

# Ex-offender ministry yields transformation

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**By John Hall**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

DALLAS—Sie Davis was born to minister to offenders.

His mother gave birth to him in prison, and he jokingly refers to himself as “the youngest parolee in the history of Texas,” since he left the correctional system’s care to live with his aunt when he was 3 months old.

Despite efforts to stay out of prison, he eventually found himself in the same penitentiary where he was born.

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But on his third trip behind bars on drug-related charges, Davis found God, and he professed faith in Christ during a prison chapel service. Surely, God would turn his life around, he thought.

But it wasn’t that simple, he recalled. Soon after his release, he gave in to the lure of drugs again, and he did a fourth stay in prison.

“I had come to know Christ, and I was serious about Christ,” Davis said.

“But I hadn’t done anything about my addiction.”

That revelation turned Davis’ life in a new direction. He integrated his faith into a 12-step recovery program. God could change his life, but Davis felt he also must be committed to change.

He left drugs in his past and started trying to help people like himself. In the last few years, Davis has started a congregation—Church of the Called-Out Ones—for ex-offenders. He also has trained other people to launch ex-offender churches and partnered with the Baptist General Convention of Texas to write a manual on the ministry.

Texas Baptists help support the ministry through their gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions.

Many Christians want to preach the Christian message in prisons, but few follow up on those ministries, Davis said. When new Christians get out of prison, they have difficulty finding a congregation where they feel comfortable and accepted. If they do not find a congregation for them, often they fall back into a life of crime like Davis did.

He teaches church leaders how to minister to ex-offenders. Ministers often connect with individuals in transitional housing after they are released from prison.

“A lot of people in prison, they reach for the Lord because they’re serious,” he said. “We need to be there as a church to help them.”

Davis’ congregation speaks directly to the needs of ex-offenders. He preaches about character issues, commitment and addiction. He holds church members firmly to their pledge to change.

Davis connects people with mentors and accountability partners to help them stay away from criminal activity. And most ex-offenders who come to

Davis' church or churches led by people he trained stay out of prison.

Davis watches as church members change. He can see in their eyes when they are dealing with troubling issues and knows when they are on the right track. He should. He's been down the same path.

For more information about ministering to ex-offenders, contact Davis at (214) 755-3963.

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