

Nov. 3, 2025

Taconic Correctional Facility

All Souls' Service

Remarks of Elizabeth Friend-Ennis

Board President, Interfaith Prison Partnership (IPP)

IPP is committed to building a culture of healing in the justice system. We are here to build bridges – bridges between people of different faiths and backgrounds with whom we join in our work, yes. But more so, we are here to build bridges between the women incarcerated behind these walls, and their fellow human beings in the towns and villages that surround them. Between the Administration and Staff who guide and maintain these facilities, and the faith communities who want to be good neighbors, to help where they can, and support the work of compassion, forgiveness, and transformation.

We are here to be a bridge for women when they are ready to come home, to facilitate their re-integration so that they can become healthy and prosperous members of our community.

I am grateful to the Superintendents, and all the staff for their openness to working with IPP & our network of faith communities, and all of our volunteers in support of the programs that benefit the women here. Together with our partners (like Woman 2 Woman) we've provided fans in the summertime, moisturizing soap throughout the year, and Care Packages on Mother's day and before the winter holidays. We provide Release Bags for returning women and Activity Kits for children who come to visit with their mothers. We celebrate the hard working men and women who keep these facilities running safely. And we're in regular conversation with DOCCS to identify any needs that we might be able to meet throughout the year.

I am grateful for the many faith leaders present here today who make our work possible, rallying their resources to answer whatever call arises with generosity of spirit. They demonstrate the deep truth that every faith tradition carries a mandate to love and care for prisoner in our midst.

If we could hear the stories of those who lie interred here, or if we could know the story of every woman behind these walls or across the street, every man at

Sing Sing, or in the many other facilities in our State and country, we would surely hear overwhelming tales of poverty, domestic violence, sexual abuse, racism, addiction, and mental health crises with no access to pivotal services or crucial supports. Our system so often fails to recognize the cascade of trauma that propels the most marginalized amongst us along the path to incarceration. For those of us resting in the privilege of our skin color, our gender, our socio-economic or educational status, we must also recognize that these are stories of our historical failure to care for one another. None of us can live in a society that is safe and whole until the least among us is also safe and whole.

We gather in an unfortunately unique time; a time in which our government seeks to capitalize upon division: Us and Them, Black and white, gay and straight, "American" and "Other." But in this gathering of people of faith I want to affirm that these dualities are illusions. There is no "them" there is only "us." All are ONE as manifestations of the Divine. Whatever we experience as "other" is a failure of imagination. A failure of love.

Let us not fail in our love. Let us remember that those who have been laid to rest here in this little cemetery are a part of our collective story, and we must remember them in order to know our own story, and who we want to be as people of love and justice.

I am so grateful to each of you for being part of this sacred day of remembrance.