

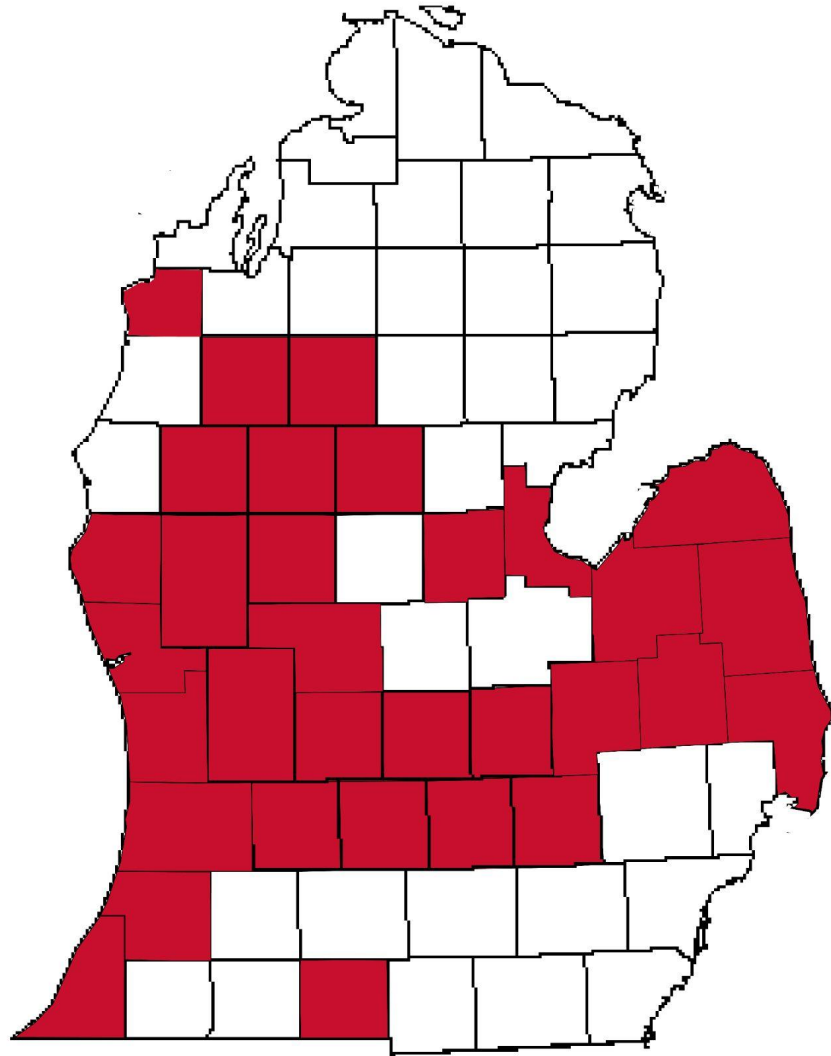


OPEN ARMS:

A CHURCH TRAINING PROGRAM TO WELCOME RETURNING CITIZENS

Presented by:

*Chaplain Sarah Heaton
Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry*



Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry

Our mission is to provide Christ-centered hope and healing through biblically-based, chaplain led, volunteer jail ministries.

Our vision is for every incarcerated person to experience new life in Christ and develop healthy family, church, and community relationships.

The Open Arms Training

Objectives:

1. To know what it means to be a welcoming church to returning citizens leaving jail
2. To break stigmas, enabling growth in awareness of the needs of those leaving jail
3. To obtain, at minimum, a basic knowledge of trauma, addiction, and recovery
4. To understand what RTF does, where RTF's work ends and the church's begins

Prodigal Son

*“For this son of mine
was dead and has now
returned to life. He
was lost, but now is
found.”*

~ Luke 15:24





Part 1

Open Arms

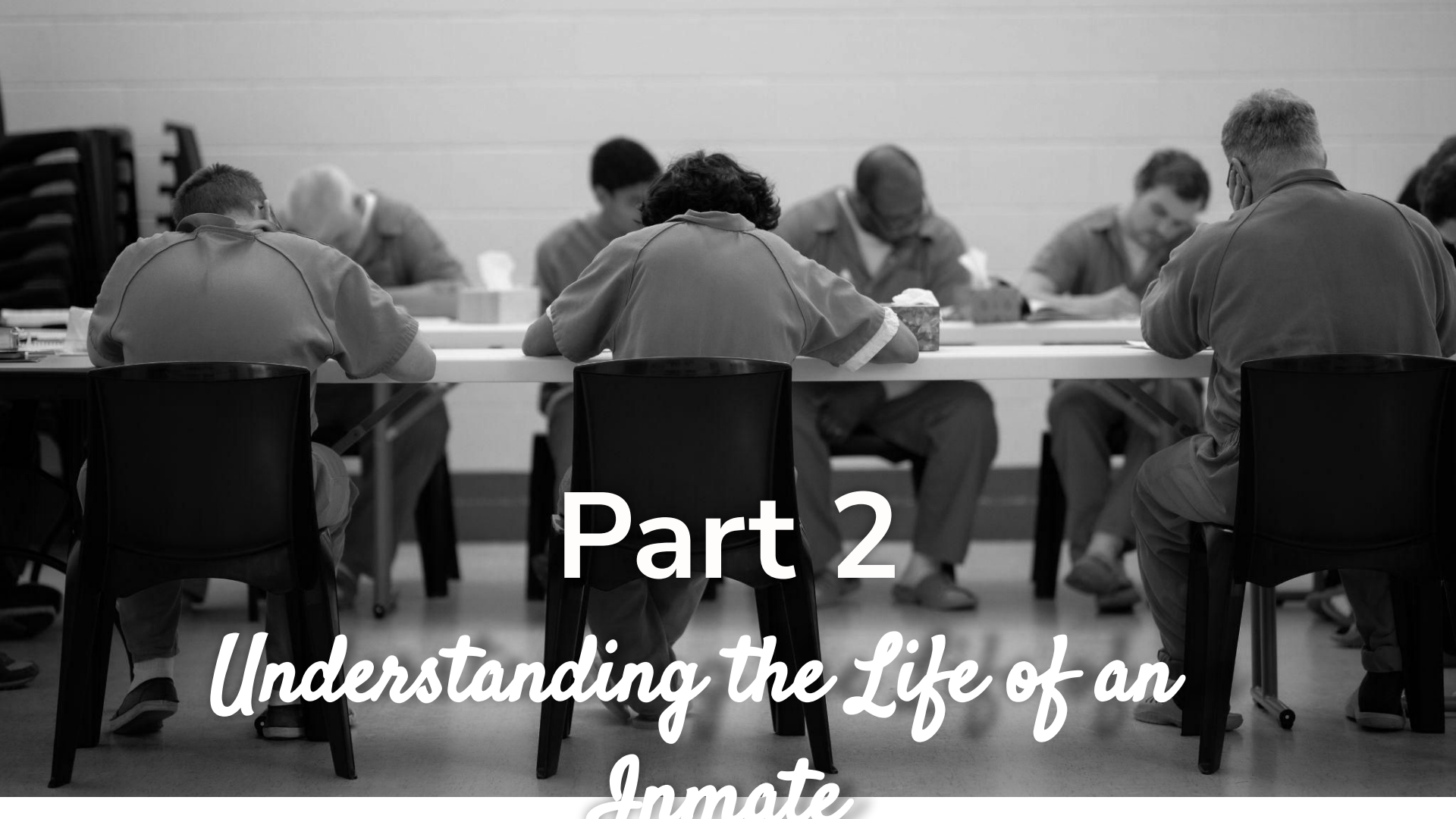
National Statistics by LifeWay

- **94%** of church goers believe that most people with a felony can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work.
- **69%** of weekly churchgoers believe that local churches have a responsibility to care for the incarcerated in my community.
- **Less than 40%** of church goers have visited someone in jail.
- **23%** of churches minister to people leaving correctional facilities.
- **6%** of churches financially support ministry to the incarcerated.

What is a Welcoming Church?

These partnerships are necessary for success

- The Church
- The Returned Citizen
- Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry
- Community Agencies



Part 2

*Understanding the Life of an
Inmate*

Common Struggles of Inmates

- Fear and uncertainty
- Family issues
- Family history
- Mental Health issues
- Addiction
- Trauma
- Lack of Biblical Identity
- Faulty theology
- Employment issues
- Lack of housing or loss of housing
- Material possessions are usually lost
- Charges in multiple counties
- Criminal behavior and thinking patterns

Statewide Video



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in children, ages 0-17. Compared to someone with an ACE score of 0, those with a score of 4+ were:

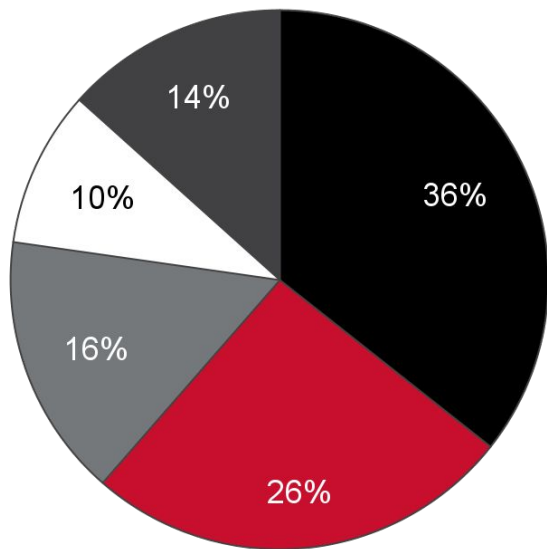
- 4x more likely to suffer from depression
- 11x more likely to become an alcoholic
- 16x more likely to inject street drugs
- 19x more likely to attempt suicide

A teen with an ACE score of ZERO, has a **1 in 500** chance of attempting suicide before their 18th birthday.

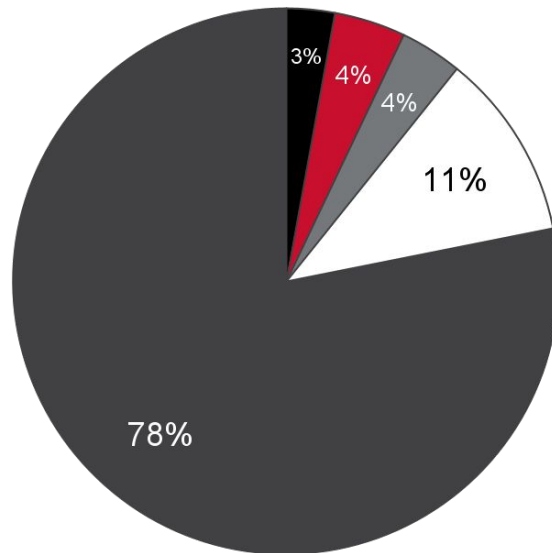
A teen with an ACE score of SEVEN, has a **1 in 7** chance of attempting suicide before their 18th birthday

Comparison of Populations with ACEs

ACE Percentages for the US



ACE Percentages for the Incarcerated



of ACEs Zero One Two Three Four+

ACE Reflections:

Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline

While most individuals with significant ACEs do not encounter the criminal justice system, exposure to ACEs is a well-documented risk factor for justice involvement, which may be an important indicator of severe and untreated toxic stress.

The neurobiological impact of trauma begins before birth and contributes to what is known as the “cradle-to-prison pipeline.” Children repeatedly exposed to adversity are at increased risk of developing the toxic stress response, which involves disruption of the neurobiological systems responsible for learning, memory, impulse control, attention, and emotional regulation.

**Information regarding ACE's were taken from The CDC-Kaiser Permanente adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study, ACE Overcomers: The Center for Resilience and Understanding the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in a male offender population in Wales: The Prisoner ACE Survey*

Addiction Definitions

- **Biological** – a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. (*American Society of Addiction Medicine*)
- **Psychological** – a state of psychological and/or physical dependence on the use of drugs or other substances, such as alcohol, or on activities or behaviors. (*American Psychological Association*)
- **Social** – a distinct physical desire to consume a substance beyond one's capacity to control it, in defiance of all rules of common sense. (*examples from AA, Big Book*)
- **Spiritual** – when your life has become unmanageable due to the use of alcohol, drugs or other chemical substances, food, gambling, pornography, sex, relationships, or because of other hurts, hang-ups, or habits. (*examples from Celebrate Recovery*)

Addiction

- What most definitions have in common: **Addiction results in harmful, repetitive behavior that a person can no longer cease or control without external help.**
- This often starts off as a choice one makes, but then your body experiences chemical and neurological changes that can lead to dependency and eventually the disease of addiction.
- It can be chemical and behavioral.
- Addiction changes the way the brain and body function.
- Addiction can be a consequence of unresolved trauma. Trauma heightens stress and then substances and behaviors provide a way to cope.
- Addiction occurs when life has become unmanageable.

Recovery

- An individual abstains from the substance or behavior that has kept them stuck in their addiction cycle.
- Does not come as a one size fits all.
- Recovery is all-encompassing.
- Recovery is both a process and a sustained status.
- Addiction creates chaos. Recovery helps build a life that is manageable.
- Recovery includes relapse. But recovery work cannot be undone.
- Sustained change requires at least 2 years as an individual is connected to support.





Part 3

Rejoining the "Free World"

What does release look like?

- Every day has a set time for people to be released.
- Some releases are spontaneous (paid bond, released at court) and some are planned in advance (court ordered).
- Leave with what (clothing and items) they came in with. Consider weather, season, and changes in weight.
- Who is waiting at the door often determines the path for success or failure.





What are reentry concerns?

- Housing
- Employment
- Church
- Mentor / Sponsor
- Money / Food
- New Friends
- Prescription medications
- Old “Friends” / Dealer / Pimp
- Probation
- Transportation
- Family



Part 4

Reentry and the Church

Redemptive Compassion: *Relationships*

People are not projects to be fixed. People are image-bearers.

Ministry rooted in relationship is imperative:

- It follows Jesus' model
- Good way to get beyond assumptions & bias
- It's hard to hate, judge, dismiss, misunderstand, or avoid when it's up close
- Need is complex... how can we know how to engage if we don't know them?
- Protects us from doing things that make us feel better

“We” (the givers) are changed and transformed when we’re in relationship with “them” (the recipient). *Mutual growth and transformation is the goal!*

Redemptive Compassion:

Charity Giving vs. Developmental Compassion

Charity Giving

This can foster a sense of inequality that further separates those who have from those who don't.

Developmental Compassion

This is not just meeting a physical need, but being physically present in someone's time of need.

Redemptive Compassion:

Listening and Collective Discernment

*Listen to God (discern) and others (counsel) and seek instruction
(Scripture) before taking any course of action.*

EVERYONE must learn to be a better listener! Value, worth and love is communicated to others when we listen.

Decisions about how to help others must be made in community, collectively discerning how God would have us engage and serve.

Boundaries

- Don't give money
- It's ok, and often appropriate, to say no
- Don't drive or meet with someone of the opposite gender by yourself
- Pair people with same gender for mentoring
- Practice healthy detachments
- Continue to point the person toward resources, and help them to deepen their community of support
- Don't try to be everything to everyone

Best Practices

- Set expectations together
- Team up with others
- Don't isolate
- Have accountability for yourself
- Don't try to make them a replica of yourself
- Don't take their "success" or "failure" personal. It's not about you
- Verify the day of before just showing up if you're giving a ride or meeting them somewhere
- Consider using Uber drivers for initial rides for church if there are transportation or liability concerns

A Call to Churches

RTF's Definition of a Welcoming Church

- A welcoming church doesn't discriminate, or put someone in a box.
- It's more than a greeting on a Sunday.
- It wants to understand who you are.
- Can separate sin from identity.
- They find common ground/relatability.
- They are learning how to create a safe space where truth can be shared in love.
- When you fall, people are still there to embrace you.
- They understand that the process is messy.

Welcoming with Intentionality

- Who are your core people that can:
 - Help with transportation?
 - Welcome at the door?
 - Sit with them?
 - Introduce them to others?
 - Welcome into their small group?
 - Mentor them?
 - Be their friend?
- Is your church willing to build a culture that is welcoming to returning citizens?

Resources

- **Transitional Resources Link**
 - tinyurl.com/RTFtransitiondoc
- **Sex Offender Church Resources**
 - tinyurl.com/SexOffenderResources
- **2-1-1 (United Way)**
 - unitedway.org/
- **MiBridges (food stamps, medicaid)**
 - michigan.gov/mibridges/
- **Jail Ministry Stories:**
 - jailministry.org/impact/
- **Healing the Wounded Heart Training**
 - jailministry.org/hwh/
- **Redemptive Compassion Training**
 - redemptivecompassion.org/
 - loveinc.org/ - find your local group

Reading

- **Redemptive Compassion: A Study Guide**
 - by Lois M. Tupy
- **When Helping Hurts**
 - by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert
- **Toxic Charity**
 - by Robert D. Lupton
- **Boundaries**
 - by Henry Cloud & John Townsend
- **Safe People**
 - by Henry Cloud & John Townsend
- **Victory Over the Darkness**
 - by Neil T Anderson
- **Search for Significance**
 - by Robert S. McGee
- **Deep in the Heart of Texas: A Memoir**
 - by Texas A. Stready

Stay Connected:



@RTFjailministry



@Reachtheforgotten

Join our email list at: www.jailministry.org

Contact me at SarahH@JailMinistry.org to learn more about the full presentation and material and what can help train churches in your area.

