



HOLLYWOOD LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Embracing the Community
with Christ's Inclusive Love*

GOOD NEWS FOR INMATES IN CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES AND PRISONS

Hello! God bless you!

This pamphlet was prepared to tell you more about Hollywood Lutheran Church and our outreach to prisoners and parolees.

Because of the faithfulness of one man in our community who was sent back to prison a few years ago, God has opened hearts in our church to reach out to inmates.

Presently we are working with more than a dozen inmates in California prisons in Blythe, Delano, Tehachapi, Coalinga and Lone, California.

It is our faith

- that God loves *all* people. God created us and blessed us all with the intention that we live with freedom, dignity and purpose (Genesis 1:26–31). God hates *no one!*
- that Christ is God's gift to us, and has redeemed all humanity by the blood of his Cross (John 3:16–17; Romans 5:6).
- that all people have sinned and do not meet God's expectations (Romans 3:21–26), but in Christ all our sins are forgiven.
- that no one deserves or earns the love of God, but everyone receives it as a gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8–10).
- that in Christ there are no distinctions, as St. Paul says (Galatians 3:28): "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Because of Christ, every human being is an heir to all the promises which God made to the Chosen People.
- that nothing we might do, or may have done in the past, can make God stop loving us:

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38–39)

- that if we love Jesus and want to follow in his steps, we are called to love each other (John 15:12–14; 1 John 4:7–21), love neighbors and strangers, work for justice (Amos 5:14–15), help those who are lost or in need (Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 25:34–40), and share the Good News with others far and wide (Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 10:7).

If this is also your faith, then we hope to share with you in all the blessings and bounty of God's love. If you put your faith in Christ, we want to be your brothers and sisters.

We know these years behind bars are very *difficult* for you. Many prisoners do not receive mail or visits. Some have been forgotten or rejected by their families.

But we are confident in faith that God loves everyone—including you—not because of anyone's good behavior but because God is Love. For the sake of Jesus, and the life he offered up on our behalf, we are *all* reconciled with God. There is no more hostility between God and humanity. Our church takes this message of reconciliation very seriously, and we want to make it real in the world around us.

Our church is a servant church. We believe it is our mission to serve others as well as we can. We try to provide food for the hungry, clothing to those who need it, welcome to the stranger, and counsel to those who are depressed or lonely or lost. We open our doors to all people, including

many who are recovering from drug or alcohol addictions.

Our congregation is a reconciling church.

For more than ten years we have openly welcomed gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people of faith into our community as full partners with us in spreading God's Good News. Although other churches may sound hateful and reject LGBT people, we read the Bible carefully and understand that our good standing with God isn't based on race or ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity, or whether someone has a police record or conviction. Our good standing with God comes from God alone as a gift, and all anyone needs to do is *to respond* to God's reconciling love generously and responsibly.

Let's not be strangers!

If you write to us, we *will* read your letters, and *pray for you by name* at worship and in small ministry groups. (We are aware that the letters you write or receive are read by the authorities in prison, so we encourage you to be as honest with us as you feel is right.) You are one of God's children, and the more you know about us and the more we know about you the better.

Please share as much about yourself as you are ready to. For example, tell us about your story and the burdens you have carried. Maybe you can share why you were sent to prison, and how you keep your heart and mind clear behind bars.

Do you know the date of your release or your next parole board appearance?

Are you a person of faith? Do you believe that God has forgiven your sins for Jesus' sake?

Do you have a good relationship with your family? Have they visited you in prison? You may want to tell them to call our church if that would be helpful to them.

Have you been baptized? Did you grow up in a Christian household, or did you find faith as an adult?

Do you have a Bible, or do you need one? Do you have access to the chapel and a prison Chaplain?

And if there is anything about yourself that you consider confidential, just write "Confidential" on the envelope.

What we try to provide

While you are incarcerated, we can offer emotional and spiritual support so that you are not alone during your term. We can try to work with family members and others in order to be supportive when you come up for Parole Board hearings.

When you have a release or parole date, and if you are returning to Los Angeles County, we will work with you to prepare for release, and to enter into your new life. For some inmates, parole may include other rehab programs outside the prison walls. We have contacts and resources to help you locate stable housing, find employment and make a break from any drug or alcohol addiction.

For us to provide ongoing assistance, we may need to be able to identify you in the California Department of Corrections system. When you write back, please give us your full name, your CDC number, your complete prison address, and your complete birth date (month, day and year).

If you want someone to visit you, please send us the visitor forms to complete. We will return them to the Visiting Office of your institution as soon as possible.

Because our funds and volunteer time are limited, we cannot come to each prison very frequently. But we will try.

We cannot accept collect calls from you unless they are arranged in advance by letter. We cannot send money directly to inmates.



Rev. Dan Hooper, Pastor

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Our Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

Thursday: 7:00 p.m. Taizé Prayer Service

On the Web at www.hollywoodlutheran.org