

## New Digital Series to Encourage Prisoners During Pandemic

*Common, Michael W. Smith, CeCe Winans Headline "Visitation 2.0" premiering May 18*

**May 5, 2020** - 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose Foundation is excited to announce the launch of Visitation 2.0, a new digital series premiering May 18, and delivering a message of faith, hope and encouragement to prisoners, their families, and correctional staff in facilities across the United States.

Featuring music from top Christian and mainstream artists, nationally recognized speakers, and short clips of inspiration from professional athletes, celebrities and political leaders, each episode of the Visitation 2.0 series will communicate directly to the prison population cut off from the world by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Watch the promo trailer for Visitation 2.0 here: <https://4thpurpose.org/visitation2/>

"Prison is often a difficult and hopeless place. But now, with the threat and uncertainty of the Coronavirus pandemic, fears and anxieties are more intense," said Josh Smith, Executive Producer of Visitation 2.0 and Founder of 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose Foundation, who was himself formerly incarcerated for five years. "We wanted to produce something positive and uplifting during such a difficult time."

There are more than two million men, women and juveniles in custody in American prisons and jails and more than 700,000 people work in the correctional field. Though only 5% of the world's population lives in the United States, it is home to 25% of the world's prison population. Confined and overcrowded conditions make the Coronavirus a particularly lethal threat in prisons for both staff and the incarcerated.

While the physical health risks to this vulnerable population are significant, dealing with Coronavirus takes a mental and emotional toll as well. To limit exposure, state departments have closed correctional facilities to all outside visitors, including families and volunteers like pastors and teachers. Visitation at prisons – a lifeline of hope to those serving time - is no more. Seeking to offset the heightened sense of isolation and loneliness accompanying the quarantine caused by Coronavirus, this new "digital visitation" series aims to remind those behind bars they are loved and not forgotten.

"I'm excited to be a part of Visitation 2.0," said three-time Grammy winner Michael W. Smith. "I've always believed music is a universal language that can bring hope and healing. Our brothers and sisters behind bars face many unique challenges including those caused by the Coronavirus. I want them to know that, regardless of their circumstance, they are loved and valued by their Creator. I hope I can bring a message of hope and encouragement that is eternal."

In addition to Smith, the Visitation 2.0 series will have contributions and feature performances from Common, CeCe Winans, Rick Warren, Ambassador Andrew Young, Lecrae, We Are Messengers, Luis Palau, Alice Marie Johnson, and many more with others joining the lineup daily.

A personal story of loss and forgiveness will be told by author and victims' rights advocate Jeanne Bishop. From once wishing that her sister's killer languished in a cell for the rest of his life, Bishop

now visits him regularly in prison and publicly advocates for his release. "It's not okay what you did, but I am not going to hate you. I am not going to wish evil on you," writes Bishop of the murderer in her book *Change of Heart*. "I am going to wish the opposite. I am going to wish that you will be redeemed."

The series, scheduled to premiere on May 18, will also include personal messages from friends, family members and other supporters interspersed throughout the program. 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose created a website where those interested can upload their own short video to express support and encouragement. People can also share and engage with Visitation 2.0 content across social media platforms using #Visitation2.0 and #WeAreComingToVisit.

**Upload your own Visitation 2.0 video message. Watch a testimony example:**

<https://4thpurpose.org/visitation2/share-your-message/>

4<sup>th</sup> Purpose Foundation is partnering with a variety of organizations to help distribute episodes of Visitation 2.0 into prisons including Prison Fellowship, the American Correctional Association, the Correctional Leadership Association, a variety of State Departments of Corrections, Global Leadership Network, Global Prison Seminaries Foundation, Lifeline Global Ministries, God Behind Bars, Kairos Prison Ministry, Every Youth-Every Facility, Alpha, Good News Jail and Prison Ministry, Celebrate Recovery Inside, and CMCA. The list of partnering organizations will continue to grow in the coming days with the goal of distributing episodes of the Visitation 2.0 series to more than 6,000 prisons and jails (including juvenile detention centers) in the United States. All content will also be available on the 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose website for the prison system and families of those incarcerated to view.

"Prison Fellowship is excited to partner with 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose to provide this series to our network of prisons and ministries so it can help bridge the gap after facilities shut down access to thousands of prison volunteers and nonessential workers across the country," said James Ackerman, President and CEO of Prison Fellowship.

Following the premiere of the first episode on May 18, a new episode of Visitation 2.0 is scheduled to be released every two weeks. There are currently five episodes planned. If, however, prisons continue to suspend visitation, 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose Foundation hopes to produce additional episodes until the reopening of visitations for families and volunteers.

"We encourage anyone interested in supporting our brothers and sisters behind bars to upload their own video to the 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose website," said Josh Smith. "It's easy to do, and we want to share as many messages of love and support as possible!"

**ENDS**

#### **ABOUT 4<sup>th</sup> PURPOSE**

4<sup>th</sup> Purpose Foundation is committed to serving as a catalyst to make prison a place of transformation. The foundation invests in research and programs that help prepare inmates for release from prison, starting day one of their sentence. Learn more about 4<sup>th</sup> Purpose Foundation at [4thpurpose.org](http://4thpurpose.org).

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

Matthew Seaman  
Ackermann Marketing & PR  
[mseaman@thinkackermann.com](mailto:mseaman@thinkackermann.com)  
865-405-6097

Kodi Schutte  
4<sup>th</sup> Purpose Foundation  
[info@4thpurpose.org](mailto:info@4thpurpose.org)  
865-246-8284