

A Special Briefing for friends of Tennessee Prison Outreach Ministry

What is Our Prayer?

It is hard to imagine the pain that our children are experiencing when it seems they are not safe anywhere. As I write this article, 24 hours just passed since another senseless shooting occurred, this time in Nashville at the Covenant School for elementary children. Three 9-year-old children and three adults, including Dr. Katherine Koonce, the head of the school, were all slain. If this was just an isolated act, it would be tragic enough, but mass shootings in this country continue to rise. There have already been 131 mass shootings so far in 2023 in the United States (defined as where four or more people are injured or killed).

There are so many factors contributing to this that it is far too simplistic to identify just one cause or even one solution. Yet, we know that as a society we have lost our moorings. The family unit is badly broken and we are experiencing a loss of community. Too many young people are growing up in pain and trauma, contributing to all types of unhealthy behaviors. When we have a society that is badly damaged and mental health problems are increasing, compounded by easy access to weapons including high-powered assault-type weapons, it is just a powder keg ready to explode.

While I certainly don't profess to have all the answers, I do know for certain that many of our children are at risk, both of being a victim and also being the one that harms others. There is an old truism: "Hurt people often hurt others." This is why the work that TPOM does for the incarcerated, the children of the incarcerated, and the young people who are incarcerated, is so vital. We are meeting a broken society at the faultline.

It is easy to sit in our homes and churches and lament the unraveling of our society, but it's another matter entirely to engage the world in its brokenness. Jesus said in regard to caring for the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, and the hurting: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:39-40). Instead of us carrying Jesus to the broken world, we go to the margins of our community to meet Jesus. He is with the broken in our world and he is inviting us to join him. Praying for the world is important but maybe our prayer ought to be for wisdom and understanding to see how the Lord can use us as his agents of hope to a world that has lost its way. What is our prayer?



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Snow".

Thomas Snow
Director, TPOM



HONOR TO VOLUNTEERS!

TPOM volunteers form an essential part of this ministry. Our staff continues to energetically recruit and train new volunteers to carry out mentoring and many other volunteer roles. Long-time mentors and teachers behind the bars are making a difference in many lives and often send returning citizens to the reentry program. Volunteers are preparing to give another great experience to the campers at Camp COPE in June. Several juvenile facilities in the Nashville area see our volunteers give mentoring, academic tutoring, and other encouraging activities to the young people housed there. Every Sunday our residents gather in the Reentry Center to enjoy a community meal graciously provided by a variety of churches and volunteers. One volunteer sent out over 1,000 lessons last year by correspondence! Once a year, TPOM provides a **Volunteer Appreciation Dinner** to acknowledge the amazing service freely given by these wonderful volunteers. Please join us on Tuesday, May 9, 6:30 p.m., at the Fellowship Hall at Hillsboro Church of Christ. A meal will be provided as we enjoy the celebration of a year of service. Register today at tpom.org/events.



TPOM GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

JASON ROBERTS

Jason Roberts recently completed the program at TPOM Reentry. He describes how incarceration interrupted his life but created the chance

for a better life.

How did you make your way to TPOM? I came up for parole at Northwest and started thinking about what was going to be best for me. I didn't have to come to a program, but I felt it was best for me to be in a structured environment and then go to my parents' house. I wanted a faith-based program and with the classes and AA, and other services, TPOM stuck out.

What were some of your concerns as you began the program? I didn't know anybody and I was nervous about the unknown. How was I going to have money, get a job, and just get around? I was afraid I'd mess up and break a rule. There are a lot of rules! But once I got here, they had everything I needed. I got food stamps, a food box, a bus pass, and a job. I started telling the new guys coming in that the rules aren't that bad. The camaraderie of the guys in the house was so great; they wanted to help me get started. The staff was amazing, too.

How is your life different now? I've lost five friends from my hometown in the last few months that OD'd. I was on that path. Every day was the same process of getting money, then getting high. It seems strange to say it, but TDOC saved my life. When I grew up, I was never taught about God. But in prison, guys were saying, "God is doing this." I started going to church and Bible study in prison and I think God led me here. Now I go to an outside Bible study and Thursday night's spiritual direction with David is my favorite class. I'm grateful for my new life. God never gave up on me. I sent your text about doing an interview to my daughter to show her how far I've come.

What future plans do you have? I've got a good job rebuilding engines for heavy equipment for now, but I want to go back to school and train to be an architect. I want to get my granddaughters back into my life. I want to be baptized when my parents can come and witness it.

What advice do you have for others who might be thinking about reentry? Take this opportunity. Don't ever give up. Put God first and keep thanking him. With his help, you can make good things happen in your life.

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

The number of TPOM Reentry graduates (February-March pictured here) continue to multiply. We look forward to these graduates blessing their families and their communities as they move forward in their lives. TPOM's program stands out as a place where many kinds of support come together: genuine love and care from a knowledgeable staff, a team of trained volunteers and mentors, workforce development, counseling, case management, on-site AA meetings, house shepherds, spiritual development, and many other supporting services. Thank you to all the supporters who make this ministry possible.



Adam Sterry



Alex Hand



Candace Bates



Cassidy Carson



Catherine Elder



Christy Smith



Heather Henderson



Jack Shuttle



Jason Lackey



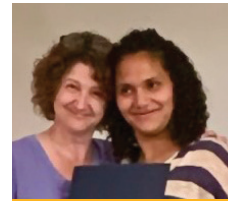
Jason Roberts



Kara Prost



Kerri Brown



Macara Page



Matthew Dickerson



Scan the QR Code (left) to donate or you may contact Thomas Snow at tsnow@tnprisonministry.org or 615-668-8281 for more information.

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UPDATES & OPPORTUNITIES

TPOM NEWS

THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Jeff Stewart gave a gift in memory of **Tommy McElhiney**.
Todd Victor gave a gift in honor of **James Pinchon, New Life Behavior instructor at Riverbend**.
Marshall Danby gave in honor of **Pebbles Garner**.
Gay Clark made a donation in honor of **Pebbles Garner**.
Linda Russell gave a gift in honor of **Pebbles Garner**.
Jim Carden gave a gift in honor of **Pebbles Garner**.
Timothy Hall made a donation in honor of **Pebbles Garner**.
Joe Henderson gave a gift in memory of **Denise Hayes**.
Larry and Stacy Hollified donated in memory of **Melba Abney**.
Crieve Hall Church of Christ women's jail ministry gave in memory of **Ladelle Morrell**.
Janice Christian gave in memory of **Oakley Christian, Jr.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Register for all events at tpom.org/events.

Basic Volunteer Training

Saturday, April 15, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., TPOM, 136 Rains Ave. | If you would like to volunteer or mentor men or women in the reentry program or with those who are still incarcerated, this is required training. Mentors continue to provide a key element of guidance and encouragement for the incarcerated or those in transition back to the community.

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

Tuesday, May 9, 6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall, Hillsboro Church of Christ, 5800 Hillsboro Pike | Join us for this annual treat as we gather to honor the many volunteers who contribute their hearts and energy to serve the incarcerated and their families.

3rd Annual "Come and See" Women's Event

Thursday, June 8, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Old Natchez Country Club, 115 Gardengate Dr., Franklin, TN 37069
SAVE THE DATE: "Come & See...Celebrating Our Stories."

Advanced Volunteer Training

Saturday, June 10, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., TPOM, 136 Rains Ave. For those who have already attended the required basic training, we offer advanced training on a variety of subjects that can help you gain a deeper understanding of your work with justice system-involved individuals. The theme will be resilience. Register at tpom.org/events.

Camp COPE

June 18-23, 2023, Whispering Pines Christian Camp, Castalian Springs, TN | The camp is for ages 8-17. Full scholarships are available for children with an incarcerated parent. Register at tpom.org.

TPOM Annual Benefit Dinner

October 5, 2023, Exposition Center, Nashville Fairgrounds | Mark your calendars now for this event at a new venue near TPOM.

"Come and See" Women's Event

Come and enjoy an inspiring evening of stories, songs, and celebration. You'll hear the stories of the women who live in TPOM's transitional house and those who walk alongside them on this journey. We hope you will join us for a delicious meal and a night of celebrating the beautiful way God is at work in our stories...and yours. Please register at tpom.org and consider sharing this invitation with your friends.



TPOM GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

MACARA PAGE

Macara Page recently graduated from the reentry housing program.

She talks about her experiences at TPOM and the new life that she plans after graduation.

Tell us how you came to TPOM. I looked at the applications for several different programs, but I heard a lot of good things about TPOM. I was told that the staff were good people and would really help you get on your feet. When I came, I found that was true.

What were some of your concerns when you first arrived? At first, I was scared to death and really nervous. When I think about where I came from to where I've grown to, I am so amazed. They really do love you here and care about you. I'm glad I picked this program.

How has your work experience been? I work at Kabinart as some of the others have. I've moved up, I'm an inspector now, and I just love my job.

How has TPOM been helpful with your reentry? Once I started working, I calmed down. Reisha (and others) lifted me up. The meetings helped a lot because I was hearing from others who want to make it.

What do people need to understand about incarceration? You have to close off the outside to make it on the inside. It's just a whole different world. You can't control what's going on on the outside. I just learned to do what I was supposed to do, avoid causing problems, and do my time.

What goals do you have for the future? My dad gave me some tough love when I needed it, but he visited recently and can see this place has changed me for the better. Now I want to go to my dad's, then get a place and eventually get my kids back. I'll get a job, go back to get my G.E.D., and go from there. I'll find an AA group to help me stay on track and I want to find a good counselor. I've loved mine at TPOM and she was a big help.

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