

## **Prison Ministry Program – Annual Report 2020**

Statement of Purpose: “To charge the Diocese of Arizona to minister to prisoners and their families (*during and post incarceration*), advocate for changes to the current prison system, and to mutually share God’s forgiving love.” The Diocesan Prison Ministry team currently has 17 active members and 4 interested parties that participate in meetings and events. These individuals represent 14 churches located throughout the Diocese. The team hosts a monthly teleconference call.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused several “in-person” prison ministries to be placed on temporary hold while the AZ Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Re-entry visitation suspension is in place, including Kairos retreats. After months of preparation, a worship team in Tucson, led by Rev. David Carlisle and Rev. Chris Ledyard, was poised to begin offering services at Wilmot Men’s Prison in April. We hope to be able to start services before the end of the year, depending on when the suspension is lifted and the availability of team members.

St. Peter’s Litchfield Park has also had to suspend worship services at Perryville Women’s Prison in March. The Bridges Re-entry organization formed by Rev. Gay Romack continues to expand services through grant programs. Currently Magdalene House West in Avondale has a full contingent of 6 women released from Perryville prison who have committed to spending two years there as they learn coping and technical skills as well as spiritual discipline. In September, the Diocese participated in a Showers of Kindness Hygiene Item Drive to benefit the residents of Magdalene House.

Sadly, Camp Genesis was cancelled this past summer along with all other camping programs at Chapel Rock. Scholarships for these children (ages 8-13) continue to be needed in order to fund all those who wish to attend camp in 2021. The first Camp Genesis Sunday in our Diocese will be celebrated on September 20<sup>th</sup>. The Camp Genesis Card Program currently has 17 churches participating in sending cards to the 23 children who attended in 2019. This has proven to be a popular ministry during the pandemic. Many of the children have written Chapel Rock and said how much they look forward to receiving cards each month and even save them!

The Women of Perryville Art Exhibits will begin again in September with a western-themed art show at St. Paul’s in Tombstone. The art show at a Tucson restaurant was so successful last year that the owner has invited us back again this fall and rotating artwork will be on display from Oct through Dec. Proceeds from art sales benefit the artists, providing much needed funds for family and personal support.

Bishop Reddall, Rev. Hunter Ruffin, Rev. Martha Seaman and Rev. Kim Crecca are involved in the Valley Interfaith Project task force that meets regularly with the Director of ADCRR and AZ Dept. of Health officials (including Dr. Cara Christ) to advocate for policies and procedures to be implemented within the AZ state-run facilities that will not only help protect the inmates and employees of ADCRR from the spread of COVID-19 but also the surrounding communities.

Beginning in January, Rev. Kim Crecca and a group of 3 family members of incarcerated loved ones have been laying the groundwork needed to start the AZ Inmate Friends and Families Association. Our group has grown to 8 individuals and hopes to go live to the public in Sept.

The Diocesan Prison Ministry team continues to work toward raising awareness about incarceration, reducing recidivism, facilitating successful re-entry for releasees, advocating for legislative reform, and serving the needs of loved ones affected by incarceration.

*Respectfully submitted by Rev. Kim Crecca, Convener, Diocesan Prison Ministry Program*