



Grace Goes to Prison
An Inspiring Story of Hope and Humanity



By Melanie G. Snyder

In 1975, a 37 year-old homemaker and former Avon lady named Marie Hamilton started visiting a group of prison inmates with one simple idea: to look for and affirm the good in them. In the 30 years that followed, she expanded that vision, creating unique programs to educate, empower and support inmates to be successful when paroled. Her volunteer work has challenged conventional wisdom about how to deal with criminals. She's had no formal education in criminal justice, she isn't part of the "system," yet her programs have become an integral part of Pennsylvania's prison system.

Discover how this unassuming woman touched the lives of thousands by tearing down walls of mistrust, bringing respect and humanity to people on both sides of prison bars.

Advance praise for *Grace Goes to Prison*:

"I had heard of Marie's work long before I met her: the prison unit that didn't blow up during riots because of her nonviolence training program for inmates, her courage and compassion in working with people in prison. Now her inspiring story from small-town girl to justice advocate has been told, and told well. It needs to be heard."

~ Dr. Howard Zehr, Professor of Restorative Justice, Eastern Mennonite University

"This powerful story shows how persistent compassion melts cold hearts and reconciles enemies.... even behind bars. An excellent resource for study and discussion."

~ Donald B. Kraybill, Co-author *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*.

"One of the men Marie worked with wrote "she was like an ear for the silent screams of men...and a voice for many who had never been heard." He no doubt spoke for many others who have had the privilege of being involved with Marie's work. Her generosity of spirit and genuine love for all fellow human beings is a model to which all of us should aspire. The story of her dedication over the past 30 years is extremely compelling and a definite must-read."

~ Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, Co-Director, Mennonite Central Committee Office on Justice and Peacebuilding

"*Grace Goes to Prison* is a story of relentless compassion. The reader sees the clanging, numbing world of prison life through the eyes of a woman whose determination, resourcefulness, and fearless love won the trust of hardened prisoners and prison administrators alike. This is a story of one who sees each new problem as an opportunity, of a blessed community of volunteers, and of God's faithful provision."

~ Bob Gross, Executive Director, On Earth Peace

“This is an inspiring and engaging book. Slow and steady – always clear about her guiding vision – deeply rooted in love and respect for all – always working in partnerships – Marie follows the path that unfolds in front of her. She is a leader without any authority. She influences lives without any structural power. What a lesson about how to make change! Marie created spaces for connection, belonging and meaning for people on both sides of the prison bars. This is the story of an ordinary human being touching the lives of countless others through deep and abiding love. It is a moving story and a reminder of the capacity we all have to influence the lives of others.”
~ Kay Pranis, former Restorative Justice Planner for the Minnesota Department of Corrections and co-author of *Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community*

About the Author

Melanie G. Snyder is a mediator, conflict resolution trainer and writer whose articles have appeared in more than 50 publications across North America. She teaches writing courses at Elizabethtown College, teaches conflict resolution skills to community, church and school groups, and speaks regularly to a variety of audiences about restorative justice, criminal justice, and related topics.

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