

WHY BOTHER?

2008 United States Rate of Incarceration was the highest in the world per capita!

Florida Prison Population Increases 2.8% Since Last Fiscal Year

http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/publications/inc_factsaboutprisons_Dec2009.pdf

<http://www.nicic.org/Features/StateStats/?State=FL>

The majority of inmates in US prisons on June 30, 2009 are male 93%. 49.7 % black.

******The percentage of black inmates in prison is decreasing (51.0% in June 2005 to 49.7% in June 2009) due to budget cuts and the FL Department of Corrections adopted Faith Based Programs into their rehabilitation plan).

The top five categories of primary offenses for which male inmates are incarcerated:

- 19.8% Drugs
- 14.7% Burglary
- 12.6% Murder/Manslaughter
- 12.4% Aggravated Assault including Forcible Rape
- 12.1% Violent personal Offenses such as Carjacking

Women's primary offenses:

- Larceny
- Drugs/DUI
- Simple Assault
- Counterfeiting
- Prostitution

Want to know a staggering reason for Offenses???

Poor children lag behind their peers in many ways beyond income; they are less healthy, trail in emotional and intellectual development, and do not perform as well in school. The challenges that poor children face accumulate and interact, casting long shadows throughout their lives. Every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity, poorer health and increased crime.

In Florida among all children, 1 in 6 is poor.
1 out of 3.3 Black Children
1 out of 5 Latino children
1 out of 8 White Children
1 out of 9 Asian/Pacific Islander Children.

Most states spend on average 2.8 times as much per prisoner as per public school pupil

Florida \$29,236 \$7,439 3.1

***Florida Taxpayers (2008) pay
33% higher than the National Average!***

Do you know the differences between Jail and Prison?

I. Define jail and prison ministry

1) Jail -

- A. Place for the detention of persons awaiting trial or legal judgment
- B. A secure place for keeping people found guilty of minor crimes sentenced for a year or less
- C. (Juvenile Detention) is a secure residential facility for young people, often termed **juvenile delinquents**, awaiting court hearings and/or placement in long-term care facilities and programs.
<http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/allfacilities.html>

2) Prison-

An institution usually under state control for confinement of persons serving sentences of a year or more for serious crimes

3) Ministry-

: The act of serving God and serving others

Why would I want to get involved?

1) Biblical

“For I was in prison and you came to visit me...when did we see you [in prison] and go to visit you?...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” Matt 25:36-40

2) Reformation John Wesley, prison reformer late 18th Century England:

- 1. Raised money to procure clothing and blankets for French prisoners of the Seven Years War detained in English jails,
- 2. In a period of nine months he preached at least 67 times in various jails
- 3. He raised money to buy linen and wool cloth to make clothes and distributed to the prisoners in greatest need.
- 4. He encouraged all his preachers to visit and to minister to the needs of prisoners.
- 5. His brother, Charles, spent time visiting prisons

3) Restorative Justice

- 1. Caring and allowing for correcting the reason for crime
 - a. ‘Cradle to Prison Pipeline’ (Children’s Defense Fund)
- 2. Caring and allowing for correcting the reason of being a victim
 - a. Allows for forgiveness and reconciliation where appropriate
 - b. ‘Chance to make things right’ (Zehr, Restorative Justice, 34)
- 3. Communities are strengthened and healed
 - a. Early interventions
 - b. Post justice

- 4) Social Justice- United Methodist Book of Discipline
1. Emphasizes 'Restorative Justice' believing "through God's transforming power...seeks to repair the damage..." and that 'the Church is transformed when it responds to the claims of discipleship by becoming an agent of healing and systemic change".
 2. Opposes the Death Penalty in that it "denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all human beings..." that '...all human life is sacred and created by God and therefore, we must see all human life as significant and valuable". By taking the life of someone "then the life of the convicted person is devalued and all possibility of change in that person's life ends ...the possibility of reconciliation with Christ" is taken away.

How do I get involved?

Connecting and transforming lives helps to reduce recidivism or repeat offences:

1. Inside
 - i. Bible Studies
 - ii. Worship Services
 - iii. Mentoring
2. Outside
 - i. Reentry
 - ii. Clothes, ID, Shelter, Programs, Employment
 - iii. Reunion with Families,
 - iv. Faith based organization, Celebrate Recovery, AA/NA
3. Advocate for change
 - i. Fair Sentencing Act
 - ii. Juvenile Justice
 - iii. Sentencing Project

Action steps to ask if you want to get involved?

- 1) Does your church have a Jail/Prison Ministry already?
- 2) Ask your pastor if he/she is aware of nearby churches have ministries and combine forces
- 3) Find out where your closet jail/prison is and find out if there is a Chaplain that needs some volunteer help
- 4) Find out if there is an established Ministry already involved in ministry on the 'inside' such as Good News or Kairos
- 5) Find out if there are 'outside' ministry opportunities such as Healing Hand, Celebrate Recovery, Jim Russo Prison Ministry, Drug/Rehab Programs, etc

Resources:

- 1). 2009 Journal of The Florida Annual Conference Part III, pg
- 2). Zehr, H. *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*; PA, 2002, Good Books.
- 3). Beisswenger, D. *Locked Up*; TN, 2008; Upper Room Books.
- 4). Williams, J. *Sheep in Wolves Clothing*. III, 2000; Moody Press.
- 5) Sample, Tex *Hard Living People & Mainstream Christians*
- 6) General Board Church and Society
- 7) Cradle to prison pipeline - www.childrensdefensefund.org
- 8) National Institute for Corrections
- 9) Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*