



**2.7 MILLION REASONS TO EMBRACE AND INTERVENE WITH
FAMILIES AFFECTED BY INCARCERATION**

By: Brenda McGowan

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Workshop Title: 2.7 million reasons to embrace and intervene with families affected by incarceration

Learning Objectives:

- To introduce the philosophy and framework for Prison Fellowship Angel Tree
- To identify typical ways in which congregations and community partners act as protective factors for children and families at risk
- To explore the role of the congregations and Christian community partners in promoting reconciliation, restoration, and transformation
- To explore successful program models, specific activities and initiatives, that have effectively responded to the needs of children and families of the incarcerated
- To discuss the critical role of Christian professionals in leading efforts

Level of Presentation: Basic, Intermediate

Target Audience: Social Workers, Church Leaders and Students

Workshop Abstract: For 2.7 million children in the U.S., their story may be filled with the abandonment, loneliness, stigma and shame that come from having a mom or dad in prison. For many, it may also include following their parents down the same destructive road to incarceration. Children and families of the incarcerated are in our midst in churches in every community. They are often invisible – sometimes by choice. The resilience literature and other studies suggest that the children, their incarcerated parents, and their families are in need of the kinds of supports that churches and community partners can and customarily provide. Moreover, if you are working in any human services organization these families are already accessing community resources. Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program partners with thousands of churches and community partners to begin the process of family reconciliation where it is possible. Angel Tree's goal is to equip churches and community partners to respond to the uniqueness of this important restorative ministry program and to better support the children, incarcerated parents, and caregivers in mentoring, in prison programs and engaging the family in the life of the church and community.

Presenter Bio(s):

Brenda McGowan holds a Masters of Public Administration and is a Family Life Educator. She is a national trainer and consultant with Nurturing Programs. She celebrates 4 + years with Prison Fellowship and currently serves as the National Director for Church and Community Engagement with Prison Fellowship. Her expertise in community capacity building, needs assessment, and coalition building has



given her a 15-year platform as an administrator for public-private partnerships. She has trained over 1,000 individuals and organizations across the United States. While serving as the Southeast area director, Brenda convened the Georgia Reentry Community of Practice, a statewide faith-based group committed to improving the reintegration of incarcerated men and women. Brenda also served on the Breakthrough Georgia Prisoner Reentry Workgroup to develop reports to legislators on barriers and recommendations for reentry.

Mary Engle is a graduate of Aquinos College. She currently serves as the Executive Director for Church and Community Engagement with Prison Fellowship. Engle has trained over a thousand volunteers and developed local coalitions and community partnerships in support of prisoners, former prisoners, and their families. She has collaborated with departments of corrections and legislators to develop intensive faith-based programming in state facilities, preparing men and women for their transition back to their community.