

A black and white photograph of a prison cell. The cell is viewed through vertical metal bars. In the center, there is a door with a small, dark, rectangular opening. The lighting is bright, creating strong shadows and highlights on the bars.

Christian Witness in a Prison State

Session #1

RETHINKING CRIMINAL JUSTICE

*I was naked and you gave me clothing,
I was sick and you took care of me,
I was in prison and you visited me.*
- Matthew 25:36

*Jesus straightened up and said to her,
'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'
She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said,
'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way,
and from now on do not sin again.'*
- John 8:10-11



OPENING PRAYER

Holy and Just God,

We approach you this morning with hearts and minds that are heavy from the toils and stresses of this week. Almighty God, liberate us that we might sit openly here in your presence. We approach this issue cautiously, mindful of the anxieties and passions that this study might conjure. Holy Spirit, move in us that we might be courageous enough to learn, to grow, to heal, and to change. We desire your peace and your grace. Open our eyes and our minds not just to the violence and injustice around us, but also to the opportunities and possibilities of healing, forgiveness, and peace. We ask this all in the name of the Living Christ, **Amen.**

CRIME BY THE NUMBERS

Use 5 Minutes to Guess the Numbers that Belong in the Blanks

1. Between 1970 and 2005, the U.S. prison population rose by _____%.
2. The United States has 5% of the world's population, but has _____% of the world's prison population.
3. There are currently _____ people behind bars in the United States, and one in _____ American adults is behind bars.
4. Drug-related crimes account for nearly half of sentences being served in federal prison. Of all the drug-related arrests in 2011, roughly _____% were for possession only—not distribution, property, or violent criminal behavior.
5. One out of every _____ prisoners is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. Of these persons, _____% are incarcerated for nonviolent drug crimes.
6. Due to excessive court costs and the threat of colossal maximum sentences, _____% of all federal cases and _____% of state cases are resolved by guilty pleas without a trial.
7. African-Americans comprise 13% of the U.S. population but are incarcerated at _____ times the rate of whites. An estimated one in every _____ black males will serve a prison sentence during his lifetime.
8. _____ children are growing up in U.S. households in which one or more parents are incarcerated.
9. Currently, there are more women in prison than at any point in U.S. history. Only _____ states require medical exams as part of prenatal care. _____ states either ignore or allow the indiscriminant use of leg or waist shackles on prisoners giving birth, and _____ states have no policy to hold institutions accountable for the unjustified shackling of pregnant women.
10. The United States spends \$ _____ per year on our system of correctional control.

READ & DISCUSS

Christians and Mass Incarceration

By Mark Osler

From the Huffington Post, 10/25/2013

The United States leads the Western world in our reliance on incarceration. Slowly, there seems to be a growing awareness that we are spending billions, limiting freedoms, and creating racial disparities through an over-broad approach to imprisonment as the primary tool of criminal law. While incarcerating people may have the positive effect of incapacitating truly dangerous people (especially in relation to violent crimes), too often we lock up those who don't present a high level of danger to others. As states and the federal government consider moves to correct this imbalance, Christians should be leading the way.

It's not hard to trace the causes of this problem. First, we over-reacted to narcotics trafficking and incarcerated wide swaths of low-wage labor in that business -- workers who were easily replaced. This was a project that proved wasteful and pointless. Second, our society too often fosters a "lock them up and forget them" mentality towards those who have committed crimes, and this allows us to accept lengthy prison terms as normal. Little thought is given to what happens when a man or woman crosses the threshold into prison.

For Christians, this system violates the basic rule of compassion and balance that infuses the morality of the faith. Mandatory minimum sentencing laws, in particular, bar any role for mercy. This result is utterly inconsistent with Jesus's teachings and actions, which emphasized mercy in our dealings with one another.

However, it is the second of these impulses that should be especially repugnant to Christians. In Matthew 25, Jesus issued one of his clearest directives: That when we visit those in prison, we visit him. It's a stunning and troubling mandate, given that it came without qualification -- an explanation that we are to visit the innocent in prison, or those who are particularly sympathetic. It is a clear countermand to our "lock them up and throw away the key" ethic.

Given the clarity of Christ's teachings, we should expect Christian groups to be in the forefront of those opposing mass incarceration (as some already are). One stumbling block may be the moralism which often goes with faith -- the instinct to draw bright lines. We don't see those bright lines, though, in the life of Jesus, who stopped an execution that was required by the law of Moses. He saved the

adulteress described in John 8 by challenging the moral right of those about to kill her: "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." No one challenged bright lines like Jesus.

Finally, criminal law should be a key issue for Christians simply because of who Jesus was. Many of us believe that the events in Christ's life did not happen randomly; rather, his story was crafted to teach us what was eternally important. He was born into poverty, and each year we recreate that scene in our homes and remember how great things can come from the impoverished. Similarly, doesn't it matter that so much of what we know about Jesus is in his role as a criminal defendant? God intended him to be prosecuted, even executed, and that must mean that these things are important.

Criminal law in the United States rests unsteadily on the backs of the multitude of Christian legislators, prosecutors, judges, and academics. It is time to unsettle that realm, and the moral wrong at its heart.

Discussion Questions

1. What thoughts and/or emotions are you experiencing through this educational material?
2. Mark Osler drew our attention to the passages in Matthew 25 and John 8 about restoration and forgiveness. How might these themes challenge our current system of criminal justice? Can you think of any other Biblical passages or Christian doctrines or themes that might also bear on this topic?
3. Write down any remaining questions that you would like to ask pertaining to this or similar topics.

CLOSING LITURGY

Leader: O God, we pray for this broken world that is thirsty for your justice;

All: That grace and reconciliation would eliminate all forms of oppression.

Leader: Lord Christ, we pray for those who suffer from the weight of incarceration;

All: That the wounded may be healed; that the broken may be made whole; that the troubled may find peace.

Leader: Holy Spirit, hover over the waters of chaos, of estrangement, and of hopelessness;

All: That the chains that bind hands and feet, hearts and minds, habits and laws would be shattered and surrendered to you.

Leader: Teach us how to be your witnesses;

All: That we may be instruments of your peace and your justice. Amen.

RESOURCES FOR DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

Books/Articles

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (Alexander, 2010)

Prison State: The Challenge of Mass Incarceration (Useem & Piehl, 2008)

Mothers Behind Bars (The National Women's Law Center, 2010)

Websites

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture: www.nrca.org

The American Friends Service Committee: www.afsc.org

The Sentencing Project: www.sentencingproject.org

Beyond Bars: www.beyondbars.org

The American Civil Liberties Union: www.aclu.org

Films/Video Clips

The House I Live In (full length documentary)

Broken On All Sides (full length documentary)

Religion & Ethics: Mass Incarceration (7:42 video):

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/?p=10091>

The REAL Cost of the War on Drugs (3:32 video): <http://youtu.be/nTZNPGeYUgg>

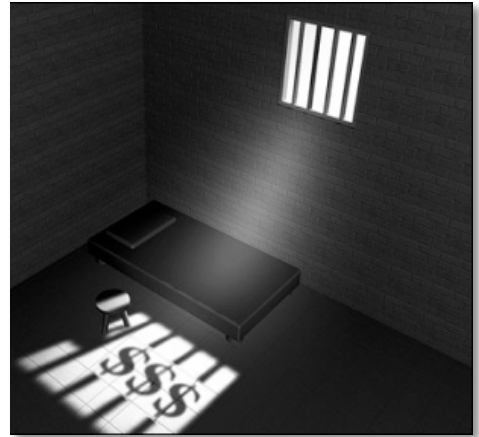
David Simon: What's Behind the War on Drugs (15:14 video): <http://youtu.be/MUhlBINuXj0>

Session #2

CORRECTION OR CORRUPTION?

*When all the prisoners of the land
are crushed under foot,
When human rights are perverted
in the presence of the Most High
When one's case is subverted
Does the Lord not see it?*
- Jeremiah 3:34-36

*Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker,
But those who are kind to the needy honor him.*
- Proverbs 14:31



OPENING PRAYER

God of Justice,

In humility we approach you this morning, asking that you might give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and mouths to speak your truth. As when you led Israel out of slavery into the wilderness, we ask that you give us courage to follow you through this uncertain and wearisome terrain. Grant us wisdom, discernment, and patience as we directly confront the unpleasant realities of injustice in our world. Above all, we ask for communion with one another and with you: creator and sustainer of the needy, friend of sinners, and deliverer of justice. **Amen.**

SESSION #2: CORRECTION OR CORRUPTION?

BIG BUSINESS: SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
[The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution]

You are invited to participate in the “Chains Become Bars” exercise.

One-by-one, remove a link in the paper chain, read the historical fact printed on the inside, and reattach the paper to the display according to the class leader’s instructions.

All of these facts derive directly from the work of historians Douglas A. Blackmon and Stephen Hartnett, as well as articles published by the Atlantic and Prison Legal News, each of which you can find listed in the “Resources for Deeper Engagement” section at the end of this session.

During or after this activity, feel free to write your thoughts, questions, or notes in the space below.

READ & DISCUSS

Response #1: United Methodist Church Announces Divestment Initiative

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The United Methodist General Board of Church & Society (GBCS) salutes the recent announcement of the denomination’s pension fund divestment from private-prison corporations and the establishment of a permanent screen on such investments. The agency also issued a call for all organizations and institutions of conscience to divest from the private-prison industry.

GBCS applauds the decision of the United Methodist General Board of Pension & Health Benefits (GBPHB) to divest from two of the largest private, for-profit prison entities: Corrections Corp. of America (CCA) and GEO Group. GBCS also appreciates the addition of the new investment screen to prohibit investment in companies that derive more than 10% of revenue from the management and operation of prison facilities.

GBPHB is the largest faith-based pension fund in the United States and ranks among the top 100 pension funds in the country. As a socially responsible investor, GBPHB is actively involved in shareholder advocacy, proxy voting, portfolio screening and community investing.

Sixth investment screen

The private-prison screen is the sixth adopted by GBPHB, guided by the United Methodist Social Principles. Other screens avoid investing in companies that derive significant revenues from gambling or the manufacture, sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages, tobacco-related products, weapons or pornography.

Attorney Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, described the United Methodist divestment and permanent screen as an “outstanding example of faith in action.” “This should become a national campaign,” she said. “No church, faith organization, or university in America should be investing in or profiting from prisons.”

Private prisons are a booming business that emphasizes incarceration in the U.S. criminal justice system, according to Bill Mefford, GBCS director of Civil & Human Rights. He said detention of undocumented immigrants has been an important ploy of the industry to fuel its profits. “While many United Methodists have been fighting to reduce the number of people incarcerated by a prison system

that is the largest in the world,” Mefford said, “our denomination has been profiting by the continuing emphasis on incarceration as a means of justice, rather than on healing for victims of crime and accountability and on restoration for those accused of crime.”

Others should divest

Mefford said the decision by GBPHB is a tremendous testament to the direct action of United Methodists throughout the United States who sent emails and signed a petition calling for this critical step of divestment and screening. This prompted the Interagency Task Force on Immigration to bring the issue of private or for-profit prisons to GBPHB’s attention.

The GBPHB announcement is a moment to celebrate, according to Laura Markle Downton, GBCS Criminal Justice grassroots coordinator. She said, however, that work has only begun as private-prison corporations continue to yield record profits from promoting incarceration of millions of persons.

“We urge our colleagues to also divest from private prison corporations to ensure that any profit incentive for further abusive over-incarceration of our sisters and brothers be eliminated worldwide,” Downton said.

Response #2: Presbyterian Church (USA) Statement for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons

Our church is called to raise her prophetic voice to demand justice on behalf of our sisters and brothers, children of God, who are incarcerated. The composition of the population of our prisons should raise an alarm for anyone called upon to speak for the oppressed. We are called not merely to offer our forgiveness to those who have traveled a road of oppression, deprivation and racism while we were busy maintaining our own security but to ask for God’s forgiveness and theirs for our complicity in what our criminal justice system has become.

Presbyterian policy has opposed prisons in general as the primary means of addressing criminal behavior since 1972. Not only have we been collectively guilty in not addressing these problems, but also trends of social injustice and punishment over rehabilitation have significantly worsened in the last thirty years.

Christ calls us to turn a critical eye to a system that is at least partly responsible for the social, political, economic, moral, and spiritual conditions that make some of our members weak, threatened, helpless, sick, and tempted to antisocial behavior.

SESSION #2: CORRECTION OR CORRUPTION?

It is the very society in which we live and which we have helped establish that creates the poor, weak, and oppressed whom God calls us to serve. We fail these members of our community when we let our governments assign prisoners to for-profit private prisons and only provide needed services and treatment programs after a person has committed a crime and is incarcerated.

The for-profit private prison corporations are substantially outside the scope of governmental regulation and control. They exploit the most vulnerable members of society. They isolate and make invisible the people they lock up. For-profit private prisons are a moral evil, which on a religious as well as an ethical basis cannot continue to exist. When we allow our governments to hire private corporations to run our prisons as if they were for-profit businesses and nothing else, we are abdicating our responsibility.

We have had policy on criminal justice issues by our church throughout its history, yet many of us ignore the need for reconciliation and have abandoned these children of God—first to a punitive government and now to a for-profit industry where they are seen not as human beings worthy of respect but as commodities from which to profit. The church must cry out in opposition to these exploitative, isolating, and unaccountable practices while joining with others in our midst that are proclaiming a vision where restorative not punitive justice allows us to more closely emulate God's justice and God's kingdom.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast these two approaches/statements against for-profit prisons.

2. What other ideas can you think of that can expand this type of work? What questions linger for you regarding these ideas?

CLOSING LITURGY: RESPONSIVE READING OF PSALM 10

Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

In arrogance the wicked persecute the poor—let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.

For the wicked boast of the desires of their heart, those greedy for gain curse and renounce the Lord.

In the pride of their countenance the wicked say, ‘God will not seek it out’; all their thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’

Their ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of their sight; as for their foes, they scoff at them.

They think in their heart, ‘We shall not be moved; throughout all generations we shall not meet adversity.’

Their mouths are filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under their tongues are mischief and iniquity.

They sit in ambush in the villages; in hiding-places they murder the innocent. Their eyes stealthily watch for the helpless;

They lurk in secret like a lion in its covert; they lurk that they may seize the poor; they seize the poor and drag them off in their net.

They stoop, they crouch, and the helpless fall by their might.

They think in their heart, ‘God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.’

Rise up, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed.

Why do the wicked renounce God, and say in their hearts, ‘You will not call us to account’?

But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief, that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you; you have been the helper of the orphan.

Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers; seek out their wickedness until you find none.

The Lord is king for ever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land.

O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear

to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more.

Amen.

RESOURCES FOR DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

Responses from Religious Communities to Prison Profiteering

United Methodist Church:

www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1LtH&b=5259669&ct=11576217

Presbyterian Church USA:

www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/acswp/pdf/abolition-of-for-profit-prisons.pdf

Conference of Catholic Bishops:

www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/criminal-justice-restorative-justice/crime-and-criminal-justice.cfm

Unitarian Universalist:

www.uua.org/statements/statements/13397.shtml

Friends Committee (Quaker):

www.fcni.org/resources/newsletter/septoct11/the_economics_of_incarceration

Episcopal Church:

www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2000-B055

Books & Articles

Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II (Blackmon, 2008)

“Prison Labor, Slavery & Capitalism In Historical Perspective” (Hartnett), published on the website *History Is a Weapon*: www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/hisprislacap.html

“Nationwide PLN Survey Examines Prison Phone Contracts, Kickbacks” (Dannenberg, 2013), published by *Prison Legal News*: www.prisonlegalnews.org/23083_displayArticle.aspx

“The War on Drugs: How President Nixon Tied Addiction to Crime” (Dufton, 2012), published by The Atlantic: www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/03/the-war-on-drugs-how-president-nixon-tied-addiction-to-crime/254319

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (Alexander, 2010)

Websites

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture: www.nrcat.org

The American Friends Service Committee: www.afsc.org

Grassroots Leadership: www.grassrootsleadership.org

Between the Bars: Human Stories from Prison: www.betweenthebars.org

Prison Legal News: www.prisonlegalnews.org

Beyond Bars: www.beyondbars.org

The American Civil Liberties Union: www.aclu.org

Media Action Grassroots Network: www.mag-net.org

Films/Video Clips

The House I Live In (full length documentary)

“Prison Profiteers – CCA” (3:02 video): www.beyondbars.org/pp_cca

“Prison Profiteers – The Geo Group” (2:39 video): www.beyondbars.org/pp_the_geo_group

“Prison Profiteers – Law Enforcement” (2:48 video): www.beyondbars.org/pp_law_enforcement

“Prison Profiteers – Corizon” (2:58 video): www.beyondbars.org/pp_corizon

Session #3

A FAITHFUL RESPONSE

*Bring me out of prison so that
I may give thanks to your name.
The righteous will surround me
For you will deal bountifully with me.*
- Psalm 142:7

*Let mutual love continue... Remember those who are in prison,
as though you were in prison with them;
those who are being tortured,
as though you yourselves were being tortured.*
- Hebrews 13:1, 3



OPENING PRAYER

God of Grace and Giver of all good things,
We pause before this our final session, thankful for minds that can grow, for hearts that can soften, for mouths that can speak truth, and for bodies that can respond to the needs of this world. We are grateful for this community that is your earthly body. We want to be witnesses to your resurrection, to announce and embody a new way of living in the world. We welcome your Spirit here in this place to challenge us, to inspire us, and to move us to action. We pray this through the power of your Son, the Christ, through whom we have been forgiven and set free,
Amen.

READ & DISCUSS

Reclaiming Christian Witness

By J. Amos Caley

As a young man, I grew up in a faith tradition that emphasized the importance of being a “witness” for God. What this meant, in my understanding, was that I should always be on the lookout for ways to convince my friends and acquaintances that Christianity was the true religion that offered the only way to heaven as well as the most moral lifestyle. Essentially, I saw my role as a *witness* to be a sort of salesperson for Jesus: marketing him to the masses as if he was a deep-cleanser for the conscience or an afterlife fire insurance policy. When it came to political, social, and economic issues I had very little to say, and I often shirked any suggestion that there could be a “social obligation” at the heart of the Gospel. Witnessing meant, for me, proselytizing, not putting myself in these situations where I might... well, *witness* certain things. Recently, and after several years of frustration—even rejection—of these “Christian” concepts, I’ve come back to this word *witness*, and it has changed and enriched my understanding of what it means to be a Christian witness in the world, and in the United States specifically.

Studying more closely the words in scripture, I learned that all references to “witness” in the New Testament used some version of the Greek word *μαρτυρα*, or “martyr.” A martyr, at least in contemporary terms, is someone who dies proclaiming or defending a cause. So if I’m to be a witness for God, I wondered, does this mean that I have to find a way to die for God? A little perplexed, I dug deeper.

The historical setting for the gospels in our New Testament is first century Palestine. According to historians of Christianity and Judaism, the political and economic climate of this region was thoroughly saturated with imperial violence, intimidation, and exploitation. The dynasty of Herod and his sons, eager to show tribute and loyalty to the Roman Empire who had them installed, ruled over Judea and Samaria with an iron fist and gold purse. Leveling heavy taxes on the poor, bribing elites with cultural and social capital, authorizing massive building projects (many of which to honor Herod and the Romans), and violently crushing those who opposed him, the reign of Herod signaled a prolonged era of state-sponsored terrorism and cultural genocide for the Jewish people.

It is no wonder why the idea of “witness” or “martyrdom” took on so much power during this time. Jewish peasants and religious leaders organized and

orchestrated a number of public protests against Roman and Herodian power. In one instance, a group of teachers and students climbed up to the top of the temple during the midday bustle, publicly tearing down the golden eagle of Rome that Herod had placed there. In response to this, Herod had them burned alive. When the crowds responded with a rally at the Passover festival, Herod's guards massacred thousands of Jewish protesters. In another story, Jewish religious teachers staged a mass protest urging the Jewish people to refuse to pay taxes to Caesar. This time, it was the elite high priests bribed by Herod that put pressure on the demonstrators and quenched the resistance. In Galilee, around 1 B.C.E., Roman armies brutally ended a three-year peasant revolt by crucifying thousands of rebels on the main roads leading to Jerusalem—a “shock and awe” campaign against Galilean dissenters.

Why is this history important? Jesus, the presence of God among us, entered a world of political turmoil and upheaval. And specifically Jesus came as a Jewish rabbi of a peasant class in a dangerous and economically ravaged region. We are told that he stood in solidarity with the defenseless, that he healed the sick and the tormented, that he fed the hungry, and that he saw and publicly recognized those rendered invisible or unworthy. In other words, he became a witness. We read that he spoke about God using politically and economically relevant metaphors—fields and famines, tax collectors and interest rates, kings and servants—and that he cast a vision for a *new* life, a *new* kingdom, and a *new* (renewed) covenant with the God of Israel, not the god of Rome. In other words, he became a witness. The gospel writers tell us that after a public ministry, which ended in a public demonstration during a politically tumultuous festival (Passover), he was condemned, tortured, and executed in public, as a failed king. In other words, he became a witness. And after his resurrection, just before he ascended into heaven, we are told that Jesus' final words to his disciples are: “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Jesus, like Elijah to Elisha, offers his followers the mantle of prophetic public witness.

In a time when we tend to completely separate religion and politics into airtight compartments, worshiping God while leaving oppressive power structures unaddressed, I believe that recovery of the word *witness* is central to embracing the type of life to which God calls us in the story of Jesus. This revolutionary message of Divine love invites us to render visible the hidden injustices of state-sponsored violence and abject poverty. It calls us not only to see and recognize oppression, but also to publicly name and condemn the policies and practices that reinforce it. The Gospel beckons us to not only protest, but also to creatively devise strategies against this dehumanization as we celebrate the dignity of each man, woman, and

SESSION #3: A FAITHFUL RESPONSE

child as unique image-bearers of God. To be a witness means to confront the exploitive and destructive system of mass incarceration in the United States and to ceaselessly work in the power of God’s Spirit to end it.

In 1914, nearly one hundred years ago, a reporter for The Continent newspaper, Marc N. Goodnow, visited a convict work camp in Florida and wrote of the political and economic exploitation he encountered there. When I read his words, I heard them as if straight from the mouth of Jesus in the first-century ghetto of Galilee. Horrified, Goodnow wrote:

The fact that this inhuman system has been allowed to flourish not only in Alabama and other States for so long is all the more reason why the church – some church at least – should attempt some systematic mission work. When society exiled these creatures... it forgot that these men would one day reenter society. The question is: ‘What kind of men will they be?’ There may be no complete regeneration ahead of these men, at least not while they are so utterly neglected by civilizing influences, but how immeasurably their mental, moral, and spiritual outlook could be improved by the kindly, human, sympathetic influence of the church? Where is the church that will accept this mission?

Discussion Questions

1. What do you believe about the role of a person’s faith in their public life? Has this belief changed over time?

2. What thoughts, concerns, or questions emerge from reading about this “reclaiming of Christian witness?”

FORMING A RESPONSE

Survey the following projects, placing an “x” beside ideas that interest you.

- Face-to-face visitation ministry to prisoners or detainees in a correctional facility
- “Outmate” ministry program for families with incarcerated loved ones
- Educational events like book studies, film showings, and panel discussion
- Restorative Justice programs, such as the “Healing Communities” program
- Re-entry work: mentoring returning prisoners, helping successful transition, etc.
- Pen-pal ministry: writing letters to prisoners and gathering information on local facilities
- Letter-writing to legislators and state officials on campaigns concerning prison issues
- Demonstrations, vigils, rallies, or worship gatherings concerning prisoner justice
- Other ideas:

CLOSING LITURGY (ADAPTED PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS)

Leader: Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

All: Where there is hatred, let us sow love

Leader: Lord, make us instruments of your grace.

All: Where there is injury, teach us how to heal and to forgive.

Leader: Lord, make us instruments of your righteousness.

All: Where there is injustice, help us to see and to respond faithfully.

Leader: Lord, make us instruments of your hope.

All: Where there is despair, show us how to comfort and to cultivate.

Leader: Lord, make us into your witnesses.

All: That we might see the invisible, that we might speak truth, and that we might believe in impossible things.

Leader: We ask these things in your power, and for your glory.

All: Both here in this place and to the ends of the earth. Both now and forevermore. Amen.

RESOURCES FOR DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

Books & Articles

Jesus and the Powers: Conflict, Covenant, and the Hope of the Poor (Horsley, 2011)

The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America (Taylor, 2001)

Marc Goodnow's quote from "The Slaves of Turpentine: A First Hand Account of Convict Leasing," from Prison Culture blog: www.usprisonculture.com/blog/2011/10/19/the-slaves-of-turpentine-a-first-hand-account-of-convict-leasing/

Websites

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture: www.nrcat.org

The American Friends Service Committee: www.afsc.org

Campaign to End the New Jim Crow: www.endnewjimcrow.org

New Jersey Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement: www.njcaic.org

Healing Communities: www.healingcommunitiesusa.org

Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference: www.sdpconference.info

Films/Video Clips

Redemption of the Prosecutor (short film): www.redemptionoftheprosecutor.org