

THE EMPOWERMENT NETWORK: Facilitators Cohort
“Strengthening The Indigenous Church Inside America’s Prisons”
Who We Are: Purpose, Principles, Practice

Background

Even though Onesimus was a fugitive, the apostle Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus as someone who had become useful to the Kingdom of God. It took all three (Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus) to empower Onesimus for effective service. In the same way, The Empowerment Network is comprised of three communities who recognize the value of empowering disciplemakers in prison and after re-entry.

1. **Facilitators Cohort:** People who empower disciplemakers in prison for the strengthening of the indigenous church inside, by sharing ideas with other cohort members and producing new resources for the indigenous church.
2. **Alumni Association:** Graduates of formal in-prison disciplemaking programs of three years or more, such as TUMI’s Capstone Curriculum and Prison Seminaries Foundation, who interact with each other on the outside for mutual support, networking, and Christian spiritual growth,
3. **Church Alliance:** Churches who have received basic training to welcome effective disciplemakers coming from prison to find their place of service in their church community, are listed in a public-facing national directory, and who share ideas with other Alliance churches.

Facilitators Cohort Vision: Grow a nationwide collaborative community hosting periodic meetings, a platform of accessible resources, and 50-state participation by 2029.

Facilitators Cohort Principles

1. America’s prisoners live in a culture that is significantly different from the culture outside prison.
2. The indigenous prison Church is a legitimate expression of the Church in its cultural context.
3. The presence of bona-fide indigenous disciplemakers in America’s prisons means it is no longer an unreached mission field.
4. The indigenous prison Church is a rich source for Kingdom workers inside prison, in the outside-Church, and for world missions.
5. A minimum of three years of formal Scripture engagement is a benchmark suggesting a prisoner has overcome criminal thinking, which is necessary to be an effective disciplemaker.
6. The outside-Church will always have a vital role to empower disciplemakers affected by incarceration, both inside prison and during re-entry.
7. An effective facilitator in the prison context recognizes that the responsibility to lead the church inside belongs to the indigenous church itself but the facilitator can provide inspiration and resources that support gifted prisoners to do ministry.

8. Effective facilitating is evident when indigenous disciplemakers minister from their gifting, using tools offered by their facilitators, to disciple others, with a desire to see people impacted by the Gospel beyond their prison context.
9. While the formerly incarcerated should start serving in a local church immediately upon release, a minimum of 12 months of observation in free-world culture is necessary to demonstrate authentic sanctification.
10. The indigenous prison Church has limited ability to collaborate with indigenous disciplemakers in other prisons, but the Cohort can assist in a nationwide indigenous prison movement.

Practice

Participants agree with historic Christian faith, recognizing the Cohort is comprised of people employing diverse methods and strategies. Therefore, no one is required to endorse the work of other participants, but all public communication is expected to be edifying. Any information listed on platforms is expected to be kept current and inquiries should receive prompt replies, preferably within five business days.