

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE COMMITTEE ON INSTITUTIONAL WORK IN CALIFORNIA

Selected Chaplain and Corresponding Chaplain Fruitage Reports June 2022 – August 2022

Chaplain: I'm very grateful to say that there are now seven inmates requesting Christian Science chaplain visits. One inmate speaks very little English, though he is trying to learn. Amazingly, I had started to take Spanish lessons again to brush up on my rusty Spanish a few weeks before this gentleman requested to see me. Our first visit saw me telling him that since *Dios es Todo-en-todo* and *Dios es Amor; entonces Amor es Todo-en-todo*. I told him that he is loved and asked if he knew "el Padre Nuestro," which he did and recited for me in Spanish. It was beautiful! I went to the Reading Room after our visit, bought 2 Spanish Science and Healths, and took one back to jail. By the next visit, he'd received it gratefully. We read the Lord's Prayer together—I read the spiritual interpretation; and over the next few weeks, read *la declaración científica del ser, ¿Qué es el hombre?* (telling him to put his name in where it says "hombre"), and *Salmo 23*. He has gotten Spanish Heralds and absolutely loves what he is learning. With our Spanglish, we are able to communicate the essential ideas, but his gratitude and affection for Christian Science comes shining through. I'm trying to find new ways of saying "You're welcome" in Spanish to respond to his many thanks!

One inmate who's been reading through S&H as fast as he can—while still pausing to think deeply and consider deep and challenging statements—asked how his wife can attend Christian Science church services. I told him about the branch closest to the jail, as well as other branches in the area. I alerted a board member of the nearest church and they are ready for her visit. He adores Mary Baker Eddy and asked about biographies he could read; when I offered an autobiography, he was thrilled. He has since received and read "Retrospection and Introspection," "Unity of Good," and "Rudimental Divine Science" in paperback editions. It is a pleasure to work with such an avid reader who studies the Bible lesson faithfully and is digging for spiritual growth.

Chaplain: I held my first chapel service at the prison in 3 months. Services had been suspended because of on-going quarantines, lockdown, and lack of staff to cover programs. I had been working on "no lapse from or return to" the omnipresence of God, and the light shined through: Christ is in the room / the Chapel. Prior to that, my chaplain visits had consisted of one-on-one cell visits and some delightful encounters in the yard with various inmates who hold chaplains in the highest regard. The civility of these encounters is not to be found in the streets. The encounters I call "God in the midst." In my services I usually write a spiritual or metaphysical theme on the board. We'll discuss it some at the table, after which we have a focus on the Bible Lesson. The theme statement I wrote on the board last week was: "Forgiveness is the medicine to cure the ancient disease: acute, chronic, mental, physical." The inmates I've worked with over the years are very much receptive to forgiveness, both of themselves and of others. We spoke of surrender and forgiveness as the core of the Christian message, deep unto deep. Surrender to the inseparable One, as in "let me love you," says our Father/Mother God. This surrender

leads to a beatified conception, how the greatest wrong transforms to the highest right to show us how. What possibilities for Joy in that statement, giving “liberty to the bruised,” “setting the captives free” in us all. A very good exchange from all that, and then a reading of the Bible Lesson (divinely authorized), followed by the Lord’s Prayer, a hymn, and a benediction as read by an appointed inmate — and they take that appointment quite seriously. We depart feeling immeasurably blessed. What a privilege to serve as a CS Chaplain.

Chaplain: One of the men who was referred to me is a Spanish speaker, but his English is definitely better than my Spanish! He was asking how to know when he’s being tempted. I told him I test an idea by adding the three words, “saith the Lord” to the end of the thought. If it makes sense, it must be a thought from God; if it doesn’t make sense, then it is not from God. For example, “There’s a bike on the ground; no one is around; I think I’ll take it...SAITH THE LORD.” Nope, that doesn’t sound right. I could tell he wasn’t getting the concept, so I asked how he would say “says God” in Spanish: “Dios dijo.” He got a big smile on his face when he realized he could ask “Dios dijo?” when ideas come to him. He eagerly accepted a Spanish *Science and Health* and an *El Heraldo*.

Corresponding Chaplain: One inmate shared his struggle with letting go of resentment. “It’s hard, because I’ve been feeding it like I don’t want to let go of it, like it’s my baby or something.” I wrote back thoughts about handling temptation, and how God doesn’t lead us to temptation but delivers us. All that God is really asking of us is to follow what Jesus asks, “Love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.” We can do this! He wrote, “It gave me goosies when I read what you wrote about being asked by God to love everyone. I have to give up my self-will and be the one who makes me who I am.” So true! As Mrs. Eddy tells us, “Imperfect mortals grasp the ultimate of spiritual perfection slowly; but to begin aright and to continue the strife of demonstrating the great problem of being, is doing much.” (S&H p. 254)

Chaplain: An inmate related a healing as follows. He stated that his daughter was to visit with him and he had been in pain and discomfort from a swollen leg. He didn’t want her to see him in this condition. He prayed that he could walk without pain and not use the wheelchair when she came the next day. He turned his thought to God that night. The next day, the leg swelling had completely disappeared and he was able to walk without the assistance of the wheel chair; the pain was gone. Another of our dear inmates has a hearing for possible release. This is after a 40+ year detainment. He owes his life to Christian Science. He is a dedicated student of Christian Science and whether here or there, he will rely on God for healing. Thank you for your prayers on his behalf.

Corresponding Chaplain: Freedom after 48 years! One individual was released at the end of August after 48 years of incarceration and he feels part of his release is due to the focused prayers and practice of Christian Science during the past 3 years. Another guy says that his recent study of the Bible Lessons has helped sustain him as he chooses a life of kindness and cooperation instead of extreme violence. He said he feels like the apostle Paul who turned away from persecuting Christians, to being a follower of Jesus Christ. Another guy says that with the

prayerful support of his CS Chaplain he is feeling more optimistic about his pending resentencing.

Chaplain: Two churches are sponsoring a talk at Folsom Prison on Monday, Sept. 26, from 12:30-2:30pm. I have been working with the director of the Community Resources Office, and when I sent him information about the speaker, Tom McElroy, CSB, he scheduled the talk for the Chapel at the men's facility and gave us a two-hour slot, when we were hoping for one! He was impressed with Tom's topic and said he feels it will be inspiring for the men. We hope it will lead to us being able to hold services there as well.

Corresponding Chaplain: An inmate asked so humbly for spiritual/prayerful support, but not CS treatment (he made that very clear, so I know he knows the difference); he just felt fearful of the medical treatment he was about to have and fearful that he might not come out of it, so he wanted to feel the presence of Love/Mind/God/Spirit there with him "in the lions' den," so to speak. These delightfully perfect titles of articles I could print from online editions of *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Christian Science Sentinel* I joyfully sent to him: "Refuse to sink" from CSM 07.11.22 issue (CS Perspective article), and "What Love can do" from CS SL 09.22.1986—beautifully comforting and powerful. I await his answer for "the rest of the story." I am so grateful for this opportunity to see how the light of divine Love "glances into the prison cell." What a blessing!

Chaplain: This past month I went to the youth facility every Saturday morning (as usual) and had 24 one-on-ones and also talked with two groups of 2 youths each. I also had a couple of "bench talks" and quite a number of good discussions with staff members. Some of the staff are fairly new, but I also got great hugs and talks with staff I have known from before the shutdown. I feel so blessed to be able to talk to these young people. I love the "I get it" moments and the "how did you know I needed that." I had to work harder these last two weeks not to hurt inside when hearing what some of these youths face in their lives. We don't discuss or talk about their past experiences or what they are in for. However, sometimes they say things that give a pretty clear picture of what they are facing. I have been praying to know that their human history is not the truth about Life and they can't be limited or defined by their past mortal experience. A lot of the discussions the last Saturday were about letting go of the past so we can move forward in the direction of God's goodness. I gave three young men Bibles this month. They were looking forward to reading them with the idea that the stories are for our instruction as to how to handle things in the way that will show us more of God's power and protection. When I tell them Bible stories, I tell them so that they can relate to them and understand how the stories help them know what the right thing to do is.

Chaplain: One individual I spoke with shared that he had been talking with another inmate who told him the most important thing to do is follow the 10 Commandments. He agreed but said he thought the **most** important thing was to start with God as Love, then to live it. That way you couldn't help but follow the 10 Commandments. I love the deeper meaning he brought to this. The next time we spoke he told me he'd been required to take a TB test and one nurse thought he probably had it and another told him not to worry about it. He said that no matter what the

outcome is he is trusting God to show him what's true. The following test came out negative. Another time he told me about a conversation with his 11-year-old daughter who came to see him. He wants her to know and understand how much God loves her and that God does not punish His loved children. He has so embraced the healing ideas of CS and trusts that he is always exactly where God wants him to be. He says he can trust God in jail, in prison, at home wherever he is. This is significant because he has been in lockdown for six years and still hasn't faced trial. I had a good first meeting with another inmate who calls himself a Muslim but also studies the Bible and *Science and Health*. He told me he's very curious about how people think and how religion influences lives. We talked about how curiosity is a scientific quality. It involves willingness to learn new things and being open to fresh ideas. I brought him the pamphlet "Time, Space, Healing," suggesting that he read the article "More Understanding, Less Matter." We'll talk about it when I visit next time.

Chaplain: Members of our services have made wonderful progress in their lives. Several have moved recently to lesser security facilities. This is a sign of possible future parole. In addition, sadness and depression have given rise to a feeling of purpose and taking college classes for one attendee. I have such gratitude for what the Christian Science understanding of God and man's relation to Him can do in a person's life. The Church of Christ, Scientist, stands triumphant in bringing the healings and teachings to Christ Jesus to all who are willing to listen and learn.

It is with joy that I tell of the progress of one of our prior inmates. If you tuned in to the Institutional Meeting of The Mother Church in June, you heard the interview between this parolee and the executive secretary for the Christian Science Committee on Institutional Work in California. I met this man at this institution in 2016. He was a regular attendee here and often spearheaded the hymn sings that we held for Christmas and Easter. Inmates signed up to attend due to his sharing of his love of Christian Science. I recently learned that he is now working with a group in Los Angeles that helps the homeless population. And they have meetings with the mayor of Los Angeles as a part of the city's efforts. I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to him, who has such enthusiasm and gratitude for all that the Christ has done in his life. You can see his testimony at EmbracedFully.org where he starts by saying that he fully expected to die in prison.

Chaplain: On each occasion when I go to the jail prepared to see a "patient"/inmate, I find someone waiting who needs to speak with a chaplain. Sometimes it's a Sheriff's Deputy, sometimes a Lobby Attendant. More often than not, it's a family member (not necessarily a family member of an inmate I'm seeing), or even someone from a self-help program the jail is providing. Last week I rode up in the elevator with an attorney who made a comment on my badge but nothing more. Neither of us were able to see the inmate we were looking to see so when we met up again, he asked me if we could speak for a moment. He revealed that he had attended a CS Sunday School on several occasions when he spent a weekend at his grandparents' house in the Central Valley of California. I was able to share a CS Monitor with him and when I pulled it out of my "jail bag" a CS Sentinel fell on the floor. He picked it up, and commented that it didn't look like the Sentinel he remembered reading at his grandparents'. When I asked him if he would like to have it, he eagerly took it, asking if it still had testimonies of healing in it. Now to me this is a healing. I am so grateful to God for opening wide the channels

of Love and for allowing me to see Love instead of wallowing in disappointment. Additionally, when I was tempted to feel disappointed that our Jail Program Director was going to leave in the middle of last year, I prayed to know that “Soul has infinite resources with which to bless mankind” (S&H 60:29). She was replaced with a new Program Director who is a tremendous supporter of CS and how it is blessing the inmates and she’s open to work with our LC leadership and chaplains in ways we could not have imagined.

Chaplain: With continued prison quarantines and lockdowns, I was able to make only one chaplain visit this reporting period. Thus my opening report title: “Suffer these things to be so now.” However, as a Christian Scientist, I am quick to add the rejoicing line: “for thus it becomes us to fulfill.” That’s the way I see it. I see Christian Scientists as the true “First Responders” in that we are the only ones to declare the Scientific Statement of Being: declaring that matter is unreal. Even Mrs. Eddy balked at that when she wrote it out at the time, but determined that she was being divinely led, and therein the statement held as the cornerstone of the CS healing ministry. It is then for us to demonstrate the principle of the statement: “for thus it becomes us to fulfill.” I’ll confess though, I have felt discouragement as I come prepared with treatment, prepared to meet the conditions just as they are—and then am told visiting chaplains as well all other outside community programs are not allowed into the prison. So, I step back from the problem—discouragement in the face of contagious crisis at every turn—and restart with God to fulfill. It often feels to me like a spiritual thriller to stay tuned for the next episode. But that’s the material narrative. The spiritual narrative is intact, blameless, and untouched. From that standpoint, we are in faith, trust and confidence, FIRST RESPONDERS. On my one visit in the first week of June, I was able to meet with 3 inmates individually in their cells. Cell visits have a quality all their own, a spiritually intimate quality, where often cell mates join in with the prayers, and too with adjoining cells. My walk across the yards also results in spiritually meaningful conversations with groups of inmates that are always most respectful of chaplains. I might say it reminds me of gospel descriptions of Christ Jesus’ walk-about.

Chaplain: I received a text message from an acquaintance asking if I could make a visit to a patient at Stanford Health Care, where I’ve been an Interfaith Spiritual Care Volunteer for more than 20 years. This call was received just after learning that Spiritual Care Volunteers were going to be allowed to do in-person visits starting in July. I called my supervisor to see if I could start earlier since all my credentials were up to date. I was given permission to visit this one patient, as a Christian Science Chaplain (not as a CPE trained, MDiv graduate, and certified Chaplain). I was able to visit the patient three times, primarily to listen and to reassure them that God was present wherever they were, even in a hospital, and that no one was criticizing them for the action they had chosen. They were in contact with a practitioner, so my position was simply to listen and reassure. They had good family and friend support which was kept to the maximum number of two visitors per day, since a Chaplain didn’t get counted! Each time as I stood up to leave, the patient squeezed my hand and offered a sincere, “Thank you!” The reason I’m sharing this is the respect that Christian Science has received as a result of these “acquaintance” visits.

Chaplain: One individual I visit is seeking peace from mental challenges. One idea that has resonated with him is the quote from Science and Health: “*Thoughts unspoken are not unknown to the divine Mind. Desire is prayer; and no loss can occur from trusting God with our desires,*

that they may be moulded and exalted before they take form in words and in deeds.” (Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 1:10) We talked about how God already knows what we need and our *desire* to find peace and healing is prayer. He said, “Oh, I already have an example of that!” He wanted to read the Narnia book series. His mom couldn’t find them in paperback so she said sorry, she couldn’t get them for him. Someone in the jail overheard this conversation and said, “I have those books in paperback and you can borrow them.” I thought it was sweet and meaningful that he came up with that example of desire being prayer and that his prayer was answered.

Chaplain: Due COVID quarantines and several lockdowns, I was not able to hold any chapel services this reporting period. However, I was able to have 2 one-on-one cell visits, and one cell visit I had on June 28th will be the focus of my narrative. The quarantines and lockdowns can be discouraging and repressive to chaplains, inmates, and staff alike. However, I am not deterred, certainly not after extensive prayer treatments for the institution(s) served and those in them. Lockdowns do not lockout Divine Mind. Quarantines cannot quarantine omnipresent Love. I have been doing this now for 8 and some years. I know how to get around. I get around with God at my side, and on a first name basis. With God at my side, I walk across the prison yard and knocking on the tower door I am reminded of “The Wizard of Oz” when Dorothy knocks on the door of the Emerald City. The Tower officer opens the window and says, “What do you want?!” , irritated at any intrusion on the lockdown day. I respond, “Chaplain here to see inmate in cell 209!” The officer looks down at me and goes, “Oh it’s you, Chaplain! Why didn’t you say so! Come on in!” The building is hollow, echo-like quiet. My steps are heard. I’m going to see an inmate whom I had not seen for some months because of the lockdowns and quarantines. He has before served as my soloist at our chapel services. He has the voice. He sings Gospel. He senses my presence and greets me at his cell door when I arrive. Cell visits are spoken in whispers, that quality of godlikeness being spoken of in whispers. I tell him I miss him for the solos. His smile widens. I pass through the slit in the door a Bible Lesson, a Sentinel, and a Monitor. “Study up and prepare for next week’s service. It will happen. God, who’s standing right beside me, said so.” Smiles widen more. I see him point to his cellmate and say, “Where two or more are gathered together, Christ is in the midst. Are you with us?” He sits up on his bed, attentive. I recite my favorite “forgiveness prayer” that I’ve become known for. They love it. It’s like medicine. And then I ask my inmate to sing a hymn, passing the hymn sheet through the slit. The hymn is “The Voice of Love,” from the CS Hymnal Supplement, as the first lines read: “Though I may speak with moving words / which can inspire the heart of man / But have no love seal their worth / They are but emptiness and sham.” He starts out low and then builds up higher and louder in gospel depth, resounding in the hollow, echo-like quiet of the building for the other 200 inmates and officers to hear. I’m always amazed when I hear his raspy voice transform to the clearest and most gripping, arresting tones straight from the gospel. From a lockdown, 0, to 200—Christ is in our midst.