

Why is Prison Ministry a Fundamental Role in the Evolution of the SSVP?



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul

Introduction



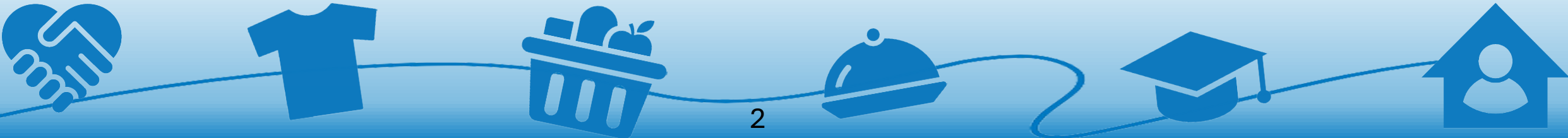
How does the Correctional System in Canada work?

What is Prison Ministry?

How is Prison Ministry interrelated with the other Social Justice initiatives of the Society?

Why should Vincentians be involved? The impact of incarceration on those you visit.

How Vincentians are involved today.



How does the Correctional System in Canada work?



Two Tier System – Federal & Provincial

Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)

All persons sentenced to two or more years are sent to the federal system.

Rehabilitation and exit programs to help them return safely to the community provided.

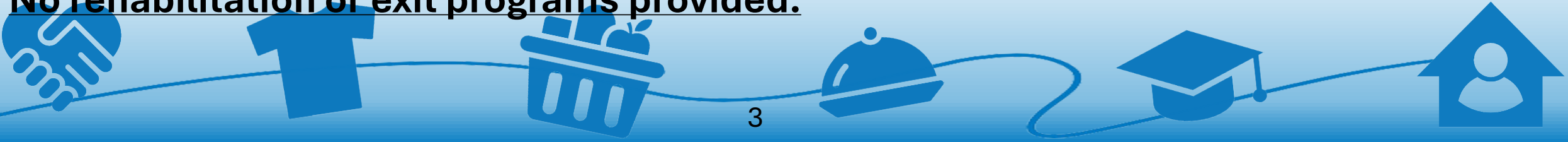
Provincial Correctional Services

All persons sentenced to less than two years are sent to the Provincial Systems.

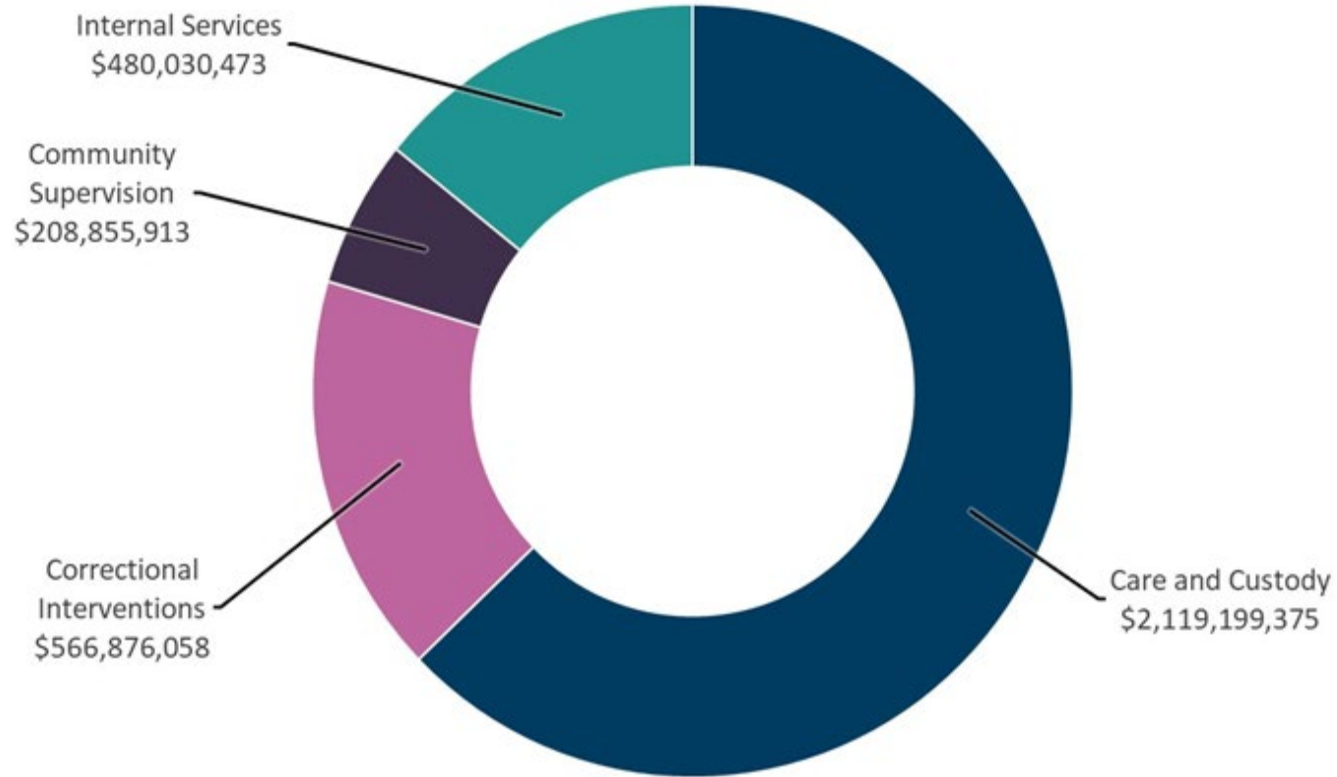
Rehabilitation and exit programs to help them return safely to the community. provided.

All persons awaiting trial are held in Provincial Remand.

No rehabilitation or exit programs provided.

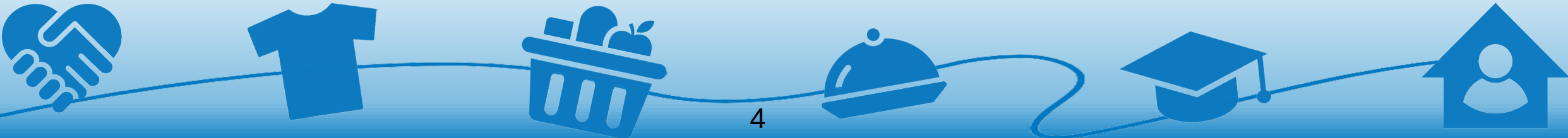


Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)

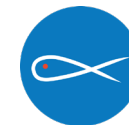


CSC in the fiscal year 2023-2024

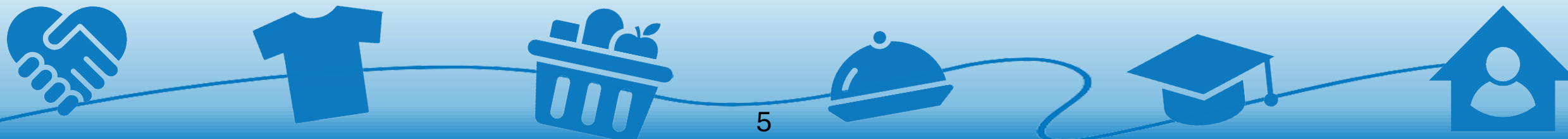
- The CSC spent **\$3,374,951,819.00**.
- The CSC held 12,667 prisoners at a cost of \$2,119,199,375.00 or \$5,806,025.69 per day.
- To house 1 prisoner for the year cost \$167,300.81 or **\$458.36** per day.
- Only 3.3% of sentences for men and 2.1% of sentences for women are 2 years or longer. StatsCan 2018



Provincial Correctional Services



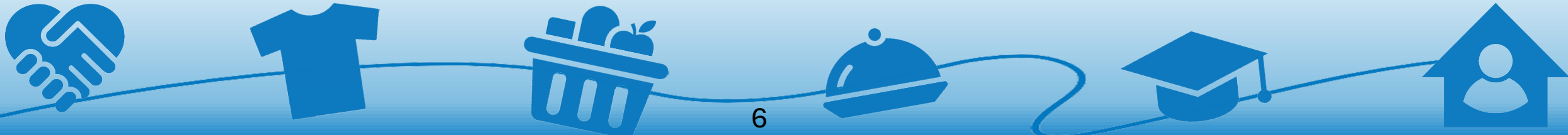
Geography	Provinces and territories ⁴ (map)				
Operating expenditures ⁵	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022	2022 / 2023
Total operating expenditures (x 1,000)^{5, 6, 7, 8, 9}	2,692,706	2,746,225	2,842,070	2,923,772	3,191,976
Custodial services (x 1,000)	2,201,698	2,267,912	2,358,757	2,421,086	2,648,492
Community supervision services (x 1,000)	379,954	387,568	385,002	403,367	425,502
Headquarters and central services (x 1,000)	101,901	81,899	90,554	90,159	108,620
Parole boards (x 1,000)¹⁰	9,153	8,846	7,758	9,160	9,362
Other operating expenditures¹¹
Total operating expenditures (x 1,000)	2,018,520	2,019,283	2,074,504	2,064,811	2,111,096
Custodial services (x 1,000)	1,650,448	1,667,582	1,721,720	1,709,807	1,751,648
Average daily inmate cost¹²	259	264	349	327	326
	2002/2003 constant dollars				



Provincial Correctional Services



- The provincial system's responsibility is to securely house inmates serving terms of two years less a day or those awaiting trial who are awaiting a bail hearing or have not been granted bail.
- Remand – Maximum Security
 - Limited movement
 - Limited access to phones or visits
- In Ontario all facilities house a mix of sentenced (Medium Security) and remand (Maximum Security)



Provincial Correctional Services



Most incarcerated Canadians are held in remand, 79 per cent in 2022 and raising.

Overcrowding has reached critical levels in our Provincial systems. For the remand sections of a prison to function efficiently it is generally agreed that a 90% capacity level is optimum. This allows for allocating prisoners based on security considerations.

Overcrowding leads to multiple issues foremost rising tensions among prisoners due to cramped conditions (sometimes 4 to a 2-man cell), often resulting in violence between prisoners or Correctional Officers and prisoners.

In 2023 Maplehurst Correctional Center operated at 134% capacity, the highest in Canada.

Ontario prisons was operating at 113% capacity. In that year 82% of the prison population were being held in remand. Since then both rates have risen.



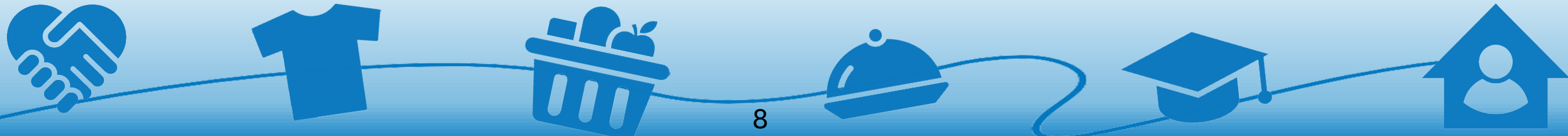


Prison Ministry Activities



Prison Visits

- ❑ Providing spiritual and religious care
- ❑ Work in alcoholics anonymous, gambling anonymous or narcotics anonymous groups
- ❑ Providing cultural and interpreter services
- ❑ Literacy and numeracy skills training
- ❑ Helping inmates prepare to return to the community
- ❑ Teaching music, leisure activities, and arts and crafts

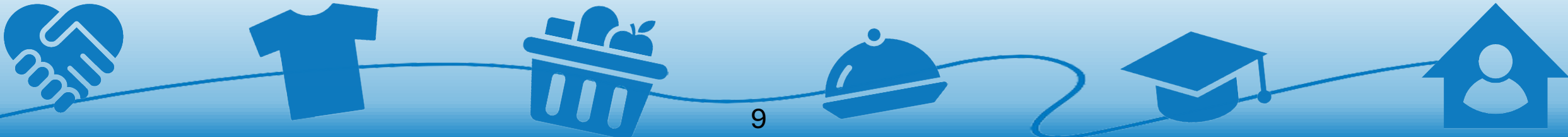


Prison Ministry Activities



Prison Visits (Continued)

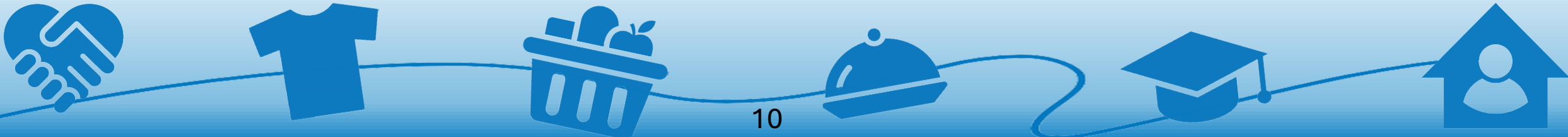
- Providing rehabilitative programs such as anger management, anti-criminal thinking, substance abuse, domestic violence, gambling, and sexual offending.
- Providing core life skills, such as budgeting, goal setting, problem solving, supportive relationships, and parenting skills
- Employment related skills, such as job search and computer skills
- Providing education, employment and life skills training



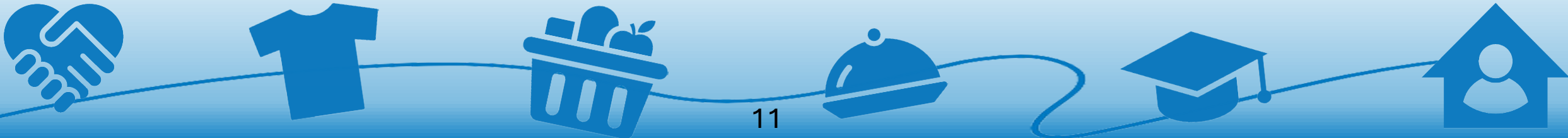
Prison Ministry Activities Outside Prison Facilities



- ❑ Prayer Groups –Prayers are the ultimate gift to prisoners.
- ❑ Providing transportation for families visiting prison.
- ❑ In the Ontario Region becoming involved with The Prison Ministry/Restorative Justice (PMRJ) network to find out what is happening in this field and for support.
- ❑ Friends of Dismas with nine locations in Ontario. Meeting once or twice per month, volunteers and ex-prisoners gather for a meal, where they listen to and pray for each other.
- ❑ Welcome Home programs offer practical reintegration support as well as helping individuals and families feel they belong and have arrived home.
- ❑ Supervising people who are on probation and are lower risk.
- ❑ Assisting probation and parole officers with court reports and office tasks.
- ❑ Providing Christmas baskets to men and women in halfway houses to demonstrate to them that the community remembers them at this time of the year.



Social Justice Initiatives of the Society



How is Prison Ministry interrelated with the other Social Justice initiatives of the Society?



Advocacy: Our correctional system is broken; we need to speak out for change. Currently the prisons are being used to warehouse our ‘problems’, the homeless, the addicted and those suffering from mental health issues.

Indigenous Sharing Circle: Indigenous people are overrepresented both as victims of crime and incarceration in our prisons.

“In 2022-2023, Indigenous adults made up 30% of admissions to provincial/territorial correctional services despite only accounting for 4% in the adult population in Canada in 2021.”¹

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Systemic barriers, including rampant racial discrimination, stereotyping and bias, are root causes of Black and Indigenous overrepresentation in our prisons.

“In 2020/21, 9% of offenders under federal jurisdiction (in custody or under community supervision) were Black, despite only representing about 4% of adults in Canada.”²

^{1, 2} From Department of Justice Canada, JustFacts, Research and Statistics Division, November 2024



How is Prison Ministry interrelated with the other Social Justice initiatives of the Society?

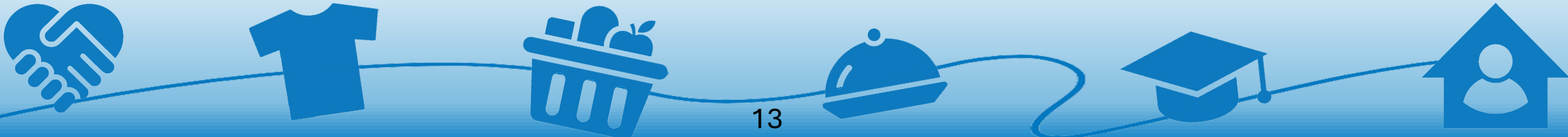


Care for Creation: The correctional system is a major contributor to homelessness. Those living on the streets, due to the situation they find themselves in, add more waste to the environment. Some of you may have experienced the seemingly endless demand for socks from the homeless. When you have no home, you have no place to wash your clothes. When they are dirty the only solution is new clothes, throwing away the old.

Homelessness: Prison, especially in the colder months is used as an option for dealing with this issue. Prison is both a cause and effect of homelessness.

Basic Income: When released from remand many people have lost everything. With no support what are their chances of becoming contributing members of society?

All the Social Justice Initiatives of the Society are inter-connected and an awareness of each of them is necessary to put forward holistic solutions for all.



Why Should Vincentians Be Involved?



- The impact of incarceration on those you visit.
 - The psychological imprisonment of mothers
 - The hidden shame
 - The financial costs to families
- Vincentians have always been involved.
 - Saint Vincent de Paul
 - Daughters of Charity
 - Blessed Rosalie Rendu
 - Founding Conference of SSVP Canada

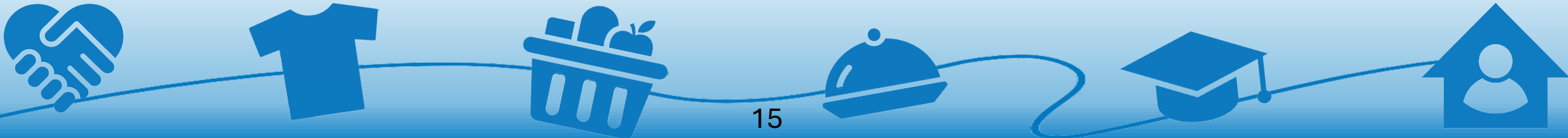




How Vincentians Are Involved Today

The following are activities reported to the SSVP Ontario Prison Ministry-Restorative Justice (PMRJ)

- Blessed Sacrament parish in Kitchener has been collecting clothing for women who are released from Grand Valley Institute (for women). Their newest project is to provide exit kits, journals and/or “My Daily Bread” prayer books to distribute to women who have been released. Their parish deacon attends SSVDP meetings and shares about his experiences visiting the Institute.
- “Jail Committee Windsor Essex” is made up of men and women Vincentians committed to serving the incarcerated and their families. Regular friendly visits to our local jail are intended to bring hope and guidance to prisoners. Special occasions are celebrated with a "Jug Up", pizza, pop, candy, friendship. Families, especially children, are often the silent sufferers when a loved one is in jail. It is the mission of SSVP to try to bring hope to these young ones. Clothing, food, smiles and understanding are provided by this ministry.
- Second Chance Ministry in Windsor, to aid people released from prison. The cause has grown to provide for others as well. There are two trucks and vans, with 4-5 people per team, who deliver furniture to those in need. An all-volunteer organization providing Basic Daily Help, Mentoring, and Bureaucracy Assistance.

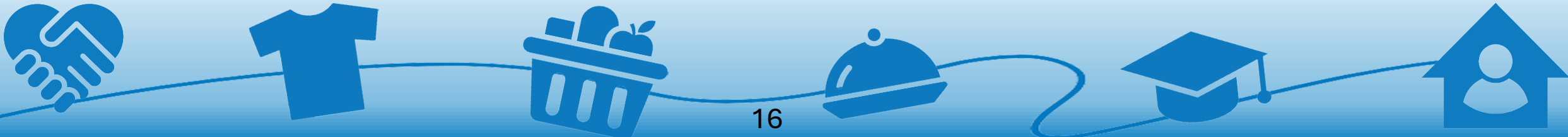


How Vincentians Are Involved Today



- ❑ The Prison Release Kits Program (PRKP) is intended to meet two needs; to aid released prisoners who will be homeless and to educate the public, especially young people about the realities of the provincial correctional system. These kits include toiletries, T-shirts, underwear, socks, and towel. In the case of the Hamilton-Wentworth facility, a store voucher for the SSVP store on Barton Street is included for the recipient to pick up clothing and footwear appropriate to the season. Efforts to start the program at Elgin Middlesex Detention Centre are currently underway.
- ❑ SSVP Ontario Prison Ministry-Restorative Justice (PMRJ) are currently working on a **“Practical Guide to Prison Ministry in Ontario”** intended to help direct people to the appropriate contacts within their communities.
- ❑ Prayer Groups – example: Dismas Plea.

Support prison visitors in your parish by letting them know you will pray for the intentions of those they visit.



DISMAS' PLEA April Intentions



From the earliest days of the Church the 'good thief' who was crucified with Jesus has been known by the name Dismas. His plea, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." is our plea.

Father, we know that You can even use evil for good. All we need to do is to look at the cross, so help these men and women who are incarcerated to know that everything in our life, good and bad, is for our ultimate best. Amen

- Braden – "to be close to God Jesus."
- Eric – "to keep safe."
- Dave - "to find myself, the truth and God."
- Jaiden – "help to change. That my son & daughter have a better Life."
- Ang - "For wellbeing and sanity for one another and for hope."
- James – "For an end of this situation and frustration. To be able to see my kids."

The following prisoners are on Suicide Watch.

- Ortho – "For my family, fellow prisoners, and C/Os."
- James – "That I will follow the right path." That he accepts Reconciliation and forgive himself.
- For everyone within the correctional system, may they be safe
- For those on parole and probation that they will be successful in staying away from trouble and that they find success in re-entering society.
- For the victims, Lord, we ask You to heal those who have been damaged by crime. Help us all to seek reconciliation and to forgive.

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory Be

Dear Lord, I pray for all prisoners that you give them the peace that Your Word promises for those who believe in Your Son. I ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, a fellow prisoner. Amen

This month's meeting Monday May 26, 2025

**Special Guest Speaker – Michael Plona, Senior Program Consultant
at the Ministry of the Attorney General**

Topic: "What Are the Causes of Trial Delays In Our Courts?"



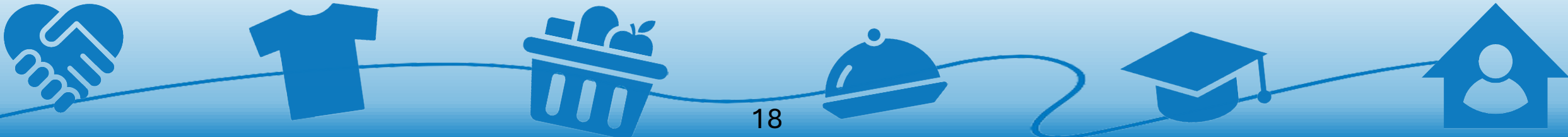
Final Thought



One day after Mass I was speaking with an elderly gentleman. He shared that all his life he had been active in various ministries in the parishes he had attended. He expressed frustration that he was now too old to do anything. I asked him if he could listen, he answered yes. I told him about a place where there were many people who needed to be heard.

At 85 years of age Nick Barber started visiting Maplehurst Correctional Center. He stopped during the Covid lockdowns for the prison but was anxious to return when they were lifted. I dissuaded him from going back right away because of the adverse conditions. Two years later, I told him that conditions for return were better.

He told me that now at 92 he would be physically unable to do the ministry. Then he said, “The prison was the only place I ever knew for certain that I was where the Holy Spirit wanted me and that He was with me.”





Please complete the evaluation form
Merci de remplir le formulaire d'évaluation



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