

# **Arizona Correctional Committee**

## **Information for Stake Presidents Engaged in Correctional Ministries**

# Video presentation:

## The Savior Wants to Forgive

A former addict and repeat convict shares his experiences with the Savior's ability and willingness to forgive him again and again, even when he felt undeserving.



<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/video/2014-04-0004-the-savior-wants-to-forgive?lang=eng>

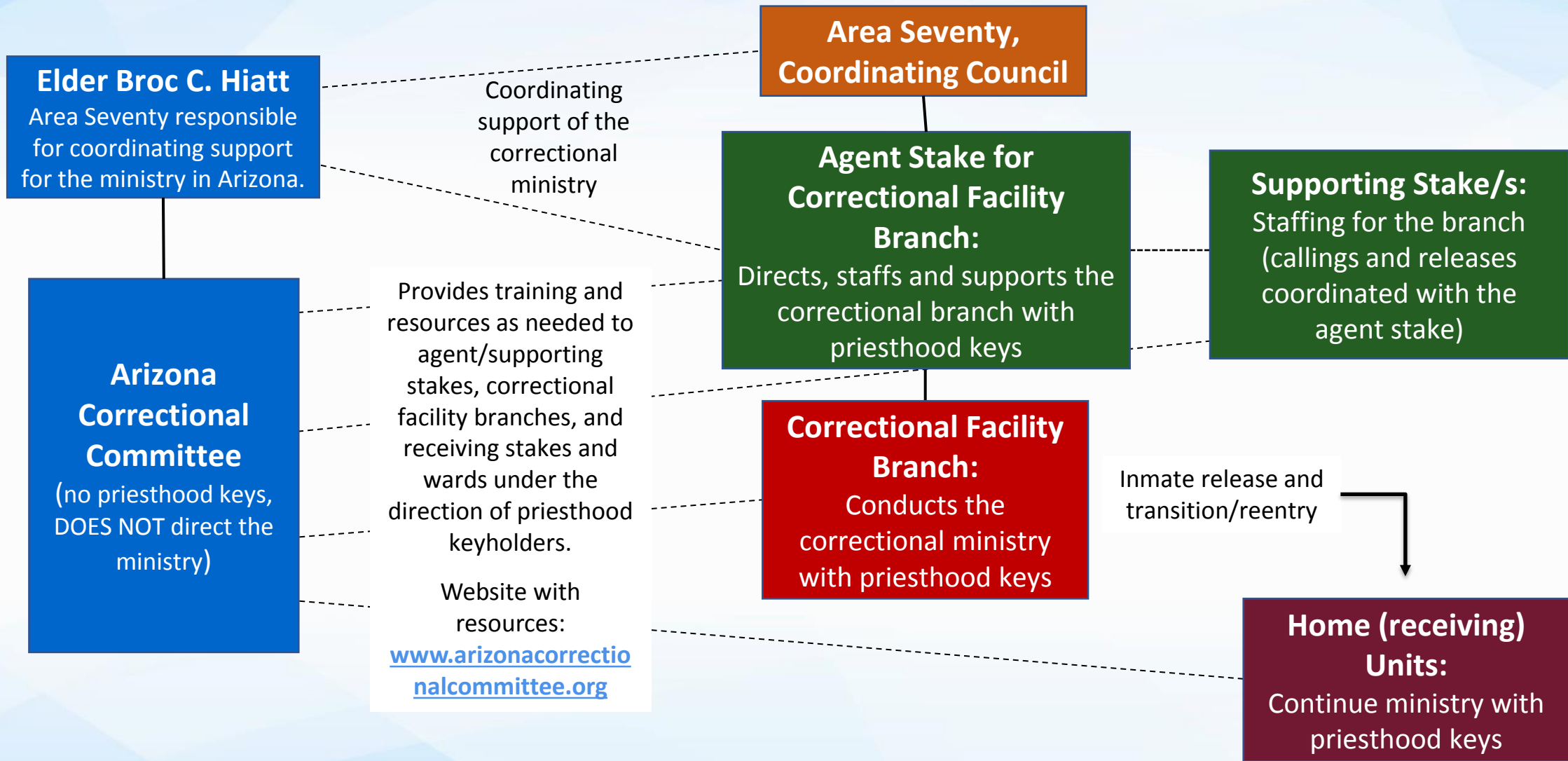
# Official Church Instructions: Administration

## Providing Support for Those in Correctional Facilities

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/callings/melchizedek-priesthood/my-calling/-providing-support-for-those-in-correctional-facilities?lang=eng>

- Based on the resources available, the stake president determines the support that is to be provided to those who are incarcerated at correctional facilities within the boundaries of the stake.
- He also supervises the support, assisted by other local priesthood leaders. If the stake needs help providing service to correctional facilities within its boundaries, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or Area Presidency may assign one or more nearby stakes to assist and to serve as the agent stake to the facility.
- Members called to serve may come from outside the agent stake boundaries with the approval of the member's stake president.
- Direction and training for agent stake presidencies and for correctional facility branch presidencies is provided by an assigned Area Seventy, as needed, and by others who may be called to assist.

# Agent Stake, Correctional Facility Branch and Supporting Stake Organization



# Role of Agent Stake

- Directs the correctional facility branch/ministry (official Church instruction)
- Oversees callings, sustainings, releases, and assignments for the branch (official Church instruction)
- Coordinates callings, releases, and ministering activities with supporting stakes (official Church instruction)
- Provides high councilor the opportunity to report on branch activities and needs during high council meetings (recommended)
- Handles membership council matters or directs branch president in related matters (official Church instruction)
- Provides reasonable budget for branch to adequately function (official Church instruction and recommended)

# Issuing Callings and Settings Apart

- For callings needed in a Correctional Facility Branch (CFB), the process outlined in General Handbook, Section 30.7.6 for recommending, approving, and issuing callings, and performing settings apart should be followed. However, there is no sustaining of branch callings by branch members.
- If a member living outside the agent stake has been recommended to receive a calling in the CFB, the member's stake president should be consulted and give approval prior to the calling being issued.
- Once the member's stake president has given approval, the calling should be issued by a priesthood leader in the agent stake as outlined in General Handbook 30.7.6.

# Official Church Instructions: Branch Organization

- In addition to the branch presidency, an executive secretary and/or branch clerk may be called.
- Depending upon needs, other callings may include a music chairman, Sunday School teachers, home evening group teachers, institute or seminary instructors, family history center workers, and Church organization presidencies.
- Individuals called to serve in correctional facilities should be worthy of a temple recommend.
- Incarcerated persons are not called to Church positions but may participate by offering prayers, giving talks, or fulfilling other appropriate assignments, regardless of their religious affiliation or standing in the Church.

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# Official Church Instructions: Branch Organization

- In addition to the branch presidency, an executive secretary and/or branch clerk may be called. Depending upon needs, other callings may include a music chairman, Sunday School teachers, home evening group teachers, institute or seminary instructors, family history center workers, and Church organization presidencies.
- Other support that may be given to incarcerated persons where permitted by the correctional facility includes ministering, Sunday School classes, a home evening group, seminary or institute classes, and other special programs such as family history work and the Family Services addiction recovery program.

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# Other Callings in a Correctional Branch: Recommended

Callings may include:

- Correspondence Clerk (optional, normally not credentialed)
- Transition Coordinator (normally not credentialed)
- Instructors (credentialed; numbers per need; security may require teaching in pairs)
- Mentors/Ministering brothers and sisters (non-credentialed; ministering by visit, video, phone, as allowed; may establish extended relationship)
- Letter-writers (valuable non-credentialed; ministering by mail, using pseudonym and branch post office for security; may establish extended relationship)
- Addiction Recovery Program Instructors

# Role of Supporting Stakes: Recommended

- Provides an assigned high councilor to work with the branch
- Supports the staffing needs of the branch in the following ways\*:
  - Provides the names of qualified members that can be considered to fill necessary branch callings
  - Assists in extending callings
  - Assists in extending releases
  - Assists with mitigating problems when they arise
  - Assists with training when and if needed

\*see more detail in slides 15-16 (Role of the High Councilor)

# Official Church Instructions: Transition to a Home Ward or Branch

- When a person is released from a correctional facility, his or her needs become the responsibility of a home ward or branch.
- Accordingly, correctional facility branch presidents should work with the home ward or branch priesthood leaders during the transition.
- This process should begin three months before the person's release date.
- Legal and other specialized matters should be left to professionals.

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## Transition Coordinator(s): **Best Practices**

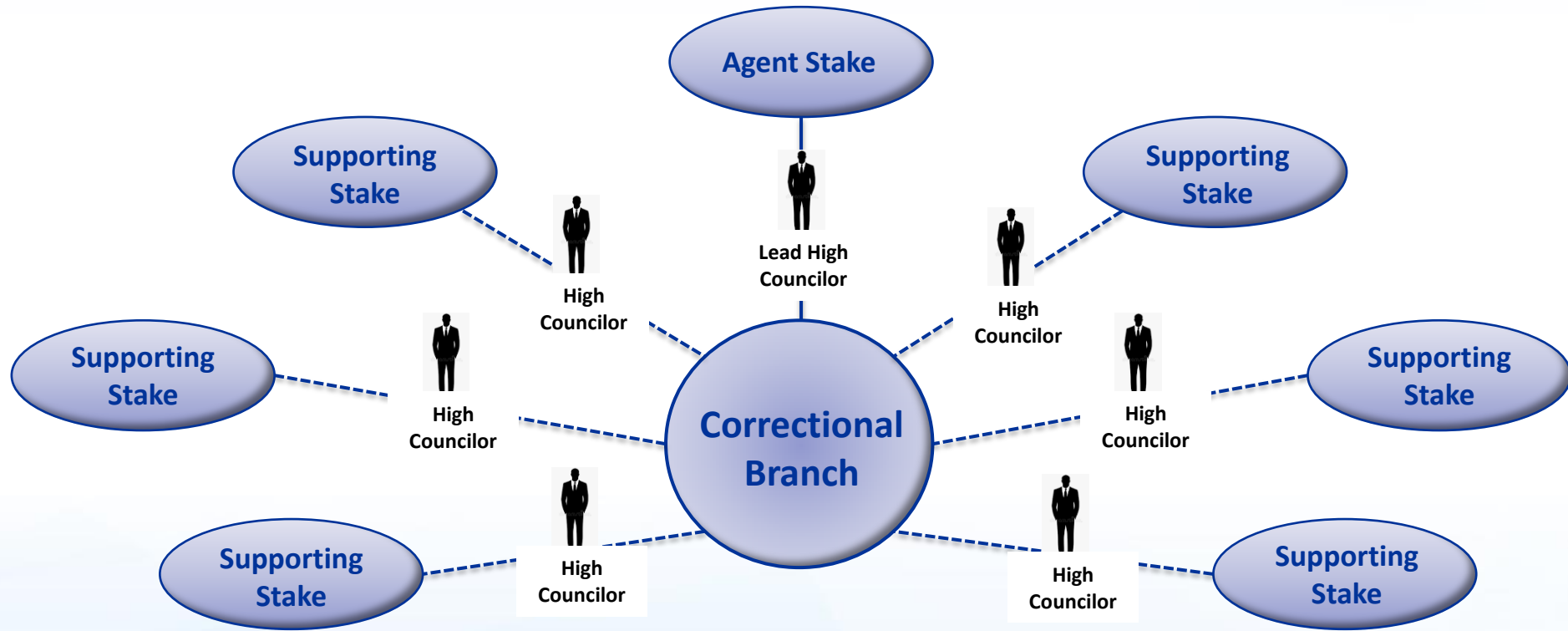
- Assists individuals in their preparation for the difficult and challenging re-entry process, as directed by the branch president
- Is normally non-credentialed (dictated by governing institution's regulations)
- Begins re-entry orientation with inmate several months prior to release date
- Informs inmate of resources that can help them effectively navigate and deal with many of the post-release hazards (but not in a professional counselor or care-giver role).
- Works with branch president to assist the released inmate in procuring food, clothing, shelter, work, etc.
- Often works with the mentor and branch president to help the released inmate connect with the receiving ward and stake
- Provides transportation and other vital resources on the day of release (this period in the transition process is one of the most critical, vulnerable times for the released inmate)
- Ensures that all safety protocols are observed during the transition process

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSITION PLEASE VISIT**

<https://www.arizonacorrectionalcommittee.org/adoc-prison-programs>

# Role of the High Councilor

## The Vital Link



## Role of the High Councilor: Recommended

The high councilor can provide support to the branch by:

- Attending branch coordination and other leadership meetings when invited
- Attending and participating in branch-sponsored firesides, etc.
- Reporting on branch activities, staffing needs, etc. in high council meetings
- Assisting in the process of identifying individuals who may be considered for branch callings
- Participating in issuing callings and releases as directed by stake president
- Acquainting stake members with the great rescue/gathering mission of correctional ministries (in ward council and other ward meetings)

# Role of the High Councilor: Recommended

The high councilor may participate in branch ministries by:

- Helping to resolve concerns with members of his stake who serve in the branch
- Mentoring an incarcerated brother
- Writing letters to an incarcerated brother
- Becoming a credentialed or guest teacher, where possible
- Being involved in the transition process (if assigned and approved by the agent stake president)
- Assisting with teaching and training workers



# Official Church Instructions: General Guidelines

Members called to serve in correctional facilities provide support in spiritual and temporal matters and maintain appropriate relationships with incarcerated persons. Members called to serve in correctional facilities should:

- Understand and adhere to the policies and procedures of the institution.
- Understand and be respectful of the judicial process, including probation and parole.
- Not give their home address or telephone number to those who are incarcerated.
- When appropriate and when permitted, priesthood blessings may be given.

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## **IMPORTANT SAFETY STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES**

- Become familiar with and strictly adhere to all regulations and protocols of the institution...If you are not sure, ask first.
- Report any safety breach, real or perceived, to the branch president.
- Members working within correctional facilities never minister outside of institutional security regulations and guidelines.
- Violating security protocols can permanently revoke a member's access to the facility and significantly damage the church's standing with the institution.
- Compliance with the facility's regulations promotes positive relationships between facility hierarchy and the Church ministry.

# Relationships with Incarcerated Brothers and Sisters: Recommended

**Credentialed members are required to maintain a proper relationship with inmates by:**

- Being aware of rules regarding items allowed to be given to them
- Knowing that volunteers are not allowed to receive anything from them
- Not contacting any incarcerated person's friend, relative or acquaintance on the outside
- Avoiding conversations with them about crimes they may have committed
- Not advocating for them
- Keeping conversations brief and focused on spiritual matters and gospel-centered topics
- Only giving priesthood blessings when appropriate and when permitted, although physically touching them may be prohibited

# Members called to serve in correctional facilities should never take in contraband:

**Contraband:** It denotes property that is against the law to possess or transport.

Contraband may also pertain to lawful goods that the law prohibits based on their nature or the person possessing them. Prohibited items may also include legal or seemingly innocent items that prisoners can use inappropriately (e.g., pencils, pens, paper, paper clips).

## Includes but not limited to the following:

- Aerosol spray cans
- Alcohol
- Equipment that may help with an escape
- Explosive devices
- Explosive substances
- Flammable liquids
- Food
- Glass containers
- Illegal drugs
- Legal drugs
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Pornographic materials
- Tattooing equipment
- Tobacco
- Tobacco smoking accessories
- USB storage devices
- Weapons

# Ministering During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Meetings with inmates are not permitted.
- Increase ministry effectiveness by:
  - Increasing the level of communication between branch and inmate via the Correspondence Clerk
  - Increasing the use of letter-writers
  - Sending monthly newsletters to inmates
  - Conducting regular interviews with letter-writers and mentors
  - Calling non-credentialed teachers to oversee correspondence classes
  - Encouraging mentors to use video conferencing, “emessaging”, and “Videogram” technology through the use of tablets
  - Conducting pastoral visits via videoconferencing (if allowed)

# Ministry Endorsements

- **Will:** Returned missionary, 18 years served. Released in 2018. Will stated “The four most important things the prison ministry did for me was:
  1. Let me know I wasn't forgotten
  2. That I was still important to my Heavenly Father
  3. That He still loved me enough to call good men to serve me
  4. Help me feel the power of His priesthood and be blessed through it on a regular basis by the presence of its holders...to help guide me through my repentance process.

“The prison ministry brings God's love into a domain dominated by Satan...It brings hope and light to a hopeless dark place, it is the antithesis of prison and the only antidote that works for those who choose to use it.”

- **Nick:** Former member, 15 years served. Recently released inmate whose mentor had been monumental in his transition. He once said after assigning him his mentor, “Where has he been all my life? If I had known him years ago, I probably would never have been here (prison).”
- **Justin:** Non-member, currently serving. He said once in our testimony meeting, “I come here every week so that I can be put back together again.”