

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE COMMITTEE ON INSTITUTIONAL WORK IN CALIFORNIA

Selected Chaplain and Corresponding Chaplain Fruitage Reports July - September 2024

Corresponding Chaplain: A gentleman I have been corresponding with for almost five years is getting ready to be released. He asked for prayers because he is afraid he might go back to his old ways. I reassured him with articles and verses that remind him that God is always his guide. He has made many positive strides while incarcerated. He has completed several college courses and taken part in an art program. He and three other fellows painted four, 16' tall wall murals depicting a variety of nature scenes. Their picture taken in front of a mural and interview can be seen on the CDCR website under "CHC murals." He hopes to take art lessons when he gets out. Also, every time I send a letter to him, I email his mom, who is a Christian Scientist, letting her know which articles/quotations I send him; she is very supportive.

Another fellow is waiting for a pre-trial to see if a settlement can be made. He is concerned his state appointed lawyer isn't working with his best interests in mind. I reminded him God is the one in charge – it's His courtroom and divine plan. I reassured him our church metaphysical group and I are praying for him. We have been working with Embraced:Fully to get an Angel Team in place when he is released. He continues to share Christian Science – the Bible Lessons/Monitors/Sentinels – with the other "brothers." He said they really look forward to **his** mail!

Chaplain: I am always grateful for the enthusiasm and attendance of the men who attend our A Yard services. I continue to see the "I don't want to miss a word" attitude. Spirituality is the main focus for this group. They want to learn how to pray, how to listen, how to put on daily spiritual armor. In many conversations, when a need is mentioned, my usual response has been, "Time to pray." I feel like my main intent is for the men to learn not just to pray, but how to hear the answers God is sending. The encouragement of a man who has been at this facility for just over a year (and in Christian Science for nine years), has led to many of the other men coming to the services. We have grown from 3 to a list of 17 men who have signed up for our services.

The Sept 29th Bible Lesson was quite interesting in the story Jesus told of the vineyard owner, who hired men at different times during the day, morning, noon, even for just the last hour of the day. Yet each man received the same wage. This brought a lively discussion that coming to Christ at any time in life, even now, in prison, provides the same benefit to the person as someone who embraced Christ Jesus much earlier in life. All will be rewarded equally. The main lesson is always turning to the Truth, at any and every turn! I get so much out of these services and the thirst for answers and understanding that the men embody. To attend is a blessing to me.

Chaplain: For the many years I have served as a Christian Science visiting Chaplain, I've stressed that the CS Bible Lesson is an individual study, and that as "divinely authorized," the

reading has a way of finding the individuals just where they are. With that in mind, I've asked those at the chapel service table to actively engage in the reading/study every day as if you were having a direct conversation with God, one-on-one. I ask that those at the table mark up their lessons, highlight the passages that speak directly to them, and be prepared to speak at the table on those highlighted passages. That's been the way. However, over the past several months I've been reading out loud the entire Bible Lesson once a week with an Embraced:Fully parolee in the spirit of communion, with pauses in the reading for interpretation, insight, and personal testimony when so inspired. This has really worked out in a healing way. Because the Bible Lesson is divinely authorized, the lesson speaks for itself, like a complete thought, a perfected sentence that one cannot add to or take away from without diluting the divinity of the message. So then pausing to comment, interpret by example, or add insight is more like dancing with a perfect partner — like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers (Ginger Rogers was a practicing Christian Scientist). So... I've decided from here on at my prison chapel visits, we at the table will not just speak to certain passages, but read the entire lesson out loud, pausing to comment, or pivot like Astaire & Rogers when so moved.

Chaplain: The roommate of an incarcerated man I've been visiting asked to see me. He told me he had never studied the Bible or gone to church. After surgery for gunshot wounds, he found no relief from pain. His CO gave him a Bible. He fell asleep with the Bible on his chest, and awakened pain-free. He wants to know more about how something like that could happen. He soaks up our conversations and frequently interrupts to say how grateful he is to have someone guide him on his spiritual journey. I planned to share Mrs. Eddy's experience of immediate healing, and the next week the account from Matt 9 was included in the Bible Lesson. As I described the event, he had tears rolling down his cheeks. Unfortunately, his hands were shackled at his sides, and I hadn't brought any tissues. He is now studying the weekly Bible Lesson.

Two men expect to be released in the next month or two, and have been given information about the Christian Science churches in the areas they will be living.

I was asked to visit a man in the infirmary. He asked me to pray for him on the topic of forgiveness. We talked about what Jesus said about forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer: forgive us our debts AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS. I asked him to think about this idea and to read the Sermon on the Mount. We had a lovely talk the next week.

Chaplain: One of our regular Chaplains will be away for a couple months, and she was very diligent about finding someone to "cover her guys" while she is away. There is such a dedicated desire to meet the needs of these men; how could I say no? So, this is my first visit to this incarcerated gentleman...and it's a joy. This individual is a dedicated student and lover of the Bible and Mrs. Eddy's writings. Knowing he was rereading the Book of Acts, we had a lovely sharing of how "The Angel got in" (June 2000 Christian Science Journal) wherever and whenever the disciples in Acts found themselves imprisoned. And we affirmed they are certainly there with him now. (That was also the title of a Sentinel article I left for him that day).

He is listening for how to be a blessing even though he is in his cell for almost 20 hours a day. He is now allowed to help clean the unit and this gives him the opportunity to “be the sower of good seed” among his fellow incarcerated men. “Today, I did 25 things in an hour for others. It doesn’t matter if it’s just getting them a cup of water. I ask, ‘What can I do for you? How can I help you? What do you need?’ And if someone doesn’t want my help...it’s OK. I say ‘I’m here if you need me.’ I’m not offended. I just plant the seed and know the mustard seed will grow.’

We also talked about Peter—how even though he’d done a bad thing in denying Jesus three times, and felt terrible, Love had a way of redeeming him, assuring Jesus of his love, and he was asked to “feed my sheep.” This individual is feeding and caring for many of His sheep right where he is. He is committed to being an example and helper to others. When he feels it’s appropriate he talks to them about the Bible, or tells them they can talk to a Christian Science chaplain.

Corresponding Chaplain: One fellow has been writing consistently for the past year. He has had major ups and downs—times when he expressed gratitude and a connection with God and times when he expressed desperation, doubt, and abandonment. Recently he has written to say that he is back on track, feeling God’s love, and beginning to trust in others again. He feels the twice weekly contact with his CS Chaplain makes all the difference in the world; it makes him feel that he is indeed worthy of Christly love.

Chaplain: One fellow consistently says that our services are his only church services, and he feels deeply connected to God and learns more about the Bible at every visit. Another fellow says that he is learning to pray his way out of arthritis pain, through the application of the messages of the CS Bible Lesson. Another fellow is being released in October and is “scared to death” because he has no family or friends to help him. I have assured him that if he contacts my church, we will assist him as we can, by referring him to resources and hopefully giving him a used cell phone.

Corresponding Chaplain:

Chaplain: [The following is a healing account, translated from Spanish, from an incarcerated man who gave his CS Chaplain permission to publish it]:

When I think about my past life, I think, man! Where would I be if someone had introduced me to Christian Science before. In my search for God, when I was just a little kid, my dad would take me to a church he attended. My aunt also would take me to another church. Both churches were Christian, but they praised God differently. The message was beautiful, but scary at the same time, because they promised salvation, but at the same time they praised an angry God that punished sinners and that, to please him, you had to be pure and free from sin. At my young age, I couldn’t understand the message very well, and I was afraid of the idea of this God with two different temperaments, the loving and protective part I loved, but the punishing and angry part made me very afraid, because of the way in the church that they define sin at my young

age, I could understand that I was already a sinner and therefore I was on the list of those that would be punished and that idea was not the sweetest of ideas that I wanted to have in my mind.

Time went by and I ended up locked up in an American jail, about which I am writing this testimony. When I arrived at this place, I still had that idea of that God I had heard about when I was a boy, but everything changed when one day I was walking down the hall of the unit where I am. While walking that day, I saw some papers on the floor. I'm not the type of person that picks things up off the floor, but those papers drew my attention and I picked them up and I could see that they were Christian Science Bible Lessons. At that time I looked for more information about this mysterious religion that I had never heard of. I sent a request to see a pastor of that religion and I was sent a pastor who only spoke English and I only spoke Spanish.

He tried to find someone who spoke Spanish, but he couldn't find anyone. So, we agreed that if God wanted to communicate the truth to me, language would not be a problem for him, and it wasn't, because that Chaplain and I today can understand each other very well, because he introduced me to this truth and that was the first healing that Christian Science brought to my life.

I have received many healings through my study of Christian Science, but this time I want to talk about one in particular. That one occurred in May of 2024. In the middle of April of this year, I started feeling ill, I got a fever, then I got a cough and my head started hurting. I was in bed for nine days. I could only do what was necessary. I was praying and witnessing about the real person that I am in the image of God as is written in Genesis 1:27, 1:31. God created me in his image, and declared me good.

So, there is no reason for me to feel bad or sick. I kept praying, but the headache was so severe and I couldn't concentrate. One night when I was in bed my nose started bleeding and I also spit up blood. It was so serious that time that a jail guard told me that he would call the doctors so that they could treat me, but I told him no, to please give me 30 minutes more and if I didn't get better for them to do what they had to do. He agreed and then the bleeding stopped and there was no reason to call the doctor when the bleeding stopped. I took a pill to relieve the headache and concentrate on the prayer. While I was praying, I remembered this passage from the Bible that is in Luke 8:43-44. While I was pondering this, all my sickness disappeared. I thought, if this woman was sick for twelve years and was healed with a touch of the border of Divine Science, I also need a touch of Christian Science. I realized that we have that spiritual truth that is able to heal old problems. So, my problem was not anything and would be destroyed by that same truth that thousands of years ago destroyed that woman's problem. It goes without saying that since that day I have not had any more health problems.

Chaplain: One incarcerated man stayed for a while after our meeting and first thanked me for an article I had sent the men about "standing porter at the door of thought," and I shared how sometimes saying to myself "That is not my thought!" has helped me do that. He then explained—and showed me in his *Science and Health*—how he refers to the Sixth Tenet every day and we discussed how having the same mind "that was also in Christ Jesus" is such a help at "standing porter."

Chaplain: An incarcerated man who had great difficulty in reading and comprehending during our services has made great progress over the past year. He used to refuse to read, or only when his friend insisted. Now he *wants* to read, and does not want his turn to pass him up. He contributes to the meetings and encourages others. He has been attending over ten months and recently said he wants to fill out an application to become a member of The Mother Church. He is a joyful member of our group! In an anonymous questionnaire asking main concerns, the men's responses included: "I would like to understand the Bible better; a desire for inner peace; how to be a better person and Christian; a desire to learn how to be closer to God." These are all worthy goals, and they sound like a response from any one of us as well.

Chaplain: "The power of stillness—a Christian Science Perspective" by Mark Swinney, in the August 26 Monitor, was printed up for the men. Much of our conversation has to do with prayer and listening. This article really brings this to light. Other articles provided recently include "Being a visionary" by Katherine Dunton from the Monitor Daily on 7/30/24; and "Where do we place our trust?" by Madora Kibbe. I am enjoying all our periodicals more and more simply in my desire to find just the right articles for these men. They have so many questions and are so engaged at every meeting. I wish you could see their eager faces, drinking in every new thought. I think transformation seems to occur right in front of me! What a blessing. I think *I* am the one being blessed, in providing spiritualization of thought, something many never knew existed.

Chaplain: Two men who live in the same dorm requested *Unity of Good* by Mary Baker Eddy. I hand-delivered the books. Both have been reading Science and Health, and discuss the ideas with each other. I'm not sure how they came to have copies of Science and Health, but they looked at the list of other books by Mary Baker Eddy in the front of Science and Health and picked Unity of Good from the listing. One man told me how he has been healed of a diagnosed condition that has no material remedy. The jail doctor doesn't understand how this could happen, but the man knows it was from reading Science and Health. Another man told me how he has been healed of chronic back pain as a result of his daily study of the Bible Lesson. Another mentioned he shares ideas from the Bible and Science and Health during conversations with his mom. She has begun attending church and studying the Bible. This same man told me he is so happy with how he feels about his relationship with God. A discussion of the Sermon on the Mount with one man included Jesus' instructions on the topic of revenge (see Matt. 5:43-48). At a follow-up meeting, he said he used to think about revenge, but not after studying the Sermon on the Mount.

Chaplain: I was assigned by the Main Jail facility chaplain to visit two men in the infirmary. I've attempted 3 times to visit one of the men, but he was sleeping each time. The other man was so excited to have me talk with him. Due to a medical emergency in the unit, I spoke to him through the window in his door. He asked for a KJV Bible, which I had with me. Our conversation went from what I'll call generic Christianity to him asking me about my church. After hearing about our textbook, he asked for a copy and was excited to receive both it and the citation Bible Lessons for September. Later, the deputy mentioned a change in the man's behavior, from having an attitude to being super happy.

I shared the CS Sentinel article, “Do we act or react?” with two men. One was greatly moved by the message it contained, and reported that by using the ideas from the article, he was able to reconcile with another man.

I received a new request from a cellmate of a man I visited a few times. This man has been reading the Science and Health I gave his cellmate, and he wants to learn more. He accepted four CS Sentinels and his own copy of Science and Health. The next week he mentioned looking up the references to SH mentioned in the Sentinel articles.

Serving as a volunteer Christian chaplain, I visited a man who wanted to understand how to study the Bible. I selected several books on the topic from the Chaplain Library. During our second meeting, he mentioned being concerned about a decision he needed to make. I asked if, when thinking about the two choices, one of the options gave him a sense of peace. He paused and said “yes.” I suggested that he had his answer since answered prayer results in a sense of peace. He laughed out loud and asked, “Is it really that easy?” I answered, “Yes!”

Chaplain: One incarcerated man in the county jail who has been facing severe financial hardship prayed to know that his supply didn’t come from family, friends, or other material sources, but directly from God, and that he could count on this spiritual fact to meet all his needs. The following week a generous donation appeared unexpectedly on his books, which allowed him to send a gift to his daughter in El Salvador which he’d been wanting to do for some time.

Chaplain: The weekly Bible Lessons have been extremely helpful in offering Christly love and support. We encouraged the fellows to study and memorize the Golden Text and Responsive Readings for the Lesson on Life, which spoke specifically to God’s love and support in times of trouble. One fellow consistently attended our weekly CS services for well over a year, and he is showing definite signs of growing understanding. He offers very insightful comments and is supportive of another man and his fears of being released. One man has memorized the Daily Prayer and says this prayer each morning when he first wakes up. A citation in the Bible Lesson on Life showed an example of how MBE, at one of her lowest points, realized that God is Love, and she continued on her spiritual journey with progress and growing understanding. This is a good example for all of us.

Chaplain: July has been an interesting month. Due to extreme heat (114 much of July) I did not attend in person. However, with my trusty list of incarcerated men I mailed out many articles and Bible lessons—at first to 10 men, and now to 14! In addition, I was able to meet up with a released citizen I knew over several years at the facility, who celebrated his one-year release anniversary. He is working and was very happy to meet up with me for lunch. When he attended the church services at the facility, he was always very engaged and drank in all that we had to share. His positive attitude and openness are what helped him along the way. In the end, his case was cut short, and his sentence was reduced to time served. I expect to stay in touch with him and was delighted to spend some time with him. I have been in touch with two other men who were released several years ago, and they are doing very well—trusting in God’s plan and progressing, always moving forward. Blessings abound!