

I get asked a lot of questions about being the pastor of a prison congregation. My best answer to all of them is, "Come and worship with us some Saturday night."

Many of our ABC churches in the Dakotas have come and some churches of other denominations.

The first thing people notice are the faces; mostly young, average, seeking. For the most part, they are not the hardened faces from the Hollywood "prison movies." Most come to truly worship. A few are there to talk to friends from other cell blocks. I always pray that something in the service; one of the hymns, prayers, something in the sermon, will strike home with them and bring them to God in spite of themselves.

Worship is important at Church of Hope. Music is a vital part. We use a blend of traditional hymns and contemporary music. We're not above hand clapping and tambourine banging, We have soloists signed up to do special music for months in advance.

Last Christmas we asked churches in Pierre to bring us special music. One week we had the choir from Oahe Presbyterian. Last week Calvary United Pentecostal came to worship. The pastor's wife sang and played the harp she had when she and her husband were missionaries in South America. Another lady did a solo that brought tears to many in the congregation. Next week, Lutheran Memorial will bring us special music.

Toward the end of the service each week, we pray for the women leaving during the following week. It has become a very special time. One of our best prayer warriors always ends by saying, "We may not all ever meet this way again on earth, but we'll see each other in heaven."

Church of Hope is special, but then I'm the pastor and I could be prejudiced. I'd like to invite all of you to come worship with us.