



Prison Ministry - Episcopal Diocese of Rochester

Supporting Central New York's Prisoners & Families

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IN THIS ISSUE

[STEP BY STEP OF ROCHESTER - PROGRAMS AND AFTER-CARE FOR INCARCERATED WOMEN](#)

[ST. PHILIP'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH](#)

[STEP BY STEP STATISTICS](#)

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

Welcome to the March 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. This issue spotlights [Step by Step of Rochester](#), a non-profit organization helping women during and after incarceration, as well as those at risk of being incarcerated. You will read about their history, programs, statistics, and how you can support their work through volunteering and financial donations. Also featured is their support for a ministry for incarcerated women started by St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Belmont, New York which works at the Allegheny County Jail in Belmont.

STEP BY STEP OF ROCHESTER HELPING INCARCERATED WOMEN THROUGH HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT

Beginnings

[Step by Step of Rochester](#) was founded in 1992 by two women Pat Merle and Margy Mayk who were closely involved in helping women at risk in the Rochester area. Pat Merle, a social worker was, at the time, working in Child Protective Services began to see that her clients had enormous strengths that neither they nor the agencies involved in their lives seemed to recognize.

Pat began to search for a better way to work with women to help them capitalize on the resources they had but were unaware of. At the same time, Margy was running groups in spirituality with people in recovery. She loved working with the Twelve Steps and had a dream of offering her services to people who could not afford the programs she was involved in.



"Wings of Steel" by Jennifer Goetting

Both women decided to begin to work with women on welfare in inner-city Rochester. They developed a workshop called "Live Your Dreams" that focused on strengths rather than problems and began to offer it to groups of women at local agencies. When the opportunity arose to give this workshop in the local county correctional facility, they found this the perfect setting in which to help women discover their gifts and strengths. Pat and Margy recognized that incarcerated women have the time and energy to devote to looking at their lives and finding ways to grow. This led to the decision in 1996 that Step by Step would work exclusively with women who are incarcerated. As the program has grown, Step by Step has expanded to two correctional facilities and also offers transitional and preventive services to women.

Currently, Step by Step holds workshops in the Albion Correctional Facility in Albion, NY, and at the Monroe Correctional Facility in Brighton, NY. They also provide workshops on the outside at their headquarters at 228 South Plymouth Avenue in Rochester, NY and provide workshop curricula for workshops facilitated by volunteers and friends of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Belmont, NY which are held at the Allegheny County Jail in Belmont, NY.

The Step by Step Model

Step by Step fulfills its mission through the various programs it offers to incarcerated women and women on the outside. There are four basic principles around which all their programming is designed: **narrative theory**,

strength-based practice, working in groups and the use of creative activities.

Narrative theory - is used in their workshops and are designed to help women tell their stories through various activities that encourage this. Telling their story in a structured setting does two very important things: it gives women an opportunity to face the pain they have sealed off (usually with drugs) and it shows them that they are not alone in their pain.

Strength-based practice - focuses on strengths rather than problems. Women in prison are so overwhelmed with problems (high incidences of mental illness, violence, drug abuse, physical and sexual abuse, etc.) and so convinced they are worthless, that it is necessary to help them find the core of strength inside themselves before they can begin to face their problems.

Group work - is essential so that the listeners of each women's story can point out strengths to her, over and over again, until she claims them as her own.

Creativity - helps women to face the pain they have buried. Creative exercises help them to find the words to tell their stories since it is difficult for women who have been abused and beaten down from early childhood to believe they have anything to say. This is the beginning of their journey to finding their own voices and claiming their own power so they can rebuild their lives.

Step by Step workshops offers structured environment for learning and self-reflection. They provide a safe environment for discussing issues of concern and provide role models of women who are leading productive lives. The workshops incorporate self-esteem building and goal-setting into the curriculum.

Workshops for Women on the Outside - STRIDE

Support, Transition, Resources, Inner Discovery, and Events (STRIDE) workshops are offered at Step by Step headquarters, 228 South Plymouth Avenue in downtown Rochester. Workshops are held every Wednesday from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. Group activities focus on women's stories, discovering strengths. Beginning in July our parenting workshop will be offered to women at their facility; simultaneously, participants' children will be offered age-appropriate workshops centered on the themes of the women's workshops.

STEP BY STEP WORKING WITH ST. PHILIP'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN BELMONT NY IN MINISTRY TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

For several years volunteers from St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Belmont, NY headed by Gloria Lundberg, and with curricula provided by Step by Step of Rochester, have been ministering to women incarcerated at the Allegheny County Jail in Belmont, NY.

The program started several years ago, when there were so few women in the jail that there were no programs at all for them. This became the inspiration to provide a program for women at the jail. Since then, due to utilizing the jail for housing inmates from the entire region, the female population has greatly increased. Gloria and her volunteers have continued Step by Step workshops helping scores of women, and are now contemplating the possibility for post incarceration follow-up where requested.

Presently, they hold two workshops sequentially on an eight week basis produced by Step by Step - "**Choices**" and "**Women Courageous**".

"Choices" helps women define choices that they have made in the past and demonstrates that choices made for the future can positively impact their lives.

"Women Courageous" highlights acts of great courage of women in history, and relates them to the lives of the women participants, showing them they can become the person they want to be. Games, group building, and creative activities are a part of each workshop.

Certificates are given to the participants after four sessions so that people who are released prior to the completion of all eight sessions can still be recognized. A common theme of these workshops is to help women express the pain they have experienced in their lives in a safe, structured environment. Then they discover strengths that they have that can help them overcome their adversities and to achieve their dreams. Presently this ministry serves anywhere from 4 to a dozen women in each 8 week cycle.

STATISTICS ABOUT STEP BY STEP

Since its inception, over 4,000 women have participated in Step by Step workshops. Based on statistics gathered by the Department of Corrections in Albany, NY, two and three year recidivism outcomes for women who participated in Step by Step programs are one third less likely to re-offend than that for women statewide. For more details about these and other statistics for Step by Step you can view their website: www.stepbysteprochester.org.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

About [Step by Step of Rochester](http://www.stepbysteprochester.org) volunteering or to make a financial donation, or to sign up for their e-newsletter, visit their website at www.stepbysteprochester.org. This website is full of information including current workshops, resources, women's stories, and statistical outcomes. Step by Step of Rochester is located at 228 South Plymouth Avenue, Rochester, NY 14608. Phone: (585) 224-0763 voice, (585) 288-8026 fax. Email at: info@stepbysteprochester.org.

For more information about the ministry to incarcerated women at the Allegheny County Jail, contact Gloria Lundberg at glorialundberg@infoblvd.net.

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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