

Introduction to ST. PHILIPS JAIL MINISTRY

Here's some information for you about the 25 year history of this jail ministry, how it operates, and what's expected of volunteers. Is the Holy Spirit calling you to be in jail on Saturday morning?

*"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, **I was in prison and you came to visit me.**'"*

*"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick **or in prison and go to visit you?**'"*

*"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, **you did for me.**' - Matthew 25: 34-40*

HISTORY OF THE JAIL MINISTRY. Though Christians help the hungry, thirsty, homeless, and naked, they too often abandon the prisoner. But, back in 1985, at the urging of the Rev. C. Thomas Midyette, and, with the cooperation of the Durham County Sheriff's Department, retired Duke history professor Dr. Richard L. Watson, Jr. began St. Philip's ministry to the Durham County Jail.

"Who is my neighbor?" Dick Watson reasoned that the County Jail was only a few blocks from the church, and that the inmates were the church's neighbors. Volunteers from St. Philips, Duke University, and a dozen other area churches have since visited the original County Jail (and the current Detention Center) on Saturday mornings, to offer religious literature, greeting cards, fellowship, and prayer to inmates. Dr. Watson visited with inmates each week, year in and year out, until his death in September 2000. He is very much missed by the volunteers who have been inspired by his example and steadfast devotion to this ministry. Parishioners will remember his recitation on Sunday mornings from the choir stall of the names of inmates who have requested our prayers.

The jail ministry has continued every Saturday, 52 weeks per year, for the past 22 years. Several years ago, in response to inmate requests for baptism, St. Philips extended this visitation ministry to offer baptism and has performed ten baptisms at the Durham County Jail. **Recently, more than 30 inmates were baptized!!** Many members of St. Philip's parish have visited with jail inmates over the years. Others continue to step forward after Dick Watson's death to contribute their time and money to support this ministry to ensure that it is sustained and grows. Our former deacon, Harriette Sturges, organized our literature and cards each week. Robert Shaw led the ministry for several years. The outreach committee of the Vestry has likewise supported the ministry, providing a yearly budget for the jail ministry.

Inmates, who are locked away and unable to afford bail, often wait a long time for a hearing to determine their guilt or innocence. Through the jail ministry, they have weekly spiritual fellowship and encouragement. Through the jail ministry, our volunteers find their own Christian faith deepened and renewed. Many of us fondly remember Dick Watson diligently pushing his walker (stacked with books and greeting cards) across Mangum to the County Jail. In that spirit, St. Philips continues its leadership and support of jail ministry.

“Bring my soul out of prison, So that I may give thanks to Thy name.”

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Psalm 142:7

ORGANIZATION. It’s not complicated. It’s just like running a library, soup kitchen, and working at McDonald’s all at once. ☺ The core of the ministry is Christian fellowship and prayer, usually one-to-one, offering encouragement and a book or greeting card. To accomplish this week in and week out, the roster of St. Philips Jail Ministry consists of 24-30 volunteers at any given time, some of whom are members of St. Philips Church. Other volunteers come from Durham area churches such as White Rock Baptist Church, Duke Chapel, Epworth United Methodist Church, Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, Apostolic House of Deliverance Worship Center, and several others. Since 2008, the Rev. Abby Kocher and students from Duke University have joined us on Saturday mornings.

St. Philips purchases supplies such as Bibles and Bible Studies, greeting cards, along with copies of Bible verses (and reading glasses) for our visitation supply bags for Saturday morning. Sometimes parishioners donate items to the ministry. Joyce Thorpe phones volunteers each week. The shepherds take our Bibles, Bible Studies, verses and greeting cards which have been contributed, to jail on Saturday morning, and monitor the visitation. St. Philips provides resources to purchase paperback Bibles and Bible studies for distribution to inmates. The volunteers visit on the fourth floor pods: 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D, the fifth floor pods: 5A, 5B, 5C, and 5D (women's pod) and pods on the third floor (3C and 3D) at the Durham County Detention Facility on Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. When we have additional volunteers, we visit inmates on the third floor pods. We visit, pray with, and give requested Bibles to as many as 80 inmates during that single hour on Saturday mornings.

FOR WHITE ROCK AGAPE INCARCERATION MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

1. The first step to join the Agape Incarceration Ministry is to **complete an application** which is available in the church office or on the website at whiterockbaptistchurch.org/agape-incarceration-ministry.
2. **The form must be notarized.** If you don’t know of a notary near you, go to a UPS Store.
3. **Mail or deliver** the completed application to Durham County Office of the Sheriff Detention Services Division, Attention: Sgt. Raymond Holsonback, 219 S. Mangum Street, Durham, NC 27701. You must also provide **a copy of your driver’s license** with your notarized application.

If you have a criminal record, you may still be cleared to be Jail Volunteer. What better witness than someone who has been incarcerated, but has turned their life around and now wants to help others?

Once you have been notified that you have been cleared for jail visitation, please notify Tim Coles, chair of the Agape Incarceration Ministry at agape@whiterockbaptistchurch.org or at 919-213-1662. St. Phillips will also be notified of your clearance and Joyce Thorpe, a member of St. Phillips will call you on each Thursday evening to ask if you will participate in jail visitation on the following Saturday morning. It is important that St. Phillips get confirmations before Saturday so that the jail can be accurately informed of the number of pods available for church visitations.

HOW THE AGAPE INCARCERATION MINISTRY WORKS

You should arrive at the Durham County Detention Facility, 219 S. Mangum Street (across the street from DPAC), no later than **8:45 a.m.** on Saturday morning. There is no designated parking for jail

visitation volunteers. You should be able to find parking on Pettigrew Street just below the rail road tracks and then just cross the street to the lobby. You should sign in at the front desk.

Mike Sistrom and Martin Fowler, members of St. Phillips, are the “shepherd” of the Jail Ministry. The “shepherd” for the day, arrives with bags of Bibles, Bible Studies, copies of Scriptural verses, and any available greeting cards, and will greet you in the lobby.

The shepherd informs the officer at the front desk of the Durham County Detention Facility which pods and how many should be alerted to expect church visitation, based upon the number of volunteers available. In order to open all the pods on the fourth and fifth floor, it is ideal to have at least 10 volunteers. This allows for 1 volunteer per pod with 2 extra to help at busy times.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING VISITATION?

You will probably be teamed with an experienced volunteer for support and advice on your first visit. The visitation areas are small rooms in the four corners of each floor and have Plexiglas windows on both sides which separate the inmate from the visitor. You will have a visitation bag that you will get from the shepherd upon arrival. The bag should contain a selection of Bibles, Bible Studies, copies of Scriptural verses, and contributed greeting cards and books. You sit on the outside of the glass window across from the inmates who have gathered to meet with volunteers.

What do you say to this stranger? *“Good morning. I’m (your first name) with the White Rock’s Jail Ministry. What’s your name? (Write it down, first name and last name and spell it correctly. Names matter.) How can I help?”* Then listen. So, during the few minutes of contact and introduction with each inmate, the volunteer writes down the full name of the inmate and his or her pod and cell number (e.g., 4B-12), taking care to listen carefully and to speak loudly enough to be heard clearly. You offer each inmate a choice of a Bible, Bible Study, copies of Scriptural verses, or several greeting cards, if those are available. Write the inmate’s name and pod/cell number on the Bible, or Bible Study. Write the same information on the inside flap of the greeting card envelope. That helps the jail personnel to give the correct materials to the inmates who requested them.

Invite the inmate to pray. You and the inmate may place your hands on opposite sides of the Plexiglas. This is extemporaneous prayer and the styles and emphasis of each volunteer may vary, according to the inmate’s needs. Be sure to speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard through the Plexiglas. Your prayer may vary depending upon your own religious background and your spiritual insight into the inmate's needs.

It is not easy to visit with and minister to as many as a dozen inmates in less than an hour. When there are too many inmates to pray with each individually, you may invite them to assemble as a group to pray together. White Rock usually receives names from Tim Coles and prays for the inmates on Wednesday at 6 pm at Prayer Service.

Your visitation must be completed by 10 am when family visitation begins. The shepherd will check with you afterwards to see if you had enough materials and to find out how your visitation went, etc. The bags are returned to the shepherd. Items for each pod are placed in separate paper bags. You fill out an inventory sheet for each pod which records the names of the inmates and the items they requested. Each inventory sheet for a pod is placed in the paper bag with the items for that pod.

Please notify Helen Featherson, Coordinator of Outreach Ministries at outreachcluster@whiterockbaptistchurch.org of the number of inmates that you see each week. The numbers are reported to the Durham County Missionary Union as part of our outreach efforts.