

CODE OF CONDUCT

PEN PAL LETTER WRITING MINISTRY

(Keep the following two pages for your records)

Corresponding with an inmate can be a very effective means of sharing Christ with an unsaved individual, or building them up in the faith. Some of our volunteers like to try and follow-up through the mail with certain inmates who are transferred to other institutions. These are some guidelines that MUST be observed in this type of ministry outreach.

1. Write short letters in the beginning to determine which inmates are going to be faithful in writing back to you. Don't write any more than two letters to an inmate without receiving a response. If you haven't received a letter from an inmate after the second letter, contact your church coordinator about a replacement. Remember that inmates do move around quite a bit and their mail may not follow them. Don't get discouraged, continue on.
2. Men write to men and women to women except in the case of a husband and wife team in which both are signing the letters.
3. Follow all of the institution's rules and regulations concerning inmate mail. For example, know that mail will be opened and checked for contraband.
4. Everything is considered contraband. **DO NOT** send anything to a prisoner including your picture. That includes Bibles, Bible tracts, pencils, paper clips, cassettes, addresses, phone numbers, or business cards. If an inmate has an unmet need, refer him to the Chaplain of that institution regarding that need.
5. **DO NOT** make contact with a prisoner's family, friends, attorney, or parole officer. Again, if there is a need, have him refer that need to the Chaplain. The Chaplain is our God ordained authority figure.
6. You should sign your letters with your first name and only the first three letters of your last name. The inmate should be instructed to address his letter in the following manner:

Ex: John Smith

John Smi

C/O Prisoners For Christ - (PP)*

*PP=Pen Pal

Church's Address

Church's City/State/Zip

7. Each active participant in this program will have an individual folder which needs to be checked at least once a week. This is a must for participation in this program.

8. **DO NOT USE A HOME ADDRESS, as a return address.** Do not give out addresses of volunteers to inmates. Remember to use your church's address on the upper left corner of the envelope.
9. When in doubt about anything, check with your volunteer Pen Pal Coordinator.
10. Remember your mission is to share Jesus Christ. Many of the inmates are lonely people, and it is easy for them to respond to Christian kindness in the wrong way. If your intentions are made clear from the start, you will be able to avoid misunderstandings.
11. Do not let yourself be drawn into the negative aspects of a person's life. Encourage them to let their "jail time" be used by God to help them grow spiritually.
12. Upon receiving a letter, read through it for general understanding, then read it a second time for directions from the Holy Spirit.
13. Pray for discernment and guidance for each letter as you are about to answer. Pray for the individual, for their needs, and that he may have personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
14. Do not let an inmate play on your sympathy, good intentions, or sense of guilt. You are the one directing the content of the correspondence.
15. Do not send money, stamps, ***your picture*** or any other gift to any inmate. Sometimes, inmates see the Pen Pal Program as a means to obtain gifts from volunteers. This is unacceptable and should always be communicated in a loving fashion. Example: "I'm sorry that I cannot send you my picture. The guidelines of the Pen Pal Program that I am involved with does not allow me to do that."
16. Keep your word, know the rules and regulations as it relates to the limitations of your ministry. Do not promise things that you may not be able to follow through on. (Example, if an inmate makes a request, and you are unsure of the rules and regulations bearing on the nature of that request, do not make any commitment before first finding out what you are allowed, or not allowed to do in such a situation).
17. Avoid denominational doctrine unless it is to answer specific questions.
18. Do not ask about the reason for the person's incarceration. Let him volunteer that information.
19. As a volunteer, periodically review your call to this ministry with an open mind. There is a maturity process that entails "**mountain top and valley experience**" that can result in a workable reality of obedient service.
20. Inmates are often released in the late hour of the evening. Do not volunteer to pick them up or take them to your home. ***Meeting with inmates after they're released is beyond the scope of the Pen Pal Program and is not permitted.*** Instruct them on available missions. Pray for them.
21. Stick with it!!!
22. Constantly pray for the discernment of the Holy Spirit.
23. Above all--BE A FRIEND!