

## May ARCH and Reentry Updates

Prisons in Ohio have been and *still are* a consistent hotspot for COVID 19 cases. Over [80% of inmates at Marion Correctional Institution](#) tested positive for COVID 19. As of May 6th [27 staff members and 14 youth tested positive](#) at Franklin County's juvenile detention center in downtown Columbus. Statewide, 37 prison inmates have died from COVID-19. These rates are staggering.

Ohio prisons are [overcrowded](#). During a time when social distancing is the saving grace against the spread of a deadly disease, overcrowding is deeply concerning. Ohio is mass testing inmates as a response to the climbing infection rates and has made attempts to implement health and safety measures. Although this is a step in the right direction, the magnitude of the infection rate in overcrowded conditions is deeply problematic.

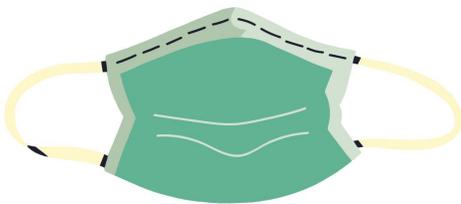
Religious leaders continue to express their pastoral care and concern for corrections staff, inmates, and their families as well as for returning citizens as they reenter into society. As of one year with the Diocese of Columbus, [Bishop Brennan](#) has accompanied Catholic chaplains and volunteers and celebrated Mass for the inmates at several correctional institutions with plans to continue the outreach to other locations throughout the diocese.



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**Our ask to you** - If you are concerned about the situations in Ohio prisons, we ask that you share your worries, prayers, and stories on social media (and tweet [@GovMikeDeWine](#) or other legislative leaders in your communities). Those who are incarcerated or working in our jails and prisons must not be forgotten in the midst of this difficult time.

**County Resource Guide** - The [Franklin County Commissioners Justice Policy & Programs](#) compiled a quick guide to current Franklin County resources and have made it available for distribution. The goal is to distribute this far and wide, and to keep this current with what's open and not open in light of COVID-19. The PDF of the guide can be downloaded [HERE](#).



**Masks Needed!** - Returning citizens coming out of incarceration often do not have access to items such as masks, gloves, or other Personal Protective Equipment. Because of this they are at high risk of contracting COVID 19. ARCH is looking for masks to include in Blessing Bags given to the returning citizens upon release. **If you are able to donate masks, please fill out this form [HERE](#). We will get in contact with you as soon as possible. Thank you!**

**[Fairfield County Reentry Coalition](#)** - ARCH has been following the the Fairfield County Reentry Coalition's updates regarding the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC), Office of Reentry and some Reentry Coordinators. The most recent update was on May 7th. [Please click here for notes.](#)



**HOPE Letters - United Methodist Church & ARCH Collaboration -**

HOPE Letters is a pathway to safely developing healthy mentoring relationships through correspondence with individuals who are experiencing some type of incarceration or temporary removal from the greater community. HOPE Letters was initiated by Grace UMC in Dayton, Ohio, as a reentry pilot program to provide hope and guidance through regular correspondence to men and women who are incarcerated in Ohio's State Prisons. Today, HOPE Letters builds faith-based relationships that ease the transition from prison to community and provides a supportive HOPE Letters reentry community for returning neighbors." - By Rev. Dr. Amelia Boomershine, Mr. James Clay and edited by Reba Collins.

ARCH is looking to expand the HOPE Letters program. If you are interested in writing HOPE letters to incarcerated individuals, please fill out the form linked [HERE](#). We will contact you as soon as possible.

**NEW! Expedited Pardon Project Online Workshop** - The Ohio Governor's Expedited Pardon Project is aimed at enhancing and expediting the process by which people apply for clemency under Ohio's laws. The Project seeks to reduce challenges surrounding a clemency application in Ohio for people meeting certain criteria with exceptional stories who can show that they have been rehabilitated and have contributed positively to their communities. This project is faster than the traditional pardon process and provides more support in completing the necessary paperwork and hearing requirements. Originally scheduled as in-person workshops the Ohio Governor's Expedited Pardon Project Online Workshop is now available [HERE](#). Or on Facebook (with captions) [HERE](#).

**Families affected by having a parent in jail and/or prison needed for research study** - A research team at Nationwide Children's Hospital are seeking to find strategies and solutions to best support youth with incarcerated parents. Youth participants will be interviewed about their experiences with an incarcerated parent, and adult participants (caregivers or parents upon 1 year of release of jail or prison) will be interviewed about caring for a child with an incarcerated parent. Participants will be given \$40 for completion of the interview and no identifiable information about the participants will be collected.

[Here is a flyer with additional information.](#)



## In the News

[How Those Incarcerated Suffer Most in the Covid-19 Pandemic](#) - COVID-19 is affecting everybody. But like most catastrophes, the majority of us are inconvenienced, while for the most vulnerable, this virus becomes another life-and-death experience.

[Expert: Ohio Better get Ready for More Coronavirus Hot Spots in State Prisons](#) - Corrections officers and inmates have disclosed frightening conditions in the Marion Correctional Institution (next door to North Central) and Pickaway

Correctional Institution, where about 80% of inmates and more than 275 workers have been diagnosed with the coronavirus.

[New Analysis Shows Surge of COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Inside State Prisons](#) - As of May 3, coronavirus cases among people currently incarcerated in state prisons were more than 3.75 times higher than the rate of the general population, while cases involving corrections staff were 3.33 times higher than cases in the general population.

[Jay-Z and Meek Mill Sending 10 Million Surgical Masks to U.S. Jails and Prisons](#) - "I don't think the public yet knows that there's no way to end the pandemic outside of prisons if we don't end it inside of prisons," Pilon added. "It's really important that we look at the solutions to ending this holistically. Prisons are eight of the top 10 hotspots, so people need to care about them." - Bob Pilon, president of the REFORM Alliance

*Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. (Hebrews 13:3)*