



AN OPEN LETTER TO OREGONIANS:

The world has stopped. In what is perhaps the defining moment of a generation, we are witnessing heroism collide with tragedy. Grace and empathy must be our new form of currency in the midst of economic disaster, and today, I'm inviting you to consider a new way to get involved in the crisis taking place within Oregon's corrections system.

Prison is an isolating experience by design. COVID-19 is trying its best to further marginalize those in Oregon's prisons—impacting both Oregonian's in custody (14,500 in total) and Department of Corrections staff (4,500 in total). On March 13th, Oregon's Department of Corrections closed all facilities to visitors, and the isolation is compounding.

What if we, as neighbors, step-up, speak life, and take action to fill the void?

Both for those who work inside Oregon prisons and for those who are living there, this isn't a simple time. What if we acknowledged the stressful complexity and began pushing for long-term redemption for all?

97% of men and women in custody in Oregon prisons will eventually be released and become our neighbors again. In the next six months, roughly 2600+ men and women (a conservative estimate) will rejoin our neighborhoods, facing a world unlike anything we have ever seen. If you and I need our neighbors more in this season, how much more will someone re-entering our neighborhood need us? The community can't control what's happening on the inside, but we can link arms for a healthy neighborhood-based re-entry. What if we sent a message now saying, "Isolation is temporary. We're taking action to ensure you are back home permanently!"

Starting today, I'm asking you to join me in an effort to bust through decades of community silence regarding the incarceration experience and create some noise.

Know Me Now is an initiative designed to push love and hospitality into the lives of adults in custody, their children, and those who work within the corrections community.

Starting today, we're blitzing the internet with a campaign to: 1) build New Beginning Bags for adults re-entering this COVID-world; 2) write letters to adults in custody and corrections officers working within Oregon's 14 prisons and 3) recruit community members to step into a mentoring role by joining a Crew to walk alongside men and women returning home.

Why?

Empathy and grace. We all need it.

Please go to: www.knowmenow.org/contact to step into a problem with a solution.

Your friend,

The Know Me Now Team

*As I was.
As I am.
As I can be.*