

## Resolution 1 – 2017 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly Resolution in Support of Prison Congregation and Prison Reform

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WHEREAS, Jesus, in Matthew 25, says that when we visit someone in prison, we are visiting him; and

WHEREAS, Prison Congregations of America provides direction and resources to assist in establishing congregations within prisons; and

WHEREAS, The Greater Milwaukee Synod, in collaboration with the ELCA Congregational Centers for Mission, has launched Breaking the Chains Congregation at the Felmers Chaney Correctional Center (minimum security prison), 2825 N. 30th St., Milwaukee, and has called Rev. Mark Thompson as the first pastor of the congregation; and

WHEREAS, Member congregations of the Greater Milwaukee Synod could gain spiritual enrichment, and opportunities for witnessing to the Gospel, by participating in the worship services of Breaking the Chains Congregation, by serving on the Prison Congregation Steering Committee, or by engaging in a local jail ministry; and

WHEREAS, Faith communities throughout Wisconsin are engaged in organizing efforts to reduce mass incarceration and racial disparities in Wisconsin's prisons, and in efforts to initiate more restorative justice policies in the Wisconsin prison system, such as earned release policies and treatment alternatives and diversionary programs for persons caught in the criminal justice system with underlying addiction and/or mental health issues; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, That the Greater Milwaukee Synod continue its support of Breaking the Chains Congregation by encouraging member congregations to send volunteers to participate in the Saturday evening worship services, to be represented on the Prison Congregation Steering Committee, to invite Rev. Mark Thompson to speak at congregational worship and other gatherings, and to contribute financially to the ministry needs of Breaking the Chains Congregation, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That congregations be encouraged to participate in ministries at local county and city jails, and nearby state prisons, as opportunities are available, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That congregations be encouraged to engage in prison reform and reentry initiatives, especially in the Restoring Our Communities (ROC) campaign<sup>1</sup>—aimed at reducing mass incarceration in Wisconsin--being carried out by four congregation-based justice organizing groups in the Greater Milwaukee Synod area: MICAHA (Milwaukee), SOPHIA (Waukesha), CUSH (Kenosha), and RIC (Racine).

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*Submitted by Hephatha Lutheran Church, Milwaukee  
Rev. Mary Martha Kannass and Rev. Joseph W. Ellwanger, Pastors  
and by Reformation Lutheran Church, Milwaukee  
Rev. Marilyn Miller, Pastor*

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<sup>1</sup> Restoring Our Communities (ROC) website: <http://www.rocwisconsin.org/>