

Jesus looked at them and said, "**With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God**" (Mark 10:27).

On average, there are about 1,000 inmates housed at the three Bucks County Institutions: Bucks County Correctional Facility, Men's Community Corrections Center and Women's Community Corrections Center. More than 80% of these inmates will be released and about half will return to Bucks County. In addition, approximately 20,000 state inmates are released each year and about 7,000 will return to Delaware, Bucks, and Montgomery Counties.

When I heard these statistics, I immediately thought: What can the church do? That pondering led me to ask the greater question: What would Jesus do (about this)? And while I realize that the WWJD phraseology is somewhat out of fashion, I contend that the work of Jesus, and the work of his believers, is never out of trend. As followers of Jesus, we are challenged by his life's work and in turn should be continually asking ourselves: What would Jesus do?

One of the blessings we have is the record of how Jesus interacted with others. The Bible states that He wept over sin, and ate with "sinners." Jesus touched those who needed to be healed and let those searching for healing touch him. Jesus explained some of his many interactions with others with these words: "healthy people do not need a physician - sick people do." He even went on to say that he "came not to call those who think they are righteous, but to those who know they are sinners" (Mark 2:17).

The incarcerated men and women and those being released from the surrounding jails and prisons are indeed among the sick and "the lost."

What Would Jesus Do (about this), you ask?

I believe that Jesus would position himself close to the incarcerated, unashamedly declare "the good news of the kingdom" and "proclaim liberty to [them]" (Matt. 4:23; Isa. 61:1).

While I can only imagine, I suspect that Jesus would find himself meeting with the incarcerated and in fellowship with those recently released. As followers of Jesus, I pray that we all will continue to be charged and challenged by the questions that cause us to look at the character of Jesus more intently as we engage a world that so desperately needs to know Him.

#### The Challenge

- More than 2.2 million people are in 1,719 state prisons, 102 federal prisons, 901 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,163 local jails, 76 Indian Country jails, and military prisons, immigration detention facilities, and civil commitment centers.
- Between 70 million and 100 million - or 1 in 3 Americans - have some type of criminal record. In Pennsylvania, this translates into nearly 3 million of the commonwealth's citizens.
- More than three times as many mentally challenged people are housed in prisons and jails than in hospitals or mental health facilities.
- The rate of growth for female imprisonment has outpaced men by more than 50% between 1980 and 2014. There are approximately 1.2 million women under the supervision of the criminal justice system.

#### Helpful Resources:

*Prison Policy Initiative*

*Pew Charitable Trusts*

*Bureau of Justice Statistics*

*Resource Center on Justice Involved Women*

**(PLEASE TURN OVER)**

Please know that Life Abundant continues to partner with other organizations to ensure that the incarcerated men and women at Bucks County are provided with some of the best programs available. We are also seeking to introduce new programs and services as well.

Some of the old and new relationships include: Celebrate Recovery Inside; Bible Based Trauma Healing; Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association (CMCA) and The Timothy Project to name a few.

We are offering co-dependency classes and a “12 Steps To A Changed Life” course. We have also partnered with Commissioner Rob Loughery and Men’s Ministry Leader Paul Payton to introduce a new series entitled: “**In God’s Larger Story: You Matter.**” We will introduce this series in September and October of this year.

If you are interested, or know of someone who might be interested in helping us to effect positive change in the lives of those that we serve, please contact us.

Below are some of the ways that you can help:

- In-prison Bible study.
- In-prison Chapel Service (i.e. church).
- In-prison 1-on-1 Mentoring.
- Aftercare 1-on-1 Mentoring.
- Mail correspondence.
- Volunteer opportunities with us.
- Purchasing Christian and holistic resources for inmates and ex-offenders.
- Training and assistance for church leaders and volunteers.
- Referrals to other agencies: counseling, workforce development, housing, employment, legal aid, etc.

The one underlying truth to all of the programs and services we offer is this: Jesus is central. Please continue to pray for all that we are doing at the institutions and that God’s power would be revealed to those that are in attendance.

May we all – the supporters of the ministry and the incarcerated men and women – continue to trust and believe that “...ALL things are possible with God.”



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In His Service,

Jonathan H. Lewis, *Executive Director*  
Sonia Mendelow, *Women’s Ministry Coordinator*  
Regina Bready, *Administrative Assistant*

Office: 215-489-0200 | [www.lifeabundantinc.org](http://www.lifeabundantinc.org) | [jonathan@lifeabundantinc.org](mailto:jonathan@lifeabundantinc.org) | Fax: 215-489-8818