



Dismas Ministry
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A newsletter published by Dismas Ministry, a national Catholic outreach for prisoners, victims, their families, the released from prison, and the community. Dismas Ministry is registered as a nonprofit corporation in Wisconsin, and listed in the US Catholic Directory as a religious, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization. All gifts are tax deductible.



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Remember Me

Fall 2018

A national Catholic prison ministry

Bridges of Hope - National Catholic Prison Ministry Conference



*Dismas Ministry board chair Sr. Patricia Weidman, CSA,
and Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ*

We are grateful to everyone who participated in the 2018 National Catholic Prison Ministry Conference held in Milwaukee on October 12 and 13, and hosted by Dismas Ministry.

For those engaged in prison and jail ministry, it truly was a time to refresh and renew their commitment to serve women and men behind bars. With more than 200 people in attendance, it was a special time to learn from one another.

Our keynote speaker, Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ, is the author of *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*. She is known around the world for her tireless

work against the death penalty. *Dead Man Walking* ignited a national debate on capitol punishment and it inspired an Academy Award winning movie, a play, and an opera. Sr. Helen has spent 37 years in prison ministry, and continues to serve as a spiritual advisor to men on death row.

We were blessed to have six other amazing presenters who shared their expertise with us. Our featured speakers and the topics they covered in their presentations include:

Karen Clifton – *Restorative Justice*
Michael Siedlecki – *Parish Prison Ministry*
Wendy Tarr – *Advocacy and Criminal Justice Reform*
Barbara McPherson – *Servant Leadership – Answering the Call to Action*
Joshua Stancil and Curtis Gibson – *Re-Entry: An Insiders' Perspective*

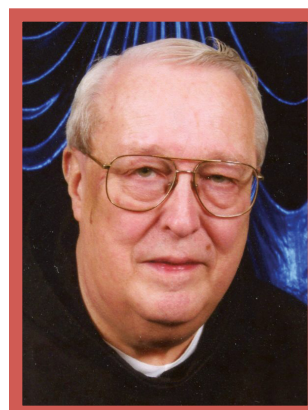
Thank you to all of the speakers for inspiring attendees as they continue on in their ministries.

"I appeal not to create walls but to build bridges. To not respond to evil with evil. To defeat evil with good, the offence with forgiveness."

Pope Francis



First Annual St. Dismas Award



During the conference Mass, the first annual **St. Dismas Award** for excellence in Catholic prison ministry was given posthumously by Dismas Ministry's board of directors to *Rev. Christian Reuter, OFM*, for his many years of service to the incarcerated. He is remembered for his joyful, unselfish, and tireless ministry on behalf of the imprisoned and the marginalized.

Fr. Chris had been scheduled to present at the Bridges of Hope national Catholic prison ministry conference featured in this newsletter, but died this summer on June 30, following complications from back surgery. He was 79.

He was a long-time promoter of pastoral care for prisoners, an advocate of prison reform, and his joyful, unselfish, and tireless ministry on behalf of the imprisoned and the marginalized was a true example of the Franciscan spirit.

Father Reuter and a number of lay and ordained prison ministers created *Our Brothers Keepers* of Southern Illinois, a re-entry project to assist returning citizens when they leave prisons. By the time of his passing, the group had established a job-training program and is looking for a place for people to stay just after being released as a re-entry house.

From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

*“For everything there is a season,
and a time for every purpose under heaven...” (Ecc. 3:1-8)*

As we concluded the 2018 National Catholic Prison Ministry Conference, held in Milwaukee on October 12 and 13, it was the peak of autumn with a spectacular display of red, orange, gold, and amber leaves. In the Midwest, the ever-changing landscape of fall foliage is brief, but lovely to behold before the cold, harsh winter begins.



Tyler Curtis,
Executive Director

The change in seasons is inevitable. It is a reminder of the need to adapt – to endings and beginnings. The change in seasons marks times of transformation.

We, at Dismas Ministry, were blessed to host the national conference, where more than 200 people from 35 states gathered in solidarity in their shared mission to serve those affected by incarceration. Our conference theme – Bridges of Hope – emphasized the ways in which those of us who minister to the imprisoned bring light where there is darkness. It was a time of sharing. It was a time of enrichment and fellowship. It was a time of renewal. And, it was a time to embrace the ministry to which each one of us is called.

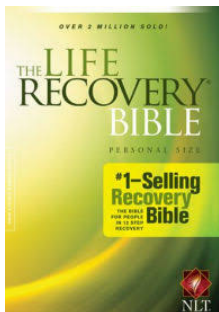
Each day, we share kindness and compassion with our brothers and sisters behind bars, and the formerly incarcerated. Ours is a ministry of presence. Those we serve are a gift in our lives because they, too, are children of God. Let us give hope to and learn from one another, for God’s abundant love and mercy is for all of us...every season of the year.

Please continue to partner with us in our commitment to serve those living on the margins. We need your prayers and financial gifts to support this important work of mercy. And, in the spirit of Thanksgiving, please be assured of our grateful prayers for you and your loved ones...today and always.

With gratitude and peace,
Tyler Curtis
Executive Director

#GIVINGTUESDAY™
November 27, 2018 is Giving Tuesday!

Please consider a donation to Dismas Ministry to meet its goal of providing **Life Recovery Bibles** to the incarcerated. Approximately 80% of them suffer from addiction problems. We receive ongoing requests for **Life Recovery Bibles**, based on the 12-step recovery model. Your monetary donation would allow us to bring the healing Word of God to those behind bars struggling to overcome their addiction.



To donate, go to: www.DismasMinistry.org/givingtuesday

The New Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition

In 2018, a new entity has been formed to enhance Catholic ministry to those incarcerated, detained, reentering society, as well as those affected by incarceration.

The Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition (CPMC) will serve as a hub network, a resource, and an advocate for ministers and chaplains who need on-going support to do their ministry.

As Catholics, there is also a need to be advocating legislatively, both locally and nationally, for the needs of those in prison, out of prison, doing the ministry, and the detained.

“The Coalition will include national Catholic organizations which presently provide resources to families and all those affected by incarceration/detention, such as Catholic Charities USA, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Knights of Malta, Jesuit Conference, and hopefully others,” said Karen Clifton, member of the executive committee, and founder and former executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network.

A key need within our Church is formation/certification of those who are ministering or are interested in ministering to those affected by incarceration. The National Association of Catholic Chaplains is part of CPMC’s formation committee, which is working to have a volunteer formation program available by May 2019. The goal is to create an on-line, free, or minimal cost program that is easily accessible. The hope is to also create materials for on-going support, and for those who are semi-professional ministers and professional ministers or chaplains.

The Coalition needs:

- National Catholic organizations ministering to the incarcerated/detained for steering committee
- National Catholic leaders who would provide diversity to the executive committee
- Catholic Ministry organizations for our best practices resource (in process)
- Topics for upcoming webinars
- FUNDING sources to make this entity a reality

Please email catholicpmc@gmail.com or call Karen Clifton at 713-823-9827 with any names, suggestions or contacts.

CATHOLIC PRISON MINISTRIES COALITION

WEBINAR



*Recognizing Trauma
in the Prisoner*

Maria Morrison and Fr. Dustin Feddon, PhD will host a discussion on recognizing and responding to trauma within the incarcerated/detained and being present to them in a compassionate way.

November 27, 2018
1:00pm EDT

Register at:
<https://goo.gl/forms/D34pNNiPtCkVNOes2>



A special thank you
to our conference
sponsors!

