

A Word to Partnering Churches, a Returned Citizens Perspective
Joseph Walling Sr.

As a returning citizen enters the community, it is likely he/she has already done some amount of research as to where they might attend church. Chaplains, volunteers, and even some Bible study organizations do their best to offer referrals. There is a certain amount of anxiety and frustration present even before the gate opens. Perhaps the prevailing thoughts are directed at, “will I be received as a normal Christian?” or “will I be embraced by loving arms?” The hope is that we can enter just as any new member would be in the community. We just want to share the excitement of being redeemed by the blood of Christ.

There are no prerequisites to receiving returning citizens. The majority of returning citizens are just seeking opportunity to worship beside other Christians in a Bible believing church. Acceptance as a member of the body of Christ is perhaps the key element that could make or break the transitioning process. A church where one feels welcomed, not judged, and the love of Christ being present, can be the catalyst to the re-entrants’ entire future. We want a place where we can bring family, be family, and learn together. It's not rocket science.

Let the Spirit lead in your decision making. Prepare to expand your boundaries and be faced with the possibility of additional needs. Most importantly, be willing to love as Christ does.