

CRIMINAL JUSTICE MINISTRY RESOURCE SHEET

LEARN ABOUT THE ISSUES

Books

- **Prison Ministry: Understanding Prison Culture Inside and Out, by Lennie Spitale.** This book covers the emotional challenges of prisoners and those who minister to them. Discusses the environment of fear, culture of deprivation, friendships between prisoners, guidelines, dos and don'ts, and many other essential topics for effective prison ministry.
- **The Little Book of Restorative Justice, by Howard Zehr.** This short and economical paperback (64 pages for under \$5.00) provides an easy to understand primer on the concept of restorative justice and how Western society views restorative versus criminal justice. Includes reflections on 9/11, the TRC in South Africa, & examples from US schools and workplaces.
- **Cain's Redemption, by Dennis Shere.** Formerly known as America's bloodiest prison, Louisiana's Angola State Penitentiary houses 5,000 inmates who have left regular knife fights for Bible studies. Long-standing Warden Burl Cain is a strong believer in the ability of the gospel to turn the most incorrigible of sinners into productive, moral citizens, and offers seminary classes and many other resources.

Online Resources

- **Prison Fellowship – www.prisonfellowship.org:** A ministry of Chuck Colson's "Breakpoint Ministries." This site contains a wealth of information about one of the strongest Christian voices that speaks for engagement and reform of the criminal justice system. This site contains resources for prisoners and families of the incarcerated, including how to support project **Angel Tree**. Prison Fellowship also has advocacy projects, updates on current legislation that affect the criminal justice system, and more.
- **Justice Fellowship – www.justicefellowship.org:** A ministry of Prison Fellowship. This site contains practical ways to advocate for criminal justice reform, including prayer requests, news updates, ways to advocate for justice, and links to other programs and resources. Their "key issues" link provides a very helpful overview of many issues.
- **The Sentencing Project –** promoting reform & research: www.thesentencingproject.org
- **Institute for Prison Ministries** at Wheaton College – www.bgcprisonministries.com: Learn about their degree program, find prison ministry volunteer opportunities & search an extensive resource page.

GET INVOLVED

Some First Steps

- Visit <http://www.covchurch.org/who-we-are/beliefs/resolutions/> and follow sidebar links to download the ECC's **resolution** and **discussion guide** on this issue.
- Support **victims of crime** and their families holistically, through prayer & walking alongside them.
- Support those who **work in the system**.
- **Travel** on a Sankofa Journey to learn about race, including its effects on incarceration and sentencing.
- Consider what might help **prevent the cycle** of crime/incarceration starting in your community.
- **Advocate** for structural approaches to preventing wrongful convictions: www.innocenceproject.org
- Visit or learn from a **Covenant church/chaplain** already active in the criminal justice system.

Support Restorative Justice

- **Restorative Justice – www.restorativejustice.org:** A ministry of Prison Fellowship International. This site introduces the concepts of restorative justice as a way to promote healing and restoration between perpetrators & victims/communities/families.

Minister to Families

- **Malachi Dads** – learn how to support incarcerated fathers and their kids: www.awana.org/lifeline
- **Angel Tree** – minister to children by giving Christmas gifts: www.angeltree.org
- **Kairos Prison Ministry** – resources for spiritually supporting incarcerated individuals and their families: www.kairosprisonministry.org
- *Some Covenant Churches active in prison ministries:*
 - New York Covenant Church (New Rochelle, NY)
 - Wellspring Covenant Church (Hawaii)
 - Tigard Covenant Church (Tigard, OR)
 - Community Covenant Church (Hopinkton, MA)
 - Hillside Covenant Church (Walnut Creek, CA)
 - Nueva Vida Church (Jamestown, NY)

Support Re-entry Ministries

- **Out4Life & InnerChange** are ministries of Prison Fellowship that equip churches for this work.
- *Some Covenant Churches active in re-entry ministry:*
 - TMTL: Truly Motivated Transitional Living (Yelm, WA)
 - Olathe Evangelical Covenant Church (Olathe, KS)
 - Moose Lake Covenant Church (Moose Lake, MN)

For more resources & to learn about the ECC's involvement in criminal justice ministries, go online at www.covchurch.org/what-we-do/mercy-justice/ or call the Covenant Resource Center, 1-800-338-IDEA.