

History of Faith and Sharing, Talbot Detention in Sherbrooke



By Lina Lagacé and Jana Létourneau

The idea of forming a Faith and Sharing group in prison came after a visit to the prison in Montreal. Since the Talbot prison in Sherbrooke had just opened, some people had the idea that it was a good way to meet the needs of the community.

In 1991 or 1992, Stéphane Bonin and Louis Beaudoin founded a group of *Emotions Anonymous* and this group was allowed to go to the prison to meet. It was later that Stéphane asked to go to Sector H-2, where the detainees were isolated from the others for their protection; they were therefore the "excluded" and the most poor of the prison. With Christine Baillargeon and Jana Létourneau, he formed the Faith and Sharing committee, probably in 1992 or 1993. This group animated a meeting every month until March 1995.



Stéphane Bonin and Christine Baillargeon

In April 1995, the group was reorganized. Stéphane asked Lina Lagacé to replace him. Sister Doris Charland m.n.d.a. and some volunteers already involved in other areas of the prison participated in the meetings. Jana Létourneau came back to help out from September to December.

In January 1996, Danielle Maréchal joined the group and did animation. In September 1996, Jacques Nadeau gave a testimony and subsequently he came regularly to meetings. Subsequently, Sylvie Rousseau became part of the team.

Faith and Sharing always maintained good contact with the detainees: simple and warm. There was a theme at each meeting, always related to the experiences of the inmates. Procedure: presentation of the theme, reflection in small groups, and often summarized in broad outline to the big group, song to precede the reflection, reading of the Word of God, homily by the chaplain, Eucharist, snack and spontaneous meeting between the team and inmates.

We kept the learning acquired at Faith and Sharing: make room for each person, do not judge, listen to the person, see the beautiful and the good of each, allow each person present to feel part of the group, respect each person's beliefs, do not impose anything, do not discuss the opinion of another, etc. This allowed the guys to talk about their feelings, to share deeply, to fraternize for a few hours.

The group stopped having meetings around 2009, but a few people involved continue to visit detainees on a personal basis. 💜