

## **Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach, Rochester, NY**

**Visiting women and men  
in prison and journeying  
with them as they reenter  
the community.**

Through the inspiration and support of Spiritus Christi Church, we strive to embrace the challenge of the Gospel. Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach was founded as an expression of the church's vocation. Our mission is to respond to the Gospel call, to visit women and men in prison, and to journey with them as they reenter the community.



### **In Jail and Prison**

Each year we provide a safe group experience for 400 incarcerated men and women.



"Even though we are criminals we are not animals; we need to be treated like human beings."

### **Jail Groups**

We facilitate three weekly groups for women and men in the Monroe County Jail and four groups in prison for men. In these voluntary groups men and women engage in the courageous process of facing the issues that have led to incarceration. Upon their release, we offer support groups for men and women.

"I need help looking at the scary parts of my life."

## **Women's residential Program**

"Home is a place where we do not have to be afraid but can let go of our defensives and be free, free from the worries, free from the tensions, free from the pressures. Home is where we can laugh and cry, embrace and dance, sleep long and dream quietly, eat, read, play, listen to music, and be with a friend. Home is where we can rest and be healed" (Nouwen, 1986).



Jennifer House is our residential program. Staff and volunteers provide a loving, safe and supportive home. At Jennifer House women and children recognize that they are beautiful, just as God intended them to be.

Jennifer House has 8 beds for women and 3 beds for their children. Women come to Jennifer House directly from jail. They spend an average of 2 to 6 months until a bed becomes available in a long-term supportive living facility. Jennifer House requires guests to live drug free in a structured, accountable program. Women must be willing to receive chemical dependency and mental health evaluations if necessary.



## **Women and Children Reuniting**

One of our goals is to reunite the women at Jennifer House with their children. While at there, children are in an environment of unconditional love and acceptance. They can be children, have a lot of fun, and work together with their moms to become families.

"Our children are worried and angry. They need help. We need help to be parents to them."

## Nielsen House

Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach is currently planning to open a men's residence similar to Jennifer House for women. We've named this Nielsen House after Maureen Nielsen, a faithful prison outreach volunteer. We chose the name for two reasons. First, it is a constant reminder of Maureen's unconditional love. She loved prison ministry. She was the staff resident of Pearl House, our first women's residence, when we were at Corpus Christi Church. She visited Groveland prison each week with us. She loved the men unconditionally.

Second, the name is a constant reminder of the incredible cost of violence. Maureen was murdered, shot in the neck and left to die in the streets of Haiti. She was murdered by a man guilty of committing an offense similar to that of men she loved so deeply and visited in prison, men who fought to sit next to her each week. Maureen was a victim of violence. Nielsen House will honor her, her family, and all victims as, one person at a time, we interrupt the cycle of violence.

Nearly 2,000,000,000 men and women are incarcerated in the United States. Most of them will return to community. Many are impacted by complex challenges that we as a society also struggle to address: poverty, racism, drug addiction, mental health, anger, violence, and, most often, a wounded and broken heart in need of healing. These problems can seem overwhelming, and we as a society are tempted to give up. We create monsters in the media, making people seem less than the fully human beings they are in fact.

We work with those who commit crimes, and we invite each person to take responsibility for his or her choices, to stop hurting others. We've learned another part of the story is often left untold. In prison ministry we realize that people who are hurt harm others. When folks are hurt they are tempted to take out their feelings on others or themselves.

Nielsen House will be a residential program for men entering community from jails, prisons, in-patient facilities, and other situations of homelessness and incarceration. Ninety-five percent of these men will have substance abuse and/or mental health issues. Most who enter the program will have a history of program non-compliance. Nielsen House will respond to a critical gap in the ideal Monroe County Continuum of Care vision by reaching out and following up in an attempt quickly to stabilize each individual. We expect Nielsen House to open in January, 2008.



### Contact Information

**Jim Smith, Executive Director, Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. 585-288-0504**

**Judy Simser, Director, Jennifer/Nielsen House. 585-288-1074**

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