

AMBASSADORS OF  
RECONCILIATION  
MINISTRIES



*Life is messy, but Jesus gives hope  
to all who need to be set free  
behind bars of steel  
and walls of bitterness.*

## ARM Certified Jail Minister Program

### Need

Incarceration provides an environment where many men and women come to understand their need for God, and many of those make decisions to follow Jesus Christ, but the opportunity to grow and be discipled by a more mature brother or sister is often scarce, especially for those in solitary confinement. Too often, such new believers wither spiritually under the harsh conditions of jail life, or else find themselves discharged with inadequate preparation and community connection to continue their walk with Christ on the outside. Recidivism and fruitlessness are so common as to be proverbial, with many onlookers rejecting the validity of those conversions because the inmates relapse so often.

While there are Christians in Butte County churches who are (or could become) qualified to provide biblical discipleship, the Butte County Jail only allows the public to visit inmates on weekends, and the visiting rooms are packed and noisy. However, ordained and licensed ministers and certified counselors are considered part of the therapeutic team, and are allowed to visit inmates on the glass weekdays until 9 pm for an hour a day.

### Purpose

ARM trains, certifies, and monitors **Certified Jail Ministers** who provide weekly visits to screened and matched inmates willing to invest time and effort in biblical training. That training is designed to help inmates grow in their walk with Christ, and in their ability to apply biblical principles to their current and future circumstances. This includes creation of a plan to be executed upon their release from custody, enabling them to continue their personal spiritual growth, to connect and serve God with a faithful congregation, to stay clean, sober, and out of jail, to find and hold a job, to manage their finances, and to form, heal, and maintain healthy personal relationships, to the glory of God.

### Process

ARM has a certification process that sets standards, conducts background checks, and assesses a person's motivation, ability, and competency to provide such life skills / discipleship ministry, and will train and certify **CJM's** to work with inmates screened by the Lead Chaplain. Upon completion of the certification process, ARM will provide documentation that will meet the Butte County Jail's requirements for **Certified Jail Ministers** to disciple inmates during the week, and will pair the **CJM** with an inmate who desires help.

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## Jail Minister Selection Criteria

Potential **CJM**'s must be carefully screened, as they will be representing ARM both to the inmates and to the Butte County Jail. Evaluation of **CJM** candidates should therefore consider the following criteria:

- **Profession to be a follower of Jesus Christ**, and known by members of their church to live a life consistent with that profession, demonstrating a mature, active, and generous faith. Membership/attendance and participation in a local Bible believing congregation is required. We will contact each candidate's home church to verify their Christian walk. Cooperation with other Christians is essential to function as a member of the kingdom of God.
- **Bible Knowledge**, whether evidenced by formal training or practical experience. **CJM**'s are not required to "know it all," but they must be familiar with basic themes in the Bible, and be able to use standard study tools to research answers to questions they will face.
- **Doctrinal Orthodoxy**: agreement with ARM's basic Christian statement of faith. We do not disqualify true believers of any orthodox denominational affiliation or persuasion, but we will not allow heretical groups to spread error among young believers in the jail.
- **Teaching and Discipling Skills**, whether acquired by formal training or practical experience. Confirmation by a congregational leader will be required.
- **Commitment to Ministry**, as evinced by a history of service and reliability in fulfilling commitments, and agreement with ARM's purpose and core values (listed below).
- **Compassion and Humility** befit any servant of God, saved by the same grace as inmates. Harshness, pride, or legalism disqualify a person from serving, especially in a jail setting.

## Curriculum

We begin with the Navigators' *Lessons on Assurance* book, then go through their *Design for Discipleship* seven-book series. This provides 42 weeks of study, counting the first meeting. The curriculum cost is \$44 to set up each **CJM** (including a leader guide), plus \$38 for each inmate who finishes the series. If you are able to help with these costs, it would be greatly appreciated, but ability to pay for curriculum is not a requirement to be certified and put to work as a **CJM**. A **CJM** may disciple more than one inmate in a week, if they are able and willing. The **CJM** does not need additional curriculum for themselves when mentoring multiple inmates or future inmates.

If the **CJM** develops a strong relationship with an inmate, and wishes to continue meeting with them weekly beyond the course, they may do this as well. Our desire is to provide discipleship and support to each inmate, as much as they need, and we want to be flexible to meet the needs of a variety of situations. Our Lead Chaplain personally meets with the potential inmate mentees, and supplies them with study tools and discipleship material. We encourage inmates to pass on the knowledge they are gaining, by teaching and mentoring other inmates, practicing their spiritual gifts in the jail, as God has supplied to each.

# ARM Purpose, Vision, Values

## PURPOSE

Our **PURPOSE** is to glorify God and further His kingdom on earth by:

- A.** Communicating and demonstrating the transforming grace and truth of Jesus Christ to all those who have experienced the crisis of incarceration and their families. We do this by evangelizing, discipling, teaching Bible principles and life skills, counseling, mentoring, referring to appropriate legal, medical, social, financial, and spiritual organizations in Butte County, and providing compassionate practical assistance to inmates and staff of the Butte County Jail, and their families.
- B.** Educating, calling, equipping, training, facilitating, and coordinating volunteers, churches and organizations who provide help, support, recovery and rehabilitation services, and direct supervision to prisoners and their families, both before and after the inmate's release from the Butte County Jail.

## VISION

Our **VISION** is to see the Christian community in Butte County awaken and rise up together across social, ethnic, economic and denominational lines to meet spiritual, emotional and practical needs of inmates, families and staff in the Butte County Jail. We want to see inmates get the help they need to transition from sinful lifestyles and incarceration into socially and spiritually productive life patterns that continue to grow upon release back into their families and community.

## CORE VALUES

### BIBLICAL TRUTH

We Believe:

- A.** The Bible is the inspired and only infallible Word of God, our final authority for faith and practice.
- B.** There is only one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- C.** Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human, as the Bible teaches. He existed as God with the Father and the Holy Spirit from eternity past. He became human when He was born of Mary, a virgin. He lived a sinless life, died on the cross to provide our salvation, rose from death bodily, and ascended to the Father's right hand.

- D.** Only by faith in Christ and rebirth by the Holy Spirit can lost and sinful people be saved.
- E.** The Holy Spirit indwells all Christ-followers, uniting them in one spiritual body, and enabling them to fulfill God's purposes in their lives, churches, and communities.
- F.** The love of Jesus Christ motivates His followers to provide food for the hungry, drink to the thirsty, welcome to the stranger, clothes for the naked, and to visit the sick and imprisoned.
- G.** Jesus is coming again in power and glory to gather His people to eternal communion with Him, and to execute final and eternal judgment on Satan and all who followed him in rebellion against God.

## **LOVE AND RESPECT**

### **A. Toward inmates and their families.**

We believe that every individual is made in the image of God, and deserves our love and respect, even as the Bible tells us that God regards each person with love and esteem as a person of eternal value. This is true even though they may be different from us ethnically, economically, culturally and philosophically. They may identify themselves with different world views, sexual preferences, moral convictions, political allegiances, and religious commitments. They may even offend our senses with their appearance and hygiene, but we are, as God's children and ambassadors, to see them with God's eyes: precious and beloved, hurting and lost, seeking (often in all the wrong places) the love, healing and reconciliation that God longs to bring into their lives. Only in the humility of Christ can we reflect God's love and respect to others, and only that love and respect will win a hearing for God's truth in the gospel.

### **B. Toward each other across ethnic and denominational lines.**

We must rise above private agendas, personal pride and hurt feelings, to live out the unity that so delights our loving God and Savior, and so powerfully reflects His transforming grace in the lives of His people. We must speak the truth in love to each other, and hold each other accountable to biblical standards of conduct as we work together for the common good. We must create a culture that extends and receives grace and forgiveness, putting others before ourselves. We want to live out and perpetuate a culture that focuses, not on those convictions which divide us, but on the essential commonalities that unite us as Christ-followers. These are the basics of the gospel, and the passionate commitment to carry that gospel of hope to hurting, struggling people whom God loves. This is not to deny the importance of our various convictions in our daily walk and service to God, but it is to recognize that the Kingdom task for which we are uniting is bigger than those issues, just as God Himself is bigger than all we can believe or think about Him.

# Guidelines for Success

Adapted from a Prison Fellowship posting

Following are some guidelines I would suggest after observing visits for nearly 30 years in Christian prison ministry. Maybe one or two will be helpful to you.

1. ***Verbally acknowledge that the other person's stress is real.*** Acknowledge that the differences in your circumstances can create misunderstandings. Empathize, but don't pretend to fully understand the other's stress factors, unless you have spent time behind bars yourself.
2. ***Give the person you are visiting adequate time to express his/her feelings.*** They may be scared, hurt by someone whom they feel betrayed them, lonely for family, spouse, children, parents (who may have turned their backs on them, or may be too far away to visit), or anxious about the outcome of a pending court date. They may feel God has abandoned them, or they may be searching for Him, and looking for an encouraging word from God, from someone who cares enough to come see them. They may have come to the Lord in jail, and are looking for someone who will help them grow in that relationship.
3. ***Give the person you're visiting the freedom to be honest about their feelings.*** If you can't handle the truth, don't ask for it. They may express their feelings in language you wouldn't be likely to hear at church! That's OK. It may be the only language they know.
4. ***There is a time for everything.*** Be sensitive to the timing in bringing up certain issues. If they are not emotionally ready to handle something, you must agree to put it on a back burner until the time is right. Remember, you are there to raise spiritual issues, not legal ones. Attorneys warn inmates repeatedly not to discuss their case with anyone. They might want to talk about it, but do not press. You may ask where they are in their legal process, and they are usually happy to tell you that their last hearing was postponed three months, or their sentencing is scheduled next week. Pray for their legal process, and for comfort for them and their family as they wait anxiously for the outcome of the next step. If you see them every week, they may open up to you, but it must be their decision.
5. ***Listen with your heart as well as your ears, and identify the real issues.*** (But do this with gentleness and respect.) Most of the time, the surface issues aren't the real problem. Anger or depression is often rooted in unresolved conflicts, and family members may be angry over all the pain and turmoil the incarcerated one has caused.
6. ***Try not to dominate the conversation.*** While it is important to have a message for them from the Word, remember that God gave you two ears and only one mouth. That should help us understand the proportion of time spent listening to others.
7. ***Be kind.*** It's not all about you. You are there to help the inmates see God in you, and perhaps reach out to Him themselves.
8. ***Pray!*** Pray the day before. Pray for God's words, and for His anointing before you go, and as you prepare to meet. Pray as you close your visit. Later, remember their requests in prayer.



# ARM Certified Jail Minister Program Application

To the extent allowable by law, we assure that no information from this application or the interview with the ARM certifying board will be shared with anyone outside that board, except to verify local church membership and service.

For answers that require more space, please use the back page, or attach a separate sheet.

Name _____				
Last	First	Middle Name(s)		
Address _____				
Street Address	Apt. #	City/Town	Zip	
Home Phone (    )	-	Cell (    )	-	Work (    )    -
Are you at least 21 years old? yes/no    Email: _____				
California Driver's License Number or State ID Number: _____				
Date of Birth _____ Spouse's (or former spouse) name _____				
Employer and occupation:				Since:
Previous Employer/occupation & dates: _____				
Male / Female	Single / Married / Widowed / Divorced			Children    yes / no
Are there any minor children living with you? yes / no    Age(s): _____				
Church you attend:		How long?	member: yes / no	
Church Address			Phone (    )    -	
Senior Pastor		other staff reference		
Other reference in the church			Phone (    )    -	
Previous Church:		How long?	member: yes / no	
Church Address			Phone (    )    -	
Senior Pastor		other staff reference		
Other reference in the church			Phone (    )    -	
Reason for leaving?				

Please describe your journey to become a Christ-follower.

Please describe your personal disciplines of Bible study and prayer.

Please describe your experience teaching, leading groups, discipling, counseling or mentoring.



Other ministry involvement and applicable degrees and certifications?

Please describe your level of Bible knowledge and training, and where obtained.

Please describe your experience visiting jail or prison inmates in the past.

Please describe your use of alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drug use, past and present, and any recovery programs you have participated in, with approximate dates.

If you have been convicted of a criminal offense in the past 10 years, please explain the circumstances, including sentences served, approximate dates, and any current limitations or registrations required. Note - the jail does not allow people under current probation or parole supervision to visit inmates. Please also list criminal activity and approximate incarceration time before that time. Past offenses do not preclude Jail Minister service; in fact, they may enhance effectiveness, so long as sufficient time has passed to demonstrate a real change of life. **However, failure to be truthful in reporting will be cause for disqualification.**

What are some real and specific past failures and areas of present weakness with which you currently struggle (not merely some vague “sin nature”)? How have you expressed genuine repentance and experienced victory in a growing walk with Jesus? Please be assured that members of this board also recognize their own crimes, failures, and weaknesses, and need for repentance, and we pledge full confidentiality (to the degree allowable by law) regarding issues raised in this application and during the interview. However, we must see a willingness to share with others those spiritual/emotional experiences that have shaped you and your walk deeply.

Are you committed to and living according to the Biblical practice of sexual abstinence before marriage, and exclusive sexual expression within lifelong marriage between one man and woman? Y / N Please describe briefly the circumstances of departures from this, including divorce.

Why are you applying to be a Certified Jail Minister?

Are you willing to work through the provided Navigators curriculum, and to commit to praying for and meeting with an inmate at the Butte County Jail once a week for 42 weeks, barring unforeseen change of circumstances? Y / N

Are there any aspects of the ARM purpose and core values about which you have reservations? If so, please discuss. Continue on reverse if necessary.

