

Volunteer inmate workers beautify St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Padanaram

Rev. Scott Ciosek wanted to spruce up his church, but he knew the funds weren't in the budget.

So he turned to the Bristol County Sheriff's Office in March of this year, sending a letter to Sheriff Hodgson asking for help.

What he got in return, according to him and members of the St. Peter's Family, was much more help.

"What you did here is incredibly significant to this church community," Rev. Ciosek told the inmates on Thursday morning. "Thank you for all you've done. We're all blessed."

Rev. Ciosek hosted a special Mass on Thursday morning at the church as a way to thank the inmate workers for beautifying the church. For about a month, inmate volunteers painted the exterior of the church and adjacent buildings, and did small carpentry work around the complex. Correctional Officer Eric Cousens directed the work crew.

"We would have never been able to do this without the generosity of the Bristol County Sheriff's Department," Rev. Ciosek said before mass.

Parishioners said they got to know the inmates during the project and would talk and pray with them during lunch and other breaks.

"We will never forget what you've done for us," a member of the St. Peter's family said to the inmates after mass. "You mean so much to us, and you'll always be part of this church family."

The parishioners shared coffee and pastries with the inmates after mass as another way to express gratitude.

Rev. Ciosek also praised the work of Officer Cousens and Naomi Carney, the director of the Community Work Program at the Sheriff's Office.

"Naomi always has such great energy," he said after mass. "And Eric, he just has a heart of gold. He's so full of compassion. He's just an amazing human being."

The BCSO's Community Work Program currently has four crews of volunteer inmate workers out in the community every day doing projects for nonprofit organizations, churches and government/public agencies. For more information, contact Carney at 508-995-6400 ext. 2515.