



Incarceration, Justice and Restoration— Tools to equip congregations to reflect and study mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness

PRESENTED BY

THE NATIONAL BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION PRISON AND JAIL MINISTRIES AND
THE RECONCILIATION MINISTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

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Item for Reflection and Research - GA 1323 Incarceration, Justice and Restoration

“According to section 2.4 of the Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly, the Administrative Committee would work with the submitters of this item in developing ways for members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to:

- 1) Engage in a study about the cost that the War on Drugs has imposed on poor communities
- 2) Learn of ways to bring about awareness and relief in their communities;
- 3) Explore avenues whereby Disciples may support restoration of full citizenship rights for first-time non-violent drug offenders including the right to vote, serve on a jury and full access to government services such as financial aid for education, housing and employment assistance.”

Mass incarceration

DEFINITION:

This phenomenon refers to the current American experiment in incarceration, which is defined by comparatively and historically extreme rates of imprisonment and by the concentration of imprisonment among young, African American men living in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage



Some sobering statistics

- With only 5% of the world's population, the United States has 25% of the world's prison population¹
- Nearly half of all prisoners in state prisons are locked up for non-violent offenses²
- By 2007 the United States spent more than \$44 billion dollars on incarceration and related offenses, a 127% jump from 1987, over this same period, spending on higher education rose just 21%³
- The U.S. prison population rose by 700% from 1970 to 2005, a rate far outpacing that of the general population growth (44%) and crime rates.⁴



¹Suzanne M. Kirchoff, "Economic Impact of Prison Growth," Congressional Research Service, April, 2010.

²"Prison Inmate Characteristics," Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), Office of Justice Programs, 31 December, 2007. Web 25 May 2011 <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=32>.

³The Pew Center on the States, 1 in 100 report. http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org_uploadedFiles/8015PCTS_Prison8_FINAL+2-1-1_FORWEB.pdf.

⁴Public Safety, Public Spending. http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pes_assets/2007/Public20Safety20Public20Spendingpdf.pdf

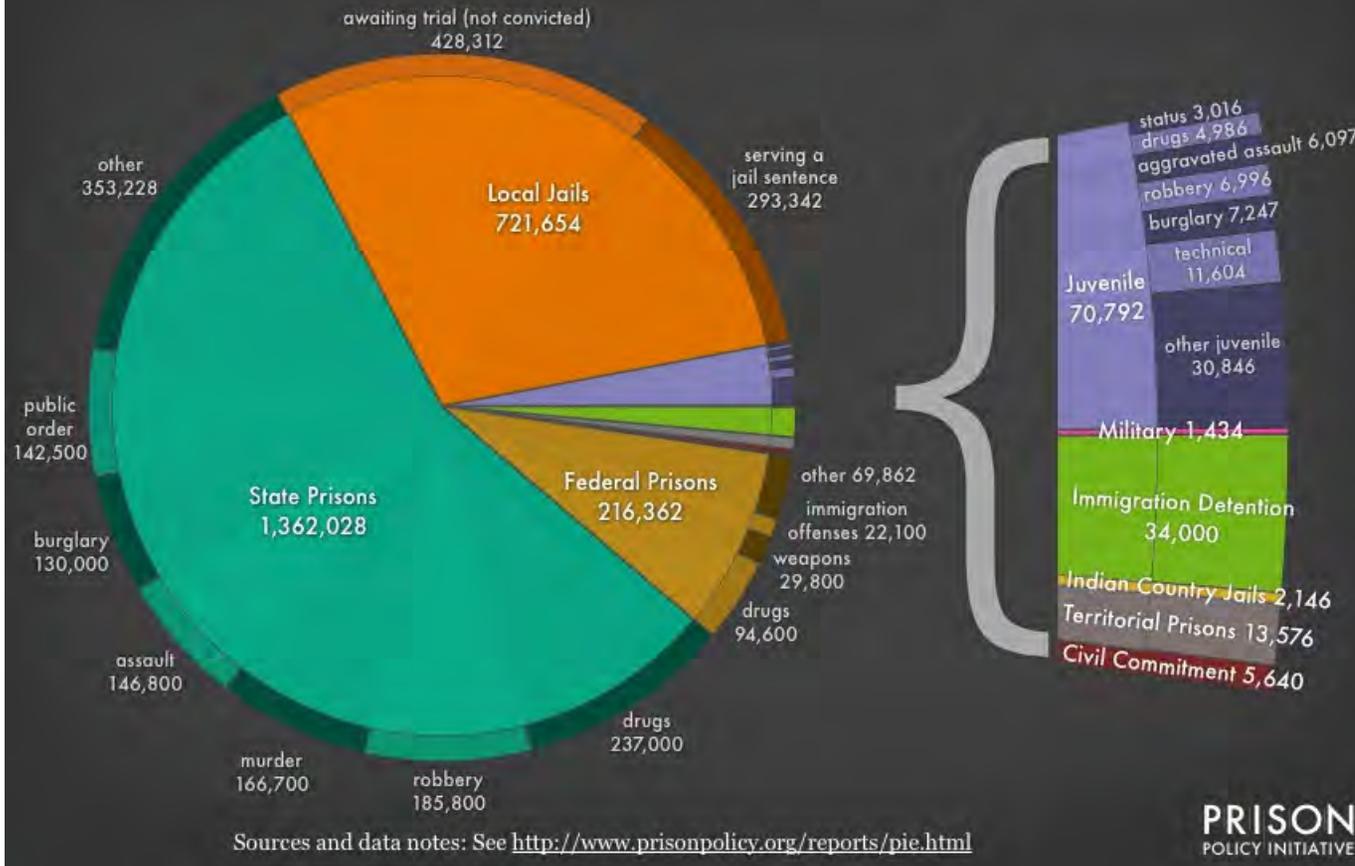


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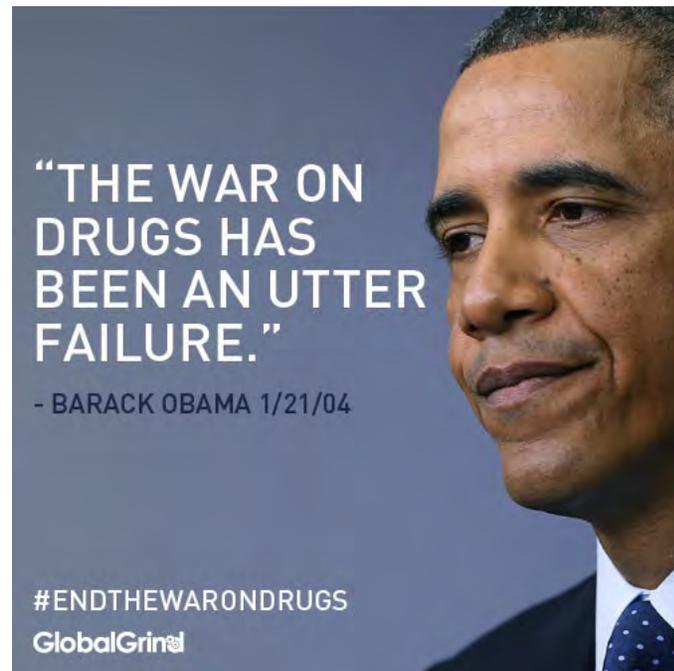
How many people are locked up in the United States?

The United States locks up more people, per capita, than any other nation. But grappling with why requires us to first consider the many types of correctional facilities and the reasons that people are confined there.



A Failed War on Drugs

For the past 40 years, the war on drugs has resulted in more than 45 million arrests, \$1 trillion dollars in government spending, and America's role as the world's largest jailer. Yet for all that, drugs are cheaper, purer, and more available than ever.



The House I Live In: a film by Eugene Janecki



Filmed in more than twenty states, *The House I Live In* captures heart-wrenching stories of those on the front lines — from the dealer to the grieving mother, the narcotics officer to the senator, the inmate to the federal judge — and offers a penetrating look at the profound human rights implications of America’s longest war. ⁵

⁵ <http://www.thehouseilivein.org>

Mass Incarceration has had a Disproportionate Affect upon People of Color

- ❖ 1 in every 106 adult white male 18 years of age or older is incarcerated.
- ❖ 1 in every 36 adult Hispanic male 18 years of age or older is incarcerated.
- ❖ 1 in every 15 adult African-American male 18 years or older is incarcerated.⁶



⁶The Pew Center on the States, 1 in 100 report. On the slide titled, Gathering, there is an incomplete date for Nathan Ruthstein's guidelines. It should be 1993.

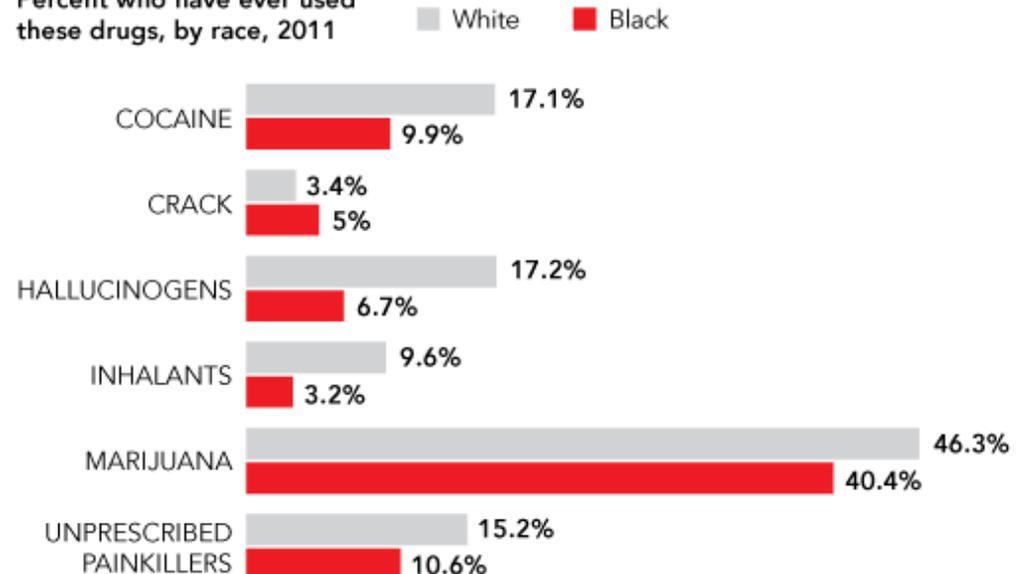
Prisoners under state jurisdiction sentenced for drug offenses by race, December 31, 2011



We Have a Problem

Drug war waged primarily in communities of color. But...Human Rights Watch – “people of color no more likely to use or sell illicit drugs than whites, but have higher arrest rate.”

Percent who have ever used these drugs, by race, 2011



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Bureau of Justice Statistics

THE HUFFINGTON POST

The New Jim Crow

Michelle Alexander, in her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, names mass incarceration as the civil rights issue of our time. The effects of the disproportionate number of people of color who have been arrested and imprisoned has not only affected the communities in which they live and their families but also has the long-term effect of disenfranchising and degrading a significant portion of the American population.

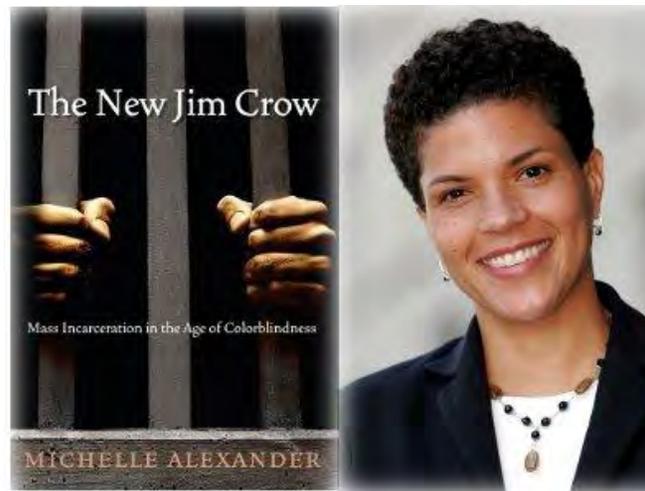
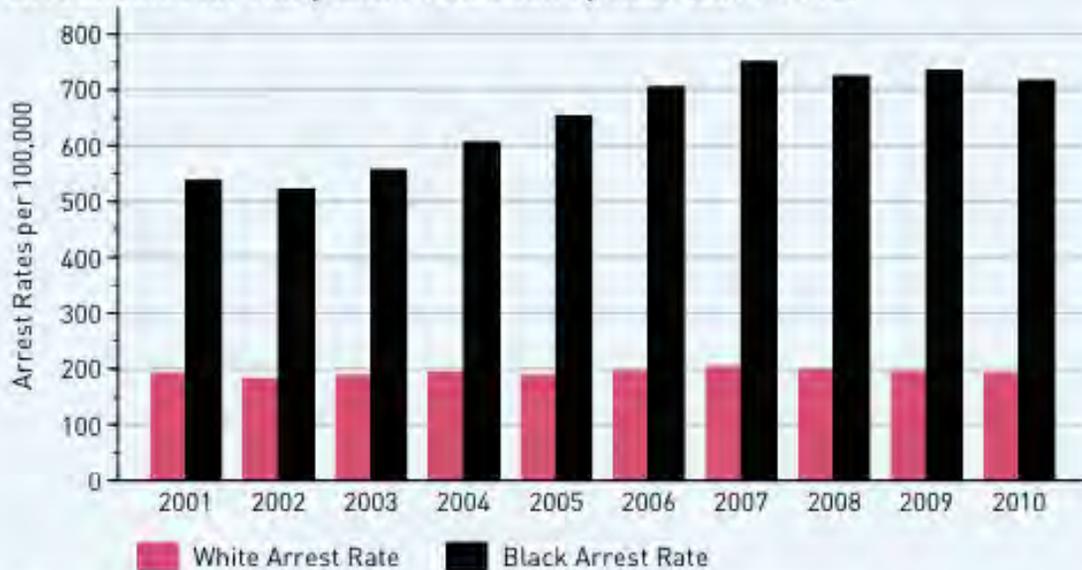


FIGURE 10

Arrest Rates for Marijuana Possession by Race (2001-2010)



Source: FBI/Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data and U.S. Census Data

Glaring Disparity

African-Americans comprise 14% of drug users, however 37% of those are arrested for drug offenses

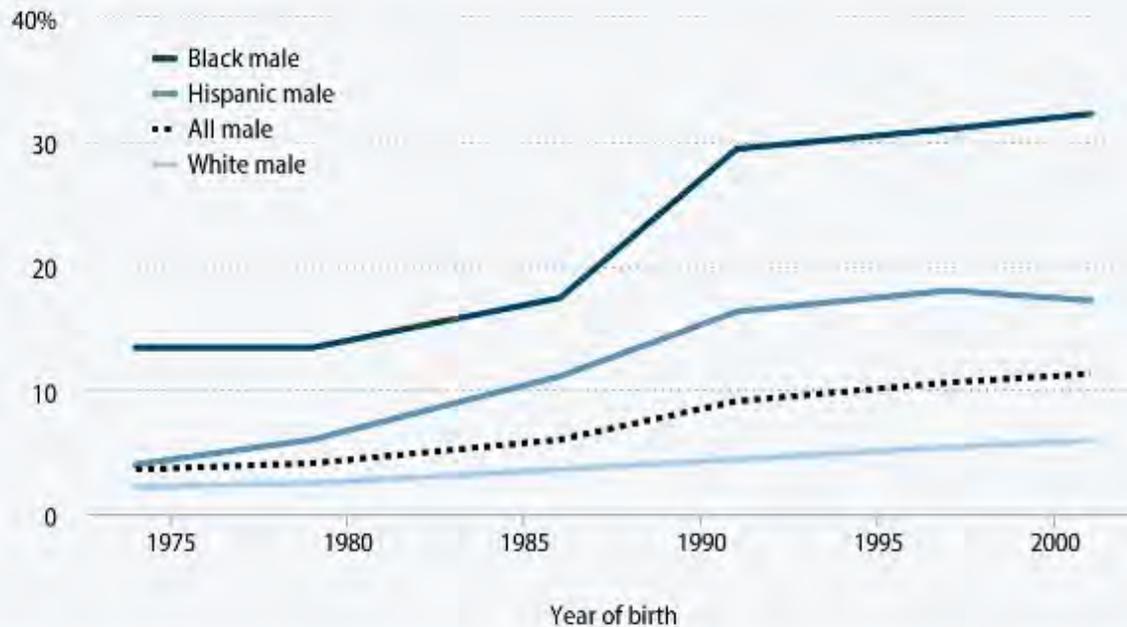
1980-2007 - 25.4 million adults arrested for drugs, 1 in 3 were African-American



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Male lifetime likelihood of going to state or federal prison, by race and ethnicity, 1974–2001



Notes: The black and white categories exclude persons of Hispanic origin. Percents represent the chances of being admitted to state or federal prison during a lifetime. Estimates were obtained by applying age-specific first incarceration and mortality rates for each group to a hypothetical population of 100,000 births. See methodology section in Bonczar (2003).

Source: Bonczar (2003)

ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE

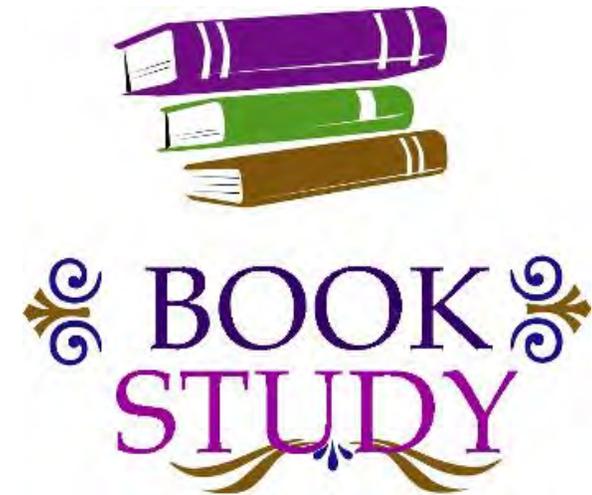
How Can our Churches Respond?



A Book Study

Here's one way to start:

A book study of Michelle Alexander's book among a diverse group of people





Kentucky's experiment: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky's Pro-Reconciliation / Anti-Racism Team

Issued a call to those who may be interested

Who came?

- Anglo and People of Color
- Young and Old
- Lay and Clergy
- 12 in all

Covenanted to meet together for prayer, study and discussion

Meetings usually scheduled during the week from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

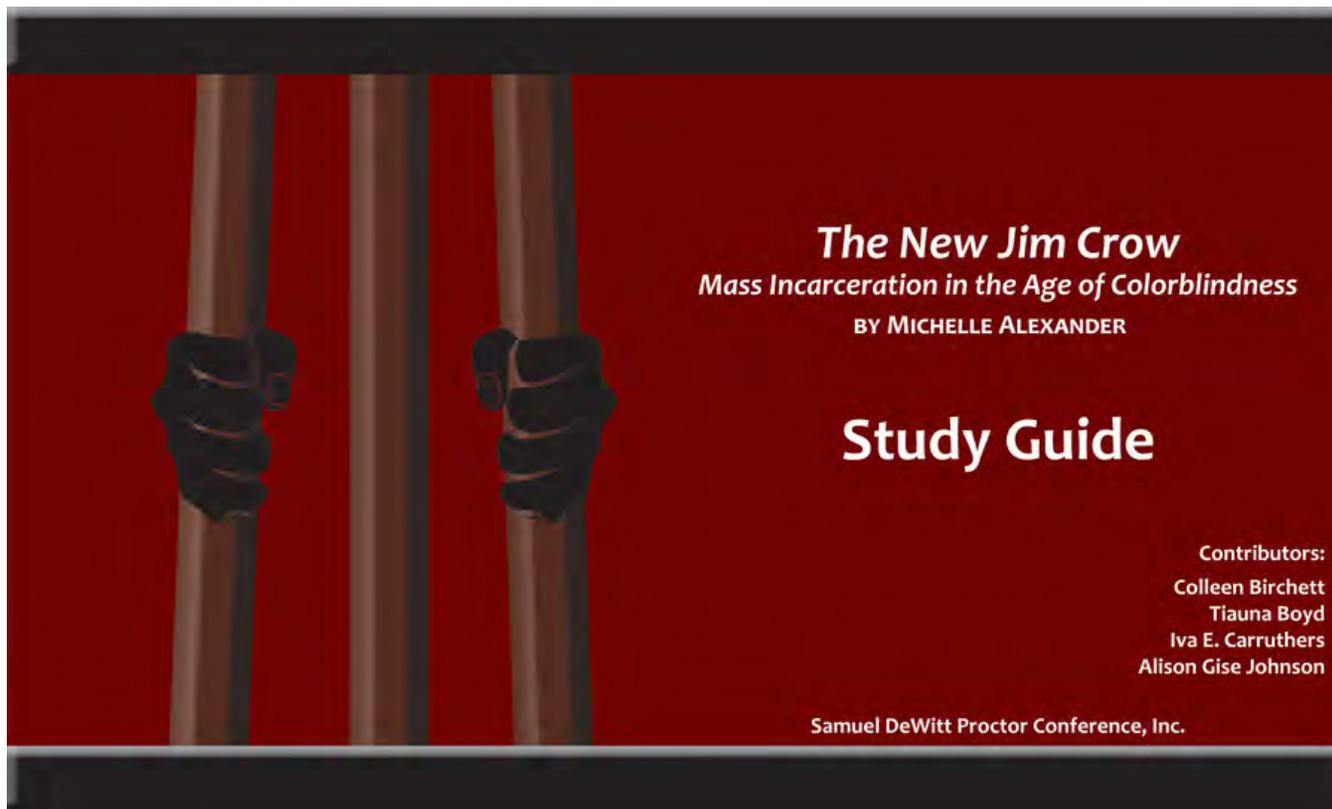
Quarterly meetings





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The Format





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The Gathering



Shared Guidelines for discussion from Nathan Ruthstein's, "Healing Racism in America" (1993)

- Met in a centralized location in one of our denomination's churches
 - Opening devotions and worship
 - Sharing/ice breakers
 - Catching up
 - The focus is on building community, getting to know one another and deep listening



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Lectio Divina



- Different passages of scripture were selected each time we met
- Read three times:
 - First reading: listen and meditate on the Word. Share popcorn style without explanation a word or phrase that jumped out at you
 - Second reading: listen and mediate on the Word. Ask how is this scripture passage speaking to me? Voluntarily share.
 - Third reading: listen and meditate on the Word. Ask how is this scripture passage speaking to this group or to the wider church? Voluntarily share.



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The Discussion



A chapter from Alexander's book each session was considered.

The study guide was used.

Prompt questions were prepared to generate discussion:

- "What surprised you in the chapter you read?"
- "What did you share with someone else?"

A quote was selected from the reading and the question asked

- "How do you respond to this quote?"

After reading this chapter:

- "What made you angry or upset?"
- "What emotions did it bring to the surface?"
- "What memories were stirred?"

Discussion sometimes in small group of 3-4 and then joining the whole group. If small groups broke out, a recorder was selected for the group to report back to the whole group.

Sometimes the whole group discussed the questions together.



Breaking Bread Together

Lunch was shared by everyone as we break bread together.

Here bonding continues and discussions get deeper.



Closing Conversations

Concluding Conversation and Looking to the Future

A time to debrief and look ahead

- “What’s next?” Where do we go from here?”



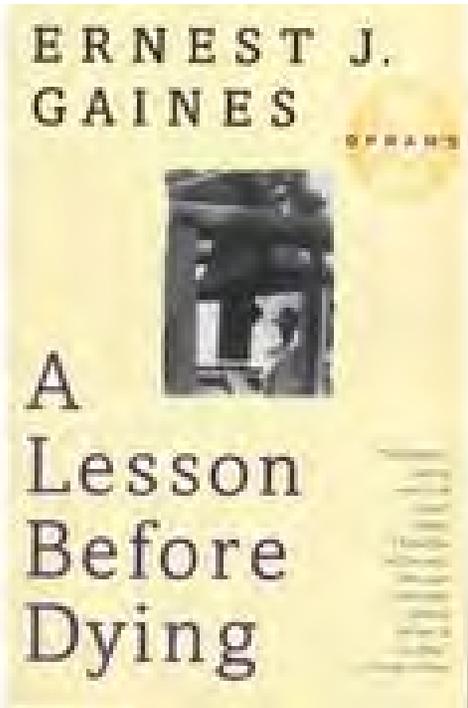
The Lord's Supper

Close with the Lord's Supper and a blessing

Our meetings always began and ended with worship.
Spiritual bookends.



Resources for Research and Reflection

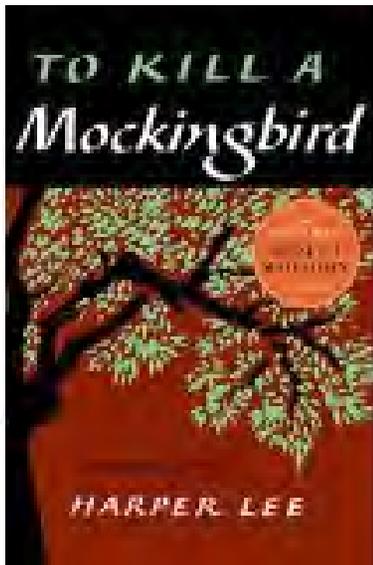


A Lesson Before Dying by Ernest J. Gaines

Discussion Guide by Doubleday Publishing:

<http://knopfdoubleday.com/guide/9780375702709/a-lesson-before-dying/>

To Kill a Mockingbird Film and/or Book Discussion



To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Chicago One Read Book and Movie Discussion Guide:
<http://www.chipublic.org/to-kill-a-mockingbir-discussion-questions/>

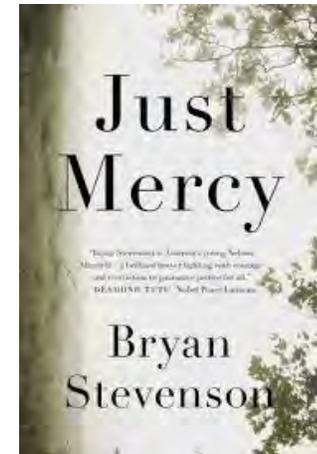
Film and Fellowship

Frontline Series: “Prison State” Video - 90 minutes

<http://video.pbs.org/video/2365235229/>

Bryan Stevenson TED Talk: “In Pursuit of Justice” - 23 minutes

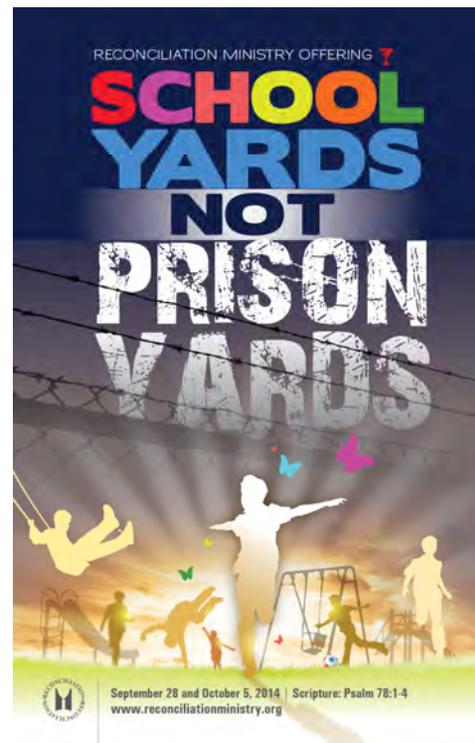
http://www.ted.com/playlists/15/the_pursuit_of_justice





Reconciliation Ministry

www.reconciliationministry.org





For More Information



If you have questions or want more information on how you or your ministry can respond, welcome and engage, contact:

NBA Prison and Jail Ministries

Rev. Dean W. Bucalos

prisonministries@nbacares.org

Reconciliation Ministry of the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. April G. Johnson

ajohnson@disciples.org

NBA Disciples Care Exchange & Affinity Groups

Rev. Monica Wedlock Kilpatrick

mkilpatrick@nbacares.org

Join us for our next webinar after the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
General Assembly in July:

**"Special Populations--Tools to equip
congregations to welcome those on the
margins."**

Look out for more information
coming soon at:

<http://www.nbacares.org/events>



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