

The Episcopal / Anglican
Diocese of Egypt
with North Africa
and the Horn of Africa



“I was in prison and you came to visit me”
(Matthew 25:36)

PRISON MINISTRY

October-December 2011

Dear friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

“We lift Jesus up in all the nations.”

These were the words that Bishop Mouneer and the Prison Ministry team sang together with the men at the Christmas service. Each time we sang this verse, it was followed by the name of a country one of the prisoners comes from; Sudan, Columbia, China, Mexico, Ethiopia, India... We also sang Silent Night in Chinese and Swahili, and ‘It’s Only You Jesus’ in over 15 languages.

Twice a year (at Christmas and Easter), the Diocese is allowed to hold a service with the prisoners. On the 20th of December, Bishop Mouneer led a communion service and preached on Luke 2. He shared that we all experience temporary joy in our lives, but it is only through Jesus that we can have true and lasting joy. Everyone can have this joy, even those in prison.

The Prison Ministry team also brought food for the men and women in prison to cook for Christmas, and gifts of blankets and clothing. Pictured to the right are members of the Prison Ministry with these items; Mrs Nahed Samir, Ms Sanaa Gamil, Rev Samuel Iskander, and Mrs Afef.

We visited all of the women together, and then all of the men, It was wonderful to join in prayer, singing and the Lord’s supper with these saints from so many countries.

Help Ministry

As well as providing pastoral support, the Diocese of Egypt Prison Ministry provides basic needs such as food, toiletries, clothing and blankets. In addition to the regular items, over the past two months, we have brought over 100 blankets to the prison as it get cold during winter.

The men in Kanater Prison are very organized, and through their Christian fellowship, they have a ‘Help Ministry’ team who are responsible for distributing these items. When they see a need, they ask the Prison Ministry team and other visitors to bring the needed items.

When new inmates arrive, they have nothing, and the Help Ministry ensures that their immediate needs are met. This is provided for anyone who arrives, Christian or non-Christians, and it is a powerful witness to the new inmates.

Update on Air Tickets

Over the past three months, using money donated, the Prison Ministry has bought one air tickets for **Mr. Mamadi Diane** from Conakry, Guinea. **Mr. Sunday Atuekwe Ben**, also from Guinea, is due to leave on the 2nd of January 2012.



Prison Ministry

For more than fourteen years, members of the Diocese of Egypt have travelled once a week to visit prisoners at El Kanater Prison on the outskirts of Cairo.

The prison authorities do not provide for all of the needs of the prisoners. Most of the inmates have their needs taken care of by their families. Therefore, the church ministry focuses on foreigners, and the church becomes their family.

The prisoners are in prison for a variety of charges. In some of the cases, they are imprisoned as they do not have a visa.

The Prison Ministry team helps to meet material needs through providing basic food supplies, medicine, clothes and blankets. They also provide friendship and a listening ear, helping to relieve the hopelessness that weighs heavily upon the shoulders of imprisoned expatriates.

Dealing with Delay*

By Mr. Yusuf Okechukwu

"It is not easy to hope for something and then wait for it a very long time. Often there is the temptation to give up.

Having been unfairly tried and convicted, I waited for an appeal but it was rejected. I did not give up hope of a chance of freedom. Years passed until I completed 20 years. I waited for a conditional release but this too did not come. Then came the revolution in Egypt. The government announced a release program for those who have served half their terms. There was the hope that I would be released. I packed my things and got ready to go. Later, we heard that the release is on conditions. Finally I did not meet the conditions for the release. That means that I have to wait for any other opportunity. I am still waiting.

I have prayed and fasted. People everywhere are praying for me. Yet the question is; why the delay? There are times I have been tempted to give up. I wonder if God has abandoned me or He is punishing me for something I did wrong. I know I am not perfect. I have my weaknesses (the frailty of humanity). But I seek the grace of God daily in my life.

As the pastor of the church in KMP, people bring me their problems, I prayed for them and their problems are solved. I have prayed for various needs and concerns and God answered those prayers. But why is my prayers for freedom not being answered? How do I deal with this delay? I believe that it is the will of God that I would be released. But at His best time. I am confident that He knows my pains and that He has not left me nor forsake me. I look up to Him for my freedom. I thank Him for the spiritual freedom and the inner peace I have. He comforts my heart and assures me of His presence with me."

*This was written in July 2011. Yusuf is still waiting in Prison and received no more news about his release.

Visiting the Prison

In November, Mr Yousry Sidrak and his daughter Christine visited the prison with the Prison Ministry team. They are pictured to the right with other members of the Prison Ministry team. Yousry writes of his experience below;

"I was really encouraged by your prison ministry. You obviously have a passionate heart for it. The way you deal with the prisoners, your prayers for and with them, even the enthusiasm by which the team carried those heavy blankets to the prisoners reveal only a serving heart. I was also encouraged by the conversation I had with Mamady Diane that he holds fast to his faith in the Lord despite the difficult circumstances he is facing being away in a prison from his two little children whom he left motherless. I also think that the prison's officials were quite helpful in facilitating our mission, they were also friendly. A big thank you goes to them."

Thank you for your support of the Prison Ministry. May God bless you!

In His service,
Rev. Emmanuel Sapana
Chairman of Prison Ministry
Diocese of Egypt

How you can help

The Prison Ministry team values your support. You can support the prisoners through praying for them. We also welcome volunteers to join our weekly visits.

Finally, the ministry relies on donations to provide for basic needs and for other needs such as air tickets. It costs around \$85 USD to provide for the basic needs of 1 prisoner for 1 year.

For more information about how you can support the Prison Ministry please contact

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Prayer requests

- Pray that the word of God and work of God may continue and progress in El Kanater prison. Pray that God would use the Prison Ministry in His work in the prison.
- Pray that prisoners who have completed their sentences may be released.
- Give thanks for the Kanater Men's Prison Christian Fellowship (KMPCF), the fellowship group within the Prison led by Mr. Yusuf Okechukwu. Give thanks for the way that they care for each other, and serve God within the prison.