

Name: Marci Pittman
Title: Faith in Prisons
Organization or Agency:
Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed
NA

Testimony:

My name is Marci Pittman. I am a Christian woman, a wife, mother, grandmother and longtime resident of Connecticut. For more than fifteen years I have corresponded with incarcerated men and women, listening to their stories, sharing Scripture, and praying for their lives and futures. I come before you today not out of anger, but out of deep conviction rooted in Scripture and love for those made in the image of God.

I want to first express my strong support for our current state corrections ombudsman. The ombudsman's office has provided a necessary voice of accountability and oversight in a system that can easily become hidden from public view. I have seen the office respond to legitimate concerns with fairness and persistence, and I believe this work must continue and be adequately resourced. Thank you for the leadership and independence shown in that role.

At the same time, I urge you to press for more specific, measurable changes when it comes to faith-based initiatives within our prisons. Rehabilitation without transformation of the heart is incomplete. Scripture repeatedly shows us that lasting change comes when broken people encounter the living God.

Consider the story of Onesimus, the runaway slave who likely faced imprisonment or severe punishment under Roman law. Through the ministry of the Apostle Paul while Paul himself was in chains, Onesimus came to faith in Christ. Paul's letter to Philemon reveals a radical vision: a former offender is no longer to be viewed as a mere criminal but as a beloved brother. Paul writes, "Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me" (Philemon 1:11). Connecticut's prisons need more structured opportunities for this kind of gospel transformation—voluntary, well-supervised faith-based programs that teach character, repentance, restitution, and new identity in Christ.

We also see powerful precedent in the account of Ebed-Melech the Cushite, an African official in the court of King Zedekiah.

When the prophet Jeremiah was thrown into a muddy cistern to die, Ebed-Melech risked his own safety to rescue him (Jeremiah 38). Because of his courage and mercy, God promised Ebed-Melech deliverance and life "because you have put your trust in me" (Jeremiah 39:18). Even in dark systems of injustice, God honors those who act righteously toward the imprisoned. Our state should honor and expand programs where volunteers and chaplains can safely reach those in solitary confinement, provide biblically-based reentry curricula, and facilitate mentoring relationships that continue after release. I respectfully ask for the following concrete changes:

- Greater access for vetted, faith-based organizations to conduct consistent, voluntary Bible studies, discipleship programs, and worship services without undue bureaucratic delay.
- Policies that recognize the rehabilitative value of genuine religious conversion, including credit toward reentry planning for participants who complete faith-based character programs.
- Protection for incarcerated believers who face ridicule or retaliation for their faith.
- Partnerships with local churches for mentorship and housing support upon release, reflecting the early church's care for former offenders like Onesimus.

Jesus Himself declared that when we visit those in prison, we visit Him (Matthew 25:36). As evangelicals we take this literally. But we also know from the lesser-known stories of Scripture that God delights in

using transformed offenders for His glory. Onesimus went from fugitive to faithful coworker. Ebed-Melech moved from bystander to deliverer because he feared God more than man.

Connecticut can do better. Let us support strong oversight through the ombudsman while deliberately opening the door wider for the kind of heart-level change only the Gospel provides. Our communities will be safer, our prisons more humane, and our God more honored when we do.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I am happy to answer questions and continue this important conversation.

In Christ's service,
Marci Pittman