

August 15, 2011

Dear Friends in the DMARC Congregations,

In Iowa there are forty-eight individuals serving life without the possibility of parole who began their sentence as minors. Meaning, before the age of eighteen, they were told that for the rest of their lives, every day would be spent in prison with no chance of release. And, there is only one nation in the world where they could even receive this sentence: The United States of America.

We invite you to join us in celebrating a Week of Faith & Healing this coming February the 12th through 18th. This week will focus on the many broken pieces of our justice system as it pertains to our youth; perhaps the most vulnerable group in America. The Week of Faith & Healing would emphasize the following:

An awareness of the sheer number of juveniles incarcerated in Iowa's prisons

A realization that minority youth represent a vastly disproportionate percentage (25%) of the prison population

Creative and positive ways to support the youth in our faith communities

A concern and recognition of victims of juvenile crimes to help them deal with their grief and anger, and, hopefully, come to forgiveness

Support children and youth whose parents and/or families are incarcerated

Develop an awareness that the majority of our incarcerated youth are victims themselves, and often suffer from mental illness

Opportunities to participate in the political process to eliminate trials of youth in adult courts, a process which includes mandatory sentencing

We invite you to participate in this Week of Faith & Healing in any way that fits with your community's faith, with a special focus on youth groups and social action committees. If your community is interested, we will send you a packet of information including suitable activities and prayers for the week. Since the week of the 12th – 18th intentionally encompasses Valentine's Day, we invite you to see this justice work as an act of love. We also invite you to work with other congregations in your community, since juvenile justice is an issue which affects us all.

At this time, we simply ask that you let us know whether or not this is something your community might be interested in by filling out the attached card (if receiving this in paper form), or by e-mailing us at events@ic4jj.org.

Sincerely,



Sr. JoAnne Talarico, CHM