

## *Prison Reform: Church of the Second Chance*



The JustMatter module, **Prison Reform: Church of the Second Chance**, consists of six sessions, although groups are encouraged to add an immersion experience as a seventh session. Each session is 2 ½ hours in length. The title comes from the book, *The Church of the Second Chance*, by the module developer, Jens Soering. Soering is an inmate who has written three other books while in prison, including the award winning *The Convict Christ*.

This module was designed and written by someone on the “inside” and does not try to soften the gritty truth of prison reality. Soering introduces the “radical” Christian principle of restorative justice, points out the critical need for comprehensive prison reform, and provides a strong criticism of the U. S. prison system. At the same time, Soering focuses throughout the module on the power of centering prayer and the Christian messages of reconciliation and redemption. The module, while focusing on the factual background for prison reform, is grounded in a deep spirituality and sense of humanity. It highlights interviews with long-term inmates and ministers from the “outside.”

Using the tools of reading, dialogue, active listening, videos, short research projects, and the possibility of guest speakers or an immersion experience, participants will:

- Engage the issue of prison reform from many angles,
- Learn what people of faith have to say about punishment and justice,
- Identify common myths and misconceptions about prisons and the corrections system and why these myths and misconceptions have come to be so well accepted,
- Explore the concepts of rehabilitation and restoration as well as prison “profiteering”,
- Discuss the systematic denial of the humanity of prison inmates, most obvious in excessive sentences and prison conditions, as an essential problem in prison reform.

**The Joliet Diocese Restorative Justice Committee is sponsoring an offering of the JustMatters’ Prison Reform module from JustFaith.** Committee members will facilitate the 6 sessions to be held on Thursdays April 8, 15, 22 and May 6, 13, and 20 from 6:30pm until 9pm at St. Charles Pastoral Center, located at Airport Rd and Route 53, adjacent to the north side of Lewis University. Registration fee is \$10 per person. Book and materials and materials cost will be approximately \$25 per person. Contact Joyce Ruhaak 815-834-4028 or joyceru@dioceseofjoliet.org