



deLIBERATEly PRISONERS

How we can all contribute





When I grow up I would like to

study and become a teacher

travel the world

marry and have a family

heal sick animals

become a lawyer

be able to build tables

Nobody would like to go to prison!

Charity liberates.



Nobody wants to become a criminal. And yet 70.000 people are imprisoned in Germany at this moment because they have broken the law. They need help discovering what life could be like without crime. They cannot do it on their own.

That is why we are looking for people who are willing to look not only at the offences but also at the men and women who have failed and who need help. People who are willing to offer reconciliation, fellowship and guidance to those who wish to make a new start. People who are convinced, as we are, that charity liberates – not only towards a life free of new criminal offences.

Take a few minutes now to look into the work of the Black Cross. We really hope you will be touched by the problems of criminal offenders. Maybe by the end of your “visit” with us, you will come to the conclusion that there is a place here for you too.

You would be most welcome – we look forward to meeting you.

Otfried Junk
Managing Director

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Christliche Straffälligenhilfe e.V.

Jägerstraße 25A · 29221 Celle

Telefon: 05141 94616-0

Telefax: 05141 94616-26

E-Mail: info@schwarzes-kreuz.de

Homepage: www.schwarzes-kreuz.de

Managing Director: Otfried Junk

Editorial Staff: Irmtraud Meifert, Otfried Junk

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The Black Cross Christian Prison Aid (Schwarzes Kreuz Christliche Straffälligenhilfe e.V.) has been supporting convicts and their families through prison volunteers and staff members nationwide since 1925. The Black Cross is affiliated with

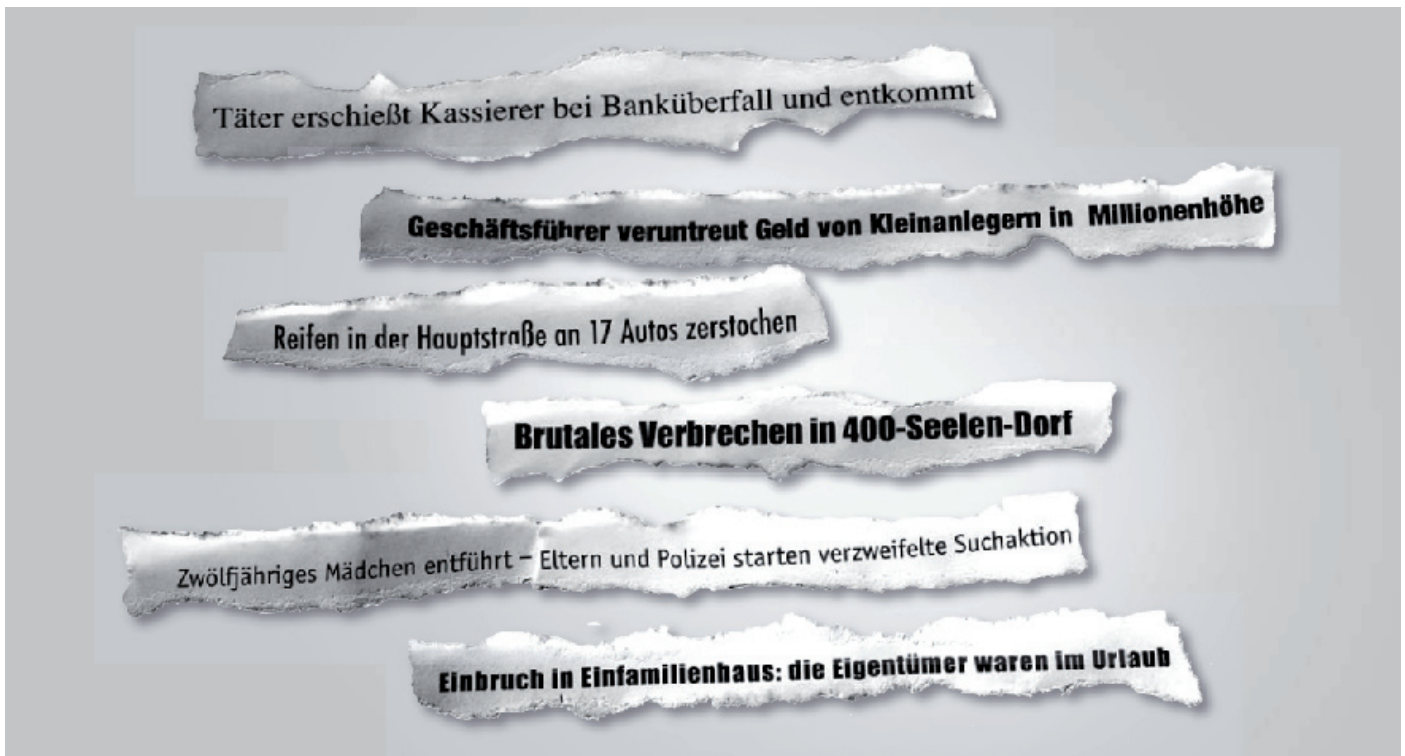


Diakonisches Werk of the Protestant Church and is a member of



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Convicted in the name of the people Why delinquency is your business too

Hardly a day goes by without our reading or hearing about burglary, assault or murder. And if something like that happens in our own neighbourhood we may easily feel threatened from all sides even if statistics prove it unnecessary. Many react with the belief that only tougher measures and longer prison terms will lead to more security. They assume that prison will not only deter the convicts from further wrongdoing but will better them as well. They are surprised to find

out that shortly after being released, ex-convicts plan their next robbery or commit some form of aggressive behaviour.

It is just not enough to convict offenders „in the name of the people“ and then leave them to their own resources. The detention system is in itself not adequate to re-socializing offenders. We must find other ways to prevent delinquency.



We want less crime How we can all contribute

We do not want to play down the offenders' guilt. They must take responsibility for their actions. However it helps neither them nor us if we exclude them from our community. We expect offenders to admit their guilt, repent and promise betterment. Too often we forget that punishment without support or willingness to seek reconciliation will more likely cause bitterness rather than good.

We want less crime. On that we agree. However, we should also be challenged. It is justifiable to expect social responsibility, but we in turn must create conditions that will permit social behaviour to be learned. Volunteer prison work provides good opportunities. It creates ties

between convicts and society. It not only reduces recidivism among offenders but also protects us from further criminal offences.

Nobody manages life all by himself. People in prison have a past that has brought them there. They have committed a crime and been convicted. Their failure has become public. And now they need help as everybody needs help in difficult times.

The toughest punishment cannot make crimes undone. However, living together in peace can only work if we are able to forgive and risk a new start.



Broken the law. Convicted. Now what? Trapped on a dead end road

By and large we adhere to the rules of our society and readily think others must be able to do so as well – if they were only to set their minds to it. Thus we conclude that offenders really don't try hard enough. However it is not so easy to live the way you want to if some basic preconditions are lacking.

„After I've served my term I will start from the very beginning.“ – Reality often turns out quite different for offenders in spite of all good intentions.

Most people are able to live their lives without getting into conflict with the law. For prisoners that didn't work. There can be many reasons. They often have to cope with special and complex problems that are not apparent on the surface. Once involved in a criminal environment they

often encounter forces whose momentum is hard to stop.

Long lasting, often lifelong lasting handicaps and disadvantages result in a pessimistic outlook, aggression and distrust that may lead to criminal offences. Problems add up beyond the individual's own resources. During incarceration these problems often increase still further, especially when it is a long term sentence.

As a result, convicts often

- > lose their sense of responsibility
- > lose their self esteem
- > lose their social contacts outside of prison



Inmates must deal with social exclusion, the breach of relationships and the need to cope with the difficult environment of inmate hierarchies and prison regulations.

Towards the outside world – and within the prison world as well – the principle of isolation prevails. The prison system regulates every area of the prisoner's life.

In this extremely hierarchical system, it is almost impossible to develop relationships of trust, let alone friendship. Inmates become less and less capable of coping with the conditions and demands of the outside world. An „un-learning“ process takes place. The longer this process lasts and the fewer contacts an inmate has to

the outside world and the more limited his capacity for learning is, the higher is his level of anxiety concerning his release from prison.

After serving his term, a prisoner is often released into unstable circumstances. With neither a place to live, work nor caring and assisting people, many ex-prisoners soon run into new conflicts with the law. Rejection by or indifference from society increases the danger of relapse.

Imprisonment also affects the prisoner's family. Family members are confronted with a mountain of difficulties, are often shunned by others and have to cope with shame and isolation.



Why we do what we do

Charity liberates

Offenders must not be branded by their past forever. After serving their term they must be given a chance to change their lives. This is hardly possible as long as they are isolated and rejected.

Johannes Muntau, president of the prison facilities of Lower Saxony, refused to give up on prisoners. He sought out socially minded, active Christians who like himself would share a feeling of responsibility towards them. In 1925 his vision became reality. The Black Cross was founded.

Charity and kindness towards prisoners has always been the mainspring from the start and it still keeps us going today. We help offenders to cope with everyday life, we

encourage them to live a life within the law, we try to strengthen their own resources and to integrate them into our social environment. Yet social rehabilitation and integration are not all that is needed for a liberated life.

Men and women in prison need to experience human kindness in dependable relationships. They need to experience people that believe in them where they themselves have already given up hope.

We believe: Life can only succeed in a relationship with God. If a criminal offender experiences God's unconditional love and God's support in spite of any guilt, then his life can become truly liberated. Even in prison.



Based on this conviction we invite offenders and their families during and after the prison term to develop perspectives for their lives without planning new crimes.

The Black Cross works nationwide through volunteers. Our head office in Celle organises and coordinates their efforts, establishes local volunteer groups and builds contacts between volunteers and correctional facilities.

Volunteers are able to offer support in a different way than prison officers can. Above all they are able to establish relationships with and talk to inmates on a person-to-person level. This is an essential step towards positive change.

Volunteers of the Black Cross

- > connect inmates with the world outside. Often it is the one and only connection,
- > help develop and stabilise the inmate's personality,
- > give counsel during the inmate's term and in the difficult time of his or her release,
- > assist in improving the inmate's ability to bear inevitable failures and disappointments.
- > help work against prejudices,
- > work against recidivism into criminal offences.



Black Cross Volunteers

What we do for you

People need people. Inmates need you. We ask you to become engaged in the Black Cross. You can invest your spare time, your experience, your abilities and your wishes in a way that will make prison volunteer work gratifying. Our head office in Celle will advise and encourage you, especially through the first steps while the prison world may still appear strange and inscrutable.

1. Getting started

Together we'll find out which tasks you are able to and would like to take on. During your „first steps“ into practical prison work you'll be accompanied by a competent and experienced person.

2. Theory and Practise: Two Sides, One Goal

Acquire the necessary theoretical know-how for your voluntary prison work. You will receive study lessons to work on at home.

3. Learning in Groups: Daytime Courses

Our daytime courses offer additional information and practical learning. No fees for Black Cross volunteers.

4. Sharing Experience with other Volunteers

Black Cross volunteers work in regional groups; there may be one close to you. Sharing experiences on a regular basis provides stability and can help you with difficulties or burdens.



Black Cross Prison Aid

An expression of faith

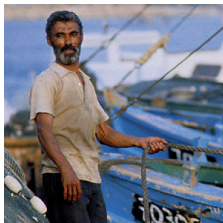
Certain things are possible in prison that might surprise you. Here are some ways you might work as a prison volunteer in the Black Cross. We would like to help you find out where your place might be. It is important to us that you feel at home in the Black Cross from the very beginning.

- > Visit an inmate or exchange letters
- > Join a prison social or focus group and talk with inmates and other volunteers about literature, common interests, vital issues or the Bible.
- > Share your hobby with inmates. There are more activities possible in prison than you might think: football, table tennis, music, a drama group, crafts and handicrafts, games... What's your hobby?
- > Support an inmate's desire for further studies, for example language courses, computer training, job application training, or in his or her dealings with public offices and filling out forms.
- > Help and support family members of inmates. Spend time listening to them, taking walks, driving and accompanying them on visiting hours in prison.
- > Do what you can to get ex-prisoners integrated into church and society.
- > Take part in one of our projects: You can for instance pack a Christmas parcel for an inmate or order our special weekly calendar. The Black Cross, both staff and office, are financed solely by donations. Support our work through donations as well.

We have a dream...



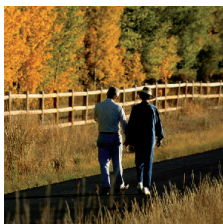
We dream of playing, singing, laughing.
We dream of an easy, carefree life like a child
in his parents' care.



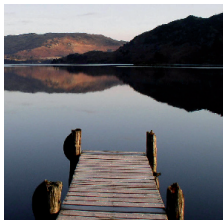
We dream of success for the work of our hands,
that we might be needed and achieve that which
helps us and others to live.



We dream of being free
of visible and invisible chains, ropes or walls.
We dream of a life in which we are what we were meant to be.



We dream of loving and of being loved.
We dream of an embrace that supports us,
of a mouth that speaks our name and touches our heart.



We dream of love that is stronger than death.
We dream of a place that God will show us.
It is here amongst us.