

Make Me an Instrument of Peace

by Dr. Martha Hurley

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I have been a member of the Death Penalty Abolition/Restorative Justice Team for a few years now. I am thankful for the many opportunities to gather with others and engage in advocacy.

Much of my time this summer was spent in dialogue with others about restorative justice (RJ), incarceration, and the death penalty in Ohio. Voices in support of implementing RJ in the local area were plentiful. I had the opportunity to co-facilitate RJ circles on a few occasions and gained some personal insight. My conversations with community groups on death penalty abolition and RJ applications were meaningful. I left many of those meetings with concrete action plans and tools in hand to continue the work. I hope to see the fruits of this labor in action via local initiatives in the near future.

I also had the opportunity to speak frequently with a person incarcerated on death row in a southern state. These conversations reminded me of my faith and God's love for us all. We spoke every other week for much of the summer. Our talks varied in length and tone. Sometimes our conversations were heavily academic and joyful. I looked forward to hearing more about how the writing of various projects was going and the sharing of light-hearted exchanges. At other times we discussed the dark side of incarceration and sadness crept in. I left every conversation with a renewed sense of purpose. We learned from each other and engaged in lively discussions about humanity, society, justice, and faith.

Upon reflection, I came out of this past summer with a greater understanding and appreciation for faith, hope, joy, peace, and service to others. As we move into the fall, I hope that all those engaged in advocacy work will reflect on their work, experience a deepening of their faith, and renew their commitment to becoming instruments of peace, as expressed in the [Peace Prayer of St. Francis](#).