

## **Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach – Men’s Program Volunteer Manual**

This document is condensed to occupy less space on [www.smart.ny.org](http://www.smart.ny.org) but omits none of the original.

*Visiting men and women in prison and journeying with them as they re-enter the community*



Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach is committed to integrity in the work place. Though our ministry often takes place in informal as well as formal settings, volunteers are responsible for high ethical conduct at all times. We value honesty in sharing and record keeping. We uphold the dignity of each person and honor his/her experience and story. We are committed to each person’s safety—physical, emotional, and mental—by the wise and just use of our influence. We respect the principles and teachings of Spiritus Christi Church and the Men’s Program. Above all we honor the sanctity and equality of each person regardless of the differences of birth or learned experiences.

**Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach Office, 934 Culver Road, Rochester, NY 14609. (585) 288-1074**

**What is our mission?** The Men’s Program is a part of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. Spiritus Christi Church is a Christ-centered Catholic community reaching beyond the institutional church to be inclusive of all. Jesus Christ is our pastor; therefore we open our church as a spiritual refuge. We hold the Eucharist as the center of our sacramental life. We embrace the challenge of the Scriptures. We are ordinary people joyously celebrating the opportunity to follow Jesus’ radical message of unconditional love. The mission of Spiritus Christi Church is to embrace the challenge of the Gospel, celebrating the opportunity to follow Jesus Christ. As part of that mission, we have founded Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. The Men’s Program is a part of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach

The Men’s Program provides an opportunity for staff and volunteers to provide a loving, safe and supportive group environment for men, either currently or formally incarcerated in County and State jail and prison facilities. We seek to help the Men recognize that they are children of God and that they are beautiful just as God intended them to be. Our mission is to respond to the Gospel call, to visit women and men in prison and journey with them as they reenter the community.

**How do we accomplish our mission?** In the Men’s Program we provide men, currently or formerly incarcerated in county jail or state prison facilities, with group settings in which they can feel comfortable and encouraged to share and explore deeply rooted feelings and critical issues that contributed to incarceration. Volunteers and participants, working together, create a safe, structured environment where positive change is fostered.

As appropriate, **our objectives in the Men’s Program** may include:

- A structured, safe and supportive group environment
- Respectful, honest and open dialogue and feedback focused on personal growth
- A plan/agreement to work with them on an exit/release plan and provide support to them as they work their program of choice (e.g. Cephas)
- Advocacy with other service agencies
- Honest and open dialogue and feedback
- Provide safe and structured groups for men in and out of jail/prison
- Help men create a solid foundation by connecting men with the community resources necessary to reestablish themselves in the community (i.e. chemical dependency programs, DSS, church affiliations, etc.)

**How can you help?** Our volunteers and staff play a very important role in creating a safe environment for the men. Listen to what people who have been incarcerated have said:

- *We need someone to listen.*
- *We are worth saving.*

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- *Even though we are criminals we are not animals. We need to be treated like human beings while incarcerated.*
- *How do people make it? We need people to show us how they do that.*
- *All I want is a safe place to live.*
- *I need other people to help me..*
- *Please look deep inside yourself before you say we are all bad.*
- *We can put ourselves back together with your help.*
- *It is very hard to ask for help; please do not judge me.*

**As a volunteer your responsibilities will change as the needs of group members change.** Some of the responsibilities may include:

- Becoming a contributing member of one of our groups
- Becoming familiar with, applying group structure, approach and techniques to insure continuity
- Being consistent in your group attendance
- Providing advanced notice (when possible) to group "lead" facilitator when unable to attend
- Deferring to the group "lead" facilitator in times of uncertainty during group sessions
- Proactively seeking feedback on group participation from team to enhance skills and better serve the men
- Proactively providing feedback to other group members in an honest yet supportive way
- Attending bi-annual retreats with the men in jail/prison
- Attending periodic volunteer retreats and recognition celebrations
- Attending periodic training
- Meeting men exiting prison, providing companionship, transportation to housing and/or program
- Becoming a member of the post release team based on our SCPO Men's Program Release Plan

**What do you need to do to become a volunteer in the SCPO Men's Program?** In order to volunteer in the Men's Program, you need to:

- Receive and read the Men's Group Volunteer Manual
- Attend an orientation and sign the statement of orientation form\*
- Fill out the volunteer questionnaire\*
- Sign the confidentiality agreement
- If becoming a member of a prison group, attend a prison orientation session
- If becoming a member of a prison group, obtain an annual TB test
  - **(NOTE:** The items above ending with a "\*" are included in the back of this volunteer manual)

**All volunteers will receive an orientation to the men's program** by the director (and/or designated staff) and the lead facilitator of the group. Orientation will include:

- Overview of Spiritus Christi Church history
- Overview of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach and Men's Program history, mission, and procedures
- Overview of the Men's Group Volunteer Manual
- Detailed review of anonymity, confidentiality and ethical conduct
- Review of policies and procedures for jail/prison, gifts, team approach, relations with group members
- Review of the problem and dismissal procedure

**At the completion of the orientation, the volunteer will sign a statement verifying the completion of the orientation**, which will be kept in the volunteer's file.

- *Please make sure you are familiar with staff and volunteer policies listed below. This will give you an understanding of what we expect from group participants and the type of structure that we provide.*

**Men's Program Staff and Volunteer Policies:** Our focus as a staff is to provide group participants with a safe, loving place to begin their recovery. We are committed to these policies to help guide our work.

- We will work as a team sharing information and struggles. Communication is key for the well being of our group participants.
- Volunteer staff will not give money or gifts to group participants or former group participants.
- Volunteer may not date group participants

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- Volunteer staff may not lend vehicles, TV, cell phones or any equipment of any kind to group participants.
- One to one conversations after a group regarding anything shared in the group are not permitted.
- Discretion needs to be used when choosing to share personal information with group members.
- Do not give out your phone number or address
- Do not give any money to any group member
- Staff permission is needed to meet with a group member outside of group
- Do not keep anything a resident says or does from the staff
- Your personal belongings should not be left unattended
- Keep discussion of/with the group participants or what goes on in group confidential
- Be cognizant of appropriate boundaries
- Do not let group members borrow your personal possessions and belongings
- Report any observed or suspected abuse/neglect to SCPO staff who will take appropriate action; do not act on your own
- Report any use of any illegal substances; staff will take appropriate action; don't act on your own
- Remember to be sensitive at all times to group members' backgrounds, especially when telling stories or jokes, using alcohol, discussing money or experiences group participants may envy.

**NOTE: Upholding Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach and the Men's Group policies and rules is essential for program unity and strength.** Please feel free to ask for a meeting with staff at any time.

**What happens if I have a problem while I'm volunteering in a Men's Program Group?** If a volunteer has a problem, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify the group "lead" facilitator and to schedule a meeting. This meeting will take place within ten days of the volunteer's request. If after this meeting the volunteer feels that the problem has not been resolved, she/he may request a meeting with the Director of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. This meeting will take place within ten days of the volunteer's request. The Director will make the final decision on how to resolve the problem. Documentation of the problem and its resolution will be placed in the volunteer's file.

**Volunteer Dismissal:** Several acts of misconduct are considered so universally recognized as being very serious violations of accepted behavior that they may subject a volunteer to immediate dismissal. The following acts are considered to be against the best interest of the Men's Program, its group participants, and our ministry.

- Violence or discourtesy toward group members, visitors, or other volunteers.
- Dangerous horseplay or the use of abusive language.
- Indecency or the making of obscene remarks.
- Use of alcohol or drugs while performing duties of volunteer work.
- Unauthorized or improper use of property belonging to the Men's Program, including unauthorized use of the telephone, email, or computer.
- Creating an/or contributing to unsanitary or unsafe conditions.
- Sexual harassment toward group members, volunteer staff, employees or guests, which include sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- Use of poor judgment while performing volunteer duties resulting in placing group members, other volunteers or staff at serious risk.
- Failure to maintain professional and ethical relationship boundaries. Volunteers are not allowed to date group members.
- Disregard for established policies and procedures.
- Breach of confidential information, material, or the breaking of anonymity.
- Theft

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## Volunteer Statement of Orientation

I have received a volunteer / internship orientation and understand my responsibilities. I further understand that my "lead" facilitator or the Director of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach are is available for questions or direction as needed.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
"Lead" Facilitator/Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Confidential files will be maintained for the Men's Program volunteers. Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach staff are responsible for ensuring safe, confidential records of volunteers.

The volunteer file will contain but is not limited to:

- Volunteer application
- Interview notes and reference checks
- Signed, dated pledge of confidentiality
- Signed, dated statement of orientation
- Miscellaneous correspondence

Note: after a period of seven years, inactive volunteer records will be shredded.

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### Pledge of Confidentiality

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that in the course of my association with the Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach Men's Program, I may learn certain facts about individuals being served by or associated with the Men's Program. These facts may be of a highly personal and confidential nature. Examples of such information are medical condition, finances, living arrangements, HIV status, criminal history, employment, sexual orientation, addiction history, relations with family members and the like. I understand that all such information must be treated as completely and strictly confidential.

I agree not to disclose any information of a personal and confidential nature to any person without the specific consent of the individual to whom such information pertains.

I realize and acknowledge that any violation of my pledge of confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action including suspension, dismissal.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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### Volunteer Questionnaire

*Mission: To respond to the Gospel call, to visit women and men in prison and journey with them as they reenter the community.*

Name: Address: City: State: Zip Code: Social Security Number: Birthday:  
Home phone: Work phone: Best time to reach you: Day: Evening:  
Email address: Occupation: Skills:

*The following questions are meant to help you discern with us what your gifts and comfort level may be in working with men and women with a history of criminal conviction. Please feel free to write your answers or just verbally talk with us about them.*

- What draws you to volunteering in this ministry?

#### Volunteer Experience

- Have you ever volunteered in Prison Ministry? (If yes, in what way?)
- Have you ever had any experience with the criminal justice system?
- What is your comfort level in spending time with people from diverse backgrounds?
- How do you feel about spending time with people who have committed all types of crime?
- Do you have any knowledge of Twelve - Step Programs?
- Day and Hours available:
- Please provide us with two references: Reference1: Reference 2:

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