

Incarceration Justice - In it for the long haul

When Lent is over please send the total of your daily mite box offerings to St. Marks in one of the following three ways by April 25, 2022:

- 1) Mailing a check to St. Mark's, 301 A Street SE, Washington, DC 20003. In note line put "**mitebox**".
- 2) Making an online contribution using the mitebox form. Click [here](#) to go to form. Incarceration Justice Information Resources
- 3) Texting "stmarks20003 mitebox" followed by the amount to 73256.

Day of Week	Weekly Themes Daily Topics	Daily Reflections
Wednesday 3/2	<p>Our mission as guided by faith and scriptures -the image of God as reflected in the imprint of our creator on all people</p>	<p>For last year's reflections I asked the question, "Why are the people of St. Mark's called to incarceration justice work?" I guess a better question is why are not all professed people of faith called and doing this work? I speak often about how Jesus/the divine spark is seeing people. Seeing them deeply and really and loved. All people are made in God's image with inherent dignity and potential. A restorative approach to justice is a model that can and has changed lives. By working through these daily writings and following the discipline of the Lenten mite box you will be changed. You will hear many different voices in these coming days and I invite you to listen with your heart and be changed and join in the work of restitution, inviting more light, more love, more god into the world. >> Thanks, Rev. Michele Morgan</p>
Thursday 3/3	<p>Compassion for all brothers and sisters</p>	<p>Hebrews 13:1-3 "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters...Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." When a person commits a crime, it tears into the fabric of our community quilt. Thus, we often banish the person to prison to pay their debt. Yet, all of us tear seams in that quilt and make mistakes. Many offenders are not caught, but all transgressions cause trouble in the universe. So too, our willingness to allow endless punishment for individuals extends that harm. We must design compassionate strategies to bring our neighbors back from despair. Think about times when a relationship was broken and the pain it caused. Put a dollar or some coins in the mite box as a remembrance for each one. >> Jan Lipscomb</p>
Friday 3/4	<p>Dignity for All - Restoration and Rehabilitation</p>	<p>Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.... Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2) We should look to Norway whose policy for prisoners is "restore and rehabilitate" in a spirit of gentleness, as we ourselves would like to be treated. Norway treats its prisoners with dignity; its recidivism rate is 20%; ours is 65%. For every time you feel you have not been treated with dignity, contribute a quarter to the mite box. >> Kathryn Powers</p>

<p>Saturday 3/5</p>	<p>Lamenting Collect</p>	<p>Lamenting Collect: God of these weighty, weary years, God of silent, unheard tears, We come before you a people bruised, battered, and broken. In a world that less and less seems to hold the promise of your reign, A world where the weakest of your children are victimized by the strongest of your children, Often in the name of your Son, Jesus, Make yourself known to us in those places where you seem least present. Make known to us a kernel of hope, some seed of healing, Sown deep in these wounds. In the churned-up soil of our hearts, plant the promise of re-birth. Show us we are not alone, abandoned, forgotten, forsaken >> Rev. Joe Hubbard</p>
<p>Sunday 3/6</p>	<p>Incarceration- systemic blight on our social fabric</p>	<p>Today we live in a nation with the world's highest number of incarcerated people, relative to population. Mass incarceration disproportionately affects communities of color. For example, African Americans are incarcerated for drug offenses at a rate 10 times greater than whites, despite relatively equivalent drug use habits. The disproportionate application and impact of laws is not accidental; it is the latest manifestation of a system that has sought to marginalize people of color. In <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i>, Michelle Alexander writes that the criminal justice system "is no longer primarily concerned with the prevention and punishment of crime, but rather with the management and control of the dispossessed." This season of Lent - consider how seriously we take the plight of the dispossessed, and whether systems that exist in our collective names point us toward true justice or simply to punishment. >> Rev. Christopher Phillips</p>
<p>Monday 3/7</p>	<p>Washington Interfaith Network [WIN]</p>	<p>The communities who suffer the racist consequences of our criminal justice system do not have political power. St. Mark's is a member of the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN), which has worked for 25 years to create power in communities like those in DC. In this mayoral election year, WIN is pushing for programs that provide preventative and non-police approaches to community problems, to keep people out of the criminal justice system and their communities safe. Join the parish WIN effort by attending WIN's citywide election year action on March 20 by Zoom or in person and help build connections with other churches across the city. More information: http://stmarks.net/win For each time your household has contacted a government official for help or to change policies that apply to you or made a political contribution, contribute a quarter. >> Christoph Berendes</p>
<p>Tuesday 3/8</p>	<p>School to Prison Pipeline</p>	<p>"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10) Jesus, in the parable of the lost sheep following this verse, begs us to bring back those who wander away, especially children. Zero-tolerance school policies criminalize ALL undesirable behavior, so children violating dress codes or using cell phones are treated the same as those endangering other students and can be suspended or expelled. Those assigned to zero-tolerance districts are more likely to end up in prison as adults than their peers in districts with restorative or scaled discipline systems. Jesus implores us to protect children, and to not put them in a position to stumble. Put a quarter in your mite box for each time you or a loved one may have felt unjustly punished. >> Logan Clark https://www.sentencingproject.org/newsletter/</p>

<p>Wednesday 3/9</p>	<p>Decriminalizing Individuals who are disabled</p>	<p>“God created humankind in their image... God blessed them... God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:27;28). Over 26% of Americans identify as disabled. Individuals with disabilities represent the largest underrepresented community in the United States, from all identity groups and socio-economic backgrounds. Many diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in our society continue to exclude disabled people. Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia segregate and incarcerate disabled people in custodial institutions. COVID-19 decimates those in the disability community, killing disabled Americans at three times the rate as all others. If God created us <i>all</i> in their image, saying all creation was good, why do we force disabled people out of our society and incarcerate them without them committing a crime? Put a nickel in your mite box for every disabled person in your circle of family and friends. >> Nathan Stenberg CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Disability Impacts All of Us,” September 16, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html. • A Washington Post article regarding Disability & COVID •And the National Council on Disabilities Report on COVID.</p>
<p>Thursday 3/10</p>	<p>Youth sentenced as adults</p>	<p>Youth false confessions account for 25% of all convictions. Children are vulnerable and have an inherent desire to please authority figures, or to end an unpleasant experience. Similarly, children often falsely implicate their peers. At the police’s urging, some youth make statements blaming other kids so they can go home. Most youth do not understand or exercise their <i>Miranda</i> rights and are alone during police interrogation, resulting in the child’s statement being involuntary or unreliable. To avoid risking long sentences, youth often agree to plead guilty in exchange for less prison time – even if they did not actually commit the crimes in question.¹ During interrogation, it is legal for police to lie and make false claims, pressuring innocent, vulnerable youth to falsely confess. ² Put a dime in your mite box for every time you remember being a scared kid confronted by authority. >>Karen Falk ¹https://www.law.northwestern.edu/legalclinic/wrongfulconvictionsyouth/understandproblem/ ²https://innocenceproject.org/police-deception-lying-interrogations-youth-teenagers</p>
<p>Friday 3/11</p>	<p>Marginalized Groups and the Prison System</p>	<p>In 2008, five Palestinian Americans from the Dallas area were found guilty of laundering money through a charity to support terrorists groups in the Middle East. This case is controversial and some think an injustice happened. You can read about it in Miko Peled’s 2018 book <i>Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five</i> and in this case study (See pp.185-195). Two of the “Five” are serving 65-year sentences, the others have served or are serving 15 or 20 year sentences. Three of the “Five” remain imprisoned in Texas; the remaining incarcerated member of the “Five,” serving a 65 year sentence, has been moved from several prisons, and is currently in a Federal Prison in Kentucky You can read New Years blog entry by Shikri Abu Baker who is currently serving his 65 year sentence in Texas. Put a quarter in the Mite Box for every time you have felt an injustice. >> Mary Neznok Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five, by Miko Peled</p>
<p>Saturday 3/12</p>	<p>Restorative Justice</p>	<p>Founded in the 1970s by Prison Fellowship International, Restorative Justice is active in over 125 countries to serve prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. In the U.S., Restorative Justice has been primarily applied for minor offenses or for juveniles, although research indicates it is effective for more severe crimes. Unlike state-centered punitive justice, Restorative Justice is victim-centered, personal, and focused on the victim and healing. Through mediation and conflict resolution, the offender is held accountable to the other parties, while also receiving a learning experience that offers law-abiding lifestyles as alternatives to criminality. Think of times you caused harm to another, even unintentionally. Might you have needed to apologize, but also to know this one incident wouldn’t define you? Did someone help you make things right? Place one dollar in your mite box for each time you can recall. >> Penny Farley Centre for Justice and Reconciliation http://restorativejustice.org/#sthash.tvQDLLeFr.dpbs Bureau of Justice Assistance https://bja.ojp.gov/ Office of Justice Programs https://www.ojp.gov/</p>

<p>Sunday 3/13</p>	<p>Lifting up Root Causes</p>	<p>"We have yet to understand: that if I am starving, you are in danger." -James Baldwin, Transformative justice moves us from "This person deserves to be incarcerated" to "What conditions led this person to be incarcerated?" We go from individual to communal responsibility and accountability. Our society assumes punishment is the way to correct someone when they have caused harm and will restore them to right relationship. But in Lent, God is awakening us to how our ideas of punishment and restitution literally and figuratively imprison those we deem deserving of punishment before, during and after they serve time. This ideology imprisons all of us in the vicious cycle of violence and oppression. Think of times over the past week when you saw someone in trouble or being "punished." For every time you thought "they must have done something to deserve it", put a dime in your mite box. >> Hazel Monae, Missioner for Equity and Justice, Episcopal Diocese of Washington EDOW</p>
<p>Monday 3/14</p>	<p>Creating Good Trouble</p>	<p>The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers reminds us that Jesus' healing ministry to transform people and institutions makes him the original disrupter and calls disruption a "holy gift." Jesus disrupted the political, social and religious status quo in first-century Palestine. As followers of Jesus, we are called to transform the root causes of injustice and inequity in modern institutions. This includes our criminal-justice system, which disproportionately impacts people of color and those who are poor. ReThink Justice DC is a coalition of individuals, groups and returning citizens who are committed to reshaping the criminal legal system in the District of Columbia. ReThink Justice participants advocate for reforms that provide alternatives to incarceration and ensure returning citizens are prepared for successful reentry and receive necessary services and support. Put a dime in your mite box for every person you can think of who started a great change by "disrupting" their world. >> Rev. Julie Petersmeyer ReThink Justice DC https://rethinkjusticedc.org/ <i>The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community</i>, by Stephanie Spellers, March 17, 2021 https://rethinkjusticedc.org/</p>
<p>Tuesday 3/15</p>	<p>Visiting individuals who are incarcerated</p>	<p>Family connections are shown to reduce recidivism. Research since the 1970s has concluded visits, phone calls, and snail mail all support an inmate's reentry into society. Family connections are often made difficult either by prison management or by the cost of a visit, including long-distance travel and loss of income for taking a day off. The logistics of arranging a visit can be daunting for family members who may meet with their incarcerated loved one for only 45 minutes. How do you maintain ties with family? Do you call your relatives on holidays? Put a quarter in the mite box for each of the family members you called on Thanksgiving or Christmas. >> Susan Sedgewick "The Importance of Supporting Family Connections to Ensure Successful Reentry" by Emily Mooney and Nila Bala www.rstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Final-Short-No.-63-1.pdf</p>
<p>Wednesday 3/16</p>	<p>Employment after incarceration</p>	<p>A year after release, 75% of formerly incarcerated individuals still don't have a job, leading to poor health and housing outcomes, and increased likelihood of recidivism. But several studies show that formerly incarcerated individuals are more likely than their peers to remain loyal to their employers, and very few are ever fired. Soldiers with felony records are 33% more likely than their peers to be promoted to Sergeant. Clearly, they have a lot to offer. But only 15 states have required private employers to "ban the box" – prohibit asking about incarceration history until a conditional offer of employment. These initiatives provide a step in the right direction to remove unnecessary bias in the hiring process. Reflect on any time someone didn't give you a chance because of one thing about you– maybe your race, sex, gender, religion, or education. Make an offering to your mite box. >> Logan Clark https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/060917-trone-reportweb_0.pdf</p>
<p>Thursday 3/17</p>	<p>From Slavery to the Prison Economy</p>	<p>In 2019, Bryan Stevenson described a client's experience at the Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana, where inmates "worked in fields under the supervision of horse-riding, shotgun-toting guards who forced them to pick crops.... If they refused to pick cotton — or failed to pick it fast enough — they could be punished with time in 'the hole,' where food was restricted and inmates were</p>

sometimes tear-gassed.” Repeat-offender laws put non-violent offenders (usually black men) in prison for life for minor offenses. In some states, the slave economy has simply taken on another name – the prison economy. After the DOJ sued the Alabama Department of Corrections for failure to provide safe conditions of confinement, the state passed [legislation](#) to put \$400 million towards the construction of two men’s mega prisons. Put a nickle in your mite box for each of the 15 decades that have passed since slavery was legally outlawed in the U.S. >>Rev. Joe Hubbard
<https://thehill.com/opinion/criminal-justice/576556-alabama-using-covid-funds-to-build-new-prisons-is-that-bidens-vision>

Hope

By Aneka

I hope I grow up one day
I hope I live to see 90+
I hope the anger in me goes away
I hope I don't just give up
I hope I'll have a family soon
I hope someone claims me as their own
I hope I'll still see the sun and moon
Each day is a blessing and I won't give up
I hope I can right my wrongs
I hope I can start over new
I want to be a better person
And not a simple fool
I hope prison changes me for the better
I don't want to be institutionalized
I hope this keeps me from stealing
And telling stupid lies
Now I'm free!
I can finally make things right
No more hoping
It's time to live my life

All entries from Free Minds Book Club, submitted with permission of poets.

Friday 3/18

Free Minds
Book Club
member

<p>Saturday 3/19</p>	<p>Free Minds Book Club member</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">My Free Mind By William</p> <p style="text-align: center;">My mind is now freed On this pad I let my thoughts bleed I don't have a one-track mind I think of everything My brain is racin' at lightning speed I cried tears cuz I once was in need I'm still physically locked up But now my mind is freed So at 10:45 when the door shuts I pack my bags, and my mind takes me overseas Then I'm somewhere on an island Under them palm trees I got a gift that we all need A pencil, lined paper and eraser So free ya' mind You'll be surprised where it takes ya' I'm in my cell But my mind 'bout to take me on a trip I guess I'll see you later When I'm back on the rip</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All entries from Free Minds Book Club, submitted with permission of poets.</i></p>
<p>Sunday 3/20</p>	<p>Solitary confinement and pandemic confinement</p>	<p>Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. (Psalm 82:3) In the last two years, many of us have felt restricted or confined to our homes. Can you imagine being confined to a 6x 8 cell, 23 hours a day? According to the <i>Washington Post</i>, "For over a year, 1,500 people held at D.C. jails have been confined to cells 23 hours a day. They were also denied visits from family and use of the library.... A majority of the jail inmates have not yet been found guilty of the crimes for which they were arrested." Pandemic confinement has become solitary confinement for many. Studies have identified adverse psychological reactions that commonly affect prisoners in isolation units. When you're feeling restricted or confined let us remember "Do Justice" and place an offering in the mite box. >> Rev. Ricardo Sheppard https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/04/19/dc-jail-lockdown-covid/ Craig Haney, The Psychological Effects of Solitary Confinement</p>

<p>Monday 3/21</p>	<p>Solitary confinement</p>	<p>It is estimated 80,000 people are in solitary confinement in state and federal prisons in the US. Prisoners are placed in solitary confinement for reasons such as punishment for not following the rules, as a tool to manage gangs, and sometimes for protection. Solitary confinement is characterized by placement in a small concrete cell for 22-23 hours a day, limited meaningful contact with other human beings, little or no reading material, no TV, no phone, and often no personal items. Time out of the cell is spent in a slightly larger concrete area or a steel cage. Solitary confinement has been described as a sentence worse than death. The boredom, idleness, and loneliness are relentless. Many people placed in solitary confinement already suffer from severe mental illness that is exacerbated by their isolation. Place a quarter in your mite box if you've ever felt lonely. >> Suzanne Wells</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hell is a Very Small Place. Voices from Solitary Confinement. Edited by Jean Casella, James Ridgeway and Sarah Shourd, Copyright 2016. 2. Opinion, My Night in Solitary, Rick Raemisch, February 20,2014, New York Times. 3. The Archives of the Episcopal Church, The Acts of Convention, Resolution 2018-D029, Condemn Prolonged Solitary Confinement as a Form of Torture. 4. American Friends Service Committee, Facts on Solitary Confinement, https://www.afsc.org/resource/solitary-confinement-facts
<p>Tuesday 3/22</p>	<p>Solitary confinement - anything over 15 days is considered torture</p>	<p>Some people spend a short time in solitary confinement while others have spent decades. The U.N. Committee Against Torture condemns the use of solitary confinement, and has said solitary confinement of more than 15 consecutive days is regarded as a form of torture. The Episcopal Church condemns solitary confinement because of its dehumanizing and harmful effects. There are many efforts to end prolonged solitary confinement in the US, mostly focused at the state level. The 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church called upon all Episcopalians to demand that their governments end any use of prolonged solitary confinement in prisons, jails and detention centers. "Remember those in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured" (Hebrews 13:3). Place \$1 in your mite box if you've ever felt trapped. >> Suzanne Wells</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hell is a Very Small Place. Voices from Solitary Confinement. Edited by Jean Casella, James Ridgeway and Sarah Shourd, Copyright 2016. 2. Opinion, My Night in Solitary, Rick Raemisch, February 20,2014, New York Times. 3. The Archives of the Episcopal Church, The Acts of Convention, Resolution 2018-D029, Condemn Prolonged Solitary Confinement as a Form of Torture. 4. American Friends Service Committee, Facts on Solitary Confinement, https://www.afsc.org/resource/solitary-confinement-facts
<p>Wednesday 3/23</p>	<p>Effects of Solitary Confinement</p>	<p>Even one stay in solitary confinement is associated with increased risk of death after release from prison. A study of 229,274 individuals who were incarcerated in North Carolina prisons from January 2000 to December 2015 found that those who spent any amount of time in solitary confinement or restrictive housing were more likely to die in the first year after release. These deaths were often due to suicide. Death from opioid abuse was often likely to occur in the first 2 weeks after release, as well as reincarceration. The more time spent in solitary confinement significantly exacerbates risk of death. Put 12 quarters in the mite box and think about the challenging year that someone has when they are released from prison. >> Suanna Bruinooge Association of Restrictive Housing During Incarceration With Mortality After Release</p>
<p>Thursday 3/24</p>	<p>Youth confined in adult prisons</p>	<p>Nearly 200,000 youth enter the adult criminal-justice system each year. These children lose their freedom when they enter adult prisons; some are placed in 'protective custody' [solitary confinement] isolated from the terror of hardened adult prisoners. In the name of protecting them, the prison administration has tossed adolescent felons into situations that will likely cause mental illness. The children also lose out on the educational and psychological benefits otherwise offered by juvenile-detention facilities. Worse, they are much more likely to suffer sexual abuse and violence at the hands of other inmates and prison staff. Kids who are placed in the adult system are 34 times more likely to recidivate than their counterparts in the juvenile system. Put a quarter in your mite box for each year you were in school and did not get arrested. >> Karen Falk https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/01/the-cost-of-keeping-juveniles-in-adult-prisons/423201/</p>

Friday 3/25	Pandemic and incarceration	<p>Incarcerated persons have a higher risk of catching COVID-19, particularly if they are unvaccinated, because prisons and jails are too crowded for social distancing. In May 2020, before vaccines were available, the D.C. Jail COVID-19 infection rate was 13 times higher than in DC overall. The D.C. Jail did not provide enough medical care, cleaning, or masks to the residents. This winter, the D.C. Jail had a surge of the omicron variant of COVID-19. In December 2021, 12 percent of the residents and 1 of every 5 staff members caught COVID. At that time, only 37 percent of residents were fully vaccinated. By mid-January 2022, 3 of 5 D.C. Jail residents remained in quarantine because of potential viral exposure. How many COVID-19 cases did your school, workplace, or neighborhood report this past week? Put a quarter in your mite box for each case. >> Alisa Tanaka-Dodge</p> <p>Renewed push for inmate release after coronavirus cases in DC jail climb 25-fold WTOP News</p> <p>Strained Situation At DC Jail Exacerbated By COVID Outbreak – WAMU</p>
Saturday 3/26	Prison Education Programs	<p>In December, 2021, James Ruffin III graduated from the University of Baltimore (UBalt). Released from prison in 2019, he immediately enrolled in UBalt through the Goucher Prison Education Program (GPEP). His reason was that, “Guys that come home and they don't have nobody, don't have nothing ... if they can't get a job, they're gonna go back to whatever they were doing that incarcerated 'em.” GPEP now has 17 graduates and 200 current students. Studies confirm in-prison education has a huge positive impact. Students in the Bard Prison Initiative were 38.6% less likely to return to prison, and every 12 credits completed dropped the rate 1.3% more. The RAND Corporation found prison students were 43% less likely to reoffend. For each year of post secondary education in your family, put a quarter in your mite box. >> Elin Whitney-Smith</p> <p>Goucher Prison Education Program</p>
Sunday 3/27	Voices from those entangled in the system	<p>We Christians like to talk about the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. What is this good news, exactly? When Jesus began his ministry, he quoted the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” So the good news is literally the announcement of liberation—in this world, here and now. As Jesus teaches us, we are to pray for the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven. Put a quarter in your mite box for every time you got to share “good news” with someone this week, and remember how that felt. >> Rev. Scott Lipscomb</p>
Monday 3/28	Hope for Young People - Cure the Streets public safety program from the Office of the Attorney General	<p>Imagine growing up and believing with near certainty that you would not live to see your 18th birthday. Unfortunately, this is the reality for many Washingtonians who live in fear of gun violence. To reduce gun violence – a multi-layered and multigenerational issue – we must bring the people closest to this problem into the solution. That's why in 2018, my office launched Cure the Streets (CTS), a pilot public safety program aimed at reducing gun violence in several D.C. neighborhoods that have historically experienced high levels of gun violence. We employ local, credible people with deep ties to these neighborhoods, who can detect, mediate, and prevent conflicts and shootings. Many Cure Team members are formerly justice involved individuals. They know this work isn't easy – but they do it because they want to end gun violence. We need to give our young people hope and show them that a life without gun violence is possible. >> Contributed by Karl A. Racine, DC Attorney General</p> <p>https://oag.dc.gov/public-safety/cure-streets-oags-violence-interruption-program</p>
Tuesday 3/29	Forgiveness and Hope from Behind Bars	<p>Matthew 25:36, "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." I did not know what to expect when I visited the men at Elmwood Jail, located in Milpitas, CA. Actually, I was scared. Society and culture had shaped my thoughts about people in jail and prison. I was struck by the sense of gratitude expressed by the men after my first visit. I went back, moved by their hope in an all too often hopeless situation. Over and over, I heard the same tale; "Nobody</p>

		<p>cares about us. I am just a number. I am not worthy of forgiveness or God's love." The truth is, this is where I've experienced the image of God shining bright. Think about your family and the support you receive from them. Put a quarter in your mite box for each of your family members. >> Joel Martinez, Seminarian</p>
<p>Wednesday 3/30</p>	<p>Free Minds Book Club member</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Unexpected By Paulo</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The doors open and I am escorted in Wearing an oversized orange jumpsuit I glance around and find myself being stared at The air circulating the room Brings goose bumps to my skin I just want to run away I want to hide And erase the moment The judge calls out my name Within minutes, my future is called out I am left speechless Escorted out, I struggle to move my legs My knees want to give up on me I cannot hold myself together I am still adding the numbers</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All entries from Free Minds Book Club, submitted with permission of poets.</i></p>
<p>Thursday 3/31</p>	<p>Free Minds Book Club member</p>	<p>I feel alone By Carlos R.</p> <p>I find myself growing up in a judicial system and not at home with my parents, but growing each day in jail this makes me feel less</p> <p>People begin to forget me and forget about my problems They forget that I am a human being who made a mistake</p> <p>People forget about me each day, they treat me like a criminal. I'm afraid to spend my life in jail. I feel alone in jail</p> <p>And I can't change what I did</p>

		<p>I feel that the judicial system Doesn't want me to leave, I feel like they want to leave me here, as if I didn't have a life or a family. I feel alone in jail</p> <p><i>Spanish Translation:</i></p> <p>Me siento solo Por Carlos R.</p> <p>Me encuentro a mi mismo creciendo en un sistema judicial y no en la casa con mis padres, si no creciendo cada dia en la carcel esto me hace sentirme de menos.</p> <p>Las personas empiezan a olvidarse de mi y de mis problemas se olvidan que soy un humano mas que cometió un error.</p> <p>Las personas se olvidan de mi cada dia mas, me tratan como un criminal tengo miedo pasar mi vida en la carcel. Me siento solo en la carcel.</p> <p>Y no puedo cambiar lo que hice Siento que el sistema judicial no quiere dejarme ir, siento como que quieren dejarme aquí, como que si no tuviera vida o familia. Me siento solo en la carcel.</p> <p><i>All entries from Free Minds Book Club, submitted with permission of poets.</i></p>
<p>Friday 4/1</p>	<p>Free Minds Book Club member</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The Vault</u> By Donald</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Locked away deep down inside Is where my treasure lies And my secrets hide So dear and sacred to me it needs two locks Not even the most sneaky could pick pock I let my feelings collect dust, way down there</p>

		<p style="text-align: center;"> Just so I won't let 'em show out here The code to the vault is truth But I'm scared to unlock it I wish my feelings, pain, and thoughts inside it Could take off in a rocket But they can't, so my secret storage will have to do That's how I deal with things, how 'bout you? When I have bad things happen or bad thoughts It all goes in the vault <i>All entries from Free Minds Book Club, submitted with permission of poets.</i> </p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> Saturday 4/2 </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Free Minds Book Club members </p>	<p> A poem from a father to his youngest son By Timothy The worst pain I've ever felt was looking at you, reach for me through a video screen and I couldn't touch you; right then, I knew what it felt like to die, a living death Metamorphosis By Alva R. For me, time is in short supply I was sentenced to 15 years But that is just an address, a location It's where my body is But my mind is elsewhere I'm reimagining who I am I'm developing my new skillset for use later When I am busy doing, time goes so fast I am going to be prepared for my opportunity I am in a metamorphosis <i>All entries from Free Minds Book Club, submitted with permission of poets.</i> </p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> Sunday 4/3 </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Voices from those entangled in the system </p>	<p> "Religion that God [...] accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:27 When a person is incarcerated, their family sometimes suffers as much as the prisoner. Inmates' families are like widows and orphans, with the added stigma of proximity to a crime. "Collateral damage of the justice system" refers to millions of family members of those in prison. African-American, Latinx, and Indigenous people are disproportionately affected by incarceration. </p>

		<p>Many lack sufficient income to live, eat, and pay rent. Parents may become harsh; children may rebel, drop out of school or seek drugs to escape. Physical separation makes it hard to nurture fragile bonds. Helping families stay connected is faith in action. Give generously to the “widows and orphans” of our justice system. >> Rev. Patricia Catalano</p>
Monday 4/4	Prison phone system	<p>In-person visits in prisons and jails have been restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic and incarcerated persons are not allowed to possess mobile phones for security reasons. The only legal way to stay in touch with loved ones is to use the prison phone service, often provided by a for-profit company. Lack of competition and regulations allow prison telecommunications companies to charge high fees. A 15-minute call from jail costs an average of \$5.74, in some places as much as \$24.82! Because most incarcerated persons’ families are low-income, more than 1/3 of them go into debt to pay for phone calls and visits. The last time you talked on the phone or video to a loved one who doesn’t live with you, how long was the call? Put a quarter in your mite box for each minute of your call. >> Alisa Tanaka-Dodge</p>
Tuesday 4/5	Returning Citizens	<p>Courtney Stewart, the Founder and CEO of The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens, says this about life after incarceration: “You come home to the same judgment, same barriers, same misinformation, same false pretenses. Coming home from prison is very deceiving and difficult. Individuals need a lot of support and a realistic view of what’s going on, instead of having to hit a brick wall. Not having that support is why so many go back to prison or have dependency issues with drugs.” In response to this reality, the DC Public Defender’s Office recently created a 900-page DC Reentry Navigator. It includes information on everything from getting a library card to public benefits, from healthcare to employment. It also includes guides on budgeting, educational resources, voting and housing. For every GPS that you or your family uses to navigate, put \$1 in the mite box. >> Julie Murphy</p> <p>The D.C. Reentry Navigator: Empowering You to Succeed with D.C. Criminal Record https://www.pdsdc.org/news/dcreentrynavigatorpressrelease</p>
Wednesday 4/6	Family Members of Inmates	<p>AFOI (Assisting Families of Inmates) in Richmond, VA, offers a Milk and Cookies program for children who have a loved one in prison. They run children’s support groups and offer guidance to parents, teachers, and service providers on the unique challenges for these children. They also help those caring for them with information on financial, transportation and mental health resources. They even provide guidance on healthy family reunification when the parents are released. Milk and cookies are always good: for every dessert you had this week, put a quarter in the box! >> Julie Murphy</p> <p>https://afoi.org/ Assisting Families of Inmates (located in Richmond, VA) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sl_MbDD47tk&t=19s Trauma Informed Project in Richmond for children of inmates during pandemic virtual schooling</p>
Thursday 4/7	Juror experience	<p>I have served on one petit jury. I was concerned by the jury’s make-up, ten Whites and two Blacks, to hear a case against a Black male. I did not understand what made that situation possible. In preparing this piece, I learned one major reason. Every state has some form of jury exclusion statute disallowing former felons to serve on juries. Since the criminal justice system disproportionately targets Black people, one-third of Black men nationwide have a felony conviction. Therefore fewer Black men are available in the jury pool. Blacks and Latinx will get a fair trial by a jury of their peers only when laws are modified to enable racially diverse juries. Diverse juries have been shown to deliberate longer, consider a wider range of information, and respect racial perspectives. Put a quarter in the mite box for each time you felt unfairly punished. >> Kathryn Powers</p>

Friday 4/8	Juror experience	I was the only Black male in the group of 14 jurors called to the Courthouse. After <i>voir dire</i> , I remained the only Black male juror. The defendant? A 23-year-old Black male on trial for double homicide. The victims? Two Black males, 19 and 20 years old. A drug deal gone bad in a Virginia suburb. The trial took two weeks. I refused to be the foreman. One Black woman accepted the challenge. I resented the tokenism, the fact that all involved could have been my grandsons, and the fact that we are still killing each other. The thirteen bullets in evidence, crime scene photos, easy access to guns, and solid middle-class upbringing of the defendant left me with sleepless nights deciding his fate. He won't get out until he's 59. Still haunts me. Put a dollar in the mite box for each time you served as a juror. >> Don Lipscomb
Saturday 4/9	Free Minds Book Club member	<p style="text-align: center;">Believe In Me By S.W.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Believe in me Not too many people believe in me Except the lady that conceived me But it's times I feel like even she ain't believe in me My past made me strong And helped my future be bright I believe the sun going to continue to shine No matter how hard you fight The couple people that believe in me Are at home needing me</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All entries from Free Minds Book Club, submitted with permission of poets.</i></p>
Palm Sunday 4/10	Progress toward Incarceration Justice	Think about the relationships in your life that have provided you with support, encouragement, nurture, growth opportunities, skill-building, trust, honesty, and safety. Make a contribution to your mite box for each example you can name. >> Rev. Michele Morgan

Local organizations, focus of their work, and locations/clientele served

Resource organization	Focus	Areas served
Free Minds Book Club https://freemindsbookclub.org/	-Supplies books, writing workshops and training -Promotes mentors -Works with citizens and youth returning to the community from prison or detention, helping them to use their voices effectively, seek meaningful ways to participate and work, and find mutual support.	D.C. residents (direct service) Virtual platforms welcome all individuals who seek to participate

<p>Returning Citizens Action Network</p> <p>https://www.nyapc.org/social-action/returning-citizens-assistance-network/</p>	<p>-Founded by New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and Metropolitan AME Church</p> <p>-Responds to urgent requests for citizens impacted by the justice system. Examples include help for families caring for children of those who are in prison, garments for citizens released with one set of clothes and no coat, and food cards.</p>	<p>DC - clients of the Public Defender Service</p>
<p>The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens</p> <p>https://thenationalreentrynetwork.org/</p> <p>3227 Dubois PI SE Washington, DC 20019 202 584-1000 Courtney Stewart, Founder & CEO</p>	<p>-Classes</p> <p>-Resources to help with necessities: documents, housing, work, healthcare</p>	<p>National</p>
<p>Interfaith Action for Human Rights [IAHR]</p> <p>https://www.interfaithactionhr.org/</p> <p>P.O. Box 55802, Washington, DC 240-324-9160 Rabbi Chuck Feinberg</p>	<p>-Pen Pal program</p> <p>-Advocacy for Prisoners, especially focused on eliminating Solitary Confinement</p> <p>-IAHR represents people of faith who educate and advocate in Maryland, DC and Virginia for corrections systems that avoid unnecessarily punitive practices such as solitary confinement and that instead focus on rehabilitation and successful reentry.</p>	<p>DC, Maryland, and Virginia</p>

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