



Churches Together in Westminster - Prisons Mission

Objective

To establish a realistic methodology to enable members of Churches Together in Westminster (CTiW) to practise their ministry to people in prisons. In future, each member church will have the opportunity to be “twinned” with a London prison.

Proposal

Member churches of different Christian traditions would be grouped into clusters and linked with the chaplaincy teams of each of the London prisons. Representatives of each cluster would meet with members of the chaplaincy team of the chosen prison to consider how they could contribute most usefully to and add value to the work of the teams. The purpose would be to listen, learn, serve and report back and aim to establish a reciprocal relationship between the prisons and each of the participating churches. It is intended that a member of the chaplaincy team would visit each member church annually to preach or to explain and discuss prison issues.

Background

The prison population of England & Wales has doubled in 20 years to c.85,000 men, women and children. This is extremely high by EU standards. At any time approximately 15-20,000 Londoners are remanded or serving custodial sentences. Many are detained far from home.

Within the London region of the Prison Service (National Offender Management Service) there are 14 prisons, of which eight are within Greater London: Belmarsh SE28, Brixton SW2, Feltham Middx (Young Offenders 10-17), Holloway N7 (women), Isis SE28 (on campus with Belmarsh), Pentonville N7, Wandsworth SW18, Wormwood Scrubs W12. These prisons hold up to 1,800 offenders and are major local employers.

Each prison has a chaplaincy team comprising full and part-time, ordained and lay chaplains of the main world faiths and Christian traditions and often complemented by volunteers. The role of these teams is to assist with services for worship and religious instruction, human relationships, parenting classes, befriend prisoners, help prisoners' families and arrange visits by external groups. Chaplains also play a part in the rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders, literacy and numeracy classes and other pastoral work.

Members of the public, including church attending Christians, know every little about life behind the walls of British prisons, despite the fact that people are sent to them in our name. Most of us know nothing of the experiences and aspirations of the offenders or the staff in the prisons. In addition to the value of the practical services identified by the chaplaincy teams and provided by member churches it would be very constructive for the congregations of these churches to have greater knowledge and understanding of prisons.

Prisons Mission – Aims

- To give service and to learn in exchange.
- A modest way for Christians to put their faith into action by reaching out to people in prisons.
- Creating a link between CTiW churches with one of the most marginalised groups in London, its prison population.

Further Information & Engagement

For further information or to engage with the pilot project, member churches and potential representatives are asked to contact John Plummer, johnplummer.audax@gmail.com, 020 7272 1639.

John Plummer
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