Rev. Dr. Lonnie McLeod reviewed Exodus, a nationally recognized program that helps ex-offenders (“returning citizens”) rebuild their lives. The program addresses the individual’s needs in education, health care, family and community relationships, physical fitness, and spirituality. Each participant receives a capacity assessment, signs a contract, and acts on an individually-tailored plan. The Exodus model emphasizes concrete skill development.

Terrence Walton reviewed two initiatives: CSOSA, the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency Faith-based Mentoring and, the D.C. Criminal Justice System Fugitive Safe Surrender Program. Faith-based involvement in social service delivery provides a welcoming bridge between an ex-offender’s past and future. Religious participation reduces recidivism, supports recovery (especially from drugs or alcohol), and builds community connections. Religion provides “promise, pardon and power.”

Through one on one and group mentoring, CSOSA provides life coaching and assistance with housing, drug treatment, job interviews, fellowship, and support. Safe Surrender encourages persons wanted for non-violent felony or misdemeanor crimes to surrender voluntarily to faith-based leaders and law enforcement in a faith institution. Parole and probation violators are eligible. Volunteers from the church greet fugitives. Churches set up family waiting areas and child care is provided. Defense attorneys are available and employment and health mobile unit services are on site. Mr. Walton said spirituality is key in recovery from drug or alcohol addiction.