

Inaugural Presbytery Prison Partnership (PPP) Newsletter!!

"...he sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners" - Luke 4:18

In this month's Newsletter....

In our first edition of our Newsletter, you will find information on our Legacy Fund Award; the formation of a Prison Partnership "Club"; Reentry Programs; the W2W Program at Bedford Hills prison; several "Save-the-Dates" and much more!

PPP Receives Legacy Fund Award

PPP has been greatly honored by recently being awarded a major grant from the HRP Legacy Fund. PPP is grateful to the Legacy Fund for embracing its vision and equally grateful to six contributing churches for providing the required seed-money: **Bryn Mawr, Korean Presbyterian of New Rochelle, Rye, Scarborough, Union and White Plains**, plus an anonymous donor.

PPP has been greatly honored by recently being awarded a major grant from the HRP Legacy Fund.

As you may know, the Legacy Fund honors the memory of those churches that have closed by awarding grants that reflect the mission and core values of HRP. PPP will honor those churches whose funds are being "resurrected" by initiating life-giving projects for "the least of these" in our vast criminal justice system. The grant awarded to PPP will allow for further outreach to the prison population and expanded awareness-raising on prison issues in our congregations. One specific area being targeted is the all-important work of reentry programs for the multitude of men and women returning each year from prison.



Ezequiel Herrera-Rodriguez of Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, Deborah Bronkema of Pleasantville Presbyterian Church, and Hans Hallundbaek of Presbytery Prison Partnership (PPP) and Croton Falls Presbyterian Church

Prisoner Reentry Programs



Members of Bryn Mawr Pres Church, led by Rev. Winfield Peacock, recently met with Julio Medina, Founder and Exec Dir of Exodus, and his staff, along with Hans Hallundbaek.

A major thrust of PPP activity over the last several years has been the establishment of reentry programs for the multitudes of people returning from prison. In New York State alone, close to twenty-thousand men and women return each year to a society where job opportunities are still scarce. Unemployment leads to higher recidivism rates for former prisoners, as well as fear among the general population of increased crime in their neighborhoods. If the formerly-incarcerated can acquire employment, everyone wins. Our first reentry program was with Ossining

Presbyterian Church, followed by the Exodus program in Newburgh, spearheaded by Calvary and Union Presbyterian churches. Our next target is the Yonkers area, where

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church is exploring a reentry program. Winfield Peacock and Theresa Colyar of Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church in Yonkers recently visited the Harlem Office of Exodus Transitional Community, as part of the churches plan for a Yonkers Reentry Program (see photo). Exodus is a leading reentry organization in NYC, with field offices in Poughkeepsie and Newburgh. For more information on Exodus and their work, visit their website at <http://www.etcny.org> Rye Presbyterian extended its many years of Prison Ministry work by a new "Coming Home" program (see following article).

"Coming Home" to Rye

Pastor John Miller (pictured here) is washing the dishes...quite literally! In January, Rye Presbyterian Church, the largest church in our Presbytery, started a prisoner reentry program in conjunction with both *The Beck Institute on Religion and Poverty* at *Fordham University*, and *The Reformed Church of Bronxville*. The eighteen week program meets weekly, starting with a meal prepared by church members, followed by shared reflections from an inspirational reading. Participants then move into their group learning sessions facilitated by Brenda Falu (second from right in photo). The program is directed by Janet Donat, (photo above, right) Elder at Dobbs Ferry Presbyterian Church, and supported by members of the Rye Church, including Pastor Miller, who initiated the project, and who, yes, was washing the dinner dishes when we visited the program.



[Click here to visit their website](#)



Bobby Lane

Newburgh Reentry Update

Bobby Lane, Director of the Exodus Newburgh Reentry program, reports the total number of people placed in employment is now up to thirty-four.

Congratulations!

[Click here to visit their website](#)

W2W Program in Bedford Hills

In the fall of 2013, Bedford Presbyterian Church launched *Woman 2 Woman*, a program which connects women in their congregation and the larger community with women incarcerated at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The women in the Correctional Facility chosen for this program have little to no outside contact. The visitors provide emotional support, encouragement and healing friendship to these women, many of whom have never experienced a trusting, respectful relationship. *Woman 2 Woman* visitors agree to visit their inmates a minimum of once per month for at least a year. The church offers training and ongoing support for the visitors, who number more than fifty. If you are interested in becoming a *Woman 2 Woman* visitor, contact Nancy Gernert at nancygernert@gmail.com or 914.763.0750.



Nancy Gernert at Bedford Pres

[Click to visit their website](#)

Announcing the Prison Partnership "Club" - PP "Club"

It is our intent to bring together a group of people who care deeply about the incarcerated. PPP is establishing a communication and project development network (a think tank, if you will) with the six co-founding churches. We also intend to reach out to additional churches who have expressed interest in further engagement in prison issues to invite their participation. All are welcome! Please contact us if you feel called to this ministry. At the June Presbytery meeting, an Open Space workshop will further expand on this effort.

Film Series

PPP continues to offer the screening of films related to prison issues to interested HRP Churches. A prison documentary often proves to be a valuable first step in sensitizing a congregation to the importance of prison involvement. Prisoners are seen, sometimes for the first time, as "real" people, not "them" or "those people". Contact Hans Hallundbaek for further information at hans@hudrivpres.org

Save the Date: Saturday June 4

Maryknoll Restorative Justice Day will be held on **Saturday, June 4, from 10 am - 4:30 pm**. We will introduce a new kind of workshop, Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation, known by their Spanish acronym ESPERE (Spanish for "hope"). The interactive workshop we will be presenting is entitled *"Anger-Forgiveness-Choices: A Restorative Justice Perspective"*. This event is co-sponsored by PPP.

Another Save the Date: Sing Sing Graduation!

This is a very unique opportunity for HRP Pastors and members to witness a joyous Sing Sing graduation...on **June 8**, New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) will hold its graduation ceremony for this year's class of MPS graduates. For info and to RSVP, contact Hans Hallundbaek at hans@hudrivpres.org



Juan Roldan, Courtney Goto of Boston University, and Hans Hallundbaek

Fordham University Practical Theologians

PPP Presented a workshop on prison issues at Fordham University on April 9 at the Association of Practical Theology's 33rd Biennial Conference. Co-presenter Juan Roldan, who is a graduate of the New York Theological Society's Master's program within Sing Sing, is now serving as a Chaplain in the NYC Police Department.

PPP Goes to College



PPP Coordinator Hans Hallundbaek conducts a yearly class on prison issues at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY. Rev Lynda Clements, former pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Ossining, and Theo Harris, former PPP Associate, serve as co-teachers in the spring semester. The class sensitizes the next generation to the need for prison reform.

We are very pleased to be sending the first PPP newsletter on Prison Ministry to you!!

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