

August 30, 2020

Dear RCB Congregant,

Bryan Stevenson has written, *“The opposite of poverty isn’t wealth. The opposite of poverty is justice.” “Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done”.*

Many of you completed the recent congregational survey on mission and we thank you for your time, interest and suggestions. The three mission program areas identified as most important to survey respondents are:

- Hunger
- Poverty and Disaster Relief
- Social Justice

We are working closely with Congregants and mission partners to support the first two areas and now want to focus on programming to address social justice issues.

As you know, for the past ten years the main initiative in social justice work at RCB has been the Coming Home Program, an intensive 20-week reentry program for those returning from incarceration. The Coming Home Program provided needed education, resources and most importantly, a supportive community through weekly meals, partnership with congregants, education and opportunities for participants to tell their stories. Recidivism has been almost zero for those who graduated from the Coming Home Program over the last ten years.

The departure of Dawn Ravella as Mission Director in April combined with necessary restrictions on gathering due to COVID-19, has forced us to consider alternatives to an in-person weekly program. Instead, we have been working with a team of Coming Home alumni to create a virtual network to connect RCB congregants with returning citizens without the necessity of an in-person connection, though we hope to build this into the program when restrictions are lifted.

The Coming Home Resource Network will be run by a committee of Congregants and alumni of the Coming Home Program, including:

Mary Mackintosh – Director of Missional Engagement; former Coming Home mentor and Leadership Team member

Kate Milliken Vaughey – Deacon and Coming Home mentor

Paul Muir – Deacon and Coming Home mentor

Frantz Michel – Founder and Director of Dream Deferred, an organization that aims to increase public safety through services that reduce crime and incarceration, improve behavioral health, and promote technology, education and employment; Coming Home alumni

Lawrence Bartley – Director of News Inside, a publication of The Marshall Project, an award-winning organization that focuses on journalism about criminal justice; Coming Home alumni

Donna Hylton – Author; speaker; Social justice advocate for women returning from incarceration and Founder of Life to Life and A Little Piece of Light organizations.

Lawrence, Frantz and Donna have created an online networking group through What's App to reach their contacts who previously have been incarcerated. They will screen the requests and present them to the Committee, prioritizing those that are from people they believe are committed to positive personal growth.

Examples of requests might include:

- Assistance in creating a resume
- Networking within certain job fields
- Preparing for a job interview
- Financial literacy – education about building credit, loans and basic savings
- Housing opportunities
- Assistance with technology
- Obtaining Certificates of Good Conduct or Relief

Participant requests will be listed in a periodic email newsletter to interested congregants describing the requests as well as highlighting existing connections and progress achieved. We hope you will read the newsletters and offer to assist where you are able. It is our fervent hope that once COVID-19 restrictions are behind us, we can have regular in-person community meals and speakers to build lasting personal connections with our partners in this program.

If you would like to be included in the newsletter mailings, you will be under no obligation to participate actively in helping our partners. **BUT**, we hope you will consider our partners' requests and open a door to a better life for those who have experienced the trauma of incarceration. Our power is in your willingness to serve by using your many gifts and resources to help our fellow citizens.

Gratefully,  
The Coming Home Resource Network Team