

# WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE PRISON ABOLITIONISTS?

## GOD BROUGHT ISRAEL OUT OF BONDAGE IN EGYPT

EX. 3:7-12, LEV. 25:8-17

The foundational act of God's covenant with Israel – the act by which the identity of God is shown forth and to which Israel returns, over and over, in their naming of God – is the release of captives. The Exodus from Egypt defines the nation of Israel and the nature of God. God is the one who brings those in prison out of bondage into the Promised Land of the beloved community.

## JESUS PROCLAIMED LIBERATION TO PRISONERS

LK. 4:18

We believe that Jesus' promise of freedom for prisoners, fulfilled from the prophet Isaiah, does not apply only to "spiritual" imprisonment to sin but to every structure that holds captive the children of God – including the actual prisons and structures of supervision and confinement built into our criminal justice system.

## EVERYONE HAS GREAT CAPACITY FOR GOOD AND GREAT CAPACITY FOR EVIL

*There is no such thing as "good people" or "bad people." Each of us is made in the image of God, and subject to the captivity of sin. We can't provide safety by identifying and incapacitating "bad people" in prisons.*

## JESUS BROUGHT AN END TO PUNISHMENT AND CONDEMNATION

ROM. 8:1-39

*Jesus' death "for us" on the cross exposed and ended our human need for retribution in the name of justice, and liberates us to imagine justice that is fully restorative, free of retribution. In his descent into Hell, Jesus brought liberation, now and eternally, to everyone, even the worst and most forsaken.*

## WE BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

2 COR. 5:18-20

*The church is called to the "ministry of reconciliation." It is our job to build structures of justice aimed at pursuing reconciliation and restoration of right relationship. Prisons are the opposite of this kind of justice. Their retributive aims conflict with the goal of rehabilitation, and imprisoning offenders does not meet the needs of victims. Ultimately, we believe that justice comes through restoration and making amends in community.*

## GOD IS RECONCILING ALL THINGS

REV. 21:1-8

The new creation begun with Jesus' victory over sin and death will not be complete until all things in heaven and on earth are reconciled to God and all evil, including the evil of prisons, is overcome. Abolishing prisons is a concrete witness of our hope, as Christians, that all will eventually be restored through "the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting."