

**Prison Ministry 2007**  
**The Rev. Jan Kozak**

In my 2006 report, I shared “Cara’s” story about her former meth addiction (for 13 years) and her recovery. At this time last year, she was struggling to make ends meet and her husband was awaiting trial on capital charges. Her life was far from easy.

It is still not easy. But it is easier. Because of her fine job performance, she has been hired in a managerial capacity at a business much nearer her home, still doing the things for which she is gifted, and I see her about once a month when I visit a parishioner. Whenever she can make herself available, she joins us for Communion. She is radiant.

Her husband has been sentenced to a pretty long sentence, but one Cara calls “do-able” for both of them. They are both uplifted by their faith. They continue to experience first hand God’s grace as they co-operate with God in God’s work of redeeming their lives. They remember being afraid they were beyond even God’s redeeming -- at least in this life. I give thanks for Cara, for her continuing witness to all with whom she comes in touch. She is a blessing to many.

In July when I went to visit with and minister among the women at the Jefferson County Correctional Facility, three young women shared their first experience “fasting”, opening a wonderful conversation about various spiritual disciplines. Fasting has never been at the top of my list, which I shared with them. I told them I admired their fortitude. They had questions about “how” to fast . . . what to do while not eating . . . was is ok to read, etc. It was by prayer and scripture they had been led to fast at all, so I suggested to them that through prayer the Holy Spirit would instruct each of them in the particular practice that would bless them most fully.

They were planning to fast again for 24 hours within a couple of weeks, seeking God’s purpose for their lives, praying for guidance and strength to live as Jesus teaches through scripture. I was looking forward to reconnecting in August to see what this second experience had been like for them. Unfortunately, they did not join us for time together that evening, so I do not know.

But I do know God planted seeds in their spirits through God’s Holy Spirit while they were guests of Jefferson County. Knowing this is both a wonderful thing and a hard thing in the life of one who ministers in county facilities, because we seldom get to know “the rest of the story”. We seldom get to know them deeply, though we do see many of the same faces routinely as the women break probation and get re-arrested.

So we continue to plant the seeds of God’s truth, his never-failing love for each of them, especially when they cannot love themselves, in hopes God will capture their hearts, filling them with love for God’s self.

God does saving, powerful work through everyone who says, simply, “Yes, Lord. I will go where you lead me.” Perhaps God is leading you to visit the captives in jail or prison . . . Your “yes” may lead to “yesses” too numerous to count . . . ☺

Faithfully,     Jan+