

Mail Correspondence with Inmates

Overview

- Retrieve a list of Christian inmates: name, inmate number, date of birth, and prison location from www.PrisonMentoring.com under the “Birthday Lists” tab, then select either men or women; men write to men and women write to women.
- Send faith-based cards/letters on their birthdays and at Christmas.
- Write a short greeting of encouragement and caring, perhaps add a Bible verse. Sign your name.
- **A return address is required,** or the item will not be delivered. It is recommended that you utilize a **PO Box** if you don’t want to use your home address.
- Inmates who want to correspond with you will write back.
- Reply to their letter with gratitude, and let the Holy Spirit direct your words. They are fellow Christians looking to connect...
- Include as much information about yourself as you are comfortable giving. They love to hear about your general interests, places you go, your spiritual journey, your hobbies, the books you are reading, favorite TV shows, jokes, etc. They also love it when you tell them that you are a good listener and that you look forward to hearing from them.

Sending Mail Correspondence

- All letters and cards for State Correctional Institutions (SCI’s) get sent to the same address in Florida (see below).
- All mail sent to Florida gets scanned and electronically sent to the designated prison.
- At the prison those emails are printed and delivered to the inmate. The lead times for delivery are approximately ten (10) days.

- All SCI letters get sent to the following address: (Add the inmate's name, inmate's number, and the prison name.) Example:

Smart Communications / PA DOC

First Last Name / AB1234

SCI Facility Name ("SCI" must precede the prison name)

PO Box 33028

St. Petersburg, FL 33733

- Note: Only the two Yellow Highlighted Lines are inmate specific. The three Green Highlighted Lines are universal for all inmates
- A return address positioned at top left of the envelope is required. The letter won't be delivered without it. It MUST contain a name, street address or P.O. Box, city, state, and zip code. If any one of these is missing, the letter will be discarded in Florida.
- It is a good idea to also include the return address at the end of your letter, in case they don't see the outside envelope.
- You can include additional items with your letter, such as newspaper articles, screen prints from things of interest from the internet, newspapers, bookmarks, or whatever. But remember that everything will be scanned. No actual items you send will be delivered to the inmate.

Mail Correspondence (continued)

- Up to five sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper can be mailed with only one stamp. More than that requires additional postage.

E-mail is an increasingly popular option...it requires approval by the inmate, a one-time set-up through www.connectnetwork.com and a 25-cent cost for each e-mail. This solves the handwriting- readability issues and it gives the inmate and both parties a permanent electronic record for reference. Some inmates have tablets in their cells and prefer emails, while others do not, so they may prefer regular mail...best to ask them...

Do:

- Give some general information about yourself, such as hobbies and interests, pets, favorite foods or sports...
- Invite them to consider corresponding with you...tell them you would welcome hearing back from them. Ask them what they are interested in...
- Listen closely to what they tell you – there will be opportunities to pray with them and to recite appropriate scripture relating to their issues, but don't force it...
- Always be upbeat and positive; good listening goes a long way. Most of them will have a lot to tell you.
- Referencing scripture verses is always a plus.

- Ask about the faith-based activities they participate in, such as church services, Bible studies, prayer groups, etc. This is a good way to gauge their spiritual situation, and it allows you to understand them better.
- **Let them know that we accept testimonials and articles for publication on our website.** If you receive any of these items, contact David Godshall to have them published on the website.
- Be flexible; each relationship will be unique.
- **Speak from your heart! They want real relationships with real people!**

Don't:

- Never offer or give financial support.
- Do not do legal mailings or make personal contacts on their behalf. You are not their employee...Use your judgement about any requests made by them.
- Do not give personal or private information about yourself right away. You will know if/when the time is right to share something of a personal nature...otherwise, stick with general info, such as likes/dislikes, hobbies, spiritual journey, sports, etc.

If you are unsure about anything, contact David Godshall.

And finally – believe it or not, you will get more out of this than will the inmates!

- Sharing the love of Christ with those incarcerated is a beautiful experience.

- Some inmates have no one else on the outside. They are incredibly appreciative of the relationship.
- Some inmates eventually get released and practice the love and caring they received from you with others they interact with.
- It is possible to continue the relationship upon their release, should both parties agree to do so.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Executive Director of Prison Mentoring, David Godshall. He can be reached at dgodshal@comcast.net or 267-210-2184 (cell).

Greeting Card Addendum

You can easily make your own “greeting card” using Google images that are free. Go on Google images, and search on “Spiritual Birthday” or “Religious Birthday”, for example.

Simply copy and paste any spiritual image you like to the top of a plain word document and save it! You can right click on the image to copy them or adjust their sizing to suit your needs. There are hundreds of different ones to choose from—be creative!

You can also add any words or message that you like, perhaps a piece of scripture, or just Happy Birthday—God Loves You! (For example) ...whatever suits your personality.

Save this document and print up as many as you need each month to bring encouragement to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are incarcerated.