

AAM/ETH 205J Restorative Justice

United Theological Seminary/Payne Theological Seminary

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This is an ethics course inspired by the need for religious leadership to invest more seriously in issues of criminal justice. The staggering incarceration rates of African American males, the rapidly rising rate of incarceration for all females, and the record numbers of African American men and women returning from incarceration demand our attention. But even preceding this, the Hebrew Scriptures gave us direction for cities of refuge, Paul wrote eloquently from his experience as an inmate and Jesus spoke clearly about our mandate to visit the incarcerated. The present crisis in criminal justice requires that a course such as this be offered. As stated in the video documentary "A Justice That Heals," after the criminal justice system has done its work, the church is called to a higher form of justice: the idea that true justice comes when there is reconciliation between all stakeholders affected by offense- perpetrator and victim, family and community.

Restorative Justice refers to a branch of ethics concerned with setting right relationships in response to offense. In the criminal justice system, offense is treated through some form of consequence, usually punitive. But the Christian needs to look beyond punishment to the concept of order and right relationship prescribed by God in His will for His people. So while the criminal justice system tends to punish and segregate offenders, the church strives for more- for restoration of relationships and all this entails. If participants take this course seriously, they will never be able to rid themselves of the image of a new way to address crime and justice in America- and especially in the African American community.

Assignments:

Basic text:

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment, T. Richard Snyder

Additional Readings:

"Healing Communities", Stephanie Boddie, Robert Franklin and Harold Dean Trulear (posted on course website)

"Healing Communities: A 7 Point Plan" (attached to syllabus)

Faith Based Institutions and High Risk Youth, Harold Dean Trulear (available at both www.ppv.org and www.aecf.org)

"I Was in Prison..." Harold Dean Trulear (attached to syllabus)

Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform: Beyond Detention -- System Transformation Through Juvenile Detention Reform, Annie E. Casey Foundation (www.aecf.org)

"Prisoners and Families: Parenting Issues During Incarceration," J. Creasie Finney Hairston (posted on course website)

Field Trips:

We will visit both a state and county corrections facility for this course. There is a difference between them. County jails are short term facilities, where persons are housed: 1) awaiting trial, 2) awaiting sentencing, 3) serving a sentence of 11 and 1/2 months or less or 4) awaiting transportation to a long term facility, State prisons are long term facilities, usually for persons serving at least a one year sentence. Many churches have prison ministries, but only work in jails. Not knowing the difference, they lose sight of the ministry implications inherent in the fact that most of the people in the county jail will be here soon indeed, in most counties the average stay is less than two weeks. We will need to visit BOTH types of facilities for this class. Part of your final assignment will be a report on your visit. See the written assignments below for the exact format for your field trip report.

Other Resources:

You will need to search the following websites for additional material:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, www.aecf.org

National Alliance of Faith and Justice, www.nafj.org

Amachi Mentoring, www.amachimentoring.org

Prison Fellowship, www.prisonfellowship.org

The Sentencing Project, www.sentencingproject.org

National Association of Restorative Justice

Powernet of Dayton, www.powernetofdayton.org

Exodus Foundation, www.exodusfoundation.org

Media Outreach Reentry Network

National Ten Point Leadership Foundation, www.ntlf.org

Your state and county departments of corrections

The Federal Department of Justice

First Unit 7 January Introduction to Restorative Justice

This unit focuses on restorative justice as a principle of Christian ethics as well as its relevance for the churches' intersection with the criminal justice system. We will view the video "A Justice That Heals" from the Media Reentry Network.

Reading:

"Healing Communities: Faith Based Initiatives and Prisoner Reintegration," Boddie, S.; Franklin, R.; Trulear, H. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006)

Second Unit 7 January (PM) Theology and Society: The Context for Restorative Justice

This unit focuses on "grace" as a theological construct. It also bids the participant consider the tension between grace as experienced and/or received through individual experience, and redemption as a corporate/collective experience.

Reading:

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment, T. Richard Snyder.
The Sentencing Project website (www.sentencingproject.org)

Third Unit 8 January (AM) Juvenile Justice

This unit focuses on the distinct challenges of working with youth, criminal justice and delinquency prevention. We will give particular attention to the Ten Point Coalition model from Boston, MA. We will view the video “Love Them One by One.”

Reading:

National Ten Point Leadership Foundation website (www.ntlf.org)
Faith Based Institutions and High Risk Youth, Harold Dean Trulear
Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform: Beyond Detention -- System Transformation Through Juvenile Detention Reform, Annie E. Casey Foundation (www.aecf.org)

Fourth Unit 8 January (PM) Families of the Incarcerated

This unit focuses on the implications of incarceration for the families of the incarcerated. It includes exploring models for family connectivity, mentoring children of prisoners and healthy relationships and support networks for the incarcerated as well as returning citizens from incarceration.

Readings:

Amachi Mentoring Program website (www.amachimentoring.org)
“I Was in Prison...” Harold Dean Trulear (attached to syllabus)
“Healing Communities: A 7 Point Plan” (attached to syllabus)
“Prisoners and Families: Parenting Issues During Incarceration,” J. Creasie Finney Hairston (posted in resources)

Fifth Unit 9 January (AM and PM) Exploring Models of and resources for Restorative Justice

We will explore actual working models of Restorative Justice, both inside and outside of the correctional system. In preparation for this discussion, read through the websites listed above under “Other Resources.” The video “Manalive: Fatal Peril” will guide our morning discussion. In the afternoon, we will be led by Craig Powell, Executive Director of Powernet, a prisoner reentry initiative for the city of Dayton.

Reading:

Powernet website, (www.powernetofdayton.org)

Sixth Unit 10, 12, 19 January Field Experience

This unit provides participants the opportunity to visit a county jail or state prison. This

will give participants not simply a visitation experience, but an opportunity to talk with corrections personnel concerning the work they do and their philosophy of corrections. Also, where possible, participants should make arrangements to have conversations with inmates concerning the same issues. Visits will be coordinated through the course faculty and state and county correctional officials, with details to come as logistics are finalized. AT present, please keep the course dates available for these visits.

Final Assignment: Assignment: Write a 2000 word proposal for a ministry partnership between your congregation and the facility you visited. It should include ideas for (1) ministry in the prison/jail, (2) ministry with families of the incarcerated, (3) transition of prisoners back into society, (4) issues affecting all stakeholders in the reentry process, (5) advocacy and public policy. In each case, show how the proposed initiative reflects the ethics and requirements of restorative justice. This paper is due January 31, 2008.

Attached readings

Healing Communities: A Seven Point Initiative

With record numbers of women and men returning from incarceration in our nation, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, a historically Black denomination of some 2,000 churches and 2,000,000 members, voted in its 2007 sessions to launch a nationwide Social Justice and Prison Ministry/Prisoner Reentry initiative. Working with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the nation's premier foundation in support of kids and their families, the PNBC endeavors to equip each of its member churches to support families in their congregations who have family members who are incarcerated or have recently returned from incarceration. As part of this nationwide training, lead congregations and organizations have been designated in various regions of the country to develop church clusters to be empowered to undertake this reentry support effort. In Detroit, the lead organization is Wings of Faith, Inc.

Wings of Faith, under the direction of PNBC minister Rev. Dr. DeeDee Coleman, has a proven track record in the delivery of services and support for men and women returning from incarceration and their families. In their role as a PNBC lead organization for Detroit, they are charged with organizing a cluster of churches and faith based organizations in their area for the purposes of providing reentry support services. To do this, they will sponsor a two day training conference in the Spring of 2008 to equip congregations in their cluster for this initiative.

In support of this initiative, the Casey Foundation- with the assistance of Dr. Coleman and other PNBC leaders- is developing a tool kit for the equipping of congregations and faith based organizations in the work of family support and reentry. The tool kit will provide basic information and instruction on how any congregation, regardless of size and capacity, can use its existing resources to support a family affected by incarceration, and become part of a larger network of resources that can facilitate

successful reentry and reintegration for citizens returning from incarceration and their families.

The training will consist of identifying issues and resources involving six areas within the framework of this reentry initiative:

1. Stigma Reduction and Welcoming Supportive Atmosphere

Through the development of educational and inspirational materials, PNBC and the Casey tool kit will offer assistance in bringing the issue of incarceration and reentry to new visibility in congregations. The aim is to heighten awareness surrounding reentry, help families reduce sense of stigma and shame over having incarcerated loved ones and create a welcoming environment for returning citizens.

2. Family identification

With stigma reduced and the issue named, congregations will be able to more readily identify a family or families in the church to adopt for this program.

3. Formal and Informal Support

Congregations will be encouraged to provide support for the family of the incarcerated through pastoral counseling and providing a support group to walk with the family through the period. Special emphasis will be given to supporting children of the incarcerated through mentoring, and supportive services to grandparents and other elderly relatives serving as care givers. Preparation should be made for the return of the incarcerated member and that will mean a shift in family dynamics for which there must be understanding and support by caring church members.

4. Visitation

Congregations will be trained to both assist the family with visiting their incarcerated member, as well as keep in touch themselves, through letter writing and visitation. Sometimes families have trouble visiting because of distance. Congregational support can range from something as simple as providing transportation, or even some benevolence support if long distance travel is involved. Other means to be explored include providing “video visitation” through real time video conferencing.

5. Volunteering

Congregations will be exposed to life skill development programs in jails and prisons and encouraged to provide volunteers for these efforts. While many jails and prisons have churches that come in and provide worship services and Bible studies, their chaplains often cite other needs that are equally as pressing. “I have a waiting list of churches that want to do worship services,” declared one long time chaplain in Ohio, “What I need is volunteers who will help with life skills- how do you balance a check book, get a driver’s

license, read a bus schedule,” he continued. “I need tutors to help with reading and writing, and mentors for good parenting skills.”

6. Network of referrals

Congregations will be introduced to and connected with resources available in the community for persons returning from incarceration. Given the needs of these persons coming home, congregations must identify what organizations provide housing, employment and employment training, health care assistance and other services required for successful reentry and be ready to refer.

7. Public Policy

Congregations will be familiarized themselves with the Second Chance Act of 2007, a major federal initiative awaiting passage in the federal legislature which has significant bipartisan support. Co-sponsored by Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill), this legislation would provide federal money for implementation of prisoner reentry programs at the state level. States will be able to apply for the funds only after submitting a plan for reentry programs constructed by a task force including representation from community and non-profit organizations. Congregations will be encouraged to be sure that their voices are heard on these task forces, and that the interests of their communities.

“I was in Prison...”

“It is the Civil Rights issue of the 21st Century,” declared PNBC Second Vice President Dr. James Perkins.

“No area of African American life is unaffected by it,” offered Dr. Owen Cardwell, pastor of New Canaan International Church, Richmond VA.

“We must approach this so that any and every congregation can be involved. This is a Black family issue,” continued Dr. Perkins.

Both men spoke of African Americans and the criminal justice system as the Commissioners of the Social Justice and Prison Ministry met under the leadership of Dr. Perkins in July, 2007 to continue planning the Convention’s national strategy for prison ministry and prisoner reentry to be unveiled at the August 2007 Convention in Washington, DC.

All in attendance recognized that the relationship between African Americans and the criminal justice system is as complex as it is compelling. Dr. Dee Dee Coleman, pastor of Russell Street Baptist Church in Detroit, and manager of the project for PNBC distributed the latest statistics from the Department of Justice on black incarceration rates, as the Commissioners discussed ways in which the Progressive Convention and its churches can address the issue nationally and locally.

For local churches to address the issue, church leadership must realize that working with incarcerated persons and their families is a ministry that all churches can and must do. While some services, such as housing and employment for persons

returning from incarceration, require a certain capacity for program development, other services can be provided by any congregation with a heart for ministry and mission.

First of all, congregations can identify members of their church and community who have incarcerated family members. While some persons will be reluctant to admit such an arrangement, others will welcome the fact that the church understands that they have special needs and concerns given their incarcerated family member. Families are always affected when one member is incarcerated. Financial issues emerge if the incarcerated person was a contributor to the family income. Anger and resentment plague families when incarceration strains an already difficult family situation. Children wrestle with the absence of the incarcerated parent- especially if the parent is the mother! "It's almost as if they see daddies going to jail as normal, but Momma is always supposed to be there," offered one observer at the Commission meeting.

Second, congregations can provide support for the family of the incarcerated through counseling and providing a support group to walk with the family through the period. Preparation should be made for the return of the incarcerated member and that will mean a shift in family dynamics for which there must be understanding and support by caring church members.

Third, the congregation can both assist the family with visiting their incarcerated member, as well as keep in touch themselves, through letter writing and visitation. Sometimes families have trouble visiting because of distance. Congregational support can range from something as simple as providing transportation, or even some benevolence support if long distance travel is involved. Other means can be as dramatic as providing "video visitation," which Dr. Cardwell's church does for families in the Richmond area whose family members are incarcerated at GGGG prison in Southwestern, Virginia, a 7 hour drive from Richmond. Every Saturday, families come to Canaan International where video conferencing equipment allows them to have a real time conversation with their incarcerated family member. "It's about keeping families together," said Dr. Cardwell, who is working in conjunction with the Department of Corrections of the Commonwealth of Virginia. "We call it 'Family Connectivity.'"

Fourth, congregations can supply volunteers for life skill development programs in jails and prisons. While many jails and prisons have churches that come in and provide worship services and Bible studies, their chaplains often cite other needs that are equally as pressing. "I have a waiting list of churches that want to do worship services," declared one long time chaplain in Ohio, "What I need is volunteers who will help with life skills- how do you balance a check book, get a driver's license, read a bus schedule," he continued. "I need tutors to help with reading and writing, and mentors for good parenting skills. Church people can do this- and when an inmate asks why they keep coming to help, and then they can share Jesus."

Fifth, congregations can familiarize themselves with resources available in the community for persons returning from incarceration. Almost all persons who are currently incarcerated will return someday. Many persons serving life sentences most likely will be released at some point. What's more, many congregations that are currently involved in "prison ministry" are really working in jails- which are short term facilities- not prisons. This makes a real difference in that many of the people they minister to will most likely be home within months, if not weeks. Given the needs of these persons coming home, congregations must identify what organizations provide housing,

employment and employment training, health care assistance and other services required for successful reentry and be ready to refer. “For many of these persons, job training and readiness are essential,” offered Dr. Peeples, pastor of Faith Memorial Baptist Church in Oklahoma City. “We must know where the vocational training is and be involved long term.”

Finally, congregations should familiarize themselves with the Second Chance Act of 2007, a major federal initiative awaiting passage in the federal legislature which has significant bipartisan support. Co-sponsored by Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill), this legislation would provide federal money for implementation of prisoner reentry programs at the state level. States will be able to apply for the funds only after submitting a plan for reentry programs constructed by a task force including representation from community and non-profit organizations. Congregations should be sure that their voices are heard on these task forces, and that the interests of their communities are reflected in the state plan.

The Commissioners agreed that prison ministry and prisoner reentry programs are really part of one “continuum of care.” Good prison ministry always helps prepare inmates to return to society. Since most incarcerated persons will return, this is essential. Good prisoner reentry programs begin with sentencing. Rather than waiting until the weeks or months before release, prisoner reentry ministries should begin building relationships with prisoners and their families as early in the process as possible. “Relationships,” said Dr. Perkins. “That’s what this is all about- and any church can do this. They can build a relationship of support for an inmate and their family- especially within their own congregation.”

The Progressive Baptist Convention has enlisted technical assistance provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their Prison Ministry initiative. The Casey Foundation, the leading foundation in the country for supporting “kids in disadvantaged communities,” has developed an initiative known as “Healing Communities,” mining the capacity of the faith community to provide informal and formal networks of support for the formerly incarcerated and their families, and to advocate in their communities for a more welcome response to the returning person. “The Black church has always been a healing community,” noted Dr. Coleman, whose Wings of Faith Ministry has provided services for returning persons for some time.

“Anyone can do this, every church can and should do this,” concluded Dr. Perkins. “It’s interesting, when we preach on Matthew 25, we always talk about ministering to the sick, but never about ministering to the prisoner. This is a mandate from the Christ. Every church visits its sick members, and they don’t have a special ‘hospital visitation’ ministry. Prison ministry should be as natural to us as ministering to the sick. Those are our family members. They are us.”

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