

Louisiana Interchurch Conference
50th Annual Assembly
Commission on Criminal Justice Report
March 2-3, 2020

As we recognize LIC's 50th anniversary, we should mention that the Commission on Criminal Justice (CCJ) has its roots in the penal reform efforts of the Louisiana Council of Churches, the predecessor agency to the LIC. In the 1960's attention of religious leaders and others became focused on the treatment of inmates at the Louisiana Penitentiary at Angola when newspaper reports and other media told of increased violence and sometimes unexplained deaths of inmates. Faith leaders and other activists joined forces to focus on more humane treatment for all residents of Louisiana correctional facilities. In the 1980's LIC voiced its concern about the Death Penalty and joined other groups in calling for the abolition of the Death Penalty.

Today the CCJ continues to collaborate with several criminal justice advocacy organizations such as; Louisiana for Prison Alternatives, Louisiana CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants), VOTE (Voice of the Experienced), Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Office of Prison Ministry and the Louisiana Parole Project .

This past year CCJ met approximately 6 times in Baton Rouge at the Catholic Charities building located on the campus of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Agenda items included updates from the Louisiana Public Defender Board, Re-entry Updates, which includes activities of the Capital Area Reentry Coalition (CAPARC), and updates from the Office of Juvenile Justice. Recently, a special presentation was made to members of the CCJ on immigration matters. Louisiana has the second largest number of immigration detainees in the country. Most of the facilities are in remote areas which creates many challenges such as; few people in the local communities speak their languages and, lack of legal representation.

In preparation of the 2020 Legislative session, some members of the CCJ attended the recent LA CURE Legislative Workshop. Special attention will be given to legislation pertaining to the Abolition of the Death Penalty, parole eligibility for all prisoners, Life Without Parole reform and Habitual Offender Reform. The session will begin Monday, March 9th and ends Monday, June 1, 2020. On Tuesday, **March 3, 2020** the LPA will conduct committee hearing rehearsals at the Louisiana State Capitol and on **March 24, 2020** the LPA will sponsor a Lobby Day at the Louisiana State Capitol Welcome Park, both events are open to the public and will begin at 10:00 AM.

And on a final note, Louisiana briefly lost the distinction of being the #1 highest incarceration rate in the world, we followed Oklahoma for a few months; but, due to criminal justice reforms in Oklahoma, Louisiana is once again -- #1.

,Linda Fjeldsjo, Chair