

11 x 15 Campaign Kickoff Rally
February 20, 2012
State Capitol Rotunda, Madison, WI

Rev. Scott D. Anderson
Executive Director
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The Wisconsin Council of Churches—which represents 14 Protestant and Orthodox denominations and over one million church members—is pleased and proud to join with other voices in the religious community to support the 11 x 15 campaign.

There are many reasons the citizens of Wisconsin should support reducing our prison population and providing drug and alcohol treatment as an effective alternative:

- The vast majority of prison inmates have no history of violence.
- Many suffer from mental illness and/or addictions.
- Wisconsin incarcerates a higher percentage of its citizens than neighboring states with no increase in public safety.
- Wisconsin's prison costs have skyrocketed from \$400 million in 1990 to 1.3 Billion in 2011, raising serious fiscal questions about the effectiveness of the status quo in these tight budget times.

But the most important reason to support this campaign is far deeper and more profound than the budget numbers and statistics suggest.

Our religious traditions teach us that justice is related to restoration, not solely to retribution. The biblical mandate “to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8) invites us to balance justice with mercy, to move beyond retribution to restoration, and to walk humbly with God amidst the complexities of social reform. Rather than build a system that simply punishes and diminishes people, we believe that the justice system must work to restore: to restore victims to wholeness, to restore our communities, and to help those who have offended to be restored to a productive role in our society.

This is why the 11 x 15 campaign is fundamentally a campaign about moral integrity, about making the cherished values of justice and mercy real in the way we treat some of our most vulnerable citizens, and this is why the WCC is pleased to be part of this campaign.