

# CHRISTIAN SCIENCE COMMITTEE ON INSTITUTIONAL WORK IN CALIFORNIA

## Selected Chaplain and Corresponding Chaplain Fruitage Reports March 2022 – May 2022

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**Chaplain:** Gratitude has been a theme with whomever I'm talking with during my visits. So far no one is put off by my asking what they are grateful for. They can always think of something. One inmate likes to think of five things he's grateful for before he goes to sleep at night. He's been reading *Science and Health* enthusiastically. Mary Baker Eddy mentions her book *Retrospection and Introspection in Science and Health*, and he said he really wanted to read about her life. I brought him a *Prose Works* and he is enjoying it very much. Another man I'm seeing is very well versed in the Bible. The first time I saw him he talked about how he likes the story of Moses at the burning bush. He was interested that God says He is the "I AM." We talked about how God created us whole and complete and, if that's true, when we say I am sad/sick/broken, we'd be saying that about God. And since God is not sad/sick/broken, we aren't either. He liked that. I've been selecting quotes from the Bible and *Science and Health* and printing them out on colored paper then cutting out and gluing these on 3x5 cards. The quotes relate to ideas that have come up in our talks. I tuck these in along with Sentinels, Monitors, some selected JSH articles, and the Bible Lesson that I give to the program coordinator to deliver to the men each week. The men really like getting these and one has stuck them up on his mirror. One of the quotes I sent this past week is: "I am sending an angel before you to protect you on your journey and lead you safely to the place I have prepared for you." Exodus 23:20 (New Living Translation)

**Chaplain:** I met with three inmates individually, and the two from the prior week who were new, *loved* their new S&Hs. One grew up in the Church of Latter Day Saints, but has been exploring other religions as he feels his childhood religion is not what he truly believes. He was stunned by Mrs. Eddy's boldness, intelligence, insight, and love. What little he'd had a chance to read (it sometimes takes a week for literature to be delivered to them from my last visit) impacted him immediately and permanently. He was humbled and grateful to have Christian Science brought into his experience. We had an amazing conversation about the basic points of Christian Science, including Genesis 1 and 2 (which he was instantly on board with and wondered why he hadn't seen the difference sooner); Jesus' ministry of love as the means of healing; and the names for God (including Mother). The other new inmate said the book resonated with him, as did *The Christian Science Monitor*. We also had a spirited discussion, wherein he detailed some of the mental challenges he is dealing with—a very dear man who is "struggling for recourse to the spiritual" but who is just now learning that his real spiritual source is all blessedness (see SH 329:26 If). This inmate who is devouring the "little book" is stunned by the fact that the world doesn't know who Mrs. Eddy is. He is convinced she's the most remarkable woman and is loving everything he is reading and studying in Science. He asked how to pray for his wife and daughter, who are both troubled and dealing with physical and

mental issues; we talked about how prayer isn't manipulating people or situations but is preparing our own hearts to accept what God has made, His own perfect image and likeness.

***Corresponding Chaplain:*** An inmate I had corresponded with for about a year was released. When we first started writing, he was new to Christian Science and said he was on the verge of darkness, but Christian Science gave him hope. He successfully completed a drug rehab program and was released shortly thereafter. Another inmate I have been corresponding with for two years should soon be released and is applying for assistance from Embraced Fully. He was recently transferred and read *Science and Health* in full during the required 14-day isolation. When he was reading S & H in the yard one day, four inmates sat down with him and listened to him talk about Christian Science and three requested a S&H. He continues to do God's work. Another inmate says he finds it difficult to deal with all the personalities he is around, and I suggested he view each one as God's child with lessons to learn (like all of us) and to "behold the perfect man" like Jesus did. I sent him two articles about handling personality clashes. His mom is a Christian Scientist, and I always let her know about the articles I send so she can see what he is learning.

***Chaplain:*** Happy news is hearing that one of our regular attendees was recently transferred to a lesser security facility. He had advised me at an earlier church service that he was hoping to be paroled out. This move is a good sign and brings great hope. I know that with the foundation that God, church, and prayer has provided, those released will go on to new and productive lives. We have seen this in several prior inmates from this facility who have been paroled and whom we hear are prospering. Of the original inmates coming to services since 2016, two have been paroled out, and three have been transferred from this maximum security facility to lesser security facilities. Gratitude is hardly a sufficient word to encompass what this sign of progress brings to me. "My cup overflows." (Psalm 23)

***Corresponding Chaplain:*** Writing to two inmates, I shared this message from Psalm 23 (The Message): "Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life." Just think of it! God's goodness is literally chasing after you and me every day of our lives! This righteousness is the very fabric of our being. It's always a joy to share thoughts with these dear ones, and to hear what they are pondering in regards to our God.

***Chaplain:*** Metanoia means "a change of heart or conversion." My report this month will focus on an inmate I've been working with for several months now. My first meeting with J was five months ago when his name was referred to me through our executive secretary, Sharon, who had received a letter from him asking for Christian Science services. So, I requested from the CO Tower that his name be called out on the yard to come to the chapel. As I stood by the chapel door, I saw a man sprinting my way. J arrived out of breath but smiling. That was our first meeting. J was unfamiliar with the practice of Christian Science, so I gave him the gist, always citing the mission statement: "...to reestablish the lost element of Christian healing." We then went to the bible lesson as the heartbeat of practice. I should say that prior to my explanations of the CS practice, I asked him why he was here and what he expected from our time. The "why"

often reveals a deep need to understand one's relationship to God. What drives one to the inquiry is always a story of loss and loneliness, most poignantly found in the confines of a maximum security prison. It is in that sense, for some, almost a monastic-like consecration of self that initiates the inquiries. This is what makes our chaplain outreach so relevant: to respond to that honest inquiry and meet that need. It can—if the individual is receptive and as the Bible narrates throughout—change a heart: metanoia. I will also say that I offer up my own motives for being here, therein a sense of brotherhood in Christ is established. A brotherhood that engenders trust. This comes over time. My own honesty helps bind the breach. For J it came quickly, as it was with his sprinting to the chapel door.

On our next visit, J had thoroughly studied the bible lesson where I ask everyone to highlight passages that speak to them directly, interpret the passages to the group, and testify how they applied that directly to their lives. J had written it all out and was eager to share. I shared my own favorite passages, and we went back and forth in this way like a Sunday School session, finishing with a hymn and a reciting of the Lord's Prayer, and then someone designated to read a benediction. J is always the first to show up at the chapel door, prepared. We have been working together one-on-one with prayer treatments for a heart condition and another having to do with a suicidal brother. Both matters were met in spiritual healing.

J has over the months indicated an affinity for the CS practice so wants to know and absorb more. I gave him Science & Health and he read it in three days, saying he's reading it again. He has since revealed that he is set to be released to his county of jurisdiction in July of this year. I've been in touch with The Principle Foundation and its associated partnership with Embraced:Fully, benevolence organizations that assist CS-affiliated parolees with spiritual and practical parolee transition support. A Christian Science Embraced:Fully Angel Team is being formed for J now, even as I write. One member of the team will greet him as he steps off the bus, and sit with him at his first parole meeting. A halfway house is being arranged as well as employment opportunities through an organization in Southern California that helps find employment for parolees.

This I submit is the fruit of our labors for all willing to receive: metanoia. The metanoia comes from the "still small voice" within us all.

***Corresponding Chaplain:*** Three individuals have asked for prayerful support as they anticipate being released from prison. I am led to pray differently for each person. One fellow appears in need of greater receptivity and trust in the Word of God. Another fellow expresses the need for guidance once released, so that he follows a different and healthier path. Another guy expresses the desire for appropriate housing once released. I pray that every detail of their release will be met by Divine Love, that they will experience abundance, find needed employment, and be guided rightly every step of the way.

***Chaplain:*** One inmate reported a healing: He'd been on lockdown for Covid for 3 weeks and was excited to get to play basketball. He was making all the shots and feeling in prime shape. His buddy warned him he'd better slow down or he'd regret it. The inmate brushed it off; in fact,

they played the next day, too. Then that night, his leg was in a lot of pain. He heard his friend's warning replay in his thought, and he realized, "That's an aggressive mental suggestion!" He realized it wasn't about his leg, it was about the suggestion. So, he rejected the suggestion—thought it was too simple to be the answer, but yep, his leg stopped hurting!

Since our local committee had planned a fruitage meeting for the following Sunday, we asked the inmates what message they wanted people to know. They said: *community*. They need a sense of community with other Christian Scientists; the deeply significant things they are learning through their spiritual study and practice are dramatically different than the messages they are getting all around them—negative messages in general and specifically about Christian Science. Two inmates both said their families warned them to stay away from Christian Science. Yet, they kept coming to services every week and their families saw a difference in them. The families started requesting the inmates to pray for them, and began asking them questions about the Bible. One mother felt like she's been emotionally supporting her son since he was incarcerated at age 14 (he's now 55), and now she's relying on him for prayerful support. She asked why he was so different—calm, peaceful, certain, and how he "knows so much"—and he said, "I told you! It's Christian Science!" She said, "Don't ever stop going to Christian Science services!"

One inmate wanted to get everyone the message that it is Christian Scientists' obligation to be obedient to Christ Jesus' command to visit those in prison! He said, "If you believe it, you will help in any way you can." This statement is not coming from just any old criminal who's putting the responsibility on other people. He told us about working with The Principle Foundation, which has been sending money to inmates studying Christian Science who need funds for various things. Our friend needed a new typewriter. The grantor did research on the kind of typewriter the inmate wanted, and realized the inmate would need correction ribbon and toner, so included funds for that as well. The inmate, who is a Mother Church member, was so moved. He said, "I can hustle typewriter ribbon in here and save \$28." I wasn't sure where he was going with this, but he continued, "Then I could send the \$28 to The Mother Church for my per capita donation!" When he got a thank you note for his TMC donation, he felt it was one of the most precious things he'd ever read; he cherishes it as a sign that he is part of a community and that he played a role in the supporting the healing message of his church.

**Chaplain:** An inmate who happily accepted all my visits was transferred to prison 12 hours after I last saw him. He has been looking forward to going to prison because he feels like it's the final stretch. He is tired of the cycle of being released and re-incarcerated 14-15 times. On Easter, he realized something momentous. He'd been treating it like any other day, watching movies, going into the yard, and frittering his time away. At bedtime, he remembered it was Easter and his heart sank. He asked God for forgiveness for treating the day so disrespectfully. In prayer, he realized his need to love God, not as a means to an end (to get something) but because he is grateful that God loves him. He said, "If I can remember to love God, He will open doors for me." I corrected him, "As you love God, you'll see the doors have always been open." He was kinda blown away by that. I have let the State Committee know about his transfer and a corresponding chaplain has already been assigned to him.