



Central California

Conference

2008-2011



Prison Ministry Plan

Prison Ministry Philosophy

There is an overriding problem that takes us back to the very beginning of the penitentiary and the reason for its existence. A major problem with conventional prison ministry programs is their creation without the realization that the penitentiary itself began as a ministry and it was unique to the Americas, specifically, Philadelphia. The Quakers created the penitentiary to move away from the medieval practices on the Continent in which men and women were mutilated for thefts and other petty crimes or executed outright. Thus, penitentiaries were created to allow wayward souls the opportunity to mend their habits while isolated from evil influences. Prisoners were given Bibles and isolation for years until the Lord had time to bring these persons to repentance.

In recent decades, the goal of the penal system has been to isolate the inmate not from evil but from society, not to correct or rehabilitate the inmate but to protect society through the isolation of the inmate. What we know today from the field of psychological study is that solitary confinement only works to destroy the psychological integrity of human beings under prolonged incarceration.

What we have today are well-meaning men and women assuming that they are doing prison ministry, in the local prison. In fact, the penitentiary is simply a longstanding but significantly changed system of failed Christian evangelism. In effect, we are trying to sprout a living tree by grafting a living branch into a cut log.

PRISON VISITATION

There are many reasons individuals visit people who are imprisoned. Some of these reasons include the following:

To visit-

- a relative
- a friend
- a potential convert
- a spouse, or potential spouse
- an enemy

a stranger

Also, there are a variety of emotions that drive or motivate prison visitors. These include the following:

Motivated by-

Love

Concern

Curiosity

Pity

Sense of duty

Vengeance

Fear

Guilt

The reasons and attending emotions that drive a person to visit incarcerated persons are to each their own to hold sacred. However, when we begin to think of the person who is incarcerated and desire to minister to his or her needs, some training is recommended. Indeed, if we are to be effective, it is necessary.

Most prison ministries currently in existence operate from the premise of the experiences and expectations of the visitor, not the convict being visited. There is a need for an additional type of prison ministry. It is to this end that we present the concept behind Central California Conference. That is, a prison ministry designed for healing and renewal of the convicted.

PURPOSE

To consider the conditions of confinement upon the convicted for the purpose of alleviating the emotional, physical, social and spiritual pain associated with prison life.

Texts: Genesis 39 (Joseph); Judges 16 (Samson); Jeremiah 37 (Jeremiah); Acts 16 (Paul); Matthew 25 (Jesus).

These texts are examples of the Bible addressing people in prison. There is no Biblical example of an actual person in prison who is a non-believer that people visit for the sole purpose of evangelism. The only persons recorded who leave prison alive with a new conversion experience are Paul's jailer with his family and they were not convicts.

Jesus admonishes us to visit prisoners because it is as if we are visiting him. No content of the visits are detailed; we are free to be creative in our approach.

Problem

1. Prison life brings with it loneliness consistent with forced separation from friends, loved ones and the home environment.
2. Confinement diminishes one's hope and sense of well-being.
3. Jail leads the convicted to question self, God, justice and fairness.
4. Outside realities haunt the prisoner ("What will happen to me when I am released?" "How can I help my family and dependents while I am confined?")

The problems of loneliness, hopelessness, unresolved questions and concerns for family and self-help never go away for the incarcerated person. These problems need to be addressed. Resolution of these perceived needs is a ministry to the soul behind bars.

METHODOLOGY

We must address the needs of prisoners systematically.

1. Train a workforce to address inmate needs.
2. Instruct the workforce on appropriate and inappropriate interaction with convicts.
3. Teach historical background, nature and purpose of prisons.
4. Inform workforce of the steps and mechanics of the judicial system
 - a. Accusation
 - b. Investigation
 - c. Arrest
 - d. Bail
 - e. Prosecution
 - f. Conviction
 - g. Probation
 - h. Parole
 - i. Etc.
5. Provide appropriate intervention and referral services for convict's family.
6. Provide a model (site) for reception of freed convicts – a setting to teach, train, assist, counsel, guide and nurture individuals toward a changed lifestyle. The village is ideal when the villagers have been trained to help and not harm the stranger that is within the gates. Thus, the site, where outside services are provided, is essential to the healing and transformation of the newly freed man or woman served by our program.

The Prison Ministry Seminar and Training

Our training is comprehensive and organized under the umbrella of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a viable extension of its mission to serve all humanity under any circumstances. Our purpose is to provide meaningful service to persons who are confined. We accept new members but we do not exchange services for promises of religious commitment from prisoners. Service is our goal not proselytizing. We address spiritual, physical, emotional and social areas of neglect with the convicted person without respect to person. We also prepare a safe and understanding community of volunteers to assist in the re-entry of the prisoner into society through multiple services including job referral, job training, rental housing, education, personal counseling, family counseling, spiritual fellowship and health needs when appropriate.

Our objectives:

- A. To assist volunteers:
 1. To be knowledgeable of prison history in the U.S.A.
 2. To understand the federal and state court systems
 3. To be informed about prison visitation rules and regulations

4. To visit with purpose and positive intent
 5. To teach spiritual lessons from the Bible
 6. To participate in spiritual services
 7. To write appropriate letters to prisoners
 8. To extend family services and referrals to families of prisoners
 9. To understand and prepare for risks involved
- B. To build working teams that are consistent and reliable as they enter any facility
- C. To reduce the prison population by building skills and providing alternatives for prisoners so he or she will not return to prison
- D. To certify volunteers through a Training Certification in the following areas:
1. Religious services (bible study)
 2. Letter writing
 3. After Care/Site model
 4. Spiritual counseling

Seminar Content:

- A. The Prison Institution
- B. History of prisons
 5. History of ministry in prison
- C. The Court System
 1. Federal
 2. State
 3. Juvenile
- D. Criminal Categories
 1. Misdemeanor
 2. Felony
 3. Infractions
- E. Steps in a Criminal Case
 1. Complaint
 2. Investigation
 3. Suspect
 4. Arrest
 5. Booking
 6. On going investigation
 7. Initial court appearance
 8. Preliminary/probable cause hearing
 9. Grand Jury
 10. Pre-trial hearings
 11. Trial
 12. Verdict
 13. Sentencing
 14. Appeal
- F. The Criminal Justice System
 1. Police
 2. Judiciary
 3. Corrections

- a. Probation
- b. Jails
- c. Prisons (Minimum, Medium, Maximum and Death Row)
- d. Community Service
- e. Home Detention
- f. Juvenile Diversion Programs

G. Ministries to Prisoners

- 1. Religious Services
 - a. Bible study
 - b. Full worship service
- 2. Letter writing
- 3. One on one visitation
- 4. Angel Tree Ministry for Children
- 5. Other Ministries may be added as deemed necessary by the board

H. Site Model and Family Services

- 1. With a connected family we use referrals to appropriate agencies
- 2. We provide counseling
- 3. We provide job training
- 4. Academic tutoring is available
- 5. Twelve step programs are available
- 6. Conflict management training
- 7. Financial planning assistance
- 8. Educational and vocational counseling
- 9. Stress management and coping skills training
- 10. Nutrition and diet planning for families
- 11. The site model is the place a freed prisoner connects with a faith based institution
- 12. The pastor connected with a site model is informed and connected with prison ministry
- 13. It is at the site model that a freed person may connect with a spiritual guardian.
The spiritual guardian is a faith based member and trained volunteer who adds the personal touch to service and referral.

H. Volunteer Precautions

- 1. Counseling / advising inmates
 - a. Avoid giving legal advise, we are not lawyers
 - b. Spiritual guidance toward hope, grace, faith and meditation
 - c. Common sense (avoid violence, drugs, stealing & etc.)
 - d. Avoid amateur therapy sessions behind bars
- 2. Risks
 - a. Volunteering is time consuming
 - b. Convicts can be manipulative
 - c. Inappropriate emotional attachments
 - d. Personal embarrassment of associations with criminals
- 3. Punctuality and consistency
 - a. Arrive early allowing time to clear security
 - b. Make your scheduled visits a priority

4. Dress and decorum
5. Develop healthy and honest relationships with prisoners
 - a. Set appropriate boundaries
 - b. Never do special favors that violate rules or laws
 - c. Do not make secret outside contacts for prisoners
 - d. Do not share personal I.D. information
6. Importance of adhering to the rules of the institution

Conclusion:

Prison ministry is an investment in skilled volunteers, an investment in prisoners and is a service to mankind, state and God. It is our attempt to provide guidance and training for persons with a burden to serve the “least of these my people,” (Jesus).

References:

1. The Constitution of The United States of America
2. Baca, A Place to Stand
3. Burris, Blue vs. Black
4. California State Penal Code
5. Mitford, Kind and Unusual Punishment
6. Osborne, A Study of the Prison System and its Effect upon the Inmate
7. Peltier, Prison Writings

CONSTITUTION

Preamble

This organization and its volunteers exist to serve convicted persons held behind bars without regard to innocence or guilt. We, the organization and its volunteers, endeavor to bring healing and renewal to individuals who are experiencing spiritual, social, physical and emotional pain while confined. Our work begins within the situation of incarceration and extends beyond into freedom where appropriate. Our goal is to break the prison’s chain forever by building a framework for support, retooling and redirecting the path of the convict.

Article I

Name

The name of the organization shall be known as the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Ministry. This ministry is an entity of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Article II

Purpose

The purposes for which this organization is created are:

- A. To bring companionship, hope, answers and recovery to people confined in prison.
- B. To train and certify a volunteer workforce who are dedicated to compassionate ministry on behalf of prisoners and their families.
- C. To establish and maintain a model site to minister our full help services for support, retooling and redirecting the course of ex-convicts.

Article III

Territory

Generally, the prison and jails within the State of California and specifically the facilities within the jurisdiction of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists shall constitute the territory.

Article IV

Duties of the Board

- A. Implement Prison Ministries program as stated in this proposal
- B. Oversee seminars and training
- C. Identify and appoint trainers in different areas.

Article V

Bylaws

The Executive Board members may enact and or repeal the bylaws. The bylaws shall not be of a nature that would conflict with or nullify any part of the constitution.

BYLAWS

Article I

Headquarters

The Principle headquarters and main office of the organization is fixed at Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The Executive Board may choose an alternate site for an emergency or called meeting if circumstances demand on a non-permanent basis.

Article II

Covenant Relationship

All policies, purposes and procedures shall be in harmony with the working policies of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the California Department of Corrections. Central California Conference is a Seventh-day Adventist Christian organization committed to the same standard as its mother organization.

Article III

Members

Executive Board Members and volunteer workforce

1. Members of Central California Conference who hold Board positions
2. Members who are trained volunteers visiting institutions and prisoners.

Article IV

Advisory Board

A local Board of Governors with no less than fourteen (14) members including, the Vice President of Ministry, a coordinator, each ethnic director, a male and female representation from each ethnic group and three members at large. Invitees may be asked to attend as deemed necessary by the vote of the board.

Meetings

The Board shall meet no less than once annually.

Officers and Duties

- A. Director – Vice President for Ministries
 1. Chairperson of the Board.
 2. Liaison between the local conference office and CCC membership.
 3. Identify available conference funding sources.
 4. Provides evaluative tools and instruments to CCC prison ministry.

- B. Coordinator
 1. Vice Chairperson to the Board.
 2. Assist the Director & Board with the day-to-day operations.
 3. Assist the Director & Board in the supervision of the site models.
 4. Assist the Director & Board with public relations.
 5. Review content of seminars before presentations are made to membership.
 6. Assist the Director & Board in marketing the CCC prison ministry to prison officials.
 7. Assist the Director in developing the agenda for Board meetings.
 8. In conjunction with the Board, recommend locations for site models.
 9. In conjunction with the Board, prepare a comprehensive evaluation of all site models, programs and personnel.

- C. Secretary/Treasurer (Church Ministries Secretary)
 - 1. This is the secretary to the VP for Ministries
 - 2. Takes minutes or provides for a recording secretary at each meeting.
 - 3. Keeps all financial books and accounts in order.
 - 4. Responsible for communication of information to pertinent constituency.
 - 5. Overseeing an organizational newsletter.
- D. Trainer
 - 1. Trains workforce volunteers for prison visitation and support services.
 - 2. Works in association with the Director, Volunteers and Prisoners.
- E. Volunteer Workforce Member
 - 1. A trained Central California Conference volunteer
 - 2. Holds no official office other than that of a willing volunteer worker.
- F. Other
 - 1. Board member selected as deemed necessary for the efficient operation of the ministry.
 - 2. Must hold status of a Member at Large.

Voting

All members of the Board have a single vote. The member must be present at the meeting or participating in the conference call to cast a vote. There is no proxy voting.

The Director is the Vice President for Ministries. The term of office is four years as voted at the regular CCC constituency meeting. The term of service for all other officers is four years. The board may terminate and replace an officer for cause with a majority vote by reason of:

- 1. Inefficiency
- 2. Immorality
- 3. Criminal activity
- 4. Apostasy

The Board may terminate and replace an officer without cause with a two-thirds vote.

Quorum

A simple majority of Board members shall constitute a quorum.

Finance

All contributions and donations are tax deductible.

Article V

Amendments

All amendments, revisions, or repeals of bylaws must be done at a regular meeting and accomplished only with a two thirds vote of the voting Board members with a seated quorum.

Article VI

Dissolution

In the event of dissolution of the organization, all assets shall be transferred to the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists after any and all outstanding bills or claims have been satisfied.