

CAREFUL CONSIDERATION

As you can see from these guidelines, correspondence with an inmate is a ministry that should be undertaken only after careful, prayerful consideration and mature discernment.

Nevertheless, our experience indicates that volunteers who follow these guidelines will find the correspondence relationship richly rewarding.

A WORD OF CAUTION

Many prisoners are lonely and may seek romantic involvement with a female pen pal. We absolutely prohibit such behavior.

We will intervene to end the pen pal relationship if this happens.

ENDING A PEN PAL RELATIONSHIP

You are free to end the pen pal relationship with your prisoner at any time. If for any reason you seek to end the relationship, please notify Restorative Justice Ministry. Upon the parole of the inmate the pen pal relationship is ended. You will be notified by Restorative Justice when and if that happens.

The Prisoner Pen Pal Ministry

is part of Restorative Justice,
Diocese of Lansing, Michigan.

As such, it is our hope that you will see yourself first and foremost as extending the love of Christ to the prisoners with whom you correspond. With each letter, we encourage you to share your faith and how God is working in your life and how He may have helped you in the past.

Daily prayer and reflection on the Scriptures are highly recommended. Include your pen pal in your prayers mindful that he/she may have burdens and obstacles we can hardly imagine.

Prisoner Pen Pal Program

Restorative Justice Ministry

Diocese of Lansing

228 N. Walnut St.

Lansing, MI 48933

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Prisoner Pen Pal Ministry

Diocese of Lansing

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

**Spiritual encouragement
and support to prisoners
through letters.**

"When I get a letter, it puts a smile on my face every time. I'm always looking forward to a letter. It makes my day while here in prison. It could be a gloomy day in here or just a bad day.

*But when mail comes and I see it's from my pen pal, the light starts to shine."
Inmate from a prison in Michigan*

OUR MISSION

We are providing spiritual support as well as friendship to men and women behind prison walls. We encourage our volunteers to include some spiritual inspiration with each letter, as well as the thoughts of friendship.

THE MATCHING PROCESS

We are looking for volunteers who are at least 18 years of age and will see this ministry as an extension of their Christian commitment. Read these guidelines and fill out the attached application form. Upon receipt of your signed application, your name will be matched with an inmate. You will receive a letter from us with your pen pal's first name only. You must start by writing the first letter. **Your first name or alias only is given to the inmate.** Before inmates are allowed to write, we require them to read and sign guidelines which ask them to pray daily and to commit to conducting their correspondence as a Christian friend.

FORWARDING LETTERS

All letters, from both pen pals and prisoners, will be sent to the Restorative Justice Office where they will be closely monitored to ensure that the content is appropriate and safe before forwarding. **Only your first name or alias is given to the prisoner.** We will forward your letter to your pen pal using our return address to ensure your privacy and safety.

MAIL YOUR LETTER TO:

Prisoner Pen Pal Ministry, Diocese of Lansing, 228 N. Walnut Street, Lansing, MI 48933 **or** email to:
kpreiss@dioceseoflansing.org

PRISON MAIL REGULATIONS

There are strict rules regarding what prisoners can receive through the mail in the prisons. Prisoners are not allowed to receive cash, packages, food or clothing from the outside. Cards must be of a single thickness of paper without layers or stickers. **Never put stickers on your letter or envelope. Do not send laminated prayer cards or laminated book marks.**

LEGAL ADVICE OR COUNSEL

We advise pen pals never to become involved in the legal matters of their prisoner's case. This includes writing letters to the parole board or attorneys. State from the beginning that this is a Christian friendship and all other matters must be taken to a lawyer or case worker.

VISITS AND PHONE CALLS

We do not allow you to visit your prisoner pen pal, or to receive any contact outside of the Diocese from your prisoner. Do not give a prisoner any of your contact information. This ministry is meant to reach out to prisoners through letters **ONLY.**

DO:

- Write at least once a month.
- Use your first name/alias only or a pseudonym in the letter.
- Include the prisoner's first name only on the envelope to insure timely delivery of letters.
- Please use your full name on the return area of the envelope you are sending.
- Send all letters to the Restorative Justice Office or email:
penpalmin@dioceseoflansing.org
- Be aware that your prisoner may have emotional ups and downs. Depression is common among prisoners and they sometimes stop writing for a while.
- Be aware of con games. Notify us if you feel manipulated in any way.
- If you feel uncomfortable with any aspect of the program, please contact the Restorative Justice Office.

DO NOT:

- Do not pry into the details of their crime, unless he/she volunteers the information, Know that he/she is doing so out of deep trust in you.
- Do not give legal advice regarding your prisoner's case.
- Do not agree to visit your prisoner or accept contact outside of the Diocese from him.
- Do not give your prisoner your address or phone number.
- Do not sign loans or pay an inmate's legal fees.
- Do not send photos of people.
- Do not give your prisoner other names or contact information to write to.
- Out of respect for the prisoner's privacy, **DO NOT** attempt to identify your pen pal.