

**RESOLUTION #1 CONCERNING
ELCA PRISON AND RE-ENTRY MINISTRY**

WHEREAS, Jesus says: “I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” (Matthew 25:35-36); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America urges individuals, congregations, and synods to call “the criminal justice system must acknowledge the disparities, and address the implicit and explicit racism that persists within; it must recognize the special needs of juvenile offenders; it must stop the privatization of prison facilities; and finally, it must foster the full reintegration of ex-offenders into community”; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Corrections New Jersey has an incarceration rate of 341 per 100,000 people (including prisons, jails, immigration detention, and juvenile justice facilities), meaning that it locks up a higher percentage of its people than almost any democratic country on earth;(<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/NJ.html>)and

WHEREAS, New Jersey has a recidivism rate (re-offense rate leading to re-incarceration) of 30.4% respectively; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Synod has no known prison ministry and no known reentry ministries and no known advocacy arm for the incarcerated or the formerly incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, it is shown that being a part of a spiritual group lowers recidivism rates,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New Jersey Synod Council create a Task Force that will encourage congregations and individuals of the Synod to participate and partner in prison and jail visitation ministry; create communications and support advocacy for the imprisoned, involuntarily housed and those on probation; as well as help to create a framework for congregations to work alongside and welcome formerly incarcerated individuals into the congregation’s life and mission.

Submitted By:

The Rev. Erich Kussman, St. Bartholomew, Trenton