

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE COMMITTEE ON INSTITUTIONAL WORK IN CALIFORNIA

Selected Chaplain and Corresponding Chaplain Fruitage Reports July 2022 – December 2022

Chaplain: I was at the Juvenile Justice Center every Saturday in December and what a blessing. I had a total of 17 one-on-ones, many “bench” talks, some great talks with several of the staff members, about a half-hour talk with another Chaplain, and gave almost all the youths a bit of something to think about every week. Most of the youths are very familiar with me and I greet them all by going around the room and chatting. I did two fun things this month when I went around. I have a puzzle you do with six coins where you ask them to make two rows of four coins each. It is impossible if you are thinking one dimensional, but not if you use two dimensions. After they puzzle over it a while, I show them how to do it and explain that sometimes when things seem really impossible, if we add God’s wisdom and love, wonderful things become possible. After I did this in one unit, one of the staff who was listening told me he loved what I said. Many times the staff hear what I talk about as I go around and they show their appreciation. On the day before Christmas, as I went around, I let the youths know that the greatest gift they could ever receive was given to them 2022 years ago and that it was the understanding of God’s love and goodness that Christ Jesus taught and proved to us. I told them that the gift was there for them, they just had to open it and figure out how to use it. I had several of the youths ask me about it and we talked for some time. It warms my heart at how I am greeted by the youths and how respectful most are to me. I had a wonderful talk with another Chaplain who has been going there about 20 years. She showed appreciation for some of the ideas I shared with her. I appreciated her as well.

Chaplain: Although one of the men I’ve been visiting speaks primarily Spanish, he and I have been able to communicate well. He asked for more reading materials in Spanish, so I gave him Escritos Miscelaneos. He shared with me how his thought is transforming, and he understands and feels the allness of Love. He started asking other men in his dorm if there is anything he can do for them. One week I spent quite a bit of time going through the entire story of Gideon with the men. (Only a small portion of Judges 6,7 was included in the Bible Lesson that week). We concluded that the story is a recipe for prayer: understand the all-powerfulness of God (the tests with the fleece and the ground); remove fear (sent the 22,000 home who were afraid); be watchful (drink water by raising hand to mouth rather than lap like a dog); listen and obey God’s instructions (holding pitchers and lights, what to shout); victory is assured (the enemy ran away; no battle).

Chaplain: I am often struck by earnestness of those I work with at the prison. The earnest seeking is that of which we read in the gospel stories. It could be from the Gadarene who says, “What have I to do with you?” They really want to know. They don’t want particulars, they want the truth. I start off by saying, “As Chaplain I can lend some guidance to the service, and in the healing practice of Christian Science. But as for the ‘truth’, we are equals in the eyes of God. At this table we will learn together as equals. What is Truth?” That opens up the discussion. I might

say, "Know the truth and the truth shall make you free." I might ask, "What is the difference between the truth and a lie?" And then I'll bring out the Bible Lesson and in reading passages, we'll cite those that speak to the difference between the truth and a lie. I might cite Science and Health where it speaks of "the interlaced ambiguities of being." That might be the theme for the service. This gets going a robust discussion, sometimes using the chapel's dry erase board to help make the connections of our seeking. We will finish up with a reciting of the Lord's Prayer and spiritual interpretation, a hymn, and a benediction selected and read by one of the men. The actual practice and guidance of Christian Science I reserve for those who directly ask for it. That I set aside for a one-on-one conversation, a copy of Science & Health, and an offer of Christian Science prayer treatment. On this reporting period I met with an earnest seeker of the truth. We found our way in trusted fellowship. I introduced him to the Bible Lessons for individual study and I asked him to highlight passages that spoke to him directly, and then to share the passages, the insights and applications, when we next met. I spoke broadly of the Christian Science practice as devoted to the "lost element of Christian healing." He returned a second time with much to share. We shared together, a true fellowship. I am forever moved by the fellowship of seekers I encounter at the prison.

Corresponding Chaplain: One fellow who I see weekly at the correctional center appears to be holding steadfast to the truth of his being as he works with moral courage to let go of a violent past, and to see himself and others as God's beloved children. He states that he is often challenged by others and accused of being a religious nerd, but he says he is able to turn away from them. He states that he feels his life is being slowly transformed by his study of Christian Science. Another fellow also shows steadfast interest in attending the CS sessions, always actively participating, asking questions, and sharing good ideas. This dear individual has expressed deep appreciation for Science and Health, and has asked for two additional copies to send to his daughters. My corresponding chaplain work continues with consistent twice monthly letters, where the weekly Bible Lessons are mailed, along with Sentinel articles and Monitors. One individual responded asking for continued prayers, as they are suffering persecution and struggles. This person is transgender, so besides the usual difficulties of incarceration, they have identity and acceptance issues. This person expresses deep gratitude for the ongoing support of the letters and the Bible Lessons.

Chaplain: Comfort was given to a chapel clerk who was very happy to hear that we use the term Father-Mother God. He had lost his mom some time back and since he is usually a very cheerful person it was unusual to see him a bit sad. We had a good discussion, and he has been reading some helpful Sentinel articles and accepted a textbook. I showed him page 16 with the Lord's Prayer and its spiritual interpretation. He loved it. This same clerk let me know he has seen a news report that showed a formerly incarcerated man now working with the homeless in Los Angeles. This man used to be in his same yard and he knows him well. What a glimmer of hope for these men, to see their prior cellmates living a life of freedom and productivity. It provides wonderful inspiration to them. I have been approached by several men outside the chapel after our services, who simply ask, "What is Christian Science?" This has provided me with wonderful opportunities to explain a new understanding of God, His love for them, and a chance for them to receive our wonderful textbook, which is happily received. I am grateful for

the facility staff, who allow these ongoing conversations to take place and are always happy for any activity that may uplift or improve the lives and attitudes of these men.

Corresponding Chaplain: I exchanged a few letters this month with an incarcerated individual who continues to share Christian Science with others in his facility. He had 37 attend his daily Bible study class which includes a lot of Christian Science teachings. He said they take turns reading the Bible Lesson as part of their church service. When the participants say they want to learn more, he'll give them a stamp and envelope (if they don't have any), so they can write to the Institutional Committee. So far, I have heard from one of those men. He continues to be grateful and feels God is preparing him for further ministry work when he is released.

Chaplain: One incarcerated individual I'm seeing, who has waited six years for his trial date, is finally in court. He told me a story about his brother sending him some appropriate clothes he could wear during the proceedings. The clothes came in time for his appearance, but no shoes were included. He got dressed for the first day of his trial, putting on his jail-issued rubber sandals. The judge saw the shoes and asked him if he had any other more appropriate shoes. He said he did not. The judge then went into his office and came back a few minutes later with a pair of shoes that fit him perfectly. He said, "You can keep the shoes." The inmate was very touched and grateful for this kind gesture. He and I have been talking about how God/Principle/Love is right there in the courtroom speaking to all those present in the way they most need to hear it. That "divine Love supplies all good." This was a perfect example of that. Here's the full quote – "It is not well to imagine that Jesus demonstrated the divine power to heal only for a select number or for a limited period of time, since to all mankind and in every hour, divine Love supplies all good." (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 494)

Corresponding Chaplain: I heard from a man who continues to share Christian Science with his Bible Study/Bible Lesson group of about 37 other incarcerated men. He said he keeps busy "feeding God's sheep." He said he broke up two fights (not between his group members). He gave them a Science & Health and told them to read the section about animal magnetism. One responded that he probably wouldn't be in jail if he had read that earlier and that jails would be a lot less full if those in them had read it, too! He also said he is sharing Christian Science (via phone) with a friend who is having a tough time. He said there are "amazing" results. He asked (and said others have, as well) if church services are available at his prison. Even though Christian Science services are not offered where he is, it is good they are interested in hearing more. God continues to work His purpose out for these dear people and will meet their needs.

Chaplain: A newly incarcerated individual made an inquiry regarding our services. Amazingly, and without my prior knowledge, a regular attendee knows sign language (!) and was able to have a conversation with the visitor explaining the services. This was truly lovely to behold. The textbook and the Bible were given to the inquirer and he says he will sign up for our weekly services. Holding these services has been my extreme pleasure. The participants always love reading the Bible Lesson, singing the hymns, listening to the solos, and praying together. Lives are changing. Divine Love is always present. "Come to the land of peace; From shadows come

away; Where all the sounds of weeping cease, And storms no more have sway. In this divine abode; Change leaves no saddening trace; Come, trusting heart, come to thy God, Thy holy resting-place.” (Hymn 44, Christian Science Hymnal)

Chaplain: The lady I started seeing in August, who had cried quietly throughout our visit, and who had progressed to feeling loved, feeling God’s presence, and requesting to hear Bible stories, had another breakthrough. At our last visit of the month she finally started really talking to me about what is bothering her and told me she sees and hears scary threats from “an evil soul,” and those threats are not just towards her, but towards those she loves also. We talked about God’s protection, and that even if she can see or hear something scary, they are empty threats because they have no power behind them; God is the only true power, God is totally good, and God is bigger and stronger than any scary thing bothering her. We talked about listening for God’s angel thoughts of comfort and protection. I brought the individual who had told me how he and his family were cheated out of their home a copy of the article “Neither Villains or Victims” by Seely. He loved it! He asked me to print a couple of extra copies so he could send them to family members. Another article I shared with all the people I visit is “The Smell of Fire” by Wheatley. We had many good conversations about the points in that article.

Chaplain: On one of my visits a man told me that a family member had passed on and his daughter was quite upset. We talked about how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. Although the former caterpillar’s friends don’t see him anymore, the fact is that he is continuing to live, and with fewer limitations. The next week the man told me that he had shared this idea with his daughter, and she was no longer grieving.

Chaplain: After our regular service and before one-on-ones, I read “All the Way” from the 1949 Journal. The men appreciated the message that with God, all things are possible, and He takes us the distance. I also met with an individual and answered his question, “Does God know about sin?” Jesus recognized and looked right through the mortal image to only see perfect man. Affirming we have no other mind but God’s mind allows us to be untouched by sin. Sin may look attractive, even pleasant at times because of its subtlety, but God’s consciousness is always pure, lovely, and can never be removed or taken away as the mortal picture can be.

Chaplain: At my first visit, I learned that one man I’d been seeing was released. Another man was sharing what he has been learning through our study with two other men in his dorm (the two men are cellmates), and they both requested to meet with me. One has a firm grounding in the healing power of prayer and healed his cellmate of chronic back pain. When I spoke with the healed cellmate, he was excited to tell me about his healing; then he stood up and showed me how he can now jump and also lean over and touch his toes. This man speaks great English, but his native tongue is Portuguese. He was thrilled when I told him I would bring him *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* in Portuguese. I also brought him three copies of “O Arauto” (Heralds in Portuguese).

Chaplain: The balance of the month was focused on the talk at this men’s prison by Tom McElroy, CSB. We were escorted into the chapel by the Community Resources Manager, who

had arranged the time and date of the talk. There were a number of men waiting. The chairs hadn't been set up yet, so Tom was asked how he would like them arranged and he chose to have them in a circle. We sat down with about 15 men. Tom's talk was both presenting ideas and a dynamic sharing and discussion. We were all impressed with the men's Christian devotion and their expression of sincerity and respect. It was a pleasure to share faith and a commitment to Christlike qualities with them. At the end we left about 40 periodicals and handed out 12 Science and Healths, which is all we had with us—if we'd had more, they would've taken them.

Chaplain: One incarcerated individual described a conversation he'd had with his 11-year-old daughter. He says he prays for her all the time and shares how she can pray for herself, too. One thing he shared was when his daughter was young, she'd been diagnosed with bone problems and was supposed to take a supplement for them. She was told her bones could break easily and that she'd always have to be careful. This man prayer for his daughter and told her, "God didn't make you that way and you can be healed." On a subsequent check-up, the problem was gone and she didn't have to take the supplement anymore. Another time a teacher in her school said she'd have to get glasses. This man prayer for her—told her that her sight was from God and that this could be healed, too. She didn't have to get glasses. He wants her to know that she can pray for herself and that God is always there for her.

Chaplain: One fellow says our weekly chaplain sessions provide him with the light and spiritual support he needs, and he says he is finding more times when he feels surrounded by this light.

Chaplain: After one of our Christian Science services, I was approached by an individual who doesn't usually come to our service but is a worker in the Chapel. He asked for help as he felt he was "coming down with Covid" and wanted me to pray with him. Of course I was able to sit with him and declare God's Truth about him. A statement came to me from the Bible Lesson we had just read: "Rise in the strength of Spirit to resist all that is unlike good. God has made man capable of this, and nothing can vitiate the ability and power divinely bestowed on man." (Science and Health, p. 393) I gave him my copy of that statement which I had printed and asked him to memorize the first sentence—whenever he felt he was feeling sick to just feel the presence of God's love and care for him. The next Monday, he was working in the Chapel—free of any belief of illness.

Chaplain: A man I've been meeting with over the past few months confided he wasn't feeling inspired anymore. I had just read the article, "Alert, alive, awake, aware" by Judy Olson in the August 29, 2022 Christian Science Sentinel. I shared a few ideas I remembered from the article, and then brought him that Sentinel the following week. The next time I saw him he had the Sentinel with him, told me how helpful the ideas had been, and showed me how he had underlined several paragraphs in the article. He also reported how he prayed specifically to heal knee pain and a swollen thumb. We rejoiced together about the healing power of prayer.