

## Why Reform Is Needed

Formerly incarcerated persons face a myriad of barriers that deny them the opportunity to become the kind of engaged, responsible citizens we claim to desire. Conditions in our prisons add to the problem. Punitive and extended use of solitary confinement creates or exacerbates mental health conditions for those who receive it. Health care is often lacking. Mandatory minimums have caused thousands of non-violent (primarily drug) offenders to spend years in prison, making reentry after release more difficult. Little is done to prepare incarcerated persons for reentry.

Advocates recently achieved success with passage of “Clean Slate” legislation that would automatically seal from public uses the records of persons with minor, non-violent misdemeanor convictions if they have remained conviction free for at least 10 years, as well as records on arrests that do not lead to convictions. But there is so much more that needs to be done.

Gun violence continues to be a problem in Pennsylvania as well. A number of bills have been proposed over the years to require better background checks, reporting of lost and stolen guns, purchasing limits of one gun/month, and banning of assault –style weapons and bump stocks. It has been difficult even to achieve small gains in very specific areas—like limiting gun access for domestic abusers.

People of faith from all points on the theological spectrum are supporting common sense legislation to address these issues, and benefit from knowing how to advocate effectively for the change they desire.

## Tentative Schedule

### Sunday, August 5

1:30-1:45 pm	Welcome/Setting the stage
1:45-2:15 pm	Why this seminar/Why we do advocacy—scriptural/theological basis with specific emphasis on the Anabaptist perspective
2:15-3:45 pm	What do we need to know about the US prison system and restorative justice? What do we need to know about gun violence?
3:45-4:00 pm	Break
4:00-5:15 pm	PA governing structure/“nuts and bolts” of advocacy: How do we make our case for reforms with elected officials?
5:15-5:30 pm	Wrap-up and instructions for advocacy meetings.

### Thursday, August 9

Actual meeting times are subject to legislator/staff availability, but planners will strive to schedule meetings on Thursday morning.

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## **Faithful Advocacy for Criminal Justice Reform/ Gun Violence: Principles and Practice**

**August 5/August 9, 2018**

First United Methodist Church  
5401 Centre Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15232

### **Why You Should Attend**

Come to this program to learn why, as people of faith, we engage in advocacy—in broad terms, but with emphasis on why from an Anabaptist perspective. Come to learn more about this important legislation and why it is so important that people of faith support a bill that opens doors for our brothers and sisters who have served time. Come to learn how Pennsylvania governing structures work, and how to engage with your legislators and policy makers to support reforms. Then join with your neighbors to visit your elected officials to make your case.

**For more information:** Contact the Pennsylvania Council of Churches at (717) 545-4761 or send e-mail to [s.strauss@pachurches.org](mailto:s.strauss@pachurches.org).

**Registration:** \$20; to register, click on link under “Events” at [www.pachurches.org](http://www.pachurches.org). You may register online and pay by credit card or download a registration brochure and send a check to address provided.

This program is jointly sponsored by the Pennsylvania Council of Churches and the Mennonite Central Committee.



**Mennonite  
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