

One Parish, One Prisoner
Jennifer Sereda Video Script
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Hi, I'm Jennifer Sereda and a member of the OPOP Team. "The what?" you might say. OPOP is the One Parish One Prisoner program you might have heard about. It is a part of the Underground Ministries program Maplewood has been involved with for a couple of years. The Director, Chris Hoke, wrote the book "Wanted," which we had the opportunity to study together.

Today, I want to take a minute to tell you about my personal experience in being involved in this ministry and more specifically about our friend, Dan Anderson. Our OPOP team has been getting to know Dan for almost a year now. This journey started a year ago when a group of us (Hallack, John and Ann Collier, Dan Woodward, Sharon Eddy, and Carrell Tysver) went to an orientation day at First Presbyterian Church in Everett. About five churches in the area were in groups at tables with a packet in the middle and a photo of a prisoner. Maplewood had been matched up with Dan because he would be released into our geographic area. His goal is to live with his elderly mother and stepfather in Lynnwood. Our first task was to learn how to write a letter to Dan. Chris has developed learning modules that we

studied each month as we met as a group. The first one was on how to write a letter! Others included “Success”, “Building Trust”, “Trauma and Healing”, and “Accompaniment through the System”. We sent our letters to Dan at Clallam State prison and he would write back. When we came together, we shared our letters and learned more about how prisoners release and what is involved. This is done to the backdrop of Resurrection, like the Lazarus story and prisoners being able to come to life.

We learned about ourselves as much as we learned about Dan and we shared that with each other as well.

What I’ve learned about Dan is that he is a pretty intelligent and funny guy. I don’t want to tell too much of his story, but he is an ordinary guy in many ways. He’s been incarcerated for 256 years and is a third strike criminal. He got caught up in drugs and associated crimes. His sentence was commuted by the Governor and he was moved to a minimum-security facility in Monroe about 9 months ago in preparation for release. He had been sentenced to life in prison up until this time. Can you imagine what a shift in perspective that was for him?

After writing snail mail letters for a couple of months, Art and I began to email Dan and once or twice had a video chat and now we have regular telephone calls. The prison video call system doesn’t work well. One thing I love about talking to Dan is the genuine, open conversation

without pretense. No need to hide behind trying to make a good impression. Dan has become a friend. We talk about books, how our days are going, what we did - even if it's sitting on a bunk, for Dan. He enjoys simple things like looking at the rabbits that run around the complex. But the system is always there - he mentions he won't dare feed them like some of the prisoners do as he's keeping to the rules to not effect his release.

Dan and our team, along with the support of the OPOP program and staff, are learning together how to grow in the ways God is teaching us. For me, having the connection with Zoom to others at church has been such a gift, especially during this COVID time. We hope Dan will be out soon and that he will get into work release. There are possibilities this might happen in the next few months. We are learning this together with Dan as he learns of his needs and we learn how to support and walk beside him. And in doing this we grow together.

I'll close with an invitation. The OPOP team is only a part of our congregation's ministering to Dan. Please pray for Dan, our team and for the support of Underground Ministries. When the time comes, Dan will need some limited financial support and welcoming gifts as he transitions into society. Would you think about how you can become involved in helping Dan feel welcome into our community at Maplewood and in society?