

## Task Force

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Evangelical Lutheran Church In America  
God's work. Our hands.

## *An Ecumenical Mission Congregation at Montana State Prison*



*"I was in prison and you visited me."  
Matthew 25:36*

## *JOIN US*

*Become a sponsor.  
Become a volunteer.  
Support the Vision!*

## *The Challenge*

Presently there are 17 worshipping communities in 10 states, with seven started by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations. **Our hope, and prayer is to be number 18.** The model of prison ministry we are using is unique because the inmates are the church members. They have a duly ordained and called pastor from the outside, and they host worship guests from churches on the outside. Outside congregations support the prison congregation financially.

*The sustainability of a prison congregation requires the support of many outside congregations and individuals, both spiritually and financially.*

The Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation Project Task Force is making this a Synod-wide effort, as well as promoting ecumenical outreach by inviting congregations from other denominations in Montana to participate. With about 1,400 men residing at the Montana State Prison (MSP), there is a great need for pastoral care.

**"The grace of God offers love and hope wherever we are, in the most unlikely places, with the most unlikely people, and in the most amazing ways."**

~ unknown

*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them...since you yourselves are in the body also."*

Hebrews 13:3

## *Did you know...*

- One in every 100 American adult is incarcerated?
- One in every 31 American adults is under correctional supervision?
- One in every four American adults has a criminal record on background checks?
- Annual state spending on corrections in the U.S. **topped \$50 billion** in 2008?
- Nationally, from 40 to 80% of released inmates are re-incarcerated within three years of release?
- **When faith communities work with inmates while in prison**, and during their transition back into communities, **recidivism rates are four to five times lower** than state and national rates?
- Reentry programs are showing a return of \$4 to \$9 in social benefits for every dollar invested?
- More than **13,000 offenders** are supervised by the Montana Department of Corrections?
- The **cost to house** an inmate at MSP is **more than \$34,000 per year**.
- Most MSP inmates (**95-97%**) will **someday be released** back into our communities where transitional resources, services and assistance are limited at best?
- Nearly 80% of inmates at MSP are high school dropouts?
- An estimated **6,000 to 8,000** kids in Montana **have a parent incarcerated**, and these high risk kids are **six to seven times more likely** to be incarcerated themselves in the future?



## The Vision

MSP offers religious opportunities to inmates, but there is no consistent fellowship and worship community like we experience in our home congregations. Nor is there a pastor to lead, serve, model or teach.

The goal of the Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation project is to establish a theologically-centered, grace-based mainline congregation, served by a full-time pastor, at MSP. It is important for the inmates and staff to have a pastoral presence they can come to trust.

The call for the new pastor has begun, changing the dream to a reality. The plan is to have the pastor hired and in place for our first congregational worship service in the fall of 2011.

**To fulfill our vision, we need your help! Congregations and individual sponsors are needed to see the Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation Project succeed.**

We need your PRAYERS! And like all programs, FINANCIAL SUPPORT, is needed.

A program such as this requires ongoing financial support for sustainability. The vitality of the congregation (inmates) is dependant on the outside faith community for support.

**Why become a sponsor?** Here are a few reasons:

- The command of Christ to visit those in prison (Matthew 25).
- The opportunity to be blessed and to be a blessing.
- Witness the transformation of lives to ones that praise God and contribute to society.
- Be involved in revitalization of faith for individuals AND congregations.

You can help the vision go forward by joining our Circle of Freedom and committing to a yearly giving amount. This amount can be paid in one lump sum or it can be given throughout the year.

"I consider them my brothers in blue and each one of them is dear to me, some I've become very well acquainted with and **they bring so much joy and hope into my life.** I come to share with them and they share with me and **I go home far more blessed than I did when I came in.**"

Cynthia Hanks, visitor

## Sustaining...

the congregation at MSP requires the following number of congregations and individual sponsors to commit to an annual donation.

# Needed	Each Giving per Year
4	\$5,000
10	\$1,000
50	\$ 500
70	\$ 250
300	\$ 100

**Can we count on you to help see the vision of the Freedom in Christ Project become a reality?**

## Ways YOU can help

- Pray for the Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation Project and the new pastor.
- Pray for the inmates and staff at MSP.
- Become a **Covenant Partner.** For more information on partnering with Freedom in Christ please contact our Project Administrator or any of the Task Force members.
- Contribute financial support - any amount is appreciated.
- Become involved by offering your God-given talents to help grow our program.
- Spread the word about Freedom in Christ.



The circle, the most common symbol in the world, represents Eternity, Completion, Unity, the Universe and Perfection. The circle for us represents the beginning of a new congregation at MSP, and the unending presence of Jesus Christ and His influence in the lives of people (eternity). It represents the bringing together of people of many faiths and walks of life to worship together in peace and harmony (unity and outreach). It also represents completion with the congregation in place at MSP and the unending ability to seek freedom through Jesus Christ.

We can accomplish this through your generous giving to the ministry. **You** are our Circle of Freedom.



**Please join us in celebrating a partnership in the gospel with the Freedom in Christ prison congregation and share in God's love, hope and healing presence in a place where these things don't always seem to be present.**

**Your help can change lives!**

## Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation Project

Please complete the form, detach and send, with your check, to the address shown below. Your prayers and financial contributions are tangible gifts of God. We thank you!

### Sponsorship Type:

- Congregation  
 Individual

### How Will You Give:

- Monthly Gift  
 Annual Gift  
 One-time Gift

### Amount of Gift:

Please contact me to schedule a presentation at my church or organization.

Please keep me informed! Add me to your mailing list.

Please add me to your e-mail list:

\_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable:

**Montana Synod Prison Congregation Fund**

and mail to:

**Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation Project  
P O Box 617  
Anaconda, MT 59711-0617**