



S.T.E.P.S. PROGRAM

“Supporting Transitions by Engaging in Parole Sponsorship”

Grace Episcopal Church

Lexington, Virginia

Purpose: A significant percentage of parole-eligible candidates in Virginia are not approved for parole. In many cases, this is due to the lack of evidence to the Parole Board that the individual will have a support system upon release that would improve the likelihood of his successful re-entry to the community and reduce the risk of re-incarceration. Furthermore, due largely to structural racial inequities in our society, a disproportionate number of inmates are people of color. Our goal is to support a carefully-selected Returning Citizen through the parole and re-entry process, and engage in mutually meaningful relationships that benefit all participants and the community.

Process:

- Choose a parole-eligible candidate (Returning Citizen)* recommended to us by directors of the Virginia Capital Case Clearinghouse clinic at the W&L Law School. Candidates should have no family or friends to serve as support system that can assist with essential areas such as employment, housing, as well as social and emotional support. Recognizing how systemic racism has contributed to incarceration, we plan to select a minority candidate.
- After selection, plan first prison visit to the candidate. Continue to communicate through the mail.
- Find volunteers to work with candidate while in prison, working with parole board, attending parole hearing, and engaging with Returning Citizen when in Lexington.
- Develop Home Plan for Returning Citizen: Includes finding a job, lodging and utilities, transportation if needed, and a group of volunteers to develop relationships.
- Establish a Re-Entry Council and collaborate with represented community and other agencies to provide Returning Citizen with a range of assistance, including basic needs and mental health resources.
- Food will be provided by RARA every two weeks as needed.
- Clothes will be contributed by the Community Closet at Christ Church in Buena Vista or from other sources.
- Find activities in the community in which the Returning Citizen the candidate can be involved, interested.
- Cost: The church will pay for lodging and utilities for the first 3 months in Lexington after which the Returning Citizen will assume payment for lodging. The church will also provide a basic cell phone for communication for six months.
- Submit quarterly reports to parole officer on Returning Citizen.
- Continue relationship with Returning Citizen for 1 year.

*If we identify two candidates who are eligible for STEPS, we will consider sponsoring both.

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 candidate. 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 counseling and emotional support for the candidate throughout the duration of the program.