

# WHAT IS THE CHURCHES ROLE IN PRISON REENTRY

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WHICH WAY DO I GO? HOW TO HELP THOSE SEEKING  
GUIDANCE AND DIRECTIONS



# MATTHEW 25:34-40

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- <sup>34</sup>Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’
- <sup>37</sup>“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup>When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup>Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ <sup>40</sup>And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’



# CHURCH YOU ARE THE KEY TO FREEDOM TO THOSE SEEKING HELP!

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ARE YOU THE KEY TO UNLOCK THE DOOR?



# HOW CAN I HELP?

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- **Preparing Your Church for Reentry**

- The challenges awaiting formerly incarcerated men and women can be overwhelming. In prison they had little control over their daily lives. Once outside the gates, they will be making many critical choices in a world they might not even recognize. The stakes are high: Nearly 600,000 people are released from prison each year, and nearly two-thirds will be arrested again within three years.
- The Church has an important role to play in reducing recidivism through reentry ministry.
- Mark Hubbell, Prison Fellowship ®'s area director for the Pacific Northwest, emphasizes that the best role the Church can play in reentry ministry is to help men and women walk with Christ and give them a place to belong. Not all churches are equipped with the resources to meet former prisoners' physical needs, but all churches can support them by welcoming, nurturing, and encouraging them. Any church can provide a positive, supportive community to ease the sense of isolation that returning citizen's face upon reentry.

[www.prisonfellowship.org](http://www.prisonfellowship.org)

# FAST FACT ABOUT INCARCERATION

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DID YOU KNOW?



Researchers have been analyzing [statistics](#) on the [incarceration in the United States](#) of [African-American](#) males as to age, location, causes, and the impact on children. Approximately 12–13% of the American population is African-American, [but they make up 35% of jail inmates, and 37% of prison inmates of the 2.2 million male inmates as of 2014](#) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).<sup>[2][3]</sup> Census data for 2000 of the number and race of all individuals incarcerated in the United States revealed a wide racial disproportion of the incarcerated population in each state: the proportion of blacks in prison populations exceeded the proportion among state residents in twenty states.

According to the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) (NAACP), African Americans constitute nearly 2.3 million of the total 6.8 million incarcerated population, and have nearly six times the incarceration rate of whites.<sup>[4]</sup> A 2013 study confirmed that black men were much more likely to be arrested and incarcerated than white men and that this disparity disappeared after accounting for self-reported violence and IQ.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Incarceration by race and ethnicity[]

010. Inmates in adult facilities, by race and ethnicity. Jails, and state and federal prisons.<sup>[10]</sup>

Race, ethnicity	% of US population	% of U.S. incarcerated population	National incarceration rate (per 100,000 of all ages)
White (non-Hispanic)	64	39	450 per 100,000
Hispanic	16	19	831 per 100,000
Black	13	40	2,306 per 100,000

## African Americans and recidivism[[edit](#)]

With regard to the [United States incarceration rate](#), African Americans represent only about 13 percent of the United States population, yet account for approximately half the prison population as well as ex-offenders once released from prison.<sup>[15]</sup> As compared to whites, African Americans are incarcerated 6.4 times higher for violent offenses, 4.4 times higher for property offenses and 9.4 times higher for drug offenses.<sup>[16]</sup>

African Americans comprise a majority of the prison reentry population, yet few studies have been aimed at studying recidivism among this population. Recidivism is highest amongst those under the age of 18 who are male and African American, and African Americans have significantly higher levels of recidivism as compared to whites.<sup>[17]</sup>

The sheer number of ex-inmates exiting prison into the [community](#) is significant, however, chances of recidivism are low for those who avoid contact with the law for at least three years after release.<sup>[18]</sup> What communities African American ex-inmates are released into plays a part in their likelihood to re-offend; communities that have high racial inequality increase the risk of African American recidivism as they are denied equal access to "employers, health care services, and other institutions that can facilitate a law-abiding reentry into society".<sup>[17]</sup> Employment can also reduce recidivism; however, for African American ex-inmates, finding employment, which can be difficult prior to incarceration, becomes increasingly so after incarceration.

## Recidivism rates

The recidivism rates for released prisoners in the [United States of America](#) is 60% compared with 50% in the [United Kingdom](#). The report attributed the lower recidivism rate in the UK to a focus on rehabilitation and education of prisoners compared with the US focus on punishment, [deterrence](#) and keeping potentially dangerous individuals away from society.

The [United States Department of Justice](#) tracked the re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration of former inmates for 3 years after their release from prisons in 15 states in 1994.<sup>[12]</sup> Key findings include:

- Released prisoners with the highest re-arrest rates were robbers (70.2%), burglars (74.0%), larcenists (74.6%), motor vehicle thieves (78.8%), those in prison for possessing or selling stolen property (77.4%) and those in prison for possessing, using or selling illegal weapons (70.2%).
- Within 3 years, 2.5% of released rapists were arrested for another rape, and 1.2% of those who had served time for homicide were arrested for homicide. These are the lowest rates of re-arrest for the same category of crime.
- The 272,111 offenders discharged in 1994 had accumulated 4.1 million arrest charges before their most recent imprisonment and another 744,000 charges within 3 years of release.

Former criminals rose to become some of America's greatest leaders in law, industry and politics.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> This possibility seems to be narrowing as criminal records become electronically stored and accessible.<sup>[13]</sup>





## *Employment and recidivism*

Most research regarding recidivism indicates that those ex-inmates that obtain employment after release from prison tend to have lower rates of recidivism

## *Education and Recidivism[edit]*

Education has been shown to reduce recidivism rates. When inmates use educational programs while within incarceration they are roughly 43% less likely to recidivate than those who received no education while incarcerated. <sup>[22]</sup> Inmates, in regards to partaking in educational programs, can improve cognitive ability, work skills as well as being able to further their education upon release.

## *Reducing recidivism among African Americans[edit]*

A cultural re-grounding of African Americans is important to improve self-esteem and help develop a sense of community. <sup>[28]</sup> Culturally specific programs and services that focus on characteristics that include the target population values, beliefs, and styles of problem solving may be beneficial in reducing recidivism among African American inmates; <sup>[citation needed]</sup> programs involving social skills training and social problem solving could also be effective. <sup>[29]</sup> For example, research shows that treatment effectiveness should include cognitive-behavioral and social learning techniques of modeling, role playing, reinforcement, extinction, resource provision, concrete verbal suggestions (symbolic modeling, giving reasons, prompting) and cognitive



# Cost of inmate per year

It costs an average of **about \$71,000 per year** to incarcerate an inmate in prison in California. Over three-quarters of these costs are for security and inmate health care. Since 2010-11, the average annual cost has increased by about \$22,000 or about 45 percent.

At first glance, the police and judicial systems seem to have excelled at finding and incarcerating millions of criminals around the country. A recent report by the [Justice Policy Institute](#), however, is claiming that private prison companies have been lobbying for longer and harsher prison sentences, which they argue has led to increased incarceration rates (as opposed to probation and parole sentences).

According to the report, private prison populations have increased faster than the entire incarcerated population. During the last decade, the total prison population grew by 16%. Simultaneously, the number of federal prisoners in private facilities grew by 120%, while the number of state prisoners in private facilities grew by 33%.



## ***THE PRIVATIZATION OF PRISONS IN AMERICA-ORGANIZED SLAVERY?***

**1. Corrections Corporation of America (CXW):** Property Management industry with a market cap of \$2.4B. It specializes in owning, operating, and managing prisons and other correctional facilities and providing inmate residential and prisoner transportation services for governmental agencies. As of December 31, 2010, it operated 66 correctional and detention facilities, including 45 facilities that it owns, with a total design capacity of approximately 90,000 beds in 19 states and the District of Columbia.

**2. The GEO Group, Inc. (GEO):** Security & Protection Services industry with a market cap of \$1.45B. It is a provider of government-outsourced services specializing in the management of correctional, detention, mental health, residential treatment and re-entry facilities, and the provision of community-based services and youth services in the United States, Australia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Canada.



## **A Role for the Local Church**

The Church can play a critical role in receiving recently released citizens back into their communities. Indeed, we are called to “let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. 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](#)). This is the verse that inspired the The West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church to think intentionally about how its communities in the region could do a better job of receiving returning citizens into their churches. “Transformation is not going to happen if we entrust it to a purely punitive system” says Deaconess Sue Wolf, “it’s about God’s love and God’s Kingdom. If we can prove it’s true there, then it’s true for all us anywhere.

<https://urbanfaith.com/2015/05/life-after-prison-how-the-church-can-help.html/>



## The Plan

So the WOC set out to create the '[All In Community](#)' Re-entry Program to address multiple facets of prison ministry within the context of church communities. This program was formed to be intentionally asset-based, acknowledging that the prisoners themselves are assets to the ministry. Thus, the content and curriculums began to form with guidance and partnership of those currently incarcerated, relying on their suggestions rather than on the varying perceptions of those on the outside.

Ultimately, the WOC plans to connect twenty-five churches with re-entering citizens to form relationships and support well before those individuals are released. The hope is to have churches ready to receive wherever prisoners are going. They will create a safety net, a soft landing, for those being released.



The program is designed to be about mutual relationships, understanding that everyone can learn and grow no matter what role they play. While inside prison, participants are required to complete cultural competency training. Thus, participating churches are also required to undergo the same. Kenya Cummings, an intern for Diversity Initiatives at the WOC, says that the churches will need to “lean into some knowledge that the released men will be imparting.”

Indeed, the goal of the partnership is to “transform prisoners, transform prisons, and transform communities.” Thus, volunteers and congregations have much to learn from the prisoners themselves, who have dedicated years to prayer and spiritual discipleship with the time they had on the inside. It’s not about a one-way relationship, but rather a partnership that brings about mutual edification and spiritual growth. Cummings attests that “the men know the Power of God and how it can be at work. They know about transformation. They know if they can be transformed, so can the Church.”



The '[All In Community](#)' Re-entry Program will also serve as a hub for community organizing, healing the neighborhoods that are most affected by mass incarceration. They will employ five Urban Encouragers to act as first-contacts for released citizens and will also serve guides for congregations that are learning how to be good partners. They will organize within the local community to help restore neighborhoods and to identify assets within the community that can support those being released.

Cumming suggests that churches interested in engaging in re-entry work become “incredibly aware of where their church congregation is located and what they have to offer.” Every church and every community setting is different, with unique needs and assets. “Reentry can never be a carbon copy ministry,” she attests, “you have to look at your church’s assets and passions, and let the ministry emerge from what is currently present.” If volunteers are artists, start an art prison ministry, if they are engaged in legislative issues, she suggests focusing around that. Customizing a church’s prison ministry is key to both its effectiveness and its persistence.

Cummings also suggests churches investigate what programs and resources are already in their local neighborhoods and to them come alongside the ongoing work of the community. “We want to build, not duplicate,” she says.





**Showing God's Love Through Jesus Christ Will Make the Difference**

