BALANCING JUSTICE WITH MERCY

An Interfaith Guide for Creating Healing Communities

October 2008

Prepared for **THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION**

Healing Communities

This guide, developed for an interfaith audience in secular language, illuminates the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Healing Communities model, which seeks to engage congregations in restoration and healing people *in their own congregations* affected by crime, incarceration and reintegration by transforming hearts and minds, creating a sense of welcome inclusion, reducing stigma and shame, and building networks of support that start in houses of worship and expand to transform the community at large.

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families.

This guide was developed out of the Foundation's recognition that family-strengthening and Family Economic Success efforts are unlikely to succeed without attending to the challenges posed by crime, criminal records and parent incarceration. The Foundation aims to reduce barriers to successful reentry and reintegration and thereby make families and communities safer and stronger and recognizes the unique role the faith community can play in addressing these challenges. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org.

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The model and the content of the guide were also influenced by what was revealed about the critical role the faith community is playing in prisoner reentry through Public/Private Partnership's Ready4Work pilots, the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign and Governor Bush's Ex-Offender Task Force in Florida – each of which the Foundation supported. The documentary film, *A Justice That Heals,* produced and directed by Jay Shefsky, gave us the story that leads this guide and helped inspire the model itself. Father Robert Oldershaw, the pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Evanston, Illinois, whose story is told in the film, updated the author on what has happened to the people in this saga since the film was made and, along with his parishioner, Robert McClory, Associate Professor Emeritus at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, who had written about it, reviewed and fact-checked the version told herein.

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James Merriner, formerly an editor with the *Atlantic Constitution* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, copyedited this guide.

Note to our readers

This guide is a work in progress. Thus far, we have developed three iterations of it -- one version we edited with the Progressive National Baptist Convention, one we shaped for an interdenominational Christian audience, and this one is for an interfaith audience. Each can be found and downloaded for free at the Annie E. Casey Foundation's website.*

We encourage your feedback. What you have to say about the guide will influence further re-writes and iterations of the guides.

Let us know if your congregation is adopting the Healing Communities model.

Contact the author to share your comments: LMillsEsq@comcast.net.

* http://www.aecf.org/OurWork/SpecialInterestAreas/IncarcerationandReentry/HealingCommunitiesResources.aspx

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INTRODUCTION

What this guide offers you and your congregation

This guide illuminates the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Healing Communities model, which seeks to engage congregations in restoration and healing – starting with people *in their own congregations* affected by crime and incarceration.

Faith communities can offer what programs and agencies usually do not — a place where non-judgment, acceptance, love, caring, forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption and restoration can occur.

By drawing upon these unique strengths of faith communities, the goal of this model is to transform hearts and minds, create a sense of welcome inclusion, reduce the stigma and shame associated with incarceration and criminal records, and build networks of support that start in houses of worship and expand to the community at large.

The Healing Communities model is unique among a broad array of strategies addressing the toll that crime and incarceration takes on vulnerable children and families and their communities.

Instead of focusing only on the period of incarceration as some prison ministries do, or focusing only on the period immediately following release from prison, as some reentry programs do, under this approach, the time for engaging members of the congregation is any time from arrest through reintegration after returning home from prison. Consensus has emerged that reentry starts with "entry" into prison – but it really starts with the arrest. That's why this model encourages engagement so early in the process.

Also the audience to whom the ministry is addressed is more expansively defined than under most reentry approaches. We are speaking to both the

New terms, new thinking:

"RETURNING CITIZENS"

Notice the reference here to "returning citizens" rather than to "ex-cons" or "ex-offenders." The emphasis is on what one is rather than what one was. And this is where the civil rights focus comes in. To use the term "returning citizen" emphasizes that the civil rights of those who have paid their debt to society should be recognized. And that also means working to change laws that, for example, restrict voting rights or deny job opportunities to returning citizens.

"HEALING COMMUNITIES"

The term "prisoner reentry" reflects the simple fact that most inmates do return to society. Healing Communities go further. They press for reintegration in their desire to see relationships restored between men and women returning from incarceration, and their families, communities, the larger society and, where possible, the victims of their criminal behavior.

"STATIONS OF HOPE"

"Stations of Hope" are houses of worship that serve as healing and teaching refuges offering a renewed vision for returning citizens, their families and communities.

individuals *and their families* affected by the criminal justice system and reentry – for instance, the mother *and* her son who is in prison, the wife and children *and* the father who was just arrested, the aunt *and* her niece who has been released from prison, or a grandmother who has been a victim of crime. As one of the preachers we are working with said recently, this is a ministry that starts with "people we already know."

When the Progressive National Baptist Convention adopted this model, it created slogan, "Any church can, every church should – build a healing community." Their slogan captures the appeal – the simplicity, directness and necessity -- of this model. With over 400,000 houses of worship across the country, Healing Communities has the potential of reaching hundreds of thousands of families; this would be greater than all the current reentry and prison ministry programs combined -- at very little cost.

The guide is designed to help congregations become "Stations of Hope" – places where congregations are mobilized to help those who are distraught while facing trial, imprisonment, or coming home from prison. Such congregations would reach out to these brothers and sisters and reach out to their families.

The guide shows congregations how they can do the work of reconciliation among those who have caused harm, those who have been hurt, and the larger community. By doing this, the Stations of Hope can build Healing Communities that embrace the prisoner and returning citizens -- and nurture and support both his family and the victims of crime.

The Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign distributes (for free) three films- ***God and the Inner City, I Was in Prison and You Came to Visit Me,*** and ***To Serve This Present Age.*** These films can help a church learn how it can help people involved in the criminal justice system and their families. The Campaign also distributes resource handbooks and discussion guides that track with the films.

Faith communities have a tradition of giving unto others. The guide demonstrates how such giving can transform returning citizens as well as the congregations serving them and how it can change how we think, how we feel, and what we do in our relations with returning citizens and their families.

The manual offers:

- Inspiring stories of the impact of engagement of houses of worship on the lives of people affected by crime.
- Background information on criminal justice policies that have created the "cradle-to-prison pipeline" for so many of our youth.
- A guide walking faith leaders through the steps to create a Healing Community.

- A guide for members of faith congregations who embrace the work of Healing Communities.
- A guide for those receiving the blessing of this work.
- Resources, including references to films, websites, and books to illuminate this work; and within the guide, materials for members of the Healing Community.

It also offers practical suggestions for a congregation's engagement at various points in the continuum from arrest to release from prison. Included among those suggestions are:

- Identifying who among your congregation is involved in the criminal justice system, directly or as a family member, whether under arrest, incarcerated, coming home from prison, reintegrating into the community after prison, or dealing with the consequences of a criminal record.
- Volunteering to help the person incarcerated by visiting and writing to him.
- Providing support for the family of the person incarcerated – spiritually, emotionally, and materially.
- Mentoring the children of the prisoner.
- Helping the victim of the crime and/or his family.
- Addressing the challenge of reconciliation.
- Expanding healing to the community, including through policy advocacy.
- Identifying resources in the community that can help prisoners, their families, victims, and people coming home from prison.
- Helping the prisoner prepare for release.
- Welcoming the prisoner home.
- Helping the individual reintegrate into the community and with his family.

By engaging in this work, congregations will help in reducing the stigma and shame of being personally involved in a criminal case or having a family member arrested and imprisoned. A welcoming and loving environment in the congregation will encourage people to acknowledge that they are affected by the criminal justice system and accept the care the congregation offers.

Healing Communities is not a program and doesn't require setting up a program – or require government grants. Our modest hope is for the sea change that would be realized if houses of worship reached out to the people hurting inside their four walls – for even in church, many are still stigmatized. From there, the healing can expand to the community.

The guide begins with the story of St. Nicholas Church's response to a gang killing of a young man in the community by a member of the church. Immediately after the killing, the pastor reached out to the young man in jail and to his family. The pastor then stood before his congregation and spoke of the terrible crime, and encouraged them to pray for the young man, his family and the family of the victim and to help and support them. In response, this congregation reached out to the young man and his family and remains engaged with him, his family, the family of the victim and the larger community to this day -- eleven years after the death.

The story shows that faith can play a miraculous role in creating healing – extending beyond the bounds of imagination. The story is also important because in the most critical sense, it does not involve a prison ministry program, a restorative justice program, a mentoring program, or a prisoner reentry program. In fact, the story is not about a *program* at all. Instead, it is a story of how faith and informal networks of support can create a healing community, how the multitude of strengths and assets inherent in those networks within a faith community make the creation of a healing community possible. It is the story of the many ways a congregation can support its families. Its *own.*

The story of St. Nicholas church's response to the killing is documented in the film, ***A Justice That Heals,*** available for free from the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign. (www.reentrymediaoutreach.org) A free study guide is available, too.

We urge you to read this story before reading the rest of the manual because it shows the many ways a congregation can work to heal the wounds caused by a crime committed by a member of the congregation or their loved one.

And now, we have a story to tell. . . .

Chapter One

"A grace experience"

Forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption – A True Story
How one death, two families, and a church transformed a church into a healing community.

A taunt leads to murder.

In the summer of 1996, Mario Ramos, a teenager who had recently joined a gang, taunted four boys in a car going by and threw his gang's sign their way. The driver and his passengers drove away, only to be chased by Mario and his gang friend, Roberto, on a bicycle. His friend navigated the bike; Mario sat on the handlebars. When the car got stuck in traffic, Mario and Roberto rushed toward it. Eager to prove his bona fides to Roberto who was urging him on, Mario shot the driver, Andrew Young. Andrew died. He was nineteen. His twin bother, holding Andrew, and their two friends rushed him to the hospital. But there he died of his wounds.

SOURCES:

Our acquaintance with this story began with the Jay Shefsky documentary, ***A Justice That Heals,*** which can be obtained from the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign. Many of the quotes found here are from the documentary. Other sources of quotes include Robert McClory's story, "Parish turns murder to grace - ministering to a killer and his victim's family" in the *Catholic Reporter*, a collection of copies of the St. Nicholas weekly newsletter, and interviews with Rev. Oldershaw.

Events such as these have become dismayingly ordinary. Their ubiquity in big cities and even small towns across America is breaking our hearts and filling our prisons.

The Outreach Campaign distributes a film called ***Fatal Peril: Manhood and Violence*** that could help a congregation understand why young men react to taunts with such violence and how that violence can be addressed.

But the story of Mario killing Andrew is not the usual story we read almost every morning. It is not a typical story that escalates from revenge and hatred into a climax of shattering violence.

Instead, it is a story of extraordinary grace – of love, leadership, faith, forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption -- a story of how an informal network of support within a congregation and its community became a *Healing Community.* That community transformed the lives of Mario, his family, Andrew's family, the congregation of a church, and institutions in their community. And all of this was done without a formal program, without special training – just by a succession of acts of love and mercy in service to God and to their own people.

"Our Mario"

When the shooting was initially announced in the Chicago media and the shooter seemed to be just another gangbanger, Rev. Robert Oldershaw's reaction was that they should lock him up

and throw away the key. With crime plaguing our communities, this is a common response, not only of pastors, but of the communities in which they minister.

About a week after he heard of the shooting, though, Rev. Oldershaw, the pastor at St. Nicholas Church in Evanston near the northern border of Chicago, learned that Mario and his family were his parishioners and that Mario was a former altar server. When he learned that it was "his Mario," "our Mario," "our parish's Mario," he shifted gears and reflected. "There's no way we can restore life; the life has been taken," he said. "But do we serve justice by destroying another person and taking their humanity away? Don't we serve justice by trying to renew, by trying to rehabilitate, by trying to bring someone back to a fuller humanity?"

The pastor's first steps – a hand and a heart.

His first act as pastor was to reach out to Mario's family to counsel and minister to them in their time of worry and bewilderment. Mario's distraught parents had had no idea that their son was involved in a gang. Until getting the call from the police on the night of the killing, they were happy and proud of Mario; he had graduated from high school just the day before. Now he was in the county lockup. And accused of murder.

The film ***Dead Man Walking***, based on the ministry of Sister Helen Prejean to death row inmates, provides a vivid glimpse of what is involved in visiting a prisoner and establishing a relationship with him. A number of study guides have been developed for viewers of this film. One helpful one can be found on this website: http://www.ocadp.org/films.html

Next Rev. Oldershaw went to the jail where Mario was being held for trial. He still seemed to be the gentle, quiet Mario he had known in his parish. Mario cried in his pastor's arms. Later he admitted his tears fell then for himself and his fear of losing his future to prison. His own family, the family of his victim, and Andrew himself were not in his heart or causing the tears. Not then. Not yet.

Engaging the congregation – offering mercy and seeking justice.

Oldershaw knew that the kind of justice and renewal the families and the community needed were not for him to provide alone. And so his third step was to speak of the death in his homily the next Sunday and on many Sundays thereafter. He invited the congregation to reach out to Mario by writing to him and visiting him in jail.

In his homily shortly after the murder, Rev. Oldershaw also described the pain being suffered by Mario's family. "Thursday," he told the congregation, "I'm with his sister. She prepares people for baptism in the Hispanic community. She feels such shame, such embarrassment, like a leper, or someone who is terminally ill. She feels such sadness, yet such love for Mario, her brother, fear for him, and for his family."

"Yesterday," he added, "I'm with Mario's parents. They feel so alone and scared. People point and whisper. They're afraid for Mario, and for their other children. Mario's mom is grief stricken."

He spoke, too, of Andrew and his family, of those in the church who knew them, and of their suffering.

"Two families devastated!" he cried. "We need to hold both of these families," he advised, "first of all with prayer. We need to let them know they are loved, that God loves them. We love them. Sometimes, too many sometimes, we do nothing because we are afraid we'll say or do the wrong thing. The effect on the families is isolation."

Rev. Oldershaw repeated his suggestion that the members of the church drop a note to the families. One member of the parish recalled seeing the invitation in the church bulletin. "I can do that," she said. Pretty soon she was visiting Mario regularly. Sharing her experience through the church newsletter, she wrote, "He helps me realize what it is to be the body of Christ, blessed, broken and shared with each other." Scores of other members of the church began writing and visiting him as well.

Rev. Oldershaw also recognized that the killing of Andrew was not just an odd or isolated event but part of a larger set of issues confronting the Mexican-American community. He brought them all together to discuss these issues, which led to the formation of a drop-in center for Hispanic teens at the parish gym where, not before long, 75 to 100 kids were coming to socialize.

The meetings with the Mexicans in the parish also led to the realization that many of the Hispanics in the parish were alienated from and intimidated by many of the institutions of authority in Evanston – particularly the police and the schools. Dialogue led to their working together, to the schools becoming more responsive, to the police department's hiring its first Spanish-speaking counselor and its first Hispanic community outreach worker. As the rift diminished, the police prepared a meal for 300 of the Hispanic parishioners and served it after a Sunday mass. Another kind of healing was now taking root.

The story of St. Nicholas and the Ramos and Young families is the subject of a public television documentary, *A Justice That Heals*. In it, the producer comments in a voiceover, "Slowly but surely, the murder of Andrew Young became not a matter of criminal justice, but a matter of *community.*"

Spreading the healing.

The suffering of the Ramos and Young families remained in the forefront of the minds and hearts of Rev. Oldershaw and the congregation. He continued to urge the parish to reach out to Mario, to visit and write to him. Some visited every week while Mario awaited the outcome of his case – with at least one traveling five hours round-trip to do so. All of the visitors "reminded Ramos simply that he was not alone, that forgiveness is possible, that God can draw good out of the worst situation."

Mario was not the only beneficiary of these visits. One woman from the parish who befriended Mario, visiting him every week, said that not only could she see the changes in Mario that the visits inspired but, "To tell the truth, this experience has really changed me, you know -- just doing what Jesus asks us to do."

The chaplain at the jail, too, noticed the change in Mario born of the love and support the parish was giving him. He said, "This kid came in here broken. Then you could see a kind of healing starting -- he even reached out in friendship to his brothers in the unit. You don't see that happen very often in here."

Reaching out to the family of the victim – struggling with forgiveness.

Within a couple of months of the murder, a parishioner introduced Rev. Oldershaw to Maurine Young. She was suspicious of the priest at first. Why would the pastor ministering to the family of her son's murderer be reaching out to her? A neighbor had told her that the church was praying for her family, and now Rev. Oldershaw was telling her that he was there for her and her family, that the parish was distraught over their loss and there for them and that they all wanted to help them. Thus was the tension reduced and Maurine reconsidered her suspicion.

Later, both Maurine and her husband Steve said they felt drawn to the St. Nicholas Church even though the congregation included the parents of the boy who had murdered theirs and even as Maurine continued to attend her Protestant church. By attending St. Nicholas, a church whose members were distraught that one of their own had killed their boy, Maurine and Steve made a choice for community over revenge – a choice the parish made as well.

Steve Young moved from grief and anger at a society he felt had failed its young people to focusing his efforts in a campaign to reduce handgun violence. Maurine Young struggled to forgive Mario.

Standing in support: "It's not your fault."

The wheels of justice start, grind, stammer and stall, and then restart their painfully slow movement. Mario spent over a year in the Cook County jail pending the conclusion of the case.

Members of St. Nicholas regularly attended the hearings. At the hearing where Mario would enter his plea of guilty, Mrs. Ramos came in and found that many people from the community were there. She also saw Rev. Oldershaw, who approached her and said, "I'm coming to be at your side – to give you courage," she recalled. And the two sat down next to each other.

Within minutes Andrew's father, Steve, walked into the courtroom and sat on Rev. Oldershaw's opposite side. Rev. Oldershaw turned to Steve and said, "This is Maria Ramos, Mario's mother. Would you like to meet her?" Then the pastor turned to Mrs. Ramos and said, "This is Andrew's father," and moved out their way.

Steve recalled that he "held [Mrs. Ramos'] hand. It wasn't like a handshake; we held hands**."** He says he doesn't speak much Spanish "and she doesn't speak much English, so we didn't say anything to each other. We looked into each other's eyes and tears started rolling down my cheeks and it was the same with her. We were both crying. Her son was going to prison and mine was in the grave."

Maria was moved by Steve's gesture. Despite the language barrier, she read the gesture as though "he was saying, 'You are not responsible. You didn't make him do it,'" she said. "'You are not guilty,'" she thought him to be saying. "'*It's not your fault.*'"

Responding to a call to serve.

Mario was initially represented by a public defender, but as the months dragged on with no action on the case, Rev. Oldershaw grew concerned that the defender's extensive caseload kept him from doing enough for Mario; Roberto Lazcalo, his 15-year-old co-defendant (the boy pedaling the bike) had already been tried and sentenced to 55 years in prison.

At a church Christmas party, the pastor, distressed over the harsh sentence imposed on Roberto and worried that Mario would fare as badly, approached a parishioner who is an experienced criminal defense lawyer. He said he needed his help in Mario's case and would raise the money to pay him. The lawyer accepted the case but refused payment, saying, "What could I do? My pastor calls, I gotta respond," adding that he believed in a justice that requires that not only the innocent deserve a defense.

The attorney represented Mario from that point forward. And Rev. Oldershaw would later comment that while Mario was indeed hardly innocent in the legal sense, he was certainly *an* innocent – untarnished, not cynical and a deeply good person.

Contrition and forgiveness cross in the mail.

Mario responded, too. At first, he was almost resentful of the visits, the love and the forgiveness. He didn't understand it. He felt so embarrassed that at first he didn't even want to be around Rev. Oldershaw. But he came to respond to the outpouring of support from the parish with both a changed heart and gratitude. He wrote to the parish to apologize for his crime, to express his appreciation for their care, to acknowledge his faith and to urge that such a thing never happen again.

Mario also realized that he had another apology to offer – to the family of Andrew Young. He wrote to them saying, "If it was possible I would change places with your son and die in his place instead. But there is no action which you or I can take to bring back Andrew or change what has been done. But by God's assurance we know that he is in God's hands. ... Though I could spend the rest of my life in jail, I don't even come close to the hurt your family must be going through. I hope that some way you may find it in your heart to forgive me."

As Mario was writing this letter, Mrs. Young began composing a letter to Mario. She had found the forgiveness she had been seeking for the year since her son's death and said in the letter, "I am Maurine, Andrew's mom. I've thought of you and prayed for you many times since you shot and killed my son." After explaining her own faith journey, she concluded the letter by saying, "You've probably heard Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. I'm writing to tell you IT'S TRUE. He desires to lead you on a new adventure. If He is for you, who can be against you? Well, I don't know whether you'd ever feel up to asking my forgiveness for killing my son, so I'll go first. ... I FORGIVE YOU!"

The letters of contrition and forgiveness crossed in the mail, a coincidence not lost on either the parish or the community. It was breathtaking. A healing community had been born and its birth affected everyone. Even Steve Young, the father who had struggled harder to reach forgiveness than his wife, concurred. He said, "I came to realize that first I must forgive as an act of obedience to Jesus' command in Matthew 18. And when I did that ... God did the rest."

Later, Steve added, "My education in the gun control movement brought me to the understanding that the gun industry had set up Mario as much as it had Andrew by making handguns so easily accessible. That realization helped me to forgive Mario. Also in the process of forgiving and having seen other victims unable to forgive, I found through forgiveness you can help yourself. Once you forgive and let vengeance and hatred go, you're free. All that awful stuff stops boiling inside of you."

Explaining her forgiveness, Maurine has said, "I never hated the boys that did this. I never really felt like I wanted to get even. I found it necessary to forgive for selfish reasons. I know my Bible, Old Testament and New. And I know what unforgiveness does to the mind, to the spirit, to the body. The Old Testament talks about how it eats away at the marrow of the bones -- causes bitterness which decays your health. I knew that I needed to forgive because if I didn't, I would lose *my* mind."

Sentencing: "A Justice that Heals."

Mario had formally acknowledged his guilt and pleaded guilty in court. Finally, thirteen months after the crime, the day of sentencing arrived. Among many others, Rev. Oldershaw spoke to the judge presiding over the sentencing hearing. "Christian faith calls me to hate the sin but love the sinner," he said. "I can't imagine anything worse than taking someone's life, but I still love Mario. Faith asks more. That we believe that redemption is possible, that a person can change, and that *there is a justice that heals*. I plead with you to balance justice with mercy in sentencing Mario. . ."

The congregation hoped for the miracle of a lenient sentence, but even with the assistance of the attorney from the parish, the 48-year sentence sought by prosecutors was lowered by only 8 years. A tough new sentencing law that had gone into effect the year before the crime, requiring that murderers serve 100 percent of their sentence, made the 40-year sentence *mean* 40 years. Steve Young later explained what happened later. "In 1999 the Illinois Supreme Court threw out 'Truth in Sentencing' on a constitutional technicality. The decision meant all sentences passed while the act was in effect reverted to previous guidelines, which are a day off for a day served. Mario's sentence was thus cut in half to 20 years."

While alarmed and disappointed by the original 40-year sentence, the parish committed to continue to support Mario. The lawyer who had volunteered to represent Mario in court moved on to volunteer to ensure that the parish remain with Mario during his incarceration. He urged them to keep writing and visiting the boy, arguing that the way to avoid Mario's being swallowed up "in the brutality and horror of prison life," was for prison officials to "know that people on the outside are coming to see him and are concerned about his welfare." The parish responded with a promise not to forget him. They did not. They have not; they continue to write and to visit Mario to this day.

A mother visits a prisoner – the young man who killed her son.

Nor did Maurine Young forget Mario. After he was sent to prison, she continued to reflect on justice and forgiveness and realized that she needed to see Mario. She had been writing to him since their first remarkable exchange of letters, but she needed to be with him – face to face. Wary

of going alone, she enlisted Rev. Oldershaw and another parishioner whom Mario trusted to accompany her. Upon arriving, the warden was shocked that the mother of a murdered child would come to visit the murderer, and even more astonished that she came to tell him that she forgives him.

When Maurine saw Mario approach the visiting room, she saw he was every bit as nervous as she. Despite her initial letter of forgiveness and the exchange of many letters thereafter, he feared she would approach him with anger.

Maurine said she could tell that Mario was afraid to look at her. And so, when he entered the room and sat at the table, she "grabbed both of his hands across the table and looked him in the eye and said, 'I want you to know that I am glad to be here.'" Rev. Oldershaw said, "This is a holy moment. Let's hold hands and pray." The four held one another's hands and their pastor prayed for the Lord's help.

Then they talked of how things were going for Mario in the prison; after that, of the suffering of Maurine's family as a consequence of the killing. Maurine, her husband and their three surviving children had each been torn apart by Andrew's death. Steve was severely depressed and no longer wanted to live, even as he felt responsible to live for his surviving children and struggled to support his family. The youngest son would stand in traffic risking injury because he "wanted to be with Andrew."

"You caused this mess," Maurine told Mario. "Now you have a responsibility to hold us up in prayer. You're part of this family whether you want to be or not. You are. You're like my own son."

Mario got shaky and started to cry. But Maurine was convinced he needed to hear what she was saying. "He needed to hear the consequences of what he had done."

Rev. Oldershaw later commented that, "In many ways it had to be harder confronting the mother of the person you killed who is not saying 'I *hate* you,' but 'I *love* you.'" Maurine's love has not abated. She, too, remains in touch with Mario.

The healing community further expands.

Mario's parents emerged from this tragedy full of shame, sorrow, a feeling of responsibility for the death of Andrew and a sense of unworthiness. Despite the efforts of the Youngs and the parish to help reconcile them to the community, they put themselves in what Rev. Oldershaw says was a kind of "self-imposed exile."

But a couple of years after the death, the Ramos family came to the parish's fall celebration – a combination of Oktoberfest and Mexican Independence Day. Mr. and Mrs. Maria Ramos grilled the arrachera, while others grilled the bratwurst. As Rev. Oldershaw watched them and the smoke rising from the grill, he sensed that the reconciliation had finally occurred.

In 1999, Rev. Oldershaw again brought together the families of Mario and Andrew for a Sunday afternoon at the church. The mothers shared with each other the impact the killing of Andrew had on their youngest children.

Then one day Rev. Oldershaw got a call from a local businessman who had struck up a friendship with a woman working at a local bakery. She came to tell him that she was the mother of Roberto, the boy who rode the bicycle and urged Mario to shoot Andrew. His mother, like Maria Ramos, said she wanted to meet the Youngs and apologize for what her boy did.

Rev. Oldershaw arranged for the two families to meet and described it as a "healing experience all around." This family, too, then started coming to the church. Rev. Oldershaw officiated at the marriage of their daughter and now stays in touch with Roberto, too.

The parish was transformed by this experience and has taken that transformation to many new venues. It deepened and broadened their spirit, their sense of care, and concern for social justice. In June 2007, another youth was shot and killed over an argument with a gang. The church attended the vigil and rally against gun violence at the high school and is working with state legislators and with Congress to restrict the ready access to guns.

And Mario was transformed. Eleven years have passed and the commitment he made to forswear gangs, drugs and violence has not wavered. He has a clean disciplinary record in prison and has now served over half of his revised, 20-year sentence. Even the most skeptical who do not believe in "foxhole conversions" believe Mario's transformation is real.

* * *

The St. Nicholas, Ramos and Young story teaches that congregations, *every* congregation, even the smallest storefront congregations, have vast storehouses of resources to help in healing and providing support. They don't need experts. They don't need to set up programs. They don't need to establish a nonprofit and seek funding from the government or foundations. They can translate faith into support of grieving, anguished members and their families with what they already have. Right now.

As one pastor told us, "We don't call it a hospital program or a hospital ministry when we visit a member of the congregation sick in a hospital; then why should we think of it as a prisoner

program or ministry when we visit a person in jail? It's just what we do – what we do as a *community."*

Asked how he would advise other pastors thinking about getting involved in such work, Rev. Oldershaw explained, "The need is clear. But there is a fear about getting involved. I didn't know what to do [about Mario] but I knew I had to do something. People need to take a risk. Lots of people are crying out there; they need help. The biggest problem is hesitating – a fear of stepping forward and getting involved. But you can learn on the job.

"Step out," he suggests, "and learn from others. I had to take a risk, step outside my comfort zone. And the only way I could do any of this was by empowering other people and trusting them. Empower. Trust. Trust. There are many people of goodwill with many gifts. Every person in the parish has a gift. My job is just to help them identify those gifts and then share them. That is the grace experience."

Chapter Two
Why do we care? Crime and Incarceration in America

We care because it is our children, our families, our neighbors who are being arrested and imprisoned and are coming home from prison. We are talking about our families, our communities.

We care because it is our *mission* to care. Our work cannot stop inside the walls of our houses of worship. It cannot fail to reach out to the hearts and hearths of our neighbors. It cannot fail to reach inside prison walls.

America's record on imprisonment

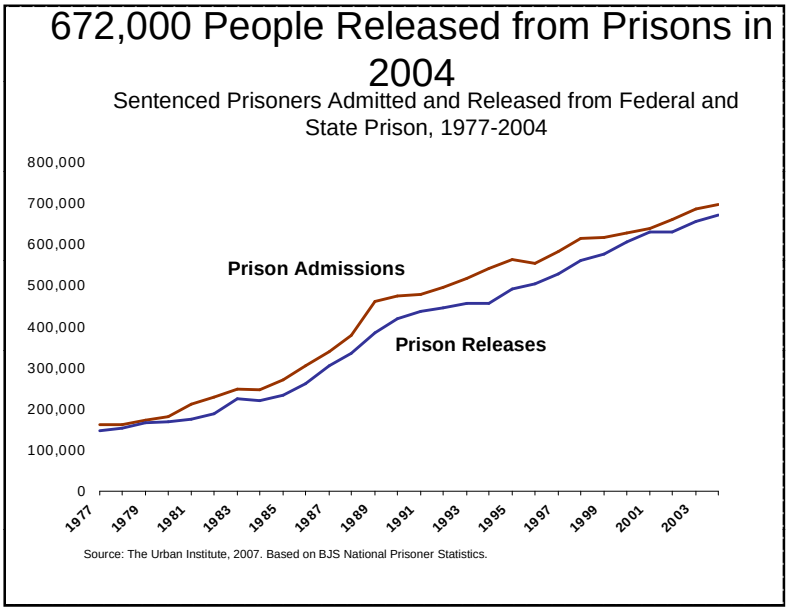
U.S. criminal justice policies, particularly sentencing and drug policies, are sending millions into jails and prison each year. In 2005, 733,009 people went to prison.

Incarceration is engulfing our communities -- swamping neighborhoods with men and women who have been scorned and rejected, tossed to and fro with every wave of hardened hearts and hostile public policies.

These men and women are our brothers and sisters and are gathering outside our doors. Their numbers are growing. And there has been no room in the inn – not for them.

We *hear* their voices. We want you to see them, hear them, and welcome them to their home in your community of faith.

America imprisons its people at a rate that surpasses any other nation on earth, including Iran, Iraq, Russia, China, all the nations of Africa, and all of the nations of Europe. And the sentences are getting longer, not shorter. In 2006, over 7.2 million people were on probation, in jail or prison, or on parole at yearend 2006 -- 3.2% of all U.S. adult residents or 1 in every 31 adults.



The U.S., with 5 percent of the world's population, has 25 percent of the world's prisoners.

Responding to the Crisis of Mass Incarceration

Rev. Patricia Watkins is a pastor and community organizer on the South Side of Chicago. She got involved in the issue of mass incarceration and reintegration as a matter of public safety. "Currently, ex-offenders return to communities with little to no resources or options," she points out. "This creates a bastion for crime, violence, and unsafe conditions. Because of these issues, our community remains in a constant volatile state. In fact, every community is affected in some way by the tragic conditions under which the ex-offender returns."

Watkins recounts her engagement. She was "outraged by the sheer number of people of color negatively impacted by the criminal justice system, the mass incarceration of young African-American males, and the deafening silence from the broader community. It was our hope and prayer that somehow we could reverse the negative impact that the criminal justice system has on our communities.

"Though we were limited in knowledge, we believed that we had a responsibility try something.

In all likelihood, someone in your congregation or a member of their family is among the anonymous seven hundred thousand facing incarceration or the even more anonymous two million currently serving time.

According to the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 1980, people incarcerated in U.S. federal and state prisons and jails numbered 501,886. By 2006, that number reached 2,336,871 – that's nearly a five-fold increase in just one generation.

The number of people being *released from prison* each year has correspondingly exploded.

Population growth cannot explain the enormous growth of the prison population. During the same 25-year period of a 500 percent growth in the prison population, the US population grew by only 4 percent. Nor is it attributable to an increase in "index crimes," that is, violent crimes such as murder, rape, and robbery, and property crimes such as burglary and motor vehicle theft. In 1980, index crimes totaled 13,408,300 nationally (5,950 per 100,000 people); but by 2002, index crimes had dropped to 11,877,218 (4,118 per 100,000).

Nationally, over $60 billion is spent on prisons and jails each year. But that money is spent almost exclusively on the basics of custody, control, and confinement. As prisons have grown, programs to address the rehabilitation needs of prisoners have diminished, in real numbers and even more dramatically in terms of the percentage of prisoners receiving such services.

The costs borne by the federal, state and local governments – and to families and communities -- to sustain this growth of prisons is enormous.

In some areas of cities, more than a million dollars are being spent to incarcerate the residents of just one block. Aren't there other and better uses of that money? Congressman Robert Scott of Virginia reflected on other ways that money could be used when he testified in October 2007 in favor of the Second Chance Act. He looked at the "impact in Virginia of the lost opportunities associated with

the 'tough-on-crime' sound byte 'abolish parole'." This policy choice, he pointed out, cost Virginia taxpayers "$2.2 billion to build new prisons and about a billion in annual operating costs." He calculated the number of projects that could have been supported with the money – projects from Boys and Girls Clubs, summer jobs, summer-camp scholarships, after- school programs, college scholarships – projects that would have served to *prevent* crime.

Criminal justice involvement and incarceration disproportionately impacts racial minorities, particularly African Americans.

This phenomenon is acknowledged by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics:

> *At midyear 2006 more black men (836,800) were in custody in State or Federal prison or local jail than white men (718,100) or Hispanic men (426,900). Black men comprised 41% of the more than 2 million men in custody, and black men age 20 to 29 comprised 15.5% of all men in custody on June 30, 2006.*
>
> *Relative to their numbers in the general population, about 4.8% of all black men were in custody at midyear 2006, compared to about 0.7% of white men and 1.9% of Hispanic men. Overall, black men were incarcerated at 6.5 times the rate of white men. The incarceration rate for black men was highest among black men age 25 to 29. About 11.7% of black males in this age group were incarcerated on June 30, 2006. Across age groups black men were between 5.7 and 8.5 times more likely than white men to be incarcerated.*

Inmate data from one county make this phenomenon particularly vivid. **Of the people from Cook County in Illinois' prisons in 2005, 91.4 percent serving prison time for class 4 drug crime convictions were black. Eighty-six of these inmates were white; 2,110 were black.**

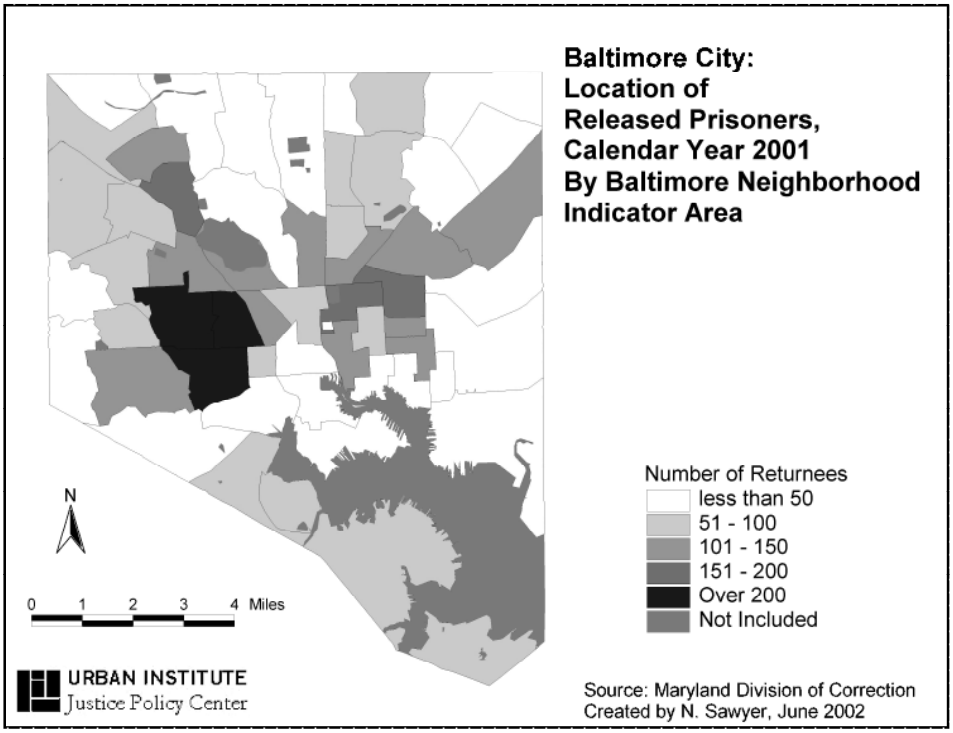
"The U.S. Sentencing Commission has reported that 73 percent of federal crack defendants have only low-level involvement in drug activity, such as street-level dealers, couriers or lookouts." (Pat Nolan and J.C. Watts, editorial for the Washington Times)

While the number of African Americans and Latinos incarcerated is significantly disproportionate to their populations, the disparity is even more glaring among juveniles. In 2002, the federal government reported that while Blacks made up 16 percent of the juvenile population, they constituted 29 percent of the juvenile caseload. Conversely, white youth accounted for the largest number of detentions but when compared to other ethnic groups were the least likely to be confined.

Some of the racial disparity is attributed to unevenly enforced drug laws and laws that mandate harsher punishments for crack cocaine than powder cocaine.

Even our federal government has voiced its concern; it has developed an office of Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) in the Department of Justice.

(Initially, DMC stood for Disproportionate Minority Confinement.) Many of those concerned cite the example of the suburban police officer who picks up a young person and takes him or her home to report the transgression to parents, thus keeping the youth out of the criminal justice system. The inner-city youth, by contrast, is taken straight to the police station for processing. The facts of the Jena 6 case also illustrate this terrible problem.



Disparate impacts on the communities of returning citizens. As we saw by the mapping of the places of return from prison, poor African American neighborhoods receive the bulk of returning prisoners.

These communities often do not have the resources to address the myriad problems the returning citizens face.

97 percent of the people sent to prison will be released one day. Currently, the rate of release from prisons alone is over 650,000 prison inmates per year. But individuals are not being prepared for success upon release, for two-thirds of prisoners will be arrested again for new crimes within three years of their release.

The question is this: Will we welcome these returning citizens home or reject them with scorn and derision? Or, more mildly, just ignore them?

Not all congregations or their faith leaders embrace the family of a criminal defendant or prisoner. Witness the sadly not uncommon struggle a woman endured when her husband was arrested on drug trafficking charges. Ann Edenfield's book, *Family Arrested,* recounts how the church did not even contact her, let alone support her, after the media made headlines of her husband's arrest. Making things worse, after she finally found a church that welcomed her and her

children, the pastor was replaced just as her husband was about to be released from prison. The new pastor gave Ann cruel and painful news, saying to her, "I can no longer be your pastor."

The policies resulting in mass arrests and incarceration impact people far longer than a term of imprisonment – the consequences of a criminal conviction last a lifetime. Over one in four working age people in the US have a criminal record. That's over 47 million Americans with a criminal history. Not all of these people have spent time in prison, but 13 million Americans are either now behind bars or have been convicted of a *felony*. All of these people suffer from some or all of the hundreds of collateral consequences of their criminal records, not the least of which is the proliferation of employment restrictions, especially those created by state and local government and imposed on both public- and private-sector employment.

The American Muslim Tradition of "Amana"

American Muslims in Chicago are fulfilling the sacred trust, ***amana,*** of serving humanity and working for social justice. Their Inner-City Muslim Action Network, IMAN, believes this sacred way of engaging the world has been endowed by the Creator and that faith and this work go hand in hand, both for individual Muslims but also for the community.

In 2005 IMAN established Project Restore, a two-pronged strategy using direct services and advocacy work to address recidivism and public safety in Chicago communities. The goal of Project Restore is to help reduce mass incarceration and provide alternative sentencing for nonviolent drug offenders.

Returning citizens are members of civil society, and in Healing Communities they are members of congregations that offer pastoral care as well as tangible support such as help finding housing, employment, and education. We are seeking to uphold and strengthen the civil rights of returning citizens by encountering them first as members of our flocks.

Families, too, are devastated by arrest and incarceration. The number of children and other family members affected by incarceration is nearly incalculable. In 1999, the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that 1.5 million children had a parent in prison or jail. Since that time, the number of people incarcerated has increased by 21 percent; if the percentage of people in prison who are parents has remained constant, then there now are over 1.8 million children with incarcerated parents. The number of other family members affected is enormous.

These families are affected by the arrest and incarceration in countless ways – from emotional issues including anger, fear, shame and humiliation, to economic hardship due to lost income or even a family member's loss of his job because of the toll taken on the individual due to the crime. These issues, unless addressed, can spiral into even worse crises -- from losing the family's stature and comfort in the community to losing their housing.

Just as those who are arrested and incarcerated need love, support and spiritual guidance, so, too, do their families.

But aren't these the very people who have preyed on our communities?

They are. But they are also our children, our fathers, our mothers, our brothers, our sisters, our aunts and our uncles, our nieces and nephews, our cousins. And they are *members, citizens,* of our communities.

A person's commission of a crime, even a heinous crime, a crime that makes you shudder and cringe, does not erase his humanity. Instead, it invites the stirring up of the many strengths of our faith. It is an invitation to love, to forgiveness and to mercy. As one pastor asked, "Do we serve justice by destroying another person and taking their humanity away?"

The people who commit crimes against people in our communities indeed cause harm. Often grave harm. But shunning them is not the same as shunning the crime or shunning crime itself.

The most often heard complaint about loving and forgiving one who has done wrong is that it is the moral equivalent of approving his actions. To love, accept, forgive and not judge such a person is seen as expressing approval of what he is doing or has done -- of sanctioning the act. If the person who has done harm is loved, it is feared, his actions will appear to be loved. Some wonder, if I love him, do I want to see the whole world love him, and if the whole world loves him, will they not then somehow just be building him up to do more harm? If, they ask, I do *not* judge and condemn him, do I not sanction his heinous acts? Is this not moral relativism, the slippery slope of "anything goes" that makes

Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice

Human Life and Dignity: The fundamental starting point for all of Catholic social teaching is the defense of human life and dignity: every human person is created in the image and likeness of God and has an inviolable dignity, value, and worth . . . Therefore, both the most wounded victim and the most callous criminal retain their humanity. All are created in the image of God and possess a dignity, value, and worth that must be recognized, promoted, safeguarded, and defended.

A Catholic approach does not give up on those who violate these laws. We believe that both victims and offenders are children of God. Despite their very different claims on society, their lives and dignity should be protected and respected. We seek justice, not vengeance. We believe punishment must have clear purposes: protecting society and rehabilitating those who violate the law.

A Catholic approach leads us to encourage models of restorative justice that seek to address crime in terms of the harm done to victims and communities, not simply as a violation of law.

The four traditional elements of the sacrament of Penance have much to teach us about taking responsibility, making amends, and reintegrating into community:

- **Contrition:** Genuine sorrow, regret, or grief over one's wrongs and a serious resolution not to repeat the wrong
- **Confession:** Clear acknowledgment and true acceptance of responsibility for the hurtful behavior
- **Satisfaction:** The external sign of one's desire to amend one's life (this "satisfaction," whether in the form of prayers or good deeds, is a form of "compensation" or restitution for the wrongs or harms caused by one's sin)
- **Absolution:** After someone has shown contrition, acknowledged his or her sin, and offered satisfaction, then Jesus, through the ministry of the priest and in the company of the church community, forgives the sin and welcomes that person back into "communion."

Taken from the Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 11/15/200.

no action wrong? Is it not true that some people will never be redeemed and that condemning them is the only way not only to stop their evil but send a message to others that such acts are wrong and will not be tolerated?

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. understood the distinction between condemning the act and condemning the actor. He called for forgiveness even after-- indeed, especially after-- the most horrific acts of violence.

Dr. King resolved the problem of forgiveness by separating the acts that he condemned from the people who had done them. He railed against segregation and the violence done in pursuit of its preservation. But he did not rail against those perpetrating the violence. He did not condemn them. He sought to love them.

Love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1957.

In a sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in 1957, he preached about loving your enemies. In reading this excerpt from the sermon, think of the "enemy" as the member of the congregation or a member of her family that the church might be tempted to shun after the commission of a terrible crime.

> *Love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals. That's why Jesus says, "Love your enemies." Because if you hate your enemies, you have no way to redeem and to transform your enemies. But if you love your enemies, you will discover that at the very root of love is the power of redemption. You just keep loving people and keep loving them, even though they're mistreating you. Here's the person who is a neighbor, and this person is doing something wrong to you and all of that. Just keep being friendly to that person. Keep loving them. Don't do anything to embarrass them. Just keep loving them, and they can't stand it too long.*
>
> *Oh, they react in many ways in the beginning. They react with bitterness because they're mad because you love them like that. They react with guilt feelings, and sometimes they'll hate you a little more at that transition period, but just keep loving them.*
>
> *And by the power of your love they will break down under the load. That's love, you see. It is redemptive, and this is why Jesus says love. There's something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So love your enemies.*

Mrs. Young learned this first hand. She was transformed by the redemptive power of forgiveness and she was filled with joy.

What is the unique contribution a congregation can make to address this crisis?

Congregations can help make their communities safer, while also deepening and strengthening their faith and the bonds among one another. They can heal the hurting and the exiled; love the stranger as well as those whom all have held in scorn and contempt.

It can start by reaching out to just one person in your congregation. Or one family. That's all it takes because that person's or that family's sorrows and struggles, when embraced by the faith community, will illuminate not only what must be done to help *them* but also the many problems with the *system* and how it needs to be changed.

When Mario shot Andrew, no one could have guessed that the lives of so many would be transformed by his church's response to the event.

A 2000, Independent Sector report found that in 1997 there were more than 353,000 congregations in the United States.

If each congregation reached out to just two people about to go to prison, or two coming home from prison, or six people incarcerated, then every man, woman and youth facing the pain of imprisonment and the challenge of coming home would be cared for.

This is just one aspect of the work of moving from faith to action. A community of faith can support the person accused, the victim of crime, and the families of both. By *not* taking sides, by not blaming but forgiving, it can create a climate that fosters reconciliation and redemption. Beyond spiritual and psychological support, it can use its own social networks to support the families in material and practical ways.

As the St. Nicholas story further demonstrates, this work strengthens the congregation and its relations among one another, and it deepens the members' faith.

And just as faith communities were responsible for the policy changes created through the Civil Rights Movement, faith communities today can create changes in the policies governing the criminal justice system. And just as the Civil Rights Movement wrought great societal and policy changes, so, too, can this movement.

Chapter Three
Creating a Healing Community: The Role of Faith Leaders

As the spiritual leader, the shepherd of your flock, you are called upon to provide vision and leadership for this critical ministry.

Whether your place of worship is a small storefront or huge, or anything in between, your spiritual home is a source of abundant assets. You can lead and do this work and create a Station of Hope.

Return to the seven questions where we began:

1. Why are we so ashamed of those who commit crimes in our communities?

2. Am I ashamed of my own family member who is incarcerated? If so, what am I ashamed of?

3. Are we afraid on those in prison or who have been in prison? What are we afraid of and why?

4. How do we, as a community, move beyond shame and fear to assume the role we should be playing?

6. Are you visiting your family member in prison? Are you visiting the people in your congregation who are prison? Their family members?

7. Are you welcoming the returning citizen? Are you welcoming their family members?

Having reflected on these questions, you need to create a safe and secure environment for the work to begin to transform your house of worship into a Station of Hope.

This section will answer questions about ministering to people involved in the criminal justice system and offer some suggestions for engaging your congregation in the creation of a Station of Hope.

How can I lead my congregation toward engagement?

1 **Learn about the challenges and issues surrounding incarceration and reentry.** This manual provides a good deal of national data, but it does not say anything about what is happening in your state, you community or the neighborhood of your house of worship.

Is your house of worship in one of the "million-dollar blocks," that is, a block where a million dollars or more is spent each year to incarcerate people with homes there? Is it in an area where there are many people cycling in and out of prison, where there is a great deal of crime, where people live in fear? Is it in an area where people have already begun to identify crime, incarceration, and reentry as important issues that need to be addressed?

2 **Create a Healing Community.**

A Healing Community is one that facilitates the cycle of wholeness.

- What does it look like? What does the process look like? Can we recognize the shift from hurting to healing?

- Are forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption the beginning of the process of healing or the result?
- Who is affected when a community is not healing or whole? *How* is a community affected? Who, beyond the Young family was affected by Andrew's death?
- How is a community a victim of a crime and what is its need for healing?

Remember: Recovering Communities are Healing Communities.

3 Introduce the issues of arrest, incarceration, release, and victimization to the congregation. From the start, address stigma and shame. Create a safe and secure environment in which to discuss this issue.

Among possible pastoral approaches, here are three suggestions to start the conversation:

- Is there anyone, like me, who has a friend or relative in prison? (show of hands)
- Speak of and to the families of the incarcerated in your congregation and offer a prayer.
- Identify someone willing to give testimony regarding an incarcerated family member or their own successful reentry.
- *Be creative: What are your suggestions? What will work for your Station of Hope?*

4 Organize study of your holy texts.
How many references to prison and incarceration are found? What is said about redemption, forgiveness and reconciliation?

5 Make incarceration and the community's redemption of Returning Citizens a theme for a services or series of services.
Be honest about the issue. *Directly address the congregation's fears.* Some specific topics that could be addressed during the course of a year might be:

- The story of Rev. Oldershaw's church and the triumph of forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Posing and answering the Seven Questions.
- Serving the least of these.

"Forgive him, Mom."

DeDe! I'd know her voice anywhere. Had anyone else heard? I glanced around.

My pastor was sitting quietly in one corner, the prison director in another. Ron was silently waiting for me to finish. Those words had been meant for me alone.

That was all God had my baby tell me. But it was enough.

I pushed back my chair and got up. "Come here, son" I said.

Warily Ron stood, then came around to my side of the table. I reached out my arms. He took a step forward. Then we were holding each other, weeping together, the tears putting out the last bitter embers inside me, washing away the anger I'd been carrying for too long, and letting the love of the Lord fill its place.

When we moved apart, I took a good look at Ron. And I saw the person he'd been 14 years before—a mixed-up young man who didn't know what he was doing when he shot my daughter, who'd probably caused his mother no end of worry.

"Ron, this may be hard for you to believe" I said, "but I want to forgive you. I want to be at peace with you."

Ron's eyes filled again. He squeezed my hand tightly. "I want that too" he murmured.

I knew Deirdra would have wanted nothing less.

(See Appendix A for the rest of this story)

- Redemption and Liberation.
- Forgiveness.
- Setting the captives free.
- Welcoming the prodigals.
- Preaching, teaching and healing.
- Power and joy of transformation.
- Triumph of the soul and reconciliation.
- Exploring and engaging nonviolence as a source of healing.

6 **Make it clear to the entire congregation that when one of them or one of their family members is charged with a crime, is in prison or is coming home from prison, or is a victim of a crime, that the congregation stands ready to support him or her.**

Supporting the defendant or prisoner is not excusing his or her crime. It does not erase the consequences of the crime. Instead, your embrace acknowledges the reality of the fear, suffering, grief and humanity of the individual.

Supporting victims of a crime or the family of victims similarly acknowledges their fear, suffering, grief and humanity, but that embrace does not negate the humanity of the person who committed the crime.

A congregation's engagement in supporting its members who are affected by crime, arrest and incarceration may be triggered simply by learning of it. Often, just putting out the call is enough to start building momentum. Rev. Oldershaw told the story of Mario, put out the call to get involved, and the congregation responded.

Take a look around. Who will be the volunteers in this work?

7 **Carefully analyze talents, gifts and skills of your congregation.** Match people's zeal with their capacity. Who has the respect and leadership skills? Who has a passion for the issue? Who can help coordinate the work? Who would be good at identifying community resources? Who would have the trust of the people being served?

8 **Develop a training and accountability structure for your Station of Hope that will ensure that each volunteer is prepared and supported in this ministry.** Develop an informal support team to monitor, supervise and provide backup for the volunteers. Develop a means for an immediate feedback loop to ensure continuous improvement and intervention and course -correction when needed. Use this manual and the resources identified here.

9 **Take another look around. Who is in need of this ministry?** Does anyone in this congregation have a family member or friend who is facing a criminal case, in jail or prison, or struggling with reintegration after being released? Is anyone suffering from being a victim of a crime?

Some say typically 70 percent of those attending services answer yes to this. That number is misleadingly low though, because shame keeps many from raising their hands.

Each of those friends and family members is calling for your support. Already, when one of our own gets sick we visit and nourish him or her. This ministry asks for the same mercy for those affected by crime

10 **Offer and provide your leadership to the volunteers in this work.**

As a leader in your community, you likely know other pastors, churches, mosques, temples, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations seeking to address this crisis. If there are, you may have not only partners in this work, but could create **a prayer circle** of similarly concerned faith leaders who regularly meet and support one another's growth of this ministry.

Just as the process of redemption and reconciliation takes a community of believers to help with reintegration, the enormity of the challenges of reconciliation often requires faith leaders and institutions to come together to support one another in this healing work. This is why we propose the formation of "prayer circles," composed of prison ministries, men's ministries, prayer ministries and outreach ministries to support one another in this work.

During the Civil Rights Movement, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his staff always sought to organize congregations to work together for change. It was their belief that if congregations came together for mutual support in light of the daunting odds before them, they stood a better chance in their move toward social change. Churches worked together, prayed together (for this is a spiritual calling) and shared resources as they approached their mission.

So, too, do we believe that this work Century requires a coming together of faith leaders and congregations who are working to support their members affected by the criminal justice system.

The faith leaders and their institutions can learn from one another in their work. Faith leaders can pray for and support each other as they take on the awesome task of leadership in this ministry.

Being part of a cluster of faith institutions -- a "prayer circle"-- strengthens the witness of each congregation, provides a context for accountability among them, and gives a greater visibility to the initiative in the larger community. One faith institution can serve as a lead congregation - a Station of Hope - that can recruit other congregations in the work, that all might grow to be serious agents of reconciliation and redemption.

11 *Do we have to set up a program or charter a nonprofit to do this work? Should we be seeking funding?*

No, No, and No. Upon inventorying your strengths and assets, you will realize that such programs, structures and funding are not necessary. We are creating this manual partly because we realize that the government and foundations *will never* provide the funding to reach all the inmates, their families and victims of crime. The numbers are simply too overwhelming and the political will to make this a high priority is simply not there.

Securing funding is a time-consuming, wearying and often fruitless gamble; there are few dollars available and too many organizations competing for them. However, creating a Healing Community within your own faith community is no gamble at all. You can only win.

Of course, this does not preclude your partnering with existing programs to learn from them and to grow in your sophistication and awareness of the needs of prisoners, victims and their families.

You have the faith and the love. Therefore, you have the ready capacity to do this work.

Chapter Four
Creating a Healing Community: A Guide for Volunteers

Facilitating

Assistance

In

Transition and

Healing

The points of a volunteer's (what others call "volunteers") potential engagement with individuals and families involved in the criminal justice system are many:

- Before a crime even occurs – PREVENTION
- When a crime occurs
- During the grieving process
- At the point of arrest
- During the time in jail awaiting the outcome of the case
- During incarceration
- While preparing for release
- Upon returning home from prison
- Reintegrating into the community
- Sustaining successful reintegration

The engagement of fellow members of your congregation will depend on where in this process its friends and family members are. If you are helping four or five people, each may be in a different stage in this process.

Familiarize yourself with the criminal justice process and the issues related to crime, incarceration and reentry and its impact on families and communities.

Read and discuss Chapter Two on "Why We Care" for important information about the issue of impact. However, the process itself is complex, as illustrated in the flowchart attached as Appendix C. Neither the typical victim of a crime, the defendant, nor their families is likely to initially understand the steps in the process. If you learn and understand the basics, you can help those to whom you are ministering understand and thus more easily navigate these waters.

Identify the resources that are available in your community to help defendants, prisoners, returning citizens, victims, and their families.

You can start by contacting your local "211" or United Way information and referral network and see if they have organized their resources for these targeted groups. Some of the resources you might want to identify include the core human services information, contact information for the jail, the courts and state corrections, the public defender's office, and bail bond companies. Housing, substance abuse treatment, job placement and referral services would also be helpful.

Start building partnerships and formal and informal networks of support for this work. Faith leaders are being encouraged to develop prayer circles with a cluster of partners, including other faith leaders and their institutions for purposes of leading and guiding this work.

Volunteers should also develop partnerships. Partnerships can strengthen and deepen your work. They can also help you answer questions, provide needed expertise, and increase the impact of your work. Partners you may want to consider including in your work could be:

- Other faith communities experienced or interested in this work
- Nonprofits providing one or more kinds of services to people facing incarceration, serving time or returning home
- Groups that provide mentoring services and train mentors
- Civil rights organizations working on criminal justice or prison issues
- Local and state corrections (jail and prison administrators)
- Local and state criminal justice or reentry task forces, councils or commissions
- State and local workforce agencies
- State and local housing agencies
- State and local health, mental health and substance abuse advocates and providers

PART ONE:
Guiding and helping the person arrested, incarcerated, or coming home

1 **Pay attention and respond to the first contact.** The content of your ministry will be shaped by who needs help and seeks it and who accepts it -- be it the defendant, victim, a family member, returning citizen or the community.

In many instances, regardless of whether the person is a defendant, family member or victim, the core of the care to be offered is similar – providing love and support is necessary regardless of how the person has been affected by the crime. However, there are important nuances because the forms of support will depend on the specific needs of the individuals. This part walks through those specific needs of the person accused or convicted of a crime.

2 **Offer to help *early* – at the time of arrest.** An arrest is devastating for the defendant and his family.

Starting the engagement with the prisoner upon his arrest is important because that is when fear and trembling is most stark and the need for support the greatest. The relationships formed at that point can be built upon and deepened as the person moves through the criminal justice process – to prison and (in most cases) the eventual return home.

While congregations and people of faith are increasing their engagement with people in prison and coming home from prison, few recognize the important role of helping at *the beginning of the criminal justice process.*

3 **Find out about the correspondence, telephoning, and visiting rules.** Jail and prison correspondence, telephone calls and visits are strictly regulated. The rules generally distinguish between approved visitors and community volunteers.

Visitors can't just show up at the door. The officials – federal, state or local, depending on who runs the facility – make up the rules and the rules must be followed. Rules for prison visits are available on the websites of the federal Bureau of Prisons (for federal prisons), most state departments of corrections (for state prisons) and many local jails. Within any prison system, e.g., a given state's system or the federal system, the visiting rules also may vary from prison to prison. Again, Chaplains can be helpful on this score, too; they sometimes provide training or materials on these rules.

Breaking the rules (for instance, the visitor dress code) can result in denial of permission to visit.

CAUTION: Once on an individual's visitor list, you may be precluded from volunteering at that prison. FIND OUT THE RULES BEFORE MAKING YOUR FIRST VISIT.

4 **Introduce yourself and work with the prison or jail chaplain.** Sometimes the chaplain can be very helpful in navigating the prison system and its rules, can identify resources and can help you look out for the person you are caring for.

Also, the chaplain often is in charge of volunteer services; sometimes, these services are the bulk of or the only services provided to inmates because funding has been cut so deeply.

5 **Write letters and offer to accept phone calls.** The relationship can begin with letters, which are treasured by people in prison. Some receive *none.* One of the great advantages of letters is that they can be read again and again. In that respect, letters can have more lingering impact than a visit.

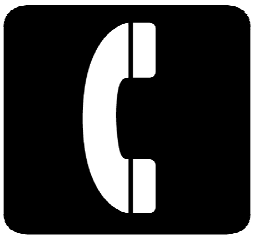
Don't get personal – don't scent the letter with perfume; don't try to build a personal relationship with the inmate. Romantic and sexual letters can result in visitation or program termination. Remember, once the letter reaches the correctional facility, it is read and becomes the property of corrections. Some prison ministries suggest that letters from inmates to those in the congregation corresponding with him be sent to the address of the visitors' house of worship rather than to their homes.

Note to the reader:

This chapter is organized in order of the person or persons to whom you are ministering, not in order of priority. Part One covers your work with defendants, prisoners and returning citizens. Part Two covers their families and Part Three covers victims of crime.

When a person is in jail or prison, often the only way they can telephone someone is to make a collect call. Some facilities are changing these rules to allow inmates to buy much less expensive calling cards, but many still require collect calling. The calls are the prisoner's lifeline (note: they are monitored). The call may be made just to hear a warm embracing voice, it may be to ask for help for a family member in crisis, and it may be because the prisoner is in fear for his own well-being and needs an advocate in seeking help. Accepting these calls is an act of fellowship.

CAUTION: Collect calls from correctional facilities may be *very* expensive -- far more expensive than regular collect calls. It is important to put limits on the minutes and frequency of the calls.



Even if the person your congregation seeks to assist had no contact with the congregation for many years (or never has), it is still not too late to create a healing relationship with a person who has long been confined in prison.

6 Visit the person in jail or prison. If a correspondence develops, ask if you can be included on the visitor list of the person you want to visit. Be aware that prisoners are usually allowed a limited number of hours of visitation per month and that the prisoner's family, if they are visiting him, too, takes priority. Don't let your time interfere with theirs.

Tell him he is loved. Show him compassion and mercy. And forgiveness.

Understand that once you arrive at a prison facility, you may have a long wait until you can begin the visit. Also, on occasion, the visit may be denied due to something happening inside the prison or with the prisoner that day.

Although a visit to a jail or prison will never reveal most of what goes on inside a prison, a visit can at least help the visitor glimpse the day-to-day life being led inside, enhancing the visitor's compassion for the prisoner.

Preparing for the Prison Visit

Find a place of peace and calm through prayer before entering the facility.

7 Expect some tension during the first few visits. New relationships are always a bit tense. What will he think of me? What will I think of him? The prison environment enlarges these ordinary concerns.

For a chilling description of contemporary prison conditions, read the ***Final Report of the Commission on Safety and Abuse*** in America's Prisons online at http://www.prisoncommission.org .

At the start, the person you are visiting needs your peace to calm both your own fears and his.

The first visit can often be very stressful for the prisoner and the visitor. If it's the visitor's first experience inside prison walls, the harsh clanging doors, the surveillance equipment, the security procedures and the hardened faces of both prisoners and staff can combine to create quite an intimidating experience.

Every visit has some kind of tension – especially first ones. Tension can also be high if the visitor did not have a relationship with the person prior to his incarceration. If you are visiting the son of a friend in your congregation, for example, such a visit is quite different from a visit from one of his parents or a sibling.

The fact that you are there is so positive, that the tension will likely abate. By showing up you have already broken through and opened the door to healing. Eventually, you will be called on to talk more deeply and to engage more fully.

8 **Be present. And listen.**

The person locked in a jail or prison needs to be heard. *Really heard*.

In most prisons, inmates are not always respected and their dignity is damaged. Rarely are they treated in a loving manner. Rarely are they referred to by name. Some prisons refer to the people confined there as "offenders," sometimes by their numbers. Inmates' concerns and fears are rarely expressed, both because they are likely to be rebuffed or ignored and because expressing them may seem to be a sign of weakness.

Your visit can counter this brutal darkness with light. It can serve to remind prisoners of their humanity. And you can provide what the prisoner has been deprived of: compassionate listening. Without prying, give him an opportunity to talk about his day-to-day life in the prison, his worries and his needs. It may be that you and your congregation can help to fill some of his unmet needs.

These visits can lead to a valuable mentoring relationship in which the visitor establishes a lasting, nurturing and guiding relationship with the incarcerated person.

Prisoners "are sneered at with venom."

Pat Nolan, now the vice president of Prison Fellowship and the leader of its policy reform arm, Justice Fellowship, was the Republican leader of the California Assembly when he was convicted of bribery. A strong and confident man, he nonetheless felt brutalized by his experience in prison. "You're an amputee, cut off from family, community, job, church, and, with your stump still bleeding, you're tossed into this boiling cauldron of anger, hatred, bitterness, sexual repression, and you're totally disrespected — screamed at -- by officers all the time," Pat says.

"You are sneered at with venom and told repeatedly, 'You ain't got nothing coming.' The implication is that you are nothing, you've come from nothing and you will be nothing. You are worthless. You have no future. None."

9 **Offer to be present at the defendant's court appearances.** The Civil Rights Movement has taught us that the significant presence or absence of supporters can affect the outcome of a case. This is the first step toward healing as well.

If an alternative to incarceration is an option (or if later in the process, a community-based

sentence is an option), your congregation can help make such an options a reality.

10 **Help the defendant in preparing for his legal defense or sentencing.** Most people accused of crimes cannot afford an attorney. The law requires that the court appoint an attorney to represent the accused for free. In most cities, the public defender's office handles the bulk of such cases. But typically these lawyers are overworked and handle huge caseloads, which means that not a lot of work will go into the case.

Not every congregation has an experienced criminal defense attorney among its membership that can be tapped to help in a case of a member of the congregation. But the informal networks of the people in the congregation may well lead to the identification of such a person in the community that can help your congregation's accused get the help he or she needs.

The congregation can also help the lawyer (whether the public defender or a private lawyer) prepare the case. If the crime took place in the neighborhood of the congregation, the members may help identify witnesses or support frightened witnesses come forward to testify. It can also help line up character witnesses and letters of support addressed to the judge presiding over the sentencing.

11 **Hold the prisoner accountable for what he has done.**

Mario came to apologize to the Young family for the pain he had caused. To apologize first requires acknowledgment of the offense causing the pain.

Mrs. Young needed Mario to understand the suffering his act had caused her family – not in general terms, but in the terrible specifics. She needed Mario to know exactly what he had done so that he could hold himself accountable for it.

The film ***Dead Man Walking,*** based on the ministry of Sister Helen Prejean to death row inmates, provides a vivid glimpse of what is involved in visiting a prisoner and establishing a relationship with him. A number of study guides have been developed for viewers of this film. One helpful one can be found on this website: http://www.ocadp.org/films.htm

However, many who are in jail or out on bond pending trial are reluctant to acknowledge responsibility, lest it interfere with their plea of not guilty. This may persist even after trial and all appeals have been exhausted.

Recall the many, many visits and prayers Sister Prejean offered Poncelet in the film *Dead Man Walking* before he could be redeemed by acknowledging his responsibility for the murder.

Redemption requires accountability; and for those who will be coming home from prison one day, accountability is the first step toward successful reintegration. To be accountable, one must acknowledge the wounded (the victim, family, and community). Restoration does not negate restitution.

That said, accountability *cannot be forced.* A relationship with a prisoner can be quickly shredded by a demand for confession or a demand for an apology. The visitor needs to stand strong in his mercy and forgiveness, make no demands, and let the person's acknowledgment arise in its own time.

In some cases, of course, the person is not guilty in fact. But it can be difficult to tell the difference. The feigned victim and the real victim may sound the same– they both may argue that they have been railroaded by the system, their lawyers were rotten, they are being scapegoated or they are the prey of a determined (or lazy) plot to pin blame for the crime on the wrong person.

But even the true victim of such a plot may be able one day to acknowledge that, even if it is not his fault, his situation is causing others to suffer.

12 Forgive him. And encourage his forgiveness of himself.

Forgiveness must precede healing. As the story of Mrs. Young's forgiveness of Mario makes clear, forgiveness is less about the person forgiven than the freeing of the heart of the person offering forgiveness. One can only be untethered and unfettered from the harm and pain by releasing through forgiveness.

You cannot move forward by looking in the rearview mirror.

13 Identify supportive resources (e.g., education, training, treatment) in the prison and in the communities neighboring the prison.

Throughout the country, states have scaled back funding of prison programs – educational, vocational, and treatment. Into this vacuum have come volunteer programs, each of which has to be approved by the prison where they are conducted. Because there is often a rather informal structure to such programs, they are rarely mandated and, often as not, not known to all the prisoners who are eligible to take advantage of them.

A congregation could do some research and sleuthing to identify the formal programs, the volunteer programs, and possibilities of new programs being developed by communities neighboring the prison. Such an inventory might suggest that their friend in prison could benefit from the program and might need an advocate with prison officials to get him in it.

The congregation might also find correspondence courses that would be interesting to and relevant to their friend's goals, and then help him find the support necessary to enroll in such courses.

14 Help in preparing for release from prison.

Although departments of corrections lately are increasingly recognizing that part of their job is to help inmates prepare for release and successful reintegration, most do not actually do very much toward that goal. Indeed, some people are actually "frog-walked" in shackles from segregation to the prison gate; imagine how prepared such a person is for reintegration.

Most people are released from prison with a small amount of money (often in the form of a check despite the fact that they do not have the I.D. necessary to cash it) and a bus ticket home. In some instances, the release happens suddenly (the paperwork is finally completed) and sometimes in the middle of the night.

The person is dropped off at a bus station teeming with people ready to tempt or re-engage the person in a criminal lifestyle. Women released from prison in this way are particularly vulnerable. Women are the least likely to be met at the gate by friends or family members and when they get off the bus, they are readily identified by the pathetic paper bag of personal possessions they were allowed to take out of prison. Pimps and drug dealers virtually lunge at these women at the station. Having nowhere to go and no one to turn to, they may well accept these invitations to return to crime if someone is not there to offer an alternative.

The Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign (www.reentrymediaoutreach.org) distributes the documentary ***Road to Return*** and an accompanying discussion guide.

The award-winning film, narrated by Tim Robbins, profiles both people who have committed crimes and crime victims, and addresses the complex, unique needs of prisoners returning to society and trying desperately, often heroically, to go straight. It provides a sobering – and at the same time uplifting – view of life as seen through the eyes of a number of men and women who have become caught in the vicious circle of poverty, crime, incarceration, release, return to crime, and return to prison.

15 Help in the preparation of a release / discharge plan (a transition accountability plan).

Often inmates spend years with no rehabilitative services, virtually vegetating. When nothing has been done to prepare a person for release, his or her likelihood of success upon release is not great.

Even if the prison staff help inmates prepare a discharge plan, it may have a lot of blanks that need to be filled in. Members of the congregation who have befriended the inmate can help fill in those blanks

The team of members from the congregation supporting the person in prison can start by figuring out who is doing what in the community that can help people coming out of prison. Is there a comprehensive prisoner reentry program?

Is there a program that helps people with criminal records get jobs? Are there drug treatment programs that could help him? If he has mental health problems, what programs or agencies are involved in this work? Who provides housing for people coming home from prison?

Filling in the blanks for one person's plan can be a start in creating a resource directory that people in the congregation could use to help others as well.

16 **Help establish realistic expectations.** Before filling in the details of the discharge plan, it is important to counsel the prisoner about what it is reasonable and not reasonable to expect upon release. The family may or may not welcome him with open arms. Getting and *keeping* a job can be very challenging.

It is critical to keep in mind that you promise only what you are certain you can deliver.

Just making the transition from a world where decisions are made for you to one in which decisions must be made *by* you is often one the toughest challenges. People speak of some prisoners becoming "institutionalized." They become so much a part of the world of the prison that it becomes the only place understandable as "home" to the inmate.

One of the classic portrayals of institutionalization is seen in the movie *Shawshank Redemption.* Brooks, an elderly man who has served as the prison librarian for many of his 50 years in prison, is granted parole. Told he could leave, he threatens to slit the throat of another inmate so he will be forced to stay in prison. His friends intervene, and no one is harmed. His friends try to understand why Brooks would do such a thing. Red, another inmate who has been there for a long, long time explains, "These walls are funny. First, you hate them, then you get used to them. Enough time passes . . . you get so you depend on them. That's institutionalized."

Brooks is released. Even with the parole board's help in finding him a halfway house and a job, he cannot function in the world. He simply does not know how. He misses his "home" and commits suicide.

The Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign (www.reentrymediaoutreach.org) also distributes the documentary ***Omar and Pete*** with an accompanying discussion guide**.** This film is an unflinching view of the journey of reentry and reintegration of two African American men with similar long histories of being in and out of prison and struggling with drug addiction. It explores both the issue of personal responsibility and society's responsibility for their tragic lives, as well as the web of social and economic barriers that low-income African-American men face in the context of incarceration and release. It also examines existing support structures, and those that are needed, to help former prisoners successfully reenter their families and neighborhoods.

The film and its epilogue do an excellent job of illuminating how developing realistic expectations can make the difference between success and failure upon reentry.

Older inmates, in particular, have enormous challenges. They have never used a touch-tone phone, never seen a cell phone, never touched the keys of a computer, never used a self-flushing toilet. The world has changed beyond recognition. Something as ordinary as traffic can feel frightening.

Another form of institutionalization sees the prisoner start to lose basic but essential skills such as decision-making.

Pat Nolan, who was imprisoned for only 29 months ("only" compared to the fictional Brooks' 50 years!) says that when he was released, he couldn't even pick out what to eat from a restaurant menu. This man, who as a legislative leader had made hundreds of split-second decisions on the floor of the California Assembly, came out of prison unable to navigate a menu. Flustered by being unable to decide, he ordered a turkey sandwich. He didn't even want turkey.

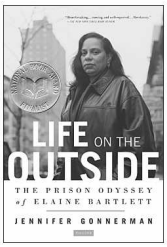
Given the depletion of such natural human gifts and assets by prisons, imagine how hard it would be to make the much harder decisions demanded on the job, or to handle even petty conflicts that arise in the course of the day.

17 Help prepare for community supervision (e.g., parole). In some states, nearly everyone who leaves prison is under some form of community supervision or parole; in other states, very few are.

While some states are thinking of ways to improve their supervision policies and practices so that they are more favorable to reintegration, many parole officers still operate as though they are part of a police force – looking for violations of the rules and a chance to send people back to prison, rather than ways to help with successful reintegration.

Given this reality, it is helpful to counsel on the importance of abiding by the rules.

The volunteer would do well to get a copy of the technical parole rules so as to guide the returning citizen on these matters. Violating a minor rule can result in being returned to prison.



Jennifer Gonnerman's book, ***Life on the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett***, is the first major work of journalism on the subject of reentry: the challenge of leaving prison and reentering the free world. It tells the story of Elaine Bartlett, who spent 16 years behind bars for selling cocaine — a first offense — under New York's controversial Rockefeller drug laws. The book opens on the morning of January 26, 2000, when she walks out of Bedford Hills prison. At 42, Elaine has virtually nothing: no money, no job, no real home.

In some states, for instance, Texas, parole offices are being established in churches. The rate of compliance with the requirements of meeting with parole officers, as a result, increased substantially.

18 **Address the issue of residency prior to release.** In many states, release cannot occur unless the officials can verify that the person has a place to live. The earlier the process of finding a residence begins, the less likely delay in release will happen.

Sometimes people are required to start their return home by staying in a halfway house, but that is becoming increasingly rare. Most people leaving prison have to figure out where they will be staying.

Some inmates expect that they will go home and live with a family member or perhaps a girlfriend. Keep in mind that this is not always the expectation, or even the desire, of the other party.

If this *is* the prisoner's expectation, you can counsel him to write to the party with whom he plans to stay and find out if he really would be welcome. If not, you and others in the congregation can help him by finding suitable, affordable housing.

Sometimes prisons give people about to leave prison a list of shelters. The list, though, may be outdated, and even if it is not, how is the person leaving prison to find out which one has an available bed? He can't go from shelter to shelter. He's not going to have a phone and likely he will have no change for a pay phone (if he can find one; with the increasing use of cell phones, phone booths are becoming nearly extinct). Each of the shelters may be full the night he comes home.

Help the person coming home by "reserving," if you can, a room. Some communities have transitional housing specifically for people coming out of prison. Find out if your community does and what additional housing resources might be there.

19 **Address the issue of post-release employment.**

You may have found some great job placement programs while helping the individual develop a discharge plan, but even better than that is finding someone actually willing to offer him a job. Even if not, once the person finds a job, you can help him succeed and his employer feel more comfortable by offering to coach him and intervene if problems arise.

The **Public / Private Ventures** website has a host of free publications including manuals that can help a congregation better understand coaching and mentoring.

This is another area in which helping to establish realistic expectations is important. Many, many jobs are off-limits to people with criminal records. In Florida, for instance, a governor's task force found that over 40 percent of the public and private jobs in the state had restrictions based on criminal history. Also, even when a job is not formally restricted, employers can and do create their own restrictions.

Still, some employers are standing up and letting it be known that they will give people with records a "second

chance" and offer them jobs. Your congregation could help identify such employers and encourage others to follow this same path. Within a given community, congregations can come together and support one another's efforts to expand the pool of available jobs to people with records.

20 **Identify who will join a circle of peer support.** The circle should be composed of reliable and supportive people who have a compassionate understanding of their role and also the ability to respect boundaries.

People coming home from prison need support. They might seek that support from the same folks who helped land them in prison--unless others are there to provide it. Those who don't have solid and positive support may turn to other people and things (such as drugs) that fill the void. The circle of peer support that you create will prevent such turns.

A circle of peer support, properly conceived, can help the returning citizen make good choices and avoid bad ones. It can provide guidance, a feeling of welcome and a sense of purpose.

The group should not be so large as to be intimidating; nor should it seem as though the individual's past is being too broadly shared. If relationships have been building between members of the congregation and the person about to be released, the members are the naturals for coaching and support upon release and for helping to build a circle of peer support.

If relationships have not been built thus far, ask who can fill such roles. One person might help in coaching about financial planning, another about staying clean from drugs and another might help with family problems. The roles will be defined by what he needs.

21 **Identify people who can respond 24/7 to crises.** In addition to peer support, it is helpful to have one or more people ready to respond if serious problems arise. It may be that two or three people are called to this role – assuring that someone will be there if a crisis erupts.

22 **Work with prison officials to be clear on date and time of discharge so you can meet the individual at the gate (or bus station) and take him home.**

Paperwork problems can cause delays. The illness of the prisoner can cause delays. And a sudden reversal on appeal or commutation can accelerate the release date.

Even when a release date seems certain, things may arise that can accelerate or delay the release. To be sure that you can meet the person at the gate, it is helpful to let the prison officials, including the chaplain, know of your intentions so you can be notified of any changes in plans.

23 **Welcome the individual back into the community and congregation.** One of the most meaningful and welcoming gestures a congregation can make is for the faith leaders to stand before the congregation and acknowledge the former prisoner's welcome into the congregation.

Big surprise celebrations, on the other hand, while they can be great fun, they are just as likely to cause great anxiety. If you plan a welcoming celebration, *consult first with the prisoner.* Ask whom he is comfortable having present and whom he would rather not see right away.

It is better to keep the celebration as low-key as possible. If the person has had drug or alcohol problems, a party might be a venue for a relapse. Keep it clean and sober. Remember, the individual has just come from a tightly controlled environment. A party with lots of nieces and nephews jumping up and down and on the furniture may be too much too soon. Also, keep the celebration short. Let your friend move away from the people participating when he feels that is what he must do.

24 **Provide close support, especially for the first 72 hours after release.** The transition from prison to home is going to be stressful and the longer the prison sentence, the more stressful the return will be.

Be there for him or her and his or her family. Offer to drive him where he needs to go, for instance to the initial visit (if any is required) with the parole officer (and accompany him if that is allowed); go with him to the department of motor vehicles to get a state identify card; help him learn to drive again and take him to get his driver's license; help him get his other identity papers, such as his birth certificate and Social Security card.

Help arrange visits with family members with whom he is not living – to the extent each is ready for such a visit.

Counsel and support him as temptations and challenges arise.

25 **Sustain your support of the returning citizen through the process of reintegration.** "Reentry" is not the same as reintegration. Reentry is simply the process of release from prison into the "free world." Reintegration involves settling in and becoming a part of the family, community and congregation – becoming a citizen again. Complete reintegration can take months or years and it will never require the same length of time or support for any two returning citizens. The challenges each person faces are unique and individual. Therefore, your response to what is needed must be based on what the individual returning citizen you are helping needs.

After years of close confinement and imposed order, the free world can be appear frightening and chaotic. Traffic can make a returning citizen jumpy. Technology can be threatening or intimidating. Some returning citizens have never touched a computer keyboard or used a cell phone. Their children and grandchildren will be more comfortable with new technologies than they are, which can cause frustration ("I can't do what my grandkid can do!"). Yet these technologies drive virtually all commerce and communication today, and it is necessary to learn and become comfortable with the rudiments of these tools – even if only for purposes of job seeking. It would be helpful if one of the members of the circle of peer support could take responsibility for introducing or reintroducing these technologies to the returning citizen and helping him navigate and understand other changes that have occurred as well.

What is required for successful reintegration will vary from person to person. Some returning citizens may be ready to go to work right away, others may need treatment first, and still others may need basic skills training first. Don't push too hard for a particular outcome too fast, such as gainful employment within a week of release. Both the volunteers AND the retruning citizen need to have realistic expectations.

During the first few months on the job, it can be helpful if one member of the circle of peer support introduces himself to the employer and agrees to play a coaching or mentoring role. This gives the employer someone to turn to if problems arise on the job and gives the returning citizen a "reality check" if he has complaints about the employer.

26 **Continue the work of reconciliation and help develop a restitution plan.** As he settles in, help him think about how he can contribute to the healing of his family, the victim and his family, the congregation and the community. Develop a plan with him outlining ways that he can "give back."

27 **Help people in the congregation with recent as well as long-past criminal records.**

This manual has focused on the needs arising in the context of arrest, imprisonment, and return home. And while there are hundreds of thousands struggling with those problems, there are millions of additional people with old criminal records, still suffering both from the stigma and the myriad consequences that attach upon a conviction.

These consequences affect the ability of the 71 million people in the U.S. (over 30percent of the adult population) whose names are in criminal history databases, to reintegrate and realize all the opportunities and benefits the rest of society can enjoy.

They include the ability to secure gainful employment or a professional license (in Florida, where such restrictions were inventoried, over 40 percent of the jobs in the Florida economy were

subject to employment restrictions based on criminal records), to vote, to hold office, to serve on a jury, and get various kinds of public benefits and housing.

A person's criminal record can haunt him in any or all of these venues for life. But apart from restrictive laws and rules, many employers and other entities create their own restrictions; it is here that a congregation can be helpful. Individuals can vouch for the person with the record and provide a recommendation as to his character.

If the person is seeking a pardon or to expunge the record, members can also speak or write on his behalf.

In a larger sense, the congregation can advocate for fairer and carefully tailored restrictions.

PART TWO
Guiding and helping the families of defendants, prisoners, and returning citizens

1 **Help the family of the defendant or prisoner. Embrace each of them.** Tell them it's not their fault. They are loved. They remain welcome in the arms of the congregation.

After an arrest, the family of the person arrested is simply heartbroken. Family members suffer great shame and embarrassment, sorrow and grief for both the victim of the crime and for their kin facing criminal charges; they also fear rejection and have feelings of responsibility and unworthiness. At such a time, they desperately need the love and support of their congregation. In most instances, they will not seek it out. The congregation needs to seek *them* out.

Let them know they are not blamed, but loved, and that support is available.

Sometimes, the families of the victim and of the accused are members of the same congregation. Make it clear that both are welcome and witness and preach forgiveness till it hurts.

2 **Address the families' material needs.** Often it is the family's breadwinner who is sitting in jail and no longer able to support the family. The congregation may want to help ensure that the family's basic material needs are met and *help them find* a means of continuing to meet those needs in the absence of the breadwinner.

At first, if the family has emergency needs, they perhaps can be met through the congregation's emergency support funds -- later by their helping the family navigate the government and charitable support systems. Throughout the process, what is most needed is building and sustaining the relationship with the family. The family of the victim may also be in material need. Due to the crime, the breadwinner may no longer be present or, if present, may not be able to work.

The emotional fallout from the crime may have immobilized the family to the point of

neglecting their basic needs. Look out for them. Look for signs of falling back or rising up. Offer a helping hand. You might want to form a support group to help these families. What existing groups within the congregation can naturally provide support.

The prisoner, too, may have basic needs that are not being met – for instance, soap or deodorant. In most facilities, visitors may neither bring such items nor mail them to the inmate. Such facilities instead require a certified check or money order for deposit in the inmate's account. He can then buy what he needs from the facility's commissary.

3 Build a mentoring relationship with the family.

Ideally, mentoring is done by a team of members from the congregation. Mentoring teams can support families with love and understanding and help reconcile them and their community. In practical and material ways, they can help families assess their own strengths and needs and help them meet their needs by identifying the services and resources available to them.

Mentoring families of prisoners also benefits the members of the congregation as new kinds of intimacy and trust are nourished – between the family and the team and among the team members and congregation. Faith can be deepened through support of the families.

4 Provide mentoring support to the children of the person in jail or prison.

A particular interest in mentoring the children of incarcerated parents is growing nationwide. Children whose parents are in prison suffer many grievous challenges, and a congregation's support and mentoring of such children can help them surmount them.

However, mentoring of children whose parents are in prison is not, in some cases, without a measure of controversy. Some have criticized those mentoring such children as undermining the parental relationships – and even seeking to replace them. Some mentors have been said to have spoken cruelly of the parents (the one incarcerated and sometimes also the one caring for the child) to the children, causing the children additional grief and distance from the parents.

A number of programs and resources that are aimed at helping children whose parents are incarcerated. They include **Amachi**, the **Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents**, and the **Family and Corrections Network**. Their websites are listed in the appendix.

A pastor told us that as a young man, he worked with people in jail and bought a pair of sneakers for an inmate he had grown attached to. Later, the inmate's mother approached and gently explained that it was her job to provide for her son and that she had been made to look bad in his eyes by having someone else buy the sneakers. She suggested that next time she be consulted and that he might even want to buy a gift and allow her to give it to her son.

With these important caveats, supporting the children of a parent who is in prison can help *heal* the relationship between the children and their parents and heal their other tattered relationships as well. One of the very positive approaches to such support is Amachi (an Ibo word meaning "who knows but what God has brought us through this child") Headquartered in Philadelphia, Amachi works in partnership with the Big Brother and Big Sister programs; their approach can be a model for your congregation. Amachi partners volunteers from local congregations with children of the incarcerated.

5 Help the family build or sustain a relationship with the prisoner. Whether support of the affected families began at arrest or not, throughout the period of incarceration such support is critical to their well-being and the well-being of the principals – the prisoner and his victim.

Social, psychological, material, and spiritual support may each be needed, albeit in different measures, depending on the parties.

It is important to remember that not all family members of a prisoner stand ready to embrace him. Some are angry with him or her for having brought shame to their family; some are angry because of the disruption that the arrest and imprisonment has caused; and still others are angry because they are the direct victim(s) of the crime. Err on the side of respecting family members' feelings about reunification or reconciliation – especially at the outset of the relationships with the family members.

Incarceration is a family affair:

The family, living on the outside, may well be living in a prison as confining and terrible as their loved one behind bars. For more information and helpful resources to help families of prisoners, go to the Family and Corrections Network at: http://www.fcnetwork.org/

When the anger is still ripe, be patient.

One of our friends recalls the words of a close relative of a prisoner: "How dare you," she said to the person trying to bring her and her family member in prison together, "how dare you open up this chapter in my life that I have been trying to close?"

At some point, you may help to resolve such conflicts, but just as you should not press the prisoner to acknowledge his wrongdoing, you cannot press family members into relationships for which they are not ready.

6 Assist with transportation when needed, which might include an offer to drive the family to see the prisoner. America's prisons are usually sited in remote rural locations. This is because the land is cheap and because prisons have served as states' economic development plums for small towns – and for favored politicians who bring the prisons to their towns. That leaves the community and family members of the person in prison terribly far away.

Sometimes, there is no public transportation to the prison.

A road trip to a prison can provide an opportunity for the member of the congregation driving the family to deepen his or her relationship with the family members, learn more about their needs and concerns, and lead to doing a better job of supporting the family.

Nearly everyone who takes the time and spends the money for the gas or bus necessary for prison visits says it is well worth it. The joy is very much two-sided. The visitor is lifted up by the appreciation for the visit and the prisoner is lifted up by the love and contact with the outside world.

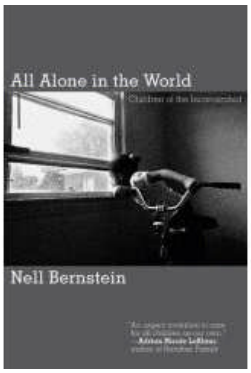
Remember: If the volunteer is traveling to the prison and wants to visit the prisoner with the family, the volunteer will need to be cleared to enter the prison (see the section above on learning about visitation rules).

7 Help the children of the parent who is incarcerated stay in touch with him or her. Another critical role a congregation can fill is to help the children of the person in prison keep in contact with him or her and help the children build and maintain a loving relationship with their incarcerated parent. In addition to taking them to visit or taking them to places where video-conferencing with imprisoned parents is made available, members of the congregation can encourage and help the children write letters and draw pictures for their parents.

Note: Children, too, have to be cleared for prison visits and video-conferencing. Also, sometimes the nature of the criminal offense will preclude the prisoner from any contact with children.

Because of the great growth of such ministries, we are not detailing all of what is involved in helping the children of prisoners in this manual; instead, Appendix B lists a number of valuable resources for this

work.



All in Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated is journalist Nell Bernstein's account of the struggles of some of the 2.4 million children with a parent in prison weaves individual stories with a discussion of the policy choices that led to this tragedy.

8 **Involve the family in preparing for the return home.** The family may or may not understand what to expect upon the release of their loved one. During the time in prison, their bonds may have strengthened or they may have frayed. The person coming home may have apologized for the strain his imprisonment has caused his family, or he may not have.

The family needs support and assurance that the support will continue for them and their loved one upon his or her release.

On a more practical level, the family can help, prior to release, line up the essentials that the person will be needing. These include helping him or her line up housing and treatment. A checklist of the essentials can be found in Appendix J.

PART THREE
Guiding and helping the victim and the family of the victim

The love and support of the victim and his or her family can help the congregation working with the defendant or prisoner understand the full consequences of the crime. This knowledge will help develop the accountability necessary for reconciliation with the individual and perhaps, ultimately, a form of forgiveness extended to him.

This guide is not intended to supply congregations all they need to know about working with victims of crime. A vast amount of resources has been developed for this purpose. Look in the section on crime victims in the Appendix's list of Internet Resources.

The Appendix also contains another story of faith and forgiveness. Again, there was a terrible murder. Again, the mother, Mrs. Arna Washington, of the young person killed forgave the killer, Ron Flowers. We were moved to address the victim in this guide in part because of the pivotal role that forgiveness plays in healing not only families, but their extended families – their faith community.

Sycamore Tree, which helped Ron Flowers and led to his seeking out Mrs. Washington, and Bridges to Life, which grew out of that model, are but two of many fine programs that address the needs of victims. For more programs that help victims of crime, see Appendix B.

The federal Office of Victims of Crime has many additional resources, including publications and a database of local resources, such as support groups. http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/

Arna Washington decided to forgive Ron 14 years after the murder. First she saw a very nervous Ron, clutching his Bible as he approaching her. The frightened young man sat with the parent of his crime victim. She did not show up to meet him to *forgive* him, but simply to find out

what happened the night he killed her daughter and perhaps get some closure. The surprise, enormity, and miracle of forgiveness she offered brought everyone to tears.

But her forgiveness did more. It lifted her from grief and anger to joy and life again. It lifted the anger and fury of the congregation. It *healed* them.

That said, forgiveness cannot be forced. It must develop in its own time. The victim and his or her family need the congregation's love and support whether or not they ever forgive the perpetrator of the crime.

Not all crimes have a direct victim – not in the sense of an actual person. Some crimes are crimes against the community. Communities can be brought to forgiveness, too.

Begin the process of reconciliation.

Reconciliation involves more than the person who committed the crime and the victims; the process of reconciliation belongs to the community, as well. And it takes time -- time, faith and determination to overcome a world of hurt.

"Reconciliation" refers to the actual reconfiguring of relationships as wrought by the redemptive process. Those who have been incarcerated have committed acts that inflicted harm on their communities, friends, and loved ones, whether intentionally or not. Violent and property offenses bring pain to neighbors. Domestic violence brings clear harm to loved ones. Incarceration causes a separation that can and does strain, fracture, and even end relationships within family and friendship networks.

Reconciliation and redemptive processes involve a making right of relationships among all parties concerned -- offender, victim, family, and the larger community. All are stakeholders in the restoration of meaningful relationships that sustain not only the person formerly incarcerated, but also those who have been victimized, either directly or indirectly, by the ex-offender.

As Prison Fellowship International, which has developed reconciliation programs, has written, reconciliation often "begins when the [individual who has committed the crime] confesses and repents (as in the case of Onesimus), but it may begin with the victim's offer of forgiveness. However, for reconciliation to be complete, both parties will need to do their parts. . . . Justice repairs the harm caused by injustice. Reconciliation, which can come only after the material, emotional, and relational harms have been addressed, is a sign that things have been made right."

Chapter Five
Expanding the circle of healing to the community through advocacy

For centuries, communities of faith have been at the forefront of social change.

Sometimes their role has been to sound the alarm and oppose policies that are harmful to the communities they serve; sometimes their role is to advance new thinking, new understanding and new policies.

In the realm of criminal justice policies, for decades, politicians hammered the public with "get tough" criminal justice policies even as poor minority communities have seen ever- increasing numbers of their youth pulled into the cradle-to-prison pipeline under those policies. Communities of faith recognized this problem but for years they stood nearly alone in decrying it.

That has now changed. The movement calling for reforming criminal justice policies – now counts among its members people across political, ideological and theological spectrums. Together they are rising up and saying "NO" to mass incarceration, "NO" to prisons that fail to rehabilitate, and "NO" to policies creating barriers to success upon coming home.

The National Reentry Media Outreach Campaign documentary ***God and the Inner City*** provides examples of how churches can work with local law enforcement, social workers, and welfare officials to save youth and others from jail, drug dependence, and unemployment.

A crime is rarely an event isolated from its social context; it is part of a larger set of problems facing communities. As members of the communities affected by these policies, we have a duty and responsibility to walk our brothers and sisters through the criminal justice processes responding to the crime and to seek justice through smarter, more appropriate policies.

Crime creates victims beyond the individual people injured. Crime can create feelings of unease, fear, frustration and anger. Congregations can reach out and help to heal the community's wounds.

The criminal justice system focuses on the perpetrator; it arrests him, tries him, and imprisons him. But the faith communities have access to a wider lens. Communities of faith can puts their attention on the community; they can strive for reconciliation, which always involves more than the person who committed the crime. It involves the victims and it belongs to the community.

In a broader fashion, reconciliation addresses root causes of the injury and suggests practical and policy solutions. Faith communities move toward reconciliation in a variety of ways -- by supporting families and by extending the reach of their ministry to the larger social justice concerns reflected by the crime.

The sea change in public opinion about crime and punishment

In the eighties and nineties, the public told pollsters that crime and drugs were among their top concerns. As a consequence, lawmakers enacted "tough-on-crime measures" such as "three strikes," "truth in sentencing," parole abolition, and mandatory minimum sentences. Now as the years have passed, the public's disposition has shifted. Such measures don't have the appeal they once did.

Today, at the national level, candidates for office barely mention crime – but they are mentioning the plight of prisoners being released to communities where jobs and support systems are lacking. And some are talking about the explosive growth of America's prisons.

This may be because polls on crime and punishment are now showing that the public's attitude has shifted.

- **82 percent of voters say that those coming out of prison are as likely or more likely to commit future crimes than if they had never been imprisoned.**
- **91 percent think the prison experience itself reinforces criminal behavior.**
- **87 percent want rehabilitation services provided in prisons and/or upon release.**
- **Only 11 percent now favor the dated punishment-only model.**

As a symbolic political gesture, the Second Chance Act completely reverses recent practice. For the first time in decades, Congress is poised to pass a bill that aims to make the lives of prisoners and ex-prisoners easier, not more difficult.

"The Right Has a Jailhouse Conversion," *New York Times Magazine*, December 24, 2006.

Policy Shifts in Washington

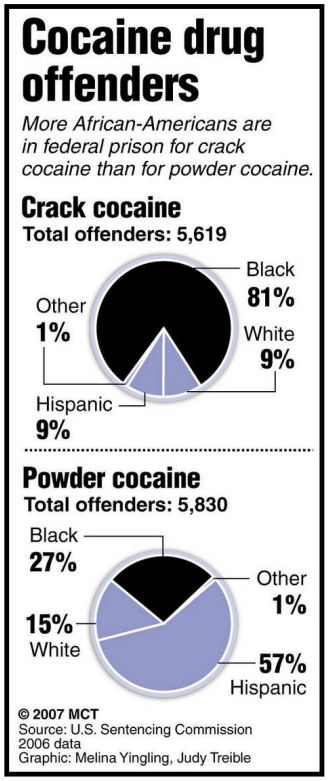
Second Chance Act. With these shifts in opinion, we see policy changes at the local, state and federal levels, too. After President Bush said in a State of the Union address, **"America is the land of second chance, "and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life,"** prisoner reentry legislation that had been languishing in Congress got a second chance and substantial bipartisan support.

On April 9, 2008, the President signed the Second Chance Act of 2007, which authorizes the appropriation of funds for Justice Department grants to do primarily two things:

- Develop and implement strategic reentry plans at the state and local levels.
- Expand services and support for people in prison and in the communities to which they return home.

The bill received broad support – across party, ideological and regional lines. Its diverse sponsors included Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Barack Obama (D-IL) in the Senate; and in the House, conservative Republicans such as Chris Cannon (R-UT) and Howard Coble (R-NC) and liberal Democrats including lead sponsor Danny Davis (D-IL) and Dennis Kucinich (D-OH).

The authorized funds are by no means substantial -- $191 million, a fraction of the more than $41 billion that states spent in 2004 on their prisons. Still, the funds will support efforts that might significantly transform policies and practices across the states to move corrections beyond their narrow mission of confinement to include the mission of successful return to communities.



Disparate sentencing: Crack vs. powder cocaine. Under a federal law passed in 1986 and associated sentencing guidelines, a person convicted of dealing in crack cocaine was, until recently, subject to the same sentence as one dealing in 100 times as much powder cocaine. Since that time, data have proved that the assumptions underlying this law were false. Crack is not more addictive, more likely to provoke violence, or more dangerous than powder cocaine.

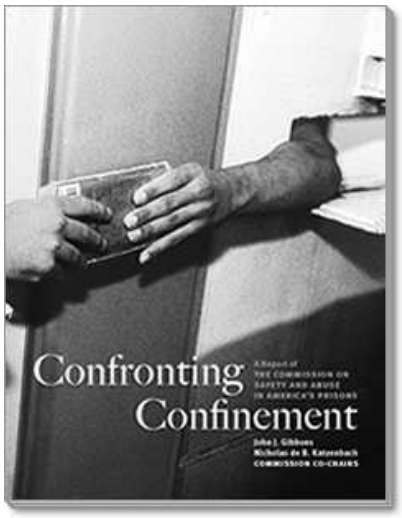
In May 2007, the U.S. Sentencing Commission proposed modifying the guidelines to allow lesser sentences for crack convictions and in December 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that federal judges may deviate from these guidelines. The following day, the Sentencing Commission's new guidelines took effect, making 19,500 inmates sentenced under previous guidelines-- about 80 percent of whom were African American -- eligible for sentence reductions. But the disparities in the underlying law remain in place. *Five bipartisan bills are pending in Congress to change the 100-to-1 disparity in the federal law.*

Some criminal justice issues that states and local governments, often with the leadership and support of faith communities, are addressing:

1 Stemming prison growth. States are grappling with prison overcrowding and the soaring costs of the still-growing prison population. Some states, notably Kansas, Texas, and Connecticut, with the help of the Council of State Government's Justice Reinvestment Initiative, are rejecting further prison construction, pursuing sentencing and parole reforms instead.

2 Reversing the incentives that allow ratcheting up of charges, sentences, and classification upon confinement. In most states, prosecution, courts, and jails are locally funded. Each of these entities competes for scarce local funds. Prisons, by contrast, are state-funded. When officials charge an individual with a felony rather than a misdemeanor, or sentence an individual to a year-and-a-day (or shorter state term under a felony conviction), the defendant goes to a state-funded prison rather than the local jail. This process leaves more funds available for local functions. Some states are realizing that this is bad public policy and, at least in the juvenile justice arena, are shifting the incentives to reward localities that employ alternatives to state incarceration. Some are considering similar reforms of the adult system.

3 Addressing conditions of confinement. The bipartisan Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons issued a report in 2006 headlined, "What happens in prisons does not stay in prisons." The report highlights the importance of just and humane conditions in reducing recidivism.



4 Undoing over-classification of inmates. In Massachusetts, a study commission found that officials who decide whether to assign a person to a minimum-, medium- or maximum-security facility had an incentive to give inmates high classification levels. The incentive? The unionized officers knew that the higher the classification, the more officers per inmate are required – thus growing the union. Shifting this function to management, the commission concluded, would reduce costs and improve the conditions of confinement of over-classified inmates.

5 Securing treatment for mentally ill people who are arrested. States and local governments are also addressing the incarceration, sometimes under cruel conditions, of the mentally ill and developmentally disabled. Jurisdictions across the country are setting up

mental health courts and seeking alternatives to incarceration. Public-interest lawyers are increasingly suing state and local governments to end the suffering and ill treatment of mentally ill people in prisons and jails, particularly the use of pepper gas and four-point restraints either to punish infractions or to assert control.

6 **Stopping gun violence.** Starting in Chicago, and then spreading to other Illinois communities, gun violence is being addressed by CeaseFire as the public health *epidemic* that it is. When violence erupts, culturally competent teams are deployed to intervene and prevent the spread of retaliatory violence. Across the country, communities are working to get guns off the streets through buy-back programs, gun bans and the development of healthy alternatives to violent dispute resolution.

7 **Developing, expanding and improving rehabilitation and reentry programming.** In the state of Washington, the legislature passed a law requiring that prison programming be "evidence-based," that is, proven to help reduce recidivism. This approach, while not always legislated, is being embraced by many other states as they look for approaches that "work" rather than waste money – or even *increase* recidivism.

8 **Addressing the lifetime consequences of criminal records.** As new laws made more kinds of actions criminal and introduced more and more people to the criminal justice system, a parallel set of new laws served to impose permanent, ceaseless punishments on people with criminal records.

While a criminal record normally creates a social stigma, these laws actually formalize the stigmatization by burdening returning citizens with special restrictions. Many rights and privileges taken for granted by those without a criminal record are abridged for returning citizens because lawmakers assume that they present further risks to society.

In Florida, a task force appointed by Governor Jeb Bush in 2005 found that at least ***40 percent*** of the jobs in the Florida economy – both public and private – were affected by a wieldy patchwork of incomprehensible state-created employment restrictions.

Across the country, literally thousands of laws have been enacted that bar employment and professional licensure to people with criminal records. Others restrict what kind of jobs and what kind of places one may work. These laws, often called "the collateral consequences" of a criminal record, also restrict driver's licenses, public housing and other public benefits, adoption and foster parenting, fishing and hunting, student loans and, perhaps most famously or notoriously, VOTING.

Some people think the entire sentence is delivered when the judge bangs his gavel at the close of the case. Those of us working with returning citizens know better.

States and localities are moving to lift these restrictions. In Florida now, a number of licensing boards no longer require that applicants with felony convictions who are seeking occupational licenses

first get their civil rights restored (a multi-year, sometimes lifetime, cumbersome process in that state).

Various municipalities, including Boston and San Francisco, have "banned the box" on applications for city jobs. While criminal records are eventually considered, the applicant is not locked out from the start; the YES / NO "Have you ever been convicted?" box on the application has been removed.

In some jurisdictions, laws are being passed that allow returning citizens to get the barriers removed by showing that they have been rehabilitated. These laws allow people to seek waivers, exemptions, or certificates of relief from the disqualifications. Some states are revising disqualifications so that instead of lasting a lifetime, they now expire after a certain amount of time.

Calling for change. Wendell L. Griffen, an appellate judge in Arkansas, speaking in his capacity as the coordinator of ministries at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, recently observed, "We are not neighbors, *yet* to our fellow humans who have been somehow beaten, robbed, and left along the road of life by the system that polices, arrests, prosecutes, adjudicates, incarcerates, releases, and recycles people in what we call criminal *justice."*

But we *can* become neighbors. This work will help build the neighborhood.

Afterword

[your prayer]

Appendix A

Faith and Forgiveness: (Another) True Story

Ron Flowers was graduating from a Bible-based spiritual and moral transformation program in Texas. In the audience celebrating his graduation was Arna Washington, a Houston woman who had found Ron alone in the world and offered to be his "other mother." After the ceremony, she told him that he could call her anytime.

She did become his "other mother" and his mentor. Ron did call, and the relationship they developed helped sustain him through her discipling, supporting and guiding him.

Mrs. Washington was well-suited for the job. She, like her husband, Marcellus, was a retired schoolteacher. They had raised two children, a son, Derek, and a daughter, Deirdra, who became a school teacher as well. Also, they had all been active in their church.

By the time Mrs. Washington met Ron, both her husband and her children had died. She cared for her son's child, Corrick, but her own grown children, children of Ron's generation, were both gone. She had been grieving for many years.

The first death she grieved was that of her daughter, DeDe, as the family called Deirdra. The death wrought a cycle of grieving and pain that seemed to have no end. DeDe was murdered and then buried on what would have been her twenty-seventh birthday. The family's grief and rage over Deirdra's murder thoroughly devastated them.

Mrs. Washington said that "without her love, it was as if we didn't know how to live anymore."

Marcellus, her husband, recoiled from the job he had loved for so many years. He found he could no longer face his students because "being around all those young people reminded him too much of what he'd lost," Mrs. Washington said. He took early retirement, staying home and losing himself in grief.

Her son, Derek, "who'd been so close to his baby sister, broke down completely and developed serious kidney problems."

As for Mrs. Washington herself, she went to church and back to teaching, but her own struggle was ceaseless. "I kept looking at DeDe's picture and talking to her as if that might keep her with me," she said, " begging God to let me hear her voice one more time. I tried to make sense of what had happened. No matter how hard I prayed, the answers didn't come."

Within ten years of DeDe's murder, Derek had died of kidney failure and her husband of a heart attack. She said, "I knew what really killed Marcellus was having both his children go before their time." Mrs.

SOURCES:

Pat Nolan, vice president of Prison Fellowship, first told us about this story. He also shared the video Prison Fellowship made of the principals. Many of the quotes found here are from the video and from an article Arna Washington wrote for *Crossroads* magazine, published in August 1999.

Washington's "immediate family was wiped out," and she blamed her son's and husband's deaths on her daughter's killer. She vowed she would never allow him to be released from prison.

Every time the killer came up for parole and she was given the chance to protest, "a bitter flame rekindled inside me." Protest she did. "He deserved to rot in prison," she said. "As long as I had breath left in my body, I'd make sure that was where he stayed. You're darn right I protested!"

* * * *

Deirdra's killer was Ron Flowers. Yes, the same Ron Flowers who, fourteen years after his act of murder, began receiving the love of his victim's mother as his own "other mother."

How did Mrs. Washington move from rage to love? What happened between the time that she wished the killer would "rot in prison" to her becoming his "other mother"?

* * * * *

The murder. In 1984, at nine o'clock in the evening, Deirdra left her family's home for a date and promised she would not be out late. At one in the morning, the family's phone rang. Deirdra's date, Carlton, told Mr. Washington that his daughter had been shot.

The parents raced to the hospital. Mrs. Washington never forgot that night of horror. "The bullet had ripped through DeDe's brain, and the doctors told us there was no hope. Only machines were keeping her alive. We never left her side. 'Come on, baby, fight,' I urged, squeezing her hand, praying that somehow my love could bring her back. But around six in the morning, DeDe gave a little sigh, and she was gone. I kissed her cheek for the last time and vowed: 'I won't rest, baby. Not until I get the person who did this to you.' "

For the next fourteen years, Mrs. Washington never learned exactly what had happened to her daughter that night. The police said her daughter had been "in the seediest part of Houston, in front of an apartment building crawling with drug dealers, when she was shot." But, "I told the officers there was no way our daughter, whose friends used to tease her about being more innocent than her kindergartners, would even have known such a place existed." Carlton told Mrs. Washington that "he'd taken her there—to collect a debt" and that then "a couple of men jumped him and beat him up. In the scuffle, someone shot DeDe."

Ron Flowers was the shooter. Mrs. Washington couldn't wait for the trial, for the opportunity to "'look that man in the face and let him know exactly what he's done. And then I'm going to ask the judge to put him away forever,'" she told her husband.

But there was no trial. Ron plea-bargained a 35- year sentence for the killing and she never did get to look him in the face before he was sent to prison – or to learn exactly what happened that night.

Parole. Fourteen years later, Mrs. Washington received a notice from the State of Texas. At first it seemed to be just another notice about Ron's coming up for parole. But this one was entirely different. It said that Ron was about to be released on mandatory parole. She was incensed. She crushed the letter and said, "Those long-held feelings leapt to the surface like flames licking hungrily at tinder. 'Lord, you know why I'm angry,' " she cried. " 'I've struggled to accept that nothing is going to bring my baby back. But accept that the man who killed her is going free? You're asking too much!' "

"'Lord, you know why I'm angry,'" she cried. "'I've struggled to accept that nothing is going to bring my baby back. But accept that the man who killed her is going free? You're asking too much!'"

In the ensuing weeks, Mrs. Washington heard new and different messages about prisoners that challenged both her and her anger. First, at her annual church conference, she heard a prison choir and was surprised that the men "didn't look mean and hard," as she assumed they would. Next, her pastor, Rev. Homer Williams, told his congregation that he was serving as a mentor in a nearby prison's spiritual transformation program. He hoped some of the members of the congregation would join him in mentoring prisoners. .

Almost "jesting," Mrs. Washington asked her pastor if he could find out about Ron Flowers the next time he went to the prison. He was glad to oblige. Ron, he later told Mrs. Washington, not only was in the mentoring program, he had accepted God into his life. He added that the program director, Jack Cowley, said he wanted to talk with Mrs. Washington about Ron.

Mrs. Washington agreed to speak to Mr. Cowley. Not to Ron.

She learned from Mr. Cowley that Ron's program focused on reconciliation. The participants met with crime victims – not victims of their own crimes – with the goal of understanding the harm they caused and assuming responsibility for the consequences. Meeting those victims made Ron think about Mrs. Washington.

Mr. Cowley told her that "Ron's a changed man" and that he wanted to get in touch with her.

Still angry, Mrs. Washington protested, "I don't want anything to do with him! I don't care how much he's changed!" But she couldn't let her thoughts about Ron go. Finally, she agreed to accept a letter from him.

Letter-writing to one's victims or to their family members was part of the transformational program at the prison. Writing these letters, the mentors believed, would help the prisoners to acknowledge their crimes and assume responsibility for the consequences to themselves and others. Before the program, Ron had spent fourteen years denying any responsibility at all for the murder; for years, he had even gone so far as to tell fellow inmates that he was in prison for robbery. Like so many others, Ron arrived in prison as a street kid from a broken home and had "grown up in the prison system." He had grown older in years, but he had not really matured. The program aimed to help the participants mature through overcoming denial and accepting personal responsibility.

Although as Ron later said, "All these years I was wondering who was this lady? Who was this lady? What was she like, and after I found out her name and found out a little bit about her, you know, and it just really tore me about," his first letter to Mrs. Washington was a disaster. He did not apologize. He did not show remorse. Mrs. Washington was furious and refused to respond to his letter.

Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Washington visited the prison where Ron was incarcerated. On a conscious level, she believed the visit had nothing to do with Ron. As a leader in her church, she went merely because her church's district office took a growing interest in prison ministry work and had organized the visit. Once there, she "noticed a young man huddled in a corner" and "knew instinctively it was Ron Flowers." Her response? She had to leave the room.

Still angry with Ron, when she got home she wrote to him: "That letter was totally inappropriate. Not only did you murder my daughter, you destroyed my whole family!" She "sent him the program from DeDe's funeral, with her picture and a tribute a friend had written to 'Our Deirdra.' " And she figured she would never hear from him again.

"Not only did you murder my daughter, you destroyed my whole family!"

But she did. Ron acknowledged that his first letter was wrong-- "As soon as I mailed that letter, I knew it was not right." Further, he took responsibility for her daughter's death. "I'm truly sorry for what took place on the night February 9, 1984; I want to let you know everything. I realize all the pain that I cause you and your family because of my bad choice in life, just because of my stupid act." He said he would like to answer her questions "face-to-face."

In an article in the magazine *Crossroads,* Mrs. Washington described her reactions to Ron's letter. "For years I had wanted to confront this man," she wrote, "to make sure he understood the anguish he'd caused. After Corrick went to bed that night, I paced the living room, going over the photos of my daughter, one by one. 'Baby, I want to do right by you,' I

After consulting her pastor, she "decided the only answer was to see Ron Flowers." She thought, "Once I heard what he had to say, maybe I would be able to put all the pain and anger behind me."

whispered, 'but I know I need to move on.' Then to God I pleaded: 'Isn't there any way I can do both?' "

In the meantime, Jack Cowley, the prison program director, thinking about both Ron and Mrs. Washington, went to her home to suggest that she meet with Ron. After consulting her pastor, she "decided the only answer was to see Ron Flowers" because, "once I heard what he had to say, maybe I would be able to put all the pain and anger behind me."

Here is Mrs. Washington's account of what happened next.

* * * * *

What forgiveness brings.

Last October thirteenth [1999] I got up early, fixed Corrick his breakfast as usual, and took him to school. *I want some closure,* I thought, as I headed to the prison with my pastor. *But, Lord, I'm going to need your help.*

In the Jester II meeting room [at the prison] my pastor showed me to a seat at the table, then moved back to give me some privacy. The door opened. A young man in prison whites entered the room. He walked toward me slowly, clutching a *Bible*, and sat opposite me. I noticed his hands were shaking as badly as mine.

"I'm Arna Washington."

"I'm Ron," he replied, so softly I had to lean forward to hear him.

There was an awkward silence.

Then I asked the question only he could answer: "What happened that night?"

He let out his breath and began. "This guy Carlton came into the apartment. He wanted drugs, but didn't have money. My friends started beating on him. He ran downstairs, and I grabbed a gun and went after him. When the car he came in started driving off, I panicked. I shot into the car window."

Ron's hand clenched his *Bible*. "I never meant to hurt your daughter, Mrs. Washington. I'm sorry."

I didn't know what to say, but I couldn't let out all my emotions in front of this stranger. As a defense, I went into my teacher mode. "Young

man, life on the outside is going to be tough. You can't hang on to that *Bible* every minute when you get out of here," I said sharply. "You're going to have to carry the Lord inside you."

"Forgive him, Mom." DeDe! I'd know her voice anywhere. Had anyone else heard? I glanced around.

My pastor was sitting quietly in one corner, the prison director in another. Ron was silently waiting for me to finish. Those words had been meant for me alone.

That was all God had my baby tell me. But it was enough.

I pushed back my chair and got up. "Come here, son" I said.

Warily Ron stood, then came around to my side of the table. I reached out my arms. He took a step forward. Then we were holding each other, weeping together, the tears putting out the last bitter embers inside me, washing away the anger I'd been carrying for too long, and letting the love of the Lord fill its place.

When we moved apart, I took a good look at Ron. And I saw the person he'd been 14 years before—a mixed-up young man who didn't know what he was doing when he shot my daughter, who'd probably caused his mother no end of worry.

"Forgive him, Mom."

DeDe! I'd know her voice anywhere. Had anyone else heard? I glanced around. . . .

"Ron, this may be hard for you to believe" I said, "but I want to forgive you. I want to be at peace with you."

Ron's eyes filled again. He squeezed my hand tightly. "I want that too" he murmured.

"Ron, this may be hard for you to believe" I said, "but I want to forgive you. I want to be at peace with you."

Ron's eyes filled again. He squeezed my hand tightly. "I want that too" he murmured.

I knew Deirdra would have wanted nothing less.

* * * * *

Faith and forgiveness. Later, Mrs. Washington, Rev. Williams, and Ron Flowers each described this powerful meeting on film.

Mrs. Washington said, "Tears were all over his face. I'd never seen so many tears. They weren't just coming from his eyes, they were just coming." Rev. Williams wept, too, and remembered, "We were all crying then, Jack Cowley, myself, Mrs. Washington and Ron was crying at that time."

"I never felt so warm and I felt close to God," Mrs. Washington said. When she heard her daughter's voice asking her to forgive Ron, Mrs. Washington not only did so but also said to Ron, "I'll go one step further, I could even, even be your other mom."

Ron was overwhelmed. Words would not come. Later, still at a loss, he said, "And you know, that just really, that just really – I can't describe the words. I can't describe it. That just – it took a hold to me."

Soon the four of them were all hugging and singing.

Arna Washington's forgiveness of Ron may seem like it could only happen once. Her story, while remarkable, is not unique. The forgiveness offered by another mother to the killer of her child is documented in the film, ***A Justice That Heals.*** This mother also now thinks of the killer as her own child. The film is available for free from the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign (www.reentrymediaoutreach.org) This film has an accompanying study guide.

Later Mrs. Washington reflected on that first meeting with Ron. "I went out there for just closure on Deirdra's death – what happened that night; I really wanted to know -- what happened. And instead I found openness that has been beautiful and you know, I feel like I've been blessed every day of my life, really. Ever since I forgave the young man, it just seems like I've been blessed."

Rev. Williams says, "Even though we preach forgiveness as a part of our Christian heritage, very seldom do we find this kind of forgiveness taking place. She has found peace, the kind of peace that our lord says surpasses all understanding. If there was just some type of way we could bottle this and market it, we would be able to change a whole lot of lives in this world because I really believe that the forgiving spirit that has been witnessed by this lady, this wonderful lady for this young man, is something that the whole world needs."

Release. When Ron was released from prison he quickly went to work, taking not one but two jobs. And his new friend, his mentor, his "other mother," Mrs. Washington, remained a vital and sustaining presence in his life. She learned that Ron's own mother had not visited him in prison. "I had been told that there had not been anyone out there to see him in all his fourteen and a half years in prison; and if I had been his mother, I would have been out there to see him. So I just felt like that he was going to need somebody when he got out."

She hopes that "he stays clear and free and raises his family. If he does everything right, then I will feel that my daughter's death was not in vain."

And Ron, in awe of the love and forgiveness he has received, says, "I love her without a doubt. There is nothing in this world that I wouldn't do for her. I love this woman. She took me in her arms and gave me the type of love only a mother can give a child."

Mrs. Washington and Ron stayed in touch almost every other day until her death in 2003.

Legacy. Ron Flowers' and Arna Washington's story of reconciliation and forgiveness affected not only Mrs. Washington's church but that of others as well.

Her pastor, Rev. Homer Williams, said he had always been a proponent of reconciliation and forgiveness, but after seeing Mrs. Washington and Ron at the prison, he came to *believe* it. He says there are confirmatory moments that God gives us, and this was certainly one. Soon he was building sermons around this story.

Almost the moment she set eyes on Ron in the prison, Mrs. Washington heard her daughter asking for her to let go and forgive and she had a sudden epiphany of forgiveness. Fellow members of her church were not so quick to share her change of heart, though. She was a beloved founder of their church, which had been born in her home. As she grieved and carried her anger forward for fourteen years, they shared it with her and had felt their own fourteen years of fury over the murder.

Nonetheless, over time began to see what Rev. Williams says he witnessed: Her "whole countenance had changed;" she was filled with relief and joy. Her burden had been lifted. Eventually, just as they had once shared her hurt and anger, members of the congregation again followed her lead and came to forgive Ron. And they were lifted by the same joy as Mrs. Washington.

Soon after Ron's release, Mrs. Washington and Ron were speaking to churches all over Texas about the happiness and peace she had found through forgiving Ron and that he had found in being forgiven. Before long, other members of her church joined Rev. Williams in his prison ministry.

The program that led Ron Flowers to want to meet Arna Washington was called Sycamore Tree. It was launched in Ron's prison by Prison Fellowship Ministries. Sycamore Tree brings small groups of prisoners together with victims of crime, who serve as surrogates of the actual victims of the inmates' crimes. When successful, the program leads inmates to experience responsibility, remorse, empathy, and repentance. They then have a much reduced chance of recidivism. The founders of the program hoped that the meetings would

bring healing to the inmates and surrogate victims alike—in fact, that the inmates might be moved to apologize to their actual victims as well. That's what happened with Ron.

Sycamore Tree was named after the Gospel story about Zacchaeus, the wealthy, dishonest tax collector, who, from the branches of a sycamore tree, spied Jesus passing through to Jericho. Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house for dinner. Zacchaeus was so overwhelmed, especially after hearing the crowd mutter about Jesus dining with a "sinner," that Zacchaeus offered half his possessions to the poor and to repay those he had cheated four-fold. Through forgiveness, Zacchaeus was reconciled to his community and those he had harmed.

Prison Fellowship deemed the pilot program a success and Sycamore Tree has expanded across the globe. Its approach to reconciliation has even been applied in Rwanda after the genocide there. John Sage, the brother of a murder victim, was one of the early volunteer mentors in the Sycamore pilot. He went on to found Bridges to Life, "predicated on the belief that understanding the impact of crime will spark empathy and remorse, and diminish the chance that criminals, once released, will commit new crimes." This program now has developed reconciliation programs in 22 prison units and jails in Texas, Colorado, and Louisiana.

Today, Ron Flowers is married and has a family. He has never had another run-in with the law and he says, modestly, of his life, "It's just going great."

The transformative power of forgiveness is brilliantly illuminated in the novel and films ***Les Miserables.*** Jean Valjean, recently released from prison, robs silverware from a local bishop who has given him food and a bed. When the police capture Valjean and take him to the bishop, the bishop says he had given Valjean the silver. He adds that he forgot to add the valuable candlesticks he had meant for him to have. After the police leave, the biship says, "Jean Valjean my brother you no longer belong to evil. With this silver, I have bought your soul. I've ransomed you from fear and hatred, and now I give you back to God."

STUDY QUESTIONS

- Mrs. Washington was trapped in a cage of regret, resentment and revenge. What did she regret? What did she resent? Against whom did she seek vengeance? What does it take to release regret, resentment and revenge? Is there anything that would have helped move her and the congregation toward release and forgiveness without suffering for fourteen years?
- Rev. Williams said the congregation shared Mrs. Washington's anger. What was the church's role in keeping Mrs. Washington's anger alive? What was she wrestling with? Were the other members of the congregations wrestling *with* her?
- What is the turning point in the story? What caused the turn?
- What were the factors that led Mrs. Washington to open her heart and forgive Ron Flowers?
- When did Mrs. Washington's church begin to become a Station of Hope?
- How can communities of faith show compassion and offer forgiveness to the alienated?
- With which of the actors in the story do you identify?
- If you have an incarcerated relative, what does this story suggest to you?
- What voices joined DeDe's when Mrs. Washington heard DeDe speak? What voices are whispering to you? Isn't it time to forgive?
- What had been blocking Mrs. Washington from forgiving Ron for so many years? Search the Bible to learn what it says about harboring anger and blame.
- What stories from your faith tradition parallel this story of Mrs. Washington and Ron and in what way?

Appendix B

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

It is to help communities of faith learn how they can minister to members of their own congregations who are caught up in the criminal justice system (both the accused and victims) and to minister to the families of those individuals.

Why is the deeper purpose of the kit?

The kit is offered as a resource to encourage, enlighten, educate, energize, and empower communities of faith to help *free* families from the isolation, pain, stigma, shame, and self-incarceration that often afflict families entangled in the criminal justice system.

The manual encourages us to create "Healing Communities." What is a Healing Community?

Faith communities are familiar with prison ministries, and more recently with the phenomenon of prisoner reentry, which reflects the simple fact that most inmates do return to society. Healing Communities go further than either. A Healing Community strives to restore relationships between returning citizens and their families, communities, the larger society and, where possible, the victims of their criminal behavior. At the center of a Healing Community are Stations of Hope.

What is a "Returning Citizen?"

A returning citizen is a person coming home from jail or prison – what some, but not we, might call "ex-cons" or "ex-offenders." The emphasis is on what one is rather than what one was. The term "returning citizen" emphasizes that the civil rights of those who have paid their debt to society should be recognized. That also means working to change laws that, for example, restrict voting rights or deny job opportunities to returning citizens.

What is a "Station of Hope?"

"Stations of Hope" are congregations that offer refuges of healing and centers of teaching -- a renewed vision for returning citizens, their families and communities.

Why should we get involved in this kind of ministry?

We are called to serve those without hope, those who are suffering, what some call "the least of these," which most definitely includes people who are facing charges, enduring incarceration, and coming home from prison. We are called to serve their suffering families. And we are called to serve the victims of crime.

Are you suggesting that we set-up a prison ministry program?

No, we are only suggesting you reach out and support the people in your own congregation facing these challenges.

Do we need to establish a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to do this?

NO! We are not suggesting a program at all – rather, ministry. Think about how your congregation reaches out to people who are hospitalized or sick. You don't need a "program" to do that. You don't need a program to do this work, either!

Do we need to raise funds to do this work?

NO! You don't need to raise money to create a Healing Community. Government and charitable funding for work with prisoners and returning citizens is extremely limited. We are hoping to build upon good but underfunded programs to help those in your congregation by starting with what you *have* -- the strength and commitment to build Stations of Hope -- and not relying on a program strategy.

What does our congregation need to do to get ready to do this work?

Start by learning about the criminal justice system (Chapter Two). Study what your faith tradition says about crime and incarceration, especially the imprisonment of prophets and other faith leaders. Reach out to your neighbors in your congregation who are affected by crime or incarceration and let them know they are supported and loved.

How do we get started?

Church leaders can make it clear that they and their congregations will become Stations of Hope that welcome and help individuals in the congregation, and their family members, when the individuals are arrested, in jail or prison or coming home as returning citizens. (*See* Chapter Three.)

Who can do this work?

Any congregation can; every congregation should!!

What if we are a very small congregation, can we still do this work?

Any congregation can; every congregation should!! You can visit family members whose loved ones are involved in the criminal justice system. You can mentor a child or family. You can attend the criminal trial of a member of your congregation. Your support will help reduce the stigma and pain others are experiencing. Really, with a little imagination, there is no limit to what you can do.

Appendix C

USEFUL INTERNET RESOURCES TO BUILD UPON THE KIT'S CONTENT

FAITH AND FAMILIES

An initiative of Pew Charitable Trusts, the **Faith and Service Technical Education Network (FASTEN)**, offers informational resources and networking opportunities to faith-based practitioners offering information on ministering to prisoners and their families and **on c**ollaborating to renew urban communities. www.fastennetwork.org/

Prison Fellowship partners with local churches across the country to minister to prisoners, former prisoners and their families. Its policy arm, **Justice Fellowship**, is a ntional leader in criminal justice reform. The website has a volunteer application, volunteer resources, organizational commitment to volunteers, Making It: A Prison Survival Guide, Shorttimer: Preparing for Release and much more. It also has restorative justice programs.
www.prisonfellowship.org; www.justicefellowship.org; www.restorativejustice.org/

Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the **Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign** supports the work of community and faith-based organizations through offering free media resources that will facilitate community discussion and decision-making about solution-based reentry programs. Churches and other groups can order download excerpts of many award-winning videos, discussion guides and other resources on the challenges of prison life and reentry for prisoners and families on the site and order the full videos for FREE! www.reentrymediaoutreach.org

The Family and Corrections Network is a national resource center that provides tools for people concerned about families of prisoners to share information and experiences. It sponsors conferences, creates liaisons with other agencies, does presentations, and offers consultation. It provides information on children of prisoners, parenting programs for prisoners, prison visiting, incarcerated fathers, hospitality programs and a variety of other topics. Its mission is to uphold the value of families of prisoners. www.fcnetwork.org

International Network of Prison Ministries. This website catalogues links to thousands of prison ministries across the world. It is organized by category, e.g., prayers support groups, family support, aftercare, Christian legal aid and many more; by denomination/church; by location; in alphabetical order; and by affiliation. prisonministry.net/

CRIME VICTIMS

National Center for Victims of Crime offers a multitude of resources for victims, their families and those who work with them. **www.ncvc.org**

The Office for Victims of Crime, US Department of Justice oversees diverse programs that benefit victims of crime. It also has a directory of crime victim programs throughout the U.S. www.ovc.gov/

Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice, has resources for victims of domestic violence as well as other gender-related crimes. www.ovw.usdoj.gov

The National Organization for Victim Assistance provides victim and witness assistance programs for both victims and professionals who work with them. **www.trynova.org**

EMPLOYMENT

Public/Private Ventures created **Ready4Work: An Ex-Prisoner, Community and Faith Initiative**. Funded by US Departments of Labor and Justice the Annie E. Casey and Ford foundations, this multi-year initiative was implemented in 17 sites, where programs were developed to help local community- and faith-based organizations support the reentry and reintegration of ex-offenders (both adults and juveniles) into their communities. www.ppv.org

POLICY REFORM

The Council of State Governments' Justice Center is addressing policy issues and identifying best practices affecting prisoner reentry as well criminal justice professionals' responses to people with mental illnesses and crime victims, racial disparities, justice reinvestment, and other complex justice-related issues. It has also produced a comprehensive policy manual, the Report of the Reentry Policy Council. justicecenter.csg.org/; reentrypolicy.org/ .

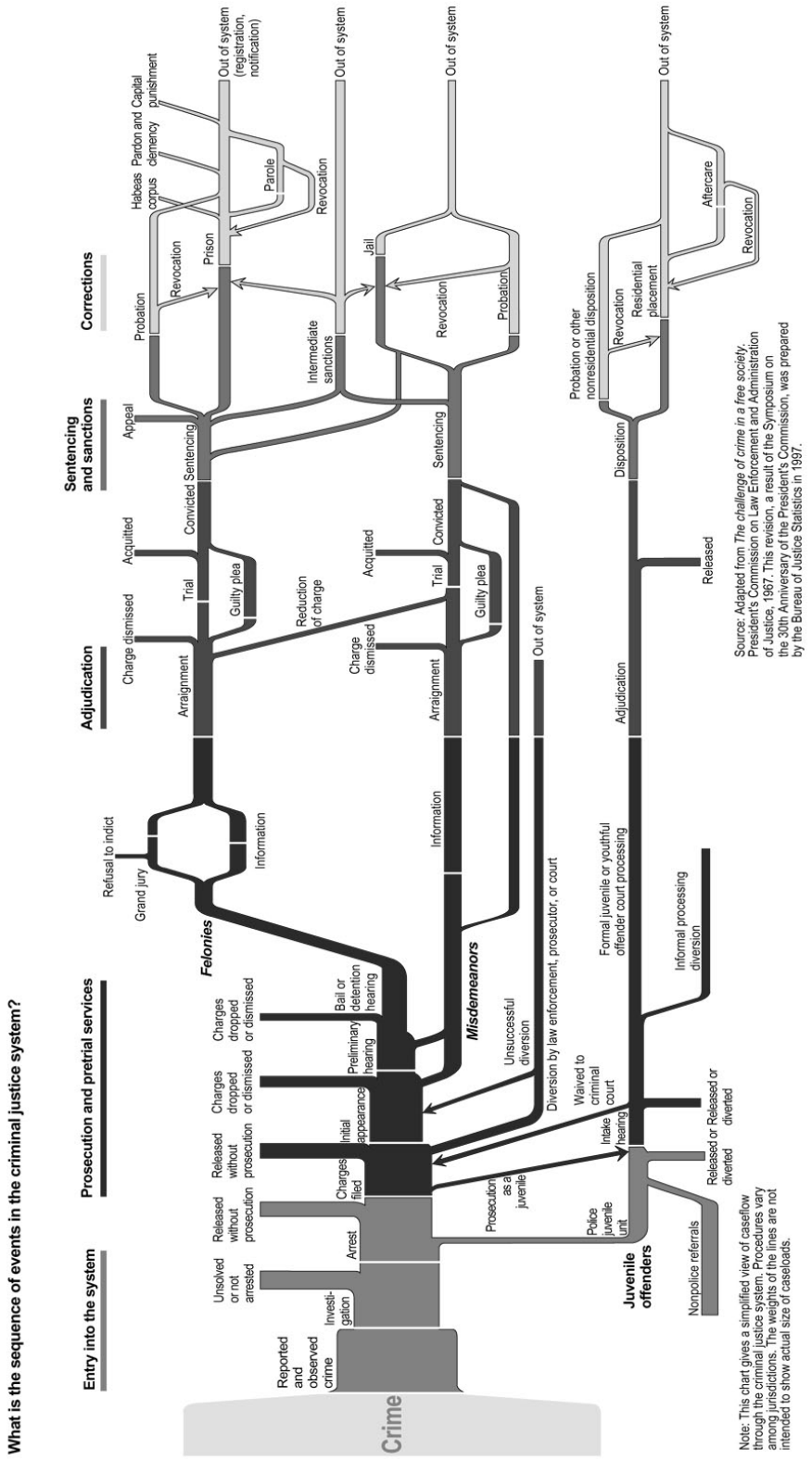
STUDIES AND STATISTICS

The federal government's Bureau **of Justice Statistics** has a host of studies and reports to build your understanding of the criminal justice system. www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/

The **Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center** has many studies on reentry and on prisons. www.urban.org/center/jpc

The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons has produced an important and comprehensive report on prison conditions and how they affect reentry: "What happens in prisons does not stay in prisons." www.prisoncommission.org

Appendix D
Criminal Justice System Flowchart



Appendix E

Obstacles to Successful Reintegration into the Community

44% of re-arrests for new crimes and/or parole violations occur within 1 year after release.

The following are a list of obstacles your mentee may have to overcome. As a mentor you are not expected to have solutions to these problems but it is helpful for you to have some insight into some of the frustrating circumstances your mentee may face.

Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions for many of these. As the mentor, the greatest way you can assist your mentee is to encourage them to persevere with a stick-to-itiveness attitude as they face and work through these obstacles.

☐ **Socially paralyzed**

The term used is "institutionalized." Signs of institutionalization are marked when the person:

- Accepts the terms of the jail/prison environment as their environment (this is different than making the best of a situation).
- Functions more easily in prison than out.
- Feels more like their self while in prison than out.
- Has learned to be dependent and loses the ability to make choices on their own.
- Commits crimes in order to be sent back to jail.
- Is fearful in traffic, using new technologies and around unfamiliar people and places.

☐ **Lack of appropriate identification**

Identity cards are critical for getting a job, cashing a check, signing a lease and getting on a plane. Since 9/11, identity cards are more important than ever and the rules to obtain them are stricter. The key cards are:

- Photo Identification (driver license, state ID, passport)
- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Card

☐ **Lack of education and job training**

Typically, the average inmate reads from a 4th to 8th grade level and has few marketable skills. Few have graduated from high school.

☐ **Little to no money**

- People earn little or no money in prison. The few who do have prison jobs typically earn very little; in federal prisons, the inmates earn 19 cents an hour for prison maintenance chores. From these wages, deductions are made for restitution, fees, costs and child support.
- The money provided upon release is very little – depending on the state, from $50 to $200.

☐ **Debilitating debt.**

With no money coming in, debts can accrue and grow to enormous sums while a person is in prison. Debts accrue from child support orders not being modified while in prison and from the imposition of court fines, costs and fees; restitution to the victim; and unpaid debts accumulating interest and fines.

☐ **Lack of Housing**

- Family members may not be welcoming the person back into their homes.
- Public and Section 8 housing is not always available to those with criminal records.
- Private landlords are often reluctant to rent to people with criminal records.
- Rents are not affordable by people just starting to work.
- Shelters are often full and unavailable.
- States, counties and cities have created severe restrictions on where people with a past sex offense may reside.

☐ **Lack of a job**

The inability to find and keep a job immediately after release is strongly associated with being re-incarcerated. Some of the reasons for not being able to find and keep a job are:

- States have created thousands of job restrictions based on criminal records.
- Even employers who may legally hire people with records are afraid to do so.
- Little or no employment history.
- Few soft (for instance, interpersonal) or hard (technical) work skills.
- Lack of identity papers, such as a state driver license or Social Security Card.
- Parole stipulations that require being at appointments during working hours.
- Lack of transportation.
- Fear and "institutionalization."
- Untreated addiction, health and mental health problems.

☐ **Addiction**

This is both an internal and external obstacle as it not only involves the addiction but the lifestyle of addiction, which affects every area of life including all of those listed above. Treatment may have to precede employment, or at the very least, be done simultaneously.

☐ **Poor family relationships**

- Parental rights may have been lost.
- Families are strained because of the length of separation.
- Men entering the home have a difficult time reestablishing their role in the home.
- The person and/or their family members are holding anger, resentment and blame for years of hurts.
- Family members may have been direct or indirect victims of the returning citizens crimes or other forms of misconduct.

☐ **Lack of medical care, insurance & benefits**

Many entered jail with, or are exposed to Hepatitis C, AIDS/HIV, tuberculosis, and bacterial infections as well as mental health issues that require ongoing treatment and/or medication.

☐ **STIGMA: Being Labeled**

- The label of "ex-offender" marks the person and is a constant reminder of past choices. Even as we change the language to "returning citizen" the stigma persists.
- Being labeled along with all of the other obstacles can lead to negative thoughts such as, I am no good, they're right—I'm never going to make, It's too hard, I can't ever get a break. This can lead to feelings of anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, depression, anger, and loneliness. If the negative thoughts and feelings are left unchecked, then the person can very quickly fall back into destructive behavior that will only lead to more trouble.

[This fact sheet is drawn from the Mentor Training Manual developed by the New Mornings Reentry Services in Pennsylvania.]

Appendix F

Qualifications for Mentors

Mentors are coaches, and some even call themselves coaches. Like coaches in sports, mentors inspire, guide, support and nurture others. In education, business, law, sports, the arts, medicine and other professions, mentoring relationships are considered important to the success of the mentee (or protégé). Often, but not always, mentors are older than their mentees. Mentees are NOT always children, young people or people just starting their careers.

Mentoring relationships can be relatively short term – a year or two – *or last a lifetime*.

Some famous mentoring relationships have included: Socrates and Plato, Plato and Aristotle, Aristotle and Alexander the Great, Paul of Tarsus and Timothy, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, and Benjamin Mays (president of Morehouse College) and Martin Luther King, Jr.

A Mentor of a prisoner, returning citizen, crime victim or their family members must:

- Be nonjudgmental, positive, nurturing, supportive, honest, trustworthy, reliable and consistent.
- Maintain confidential communications. Not gossip.
- Maintain boundaries with the mentee.
- Refrain from asking questions out of personal curiosity but only to further the growth of the mentee and your relationship.
- Have a commitment to the growth and success of the mentee.
- Coordinate the mentoring relationship through your faith community and be a part of that community.
- Be accountable to the mentee and the faith community and hold the mentee accountable.
- Have a genuine concern for those who are or have been previously incarcerated, their families and victims.
- Have the ability to encourage and be supportive without creating a dependent relationship.
- Apply the same principles and standards presented to the mentee as standards to your own life.
- Ask for help when confronted with situations beyond your own resources or expertise.
- Be free from drug and/or alcohol addiction.

Understand and empathize with the challenges of the mentee without letting them become excuses.

[This fact sheet is drawn from the Mentor Training Manual developed by the New Mornings Reentry Services in Pennsylvania.]

Appendix G

The Do's & Don'ts of Mentoring

The following do's and don'ts are a guide to help you effectively help your mentee.

As a mentor, do:

1. Be yourself

You are coming alongside a person who is looking for a new direction, a new perspective and a new way of doing life. The greatest value you bring to the mentoring relationship is yourself, your faith and your willingness to share from your own life experiences.

2. Speak truth in love

The balance of truth and love is essential. Be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses in this area. In an effort to set someone straight, do you tend to blurt out the truth? Or, in an effort to be loving, do you tend to avoid saying anything? If you tend to be a "truth teller" you will need to **be mindful of how you share**. The truth must be tempered with compassion. **Truth in love is not always efficient but it is always effective**.

If you tend to be kind so as to not hurt other's feelings you will need to **be mindful of what you share**. Kindness must be rooted in truth. **Love with truth is not always comfortable but it is always beneficial**.

3. Act as a friend.

Make sure your relational approach is one of being a friend and not a parent, teacher or supervisor. There will be teaching times, and there will be times where you will need to hold your mentee accountable. Make sure that even in those times you are ultimately being a truthful loving friend.

4. Use wisdom and be innocent.

Use wisdom to avoid being manipulated or drawn into any unhealthy and/or unsafe dealings with your mentee. Review the information in this manual and when in doubt contact the mentor coordinator. Innocent does not mean naive. Being innocent means to be guarded against falling into the same negative behaviors as your mentee. In combination with wisdom this is not license to be self-righteous and condemning, but an opportunity to be a positive influence. An example would be the tendency to argue. If your mentee has that tendency then you will need to use wisdom to guard against getting caught up in useless arguments and gently help the mentee learn how to do the same.

5. Be a good listener.

This sounds simple but all of us can struggle with really listening. We can all tend to be easily distracted especially with all of the new technology we have. Here are a few basics:

- Avoid formulating a response while the other person is talking.

- Ask questions for clarity.
- Avoid talking before the other person is finished.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Be aware of body language and emotions behind the spoken words.
- Unless you are waiting for an important call, put your cell phone on vibrate and do not answer calls while meeting with your mentee.
- Don't feel like you have to be the answer person.

6. Treat your mentee as you would want to be treated.
Take time to listen and put yourself into your mentee's shoes. But always remember that when you attempt to stand in another's shoes, you must stand in *their* shoes and not your own. That means understanding the fullness of their life experiences. It does not mean thinking they should do what *you* would do, given *your* life experiences, if you had the same choices to make.

There may be the temptation to be more curious about what they did than concerned about the person. Make sure you meet your mentee having a concern for their well-being rather than curiosity about their past doings.

7. Be adequately prepared and on time for any meetings or outings.
Again, you are an example.

8. Decide with mentee what they need to work on—not *for* the mentee.
The mentee needs to take ownership of those areas of their life they need to work on. If you tell them what they need to work on without their input they will be more apt to blame you when they fail. It is possible (especially if your mentee has served a lot of time) that your mentee is used to someone telling him/her what to do. They might have a history of rebelling and blaming, but have also become comfortable with others telling them what to do. This dependence prevents them from taking responsibility for their own choices and behavior. HELP set goals; don't set goals for the individual.

9. Help mentee make decisions on their own
When faced with choices it is an opportunity to help your mentee see both sides and work through making the decision. Remind your mentee of the principle: choosing not to make a decision is to choose to live with the consequences of indecisiveness.

10. Be free to say "no."
If you are interested in mentoring, there is a good chance that you are a "people helper" and want to be a help whenever and however you can. You will do yourself, your family and your mentee a great disservice if you don't exercise the freedom to say "no." It is okay to say, "let me get back to you," if the situation allows for a delayed response. It is easier to undo a "no" response versus a "yes" response. Don't give in to pressure to respond immediately.

11. Pray
This is the last "do" but certainly **not the least**. Pray for your mentee. Make it a habit to ask what you can be praying for and follow up with what they shared. Also pray for wisdom for yourself—you will need it. As an encouragement to your mentee you may

want to keep journal so that both of you can be reminded of how his faith helped in the past especially during difficult times.

As a mentor, do NOT:

1. Put hopes in release dates.
If you are mentoring a prisoner, you want to encourage your mentee during their incarceration but not by giving false hope. One reason is that unfortunately their release date is subject to change as a result of his/her own behavior or administrative decisions. Another reason is that the future is an unknown but when we rest on our faith, we can rest in knowing that we will get through—this is the hope in which you want to encourage your mentee.

2. Call wives/husbands, girlfriends/boyfriends on behalf of mentee.
If you are following the "Do's" this will not be an issue for you. You want to encourage your mentee to reconcile with their family members when possible and when beneficial but your role is not to be a mediator for your mentee especially while they are incarcerated. If they insist that they need to get information to a family member you can suggest that they make the request to the chaplain.

3. Give contraband to inmates—gum, pens, books, etc.
This is a prison rule. If you are not sure, don't give it. In some prisons, certain items may be approved and given to the inmate by the correctional officer at the front desk but not always. Many prisons only allow you to enter with a car key, some change for the vending machines and your ID. And many prisons require books to be sent by the publisher or on-line book sellers like Amazon.

4. Make promises you can't keep.
Know your limitations. Don't commit yourself or anyone else to do anything that you are not sure is possible. Chances are your mentee has experienced the pain of many broken promises either their own or another's. You will build confidence in the relationship if you avoid making promises you can't keep.

5. Give legal advice.
You can share any past experiences that you have had but make sure the process and the outcome is presented as your experience and not as a representation of the way things are done.

6. Side with mentee against authority or bad-mouth the system.
No system is perfect and things are going to happen. When your mentee has a conflict with authority it is an opportunity to encourage them in a new attitude and perspective on authority. Even if there was an injustice, you can share the proper way to respond that will bring peace to your mentee rather than more trouble.

7. Bad-mouth other groups.
There are a variety of groups that go into the prison and are available to help with the various issues that prisoners face. Be careful not to allow your own biases to cloud your

conversations with your mentee. Instead be respectful of the religious and ideologies of other groups and organizations.

8. Share information about other mentees or inmates.
If you have more than one mentoring relationship there is the possibility that your mentees may know each other. If that information is discovered be very careful not to share information about either of them. This is critical in building trust.

9. Enter into business dealings with mentee.
Your mentee may be extremely intelligent and highly talented but entering into business dealings will add facets to the relationship that are not beneficial and can undermine the purpose of the mentoring.

10. Push the mentee to give their testimony.
It can be very exciting to watch someone turn their life around but it is best to let someone practice their new life choices over a long period of time before "going public." Often times mentee's decision to practice changed attitudes and choices in the many areas of life will speak volumes to a watching world. One year is a good practice time before publicly sharing a testimony.

11. Major on the minors.
There will most likely be many areas of your mentee's life that are not ideal. There will be areas that you would easily declare to be off limits according to what you know to be true but to try to attack all of those areas up front would be futile. By helping your mentee learn how to, by faith, have right thinking, and make good choices, those areas will begin to change for the good.

12. Feel like you have to have all of the answers.
You do not have all of the answers. Your willingness to be available, to be an encouragement and to help is invaluable. If you are in need of guidance or information, contact your faith leader for help.

[This fact sheet is drawn from the Mentor Training Manual developed by the New Mornings Reentry Services in Pennsylvania.]

Appendix H

Working with Victims and Returning Citizens: Participant Issues

Working with participants—victims, returning citizens, and supporters—in a restorative process can be difficult. Each person brings his/her own experience and emotions to the process. These can range from anger and pain to shame and guilt. It is important to be sensitive to and respectful of the needs of these individuals. This issue of *Focus on Justice* provides some principles for working with participants in a restorative process.

1. Victims need to vent and share their feelings about the crime

After a crime, victims need to tell their stories and express their emotions. At the same time, they need to feel that they have been heard. When meeting with them to prepare for the restorative encounter, it can be difficult to listen to the victims' stories and comments about the returning citizen. At this point, the victim just needs a compassionate, non-judgmental ear to listen to their feelings and concerns.

When the victim is ready, you can explain the process and answer their questions. Some useful questions to include in a preparation meeting are:

- Can you tell us what happened?
- How did you feel at the time?
- How has this impacted you?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- If the returning citizen were here, what would you like to say to him?

2. Returning citizens need to vent and share their feelings about the crime

It is important to listen to returning citizens tell their own stories, both of the crime and of its aftermath. They will have questions about the process, how it benefits them, and how they will be treated in the meeting. They will be dealing with issues of shame and remorse that could lead to belligerence and denial of responsibility that will be challenged by a restorative encounter process.

Meetings with the returning citizens often reveal attitudes that can be problematic in moving toward a meeting between them and the victims. This could include minimizing the amount of harm done, taking a victim stance, blaming others, or refusal to acknowledge needs of victims. Remember to accept them as they are at the moment and not get hooked by different attitudes.

Useful questions for the preparation meeting include:

- Can you tell us what happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you been thinking since then?
- How has this affected you?
- Who else has been affected? How?
- What would you do differently in the future?

3. Even skeptical parties can participate as long as they understand and accept the process

Preparation meetings with victims and returning citizens can reveal attitudes and emotions that are harsh and uncomfortable. However, these do not have to stop you from organizing a restorative encounter. Each case will be different and it is important to evaluate each one separately. If there is some acceptance that he/she has done harm then an encounter with the victim could be helpful. If an angry victim is willing to respectfully speak with the returning citizen, then the process can help him/her in working through these emotions. Remember to let the parties determine if they want to move forward.

4. Don't forget the support people

In these encounters, support people for either the victim or the returning citizen can play an important role. Their stories help develop common understanding of what happened and the crime's impact on all involved. At the same time, support people need preparation as much as the other participants. This includes an explanation of the process, steps in the program and possible outcomes. Support people will also need to tell their stories and have questions answered.

5. Let the parties make their own decisions

The encounter processes is not restorative justice. Restorative justice is a way of seeing crime as harm done to people and relationships and justice is done when that harm is addressed. The best way of addressing that harm is allowing those impacted to have a voice in the response. This is the purpose of the encounter process.

Just as the victim has the opportunity to decline participation, there are other decisions that are important for them to make. This could mean telling the victim about the returning citizen's attitude and the possibility of hurt in the encounter meeting and letting the victim decide about moving forward. This also means allowing the parties to decide on an agreement for repairing the harm instead of imposing ideas on them.

[This fact sheet in drawn from the Focus on Justice series developed by Prison Fellowship International's Centre for Justice and Reconciliation. It was edited to reflect the language used in this kit and Americanized spelling.]

Appendix I

Working with Victims and Returning Citizens: Process Issues

It can seem intimidating to facilitate restorative encounters between victims and returning citizens. However, there are some relatively simple principles that will increase the likelihood that the experience will be positive for all involved. This fact sheet will explore principles related to the restorative process, and the next issue will address issues related to the participants themselves.

1. Preparation of parties is key to a successful restorative process.

By having individual meetings with participants before the actual encounter meeting, you give yourself the opportunity to build rapport and a level of trust with each person who will be there. You will explain the process and look for any obstacles they face in participating in the restorative process. This also gives them the opportunity to ask questions, to think about what they want to say to the other party and to begin considering about ways to repair the harm. This is a time when you can deal with unrealistic expectations the parties may have—such as when victims assume that there will be deep remorse from returning citizens, or returning citizens expect that the victim will forgive. Unrealistic expectations can turn what would otherwise be a good experience into a bad one simply because the participants anticipated more than was reasonable.

2. Don't take it personally if victims are angry or upset.

Victims have suffered trauma through the crime and the criminal justice process. The anger and pain arising from such trauma can be directed toward the facilitator in the restorative justice process. The victim may link you with the offense, the returning citizen or the justice system. The best response is to remember that this anger is not personal and listen to the victims. If possible, direct the anger to the appropriate person or agency responsible. Honest, transparent and compassionate treatment will help to build the relationship with the victim.

3. Use caution in defining successful outcomes.

The way you define success can impact how you treat parties in a restorative process. If the focus is on completed meetings between victims and returning citizens then it is possible to coerce parties to participate in the process when they are uncomfortable with it. If success means forgiveness or reconciliation, then it's possible to push parties toward these outcomes before they are ready. In either case, the definition of success could lead to behavior that could harm the participants.

For a facilitator in a restorative process, success is providing a safe place—both physically and emotionally—for all participants to tell their stories, listen to the stories of others, dialogue about the impact of the crime and decide on steps for moving forward.

4. Never assume that participants automatically understand the process.

The restorative justice process will be very new to the victims and returning citizen. For this reason it is important to be open and supportive of parties considering participation. Let them know the purpose of preparation meetings and that the other party will not be present. Explain each step of the process from scheduling to the actual encounter meeting to the follow-up.

5. Be prepared to develop alternatives

One process does not fit all individuals. Victims may choose not to participate in a direct encounter but want some input or need other services. It is important to be open to the needs of the victims at this time and to help them find the kind of help they need.

As for the restorative encounter, victims could write letters explaining the impact of the crime or send a representative. If a victim doesn't wish to participate at all, the returning citizen can meet with a community representative to discuss the impact of the crime on the community and ways of repairing the harm. For victims wishing to participate in a restorative encounter when the returning citizen is not available, a meeting with another returning citizen can provide an opportunity for discussing the harm, as happens in the Sycamore Tree Project®.

[This fact sheet in drawn from the Focus on Justice series developed by Prison Fellowship International's Centre for Justice and Reconciliation. It was edited to reflect the language used in this kit and Americanized spelling.]

Appendix J

Crime's Impact on Victims

Crimes cause crises that remove victims from their normal range of experiences and challenge their coping mechanisms. The realization that they cannot control what happens to them can shatter victims' sense of safety and security. This trauma can touch many areas of victims' lives. Understanding the impact of crime on victims is important preparation for working with them, for helping offenders understand the impact of their actions, and for ministering to prisoners and other people who have themselves been victims of crime.

There are at least seven ways in which crime impacts victims:

Physical
Many victims have to deal with bodily injuries inflicted during the crime. Tending to those injuries is one way that we love our neighbor. However, there may also be less obvious physical symptoms resulting from trauma. These include nightmares, changed sleep patterns, fatigue, impotence, weight change, chemical dependency, and an exaggerated startle response.

Mental
Some of the after-effects of crime include an inability to concentrate and the experience of flashbacks of the offence. The crimes' assault on the victims' sense of security and self-control may cause them to struggle to make sense of their world. They may question levels of safety and crime in society, struggle with issues of self-blame and failure and develop a negative self-identity. This is a normal part of the process of coming to terms with what happened, and with help, the victims can regain self-control and dignity, and emerge with a more realistic but positive understanding of the world and of their place in it.

Spiritual
Because crime raises questions about victims' fundamental beliefs, it often leads to a spiritual crisis. The understanding and supportive response of members of the faith community can help victims turn the crisis into an occasion for strengthening and maturing their faith. Insensitivity and unthinking comments by the faith community can intensify the faith crisis and the sense of inappropriate guilt, making it more difficult for victims to cope.

Emotional
Not all victims react to crime in the same way, and individual victim's responses will change over time. Victims face issues of grief for what was lost in the crime. They may suffer feelings of guilt and shame, and experience loneliness, depression, sadness, fear, self-pity and helplessness. This can result in withdrawal from others and may even lead to acts of revenge.

Interpersonal
Crime affects not only the victims, but also their relationships with families and friends. The result can include divorce, reduced parenting skills and disconnection from social and family networks. There is greater risk of domestic violence and chemical dependency. In addition, relatives and friends of crime victims may hold unrealistic expectations of how the victims should respond, leading to blame and rejection.

Financial
The financial costs of crime arise from lost or damaged property, medical and psychological treatment, lost income, and the requirement to participate in judicial proceedings. Furthermore, victims make lifestyle changes in response to the crime which may include investing more resources into personal security.

Vocational
Victims may experience a change in their work habits. They may have difficulty functioning at their previous level due to the emotional and mental repercussions. Some victims become workaholics as they withdraw from social and family networks.
Each crime victim and situation is unique. Past trauma, the existence of good support networks, and the availability of needed resources all affect the ability of victims to cope. A supportive family, congregation and community are instrumental in helping victims work through the various impacts of crime.

This fact sheet is drawn from that of Prison Fellowship International.
Resources:
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Appendix K

Ties that Bind: Supporting Families When a Member is Arrested, Incarcerated, or Coming Home from Prison

As you learn of members of your congregation – or members of their families - being arrested, incarcerated, or coming home from prison, reach out to them and let them know your faith community stands with them and their loved one.

GENERAL TIPS:

- ☐ Call and visit the family members. Tell them they are welcome in the congregation and that it stands ready to support them. Let the family know that you are concerned about their well-being and the well-being of their loved one.
- ☐ Ask if the family thinks it would be helpful if you met, visited with, or wrote to their loved one. If so, do so!
- ☐ Discreetly ask how the family is doing financially. Has the arrest, trial, or incarceration of their loved one caused financial distress? If the family *does* need financial help, steer them to government and charitable resources that can help them.
- ☐ Build a mentoring relationship with the family, especially the children.
- ☐ Help the family build or sustain a relationship with their loved one.

AT THE TIME OF ARREST, INVESTIGATION, AND TRIAL OR SENTENCING:

- ☐ Offer to be present at the defendant's court appearances.
- ☐ Help the defendant in preparing for his legal defense or sentencing.

DURING THE PERIOD OF INCARCERATION:

- ☐ Assist the family with transportation to jail or prison when needed, which might include an offer to drive the family to see the prisoner.
- ☐ Introduce yourself and work with the jail chaplain.
- ☐ Find out about the correspondence, telephoning, and visiting rules.
- ☐ Write letters and offer to accept phone calls.
- ☐ Visit the person.
- ☐ Hold the prisoner accountable for what he has done.

- ☐ Forgive him. And encourage his forgiveness of himself.
- ☐ Help resolve problems, disputes, and complaints regarding jail and prison conditions and other problems.
- ☐ Identify supportive resources (*e.g.,* education, training, treatment) in the prison and in the communities neighboring the prison.
- ☐ Guide and help the recovery of the crime victim and the family of the victim.
- ☐ Begin the process of reconciliation – with family, the faith and larger communities, and the victim, is appropriate.

PREPARING FOR RELEASE FROM PRISON:

- ☐ Help in the preparation of a discharge plan.
- ☐ Help establish realistic expectations.
- ☐ Help prepare for community supervision (e.g., parole).
- ☐ Address the issue of residency prior to release.
- ☐ Address the issue of post-release employment.
- ☐ Start building a circle of peer support.
- ☐ Identify people who can respond 24/7 to crises.
- ☐ Work with prison officials to be clear on date and time of discharge so you can meet the returning citizen at the gate (or bus station) and take him home.
- ☐ Involve the family in preparing for the return home.

RETURNING HOME:

- ☐ Welcome the returning citizen back into the congregation and community.
- ☐ Introduce the returning citizen to the circle of peer support.
- ☐ Provide close support, especially for the first 72 hours after release.
- ☐ Continue the work of reconciliation and help develop a restitution plan.
- ☐ Help the returning citizen find and keep a job.
- ☐ Help the returning citizen maintain sobriety.
- ☐ Help the returning citizen find and keep permanent housing.
- ☐ Help the returning citizen abide by the terms of parole or probation, if any.
- ☐ Involve the returning citizen in the church's ministry work.

Appendix L

Ties that Bind: Keeping the Family Together When a Member is Incarcerated

Bear One Another's Burdens

Drawing on the strengths of your family…

- ☐ **Know this: YOU ARE NOT ALONE. We are offering you a network of caring, loving people supporting your family.**
- ☐ **Let your faith leader and congregation know what your family needs – emotionally, financially – whatever the needs might be.**
- ☐ **Get to know the prison chaplain. He or she can be a link between the family and your loved one.**
- ☐ **Write letters to your loved one to let them know you care about them.**
- ☐ **Accept calls from your loved one whenever financially possible.**
- ☐ **Remember special dates, such as birthdays, and send cards to show you love and support them. Send pictures of family activities and events.** Pictures of sports games, family activities or school functions work well. Encourage children to write a story about the activity to accompany the pictures.
- ☐ **When major decisions face the family, seek your loved one's perspective on the issue**.
- ☐ **Visit as often as possible**. Your family visits will help keep your loved one and the entire family grounded.
- ☐ **Talk about your loved one to the children so that the parent remains important in their lives.**
- ☐ **Let your loved one know about gift-giving programs, such as Prison Fellowship's AngelTree® program.**
- ☐ **Encourage your loved one's extended family (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc.) to communicate.** Staying in touch reminds those who are incarcerated that they are loved and reminds them of their ties to the community to which they will return.

Specifically for children. . .

- ☐ **Encourage the child to color and send pictures (age appropriate).**
- ☐ **Encourage the child to keep a journal. This journal could contain everyday things that they would like to discuss with their parent. On phone call day(s) pick out the most important issues to discuss. If you run out of time you can continue the conversation in a letter.**
- ☐ **Send holiday cards that the child has made. Encourage children to acknowledge their parent's special days, such as like birthdays.**
- ☐ **Send the child's report cards, graded test scores, and homework.**
- ☐ **If a child is assigned to read a certain book in school, try to get a copy to the incarcerated parent so they can read the book as well. Discuss the book with them.**
- ☐ **Find out if the prison has facilities for video-conferencing between parents and children. If not, talk to the chaplain about setting up such a system.**