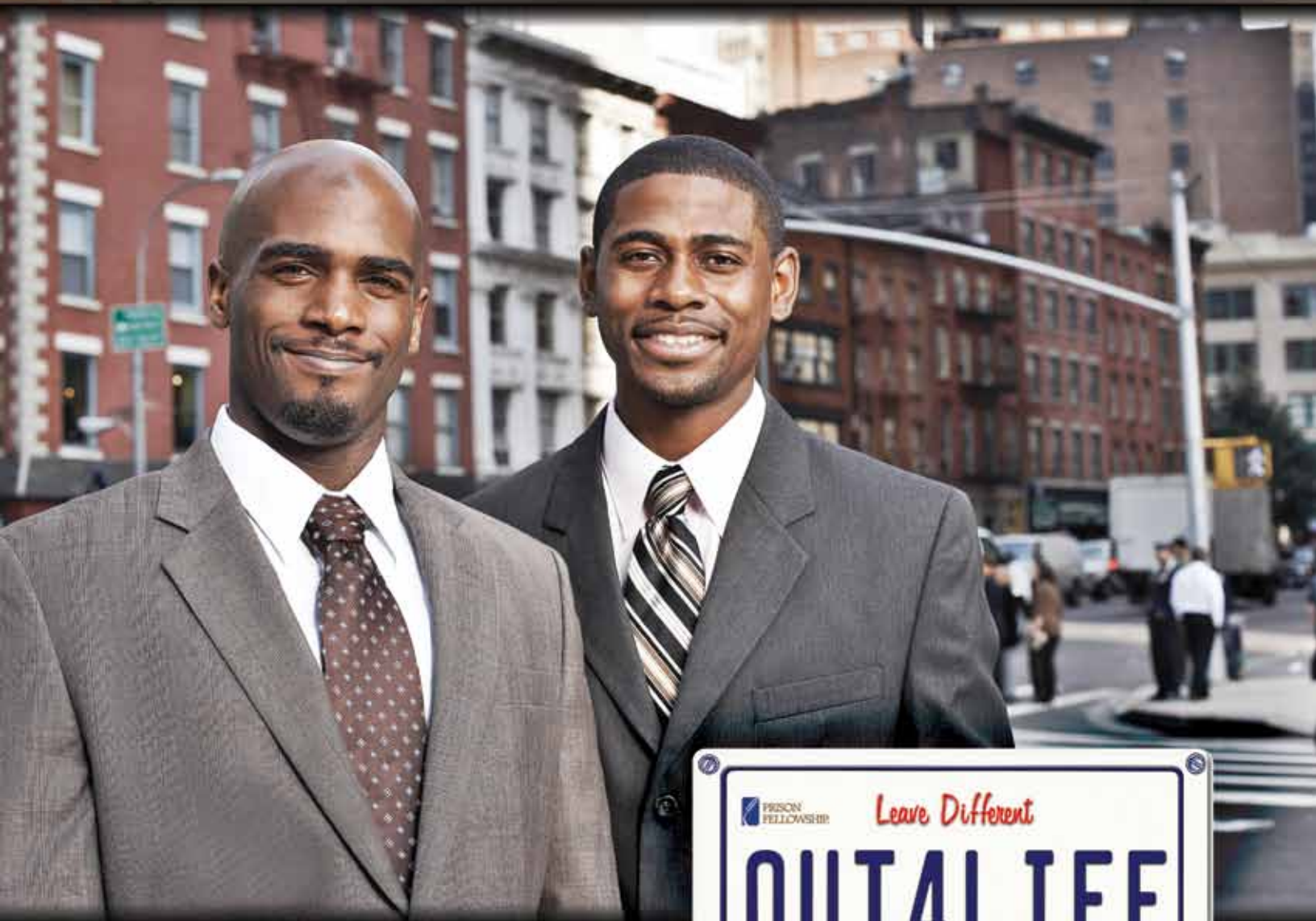


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OUR BEST HOPE FOR PERSISTENT PRISONER TRANSFORMATION:

A CASE STUDY OF OUT4LIFE



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**OUR BEST HOPE FOR PERSISTENT PRISONER TRANSFORMATION:
A CASE STUDY OF OUT4LIFE**



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BACKGROUND	5	PRISON FELLOWSHIP MOVES TOWARD REENTRY	13
ANSWERING A CALL TO PRISON MINISTRY	6	OUT4LIFE IS LAUNCHED IN LOUISIANA	15
EVIDENCE THAT TRANSFORMATION MINISTRY MATTERS IN PRISONS	6	OUT4LIFE COALITIONS: CARRYING THE MOMENTUM FORWARD	16
THE PROBLEM: PRISONER REENTRY	7	OUT4LIFE CROSSES THE BORDER	17
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAKES AN INITIAL STEP IN ADDRESSING PRISONER REENTRY	8	OUT4LIFE GOES NATIONAL	18
THE SOLUTION: EXTENDING TRANSFORMATIONAL MINISTRY TO THE COMMUNITY - OUT4LIFE	9	SUSTAINING OUT4LIFE	19
OUT4LIFE: WORKING TOGETHER TO GIVE EX-PRISONERS A SECOND CHANCE	12	OUT4LIFE AN INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATONS	19
THE ORIGINS OF OUT4LIFE	13	CONCLUSION	23
		ENDNOTES	24
		ABOUT THE AUTHORS	26



Leave Different

OUTALIFE

THE STATE OF REENTRY



OUT4LIFE, PF'S NEWEST INITIATIVE, SEEKS TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL REENTRY NETWORK TO ASSIST THE 700,000 PLUS PRISONERS RELEASED EACH YEAR IN THE UNITED STATES TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION BACK TO THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.

BACKGROUND

Prison Fellowship (PF) was launched in 1976 by Chuck Colson, the former Nixon aide who had spent time in prison for his part in the Watergate scandal. Colson's religious conversion, documented in the autobiography *Born Again*, would dramatically change his life after release from prison. Indeed, Colson has spent the last 34 years trying to give other prisoners the same opportunity for radical change and freedom that he found. PF's mission is: "To seek the transformation of prisoners and their reconciliation to God, family, and community through the power and truth of Jesus Christ." PF pursues this mission through six service areas/programs:

1. Traditional Prison Ministry including Bible Studies, Seminars, and visitation delivered by PF trained volunteers.
2. InnerChange Freedom Initiative a values-based program of Christian service for inmates preparing for release to help them transform their lives and re-enter society successfully.
3. Justice Fellowship works for reform through grassroots lobbying and interacting with federal and state government officials.
4. Operation Starting Line represents a partnership between PF and dozens of other Christian ministries to bring the transforming message of Jesus Christ to prisoners across the country through in-prison outreaches.
5. Angel Tree partners with churches throughout the country in order to reach out to the children of inmates and their families in Christian love, initially through gifts at Christmas time but also extending throughout the year with the goal of developing relationships with the families of prisoners as well as providing children of prisoners with summer camp scholarships and mentoring relationships.
6. Out4Life, PF's newest initiative, seeks to develop a national reentry network to assist the 700,000 plus prisoners released each year in the United States to make a successful transition back to their families and communities.

Prison Fellowship International has ministries in 117 countries worldwide. In the U.S. alone, PF has an active presence in over 1,300 prisons through more than 14,000 volunteers ministering to over 200,000 prisoners and their families annually working through about 7,700 churches and other prison ministries. Therefore, Prison Fellowship—helps this vast network of trained volunteers and churches—to work both inside and outside of our nation's prisons to help reconcile incarcerated men and women to God, to their families, and to their communities.

ANSWERING A CALL TO PRISON MINISTRY

Historically, Prison Fellowship has primarily focused on traditional in-prison ministries, beckoning to the call of Matthew 25, where Jesus references the visiting of prisoners in jail as one of the ways of serving God:

... ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me.’ (Matthew 25:40 – NIV).

When Prison Fellowship started in the mid 1970s, the focus of this ministry was largely dedicated to helping prisoners become Christians and then to help them become mature Christians. PF’s programs were essentially dedicated to inspirational seminars and Bible studies that were designed to nurture and deepen an inmate’s Christian faith commitment. It is not a coincidence that one of the earliest of Prison Fellowship’s programs was called the DC Discipleship Seminar. This seminar was viewed as an intensive study and reflection experience to help offenders develop what Chuck Colson has often referred to as a Christian worldview. The idea behind the seminar was to lead prisoners into serious study of the scripture that would enable them to stand more strongly in their faith.

Since its founding, a hallmark goal of PF has been “to see prisoners come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ and be transformed into His image as they follow Him.” It is an intentional approach of equipping and nurturing prisoners to “demonstrate Christ-likeness in all areas of their lives: transformed mind, character, relationships, service, and influence.” Thus, for Prison Fellowship, there has been a persistent priority in connecting evangelism with discipleship. PF has long maintained it is through this process of transformation that authentic rehabilitation can best be achieved.

In the late 1970s, and on into the 1980s, PF was pioneering national ministries dedicated

to systematically and comprehensively providing faith-based outreach programs to prisoners. Over time, PF expanded its programs in two fundamental ways. The first way was through Justice Fellowship, established in 1983, which spearheaded research and reform efforts in order to: 1) improve the nation’s criminal justice system; 2) repair the harms caused by crime; and 3) bring greater peace and security to lives and communities. The second way PF expanded upon its in-prison ministry work was to reach out to the families of the incarcerated through the Angel Tree program, starting back in 1982. Although limited in terms of the level and duration of this outreach to families of the incarcerated (i.e., through distribution of Christmas gifts and a scripture message to children of prisoners), it nonetheless marked an acknowledgement on the part of PF of the needs beyond those addressed through its in-prison ministries.

From various in-prison seminars, Bible studies, restorative justice programs, and in recent years to faith-based dorms and even faith-based prisons, PF has been the global leader in facilitating programs for those incarcerated. Indeed, PF has been instrumental in recruiting and training record numbers of volunteers in local churches and helping them engage in active prison ministry.

EVIDENCE THAT TRANSFORMATION MINISTRY MATTERS IN PRISONS

Though it is not widely known, there is empirical evidence that religious volunteers, religious programs, and faith-based organizations can positively influence the rehabilitation of prisoners. In the mid-1990s, Prison Fellowship commissioned research to determine the effects of faith-based interventions on prisoner recidivism. Utilizing a quasi-experimental design, the study examined the influence of religious programs on prisoner adjustment (i.e. institutional infractions or rule violations) and recidivism rates (i.e. post-release arrests) in two matched groups of inmates from four adult prisons in New York

State. One group had participated in programs sponsored by PF; the second group had no involvement with PF programs. Researchers found that after controlling for level of involvement in PF-sponsored programs, inmates who were most active in Bible studies were significantly less likely to be arrested during the one-year follow-up period.

A follow-up study was conducted with an additional seven years of data and found that after dividing the sample by levels of participation in Bible studies, high participants were less likely to be rearrested two and three years after release from prison. The study concluded that participation in religious programs and activities can contribute to positive inmate adjustment while in prison, as well as reduce the likelihood of recidivism following release from prison. Additionally, research suggests that faith-based dorms and housing units have the potential to counter the negative and often harmful prison culture that pervades so many prisons. This emerging body of evidence suggests religious volunteers and faith-based programs have the potential to play a significant role in prison management, safety, and offender rehabilitation.

A six-year evaluation of a faith-based prison program called the InnerChange Freedom Initiative found that inmates completing the program were significantly less likely than a matched group of prisoners to be rearrested (17% v. 35%) or re-incarcerated (8% v. 20%) during a two-year follow-up period. The study revealed a stark contrast between the areas of the prison where the faith-based program operated as opposed to those areas housing prisoners from the general population. The general population was typified by the presence of a distinct prison code of behavior that often condones rule-breaking and other inappropriate behaviors. Not surprisingly, traditional prison culture often works to undermine the very premises on which a rehabilitation model is based.

In contrast, the faith-based side of the prison was typified by: educational classes, study, work, worship services, little free time, and the absence of television sets and pornography. Further, the faith-based program enjoyed an atmosphere promoting forgiveness, honesty, and personal accountability. Faith-based efforts like InnerChange, Kairos (another

faith-based prison program), and other faith-based ministries are designed to discourage antisocial behavior and to encourage positive or what social scientists call prosocial behavior. Faith-based prison programs promote contrition and spiritual transformation, and can even provide an antidote to the pervasive prison code. Preliminary research lends at least initial support for the notion that faith-based dorms or units can create an environment conducive to effective treatment and to rehabilitation programs more generally. In this way, faith-based interventions enhance the achievement of a secular goal and civic good – lower recidivism.

Prison Fellowship has been and will remain committed to transformational ministry in prisons across the country and around the world. This commitment to transformation ministry in prisons, however, does not mean Prison Fellowship can ignore other glaring needs and opportunities to be proactive in addressing one of the most neglected and troubling areas facing society today – the plight of ex-prisoners.

THE PROBLEM: PRISON REENTRY

Traditionally, the culture and function of the correctional system in the United States has focused more on the notion of punishment or incapacitation (what some have referred to as simply warehousing) of criminals than it has been on their rehabilitation. However, as the prison population as well as the associated taxpayer costs for housing prisoners continued to grow, greater attention and focus turned towards recidivism, which refers to the percentage of prisoners that go back to prison after serving their term, either for repeat crimes or for technical violations of their parole. In June of 2002, the Bureau of Justice released the results of an important study on recidivism for prisoners released in 1994. That study found that among the 300,000 inmates released from prison, two-thirds were re-arrested within three years. More recent research, unfortunately, confirms that recidivism rates have essentially remained unchanged.

In less than three decades, the U.S. prison population has grown from roughly 300,000 to approximately

1.5 million and the number of former prisoners on parole has increased from around 220,000 to 825,000. This unprecedented growth curve means that some 2,000 prisoners are being released from prisons around the country each day. It is not an exaggeration to suggest the country is now facing a prisoner reentry crisis. The transition back to society has been an ongoing problem – former prisoners as well as the communities receiving them have always struggled with the issue – but the sheer magnitude of the number of prisoners returning to society has turned a problem into a national crisis. Despite various correctional experiments designed to assist former prisoners with this difficult transition period, the likelihood of a former prisoner successfully reintegrating back to the community has not improved. As stated earlier, roughly two-thirds of all offenders released from prison will be re-arrested within three years of their release. It is not unreasonable, therefore, for politicians and decision-makers to fear that the increasing number of ex-prisoners returning to society poses a threat to public safety.

Most correctional experts agree any comprehensive prisoner reentry strategy must include the following components: close community supervision, access to substance abuse treatment, mental health services, educational programs, vocational training, and job placement. The reality, however, is that our criminal justice system does not have a good track record for providing these much needed components. In fact, correctional budgets are being cut in many states and it is likely we will continue to see more cuts rather than expansion of programs – especially those designed to address prisoner reentry. Consequently, recommendations for a comprehensive and well-resourced prisoner reentry plan to be delivered and shouldered exclusively by the government are shortsighted, cost-prohibitive, and untenable. Finding sustainable and replicable solutions to prisoner reentry requires a much more holistic approach than academics, corrections experts, stakeholders, and decision-makers have been willing to consider.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAKES AN INITIAL STEP IN ADDRESSING PRISONER REENTRY

First as a governor and then as president, George W. Bush championed public-private partnerships whose mission was to assist ex-prisoners. Although Bush indicated that the government has a very clear role to play when it comes to prisoner reentry, he was equally clear that government is not equipped to provide the mentoring, care, and social supports that are essential for any effective and holistic plan for prisoner reentry. That is to say, government cannot address the prisoner reentry crisis by itself. But the alternative is also true – faith-based organizations and individuals cannot effectively address the prisoner reentry problem by themselves. Faith-motivated approaches can and should be central allies to secular and governmental entities in developing and implementing a comprehensive and sustainable prisoner reentry strategy that is effective not only helping ex-prisoners remain crime-free, but support them in becoming productive citizens. As president, Bush would find considerable support in the Department of Labor for addressing prisoner reentry, and doing so with the intentional involvement of faith-based organizations and groups.

Two major prisoner reentry initiatives have now given us some preliminary evidence that sacred-secular partnerships hold promise for addressing the prisoner reentry crisis. In 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor launched Ready4Work, a three-year pilot program to address the needs of ex-prisoners through faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs). Ready4Work placed an emphasis on job training, job placement, case management, mentoring, and other aftercare services. FBCOs were selected to provide services to adult ex-offenders in eleven cities.

Ready4Work purposely targeted participants with a high probability of recidivism: ex-prisoners in Ready4Work had extensive criminal histories and half had been previously arrested five or more times. Once individuals entered the

program, they were eligible for services lasting up to one year. Participants were also matched with mentors in one-to-one and/or group mentoring relationships. Job placement specialists helped participants find jobs and case managers continued to provide assistance after participants were employed.

The Ready4Work pilot ended in 2006, and results indicate a total of 4,482 former prisoners enrolled in Ready4Work. Of these ex-prisoners, 97 percent received case management services, 86 percent received employment services, and 63 percent received mentoring services. Ready4Work sites placed 2,543 participants (57 percent) into jobs, with 63 percent retaining jobs for three consecutive months after placement. Public/Private Ventures (PPV), reports that only 2.5 percent of Ready4Work participants were re-incarcerated within 6 months and 6.9 percent were re-incarcerated at the one-year post-release mark. PPV found that the mentoring services in particular were shown to have a positive impact on outcomes for Ready4Work participants. Ready4Work participants who met with a mentor remained in the program longer, were twice as likely to obtain a job, and were more likely to stay employed than participants who did not meet with a mentor. PPV researchers concluded “while mentoring alone is not enough, supportive relationships – which can be fostered through mentoring programs – should be considered a core component of any reentry strategy.” In sum, early results from Ready4Work provide important preliminary evidence of what is possible when an intermediary brings together public and private partnerships to address prisoner reentry in a holistic and coordinated strategy. Additionally, Ready4Work highlighted the work of FBCOs already addressing prisoner reentry, such as Exodus Transitional Community in Harlem, NY and Word of Hope Ministries in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The President’s Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) was announced by President Bush in 2004, and grew out of the Department of Labor’s Ready4Work project. PRI was designed to further test the proposition that prisoner reentry could be effectively accomplished with a comprehensive strategy designed to draw heavily from partnerships with FBCOs. The PRI helped to connect former prisoners with faith-motivated groups as well as secular community-

based organizations willing to help ex-prisoners locate employment and to stay out of trouble by following prosocial paths. A total of 30 PRI grantees across the country were selected in order to provide mentoring, employment and other transitional services to thousands of ex-inmates.

PRI sites began serving program participants in the spring of 2006 and, like Ready4Work, preliminary results are promising. A total of 10,361 PRI participants had been enrolled as of November 2007 and about 6,000 participants were placed into jobs. Participants’ one-year post-release recidivism rate was 20 percent. Though very preliminary, these early findings are indeed encouraging, as compared with the 60%-plus average recidivism rate nationally. Nine of the 30 PRI grants went to faith-based organizations; twenty-one grants went to community-based organizations, and all but three of these secular organizations report partnering with faith-based organizations. Indeed, collaborations with faith-based organizations appear to be equally important for faith-based as well as community-based PRI recipients. These alliances confirm the premise that sacred and secular partnerships can indeed be critical partners in establishing a network of social supports necessary for comprehensive and coordinated prisoner reentry.

THE SOLUTION: EXTENDING TRANSFORMATIONAL MINISTRY TO THE COMMUNITY - OUT4LIFE

Out4Life, PF’s newest and boldest initiative, seeks to develop an unprecedented national reentry network to assist the 700,000 plus prisoners released each year in the United States to make a successful transition back to their families and communities. The scope of this effort is as mind-boggling as is the need itself. In short, Out4Life maps out a dramatic vision of what must be accomplished in communities across the country if ex-prisoners are to successfully transition back to society as law-abiding and productive citizens.

Any prisoner reentry plan that is comprehensive and able to reach scale (i.e., be replicated in other jurisdictions) will require a massive influx of new



THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE MANY THOUSANDS OF CORRECTIONAL VOLUNTEERS TEND TO COME FROM RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS. AND THERE IS NO OTHER SOURCE THAT IS MORE VOLUNTEER-RICH THAN AMERICA'S HOUSES OF WORSHIP.



people and programs that do not currently exist in most jurisdictions. Since the government alone cannot provide these programs, faith-based groups represent a critical piece of the reentry puzzle that has yet to be courted as an ally. Indeed, many faith-based groups feel they are marginalized and even mistrusted by government entities. Historically speaking, the reasons for this lack of cooperation, unfortunately, have dealt with stereotypes, prejudice, and even discrimination. Most secular groups as well as the government do not have a solid track-record for being ‘faith-friendly’. Likewise, many faith-based organizations are often reluctant to partner with government and secular institutions. There is, consequently, a degree of distrust among faith-motivated individuals toward perceived outsiders and the opposite is also true. In a respectful and transparent approach, Out4Life seeks to bridge the critical gap existing between these two important sectors.

For example, Out4Life argues faith-motivated individuals can assist prisoner reentry efforts by agreeing to undergo necessary training to specifically assist parole and other community-based correctional personnel. Ultimately, a truly comprehensive prisoner reentry plan will require very large numbers of committed and trained volunteers (e.g., probation and parole) who will agree to bring to bear their varied networks of social and spiritual support to correctional, governmental and secular entities committed to prisoner reentry and aftercare. Without a comprehensive approach that coordinates public and private, secular and sacred partnerships, prisoner reentry support will remain fragmented and poorly resourced, and continue to be a national crisis. There is great promise if government and faith-based groups collaborate in meaningful partnerships to successfully address prisoner reentry problems.

For any comprehensive prisoner reentry plan to be sustainable, it must encourage rather than discourage partnerships between sacred and secular groups. A healthy atmosphere of mutual respect must replace the suspicion and distrust that still too often typifies relations between public and private organizations as well as between secular and religious groups; entities which share similar social service missions even if their approach is vastly different. Out4Life

realizes this is no easy task and is therefore committed to a long-term investment in this ministry.

It is readily acknowledged that lack of housing, employment, transportation, counseling, and mentoring are substantial obstacles making the transition from prison to society so difficult for ex-prisoners. And tackling these problems is going to require a great deal of new human and financial resources as well as the participation of key community leaders. Additionally, Out4Life recognizes and proposes that any comprehensive strategy for confronting the problems of prisoner reentry will require an infusion of an unprecedented number of new volunteers – drawn heavily from communities of faith – that have or can develop strategic alliances focused on each of the problems ex-prisoners encounter.

Out4Life, therefore, seeks to create a paradigm shift for how many have thought about ministry to ex-offenders. Instead of leading a Bible study in prison, many new religious volunteers may be asked to consider developing strategies to improve the housing and employment conditions for ex-offenders already living in the community as well as prisoners that will eventually be returning home. The importance of mentoring relationships that are established in prison and carry over to the community cannot be overemphasized. We know that mentoring matters for youth and children, but it also matters for adults. The real problem is that we have a severe shortage of mentors for prisoners, and an even more dramatic shortage of mentors for ex-prisoners. This is precisely why communities of faith, by far America’s most volunteer-rich organizations, are uniquely positioned to assist in alleviating the mentoring deficit. Tragically, almost all the 700,000 leaving prison this year will do so without the benefit of a mentor. Communities have not been approached in any systematic or meaningful way about how they can provide these mentors. Out4Life seeks to address this oversight.

The good news is that the vast majority of the many thousands of correctional volunteers tend to come from religious congregations. And there is no other source that is more volunteer-rich than America’s houses of worship. There are approximately 375,000 congregations in the United States,

1 It is important to note, however, that these early outcomes are preliminary and that we still need much more rigorous research (e.g., randomized designs that include strict controls) to understand and isolate the effects of these programs

and Out4Life intends to make widely known what would seem obvious to any objective observer, namely; that the “faith factor” should be front-and-center when developing strategies for prisoner reentry. Indeed, Out4Life believes the coordination and mobilization of faith-motivated volunteers and organizations should be considered a non-negotiable ingredient for any successful prisoner reentry plan.

OUT4LIFE: WORKING TOGETHER TO GIVE EX-PRISONERS A SECOND CHANCE

Out4Life argues we all have a stake in increasing the ability of more than 700,000 inmates released each year from prisons to successfully return to their families and communities. Out4Life - mobilized by Prison Fellowship - engages stakeholders in a national reentry network to help make this happen. Out4Life works to 1) generate awareness of the needs and obstacles facing newly released prisoners and the urgency to address those needs; 2) pull together government agencies, businesses, churches and faith-based organizations, and civic groups in a collaborative effort to help ex-prisoners successfully reintegrate into society; 3) identify and offer best practices that prove effective in restoring formerly incarcerated men and women to their families and to society; 4) build regional and state coalitions and support existing coalitions to help offer a comprehensive array of services and support to returning prisoners; and 5) network all of these coalitions to change lives and reduce recidivism throughout the nation.

Out4Life was launched in 2008 in Louisiana and Arkansas in 2009 and in 2010 was launched in the following states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. In 2011 Out4Life will be launched in California, Kansas, Illinois, South Carolina, and Missouri. Out4Life seeks to build a national reentry and aftercare movement by supporting three distinct stages of action: Reentry conferences, establishing coalitions, and building a national network.

Reentry Conferences build awareness by bring-

ing together representatives from government, community and church to discuss both the needs and the potential of returning prisoners. Through plenary talks and workshops these conferences provide a platform for addressing barriers to reintegration as well as the opportunity to identify strategies for overcoming these barriers, and to begin the process of cultivating collaborative relationships.

Out4Life Coalitions include agencies, faith-based organizations, businesses, community organizations, and other social service providers who reach out to formerly incarcerated men and women with much needed resources and ongoing support. These regional and state level collaborative teams offer diverse services that may include mentoring, support groups, housing, assistance, job placement, educational opportunities, counseling, and other supportive services.

The Out4Life National Network seeks to link all of these regional and statewide coalitions together to maximize the exchange of information and the shared use of best practices for successful reentry. Prisoner reentry and aftercare are formidable problems for every community in the country. Consequently, it is essential to build a national network that pays attention not only to urban centers where so many offenders will be returning, but to small and rural communities that have their own unique set of challenges.

In terms of prisoner reentry and aftercare, Ready4Work, the Prisoner Reentry Initiative, and Out4Life represent the most positive developments in the last two decades. Led by Prison Fellowship, Out4Life is critical on a number of fronts. First, it corrects an oversight common to prison ministry for many decades, namely, the disproportionate emphasis on faith-motivated volunteerism in prisons rather than communities. Out4Life seeks to bring a whole new generation of volunteers - and the vast network of services these volunteers can systematically tap - to bear on the needs of reentry and aftercare. Second, Out4Life acknowledges that government programs as well as faith-based and community efforts in isolation of each other are insufficient to adequately address prisoner

reentry and aftercare. Stated differently, the solution to reentry and aftercare cannot be achieved by the faith community or government alone. Thus, Out4Life is all about coalition building and networking, all in an effort to build and sustain the necessary capacity to achieve what otherwise will be an unattainable civic good. By intentionally focusing on reentry and aftercare by highlighting best practices, and supporting public/private as well as sacred/secular collaborations, Out4Life has the potential to represent a serious paradigm shift for the field of corrections.

What has been missing until recently is a prisoner reentry model or template that links all the non-negotiable elements of reentry together in a way that can be replicated and sustained in cost-effective ways in local communities, in regions, or statewide. We are in need of a plan where coordination and collaboration are central, where the goals of the reentry model are realistically achievable, where the specific elements of the plan are replicable in any community, and finally, where the plan is affordable and does not add new costs to already overburdened correctional budgets. Out4Life promotes a strategy that offers a viable and scalable solution.

THE ORIGINS OF OUT4LIFE

Out4Life was essentially created out of the convergence between the shift in PF's vision to consider reentry needs more, and the increasing concern at the state level over the cost burden of housing the growing prison population, as exacerbated by the high recidivism rates, in states like Louisiana.

One of the challenges for state Departments of Correction (DOCs) getting involved in reentry is that, historically, the culture of those organizations were somewhat aloof, both in terms of collaboration among other state agencies and certainly when it came to connecting with FBCOs. At the Louisiana DOC, the shift away from this insular culture was triggered through changes at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, the largest maximum security prison in the United States. Up until 1995, the prison was considered one of the most violent in the nation and the average tenure of its prison wardens

over the past 20 years or so was only about four years.

In 1995, Burl Cain would become the new warden and launch a partnership with the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to offer offenders, many of whom were serving life terms, four-year college degrees. These and other efforts by Cain to involve the faith community began to change the culture, first within Angola and eventually throughout the entire state correctional system, as prisoner/pastors were sent out to serve the needs of other prisoners. The efforts by Cain helped to make the correctional system more open to collaboration, and particularly with faith-based organizations (FBOs).

PRISON FELLOWSHIP MOVES TOWARD REENTRY

On the PF side, the shift to what would come to be called Out4Life began through Jean Bush, who took a position as the director of PF's state office in Louisiana. Bush's background included private sector experience with Fidelity Investment for 8 years, followed by serving as a consultant for 14 years to public agencies and private corporations including Texas Workforce Commission, Bank of America, American Airlines, Catholic Diocese of Dallas, and Dallas County Workforce Board. In this position she specialized in workforce development and program development. This included designing comprehensive service programs built on the foundation of producing measureable outcomes through diverse collaborations within targeted Dallas communities. Development included numerous youth programs, in-school drop-out prevention programs, job training and employment programs for women transitioning out of the TANF. In 1997 one of her projects was recognized as a Best Practice and received the U.S. Department of HUD, John J. Gunther Award. Bush was familiar with PF from her involvement in an Angel Tree program in her church in Dallas fifteen years previously.

One of the first things Bush did in her new role was to go out and talk with some of the key PF stakeholders; namely, leaders in the faith community and prison chaplains. The two key discoveries by Bush from this 'listening' exercise were:



“THE GOAL WAS FOR PF TO PLAY AN INTERMEDIARY ROLE; REPRESENTING THE FAITH COMMUNITY AT THE STEERING COMMITTEE LEVEL WITH THE GOVERNMENT PARTNERS, AND ALSO COORDINATING AND FACILITATING COLLABORATION AMONG FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, WHICH WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS ALSO DEFICIENT IN COMMUNITY-BASED REENTRY EFFORTS TO DATE.”

JEAN BUSH

OUT4LIFE IS LAUNCHED IN LOUISIANA

1. The lack of visibility of PF within the faith community, and particularly within the black church; and
2. That reentry was a major focus for the prison chaplains in terms of their need for support.

Among Bush's network of relationships, based on her work previous to PF, was Whalen Gibbs, an eighteen-year veteran of the Louisiana DOC and current Assistant Secretary of the department. Bush and Gibbs, who were originally connected back in 2002, came back together in 2006, both with a motivation to bolster their respective organization's roles with respect to prisoner reentry. Early on, Bush and Gibbs recognized that a successful reentry effort would require other key partners, especially within state government. As Bush explained:

We knew that employment was a key factor for successful reentry, so we also engaged the state departments of labor and economic development.

Within PF, Bush also received some early support through David Lawson, then Senior Vice-President at PF in their headquarters in Virginia. Lawson immediately saw the burgeoning collaboration between Bush and Gibbs as an opportunity for PF to build more program and ministry capacity outside the prison walls. He also saw this effort as a means for changing the historically insular culture of PF, not unlike that of the Louisiana DOC, into a more collaborative one. Lawson helped Bush on re-directing key PF skills and resources towards reentry. As Lawson described:

Out4Life took us off the island. It provided us with greater visibility in the community, aligned us better with the needs of the correctional community towards reentry, and allowed us the opportunity to finish much of the work we started with folks in the prison that were ready to be released. To put it another way, we need to go where the market is, which has shifted from in-prison to reentry. In combining our in-prison efforts with this reentry initiative we could provide holistic services to prisoners.

Out4Life was officially launched by PF in January of 2007, with Louisiana as the first implementation site. The Out4Life process started at the top, with state representatives from the departments of correction, economic development and labor alongside PF, which represented the faith community, serving as the steering committee. Bush was also able to draw in some business partners, as well as a regional representative from the US Department of Justice Community Relations division.

This state-level steering committee decided that the first step would be to hold a statewide reentry conference in order to galvanize relationships and resources towards a more coordinated, systematic approach to addressing the challenges of prisoner reentry. One of the primary areas of responsibility for PF in this collaboration was to organize and bring the faith community to the table. Bush described the vision she had for how PF would perform their role:

The goal was for PF to play an intermediary role; representing the faith community at the steering committee level with the government partners, and also coordinating and facilitating collaboration among faith-based organizations, which was something that was also deficient in community-based reentry efforts to date.

As Bush moved forward, she also discovered that the FBOs doing in-prison ministry, which was where PF's networks were strongest, were generally not the same FBOs that were interested in community-based reentry work. As Bush explained:

Although it meant we had to basically start from scratch in our FBO recruitment efforts, it was a plus for PF in the long run because it dramatically increased the visibility of PF in the faith community, and especially in the Black Church, where PF was virtually non-existent. The Black Church is very active in prisoner reentry, both in terms of what they feel called to do as Christians, but also from a practical standpoint, due to the fact that a lot of these ex-offenders were coming back into their communities.

In order to bring the faith community together, and to provide a forum that was ‘safe’ for addressing religious and spiritual aspects of reentry work, Bush held a pastor’s dinner the evening prior to the inaugural Out4Life conference in Louisiana. The dinner allowed pastors to share from their faith, and provide a discussion of Christian responsibility with respect to supporting ex-offenders in their transition back into the community.

In February of 2008, the first Out4Life conference was held; a 3-day event involving over 300 participants. The Louisiana conference, held in Shreveport, brought together a diverse group of community stakeholders -- including representatives from: the faith community; state agencies, corrections, community-based organizations, victim advocacy groups, and the business community – to discuss how to unite and coordinate reentry efforts in their state. As Bush recounted:

The event exceeded all of our expectations. From the very start, churches and community groups began networking amongst themselves and with state agency parole and probation staff, and continued to do so through the three days of the event.

OUT4LIFE COALITIONS: CARRYING THE MOMENTUM FORWARD

Bush, Gibbs and the rest of the state-level steering committee were aware of the fact that the conference, as good as it was, could only really serve as a catalyst, and that the real work of improving reentry needed to happen locally. As Gibbs explained:

Going into the conference, we knew there was a need for some direction and structure in addition to all the information and resources they were receiving. We had a general idea of forming local Out4Life coalitions, and the conference helped to so-

lidify these plans, and even added a couple of regions that emerged during the conference.

Five regional coalitions were established at the conference: Alexandria (Central); Baton Rouge (Southwest); Lake Charles (Southwest); Monroe-Fayetteville (Northeast); and Shreveport (Northwest). Each of these coalitions were headed by a lead organization, with FBOs serving in that capacity for two of those coalitions.

One of the FBO-led coalitions was in Northeast Louisiana, under the direction of Dr. Woods Watson from Freed Men, Inc. Dr. Watson is a pastor on staff at First Baptist Church, West Monroe, LA and is a volunteer board member of Freed Men, inc., a separate non-profit affiliated with the church that provided a six-month transition program for ex-offenders. Dr. Watson described the impact the state wide conference had for him and his organization:

Although we had been serving in the community for years, we were new to the whole reentry issue, particularly as it related to reaching prisoners before they are released. I was mostly a sponge at the conference, absorbing as much information as I could. By the end of the conference, I was asked to serve as the lead organization for the Northeast coalition.

The Northeast Out4Life coalition, with resources and support from Bush and PF, were one of the first coalitions ‘out of the gate,’ holding their first meeting 3 weeks after the statewide conference. One of the unique aspects of the Out4Life implementation strategy was the multi-level collaborations, with the state-level steering committee supporting and resourcing FBOs and government staff at a local level. Pearl Wise, serving as both Probation and Parole Supervisor and Community Resource Coordinator for the Monroe district office, proved to be a key government partner and collaborator at the local level. Wise described the path that made her a key partner in the Out4Life initiative:

Around the same time as the statewide conference, DOC developed and distributed a reentry policy statement, which was meant to provide local guidance to what the department considered the work of probation and parole officers to be. It emphasized the importance of collaborating with other organizations, including faith-based groups, and to improve our awareness of, and referrals to, various community resources to assist the ex-offenders on our caseload. In the past, the work culture here seemed to be more about addressing violations with the appropriate authority for a resolution of them. In fact, about 44% of our parole and probation revocations at the time were for technical violations, not for repeat offenses. Now, we want to address the offender in a way to prevent those violations and to support them to prevent and correct parole violations. The policy statement from DOC sent the message loud and clear that collaborating with local agencies and doing all we could to make for a successful return to the community was an important part of our job as well.

Dr. Woods and Wise, along with the other coalition partners, moved quickly, developing a five-year plan outlining ten key challenge areas faced by ex-offenders returning to the community. These ten key areas then served as the framework for their monthly coalition meetings, which included special speakers and subject matter experts providing information and resources to coalition members on topics ranging from substance abuse to the importance of mentoring for helping with the transition back to the community.

Another early step taken by the coalition was to assemble an inventory of services and supports available through the coalition members for DOC's reentry coordinators to use with pre-release inmates in planning their return. Dr. Watson reflected on the impact of the coalition efforts on how the Freed Men program functions:

To me, one of the most important aspects of the coalition, and particularly the community service inventory we conducted, is the ability to match the strengths of each of the partners. In the past, when we were doing our ministry in

isolation, we sometimes felt spread thin trying to meet all of the needs of the ex-offenders we were serving. Now, with a greater knowledge of what other people could do, we were better able to focus on what we did best, and to refer to other organizations for services they were better equipped to provide.

Rhett Covington, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Reentry in the Louisiana DOC under Whalen Gibbs, added his insights and concerns about the birth and growth of the coalitions:

I think the coalitions are taking on a life of their own and doing well in many parts of the state. One big issue is getting members to understand that this is not a source of funding, but a new way of working together. Once that culture or attitude shift occurs, you lose those looking for money and can focus on planning. Getting buy-in from local officials is a key. I think having coalitions focus on specific offenders to assist them will help them become more focused on the pitfalls and gaps and more easily see what partnerships need work. Focusing on strategic planning is necessary, but we sometimes miss the trees and just see the forest.

OUT4LIFE CROSSES THE BORDER

The seeds for Out4Life's growth beyond Louisiana were also germinated through that first statewide conference, in the form of participants from elsewhere in PF and also one of their faith partners in Arkansas. Fellowship Bible Church, a 6,000 member congregation in Little Rock, and already an active supporter in PF's InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) in Arkansas, provided \$50,000 through an anonymous member of the church as the start-up funds for holding an Out4Life conference in their state. Scott McLean, IFI state director in Arkansas, pointed to important shifts in the state's attitude towards its correctional policies, which further fueled the impetus for a new approach to reentry:

The Governor's recent address, which called for prison reform and alternative sentencing,

combined with the enthusiastic support from Fellowship Bible Church, made for the perfect conditions for launching an Out4Life initiative in Arkansas. We had the buy-in at the top of government and through the state board of corrections, together with leadership from the faith community, to make something special happen.

The Arkansas conference was also a big success, with well over 250 in attendance. Participants were informed and inspired by ex-offenders, prison wardens, ministries, Department of Workforce services, Department of Justice, Department of Corrections, and many other community leaders. The coalition regions were built directly around the location and jurisdictions of the state's Community Corrections staff and offices. Three functional coalitions emerged through the conference, with plans for up to four other coalitions initiated at the conference as well. Representatives from the state's Community Corrections department were allocated to both the current and planned coalitions.

The Arkansas conference also spurred the development of a statewide resources directory, along with complementary regional directories to support the local coalitions. Two of the Out4Life coalitions, both located in Northwest Arkansas, developed an assessment form for pre-release inmates returning to their region to assist them with tracking and assisting, such as identifying mentors for those that requested them. McLean reflected on the whirlwind of activity preceding, during, and directly following the Out4Life conference:

Overall, I think the Out4Life initiative has been a real plus in terms of enhancing PF's vision to include reentry services. It has also expanded our network within the faith community since, as we discovered, the faith groups involved in reentry were somewhat distinct from those we traditionally worked with for in-prison ministries. The initial success from the first three coalitions, particularly with respect to government collaboration with faith-based organizations, has

dispelled the notion that government was somehow fearful of working with the faith community, and vice versa. Ironically, we have had more of a challenge getting faith community involvement than we have getting government involved.

OUT4LIFE GOES NATIONAL

The successes in Louisiana and Arkansas were more than enough proof of the strength and value of Out4Life, and PF promptly moved Bush to national director, with the responsibility of working with other state PF staff and regional executive directors to start Out4Life initiatives in other states. Bush and PF moved quickly, holding statewide conferences in eight additional states between March and October of 2010, as shown in Table 1.

Bush reflected on PF's ability to ramp up the Out4Life initiative at such a rapid pace:

The fact that we were able to conduct so many conferences in so short a period of time reinforces my initial vision of PF as an intermediary, skilled in bringing like-minded people together from all sectors of society, and particularly in galvanizing the faith community into the world of prisoner reentry. I think the challenges for PF is to not only serve as the catalyst through the statewide conference, but to also be there to support and nurture these fledgling coalitions and keep them relevant and viable.

TABLE 1: OUT4LIFE SCHEDULE OF STATEWIDE CONFERENCES

STATE	MONTH/YEAR OF CONFERENCE	# OF PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE*
Louisiana	2/2008	355
Arkansas	9/2009	338
Tennessee	3/2010	396
Georgia	3/2010	331
Michigan	4/2010	222
Arizona	4/2010	351
Minnesota	5/2010	214
Ohio	5/2010	187
Texas	6/2010	380
Virginia	7/2010	242
Oregon	10/2010	245

* Include pastor dinner

SUSTAINING OUT4LIFE

The rapid success of the Out4Life program also brings new, and familiar, challenges to PF, both in terms of the skills-set of its field staff and the overall capacity of the organization. As David Lawson, former V-P for PF, explained:

In some of our previous program launches, PF has earned the unfortunate reputation as being good at starting programs but not as good in sustaining them. In recognition of the demands that Out4LIFE would have on regional executive directors and state staff, we reorganized PF to remove most of the responsibilities for the Angel Tree program and bring that into central office. Even with that, we are still getting push back from regional and state staff, which is limiting our ability to support these newly-formed Out4LIFE regional coalitions. The bigger challenge PF faces, in my opinion, is whether the skill set of regional and state staff match the new needs and requirements associated with making Out4LIFE and PF a success within the community, which includes the ability to collaborate at both state and local levels, and to be skilled in building the capacity of these regional coalitions.

OUT4LIFE AND INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

What is an intermediary and what roles do they play? Intermediaries are organizations that occupy the space in between at least two other groups or entities. Intermediary organizations operate independently of these two groups and provide distinct value beyond what the parties alone would be able to develop by themselves. At the same time, intermediary organizations depend on those parties to perform their essential functions.

Intermediaries, for example, can bridge the gap between disadvantaged populations and the resources they need. Otherwise, high-risk groups (i.e., ex-offenders) will likely remain beyond effective reach for the provision of support during their transition back to society.

On the other hand, with the help of individuals and groups that come from the very communities being served, at-risk populations are not only reached, but relationships are developed in a way that increases the likelihood of positive results.

Intermediaries, for example, can play a key role in coordinating the efforts of fragmented community and faith-based organizations. Too often these small



INTERMEDIARIES ARE AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY TO “LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD” BY ASSISTING ORGANIZATIONS IN BEING MORE PRODUCTIVE AND ENHANCING IMPORTANT COMMUNITY RESOURCES.



groups operate in relative isolation from each other and as a result are not able to build or sustain capacity. Rather than working in isolation, influential and well-networked intermediaries are uniquely positioned to play a key role in coordinating resources locally and beyond.

Intermediaries are essential to comprehensive and coordinated plans that recruit large numbers of skilled and trained volunteers, while developing private and public partnerships in order to confront an array of social problems from youth violence to prisoner reentry. Further, intermediaries are suited to interact with governmental entities while drawing upon the substantial human capital of volunteers, as well as the social and spiritual capital of individuals and organizations in the private sector.

The role of faith- and community-based intermediaries in social service provision is still relatively new and underdeveloped. This is unfortunate since intermediary organizations may be the most important element underutilized in building successful prisoner reentry models that are intentional about working with volunteers, especially volunteers who come from religious congregations.

Intermediaries can be a bridge, for example, between ex-prisoners and the many social service providers and various governmental agencies. Intermediaries can coordinate prisoner reentry efforts of community- and faith-based organizations, volunteers, social service providers, mentors, and parole officers.

Additionally, intermediaries can serve many important roles by providing (1) management and oversight to groups and organizations; (2) technical assistance to agencies, groups, and ministries; (3) ongoing training to strengthen capacity and sustainability; and (4) structure and tools necessary to make partnering groups accountable for achieving outcomes (e.g., recidivism reduction).

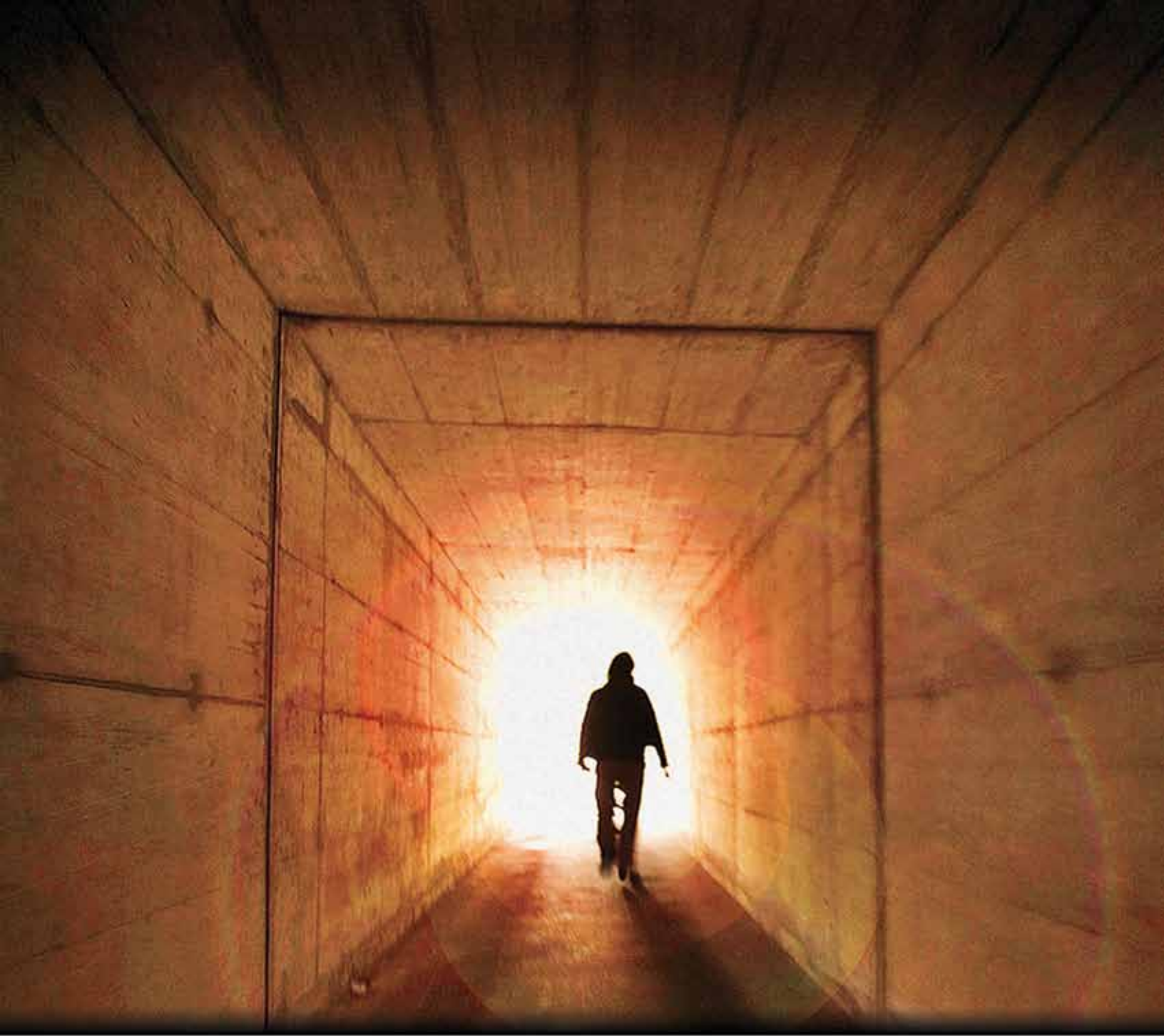
Beau Egert described the connection between capacity-building and the desire to increase and improve FBCO/government collaborations for the Texas-based OneStar Foundation's Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) project:

We recognized that in order to serve our role of encouraging and developing more government collaborations, we needed to raise the level of organizational competency and sophistication of FBCOs in the State. The State of Texas, particularly through its human services and workforce development agencies, had a history of engaging FBCOs, so we already had strong networks among those organizations. However, many of those collaborations were non-financial and related to FBCOs coordinating their efforts with local human service agencies. The CCF project provided the tools for many of these community-serving organizations to be able to engage in more formal collaborations as well.

Intermediaries are an important strategy to “level the playing field” by assisting organizations in being more productive and enhancing important community resources. Intermediaries can bring their administrative and fiscal strengths to small organizations and somewhat offset the load of government duties by providing training, technical assistance, and encouragement. In this way intermediaries enhance as well as make possible more extensive involvement in government programs, and greater access to government resources. This is especially true of organizations that are too small or too limited in capacity, to readily partner with government on their own.

While some faith-based organizations are very comfortable working with public programs and their restrictions, others are not. Intermediaries can also serve as a buffer between government and faith-based organizations.

Effective intermediaries can build the capacity of FBOs and thus improve the likelihood they will be strong partners in coordinated collaborations. For example, intermediaries can help small faith-based organizations to develop much needed program skills such as case management, data collection, reporting of outcomes, and more. One leader of a faith-based group had this to say about working with an intermediary:



CONSIDERING THE UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE PRISONER REENTRY CRISIS, OUT4LIFE REPRESENTS PF'S MOST DAUNTING, IMPORTANT, AND POLICY RELEVANT TASK YET.

At the onset of the grant, none of our sub-grantees had the knowledge or capability to collect the data or track outcomes necessary for a Federal Labor grant. Without the technical assistance and hands-on support of the intermediary, the sub-grantees would have been overwhelmed by the reports required with no systematic way of finding instruction or assistance...the intermediary was a key element to our success.

Capacity-building services not only improve effectiveness, but also help sustain and grow the organization and

thereby assist in not only serving more clients, but serving in more and effective ways. Once FBOs improve and mature, they tend to become more optimistic about sustainability as a result of their capacity-building efforts.

By building a national reentry network and supporting the work of intermediary organizations Out4Life will indirectly bolster capacity-building efforts of many groups.

CONCLUSION

Out4Life is Prison Fellowship's latest program area for carrying out their mission "To seek the transformation of prisoners and their reconciliation to God, family, and community through the power and truth of Jesus Christ." Considering the unprecedented challenges presented by the prisoner reentry crisis, Out4Life represents PF's most daunting, important, and policy relevant task yet. In a nutshell, the vast majority of inmates are not ready to return to society when they leave prison. Compounding this problem is the realization that communities across the country are woefully unprepared to receive former ex-prisoners. These realities create a toxic recipe for all sorts of deleterious outcomes.

Prisoner reentry has always been a problem, but because of the sheer magnitude of prisoners coming out of prison each year, we are faced with the prospect of facing even greater economic and emotional harm to society. The problem can be simply stated, but the solution is profoundly complicated.

Out4Life recognizes prisoner reentry requires the active engagement of multiple sectors, private and public, secular and sacred, in order to make a difference. Faith and community-based networks dedicated to prisoner reentry that do not presently exist must be created. Partnerships, for example, must be forged between faith-based organizations and governmental agencies -- entities that have not always had a track record for working together, must unite for the civic good. In order to be effective, these efforts must be bolstered by intermediary organizations that will provide oversight, technical assistance, capacity building, and accountability. Out4Life is providing leadership in this area by organizing local, regional, and national forums for facilitating these vital discussions and challenging individuals, groups, and agencies to think intentionally about meeting one of the most vexing problems facing our society.

ENDNOTES

For more on the Angel Tree program, see the ISR case study entitled Building Relationships with Prisoners, Their Families, and Churches; at <http://www.isreligion.org/publications/case-studies/>; February, 2010.

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Participant eligibility for Ready4Work was determined based on three factors (1) age of the ex-offender; (2) presenting offense; and (3) length of time pre or post-release. Ex-prisoners between the ages of 18 and 34 who had most recently been incarcerated for a nonviolent felony offense and were no more than 90 days pre or post-release were eligible to enroll in the program. See Farley, C., & Hackman, S. (2006). Ready4Work in Brief – Interim Outcomes are In: Recidivism at Half the National Average. P/PV in Brief, Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia, PA. Ibid.

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Professor Johnson is currently collaborating with the Gallup Organization on a series of studies addressing religion and spirituality in the United States as well as internationally. His research has been used in consultation with the Department of Justice, Department of Defense, Department of Labor, and the National Institutes of Health. He is author of the forthcoming book, *More God, Less Crime: How Religion and Faith-Based Approaches Reduce Crime and Foster Hope* (Templeton, 2011).

William Wubbenhorst is Research Fellow at Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion and Program on Prosocial Behavior. He serves as a project manager for the Faith Service Forum and is the lead subject matter expert within ICF Macro, ICF International company, in the area of faith-based and community initiatives and the establishment partnerships with government at the local, state and federal level.

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He has published a number of articles pertaining to Charitable Choice and the Faith-Based/Community Initiative and served as an independent research consultant for the Center for Public Justice, conducting research on Charitable Choice and other related faith-based initiatives.

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