

CANON OF THE REC TEAM

I am a member of the REC, an earthen vessel and here in a servant's role.

I will serve gratefully and in humility, remembering the Holy Spirit calls for my love, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control in all things.

I will pray for strength, submission to the Holy Spirit, and commitment to be God's person during these three days.

I will remember, by God's grace, I am here as an instrument through which God can work to renew His church.

I will pray for other team members, the residents, ask our Lord to strengthen them and reveal Himself to them in new ways.

I will not over-emphasize my role during these three days by word or deed.

I will not glorify myself or a member of this team or allow another to glorify me.

I will use "I" as little as possible and will remember that all others are the main reason for my presence and my prayers.

I will remember at all times that I am less important than any other person on this weekend.

I will accept and be obedient to the authority of those under whom I serve.

I will be obedient to the Lord and totally responsive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Leader's Prayer at Team Meetings

Lord, help us to understand that it is your presence that bears fruit, not the colorful moments that we sometimes depend upon.

We will sacrifice our time, our faculties, our health, and even our lives for Your cause.

Give us boldness in our initiatives, good judgment in our choices, and courage in spite of failures which will insure victory through Your redeeming love.

Cleanse us of petty rivalries, sensitivities, pride, and disrespect, everything that distracts, divides or discourages us from Your work.

Help us maintain meaningful and mutual love at a high level among us, so each one will seek the most humble tasks and rejoice at the good deeds performed by others.

Unite us in a common purpose and to share in Your Spirit, Lord Jesus. Let our faces radiate Your goodness and allow Your warm accent of love to be heard in all our words.

May we show something of You to the world while proclaiming Your living presence among us. Amen.

Prayer for the Holy Spirit

**Come Holy Spirit, join us and strengthen us to be
better Christians.**

Lead us and guide us now as we share together.

**Open our hearts to receive from each other and from
You, that life that helps us overcome our
surroundings and the temptations we face.**

**Holy Spirit, we put our trust in You, and we know we
will not be disappointed.**

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

RESIDENTS ENCOUNTER CHRIST

History

Residents: Those now residing in that facility
Encounter: Meet or come face to face
Christ: A safe place to meet Christ

REC is a non-denominational experience of Christian living and community in which a team of people go into a prison for a spiritual retreat weekend with the residents of the facility. The team will be in the prison for three days to share their hope, joy and love of Christ to the residents. A resident may be afraid or hesitant to share his deep religious experiences. REC gives them "a safe place" to meet Jesus, share their faith and concerns. The talks, discussions, and the celebrations of God's love will encourage the resident to establish a Christian identity. He can use this identity to share the message of Christ and help change the environment of the prison to build a strong Christian community. Residents are encouraged to develop sharing groups to encourage each other, pray for each member, the prison staff and fellow inmates.

The REC ministry was started in Kentucky through the vision and efforts of Rev. Spence Quick and other Christians who prayed for an opportunity to take the message of the Gospel inside the prison walls. Rev. Quick spoke to a Louisville Cursillo group in January 1985, concerning an REC weekend that August in the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women (**KCIW**) in Pee Wee Valley, KY. A REC volunteer team came from Peoria, Illinois to train and assist the Kentucky group for the first REC weekend. REC retreat weekends have been held at KCIW twice a year since the first retreat weekend.

The first REC weekend in the Lexington area was held at the Federal Medical Center (FMC) for Women in the spring of 1992. The first REC weekend for men was held in the fall of 1995. Weekends and monthly reunions have been held on a regular basis and most are filled to capacity.

The Bluegrass REC Board plans to take this ministry to other institutions in the Lexington area. The ministry has taken REC to several prisons and established boards in other communities to further the Lord's work.

The Purpose of Residents Encounter Christ

Purpose of Team Formation

Scripture References John 17:21-23 Matthew 28:19 I Thessalonians 3:12-13

The purpose of team meetings is to form members of the team into a Christian community. Volunteers come from a variety of social, economic, educational and denominational backgrounds. Their religious experiences vary significantly from their Emmaus or Cursillo weekends.

Christ, as the head of the team, calls the Lay Director to lead individuals into one body to present the gospel to residents in the institution. The Lay Director has four meetings to bring the team together for ministry through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The focus of the first team meeting is to build team unity, begin bonding and look into our hearts. Community-building is the central point of the second and third meetings. The goal of the fourth meeting is to explore the team's role as Christ-bearer to the residents. Scripture selections are offered to provide direction at each team meeting. Team members will be divided into small groups for community building exercises by studying a specific scripture or thought. Meetings will begin with the Leader's Prayer, devotional thought or talk preview. Group prayer and the Lord's Prayer will close each team meeting.

Purpose of R.E.C. Weekend

The purpose of the R.E.C. weekend is to form selected leaders from the prison environment into 3-5 person prayer and share groups. Members of these groups should meet weekly with Christ to share their lives on a deep spiritual level and pray for one another, other residents and prison staff.

This fellowship will allow them to learn to love, accept being loved by God, and love one another through becoming vulnerable. They will discover acceptance of self and their worth by receiving God's forgiveness and forgiving others. Accountability to one another will enable them to participate in a realistic social environment. R.E.C. weekend encourages participants to form prayer and share groups. Time is limited during the weekend but should reinforce and work toward this goal.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The Holy Scriptures remind us of the Power in Prayer. The Walk to Emmaus, Residents Encounter Christ, the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Cursillos remind us how much prayer means to all Christian endeavors. Remember to lift up the REC team, the residents, and your prayer partner daily to our Lord as we prepare to serve Him.

1 John 5:14-15 - ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.

Ephesians 6:18 - ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Philippians 4:6-7 - ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

SCRIPTURES FOR WEEKLY MEDITATION

1. **John 13:34-45** "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples."

2. **Matthew 20:26-28** "This, however, is not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, he must be your slave ...like the Son of Man. who did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people."

3. **John 15:16** "You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures."

4. **Ephesians 5:20** "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, always give thanks for everything to God the Father."

5. **Matthew 6:14-15** "If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done."

6. **2 Corinthians 1:4** "He helps us in all of our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God."

7. **John 15:5** "I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me."

THE TEAM MEMBER

WHY AM I HERE, LORD?

I am here for God's pleasure, to praise Him and do His Holy Work.

I am here to imitate Jesus Christ and to be a reflection of Him on the REC weekend.

I am here to pray, work, and make necessary sacrifices for the residents and the team.

I am here to bring Jesus Christ to the residents that they may establish a Christian community through the Holy Spirit.

I am here to help the speakers know the intent of the talks and direct discussions at the table.

I am here to show love, display Christian discipleship, and accept all regardless of condition or denomination.

I am here to lovingly demonstrate leadership, serve as a guide, and be a tolerant listener.

I am here to recognize Christ, honor Him, and allow the residents to see Christ as He reveals Himself.

I am here to ask God's will be done and not mine.

I am here to submit to Christ with heart, mind and body so the love of Christ will bloom and grow in the residents' heart.

Let's always ask: "What is the loving thing to do?"

PRISON IS A PLACE

What is prison? It's not the same for everyone. The prison I know is different from the prison you know.

PRISON IS A PLACE where the first prisoner you see looks like an all American college boy and you're surprised. You later become disgusted after discovering people on the outside still have the same prejudices about prisoners that used to dominate your thoughts.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you write letters, can't think of anything to say, begin to gradually write fewer letters and finally stop writing altogether.

PRISON IS A PLACE where hope springs eternal; where each parole board appearance means a chance to get out, even if the odds are hopelessly against you.

PRISON IS A PLACE where the flame of hope in every resident burns low, flickers weakly and for many burns out.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you find gray hairs in your head or your hair starts to disappear. It's a place where you get false teeth, stronger glasses, aches and pains you never knew existed. It's a place where you grow old and worry about it constantly.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you begin to believe the psychologists know what they are talking about when they say you actually hate yourself.

PRISON IS A PLACE where the outside world goes on and no one seems concerned about your condition.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you can go for years without the touch of a human hand, go for months without hearing a kind word, and your friendships are shallow and it is ingrained in you.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you hear about a friend's divorce and you didn't know he was married. It is a place where you hear about a neighbor's kid graduating from school and you assumed they were in kindergarten.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you feel sorry about your circumstances, then disgusted about them, then angry for feeling this way, and then try to put it out of your mind.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you wait for a promised visit that doesn't come, you worry and become frustrated with the trivial excuse.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you forget the sound of a baby's cry, a dog's bark or even the sound of the dial tone.

PRISON IS A PLACE where a letter from home or from a lawyer can be intimidating as you open it. Disappointment or anger usually accompanies the long-awaited news.

PRISON IS A PLACE where, if you're married, you learn that absence does not make the heart grow fonder, and your spouse wants a partner, not a fading memory of yesterday.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you go to bed before you're tired, pull the blanket over your head when you're not cold, escape by reading, by playing cards, by dreaming, or by going mad.

PRISON IS A PLACE where you get out some day and wonder how everyone else can be so calm when you are so excited. You feel like telling the bus driver, but do not because you know it is foolish.

Sculptor's Attitude

**I woke up early today and am excited about what to do before bedtime.
My job is to determine what the Lord wants me to do today.**

Today - I can complain about the weather being rainy or be thankful the grass is getting watered free.

Today - I can feel sad I don't have enough money or be thankful my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and make me aware of waste.

Today - I can grumble about my health or rejoice that I am still alive.

Today - I can cry for what my parents didn't give me as a teenager or be grateful they allowed me to be born.

Today - I can cry because roses have thorns or celebrate that thorny bushes have roses.

Today - I can mourn over my lack of friends or get excited upon starting to form new relationships.

Today - I can gripe because I have to go to work or shout for joy because I have a secure job.

Today - I can moan because my house needs cleaning or feel honor and joy because God has given me shelter.

Today - Stretches out broadly in front of me waiting for my response.

What will I do today? I am the sculptor and must shape the kind of day I will have with God's Help.

Have a great day unless you have other plans.

WHO ARE PRISON RESIDENTS?

Chaplain Ray Hoekstrea
International Prison Ministries
Dallas, Texas

The average prison resident in America today is under twenty-five years of age, ninety-six percent are men and four percent are women. The resident comes from a broken home or from a home where there was little love and discipline. Most residents have very little commitment to Jesus Christ and were accustomed to living with no instruction. They average nine years of formal education, but gained only a seventh grade level. He has scant vocational training, usually worked for minimum wage, if gainfully employed. He sees himself as a "loser", and feels that the whole world consists of them against us. "Them," to the resident includes: police, courts, judges, lawyers, wardens, prison officers, chaplains, preachers, pastors and churches. "Us" represents all other residents (losers) who have been arrested and imprisoned.

He soon begins to realize the impact of loneliness for the first time since he has been separated from his family and his friends. He may have an occasional controlled visit from a relative or a friend, but it is never very congenial or meaningful.

He has very few, if any, acceptable interpersonal human relationships and tends to seek out those having the same problems. Imprisonment involves a single sex environment where homosexual invitations and pressures can be very strong. Rapes on occasion do occur and this increases the frustration, bewilderment and fears for the resident.

He feels that he is a victim of injustice and finds it hard to understand he is personally responsible for his imprisonment. He readily joins with other residents in expressing anger against society, law and authority. He wants out of prison immediately and this dominates most of his thoughts and actions. He now feels that God has let him down, (even if he is a believer) creating doubts about God and his security as a Christian. He may assume God is for others and is not sure that God will hear and answer his prayers.

He finds it very difficult to accept responsibility for his acts and their consequences. He soon falls into the "Prison Games" that residents play to beat the system of justice that has deprived them of their liberty. He has lost his sense of self esteem, compensating with an outward bravado as he tries to establish an identity as a "Right Guy" in the prison. The "Right Guy" begins to replace the routine things missing in prison -- babies born, parents dying. He becomes like the residents and the environment surrounding him.

Listening

I Will Know You Are Not Listening To Me When:

- You say you understand before you know me.
- You have an answer for my problem before I completely explain the problem.
- You cut me off in mid-sentence.
- You are critical of my vocabulary, grammar or accent.
- You are so anxious to say something you interrupt before I finish speaking.
- You tell me of your experience and it makes mine seem unimportant.
- You are communicating with someone else in the room.
- You refuse my thanks by saying: "I haven't really done anything."

I Will Know You Are Listening To Me When:

- You come quietly into my private world and allow me to be me.
- You try to understand me, although I may not make much sense.
- You grasp my point of view when it goes against your own convictions.
- You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even when you think they are wrong.
- You do not take my problem from me but allow me to deal with it my way.
- You refrain from giving too much "good advice."
- You offer me religious solace only when I am willing, ready and able.
- You allow me the room to discover what is really happening in my life.
- You allow me to say thanks for the weekend.

Relationships

We will be examining three different relationships during the REC experience in the formation process and during the weekend. Our hope is the residents will continue this process of self-examination through weekly prayer meetings and share groups.

The first of the relationships is to self and during the weekend it consists of talks and meditations directed toward self-examination. Self-examination for the team should begin during the team formation process. We should begin at the time a volunteer is asked to serve on a team and continue through the second team meeting. We should look not only at who we are before God but also as a community and how we become one in the body of Christ.

The second relationship is our personal relationship to Jesus. The relationship with Jesus is the theme of the second and third team meetings during the formation process. Saturday is the opportunity to deal with this relationship to the residents and offer the opportunity for conversion.

The third relationship we are concerned with in the structure of REC is our relationship with the world. The relationship with the world is the theme of the fourth team meeting right on through the weekend. We will introduce this to the residents on Sunday as we attempt to get the pilgrims to focus on their relationship with those not involved in the weekend.

We will prepare for our team meetings by giving you a brief list of scripture selections. Please transfer them to 3x5 cards which can be carried with you in your pocket or purse. The purpose of these scriptures is to provide a window through which we might observe our journey with Christ during our growth as a team. Meditate on these scriptures, jot down any particular insights you receive, and we will share them at a team meeting.