



Prison Ministry - Episcopal Diocese of Rochester

Supporting Central New York's Prisoners & Families

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Welcome to the January 2011 e-newsletter of the Prison Ministry Advisory Board of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester!

We offer this newsletter to readers monthly on an "as request" basis to highlight recent developments among the various ministries and agencies working with and through our members. In this issue we feature a group therapy program called "Houses of Healing" based on a book and videos by author Ms. Robin Carsarjin, and offered by Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry (RIJM) for both men and women in Monroe and Erie counties in Upstate New York.

"HOUSES OF HEALING" A THERAPEUTIC MINISTRY OF SPIRITUAL AND SELF-HEALING OFFERED BY ROCHESTER INTERFAITH JAIL MINISTRY

The "Houses of Healing" project ministers to incarcerated men and women at the Monroe County Correctional Facility and men in the Monroe County and Erie County reentry programs at Orleans State Prison.

Five years ago the Rev. Mark Steigler, as Executive Director of Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry (RIJM), urged some of the volunteers to look into the book, "Houses of Healing, a Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom" by Ms. Robin Carsarjin, published by Lionheart Press, 1995. In the book, the author detailed a program she had been using in Massachusetts' state prisons. The program sought to provide inmates with information on human nature and different ways of seeing things in order to promote their greater understanding and self-awareness. Using alternative ways of perceiving people and circumstances, it was argued, they could be empowered to choose peaceful, non-combative responses to life's challenging circumstances.



Several RIJM volunteers took Ms. Casarjin's book and the instructional videos she has produced and adapted the normal 12 week program into an 8 week series suitable for presentation to interested men and women serving sentences at the Monroe County Correctional Facility (MCF) in Brighton, NY. They have been offering the program regularly for the past four years - and over that time eight volunteers have been facilitators.

Currently members of the Prison Ministry Advisory Board of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, Bob Crystal and Dick Frey are heading up and presenting this program on a regular basis to the men and women in separate groups at MCF. They start with a one hour introduction. Then in subsequent weeks, they offer one hour sessions on such topics as understanding the influences that have shaped who we are, handling anger and grief, stress management techniques, and forgiveness of oneself and others. Each group numbers between 5-10 participants depending on the interest. Discussion with and among the participants is a key element to each group's success. Upon completion of the program a certificate is awarded each person. Based upon positive responses from those participating in the program, RIJM now provides each participant with his or her own copy of the book for the series at a cost to the organization of \$10 each.

A year ago, staff at Orleans Prison, having heard of the program being offered at the Monroe Correctional Facility, and of the positive responses for it, approached RIJM about offering a version of the program to interested men in the Orleans Prison as part of a special 90 day re-entry program recently created there. In

response, RIJM developed a modified four week series of two hour sessions each week to be used in this special program. That program has been offered in several cycles, and is also facilitated by Bob Crystal and Dick Frey.

All the volunteers involved in facilitating the "Houses of Healing" program, not only enjoy seeing participants gain new insights about themselves and the world, but are personally enriched by the self-knowledge they gain through facilitating these groups.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

For more information about [Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry](#), volunteering with this program, or for making a financial contribution toward the cost of books, contact Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry, C/O Robert Crystal, Church of the Ascension, 2 Riverside Street, Rochester, NY 14613, 585-254-6970, or crys24634@aol.com.

For more information about the [Lionheart Foundation](#), obtaining Houses of Healing books and videos, or about the author Ms. Robin Carsarjin: visit the website www.lionheart.org, e-mail questions@lionheart.org. or contact the Lionheart Foundation at P.O. Box 170115, Boston MA, 02117, phone 781-444-6667 (Voice), 781-444-6855 (FAX).

For more information about the Prison Ministry Advisory Board of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester and its many related ministries, visit our website, at www.prisonministry-edr.org.

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