

Coming Home and Welcoming Others: A Reentry Success Story



Michael Harris is now a free man. At the end of his work day he enters his new apartment to sleep by himself for the first time in 19 years. "The thing about being incarcerated is that you are never alone, every movement is watched, and it is never quiet. My prayer is for my home to be a place of welcome and worship", he said.

Michael is a former resident of the Alston Wilkes prisoner pre-release halfway house, and having spent his last night there he looks forward to having his own home as a freed man who has paid his debt. When asked why some guys make it and some guys return to the streets, Michael's response was quick, "The Lord," he said, "If you go down to your knees a broken thing and look up to Jesus, he will raise you up a new man. The only other choice is to never bend the knee and you are just kidding yourself that you can be strong. I keep bending and looking."

Two Rivers Presbyterian Church got to know Michael personally through his faithful attendance at *Jobs for Life* re-employment training. He really identified with the story of Joseph and how he trusted God when roadblocks appeared. Instead of becoming bitter Joseph served God wherever he was placed. Near the end of the training, Michael applied the skills honed in class to get a job at Goodwill retail store.

Michael is now at work waiting for 5pm to 'go home' for the first time in 19 years. He does not have a stick of furniture, any kitchen items (Two Rivers provided groceries to surprise him), a shower curtain, nor drapes; but he knows the first household purchase he will make. "A welcome mat. I want visitors and I want them to know they are welcome in the home that the Lord has welcomed me into!"

****This article was contributed by Two Rivers Presbyterian Church in Charleston, SC. ****

