

The Christian Science Committee for Institutional Work in Texas
Forty-Third Annual Report
May 17, 2003

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This statewide committee evolved from the efforts of branch churches and societies to respond to the needs of those individuals confined in institutions (hospital, hospice, mental, penal, welfare, and retirement & nursing facilities) who are unable to avail themselves of the activities of Christian Science churches. The committee meets this goal by:

- Providing authorized books and literature.
- Sharing Christian Science on a one-to-one basis.
- Holding Christian Science services.
- Providing Christian Science treatment for individuals who request it.
- Arranging Christian Science lectures.

OUR LEADER'S INTEREST

As a follower of our Master, Mary Baker Eddy was ready to go “into all the world” to preach the gospel. In *Miscellaneous Writings* (112:15) she writes of her own visit to a prisoner, the assassin of President Garfield. Her interest in the possibilities of Christian Science activities in institutions continued, as indicated by Irving C. Tomlinson in his book *Twelve Years with Mary Baker Eddy* (pp 185, 186). A further acknowledgment of her interest is the inclusion in *Miscellaneous Writings* (pp 403-406) of testimonies of healing of a man in the Massachusetts State Prison at Charlestown and of a woman who had been in a state mental hospital.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

As a result of correspondence from an inmate in one of the units of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), The Christian Science Board of Directors requested that Fourth Church, Houston initiate action to establish a statewide committee for institutional work in Texas. By 1960, *Bylaws* of this Committee were approved by The Christian Science Board of Directors. The *Bylaws* were revised in 2002 to reflect and accommodate current circumstances.

ORGANIZATION

This statewide committee comprises representatives or their alternates from each participating branch church or society. Annual meetings of the state committee provide opportunities for branches, through their representatives, to hear reports from the field. An Executive Committee consists of one member each from the metropolitan areas of Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio along with two members-at-large from the less populated areas of the state. The Executive Committee guides and coordinates the work carried on by individual churches, zone committees and specially designated workers. The work at the local level is carried out by individual workers appointed by their church or society, and worker/chaplains appointed by the Executive Committee for specific institutions. The office of the Executive Secretary is available to assist local areas with information, guidance, and funds for literature and other authorized expenses.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

In addition to maintaining normal office activities of general correspondence, paying incurred expenses, receiving and accounting for receipts from churches, societies and individuals during the past twelve months, the Executive Committee revised the *Institutional Work Guidelines* and the *Bylaws* for this statewide committee after receiving suggested input from Texas churches regarding needed changes. Also, the Executive Secretary's office mailed 28 copies of the English and four copies of the Spanish *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, four *Prose Works*, and 91 *Weekly Bible Lessons* to inmates at their own request or the request of relatives, Christian Science churches, or Christian Science practitioners. The office also initiated contact with 26 inmates as requested by relatives, Christian Science branch churches, Christian Science practitioners, or The Mother Church and offered to each books, literature, visits (where possible), and applications for free subscriptions to *The Christian Science Monitor* and the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

FRUITAGE

This report reflects the effectiveness of the prayerful and financial support of participating branch churches and societies, associations of Christian Science students, and individual Christian Scientists. The following fruitage reports represent the work of dedicated Chaplains and volunteer institutional committee workers from branch churches and societies throughout the state. Obviously this is only a representative sample.

Protection From Harm: A prisoner told a Christian Science worker how he was lifted out of a dangerous situation. He said that the prison he was in had several gangs. He knew of Christian Science through one of the inmates and he had read a little. One day one of the gang members told him he had to make a choice either to join their gang or one of the others. If he did not, they were going to "get him good." He was frightened and in his desperation he went to the man that had told him about Christian Science. His friend gave him his *Science and Health* to read that evening. The man read and prayed all night long. A few days later, without any explanation, he was transferred to another prison. The prisoner has since been released, is living with his family and is gainfully employed.

Healing While Explaining Christian Science: A prisoner used Christian Science to heal many times. On one occasion he sprained his ankle quite badly while playing basketball with some other inmates. He could hardly walk, it was so painful. The next day, his mother came to the prison for a visit. When she saw his ankle, she was very upset. He began to tell her about Christian Science and how he was treating his ankle through prayer. While he was talking to her, the swelling began to go down, and by the time the visit was over, he walked out totally free.

Freedom Gained By Reading *Science and Health*: One prisoner wrote, "I've had lots of time to think and study and really don't know how to explain but it's like if I've had a blindfold on my eyes. But thanks to you, and *Science and Health* that blindfold has come off. Even though I am behind these prison walls, I feel free. For the first time in my life, I can truly say I feel free. I know that I still have a lot to learn. I want to change my life. What does it mean to be a Christian Scientist? How can I become a member and what is required of them?"

Prayer Opens Closed Doors: Resistance to Christian Science in the city jail by other religious groups has been overcome after three years of persistent prayer. Today, Christian Science

workers hold *Bible* talks with some 65 to 70 inmates attending each month. Copies of the *Bible* and *Science and Health* are given to those who will accept them. Recently a Christian Science lecture was held in the jail facility. Attendees are learning to use the power of prayer to get answers to their problems and several have been able to go to the authorities and have their parole time shortened. One inmate, holding up his much-used textbook, gave a testimony of how he had been studying along with the group for seven months, and how he went to the textbook every time he had a problem. He said that he had a residual tooth problem that was healed through prayer.

Inmate Finds Truth About God and Man: A prisoner was asked if he could explain what he had learned in Christian Science. He said that he had been to many different Christian church services while in prison. When he attended the Christian Science services, and read from our books, he realized that this was the truth about God, Christ, and man, for which he has been searching, and he loves what he has found.

Honest Seeker for Truth: Excerpted from an inmate's letter, "After receiving this beautiful book, *Science and Health*, I understand what you meant when you said 'honest seekers for Truth.' I am that today. I feel like a newborn. I also appreciate this copy of the Lord's Prayer. I find it to be the most informative version I have ever heard." In a recent visit, this woman said, "*Science and Health* answers my questions each night. I feel like Mrs. Eddy is speaking to me."

Said "No" to Drugs: One man with whom Christian Science workers visited read *Science and Health* from cover to cover, and requested that *Sentinels* be sent to one of his friends. He loves what he is learning about God and who he is as a child of God. During a visit he told the Christian Science worker that not long ago drugs were being passed around his tank. From what he was learning about God in *Science and Health*, he found the strength to say "no" to the drugs. On one visit, he related an instance of how he applied what he learned from *Science and Health*. He said that his bed is very close to a window and that during some recent frigid weather, he began to feel very cold and ill. He only had one blanket and felt a cold draft from the outside winds. He said he prayed to feel God's presence and the warmth of His love, and that, after this prayer, he no longer felt cold and uncomfortable.

From Fighting to Praying Daily: The inmate writes, "Before I started studying *Science and Health* I had respect for no one. I was always getting into fights. I had no real knowledge or respect for the *Bible* or God's word. I believed the *Bible* was for sissies." He continues that he wrote to two Christian Science workers, and he "put them through a lot of disrespect, yet both stood for me, and never gave up on me. Both would visit and give me teaching of Science and help, still I would not listen." He says that due to them "sticking with me, I got to reading our Mighty Lord's word. I quit fighting, cussing and I pray several times a day. I daily read my *Bible* and *Science and Health*. It has 100% given me a new life and better mind on our Lord and Savior. *Science and Health* is very helpful. I am very grateful for Mary Baker Eddy for giving this Science to the world."

Spiritual Fulfillment: "The unfoldment and advancement in the study of *Science and Health* has brought immense transition and spiritual healing in my life. Having now been released for three months, I have received the family love and friendship that can only qualify as God's own direct reflection. The approval for my membership by Boston and my branch church has only

The Christian Science Committee for Institutional Work in Texas, *Forty-Third Annual Report*

solidified the continual blessing of manna from our Father-Mother God. To report this to the Institutional Committee is not only a joy, but a spiritual fulfillment.”

To Know God Better: “Dear Committee Members: This covers any new growth that has come to me by the way of Christian Science. It has helped me to know God better, not only to know for who He is – our Father-Mother God, who dwells in all infinite light, Truth, Love, Soul, and Spirit, but all that pertains to Life itself. I now have come to know God as a relationship, as a real Father and son. Trusting Him to guide me through life as I once depended on my parents, I now depend on God, as I have come to understand that God is as a parent, being Father-Mother. Yet His love is ever richer, and is given with pure Love and beauty. Christian Science has helped me turn my life around.”

Be Still And Know: At a regular meeting on a US Air Force base, one airman told of how coming to the Christian Science service on the base had allowed her to stay in the service and battle some obstacles that almost eliminated her from the Air Force. She told the others how she needed to be quiet and listen for God to give her the instructions she needed, and that it was not easy with all the noise going around her. But prayer had restored her to her rightful place every time.

Gratitude: On a request form for free subscriptions from the Christian Science Publishing Society, the applicant wrote, “I am requesting for any (literature) that I can receive and I thank y’all for the book *Science and Health*, it has brought me a whole lot closer to God. I have done read it 3 times and it’s changed my life a whole lot. I thank you for everything. God Bless y’all”

MD Practicing Christian Science: A Christian Science worker writes, “A recent new visitor to our services, an M.D., was referred to our group by one of the just-departed transferees. This lady doctor is very spiritually minded and had already concluded that matter does not heal matter and that sickness/health are mental/mind driven. She is studying the Lesson-Sermons, has read a biography of Mrs. Eddy already, and is anxious to begin putting into practice what she is learning. She has expressed the desire to have a more substantial healing practice after she is released, not based on conventional medicine.”

Executive Committee Members for 2003-2004	
Judge Al Alonso, Jr.	First Church of Christ, Scientist, San Antonio
Mr. Jim Dinsmore (new)	First Church of Christ, Scientist, North Richland Hills
Mrs. Anita Huggins, C.S.	Christian Science Society, Athens
Mrs. Bonnie Resley	First Church of Christ, Scientist, Midland
Mr. Pedro Saldano (new)	Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, Houston
Mrs. June Taylor, C.S.	Third Church of Christ, Scientist, Austin
Mrs. Sandra Wheeler	Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, Dallas
Ms. Susan Clay (retiring)	Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, Houston
Ms. Sher Orpen (retiring)	Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Fort Worth

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