

# **Diocesan Prison Ministry Advocacy Group Meeting Minutes – April 12, 2008**

**Trinity Episcopal Church  
520 South Main Street  
Geneva, NY 14456  
(315) 789-2919**

**Present:** Dick Frey, Britt Hopkin, Dick Laidlaw, Claire Kremer

## **Minutes**

**Opening Prayer:** Opening prayer was led by Britt.

**Two Videos:** Two short videos were shown. The first was a clip from WHAM News in Rochester, NY anchored by Doug Emblidge and interviewing a person who had just been released from Attica Penitentiary after 31 years. The second film featured the same person, and was produced by Marco Flagg, a graduate of the School for Criminal Justice at RIT. In this video the person's feelings are discussed as well as the needs of people re-entering society, and the work of Cephass, Inc.

**Updates on Ministries in the Southern Tier:** Claire Kremer gave us an update on the work of the **Northeast District Storybook Project** which she founded in Ontario County. Recently a BORDERS gift card in the amount of \$1,000 was awarded by Hobart and William Smith Colleges. A volunteer and her 14 year old went shopping during a sale and were able to get \$1,250 worth of books. We have purchased several different titles in Spanish at the request of the Spanish speaking inmates. The jail requested that we run separate sessions for male inmates and these have been very well received by the men. Active volunteers come from St. John's, Canandaigua, Trinity, Geneva, and Zion, Palmyra. She currently has 9 volunteers, of whom 6 are presently active. Recently, the jail has asked her to start a program for the male prisoners as well. This is very exciting because it is the first time in this area that the storybook idea has been done with fathers.

We also heard that the mentoring ministry in the **Alleghany County Jail** at Belmont NY now has several volunteers. They are continuing to use topical material provided by Step by Step of Rochester with the female inmates.

**Rochester Coalition Ministry Updates:** Dick Laidlaw gave us updates on the coalition program for adults called **PRAM (Prison Re-entry and After care Mentoring)**, and on **YIAM (Youth Intervention and Mentoring)**. Both ministries were conceived by Dick at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church.

**Regarding PRAM,** St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Henrietta, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Brockport, St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Rochester, and Ascension Episcopal Church in Rochester have joined in the coalition. The coordination work will be done by Bob Crystal of Ascension, with an office for PRAM located at Ascension. PRAM will be partnering with the Judicial Process Commission, Step by Step of Rochester, Cephass Inc., and Spiritis Christi, to provide training for the mentors, as well as to track the progress of the participants in the program. (As of this writing, attempts are being made to merge data bases for these organizations so that data for long term outcomes can be obtained. This is essential for the long term survival of this program as it will build a statistical basis for success of this program. A summary proposal of the PRAM ministry is shown below, at the end of these minutes.

**Regarding YIAM,** the **Girl Scouts Beyond Bars** program will be sponsored by St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Rochester. The program is now just getting started, with planning meetings being held at St. Thomas'. This, the first troop of its kind in New York State is composed of girls who have one or both parents behind bars. Studies have shown that children of incarcerated parents are much more likely to become offenders. However in these troops, girls visit their parents and do activities with them. Leaders get to mentor the girls and to get to know their parents and family as well. The long term relationships

that develop have been shown to reduce the likelihood of these girls becoming offenders, and helps families get back on their feet during and after incarceration. YIAM is also looking into starting a Boy Scouts Beyond Bars troop. If this happens, it will be the first in the nation.

Efforts to begin tutoring / mentoring programs at the Monroe Detention Center in Rochester, and at the Industry Limited Secure Facility in Rush are continuing. The Monroe Detention Center has expressed interest in beginning a program some time in the future. The Industry program appears to be on "hold" for the moment.

**Many Thanks to Claire Kremer** for hosting our meeting at Trinity Church in Geneva, and for providing a wonderful spread of refreshments.

**Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Saturday, July 12th, 10AM to noon at Ascension Episcopal Church, 2 Riverside Street, Rochester NY 14613 (Off Lake Avenue just south of Ridgeway Ave near Kodak Park). Phone: (585) 458-5423.**

---

### **Prison Reentry Aftercare Ministry (PRAM) – Summary Proposal**

#### **Need:**

Inmates, who receive little or no services upon release, have a recidivism rate of over 30% percent (see below). Without these services, released inmates face a long and slow turnaround of their behavior and their life. When challenged by social workers in the jails and outside of the jail by rehabilitation service programs to "start rebuilding the bridges they have burned with their family," they lack the friends and family whom they have alienated. Without this support, this turn around becomes drawn out and ineffective.

#### **Program Goals:**

**The central goal of the PRAM Collaborative is to increase former inmates' likelihood of successful reintegration into Community life** and reduce recidivism by providing:

- **In-jail human services to inmates;** and
- **Transitional reentry services and support** to released inmates through referrals from and to community-based organizations including faith communities; and
- **Rebuild confidence and trust** in transiting prisoners through personal contact; and
- **Measure change toward specific outcomes** and track information that can be used for planning future improvements and advocate for improvements in the system; and
- **Offer opportunities for ministry** and community service to parish members.

#### **Proposed Work:**

**PRAM will recruit volunteers from participating faith communities.** Volunteers bring their own skills and levels of time commitment that they wish to give. Those wishing to work directly with clients will be given opportunities for mentoring training from community agencies such as Judicial Process Commission, Spiritis Christi Prison Ministry Outreach or Step by Step of Rochester. Some volunteers will also work "behind the scenes" for mailings, grant writing, or data management, serving on the grant committee, etc.

**Volunteers will establish supportive and trusting relationships** with incarcerated persons several or more months prior to release through group mentoring and visits. This supportive relationship will continue as the person goes through the re-entry process. Assistance will be given as needed for finding shelter, transportation, mentoring /tutoring, re-establishing family relationships, connections with community support agencies, etc. The participating parishes will be engaged by requests for additional funds, material needs, or other services (such as help in setting up a household) and spiritual support.

**PRAM will continue this supportive relationship with clients for at least 3 years** after release. Our volunteers will work cooperatively with community agencies to maintain a continuity of service for our clients thus preventing them from "falling through the cracks".

**Identified needs / services performed / and outcomes will be tracked** for each client in a computer data base to be maintained at Ascension Episcopal Church. This data base will be used in evaluating program effectiveness of promoting successful and permanent re-entry into the community.

**Initial Activities: March 2008 — December 2008**

**Develop a PRAM steering committee to plan a first-year pilot program**, including volunteer job descriptions, recruitment and training, transportation, funding, activities, finalization of plans with Monroe Correctional Facility, etc.

**Develop an emergency fund.** A grants committee made up of members from the various congregations will review grant requests and develop a sustainable process for managing the fund. Volunteers will not be allowed to spend their own money.

**Current Work:**

**Our proposal is based on current programming** PRAM volunteers are performing at the Monroe Correctional Facility. We are now just beginning to work with clients as they are being released back into the community. We are providing a continuum of support for clients so that they can be successful in their transition back into the community.

**Steering Committee:**

The Steering Committee is currently made up of representatives of participating parishes and community agencies:

Saint Thomas' PRAM. — Dick Laidlaw, Kathy Walczak , Ascension Episcopal Church- Bob Crystal, Saint Peter's Episcopal- Henrietta-Britt Hopkin, JPC Sue Porter, Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach Ministry -Jim Smith, Step by Step — Margy Mayk

**Statistical Basis for the PRAM Initiative:**

**Evaluation Findings:**

Based on the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ) study in Pennsylvania 11/14/2007, it was determined that over a 3 year period, The ACJ Collaborative capacity effort generated impressive positive results including:

- Significantly lower recidivism rates among inmate participants;
- Similar service benefits across racial groups; and
- Successful reintegration into community life among a high majority of participants.

**Examples:**

1. Allegheny County is saving over \$5.3 million annually by the ACJ Collaborative serving 300 inmates per year;
2. The greatest cost-savings generated by ACJ Collaborative is in areas of public safety and reduced victimization Among county residents;
3. Cost-savings ratio is approximately 6 to 1 (i.e., for a dollar investment to the ACJ Collaborative, the cost-savings Return is approximately \$6);
4. At 12 months post-release the Collaborative inmates are achieving a significantly lower recidivism rate (i.e., 16.5%) than matched comparison group (i.e., 33.1%) -- the relative difference of 50% lower recidivism rate; and
5. In contrast to historical trends nationally and at ACJ, there were no statistically significant differences in the Recidivism rate between Black and White Collaborative inmate participants.