

STEPS



From Incarceration To Independence

Supporting Transitions by Engaging in Parolee Sponsorships

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” Matthew 25:40

What is the purpose of the STEPS Program?

The high number of incarcerated individuals is well-documented, as are the multi-level and intergenerational costs of incarceration to families and communities.

Combined with a lack of support systems, barriers in access to housing, employment, and transportation often create conditions that prevent a returning citizen from meeting probation/parole terms, resulting in the prison-to-community revolving door. A Home Plan that removes these barriers and provides mentoring support strengthens the case for release of a probation/parole eligible inmate, and greatly increases the returning citizen’s likelihood of successful reentry. Furthermore, due largely to structural racial inequities in our society, a disproportionate number of inmates are people of color. The intersection of race and ex-offender status creates additional barriers that the STEPS program addresses.

In this year-long program, our goal is to support a carefully selected returning citizen through the release and reentry process and engage in mutually meaningful relationships that benefit all participants and the community well beyond that year.

How will candidates be selected for the program?

Starting with their recommendation from a reputable source, candidates complete the STEPS application and sign releases for their criminal and prison records. The final step in the vetting process is a phone interview with the STEPS team. Accepted candidates sign an agreement that outlines their responsibilities designed to promote successful completion of the program.

Recognizing how systemic racism has contributed to incarceration and recidivism, we welcome applications from candidates of color.

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After selection, what is next?

Members of the STEPS team will continue to communicate with the returning citizen prior to release and assist with logistics related to post-release needs. Mentors will engage with their returning citizens in Lexington on a regular basis throughout the year of the program.

What does a Home Plan look like for the Returning Citizen?

A Home Plan will include employment, housing, transportation, and related basic needs. The centerpiece is mentoring that promotes mutually meaningful relationships and guides the transition to reentry.

How will the program support the Returning Citizen?

The church will pay for housing, utilities, transportation, and internet service for the first three months. The returning citizen will share housing costs with the church in the remaining nine months and assume full responsibility for other costs. The returning citizen will continue to be eligible for local food pantries and community clothes closets throughout the STEPS year. In addition to these community partnerships, we connect our returning citizen to additional appropriate resources, including physical and mental health providers and financial management experts.

What about liability?

Neither Grace Episcopal Church, Lexington, VA, nor any of its affiliates will assume responsibility or be held liable for any other conditions associated with the STEPS returning citizen.

This includes, but not exclusively, loss of job, lodging and utility expense beyond three months, hospitalization, sickness, violation of parole requirements, or commission of a crime. Grace Episcopal Church will continue social and emotional support for the returning citizen throughout the duration of the program.