



# INSIDE Journal

PRISON FELLOWSHIP'S NEWSPAPER FOR AMERICA'S PRISONS VOLUME 23, NO. 1 WINTER 2014

## Back From the Brink

by Ron Humphrey

**D**avid Hamm sadly reflects, "The invention of the TV dinner tray for eating in front of the television instead of at the dinner table began a downfall for my family."

David was 12 at the time, living in Garland, Texas. That was when he stopped attending Sunday school, church, and vacation Bible school, which he had previously loved.

"My dad worked 36 years for the post office and retired as postmaster. My mother was a stay-at-home mom, and my brother, a year older, was already getting into alcohol and drugs. My younger sister and I would soon follow." David was stealing beer at age 13 and consuming a six-pack every evening. Bragging about it at school was a bad idea, and the police arrested him on a misdemeanor charge of theft.

David didn't get the message and was soon smoking mari-

juana and moving into more serious drug use.

"If I could get high on it, I was taking it or smoking it," he remembers. David recalls one time when, after taking two hits of LSD at a Styx concert, he lost touch with reality for two weeks. One step ahead of the law after a botched armed robbery, David thought he could straighten himself out in the military, so he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force.

But nothing went as David planned. He became a serious alcoholic and continued his use of drugs. The military, however, never caught on to his substance abuse, and he completed his four-year hitch with an honorable discharge and a Good Conduct Medal.

Two years later, the roof caved in when David's brother, his role model, committed suicide.

"I loved my brother, and his death broke my heart," David says. Unable to deal with his brother's death, David launched himself into even deeper use of drugs, living in a fog for months.



Photo by Charles Prince

David Hamm enlisted in the U.S. Air Force to try to outrun his drug addiction.

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## Former Parolee Advises Others

by Sarah Chaffee

A Q&A with Clark Porter

**C**lark Porter's childhood was rocky. As a teenager, he took to the streets.

After robbing a post office at gunpoint, he received a 35-year sentence. He served 15 years, mostly in 22-hour-a-day supermax lockdown.

Clark turned to Christ to change his life, and when he was released, he had a plan to make it in the free world.

"When I left prison, my mindset was not to go back," he says. "I worked on three areas: faith - becoming a part of a church, therapy for four years, and getting a job/ becoming independent. Once I was settled and got my own apartment, I started focusing on school."

At community college, Clark's creative writing caught

the attention of a professor, who showed his work to a dean at Washington University in St. Louis. Clark received a scholarship and graduated with honors in 2006. He went on to complete a master's program in social work. Afterward, he gave his résumé to Doug Burris, head of the federal probation office in St. Louis, for assistance in the job search.

"[Doug] had me come by the office and said, 'Why don't you work here?' I said 'OK,'" Clark recalls.

"[Clark] was sworn in by the chief judge in the district courtroom, which means he stood there twice - once to get a 35-year sentence; the other time to accept a job," Doug said to the St. Louis Beacon.

Clark now serves in three areas: providing resources for inmates during the pre-release stage, conducting cognitive behavior groups, and helping to

administer Program Re-Direct, which serves ex-prisoners at high risk of returning to prison. Clark presented about Program Re-Direct at a national probation officer conference.

Recently Clark got on the phone with IJ to give insight to our readers who might be anticipating their own release date.

### IJ: What is important knowledge for someone just released?

Clark: Once someone is out, my first objective is to work on three areas: employment, training, and college. They need to overcome obstacles in the way of these three things.

You aren't going to get anything without education. You're not competitive unless you are a qualified employee. Recently-released people often think, I'm going to get a job and all is well. You minimize disadvantages by getting



Photo provided by Clark Porter

In 1986, 17-year-old Clark Porter assisted in an armed robbery. But today, this ex-prisoner is a program support specialist at the St. Louis Federal Probation Office.

education. An employer can look at an ex-con and say: He doesn't have any education; he doesn't have any job skills. He's not a qualified employee ... Get yourself into training, get 'paper' so that you are

certified ...

Training is important, education is important because we don't want them to just have a job at McDonald's. We want them to get a job with medical and dental benefits, to get them into careers. We want to get them educated and send them back to college.

### IJ: What advice would you give to prisoners preparing for reentry?

Clark: Be willing to invest. As much time as you spent in prison, invest that time to grow. If you spent five years in prison, spend five years trying to get your life on track. What do you want your life to look like? You've got to invest in those visions. You can't come out of prison looking for immediate gratification.

Take advantage of training programs, even if you think they are inferior. Keep yourself occupied and focused on learning ...

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# Letter From the Editor

## Dealing With Grief

I'll never forget when my mom called me to say that my dad had just died. It was like someone had thrown a bucket of ice water over my head. It was just the first step in a long journey of grief.

When someone you love dies, there are so many emotions to face: shock, sadness, anger, loneliness, and perhaps feelings of guilt or regret about the relationship you had with that person. The grieving process can be even more complicated and intense when you are away behind bars – unable to say goodbye, attend the funeral, or receive comfort from your friends and family. Many prisoners say their greatest fear is that someone they love will die before they can get out and



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go home.

How can you cope if this happens to you?

It can help to understand that grieving is a journey everyone must go through. According to "On Death and Dying," a popular 1969 book by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, grief has several stages, including: denial ("Maybe there's been a mistake ..."), bargaining ("If only I had

been there, maybe things would have happened differently."), anger ("This isn't fair!"), depression ("I don't see how I can ever feel happy again."), and finally, acceptance ("I will always miss this person, but I am able to move on.")

Grieving takes a lot of time, and it can be different for everyone. But – especially with help – you can get through it and come out the other side.

Grief can also bring us unexpected gifts. It can help us not to take things for granted, and instead appreciate the beauty and joy of even the smallest things. It can help us think carefully about how brief and fragile life is, and how we can spend our days on things that will matter after our lives in this world are over.

Have you experienced the loss of a loved one while incarcerated? What helped you cope? What's your advice for others? Write to us at: Letters to the Editor, Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20176.

Sincerely,

A.R. Quinn  
Editor

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## Back From the Brink

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David's dad blamed himself for his son's death and started drinking heavily. He became bitter. Forty years later, he would try to kill himself the same way his son had.

## Finding Christ Through Meadowlark

Everything would change for David on Christmas Eve, 1984. By chance, he tuned his TV to a religious channel hosted by Harlem Globetrotter basketball star Meadowlark Lemon.

David notes, "On that program, I saw such joy on everyone's face. I called in and accepted Jesus over the phone while talking with a prayer partner."

David's life began to change through the power of Jesus Christ. Gone were the drugs and alcohol. David returned to church and went "full-speed ahead" with Jesus. He started



Photo by Charles Prince

**David's dependence on speed led to his first serious prison time. With mentoring, accountability, and faith, he's been clean and sober for nine years.**

a Bible fellowship in his home. Next, he began street witnessing and ministry to prisoners. He became a missionary, traveling through the United States, Mexico, and Chile. "We did child evangelism, dramas, street ministry, door-to-door evangelism, as well as visiting with prisoners."

After several years as a street missionary, David decided he needed more education. He began attending classes at DeVry University while holding down a job to pay his tuition and living costs. The stress was too much, and David tried some meth to keep up the pace. But David's drug addiction had been one step behind him, and now it came roaring back. Soon, he was shooting heroin.

Still, David stuck to his classes and graduated magna cum laude with a 3.84 grade point average and a bachelor's degree in computer information systems. That led to a job with a major company, and the money rolled in. But so did the cops, eventually, nabbing David on possession of speed. He was sentenced to five years of supervised probation. While on probation, he gained a master's degree in information systems management.

But that changed to two years of prison time when David violated his probation. For the first time in his life, David found himself behind some serious prison bars, at the Estes Unit in Venus, Texas.

## Parolee Advice

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Get your GED and take all the education programs, because you don't know what you're going to need once you're out. I didn't know that my writing was going to help me. I invested a lot of time in writing while I was in prison. And I didn't know that my GED would help me to get into community college.

### IJ: How should an ex-prisoner go about repairing relationships with family?

Clark: Sometimes you have to limit your relationships ... Your family had the problems they had before you came out of prison. All of those problems were there the whole time you were in prison. Focus on getting you together.

### IJ: How does one form a strong relationship with their probation/parole officer?

Clark: You have got to make the relationship collaborative, or you're going to lose out. You've got to treat them well. Keep them out of your face. Follow the standard conditions of parole/probation ...

Probation officers and social workers can connect you to the community, and help you to find resources to address some of your needs. Utilize your resources; don't see these people as your adversaries ... You don't

know what opportunities in the community they can offer you if you open yourself up to them.

### IJ: How can parolees focus on long-term goals instead of mere survival?

Clark: Strike a balance between a survival mentality and going for goals. You have to keep many balls in the air. You have to keep pushing toward a future for yourself ... Don't focus on the fact that you don't have employment. Focus on establishing yourself in the community. Don't become myopic about doing one or two things. You have a host of things you have to get accomplished, including fulfilling the conditions of parole. Create structure within your life.

### IJ: How important is community in reintegration?

Clark: ... [S]tick to what kept you together when you were in prison. Keep that community in place. For those who are Christians, I strongly recommend keeping that community in place through a church. Community means I'm accountable to someone. I'm accountable to my higher power, and persons I value and hold dear. It may take six months or a year for you to find a home church. Once you've found a church, stick with it ... You're not going to be satisfied all the time, but you are building and growing with that church. ■

## A Second Chance

David had finally hit rock bottom, going from underage drinking and smoking pot to a hard-core prison inmate. But God hadn't given up on him. David enrolled in the faith-based unit at Estes. There, he was surrounded by eager, enthusiastic inmates living out a Christian life behind bars while they prepared themselves for a productive future back in society.

"I was into Christ 24/7," says David. "I attended church services, Bible studies, classes, and seminars offered by various ministries." Paroled in 2011, David began an outside mentoring relationship with Dave Baer, Prison Fellowship's Dallas director.

David now has a job and works with several prison ministries in Texas, including Prison Fellowship. He offers this advice

to prisoners: "If you are serious about making a new start in life, begin making attitude changes while still in prison. When you are out, find a loving, caring church to attend. Don't hide your past, but explain where you have been in your walk with the Lord and your need for a good mentor to help."

"I am also giving back through my work in prison ministry. The support of my family has been extremely important. Put this all together, and you have a plan for success."

It has been two years since David's release from prison. "I am nine years clean and sober," he says. "I can attribute it to attending church, Bible study, and most definitely to accountability and mentorship. God is what my life is all about today. I am so thankful. What God did for me, He can do for you. Prison is not the time to give up." ■

## PRAYER WARRIORS CORNER



*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."*

Proverbs 9:10

Pray with and for one another:

- For wisdom to make all the daily decisions of life with a biblical worldview
- For wisdom that yields patience; it is to your glory to overlook an offense
- For wisdom to have the right motives in your actions

**"I loved my brother, and his death broke my heart."**

# Feeling All Tied Up?

by Zach Sewell

A friend of mine recently used an illustration to explain how difficult it can be for people who have been released from prison. He asked me to stand in the middle of a group and hold a ball of yarn. I was supposed to represent an ex-prisoner. He asked those standing in the circle to

ity, family stress, the struggle to find employment ... When all of these challenges stack up, they're overwhelming.

Freedom for ex-prisoners is not the same as freedom for most people. Freedom is an obstacle course for ex-prisoners, with a high rate of failure. This is not a new reality. The world has always been hard on former inmates. Thousands of years ago, God broke the chains of imprison-

ment and slavery for a group of Israelites who had been confined in Egypt. They had endured what the Bible describes as "ruthless" treatment from the Egyptians (Exodus 1:13-14).

God sent Moses, a survivor of the infant genocide who had escaped Egypt as an adult, to demand the release of the Israelites. When the leaders of Egypt didn't listen to Moses, God sent devastating plagues on the Egyptians until their top official could no longer take it and told Moses to gather the prisoners and leave.

But freedom wasn't a walk in the park. The newly freed group was vulnerable in many ways. Shelter was an ongoing challenge. For years, they were on the move and didn't have a stable housing situation. There were also concerns about food, and people started to compare their food to the filling meals they had while they were enslaved (Exodus 16:3). There was also a threat of violence (Numbers 14:3-4). The men were afraid that other groups would kill them and take their wives and children as prize.

The group's morale sank. Just as many ex-prisoners struggle in the days after release, the former slaves began to grumble and resent the uncertainties of freedom in the wilderness. Perhaps the most discouraging point for Moses came when he heard someone say: "Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" (Numbers 14:3)

The pressures of living free were so overwhelming that they wanted to go back. They were willing to sacrifice liberty and freedom for familiarity and certainty. They were willing to return to hard labor, abuse, ridicule, chains, lashings, and long hours in the heat.

Does this sound familiar? Has the difficulty of trying to stay on the right track convinced you to give up? Have you or a friend ever

been released from prison - only to catch yourself wondering if there's something you could do to get back behind bars, the only place that feels safe and familiar to you now?

Captivity (whether it's physical captivity or captivity to a particular sin) might feel safer than freedom sometimes, but God made you for freedom, with all of its responsibilities and uncertainties. In fact, God loves it when a prisoner is set free. This is best illustrated in Psalm 107:10-16, a word-painting that describes God breaking apart shackles and prison bars for people who did wrong and then turned

to God. The Bible describes His own Son as being on a mission to "proclaim freedom for the prisoners" (Luke 4:18). When someone is freed from any kind of bondage, God wants them to stay free.

God did immeasurably more for the Israelites than they could have hoped - even though things looked bad for a while. They didn't go back to the prison of Egypt. They found the courage to focus on God and persevere. God showed them the path to a new home where they could start afresh. He can do the same for you. ■

Zach Sewell is the author of "Prisoners in the Bible."



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mention challenges ex-prisoners face. When the first person spoke up, I held the end of the yarn and gave the roll to them. They held onto the yarn and tossed the ball to the next person, who named a different challenge.

By the time they were done, I was all wrapped up. I felt suffocated by all the pressures they brought up: housing, parole fees, paying for an ankle bracelet, child support payments, medication costs, temptation, addictions, judgment, relationship issues, instabil-

ment and slavery for a group of Israelites who had been confined in Egypt. They had endured what the Bible describes as "ruthless" treatment from the Egyptians (Exodus 1:13-14).

The Israelites faced beatings, unreasonable demands, and constant verbal abuse. Worst of all, they lost their infant boys to murder because the Egyptians felt threatened by their increasing population. The boys were sentenced to death as soon as they were born. The Egyptians took

## Out of Egypt

There are many kinds of captivity. Your body can be held behind bars and walls, your mind can be held in shackles of ignorance, and your spirit can be a prisoner of darkness.

True freedom - open to all people - is found in knowing Jesus Christ, accepting God's forgiveness for your sins, and living life the way He meant it to be lived since the beginning: in a whole, healthy, loving relationship with Him, with others, with the world, and with yourself.

You can find true freedom right now. It doesn't matter who you are, where you are, or what you've done. You can leave your "Egypt" behind forever. A prayer like this may be a great start:

*Dear God, I've been a prisoner in more ways than one. I want to be free from my sin. I give my life to You and I accept Your forgiveness. Help me to walk in true freedom and never look back. Amen.*

Learning to let God free you is a lifelong process that begins again each day.

If you've decided that you want to learn more about what it means to let God set you free, Inside Journal wants to help. Write to "Out of Egypt," c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790. We'll connect you with a partner that provides a free correspondence Bible study and a Bible, if you don't already have access to one through your facility.

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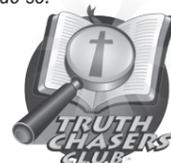
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# These Prisoners Are All Business

by A. R. Quinn

**C**HARLOTTESVILLE, VA. – It all started with a letter.

A few years ago, a prisoner at Pocahontas State Correctional Center sent a carefully typed message to the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia (UVA) in Charlottesville, asking what the famous university could do to help him find employment.

The answer? Nothing.

But Robert F. Bruner, the dean of the business school, gave the letter to Gregory Fairchild, a UVA professor who was ranked as one of the Top Ten Business School Professors in the World by CNN/Fortune in 2012. Bruner asked Fairchild about the possibility of preparing a business curriculum for inmates.

The idea intrigued Fairchild, who has always believed in the importance of reaching out to prisoners.

“Matthew 25 is pretty clear,” Fairchild, who grew up attending church, said in an interview. “When we go to the prisoner, Jesus says that we are going to Him. So that was always a part of my perspective. I always knew that was important.”

Before long, Fairchild met with leaders in Richmond, Va., to obtain approval for a pilot entrepreneurship training program at Dillwyn Correctional Center in Virginia’s Buckingham County.

## Commitment to Learning

The pilot program, which



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The renowned Darden Business School at the University of Virginia has thrown its weight behind an innovative entrepreneurship course for prisoners.

began in April 2012, brings together groups of dedicated inmate students at Dillwyn, a men’s prison, and Fluvanna, a women’s prison. Three times a week, students participate in courses facilitated by UVA business school professors and graduate students, who teach using the Socratic method. The Socratic method emphasizes questions and answers instead of lecturing, so that students have an opportunity to share their own real-life experiences and knowledge.

Fairchild and his wife, Tierney, an education expert who helps facilitate the classes at Fluvanna, have been impressed by the dedication of their students. Fairchild recalls how students made their own version of an

Excel spreadsheet, carefully calculating figures by hand. Tierney was struck by the ingenuity of a woman who went from cell to cell, asking other inmates about what foods they liked and what they would be willing to pay for them, so that she could know what prices to charge for meals at a restaurant she wants to open one day.

Inmates who successfully complete all of their classwork and math testing, write a business plan, and pass a final exam are eligible for an entrepreneurship certificate from the prestigious business school. The Fairchilds hope this will make it easier for ex-prisoners to find jobs or start their own businesses instead of returning to prison.

One of those inmates is Kirk

Smith, a Virginia man now wrapping up a 20-year sentence, who was interviewed by the Darden Report for an article in 2012.

“I’m still scared,” said Smith, who plans to use his new entrepreneurial skills to start a custom painting business. “At times, I was pulling my hair out. But now I have more confidence. Now I believe I can start this business. I know I would have failed miserably without this class.”

Even though the extra hours are sometimes long, the Fairchilds continue the program because they believe the entrepreneurship program can help ex-prisoners gain the confidence and skills they need to succeed.

“I believe people can change,” Fairchild told the Darden Report.

“I believe educational institutions can make a big difference. This is a world-class university and a world-class business school, and developing leaders to improve society is our stock-in-trade. We usually get the most prepared, the most advantaged students. I believe we can use our skills to teach the least prepared and the least advantaged. I believe this is possible.”

## A Growing Movement

The Fairchilds are not the first to believe that real-world entrepreneurial skills can help ex-prisoners compete in the job market. Before launching the program, Gregory traveled to Texas to study its Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP), a nonprofit organization founded by a former Wall Street professional. PEP’s teaching model is based on the belief that inmates have hidden potential, and with business savvy shared by experts, they can craft plans for successful new ventures. Over the last decade, PEP graduates have enjoyed some of the best rehabilitation rates in the country. The vast majority never return to prison.

It’s still too early to tell whether, like PEP, the Darden program will help its graduates pass the ultimate test by succeeding when they re-enter the community. But the Fairchilds are optimistic. They trust that employers will see what they have grown to see in their students: that they belong in a suit and tie instead of a prison jumpsuit. ■

# Movement on Sentencing Reform

by Sarah Chaffee

**P**rescription painkillers eased John Horner’s suffering after he lost an eye. When a friend wanted medication, Horner sold him four bottles he hadn’t used. But his friend turned informant. Not long after, Horner was arrested and sentenced under federal mandatory minimums for drug dealing. This father of three faced 25 years of prison time.

“Mandatory minimum sentencing has done little to address the very real problem of drug abuse while also doing great damage by destroying so many lives,” Senator Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) said to the Senate Judiciary Committee. His written testimony shared Horner’s story.

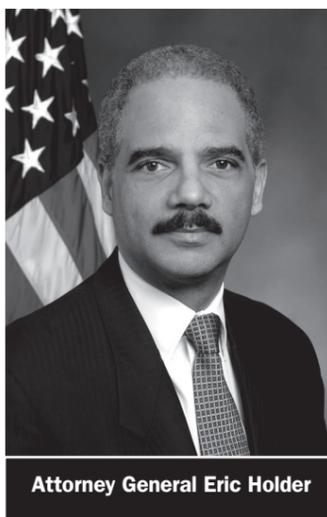
In 2013, Paul and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder proposed revisions to federal charging policies on mandatory minimum sentencing and expanded the criteria for compas-

sionate release.

## Flexibility on Mandatory Minimums

“Too many Americans go to too many prisons for far too long, and for no truly good law enforcement reason,” Holder said to the American Bar Association in August, announcing changes in federal charging policy.

In the reforms introduced by the Department of Justice,



Attorney General Eric Holder

Wikimedia Commons

“certain low-level, nonviolent drug offenders who have no ties to large-scale organizations, gangs, or cartels will no longer be charged with offenses that impose draconian mandatory minimum sentences,” Holder said.

This change is somewhat retroactive.

“[T]he department has issued new guidance to apply our updated charging policy not only to new matters,” Holder said on September 19, “but also to pending cases where the defendant was charged before the policy was issued but is still awaiting adjudication of guilt.”

While most agree with relaxing mandatory minimums, not all support Holder’s change. Congress – not the Department of Justice – should initiate reform, argued former Attorney General Michael Mukasey.

“The way to do that [get rid of mandatory minimums] is to pass a law, not to simply say you’re going to disregard the law,”

he explained to CNN.

Mukasey may get his wish if Congress passes Paul’s and Senator Patrick Leahy’s (D-Vermont) Justice Safety Valve Act of 2013. This legislation would allow judges to sentence below mandatory minimums in all federal crimes, not just drug-related offenses.

## Compassionate Release Eligibility Broadened

At the August meeting, Holder also announced “revised criteria for elderly inmates who did not commit violent crimes and who have served significant portions of their sentences.”

According to the White House website, a federal inmate may apply for a reduction in their sentence if they face:

- medical situations (terminal and non-terminal),
- situations where the caregiver for their child dies,
- situations where their spouse suffers serious medical/mental impairment,

aging (certain circumstances).

Normally, federal prisoners re-offend at a rate of 41 percent. But according to a Bureau of Prisons study, the three-year rate of recidivism under compassionate release reaches only 3.5 percent.

For some, the Department of Justice’s changes to compassionate-release and mandatory-minimum sentencing may ultimately mean shorter prison terms and more time with family – something John Horner would have enjoyed. ■



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