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*An Inter-Lutheran Journal
for Practitioners and
Teachers of Pastoral Care
and Counseling*



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THE PURPOSE OF *CARING CONNECTIONS*

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written by and for Lutheran practitioners and educators in the fields of pastoral care, counseling, and education. Seeking to promote both breadth and depth of reflection on the theology and practice of ministry in the Lutheran tradition, *Caring Connections* intends to be academically informed, yet readable; solidly grounded in the practice of ministry; and theologically probing.

Caring Connections seeks to reach a broad readership, including chaplains, pastoral counselors, seminary faculty and other teachers in academic settings, clinical educators, synod and district leaders, others in specialized ministries and — not least — concerned congregational pastors and laity. *Caring Connections* also provides news and information about activities, events and opportunities of interest to diverse constituencies in specialized ministries.

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Editorial

This issue of *Caring Connections* represents a change in *Caring Connections* that some readers will remember as a return. With this issue, *Caring Connections* is now a publication of the Lutheran Services in America Chaplains' Network. Lutheran Services in America is a pan-Lutheran organization encompassing member organizations recognized by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and/or affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Chaplains' Network is dedicated to being a supportive community of Chaplains connected to LSA's members and sponsoring churches. Predecessor communication forms and newsletters to *Caring Connections* were published by the LSA Chaplains' Network, and so *Caring Connections* returns to this sponsor. *Caring Connections* will otherwise continue with the same format and editorial process. Please learn more about the LSA Chaplains' Network at www.lutheranservices.org/chaplains_network

This issue of *Caring Connections* is dedicated to the work chaplains do connected to the criminal justice system. A number of writers with experience in this area share their perspectives for us.

- George Klima shares his reflections on his ministry as a police chaplain, and how this ministry is “to the world and community.”
- Bryn Carlson shares two articles in this issue. In one he presents an intentional theology for prison ministry. In one insight Bryn reflects that “the chaplain represents the Gospel in a stark and often hopeless environment.” In this second article, Bryn portrays chaplains as ethical change agents in the corrections context.
- Lori Wilbert presents “Living Our Truth: Prisons and Programs.” Lori reflects that “there are many offenders who take seriously the challenge to work change in their hearts.”

In addition to these articles, we share a series of resources and links pertaining to criminal justice, including some of the teaching documents the denominations have prepared. We hope these resources will assist you in identifying ways all our ministries can reach out to those who work in the criminal justice system and those who are imprisoned.

Keep in your mind (and calendar) the **Zion XV** conference, scheduled for October 24-27, 2013, at Lutheridge, a Lutheran camp and conference center located in Arden, N.C., about ten miles from Asheville. The dates arranged with Lutheridge correspond to the peak weeks for fall colors in western North Carolina. The area also provides a number of tourist attractions, such as the magnificent Biltmore Estate. Asheville is the center for studios that sell Appalachian craft and arts. The pride of the east coast for pristine mountain viewing is the Blue Ridge Parkway, only five miles away. The theme and key presenters have not yet been selected, but we hope these notes will entice you to make plans to be there.

We want to remind any of you who are Lutherans in training to become a chaplain, pastoral counselor or clinical educator, that the **Give Something Back** Scholarship Fund — at this time — has \$3000.00 available every six months for those Lutheran brothers and sisters who are in need of financial assistance as they journey through their professional training. If you are interested in obtaining more information, contact the Rev. Joel R. Hempel in the office of “Specialized Pastoral Care,” Joel.Hempel@lcms.org

Do you subscribe online to *Caring Connections*? Remember, **subscription is free!** By subscribing, you assure that you will receive prompt notification when each issue of the journal appears on the *Caring Connections* website. This also helps the editors and the editorial board to get a sense of how much interest is being generated by each issue. We are delighted that the numbers of those who check in increases with each new issue. You can subscribe by clicking on the subscription link on www.caringconnections.org, or by following the directions given on the masthead (p. 3), or in larger print on page 20.

Call for Articles

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran Pastoral Care Providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight with the wider community. We want to invite anyone interested in writing an article to please contact the editors, Rev. Kevin Massey and Rev. Chuck Weinrich.

Specifically, we invite articles for upcoming issues on the following themes.

Spring, 2012 “Pastoral Care and Suicide”

Summer, 2012 “Hope, Resilience, and Moral Injury”

Have you dealt with any of these issues? Please consider writing an article for us. We sincerely want to hear from you!

Reflections of a Pastor/Police Chaplain

The church is not simply a hiding place, a harbor free from storms of life, or a museum about defenders of the faith. The church is the living Body of Christ in the community.

The call came at 2:00 a.m. A death had occurred, and a chaplain was requested by the police to make a death notification. “What kind of family am I dealing with? What is their religious background? What kind of support system do they have?” As I dressed to answer the call, my prayer was for courage, understanding and a caring and listening attitude. I did not know the family. They did not know me. My presence with the officer first brought fear, then tears and grief. My presence helped to bring calm to the situation and marshal the support system for this family.

This kind of thing takes place in the parish setting also. Death, suicide, overdoses, sudden illness and accidents are all a part of parish life. So, what is the difference between the community and the communion of saints? Absolutely nothing! God is not confined to a church label, building or set of rules and regulations required for membership. God’s people are everywhere, and the needs of God’s people for spiritual guidance give community-oriented pastors the opportunity to witness to the Gospel of Christ through involvement wherever they find themselves.

Often there is nothing to be said. The chaplain/pastor must be a good listener and familiar with use of the ministry of presence. In over 40 years of ministry I have often felt uncomfortable. The police, coroner, doctors, nurses and technicians all have their assigned tasks. What about the chaplain/pastor? A pastor/chaplain friend of mine says, “Don’t just do something; sit there!” In many cases the people to whom I ministered — sometimes only in silence — later thanked me for just that, for being there.

My community chaplaincy “parish” is not bound by labels of a denomination, by a building at Fourth and Elm, or by regulations of church membership. The cries for help and groans of despair are cries of pain, for food, shelter, clothing, hope and comfort. The greater need is to be present to people with the comfort and hope that only the Word of God can give.

Whether counseling a police officer or a firefighter on the scene, in the station or office or dealing with victims and the families of victims, the presence of the pastor/chaplain is very much appreciated. It is a privilege of the holy ministry to be with people, not only in the best of times, but also to be with them at the worst of times. The first responders appreciate the presence and support of the chaplain/pastor. They are encouraged in the work



they need to do. For the chaplain there are referrals to be made, counsel to share, and occasionally even a funeral service to do. But always the pastoral presence must give the assurance of God’s love in Christ.

The greater need is to be present to people with the comfort and hope that only the Word of God can give.

In the partnership I have with my parish, Hope Lutheran Church in Shorewood, Ill., I have a built-in support system for myself, for the first responders, and for the victims and the families of victims. In all crime there is more than one victim. Accident, robbery, assault, rape and murder leave many people and their families with

shattered lives. Where does one find the resources to begin to mend those lives? God's communion of saints and members of the community join hands to work at the restoration process. The church is not simply a hiding place, a harbor free from storms of life, or a museum about defenders of the faith. The church is the living Body of Christ in the community. Jesus went out teaching, healing and preaching. So should we, both pastors *and* parishioners.

Too often, the church joins with the community in saying, "Lock them up and throw away the key," or "Fry them." But the caring community of the church realizes that the perpetrator is also a victim, has a family, and needs ministry. We are called to love and forgive all people, to "hate the sin, but love and forgive the sinner." Remember, as we say in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

There are many theories put forth in the areas of psychology, sociology and criminology. These disciplines are very important, and we need to study and apply what we learn from them to our ministry. However, in addition, a pastor is called to reflect Christ not only within the church, but also throughout the community. The parish is also called to serve that community. Jesus said, "When I was hungry, thirsty, cold, alone, sick and in prison, you met my needs." When? "Whenever you did it to one of these, the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me."

The ministry of the church is to the world and community. "Go, make disciples," go preach the Gospel to the whole world. Members of the church live, work and play in the community. Our children go to school and have all kinds of activities in the community. The church cannot hide from, run away from or ignore the world around it. The church needs to reach out to and be concerned about the needs of the community in which it finds itself.

The pastor leads and the flock follows. We need to be inclusive. We need to embrace our community. For example, our congregation and its church plant are open to scouting, a number of addiction groups and other community projects and needs. We are also planning an off-the-street sports program for parish and community. We are working at developing a missional attitude, a caring reputation and a spirituality that takes seriously the concept of the church as light and salt in the world.

George Klima has, for 43 years, been a parish pastor and a prison and hospital chaplain. He is presently pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Shorewood, Ill. He is also serving as chaplain to the Shorewood Police Department, as well as chaplain to the Troy Fire Department. He is married, and has six children and 16 grandchildren.

Prophet, Priest and King: An Intentional Theology for Prison Ministry

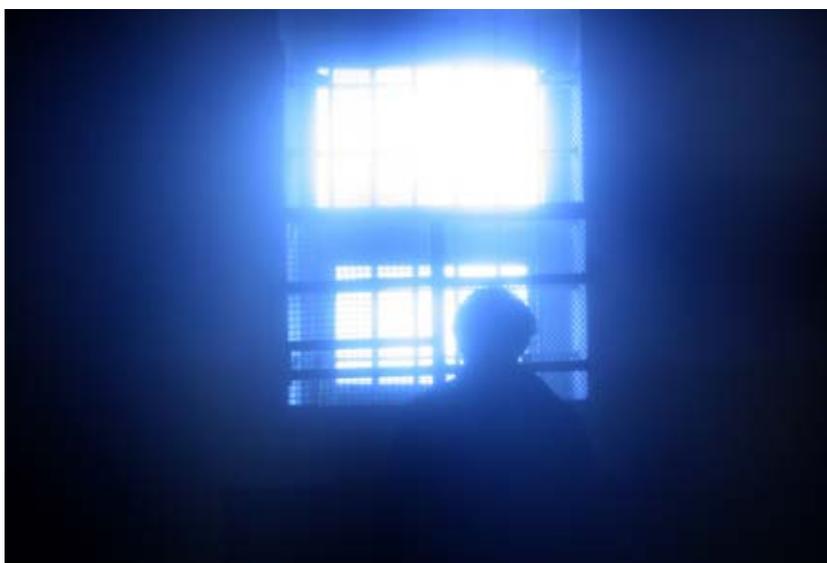
Without an intentional theology to inform their ministry, prison chaplains may find themselves tied to the system, over-identifying with those they are called to serve, or afloat in the institution, insensitive of the cultural context within which their ministry seeks to be relevant.

Prison ministry is characterized by a wide variety of delivery models. They vary from strictly community volunteers; to individual contractual services with a staff person serving as 'religious coordinator'; to a consortium of city or state religious organizations providing for the pastoral services; to the contracting of an 'outside' religious organization to provide for the religious needs of the inmate; to a full time chaplain employed by the governmental jurisdiction. A form of delivery is often influenced and given shape by fiscal constraints, political realities, available resources and differing philosophies on the most effective method to supply ministry to a pluralistic prison population. This article makes the premise that the pastoral delivery form in prison ministry is secondary to an intentional theological context that informs that ministry.

In their book, *Ministering to Prisoners and Their Families*, Kandle and Cassler state that correctional institutions may be described in terms of their "auspices [jurisdiction], the degree of security, the age limitations and the program specialty."

After describing each of the auspices they state, "none of these descriptions are as important as the specific program a particular prison develops."¹ This paper uses a similar premise. In any number of correctional institutions there may be a wide diversity of models used to deliver pastoral care. However, contrary to what some might advocate, a particular model is not as important as a specific intentional theological framework that gives shape to the delivery of pastoral care in prison.

Prison ministry often lacks intentional theology. While theological language (hope, freedom, redemption, resurrection, etc.) may be relevant to the inmate, the highly structured and authoritative setting of a prison can make it difficult to bring an intentional theology into practice. Ministry in prison is often carried out on the extremes — from giving meaning to the mundane routine of daily prison life to responding to crisis, which is often characterized by violence. Without an intentional theology to inform their ministry, prison chaplains may find themselves tied to the system, over-identifying with those they



are called to serve, or afloat in the institution, insensitive of the cultural context within which their ministry seeks to be relevant.

Ministry in prison is often carried out on the extremes.

A theology that has evolved for me during thirty years of ministry within the correctional system is based on the Transfiguration as recorded in the Gospel of John:

And as He was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and His raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with Him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared and spoke of His departure, which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem . . . And a voice came out of the cloud saying, this is my Son, my Chosen, listen to Him!

*And when the voice had spoken Jesus was found alone.*²

The passage from John is New Testament proclamation of the fulfillment, based on the concepts that give substance and expression to the Hebrew faith — Prophet, Priest and King. The role and importance of the Prophet finds expression in the lives and messages of the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament and as well as with Elijah. The institution of the Priest has its roots in Moses, to whom the law is given; it is handed down to Aaron and affirmed in the Book of Leviticus. The institution of the King is paramount in the history of Israel; it is through the line and lineage of David as king that God works his divine intention. God manifests himself to his people through these three institutions. These three concepts — Prophet, Priest and King — give shape for an intentional theology for ministry in the prison environment. And in Christian theology, Prophet, Priest and King are personified and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Prophet

During my thirty years of prison ministry, I have often heard the chaplain referred to as the “conscience of the institution,” just as the Prophet is referred to as having served as the “conscience of Israel.” This is an oversimplification. It lacks an understanding and appreciation for the message and role of prophecy in the Old Testament. It is difficult to identify one common denominator for prophet or prophecy in the Old Testament. Prophet and prophecy mean different things, at different times, in Israel’s history.

Gerhard Kittel articulates the tradition of the prophet in the Old Testament in his description of the prophetic in, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. He provides the following insights:

- A common emerging feature in the Old Testament is that the prophet speaks by Yahweh’s commission. In the Greek oracle, men choose the prophet.
- In the Old Testament, the prophet’s task is not to be seen from the perspective of one whose primary task was to shake up people, but the primary function was one of preservation and keeping the people Israel in contact with the will of Yahweh.
- A peculiar element in the writing of the prophets, from Isaiah to Ezekiel, was that they came with the authority of the word of Yahweh, even though it may sometimes conflict with the total tradition of the faith of Israel. Jeremiah proclaimed the word of Yahweh without the backing of tradition, while opponents can appeal to tradition.
- In the Old Testament, the prophets do not merely pass on the word that they received from Yahweh. They themselves are responsible for the correct delivery of their message; they are not

involuntary instruments.

- The prophets always provided an explanation for any kind of particular threat that is given, and those who are addressed are shown their sin. There is a close connection between it and the calamity proclaimed. The connection that the prophet seeks to address is one between deed and consequence. One is not simply to think in terms of retribution.³

The implications for prison ministry are clear: prophetic ministry is to remind both the ‘keeper and the kept’ of their relationship and responsibilities to each other and to God.

The implications for prison ministry are clear: prophetic ministry is to remind both the ‘keeper and the kept’ of their relationship and responsibilities to each other and to God. Prophetic ministry in prison is to speak to a system of values and ethics that may become distorted, neglected or unpopular in a highly structured and polarized environment or in times of stress or crisis. Prophetic ministry is to reveal the consequences of one’s deeds, not in terms of retaliation or retribution, but in the hope of restoration. The chaplain must have a deep sense of awareness of their own personal and pastoral identity for this role to be integral in prison ministry.

The prophet role of the prison chaplain has the potential for more tension than either the role of the priest or the king. It is the most misunderstood of the three pastoral dimensions. It can be the most difficult to incorporate into the highly controlled, structured and polarized prison environment. It has the most potential for leaving the chaplain vulnerable.

The chaplain must be theologically grounded so as to provide a voice that reminds self, and those served, of God’s redemptive intention for their life. The prison provides a context where this message often runs contrary to the institutional mission and tradition. The chaplain is responsible for the correct delivery of this message. A delicate balance must be achieved between assuming the role of the prophet within the system, and yet respecting the prison culture. If ministry in the prison environment becomes characterized solely by the prophetic, the institutional staff may become suspicious, creating an atmosphere of mistrust. This is especially true for those who lack pastoral integrity and do not appreciate or understand the prison culture. However, if prison ministry is lacking the prophetic, then the pastoral role is, at best, compromised, or at worst, abdicated. This often takes place when prison chaplains lack security in their pastoral identity, leading the chaplain to seek affirmation

and approval from the system. When this happens the chaplain then finds it difficult to differentiate their pastoral role from the institutional culture in which they are called to serve, severely crippling or even nullifying the prophetic voice.

“Since you are in Diaspora, do something to give it meaning. Otherwise you will come closer to despair.”⁴ The Diaspora of the inmate is doing time. The inmate is in exile, away from home, if in fact they have one. The prophetic voice calls out to the inmate to find meaning in the prison wilderness. The Hebrew people in Diaspora needed a vision for the future that would give meaning and purpose to their exile. For the inmate, there is often little incentive to use their confinement to ponder life’s meaning and their own basic beliefs. Perhaps nothing is as important as the nurturing of a vision. For where there is no vision the, the people parish.⁵ The prophet seeks to assist the inmate in finding meaning and a vision. The formulation of a vision and finding meaning an turn incarceration into a redemptive and transforming experience.

The prophetic role of the institutional prison chaplain was evident during the 1987 prison riot at the United States Penitentiary in Atlanta, Ga. At mid-morning, Nov. 23, 1987, Cuban inmates used concealed weapons to gain control of the interior institution. They were successful in taking nearly 100 hostages. The institution’s Roman Catholic priest and protestant chaplain were two of the hostages. In the early stages of negotiations with authorities, the inmates offered to release both chaplains. The chaplains refused, stating that they would remain until all hostages were released.

Remarkably, the inmates gave the two chaplains access to all of the hostages. During eleven days of captivity the two chaplains exercised (kingly) authority and critical (priestly) ministry to the other hostages scattered throughout the institution. Incredibly, the priest was not only permitted to conduct daily Mass on the yard for the hostage takers, but was also allowed to attend the meetings of a small group of Cuban inmate leaders who were heavily involved with negotiations with local and national U.S Bureau of Prison officials. During the negotiations, the priest fulfilled the prophetic. Subtly, but unrelentingly, he was responsible for delivering the message of the relationship between deed and consequence. By helping the inmates weigh the consequences of a prolonged siege, the role of the prophet became critical in bringing about a conclusion to the hostage crisis.

Priest

“Despair petrified” is a description of life without hope used by a prisoner in one of America’s most notorious Civil War prisons — Andersonville.⁶ “The only minister who came into that stockade was a Catholic priest . . . He was unwearied in his attention to the sick, and the whole day could be seen moving around the prison, attending to those who needed spiritual consolation.”⁷ He had no

role of prophet — no role of king, but the role of priest was distinct and significant.

The role of priest has been the most easily identified, and expected, role of the prison chaplain. It is the least difficult of the three roles to understand. It might well be defined as bringing God’s compassion, grace and love to all people. This is most particularly true with the sick, the disenfranchised, the poor, and the despised — often

For the inmate, there is often little incentive to use their confinement to ponder life’s meaning and their own basic beliefs.

exemplified by the prisoner. In the role of the priest the chaplain represents the Gospel in a stark and often hopeless environment.

In the Gospels, Jesus does not refer to himself or his disciples as priests. Jesus takes his images from the secular world, rather than the priestly ministry. The concept of priest is defined in the book of Hebrews:

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.⁸

In the Old Testament, the priest’s the sacrifices to God were substitutionary in nature. In Hebrews, Christ is the one who brings an end to the old sacrifices with his life. Christ — the High Priest — affects access to the full presence of God. Because of Christ, the place of God’s presence now becomes accessible to hope. Through Christ the High Priest, the world and the world to come are linked.⁹

In his book, *The Priest in Community*, Urban Holmes conceptualizes the priestly role:

The priest is much more than a sacrificial official. He is a mystagogue. To be a mystagogue is to lead the people into the mystery that surrounds our life. The mystagogue comes out of the darkness of man’s evolutionary past, charged with the responsibility of deepening humanity’s understanding of itself by word and action, by the very nature of the priest’s presence.¹⁰

On this threshold:

The priest does serve both the community and the God who speaks from across the fathomless ocean of our consciousness. The priest stands with one foot in the receptive mode and one in the action mode,

*a liminal or “threshold” figure, called to symbolize what the priest on his own cannot even imagine; that inner word of God, providing humankind with the light to see God’s intention for creation.*¹¹

Holmes’s description illustrates the role of the priest in the prison. As bridge builder, the priest is more than a source of knowledge or information. The priest also provides understanding which involves a relationship. Using Holmes’ imagery, as bridge builder the priest enables a relationship by joining the creator and the created.

The priest in prison stands on the threshold and leads the people served through the desert of prison life. He prepares the people to encounter their God in the midst of the nakedness of their prison existence. This encounter can transform a wasteland of despair, isolation and hopelessness into an oasis of trust, hope, redemption, grace and forgiveness, giving meaning and interpretation to the inmate’s experience.

Jerry arrived at the penitentiary early in 1978. As was the custom of the “treatment” staff, I was standing in the large corridor off of the mess hall as inmates entered and left for the noon meal. This was a practice implemented by the Warden to assure that at least once during the day inmates had access to any staff member. Upon exiting the mess hall, with eyes cast to the floor, Jerry thrust into my hand an envelope with “chaplain” written on it. He hurried on. I stuck it in my back pocket.

Later, in the privacy of my office, I opened the envelope. It had his name, institutional number, cell and work assignment and this note: “I need to see a priest.” Over a period of time, he told me he had served three tours in Viet Nam, attaining the rank of Sergeant Major. On returning home from his third tour, he found his son in an incestuous relationship with his wife. In a fit of rage, he killed his son. Jerry personified “despair petrified.”

Jerry did not need a “prophet” — he did not need a “king.” By his own frank admission, he needed a priest. For Jerry, the priest represented someone who might shed light and understanding on the darkness that had enveloped his life. He saw the priest as a refuge in the midst of an environment that was alien to him. He saw the priest as one who could perhaps serve as a bridge between ‘land’ and the ‘abyss’ he was experiencing.

How is the role of the priest fulfilled in this pastoral relationship? First, I had to reflect on why he requested to see me. What was it that he saw in my role as priest? Early in our pastoral sessions, I had to identify what his expectations were of me as “priest” and how that was compatible with my understanding of my identity as “priest.” Second, I had to listen carefully. I wanted to hear his pain. My pastoral inclination to serve as “priest” by offering grace and forgiveness prematurely, had to be checked. Third, Jerry needed a referral. Our pastoral (priestly) relationship did help shed some light on his plight and assisted him in coping in his new environment: however, we both knew he needed psychiatric

help. I was able to assist in facilitating a transfer for him to a Federal Medical Center where he entered into a therapeutic relationship with a very competent and reputable psychiatrist in the prison system.

As is so often the case in serving as a chaplain in prison, I have often wondered, what happened to Jerry. From time to time, I still think about him. When I do, I offer a short prayer for him and give thanks for how he assisted me in defining the priestly role in my prison ministry.

In the role of the priest the chaplain represents the Gospel in a stark and often hopeless environment.

King

The concept of king is the most difficult to understand and implement in prison ministry. How does one implement the pastoral dimension of king within a prison where power and authority rule?

An understanding of the Judeo/Christian development and its concept of “king” is imperative in understanding this pastoral role within the prison. In the historical tradition of Babylon, Egypt and other countries surrounding Israel, the concept of king was exemplified in a person of absolute and unquestioned authority. This view parallels the prison environment. The role of “king” in Israel’s religious thought is determined by circumstance. In the history of Israel, the monarch rose under Philistine pressure. Monarchy came at a time when the faith of Israel had already developed strongly along its original lines. This was in contrast to most ancient peoples where monarchy developed as an institution, ahead of or alongside of religion. Monarchy is not elemental in the religion of Israel. It is secondary to an established religious heritage. The Hebrew faith brought independent criticism and definite claims to the monarchy, yet also adopted it, with some degree of tension, into its faith and especially its hope. Nevertheless, it is a truism that the Israelite religion remained stronger than some of the adopted forms. In the Old Testament, there no hint of human deification which lay at the heart of the court styles of Babylon and Egypt.¹² In the Hebrew tradition, the king was a man subject to the religious institution of Israel. It was not David who was to build a house for Yahweh; Yahweh would build David a house and his monarchy would last forever. Divine dignity is ascribed only to Yahweh or the Messiah. If the King of Israel begins to assume that rank and dignity — God intervenes.¹³

Prison culture is the antithesis to this Hebrew concept. Prison culture is based upon absolute authority. Everything in the prison environment is subject to the authority and the rules of the institution. This axiom runs counter to the role of “king” in the history of Israel; it is

more compatible with the ancient court styles of Babylon and Egypt.

A sensitivity to, and an understanding, of how the institution of king developed in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and how that view can then be integrated into prison ministry, will assist the chaplain in avoiding two pitfalls: First, the chaplain could become an extension of the absolute authority and rule of the prison system. In the eyes of the inmates he could be seen as one more person in the system that knows no law except that as developed and imposed by the system — one more “key carrier” — resulting in a loss of respect as minister. Second, the chaplain could see himself as above the system, risking the loss of credibility with fellow staff members. In assuming the role of being above or unaccountable to the system, the chaplain leaves himself open to manipulation by the inmates, who constantly confront the chaplain with their perceived unfairness of the system.

In his book, *The Rock: A History of Alcatraz*, Pierre Ordier describes this pastoral dilemma.

The constant attempts to get something done — ‘Do me a favor chaplain’ — would create an air of suspicion even in the most trusting of the chaplains a situation that did cause a degree of frustration, for some inmates know how to play on that nerve of sympathy and thus tried to use the chaplain in the name of faith. Some inmates however felt that the chaplain was the same as a guard and that he worked for the system and they were just as alert toward him as anybody else.¹⁴

Inmates are well aware of the chaplain’s vulnerability. If the chaplain is not secure in role identity in the prison culture, manipulation becomes a constant factor usurping pastoral energy and leading to a compromised ministry.

For the chaplain, the role of king, as derived from the Hebrew tradition, is unique among all prison staff. The role is often ambiguous and misunderstood. Ordier states that:

perhaps the toughest position must have been reserved for the chaplains the men of spiritual values, men trained to deal help with and console the spiritual needs of the individual human being. This area is the vaguest in all of the procedures and regulations.¹⁵

Ordier made this in reference to one of the most notorious prisons in the history of our country — Alcatraz. Yet the dynamic is the same in all prisons.

To integrate the concept of king in prison ministry, the chaplain needs a realistic awareness of the prison environment and culture. Again, it is critical that the chaplain have a very strong awareness of one’s own pastoral and personal identity. The delivery of ministry to inmates must be integrated with a strong awareness of the Judeo/Christian concept of King. This is fundamental.

In his *Commentary on Luke*, Fred Craddock points this out beautifully, “Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I

am well pleased.” This heavenly attestation combines Is. 2:7, used at the coronation of Israel’s King as the Son of God and Is. 42:1, a description of the servant God. These two texts join sovereignty and service.”¹⁶

I became aware of this ministry dynamic upon reflection of an incident that happened early in my chaplaincy at the Wisconsin Correctional Institution. The Correctional Officer’s Union had called for a labor strike. The warden requested, and was granted, the deployment of a local Wisconsin National Guard Battalion to assume the posts of the correctional officers. I was the chaplain of the deployed Battalion. During the two-week strike I was able to conduct ministry in this often highly charged environment. When it was clear that the strike

For the chaplain, the role of king, as derived from the Hebrew tradition, is unique among all prison staff.

was coming to an end, the warden summoned me to his office. He handed me a memorandum which detailed the procedures of heal the institution, how to bring it ‘back together.’ “Here,” he said, “you are the only one in the entire institution who has had access to the striking guards, the National Guard members, the inmates and the management staff. Let me know what you think?” It was a powerful encounter for me. I realized that my ministry in this instance had assumed the pastoral role of the servant king.

Ministry in prison must be done in an environment characterized by a number of factors. These include, but may not be limited to: competing ‘ministries’ that are consumed with the ‘care and cure of souls’ to a population that is confined and vulnerable; executive staff and a particular correctional philosophy that often changes with each election; a culture and nature of institutionalization that is highly structured and confining; the oft polarization of staff and inmates; the public’s general consensus in regard to prisons of ‘throw away the key’; the institution’s need to have the chaplain supervise and arrange for the care of all authentic and pretentious religious needs; and the sensitivity of judicial decisions and issues that impact the delivery of religious services in prison. These are all mitigating factors that can tug at a prison ministries authenticity and integrity.

It is the thesis of this paper that prison ministry must be characterized by an intentional theology that takes seriously the context in which it is delivered. If there is not intention, no contextual sensitivity to both the environment and attitudinal issues in regard to ‘prison systems’, ministry will be diluted, compromised or at best it will be random.

This paper offers one model for an intentional theology for prison ministry.

Endnotes

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Embracing the Prophetic

Chaplains are an agent for ethical change in a corrections environment.

The prison had been on lock down for two weeks after the correctional officers union had called for a work stoppage. The warden and state corrections administrator requested that the governor mobilize the local National Guard unit to operate the institution during the strike. After the strike ended, the warden called the chaplain into his office and said, “Chaplain, during this strike you are the only one who has had free access to the National Guard members, the inmates, the striking workers and the institutional administrative staff. Can you read this memorandum and tell me if you think it will begin to affect healing after all this strife?”

While participation by a chaplain in a formalized ethical decision-making process within the healthcare environment is now common, and often expected, chaplains in correctional facilities often engage a prophetic role. Correctional chaplains are often seen as an agent for ethical change — an agent for healing.

The term “ethics” is seldom heard within the institutional correctional/prison environment. This is not at all to say that ethics or an ethical environment is not operable or present in any given correctional institution. However, specific clinical practices and the language common to the field of ethics would, in all likelihood, not exist in either a formal or an informal sense in a particular correctional institution.

One will hear words and phrases like *humane treatment, fair and consistent practices* and *change* rather than ethics. Any formalized ethical structure or process within corrections would be found at the county, state or federal level rather than at an institutional level.

The phraseology of ethical language in the correctional scene is foreign because of the great polarization between the “kept” and the “keeper,” the “kept” and “society.” The marked distinctions between a correctional environment and a healthcare environment aid in understanding this polarization and begin to illuminate the distinct role of the chaplain in this setting:

The intent of the environment

- The healthcare environment seeks to heal and discharge as soon as possible.
- The correctional environment seeks to produce change and keep confined until the law dictates.

Why persons encounter the environment

- Patients in the healthcare environment are often there as a result of their illness or disease.
- Inmates in the correctional environment are there as a result of an injustice or injury they have inflicted upon another.



Relationship with the community

- A caring community, such as family, friends and a religious institution, often gives support to healthcare patients.
- A caring community is often lacking for inmates in a correctional environment.

Correctional chaplains are often seen as an agent for ethical change — an agent for healing.

Underlying theology

- The healthcare environment is characterized by a theological milieu of care, grace and healing.
- The correctional environment is characterized by a theological milieu of law and retribution.

Theologically speaking, the chaplain's role as an ethical change agent in corrections might be similar to that of other institutional settings. In any institutional setting, the role of the chaplain as an ethical change agent takes on the characteristics of the prophetic. The chaplain's function is to proclaim and to enable an organization to be sensitized to the will of God for all people. At times, this may even conflict with the total tradition of the institution.

While it is very necessary, it often becomes very difficult to speak of values and ethics, which often become distorted, neglected and even unpopular in time of crises or great stress in such a highly structured and polarized environment as a prison. Even so, the chaplain's responsibility is to address the relationship between deed and consequence.

Historically, the correctional chaplain served as a team member of a parole progress review. During this formalized process, the chaplain, along with a representative from security, education, unit/case management and psychology, met with an inmate and made recommendations to the parole board regarding his/her rehabilitative process. Within this context, the chaplain was able to offer input of an ethical and values nature regarding a particular individual. Also in this context, chaplains formed relationships with staff that gave the chaplain a venue to address institutional issues and practices that impacted inmates.

The chaplain's participation in a formalized institutional treatment team essentially ended a couple of decades ago for two reasons. The factors having the most significance in an inmate's eligibility for parole shifted to time served, participation in required therapeutic programs, work participation and intuitional behavior. At the same time, the courts agreed that participation or non-participation in institutional religious activities should not be used as criteria for parole consideration. With this shift, inmates participated in religious services out of their own personal need, unencumbered by the baggage that it might satisfy a parole board.

Given this context, the impact of today's correctional chaplain as an ethical change agent in his/her institution essentially depends upon the chaplain's pastoral identity and credibility among institutional staff and inmates. How that is lived out in everyday ministry in the correctional institution gives flesh to the chaplain as an ethical change agent. Consider these stories:

A busload of inmates is in transit from a maximum-security institution in the Southeast to one in the Northeast. Their transfer is necessitated by a number of acts of violence in the former institution and the need to disperse those involved. In route, the inmates begin to rock the bus in an attempt to tip it over, and state police are called to escort the convoy across state lines. As the warden prepares for the transfers' arrival, he cautions his staff to be very firm, disciplined and fair with

them. Though his reasons for doing so might be varied, he calls the chaplain to observe the inmates' reception, their treatment and subsequent placement in the receiving institution.

A small delegation of inmates approaches the chaplain after chapel services one Sunday. They state they have reason to believe that an acquaintance in segregation status is being mistreated by an officer on the third shift. They ask the chaplain to look into it.

The warden of the penitentiary telephones the chaplain shortly after his arrival at work. He requests the chaplain's assistance. They have learned that an inmate, working in industry, has a contract on his life to be carried out before noon. They can't send a contingent of officers to retrieve him for fear of a further disturbance. Would the chaplain serve as a participant in setting up a scenario that would effectively remove this inmate from the population to protective custody until he can be transferred?

The chaplain's function is to proclaim and to enable an organization to be sensitized to the will of God for all people.

In the prison environment, the chaplain will experience that his/her ethical change influence is often dependent upon walking the fine line of not being over-identified as staff or as over-identified with the inmate. This calls for a solid and intentional pastoral identity on the part of the chaplain. Otherwise, the chaplain will lose credibility with the inmate if he/she becomes seen as just one of the police. On the other hand, if staff feel the chaplain is over-identifying with the inmate, staff relationships may become difficult, making it hard to intercede on behalf of the inmates.

At times, this intercession responds to very basic needs of the inmates. An honors dormitory within the walls of a maximum-security penitentiary was outside the direct line of sight from any of the institution guard towers. A floodlight was installed on the outside wall of the dormitory so that the inmates could switch the light off and on to draw attention of the guards in case of an emergency need in the dormitory. For some time the floodlight had not been working. When the inmates' requests to remedy the situation went unheeded, a small delegation of inmates approached the chaplain to appeal for help. Two days later an inmate returned with a word of thanks, reporting the light had been fixed.

To be an ethical change agent within the correctional institution, effective and trained chaplains need to un-

derstand the delicate balance between the needs of inmates, the correctional staff and the system at large, and are able to be pastorally effective among sometimes tense dynamics to promote the well-being of all concerned.

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Living Our Truth: Prisons and Programs

Prisoners I have known through my years of service have given me rich testimonies of God's abundant grace and tender mercy, like nothing else I have experienced in my years of ministry in the church.

How do we live our truth and enable others do the same? I'm speaking of the truth that Christ calls us to live out in our lives. Living our truth gives witness to God's grace and all-consuming love. Living our truth enables us to be the people God would have us be. Because Christ went to the cross, each of us has a mission and purpose for our lives. Programs for the incarcerated help men, women and youth find their mission and purpose in life in light of a God who loves them. Programs in prison that involve classes build community and both challenge and enable the incarcerated to experience new growth emotionally and spiritually, perhaps understanding for the first time that healing is possible. Community holds us accountable to one another — whether we live behind a wall or on the street. Accountability makes us think about how to value life and respect one another. When we are accountable, change and transformation are possible and increase our ability to value life, our own as well as others. Enabling offenders to discover empathy and begin to care for others is key to building community behind the wall. The church has a place in prison!

My experience with prison chaplaincy has been working and ministering for 25 years behind the wall of a maximum security prison, as well as work in a men's medium and women's minimum security prison and a juvenile maximum security facility. *Houses of Healing* (Robin Cesarjian/Lionheart Press) is a curriculum I use that is designed to initiate dialogue regarding anger, resentments, forgiveness of self and others, addictions and recovery, restorative justice (taking responsibility for harm done to others as well as making amends to victims) and, finally, asking the question, "Where is God in this place and time in my life?" The class is a powerful tool that enables offenders to begin the process of change and transformation. Waiting lists to enter classes are long. There are many offenders who take seriously the challenge to work change in their hearts and lives but have never been empowered to do so, particularly within the confines of a maximum-security prison. Enabling individuals to take responsibility for their choices empowers them. Whether taken by a long-term or short-term offender, these classes can and do work. There is a place for programs like this within the prison system.

I have found using graduates of previous *Houses of Healing* classes as mentors works well in the prison set-



ting. Graduates from previous classes help initiate new recruits to the class community by building consensus among new students as they model appropriate boundaries, civil dialogue and respect of others in the class room (especially when there is disagreement among students) and demonstrate their genuine concern for one another. When I raise the bar for appropriate behavior and class

There are many offenders who take seriously the challenge to work change in their hearts and lives but have never been empowered to do so.

discussion, the students far exceed my expectations. Peer accountability within the classroom setting is powerful. Maximum-security prison or not, time and again, a peer model works.

Another rationale for prison programs is that, when properly administered, they ease tensions. Why? When

an individual in prison has a reason to get out of bed in the morning with a renewed sense of purpose and meaning it eases the hopelessness a prison environment breeds. When tensions are low, inmates, security staff and all those who work within a prison are safer. Classes designed to enable change and transformation model for inmates new ways of thinking that allow for opportunities to experience living life more deliberately, while making choices with renewed intent, thought and reflection.

There has been much focus on “re-entry” programs in the past few years, and while I agree that programs for those being released are crucial to an individual’s integration back into the community, I would argue that programs behind the wall are needed just as much by the community of long-term offenders. We are called to help those who have lost their way in life and who may be facing long years of incarceration find the truth to which Christ has called them in the place they now call home. The church can help change systems designed to warehouse and not rehabilitate. The church can sound a prophetic voice within society, challenging our correctional system to change for the better, by creating more humane living spaces within our prisons and jails.

Programming creates a healthy environment that encourages individuals to accept responsibility for their personal growth, thereby helping the offender and, I would argue, the victim as well. We must go to those in prison; they cannot come to us. How we help people in prison and enable change to happen in their lives is a direct reflection of our love of Christ and our fellow brothers and sisters, both offenders and victims, all of those Christ has called us to love.

Jesus says the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12: 28–31). This is a tall order, as we pray for all those with whom we live in community, both locally and globally, because it includes offenders who have harmed, terrorists who have killed innocents and each of us who has offended God everyday with our judgments, petty gossip and meanness towards those different from ourselves or those we simply don’t like.

How might a local congregation become involved in a jail/prison ministry?

Call the chaplaincy department or ask for programs at a local jail (jail is a short-term setting for those awaiting a prison sentence) or prison (prison is the facility where offenders will serve out their sentences). Put aside your own agenda and ask what kind of services they need. For example, is an adult literacy class needed? A parenting class? A Bible study? Individuals from churches will want to use the gifts they have been given, but don’t assume that a prison or jail needs exactly what you think you have to offer. I’ve seen many volunteers over the years insist on doing a Bible study when a Bible study was

not needed because there were many volunteers already conducting Bible studies. What was needed were literacy volunteers to help inmates learn to read. Volunteers can be so insistent on their own mission that they miss an opportunity to do ministry work that is needed. When our own needs as volunteers get in the way of those to whom we are ministering we end up serving only ourselves, not those we claim to want to help. A little humility goes a long way in a prison or jail community. The inquiry, “How can I be of most help to you at your facility?” is the question that needs to be asked by those looking to volunteer in a correctional setting.

The church can sound a prophetic voice within society, challenging our correctional system to change for the better.

Volunteering at a jail or prison can be a daunting and intimidating experience. If you feel a call to do this work, begin to educate yourself about the prison population, read about the current U.S. prison system, and most importantly, speak to veterans who have done this work and learn from them. An excellent resource is Howard Zehr’s *Changing Lenses*. Zehr speaks of a correctional system in need of change and how restorative justice could be an effective tool in that process. Approach this ministry work with a spirit of humility. You will learn as much from the inmates as they will learn from you.

Another way the church can serve our correctional system is by educating those studying for the ministry. I have enjoyed teaching a correctional chaplaincy course at the seminary level for several years. Feedback from students convinces me of something I have always believed, that it is helpful and practical to hear from someone actually doing the work, in this case, a prison, as well as a system often forgotten by the church and seldom discussed. Ironically, within many of our congregations there are offenders, offender’s families, victims and victim’s families. Yes, the church (you and I) needs to be in prison.

What continues to drive me to prison are relationships within the community of the incarcerated, as well as prison staff. No, I don’t live there, but when I visit their “home” behind the wall, I am made to feel a part of their community and welcomed into their lives. It’s a privilege to minister in prison, and those I have come to know have blessed me beyond measure. They are a diverse and varied group of individuals: someone’s father, mother, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, etc. Prisoners I have known through my years of service have given me rich testimonies of God’s abundant grace and tender mercy, like nothing else I have experienced in my years of ministry in the church.

Stan's story is a testimony that stands out for me. I have known Stan for over 10 years. I still recall the day Stan decided to share some of his history with me. I was standing in front of his 8x12' cell staring through the old 1920's era iron bars when, with complete candor, Stan told me about the first 20-year sentence he served for a murder he did not commit. Stan's anger grew intense throughout those years of incarceration, and when he left prison that first time he was a bitter man. Stan returned home for a short time and did commit murder; he is now serving life. Stan often wonders what would have happened had he not been wrongfully convicted the first time, or if someone had been able to reach him through the bitterness of that first incarceration. Remorse, regret and sadness are woven throughout his life story. Yet, at 55+ years of age, and having spent most of his life behind bars, Stan is one of the most grace-filled individuals I have come to know in prison. Who but God could be present in the mystery of Stan's hope and incredible desire to not only acknowledge what he has done and accept responsibility, but also help others, especially younger inmates coming to prison for the first time. Stan is a light in a dark place; love permeates his actions and words toward all those with whom he comes into contact.

Stan, by his own choice, is a mentor in my classroom to this day, a holdover from one of the first Houses of Healing classes I held at the facility. Stan believes that healing is possible because he himself has experienced it.

The church can help facilitate a renewed sense of accountability, truth and God in offenders' lives through our presence behind the wall and enable our brothers and sisters to know the God who loves and accepts them simply because he does. Isn't this love what keeps *all* of the community of faith hope-filled, whether on the street or behind a prison wall? I believe it is.

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Jail Ministry

The story of Joseph in Genesis is a helpful reminder that God's promises are good wherever life takes us.

As jail chaplains we are often asked myriad questions when we encounter people in the "free world." When we were asked to author this article we saw an opportunity to address a few of these commonly asked questions.

We have to make an important distinction before we begin. Often times the words "jail" and "prison" are used synonymously. Although they are similar, they are unique entities. Jails are pretrial facilities that hold inmates while they wait to go to court or bond out and fight their cases from the street. In most jurisdictions, inmates may serve up to a one-year sentence in a jail. Prisons are correctional facilities where inmates go post conviction to serve the time to which they were sentenced in court.

This may sound like a quibble over words, but jails and prisons, especially as it relates to ministry, are quite different. In jail, inmates are there for an indefinite amount of time. The individual may bond out after a few days or be there for two or more years awaiting the outcome of his/her case. Inmates are often in states of crisis: the shock of incarceration, the stress of whether or not they will win their court battle or be sent to prison, the death of a loved one, de-toxing from drug/alcohol addiction, the fear that their loved ones will forget about them. For the chaplain or person ministering in this environment, crisis intervention techniques are a vital part of everyday ministry. Each interaction is conducted as if it may be the last contact that you may have with the individual. The volume of inmates who cycle through jails on a yearly basis, especially in metropolitan areas, is much higher than most prisons; quite possibly numbering tens of thousands.

In summary, we are jail chaplains and have never worked in a prison environment. The answers we give will be from a jail perspective and, although similar, may not have a direct translation to prisons. Now for some commonly asked questions.

"What does a minister need to know about visiting parishioners in a local jail?"

It's important to remember that every jail is different and has different personalities. When attempting to visit a parishioner or client in jail it is more important to know the right questions to ask as opposed to know an exact procedure, as this will vary from facility to facility. First, call the facility before you try to visit in person. Call the front desk and ask what the procedure is for scheduling clergy visits. It is important to note that many jails give preference to persons who are ordained and may require credentials before you are considered for a visit. Non-ordained persons may be allowed to visit, but



understand that jails are selective of who they allow to visit for security reasons. It is quite possible that you will be asked to submit to a background check. Make sure you find out who is in charge of scheduling clergy visits. Get their phone number and title if possible. The person will, at some point, want to know who you are, who you are requesting to visit, what is your relationship with him or her, and what is the purpose of visiting. Many facilities will not allow you to visit as clergy if you are related to the person and/or are currently on any inmate's personal visiting list in their system.

Each interaction is conducted as if it may be the last contact that you may have with the individual.

Be prepared to get many different answers from different people. Instead of getting aggravated with the person with whom you are talking, just thank him or her for their time and call back later. You don't want to have your application mysteriously disappear or be given the run around anymore than is necessary.

"What makes life worth living for an inmate?"

Inmates need to focus on something to deal with the monotony, violence, loneliness, and regimentation of daily living in jail. In our experience their lives are fueled

by hate, hustle, or hope.

Nearly every earthly thing is stripped away from inmates, but hate is something that can't be taken away. You can take their freedom, earthly possessions, proximity to family, but they can hold on to their anger. Many incarcerated people have poor or no coping skills, other than using drugs or alcohol. With no positive outlet, their frustration, sadness, and fear are channeled into rage that is unleashed on those by whom they are surrounded. Gangs and groups that are strictly divided along racial lines give inmates a lifestyle of hate and warfare in which they can immerse themselves. This becomes the daily way of living that dictates how they live their daily lives while incarcerated. Every day can be consumed with hating being locked up, hating the correctional officers, hating enemies in other gangs, hating people of other races, hating their families for forgetting about them.

It has been said that everyone has a hustle in jail. A lot of time is spent by inmates plotting: how to get drugs and tobacco smuggled into the institution, how to steal others' belongings, how to get an extra tray at mealtime, what their next scheme will be when and if they get out, how to manipulate the chaplain into giving them a free phone call, how to break the rules, how to beat the system, how to convince everyone of his or her innocence. Many people come from the hustler lifestyle on the streets, selling drugs and committing crimes.

Hope is the other thing that makes life worth living. Many people get religious in jail, and some actually mean it. There are inmates who spend their time reading the Bible and deepening their faith while incarcerated. Sometimes when people reach their lowest point they have nowhere to look but up. There is a great opportunity to share the Gospel with fallen and broken people in jail, to show them that there is another lifestyle that can make life truly fulfilling and worthwhile. We can, through the guiding of the Holy Spirit, show people that there is a living God who loves and cares for them regardless of what they've done and who they've been. There is a God who became a man, to live as they lived, and to die on the cross to take the death penalty that should have been ours; who wants to take their hate and teach them how to cope with their hurt and frustration.

Many times inmates will only listen to you if they respect you and have tried and failed to hustle you and hate you. When we respond in care and concern, with healthy boundaries instead of pity or contempt, we can model Jesus' love. We can point them to His dedication, dedication to the point of death, which truly cares and gives a new lifestyle that is effective in their current situation and future journey.

"What are common themes that you encounter while ministering to inmates and staff?"

Being arrested and sent to jail is an overwhelming experience, unleashing strong feelings of helplessness and panic. Common thoughts a new inmate might have included, 'What will happen to my family, job and belong-

ings?' One can do very little to help oneself in jail. An inmate can only make a few calls per week. Everything takes a long time to happen. An inmate has to rely on others to find an attorney or wait for the court to appoint one. Often, inmates are going through drug or alcohol withdrawal, greatly adding to the confusion and pain. One's life is suddenly taken out of one's hands and placed in the hand of many strangers. Rules must be followed or the incarcerated person will face further confinement and isolation. Feelings of despair, hopelessness and thoughts of suicide are common. Ministers are called to provide a calming presence in the midst of a storm, a safe place to vent frustrations with someone who will share personal sorrows.

*Hope is the other thing
that makes life worth living.*

As inmates settle into the daily routine of jail, there is a lot of time to think about life. The mind begins to clear a bit from substance use. They have time to think about the lifestyle choices that resulted in their arrest, time to think about how the offender's family is being affected. A person who is incarcerated may ponder serious questions: "What will my future be like? Will I face going to prison? If I get released, will I fall back into the same destructive life style of drug addiction and stealing to support my habit? Am I losing my family support because I continue to fail?" Many inmates seek God's help during this time of uncertainty. They search the Scriptures looking for anything that will get them out of jail. Many believe their faith makes a difference in swaying God to give a favorable answer. If inmates succeed in being set free from incarceration, it frequently does not take long for them to forget about God, return to their former self-destructive lifestyles, and return to jail. It takes patience and trust for a minister to confront the inmate with the fact that our human will is corrupt and continues to destroy our life and the lives of those for whom we are called to care. Those in jail have a difficult time controlling their impulses and admitting that their will stinks and that they desperately need God as the only source of goodness and hope for a healthy, well-balanced life. It is a great leap of faith to go from self-reliance, despite the negative consequences, to acknowledgment of their total dependence on God for anything good.

Life goes on while an inmate is in jail, even if it feels like life is on hold. The death of a loved one is particularly difficult for those incarcerated. Feelings of numbness, guilt, despair and isolation are intensified. It takes a court order for an inmate to be able to view the body of the loved one, alone with a few officers. Sometimes an inmate feels like exploding and doesn't think about the consequences. Any little thing can set off a grieving inmate. Providing a safe place to express the full range of grief's emotions and feelings is a great release valve, often

defusing a grieving inmate's emotional bomb and promoting healing and closure. The resurrection of Christ is the only news that brings comfort to such a grieving soul.

Many who go to jail will go on to prison. Some have been there before. It is easy to think that life has lost its value. A despairing inmate may ponder, "What am I living for?" The story of Joseph in Genesis is a helpful reminder that God's promises are good wherever life takes us. An inmate once said, "The past is over. The future is a mystery. Today is a gift. That is why it is called the present." We encourage the inmates we serve to stay in God's word and His promises for them.

For those being released from incarceration, there is a fear of falling back into addiction and destructive relationships. Common thoughts of these individuals might include: "With my criminal record, who will hire me? My old friends are there to help me make a quick buck selling drugs and stealing." Ministers can point inmates to healthy, helpful resources to find work and to meet other needs for themselves and their families. Those ministering to incarcerated individuals can invite them to church, where they can join Christ's family and begin to experience a healthy sense of belonging in their local faith community.

We hope that this article has been helpful to you and answered a few of the questions that you may have had. We wish we could say that we've done more than scratched the tip of the iceberg that is jail chaplaincy. This is just a taste. In order to really understand what it's like, you have to walk the halls, feel the tension, see the blood spattered walls, and observe the tears of hardened men and women soak the floor of your office. It's definitely not for everyone, but we can't see ourselves doing anything else. To God be the glory, who gives peace to the broken, direction to the lost, and hope to the hopeless. Amen.

Chaplain Vince Stanley has served six years as chaplain for the St. Louis County Justice Center. Prior to that, he served six years in St. Louis City Nursing homes. Chaplain Stanley is married with three grown children.

A Second LCMS Prison and Jail Ministry Conference

Why and what is different?

On April 30 and May 1, 2005, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod sponsored its first Synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference at the Crowne Plaza in St. Louis, Mo., under the theme “Catch the Vision.” They had over 100 lay persons and professional church workers attend the two-day conference.

On Saturday, April 30th, there were five plenary sessions that included such notables as Rev. Matthew Harrison, at the time, Director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) and Rev. Herbert Mueller, at the time, Southern Illinois District President, both of whom now serve as the Synod’s President and First Vice President respectively. Other notable included Mr. Doug Dreytke, an LCMS member who was Texas Director of Corrections, which at the time was notorious for the number of capital punishment executions being completed.

On Sunday, May 1st, there were 17 sectional workshops that covered a variety of topics including: how to get started in volunteer prison and jail ministries; reaching out to other faith-group inmates; reaching across multi-cultural barriers; and, maintaining a “Confessional approach” while being approachable. For those in attendance, it was considered a blessing and started the difficult process of networking with others who are in prison and jail ministry.

It was also stated and requested that there would be another synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference. It has taken seven years for this to become a reality.

As the LCMS Southern Illinois District celebrates its 110th year of doing Prison Ministry, they are sponsoring, with the financial assistance of the International Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) and support of WR-HC, the second Synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference is being held at the Crowne Plaza, St. Louis, Mo., on September 29–30, 2012 under the theme: “The Lord Sets the Prisoners Free” Psalm 146:7.

It began with the continued work of the Southern Illinois District prison ministry coordinators. It is also a story that reflects the blessings of the Lord as His timing again brings forth those things that are to His glory and the mission and ministry He places before us in His Word and Sacraments.

The story, briefly reflected here, begins with Pastors Jim Rivett and Jeff Nehrt being in attendance at the Southern Illinois District LWML bi-annual District Convention. Jeff and Jim were staffing a prison ministry display and praying for support of the \$7,000 grant request to help support 10 congregations in their prison ministry



to provide Bibles and study materials for inmates who perhaps have never had their own Bibles.

During the convention reports on September 25, 2010, the international representative of the LWML gave a presentation and mentioned that grant applications for the International Convention at Peoria, Ill., in June 2011 were due by September 30, 2010 — meaning that there were only five days to submit a grant to them. To add to the excitement, the LCMS in its tri-annual convention in July, 2010 had passed Convention Resolution 6-05, which among other things resolves: “Resolved, . . . and that the Synod sponsor another Synod-wide prison and jail ministry conference prior to the next LCMS convention. . .”

The Lord had moved a whole convention to direct the Synod to sponsor another Prison and Jail Ministry Conference, but it did not say how the monies would come about, only that the Board for Human Care ministry was to seek funds to support prison ministry grants, etc.

This same Synodical convention also passed a resolution to re-align the whole LCMS organizational structure in St. Louis, which meant among other things, re-framing everything. Do you know how long it takes Lutherans to re-frame something? This is cause for prayer!

So in the midst of re-alignment, I contacted WR-HC and discovered that they had not planned, nor were they able at the moment, in the middle of re-alignment, to write a grant in four days to help support another Synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference.

It was a grant from the International LWML in 2005, to the tune of \$20,000 that had supported the first Synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference. We were

going to need those funds again . . . and given inflation, more than that amount.

After contacting the SID District President, Pastor Tim Scharr; the SID LWML District President, Mrs. Helen Mayer; Interim director of WR-HC, Rev. John Fale; and my local Our Redeemer LWML Society President, Joyce Cloninger; I had received permission to pursue writing a grant to the International LWML Society to support the Second Synod-Wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference with the local LWML Chapter as the sponsoring society of the grant.

With assistance from a number of folks to retrieve photos, gather information regarding the last grant with expenses, expenditures, and income, time was going all too quickly along with the regular responsibilities of a “parish/prison ministry pastor.” The Lord blessed the draft of the grant, which was reviewed quickly by a number of folks, including getting signatures to have it e-mailed and then sent with hard copies to the Vice President responsible for collecting all the grants for review with her committee.

Much to the surprise of a number of folks, including some of the LWML people, our grant made the final cut to be considered by the International LWML Convention at Peoria in June, 2011. I am sure that this was in part due to the endorsement by the LCMS officials in St. Louis who serve in advisory capacities to the International LWML. The Lord does work in mysterious ways.

Pastor Nehrt and myself made arrangements to be at the LWML Convention in Peoria at the end of June, 2011. We prayed, handed out materials to the convention women and men, and made connections for networking for the second Synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference. As we prayed and attended the voting and announcement of the results of the grants to be considered — we made the final list of approved grants, coming in last place. The Lord had blessed us with our request for \$27,500 to help sponsor the second Prison and Jail Ministry Conference — to be completed prior to July, 2013.

Since then, the Lord has guided and developed a Task Force for the second Synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference that includes previous members of the first Synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference. Our present Task Force Members include: Mr. Jon Houghrefe, President of the SID Task Force of Prison Ministry; Deaconess Sandy Bowers; SID President Tim Scharr; Mr. Roger Sprengel, Executive to SID President; Pastors Jeff Nehrt, David Kollmeyer, myself; and Advisory and Synod Liaison, Rev. John Fale, Interim Director of WR-HC.

We have been guided to develop our Theme of “The Lord Sets the Prisoners Free” Psalm 146:7. We are blessed to have the Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus, speaker emeritus of “The Lutheran Hour” radio program, to be the keynote speaker. As recently reported in the LCMS’ February 2012 issue of *Reporter*, “The conference, according

to the Rev. John Fale, interim co-director of the LCMS Office of International Mission, is designed to acquaint individuals (pastors and laity) or congregations that desire or are doing prison and jail ministry “with proven models of pastoral and lay prison and jail visitation and to equip them to return to their districts to train others interested in establishing or supporting visitation programs.” (Footnote: quote from page three of the *Reporter*, February, 2012).

In addition to Rev. Klaus focusing on our conference theme, there will be plenary sessions that will focus on: “How to Get a Grant” presented by Wheatridge’s Kim Loontjeer; “The Criminal Personality” presented by Eric Shillo, retired Executive of LCFS of Iowa; “Presence in the Word with Lutheran Understanding” presented by District President James Keurulainen — with 35 years of experience of prison ministry. We will also have workshops that will include such topics as women’s prison ministry entitled “Dare to be You” with Soaring Spirit Ministries of St. Louis; “Ministering in an Atmosphere of Failure”; “How to Start and Do Prison Ministry” and “Starting and Doing Jail Ministry” which are different and unique.

We will have ex-offenders doing presentations on how the Lord has moved in their lives so that they are now returning the blessings the Lord has given to them as they minister to those who are incarcerated. We will have resource tables with various organizations presenting the materials that they have and are using to assist them in reaching out to those “doing time.” There will be information on re-entry programs. We will spend time together in worship, in God’s Word, in fellowship, in sharing, and in networking. We will be challenged with how can you get your district or synod involved in doing prison and jail ministry.

For more information about the conference you can contact the author as noted above or at 618-694-4825, or contact Pastor Jeff Nehrt at nehrt@csl.edu or 618-282-4392. Conference details and a registration form will be available at www.sidlcms.org/prisonministry.

Pastor E. James Rivett, M. Div., M.S.W., is presently serving as pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Golconda, Ill., and currently he goes into several state facilities, including a juvenile facility, as a volunteer chaplain, conducting worship services, Bible classes, and pre-marriage seminars. He served the Southern Illinois District for over three years as their Prison Ministry Coordinator from 2008–January, 2011. He also served as a full-time chaplain with the Federal Bureau of Prisons from 1982–2002, and a contract and volunteer Chaplain at U.S.P. Marion from 2002–2004, and 2008–2009, respectively. For more information about the prison ministry being done in the Southern Illinois District and how to contact Pastor Rivett, go to www.sidlcms.org, click on “SID Missions” and go to “Prison Ministry.”

Additional Resources and Opportunities

The Churches' Teachings on Criminal Justice Issues

In addition to the reflections and sharings of our writers in this issue, we present some of the statements, teachings, and guidance documents that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have produced over time related to the issues of Criminal Justice. The authority and purpose of the forms of statements and teaching documents of the churches differ and readers are encouraged to consult the respective church bodies for any questions and insights regarding these documents. We share them as companion pieces for the work our churches have done regarding Criminal Justice.

ELCA Social Statement on the Death Penalty www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Death-Penalty.aspx

LCMS Position on the Death Penalty www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=549

ELCA Social Message on Community Violence www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Messages/Community-Violence.aspx

ELCA Current work toward an ELCA Social Statement on Criminal Justice (Draft expected March 2012) www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements-in-Process/Criminal-Justice.aspx

Additional Resources and Opportunities related to Criminal Justice

“Cell Groups: Inmates and Seminarians study together.”

Christian Century. February 13, 2012. www.christiancentury.org/article/2012-02/cell-groups

Criminal Justice Ministry: a Congregational Handbook for Jail and Prison Ministry. http://resources.elca.org/Social_Issues-Criminal_Justice_Ministry_Handbook.html. This is an 80-page notebook (3-hole punched) with a primary section devoted to preparing the congregation for criminal justice ministry. Also included are a biblical reflection; 2 sessions of volunteer training; Web, print and video resources; and a dozen essays on criminal justice topics. The resource is a joint project of ELCA and LCMS.

Christian Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Workshop

On May 21-25, 2012, Concordia Seminary, together with Peace Officer Ministries, Inc. (POM), will host “Christian Law Enforcement Chaplaincy—Theology and Practice,” on the Seminary campus. The workshop offers unique accredited training for chaplains, peace officers and pastors, focusing on effective Christian ministry to and through law enforcement. For additional information about this workshop, visit the following link: www.csl.edu/2012/02/christian-law-enforcement-chaplaincy-workshop

Training & Equipping Conference for Prison and Jail Ministry

September 29-30, 2012 at Crowne Plaza Hotel, St. Louis, Mo. A conference for pastors and laypeople of the LCMS and others interested in prison and/or jail ministry. This conference is held in response to LCMS 2010 Convention Resolution #6-05:

- To develop and participate in a Synod-wide system of networking
- To establish and maintain proven models of prison and jail visitation
- To help others establish and/or support prison and jail visitation

For additional information, visit <http://sidlcms.org/prisonministry.aspx>

Events

How to Subscribe

Inter-Lutheran

- May 21-25, 2012 Christian Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Workshop at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri
- Sept. 29-30, 2012 Training & Equipping Conference for Prison and Jail Ministry at Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri
- Oct. 24-27, 2013 Zion XV Conference at Lutheridge Lutheran Camp and Conference Center in Arden, North Carolina

Subscribers to future issues of *Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling* will be notified by e-mail when each issue is published. We hope you will subscribe. The process is simple: visit www.caringconnectionsonline.org and click on "Click here for free subscription" OR go to www.lutheranservices.org, select "Sign Up for Newsletters" (upper right), then select "Caring Connections" and register on that page. You will need to provide your name, your organization's name, your email address, and your ZIP code. Subscribers and nonsubscribers alike will also be able to access this issue of *Caring Connections* electronically by visiting the LSA website.

Caring Connections: An inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling welcomes your submissions of news germane to specialized ministries as well as announcements of forthcoming events. You may email news items and announcements to one of the *Caring Connections* news editors: John Fale at John.Fale@lcms.org or Judith Simonson at jsimonson@pennswoods.net