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International Prison Chaplains' Association European Conference

The International Prison Chaplains' Association European Conference was held in the Capital of Estonia, Tallinn between the 1st of June and the 7th. Because of this the writer of this article was asked to write about the Declaration of Tallinn and about the history and work of the Association.

The inauguration of IPCA took place in August 1985 at a meeting of 59 prison chaplains from 20 countries, in Bossey, organised at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland. The association was founded as a result of a declaration made on 25th August. The Lutheran World Federation in Geneva supported the idea of the conference; The World Council of Churches issued the official invitation.

The spiritual atmosphere was so powerful at this meeting that people have often since spoken of 'the Spirit of Bossey'. When people have used this phrase they have referred to a strong feeling of belonging together in a spiritual community - a feeling of shared mission emerging from a common ground level experience overcoming barriers of nationality and denomination.

Who are prison chaplains?

Prison chaplains are ordained ministers, or sometimes lay people, accredited whenever possible both by their churches and their national states to work on behalf of the spiritual well being of people in prison. The interpretation of their prison work in terms of its understanding, opportunities and status is worked out practically through a great variety of cultural contexts. The linking up of pastors in these different situations all over the World is the heartbeat for IPCA.

The First Declaration in Bossey emphasize, that IPCA should promote the work of Christian prison chaplains and declares, that the association should be non-political and non-profit making.

Participants at Bossey were well aware that the United Nations upheld the importance of the work of prison chaplains in the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, that is why found important to keep closer relationship with UN. This is why several participants of Bossey attended the Seventh UN Quiquennial Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders to be held two weeks later in Milan.

Among others, two important results came from attendance at that UN meeting. First, informal contacts were made with Monsignor Cesare Curioni who was the representative of the Holy See at that Congress. He was also the President of the International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care (ICCPPC). He iniciated that his organisation should associate with IPCA materialised two years later at a meeting in Helsinki. Secondly, became important, that IPCA should be focusing on the needs of prisoners rather than the needs of prison chaplains.

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Second and Third IPCA Conferences

A Second International Conference was held in Bossey in 1990. About one hundred chaplains attended this meeting from around the world. A Steering Committee of ten people was established representing a worldwide membership of prison chaplains. The chairman was again Peter Rassow, German Lutheran prison chaplain. This committee met every year mainly in Europe to plan a third conference, which was held in Ottawa in 1995. This conference was attended by three hundred people and elected a new international committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Pierre Allard, then Director of Chaplaincy in the Correctional Service of Canada. It again met every year in locations around the world, This Steering Committee organised the Fourth Conference to be held in South Africa in August 2000.

IPCA and internationalism

The establishing of the International Prison Chaplains' Association reflects the contemporary development of internationalism. Professional people in all spheres have realised that today's means of travel and channels of communication facilitate worldwide contacts. Sharing thoughts leads to wider professional understanding, to mutual support, to standardising workplace ideals.

IPCA and ecumenism

All this ties in with the fact that in church circles there has also been a long tradition of worldwide links. For centuries individual denominations have spread around the world as part of missionary outreach. In recent years there has been a greater emphasis everywhere on ecumenical activity - particularly in areas of service, like prison ministry, in which the cooperation do not compromise traditions of dogma. Willingness to work ecumenically has always been the hallmark of IPCA.

IPCA and regional development

It was always envisaged that the International Prison Chaplains' Association should have regional organisations, like for example in Europe where international conferences have been held in Helsinki (1988), Strasbourg (1992), Rugby (1994) and Ystad (1997).

IPCA and Prison Fellowship

In recent years IPCA has had close connection with Prison Fellowship International based in Washington, which has local Prison Fellowship groups in 105 countries around the world. Workers for Prison Fellowship have close links with chaplains. The link between IPCA and Prison Fellowship is one of amicable and constructive co-operation not only formal contact.

IPCA and the International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care

As before I mentioned, alongside IPCA there is the International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care (ICCPPC) that represents Roman Catholic prison pastoral care workers around the world. There is a close relationship between the two organisations,

and an official representative, one of the leaders of ICCPPC is on the Worldwide Steering Committee of IPCA, at present Hans-Peter Echtermayer German Roman Catholic prison chaplain, president of ICCPPC – Europe.

Very important, that IPCA's conferences are open to all chaplains and they have always been attended by many Roman Catholic chaplains. IPCA is a movement with which any Christian prison chaplain can be associated, but it is not possible to enrol as a member. The organising of large worldwide and regional conferences has been its primary objective. The networking that follows from these meetings is largely informal.

Mission Statement of IPCA

a. IPCA helps Christian Prison Chaplains everywhere to be in touch with each other to be more effective in their ministry. It also aims to support all chaplains regardless of race, gender and religion.

b. IPCA recognizes that the enclosed institutional life of prison chaplains can isolate them from their churches. IPCA therefore works towards helping prison chaplains globally make supportive contacts to enhance their care for prisoners and their affirmation of the inherent dignity of every individual held in custody.

c. IPCA creates links with churches and challenges them and their congregations to take the ministry to prisoners more seriously. IPCA invites the churches to offer the necessary support to chaplains in their ministry to prisoners and also to prison staff.

d. IPCA is committed to implementing peace and justice and affirms the obligations for all countries to adopt all the standards recommended by the United Nations.

Declaration 2000. South Africa, Kroonstad

This Declaration comes from over 300 prison chaplains from 67 countries meeting in Kroonstad in South Africa in August 2000 at a conference entitled „Challenging Despair, Creating Hope".

This Declaration is urgently addressed to all Government and Churches as well as to Prisoners, Victims and Prison Chaplains.

To governments

The conference exhorts all governments to apply rigorously „The Minimum Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners" as advocated by the United Nations.

The conference informs all governments that it is absolutely opposed to the use of capital punishment. It invites those who support the death penalty to reflect seriously on the call by the United Nations for a moratorium on executions and to work for eventual abolition.

The conference asks all government to show more concern about the dramatic spread of tuberculosis and AIDS. It urges them to improve welfare provision for those afflicted with these diseases.

The conference encourages more interest in ideas that facilitate alternatives to imprisonment. It is aware of the success of victim/offender reconciliation schemes - often referred to as Restorative Justice. It expresses hope that all governments will put more resources into

developing alternatives to imprisonment and into possibilities for reconciliation between victims and offenders.

The conference expresses outrage at some prison conditions, which are unworthy of human beings, especially in less developed countries. The conference notes with particular concern the distinct needs of women in prison - noting that prisons are often designed for men.

The conference wishes to highlight other issues - namely, the cruelty of detaining prisoners for long periods without charge, the incarcerating of life sentenced prisoners on an indeterminate basis and the devastating social and criminal consequences of containing impressionable young prisoners with experienced law-breakers. It points to the unnecessary hidden misery caused by limiting prisoners' contacts with their families.

The conference notes that this is the Millennium Year. It invites leaders to make this a year of hope for prisoners by making every possible legal provision for amnesties. This could apply to prisoners serving less than twelve months and to women who have dependent children.

The conference nevertheless affirms much excellent work being done by many governments in implementing plans to improve prison regimes and human rights. The conference expresses solidarity with prison administrators who share with chaplains the exhortation of Peter „always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence". (1Peter 3:15)

To Churches

The conference calls upon churches to remain a prophetic voice for the rights and dignity of prisoners who have no voice of their own.

It urges churches to remember that it is the hope of salvation that is our „helmet" (1Thes. 5:8) and not a spirit of vindictiveness. Churches are therefore urged to do all they can to lessen discrimination towards people sent to prison so that the self-esteem of prisoners may be restored.

The conference also hopes that churches will be more available to help victims.

The conference urges churches to maintain strong ecumenical links in prison ministries. It encourages chaplains to act with greater sensitivity in these matters. It also endorses the relevance for prison chaplains of working in teams for mutual support and stimulation.

The conference asks all churches to maintain close contact with international organizations to ensure that congregations are informed about developments in prison regimes. It asks churches to make people more aware of the complexity of issues associated with criminality in order to eliminate prejudice.

It asks churches to help prisoners re-enter society. In this respect the conference wishes to affirm the role of community chaplains in their hopeful work in bridging the gap between prison and daily life.

To prisoners

The conference affirms the inherent dignity of all prisoners.

It invites them to make use of the pastoral ministry offered by prison chaplains. The conference reminds prisoners of the exhortation by Paul in The Epistle to the Romans that „suffer-

ing produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us". (Romans 5:3-5).

The conference recognizes that in struggling with this hope prisoners can give inspiration to chaplains and many others.

The conference also urges prisoners to do all they can to be reconciled with prison staff and fellow inmates with whom they are forced to live. It encourages them to reach out for the benefits that may come to them and to their victims by embarking on victim/offender reconciliation schemes.

To victims

The conference is aware of how much victims are being overlooked by the criminal justice system. It also recognizes that the pain and anger in victims have little opportunity to be expressed. The conference encourages victims to find support and reconciliation through their churches. The conference also emphasizes that victim/offender reconciliation offers enormous potential for good. No victim can be forced to seek reconciliation but the chaplains hope that its long-term benefits may be realized by victims.

To prison chaplains

The conference expresses solidarity with all prison chaplains. It reminds them that their work constantly demands a strong sense of hope.

The conference believes that preaching the gospel in prison means that chaplains should also share the relevance of their ministry with the community, raising awareness about issues of justice and the problems of prisoners. It salutes the particular pastoral ministry that women bring to prison ministry.

The conference urges chaplains to be aware of procedures in prisons for exposing injustice and, if ultimately necessary, to know how to contact organizations which speak up for human rights. It salutes all prison chaplains who feel oppressed or isolated in their work. It exhorts chaplains everywhere to share the joys and sorrows of ministry with others and to show concern for colleagues who are disadvantaged in their work. It urges all chaplains to seek support through International Prisons Chaplains' Association networks.

The conference encourages all chaplains to continue „praising the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade." (1Peter 1:3-4)

IPCA-Europe

Following I would like to write briefly about the European organisation of IPCA.

The European section of the global IPCA organization, commenced its work with the Ecumenical Conference for Pastoral Counselling in European Prisons, held in Strasbourg in May 1992. The conference was conducted in collaboration with the Council of Europe. The working goal is to create a network between prison chaplains of all Christian churches in

Europe. The network is intended to facilitate ecumenical cooperation and mutual support. The chief aims are: maintenance of human rights and freedom of religious practice and pastoral counselling in prisons, protection of minorities and improvement of the situation of crime victims.

At regular intervals, currently every four years, IPCA-Europe organizes a pan-European conference chiefly aimed at active prison chaplains. More than 100 participants attended each conference from some 30 European countries. Between the pan-European conferences IPCA-Europe also initiates working groups and regional conferences in collaboration with regional and national associations of prison chaplains. IPCA-Europe is an associate organization of the CEC (Conference of European Churches) and is in contact with the CPT (European Committee for the Prevention of Torture) of the Council of Europe.

During the pan-European conferences a Steering Committee is elected to prepare the next conference and to conduct business. The Steering Committee is itself responsible for funding its work. It elects a chairman and, generally speaking, meets twice year. The Steering Committee currently comprises eight elected members and one co-opted member from various European regions and churches.

IPCA-Europe does not have a secure budget at its disposal. The work is funded through project-based ecclesiastical and state grants. This funding is particularly crucial for ensuring the collaboration and participation of prison chaplains from Eastern and Southern Europe.

Conference in Tallinn

The last European Conference took place in Tallinn, 1–7 June. On this conference a delegation of four chaplains represented the Hungarian prison chaplains. Next I would like to publish the Declaration accepted by the conference. I would like to attract the attention to the third point of the Declaration, which was proposed by the Hungarian participants, based on the proposal, which was prepared by the Organisation of Prison Chaplains in Hungary, under the title: „Proposal of church services for aftercare and crime prevention". Initiated and organized by the Organisation of Prison Chaplains in Hungary this document was discussed on the 24th of June, at a meeting participated Dr. Peter Bárandy minister of Justice, director general Dr. István Bökönyi, Church leaders, great number of prison chaplains and experts.

Also the Proposal was discussed in Tallinn in a Workshop for „Aftercare and prevention of crime", and received a positive welcome.

Based on this got this third point into the Declaration, and I am convinced, that this is the most important part of the Declaration.

The text of proposal of the Organisation of the Prison Chaplains in Hungary is as follows:

Proposal of church services for aftercare and crime prevention

In Hungary, even in the government, negotiations with church leaders were held many times concerning the idea that churches should participate in crime prevention activities. Church leaders are open to this advice, therefore the Organisation of the Hungarian Prison Chaplains made a suggestion to church leaders and priests about how they could take part in this important job in a particular way determined by their situation.

Concerning this suggestion, my starting point is that crime is a problem that affects the whole society, therefore the 'whole' society has to take a part in solving it. In the society the church is the most significant and biggest organization. Their members are also touched of course, and this means to them a special task and responsibility in the solution of the problem. Nevertheless the mission of the church is to help improve the world and the people living in it. And also to help fight against crime. Churches can help in this job through their congregations, priests and believers. It's not only the pastor's task, but also the task of the church members.

There is no other organization where there are so many active, ready-to-go and able-to-do people! We are convinced that each congregation and local church have either young or old persons who we can count on to help out with this effortless but special service.

Our first proposal is: Introduction of a prayer week, beginning on the second Sunday after Easter, which first Sunday would be called the Prison Mission Sunday – when chaplains would serve in many churches. Namely we suggest joining the International Prison Mission Prayer Week which is organized in more than 100 countries in the world at the same time. In Hungary this year we sent our notice to 2500 congregations and also published it in church papers and in public daily papers as well. During the prayer week chaplains would visit congregations and would give services there. This would mean that chaplains would reach hundreds of congregations in one year. During the Prayer Week chaplains could meet the members of the Crime Prevention Mission Committee or help them establishing them.

It is desirable that chaplains pay special attention so that a pastor of a congregation in a town where there is a prison would occasionally go and give a service there. Therefore allowing churches to get closer to the prisons.

Our second proposal: It should be arranged for pastors in each county in Hungary to visit prisons so that everybody of them could see a prison inside at least once in his life and to meet inmates. Also the members of the Crime Prevention Mission Committee could join this visit.

Our third proposal: each congregation of Hungarian churches should establish a Crime Prevention Mission Committee ("Ephphata Committee") - consisting of a couple of people where the pastor sees the need for it. At the beginning the Committee can consist of 2 to 3 persons, but this number can be increased later. We are convinced that this idea can be fulfilled in almost every congregation.

Task of the Committee: to help one (only one) prisoner. Here we are thinking of a prisoner who has kept in contact with the chaplain or a prison missionary for an extended time and it has been suggested that the prisoner be supported. These chosen prisoners are people who don't have an external relationship anymore. Nobody visits them, they don't have a contact person and they don't receive letters or packages from anyone. The Committee would be responsible to send packages to the prisoner a couple of times a year and with the help of the church members, to correspond with the prisoner and also would be responsible to ask the brethren to pray for the prisoner. This means help not only to the chaplain and the missionary worker but also the prisoner will have a positive feeling because of knowing that somewhere there are people who think of him, help him and pray for him. This program could be named as: "One Church – One Inmate". It has been working for a long time in Texas with fantastic results.

Our fourth proposal: It is required to establish so called Aftercare (Half-way) Houses (as many as required) which can host 13-15 released prisoners simultaneously and can offer a temporary home for those who have no possibility to return to their families, old communities or if it has been recommended that they not do so. Obviously, those prisoners who were patronized by local churches earlier would be hosted in these Aftercare Houses, since the local churches and their believers have no possibility to take care of the prisoner after release. Perhaps you can't even expect them to do so. However, an institutional solution has to be found for this problem. These Aftercare Houses would be institutions ran by the churches and would be established in cities where there are more prison missionary volunteers or where the local Crime Prevention Mission Committee is able to run one like that. Firstly in cities where the conditions of counselling, follow up and adapting to a community are given. Accomplishing the program of Aftercare Houses does require more time, more steps and governmental financial resources. However opening one or two Aftercare Houses will be needed as soon as possible. They would run with a state normative as a temporary home. Similar houses are working in the Netherlands for crime prevention and aftercare. Their program is called Exodus.

Our fifth proposal: In those places where the local church is involved, namely where the parent of a family is in prison, the Crime Prevention Mission Committee – on chaplain's and missionary worker's intervention, and on the prisoner's request would search for these family's children. The Committee would then organize their care in the case where the family accepts and has need of it.

These families and children could be drawn into church life, could attend Sunday school, and could receive Christmas presents together with other children. (We would like to emphasize that we are talking about families where the imprisoned parent actively takes part in church services in the prison and has regular contact with the chaplain etc.) So-called 'Family Caretakers' would help the prisoner keep in touch with his family and children. Hereby the prisoner has greater chance to be allowed to return to his family after release. This also means that the chance of returning to prison, because of committing another crime, reduces to the one-sixth. At the same time it is well known that children who have a parent that has been to prison become involved in crime and end up in prison, themselves, later on.

Church holiday homes should open their gates to childcare and help in the above mentioned way for ten days a year, so that they could be taken there for vacation. Theologians, seminarists and youth activists could lead the camps for children groups of several ages. Governmental resources could cover the expenses of the camps. Each year there are many opportunities announced for supporting camps.

Our sixth proposal: In every large town, at the most suitable place, the church should open - let's call them EPHPHATA CLUB. They should be open from Friday afternoon until Monday morning non-stop, providing the possibility to play table tennis – on more tables. This is for those young people who can't find a place at night and hang around, take drugs and go to discotheques. It would be necessary to provide simple food (sandwich, tea) for them. The Crime Prevention Mission Committee of the local churches would be responsible for this 'Week-end duty' with the partaking of young believers, shifting duties in every 4-5 hours. At the same time raps, youth clubs can be organized with voluntary participation. However the emphasis is on the

games, meaningful occupations, personal relationships and communication. Similar clubs already exist in the country – in secular organization – showing great results. Similar clubs being run all over the world are showing great results. Its Hungarian founder is Sándor Faragó, Dr, (paediatrician.)

Our seventh proposal: Establishment of a coordinating office is essential at a central location employing 2-3 persons full-time to organize all the work and activities. The government finances this. This office would be responsible for finding prisoners for congregations, for locating families and children who need help, and for organizing camps. They may also arrange correspondence with prisoners, organizing Ephphata Clubs, etc.

Our eighth proposal: Assigning one person at each church so that he/she is responsible for crime prevention service at their church. This person would be responsible to know about their churches' tasks and duties and to make sure that they are being completed.

At the end let us see the Declaration itself:

Declaration, Tallinn 2004

1. The Fifth Conference of IPCA-Europe took place from the 1-7 June in Tallinn, Estonia. 150 prison chaplains from 27 European countries representing Anglican, Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Free Churches participated in the conference. The Conference was addressed by a range of speakers, including, for the first time, a Muslim Chaplain

2. IPCA-Europe strives to safeguard and promote law and justice that is based on the biblical image of humanity and the liberating and justifying message of Jesus Christ and the human rights of prisoners.

3. IPCA-Europe expresses the need for closer cooperation between local Churches and Prison Chaplains to provide for the pastoral care of the families or prisoners and aftercare for those released from prison.

4. The Theme of the Conference was: "I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25.36). The Conference recognises that in the changing and developing Europe there are many different conditions for the work of prison chaplains. The conference asks that in all European countries

- **a.** Prison Chaplaincy should be authorised, recognised and supported by States and Churches
- **b.** the majority Churches should work to ensure that the prisoners of the minority Churches have equal access to Prison Chaplains of their Churches
- **c.** the Churches should work to ensure that the prisoners of other world religions should also have equal access to Prison Chaplains of their Faith Community

5. The Conference recognizes the success of reforms in the prison systems in some European countries, especially in former communist states. We welcome these developments to ensure that the dignity and the Human Rights of all those in prison are respected as a positive contribution to their successful integration into the society after release. We were delighted to discover the major developments in Estonia not least the creation of an ecumenical Prison Chaplaincy.

6. However the Conference also recognizes that all European countries face many challenges to ensure that the Standard Minimum Rules of the Council of Europe are applied in every

country. We welcomed a lecture by a representative of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). We continue to support their vital work in ensuring the dignity of all held in custody.

7. The Conference wishes to express its shock at the torture and the inhuman and degrading treatment of those being held in Abu Ghraib and other Iraqi Prisons by American personnel. We are shocked because of our Christian understanding of the love of God and its demand that we work for justice, for the dignity and reconciliation of all humanity. This commitment to justice also leads us to express our grave concern for those being held in Guantanamo Bay.

8. IPCA-Europe urges all the countries of the world to abolish the death penalty, in keeping with the policy of all the member states of the Council of Europe. The Conference was informed that Libya has sentenced five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor to death by firing squad accused of deliberately infecting some 400 children with HIV. We offer our deep sympathy to the families of those affected, but our Christian understanding of the love, mercy and compassion of God demands that we work for justice, dignity and reconciliation for all people. We appeal to the European authorities to use all possible measures to assist these medical workers, as we continue to uphold the principle that no-one has the right to condemn anyone to death.

9. Finally we ask that the Churches and States continue to develop justice systems that increasingly employ the principles of Restorative Justice, for the benefit of those individuals affected by criminality, and the communities in which they live. We commit ourselves to these principles and ask for the prayers of the people of Europe in our ministry to prisoners and prison staff.

Note: To the history of IPCA worldwide I used the study of my friend, the English, Anglican prison chaplain Reverend Allan R. Duce, who has participated in the first three Steering Committee of IPCA.