

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE COMMITTEE ON INSTITUTIONAL WORK IN CALIFORNIA

Selected Chaplain and Corresponding Chaplain Fruitage Reports July – September 2023

Chaplain: The Christ fellowship at the table was palpably present among us. One man was from Armenia, an immigrant who spoke broken English. It was pointed out that Armenians were historically the first to practice the Christian faith and practice. In broken English when introducing ourselves at the table, the Armenian man said, “We have two questions but one heart,” implying different stories but one heart at the table. Another man from Alabama spoke of an experience he had of a meth overdose that took him to a near death state of mind. Within this dark state he reached out in prayer, and spoke of his prayer being answered as the intimate touch of Christ light. This experience changed his life from within. He now wants to know more about that Christ healing touch and that’s why he’s at the table. Another man was stricken with arthritis, has read Science and Health from a previous visit, has sworn off medicines, and requested Christian Science treatment. I met with him after the service one-on-one to discuss Christian Science healing treatment and to assure him of God’s tender care. Another man asked to speak with me privately about a personal matter for which he is requesting Christian Science treatment. I spoke with him one-on-one where the private matter had to do with deeply entangled family related resentments. I spoke of the “great untangler” of human resentments, and gave him a copy of the 91st Psalm with a Christian Science healing interpretation attached, and asked him to read that to himself every morning when he wakes up, and every evening before he sleeps, along with assurances that I will be working with him in prayer for his freedom from the bondage of resentment.

Chaplain: We needed to be out of town for a number of weeks, and one regular attendee on the main yard who has been studying Christian Science for many years, and is class taught, was allowed to facilitate reading the Bible Lesson with other regular attendees in the chapel. We were grateful that the Christian Science services were able to continue in this way while we were gone. While away, I was able to research and send information to one inmate on A yard—who discovered Christian Science while at this facility and loves it—about how to continue her study of it and correspond to the State Committee. She wrote to our supervisor at the prison a letter of gratitude, telling how Christian Science has changed her life and how crucial it has been in her spiritual journey, stating she will be pursuing it at her new location. We are still experiencing great interest in Christian Science, the Monitor, and in Science and Health. We were able to deliver another 600 pieces of literature to the warehouse and we expect we will have access to it next week. One inmate, new to A yard, said the enthusiasm of others who were studying Christian Science caused her to write to the State Committee and request to see a Christian Science chaplain. I was able to meet with her one-on-one and give her Monitors, a Science and Health which she had requested, and some Sentinels. She came to the next week’s service and is very enthused about the Monitor, saying she had been a journalist in the past. She also wanted to know all about Christian Science nursing.

Corresponding Chaplain: I heard from the same individual 3 times and I replied 3 times. This is after a few months of hearing nothing from him at all. In fact, one of my packets was returned to Hollister without any reason noted on the envelope a few months ago! Then in August this man received a tablet that worked better than his past tablets, and this brought on a call to Hollister from him asking to speak with me. I have told that story in a past report. In accord with our California Institutional Committee Procedures, we have not spoken to each other with the tablet, we have stuck with paper. But a new sense of closeness has developed, and his letters have been longer and longer! In the middle of all this, he called Hollister a second time on his tablet and requested Christian Science treatment for arthritis in his hands and stated that he uses no medicine for his hands. I sent him an excerpt from the Mary Baker Library book, "In My True Light and Life: Mary Baker Eddy Collection," mainly from a letter Mrs. Eddy wrote to an unknown recipient, August 17, 1896, p. 313. It begins, "Be of good heart you have everything for you and nothing against you. Every day pray the Lord's Prayer in the meaning and spirit thereof...ask for the true sense of God and man to come to your understanding and into your affections." Then I suggested that after reading the full statement several times, he substitute "my" or "mine" where "you" or "your" appear, to feel how the angel-messages are really meant for you (him). In his next letter, (9 pages!) he was just glowing with God's radiant love! He described it this way, "When I read your letters, I could feel the spirit of good surrounding me in a good way. Your explaining the "Lord's Prayer" was very good. If you say it either way every day it's a very good thing. Mary Baker Eddy was ahead of her time, have always thought that." He also shared that a leather-bound Bible a friend gave him had a note taped inside the cover that has the "Lord's Prayer" and its spiritual interpretation on it! It is so humbling to hear what "God has already done!"

Chaplain: A conversation with an incarcerated man at the jail led to sharing ideas to all three of the individuals I minister to from the article, "The day I rewrote my life" by Patricia Tupper Hyatt. In it she writes, "The question was this: Was what I was remembering the effect of God's good influence shining in my life? If I determined that something was an indication of God's presence, I kept it as part of my history. If I determined it wasn't, I deleted it, just as I delete paragraphs on the computer when they aren't worthy or useful when I'm writing." What a comfort to all who are serving a sentence, knowing that their past does not have to chase them or influence them today or in the future! The individual at the jail said his Embraced:Fully application disappeared. These things happen; their personal items often go missing. He had been working on filling it out, but he was patient with the situation and happily received a new application from me. One of our church members is the director of the 211 program in our community. I asked if this incarcerated individual, who will be rejoining the community in December, could possibly work as a dispatcher, and there were positive remarks both from the director and this man.

Chaplain: One of the individuals I see at the jail has been yearning for a better relationship with his wife. He is a sincere student of the Bible and is now reading Science and Health with great interest. He came across the chapter on Marriage and loves it. He's been studying it and feels it's got some valuable ideas he can use. He looks forward to sharing with his wife when he is released. I am visiting four individuals in the jail at the moment, and each one is a "sincere seeker of Truth." They were all familiar with the Bible to begin with. A couple were raised with an emphasis on going to church and using the Bible as a guide for daily life. One person fondly

remembers his grandmother reminding him to take God's hand every time he left the house. This same person wants his two daughters to have a relationship with God. I recently sent a book each to his 8- and 15-year-old daughters—one titled "The Story of Jesus" an easy read for the 8-year-old and the other "Stories of Healing – Jesus and his followers" for the 15-year-old. He can't wait for them to be received. Another individual loves to share ideas from the Bible and Science and Health with his girlfriend. I was able to send her a Science and Health so they can study together.

Corresponding Chaplain: This week I received three letters from one incarcerated woman, all written in August. I have been corresponding with her for a year now and she writes heartfelt letters about her attraction to Christian Science even though she identifies as Muslim. Her letters are usually about six handwritten pages long. She tells me my letters to her bring her tremendous joy and they also cause her to question her beliefs about Islam, which she feels has much truth but is misguided today. She asks many, many questions (more in these three letters than ever before) – mostly theological questions about passages from Isaiah and from the Gospels. Do I consider Mary Baker Eddy a prophetess and if not, why not. What does true happiness look like? She considers herself a visionary and told me, in great detail, about a vision she had of Christ visiting her and telling her she has been chosen to correct the misguided path of Islam. When I write back to her this week, I will keep my letter simple and stress the importance of listening. I will remind her that because we acknowledge one God, all the answers to her questions are available all the time from divine Mind. I will encourage her to continue to read the New Testament and study how Jesus worked and what he taught.

Chaplain: One delightful healing involves the whole group at this facility. The staff chaplain had put new restrictions on the individuals attending our services, stating that only those who have designated in writing that Christian Science is their faith could continue to attend. As soon as the chaplain left, we all prayed silently and aloud, knowing that divine Mind has the solutions and that nothing can interfere with the right activity going on during our Christian Science services there. At the end of our session the staff chaplain came back in and handed all the men the form to indicate their religion. I thanked him, then I told the inmates to do what was in their heart. All six men signed the form to indicate Christian Science as their religion!

Corresponding Chaplain: One incarcerated individual and I had a while to talk before our service. He said he is Catholic, and is not going to change that, but he really loves Christian Science. He said he loves it because at a time when he didn't or couldn't go to church, Christian Science came to him. He didn't give me any further information, and perhaps I should have asked him how that happened. He said Christian Science got him through a very dark time. Then another man arrived and asked me (and I almost got the feeling someone else had asked him the question) if I could briefly explain why our religion considers itself a science—why do we use that word in connection with our religion. I explained that when Jesus was before Pilate, he said "to this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world: that I should bear witness unto the truth." I said I think he did that, not just in what he said, but also in what he did. Therefore, when Jesus was healing the sick, stilling the storm, feeding the multitudes, raising the dead, and being resurrected himself, he was not performing some kind of magic trick or exercising some kind of superpower, he was bearing witness to the truth. The word "science" is generally

associated with the study, demonstration and understanding of—the search after—truth; and I think that is how Mary Baker Eddy used the word. Therefore, the truth of God, the law of God—the truth that Jesus demonstrated—is as eternal and indestructible as $2+2=4$. It's far more comprehensive, but it's just as true and just as eternal, and it is just as available to everyone, and it operates according to rules. Thus, it is fair to call it a science. That seemed to satisfy him. Our talk went back to the Bible, and one man said one of the things he loved about Christian Science was that he could see that it was absolutely based on the Bible.

Chaplain: One of the men I meet with regularly has become very devoted to reading the Bible Lesson. He tells me about how much he has changed from other times he was in jail or prison. He said our conversations “hit a home run for him each week.” Of course, we know it is God who is guiding our conversation.

Chaplain: One man requested a textbook remembering that a previous cellmate had had one and he had browsed it and found it intriguing. I talked to him about the progressive revelations that are represented in each successive chapter and arranged for one to be delivered to him. Another man wanted to engage with God and see if that would help him sort out a set of challenges. He had missed having our services in the jail during the pandemic and was pleased to be able to be in touch. The practice of Christianly scientific thinking was exactly his answer. We had many requests for one-on-one visits after the service, and several men were wondering about the term “science” with regard to Christianity, and the simple statement was provided that science is the knowledge of discoverable and provable facts – a perfect introduction to an exploration of the fundamental truths of God and the present divine expression that is man. Several men expressed gratitude for the gift of a visit, in which they found themselves reconnecting with their spiritual purpose of love. They expressed relief that loving was not a distant goal to attain but a present capacity for them. Each man could see that nothing in the past had any control over them whatsoever, and that in each present moment they are fully free to love and choose to do the beneficial things for themselves and others. With one man we fully explored the nature of love – that when we love we also are at peace, and tell the truth, and make wise choices. That we find all of these experiences—love, peace, truthfulness, and wisdom—when we practice any one of them. It helped him consolidate his thoughts and confidence, as he had already found that telling the truth was liberating, and now could fully see why.

Chaplain: One incarcerated individual asked for prayers because he was given a notice that he would be transferred to another facility, which was upsetting because he was in the middle of several college classes and he finally felt he was in a safer and more accepting environment. We both prayed, and the last correspondence via a “Getting Out” app he said he was able to stay in his existing facility to continue programs, and that he did not get angry when addressing the authorities involved. He also heard that, as a result of prayers, he may have the opportunity for resentencing based on additional information in his favor.

Chaplain: Upon arrival in a dorm one day, the deputies asked if I would meet with a woman who had just been informed that her grandmother had passed. I shared my healing of grief after the passing of a friend: I was hiking in the Sierras when I saw a view of Martis Valley, and could see I-80 going over the hill into Reno. Just as cars would disappear from my sight, I realized my friend had left my sight, but was still moving forward – as was I! She asked me to visit her again. An individual who is in a program dorm said the new class that is starting is on self-esteem. How wonderful! We know from Jesus’ teachings that we must love our neighbor as ourself, so knowing we are worthy and have value is the first step to following that instruction! Our periodicals (current and past) provide wonderful inspiration on so many topics. One man desires freedom from alcohol. A recent Christian Science Sentinel had an article titled, “My desire for alcohol ceased” and I found a pamphlet titled, “Just one step out of alcoholism.” The materials were gratefully received.

Chaplain: “The Lady of Butte” (County) is Alberta Tracy. Alberta, who recently passed, served as a Christian Science institutional chaplain for 30 years in Butte County, and as a corresponding chaplain (pre-pandemic) throughout the state of California. Nine years ago when I started as a Christian Science institutional chaplain, I sought out Alberta for mentor guidance. I asked her what are the most important points I should know before entering a maximum security prison? I was expecting the seven most important policy points to adhere to. Alberta responded with this simple edict: “See those you work with the way God sees them. That practice is our only policy.” This guidance has served me well in my chaplaincy work. It has provided many holy moments in my interactions with the prison staff and inmates. Science and Health speaks to this guidance as the Principle of the Christ healing practice: Cause to effect. I have found that when I see those I work with the way God sees them, those I work with open up with receptivity and trust, and testimony flows that is right out the gospel stories. For the many blessings I have received from Alberta’s principled and practiced guidance: Hats off for “The Lady of Butte!”

Chaplain: One individual I see reported that he observed the golden rule in action a few times. He told me an incarcerated individual was yelling “Black Lives Matter” over and over very loudly. My guy (a Hispanic man) took the opportunity to talk with this man and agreed with him – yes! Black lives do matter, and brown and white and every kind of combination we can come up with. The most important thing, however, is that God loves us all the same – so We All Matter! If God loves us and we reflect God, we too can value everyone we see because they were all made by God. The guy calmed down and stopped yelling after hearing that. My guy told me that it’s his study of the Bible and Science and Health that helps him see the healing value of treating others as he wants to be treated. This individual has countless stories of approaching with love others who are upset, and that it often turns the situation around. The deputies are grateful too. Recently a deputy brought him some extra meat leftover from the kitchen as a thank you. There is a lot of healing going on in this most locked down pod.

Chaplain: Exam anxieties, rashes, and struggles with roommates all handled with the touch of the Christ! I appreciate the resources we have for sharing with these dear ones. Bible Lessons, Monitors, Sentinels, Christian Science articles written by those who have had successes with such challenges, as well as letters of encouragement, weekly chaplain visits, and of course

Christian Science treatment – all provide the uplifted thought God’s children need, whether we are in the institution or out!

Chaplain: A new position has been added in the Spiritual Care Dept. at Stanford Health Care. There is now specifically a Christian Science Chaplain who is charged with visiting those patients who are registered as Christian Scientists, as well as those patients or their families who request visitation from the Christian Science Chaplain. Since this addition was approved in June 2023, two different patients have been visited. One was a Christian Scientist who was in one of the patient units I visit as an Interfaith Spiritual Care Volunteer at SHC. The patient’s religious preference was listed as “No Religious Preference.” When I entered the patient’s room, we both realized that we knew each other. The patient reminded me that we knew each other from church. The patient was unaware that there was a CS Chaplain at SHC. We had a friendly conversation, which ended when a nurse came to tell the patient that their discharge procedure was complete and they were free to go home! The patient wasn’t planning to return to the hospital, but was grateful to know that there is a CS Chaplain available.

Chaplain: I’m grateful for the world-wide outreach of our church. I am able to give the Herald (O Arauto) to a man who speaks Portuguese, and was also able to provide a list of churches in Brazil for when he gets out of jail and returns home. The Bible Lesson titled, “Love” had some passages about God’s grace, which reminded me of a story about how God’s grace is like grits that I shared with a few of the men: There was a man traveling in the south. He went to a diner to get breakfast. When the waitress brought his plate, there was a pile of something on it that he couldn’t identify. He said to the waitress, “I don’t know what that is, but I didn’t order it and I’m not going to pay for it.” The waitress replied, “Son, those are grits. You don’t have to ask for them; you don’t have to pay for them; they just come.” And THAT is like God’s grace: we don’t have to ask for it, we don’t have to pay for it, it just comes.

Chaplain: We continue to find great progress at the induction yard where we have up to two dozen new women each week at each of the 2 afternoon services. It is a healing process introducing those who have never heard of Christian Science or have gotten inaccurate information about CS from other sources. Along with literature, each woman is always given a single sheet that contains the tenets, a description of what CS is and is not, and the Lord’s Prayer along with the spiritual interpretation. We are always touched when an inmate shares a healing from their turning Godward. A woman shared that she was homeless and living down by the river, struggling with “walking pneumonia,” as well as heavy painful blisters on her feet from walking miles to try to get a job. She said one night she was terribly cold as well as in pain, and reached out to God to warm her heart and body. With the warm morning sun on her, she felt God’s caring presence, along with being totally healed of both the pneumonia and blisters. Her tears as she told this account showed her sincere gratitude for this all-loving infinite God. Another woman who has regularly attended the services, privately came up to us last week and said that she “has been searching for many years for the truth, exploring many religions, and now is convinced that she has found the full truth in this Christ Science.” We continue to feel so very blessed to see how this Science is reaching the searching hearts.