocates in the justice system. We are an ambassador for Christ who is privileged to bring others to Jesus Christ with integrity and respect."

## **WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO**

One of the strongest reasons to minister to inmates comes from Jesus himself in Matthew 25:31-46. In this passage, Jesus makes a comparison to a shepherd separating his flock, just as he will separate all of us at the end of days. The criteria for those who are blessed, those who enter the kingdom, is surprisingly not what we would think. There's no mention of going to church regularly, reading your Bible, or all of the usual events we associate with being a Christian. What Jesus does mention is how they've given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, housing for strangers, clothing for the poor, care for the sick, and, lastly, visitation for the prisoner. And Jesus pounds this point home further when tells the other group, those who are cursed who have eternal fire prepared for them, that they did not do any of these. Both groups, however, are shocked at the fact that Jesus identifies with these needy people, saying "when you've done this for one of the least of these, you've done this for me."

## **CORE VALUES**

The day-to-day work of the jail ministry is greatly determined by the spiritual and moral values held by all those persons committed to the success of the ministry. The Steering Committee discussed the values that form the basis of the jail ministry and which motivate the actions and behavior of all participants. These values are as follows:

- Jesus Christ is the way to eternal salvation, the author of all that is true and honorable, and the one who empowers people to lead transformed lives.
- The volunteers believe that like themselves, inmates are created in God's image and are cherished by Him.
- The volunteers believe that through them Jesus ministers to the whole person in progressing toward goals of spiritual, emotional, psychological, social and material well-being.
- The volunteers seek to minister to inmates and their families by forming authentic personal relationships with them, even as the Lord ministers to each of us in love on a personal level.
- The Gospel of Jesus teaches forgiveness, compassion and healing love as foundational in ministering to people in need.
- The volunteers see forgiveness, compassion, and healing love as critical components to minister to inmates.
- The volunteers are careful to maintain the highest standards of integrity and confidentiality in their dealings with inmates and their families.
- The volunteers will offer the love and message of the Christian Gospel as a means to draw near to Jesus and live a purposeful life freely and without coercion.
- Those who volunteer to work with the jail ministry have come to this commitment through prayer and a sense of calling from the Lord.
- The volunteers will honor their commitments to the ministry by their prayers, preparation and timely presence.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

As a program component of the jail facility, our first priority is the safety and security of the facility, its inmates, and the staff and volunteers within. With that in mind, these policies and procedures will govern our behavior inside the jail.

## **GENERAL REGULATIONS**

All volunteers must submit a jail ministry application, a Sheriff Department Civilian Staff Application, and a Pastoral Reference Form. The Chaplain and Jail Ministry Board reserve the right to deny any application to volunteer. Volunteers will be asked to commit to a minimum of six months, at which time they may ask to further volunteer or decline.

No one under 18 is allowed to volunteer.

Ex-offenders who wish to volunteer must have at least one year out of jail and be involved in a local church receive clearance from the Sheriff's Department.

At all times, volunteers will show respect for authority and immediately obey any instructions from the jail staff. Volunteers will respect the time given for services and arrive and leave on time.

It is not required that volunteers get a TB test from their local medical provider, but rather recommended for those who volunteer in jail over 30 hours per month.

If a volunteer has a close relative that is incarcerated in the particular unit they minister in, notify the Chaplain about that relationship.

Volunteers must have proper identification (driver's license, photo ID) to show before entering.

## **DRESS CODE**

**GENERAL RULE:** dress casual, but more modest than usual. The type of personal attire worn does not only affect our Christian witness, but is a factor in the respect of the inmates and the institutional officers. Women entering a men's unit should be especially cautious in their dress and actions so as to not attract unnecessary attention. The same cautions apply to the male entering a women's unit. Be aware of the amount of metal on you (i.e. rivets, buttons, and belts). You will be processed through a metal detector so the less you have, the quicker it will go.

Personal item can be left in your vehicle.

No shorts

No tank tops

No see through fabrics

No hats

No shoes with steel toes

No t-shirts with writing

No tight form-fitting jeans

No skirts that don't cover your legs

No low-cut tops or plunging necklines

Limit jewelry to wedding rings and watches only

No Cell phones, pagers, or purses

## **INTERACTION WITH INMATES**

**GENERAL RULE:** nothing in, nothing out, when in doubt, leave it out.

Volunteers are not allowed to pass materials to inmates that have not been approved by the Chaplain ahead of time. Absolutely no publications with staples will be allowed – you must remove all staples before bringing it in the jail or have a Corrections Officer approve it first. Approved materials are Bible Study sheets and corresponding tracts/handouts, song sheets, prayer request slips, sign-in sheets, Bibles, Daily Bread Bible studies and greeting cards and other materials in our ministry team locker at the facility.

A pen may be circulated to fill prayer request slips and sign-in roster, but *it must be returned*. Inmates are generally responsible to supply their own pen.

Volunteers can introduce themselves by their first name, as well as the church they attend, and if need be, job occupation. Last names, phone numbers, addresses, and job locations should be kept private. Volunteers may give out the ministry P.O. Box address JMO P.O. Box 1023 Cooperstown, NY 13326. Please do not give out the Chaplain's phone number to inmates.

Volunteers will not ask the inmate about his/her crimes. Please let the inmate volunteer that information.

Volunteers will not pass anything between inmates, verbal or written.

Volunteers will not make unauthorized public statements regarding inmates. Please be prudent when sharing for "prayer requests." Only share a name if given permission by the inmate.

Volunteers cannot contact family members of inmates at the inmates' request. However, family members may initiate contact with the Chaplain via the jail ministry website, [www.jmoconline.org](http://www.jmoconline.org).

Volunteers should not receive anything from inmates, especially personal sentiments. Politely decline the offer, leave it with the inmate, or read it in front of them. If in question, ask the officer in charge.

Volunteers will limit physical touching to hand-shakes only. The church tradition and Biblical model of "laying on of hands" can be used but the volunteer must be sensitive to the inmate.

Volunteers are strongly encouraged to wash their hands after leaving the facility and/or use hand sanitizer before entering and prior to leaving the facility.

Volunteers can visit an inmate during regular visiting hours. Inmates are only allowed two visits per week, including volunteers. Please try to save those visits for the inmate's family.

## **SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

If an inmate requests a "personal favor," firmly and politely decline. Inform the Director of repeated requests from the same person. Examples of a "personal favor" would be items to be brought in to the jail, a phone call to a relative, speaking to another inmate, lawyer, or officer on their behalf.

If an inmate mentions one of the following subjects (however insignificant it may seem at the time), immediately notify the Sergeant, or an available Correction Officer and then the Chaplain:

- Indicates he/she may harm themselves or indicates a desire to end their life
- Indicates that a person (spouse, children) is in eminent danger on the outside
- Indicates he/she is in physical danger or expresses a desire to hurt another person
- Any conversation that "raises a flag" (i.e. mentions committing a crime) or makes you feel uncomfortable; please talk it over with the Chaplain as soon as possible.

### **SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:**

1. Do pray before and after entering the institution.
2. Do share your witness with the guards and jail personnel when possible but do not distract them.
3. Do show respect for authority and immediately obey any instructions from staff.
4. Do be yourself; do be honest (while withholding private information).
5. Do be consistent. Arrive on time and leave on time.
6. Do remember and repeat names.

### **THE MESSAGE**

As Paul stated in his letter to the Corinthians, he didn't come with fancy words or great wisdom, but stuck to the truth about God's love. Our goal should be the same. For the sake of unity, we should avoid "high theology" and "Christianese." By "Christianese" we are referring to common "churchy language" that most inmates would not understand. Ex: "Are you *on fire* for the Lord?" Although it may be humorous to think of this as meaning spontaneous combustion, it can be confusing to others. We should also avoid bringing up the discrepancies that our particular denomination holds to. We should stick to the sample message sequence below and, if tangent issues arise, we can choose whether or not to address them. In addition, we are careful *not to criticize* other belief systems. Let the truth of the Gospel speak for itself.

### **THE GOOD NEWS**

1. God Loves You (Jeremiah 29:10-14, Romans 8:28-39, Father's Love Letter)
2. Coming Home (Luke 15:11-32)
3. Our Sin (John 8:1-11, Romans 7:14-25)
4. His Cross (Isaiah 52:13-53)
5. Jesus is the Way (John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8-9, 4 Spiritual Laws)
6. Our Response (Luke 18:18-30, Luke 19:1-10)

### **GROW IN CHRIST**

1. The New Life (2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Romans 6:1-14)
2. God's Word (2 Timothy 3:14-17, Psalm 119:9-11, James 1:22-25)
3. Obedience to Christ (John 14:15-24, Luke 6:46-49, Romans 13:1-7)
4. Prayer (Matthew 6:5-13)
5. Fellowship & Accountability (Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 5:13-20)

### **FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST**

1. Freedom from Habitual Sin (John 4:1-30; Isaiah 55:1-3)
2. Freedom from Temptation (Hebrews 12:1-3, Mark 9:43-47, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20)
3. Freedom from Worry (Philippians 4:4-9, Psalm 23)
4. Freedom from Hopelessness (2 Corinthians 4: 8-18, Isaiah 40:28-31)
5. Freedom from Un-forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35)

### **In addition to this sequence, we have seven SEASONAL STUDIES:**

- Easter I: The Penitent Thief (Luke 23:32-43)
- Easter II: Witnesses To The Resurrection (Luke 24:1-12)
- Easter III: The Road To Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) CHRISTMAS:
- Christmas I: Luke investigative witness (Luke 1:1-4)
- Christmas II: Gabriel, heavenly witness (Luke 1:26-38)

- Christmas III: Angels & Shepherds, joyful witnesses (Luke 2:1-20)
- Christmas IV: Simeon & Anna, patient witnesses (Luke 2:22-40)

### **A Word about the “Free on the Inside Bible ”**

We freely make available to all inmates a “Free on the Inside” New King James Version Bible. This Bible is published by the International Bible Society in cooperation with Prison Fellowship Incorporated. It is an effective tool being used in prison ministry because it is filled with all kinds of helps for inmates.

### **Other Ministry Materials**

The Jail Ministry also gives out copies of the Our Daily Bread. Any other materials to be given out to the inmates must first be approved by the Chaplain.

### **JAIL FACILITY INFORMATION**



The above picture is that of the Public Safety Building of Schoharie County in Howes Cave, New York. It houses the offices of the Sheriff’s Department and the County’s jail. Through its door pass a steady file, mostly men but some women, who will spend time incarcerated as they await sentencing or serve time locally.

The Schoharie County Harvey E. Stoddard Public Safety Facility, located at 157 Steadman Way, Howes Cave, NY. 12092 is a 69 bed facility and is a new facility, built after Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee flooded out the original facility located in Schoharie New York. It is a new, modern facility complete with kitchen, laundry and medical services within the facility. The contact number for this facility is 518 295 2264. The mailing address for this facility is: PO Box 159 Howes Cave, New York. 12092.

#### **Programs offered at this facility:**

Active educational program where inmates can earn their TASK equivalent. (Formerly G.E.D. equivalent).

Active chemical dependency program

Active mental health program

Active daily exercise program

Active religious program

#### **Commissary:**

The jail provides a weekly commissary store for the inmates and orders are posted every Monday. For all inmates, items can be purchased at a discounted price. The inmate needs money in their account to order commissary and money may be mailed or dropped off at the jail Commissary Kiosk.

**Items that can be purchased are:**

Games

Hygiene items

Food products

Writing supplies

**Visitation schedule for family and friends:**

Visitation at the jail will be non-contact. Friends and family may schedule their visits beginning on Tuesdays through Thursdays each week by calling 518 295 2264 between 8 am and Noon for a Saturday evening or Sunday morning half-hour visit with the inmate.

**Visitation schedule for Clergy:**

Before Clergy can visit an inmate, they must have security clearance. To obtain this form, please contact the jail chaplain, Rev. Cyd Collischonn at 518 657 9405 or [cyd@cagcobleskill.org](mailto:cyd@cagcobleskill.org)

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