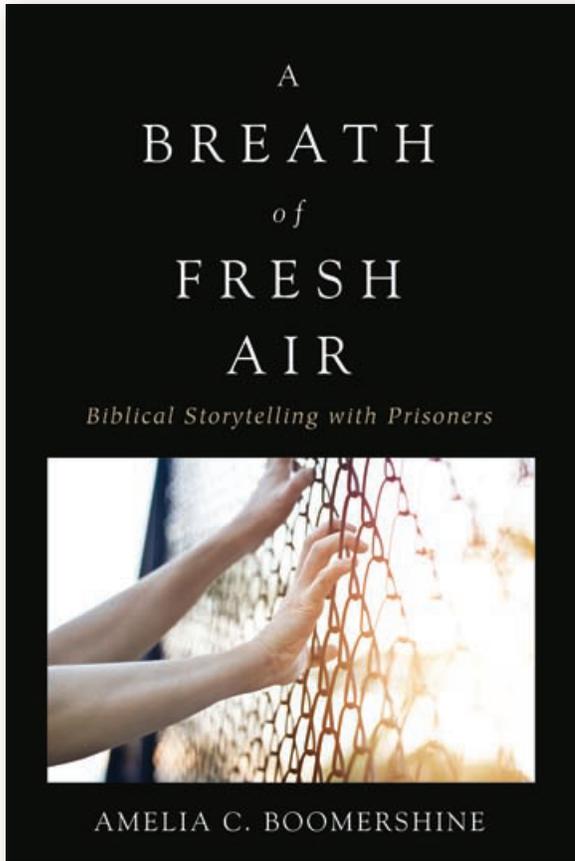




A BREATH of FRESH AIR



Biblical Storytelling with Prisoners

AMELIA C. BOOMERSHINE

A Breath of Fresh Air: Biblical Storytelling with Prisoners challenges the behemoth of mass incarceration through the convergence of biblical storytelling pedagogy, restorative justice principles, and peacemaking circle structure. Circle of the Word is an interactive, creative process of engagement with biblical stories. It is a spiritual intervention that addresses an American criminal justice system that is retributive, discriminatory, and out of control. Boomershine reports on the impact of Circle of the Word for incarcerated men and women and grounds Circle of the Word in a multifaceted foundation: the study of the Bible as performance literature, the history of prison reform in Enlightenment England, the doctrine of the Word of God, and the development-of-hope theory. Since the purpose of the book is both advocacy and empowerment, a how-to chapter is included with details for implementation. Participation in Circle of the Word has proven to be a transformative experience for men and women directly impacted by mass incarceration—discovering community in the midst of isolation and hope in the midst of despair.

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“A must-read for those committed to the transformation of inmates and the criminal justice system. Carefully researched, practical, yet theologically astute, this persuasive testimony of the power of biblical hope is a clarion call and accessible guide. Amelia C. Boomershine gives the faith community an indelible picture of a broken system, its victims, and proven tools of grace by which to set the captives free.”

—C. JOSEPH SPRAGUE, President, Horizon Prison Initiative

“This book addresses a colossal social problem: the United States has just 5% of the world’s population, but nearly 25% of the world’s prisoners. What makes *A Breath of Fresh Air* a unique piece of literature is that it combines factual information about mass incarceration with deeply spiritual insights. Boomershine vividly describes her prison ministry, which uses the performative voice of biblical stories with the aim of empowering the men and women behind bars. A masterful storyteller herself, her book amounts to a moving appeal to transform the retributive system into restorative justice.”

—WERNER H. KELBER, Isla and Percy E. Turner Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies, Rice University

“Our prisons and jails are stifling and deadening places. Boomershine’s practices have the potential of breathing fresh air and new life into people in the incarcerated church, as well as into the church outside prison walls. As a result, *A Breath of Fresh Air* makes an important contribution to Christians discerning what it means to ‘visit the prisoner’ in an age of mass incarceration.”

—AMY LEVAD, University of St. Thomas; author of *Redeeming a Prison Society: A Liturgical and Sacramental Response to Mass Incarceration*

Amelia C. Boomershine is Executive Director of GoTell Communications Inc. and an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church. She holds an MA in early childhood education from the University of Michigan and an MDiv and DMin from United Theological Seminary.

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