

8-24-11
Mindful Prisoner #11

Church in Prison is Hard

There is one English Language protestant church service and bible study at the prison chapel. Almost everyone has problems with something someone is saying or doing. Which is exactly what you would expect. There are hundreds of protestant denominations and major sub associations within those denominations. Since everyone one of us went to a different church it is any wonder that we cannot agree on what this on service should look, feel and sound like, much less be preaching.

I would be surprised if in fact there are any two people who would agree on all there points of theology and worship style. Those who like a more quiet reverent service are irritated by the clapping and shouting style of the Pentecostals. The Pentecostals find the silent sitting and listening crowd to be cold and depressing.

Then the content of the service. The theology of more fundamentalist looks to divide the good Christians from the "bad" so to not contaminate the committed. So homosexuals are demonized along with all manner of sinners. The more liberal find the demonization of homosexuals and judgmental attitudes toward each other as offensive.

Race is also an issue with most Pentecostals are black and many fundamentalists are white. These are the two biggest groups. There is a smaller group of mostly whites who are evangelicals but not Pentecostal nor fundamentalist. An even smaller group of liberals (non evangelical - National Council of Churches - "mainline").

The tension to split into groups are always there. If one group pushes to far the others stop coming. It is a very hard tight rope to walk for any Chaplin. I do not envy there job. the bottom line is both sides have to compromise. Some speakers will represent fundamentalist theology, some will be Pentecostal style worship, some will be evangelical but not either Pentecostal style nor fundamentalist theology. (Of course the liberals have to expect never to have their views respected.) :-). The trick is to get that balance and convince most of us to go along with it. Awareness of the needs of others can lead to compromise and lack of awareness will only perpetuate the problems of living together with others.

the mindful prisoner

PS Thanks ShadyX for my first comment + the song suggestion.

8-25-11

Mindful Prisoner #12

I Speak (#1?)

One of the common feelings of prison is being voiceless. No power to make yourself be heard. That is why I like the idea for the Blog. I am thinking about some prisoners in particular. And some also the loved ones of those prisoners. Sex related crimes. What is prison like for them? How should I prepare for coming here? What kind of issues do SOs need to work on to heal and not re-offend?

I think these questions should be regular topics for Mindful prisoner. I would encourage either those who are preparing to come to prison, or people whose loved ones are preparing for prison, to write in by comments or by using my mail address. I will respond to everyone. My focus will be on the social-psychological and spiritual dimensions of the issues. Remember this is a family friendly site, so write comments with that in mind. (Please write letters for anything that you think might be questionable.)

First a good website for those that have questions about whether or not they have a sexual addiction or not is

saa.org *saa-recovery.org*

There is plenty of good content for those struggling with all sorts of sexually related addictions (both legal and illegal behaviors).

Next to those who are preparing for prison (both SO and loved ones).

1st thing is get into both a local SAA program and find a therapist. Believe me if you are coming to prison you have some addictive behavior or you would have stopped it long ago before being detected. Also you will not receive much attention till the last 2 years of your prison sentence so you need to get on a program of mental health prior to prison. This will allow you to begin your healing and carry you through till the prison system has space for you. The reality is that SOs are flooding the federal system. SOs are the number one offense by far and there are tens of thousands waiting to be processed. This is like the first few years of the war on drugs, when 10s of thousands were put in prison but they did not have the resources to treat them.

I would encourage family members to get on prison talk to find other family members of felons. Also find a 12 step program geared toward family members of the addicted. These will give you support while you are dealing with consequences of your loved ones behavior (if you can afford a therapist - this is a good time to see one).

My primary message is that you all we get through this. It will be the hardest thing you have ever done, but you will make it. Please write and I will help any who want some help along this path. I will not have all the answers, but I will at least provide a virtual ear to listen to your concerns. Remember, family friendly posts only can be comments. All other writing needs to be done in the form of a snail mail letter.

Peace and Solidarity

The Mindful Prisoner