

# Nancy's Pulpit Editorial – *Partakers: College Behind Bars*

Good morning.

I'd like to share a story about learning, about community, and about hope—my experience as a mentor in the Partakers College Behind Bars program.

I do not work alone. I am part of a dedicated team—Carol McKeen, Bob Gill, and Mike Mordas—and together we support a student pursuing a college degree while incarcerated.

Imagine trying to earn a degree with limited access to books, little or no internet, and facing daily obstacles most of us never have to consider. This is the reality for incarcerated students.

The Partakers program offers something simple yet powerful: it ensures these students are not alone. A mentor can be a lifeline—someone to brainstorm essay ideas with, someone to say, “Keep going,” and someone to remind them that their voice and future truly matter.

Personally, walking alongside my mentee has opened my eyes. I have gained insight into life inside prison, and I am continually inspired by the perseverance, wisdom, and hope my mentee displays. This experience has deepened my gratitude and broadened my perspective on justice and our shared humanity.

There is another benefit I didn't expect: the way mentoring has drawn me closer to my fellow mentors at First Parish. Meeting regularly, coordinating correspondence and visits, celebrating victories, and supporting each other through challenges has strengthened our own sense of community. Education changes lives—it opens doors, builds dignity, and creates stronger communities both inside and outside prison walls.

By supporting Partakers, we send a powerful message to people behind bars: you are not forgotten, your potential is real, and we believe in your future.

I invite you to learn more, consider joining a mentor team, support the organization if possible, and keep these students in your thoughts and prayers.

Together, we can help break cycles of isolation. Together, we can foster hope, healing, and new beginnings. Thank you.

Nancy Piedra  
Volunteer Mentor with Partakers prison ministry  
Sunday, September 14, 20215



## ABOUT THE PARTAKERS PROGRAM



Partakers match volunteer mentors with students who are earning college degrees while incarcerated.

Each mentee is supported by a team of four mentors. The volunteer commitment is manageable: pairs of mentors visit their mentee once every two months, offering encouragement and support.

## CONTACT INFORMATION



Learn more about First Parish Partakers,  
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