



Corrections

Adopted 1980

Revised 1991

The Montana Association of Churches supports:

1. A sentencing system which permits judges and others within the justice system latitude and discretion in dealing with individual offenders; and
2. Individualized correction programs which consider confinement as the least desired alternative, consistent with public safety and the offenders' needs; and
3. More community corrections alternatives and resources rather than an increase in the capacity and/or the population of Montana State Prison; and
4. Programs, facilities and services to treat and rehabilitate those incarcerated, looking toward their reintegration into society.

SUPPORTIVE STATEMENT

The Montana Association of Churches speaks from a Judeo-Christian ethic that echoes a constant theme regarding concerns for the captive person. Jesus associates himself with those in prison: "I was in prison, and you came to visit me." As leaders of Christian churches and as participants in and observers of the justice

system in Montana, we speak to the needs of that system.

The judge traditionally is accepted as one, in a non-biased position, who knows the individual circumstances surrounding each case. There are guidelines (ABA standard, National Council on Crime and Delinquency's Model Sentencing Act) which help in the individual decisions.

We favor individualized correction programs which do not always view confinement as the first and best alternative. We agree with the Montana Justice Project Correction Report (1976) that no offender should be subjected to more custody and security than needed. We agree with the report that "the majority of offenders do not pose a substantial threat to society, and can be effectively dealt with in the community through diversified programs entailing supervision."

We support facilities and programs which adequately provide for education, treatment, training and employment opportunities for those incarcerated.

We believe that a well designed and properly functioning corrections system will have direct social and economic benefits, for all Montanans.