

Resolution 002 for the 154th Convention
Of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania
ENCOURAGING PARISH ENGAGEMENT REGARDING COUNTY JAILS

Be it RESOLVED that the 154th Convention of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania encourage all parishes prayerfully consider education and action regarding county jails by doing any of the following:

Christian formation activities exploring conditions and demographics in the county jail; developing appropriate ministries to those in their county jail; advocacy efforts to change their county jail. including visitation or serving on the local prison board; of restorative justice as an alternative for certain cases; exploration of alternatives to cash bail, and exploration of deaths in county jails, especially those that occur prior to a person being sentenced.

Sponsor: The Rev. Rebecca Myers, The Rev. Dn. Michael Nailor, The Rev. Linda Watkins, Cn. Anthony Alexander, Ms. Sharon England, Ms. Brenda Scott

EXPLANATION:

Our Bible has numerous instances of our responsibility to prisoners (See especially Isaiah 61:1 and Matthew 24:31-40). It has numerous writings about the captives being freed. There are plenty of accounts of people being unfairly imprisoned. It is our responsibility as Christians to ensure that those imprisoned in our communities are cared for in alignment with the teachings of Jesus – to visit the prisoners and to even set them free.

County jails are the first place where people accused of crimes are housed. If they are convicted of their crime and the sentence is less than two years, they most likely complete their sentence in a county jail.

County jails are a significant part of a taxpayer-funded county budget. In addition, people who are incarcerated, especially those incarcerated before trial and not convicted of a crime, can be at great risk for abuse in some county prisons.

A significant number of people are incarcerated in these institutions because they cannot produce the money to make bail or post a bond. This results in wealth-based detention that violates well-established norms of fairness and constitutional principles.

It is our responsibility to care for the prisoners in our midst. Many of us are unaware of what is going on in our local jails. This is a resolution to educate ourselves and then take whatever appropriate action is needed and possible for our parishes.