

## CAREFUL CONSIDERATION

As you can see from the guidelines, correspondence with an inmate is a ministry that should be undertaken only after careful, prayerful consideration and mature discernment. Nevertheless, our experience indicates that volunteers who follow these guidelines will find the correspondence relationship richly rewarding.

## A WORD OF CAUTION

Many prisoners are lonely and may seek romantic involvement with a female volunteer writer. We prohibit such behavior. We will intervene to end the correspondence if this happens.

## ENDING A LETTER WRITING RELATIONSHIP

You are always free to end the writing relationship with your prisoner at any time. If, for any reason, you seek to end the relationship, please notify the Prison/Jail Ministry. Upon the parole of an inmate, the relationship is also ended. When this happens you will be notified by the Office of Prisoner Outreach.

# Prisoner Outreach Program

Diocese of Lansing

## VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

Spiritual encouragement and support to prisoners through letters.



Diocese of Lansing  
Prison/Jail Ministry  
228 N Walnut St., Lansing MI 48933  
[penpalmin@dioceseoflansing.org](mailto:penpalmin@dioceseoflansing.org)

***Our Mission** is to provide spiritual support as well as a respectful friendship to men and women behind prison walls. Please include some spiritual inspiration with each letter!*

## THE MATCHING PROCESS

We are looking for writing volunteers who are at least 21 years of age and will see this ministry as an extension of their Christian commitment. Read these guidelines and fill out the attached application form. Upon receipt of your signed application, your name will be matched with an inmate. You will receive a letter from us with your prisoner's first name only. You are free to then write him/her a letter using only your first name or an alias to the inmate. Before the inmate is allowed to write you we require them to read and sign the guidelines which ask them to pray daily and to commit to respectfully conducting their correspondence.

## LETTER WRITING PROCESS

All letters from both inmates and volunteer writers will be first sent to the Office of Prisoner Outreach to be closely monitored. We will vet the content for appropriateness and safety before we forward the letter. **Please only use your first name** when writing to the inmate.

*"When I get a letter, it puts a smile on my face every time. I always look forward to a letter. It could be a gloomy day in here or just a bad day. But when the mail comes and I see it's from your ministry, the light starts to shine."*  
Inmate from a Michigan Prison.

## PRISON MAIL REGULATIONS

We receive prison mail from all parts of the country. There are strict rules regarding what prisoners can receive through the mail. They cannot receive cash, packages, food, clothing, or books. Cards must be of a single thickness. Never put stickers on your letter or envelope or send laminated bookmarks.

**LEGAL ADVICE OR COUNSEL IS PROHIBITED IN THIS PROGRAM.**

**YOU MAY NOT PHONE OR VISIT THE PRISONER. NO PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION IS ALLOWED, THIS IS FOR YOUR SAFETY.**

## DO

- ✚ Write at least once a month
- ✚ Use first name or alias
- ✚ Include inmate's first name for timely delivery of letters
- ✚ When sending to the Diocese of Lansing please use your full name on the return address
- ✚ Send all letters by mail or email listed below
- ✚ Be aware of con games, emotional ups, and downs of the inmate, or any manipulation and they might not write because of depression.
- ✚ If you feel uncomfortable with any aspect of the program please contact us.

## DON'T

- ✚ Do not pry into the details of their crime unless they divulge it to you.
- ✚ Do not give legal advice or accept an invitation to visit.
- ✚ Do not give them your address or phone number or exchange photos.
- ✚ Do not send money or sign loans.
- ✚ Out of respect for the prisoner's identity, do not attempt to identify them.