

Liberty University School of Divinity

Inmate Peer to Peer Mentoring, a Resource for Future Prison Reform

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

By

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## DEDICATION

To Robin, my wife, a godly woman who set a Christ-centered example for our family long before I did.

To Brenda, my mother, who spent a lifetime praying for me.

To my father, Calvin L. Sutphin ( June 7, 1939 – January 15, 2020 ), who would have loved to witness my accomplishment. We will discuss in Heaven someday.

To my son, Calvin III, and daughter Sydney whom I love so much.

To my incarcerated brothers who have helped me become a better person.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation for permitting this study and their desire to see the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative succeed.

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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Dr. Joe Easterling

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Liberty University School of Divinity, September 19, 2020

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The moral rehabilitation initiative using trained and equipped inmates to mentor their peers within West Virginia prisons is in its infancy and lacks formal validation as a resource for prison reform in West Virginia. All key stakeholders must validate peer-to-peer mentoring for it to reach its fullest potential and become a tool for future prison reform. The key stakeholders include state correctional leaders, individual prison administrations, and the inmate population.

Most of the inmate population in West Virginia has release dates and will be returning to local communities throughout West Virginia. Today's investment in an inmate's moral fiber translates to positive changes within the prison culture and fewer future victims of violent crime within the communities upon release. Moral people do not kill, rape, or steal.

The "moral rehabilitation" training and equipping is provided through a four-year accredited Bible College offering a Bachelor of Arts in Bible/Theology and Pastoral Ministry. The college is inside West Virginia's only maximum-security prison and is the first of its kind in West Virginia's history. The college is open to men of all faiths or no faith, and anyone can apply for admission. Of West Virginia's twenty-one adult prisons, over twenty men have graduated and currently serve as peer mentors. Some of the graduates were sent out as missionaries to other prisons within West Virginia. There are four prisons now using the graduates as peer mentors.

The purpose of this study will be to seek validation of the use of peer mentors as a strategic resource toward prison reform, not only in West Virginia but other states as well.

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## Abbreviations

ABC	<i>Appalachian Bible College</i>
AWOP	<i>Associate Warden of Programs</i>
CM	<i>Catalyst Ministries</i>
CTT	<i>Criminal Triad Theory</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
DOC	<i>Division of Corrections</i>
PSF	<i>Prison Seminaries Foundation</i>
HCCJ	<i>Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
MOBC	<i>Mount Olive Bible College</i>
MOCCJ	<i>Mount Olive Correction Complex and Jail</i>
NOBTS	<i>New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary</i>
NCCJ	<i>Northern Correctional Center and Jail</i>
SMCCJ	<i>St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail</i>
SWBTS	<i>Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary</i>
WVDOCR	<i>West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation</i>

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The United States incarcerates people at a higher rate than any other country in the world, by far. More than two million people are locked up, of which approximately two thousand are released back into society every day.<sup>1</sup> The United States penal system has become a system of mass incarceration. Society knows these facilities as prisons. However, their formal names are correctional centers or correctional complexes, meaning a core element of the penal system's mission is to correct deviant behavior.

The attempt to correct deviant behavior comes through various formats within the prison setting. Primary avenues are academic and vocational programs, coupled with crime and addiction-specific programming. In addition to formal programs are the various informal programs delivered via volunteers, mainly the faith-based community. Prisons across the United States are beginning to look at the inmates themselves as resources and not just criminals. In some prisons, the inmates are even assigned certain positions of responsibility.

Individual states are beginning to look at a growing trend labeled as moral rehabilitation. The moral rehabilitation initiative trains and equips inmates to serve their peers as agents of moral change. Inmates who experience real moral rehabilitation can be equipped to serve as agents of hope, purpose, and positive life-change to their peers. This researcher desires that this project's design will present evidence-based results that will become a valid resource for prison officials throughout the United States. This thesis is designed to introduce the use of inmate peer-

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Baker, *You Can Change: Stories from Angola Prison and the Psychology of Personal Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020), 7.

to-peer mentoring as a tool for prison reform. The study will examine the moral rehabilitative initiative of inmate training, equipping, and serving that is growing across the country.

### Ministry Context

The ministry setting is inside West Virginia’s Adult Prison System. West Virginia currently houses over seven thousand adult offenders, of which approximately ninety percent have release dates and will be returning to the local communities throughout West Virginia.<sup>2</sup> The following are some adult statistics specific to the ministry context.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1.1

<u>Sentence Type</u>	
Habitual Life	0.83%
Life with Mercy	4.41%
Life w/o Mercy	4.02%
Regular	90.75%
Total	100%

Table 1.3

<u>Race</u>	
White	86%
Black	12%
Other	2%
Total	100%

Table 1.2

<u>Age Classification</u>	
Under 20	0.36%
20-29	22.81%
30-39	33.74%
40-49	22.64%
50-59	12.49%
60+	7.96%
Total	100%

Table 1.4

<u>Security Classification</u>	
Maximum	9.36%
Medium	49.08%
Minimum	17.54%
Other	24.02%
Total	100%

<sup>2</sup> West Virginia Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (WVDOCR), *FY 2019 Annual Report*, by Betsy Jividen, (Charleston, 2020), 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Today's investment in a person's moral fiber translates to safer prisons and a safer West Virginia upon release. Jesus said, "the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).<sup>4</sup> This researcher has not met one person who wanted to end up in prison. There are many reasons people commit crimes and end up in prison. Criminal behavior can be complicated. However, some common characteristics relating to criminal behavior include psychological disorders as well as social and economic factors such as poverty, lack of education, parental relations, ostracization, low self-perception, peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, and deprivation.<sup>5</sup> The prisons in West Virginia and those across the United States are full of men and women who have endured years of abuse, poverty, and ostracization. Although these factors are no excuse for criminal activity, these life factors cannot be overlooked when trying to understand what went wrong. At some point, something manifested within them, and a crime was committed. The enemy Jesus spoke of was able to steal, kill, and destroy a portion of their lives.

However, God's inerrant, infallible Word states, "therefore I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11). Nowhere in the Bible does it state that God's Word does not apply to those in prison. God does not grant exemptions. His Word is His truth, and it is applicable for all believers.

Prison can be a complicated, dark place, and those in prison experience significant levels of despair and depression. There must be activities available that help the incarcerated reshape

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<sup>4</sup> "Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version."

<sup>5</sup> "Causes of Crime," Crime and Punishment in America Reference Library, *Encyclopedia.com*, (August 2020), accessed September 18, 2020, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/law/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/causes-crime>

their opinion of themselves. Christians find strength in the gospel and its application within their lives. The mentors exchanged old activities with new ones; they begin serving God and others. The gospel brings new hope, especially to those struggling in prison. The good news is that their current situation does not have to be the definitive moment in their life. There is hope for a future in Christ, hope for a purpose, even though they are in prison. The gospel is a reshaping tool that can radically influence how those in prison think of themselves. It takes a power greater than their own, a power found in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The incarcerated, while broken, can embrace the fact that “if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here” (2 Chr 5:17). This is instrumental in shaping those who chose to accept the gift of salvation, and through surrender and obedience, allow God to begin a new work in and through them. The Word states, “my sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise” (Psalms 51:17). God is responding to His broken children within the prisons. Jesus called those in prison His brothers: “When did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you? The King will reply, truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:39-40). Jesus has not forgotten the imprisoned, and neither should the church.

All humans need to feel a sense of purpose and a reason to thrive; inmates are no different even while in prison. Prisons are a microcosm of society. Like society, there are jobs available within the prisons of West Virginia. Some states do not pay inmates for the work they do, but West Virginia does. Historically, inmate jobs were limited to the support of the day-to-day operations, such as serving meals, cooking in the kitchen, laundry services, sorting mail in the post office, cleaning, grass cutting, building maintenance, and so on. As to the spiritual culture within the prisons, religious services were led by free-world volunteers. Volunteers from

local denominational churches would come in, some every week and some monthly. Most volunteer efforts were centered around worship services like those taking place in their local churches. The inmates would come into the chapel, sing, hear a sermon, pray, and leave. Many times, inmate bands were allowed to sing, coupled with an occasional inmate testimony, but the services were always volunteer-led.

The moral rehabilitation initiative using peer mentors is quite different. Its goal is to train and equip the inmates to shepherd themselves. The moral rehabilitation initiative allows the men to change; it gives them the opportunity, space, and time to become agents of moral change among their peers. The men conduct one hundred percent of their worship services, facilitate discipleship classes, and lead addiction programs, such as Celebrate Recovery. As much as the inmates love interacting with free-world volunteers, they watched them go home to their families after a short visit.

There is a difference between an outside entity conducting worship services and the inmates doing it themselves. The inmates understand the depth of what prison life is; they know what one another is going through daily. They witness a depth of prison life that free-world volunteers cannot see. The inmates are better equipped to see current needs within the prison culture. The peer mentors can feel the prison community's pulse; they are aware of issues as they unfold. Prisons are small communities, and the inmates watch each other; they have a unique gift of telling whether someone is real or fake. They can respond to situations quickly, and that can be very important within the prison setting.

The mentors are side-walk counselors and can serve to de-escalate situations many times before they develop. Often, the inmates themselves are more significant to the prison yard's stability than the correctional staff. The resources that peer mentors add to the prisons are one of



moral change and safety, and in prison, both are very important. They can serve their peers in areas that free-world volunteers cannot.

The mentors visit the sick in the medical and behavioral units. They feed in the solitary confinement units where men spend twenty-three hours a day confined to their cells. They conduct memorial services when a fellow inmate dies, allowing the men a process to grieve as well as spend time with men who lose family members. They sit with men in the hospice unit, so no man dies alone in prison. They offer side-walk ministry as they come alongside their fellow inmates who may be hurting, troubled, burdened, etcetera. These activities occur daily and are directly related to this research.

The body of Christ, the church, should change the community God placed them in. Prisons are no different; the inmates are rising to become the spiritual leaders of their community, the prison yard. These men allow themselves to become transformed servants of Christ, and good fruit is becoming evident. Although evident in specific prisons in West Virginia, more work is needed. Validation by all key stakeholders will lay a foundation for the future, and the potential is limitless.

Historically, the inmates mainly depended on the free-world volunteers; now, they are beginning to rely on each other. The moral rehabilitation model creates hope and purpose inside the hearts of the men. That is a powerful tool in the prison setting, which has tremendous potential as a tool for future prison reform. Traditionally, within the offender rehabilitation framework, the offenders themselves are viewed as passive recipients of treatment and are required to adopt the role of patient, client, or student, with the change process resting upon a professional staff. However, within that framework, Devilly, Sorbello, and Eccleston point out

that offenders themselves represent the largest group of untapped resources in most rehabilitation frameworks, capable of having a powerful and positive influence on fellow offenders.<sup>6</sup>

### Catalyst Ministries

The State of West Virginia State-level leadership is embracing the concept of using inmates to influence positive culture change. In September 2014, Catalyst Ministries partnered with the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (WVDOCR) and Appalachian Bible College to implement an unprecedented, evidence-based prison reform model in West Virginia labeled as moral rehabilitation. The goal is a positive moral change, basically from the inside out.

This researcher is the founder and president of Catalyst Ministries. Catalyst Ministries' primary function is to secure funding for the moral rehabilitation initiative, as it receives no federal or state funding. This includes the financing of the Mount Olive Bible College and support programs of the moral rehabilitation initiative. Catalyst Ministries works with the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation in strategy development and oversight in moving this new, innovative initiative forward toward its fullest potential. As the president of Catalyst Ministries, this researcher serves the moral rehabilitation initiative on a full-time basis. The moral rehabilitative activities relating to this research take place daily.

The moral rehabilitation model adopted in West Virginia originated in Louisiana at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, better known as Angola Prison. Angola was once known as America's bloodiest prison, but now Angola is known as one of America's safest. Angola's

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<sup>6</sup> Grant J. Devilly, Laura Sorbello, Lynne Eccleston, and Tony Ward, "Prison-based peer-education schemes," *Science Direct: Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10, (2005): 220, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/science/article/pii/S1359178903000879?via%3Dihub>.

general population has been transformed from a collection of self-centered individuals into an influential community of change.<sup>7</sup> Texas was the first state to adopt Angola's moral rehabilitation initiative, followed by West Virginia approximately three years later. Angola's academic partner is the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In Texas, the Darrington Prison partners with the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Although Texas and West Virginia were some of the first states to adopt the Angola model, currently, seminaries are being launched across the United States. The Prison Seminaries Foundation is leading the moral rehabilitation movement. The Prison Seminary Model is about creating transformational opportunities in cooperation with the state division of corrections (DOC) and higher-education institutions that support every inmate's moral rehabilitation.

The moral rehabilitation model consists of the following components:<sup>8</sup>

1. There must be a four-year accredited program.
2. The Prison Seminary Model requires a private, accredited school to offer a four-year degree plan within a state prison. The school cannot receive any funding from the inmates or the department of corrections to do so.
3. The curriculum must be geared toward moral rehabilitation. All faiths are welcomed, but the student must realize the course of study will include Biblical tenets. Being confronted with the teaching and life of Jesus, specifically issues of servanthood, social justice, forgiveness, loving others, and the like, demand a response. The research conducted by Baylor University validated how the Christian context, with its promotion of being "made new," a "positive self-identity," "personal transformation through

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<sup>7</sup> Baker, 92.

<sup>8</sup> "The Prison Seminary Model," Prison Seminaries Foundation, accessed June 22, 2020, <http://globalprisonseminaries.org/the-prison-seminary-model/>.

suffering,” and the ability to “recode” all experiences to be worked for a greater good, was key in criminal desistance. Biblical principles are used for understanding truth, morality, and wholehearted living.

4. The program should be a bachelor’s degree or higher, requiring a full four years of study. Prolonged time in the academic setting, being mentored by professors, and sharpened by peers are needed to determine who will stand out among the population as a model of moral rehabilitation. It should be noted that some may come into the prison seminary program and leave only with a college degree, not having the evidence of moral change. The degree itself does not determine a graduate’s suitability to be a moral leader among his or her peers. Primarily, the determining factor is the transformation of one’s character, as evidenced by prosocial activity, wisdom, integrity, and selfless servanthood.

#### Mount Olive Bible College

As stated, the academic partner in West Virginia is Appalachian Bible College.

Appalachian Bible College operates a campus known as Mount Olive Bible College inside Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail, West Virginia’s only maximum-security prison for men.

The men are trained and equipped to go as Jesus directed His disciples. Graduates of Mount Olive Bible College receive a Bachelor of Arts in Theology and Pastoral Ministry. Mount Olive Bible College is the epicenter of servanthood. Once the inmates graduate, those whose character has been transformed, evidenced by measurable change, may become peer mentors. Some of the peer mentors are transferred from Mount Olive prison to other West Virginia prisons to serve as agents of moral change, while some remain at Mount Olive and begin serving their peers.

In prison, a lack of hope is the number one enemy.<sup>9</sup> The moral rehabilitation initiative using peer mentors creates self-worth, hope, and purpose throughout the prison culture. As of January 2020, Mount Olive Bible College at the Mount Olive Prison has graduated and transferred over twenty men to serve as peer mentors within four West Virginia prisons. The inmate peer mentors are serving at Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail, West Virginia's only maximum-security prison, housing over one-thousand men; Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail, medium security, housing over one-thousand men; Northern Correctional Center and Jail, medium security, housing over six-hundred men; and St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail, medium security, housing over six-hundred men.

West Virginia has twenty-five adult facilities consisting of prisons, jails, and work-release facilities. Peer mentors' use is in its infancy and needs validation among all key stakeholders, including state-level correctional leaders, individual prison administrations, and the inmate populations. It is assumed that validation will open the door for others to begin using peer mentors, not only in West Virginia but also in other states.

### **Problem Presented**

The problem is that the use of peer-to-peer mentoring as a tool for future prison reform lacks key stakeholder validation. Catalyst Ministries was created for the sole purpose of introducing and assisting in the implementation of the Angola model, known as moral rehabilitation, to the State of West Virginia Correctional leadership. Catalyst Ministries has partnered with the WVDOCR to implement the moral rehabilitation initiative. The core of the initiative is the use of inmate peer-to-peer mentors. The peer mentors assume various roles of

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<sup>9</sup> Baker, 126.

responsibility within the prison. The goal is for the inmate peer mentors to become vessels of positive change by helping other men address their moral fiber, that is, to help men change from the inside out. The scale of peer mentoring is unprecedented yet limited to only four West Virginia prisons. Although moral rehabilitation via peer mentors has been embraced by the WVDOCR's State-level leadership, it needs continued validation by individual prison administrations and the overall inmate populations to become a strategic resource to broad prison reform.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) research is to present all key stakeholders with information that will validate the use of peer-to-peer mentoring as a tool for prison reform throughout West Virginia. This DMIN thesis will thoroughly investigate the validity of peer-to-peer mentoring within the four West Virginia prisons that currently use Mount Olive Bible College graduates as peer mentors.

The researcher will present the various roles and responsibilities of the peer mentors and their perceived impact and value. This researcher will evaluate the impact through quantifiable, measured outcomes, along with the perspectives of the State of West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation State-level leadership; the administrative leadership of the four prisons, the inmate population; and the peer mentors themselves. The research will seek to show that peer mentoring is a powerful tool in changing the moral fiber of incarcerated men, thus leading to a positive culture change within the prison setting and safer communities upon release.

### **Basic Assumptions**

This study's primary assumption is that the research will validate the use of inmate peer-to-peer mentoring as a resource for future prison reform to key stakeholders throughout West

Virginia. An underlying assumption is that the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation leadership will embrace and be fully supportive of this project. Such critical support includes providing the researcher with all requested documents deemed pertinent, including policies and procedures additionally, making themselves available for interviews, and endorsing the study to all individual prison administrations identified.

A similar underlying assumption is that the administration located at the four sample facilities will support the study and the various requested processes. An essential component of this support is seen through the wardens, deputy wardens, associate wardens of programs, and the chaplains willingly and thoroughly participating in the interview and focus group discussions, as well as assisting with any additional requests that prove pertinent. The researcher also presupposes that the prison administration responses of the four prisons sampled would produce similar results statewide. A basic assumption is that most wardens statewide will value the use of inmate peer-to-peer mentors as an operational resource once presented with the research.

Finally, the researcher presupposes that the inmate interviews and focus group discussions will produce honest, transparent responses. Also, the inmates interviewed will take the process seriously, thoroughly evaluating each question before answering. The researcher presumes the sample size used for the general inmate population survey will produce valid results. The researcher presumes the results would be similar in additional West Virginia prisons given inmate peer mentors were housed there. The researcher will provide the four prisons with two-hundred-fifty, ten-question surveys. The goal will be a ten percent response rate.

## Definitions

This section provides definitions for specific words, phrases, or titles key for a clear understanding of the research project.

*Associate Superintendent/Warden, West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation* – Under general supervision, performs managerial work in coordinating and evaluating operational and administrative programs of WVDOCR. These positions exercise managerial responsibility and authority for an assigned major operational and administrative component of the facility organizational structure, such as the Security Division, Rehabilitative Programs, Treatment Division, or Operations Division.

*Chaplain, West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation* – Under administrative direction, performs counseling work at the full performance level by providing spiritual guidance to inmates in a state correctional facility. Conducts interdenominational religious services. Work is performed independently with considerable freedom to plan services and activities to address morale and spiritual problems.

*Commissioner, West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation* – The Commissioner is required to maintain the custody of convicted inmates and juvenile residents. The Commissioner is responsible for maintaining a professional Security Officer force, including maintaining training standards that ensure the humane treatment of offenders. Additionally, the Commissioner is responsible for all day-to-day correctional operations in the State of West Virginia.

*Deputy Superintendent/Warden, West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation* – Under general direction, performs managerial work for the Division of Corrections. The position acts as the senior assistant responsible for the planning and



management of the facility. The Deputy is an advisor to the Superintendent. Exercises independent judgment and considerable latitude in the execution of assigned duties required of the Superintendent.

*Director of Inmate Services, West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation* – The Director manages the agency’s rehabilitative programs, including Religious Services and Activities. The Director supervises the Chaplaincy program in all State of West Virginia prisons and jails and the Moral Rehabilitative Programs associated with the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative and Mount Olive Bible College.

*Inmate Peer Mentoring* – A person confined to an adult prison, who is of equal status with other inmates, and a trusted counselor or guide to fellow inmates. For this study, the peer mentors will be used in the following areas: side-walk ministry, church services, twelve-step recovery programs, inmate accountability programs, memorial services, infirmary and segregation visits, discipleship classes, academic tutoring, hospice visits, and so on. They will also serve as a liaison between the prison administration and the inmate population regarding various moral rehabilitation activities.

*Inmate/Prisoner/Offender* – These words used throughout this project will refer to a person(s) occupying a single place of residence; that is, who are confined to an adult prison.

*Moral Rehabilitation* – The process of restoring a person toward conformities to the standard of right behavior. As evidenced by prosocial activity, wisdom, integrity, and selfless servanthood, the transformation of one’s character is the determining factor.

*Prison/Correctional Center/Correctional Complex* – All refer to an institution (either under state or federal jurisdiction) to confine persons convicted of serious crimes.

*Stakeholder* – A person(s) or group that directly influences West Virginia’s moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of peer mentors, including its sustainability, acceptance, and overall impact. The *Key Stakeholders* are the West Virginia State-level Correctional leadership, individual prison administrations, peer mentors, and the inmate populations.

*Superintendent/Warden* – The head official in charge of all prison operations.

### **Limitations**

Prisons are closed systems, meaning most of their operations are within the prisons themselves. Prisons are governed by stringent rules, policies, procedures, and guidelines. Consequently, this project will be limited to the access granted by the West Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation Senior Leadership. The WVDOCR leadership will control and approve all avenues of access. They will authorize where and when the project interviews take place. Interviews are with the following entities: WVDOCR senior staff, individual prison staff, inmate peer mentors, mentees, and the inmate populations at the various prisons where the research will be conducted. The study is limited to any policy or procedural change that becomes effective during the project. Furthermore, the study may be limited to any legislative or senior leadership transitions, at which point the project would need to be edited in scope.

Additionally, physical access to the prisons themselves will be scheduled and controlled by the WVDOCR leadership. They will set specific time frames and locations for all interviews. The WVDOCR will oversee the availability of all WVDOCR policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. The WVDOCR will not select the inmates that participate in the general population survey. The survey will be done randomly and voluntarily to the inmate population. The WVDOCR will control the format regarding inmate identification, including public disclosure of

names, etcetera. Limitations outside the researcher's control will be the potential for unforeseen activities or events that may cause entry into the prisons to be denied.

Currently, West Virginia prisons are under a strict lockdown status due to COVID-19. All visitation and volunteer access have been suspended. Although the researcher foresees the restrictions as temporary, the current guidelines set by the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation guidelines must be adhered to.

The study will also be limited to the inmate interviewees' confidentiality as they are in the custody of the WVDOCR, and complete names may not be released. The study may be limited as to the confidentiality of all WVDOCR staff interviewees. Additional limitations will be the timeframes allotted for interviews, both inmate and staff, and the availability of all or certain policies, procedures, and other legal documents.

### **Delimitations**

This project's primary delimitation is that the study will be limited to West Virginia's prison population. Although a few other states have embraced the use of inmate peer mentors, the interviews and physical onsite visits will be conducted at West Virginia prisons.

The project will be focused on the four prisons where the inmate peer mentors are serving. They are Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail, Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail, Northern Correctional Center and Jail, and St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail.

The inmate peer mentors are all graduates of the Mount Olive Bible College and were transferred to the noted facilities to mentor their peers. They were sent in teams at different times and dates. The study will be limited to a look-back period before the mentors arrived at the individual prisons and up to this study's date. The study will not be conducted at any other West Virginia prison.

The prison setting can abruptly change. There are constant variables that could impact the study that the researcher would have no control over. These changes may affect the timeliness of the study.

### **Thesis Statement**

If the moral rehabilitation initiative using peer-to-peer mentors is validated by all key stakeholders, then the program may be promoted in other prisons. The study will present information aimed at validating or disproving the use of inmate peer-to-peer mentors as a reformatory resource.

## **Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework**

### **Literature Review**

Inmates have maintained an informal code of influence over the prison environment for years; however, they have not been awarded formal roles of responsibility by prison administrations. Historically, the inmates have not been viewed by prison administrations as resources that could be used as a means of cultural reforms. However, in recent years, a movement known as moral rehabilitation is beginning to illuminate in prisons across the United States. At the core of moral rehabilitation is the inmates themselves serving as agents of moral change within the prison culture.

Prisons are closed systems with very stringent rules. Inside the prison walls exists a community that survives in many ways like small free-world communities. There is access to food, as well as medical and behavior services. There are rules and laws that inmates must adhere to and a court system for those who break the rules or laws. Indeed, there are jails within the prison for those who violate specific rules or laws. There are activities, sports leagues, and even religious services for inmates of many different religious affiliations.

There are several resources authored by those respected in corrections that depict inmate roles within the prison setting. There are many significant resources relating directly to the inmate population and their impact on the prison culture. However, when looking directly for a formal, key stakeholder endorsed initiative such as moral rehabilitation, the literature thins. This study will provide a review of available literature that will illuminate the various roles inmates have had in impacting the prison culture while serving as a basis for building this research.

The literature is divided into the following themes: United States Prison System, Religion, Crime and Desistance, Moral Rehabilitation, Changed Behavior, and Discipleship. The purpose of this arrangement is to provide a broad perspective that highlights the informal impact the inmates have made while pointing to the void and potential impact they can make through formal, key stakeholder endorsed peer-to-peer mentoring.

### United States Prison System

Gaining a perspective of the United States penal system can help understand the inmate population's historical, current, and future plight. In his book, *You Can Change*, Mark Baker points to the fact that the United States incarcerates people at a higher rate than any other country in the world by far.<sup>10</sup> Baker notes that more than two million people are locked up, of which approximately two thousand are released back into society every day.

Baker shares that prisons are horrible places in most cases, simply holding cells where society puts people it does not think can change.<sup>11</sup> Having visited Angola prison in Louisiana, Baker presented, that Angola Warden Burl Cain stated, "lack of hope is the number one enemy in prison."<sup>12</sup> Restoration must begin with hope. The absence of hope, especially in prison, makes little else matter.<sup>13</sup> Baker also makes an essential distinction between the two kinds of hope.<sup>14</sup> The first is called wishful thinking. The main problem with wishful thinking is that it thwarts growth by preventing the individual from facing their pain and growing through it. Hope is a tool

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Baker, *You Can Change: Stories from Angola Prison and the Psychology of Personal Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

to deal with a difficult life, not a defensive avoidance of it. Fortunately, there is restorative hope, which involves the courage to face obstacles and realistically name each one of them if need be.

Jouet Mugambi, in “Mass Incarceration Paradigm Shift? Convergence in an Age of Divergence,” has made several critical observations in the arena of mass incarceration. Mugambi points out an essential set of facts that help explain the philosophy of incarceration. First, because of the prison population explosion, many jurists have known no other penal system in America. As America faced imprisonment levels on a scale virtually unprecedented in global history, secondly, the Court recurrently concluded that the Eighth Amendment’s bar on “cruel and unusual punishments” effectively does not cover draconian prison terms.<sup>15</sup> Third, these circumstances came to obscure how conceptions of justice in America have historically been impermanent, ebbing, and flowing between repressive and humanitarian approaches.

Drawing a parallel between In *Dante’s Inferno* and modern American prisons, Mugambi notes that an ominous warning marks the entrance to hell:

“Abandon every hope, all you who enter.” The narrator shudders, observing that “these words I see are cruel.” The hopelessness of modern American prisoners condemned to die behind bars concretely illustrates Dante’s age-old allegory. Certain inmates facing life without parole indicate that they would prefer to be executed. While some lifers are resilient, acute psychological distress is an ordinary aspect of their bleak existence.<sup>16</sup> The prison environment is also one of survival. Inmate behavior is dictated by a need to

survive. Alan Elsner’s *Gates of Injustice: The Crisis in America’s Prisons* presented that an inmate’s need to protect themselves from each other, and in some cases the guards, is a core cause for the formation of prison gangs.<sup>17</sup> The gangs offer some sort of control over the brutality

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<sup>15</sup> Jouet Mugambi, “Mass Incarceration Paradigm Shift? Convergence in an Age of Divergence,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 109, no. 4 (2019): 705, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7657&context=jclc> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 743.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Elsner, *Gates of Injustice: The Crisis in America’s Prisons* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006), 38.

and chaos. Without question, prisons are the most racially segregated discriminatory places in America. Unlike the free society, where hope and purpose are seldom thought of, they are real reminders of complete losses in the prison setting.

However, there are opportunities in prison where individual hope and purpose can be cultivated. In her article titled “Self, Belonging, and Social Change,” Vanessa May highlights that inmates need to feel connected.<sup>18</sup> They need a sense of belonging or self-value. Over their lifetime or through years of incarceration, many inmates have lost their sense of belonging and self-value.

According to May, belonging is related to a sense of ease with oneself and one’s surroundings. Belonging is the quintessential mode of being human in which all aspects of the self, as human, are perfectly integrated, a mode of being in which a person is as they ought to be fully themselves. Belonging is a powerful motivator; thus, it is crucial to being a person and is fundamental to every individual. Thus, belonging plays a role in connecting individuals to the social. This is important because the sense of self is constructed in a relational process within interactions with other people as well as in relation to more abstract notions of collectively held social norms, values, and customs. In America’s prisons, a sense of loneliness, loss of self-value, and belonging must be overcome. The prison system offers various adult education and vocational programs to help the inmate better themselves and prepare for re-entry back into society. Additionally, the faith-based community has been a foundational agent of change in helping bring hope to the inmate population throughout America’s prison system. In addition to

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<sup>18</sup> Vanessa May, “Self, Belonging and Social Change,” *Sociology* 45, no. 3 (2011): 368, accessed April 20, 2020, [https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/10.1177/0038038511399624\\_](https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/10.1177/0038038511399624_)



the faith-based community, prisons across America are beginning to look at the inmates themselves as resources and not just criminals.

In his article “Prison-based peer-education schemes,” Devilly points to the concept of the inmates themselves as resources. Traditionally, within the offender-rehabilitation framework, the offenders themselves are seen as passive recipients of “treatment” and are required to adopt the role of patient, client, or student, with the change process resting upon a professional staff.<sup>19</sup> However, within that framework, Devilly points out that offenders themselves represent the largest group of “untapped resources” in most rehabilitation frameworks, capable of having a powerful and positive influence on fellow offenders.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, and in line with cognitive dissonance theory and research, when offenders act as agents of change, they increase the likelihood of changing their own opinions and beliefs regarding offending behavior to be consistent with their new role as a model.

A growing faith-based change agent impacting prisons across the United States is the Prison Seminaries Foundation (PSF), headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. PSF’s mission states, “PSF exists to create transformational opportunities in cooperation with state departments of corrections and higher-education institutions that support the moral rehabilitation of every inmate.”<sup>21</sup> PSF’s mission is accomplished by providing step-by-step assistance and ongoing support of Prison Seminary Model program implementations, education and consulting services,

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<sup>19</sup> Grant J. Devilly, Laura Sorbello, Lynne Eccleston, and Tony Ward, “Prison-based peer-education schemes,” *Science Direct: Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10, (2005): 220, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/science/article/pii/S1359178903000879?via%3Dihub>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> “Mission Statement,” Prison Seminaries Foundation, accessed April 20, 2020, <http://globalprisonseminaries.org/our-mission/>.

accountability, and continued research in the areas of moral rehabilitation and the Prison Seminary Model and its impact on prison systems in the United States and other countries.

The PSF has been pivotal in helping launch Bible colleges within seventeen prisons across the United States. Currently, PSF is in negotiations or planning for twelve additional locations and has another ten targeted, thus covering over thirty states.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, society should be concerned with America's inmate population. According to the United States Bureau of Justice, at least ninety-five percent of all state prisoners will be released from prison at some point.<sup>23</sup>

### Religion, Crime, and Desistance

Religion is a challenging subject to study, in part because determining one's definition, meaning, and understanding of religion can be challenging. In "Religion and Crime: A Systematic Review and Assessment of Next Steps," Amy Adamczyk, Joshua Freilich, and Chunrye Kim provided these religious dimensions that they thought would be most appropriate and most likely to yield significant effects: religious activity (e.g., church or Bible study attendance); religious belief (importance of religion in life); prayer and spirituality; type of religion (personal religious affiliation and religious identity); and combination of religious measures.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "Impact Map," Prison Seminaries Foundation, accessed April 20, 2020, <http://globalprisonseminaries.org/impact-map/>.

<sup>23</sup> "Bureau of Justice Statistics," Office of Justice Programs, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.bjs.gov/content/reentry/reentry.cfm>.

<sup>24</sup> Amy Adamczyk, Joshua D. Freilich, and Chunrye Kim. "Religion and Crime: A Systematic Review and Assessment of Next Steps." *Sociology of Religion* 78, no. 2 (2017): 192-232, accessed May 21, 2020, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2375461296?accountid=12085>.

In their article “Religion and Crime Studies: Assessing what has been Learned,” Melvina Sumter, Frank Wood, Ingrid Whitaker, and Dianne Hill have noted that available empirical evidence generally suggests an inverse relationship between religion and crime.<sup>25</sup> According to over 40 years of empirical research summarizing the relationship between religion and crime, findings indicate that religion decreases propensities for criminal behavior. Regarding self-control, researchers have typically considered how attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and values, which are internalized, can influence the behavior of the individual. Subsequently, in reviewing criminal activity, members of society who have incorporated a set of attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and values that condemn illegal activity will be less likely to engage in such activity. Religion represents one example of a system that incorporates these elements.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, available research indicates that higher levels of religiosity contribute to higher levels of social control, which reduces the likelihood of criminal offense.<sup>27</sup>

Lee Johnson, Todd Matthews, and Elizabeth Ayers in “Religious Identity and Perceptions of Criminal Justice Effectiveness,” presented that research has traditionally held that religious institutions were powerful shapers of stable individual identities.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, members of religious communities are consistently conscious of the distinction between the sacred and profane, so they are conscious of the beliefs that are represented in the sacred. This

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<sup>25</sup> Melvina Sumter, Frank Wood, Ingrid Whitaker, and Dianne Berger-Hill. "Religion and Crime Studies: Assessing what has been Learned." *Religions* 9, no. 6 (2018), 2, accessed May 22, 2020, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2125021208?accountid=12085>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Lee Johnson, Todd Matthews, Elizabeth Ayers, "Religious Identity and Perceptions of Criminal Justice Effectiveness." *Religions* 9, no. 5 (2018): 3, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9050157>.

conscious awareness of the distinction between the sacred and profane ensures that members of religious communities avoid behaviors and decisions that desecrate the sacred.<sup>29</sup>

In *Religion, the Community, and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders*, Thomas O'Connor notes that there is a deeply held belief among many in the United States that religion plays a profound and necessary role in creating and maintaining a moral and law-abiding community.<sup>30</sup> According to O'Connor's study, M. G. Pass found that a higher number of people reported a religious affiliation after being in prison than prior, and one-third of the sample reported a change of affiliation once in prison.<sup>31</sup>

### Moral Rehabilitation: Equipping Peer Mentors

Byron Johnson, in *More God, Less Crime*, declared that America is the land of the second chance where when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.<sup>32</sup> Economically speaking, there are reasons hope and moral change need to occur within the prison population. Incorporating other social costs into the equation suggests that the annual cost of crime to society is \$1 trillion or more.<sup>33</sup> Economists help the public understand that the real costs of crime, including the hidden cost to victims and society, are significantly higher than criminologists have recognized. Lisa Miller is a clinical psychologist who writes from a purely scientific perspective. She does not give any indication that she has any particular religious

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<sup>29</sup> Johnson, Matthews, and Ayers, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas O'Connor, *Religion, the Community, and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 12, accessed May 22, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central. O'Connor.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Byron Johnson, *More God, Less Crime*, (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011), 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

affiliation herself, but her research is extensive and convincing. Baker quoted Miller as saying, “that experiencing a personal relationship with a loving God changes you.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Hurt People Hurt People**

Hurt people hurt people, and the majority of those in prison have been hurt many times before they hurt someone else. Kristi Miller and Vance Drum have served as prison chaplains. In “Inmate Peer Ministry: The Chaplain’s Role,” Miller and Drum offered that inmates are takers in part because they have been wounded in their lives and bear broken minds, injured bodies, and shattered souls.<sup>35</sup> They are operating from a place of severe deficiency and need. This creates a self-centered identity, one focused on taking or receiving versus serving or giving.

In “Prison-based peer education,” Devilly presents that for many offenders, adverse childhood experiences such as lack of family support, family conflict, anti-social parents and associates, and childhood abuse and neglect have characterized their learning process.<sup>36</sup> The noted deficiencies often lead individuals to a place of ostracism.

According to Ren Dongning, Eric Wesselmann, and Kipling Williams, in “Hurt people hurt people: ostracism and aggression,” humans have a fundamental need to connect socially with others.<sup>37</sup> Ostracism, along with rejection and other forms of social exclusion, threatens this need, triggers painful feelings, and elicits a wide range of adverse effects. Also, ostracized individuals may believe that the ostracizers intentionally try to harm them; thus, aggressive

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<sup>34</sup> Baker, 18.

<sup>35</sup> Kristi B. Miller, and Vance L. Drum, "Inmate Peer Ministry: The Chaplain's Role," *Corrections Today* 81, no. 2 (2019): 11, accessed April 21, 2020, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2191282764?accountid=12085>.

<sup>36</sup> Devilly et al, 222.

<sup>37</sup> Ren Dongning, Eric Wesselmann, Kipling Williams "Hurt people hurt people: ostracism and aggression" *Current Opinion in Psychology* Volume 19, (2018), 34-38, accessed May 22, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.03.026>.

retaliation would be a normative response. Immoral behavior results from a lack of empathy for others.

Baker declares that psychologists believe that empathy starts at birth and develops when infants mimic the behavior of others and then gradually develop the ability to play, understand, and respond to their feelings.<sup>38</sup> If immoral behavior results from the lack of empathy, then the presence of empathy is the cure. According to Baker, psychological injury results from emotional damage suffered from overwhelming, painful events in a person's life.<sup>39</sup> Still, psychological trauma results from suffering that same damage when a person suffers it alone.

### **Prison Bible Colleges**

Prison Bible colleges provide a safe place, a place to be accepted, a sense of belonging. Prison Bible colleges offer inmates hope and purpose, and in that environment, empathy and morality are cultivated.

The following are samples of current Bible Colleges within United States prisons: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) located at Angola prison in Louisiana, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at the Darrington prison in Texas, and Appalachian Bible College's Mount Olive Bible College at the Mount Olive prison in West Virginia. All three Bible colleges have four-year baccalaureate programs and are fully accredited through the Higher Learning Commission within their accredited regions.

*In the Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity, Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation*, Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Byron Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, and Grant Duwe provide the prison college admission criteria. The programs

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<sup>38</sup> Baker, 87.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

require a recommendation from the program director, approval from security, and a character reference from another inmate religious leader.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, only prisoners with clean disciplinary histories are considered for the program. Inmate Ministers shall be held to a higher standard and are expected to behave in a manner that sets an example for other inmates to follow in ethics, moral rehabilitation, and moral behavior. Inmates of all faiths or no faith can apply. NOBTS has graduated 255 students at no cost to either the inmates or the public.<sup>41</sup> These graduates have subsequently permeated the population and assumed leadership roles within Angola's religious congregations, social organizations, and hospice programs.

In their article "Prisoners Helping Prisoners Change: A Study of Inmate Field Ministers Within Texas Prisons," Sung Joon Jang, Byron Johnson, Joshua Hays, Michael Hallett, and Grant Duwe provided statistics from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) at the Darrington prison in Texas. SWBTS graduated its first cohort in 2015 and has graduated three others to date.<sup>42</sup>

In Louisiana, less than twelve percent of NOBTS graduates who became Inmate Ministers are deployed from Angola prison to other Louisiana prisons as Inmate Missionaries. Texas expects that most seminary graduates will transfer to other Texas prisons as field ministers. Darrington prison retains a fraction of its graduates to fill ministry roles and to provide academic assistance as tutors to subsequent cohorts.

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Byron Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, and Grant Duwe, *The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity, Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>42</sup> Sung Joon Jang, Byron R. Johnson, Joshua Hays, Michael Hallett, and Grant Duwe, "Prisoners Helping Prisoners Change: A Study of Inmate Field Ministers Within Texas Prisons," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 64, no. 5 (2020): 474, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/0306624X19872966>.

Mount Olive Bible College in West Virginia began in September 2014. They have graduated two cohorts consisting of twenty-five inmates. All three prison Bible College programs graduate men to become peer mentors and help change the cultures at the various prisons where they are assigned.

Grant Duwe, Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Sung Joon Jang, and Byron Johnson analyzed whether a Bible college program impacted prison misconduct. In “Bible College Participation and Prison Misconduct: A Preliminary Analysis,” they examined 230 inmates within the Texas Prison system and their findings suggest participation in the Bible college significantly improved offender behavior.<sup>43</sup>

#### Changed Behavior

Baker declares that punishing people to control behavior can work, but it is only effective if there is a constant external threat of punishment to ensure compliance.<sup>44</sup> Treating people with respect inspires them to want to change their behavior. This can help them get to the roots of their problems and change from the inside out. Regarding real behavior change, Lisa Miller has written that a belief in a personal and loving God is not just mystical sentimentalism; it is a powerful source of real, personal change.<sup>45</sup>

In “Prisoners Helping Prisoners,” Jane noted that prisons have often been called “schools of crime” because imprisonment easily aggravates criminality and enhances the learning of

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<sup>43</sup> Grant Duwe, Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Sung Joon Jang & Byron R. Johnson, "Bible College Participation and Prison Misconduct: A Preliminary Analysis," *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 54:5, (2015), 371, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/10509674.2015.1043481>.

<sup>44</sup> Baker, 13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.



“tricks of the trade” from other prisoners.<sup>46</sup> To the extent that the principle of differential association applies, however, offenders may become less criminal because of contacts with anticriminal patterns and isolation from criminal patterns.

In her report in “Surviving incarceration: two prison-based peer programs build communities of support for female offenders,” Kimberly Collica offers that inmates may want to change. However, if they are unable to achieve a new identity and friends that support such an identity, they could revert to preexisting criminal networks to find the approval, the sense of self-worth, and the sense of familiarity they desire.<sup>47</sup>

In “Inmate Peer Ministry,” Miller declares that morally rehabilitated inmates know that they add worth to their own lives as they help their peers find a better path; they become “wounded healers.”<sup>48</sup> A core element of change is to embrace morality. Many inmates have never been taught the concept of morality, and coupled with a sense of belonging, many can and do change.

In “Religious Identity and Perceptions of Criminal Justice Effectiveness,” Johnson, Matthews, and Ayers noted that morality is considered a social fact that can guide an individual in his or her life.<sup>49</sup> Without this morality, the individual would be enslaved by ever-expanding and insatiable passions. Therefore, a moral consciousness would lead individuals to act in a manner that kept them tied to society rather than isolated from it.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jang et al, 485.

<sup>47</sup> Kimberly Collica, "Surviving incarceration: two prison-based peer programs build communities of support for female offenders," *Deviant Behavior*, 31: (2010), 321, accessed April 21, 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620903004812>.

<sup>48</sup> Miller and Drum, 11.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, Matthews, and Ayers, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Thomas O'Connor's study in *Religion, the Community, and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders* tells the story of one inmate at Lieber prison who was involved in religious programming. After experiencing a spiritual conversion, the inmate spoke of his selfish, self-centered life before coming to prison, only to be radically transformed through his spiritual encounter.<sup>51</sup> Moving forward, his life was focused on God and other people. He understood that God loved other people, and as a new creation in Christ, he needed to love others.

### **Spiritual Transformation**

Angola's inmates had not been transformed out of fear of punishment either by God or the State of Louisiana; their experience of a spiritual encounter changed them, and they were continuing to be changed by their ongoing service to others. Baker reports that they did not just stop making bad choices. They were now making "the right choices for the right reasons."<sup>52</sup> According to Jang, self-transcendence also leads them to discover meaning and purpose for their lives, which tends to be found in something bigger than self and is likely to contribute to offender reformation.<sup>53</sup>

Byron Johnson wrote of a Texas inmate minister who had a bad attitude and a hard time getting along with people.<sup>54</sup> He used to get in fights all the time and was to the point that he did not want to live any longer. The man began to pray for God to take control of his life. He surrendered his heart to the Lord and was able to control his thoughts and anger for the first time in his life. He was beginning to experience peace for the first time.

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<sup>51</sup> O'Conner, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Baker, 158.

<sup>53</sup> Jang et al, 487.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, 123.

Additionally, Johnson was reminded of an inmate who spent most of his time in disciplinary confinement until he became a Christian. The change in his life was so dramatic that the institution was never the same. He never got into another fight after that. He started writing to people while he was in prison to make restitution.<sup>55</sup>

Can a bad inmate become good? Can one who once exhibited the most destructive and dangerous behavior become the one who exhibits wholeness and peace, even to the point of desiring to impart healing to others? Miller and Drum have witnessed genuine rehabilitation. In “Inmate Peer Ministry,” they declare they have seen inmates living a life of fullness and serenity, modeling good behavior from a sincerely changed heart and a new life direction.<sup>56</sup> They have met inmates who have accepted responsibility for their actions, have experienced genuine remorse, and have embraced forgiveness. They have decided not to be defined by their past mistakes.

## **Identity**

Baker reported that when criminologists studied the inmates who changed from violent offenders into peaceful members of the inmate population, they discovered that the inmates who experienced lasting change had a “re-conceptualized self-identity.”<sup>57</sup> Dongning, Wesselmann, and Williams declared that many individuals who have been hurt and ostracized are susceptible to social influence.<sup>58</sup> They may join gangs and develop violent behavior resulting from a need to be liked and included.

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<sup>55</sup> Johnson, 155.

<sup>56</sup> Miller and Drum, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Baker, 189.

<sup>58</sup> Dongning, Wesselmann, and Williams, 35

Hallett's study in *The Angola Prison Seminary* showed that an inmate's transformation through great suffering had resulted in entirely new identities. In their view, desistance comes about because the offender willfully changes his identity, and both work toward something positive while steering away from something feared.<sup>59</sup> Deliberate self-change and desistance are not captured in a moment or event, but they constitute a process occurring over time. Peers can be influential "identity models" for offenders, people they can identify with and are living proof that turning away from crime is possible.<sup>60</sup>

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation asserts that "ex-offenders who have successfully been rehabilitated often make the best mentors."<sup>61</sup> In "Offender Peer Interventions: What do we know?" Del Roy Fletcher and Elaine Batty shared vital benefits that are products of a changed identity. Increased confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth provide a pathway back into mainstream employment and society.<sup>62</sup> Peers can feel more empowered and responsible. The deployment of peers may signal the values and culture of an organization. Peers can become ambassadors to other service users. The deployment of peers may help paid staff to use their time more effectively; peers can improve service delivery by identifying the real issues on the ground.

#### Discipleship: Peer to Peer

Angola prison has changed, and Warden Burl Cain is convinced his formal education and moral reform model changes lives. According to Baker, because of Cain's efforts, other prisons

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<sup>59</sup> Hallett et al, 83.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Del Roy Fletcher and Elaine Batty, "Offender Peer Interventions: What do we know?" *Centre for Regional and Economic Research*, (Dec. 2012): 3, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/crest/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/offender-peer-interventions.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 13.

are establishing their traditional seminaries dedicated to producing what Cain calls “field ministers.”<sup>63</sup> These men will live out their sentences behind prison walls ministering to their fellow inmates through service and leadership.

In her “Peer Mentors: the challenges and opportunities,” Linda Holbeche declares that peer mentoring is where two, three, or more individuals agree to have a developmental relationship with one another, which may involve occasional or regular meetings, phone calls, exchanges of information, and specific forms of support that go beyond networking.<sup>64</sup> Peer mentors need not be friends, though often, an agreement to enter a peer mentoring relationship leads to friendship.

Byron Johnson reports that for those who have been in prison before, maybe multiple times, this time they feel like they are on a mission as they prepare to leave prison.<sup>65</sup> They now have a sense of meaning and purpose they have not known before. For many, a Christian conversion experience marked a turning point in their life, either a spiritual awakening or reawakening that was foundational for them.

Fletcher and Batty identified four primary purposes of peer interventions through the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation:<sup>66</sup>

1. Targeted: to find employment, stop re-offending, or help integrate individuals into the community.
2. Change Behavior: to improve relationships, reduce anti-social behaviors.

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<sup>63</sup> Baker, 196.

<sup>64</sup> Linda Holbeche, "Peer mentoring: the challenges and opportunities," *Career Development International* 1, no. 7 (1996): 25, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://www-emerald-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/insight/content/doi/10.1108/13620439610152115/full/html>.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, 122.

<sup>66</sup> Fletcher and Batty, 3.

3. Expand Opportunities: to help develop personal skills, build confidence, improve attainment.
4. Supportive: to build trust and resilience and reduce social isolation.

### **Creating Community**

There are various professional opinions regarding the causes and treatments of aggressive behavior. Dongning, Wesselmann, and Williams write that the destructive nature of aggression motivates the field to look for ways to reduce it.<sup>67</sup> Possibly the most apparent remedy is to provide individuals with a chance to be acknowledged and included. Jang's findings proved that some prison offenders are potential assets waiting to be developed to help other offenders reform within their prison communities.<sup>68</sup>

Hallett noted that Warden Cain jokingly refers to Angola's dominant religion as Bapticostal to point out the inclusiveness there.<sup>69</sup> Hallett concluded that the religion at Angola is best described as "relationship theology," and those healthy relationships are agents of change.<sup>70</sup> In Hallett's study, "relationship theology" is a term frequently invoked by Inmate Ministers at Angola to describe their attention to serving the prison through interpersonal relationships.<sup>71</sup> It is a central focus of the "Inmate Ministers" personal vocation.<sup>72</sup> Upon visiting Angola, Baker's

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<sup>67</sup> Dongning, Wesselmann, and Williams, 36.

<sup>68</sup> Jang et al, 489.

<sup>69</sup> Hallett et al, 159.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Hallett et al, 26.

perspective is that the general population at Angola Prison has transformed from a collection of self-centered individuals into an influential community of change.<sup>73</sup>

Duwe reported that considering the inmate student's collective pursuit of the same conventional goal, program participants might naturally form a group of like-minded individuals who learn prosocial behaviors through positive reinforcement and imitation as well as negative attitudes toward misconduct in prison.<sup>74</sup> Regarding peer mentoring, Fletcher and Batty stated that it builds on individual and community strengths. Bringing together volunteers with the disadvantaged helps build social capital and resilience within deprived communities.<sup>75</sup> In her dissertation, "Brother's Keeper: Self-Discovery, Social Support, and Rehabilitation Through In-Person Peer Mentorship," Rebekah Zwick addressed the subject of inmates providing support for others. She declared that the subject described an evolution of self in which, during their time of incarceration, they allowed themselves to be available and supportive for other men in need of emotional scaffolding and intellectual guidance.<sup>76</sup>

Baker declares that leading psychologists now say that humans are relational creatures seeking meaning from their emotional and spiritual experiences with each other. Therefore, the sense of community at Angola Prison is so powerful. The inmates are seeking spiritual truth, and they discover their need for meaningful relationships with each other.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Baker, 92.

<sup>74</sup> Duwe et al, 386.

<sup>75</sup> Fletcher and Batty, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Rebekah Gwynne Zwick, "Brother's Keeper: Self-Discovery, Social Support, and Rehabilitation Through In-Person Peer Mentorship" (PhD diss., Nova Southeastern University, 2018), 67.

<sup>77</sup> Baker, 94.

## Conclusion

The reality is that the United States incarcerates people at a higher rate than any other country in the world. According to Baker, more than two million people are locked up, of which approximately two thousand are released back into society every day.<sup>78</sup> It will serve in the best interest of public safety if those returning to society return morally rehabilitated. A critical element needed for future reform would be a change in prison administration philosophy in how corrections are delivered. Mugambi made crucial observations in presenting issues associated with mass incarceration. The United States is inherently harsher than Europe; many jurists have known no other sentencing structures; legally, “cruel and unusual punishment” does not cover draconian prison terms, etcetera.<sup>79</sup> Prisons must be viewed as more than what Baker described as holding cells where society puts people it does not think can change.<sup>80</sup> Second, the research supports peer mentors’ use within the prison system, although this concept is not widely accepted within the prisons across the United States.<sup>81</sup> Devilly point out that offenders themselves represent the largest group of “untapped resources” in most rehabilitation frameworks, capable of having a powerful and positive influence on fellow offenders.<sup>82</sup>

The literature research has shown that a change in correctional leadership philosophy, coupled with inmates functioning as agents of change, has excellent potential in serving as a positive tool in overall penal reform. Therefore, continued validation of inmate peer-to-peer mentoring is imperative. This project will fill a void in this field of study. It will present

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<sup>78</sup> Baker, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Mugambi, 705.

<sup>80</sup> Baker, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Mugambi, 705.

<sup>82</sup> Devilly et al, 220.



perspectives from the State of West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation state-level leadership, the Wardens responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the four identified prisons along with the inmates themselves. The study will integrate the three perspectives to formulate a single portrait of the current awareness, perceived value, and future potential of moral rehabilitation using inmates as peer-mentors within the prison system of West Virginia.

### **Theological Foundations**

Catalyst Ministries followed God's call into the prisons of West Virginia. The following themes are intended to provide the theological framework for this study: Catalyst Ministries: Answering God's Call, Community, Shepherding, and the Great Commission.

#### **Catalyst Ministries: Answering God's Call**

Catalyst Ministries is a discipleship ministry formed to be God's vessel of hope and purpose to the imprisoned in West Virginia. Catalyst Ministries was sent behind the prison walls to serve the imprisoned, those with no voice, yet who are important to God as noted throughout the scriptures. Navigating the prison environment is not a simple task. It can be complicated, yet Jesus came to heal the sick, encourage love; he even encouraged His disciples to visit those in prison. The Catalyst model equips, trains, and then sends the inmates as peer mentors to serve as moral change agents throughout West Virginia prisons. Jesus stated, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt 10:16). The Lord's words to the apostles concerning the response to their ministry were not encouraging. Their task would be difficult, for they would be "like sheep among wolves" (cf. 7:15, where false prophets are spoken of as "ferocious wolves"). It would be essential for them to "be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves;" that is, wise in avoiding danger but harmless in not forcibly

opposing the enemy.<sup>83</sup> “Innocent” translates *akeraioi* (lit., “unmixed, pure”).<sup>84</sup> Matthew 10:16 rings true on the prison yard, as the peer mentors are tasked to serve in an environment governed by a strict convict code. The convict code has its own set of rules, ones that, if violated, could result in physical harm.

The Catalyst goal is a changed heart, basically from the inside out, as stated in the book of Ezekiel, “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek 11:19). Spiritual renewal will accompany Israel’s physical return. When they come back to the land, they will remove all vile images and detestable idols. The land will be purged of idolatry, and the people will be purged too. For God said, “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them” (Ezek 11:19). Israel’s external difficulties resulted from her internal condition. God promised to correct that.<sup>85</sup>

Most of those that enter prison enter with a heart of stone, a heart hardened by years of personal pain and suffering. The peer mentors serve as God’s vessel delivering hope to the fellow inmates. They begin by sharing the good news that life is not over when the prison doors shut, and the God of the Bible can and wants to make a difference in each person’s life. Many of those in prison have never been presented with the gospel. The Bible states, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom 10:14).

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<sup>83</sup> L.A. Barbieri, Jr., Matthew. Vol. 2 In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 42.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> C.H. Dyer, Ezekiel, Vol. 1 In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1248.

Those in prison often feel as if they are societal outcasts, believing society has forgotten them as ones who no longer matter. However, this societal view is not God's view. Throughout the Bible, God makes His love for those hurting and imprisoned clear. Jesus stated, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). This verse was remembered and preserved in several early Christian sources, including Clement of Rome (*2 Clem.* 2:4), the *Didache* (4:10), the *Epistle of Barnabas* (5:9), and Justin Martyr (*Apol* 1.15.8). The saying is a defense of Jesus' outreach to the disreputable, not suggesting that some are exempt from his call. The fact that Jesus can be found in the company of people such as Levi reminds us of the difference between his mission and that of the scribes. They come to enlighten; he comes to redeem.

Given that mission, it is as senseless for Jesus to shun tax collectors and sinners as for a doctor to shun the sick. The grace of God extends to and overcomes the worst forms of human depravity. Ironically, in one sense, great sinners stand closer to God than those who think themselves righteous, for sinners are more aware of their need for the transforming grace of God. "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Rom 5:20).<sup>86</sup>

Catalyst Ministries strives to establish a model of love and service within the prisons, "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing so; some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering" (Hebrews 13:1-3). What about those who, robbed of their freedom, cannot visit our homes but long for us to visit them? The readers

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<sup>86</sup> J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, (Grand Rapid: Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002) 86.

must think of the prisoners and feel sympathetic as though they were in prison alongside them. This means that they think carefully about the kind of help they would like if they were prisoners; a personal visit, warm encouragement, a sustaining prayer, and some valuable provisions.<sup>87</sup>

Lastly, a core component of Catalyst's work service directly relates to Matthew 25:34-40;

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, 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." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Throughout his earthly life, Jesus had never sought to be in a lofty and comfortable position. He lived "despised and rejected of men" (Isa 53:3). It is natural for the human race to seek what is comfortable and be ready to serve only the great. However, Jesus' ministry was to the poor and the outcast. He is saying strongly that the ministry of his followers is likewise to be to the needy. They do not seem to be in the least important, but their relationship to Jesus is significant.<sup>88</sup>

## Community

Most of the imprisoned have come from broken relationships and unhealthy communities. Their communities were overwhelmed by poverty, crime, and violence. Change in

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<sup>87</sup> R. Brown, *The message of Hebrews: Christ above all* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 250.

<sup>88</sup> L. Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 639.

prison must come from the men themselves. They must establish community as Jesus did with His disciples. Jesus spoke of the family when He declared those to be His brothers and sisters. The apostle Paul followed Jesus' teaching as Paul continued the family narrative in his writings. Although most of the inmates will not refer to the prison as their home, they will acknowledge it as their community. Many of the broken will change and, in Christ, anyone can change. Change within the prisons must come through fellow believers growing deeper in relationship to God and others. The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer. With great yearning, the imprisoned apostle Paul calls Timothy, his "beloved son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2) to come to him in prison in the last days of his life. He wants to see him again and have him near. Whether in prison or not, everyone has a longing to belong and to sense a connection to something good, such as healthy relationships. In *Living Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke that Christians could not take the privilege of living with other Christians for granted.<sup>89</sup> This is especially true in prison, as the prison environment can be challenging to navigate. The prison yard needs men to rise as Christ's ambassadors. The men need to know there is hope found in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian living in the diaspora needs to recognize that in the nearness of a fellow Christian is a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God. In their loneliness, both the visitor and the one visited recognize in each other the Christ who is present in the body. They receive and meet each other as one meets the Lord in reverence, humility, and joy.<sup>90</sup> Many of those in prison have never experienced any form of love, relationship, or community. Their loyalties only birthed dysfunction and pain; therefore, trust and relationships can be hard to obtain in the prison

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<sup>89</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: Reader's Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 1, accessed May 26, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=4396249>.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

setting. It takes time to break the hardened shells of the imprisoned. However, just as Jesus challenged His disciples, those in prison must be challenged; Jesus radically challenged His disciples to disavow primary loyalty to their natural families in order to join the new surrogate family of siblings He was establishing: the family of God. Relationships among God’s children were to take priority over blood-family ties.<sup>91</sup>

The Bible declares, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb 10:24-25). Christians are brothers in the same family, partners in the same enterprise, and household members. They have a responsibility not only to “hold fast” (Rev 2:25) themselves but also to encourage their fellow believers to do the same. John Wesley often reminded the early Methodist people of the words of a friend: “The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.”<sup>92</sup> In the teaching of this passage, the exhortation is not simply to the exercise of fellowship but the stimulation of compassionate activity in the work of Christ.<sup>93</sup> Once levels of trust and relationships are established, many times, those in prison are ready to embrace a loving, healthy change.

### Shepherding

Satan is the strong man armed, but our Lord Jesus is stronger, and He shall proceed and do all that He purposes. Christ is the Good Shepherd; He shows tender care for young converts, weak believers, and those of a sorrowful spirit. By his word, He requires no more service; and by

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<sup>91</sup> Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009),64.

<sup>92</sup> R. Brown, *The message of Hebrews: Christ above all* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 186.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

His providence, He inflicts no more trouble for which He will strengthen them. May we know our Shepherd's voice and follow Him, proving ourselves His sheep.<sup>94</sup>

In prison, stronger inmates often take advantage of the weaker ones. Prisons are full of strong-armed inmates that prey on the weak. Prisons need men to rise as shepherds, embracing God's strength and proceeding to do His will. The weak in prison need strong shepherds to help them navigate life, not only as a believer but the prison culture itself. Many inmates have been preyed upon their whole life in one form or another. Men and women have endured years of abuse, poverty, ostracization, and low self-esteem, and they bring the effects into prison when they come. The weak need the strong to survive, and the peer mentors are trained and equipped to show tender care to young converts, weak believers, and those of a sorrowful spirit.

Jesus' example as the good shepherd is emulated throughout the Scriptures. The Bible states, "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). Jesus' motivation is compassion (9:36). Jesus knew that people needed what He brought them, both the message of the kingdom and physical healing; He came for the good of the people, not His own (John 3:16–17). It is to all believers hurt when they do not serve the Lord (Jer 2:13; Hos 7:1, 13; 13:9), and it hurts Him because it hurts His children. All believers can approach Him with their needs precisely because they know how much He cares for them.<sup>95</sup> Many in prison live like sheep without a shepherd, many who have never had the gospel presented to them or experienced any kind of sincerity. Like sheep, they will respond to a shepherd in their lives. The peer mentors rise to the role of shepherds.

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<sup>94</sup> Matthew Henry, "*Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary*" Isaiah 40:1-11 (WORD search Corp.), 2013, accessed October 2, 2020, <https://app.wordsearchbible.lifeway.com>].

<sup>95</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Matthew* Vol. 1, Matt 9:36, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

The Bible declares, “Then He said to His disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers, into the harvest field” (Matt 9:37-38). Here, however, as in John 4:35, his thought is rather of men’s readiness now to respond to the gospel by “fleeing from the wrath to come.” The context shows that the laborers here are not angels sent out to execute final judgment on the nations, as his Jewish hearers would expect, but men sent out to rescue others from judgment. For this task, the disciples were very few, and the command to ask the Lord of the harvest for reinforcements has never been superseded.<sup>96</sup>

Traditionally, religious programming in prisons across the United States has been delivered by the faith-based community. Volunteers from all denominations are scheduled through the prison chaplaincy to come in and conduct a Christian service or program. Free-world volunteers lead these services and programs. This pattern has also been the norm in West Virginia. Representatives from different denominations come in on most evenings and preach, teach, and leave. The inmates play little role in the evening formats.

The Catalyst model equips men to become shepherds of their flocks within the prisons. Catalyst believes in the men and the wealth of untapped resources within them. Jesus did not go to the religious elite. He picked ordinary men to become His representatives and to go out and spread His message. The Catalyst model uses ordinary inmates who have become peer mentors to facilitate faith-based and moral rehabilitative initiatives.

The inmates respond differently to one another than free-world volunteers, as the inmates have shared similar pain and suffering. The inmates live with one another, and their life is an

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<sup>96</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: an introduction and commentary* Vol. 1 ( Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 179.



open book; they dwell among each other just as Jesus did (John 1:14). Many inmates are searching for meaning, and that meaning can be found in Jesus Christ. Peer mentors play a significant role as they live their faith. Jesus lived with His disciples. He did not show up to teach one night a week. He ate, slept, traveled, wept, and laughed with them. Author Günter Krallmann writes about Jesus as a mentor.

Through the disciples' continual exposure to who He was, what He did, and said, Jesus, intended them to discern and absorb His vision, mindset, and mode of operation. He desired them to become so saturated with the influences arising from His example and teaching, His attitudes, actions, and anointing, that every single area of their lives would be impacted towards greater likeness to Himself. The approach He decided on was simple and informal, practical, and wholistic. The totality of shared life experiences made up the disciples' classroom, and their teacher's words merely needed to elucidate further the lessons already gained from His life.<sup>97</sup>

Many inmates have experienced deep levels of despair, and they are searching for hope. Sadly, many are searching in the wrong places and continue to become ensnared in Satan's traps. The peer mentors live Christ, which presents great potential for the lost to embrace throughout the prison yard. The disciples were changed by shared life experiences with Jesus and, as His representatives, peer mentors share their life experiences in Christ with their peers.

### The Great Commission

The Great Commission does not stop at the prison gates. God is not intimidated by what life is like behind the prison walls. Jesus did not footnote the Great Commission and exempt those in prison from His instruction to make disciples. This is evidenced by the apostle Paul's life. Paul wrote mentoring letters to people and churches while imprisoned. Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

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<sup>97</sup> Günter Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission: A Handbook on Leadership Principles Exemplified by Jesus Christ*, (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing., 2003), 53.

And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20, NIV). “Therefore” leads to the fact that this has consequences for those who follow Him here on earth. Because He is who He is and because He has the full authority He has, they are commissioned to “go” and “make disciples.” In this Gospel, a disciple is both a learner and a follower; a disciple takes Jesus as his teacher and learns from Him, and a disciple also follows Jesus. The life of a disciple is different because of his attachment to Jesus. The Master is not giving a command that will merely secure nominal adherence to a group but will secure a person’s wholehearted commitment.<sup>98</sup>

A wholehearted commitment is the will of God for all believers, including the imprisoned. Our lives belong not to us but to the One who died to purchase our freedom from sin and death. Along with our freedom, He purchased our availability and usefulness to Him as tools for the conduct of His ministry. We rob him of his right when we fail to fulfill his marching orders. The entire Gospel of Matthew serves to equip us for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.<sup>99</sup>

The peer mentors spend four years in the academic setting of Mount Olive Bible College. During their tenure as students, they are required to begin serving in various mentorship areas, such as facilitating church services and other faith-based initiatives. They visit those in the prison infirmary and those in the administrative segregation unit, known as solitary confinement. The inmates have begun conducting memorial services for those who die in prison; they sit with dying inmates so they do not die alone. These men are living examples of Matthew 25:36 with their visits.

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<sup>98</sup> L. Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 746.

<sup>99</sup> Max Anders and Stuart Weber, *Matthew* vol. 1 of *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012) accessed October 3, 2020, <https://app.wordsearchbible.lifeway.com>.

They are vessels of encouragement as directed by the Scriptures. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – all the more as you see the day approaching” (Heb 10:24-25). Prisons are places of deep regret, loneliness, and pain, and most inmates are thirsty for hope and purpose. Peer mentors serve as God’s vessels, introducing the lost to God’s living water (John: 7:38).

### **Theoretical Foundations**

In the recent ten-part television series titled “The Last Dance,” Michael Jordan stated, “With me, it all started with hope.”<sup>100</sup> The path forward starts with hope, for in its absence, little else matters. In presenting the concept of using inmates as peer mentors, it is important to discuss various theories relating to human development and crime. Although this section is not intended to be clinically exhaustive, it is meant to present different influences that could factor into an individual’s criminal behavior. The following ideas and theories will be broadly presented: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs; the Criminal Triad Theory; Anomie, Spirituality, and Crime; and Empathy.

Second, it is imperative to identify biblical principles that combat what the adversary has used to “steal, kill, and destroy” biblical principles, like hope, belonging, and purpose. In prison, religious services are provided through the prison chaplain. The chaplain serves as the liaison between the prison and free-world volunteers. The volunteers provide the majority of religious services. The research to date regarding the use of peer mentors relating to moral rehabilitation is limited. This section’s practices and ideas are unique in that the inmates will be God’s vessels delivering the transformative concepts associated with hope, belonging, and purpose. Hope,

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<sup>100</sup> *The Last Dance*, season 1, episode 10, directed by Jason Hehir, aired April 19, 2020, on ESPN.

belonging, and purpose will change prisons. The inmates can provide it much more effectively than free-world volunteers; for inmates, they have something to contribute that volunteers are limited with, time. It is crucial to merge the prominent theories of human development and crime with a biblical pathway from criminal behavior to Christian love and service delivered by the mentors.

### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Jesus stated, "The thief comes to steal, and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). God ordained the family, even before He chose His people Israel. The Bible states, "Then God said, 'let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'" (Gen 1:26).

If the enemy can destroy the family, along with its healthy components of development, he has advanced his goal of destruction. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology, comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid.<sup>101</sup> The five essentials are incorporated into three quadrants: basic (physiological and safety), psychological (belongingness, love, and esteem needs), and self-fulfillment (self-actualization needs).<sup>102</sup> Sadly, most inmates were raised in environments lacking in Maslow's basic and psychological quadrants, evidenced by Herrenkohl, Jung, Lee, and Kim's study on the effects of child maltreatment on adult crime anti-social behavior. When people are

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<sup>101</sup> S. A. McLeod, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," *Simply Psychology*, (March 2020): 1, accessed May 28, 2020, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

deprived of food, shelter, clothing, warmth, emotional security, freedom from fear, friendship, belonging, and love, they are greatly and negatively affected.<sup>103</sup>

### The Criminal Triad Theory

The Criminal Triad Theory (CTT) attempts not to create a new theory of criminality. Instead, it provides a new way of synthesizing theories that have contributed to a fuller understanding of deviant behavior over the decades into one existing model. Theories relating to psychoanalysis, behaviorism, social learning theory, cognitive theory, and several perspectives taken from the discipline of criminology.<sup>104</sup> The Criminal Theory model of the internal deterrence system consists of the self, moral, and social deterrence mechanisms. “Self-Deterrence Mechanism” relates to self-expectations and is the aspect of personality that compels an individual to avoid deviance because of its inconsistency with a particular self-image they attempt to maintain or achieve.<sup>105</sup> “Moral-Deterrence Mechanism” is a personality component that is empowered by the individual’s empathic awareness of another’s pain and emotional suffering; it includes not only this awareness but also an altruistic concern for other people.<sup>106</sup> “Social-Deterrence Mechanism” is essentially Freud’s Superego or that part of the individual that attempts to live up to other people and social institutions’ expectations.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Todd I. Herrenkohl, Hyunzee Jung, Jungeun Olivia Lee, and MooHyun Kim, “Effects of Child Maltreatment, Cumulative Victimization Experiences, and Proximal Life Stress on Adult Crime and Antisocial Behavior,” *Office of Justice Programs: National Criminal Justice Reference Service* (2017): 4, accessed May 29, 2020, <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2012-ij-cx-0023>.

<sup>104</sup> William Harmening, *Criminal Triad: Psychosocial Development of the Criminal Personality Type*, (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 2010). 87, accessed May 28, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=536955>.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 88.

## Anomie, Spirituality, and Crime

Whereas the more traditional orientation in criminology focuses on the social and structural factors that contribute to anomie (breakdown of moral values), the treatment of alienation in social psychology provides a functional model for exploring the micro-elements of anomie. Here, alienation refers to powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, there is the concept of spiritual alienation, which separates an individual from God and others. The anomic concept, coupled with spiritual alienation, is an essential factor in developing criminality and other forms of deviant behavior.<sup>109</sup> Most of the incarcerated have and continue to experience a lack of moral guidance. Throughout their lives, and especially in prison, they feel powerless, isolated, and that their lives have no meaning. These feelings lead to a loss of hope and purpose.

## Empathy

Empathy refers to a person's ability to understand the emotions of others and share in their feelings. Researchers in many fields have shown that empathy, or its absence, matters significantly in many aspects of social life. For example, empathetic people are more likely to have strong ties to family members and others they interact with. Individuals capable of empathy have higher self-esteem and enjoy life more fully. Sadly, the opposite is also true: people who have trouble empathizing with others tend to suffer from poorer mental health and have less

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<sup>108</sup> Randy Martin, "Anomie, Spirituality, and Crime." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 16, no. 1 (February 2000): 75–98. accessed May 27, 2020 doi:10.1177/1043986200016001005.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

fulfilling social relationships.<sup>110</sup> Empathetic people are less likely to engage in delinquency or crime. However, those who have trouble perceiving how others feel, and have difficulty sharing those feelings, are more likely to engage in unlawful acts: everything from minor juvenile delinquency to the most serious of violent crimes.<sup>111</sup> A core goal at Catalyst Ministries is moral rehabilitation, as moral people do not kill, rape, or steal. Immoral behavior results from a lack of empathy. Psychologists believe that empathy starts at birth, develops as infants mimic others' behavior, and then gradually develops the ability to play and respond to their feelings.<sup>112</sup> Typically, empathy is a natural part of the development process, but it must be taught for some people. If immoral behavior results from a lack of empathy, then the presence of empathy is the cure.<sup>113</sup>

### Hope

Inmates, like all humans, need hope. Gabriel Marcel, a leading Christian existentialist, stated, "Hope is the very fabric out of which our soul is made."<sup>114</sup> The absence of real hope renders life meaningless. Prisons are environments where hope fades. Inmate peer mentors are God's vessels of hope to the hopeless. There are many in prison hungry for change; however, they do not know how. Day after day, they accept the status quo of prison life. The peer mentors

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<sup>110</sup> Chad Posick, "The Role of Empathy in Crime, Policing, and Justice" *Scholars Strategy Network: Criminal Justice* (March 2013), 1, accessed May 28, 2020, <https://scholars.org/brief/role-empathy-crime-policing-and-justice>.

<sup>111</sup> Posick, 2.

<sup>112</sup> Baker, 86.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>114</sup> Paul O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope: An Introduction to Eschatology* (Washington: Catholic University of American Press, 2011), 3. Accessed October 6, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=3135110>.

introduce the fellow inmates to the concept that change is possible and that change is found in the hope offered through Jesus Christ.

Robert Jenson and Eugene Korn write that Christian hope is grounded in Jesus Christ rather than confidence in human power.<sup>115</sup> This hope depends upon faith that God has decisively acted in history through Jesus to free believers from sin and that the Holy Spirit is working in their lives and the world to sanctify them and it (Rom 5:1-5). Christian hope thus reckons with the bondage of freedom and disorientation of desire. The Christian who hopes is one whose being is enclosed, determined, and protected by Jesus Christ, their hope. Hope, then, entails faith-informed convictions about reality. Furthermore, whereas the strong version of responsibility that modernity offers lends itself to a hope that one can always make a new future, Christian hope anticipates a future of God's making.

Those in prison need to know that a new future is possible. They need to realize that life does not have to be a certain way. Life does not have to be full of despair, depression, and hopelessness. The Bible is clear, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old is gone, the new is here" (2 Cor 5:17). Peer mentors are God's ambassadors to reach those who believe their prison sentence means the end. Peer mentors help steer their peers to real, sustainable hope -- a hope that goes beyond emotions and a hope that can only be secured through faith in Jesus Christ.

Author Paul O'Callaghan writes, "Hope, as we saw, points to the future, to a good perceived or promised but not yet possessed. For hope to be possible and humanly meaningful, therefore, the future must be perceived as 'superior' in contrast to the past, better than what one

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<sup>115</sup> Robert W. Jenson and Eugene Korn, eds, *Covenant and Hope: Christian and Jewish Reflections* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012) 182, accessed October 3, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=4859346>.



already possesses, and the ‘future,’ involving a greater good than the one now offered or available. Otherwise, there would be nothing to ‘hope’ for.”<sup>116</sup>

According to Thomas Aquinas, the theological virtue of hope amounts to trusting that God will lead us to beatitude. Aquinas states, “People should hope for nothing less from God than God’s very self; God’s goodness, by which God confers good upon creatures, is nothing less than God’s own being. And so, the proper and principal object of hope is indeed eternal blessedness.”<sup>117</sup> The theological virtue of hope is hope for what only God can provide.

### Belonging

Prisons are full of men and women who have never had a spiritual encounter with the God of the Bible. Many of the incarcerated never understood who they were; they existed yet lacked identity and purpose. Calvin’s *Confession* notes, “As no man is found, however barbarous and even savage he may be, who is not touched by some idea of religion. It is clear that we all are created so that we may know the majesty of our Creator, that having known it, we may esteem it above all and honor it with love and reverence.”<sup>118</sup> Prisons have many forms of religion, some formally acknowledged by prison administrations and some not.

A common denominator in the noted influences on criminal behavior was isolation. When isolated, a person loses their sense of belonging. Author Brian Coulter writes, “And not only are people lonely, but they are perpetuating a cycle of loneliness. People interact fewer

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<sup>116</sup> O’Callaghan, 52.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary*, trans. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 237, accessed October 4, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=1688426>.

<sup>118</sup> John Calvin, *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, trans. James Jennison Jr. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 37, accessed October 6, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5842100>.

times in talking and mingling with each other, so they understand less about each other. The lonely interact less with others, so they understand less about their lives, so they are apathetic about them.”<sup>119</sup> Those in prison need to know they do not have to be alone. As God’s ambassadors, peer mentors share the good news; they seek the lonely to tell them that God alone can make a difference. The Bible states, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence so that we may find mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb 4:15-16).

Many in prison need to hear that God is willing to provide help. Peer mentors always provide sidewalk ministry; they are witnessing, counseling, and sharing the good news daily in the prison yard. The lonely in prison respond to peer mentors. A kind gesture or a sign that someone cares is enormous in prison. Maya Angelou, an American poet, wrote, “We allow our ignorance to prevail upon us and make us think we can survive alone, alone in patches, alone in groups, alone in races, even alone in genders.”<sup>120</sup> Brian Coulter writes, “Humans are called to be in community and for the community. They are called to be holy. This is a calling that invites everyone to live a life that is ‘set apart with’: with all the saints, with all that is consecrated, with all that is sanctified, with all that is holy. To be set apart as a holy community with one another.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Brian Coulter, *Be Holy: Find Identity/Find Belonging/Find Purpose* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2014), 73.

<sup>120</sup> Maya Angelou Quotes. (n.d.). allauthor.com. Retrieved October 07, 2020, from allauthor.com Web site: <https://allauthor.com/quote/99090/>

<sup>121</sup> Coulter, 94.

Authors Cynthia Pickett, Wendi Gardner, and Megan Knowles argue that “to successfully establish and maintain social relationships, individuals need to be sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others.”<sup>122</sup> The peer mentors learn to listen and not just talk. They sit with their peers sometimes for long periods, and they feel the pain and loneliness of their fellow inmates. The mentors are not on tight schedules like the chaplains or the free-world volunteers. Albeit sad, a benefit of being a peer mentor is that they have time, and they can devote as much as needed to be sensitive to others’ thoughts and feelings.

The mentors draw their peers out of isolation and into the community. They let them know what the Word of God says about His family and community. The Bible states, “So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom 12:5). A sense of belonging in prison is enormous; it illuminates hope and signals to the inmates; they are no longer alone.

### Purpose

In prison, purpose comes through serving others. The Bible notes, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). When a person has a purpose, they have something positive in their life. In prison, this is a big deal, as inmates are faced with negative temptations daily. The Bible states, “Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly: I do not fight like a boxer beating the air” (1 Cor 9:26). Peer mentors let others know they have value, and that value can be applied to help others in

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<sup>122</sup> Cynthia Pickett, Wendi L. Gardner, and Megan Knowles, “Getting a Cue: The Need to Belong and Enhanced Sensitivity to Social Cues.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30, no. 9 (September 2004): 1095–1107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203262085>.

need. The Bible notes, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pet 4:10).

Purpose provides the incarcerated with a standard of right and wrong. Many inmates have just existed without thinking or caring about their life or the life of others. Purpose begins to establish a new moral compass that looks very different from the life they are used to. They are learning the concept of love and service as God’s Word becomes real to them. Jesus stated, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciple if you love one another” (John 13:34-35). Purpose in prison is a simple concept centered around love and service, but it does not come easy. Love and service in prison can be seen as weak, so Christian inmates need to grow spiritually to withstand the trials and daily ministry challenges.

### Conclusion

The noted influences on criminal behavior have played a significant role in most inmates’ lives. The adversary has stolen and destroyed, ending with prison sentences, some even for the rest of their lives. However, God’s love does not stop at the prison walls.

A new and unique philosophy is developing in prisons. It is called moral rehabilitation. Moral rehabilitation uses the inmates as shepherds of their flocks to deliver the message of hope, belonging, and purpose. The Catalyst vision believes hope, belonging, and purpose can result from a person becoming moral. Morality found through a spiritual encounter with the God of the Bible, followed by spiritual growth, love, and service.

Through the Mount Olive Bible College, the inmate students study the works and Word of Jesus Christ for four years. They are experiencing empathy, some for the first time in their lives. As a result, the inmates are becoming empathetic, beginning to care about others’ feelings,

and, thus, becoming morally rehabilitated agents of change. Also, many inmate graduates experience a spiritual conversion along with a healthy community of fellow believers for the first time. These two aspects are modern miracles to them. This creates the peer mentors' influence. Other inmates know these men, know their past, and know the crimes they committed. They had front-row seats in witnessing their transformation. This is a powerful resource for prison reform; as the other inmates realize, that kind of transformation, hope, and purpose became real for their fellow inmates; it could become real for them.

## Chapter 3:

### Methodology – Research Design – Design Implementation

#### Introduction

This chapter provides methodology, including the study's rationale, validation questions, ministry context, population, and sample size. Additionally, the chapter describes the research design, the design's implementation, and analysis.

#### Rationale

The rationale for the research is to seek validation from key stakeholders regarding the use of inmate peer mentors as a resource for future prison reform, not only in West Virginia but also in other states. The key stakeholders are West Virginia's State-Level leaders, individual prison wardens and administrative staff, peer mentors, mentees of peer mentor-led activities, and the general inmate population. As Devilly, Sorbello, and Eccleston noted, the inmates themselves represent the largest group of untapped resources in most rehabilitation frameworks, capable of having a powerful and positive influence on fellow offenders.<sup>123</sup> Inmates in West Virginia are allowed to possess jobs. They are day-to-day operational support jobs, such as meal preparation and service, cutting grass; cleaning the housing units and general areas within the prison; working in the industries building making license plates, state signage, soaps shampoo for all West Virginia prisons, and so on. Historically, the inmates were not allowed to possess any roles that could be presumed as authoritative in relation to their peers. The addition of new levels of

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<sup>123</sup> Grant J. Devilly, Laura Sorbello, Lynne Eccleston, and Tony Ward, "Prison-based peer-education schemes," *Science Direct: Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10, (2005): 220, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/science/article/pii/S1359178903000879?via%3Dihub>

responsibility entrusted to the peer mentors may create new levels of hope and purpose within the prison culture.

### Validation Questions

This researcher is seeking the answers to the following three critical questions to validate the use of inmate peer mentors as a resource for future prison reform.

1. Are all key stakeholders aware of the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of inmates as peer mentors?
2. Is the peer mentoring concept valued by key stakeholders?
3. Do the key stakeholders believe in the potential that the peer mentoring concept brings to the prison culture?

### Ministry Context

Catalyst Ministries introduced a model of prison reform labeled moral rehabilitation. Catalyst Ministries partnered with the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (WVDOCR) in September 2014 to implement the moral rehabilitation initiative. In partnership with the WVDOCR and academic partner Appalachian Bible College, Catalyst Ministries equips and trains inmates to become peer mentors through a four-year accredited college launched at Mount Olive Correctional Complex. As the inmates graduate, they become peer mentors and are transferred to other West Virginia prisons to serve as agents of moral change. The WVDOCR has allowed the peer mentors to hold higher levels of responsibility, thus pioneering new innovative changes affecting the prison culture. The peer mentors facilitate moral rehabilitative programs while leading other faith-based events such as conducting church services, visiting the sick in prison, sitting with the dying, and sidewalk ministry. Also, they work with the prison

administrative staff on specific projects, such as delivering meals to other inmates in solitary confinement, helping new inmate arrivals with prison orientation, and so on.

### Population and Sample Size

The population of this study is key stakeholders within the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Primarily, four prisons: Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail; St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail; Huttonsville; and Northern Correctional Facility. Additionally, the Commissioner and the Director of Inmate Services are state-level leaders located at the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's central office.

Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail (MOCCJ) is a maximum-security prison housing approximately one thousand men. The sample size at Mount Olive consisted of the warden, deputy warden, associate wardens of programs, chaplain; eight peer mentors; twenty-five mentees; and the general inmate population. The participation goal for the general population was ten percent, translating to one hundred participants. This goal was met.

St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail (SMCCJ) is a medium-security prison housing approximately seven hundred men. The sample size at St. Marys consisted of the warden, deputy warden, associate wardens of programs, chaplain; three peer mentors; twenty-five mentees; and the general inmate population. The participation goal for the general population was ten percent, translating to seventy participants. The goal was met.

Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail (HCCJ) is a medium-security prison housing approximately one thousand men. The sample size at Huttonsville consisted of the warden, deputy warden, associate wardens of programs, associate warden of operations, chaplain, three peer mentors, twenty-five mentees, and the general inmate population. The participation goal for the general population was ten percent, translating to one hundred participants. However, this



goal was not met. This researcher received twenty-seven responses, representing approximately three percent of the general population.

Northern Correctional Center and Jail (NCCJ) is a medium-security prison housing approximately two-hundred-fifty men. The sample size at Northern consisted of the warden, deputy warden, associate wardens of programs, chaplain; three peer mentors; twenty-five mentees; and the general inmate population. The participation goal for the general population was ten percent, translating to twenty-five participants. This goal was met.

## **Research Design**

### Data Collection Methods

The methods below represent the field research portion of the project. The following data collection methods were used: interviews, focus groups, a questionnaire, and a survey. These methods are critical to the research process. They gather data directly from the key stakeholders regarding the studies' problem while serving as a complement to existing literary resources.

### Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic caused this researcher to modify the field research procedures. The West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation remains restricted to all volunteer and outside visitation. This required a modification from all previously scheduled in-person activities such as introductory meetings, interviews, and focus group meetings to phone calls or live video conferencing.

## The Hawthorne Effect

The Hawthorne Effect is defined as the effect on individuals' behavior of knowing that they are being observed or are taking part in the research.<sup>124</sup> To avoid the Hawthorne Effect's potential, this researcher provided a copy of the interview and focus group questions to each participant to be completed and returned to this researcher in advance of the video-conference meetings. This allows each individual the opportunity to express themselves privately as well as publically.

### **Interviews via Video-Conference Call:**

There were two interviews conducted with the WVDOCR state-level leadership. The interviewees were Betsy Jividen, WVDOCR Commissioner, and C. J. Rider, WVDOCR Director of Inmate Services. The interviews with Commissioner Jividen and Director Rider provided critical support for the study's purpose and objective. Both individuals are key decision-makers and have the authority to decide whether peer mentoring within the West Virginia prisons will be permitted. Their opinions are critical to the continued use of peer mentors throughout the prisons of West Virginia.

### **Focus Groups Discussions via Video Conference Call:**

Focus group discussions were conducted at the four participating prisons. The focus groups were divided into three individual meetings: wardens and senior staff, peer mentors, and mentees of peer mentor-led activities.

The focus group conferences with the wardens and the senior staff provide critical support for the study's purpose and objective. This researcher provided the participants with six

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<sup>124</sup> APA Dictionary of Psychology, American Psychological Association, <https://dictionary.apa.org/hawthorne-effect>.

questions to be used as the basis for discussion. These individuals are responsible for the well-being of the inmates and the daily operational tasks of running a prison. They are onsite and witnesses to the behavior of the inmates, both good and bad – daily. They discern what programs work versus those that do not. They determine value in programs, and they possess the operational authority to support such programs' continuance. Their opinions are crucial to the validation of peer mentors throughout the prisons of West Virginia.

Additionally, focus group meetings were completed with the peer mentors at each of the four participating prisons. This researcher provided participants with seven questions to be used as a basis for discussion. Many times, formal reporting excludes the very voices that should be heard. This study will seek the voices of those who are impacted the most: the inmates. There may be no better way of accessing the value of using peer mentors than hearing from them directly. The mentors live, eat, sleep, recreate with other inmates. This is their home, some for the rest of their lives. They feel the prison community's heartbeat more than anyone, including the prison administration and correctional staff. This initiative, using peer mentors as agents of moral change, will not succeed without the complete buy-in of the peer mentors themselves. Therefore, their opinions, advice, and input are imperative to this study.

The third focus group discussion at the noted prisons consisted of inmates who have participated in peer mentor-led activities such as church services, programs, sidewalk counseling, visitation, tutoring, and so on. This researcher provided the participants with five questions to be used to generate discussion. If the use of peer mentors is going to be a tool for future prison reform, it must be embraced and valued by the inmate population. It is vital to hear their voices.

## **Questionnaire**

The goal is to dig deeper into the peer mentors' perceived value among those inmates who have had direct contact with the mentors. Those who have participated in peer mentor-led activities, such as church services, events, programs, one-on-one counseling, or have received visits from a mentor while in administrative segregation, otherwise known as solitary confinement, and so on. A small questionnaire consisting of three questions was distributed. The group size was aimed at twenty men at each of the four participating prisons. The questionnaire will gather a deeper understanding of how the participants feel about the concept of peer mentorship and why they feel that way. It will seek to understand the degree of value the inmates assign to the moral rehabilitation initiative and the opportunities it presents to them.

An excellent resource for gauging the peer mentors' overall acceptance is the inmates who have experienced the peer mentors firsthand, men who have connected with the mentors somehow. They are the direct beneficiaries of the mentor's work, of their call to serve. Therefore, who better to hear from than those who have had direct contact with their services?

## **Survey**

A ten-question survey was distributed to the general inmate population at the four participating prisons. The participation goal was ten percent of the approximate inmate population at each prison. The survey aimed to gauge the overall inmate population's awareness and understanding of the moral rehabilitation initiative and peer-to-peer mentors' use. The general inmate population must accept peer mentors' use for the moral rehabilitation initiative to survive and become sustainable.

## **Implementation of the Research Design**

The study may be considered validated if the following facts are established: an overall *awareness* of the peer mentors by all key stakeholders within West Virginia's prison system; that key stakeholders value the use of peer mentoring, and that key stakeholders agree there is future potential regarding the use peer mentors. This researcher desires that the thesis project serves as an instrument that supports or does not support the validation of peer mentoring. In that, proper implementation of the research design elements is critical to the research project's outcomes. The design's implementation consists of the approval process and the field research.

### **The Approval Process**

This researcher contacted WVDOCR Commissioner Betsy Jividen to discuss conducting a doctorate study on peer mentoring within the prison system of West Virginia. This researcher explained the thesis project's design and requirements to complete the study. Commissioner Jividen was interested in the study.

A formal letter (see Appendix B) requesting permission was emailed to Commissioner Jividen on September 4, 2020. The letter provided core elements required to complete the study's field research. Additionally, this researcher requested a formal letter of approval from Commissioner Jividen. On November 16, 2020, this researcher received a formal letter of approval (see Appendix C) from Commissioner Jividen.

Upon formal approval, the Director of Inmate Services, C J Rider, began corresponding with the participating prison wardens to inform them of the study. The initial correspondences were sent via emails. Director Rider explained this researcher was approved to complete the doctorate study on peer mentoring and asked that everyone please assist in all study requirements. This researcher emailed a working outline of the study (see Appendix D) detailing

projects to be completed to Commissioner Jividen, Director Rider, and the participating prison wardens. This researcher requested a facility designee to work directly with at each of the four prisons. Each warden assigned the Associate Warden of Programs as the designee.

This researcher emailed each facility designee and scheduled a phone conference to develop a strategy to complete all required tasks. The strategy included the video-conference connection testing and scheduling, consent forms, pre-meeting requirements, meeting duration estimates, post-meeting requirements, questionnaire, and survey protocols.

A strategy was approved by Commissioner Jividen, Director Rider, and the individual prison designees. On Monday, February 8, 2021, this researcher began the field research portion of the study.

## Field Research

### **Interviews: State-Level Leaders**

A recruitment letter (see Appendix E) and a consent form (see Appendix F) were emailed to Commissioner Jividen and Director Rider to provide additional information regarding the study and invite them to participate. Commissioner Jividen and Director Rider agreed to participate in this study.

Betsy Jividen, Commissioner, West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation

This researcher's interview with Commissioner Jividen was conducted via video conference call. Commissioner Jividen is the third Commissioner of Corrections since the moral rehabilitation's inception in 2014. She, like her predecessors, has endorsed the moral rehabilitation initiative. Commissioner Jividen has been the Commissioner of Corrections since January 2018. Before coming to corrections, She represented the Federal Bureau of Prisons, its staff, and officers for more than twenty-five years in lawsuits filed by inmates. She supervised

the prosecution of crimes occurring inside federal correctional facilities for more than ten years. She has also served as a Reentry Specialist, focused on rehabilitation and reentry programs aimed at reducing recidivism and ensuring public safety. Jividen has extensive experience with corrections issues.<sup>125</sup>

Eight questions (see Appendix P) were emailed to Commissioner Jividen before the interview. The questions helped both the researcher and the Commissioner prepare for the interview. Topics discussed were the United States Penal System, having been punitive versus a rehabilitative system, Angola Prison, Moral Rehabilitation in West Virginia, peer mentors, challenges, opportunities, future potentials, etcetera.

Commissioner Jividen is a great resource based on her thorough knowledge of the justice system. Her assessment of the peer mentors' current status and future potential is imperative and must be included in the design methodology and implementation. This researcher and Commissioner Jividen spoke for approximately thirty minutes.

#### C J Rider, Director of Inmate Services

This researcher's interview with Director Rider was conducted via video-conference call. Mr. Rider was associated with WVDOCR's moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of peer mentors since the inception. Director Rider was one of the WVDOCR's original team that launched the moral rehabilitation initiative. He made several trips to the Louisiana State Penitentiary, better known as Angola Prison, to learn and observe their evidence-based model. Director Rider possesses as much knowledge as anyone within the West Virginia Correctional environment regarding the initiative.

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<sup>125</sup> Lawrence Messina, "Governor Justice appoints Jividen as W.Va. Corrections Commissioner," *West Virginia Department of Homeland Security*, <http://dhs.wv.gov>. January 8 2018, accessed February 19, 2021.

Additionally, Director Rider plays a vital role in the moral rehabilitation initiative's oversight as part of his supervisory responsibilities. Director Rider also understands the prison perspectives. He served in the chaplaincy as assistant chaplain and then the chaplain at Mount Olive Correctional Complex for fourteen years before moving into the state-level position.

Eight questions (see Appendix P) were emailed to Director Rider before the interview. The questions helped both the researcher and Director Rider prepare for the interview. Topics discussed were the United States Penal System, having been punitive versus a rehabilitative system, Angola Prison, Moral Rehabilitation in West Virginia, peer mentors, challenges, opportunities, future potentials, etcetera.

Director Rider is a great resource based on his thorough knowledge of Angola Prison's history and his inaugural participation in launching the initiative in West Virginia. His honest assessment of the peer mentors' current status and future potential is imperative and must be included in the design methodology and implementation. This researcher and Director Rider spoke for approximately forty-five minutes.

### **Focus Group Meetings: Wardens and Senior Staff**

A recruitment letter (see Appendix J) and consent form (see Appendix K) was emailed to the wardens at each participating prison introducing them to the study and inviting them and their senior staff to participate. All wardens and senior staff at the four prisons agreed to participate in this study.

#### **Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail**

This researcher received an email from the warden identifying the Associate Warden of Programs (AWOP) as the designee who would be coordinating all study activities. This researcher emailed the AWOP the working outline and requested a time to discuss by phone.



This researcher and the AWOP talked via the phone and developed a strategy to complete the required tasks. One of the tasks was a focus group discussion via video conference with the warden, deputy warden, associate warden of programs, and the chaplain. This group of facility leaders was well-tenured in corrections. Each had witnessed programs and initiatives come and go, some that worked well and many that did not. They were well equipped to provide an accurate evaluation of the moral rehabilitation initiative using peer mentors. The leadership at MOCCJ is far more familiar with the peer mentors than the other participating prisons, as Mount Olive Bible College (MOBC) was launched there in 2014. The students at MOBC are required to participate in field service, equating to peer mentoring throughout their academic training.

In advance of the focus group meeting, this researcher emailed a set of questions (see Appendix Q) to be completed and returned. The questions were aimed to generate discussion regarding corrections and peer mentors' use.

This researcher asked for administrative input regarding the peer mentors' value and the peer mentoring concept and its future potential. Discussion topics regarding the peer mentors included their current status, service to administrative segregation (solitary confinement), mental health, program facilitation, etcetera. Additionally, future opportunities were discussed, including the use of peer mentors to assist with new inmate arrivals. The video conference call with this focus group call lasted approximately thirty-five minutes.

#### St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail

This researcher emailed the warden, deputy warden, and associate warden of programs to schedule a phone call to discuss the study and its requirements. The working outline was emailed in advance detailing the tasks to be completed. This researcher, warden, deputy warden, and associate warden of programs talked via the phone and developed a strategy to complete each

task. Additionally, a focus group meeting via video-conference call was scheduled with the noted administration, also added to the meeting was the prison chaplain.

As the leadership at MOCCJ, these prison leaders are well-tenured in corrections. Each had held various positions during their career in corrections, and they were well-equipped to discuss the peer mentoring concept. The inaugural group of inmate peer mentors was transferred from MOCCJ to SMCCJ. The peer mentors have been at SMCCJ since March 2019.

In advance of the focus group meeting, this researcher emailed a set of questions (see Appendix Q) to be completed and returned. The questions were prepared to ensure an efficient and timely meeting, focusing on the prison culture at SMCCJ and peer mentors' use.

The video-conference focus group was convened, and this researcher asked for their administrative input regarding the peer mentors' value, the peer mentoring concept, and its future potential. Additional topics included the peer mentors' administrative support, culture change, servanthood relating to mental health, hospice, the health units, the inmate-to-inmate relations, inmate-to-staff relations, disciplinary actions, program facilitation, and new inmate orientation. The video conference call with this focus group lasted approximately forty-five minutes.

#### Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail

This researcher received an email from the warden identifying the AWOP as their designee. This researcher emailed the designee and scheduled a time to discuss the study by phone. In advance of the call, this researcher emailed a copy of the working outline detailing the study's required tasks. This researcher and the designee talked, and a strategy was established. The designee provided a convenient day and time for the video-conference focus group meeting with the deputy warden, associate warden of operations, associate warden of programs, chaplain, and this researcher. They were well tenured to discuss corrections. However, although they had

heard of the moral rehabilitation initiative training at Mount Olive Bible College, their direct experience was limited compared to the administrators at MOCCJ. The inmate peer mentors have been at HCCJ since March 2019.

This researcher provided questions (see Appendix Q) to be completed and returned to this researcher before the meeting. The questions aided in generating discussion specific to corrections and the use of peer mentors.

This researcher asked for input regarding the peer mentors' value, the peer mentoring concept, and their future potential thoughts during the video conference. Additional topics included chaplain support, program facilitation, and new inmate arrival orientation. The video conference call lasted approximately thirty-five minutes.

#### Northern Correctional Center and Jail

This researcher received an email from the warden naming the AWOP as the study designee. This researcher emailed the designee the working outline and requested a time to discuss it by phone. This researcher and designee developed a strategy to complete the study requirements. The designee also scheduled the focus group meeting with their administrative team. NCCJ's focus group participants consisted of the deputy warden, superintendent II, associate warden of programs, and the chaplain. Like HCCJ, they also witnessed the moral rehabilitation initiative from a distance, as in the first years, the peer mentors were being trained at Mount Olive Bible College. The peer mentors had been at NCCJ since 2019.

In advance of the focus group meeting, this researcher emailed a set of questions (see Appendix Q) to be completed and returned before the meeting. The questions helped streamline the conversation about the level of administrative awareness of the peer mentors, perceived value, and thoughts regarding future potential. Discussion topics regarding the peer mentors' use

included administrative segregation (solitary confinement), mental health, program facilitation, disciplinary actions, and volunteerism. Additionally, future opportunities were discussed, including peer mentors' use to assist with new inmate arrivals. The video conference call lasted approximately thirty minutes.

### **Focus Group Meetings: Inmate Peer Mentors**

A recruitment letter (see Appendix L) and consent form (see Appendix M) were emailed to the chaplain to introduce the study to the peer mentors and invite them to participate. Currently, twenty peer mentors are serving at the four participating prisons, of which nineteen participated.

#### **Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail**

This researcher talked by phone with the facility designee regarding the logistics required to conduct a video-conference call with the inmate peer mentors. It was decided that the prison chaplain would oversee the logistics, including the video connection, meeting location, getting the peer mentors released to participate in the meeting. The chaplain provided the inmate peer mentors with the required pre-meeting questions (see Appendix R). The questions were completed, and the chaplain scanned and emailed the answers to this researcher.

The chaplain arranged for the video conference to take place in the prison's chapel. The chaplain's office laptop was used for the video connection. The pre-meeting questions served as a baseline for the focus group discussion on perceived value and potential. Additional points of discussion relating to the study were responsibilities, trust, discipleship, and relationships.

There are eleven peer mentors at MOCCJ, and nine were present at the meeting. The meeting was approximately 40 minutes.

## St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail

This researcher talked by phone with the facility designee regarding the logistics required to conduct a video-conference call with the inmate peer mentors. The video conference was scheduled in one of the administrative board rooms. The warden approved and arranged for the peer mentors to attend. The board room is used for video-conferencing, so the connection and sound were good. The designee provided the inmate peer mentors with the required pre-meeting questions (see Appendix R). The questions were completed, then the chaplain scanned and emailed the answers to this researcher.

The pre-meeting questions served as a starting point. The goal was to obtain the peer mentor's perception as to peer mentor value and future potential. Additionally, topics such as consistency, moral rehabilitation versus the prison code, transparency, chaplain and administrative support, changed lives, and authenticity was discussed.

There are three peer mentors at SMCCJ, and all three participated in the video conference. The conference lasted approximately 40 minutes.

## Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail

This researcher talked by phone with the facility designee regarding the logistics required to conduct a video-conference call with the inmate peer mentors. It was decided that the prison chaplain would oversee the logistics, including the video-conference connection, meeting location, and getting the peer mentors released to participate in the meeting. The chaplain provided the inmate peer mentors with the required pre-meeting questions (see Appendix R). The question was completed, and the chaplain scanned and emailed the answers to this researcher.

The chaplain arranged for the video conference to take place in the prison's visitation room. A computer in the visitation area was used. The pre-meeting questions would serve as a

discussion guide and an aid in keeping the meeting focused on the mentor's perceived value and thoughts on future potential. Additional points of discussion were, celebrate recovery, bible study, letters of inspiration, staff assistance, and grief counseling. These topics were relevant to the study's purpose.

There are three peer mentors at HCCJ, and all three were present at the meeting. The meeting was approximately 40 minutes.

#### Northern Correctional Center and Jail

This researcher talked by phone with the facility designee regarding the logistics required to conduct a video-conference call with the inmate peer mentors. It was decided that the prison chaplain would oversee the logistics, including the video-conference connection, meeting location, getting the peer mentors released to participate in the meeting. The chaplain provided the inmate peer mentors with the required pre-meeting questions (see Appendix R). The questions were completed, and the chaplain scanned and emailed the answers to this researcher.

The chaplain arranged for the video conference to take place in the chaplain's office. The chaplain's computer was used. The pre-meeting questions served as a discussion guide and helped keep the meeting centered on the mentor's perceived value and thoughts on future potential. Additional points of discussion were sidewalk counseling, volunteerism, one-on-one time with other inmates, and acceptance. These topics relate to the current work of the peer mentors and are valuable to the study.

There are three peer mentors at HCCJ, and all three were present on the video conference. The conference lasted approximately 30 minutes.

## **Focus Group Meetings: Participants/Mentees of Peer Mentor-led Activity**

A recruitment letter (see Appendix N) and consent form (see Appendix O) were emailed to the chaplain to post in various locations within the prisons. This allowed those who participated in any peer mentor-led activities aware of the study and invited them to participate. Five men were selected to participate from each prison.

### **Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail**

The chaplain was assigned the task of coordinating the video-conference focus group meeting with mentees who had participated in peer mentor-led activities. The activity may have been programming, sidewalk counseling, bible study, church services, one-on-one time, etcetera. The chaplain provided the inmate mentees with pre-meeting questions (see Appendix S) to be completed. The questions were completed, and the chaplain scanned and emailed the answers to this researcher before the meeting.

The chaplain arranged for the video conference to take place in the prison's chapel. The chaplain's office laptop was used for the video-conference connection. The pre-meeting questions served as a baseline for the focus group discussion. It was essential to hear from the mentees who had connected with the mentors. It is imperative to hear what this group of men think about the peer mentors and their value to the prison culture. The mentees mentioned topics such as servanthood versus selfishness, understanding, and peer mentors compared to outside volunteers. There were five participants/mentees that participated in the video conference, lasting approximately 30 minutes.

### **St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail**

The warden scheduled the video-conference focus group meeting with the mentees in the administrative board room. The meeting consisted of men who have participated in peer mentor-

led activities. Activities included programming, sidewalk counseling, bible study, church services, sick and mental health visits, one-on-one visits, etcetera. This researcher emailed the designee a set of pre-meeting questions (see Appendix S) to complete. Once complete, the responses were scanned and emailed to this researcher by the chaplain.

The pre-meeting questions served as a baseline for the focus group discussion. The goal was to hear from the men who have received some service from the mentors. It is imperative to hear what this group of men think about the peer mentors and their value to the prison culture. Five mentees participated in the video conference, lasting approximately 30 minutes.

#### Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail

The chaplain was assigned the task of coordinating the video-conference focus group meeting with mentees who have participated in peer mentor-led activities. The activity may have been programming, sidewalk counseling, bible study, church services, or just one-on-one time with one of the mentors. The meeting was conducted in the visitation area. The chaplain provided the inmate mentees with pre-meeting questions (see Appendix S) to be completed. The questions were completed, and the chaplain scanned and emailed the answers to this researcher to use as discussion points.

The goal was to hear from the mentees who had spent time with the mentors. It is imperative to hear what this group of men think about the peer mentors and their value to the prison culture. Five mentees participated in the video conference, lasting approximately 30 minutes.

#### Northern Correctional Center and Jail

The chaplain was assigned the task of coordinating the video-conference focus group meeting with mentees who have participated in peer mentor-led activities. The activity may have



been programming, sidewalk counseling, bible study, church service, or just spent time with one of the mentors, etcetera. The chaplain arranged for the video-conference meeting to follow the peer mentor meeting. The chaplain provided the inmate mentees with pre-meeting questions (see Appendix S) to be completed. The questions were completed, and the chaplain scanned and emailed the answers to this researcher before the meeting.

The chaplain arranged for the video conference to take place in his office. The chaplain used his office computer to conduct the video conference. The pre-meeting questions served as a baseline for the focus group discussion. The goal was to hear from the mentees whom the mentors have served. It is imperative to hear what this group of men think about the peer mentors and their value to the prison culture. The mentees mentioned several essential points they perceived as valuable relating to the mentors. Five mentees participated in the video conference, lasting approximately 30 minutes.

### **Questionnaire: Participants (Mentees) of Peer Mentor-led Activities**

This researcher emailed a recruitment letter (see Appendix N) to the designees and the chaplains at all four participating prisons. The chaplains posted the letters in various locations throughout the prison. Any mentee was permitted to complete the questionnaire. However, the goal was twenty participants at each facility. In the event there were more than twenty responses, this researcher completed a random selection of twenty. All participants completed a signed consent form on all submitted questionnaires.

The chaplains at each prison distributed the three questions (see Appendix T) to all interested mentees. Upon completion, the mentees returned the questionnaire to the chaplains. The chaplains scanned and emailed the signed consent forms and the completed questionnaires to this researcher.

## Survey: Inmate General Population

This researcher emailed a recruitment letter (see Appendix U) to the designees and the chaplains at all four participating prisons. The chaplains posted the letters in various locations throughout the prison. Any inmate was permitted to complete the survey; however, the goal was ten percent of the general population at each prison. There were no consent requirements as the survey was anonymous. The chaplains and the individual housing unit counselors distributed the surveys. Once complete, the surveys were returned to the chaplain. The chaplain emailed the responses to this researcher. The survey consisted of ten questions (see Appendix V).

### Analysis

The analysis ensured the study is valid and reliable. The population within this study consisted of the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation state leadership, the leadership of the individual prisons, inmate peer mentors, inmate mentee participants of various moral rehabilitation initiatives, and a sample of the general inmate population at the four selected prisons.

The study analyzed the data collection methods by searching for unique information, themes, and majority responses. The study looked at the data collection methods individually; the methods were also looked at from a triangulation perspective. The term *triangulation* refers to the practice of using multiple sources of data or multiple approaches to analyzing data to enhance the credibility of a research study.<sup>126</sup> The study used triangulation to integrate the interviews, focus groups, surveys, and questionnaires in searching for any common themes, unities, or divisions. As stated, the voices of the key stakeholders, both together and separate, are

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<sup>126</sup> Neil J. Salkind, "Triangulation," in *Encyclodeia of Research Design*, (Thousand Oaks: CA, 2010), 1540.

critical in thoroughly evaluating inmates' use as peer mentors. Combining the state leaders, prison administrators, and the inmates is a rare occurrence and no small task. However, God is a big God, and through hard work and prayer, the study was completed, and a dialogue was opened to discuss its findings.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to present all key stakeholders with information that would validate the use of peer-to-peer mentoring as a tool for prison reform throughout West Virginia. This validation would not only serve as a resource for West Virginia but other states as well. The information used to validate the use of peer-to-peer mentoring came from various sources, including literary research and the key stakeholders themselves. It was imperative to give voice to those inside the prison system in West Virginia, both administrative staff and inmates alike.

This researcher sought the answers to the following three critical questions to validate the use of inmate peer mentors as a resource for future prison reform.

1. Are all key stakeholders aware of the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of inmates as peer mentors?
2. Is the peer mentoring concept valued by key stakeholders?
3. Do the key stakeholders believe in the potential that the peer mentoring concept brings to the prison culture?

This researcher used multiple data collection methods to evaluate validation, including video-conference interviews and focus group meetings, questionnaires, and surveys.

Through the noted data collection methods, the following are the hoped-for results. The State of West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation Commissioner will formally acknowledge that Catalyst Ministries and the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative using peer-to-peer mentoring is a valid resource for future prison reform. Additionally, other state-level leaders will

embrace the use of peer mentors and fully support continued efforts to advance the moral rehabilitation initiative.

Second, the wardens and senior staff at the four selected prisons will embrace the future use of inmate peer-to-peer mentoring. The use of peer-to-peer mentoring and the degree of responsibility granted to the inmate peer mentors is still in its infancy in West Virginia. The concept of inmate peer mentoring can be difficult for the prison administrations as many have inherited years of traditional philosophy regarding what the inmates can do. One of the study's key outcomes will be the peer mentors' approval to hold new roles of responsibility, not authority. The researcher hopes to establish partnerships with state-level leaders and prison administrations, partnerships where ownership of the moral rehabilitation initiative is shared. A true spirit of collaboration will be beneficial to both the prison administration and the inmate population.

Third, the researcher hopes the inmate's focus group, questionnaire, and survey results support inmate peer mentoring. The researcher hopes the peer-to-peer mentoring has progressed to the point that the mentors are well known and valued throughout the inmate population.

The researcher hopes the project will improve the problem in three ways; first, the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative using Inmate Peer Mentors will be added to the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Strategic Plan. Second, that verbiage regarding the moral rehabilitation initiative using peer mentors will be added to current West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (WVDOCR) policies and procedures. Third, the moral rehabilitation initiative using peer mentoring will be systematically expanded into all West Virginia prisons and jails.

The researcher will measure the results through tangible progress. The inclusion of the moral rehabilitation initiative into the WVDOCR's strategic plan, the updating of WVDOCR's policies and procedures to include verbiage relating to moral rehabilitation, and the systematic

expansion of the moral rehabilitation initiative into the remaining prisons and jails will be ways to measure the WVDOCR's endorsement of the project's results, findings, and recommendations.

### Field Research and Findings

This researcher conducted fourteen video-conference interviews and focus group meetings, consisting of state-level leaders, wardens and senior staff, peer mentors, and mentees. Additionally, this researcher received eighty questionnaires from mentees and two-hundred-twenty-six survey responses from the general inmate population at the four participating prisons. The following results represent the data collected. The state-level leader's interviews are summarized. A full transcript is provided in Appendix G and H. The warden and senior staff video focus group discussions are summarized with additional excerpts provided in Appendix I. Additionally, the peer mentor's and mentee's focus group questions and responses are presented via excerpts from their respective video conferences.

#### **Interviews: State-Level Leaders**

John Maxwell, an American author, and motivational speaker, often states, "Everything rises and falls on leadership."<sup>127</sup> The moral rehabilitation initiative needs to have commitment and support from the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation leadership at the state level. The leadership's support is critical for the initiative's long-term success and sustainability. Leaders at the state level must be aware of the initiative. They must also value it and believe in its potential.

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<sup>127</sup> John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 285, Kindle.

This researcher was able to discuss the moral rehabilitation initiative with Commissioner Jividen and Director Rider. Below is a summary of the discussions. A full transcript of the questions and their responses can be found in Appendix G and H.

#### Commissioner Jividen Interview Summary (Full transcript Appendix G)

Since the 2014 launch of the moral rehabilitation initiative, there have been three commissioners, and all have endorsed the initiative. Commissioner Jividen has been the Commissioner of the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation since January of 2018. The Commissioner oversees the state's ten prisons, ten jails, four community corrections centers, and ten juvenile facilities, along with approximately 4000 employees and more than 10,000 offenders.

Launched in 2014, the moral rehabilitation initiative using peer mentors is relatively new, not only in West Virginia but also across the country. It was essential to hear from the State of West Virginia's top correctional leader regarding the initiative's current status and its future potential in lieu of its infancy. Commissioner Jividen stated, "I do not think we have even begun to see the moral rehabilitation initiative's full potential, but lives are already being changed. Attitudes are changing among both the staff and offender populations and those of us watching the progress know that the potential for what can be accomplished is unlimited. There is no doubt that these inmate mentors' influence and their active participation throughout so many areas substantially contribute to providing hope, faith, and a sense of purpose to our offender populations."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Betsy Jividen, interviewed by author, Charleston, West Virginia, March 3, 2021.

Regarding the peer mentors facilitating programs versus historical programming, Commissioner Jividen stated, “the fact that inmates – and staff – recognize the value of having these mentors as a resource seems, in and of itself, historical. By helping offenders learn, from each other, to take responsibility and use the mentoring process to work on problems, address situations, adjust to prison life, and settle differences, offenders are doing good in prison. The results benefit everyone. Inmates and staff recognize that the Moral Rehabilitation initiative reaches beyond what is offered in many typical programs.”<sup>129</sup>

Moral rehabilitation is for the whole prison culture. Commissioner Jividen noted, “I think the bringing together – and acceptance of – different faiths and religious cultures is also particularly relevant, especially in the prison culture. I will always remember the day that I participated in a prayer circle at our maximum-security prison. As I, a Jewish woman and former prosecutor, held the hand of and prayed with the Muslim offender seated beside me. Along with a group of Christians, it was impossible not to recognize that something important is happening. In prayer, we came together, accepting our differences, while united in our wish for the greater good and God’s presence in our lives and the lives of others.”<sup>130</sup>

Moral rehabilitation within the prison environment has experienced its challenges, such as overcoming staff skepticism. Prison staff, especially correctional officers, have very stressful jobs. They have to maintain an environmental awareness at all times and are constantly being challenged by the inmates. This stress makes discernment difficult. It can be challenging to trust that the transformations within the men are real. Commissioner Jividen states, “there will always be both staff and other inmates who doubt the sincerity of those participating in the moral

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<sup>129</sup> Jividen.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.



rehabilitation initiative, and this skepticism is well-founded in that countless offenders claim to be saved in prison without really changing at all. Nonetheless, we see progress as people on both sides of the bars watch the program unfold and develop in their facilities. The change will not come overnight.”<sup>131</sup>

The opinion of the commissioner is imperative to the validation and future of the moral rehabilitation initiative. The commissioner must believe that moral rehabilitation using peer mentors can make a positive difference in West Virginia’s prison culture. When asked to elaborate, Commissioner Jividen stated, “Absolutely. No one would dispute that peers have the greatest influence and the most credibility with other offenders. A former offender recently told me that ‘the best example is a living example,’ and that is what inspired him to do better and change his life path. Inmates witness the change in others, and they want it for themselves.”<sup>132</sup>

Hope and purpose can be lost when an inmate enters the prison. Life as they knew it is over, some for a long time, and some forever. Mount Olive Bible College has graduated two classes, resulting in peer mentors within four prisons. One of the moral rehabilitation initiative goals is to create hope and purpose within both the students and the graduates. Regarding hope, purpose, and the graduates, Commissioner Jividen stated, “Not only have I attended the graduations, but I have also been there for church services and the first performance (and subsequent ones) by the “St. Mary’s inmate choir.” The opportunity to do good and live a purposeful life in service to God and others, even in prison, is the resounding message to everyone who witnesses what is going on. The universal lesson for these offenders is that they

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<sup>131</sup> Jividen.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

can say – and they know – that they are not the same people they were when they went into prison.”<sup>133</sup> This researcher encourages the reading of the full transcript in Appendix F.

#### Director Rider Interview Summary ( Full transcript Appendix H )

Director Rider has been involved in the moral rehabilitation initiative from the beginning. Before the initiative's launch in 2014, Director Rider visited Angola prison several times to evaluate the Angola moral rehabilitation model. He has a thorough understanding of Angola’s model, the years it took to develop, and its successes and challenges along the way. Director Rider’s opinion regarding West Virginia’s moral rehabilitation initiative is imperative to its validation.

Director Rider is the Director of Inmate Services and Activities. He supervises the prison Chaplains and Religious Services statewide. He also serves as the agency liaison for Mount Olive Bible College and oversees the Peer Mentor program.

This researcher felt it essential to hear Director Rider’s opinion regarding West Virginia’s moral rehabilitation model's potential given his knowledge of the Angola Model. Compared to Angola, West Virginia is still in its infancy, yet its evaluation and future potential are essential to evaluate. Director Rider stated, “I am supportive of the program. The inmates have a unique opportunity to provide moral guidance for their fellow inmates. We are not trying to create perfect people, but we are trying to teach responsibility before God and your fellow man. Ultimately, we would hope to grow and expand so that every housing unit has a peer mentor, living there or going there to minister, including the segregation units.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Jividen.

<sup>134</sup> C. J. Rider, interviewed by author, Charleston, West Virginia, January 19, 2021.

Programming in prison comes in many forms, some mandated by federal and state guidelines, and some delivered through approved volunteers. Paid employees or volunteers primarily led historical programming. The moral rehabilitation initiative requires peer mentors to possess critical roles of responsibility in programs, services, and so on. When comparing historical programming and the moral rehabilitation model, Director Rider noted, “Peer mentoring is a unique situation where we allow inmates to influence other inmates. The traditional correctional model forbids any inmate from being in an official position of authority over another inmate. That included any preaching or teaching roles. However, we have learned that positive peer influence is what is needed.”<sup>135</sup>

As noted in Commissioner Jividen’s comments, Director Rider concurred that moral rehabilitation has had its challenges and, at times, levels of pushback from staff. The staff are on the front lines and have very stressful jobs. Some reluctance or even resentment toward inmates who are getting a free college education and then providing new responsibility roles is both expected and valid. Director Rider noted, “there is certain staff in positions where they can hinder or actively oppose the program. That is why it is vitally important to have a Commissioner who supports the program.”<sup>136</sup> Over time, just like Angola prison, the staff will change when they are sure the men’s transformations are real and lasting.

For moral rehabilitation to be a sustainable initiative, it must make a notable, positive difference within the prison culture. Director Rider stated, “I am confident the moral rehabilitation initiative will make a positive impact. We do not have the statistical data to

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<sup>135</sup> Rider.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

evaluate the program at this point. However, the anecdotal evidence is encouraging.”<sup>137</sup> Rider shared, “before we had our first graduating class, we allowed some of the students to minister in the same facility’s punitive segregation unit. One individual that was serving his punitive time was ministered to by the students, and he got saved. His behavior was noticeably different after that. In a short time, he wanted to be baptized. Arrangements were made, and he was baptized. The thing that stands out so much to me is that the captains that ran the punitive segregation unit contacted the Chaplain to arrange for the baptism. That is staff buy-in.”<sup>138</sup>

The goal of the initiative is moral change, then servanthood, both cultivating hope and purpose. Regarding purpose, Director Rider noted, “The goal has always been to train peer mentor workers. However, I have seen how the biblical educational process has changed some of the students. They are given purpose; they are given a solid foundation for their own lives.”<sup>139</sup> This researcher encourages the review of the full transcript in Appendix G.

### **Focus Group Video-Conference: Wardens and Senior Staff**

The questions below are excerpts from the video-conference focus group meetings.<sup>140</sup> The researcher provided the questions below as they relate directly to the study’s validation, specifically, the awareness, value, and potential of the moral rehabilitation initiative and peer mentors' use.

2. I know the concept is relatively new, but could you please share your knowledge of West Virginia’s Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, especially the Peer Mentors’ use?

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<sup>137</sup> Rider.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> The list starts with question 2, as questions 2,3,4, and 6 are excerpts from the focus group meetings.

3. Do you see any value the Peer-to-Peer Mentors are bringing to the prison population? If so, briefly describe the value.
4. Are the Peer-to-Peer Mentors adding any administrative value? If so, please elaborate.
6. What are your thoughts as to the potential of using Peer Mentors? Security will always be the number one priority, but do you envision this as something that could change the delivery of corrections in West Virginia?

#### Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail Summary (Additional Excerpt, see Appendix I)

A video conference was held on February 5, 2021. A summary along with comment excerpts is provided below. The names of the wardens and senior staff are confidential. Please see Appendix I for additional discussion details.

The warden and senior staff were all aware of the moral rehabilitation initiative. They also believed it was valuable and had future potential. The prison leadership's knowledge of the initiative is critical. The Associate Warden of Programs of Mount Olive Correction Complex and Jail (MOCCJ) noted, "the initiative is to train and educate inmates through college-level courses to serve their peers through modeling and self-discipline. Hopefully, as inmates transform and serve the population, the prison culture will change, thus making the whole Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation a safer and more productive environment."<sup>141</sup>

Regarding value, the warden stated, "I do see value being brought to the facility by the peer mentors. Our facility has used the mentors to help feed and to disciple our most restrictive population. The mentors can reach inmates who have been placed in lockdown and have no other daily contact with other inmates. We have used the mentors to talk to inmates who have

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<sup>141</sup> Video conference with MOCCJ prison wardens and senior staff, February 5, 2021.

become upset. The situation could lead to a use of force incident, but the mentor was able to calm the inmate down.”<sup>142</sup>

One of the goals of moral rehabilitation is to provide various forms of administrative value. The deputy warden stated, “a benefit of having peer-to-peer mentors has inmates who want to change their way of living and thinking and want to pass that on to as many inmates as possible. Of course, this helps the administration when it comes to disciplinary problems, information of inmates needing help, and it just creates a better work environment for staff and inmates alike.”<sup>143</sup>

A key to moral rehabilitation's sustainability is its future potential. The prison leaders are busy, have stressful jobs, and have to balance their time accordingly. They must believe in the initiative's potential to devote the time necessary to assure its success. As to potential, the warden stated, “I think the peer mentors could be a great asset. When we can use inmates to help talk to the population, it is a win on both sides.”<sup>144</sup>

Additionally, the associate warden of programs noted, “We have plans to utilize certain peer mentors in our inmate Orientation Program. This will allow a rapport to be built with the mentors when the new inmates first arrive in the institution. This will provide new arrivals with someone to seek out in the main population to steer them in the right direction. In our institutions, we will see a culture change, and it should make a difference in all areas of our correctional environment.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Video conference with MOCCJ prison wardens and senior staff, February 5, 2021.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

## St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail Summary (Additional Excerpt, see Appendix I)

A video conference was held on February 11, 2021. A summary along with comment excerpts is provided below. The names of the wardens and senior staff are confidential. Please see Appendix I for additional discussion details.

The warden and senior staff were well aware of the moral rehabilitation initiative. They had an excellent grasp of its current value and future potential.

The Bible college is located at MOCCJ. The leadership and staff have watched the initiative develop since 2014. However, St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail (SMCCJ), Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail (HCCJ), and Northern Correctional Center and Jail (NCCJ) have only had mentors for two years, and before that, they had little exposure to the initiative.

When asked about their degree of knowledge regarding the initiative, the associate warden of programs stated, “the moral rehabilitation initiative was implemented to have the inmates change their way of thinking, make moral decisions, taking the high road and regaining control of their lives in a positive manner.”<sup>146</sup> The deputy warden noted, “it is the practice to strengthen the desire for inmates to increase their moral compass.”<sup>147</sup>

Peer mentors must add value to the prison culture to succeed. When asked if the mentors provided value to the prison population, the deputy warden stated, “absolutely, the mentors can lead by example. The mentors can deescalate situations before they evolve into a situation. The mentor’s value cannot be measured due to the fact that just them being morally conscious shows

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<sup>146</sup> Video conference with SMCCJ wardens and senior staff, February 11, 2021.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

other inmates the proper behavior.”<sup>148</sup> The associate warden noted, “the value is seeing the connection between the mentors and the rest of the population and seeing other inmates want to do the right thing.”<sup>149</sup>

Long term, the mentors will need to become an asset to the administration. Asked about administrative value, the associate warden of programs stated, “disciplinary actions have decreased. The mentors are considered leaders among the inmate population. Inmates see them as a voice for themselves, and the administrative staff sees them as a voice to relay expectations and messages to the population. Inmates respond better to each other.”<sup>150</sup> The chaplain stated, “the mentors have made a difference in relations with staff and other inmates. I have allowed them to get involved in many things that I would handle before myself. As a result, they realized our perspective. They can relay that perspective to inmates to resolve issues.”<sup>151</sup>

As stated, the mentors have only been at SMCCJ for approximately two years. Initial opinion as to the future of the peer mentors is vital. Regarding potential, the associate warden of programs commented, “it already has changed the delivery at SMCCJ. Inmate to staff and staff to inmate communications have improved immensely. Inmates have a voice more than before; they are listening more than before as well. Inmate-led programs are occurring, increasing attendance in good programs and inspiring other inmates to become creative in developing new beneficial programs.” The deputy warden, “I think the use of peer mentors in the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation will be beneficial. It has been very positive at SMCCJ.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Video conference with SMCCJ wardens and senior staff.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.



Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail Summary (Additional Excerpt, see Appendix I)

A video conference was held on February 5, 2021. A summary along with comment excerpts is provided below. The names of the wardens and senior staff are confidential. Please see Appendix I for additional discussion details.

The warden and senior staff were familiar with the moral rehabilitation initiative; however, the warden was new to this facility. Additionally, the associate warden of programs was new to the position.

The warden commented, “I have not had the opportunity to work directly with the program yet. However, I have visited a facility utilizing the concept and was very impressed with the accomplishments.”<sup>153</sup>

The leadership noted several areas the mentors had added value. The deputy warden commented, “the mentors give the offenders someone other than the staff that is trained to assist them.”<sup>154</sup> The associate warden of operations noted, “it has been very beneficial with the orientation of new inmate arrivals.”<sup>155</sup> As to administrative value, the leadership was not aware of any direct administrative value associated with the peer mentors to date.

The leadership did believe the initiative had potential. The warden noted, “I believe the use of peer mentors has great potential to assist staff in dealing with the inmate population's day-to-day issues and concerns.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Video conference with HCCJ wardens and senior staff on February 5, 2021.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

Northern Correctional Center and Jail Summary (Additional Excerpt, see Appendix I)

A video conference was held on February 5, 2021. A summary along with comment excerpts is provided below. The names of the wardens and senior staff are confidential. Please see Appendix I for additional discussion details.

The warden and senior staff are aware of moral rehabilitation and its history, not only in West Virginia but also in Angola Prison in Louisiana. The chaplain noted, “the moral rehabilitation initiative is a WVDOCR-wide program based on Angola Prison's program in Louisiana. A program designed to encourage and foster moral rehabilitation among facility inmates using the servant leadership model taught at the Mount Olive Bible College. Inmate peer mentors are trained at MOBC and deployed to other WVDOCR facilities to be catalysts for moral rehabilitation.”<sup>157</sup>

Regarding value, the warden noted, “the peer mentors help influence inmates to do good. They help promote positive development within the inmate population.”<sup>158</sup> The deputy warden commented, “the mentors can relate to the inmates and situations they may be dealing with. They can share their perspective and insight. This coming from a peer and not an authority figure is much more beneficial to the inmate population.”<sup>159</sup>

This researcher asked the leaders about the administrative value that could be linked to the mentors. The associate warden of programs provided, “the total number of disciplinary reports has decreased since the peer mentors' implementation at this facility. In June 2019, NCCJ's fiscal annual report reflected eight-hundred-eighty-one disciplinary reports, of which

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<sup>157</sup> Video conference with NCCJ wardens and senior staff on February 5, 2021.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

thirty-three were assaults. By June 2020, the fiscal year's report showed six-hundred-fifty-nine disciplinary reports, of which twenty-seven were assaults. These changes reflect a twenty-five percent reduction in total disciplinary reports and an eighteen percent reduction in assaults."<sup>160</sup>

Additionally, as to future potential, the warden stated, "the peer mentors could help new offenders coming into the system until the day they are released. The mentors could positively impact the lives of the type of inmates we have at our facility."<sup>161</sup>

This researcher conducted four video conference, focus group discussions with the wardens and their senior staff members. The level of understanding relating to the moral rehabilitation initiative varied between the facilities. However, all involved were aware of the initiative, considered it valuable to some degree, and believed there was future potential. These endorsements were critical to the study's validation. This researcher encourages a review of Appendix H for further excerpts.

### **Focus Group Meetings: Inmate Peer Mentors**

The questions below are excerpts from the video conference focus group meetings.<sup>162</sup> The researcher provided the questions and responses below as they relate directly to the study's validation, specifically, the value and potential from the peer mentors' perspective.

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<sup>160</sup> Video conference with NCCJ wardens and senior staff.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> The list starts with question 2, as questions 2 and 7 are excerpts from the focus group meetings.

## Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail Responses

A video conference was held on February 12, 2021. The names of the inmate peer mentors are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a peer mentor.<sup>163</sup>

More peer mentors are located at Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail as it houses the Mount Olive Bible College. The graduates remain here to serve or until they are transferred to other West Virginia prisons. Nine of the twelve peer mentors participated.

### **Value**

2. How do you personally value the Moral Rehabilitation Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program?

- Great, it is the Lord's calling! We can reach others from a Gospel point of view. Doors are opening for us to go and reach out to others.
- Great, it helps others and helps me mature as a Christian as well.
- I believe it is very important. Security prevents us from doing it quite a bit; however, under normal conditions, it is a Godsend for the men in those units.
- It has been a great light to the inmate population. They see something different that may bring hope to them.
- I value it with all my heart. It helps me keep my thoughts and mind on God, and it shows that I can help others in bad times.
- Yes, and it makes a big impact on the inmate population. It makes serving the Lord a joy when you know that you see the Lord at work with inmates.
- Good in concept, but not much happening. No follow-through.
- I value it immensely! Moral Rehabilitation is so much more effective than the current or secular models; it affects the desire, not the program itself. Change the heart, and the mind will follow.
- I value the moral rehabilitation peer-to-peer mentoring program very highly. It has made a huge impact on the inmate population. It really makes life serving the Lord a great joy when you see the Lord at work.

### **Potential**

7. Do you believe the use of Peer Mentoring has the potential to make positive changes within the correctional setting?

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<sup>163</sup> MOCCJ peer mentor video conference focus group discussion with the author, February 12, 2021.

- Absolutely! Other men see your walk and know that your talk and lifestyle lines up together. They are glad to trust someone not in an officer's uniform or who works at MOCCJ. The staff are welcoming and are positive about what they see you do and how you make a difference in some of the men's lives.
- Absolutely, the Word of God changed me, and it can change anyone, both inmate and staff.
- I honestly do, especially when we get five or six graduations under our belts. So many have been moved, we only have eleven here, and half of them will not work. They want everything given to them on a silver platter.
- Absolutely, it has made a change; the only thing lacking is more peer mentors.
- Yes, because it will help to change the way guys think and what they believe in. It also helped give them someone to look up to and come to in times of need.
- Yes, it has already made a big change in the prison. The staff has welcomed me to talk with other inmates they claim are rowdy and would like to see them change.
- Yes, if it had a clear direction. The leadership would have to have the time to oversee the peer mentors and the program. The chaplain does not have the time due to other responsibilities within the prison system. To make the peer mentorship program successful, it would require a full-time leader. The chaplain does not have the time.
- Yes, absolutely, the actual concept is powerful.
- I do not believe that it has made a positive change, I know that it has. I truly see the change within the correctional institution and the staff and inmates.

## St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail Responses

A video conference was held on February 11, 2021. The names of the inmate peer mentors are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a peer mentor.<sup>164</sup> There are three peer mentors at this facility, and all three participated.

### **Value**

#### 2. How do you personally value the Moral Rehabilitation Peer-to-Peer Mentoring?

- The mentoring program, in my eyes, is very valuable and impactful. It impacts the prison environment in a good way, making for positive change within the prison setting and when people enter society again. Ministry to others gives hope to the hopeless and gives them a chance to better themselves.
- The value I place on moral rehabilitation is the same as I place on my life because it has become my life. I possibly place more value on the moral rehabilitation's peer-to-peer mentoring ministry as the Lord has used it to give me a purpose. The Lord has made this

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<sup>164</sup> SMCCJ peer mentor video conference focus group discussion with the author, February 11, 2021.

my life, which began long before the Bible College. Moral rehabilitation started with Malachi Dads at Mt. Olive Correctional Complex and Jail. Peer-to-peer mentoring has transformed my life and has given me a heart for God, His people, and myself for service. I am an open book, and through this ministry, I have become what God has intended me to be: a son, brother, father, uncle, and friend. This is not just an internal prison ministry; this is who I am now and transcends beyond these walls. I cannot go anywhere else, and when I have thought about giving up, I could not; it has its hands upon me; well, Jesus has His Hands on me, and I know He will not let me go. I take value in helping others because it truly helps me.

- I place a high value on the moral rehabilitation peer-to-peer mentoring program because I know that I know God has called me for this. It is not just going to be inside of prison. I believe that this is my preparation to continue this on the outside. This is now a huge part of my life.

### **Potential**

7. Do you believe the use of Peer Mentoring has the potential to make positive changes within the correctional setting?

- Yes, it does and has. I have personally seen changes in prisons because of mentoring. It has been very impactful to not only inmates but to staff also. This goes on to the streets, and people can see how God works in these places through mentoring.
- Absolutely, 100%. You know it took Angola over twenty years to get to the place they are with moral rehabilitation. I do not know what it was like in their first few years. However, I can speak for here in West Virginia. At times, it can be easy to see that it is in a rut, stagnate, because of all the opposition. However, when we talk to men who need a mentor and see men transform their lives, you can see how beneficial this is, especially when everyone embraces this vision. You know we are visual people, visual learners, and sometimes we can lose sight of the vision ahead of us because of the cares of the world; life happens at unexpected times; we can forget what the purpose is. So I think that it is important that people often hear the vision of moral rehabilitation. It introduced me to Jesus in a way that I could never have imagined. Fifteen years ago, if someone told me that I would be preaching behind the pulpit in prison as an inmate, I would have said they were lying. However, this has and is so freeing that I now have life through Him who gave His life for me; I cannot turn anywhere else. I mean, where would I go? Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom we shall go? You have the Words of Eternal Life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:67-69). That is exactly my sentiments, to whom will I go and where would I go, for He has used this to clothe me in His Blood, Words, and Righteousness. Now that I have tasted the fruits of His glorious salvation, I would be a fool if I turned back.
- I do believe that Peer Mentoring has the potential to make significant changes all the way around with the correctional setting, but it ALL starts with the administration. I truly believe in my Spirit that this is from the Lord.

## Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail Responses

A video conference was held on February 12, 2021. The names of the inmate peer mentors are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a peer mentor.<sup>165</sup> There are three peer mentors at this facility, and all three participated.

### **Value**

2. How do you personally value the Moral Rehabilitation Peer-to-Peer Mentoring?

- The program has great value in making a change. It is an avenue for inmates to have someone they can talk to or find direction, guidance, support, or a friend.
- This changed my life in the way I think and look at other people. I now am totally dedicated to helping fellow inmates change their lifestyles, improve their behavior, and become leaders in their own families to stop the prison lifestyle from affecting their children and loved ones. If these men do not change, they will come back.
- Too many programs and not enough honest one-on-one contact with the resident's problems, keeping them from Christ. They do not care how much you know until they know how much you care!

### **Potential**

7. Do you believe the use of Peer Mentoring has the potential to make positive changes within the correctional setting?

- Yes. Currently, restrictions are in place due to COVID 19. When things return to normal, I believe that the one-on-one conversations, helping others to understand the Bible, and dialogue with inmates of other beliefs, to name a few, will continue to increase the potential to change the prison culture.
- Yes, If allowed to return to my entire ability to visit the entire prison, we will make a difference and change the outlook of all men and staff.
- It would with different training, the involvement of other inmates to expand discipleship. People need positions highlighting their skills and ability rather than what they choose out of self-promotion. Also, we need a much broader out-reach to the prison population—narrow out-reach results in narrow results toward an already narrow path. There needs to be more interaction with the mentors. Our facility has zero unity between participants. The selection process of who teams up needs to be changed.

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<sup>165</sup> HCCJ peer mentor video conference focus group discussion with the author, February 12, 2021.

## Northern Correction Center and Jail Responses

A video conference was held on February 11, 2021. The names of the inmate peer mentors are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a peer mentor.<sup>166</sup> There are three peer mentors at this facility, and all three participated.

### **Value**

2. How do you personally value the Moral Rehabilitation Peer-to-Peer Mentoring?

- I believe peer mentoring has great value and have heard this from many inmates that I have talked to. I believe that the example we set by showing the love of Christ through our words and actions is of great help to inmates and staff alike.
- This is an extremely difficult question for me to answer, as I have often asked the same many times over the past few months. It is hard to determine if the work I have done and how I live my daily life has a positive influence on anyone, even though I am told I do.
- I see it as an opportunity to help the inmates who desire to change their lives.

### **Potential**

7. Do you believe the use of Peer Mentoring has the potential to make positive changes within the correctional setting?

- Yes, I believe peer mentors can set examples for the rest of the inmates and staff. I feel that with some representation, inmates can relax knowing that their voices are being heard. By hearing inmates' grievances, the staff could relieve much of the tension in prison.
- Yes, if guidance is given from Charleston for such to occur. Several ideas come to mind in this setting at NCCJ. First, a satellite Bible College campus here. Now that I have a Masters in Theology, I would be happy to teach; second, increasing the peer mentors here from 3 to 5 for more interaction to occur; third, trusting the peer mentors to work in areas that would assist the administration, e.g., painting the exterior windows; Finally, if, if, if a peer mentor breaks a rule, punish the individuals and not the group.
- I do believe it has the potential to make positive changes. The majority of inmates are not Christians. To change the culture, we need to have support to address everyone's needs, and we need help from the upper-level administration.

This researcher conducted four video-conference focus group discussions with the peer mentors. The buy-in from the peer mentors is foundational to the moral rehabilitation initiative's

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<sup>166</sup> NCCJ peer mentor video conference discussion with the author, February 11, 2021.



success and future. The participation percentage and responses signal the buy-in is present. All involved considered the peer mentor concept valuable and believed there was future potential. These endorsements were critical to the study's validation.

### **Focus Group Meetings: Recipients/Mentees of Peer Mentor-led Activity**

The questions and responses below are excerpts from the video-conference focus group meetings. The researcher provided the questions and responses below as they relate directly to the study's validation, specifically, the value and potential from the recipients and mentees of peer mentor services. This researcher conducted a video-conference focus group discussion at the four participating prisons. There were five mentees present in each meeting.

#### **Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail Responses**

A video conference was held on February 12, 2021. The names of the inmate mentees are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a mentee.<sup>167</sup>

#### **Value**

3. Do you feel the Peer Mentors add value to the prison population?

- I think they are a great value in an all-around way that includes development in social skills, morality, education, and personal relations. Also, in dealing with substance abuse.
- Definitely, yes, most people, even in prison, more readily respond to someone who cares.
- Yes
- Absolutely, because it shows that we are willing to help each other out when we can't rely on anyone else.
- Yes
- Absolutely Peer Mentors add value to the prison population in many different ways.

#### **Potential**

2. What makes the concept of a Peer Mentor unique to the prison setting?

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<sup>167</sup> MOCCJ mentee video conference focus group discussion with the author, February 12, 2021.

- It is the simple fact that a person can relate directly to another's issues, problems, and situation as they have been through situations and dealt with problems that others now face. Unless a person has been incarcerated, they can not truly understand.
- A peer mentor in prison is unique because prison is typically an environment that fosters self-interests to survive. A peer mentor is someone who willingly and freely gives-selflessly.
- It can change individual perceptions; all are on equal ground if one can stand as a helper. This would be unique in this setting.
- The uniqueness is that we can talk about what has happened to us and not be judged by what we've done but be lifted by one another.
- Gotta be real.
- The concept of a peer mentor is unique in a prison setting because many people have trust issues that a mentor understands. We are around each other a lot, so you get to know each other. You have got to be a real person and cannot fake it, or you get no respect.

#### 4. How are the Peer Mentors different compared to volunteers?

- Peer mentors see their servitude as a way of life in serving a purpose to humanity in direct relation to obeying God's will. It is done with a deep desire not to let anyone down. They are not judgmental of whom they are helping; they live to help others. Volunteers often want to choose who they help, and they mean well, but they are not as dedicated to it as a mentor's life mission.
- Volunteers are great, but they do not have the opportunity to really get to know a prisoner personally as a peer mentor does.
- The mentors want to effect change in the population; they are in the population twenty-four hours a day and have more in common with the inmates.
- Others choose mentors; volunteers choose where they devote their time.
- The peer mentors must be able to set a standard and be an example in their everyday living. More is expected from the peer mentor than a volunteer. As the old saying goes, "lead by example."
- You can volunteer for anything, but you cannot volunteer to be trusted.

#### St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail Responses

A video conference was held on February 11, 2021. The names of the inmate mentees are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a mentee.<sup>168</sup>

#### **Value**

#### 3. Do you feel the Peer Mentors add value to the prison population?

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<sup>168</sup> SMCCJ mentee video conference focus group discussion, February 11, 2021.

- This year, with COVID, all the education classes and church services were canceled. The peer mentors helped keep attitudes and spirits upbeat.
- Yes, because many people do listen to the peer mentors.
- Yes, it adds value to the prison population. It confirms that we are still people and that all is not lost. It is like a thought in our minds that if someone wants to say we are useless, we have a face or poster person to represent us and encourage us to remain worthy.
- The peer mentors have fostered an atmosphere of positive change within the prison. They have been instrumental in helping to bridge the gap between the inmates and staff. The staff and inmates are in a position to communicate better because of the peer mentors.
- No, I know 1,000 percent they add value to the prison population. The impact is one you have to see to believe. I have seen guys open up to peer mentors. I have seen guys cry in their arms, men who were not accepting, to begin with, but saw how genuine the mentors were and how their lives had changed.
- The peer mentors add value to the prison population; they also add value to the correctional officer's population. I have noticed a change in some of the correctional officers too. Some have been transformed from punishment to rehabilitation, which speaks volumes, knowing some of the transformed minds. Changing the minds of inmates and correctional officers from a them and us mentality has to be larger than anyone expected.

### **Potential**

#### 2. What makes the concept of a Peer Mentor unique to the prison setting?

- There is so much hate and negativity in prison. It is good to have a positive light when all we as inmates are used to is darkness.
- Life experience while doing time with these peer mentors.
- I believe what has made the peer mentors unique in the prison setting is that it covers an area of trust that is sometimes hard to share with personnel that is not dealing with the prison setting like we are. To have an outlet such as this is comforting and needed.
- The Peer Mentor program is unique within the prison setting because it shows other inmates how to lead by example. Having prisoners themselves give other prisoners guidance allows all parties to feel trust and other comforting bonding emotions. When Christ comes into play due to their backgrounds, the mentors can convey their spiritual side. This is very important.
- Simply because the culture in a prison setting is negative, violent, and misleading, so the thought of putting peer mentors in a prison setting brings thoughts of tension; seeing the population accept and look up to the leadership of the peer mentors epitomizes uniqueness. It has been a blessing to see and be a part of what has taken place here at SMCCJ.

#### 4. How are Peer Mentors different compared to volunteers?

- The mentors are always studying and watching films to learn. They are always speaking to Chaplain Smith for advice and to learn.
- I never met a volunteer. The Peer Mentors are better because they go out of their way and stop what they are doing to come and pray or talk to you.
- The peer mentors hold themselves to a higher responsibility as examples than a volunteer. Not that they are better, but a volunteer can range anywhere from the front line to the back of the pack, and peer mentors seem to sacrifice themselves as a calling to be the front liners.
- Experience, they know how it feels to be incarcerated. Volunteers may have their hearts in the right place, but what separates them is the lack of understanding.
- Experience, the peer mentors have been through and are going through the same things we are, opposed to volunteers who have read books, taken classes, and have a passion and love for what they are doing.

### Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail Responses

A video conference was held on February 12, 2021. The names of the inmate mentees are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a mentee.<sup>169</sup>

#### **Value**

3. Do you feel like the Peer Mentors add value to the prison population?

- Mentors alleviate the chaplain's stress by interceding and screening urgency, thus freeing the chaplain to address & concentrate on the heavenly needs without rushing. The attention from the mentors helps an inmate feel worthy and that God is listening.
- Yes, we live in a very depressing, dark environment for the most part. To see those walking in the light of Jesus's love and mercy helps to encourage and build up the prison residents.
- Absolutely!
- Yes, the mentors are here all the time when needed

#### **Potential**

2. What makes the concept of a Peer Mentor unique to the prison setting?

- Most people are out for themselves, and they possess a what is in it for me attitude. To know someone cares is rare. It sets them apart from the crowd. Peer mentors help lift and encourage others to do better.
- The mentors help other inmates share their Christian values and emphasize and encourage them to do what is expected of them.

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<sup>169</sup> HCCJ mentee video conference focus group discussion, February 12, 2021.

- They help others learn here, and they also help me have a better outlook on life after prison.
- The mentors help people who are trying to learn. They are someone that can be trusted to get answers other than the chaplains.

4. How are the Peer Mentors different compared to volunteers?

- The training the mentors receive gives them a solid foundation through which the Holy Spirit can speak.
- They are here all the time; they live and experience the same conditions we do 24/7. The volunteers come for a couple of hours and leave. The Peer Mentors are available at any time.
- They are trained to deal with different scenarios, and they have a standard to follow.
- The mentors go deeper in God's Word in helping others than the volunteers do.
- They are here all the time when you need them.

#### Northern Correctional Center and Jail Responses

A video conference was held on February 11, 2021. The names of the inmate mentees are confidential. Each bullet point below represents a comment provided by a mentee.<sup>170</sup>

#### **Value**

3. Do you feel the Peer Mentors add value to the prison population?

- Yes, they can be a relief to someone needing to blow off a little steam, or a source of valuable advice to someone in a bad spot, or just a friendly person to hang out with for 15-20 minutes.
- Yes
- Yes, because many of the prisoners here do not have anyone, having a peer mentor is valuable when you are having a bad day.
- Absolutely
- Yes, sometimes you need someone to talk to. We do not always feel comfortable talking to staff.

#### **Potential**

2. What makes the concept of a Peer Mentor unique to the prison setting?

- They are a means for prisoner self-help; this is hard to find given everyone has their hidden agendas in here. Mentors are inmates who have some experience with doing time,

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<sup>170</sup> NCCJ mentee video conference focus group discussion, February 11, 2021.

and they can pass on the knowledge you may need without worrying about what they are after for themselves.

- They stand out more than others when it comes to religion.
- When you come into prison, you do not know which way to go or how to go about doing things, so having a mentor helped me get into programs and make choices for myself.
- They help questions get answered, and things get done. It is unique because it is usually negative here.
- By making the prison environment better for the inmates and staff.

4. How are the Peer Mentors different compared to volunteers?

- They are people many of us knew or know, and they are one of us, the inmates. They have been there. Plus, it is easier to talk with another inmate.
- They are always around and know how we feel because they go through it in prison with us.
- Volunteers are going to come and go. The peer mentor is the same person, and it becomes a relationship with someone you can trust.
- They are here with us. They know the struggle we face day in and day out.

This researcher conducted four video-conference focus group discussions with the mentees, who participated in peer mentor-led activities. The acceptance of the peer mentors by the mentees is foundational to the moral rehabilitation initiative's success and future. The mentee responses signal the acceptance is present. All involved considered the peer mentor concept valuable and believed there was future potential. These endorsements were critical to the study's validation.

### **Questionnaire: Participants (Mentees) of Peer Mentor-led Activities**

The tables in this section represent the questionnaire responses provided to mentees at the four prisons who participated in peer mentor-led activities. Activities such as church services, sidewalk counseling, Bible study, moral rehabilitative programs, one-on-one conversations, received a visit while in the medical units, and so on. This researcher randomly selected twenty responses from each of the prisons to include in the results section. The questionnaire consisted of three questions. The responses were classified as favorable, unfavorable, or neutral.

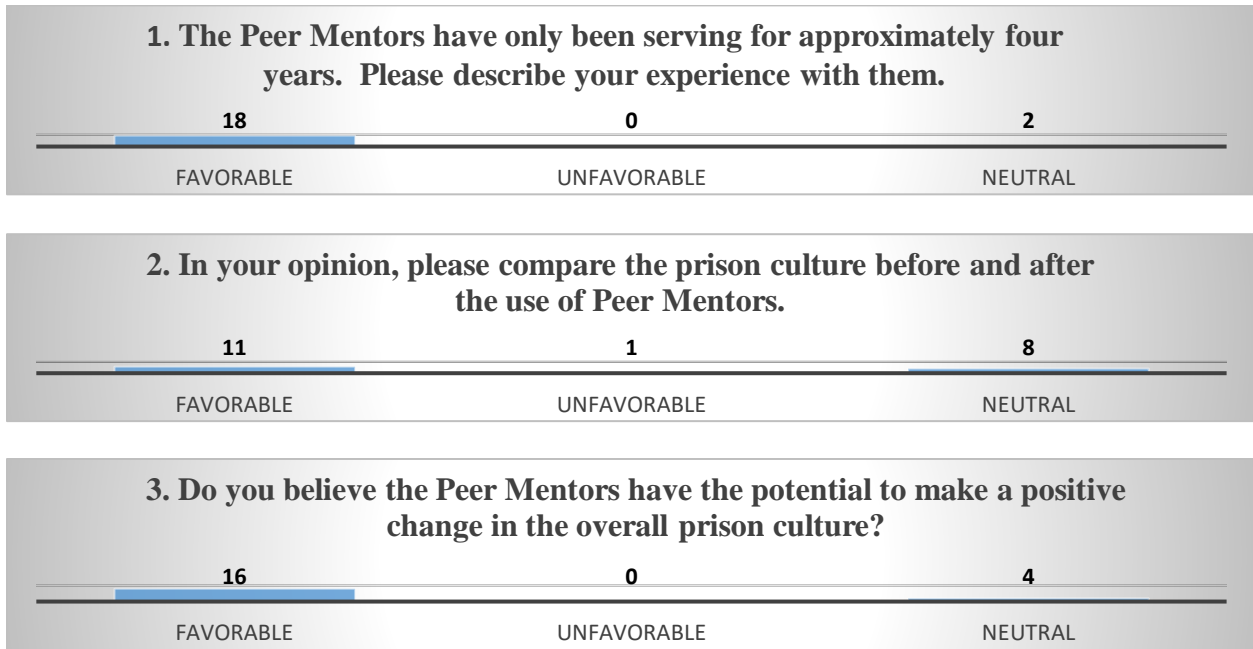
## Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail Responses

Hearing from those who have had direct experience with the peer mentors may be the best way to measure the mentor's impact. The mentees must receive the peer mentors in three areas to validate the use of the peer mentors.

The questions below measure the mentee's acceptance, perception, and potential they assign to the mentors. The questions let the mentees know their opinions matter, and without their endorsement, the moral rehabilitation initiative will not last.

Question one relates to the interaction between mentor and mentee. The mentees must have favorable experiences with the mentors. Question two addresses the prison culture. It will take time, but the inmate population must tangibly notice a positive change in the prison culture, and the inmates must credit these changes, mainly to the peer mentors. Question three is regarding potential. The mentors can believe in themselves, but the initiative will not be successful long term if their peers do not. The responses from the mentees have been categorized as favorable, unfavorable, and neutral.

**Table 4.1: Responses by Mentees at Mount Olive Regarding the Effectiveness of Peer Mentors**



**St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail Responses**

Hearing from those who have had direct experience with the peer mentors may be the best way to measure the mentor’s impact. The mentees must receive the peer mentors in three areas to validate the use of the peer mentors.

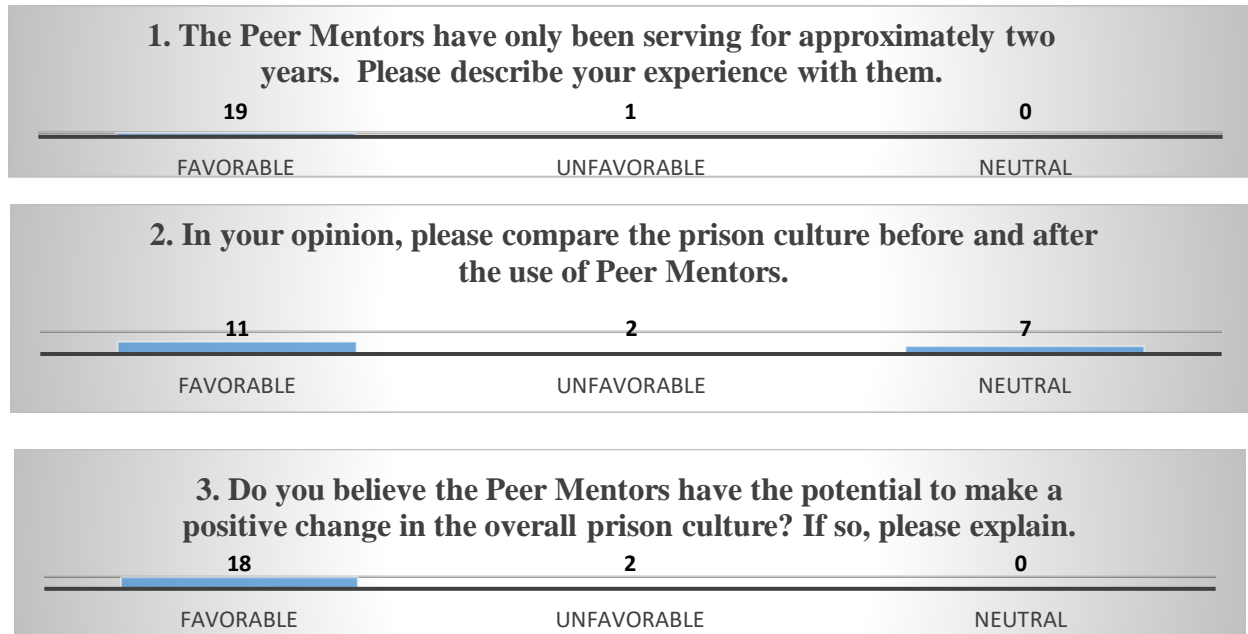
The questions below measure the mentee’s acceptance, perception, and potential they assign to the mentors. The questions let the mentees know their opinions matter, and without their endorsement, the moral rehabilitation initiative will not last.

Question one relates to the interaction between mentor and mentee. The mentees must have favorable experiences with the mentors. Question two addresses the prison culture. It will take time, but the inmate population must tangibly notice a positive change in the prison culture, and the inmates must credit these changes, mainly to the peer mentors. Question three is regarding potential. The mentors can believe in themselves, but the initiative will not be



successful long term if their peers do not. The responses from the mentees have been categorized as favorable, unfavorable, and neutral.

**Table 4.2: Responses by Mentees at St. Marys Regarding the Effectiveness of Peer Mentors**



### Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail Responses

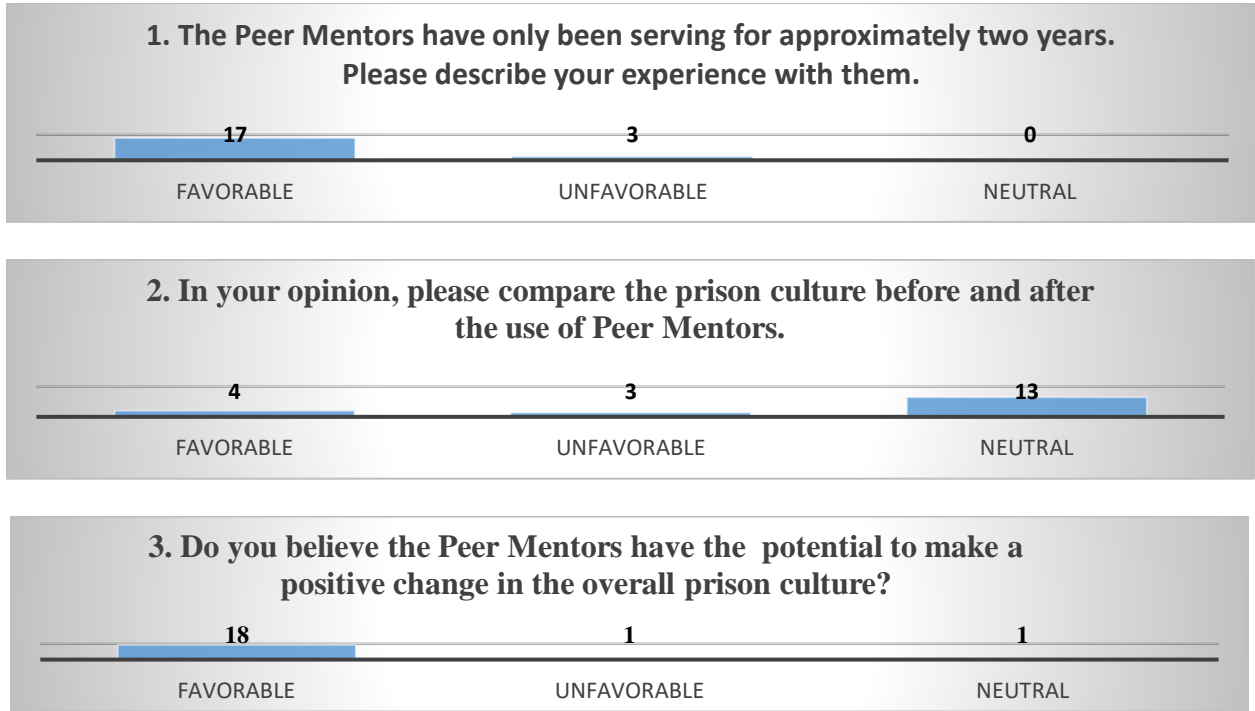
Hearing from those who have had direct experience with the peer mentors may be the best way to measure the mentor’s impact. The mentees must receive the peer mentors in three areas to validate the use of the peer mentors.

The questions below measure the mentee’s acceptance, perception, and potential they assign to the mentors. The questions let the mentees know their opinions matter, and without their endorsement, the moral rehabilitation initiative will not last.

Question one relates to the interaction between mentor and mentee. The mentees must have favorable experiences with the mentors. Question two addresses the prison culture. It will take time, but the inmate population must tangibly notice a positive change in the prison culture, and the inmates must credit these changes, mainly to the peer mentors. Question three is

regarding potential. The mentors can believe in themselves, but the initiative will not be successful long term if their peers do not. The responses from the mentees have been categorized as favorable, unfavorable, and neutral.

**Table 4.3: Responses by Mentees at Huttonsville Regarding the Effectiveness of Peer Mentors**



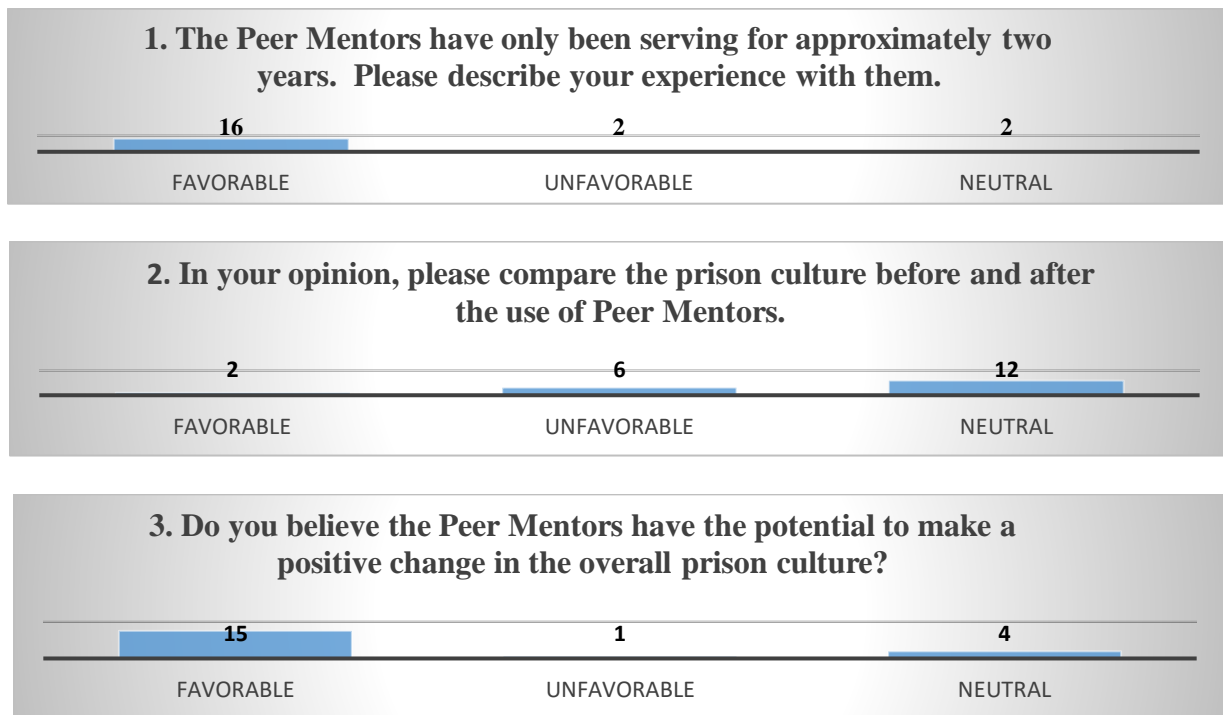
**Northern Correctional Center and Jail Responses**

Hearing from those who have had direct experience with the peer mentors may be the best way to measure the mentor’s impact. The mentees must receive the peer mentors in three areas to validate the use of the peer mentors.

The questions below measure the mentee’s acceptance, perception, and potential they assign to the mentors. The questions let the mentees know their opinions matter, and without their endorsement, the moral rehabilitation initiative will not last.

Question one relates to the interaction between mentor and mentee. The mentees must have favorable experiences with the mentors. Question two addresses the prison culture. It will take time, but the inmate population must tangibly notice a positive change in the prison culture, and the inmates must credit these changes, mainly to the peer mentors. Question three is regarding potential. The mentors can believe in themselves, but the initiative will not be successful long term if their peers do not. The responses from the mentees have been categorized as favorable, unfavorable, and neutral.

**Table 4.4: Responses by Mentees at Northern Regarding the Effectiveness of Peer Mentors**



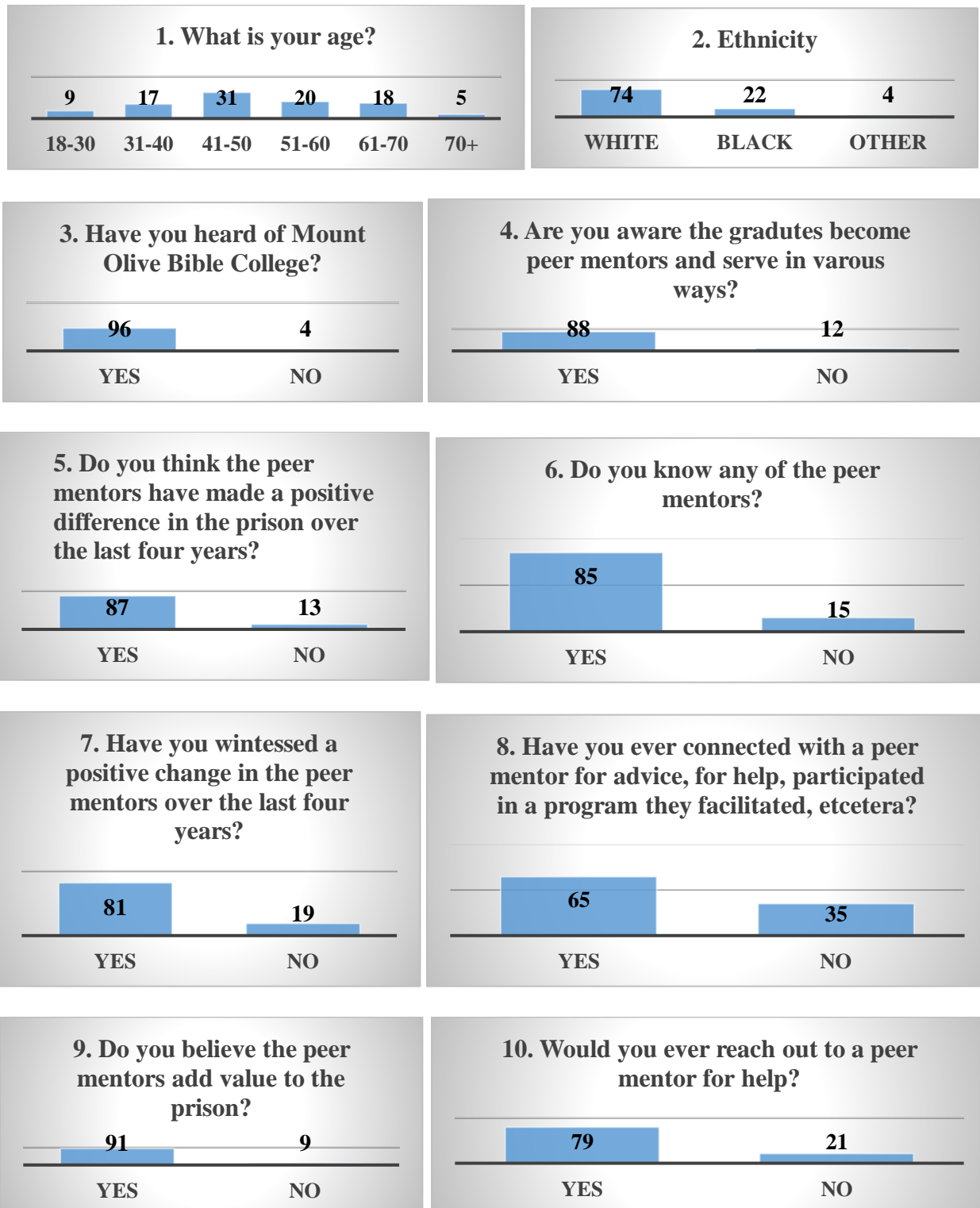
This researcher provided the noted questions to men who had spent time with the peer mentors. The acceptance of the peer mentors by the mentees is foundational to the moral rehabilitation initiative's success and future. The favorable responses signal acceptance of the peer mentors. This data serves as an endorsement for the peer mentors and their future potential. The endorsements were critical to the study's validation.

## **Survey: Inmate General Population Results**

### Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail

This survey aimed to gauge the overall inmate population's awareness and understanding of the moral rehabilitation initiative and the peer mentors' role. The general inmate population must accept the peer mentors' use for the moral rehabilitation initiative to survive and become sustainable. Questions three through ten measured the awareness, perceived value, and potential from the general inmate population regarding the per mentors.

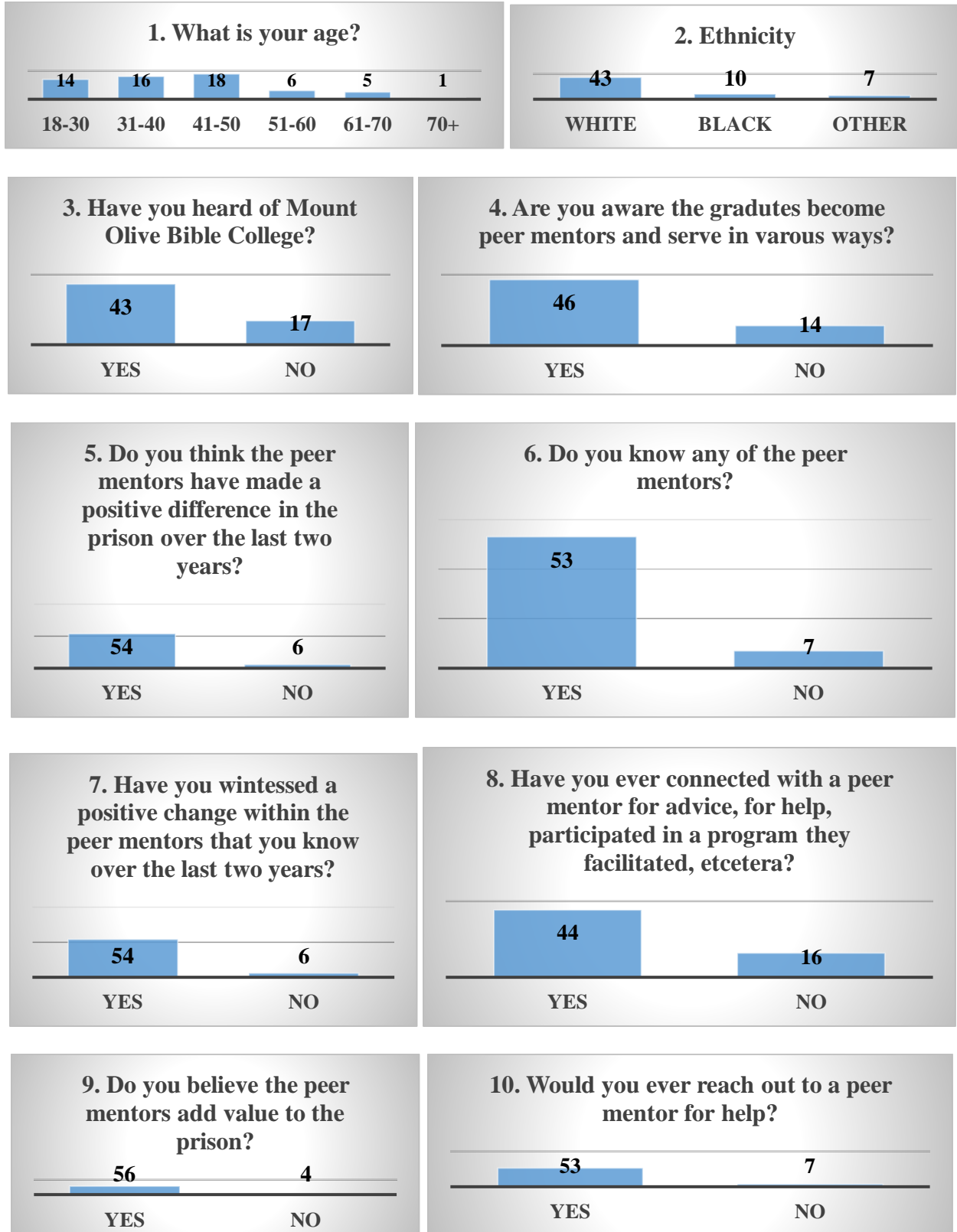
**Table 4.5: Inmate Population Responses at MOCCJ Regarding Awareness of Peer Mentors**



## St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail

This survey aimed to gauge the overall inmate population's awareness and understanding of the moral rehabilitation initiative and the peer mentors' role. The general inmate population must accept the peer mentors' use for the moral rehabilitation initiative to survive and become sustainable. Questions three through ten measured the awareness, perceived value, and potential from the general inmate population regarding the per mentors.

**Table 4.6: Inmate Population Responses at SMCCJ Regarding Awareness of the Peer Mentors**

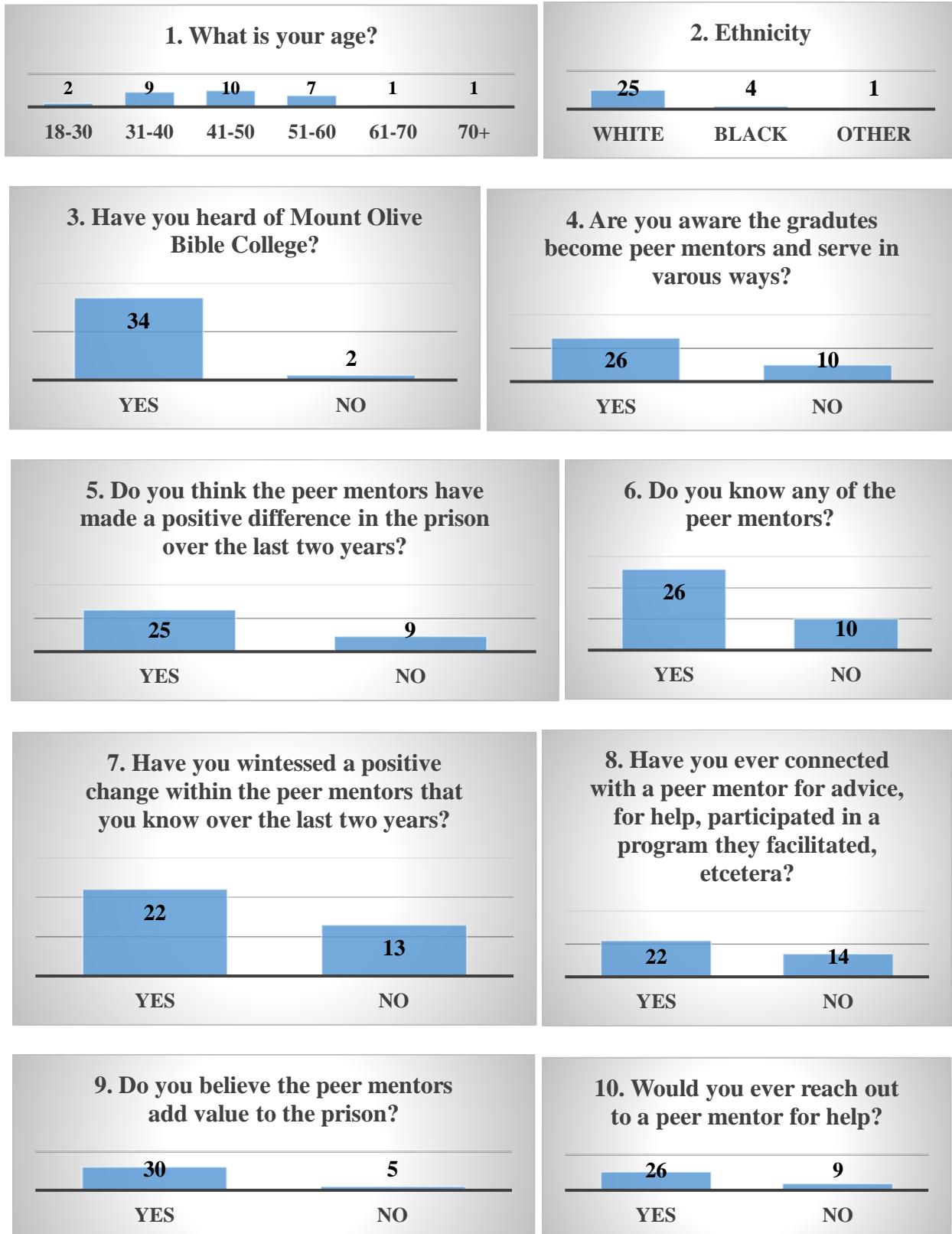


## Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail

This survey aimed to gauge the overall inmate population's awareness and understanding of the moral rehabilitation initiative and the peer mentors' role. The general inmate population must accept the peer mentors' use for the moral rehabilitation initiative to survive and become sustainable. Questions three through ten measured the awareness, perceived value, and potential from the general inmate population regarding the per mentors.



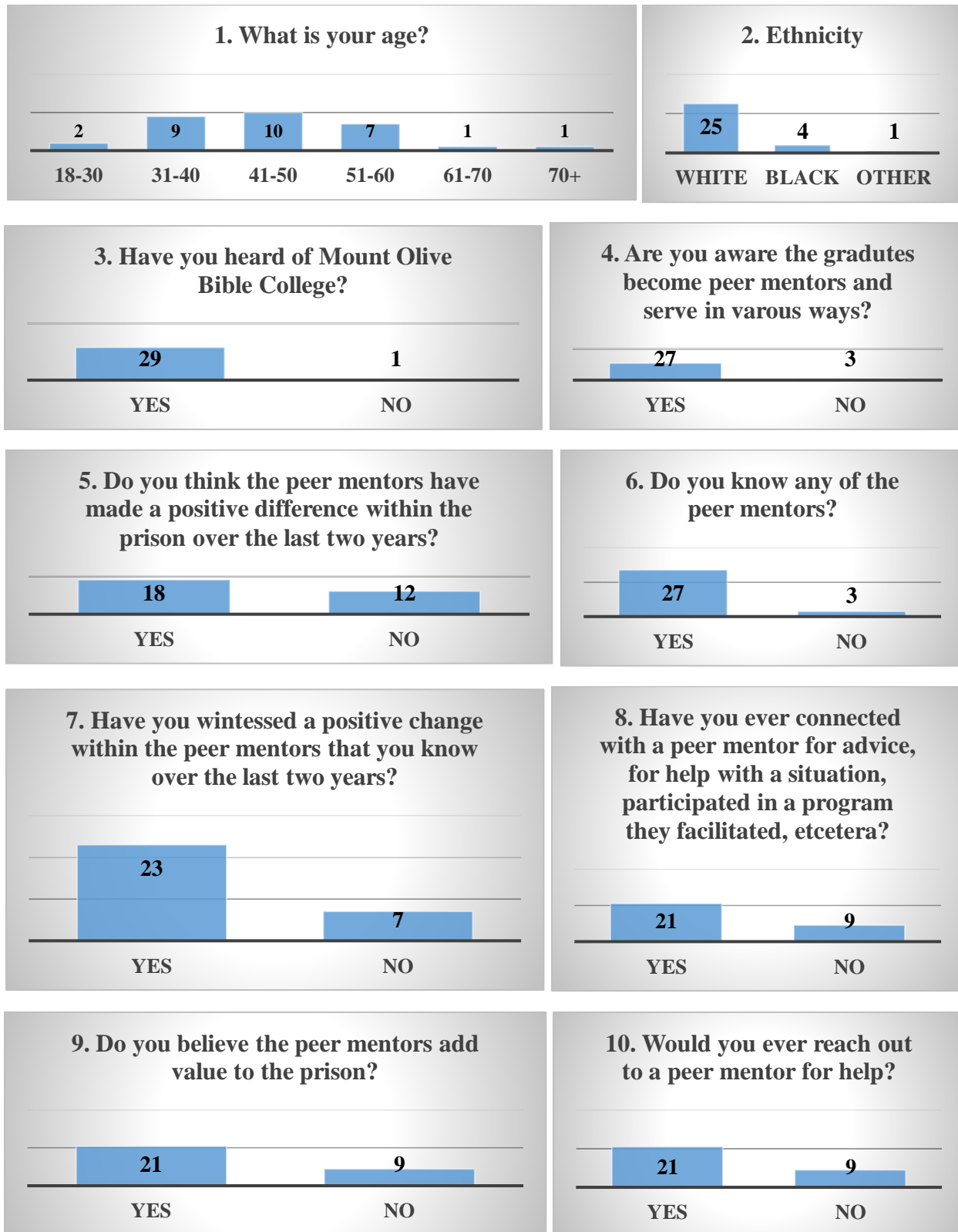
**Table 4.7: Inmate Population Responses at HCCJ Regarding Awareness of the Peer Mentors**



## Northern Correctional Center and Jail

This survey aimed to gauge the overall inmate population's awareness and understanding of the moral rehabilitation initiative and the peer mentors' role. The general inmate population must accept the peer mentors' use for the moral rehabilitation initiative to survive and become sustainable. Questions three through ten measured the awareness, perceived value, and potential from the general inmate population regarding the per mentors.

**Table 4.8: Inmate Population Responses at NCCJ Regarding Awareness of the Peer Mentors**



This researcher provided the surveys to the general inmate population to measure their awareness of the peer mentors. Additionally, the survey measured whether the general population valued the peer mentors and if they would ever reach out to a peer mentor for help. The acceptance of the general population is a core component of the moral rehabilitation's sustainability and success. The majority of the general population responses relating to peer mentor awareness, value, and willingness to ask for help were positive, signaling the peer mentors' acceptance by the general population. The endorsements were critical to the study's validation.

### Triangulation: Observations – Common Themes – Unique Findings

#### **Observations**

Prisons are closed systems, meaning they operate within the prison walls and fences under the prison administration's direction and the codes the inmates impose on themselves. Prisons operate without much interest or interference from outside groups. Trust must be earned in the prison setting, both by the prison administration and the inmates.

This researcher observed a wide-spread willingness to participate in this study by all key stakeholders. All key stakeholders were committed to the requirements of the study. The commitment is worth noting, as the prison environments can be taxing on staff and inmates alike daily. The commitment to get the interviews conducted, focus group meetings with the prison wardens and senior staff, peer mentors, and mentees completed, all via video-conferencing, was no small task. The commitment was a testament to all key stakeholders and their support of the moral rehabilitation initiative.

The study results varied but were evident in that the majority of all the key stakeholders support the moral rehabilitation initiative and peer mentors' use. This researcher observed

honesty among the key stakeholders in expressing themselves and their opinions regarding the peer mentors. The key stakeholders took the study seriously, as it was evident in their thoughtful responses in the interviews, multiple focus group discussions, questionnaires, and the surveys.

The results were outstanding and encouraging, especially considering the moral rehabilitation initiative is still in its infancy. There have only been two graduating classes from Mount Olive Bible College since its inception in September 2014. Of those two classes, nine men have been transferred from Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail to the three participating prisons to serve as peer mentors. Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail have the most experience with peer mentors as it houses the Mount Olive Bible College. The peer mentors have been serving there for approximately four years. The three participating prisons have had peer mentors for approximately two years. The study results, given the infancy of moral rehabilitation, are inspiring and encouraging.

## **Themes**

The common theme throughout this study was awareness, value, and potential regarding the moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of peer mentors. All key stakeholders were aware of the moral rehabilitation initiative. The majority was aware of the initiative's origination at Angola Prison in Louisiana. The degree of awareness regarding the peer mentors exhibited by the interview transcripts with Commissioner Jividen and Director Rider was impressive. The Commissioner has a colossal responsibility overseeing West Virginia's adult prisons, jails, and juvenile centers statewide. Her degree of awareness and commitment to moral rehabilitation is another testament to the initiative's results and future potential. The awareness was also widespread among the general inmate population. The percentage of the general population that reported knowing a peer mentor exceeded eighty-five percent at each prison.

Additionally, the peer mentors were considered valuable throughout the multiple data collection methods. All key stakeholders considered the mentors valuable. Worth noting again was the information that came from the general inmate population survey. The average percentage regarding value among the four prisons' general population exceeded eighty percent. The value remained constant throughout the statewide leaders, prison wardens and senior staff, peer mentors, and the mentees, thus endorsing a core component needed for the study's validation.

If there is no potential, whatever it is, it is nearing the end. A core element in the study's validation was the peer mentor's future potential. There will be good and bad peer mentors in the years to come. However, the concept of peer mentoring and its future potential must be embraced by all key stakeholders. This study results verify that all stakeholders believe there is potential to move forward with the peer mentors. The constant belief in the peer mentor's potential among key stakeholders culminates with the general population survey results. The average number of inmates who answered "yes" when asked if they would ever reach out to a peer mentor for help was seventy-eight percent. The shared buy-in by the stakeholders supports the study's validation.

### **Unique Findings**

Often, the incarcerated voice is silenced, but this researcher was able to hear from those affected the most, the inmates. The prison leadership from the state level to the individual prisons permitted the inmates to participate. The inmates were eager to express their opinions and feelings regarding moral rehabilitation and the peer mentors.

Prisons are known to be dark, lonely places where individuals are sent to pay their debts to society. The rule of law must be implemented to function and remain safe for its citizens to

thrive. There is never one victim when a crime is committed. Crime affects both the victims and the offender's families. The inmates are often forgotten and considered societal outcasts. Burl Cain, past warden of Angola Prison, once told this researcher that eighty percent of the inmates at Angola never receive a visit.

In this study, the researcher witnessed the trust and respect the inmates had for one another. This researcher heard comment after comment regarding the value the peer mentors brought to the inmate population beyond what prison counselors, programming, or outside volunteers could. This researcher witnessed a unique, human side of the inmates, one that many have forgotten. Although known for their potential for violence, this researcher witnessed inmates supporting and encouraging one another. The inmates spoke of how the peer mentors can relate to what they are going through because the mentors have had the same prison experiences. The men acknowledged the transformations they saw in the peer mentors, as they remember how the mentors used to be. The men spoke of hope. A hope they witnessed in the peer mentors and a hope that they, too, could change. Even the general inmate population, many of whom have never reached out to the peer mentors, stated they believed in them. This researcher witnessed a brotherhood of support and encouragement for one another that rarely gets presented when discussing prison life. When presented with the question, do you believe the peer mentors have the potential to make a positive change within the prison culture? An inmate in solitary confinement wrote, "yes, being someone who is in the hole, having someone who asks you how ya doing and to keep you up to date on things going on in the prison makes a huge difference and also makes you feel that some changes are worth trying to do."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> MOCCJ inmate questionnaire response.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to validate the use of peer-to-peer mentoring as a tool for prison reform throughout West Virginia. The validation must come from all key stakeholders. Key stakeholders being the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation state-level leaders, the prison wardens and senior staff, peer mentors, mentees, and the general inmate population. This researcher chose to validate via three core assessments:

1. Are all key stakeholders aware of the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of peer mentors?
2. Is the peer mentoring concept valued by all key stakeholders?
3. Do the key stakeholders believe in the potential the peer mentoring concept brings to the prison culture?

If the moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of peer mentors are going to be both valid and sustainable, all key stakeholders must remain committed to the initiative. This researcher chose multiple data collection methods in seeking awareness, value, and potential.

A video-conference interview was conducted with West Virginia's highest correctional official, Commissioner Jividen. Commissioner Jividen stated, "I do not think we have even begun to see the moral rehabilitation initiative's full potential."<sup>172</sup> When asked if she believed the moral rehabilitation initiative can make a positive difference within West Virginia's prison culture? Commissioner Jividen responded, "absolutely, no one would dispute that peers have the greatest influence and the most credibility with other offenders."<sup>173</sup> When presented with the

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<sup>172</sup> Jividen.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.



same question, Director Rider responded, “I am confident the moral rehabilitation initiative will make a positive impact.”<sup>174</sup>

There were four video-conference focus group discussions conducted with the prison wardens and senior staff, peer mentors, and mentees at each participating prison. The percentage of participation was one-hundred percent for the prison wardens and senior staff and mentees and eighty-six percent for the mentors.

The mentee’s questionnaire was provided to the four participating prisons. The questionnaire response rate was one hundred percent. The inmate general population surveys were provided to each prison. A response rate goal of ten percent of each prison’s average population was established. This goal was met at all prisons except Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail. Their response rate was four percent. However, with all other prisons reaching a one hundred percent survey response rate, the lower rate at the Huttonsville prison did not affect the overall survey results.

The study results from each group of key stakeholders were overwhelmingly clear. The stakeholders were aware, considered the initiative valuable, and believe in its current and future potential. This study has validated the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of peer mentors as a tool for future reform.

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<sup>174</sup> Rider.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

This researcher believes the current national expansion of academic seminaries throughout the prisons in the United States will lead to the expansion of the moral rehabilitation initiative within the prisons. West Virginia is ahead of the trend. They have an established Bible college, have graduated two classes, and have transferred peer mentors into other West Virginia prisons to serve as agents of moral change. This project's results endorse the validity of this national movement, not only impacting West Virginia but other states as well.

#### Comparison: Study Results and the Literature Review

##### United States Prison System

Mark Baker points out that the United States incarcerates people at a higher rate than any other country in the world by far; Baker notes that more than two million people are locked up, of which approximately two thousand are released back into society every day.<sup>175</sup>

Baker shares that prisons are horrible places in most cases, simply holding cells where society puts people it does not think can change. Having visited Angola prison in Louisiana, Baker quotes Warden Burl Cain, that “lack of hope is the number one enemy in prison.”<sup>176</sup> Restoration must begin with hope. The absence of hope, especially in prison, makes little else matter.

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<sup>175</sup> Mark Baker, *You Can Change: Stories from Angola Prison and the Psychology of Personal Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020), 7.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

West Virginia currently houses over seven thousand adult offenders, of which approximately ninety percent have release dates and will be returning to the local communities throughout West Virginia.<sup>177</sup>

This researcher heard from many men in prison who are working hard to earn a second chance. They began working on themselves early into their incarceration. The moral rehabilitation initiative became a venue for the men to continue their path of self-improvement. An inmate peer mentor from St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail stated, “The mentoring program, in my eyes, is very valuable and impactful. It impacts the prison environment in a good way, making for positive change within the prison setting and when people reenter society. Ministry to others gives hope to the hopeless and a chance to better themselves.”<sup>178</sup>

### **Religion, Crime, and Desistance**

A common goal of all prison administrations is less violence within the prisons. In the article “Religion and Crime Studies: Assessing what has been Learned,” Melvina Sumter, Frank Wood, Ingrid Whitaker, and Dianne Hill have noted that available empirical evidence generally suggests an inverse relationship between religion and crime. According to over 40 years of empirical research summarizing the relationship between religion and crime, findings indicate that religion decreases criminal behavior propensities.<sup>179</sup> It offered that, in examining self-control, researchers have typically considered how attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and values,

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<sup>177</sup> West Virginia Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (WVDOCR), *FY 2019 Annual Report*, by Betsy Jividen, (Charleston, 2020), 1-4.

<sup>178</sup> SMCCJ Inmate mentor questionnaire response.

<sup>179</sup> Melvina Sumter, Frank Wood, Ingrid Whitaker, and Dianne Berger-Hill. "Religion and Crime Studies: Assessing what has been Learned." *Religions* 9, no. 6 (2018), 2, accessed May 22, 2020, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2125021208?accountid=12085>.

which are internalized, can influence the behavior of the individual. Subsequently, in reviewing criminal activity, members of society who have incorporated a set of attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and values that condemn illegal activity will be less likely to engage in such activity. Religion represents one example of a system that incorporates these elements.<sup>180</sup>

The associate warden of programs at Northern Correctional Center and Jail noted in the video conference, “the total number of disciplinary reports has decreased since the peer mentors’ implementation at this facility. In June 2019, NCCJ’s fiscal annual report reflected eight-hundred-eighty-one disciplinary reports, of which thirty-three were assaults. By June 2020, the fiscal year’s report showed six-hundred-fifty-nine disciplinary reports, of which twenty-seven were assaults. These changes reflect a twenty-five percent reduction in total disciplinary reports and an eighteen percent reduction in assaults.”<sup>181</sup>

The moral rehabilitation initiative is still in its infancy. Therefore, a uniform, formal system that measures statistics related to the peer mentors has not been formally implemented in the prisons where the peer mentors are serving. However, this researcher heard from prison administrators that informal statistics directly relating to the use of peer mentors are favorable.

Additionally, the Deputy Warden at St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail noted, “In some instances, statistics may not easily be tracked; for example, the mentors often serve to de-escalate situations before they occur. These situations have the potential for violence, yet through their de-escalation, these events never occurred. Therefore there is no statistic to record. We know this takes place, and we are a safer prison as a result.”<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Sumter et al, 5.

<sup>181</sup> NCCJ associate warden of programs video conference, February 11, 2021.

<sup>182</sup> SMCCJ deputy warden, video conference, February 11, 2021.

## **Moral Rehabilitation: Equipping Peer Mentors**

Byron Johnson, in *More God, Less Crime*, declared that America is the land of the second chance and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.<sup>183</sup>

Economically speaking, there are reasons hope and moral change need to occur within the prison population. Incorporating other social costs into the equation suggests that the annual cost of crime to society is \$1 trillion or more.<sup>184</sup> Economists help the public understand that crime's real costs, including the hidden cost to victims and society, are significantly higher than criminologists have recognized.

As stated, ninety percent of the incarcerated in West Virginia have a release date and will be returning to local communities throughout the state. This researcher sees the fruit of moral rehabilitation taking place inside the prisons of West Virginia. Every inmate who successfully returns to society reduces correctional spending and increases tax revenue. Every inmate who successfully returns to society who does not recidivate saves future victims, thus creating a safer community. Moral people do not kill, rape, or steal. The benefits of moral rehabilitation both inside and outside the prison walls are endless.

Hurt people hurt people, and the majority of those in prison have been hurt many times before they hurt someone else. Kristi Miller and Vance Drum have served as prison chaplains, and both have extensive prison experience. In “Inmate Peer Ministry: The Chaplain’s Role,” Miller and Drum offered that inmates are takers in part because they have been wounded in their

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<sup>183</sup> Byron Johnson, *More God, Less Crime*, (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011), 12.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

lives and bear broken minds, injured bodies, and shattered souls.<sup>185</sup> They are operating from a place of severe deficiency and need. These deficiencies create a self-centered identity, one focused on taking or receiving versus serving or giving.

This researcher witnessed these wounds firsthand, as inmates have referred to life in prison as depressing, dark, and at times, violent. A mentee from St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail (SMCCJ) noted, “There is so much hate and negativity in prison. It is good to have a positive light when all we as inmates are used to is darkness.” The inmates talked of prison life where men focus on themselves, creating a lonely existence where trusting others is rare. However, the peer mentors are working hard to change this mindset. A mentee from Mount Olive Correction Center and Jail (MOCCJ) noted, “The peer mentors are unique because prison is typically an environment that fosters self-interest to survive. A peer mentor is someone who willingly and freely gives of themselves.” This researcher received many comments relating to the mentor’s giving.

### **Changed Behavior**

Long-term change must come from a place of desired healing. Baker declares that punishing people attempting to control behavior can work, but it is only effective if there is a constant external threat of punishment to ensure compliance.<sup>186</sup> Treating people with respect inspires them to want to change their behavior. Treating others with respect can help them get to the roots of their problems and change from the inside out.

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<sup>185</sup> Kristi B. Miller, and Vance L. Drum, "Inmate Peer Ministry: The Chaplain's Role," *Corrections Today* 81, no. 2 (2019): 11, accessed April 21, 2020, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2191282764?accountid=12085>.

<sup>186</sup> Baker, 13.

Moral rehabilitation in the prisons of West Virginia focuses on a person's moral fiber. This researcher has witnessed men changing from the inside out. One SMCCJ peer mentor noted, "Fifteen years ago, if someone told me that I would be preaching behind a pulpit in prison as an inmate, I would have said they were lying."<sup>187</sup> This researcher has met many men who have allowed the God of the Bible to changed them from the inside out while serving their prison sentences.

In "Inmate Peer Ministry," Miller and Drum declare that morally rehabilitated inmates know that they add worth to their own lives as they help their peers find a better path; they become "wounded healers."<sup>188</sup> A core element of change is to become moral. Many inmates have never been taught the concept of morality, and coupled with a sense of belonging, many can and do change.

The peer mentors in West Virginia have indeed become wounded healers. According to Jang, self-transcendence also leads them to discover meaning and purpose for their lives, which tends to be found in something bigger than self and is likely to contribute to offender reformation.<sup>189</sup> One SMCCJ peer mentor declared, "The value I place on moral rehabilitation is the same as I place on my life itself because it has become my life.. I possibly place more value on the moral rehabilitation's peer-to-peer mentoring ministry as the Lord has used it to give me a purpose. Peer-to-peer mentoring has transformed my life and has given me a heart for God, His

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<sup>187</sup> SMCCJ peer mentor video conference focus group discussion with the author, February 11, 2021.

<sup>188</sup> Miller and Drum, 11.

<sup>189</sup> Sung Joon Jang, Byron R. Johnson, Joshua Hays, Michael Hallett, and Grant Duwe, "Prisoners Helping Prisoners Change: A Study of Inmate Field Ministers Within Texas Prisons," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 64, no. 5 (2020): 487, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/0306624X19872966>.

people, and myself for service.”<sup>190</sup> Another SMCCJ mentor noted, “I place a high value on the moral rehabilitation peer-to-peer mentoring program because I know God has called me to this. This is not just for inside the prison; it is preparing me to continue on the outside. This is now a huge part of my life.”<sup>191</sup>

This researcher received many statements regarding transformation from all key stakeholders. In prison, a person cannot hide who they truly are. The prison yard is small, and inmates have a unique gift in knowing whether a person is real or not. There are transformations taking place within the prisons of West Virginia that cannot be denied.

### **Discipleship: Peer-to-Peer**

Byron Johnson reports that for those who have been in prison before, maybe multiple times, this time they feel like they are on a mission as they prepare to leave prison.<sup>192</sup> They now have a sense of meaning and purpose they have not known before. For many, a Christian conversion experience marked a turning point in their life: a spiritual awakening or reawakening that was foundational for them.

This researcher met many men who struggled with life in prison. Prison is full of setbacks, and it is easy to quit and simply go with the flow the prison life dictates. However, peer mentors help lift others. They work to help others achieve their goals, even if life has been full of failure. As noted, the mentors in West Virginia feel as if they are on a mission, one that is much bigger than themselves.

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<sup>190</sup> SMCCJ peer mentor video conference, February 11, 2021.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Johnson, 122.



## What Did the Researcher Learn Implementing the Project?

This researcher was blessed to learn that many good things are happening inside the prisons of West Virginia. All too often, when a person hears prison news, it is not good. Usually, the news is delivered via local and national news outlets, mostly presenting violence and upheaval stories. The positive stories that occur within the prisons rarely make it beyond the prison walls.

This researcher witnessed a variety of good happening within the prison system in West Virginia. This researcher heard facts regarding prison life's reality, good and bad, from the key stakeholders, both staff and inmates. This researcher felt blessed to be approved to complete this study. This researcher was provided access to everyone requested; even with the Covid-19 restrictions and video-conferencing adjustments, the study maintained its integrity. The courtesy provided to this researcher in completing the study is a testament to the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's commitment to moral rehabilitation.

### **State-Level Leadership**

This researcher learned that leading the State of West Virginia's Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation is a huge responsibility. The day-to-day operations include: the political, legislative, operational, budgetary, health, and safety of both staff and inmates, and the list goes on. This researcher learned that approving and having the commitment to continue West Virginia's moral rehabilitation initiative was and is no small task. There were many factors to consider in launching the initiative, including student eligibility, space and resource allocation for a Bible college, and a willingness to transfer graduates to other West Virginia prisons as peer mentors to serve their peers in new, innovative ways. West Virginia's leadership pioneered this innovative approach labeled moral rehabilitation following only two other states, Louisiana and

Texas. West Virginia was only the third state in the country to implement this initiative at that time. The leadership's pioneering spirit is a testament to the insight and willingness to launch new, innovative correctional approaches. This researcher was impressed with state-level leaders' vision and commitment in adding such an innovative initiative into the correctional setting inside West Virginia's prisons. This researcher commends them for implementing the moral rehabilitative initiative, breaking years of traditional correctional philosophy, not only in West Virginia but nationally.

### **Wardens and Administrative Staff**

The prison wardens and senior staffs have demanding jobs. Most people live out their daily lives without thinking about safety. In prison, safety is the highest priority, and this responsibility falls on the shoulders of the prison warden and the senior administrative staff. This researcher was able to hear directly from the prison administrators at the four participating prisons. Prison administration must evaluate everything that happens within the prison. There are many factors in approving new initiatives, programs, and operational changes.

This researcher appreciated each administration's willingness to meet via video conference and the transparency in which the wardens and senior staff spoke. This researcher learned of the wherewithal it takes in overseeing the day-to-day operations behind the prison walls. They are tasked with carrying out the initiatives approved by the state-level leadership.

Regarding the moral rehabilitation initiative, the prison wardens and senior staff are the first to witness the ups and downs, successes and failures directly related to the initiative. The administrators have managed these very well. The prison administrators work through the moral rehabilitation initiative's challenges. They have front-row seats to watch the peer mentors serve; they identify both good and bad mentors, yet, they remain committed to ensuring the moral

rehabilitation initiative's success. The researcher was impressed by the wardens and senior staffs' willingness to embrace the moral rehabilitation initiative.

Most prison wardens or senior staff members spend years in corrections before advancing to administrative positions. They inherit years of traditional thinking that can serve as a roadblock to innovation. The wardens and administrative staff in West Virginia have risen to the challenge of accepting and pioneering this unique approach to corrections.

### **Peer Mentors**

This researcher learned a core element of the peer mentor's success was not how much they knew but how much they cared. A key to the mentor's impact was in the relationships that were developed. Hallett noted that Warden Cain jokingly refers to Angola's dominant religion as "Bapticoastal" to point out its inclusiveness.<sup>193</sup> Hallett concluded that the religion at Angola is best described as "relationship theology," and those healthy relationships are agents of change.<sup>194</sup> In Hallett's study, "relationship theology" is a term frequently invoked by Inmate Ministers at Angola to describe their attention to serving the prison through interpersonal relationships and is a central focus of the "Inmate Ministers" personal vocation.<sup>195</sup>

This researcher learned that, given the right set of circumstances, any man could change. The change in the peer mentors could not be denied. The men were not the same. They had allowed the God of the Bible to change them. The Bible states, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new has come: the old has gone, the new is here" (1 Cor 5:17). This researcher witnessed the

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<sup>193</sup> Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Byron Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, and Grant Duwe, *The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity, Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 159.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

new creation in the peer mentors. Upon visiting Angola, Baker's perspective is that the general population at Angola Prison has transformed from a collection of self-centered individuals into an influential community of change.<sup>196</sup> This researcher witnessed the same transformations in the prisons of West Virginia. However, some enter prison and claim religion for selfish reasons, known as jailhouse religion. This is not the case with the peer mentors; they have become impactful agents of moral change. The mentors are not perfect, but they have been transformed, and they are serving others as vessels of God's hope and purpose.

## **Mentees**

This researcher learned that men in prison, just like the free world, need to *belong*. The mentees responded to the mentors when provided opportunities to connect. The peer mentors provided opportunities where individual hope and purpose could be cultivated.

In her article titled "Self, Belonging, and Social Change," Vanessa May highlights that inmates need to feel connected.<sup>197</sup> They need a sense of belonging or self-value. Over their lifetime or years of incarceration, many inmates have lost their sense of belonging and self-value. Belonging is a powerful motivator; thus, it is crucial to being a person: it is fundamental to every individual.

This researcher heard many life stories from the mentees, many full of isolation, abuse, and loneliness. The mentees have responded powerfully to the opportunities presented to them via peer mentors. Once more, this researcher witnessed that in Christ, any man can change. The mentees are changing. This researcher realizes the mentees will struggle. They are not perfect,

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<sup>196</sup> Baker, 92.

<sup>197</sup> Vanessa May, "Self, Belonging and Social Change," *Sociology* 45, no. 3 (2011): 368, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/10.1177/0038038511399624>.

but this researcher witnessed a sincerity to do the right thing that is far greater than many living free outside the prison walls.

This researcher witnessed a level of trust that only existed amongst the inmates themselves. The mentees valued outside volunteers, but they made it clear that they respected the peer mentors as they lived and struggled through the same issues. Volunteers come inside the prison for a couple of hours, usually weekly. However, the mentors are visible to the mentees and the general population twenty-four hours a day, three-hundred-sixty-five days a year. This makes living your faith real and transparent or easy to spot if not. This creates a value and transparency assigned to the peer mentors that outside resources cannot duplicate.

### **This Researcher**

This researcher was blessed to be able to conduct this study. Many men in prison have committed horrible crimes. The pain of those crimes will remain with the victims and their families for a lifetime. Moral people do not kill, rape, or steal. Moral rehabilitation in West Virginia prisons is working, translating to safer prisons and safer communities as the inmates return to society. That is the ultimate goal, fewer future victims.

This researcher met men who are working very hard to earn a second chance. This is evidenced by years of commitment, commitment to their spiritual development, restoration and reconciliation with their families, and preparing themselves to reenter society as productive citizens. The Bible states, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ez 36:26). This is happening within the prisons of West Virginia. God has chosen the peer mentors as His vessels of change.

This researcher saw a side of the inmates, both mentors, and mentees that few have the privilege of seeing, their human side. Men who were eager to prove they can and have changed.

Men who were eager to embrace positive opportunities to live and grow with one another. Men who desired to belong to something real, to be part of something they could share ownership in positive ways. This researcher observed compassion, empathy, love, respect, service, and so on from the men. This researcher learned to value God, life, family, freedom, love, and service from the men inside the prison walls of West Virginia.

### How Might the Results Apply in Other Settings?

When the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation launched the moral rehabilitation initiative, West Virginia was only the third state to adopt the Angola Prison model. West Virginia was third behind Louisiana and Texas, respectfully. Since then, Burl Cain, ex-warden at Angola prison, founded the Prison Seminaries Foundation. Prison Seminaries Foundation was birthed out of former warden Burl Cain's experience at Angola (Louisiana State Penitentiary).<sup>198</sup>

Angola, once known as the bloodiest prison in America, is now one of the safest and most peaceful prisons in the country.<sup>199</sup> This transformation came about with what is now known as the Prison Seminary Model. Moral rehabilitation is facilitated and encouraged by providing a robust theological education of inmates with long sentences in the form of a four-year accredited degree program to use those inmate graduates as peer mentors within the prison system.

Cain desires to see every state prison system experience a cultural change and become a channel for moral rehabilitation.<sup>200</sup> Cain helped numerous prison seminaries get started while

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<sup>198</sup> "Home," Prison Seminaries Foundation, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://globalprisonseminaries.org/our-mission/>.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

serving as the Angola warden. He retired in 2016 and launched the Prison Seminaries Foundation.

This study's results have validated moral rehabilitation and the use of peer mentors as a tool for future prison reform. This study's validation may serve as an aid to legislators, correctional leaders, non-profit donors who may be interested in moral rehabilitation in their state. Furthermore, this study may support current moral rehabilitation initiatives as the Prison Seminaries Foundation has led the expansion of moral rehabilitation into fifteen states with twelve states in negotiations or planned.<sup>201</sup>

#### Where Should Research Regarding this Problem Go from Here?

The study's literature review noted years of research relating to inmates, peers, prisons, penal philosophy, and so on. There were several resources directly related to the moral rehabilitation model that originated at Angola Prison in Louisiana. The most comprehensive research to date would be "The Angola Prison Seminary, Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity, Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation," conducted by Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Byron Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, and Grant Duwe.

This study is also unique to most literary research in that it presented the voices of those directly involved. This study sought the opinions from the State of West Virginia Correctional leadership, prison wardens and senior administrators, peer mentors, mentees, and the general inmate population. Prison literary research exists in many forms. This project captured the voices of all the key stakeholders in a single study.

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<sup>201</sup> "Home," Prison Seminaries Foundation, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://globalprisonseminaries.org/our-mission/>.

In his article, “Prison-based peer-education schemes,” Devilly points to the concept of the inmates themselves as resources. Traditionally, within the offender-rehabilitation framework, the offenders themselves are seen as passive recipients of treatment and are required to adopt the role of patient, client, or student, with the change process resting upon a professional staff. However, within that framework, Devilly points out that offenders themselves represent the largest group of “untapped resources” in most rehabilitation frameworks, capable of having a powerful and positive influence on fellow offenders.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, and in line with cognitive dissonance theory and research, when offenders act as agents of change, they increase the likelihood of changing their own opinions and beliefs regarding offending behavior to be consistent with their new role as a model.

One of the potential challenges is the level of moral rehabilitation buy-in from the correctional leadership nationwide. Change can be a complicated process, especially a radical change in correctional philosophy regarding new inmate responsibility within the prison population. The inmates have not been allowed to possess high levels of responsibility within the prisons, both in West Virginia and the United States, so the transition of inmates becoming agents of moral change will not be without its challenges.

The next step is to continue a spirit of partnership, excellent communication, and a foundation from which to build. This project validated the moral rehabilitation initiative and the use of peer mentors. The next step will be to continue discussions based on the lessons learned and the thesis project's opportunities.

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<sup>202</sup> Grant J. Devilly, Laura Sorbello, Lynne Eccleston, and Tony Ward, “Prison-based peer-education schemes,” *Science Direct: Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10, (2005): 220, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/science/article/pii/S1359178903000879?via%3Dihub>.



The key stakeholders must realize the commitment necessary to move forward. This researcher believes the commissioner and senior leaders will embrace this opportunity by developing a moral rehabilitation team dedicated solely to developing and implementing a plan to expand the moral rehabilitation initiative into all West Virginia prisons. An excellent beginning would be to include the moral rehabilitation initiative in the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's strategic plan.

Additionally, the development of policies and procedures to guide the individual prison leaders through this new initiative. The moral rehabilitation initiative is still in its infancy, so a step-by-step guide would be an excellent resource for prison administrators as they embrace this new initiative. The wardens, deputy wardens, associate wardens of programs, and the chaplains will play critical roles in the success and sustainability of the moral rehabilitation initiative.

The research must continue. It begins with assuring all key stakeholders are aware of the moral rehabilitation initiative; they value it and believe in its future potential. As time passes, the satisfaction research must be documented relating to correctional staff buy-in. There needs to be statistics in West Virginia and other states showing support for moral rehabilitation. Additionally, there needs to be statistical data similar to that compiled at Angola prison. Angola documented inmate assault on staff, and inmate on inmate assault dropped over seventy percent after the moral rehabilitation initiative was implemented.<sup>203</sup> Research must be continued as to the number of inmates becoming peer mentors, the number of mentees, and the general inmate population's continued acceptance.

The research must be shared nationally. Currently, the Prison Seminars Foundation is the country's leader in the expansion of moral rehabilitation. They have led the expansion

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<sup>203</sup> Hallett et al, 235.

through networking with key stakeholders in the individual states. Research needs to be compiled and shared nationally; each state needs to document its stages of progress, best practices, and statistical results. Future research must include the new roles of inmate responsibility being permitted by prison administrations, both in West Virginia and nationally.

Ongoing research will enable prisons throughout the country to perpetually evaluate their progress. The research will serve as a grading system for the success or failure of individual moral rehabilitative initiatives. It will serve as an excellent resource for other state correctional leaders who may be interested in implementing moral rehabilitation initiatives in their prisons. So the research must continue in West Virginia and states across the country.

Ongoing research is merited regarding the continued positions of all the key stakeholders. The voices of all the key stakeholders must remain constant within future research. The moral rehabilitation's sustainability will not come from political influence or administrative mandates. Moral rehabilitation will survive through positive cultural changes within the prisons that cannot be denied and when moral rehabilitation statistics are positive and consistent as well as when the wardens and the administrative staff value the peer mentors as assets. Additionally, when the mentors continue to multiply and embrace new, innovative ways to serve others, the mentees and the general inmate populations accept this model long term.

### Conclusion

Moral rehabilitation is a core element in anyone's journey to improve, inside or outside of prison. This researcher witnessed it happening in one of the most unlikely places, prison, through those declared the least of these, the inmates. This researcher witnessed that, in Christ, any man can change. These transformations are real. These men are still not perfect. They fail often, but they repent and continue their faith and hope in Christ.

Jesus stated, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). This researcher met many men who have stolen so much from others, yet, they too, have lost much. Crime paints with a broad brush. It impacts the victim and the victim’s family, but many times, it also destroys the offender’s family.

This researcher witnessed men who have embraced the good news that Christ brings. They have not only accepted His gift of salvation, but they have also embraced a new lifestyle, and many are doing their part to fulfill, The Great Commission. The Bible notes, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news” ( Rom 10:14-15). The peer mentors have accepted the role of delivering the good news throughout West Virginia prisons; the mentors are experiencing hope and purpose, some for the first time in their lives.

The Bible states, “When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, ‘truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’”( Matt 25:39-40). This researcher is blessed to call the men inside the prison walls in West Virginia brothers.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A – IRB Approval Letter

December 18, 2020

Calvin Sutphin  
Joe Easterling

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-162 Inmate Peer-to-Peer Mentoring: A Resource for Future Prison Reform

Dear Calvin Sutphin, Joe Easterling:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: December 18, 2020. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

IRB Mentor

Liberty University

## Appendix B – Study Permission Request

September 4, 2020

Betsy Jividen  
Commissioner  
West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
1409 Greenbrier Street  
Charleston, West Virginia  
25311

Dear Commissioner Jividen:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research project is *Inmate Peer to Peer Mentoring, a Resource for Future Prison Reform*. The purpose of the study is to acquire validation that peer to peer mentoring can be a tool for future prison reform.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your staff along with the inmate population to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to complete either an interview, focus group, questionnaire, or survey. Participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on the official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,  
Calvin L Sutphin II  
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C – WVDOCR Approval Letter



BETSY C. JIVIDEN  
COMMISSIONER

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY



JEFF S. SANDY, CFE, CAMS  
CABINET SECRETARY

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Office of the Commissioner  
1409 Greenbrier Street  
Charleston, WV 25311  
304-558-2036 - Telephone  
304-558-5367 - Fax

November 16, 2020

Calvin L Sutphin II  
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University  
4300 Staunton Avenue  
Charleston, West Virginia  
25304

Dear Calvin,

Please be advised that after careful review of your research proposal entitled Inmate Peer to Peer Mentoring, a Resource for Future Prison Reform, we are pleased to grant permission for, and to support your study within the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The approved facilities are Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail, Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail, Saint Marys Correctional Center and Jail, Northern Correctional Facility, and the North Central Regional Jail. I wish you the best in this endeavor and am looking forward to the information it can provide for all of us.

Sincerely,

Betsy Jividen

Commissioner  
West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation

## Appendix D - Peer to Peer Study Facility Working Outline

### 1. **Wardens and Senior Staff**

- a. Complete Questions before conference call: Calvin will provide
- b. Sign Consent Form: Calvin will provide
- c. Schedule Zoom Video Conference Call (Approx. 45 minutes)

### 2. **Inmate Peer Mentors**

- a. Post Recruitment Letter: Chaplain/Calvin
- b. Complete Questions before conference call: Chaplain/Calvin
- c. Sign Consent Forms: Chaplain/Calvin
- d. Schedule Zoom Video Conference Call (Approx. 45 Minutes)

### 3. **Inmate Mentees:** (5 men who participated in peer mentor-led activities/programs, received any service from a peer mentor such as hospital, medical visit, etcetera)

- a. Post Recruitment Letter: Chaplain/Calvin
- b. Complete Questions before conference call: Chaplain/Calvin
- c. Sign Consent Forms: Chaplain/Calvin
- d. Schedule Zoom Video Conference Call (Approx. 45 Minutes)

### 4. **Inmate Mentees** (20 men who have participated in peer mentor-led activities)

- a. Post Recruitment Letter: Chaplain/Calvin
- b. Complete questionnaire consisting of 3 questions: Chaplain/Calvin
- c. Sign Consent Form: Chaplain/Calvin

### 5. **General Population Survey:** The facility will be provided 250 copies of the survey. The survey consists of 10 “Yes or No” Questions: Chaplain/Calvin

- a. Post Recruitment Flyer: Chaplain/Calvin

## Appendix E – State Leadership Recruitment Letter

Dear West Virginia State-level Leader:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to seek validation of the use of Peer Mentors as a means for future prison reform. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and current state-level correctional leaders who have direct knowledge of the use of peer mentors within prisons. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a Zoom video-recorded interview. This should take approximately one hour to complete. The Director of Inmate Services will be asked to provide publicly accessible policy and procedure documents at the time of the interview. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please reply to this email.

A consent document is attached to this email. The document contains additional information about my research. Please sign and return it to me by email before the interview if you choose to participate.

Sincerely,

Calvin L Sutphin II  
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix F – State Leadership Consent Form

**Title of the Project:** Inmate Peer to Peer Mentoring, a Resource for Future Prison Reform

**Principal Investigator:** Calvin L. Sutphin II, MSM, MACM, Liberty University

**Invitation to be part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and a current state-level correctional leader who has direct knowledge of the use of peer mentors within prisons. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

**What is the study about, and why is it being done?**

The study's purpose is to acquire validation that peer-to-peer mentoring can be a tool for future prison reform. The study will gather information directly regarding peer-to-peer mentoring in the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative. Peer mentors are graduates of the Mount Olive Bible College who serve as moral change agents throughout the prison culture.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a Zoom video-recorded interview. This should take approximately 1 hour to complete.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Your participation in this study may lead to prison reform, benefitting both the prison culture and prison administration.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked drawer. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and any paper copies will be shredded.
- Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. The recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher is the president and CEO of Catalyst Ministries, which introduced the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative to West Virginia. Catalyst Ministries works with the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. While there is no immediate benefit to Catalyst Ministries, this disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, Catalyst Ministries, or the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Calvin Sutphin II. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 304.539.1097, [calvins@suddenlink.net](mailto:calvins@suddenlink.net), or PO Box 4385, Charleston, WV 25365. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Joe Easterling, at [jeasterling2@liberty.edu](mailto:jeasterling2@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Subject Name  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Signature & Date

## Appendix G – WVDOCR Commissioner Jividen Questions and Responses

1. What is your current position, and could you briefly explain what it entails?

I have been the Commissioner of the WV Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation since January of 2018. I am responsible for overseeing the state's ten prisons, ten jails, four community corrections centers, and ten juvenile facilities, along with approximately 4000 employees and more than 10,000 offenders. The Division is charged with the mission of protecting the safety of West Virginia communities and the incarcerated populations of the states and providing resources and tools to better prepare offenders to reenter their communities as productive, law-abiding citizens.

2. Historically, research suggests that Corrections has been punitive versus rehabilitative. Do you agree with that?

Yes.

3. I know the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative using peer mentors is relatively new, not only in West Virginia but also across the country. West Virginia is one of the earliest states to embrace Moral Rehabilitation, the evidence-based model from the Louisiana State Penitentiary, better known as Angola Prison. What are your thoughts on the current status of Moral Rehabilitation using the inmates as mentors, and what do you believe its fullest potential is?

I do not think we have even begun to see the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative's full potential, but lives are already being changed. Attitudes are changing among both the staff and offender populations, and those of us watching the progress know that the potential for what can be accomplished is unlimited. Offenders who have spent lifetimes making bad decisions and understanding that they do not have to be forever defined by them and that by committing themselves to love and serve God, they find hope, forgiveness, purpose, and the opportunity to transform not only their lives but the lives of others as well. A former offender recently told me that.

The transfer of the first inmate missionaries from Mt. Olive to St. Mary's, Northern and Huttonsville, following the first graduation of the Bible College class, has been the start of something powerful. The role played by these mentors encompasses engagement and support on fronts beyond a purely religious perspective. Their involvement in more comprehensive reentry goals and their responsiveness to broader inmate needs affects change on so many fronts. These mentors make a point of "being there" when offenders may "need" them, not only counseling and praying with these individuals, but also participating and providing input and support for other outreach programs (such as the First Contact), working to facilitate acceptance by staff, and bringing a message of faith, forgiveness and most importantly hope to our incarcerated populations. Mentors are working in our mental health units, trying to counsel and relate to troubled offenders, and remaining at the bedside of dying inmates (sometimes singing hymns to them during their last hours). Death notifications to inmates are generally delivered by the mentors, who then remain with the grieving inmates providing spiritual care and serving as a support system. The choir at SMCC is nothing less than impactful, and attending their concerts



and the inmate ministry church services is an uplifting and inspiring experience for all of us who are lucky enough to be able to do it.

There is no doubt that these inmate mentors' influence and their active participation throughout so many areas, substantially contribute to providing hope, faith, and a sense of purpose to our offender populations. Perhaps one of the most exciting goals for the mentors is the planned transfer of some of them to the Regional Jails to mentor and minister to jail inmates. The fact that a transfer to a jail involves a substantial sacrifice of movement, amenities and programming opportunities for these mentors is a further testament to their dedication toward instilling a sense of humanity and working toward the greater good of our facilities and our populations.

4. How does this initiative compare to other programs, and could you foresee the peer mentors facilitating historical programs?

The fact that inmates – and staff – recognize the value of having these mentors as a resource seems, in and of itself, “historical.” By helping offenders learn, **from each other**, to take responsibility and use the mentoring process to work on problems, address situations, adjust to prison life, and settle differences, offenders are “doing good” in prison. The results benefit everyone. Inmates and staff recognize that the Moral Rehabilitation initiative reaches beyond what is offered in many typical programs. Aside from the change that comes from coming to know God in prison, the commitment outside of the program confines of “not giving up,” living a purposeful life, and the knowledge that it is possible to do good and live a purposeful life – even in prison – transcends to an offender’s behavior and life choices outside the confines of programming time.

I think the bringing together – and acceptance of - different faiths and religious cultures is also particularly relevant, especially in the prison culture. I will always remember the day that I participated in a prayer circle at our maximum-security prison. As I, a Jewish woman and former prosecutor, held the hand of and prayed with the Muslim offender seated beside me. Along with a group of Christians, it was impossible not to recognize that something important is happening. In prayer, we came together, accepting our differences, while united in our wish for the greater good and God’s presence in our lives and the lives of others.

5. How has the use of peer mentors been accepted by staff as well as the other inmates? Have you witnessed any degree of “pushback”?

There will always be both staff and other inmates who doubt the sincerity of those participating in the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, and this skepticism is well-founded in that countless offenders claim to be saved in prison without really changing at all. Likewise, there is resentment, which is also expected and even somewhat understandable on the part of the staff who complain that **they** have to pay for **their** college education or their children, while these “criminals” are getting it for free. Nonetheless, we see progress as people on both sides of the bars watch the program unfold and develop in their facilities. The change will not come overnight. There will always be those who will never accept the program or the genuineness of the change they see in participants and followers. However, acceptance of the program and its benefits to our offenders to our facilities is growing. Having the support of the administration is key as well. Our

Governor attended our first Bible College graduation, addressed the graduates, and has been a staunch supporter of moral rehabilitation programming and possibilities.

One occasion stands out to me as especially powerful proof that “security” and uniformed staff are also coming to recognize the Moral Rehabilitation program’s value and supporting its implementation. During a meeting held to provide information and an overview of the program for all our facility superintendents, our partner from Catalyst Ministries presented to the group, as did our chaplains, but the most compelling presentation was the host facility’s head of security who told the group how this program “really works” and how he has been part of the process where mentors and staff are actually working together and “**communicating.**” Seeing the change in inmates has led to a change in attitude among officers, and there is every indication that it will continue.

I have also had the opportunity to talk with and spend time watching men who were part of the program. Perhaps more significantly, men whom these mentors influenced not only within their facilities but also as they begin to navigate the difficult paths of reentry. I find it encouraging to hear released offenders and program graduates say that part of what they strive to do is prove these “naysayers” wrong. – make the way easier for those still left and for those coming out behind them.

6. What challenges have you faced, and do you anticipate any major ones using peer mentors?

Other than the “pushback” and skepticism discussed above and the more recent setbacks caused by so many COVID-19 division-wide restrictions, one of the remaining challenges is that of holding inmate mentors to the higher standard required of those who are to set an example and occupy positions of trust in the facilities. It can be difficult for both the mentors and prison management. Stigma from staff who may perceive them as over-entitled or as playing the system, while at the same time being perceived by other inmates as “informants” for the administration, can complicate life for mentors. There will be occasions where making the wrong choice results in discipline or sending a mentor back to the originating facility. Balancing messages of forgiveness and second chances with institutional and societal concerns for respecting the victims of the crimes committed by some participating offenders is also a continuing challenge. We have been fortunate to benefit from the wisdom and learn from the example and practices put into place by Burl Cain at Angola, who created the blueprint for this program.

7. Do you believe the Moral Rehabilitation can make a positive difference within West Virginia’s prison culture? Please elaborate.

Absolutely. No one would dispute that peers have the greatest influence and the most credibility with other offenders. A former offender recently told me that “the best example is a living example,” and that is what inspired him to do better and change his life path. Inmates witness the change in others, and they want it for themselves. Behavior improves, and acceptance grows. Inmates see their help to others as a way to start making up for their past criminal behaviors. It is rewarding to see barriers being broken down among the inmate population. Not only is their example imitated in life within the prison, but many carry it to their lives after prison—the best indicator of the positive differences

in the reports of officers and staff in our facilities. The program already has made a positive difference with respect to the quality of relationships with staff. The fact that more superintendents are asking for placement of peer mentors is clearly an indication that the program is already having a positive influence within our prison culture.

8. In meeting both graduating classes along with current students, do you feel this initiative has been a tool in adding “hope and purpose” in the lives of the graduates and students?

Not only have I attended the graduations, but I have also been there for church services and the first performance (and subsequent ones) by the St. Mary’s choir. The opportunity “to do good” and live a purposeful life in service to God and others, even in prison, is the resounding message to everyone who witnesses what is going on. The universal lesson for these offenders is that they can say – and they **know** – that they are not the same people they were when they went into prison.

One former offender told me, “it is like a bridge” that he keeps walking over to get from his past lifestyle choice to his new one. It is not a “leap” or a quick change. It builds a step at a time. Prison mentors and participants offer spiritual support, help, and counsel to fellow inmates on the inside, and many continue to do the same thing once released. I am personally aware of the path that many offenders impacted by the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative have followed upon their release from prison. They serve as peer mentors and support specialists, spiritual guides, and “living examples” to those coming out behind them, and in some cases, to those who came before them.

## Appendix H – Director Rider Questions and Responses

1. What is your current position, and could you briefly explain what it entails?

Clarence J. Rider, Jr., Director of Inmate Services and Activities. I am the agency contact for Recreation Services, Library Services, and Inmate Arts & Crafts. I supervise the Chaplains and Religious Services. That includes providing equitable services for all faith groups within the WVDCR. I am in contact with other Religious Services Administrators around the country on a weekly basis. We consult each other on current and best practices in providing religious services. I am also the agency liaison for Mount Olive Bible College. I also provide oversight for the Peer Mentor program.

2. Historically, research suggests that Corrections has been punitive versus rehabilitative. Do you agree with that?

That is an accurate statement. In part, it comes with the nature of the job. Every correctional person's role is to maintain a secure and safe facility. Past practices to accomplish this have worked well over the years. However, the correctional and political leaders are realizing that society cannot incarcerate away drugs and other crime problems. Some people must be incarcerated for the rest of their lives because they are a threat to society. However, the vast majority of our inmates have a release date and return to society, either by parole or discharge. I have been in corrections since September 1994, and in my time, we have tried to prepare inmates for reentry. The process is continually changing and improving.

3. I know the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative using peer mentors is relatively new, not only in West Virginia but also across the country. West Virginia is one of the earliest states to embrace Moral Rehabilitation, the evidence-based model from the Louisiana State Penitentiary, better known as Angola Prison. What are your thoughts on the current status of Moral Rehabilitation using the inmates as mentors, and what do you believe its fullest potential is?

I am supportive of the program. The inmates have a unique opportunity to provide moral guidance for their fellow inmates. Inmates are around each other twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three-hundred-sixty-five days a year. It is hard being constantly observed. That is why the training at the Bible College is so important. We are not trying to create perfect people, but we are trying to teach responsibility before God and your fellow man. Hopefully, the peer mentors become a positive voice for their peers. Ultimately, we would hope to grow and expand so that every housing unit has a peer mentor, living there or going there to minister, including the segregation units.

4. How does this initiative compare to other programs, and could you foresee the peer mentors facilitating historical programs?

Peer mentoring is a unique situation where we allow inmates to influence other inmates. The traditional correctional model forbids any inmate from being in an official position of authority over another inmate. That included any preaching or teaching roles. However, we have learned that positive peer influence is what is needed. The peer pressure is there anyway, so positively using that makes sense. There could be a time when we use inmates to assist the West Virginia Department of Education more directly. We currently allow the peer mentors to serve in many areas and facilitate several programs such as Faith-based and Substance Abuse.

5. How has the use of peer mentors been accepted by staff as well as the other inmates? Have you witnessed any degree of “pushback”?

There are mixed reviews regarding staff acceptance of the moral rehabilitation program. I had a Sergeant tell me he resented the inmates being provided a free college education when he had to pay for his kids to go to college. There is pushback from facility management on access to educational space, equipment, and materials. There is certain staff in positions where they can be a hindrance or actively oppose the program. That is why it is vitally important to have a Commissioner who supports the program. We have been fortunate since we started the initiative to have Commissioners that believed in the program.

6. What challenges have you faced, and do you anticipate any major ones using peer mentors?

The challenges have mostly surrounded personalities. There have been times when individual prison administrations have not been true believers in the program; they followed the Commissioner’s directive. This lack of buy-in creates a need for more oversight. In the Angola model, Warden Cain was the main DOC staff person who promoted the moral rehabilitation agenda. He set expectations and directly dealt with issues. There has to be someone somewhere in the system that will adopt that role. Additionally, we must mentor the mentors as we move along. Peer mentors are still convicted felons, and the prison culture is ingrained and very hard to overcome with both staff and their peers. Their transformation must be real for administrative buy-in. There will always be peer mentors who get in trouble, quit, or otherwise become ineffective. You must address those issues directly and with compassion on an individual basis. The moral rehabilitation initiative must maintain its integrity to assure administrative support.

7. Do you believe the moral rehabilitation initiative can make a positive difference within West Virginia’s prison culture? Please elaborate.

I am confident the moral rehabilitation initiative will make a positive impact. We do not have the statistical data to evaluate the program at this point. However, the anecdotal evidence is encouraging. At one facility where we have placed peer mentors, the administration has bought-in completely. They actively pursue programs that will benefit

the entire population and advance the moral rehabilitation initiative. One story stands out in my mind. The facility was conducting a Day with Dad activity. During that day, I observed the facility's Chief Correctional Officer have a race on clown bicycles with an inmate. Another story comes to mind. Before we had our first graduating class, we allowed some of the students to minister in the same facility's punitive segregation unit. Those particular students had previously spent time in the same punitive segregation unit. Punitive segregation is for institutional violations and not based on the crime that sent them to prison. One individual that was serving his punitive time was ministered to by the students, and he got saved. His behavior was noticeably different after that. In a short time, he wanted to be baptized. Arrangements were made, and he was baptized. The thing that stands out so much to me is that the captains that ran the punitive segregation unit contacted the Chaplain to arrange for the baptism. That is staff buy-in. There have been other incidents where officers have called for Bible College students/peer mentors to help troubled inmates.

8. In meeting both graduating classes and current students, do you feel this initiative has been a tool in adding "hope and purpose" in the graduates' and students' lives?

The goal has always been to train peer mentor workers. However, I have seen how the Biblical educational process has changed some of the students. They are given purpose; they are given a solid foundation for their own lives.

## Appendix I – Focus Group Video Conference - Wardens and Senior Staff

The questions below are excerpts from the video-conference focus group meetings. The researcher provided the questions below as they relate directly to the study's validation, specifically, the *awareness*, *value*, and *potential* of the moral rehabilitation initiative and peer mentors' use.

2. I know the concept is relatively new, but could you please share your knowledge of West Virginia's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, especially the Peer Mentors' use?
3. Do you see any "value" the Peer-to-Peer Mentors are bringing to the prison population? If so, briefly describe the value.
4. Are the Peer-to-Peer Mentors adding any administrative value? If so, please elaborate.
6. What are your thoughts as to the potential of using Peer Mentors? Security will always be the number one priority, but do you envision this as something that could change the delivery of corrections in West Virginia?

### Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail Summary

The warden and senior staff were all aware of the moral rehabilitation initiative. They also believed it was valuable and had future potential.

#### **Awareness**

2. I know the concept is relatively new, but could you please share your knowledge of West Virginia's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, especially the Peer Mentors' use?

- The Associate Warden of Programs: I believe the initiative is to train and educate inmates through college-level courses to serve their peers through modeling and self-discipline. Hopefully, as inmates transform and serve the population, the prison culture will change, thus making the whole Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation a safer and more productive environment.

#### **Value**

3. Do you see any "value" the Peer-to-Peer Mentors are bringing to the prison population? If so, briefly describe the value.

- Warden: I do see value being brought to the facility by the peer mentors. Our facility has used the mentors to help feed and to disciple our most restrictive population. The mentors can reach inmates who have been placed in lockdown and have no other daily

contact with other inmates. We have used the mentors to talk to inmates who have become upset. The situation could lead to a use of force incident, but the mentor was able to calm the inmate down.

- Deputy Warden: At our facility, we provide the mentors who speak with other inmates throughout the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation and here at the facility. Anytime you can have an inmate positively speaking to another inmate is a plus. The inmates tend to respond better to these conversations because they have been thru the same thing as far as being convicted of a crime and being in prison. This helps the facility's inmates with their social skills, positive behavior benefits, translating to an overall benefit to everyone.
  - Associate Warden of Programs: The mentors provide extra outlets for the less stable and problemed inmates. Inmates have peers or other inmates who will give them better morally acceptable advice and different problem-solving avenues than just the correctional staff.
4. Are the Peer-to-Peer Mentors adding any administrative value? If so, please elaborate.
- Deputy Warden: A benefit of having peer-to-peer mentors has inmates who want to change their way of living and thinking and want to pass that on to as many inmates as possible. Of course, this helps the administration when it comes to disciplinary problems, information of inmates needing help, and it just creates a better work environment for staff and inmates alike.”
  - Chaplain: Yes, the peer mentors serving as a chaplain’s assistant have the following responsibilities: they monitor religious services in the chaplain's absence, counsel other inmates, typing responsibilities as requested, assisting inmates in acquiring religious literature, Bibles, books, etc. They also transport materials to the Quilliams units.

## **Potential**

6. What are your thoughts as to the potential of using Peer Mentors? Security will always be the number one priority, but do you envision this as something that could change the delivery of corrections in West Virginia?
- Warden: I think the peer mentors could be a great asset. When we can use inmates to help talk to the population, it is a win on both sides.
  - Associate Warden of Programs: We have plans to utilize certain peer mentors in our inmate Orientation Program. This will allow a rapport to be built with the mentors when the new inmates first arrive in the institution. This will provide new arrivals with someone to seek out in the main population to steer them in the right direction. We have discussed possibly utilizing designated mentors in conjunction with security and mental health staff during self-harm watches. In our institutions, we will see a culture change, and it should make a difference in all areas of our correctional environment. I believe that the individuals who go through the program successfully and serve as mentors will be better equipped to re-enter society. I think it will also reduce our recidivism rate for the mentors and peers if successfully implemented.



## St. Marys Correctional Center and Jail Responses

The warden and senior staff were well aware of the moral rehabilitation initiative. They had an excellent grasp of its current value and future potential.

### **Awareness**

2. I know the concept is relatively new, but could you please share your knowledge of West Virginia's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, especially the Peer Mentors' use?

Associate Warden of Programs: The moral rehabilitation initiative was implemented to have the inmates change their way of thinking, make moral decisions, taking the high road and regaining control of their lives in a positive manner. Peer mentors related to other inmates better than staff. They spread the message of moral rehabilitation, setting an example along the way.

Deputy Warden: It is the practice to strengthen the desire for inmates to increase their moral compass. The mentors relate better with their "fellow" inmates; therefore, they can be more influential in changing the prison culture.

### **Value**

3. Do you see any "value" the Peer-to-Peer Mentors are bringing to the prison population? If so, briefly describe the value.

Deputy Warden: Absolutely, the mentors can lead by example. They are a liaison between the administration and the inmate population. The mentors can deescalate situations before they evolve into a situation. The mentor's value cannot be measured due to the fact that just them being morally conscious shows other inmates the proper behavior.

Associate Warden of Programs: The value is seeing the connection between the mentors and the rest of the population and seeing other inmates want to do the right thing. They see how good it is when you make good decisions and do what is morally right.

4. Are the Peer-to-Peer Mentors adding any administrative value? If so, please elaborate.

Associate Warden Programs: Disciplinary actions have decreased both overall and how the actions are dealt with. The mentors have been utilized to "mentor" and work on the "real" issues with other inmates instead of staff handing out punishments for every action.

The mentors are considered leaders among the inmate population, and they meet with the administration often. Inmates see them as a voice for themselves, and the administrative staff sees them as a voice to relay expectations and messages to the population. Inmates respond better to each other.

Deputy Warden: Yes, the mentors relay the administration's mission. In their position, the mentors act as liaisons for administration and the inmate population, and this includes the mentors working with all staff at SMCCJ.

Chaplain: I think the mentors have made a difference in relations with staff and other inmates. I have allowed them to get involved in many things that I would handle before myself. As a result, they realized our perspective. They can relay that perspective to inmates to resolve issues. We have used them for questions with religious diets, Ramadan issues, disciplinary issues, death notifications, and religious points of view and discussions. I will continue to utilize them to their fullest potential.

## **Potential**

6. What are your thoughts as to the potential of using Peer Mentors? Security will always be the number one priority, but do you envision this as something that could change the delivery of corrections in West Virginia?

Associate Warden of Programs: It already has changed the delivery at SMCCJ. Inmate to staff and staff to inmate communications have improved immensely. Inmates have a voice more than before, but I believe they are listening more than before as well. Inmate-led programs are occurring, increasing attendance in good programs and inspiring other inmates to become creative in developing new beneficial programs. Inmates still know that there will be consequences for destructive behaviors. However, I genuinely believe there is more respect for these consequences when they know they will be delivered fairly. This change has been brought about with communication initiated by the mentors.

Deputy Warden: I think the use of peer mentors in the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation will be beneficial. It has been very positive at SMCCJ.

## Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail Responses

The warden and senior staff were familiar with the moral rehabilitation initiative; however, the warden was new to this facility. Additionally, the associate warden of programs was new to the position.

## **Awareness**

2. I know the concept is relatively new, but could you please share your knowledge of West Virginia's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, especially the Peer Mentors' use?
- Warden: I have not had the opportunity to work directly with the program yet. However, I have visited a facility utilizing the concept and was very impressed with the accomplishments.

- Associate Warden of Operations: When the program started at HCCJ, the program was referred to as Bible College Mentors. The mentors worked closely with the chaplains and assisted with discipleship classes. The mentors lead prayer and assist with planning worship services. They assist the counselors with the orientation of new inmate arrivals.

### **Value**

3. Do you see any “value” the Peer-to-Peer Mentors are bringing to the prison population? If so, briefly describe the value.
  - Deputy Warden: It gives the offenders someone other than the staff that is trained to assist them.
  - Associate Warden of Operations: It was very beneficial with the orientation of new inmate arrivals.
  - Associate Warden of Programs: Yes, before Covid-19, the mentors were actively facilitating “Celebrate Recovery” meetings and Bible studies.
4. Are the Peer-to-Peer Mentors adding any administrative value? If so, please elaborate.
  - The leadership HCCJ was not aware of any direct administrative value associated with the peer mentors.

### **Potential**

6. What are your thoughts as to the potential of using Peer Mentors? Security will always be the number one priority, but do you envision this as something that could change the delivery of corrections in West Virginia?
  - Warden: I believe the use of peer mentors has great potential to assist staff in dealing with the inmate population's day-to-day issues and concerns.
  - Deputy Warden: With the right peer mentors and offenders who want to do the right thing.

### **Northern Correctional Center and Jail Responses**

The warden and senior staff are aware of moral rehabilitation and its history, not only in West Virginia but also in Angola Prison in Louisiana.

### **Awareness**

2. I know the concept is relatively new, but could you please share your knowledge of West Virginia’s Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, especially the Peer Mentors’ use?

- Chaplain: The Moral Rehabilitation Initiative is a WVDCR-wide program based on the program at Angola Prison in Louisiana designed to encourage and foster moral rehabilitation among facility inmates using the servant leadership model taught at the Mount Olive Bible College located at MOCCJ. Inmate peer mentors are trained at MOBC in this model and are deployed to other WVDCR facilities to be catalysts for moral rehabilitation among inmates of the WVDCR.
- Warden: In April of 2019, a directive was given to receive offenders who graduated from Mount Olive Bible College. The peer mentors were to affect positive change among the inmate population. This directive was based on the program at Angola Prison in Louisiana.

## Value

3. Do you see any “value” the Peer-to-Peer Mentors are bringing to the prison population? If so, briefly describe the value.

- Warden: The peer mentors help influence inmates to do good. They help promote positive development within the inmate population.
- Deputy Warden: The mentors can relate to the inmates and situations they may be dealing with. They can share their perspective and insight. This coming from a peer and not an authority figure is much more beneficial to the inmate population.
- Associate Warden of Programs: There is the inherent value of speaking with a peer vs. an authority figure. Many of our inmates have often only had negative interactions with authoritative figures. This process of being guided by the mentors, someone who truly understands what the person is going through, helps one feel more validated in sharing their emotions.

4. Are the Peer-to-Peer Mentors adding any administrative value? If so, please elaborate.

- Associate Warden of Programs: the total number of disciplinary reports has decreased since the peer mentors' implementation at this facility. In June 2019, NCCJ's fiscal annual report reflected eight-hundred-eighty-one disciplinary reports, of which thirty-three were assaults. By June 2020, the fiscal year's report showed six-hundred-fifty-nine disciplinary reports, of which twenty-seven were assaults. These changes reflect a twenty-five percent reduction in total disciplinary reports and an eighteen percent reduction in assaults.
- Deputy Warden: Yes, the mentors provide the inmate population's comments/concerns/issues to the administrative staff. This helps us in decision-making for the inmate population.

## Potential

6. What are your thoughts as to the potential of using Peer Mentors? Security will always be the number one priority, but do you envision this as something that could change the delivery of corrections in West Virginia?
  - Warden: Peer mentors could help new offenders coming into the system until the day they are released. The mentors could positively impact the lives of the type of inmates we have at our facility.

This researcher conducted four video conference, focus group discussions with the wardens and their senior staff members. The level of understanding relating to the moral rehabilitation initiative varied between the facilities. However, all involved were aware of the initiative, considered it valuable to some degree, and believed there was future potential. These endorsements were critical to the study's validation.

## Appendix J – Warden and Senior Staff Recruitment Letter

Dear Warden, Deputy Warden, Associate Wardens of Programs/Security, Chaplain:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to seek validation of the use of Peer Mentors as a means for future prison reform. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and current wardens or administrators in state correctional facilities. Administrators include deputy wardens, associate wardens, and chaplains. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a Zoom video-recorded focus group. This should take approximately 1 hour to complete. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please reply to this email.

A consent document is attached to this email. The document contains additional information about my research. Please sign and return it to me by email before the focus group if you choose to participate.

Sincerely,

Calvin L Sutphin II  
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix K – Warden and Senior Staff Consent Form

**Title of the Project:** Inmate Peer to Peer Mentoring, a Resource for Future Prison Reform

**Principal Investigator:** Calvin L. Sutphin II, MSM, MACM, Liberty University

**Invitation to be part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and a current warden or administrator in a state correctional facility. Administrators include deputy wardens, associate wardens, and chaplains. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

**What is the study about, and why is it being done?**

The study's purpose is to acquire validation that peer-to-peer mentoring can be a tool for future prison reform. The study will gather information directly regarding peer-to-peer mentoring in the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative. Peer mentors are graduates of the Mount Olive Bible College who serve as moral change agents throughout the prison culture.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

2. Participate in a Zoom video-recorded focus group. This should take approximately 1 hour to complete.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Your participation in this study may lead to prison reform, benefitting both the prison culture and prison administration.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked drawer. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and any paper copies will be shredded.
- Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. The recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher is the president and CEO of Catalyst Ministries, which introduced the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative to the state of West Virginia. Catalyst Ministries works with the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. While there is no immediate benefit to Catalyst Ministries, this disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, Catalyst Ministries, or the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Calvin Sutphin II. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 304.539.1097, [calvins@suddenlink.net](mailto:calvins@suddenlink.net), or PO Box 4385, Charleston, WV 25365. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Joe Easterling, at [jeasterling2@liberty.edu](mailto:jeasterling2@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature & Date



## Appendix L – Peer Mentor Recruitment Script

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, Calvin Sutphin is conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of his research is to seek validation of the use of Peer Mentors as a means for future prison reform. I am speaking to you on his behalf to invite eligible participants to join his study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and current inmate peer mentors who have gone through mentor training in a state correctional facility. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded focus group via Zoom. The focus group will consist of five men and take approximately 1 hour to complete. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please return the consent form to me signed.

A consent document will be handed to you momentarily. The document contains additional information about the research project. If you choose to participate, please sign and return it to me, the chaplain.

Sincerely,

Chaplain

## Appendix M – Peer Mentor Consent Form

**Title of the Project:** Inmate Peer to Peer Mentoring, a Resource for Future Prison Reform

**Principal Investigator:** Calvin L. Sutphin II, MSM, MACM, Liberty University

### **Invitation to be part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and a current inmate peer mentor who has gone through mentor training in a state correctional facility. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

### **What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The study's purpose is to acquire validation that peer-to-peer mentoring can be a tool for future prison reform. The study will gather information directly regarding peer-to-peer mentoring in the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative. Peer mentors are graduates of the Mount Olive Bible College who serve as moral change agents throughout the prison culture.

### **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

3. Participate in a Zoom video-recorded focus group. This should take approximately 1 hour to complete.

### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Your participation in this study may lead to prison reform, benefitting both the prison culture and prison administration.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked drawer. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and any paper copies will be shredded.
- Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. The recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher is the president and CEO of Catalyst Ministries, which introduced the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative to the state of West Virginia. Catalyst Ministries works with the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. While there is no immediate benefit to Catalyst Ministries, this disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, Catalyst Ministries, or the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Calvin Sutphin II. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at PO Box 4385, Charleston, WV 25365. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Joe Easterling, at [jeasterling2@liberty.edu](mailto:jeasterling2@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Subject Name  
\_\_\_\_\_ Signature & Date

## Appendix N – Mentees of Peer Mentor-led Activities Recruitment Script

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, Calvin Sutphin is conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of his research is to seek validation of the use of Peer Mentors as a means for future prison reform. I am speaking to you on his behalf to invite eligible participants to join his study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and current mentee participants in the inmate mentor/mentee program in a state correctional facility. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a paper questionnaire. It should take approximately 30 minutes. **Twenty participants will be selected at random and asked to participate.** Additionally, five mentees will be selected to participate in an audio-recorded focus group via Zoom, which should last approximately 1 hour. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please see the chaplain.

A consent document containing additional information about the research project is available for your review. If you would like to participate, please sign and return it to the chaplain.

Sincerely,

Chaplain

Appendix O – Mentee Consent Form

**Title of the Project:** Inmate Peer to Peer Mentoring, a Resource for Future Prison Reform

**Principal Investigator:** Calvin L. Sutphin II, MSM, MACM, Liberty University

**Invitation to be part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and a current mentee participant in the inmate mentor/mentee program in a state correctional facility. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

**What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The study's purpose is to acquire validation that peer-to-peer mentoring can be a tool for future prison reform. The study will gather information directly regarding peer-to-peer mentoring in the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative. Peer mentors are graduates of the Mount Olive Bible College who serve as moral change agents throughout the prison culture.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

4. Complete a paper questionnaire. It should take approximately 30 minutes. The questionnaire will be distributed by and returned to the chaplain.
5. Participate in a Zoom video-recorded focus group that should last approximately 25 minutes.
6. Twenty participants will be selected at random for the questionnaire and five for the focus group.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Your participation in this study may lead to prison reform, benefitting both the prison culture and prison administration.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked drawer. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and any paper copies will be shredded.

- Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. The recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher is the president and CEO of Catalyst Ministries which introduced the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative to the state of West Virginia. Catalyst Ministries works with the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. While there is no immediate benefit to Catalyst Ministries, this disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, Catalyst Ministries, or the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Calvin Sutphin II. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at PO Box 4385, Charleston, WV 25365. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Joe Easterling, at [jeasterling2@liberty.edu](mailto:jeasterling2@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above. *I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*  The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature & Date

## Appendix P – West Virginia State Leadership Discussion Questions

1. What is your current position, and could you briefly explain what it entails?
2. Historically, research suggests that Corrections has been punitive versus rehabilitative. Do you agree with that?
3. I know the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative using peer mentors is relatively new, not only in West Virginia but also across the country. West Virginia is one of the earliest states to embrace Moral Rehabilitation, the evidence-based model from the Louisiana State Penitentiary, better known as Angola Prison. What are your thoughts on the current status of Moral Rehabilitation using the inmates as mentors, and what do you believe its fullest potential is?
4. How does this initiative compare to other programs, and could you foresee the peer mentors facilitating historical programs?
5. How has the use of peer mentors been accepted by staff as well as the other inmates? Have you witnessed any degree of “pushback”?
6. What challenges have you faced, and do you anticipate any major ones using peer mentors?
7. Do you believe the Moral Rehabilitation Initiative can make a positive difference within West Virginia’s prison culture? Please elaborate.
8. In meeting both graduating classes and current students, do you feel this initiative has been a tool in adding “hope and purpose” in the graduates’ and students’ lives?

## Appendix Q – Wardens/Senior Staff Focus Group Questions

1. Can each of you state your title and briefly describe your role at the prison?
2. I know the concept is relatively new, but could you please share your knowledge of West Virginia's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative, especially the Peer Mentors' use?
3. Do you see any "value" the Peer-to-Peer Mentors are bringing to the prison population? If so, briefly describe the value.
4. Are the Peer-to-Peer Mentors adding any administrative value? If so, please elaborate.
5. Have you been able to quantify any benefits relating to Peer-to-Peer Mentoring, such as disciplinary action, etc.?
6. What are your thoughts as to the potential of using Peer Mentors? Security will always be the number one priority, but do you envision this as something that could change the delivery of corrections in West Virginia?



## Appendix R – Peer Mentors Focus Group Questions

1. Congratulations on graduating from Bible College. What year did you graduate, and what responsibilities and activities have you engaged in since becoming a Peer Mentor?
2. How do you personally value the Moral Rehabilitation Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program?
3. Was the transition into Peer Mentoring challenging? If so, please elaborate.
4. Have you witnessed progress in the Peer-to-Peer Mentoring concept? If so, please share.
5. How have the other inmates treated you before and after becoming a Peer Mentor?
6. Has the prison administration accepted you as a Peer Mentor? Please elaborate if possible.
7. Do you believe the use of Peer Mentoring has the potential to make positive changes within the correctional setting?

## Appendix S – Mentee Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe your interactions with the Peer Mentors – programs, mentorships, one-on-one conversation, etc.
2. What makes the concept of a Peer Mentor unique to the prison setting?
3. Do you feel the Peer Mentors add value to the prison population?
4. How are the Peer Mentors different compared to volunteers?
5. Would you consider becoming a Peer Mentor?

## Appendix T – Mentee Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in paragraph form. Please put some thought into your response before writing.

1. The Peer Mentors have only been serving for approximately four years. Please describe your experience with them.
2. In your opinion, please compare the prison culture before and after the use of Peer Mentors.
3. Do you believe the Peer Mentors have the potential to make a positive change in the overall prison culture? If so, please explain how.

# Research Participants Needed

## Peer Mentors as a Tool for Future Prison Reform

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Are you currently an inmate in a state correctional facility?

If you answered **yes** to both questions, you might be eligible to participate in a research study.

The study's purpose is to acquire validation that peer-to-peer mentoring can be a tool for future prison reform. The study will gather information directly related to the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Moral Rehabilitation Initiative regarding the use of peer mentors. Peer mentors are graduates of the Mount Olive Bible College who serve as agents of moral change throughout the prisons.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a 10-question survey. This is an anonymous survey, meaning participants will not be required to submit names. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If interested, please see the Chaplain to obtain a survey and instructions.

Calvin Sutphin, a doctoral student in the School of Divinity Liberty University, is conducting the study.

**If you have any questions, please contact the researcher at PO Box 4385, Charleston, WV 25365.**

## Appendix V – Inmate General Population Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gauge the overall awareness of the Moral Rehabilitation Initiatives' use of Peer Mentors among the General Population.

1. What is your age? Please check where applicable.  
18 – 30 \_\_\_ 31 – 40 \_\_\_ 41 – 50 \_\_\_ 51 – 60 \_\_\_ 61 – 70 \_\_\_ 71+ \_\_\_
2. What are your race and ethnicity? White \_\_\_ Black \_\_\_ Other: Please list \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you heard of Mount Olive Bible College?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. Are you aware the graduates become Peer Mentors and serve in various ways?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
5. Do you think the Peer Mentors have made a positive difference within the prison?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
6. Do you know any of the Peer Mentors?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. Have you witnessed a positive change within the Peer Mentors that you know over the last couple years?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
8. Have you ever connected with a Peer Mentor for advice, gone to a Peer Mentor for help with a situation, been part of a program they facilitated, etcetera?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. Do you believe the Peer Mentors add value to the prison?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
10. Would you ever reach out to a Peer Mentor for help?  
Check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_