



CONVERSATION:
MANNY MILL

Responsibility to love

Koinonia House National Ministries, Inc., is a post-prison ministry based out of the Chicago area. Executive Director Manny Mill knows firsthand the difficulties prisoners face upon reentry into society. He recently spoke with Assistant Editor Jennifer McClure about these challenges and the Christian's responsibility.

tpe: What is Koinonia House's goal?

MILL: We want to be obedient without delay to the Word of God in making disciples, as stated in Matthew 28:19,20, and loving our neighbor, as stated in Matthew 22:37-40. We believe many people coming out of prison are disciples waiting to be made. To us, they are not ex-convicts; they are Christian neighbors.

tpe: Your Web site, koinoniahouse.org, states that of the 700,000 incarcerated individuals released each year, an estimated 10 percent are Christians.

MILL: That is a conservative figure. We need at least 70,000 churches to meet the Christians at the prison gate. Question: Who is

going to step to the plate?

If you move from California to Ohio, you need a church transfer. These guys are going to be moving from the church in prison to the church on the street. But ministering to men and women coming out of prison is like dealing with leprosy. People don't want to do it. The challenge for the church in America is to deal with the most critical, urgent and neglected problem we are facing as a country and as a church — and that is a lack of God's love.

tpe: How many houses are available through KHNM?

MILL: We have three houses functioning and another eight that are beginning. We equip and assist the church to love our Christian neighbors coming out of prison. We do that through seminars, consulting and training. However, our bread and butter is the Meet Me at the Gate Initiative.

tpe: What is Meet Me at the Gate?

MILL: Through Meet Me at the Gate a church or prison ministry makes a commitment to be at the prison gate when the Christian neighbor is released. They disciple

that Christian neighbor, preparing him or her for the reality of the outside prior to the release. Once the Christian neighbor is released, they commit to take care of 17 needs we have listed, including housing needs and three months of general needs.

When people are released from prison they have no resources. So these partners are going to put a budget together to pay for these neighbors' expenses. Also, each released person needs to have at least three mentors. First is a primary mentor, who coordinates the Meet Me at the Gate connection for the church or ministry. Then there is a spiritual mentor and a financial mentor. We'll provide the training for the mentors and the host family.

tpe: What does Meet Me at the Gate look like once the individual is released?

MILL: Every Sunday the host family will pick up the Christian neighbor and take that person to church for Sunday School and worship service and then for a meal just like a regular Sunday.

In life, most things are caught, not taught. We want these men and women who have never had a father, who have never had a life in Christ outside of those walls, to be able to know how to live life. If we are going to really solve this nation's crime issue, we must create for released people the family that they never had. **tpe**

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

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