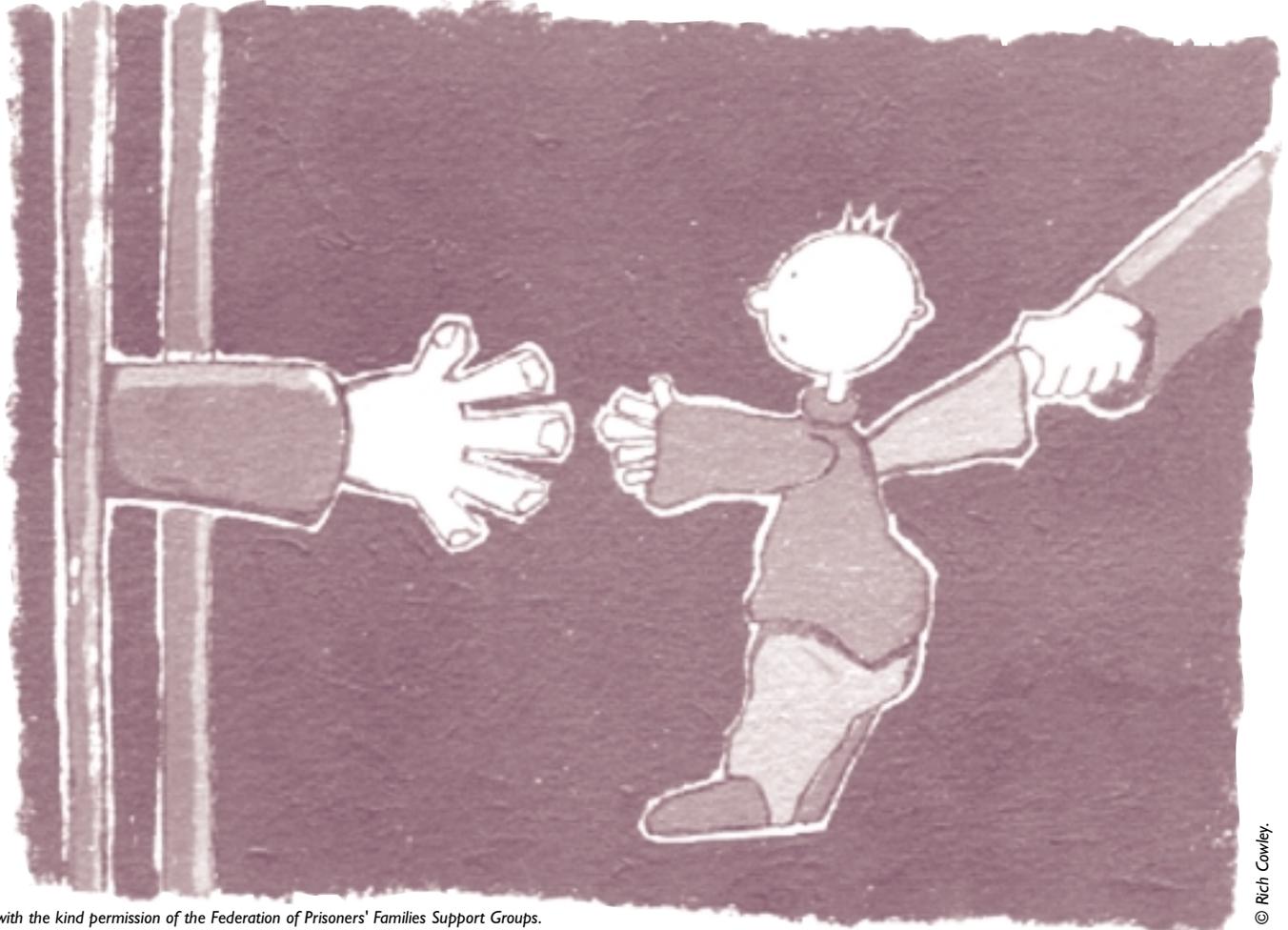


P R I S O N A N D F A M I L I E S



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EDITORIAL

They have been described as invisible – the families of prisoners. This newsletter seeks to give visibility to these forgotten victims and to encourage the Anglican Church and other Christians to further develop ministries to prisoners and their families. Partners and children, parents and relatives, are often stigmatised and placed in situations of great hardship through no fault of their own. They should not be forgotten. A recent UK Church report on prisons* underlined the lack of support for prisoners' families and asked the question "Is the Church the first or last place to which a family in trouble will turn?" Apart from the religious imperative to care for the less fortunate, families of prisoners need to be viewed as a positive resource, given the link between family ties and the reduced risk of prisoners reoffending. This would not only lessen the families' vulnerability, but would give the prisoner an improved chance of leading a law-abiding life on release.

*"Prisoners' Families, The Forgotten Victims" Lucy Gampell and Janet Harber, *Prisons; a Study in Vulnerability*, (Board for Social Responsibility, Church House Publishing 1999)

INTRODUCTION

What is it like to have your loved one, your family member incarcerated? It is an ultimate humiliation... it starts with an arrest, which often follows a violent act, sometimes known to the family, more often not known to them. A phone call in the night, a police officer at the door, a friend bringing bad news, thrusts the family into an unwanted relationship with the judicial system. And regardless of the relationship with the accused, the family is most often treated as if they were as guilty as the one detained.

Time passes very slowly for families of those in jail... visiting is severely limited, and usually takes place in a small booth, separated by a glass wall, using a telephone to talk. There is no privacy, and no place for the children to stay who cling to your lap, cry and want attention. Your family member is often asking for financial help to buy treats or necessities in jail, money you don't have.

In time a court appointed attorney gives you little information, and makes you wait for appointments. If your family member is released awaiting trial there are many meetings to attend, conferences with the attorney, so that jobs are disrupted, and money is tighter than usual.

All these negatives are magnified when the convicted family member goes to prison. Usually rejected and scorned by friends, the isolation is overwhelming. There's no one to talk to, no one who understands, and no one to give you reliable information about what is going on.

Assignment to a prison is not made in consideration of the location or needs of the family, it is at the convenience and meets the needs of the system. Further feelings of isolation, increased costs of communication and often breakdown of the relationship result in the early period of incarceration. Even the strongest marriages and relationships are strained to an unbelievable point, while many others result in alienation, separation, or divorce.

To a great extent, inmates adapt to life in prison in direct proportion to the success their families and loved ones are meeting on the 'outside'. And since families rarely can meet success on their own, this crisis time in their lives is a perfect time for loving and compassionate support.

Many church communities have learned about this special ministry, and adopted programmes of outreach, education and advocacy. People do not have to walk this terrible time in their lives alone. Their

needs are many: their coping skills inadequate, their finances in disarray, and friendships broken, yet they can and do respond to an out-reach which does not judge them, which provides help for their basic needs, and gives information (particularly about the prison and its many regulations) and support.

Across the world, desperate families are throwing food to loved ones over the fence of the prison (and risking their own freedom in the process), rocking crying children to sleep when they can't understand what happened to Daddy, and coping with angry youth, who often end up incarcerated themselves because there was no one there to help.

In Matthew's Gospel, our Lord commanded us to 'visit those in prison' and indeed while we visit them, we must also reach out to their families.



Practical Help: Symon of Cyrene Society

Matthew House of Hospitality and the Family Bus Service are two of the outreach programmes of the Simon of Cyrene Society, based in Monroe, Washington. The Society is dedicated to serving the families, friends and loved ones of those incarcerated, primarily in Washington State. The House offers childcare in the afternoons during visiting hours at the four Corrections facilities nearby. There is a clothing closet for women and children, an emergency food pantry and the programme also offers short-term overnight accommodation for visitors travelling a distance to visit.

In this picture, the young son of a prisoner plays in the Matthew House playroom while his mother visits Dad in prison.



SOUTH AFRICA

Within the Cape Diocese we have about thirty prisons and very few Anglicans ministering within them. This I believe to be a legacy of our Apartheid history, when access to ministry was hampered by the enmity existing between State and Church. This situation has now improved and we are in the process of addressing the lack of ministry.

There is still much to be done. Many prisoners do not receive any visitors. The number of visits allowed depends upon their status as prisoner, with some being only allowed non-contact visits. One of the reasons for the lack of visitation is the cost of transport and the distances that family members have to travel. We are hoping to be able to encourage parishioners to visit the prisons within their parish and to write letters as another form of ministry, as prisoners seldom receive any mail.

It is certainly true that when a prisoner is sentenced the entire family is punished financially, socially and emotionally. We often have a crowded room, rows of benches and with the noise level so high you cannot have a decent conversation. Here too is another opportunity, as volunteers could be available during visiting time to minister to the children and the partners, who often need a hug or a shoulder to cry on.

Only prisoners of a certain status are allowed to attend the funeral of a family member. When possible I have tried to organise a memorial service at the prison



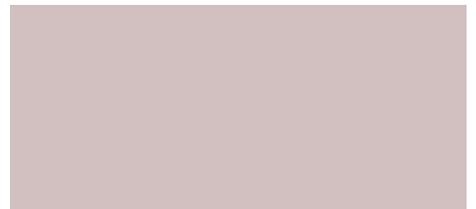
A scene from "Puppets in prison", Diepkloof Prison.

Photo: Gisèle Wulfsohn/Panos Pictures.

with permission to invite a few of the family. Such permission depends entirely upon the grace of the Head of the prison section. I would like to see this become a prisoner's 'right' rather than a 'privilege'.

There is still so much to be done. We, as a church, need to set up a network of structures for ministry within the prisons and for the care of the families. Please pray that the Lord will raise up willing

workers to be a blessing of reconciliation, to bind up the broken-hearted, and set the captive free.



NIGERIA

The Mothers' Union of Bassa Archdeaconry, who have been assigned the prison ministry in the Diocese, visited prison formations to preach the gospel and to present gifts to the inmates. Many inmates gave their lives to Jesus Christ. The Diocesan prison chaplain visits regularly for follow-up, counselling, preaching and prayers.

Most of the inmates have lost contact with their families as many gave fictitious names to the enforcement agencies at the time of their arrest, thinking that their names would be protected. Some families have blatantly refused to have contact with the inmates because of the disgrace their crimes and detention had brought on them. The Church has been doing a lot to reconcile both parties and, with these efforts, some families have access to their relations in detention.

Nigerian prisons enjoy very bad social stigma. The word "prisoner" in popular consciousness is often interpreted by even the enlightened man as crime, violence, brutality. Nigeria, like some African countries, is currently experiencing a wave of intense and disturbing political, economic and socio-cultural crises. These problems have been translated into increased psychological phenomena, crime and violence. There is drug abuse, corruption, armed robbery, ritual killings. I believe that these are not merely symptoms of environmental shock and mal-adaptation but signs of end time which calls for spiritual therapy. The situation is made worse by the slow pace of justice in our courts and the congestion in prisons. Also of importance is the poor funding, malnutrition, insufficient medical care and lack of basic data to sensitise and enable all concerned to resonate in sympathy with the prison conditions.

The Anglican Communion should realise the enormity of the Church's responsibility for helping such families by organising courses and lectures and providing funds and materials. The Church should induce and assist the Government to increase the feeding allowance for inmates, improving health care facilities and water provision. Human Rights Committees should be formed to promote human dignity, justice, enlightenment and enforcement of the inalienable rights of the human being. The Church should ensure that elements of restorative justice are institutionalised within the criminal justice system of developing countries.

ZAMBIA

What started as the burden of one prisoner and his family has grown into a Christian movement. After being discharged, a prisoner went back regularly to share God's word and encourage the friends he had left in prison. Over a period of time, Christian friends from local churches joined him in reaching the prisoners with the word of God and caring for prisoners and ex-prisoners. The group grew and with God's help, the **Prison Fellowship of Zambia**, which is a registered Society with the government of Zambia, was born. This Society is aware that many churches and priests have been endeavouring to reach the prisons with the word of God. Its work is to encourage them to work together. Its three-fold mission aims are:

1. To proclaim the Good News, make disciples and build up the church of Jesus Christ among prisoners.
2. To exhort and assist local churches in ministry to prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families.
3. To work for a just and effective criminal justice system.

Kabwe Prison.

Kabwe is 140 km north of the Capital City, Lusaka. It used to be a mining town but the mines closed down, leaving threequarters of 143, 000 people unemployed.

The prison has about 1000 prisoners, most of them on death row, some serving between 20–30 years, and others life imprisonment. My involvement in prison work came about when I was doing my normal pastoral visit in the Archdeaconry. I must confess that during my first few visits, I was scared mingling with hard-core criminals, but with God's protection,

I overcome the fear. If anything, I discovered that they were in fact "harmless". They welcomed me with open hands. Their request primarily centred on Bibles, reading materials, radios and medicines. Surprisingly enough, food came last! They were more concerned with spiritual food.

All of them regretted their offences. When they talked about the families they had left behind, I could see in their eyes that they were heart-broken. They were worried about their wives and children; whether the wives had remarried and children were still at school. Most of them asked whether I could visit their families. I have done so and some have re-established contact. Praise God.

The various churches who visit have formed a united unit of the prisoners for a fellowship where Bible study and prayers take place. Services of the different denominations are sometimes held. We have an organisation known as Theological Education by Extension in Zambia (TEEZ) which provides free reading materials for Bible studies, teaching, counselling and workshops. Those prisoners who can make it are encouraged to study these.

I have now moved, but I still visit the prison once a month. Scriptures such as Matthew 25: 31–46, Luke 4: 18–19, Isaiah 42: 1–3, keep my heart for these inmates, rejects of society. Though they are separated from their families, they need assurance that God is working and is looking after their families, for He is in control.



Common Room of Women's Prison, Uganda.

Photo: M. Scott-Joynt.

KENYA

If the father of a family is imprisoned, the whole family suffers because he is the head of the house and the breadwinner. Therefore at such a situation the wife does not remember what is to be done. For example:

- children miss their father and cannot go to school properly because of the school fees, uniforms etc;
- family cannot get basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, healthcare or medication.

In the case of the wife being imprisoned, children will lack material love, with no proper care in the family. They go to neighbours for help, they become workers in the home. For example, the elder children take the responsibility of the mother. Cases of pregnancy are high for the girls and the dropping out of school for boys to look after the cattle and farm work.

Churches visit the imprisoned and the left and do guidance and counselling. They help in the provision of some basic needs. Most of all prayers are offered to these families. The Church also prepares Youth rallies to educate and encourage the young people through the Brigades. Fathers' Associations encourage fathers and there are conferences for the mothers to help them bring up good families and to train and teach them on good morals and how they instill this to the family members.

MALAWI



Gangrenous feet of prisoners.

Photo: Seamus Murphy/Panos Pictures.

Maula Prison in Lilongwe has over 180 boys aged between 12 and 18. Others are serving prison sentences and have been imprisoned for minor offences like stealing food and fighting. Over-crowding, lack of water and hygienic facilities are putting the health of these children at risk. In many prisons there is evidence of increasing epidemic of scabies, lice and fleas. Many prisoners suffer from infected sores. It has been reported that some prisons have frequent suffocation of prisoners from overcrowding.

Children and adult prisoners are sometimes tortured and ill-treated in police custody. They are detained in inhuman and degrading conditions. They are mostly denied their right to fair trials and are sometimes unlawfully detained.

In respect of universal human rights, prisoners are human beings and have a right to life, protection, special care and assistance, regardless of race, colour, creed or ethnic origin. The best interest

of children in prisons should be the primary consideration. However, for the vast majority of children the reality is not rehabilitation and special care but punishment and tremendous marginalisation. When adult prisoners are serving their term of imprisonment, their families suffer greatly. There is no education material and financial support for their families. Their wealth and assets are destroyed by relatives.

St Mary's Anglican Church would like to establish a charitable institution for the welfare of prisoners. The main objective of the institution will be to provide personal and medical care, literacy, family management and leadership skills. We are soliciting funds for the commencement of the proposed project.

SUDAN

During the current war, thousands of people have been executed or have disappeared. The war has created a catastrophe of immense human cost as all parties flagrantly violate human rights and the humanitarian laws and principles governing armed conflict.

Many untried prisoners are in custody on remand, since imprisonment is used as a punishment alongside death, banishment and confiscation of property. This truly happens in the urban centres of both the northern and southern Sudan. Since 1989, Amnesty International has learned the names of political prisoners, but more remain unknown, including students, trade unionists, journalists, women. For

many, it is not known exactly where they are held, even their families are not told where they are or which authority is holding them.

The Church's role is reconciliation and reconstruction. We are to remember those in prison as if we were their fellow prisoners and visit them with encouragement and hope.

In April 1998, my father, the late Bishop Daniel Zindo, his chaplain, my sister and her three children plus our driver and six others were detained in the Central Africa Republic on our way to visit a

refugee camp. The allegation was that we had disobeyed the immigration rule which, in that African nation, says that, as a foreigner, you must report in every police station throughout your journey. We were ignorant of this, but had reported at the port of entry, and understood that in a democratic country, this meant you were free to travel. During our days of detention, we spent three days fasting and praying and were then set free with all our belongings which had been confiscated. Praise God.

GHANA

After much planning, the Accra Diocese Mothers' Union now visit a female prison in Accra. It all started several years ago when a member, employed in the Prison Service, suggested during a discussion how the Union could explore the possibility of a visit to the female prisoners to interact and have fellowship with them, to raise their morale and to bring them some hope of a better life for the future. At a set time the members arrive with items like bread, toiletries, fruits and used clothing (not worn out). These have recently been added as they have been found useful for those whose relations are not in a position to provide them when needed. As part of the preparation, the items are distributed among Branches in the Diocese to ensure a fair quantity of each item in the package that is sent.

The programme starts with prayers and Bible passages in which the inmates participate, all joining in sharing the word of God and using situations in life to be avoided if we are to follow in Christ's footsteps. We lay emphasis on the fact that Christ, by his death on the cross, blotted out our sins and invites us to follow him and make a fresh start. The air becomes tense as some break down and start crying with remorse for the situation in which they now find themselves. At this point those who wish to pour out their hearts are encouraged to do so and to let off steam. Then there is singing Gospel songs with clapping and dancing. Finally, the Diocesan President makes a presentation of the items to the Chief Officer of the prison, who expresses the appreciation of the inmates for the gifts and especially for the warm fellowship shared with them.

UGANDA



Prisoners in need of help, Masaka.

Photo: Buddu Social Development Association.

Consider a situation whereby someone is put in prison over a simple theft of matooka (banana) – a staple food here. He/she is father/mother to over eight children with six other family dependents in the Government prison where he/she is kept. He/she is considered a liability as he/she stretches the National Budget, being fed daily. The Government would opt to use the funds on maintaining a thief on other national issues. There are many people in prison – one cell has 700 inmates.

In prison, some develop extra bad habits, becoming core criminals. As poverty bites more, some people who are put in prison, especially first offenders, tend to like staying longer in prison as here they get food and security.

Prisoners' families have no help at all. It is this situation which Buddu Social Development Association strives to transform. Living in a remote area of Buddu, we lack many of the needed items to sustain our voluntary efforts. We would be glad to link up with any Christian Anglican organisations to help us with some basic needs ie clothing, blankets, gospel materials and some minimal support funds to help with treatment of prisoners' children and provide school fees. This will surely give some extra joy to the family of an imprisoned member.

PALESTINE

Oftentimes, images of Palestinian political prisoners focus exclusively on either their campaign for release from Israeli jails or public demonstrations promoting this end. Too often ignored are the effects this incarceration inflicts upon the prisoners' families. For every prisoner, there is a wife, husband, father, mother, or children, who bear the consequences of their loved one's detention, torture, and eventual re-entrance into an unfamiliar world. But these effects do not end with psychological trauma and adjustment; these families become prisoners themselves, chained to their homes and towns by Israeli security measures.

As Khaled Bitrawi, Director of the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners in Ramallah, notes, the prisoner's reintegration into society and into his/her own family structure is a difficult transition, resulting from psychological and physical

trauma. He or she is accustomed to an institutionalised life, expectant of daily, systematic violence and removed from regular family interaction. Cultural norms regarding emotional expression among ex prisoners (predominantly men) often hinder the prisoners' involvement in counselling and psychiatric programmes. The prisoner's family unit may be functioning differently, as the mother has assumed greater responsibility and authority during the husband's incarceration. Again, cultural norms regarding paternal/maternal roles may generate feelings of inadequacy and bitterness in the returning prisoner.

The prisoner's dehumanisation is a singular tragedy, and yet what is generally left unaccounted for is the collective punishment imposed upon the prisoner's family by the Israeli authorities, before, during and after his/her confinement. The

family's prison sentence may involve the demolition or sealing off of their home. They may also be discriminated against when applying for family reunification. In the case of Khaled Bitrawi, following his release, Israeli officials refused for ten years to grant family reunification to his wife, and his children were long refused residency rights. The entire family is punished for the alleged actions of one of its members.

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre prays for Palestinian and Arab prisoners who continue to languish in Israeli jails, as well as all political prisoners world wide suffering from abuse and inhumanity.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Women gaol'd in the Dominican Republic.

Photo: Larry Boyd/Christian Aid.

Louis was at home when four thieves broke into his house and threatened him with machetes. He chased them out of his home with his own machete and they were all arrested by the police. The four Dominicans were released and Louis was detained in prison without trial and no date for release.

Louis, a migrant Haitian worker, lived with his family in the Dominican Republic. His story was told by a delegation of British and Irish churches who went to the country and visited the prisons where Christian Aid partner CODIHA (the Committee for the Defence of Haitian Rights) works with Haitians and Dominico-Haitians.

The international community knows little of the plight of many Haitians and Dominico-Haitians living in the Dominican Republic and in particular of those, like Louis, who end up in Dominican jails. The Dominican Republic is famous for white stretches of sandy beach and blue skies. Very few tourists will see the reality of racism and racial issues which are so deeply embedded in the country's economic, social and political structures.

The context of racism in the Dominican Republic is crucial to an understanding of the situation faced by Haitians in prison. Socio-economic conditions in Haiti fuel the migration of Haitians across the border to find work on the sugar cane plantations or in the construction industry. Many settle in the Dominican Republic and it is estimated that 500,000 Dominico-Haitians and Haitians live there.

Whilst it would be unjust to accuse all Dominicans of racist attitudes, a large percentage consider race to be an

important issue. Dozens of different racial groups are used to designate every shade of skin colour and many Dominicans will go to great lengths to deny their own African heritage. Everything Haitian, and associated with African identity, is viewed with disdain. This sentiment, combined with an irrational fear that Haitians pose a constant threat to Dominican sovereignty, and a belief that they bring AIDS and malaria and devious religious practices to the country, finds expression in racist attitudes towards Haitian and Dominico-Haitian immigrants and settlers.

Against this backdrop, Louis' experience starts to make sense. With judges who do not consider Haitian prisoners as priority cases and without any legal representation or communication with the outside world, detainees can wait for years before having court hearings. Over half of the Haitian prisoners whom the church delegation met had never gone through any legal process. Many had never seen a lawyer nor knew what they were charged with.

CODIHA represents these forgotten prisoners in the courts of law; reduces the possibility of sentences based on discriminatory and/or false accusations; speeds up the hearing process which fixes sentences for crimes committed; and, when necessary, pays the judicial fee for their acquittal. In this way they have helped hundreds of Haitians and Dominico-Haitians who would otherwise be left in the prisons without hope of ever being released.

HONG KONG

One of the greatest punishments that can be inflicted on a person is to separate them from their loved ones. In many parts of the world, the prison system is criticised as being too comfortable for the prisoners. Many people want those who are in prison to be "properly" punished and deprived of any comfort for their term of sentence. What these critics of the system do not realise is that even with soft chairs, beds with mattresses and colour television, most prisoners are deeply unhappy because they are taken away from their family and their community. In this sense also there is double punishment inflicted on the inmates, because not only are they separated from their families, but their families are separated from them.

When I asked a group of prisoners in one of the institutions that I visit here in Hong Kong, what the impact of their prison sentence was on their families, one Nigerian inmate replied that it forced his family into destitution. This highlights the fact that many adult males who are incarcerated are the major bread-winners. In countries where there is little or no social security provided by the Government, such as in Hong Kong, family members are forced to find employment even when old or in poor health or with young children to care for.

Social stigma is also a major concern not only for the prisoners themselves, when they are released, but also for their families. Hong Kong is a society which has a very low regard for prisoners, and little consideration is given to the circumstances which lead people to commit crimes. A double social stigma is attached here because most prison inmates are members of triad organisations which are also deeply frowned upon by the wider community. As a result, many prisoners are disowned by their families who fear that if others know that they have a family member in prison they too will be forced to become social outcasts.

There is also often a serious time lag in relation to family news. Several prisoners have found out about the death of loved ones long after the event. This adds further to the grief experienced by the prisoner who commonly suffer from guilt in relation to their family, particularly parents, for the suffering they have caused them.

Separation, I believe, is the greatest punishment that is inflicted on inmates. Regardless of how comfortable a prison might appear, it still causes painful separations for both inmates and their family members.

PAKISTAN



Eating oranges in the cold weather, girls' hostel, Sialkot.

At our girls' hostel in Sialkot, Pakistan we have different experiences of prisons and families. Here are some examples of able students who were not able to continue their studies because of the imprisonment of a member of their family.

Zabida's father worked in the Middle East. He sent generous money to her mother and grandmother with whom the family stayed while he was away. But tricked by someone, or for some reason the truth of which may never be known to the family, he was thrown into jail, with no trial, no defence and no plea. Remittances stopped coming. Mother and grandmother did menial and despised cleaning jobs and gleaned the wheat fields to keep the children fed. Zabida was clever at school but could attend only with increasing difficulty. She came to the hostel, studied hard and passed her Matriculation examination. She was ready to go into nursing. Then came what for her was the biggest gift and success. Her father returned to them, a free man again. He looked surprisingly prosperous for one who had languished in jail, had gold fillings in his teeth and was of normal weight. His mother, wife and daughter were all just skin and bone. Rejoicing in the family kept them from thinking about Zabida, so she missed the chance of getting into training. They just could not get around to making any effort on her behalf and did not let anyone else do so either. The head of the family is present so no one else can make decisions. Zabida was better off when her father was in prison, in spite of all the deprivation the family suffered, because

they all worked to overcome the hardships and to help the children get on. Now she is frustrated, cannot go for training for further studies, because her father is there and is not interested.

Olga was in the hostel for High Schools, as there was no school near her home. She sat her Matric and was on holiday at home awaiting the result. It came to the school and she had passed. But she did not come to find out. We made enquiries and found that the whole family had disappeared from the village. Olga's father and some of his brothers and nephews had been thrown into jail on charges under the Blasphemy Act. The rest of the family had had to leave the village and were in hiding and constantly moving. Two months later, a relative came and took her result. But she had not been able to return here to study. She and her family are in hiding, on the run from injustice.

What does prison mean to families? Separation; deprivation; over-compensation and its dangers; the challenge to overcome and survive anyway. The Church has supported the girls as far as the situation has allowed. But the girls will continue to suffer because their advancement has a low priority when the family is in distress. Such cases are to be found all over the country, in increasing numbers, and the sufferers are the children, the next generation of the Church.

AUSTRALIA

MU Australia have always shown a keen interest in the work of our prison chaplains, supporting them financially, but recently we were asked to extend this help by providing one-to-one support to a young mother and her children. She never had any visitors as her family live overseas and her husband was also in prison. The children hardly ever saw any other children except those occasionally visiting the jail at weekends.

One MU member, who had experience of working with children at risk, took up the challenge. She visited monthly, but during the week, to make the mother feel special and so quality time could be given to the children. The value of special one-to-one relationships like this cannot be measured. At first, the mother was wary of help but she loved her children dearly and wanted the best for them. But she was too depressed to find the energy to play and stimulate them, and had become aggressive when others had offered suggestions on her parenting. The TV had often become the major carer. Slowly, and with a lot of laughter, she learned to have more confidence in herself. She read to the children more, they sat down and ate together and with much perseverance finally found a part-time place for them in a pre-school outside the jail where they could mix with other children. They were extremely shy at first and so intimidated would not even eat with the other children, but slowly blossomed. She even used this free time to complete the dreaded parenting course. Her confidence grew as she saw the benefits to her children.

With lots of positive input and consistency, a firm bond had formed between her and her mentor. As she prepares for her release, she still has many fears and uncertainties for the future, not the least being her relationship with her husband who now is almost a stranger. But she has grown so much, being prepared to listen and work difficulties through without expecting immediate solutions.

Life is very hard for women with children in the prison system. They have to be careful of every word they say or thing they do in the care of their children and are very wary about sharing their deepest concerns for fear it will get back to the authorities and they will be seen as a bad mother. Often because of their past they feel they are bad mothers and the pressure to continually prove themselves leads to self-doubt and depression.

Having someone who believes in them, loves them unconditionally and affirms the good things they do can make a world of difference. Just quietly trying to show them Christ's love by being consistent and faithful in visiting alongside them often "sets them free" before their prison term is finished.

Article from MU Sydney.

INDIA

When Ramar was 12 years old his uncle was sent to jail for killing Ramar's father over a property dispute. They were hard times for the Ramar's mother and brothers; they eked out a living on the land and the boys were not sent to school. When the uncle was released, he persecuted Ramar and his brothers, seeing them as the cause of his imprisonment. They decided they could not live like this and killed their uncle. Caught and sentenced for life, they had to sell most of their properties to pay the court fee. The High Court eventually confirmed the sentence and they are now in Central Jail Madurai.

Ramar is now 48 years old. He has five daughters and one son. The family suffers from lack of protection as there are five girls. Two of them have been forcibly married and another is a coolie. Ramar feels very sorry for his past deed which now has brought his family to a pitiable condition. He was employing at least ten people in the past to work in the field. Now his family waits for the next meal. Though he feels happy that he will be released in ten and a half years for his good conduct, he is terrified about his future. He does not have the strength he had to work, he fears whether a "lifer" could find a job. His relatives did not help his family when he was in jail. How come they would help him on his release?

Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary Ministry to Prisoners

Ramar is just one example of a prisoner and his family helped by the Seminary.

Among many other activities, this Ministry seeks to take children of prisoners away to boarding homes. Then they face the hostile environment and ostracisation only during vacations. Help is given where possible to wives, bereft of



The ordination of the repentant murderer.

their husbands' earnings, with small self-employment schemes such as the purchase of a wet rice grinder to produce flour, or of a sewing machine.

Once a year, a family reunion for parole prisoners is held. Recently, some 25 families spent a whole weekend in the seminary having fun, some Gospel input and discussions over problems faced.



Karimnagar

One important story is that of a murderer, who with help from the Bishop of Karimnagar, changed into a follower of God. Jailed in 1983 for killing atrocities, this man, a member of a militant group, was sentenced to the gallows, with this being changed to life imprisonment. In

1995, he was miraculously set free for good behaviour. During his 12 years rigorous imprisonment, he repented of atrocities and accepted Jesus Christ with total dedication to His service. The Bishop, seeing his dedication, deputed him for pastor's training at Andhra Christian Theological College, Secunderabad. His wife and relatives have also accepted Jesus Christ as their personal saviour. Now he is undergoing pastor's training along with his wife and children.

In October 1999, he was ordained as a deacon by the Bishop in a special service. Let all us pray for his successful ministry.



URUGUAY

In Uruguay, there are about 4000 citizens behind bars at any one time. Of these about 100 are women and they are kept in a separate prison in Montevideo. Children up to the age of eight may live with their mothers in prison at night. In the day, they go to day-care centres. The mothers, many of whom work outside prison and return at night, have the right to buy beds and fabrics and make their cells as homely as possible. There are programmes so the mothers can learn about childcare, to sew and cook and how to operate computers – tasks that can optimise the lives of their offspring.

My work is in the largest men's prison (1900 men squeezed into a space built for 1000). Most of the prisoners are between the ages of 18 and 25. The longest sentence, for multiple homicide, is 30

years. So all know they are going to get out eventually. Although the facilities are poor, the food atrocious, and there is very little opportunity to work or continue education, there is something much more humane than in some other prison systems. Families and friends are allowed to visit up to four days a week. None of the prisoners wear uniforms. They rely on their families to bring them clothing and also nourishing food. Then they pull up chairs to crude concrete tables covered in wool blankets and share meals together in the patio outdoors or in the various visiting salons. Guards don't stand around with rifles and mean looks watching everything.

However six months ago there was a terrible riot where four public defenders were taken hostage and ten guards were

injured. Since then, none of the social workers or other officials will risk going into the cell blocks. So I am sort of a freak because I go behind bars to be with "mis muchachos." I trust them and they trust me. God sends me there, what else can I do? The guys know I am there for them.

About four times a year, I am allowed to sponsor special programmes or "fiestas" for the children and families of prisoners. Toys are purchased and balloons and we've even been able to have soda pop and hot dogs. Dull walls are painted with cartoon characters by the prisoners. So much artistic talent is wasted behind bars. There is music, Uruguayan style (lots of drums, no melody) and a general uplift of spirit that one doesn't see in other prisons. Only the wire fences remind us we are locked in. I take photographs of



Prisoners from the Theatre Group with authoress Mercedes Reia and Revd. Audrey.

the families and give them copies for the prisoner and his family.

For Mother's Day this year, a group of 20 prisoners in the minimum security cellblock organised a production of a major Uruguayan play. It was one of the most exciting moments because men who never crossed a stage found an ability to act within. This first time event has received incredible coverage by the news media, and now these men have a chance to continue in the acting field. The authorities have been very generous in allowing the press to come see the production. Now a play for children

written by one of the older prisoners is in preparation for Dia de Ninos in August.

When I return home after visiting the prison, my notebook is full of mothers to call. I call many girlfriends when relationships have been ruptured and try to encourage them to give the guy another chance. It's not easy for the poor families to afford the buses to Com.Car. several times a week. It takes hours to get there because it is at the farthest edge of the city.

Most important is the fantastic relationship I have been allowed to have

with the prison warden and his staff. Because of them, I am able to be like family to the boys. I try to find them jobs when they are finally freed, and let them know we have a special place they can always go for encouragement, that is in our cathedral, or for a meal in our long-running soup kitchen.

My main concern is for the boys who have no families, and consequently no where to go. Most were ragamuffins on the streets and have no habit of work. By whatever method, I hope to raise enough funds and interest to set up a "halfway house" where prisoners with no place to go can live once they are free. There is no parole system. There is no follow-up by social workers. Once they are out, they are out. With a halfway house, they would have a place to sleep, eat and get their act together for a few months until they can find a job. In this economically tough nation where there is a disastrous lack of jobs of any sort and a lack of interest in the population and most churches to improve life for the poor, I feel I bang my head against a concrete wall. But one of these days someone will listen and hopefully another heart will open. I count on God to do that.

CANADA

You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants... it shall be a jubilee year for you... and each of you shall return to your own family (Lev.25.10)

The **Jubilee vision** is first articulated in Leviticus 25. All the children of God are to be freed from prison, poverty and oppression. They are all to be free to return home to their own places and families and to be given the resources to make a fresh start. Jesus comes to fulfil the Jubilee vision. At the beginning of his ministry, he proclaims the year of the Lord's favour and demands freedom for the prisoners so that they can return to their families. (Luke 4)

It is now a time of jubilee and it is fitting that we should look at the implications for our work with prisoners, and especially for their families, in the light of this vision. It is obvious, to those of us who work within the criminal justice system, that often the courts and prisons are devastating to families. A few examples from my experiences of the past year:

- a nursing mother forcibly separated from her new-born child to go to gaol
- a husband and wife, desperate for

reconciliation after an episode of family violence, but unable to do so because of court orders forbidding association

- a gaol sentence causing a married man to lose his job and depriving his family of his financial support, thus forcing them from their home and into welfare.

If the Jubilee vision calls for freedom and reconciliation, it is certainly hard to find in these stories.

How can the criminal justice system become more family-centred? In the **short-term** we need to develop community-based alternatives to incarceration such as:

- **Restorative justice** approaches that work towards restoring right relationships among people. Examples include victim-offender reconciliation programmes, family conferencing and meaningful community service orders.
- Expanding innovative **new treatment approaches** such as multi-systemic family therapies.
- Vigorous and **early intervention** in situations of domestic violence with referrals to helpers trained to defuse anger and effect more amicable solutions.

Over **the long-term** we need to

advocate for biblical justice amongst us:

- affordable housing
- a just distribution of goods and resources in our societies
- work that is fairly compensated
- family-centred social policies such as maternity benefits and affordable day-care

Finally, a true visionary approach growing out of the Jubilee vision would call for an amnesty for prisoners and prison abolition.

Just over thirteen years ago, I entered a Canadian prison for the first time. Young and wide-eyed, a first year University student, I had no way of knowing the Institution would become my second home. Three years later, I married my husband – a man doing a life sentence for a murder he did not commit. The next six years were full of loneliness, isolation and emotional stress. As difficult as this experience was, there were many things I did not have to cope with; the arrest, the trial, the public condemnation, the loss of children's fathers and the responsibility of picking up the pieces and carrying on.

I, at least, had been a volunteer, and had some idea of what to expect.

As women supporting a loved one in prison, we are in a unique situation. We tend to take on a nurturing role, even more so than usual, and often neglect to take care of ourselves. We are frequently isolated from our friends, families, co-workers, and society as well as those behind bars.

Eight years later, I found myself at a meeting of women who were in the same situation. Circle of Hope is a group for women who are currently supporting (or have in the past) a loved one in prison. It offers women the opportunity to share their experiences, practical advice, information and resources. The members of the group encourage a spirit of self-care and self-empowerment in a safe and friendly environment. Sharing their experience, women are able to offer compassionate insight and practical assistance to others with loved ones who are incarcerated. The group offers an opportunity for further volunteer involvement for those who wish to study or work on aspects of advocacy and public education with respect to the Canadian penal system.

Circle of Hope is a programme of JustUs, a spiritually based, non-profit charitable organisation supported in part by the Anglican Diocese of Toronto. JustUs works to eliminate fear and prejudice by creating relationships among inmates, ex-inmates, their families and the larger community.

By Michele Sauve

USA

Finding a new way to address our criminal justice system is a challenge to our nation. We are watching a terrible spectacle. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent to warehouse people. We have all heard the statistics of expenditures on building prisons that outstrip spending on education. Private entrepreneurs are taking advantage of this mushrooming industry. There is money to be made and criminal justice is not just about punishment any more. It is about profits as well.

Jesus says that we are to love one another, even our enemies and those who do us harm. The biblical passage (Matthew 5: 38-9; 43-44) in which Jesus replaces the old law of an eye for an eye with a command of love, goes to the nub of the issue. The standard of our society's response to criminal justice today is in retribution or retributive justice. This approach embraces an eye for an eye. And it leads to the massive expenditure of funds being spent for incarceration

without regard for ministries of reconciliation and healing. The new movement, which is about restoration or restorative justice, points us in the direction of love, including those who have done us harm. Make no mistake. That harm is sometimes devastating and tests the human spirit almost beyond its endurance. But it is still our Christian vocation.

What encourages me about restorative justice is that it does not seek to divide the rights of the offender from the rights of the victims. Before, in one scenario, the rights of the victims seemed to be ignored in favour of the offender and, in the other, revenge was sought for the victim. Neither has ever been satisfactory.

In retributive justice, the state punishes the offender on behalf of the people, including the victims. But restorative justice seeks to heal relationships between the offender and the victim and



Samson breaking his chains. Paper cut, Amity Centre, China.

with society in general. It does not mean the offender goes unpunished or is less punished than he or she should be. Forgiveness follows justice. But rather the offender is given the chance to make peace with his or her soul through reconciliation with the victim or victims. Nor does restorative justice mean that victims are without compensation. But instead of revenge, they are given the chance to forgive.

I am always dismayed to see some families of a loved one murdered waiting in a kind of tortured hell for the offender to be executed. They seem to believe that revenge, an eye for an eye, will somehow heal them. And it can never really be so. Revenge can feel good, but it is a false salvation. Forgiveness and reconciliation that culminate in healing are the true marks of salvation.

Not all efforts in restorative justice will succeed any more than all relationships, in daily lives succeed. But I do believe that if we are able to move from a criminal justice system that has retribution as its purpose to one that restores relationships, we will be able to see a day when we can put the prison-makers out of business.

(edited address by the Rt Revd Charles

Way Home Programme: Delaware

This is a programme designed to help ex-offenders make a successful transition back into the community. It grew from a Bible study held in a local prison. A priest encouraged a small volunteer group from St Martha's church in Bethany Beach to become interested in prison ministry. They came to realise that help is needed during a person's vulnerable period after release from prison. They organised the **Way Home** programme with the help of the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware and other agencies.

The goal of the programme is to reduce the rate of recidivism and to help those who are participating to become productive members of the community. It provides help with housing, finding jobs, transportation and support services in the community. Community support is built through church and civic organisations as well as through the efforts of concerned individuals who believe in helping others to get a second chance. Everyone benefits. In Delaware some 70% of those released from prison eventually go back for another offence. The approximate cost per prison inmate is \$22,000 per year, not to mention the cost to society. Crime hurts victims and their families, offenders and their families, and society as a whole.

Outreach activities of the programme include:

- **Welcome baskets.** Needs and clothing sizes are determined before the participant is released, and congregations are invited to sign up for different needs and fill the basket. This is a wonderful first sign of forgiveness and reconciliation on the part of the community,
- **Mentors.** Many of our participants are men aged 30 to 40 who have never had a supportive male role model in their lives. Mentors are needed!
- **Literacy volunteers.** Reading problems are common in a prison setting. Volunteers can help participants acquire literacy skills, making a real difference to their lives.
- **Bible Study** in the Chapel at the Sussex Correctional Institution. An ecumenical group enjoys a monthly clergy and lay-led study in the prison.

Mothers Union, Wales: Children's Play Area

In 1990, the Governor of Swansea Prison agreed to the chaplain's request for a playroom within the visiting room. The prisoners painted a partitioned-off area, equipment was donated and a beautifully decorated haven was set up for the children. Over 100 volunteers were recruited, mainly through the Mothers' Union.

When a new prison wing was recently built, a purpose-built visiting room was included on the ground floor. We now have a good-sized area, with a low wall round it and an open entrance. The area has to be visible to the prisoners and visitors, as the parents remain responsible for their children. We are there to care for the children if the parents wish to use the play area. In doing this we are trying to follow Jesus' commands in Matthew 25: 35-40. As Mothers' Union members we are also trying to uphold our objectives which seek to protect children and to help those whose family life has fallen into adversity.

What greater trauma is there than the breaking-up of family life by an errant partner? It affects them all. The children suffer – perhaps taunted at school. They miss their Dad and find themselves in a one-parent family. The mother has her problems: grief at the loss of a partner, having to cope alone, perhaps feeling guilty and ashamed; probably also with financial worries. Maybe she feels anger at her partner and sometimes this can be transferred to the children. It is hard for them all, so when visiting time comes around there is a lot to discuss and, with the children safely playing in the play area, the parents can have proper time together.

The children are beautiful. The ages range from babies to teenagers. We try to give them individual attention, listening to them and being completely non-judgmental. This is important. Most of the children are quite happy to come to us. We hope that they find some love and caring in the play area. Some of them have not a lot going for them. We see the difference between the children: some are quiet and withdrawn, some are noisy, some are bossy, but all loveable. There is the eight-year-old lad, who on learning that I did not have a video said "Would you like one? Dad has lots in his attic"; or the little boy who loves his Dad so much he wants to follow in his footsteps and be a "robber" when he grows up.

We are greatly encouraged by the Governor, his staff and the prison chaplain; their response to us is excellent. The project is running well, and with God's help, I hope it will run for many years to come.



Writing home

Photo: Mike Grieve.

Women in prison

In July 1999 the Catholic Agency for Social Concern (CASC) launched its Jubilee report on Women in Prison at an ecumenical conference in London. The report had grown out of two concerns; firstly, to explore ways in which the Jubilee message, which talks of 'the opening of the prison to those who are bound', could be given substance in today's world. Secondly, to address growing unease in the Catholic community about the recent steep rise in the numbers of women in prison – 3,066 by December 1998 – and the negative consequences for the women's children.

Most women in prison are serving sentences for non-violent offences, and present little security risk; many have considerable personal problems, such as unemployment, addictions, abusive backgrounds and debt, which have contributed to their involvement with crime. It has been estimated that nearly two-thirds of women in prison are mothers, with the majority having at least one child aged under 16. Women prisoners are usually the primary carers of their children, and imprisonment therefore has a greater impact on their families. The female prison population is, by comparison with the male, relatively small but growing and so women's prisons are more geographically dispersed.

In recent years, politicians and the judiciary have come under pressure to be "tough on crime" and this has been reflected in a growing use of custodial sentences. However, research evidence suggests prison doesn't work: the most successful forms of community sentences can reduce re-offending more effectively than prison, whilst maintaining the family and community ties of offenders. Whilst imprisonment will always be needed for the most dangerous or persistent offenders, there is scope for greater use of non-custodial sentences in particular for women and young offenders.

What is the role of Christians in this situation? The report argues that criminal justice is an important and sometimes

neglected area of concern for Christians and for all men and women of good will. Christians can play an important role in supporting women and their families both during prison sentences and after release. There is also important preventive work to be done combating the poverty, social exclusion and racism which so often contribute to crime. And, as part of our Jubilee message, we have a particular responsibility to seek reconciliation between the offender, the victim and society. The report makes 12 recommendations to address this situation, which are now being followed up by an

YMCA

Set up in 1844 to help young apprentices alone in London, today the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) is the biggest youth and community organisation in Britain and one of the world's largest Christian charities. As part of an International Movement with 30 million members and volunteers worldwide, we also work closely with YMCAs overseas.

In 1994, the YMCA was invited to provide a programme of activities with the Lancaster Farms Young Offenders Institution to complement what was already offered by prison staff. This resulted in a programme, piloted in the North of England, and now being established throughout the country.

Many YMCAs have been involved in work with young offenders for many years. The distinction is that **Partnerships in Prisons** intervenes "on the inside" at any time during the detention of a young person in order to build relationships that lead to the availability of continued support upon release. Young people are often not imprisoned near to the place in which they live. They can be moved around for a variety of reasons and most Young Offenders Institutions have large catchment areas. The work that has been established

confirms that relationships created on the inside provide the basis of trusting and supportive relationships on the outside. It is this support that really makes a difference in the early days of release when there may be a desire to establish a new pattern of life but there is significant pressure from previous adversaries to "re-connect" with them.

Asylum-seeking Families

Increasing numbers of asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom are being detained on arrival. Families with young children may now be detained in two detention centres. This worries children's charities and refugee organisations. Asylum-seeking children are poorly protected in the United Kingdom. When the UK signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a reservation was entered. As a result, if there is a conflict between the rights of the child and immigration law, then immigration law prevails rather than the best interests of the child.

The Home Office argues that it is better to detain children together with their parents than to put the children into care when the parents are detained. Perhaps, but why detain the parents? The UK detains more asylum seekers, with fewer judicial safeguards, and for longer periods, than any other Western European country.

At Oakington Detention Centre near Cambridge, families with children have been detained since May 2000, accommodated separately from other detainees. Child-care is provided whilst the parents are being interviewed by the Immigration Service and by lawyers who will help them to present their cases. When I visited, two small boys were playing their own brand of chess in a light and airy room with toys, books and games. They were being cared for by qualified nursery nurses but the children's anxious, pinched faces told their own story.

Adults should only be detained under proper judicial supervision and with limits on the time for which they may be held. Confinement is particularly inappropriate for children, however caring the environment. Oakington will eventually hold 400 detainees with constant comings and goings as the aim is to make initial decisions on cases in seven days. It will inevitably be a fraught and bewildering place for a child.

A former Anglican Chaplain General to the Prison Service recently visited a detention centre and met a mother and small child who had been there for a week (although he was told children were never held for more than a day). The mother was listless and bewildered, the child uncomprehending. The encounter was sufficient for him to decide that children should never be detained.

Maze Prison, Northern Ireland

Editorial Note

During the troubles in Northern Ireland, the Maze prison housed the special category prisoners of the paramilitary organisations of the Republicans and the Loyalists. So the Maze contained both politically motivated prisoners and ordinary criminals.

When I was appointed as a chaplain to the Maze in 1982, there were about 1800 prisoners. More than half the prison population were serving life sentences, in many instances for multiple murder. The hunger strike, in which ten republican prisoners had died, had recently ended and the atmosphere in Maze was appalling.

The biggest problems concerning family relationships were evidenced among the long-term and life-sentenced prisoners. Compassionate home leave was not granted to anyone who had served less than eight years. This meant that on many occasions I was asked by a prisoner to visit a seriously ill or dying family member at home or in hospital. I often represented the prisoner at the funeral of a loved one.

The Roman Catholic chaplain and I worked tirelessly to encourage the authorities to show greater compassion in this area of illness and bereavement. This has been successful in that a prisoner is now given home leave to visit relatives who are seriously ill and 72 hours leave to attend a family funeral. These changes have been brought about gradually during the past ten years.

The situation prevailing in the compounds in the 1980s meant that some prisoners had been incarcerated for more than 15 years. We saw this as being extremely detrimental to family life and with the assistance of our bishops we were successful in seeing the introduction of Christmas Home Leave for those who had served more than 12 years (a limit which was subsequently gradually reduced). A similar scheme of home leave in the summer was also introduced. The reason that such home leave was a success was peculiar to the Maze. Prisoners from the different paramilitary organisations gave their word that they would not abscond. Their organisations would make sure that a prisoner returned on time as a breach of the system could result in the next person who requested such being turned down. The ability to spend time at home with wives and children undoubtedly prevented many marriages from breaking up. I always encouraged a man's own clergyman to visit his former parishioner, but only a small number actually did this.

I thank God for the grace given me to serve him in the highly sensitive and dangerous situation which prevailed in the Maze and for the unwavering support of my Diocesan Bishops and our Archbishop.

A PRISONER'S PRAYER

Thank you Lord for this day.

May this be one day nearer my being together with those I love.

Take care of my family: may they have the friendship and help of others which they need.

Bless those around me, giving us strength and courage to face each new day.

Help me to use my days to become the person You want me to be, living and working to your praise and glory. Amen.

PRAYER OF A PRISONER'S FAMILY

Our Father in heaven,
Grant your love and care to the one whom we miss so much.

Keep him/her well in body, mind and spirit.

Give us the grace of patience,
resourcefulness and hope
To live and share together in
preparation for their return.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The theme of our next newsletter is to be **Education and the Family**. We hope to cover issues such as how families provide and encourage education for their children, how families relate to schools and the education system, how education differs for boys and girls. What more can be done to help the education of children? What are churches and Christians doing to encourage such education and what more should/could they do?

We want to hear from as many countries and Provinces of the Anglican Church as possible. Please send articles (c300-500 words) to the Network office. We need to receive them **by the end of December 2000**.

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