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Colson Prison Ministry Wins Federal Concession

Charles W. Colson, who heads Prison Fellowship here, said an agreement with Norman Carlson, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, will permit Prison Fellowship to provide personnel for spiritual leadership at the new federal correctional institution in Memphis.

This is a basic departure from normal policy followed at federal penal institutions, with spiritual work generally limited to paid chaplains.

Prison Fellowship will provide the men as coordinators of spiritual life without cost to the institution. Colson, former aide to President Nixon, said he views the men who will be selected as missionaries from the community to the inmates, "but more as elder brothers than as preachers."

Drawing from the Memphis community, Colson said the hope is to provide a vital link between the community and the inmates. Additionally they will help the inmates build spiritual relationships; to understand themselves and to strengthen their relationship with God, he said.

"Much depends upon the success of this program in Memphis since this plan is a major departure from tradition and a historic opportunity for the Christian community," Colson said. "We view this as a great opportunity to show how churches and community groups can minister together to those behind bars."

Colson will speak at the 8:45 and 11 a.m. services tomorrow at Columbia Baptist Church, 103 West Columbia St., Falls Church.