

# **The Christian Science Committee for Institutional Work in Texas**

## ***Forty-Fourth Annual Report***

**September 18, 2004**

### **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 literature.

## 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, during 2003 the Executive Secretary's office mailed 24 copies of the English and four copies of the Spanish *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, three *Prose Works*, and 106 *Weekly Bible Lessons* to inmates at their own or the request of relatives, Christian Science churches, or Christian Science practitioners. The office also initiated contact with 58 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 Christian Science Chaplains and volunteer institutional committee workers from branch churches and societies throughout the state. Obviously this is only a representative sample.

**Finds Answers in Science and Health:** At one of the services held by Christian Science workers, a woman brought her *Science and Health* with her and said, "I have gotten so much out of this book. I find that I always get an answer or a new idea when I read it. I've never read anything like this before." Later she said, "I get out next week – don't be surprised if you see me at church."

**Healing and Protection:** One of the female prisoners had an impressive healing due to her own metaphysical work. She was playing softball in a game recently and a base runner crashed into her at second base. In an attempt to make her drop the ball the runner hit the prisoner in the face with an elbow, breaking her glasses against the bridge of her nose. Fears were expressed of bruising, black eyes, etc, but she stood fast in her understanding that in reality nothing bad had happened. The wound to her nose was treated with a band-aid and prayer. None of the dire predictions came about. She rejoices in the protection she has come to claim with her growing understanding and refuses to accept the suggestion that she is too old to be playing with much younger players on the team.

**Skin Condition Healed and Sense of Peace Achieved:** One inmate who requested a visit from a Christian Science Chaplain, a copy of *Science and Health*, and a subscription to the *Christian Science Sentinel*, was a man with whom the Christian Science worker had visited several years before. During this second series of visits, the inmate found relief from a skin condition and discovered a desire to help others and volunteered to do menial jobs that other prisoners did their best to avoid. These unselfish acts brought a sense of satisfaction and peace in his surroundings. Another inmate in his tank requested a copy of *Science and Health* and visits from a Christian Scientist.

**Inmate Deals With Anger:** One woman wrote in a letter, “I am very grateful to the time you took to get me the magazines on ‘Anger’. I’m still struggling within self with anger. ...I know it’s time to let the walls come down and let the healing begin. I know God and know that He’s the only way to peace, joy, and life. ...I really do enjoy and understand *Science and Health*. ...I understand life, mind, and my health so much more because of *Science and Health*.” She shared her appreciation of *Science and Health* with two other inmates who requested copies of our textbook and *Christian Science Sentinels*.

**Science and Health Helps to Put It All Together:** One woman waiting for a court hearing had a great desire to be free from past destructive experiences and prescription drugs. She was receptive and seemed to understand God as Principle. She had been studying the *Bible* for several years and said that *Science and Health* helped to “put it all together” in her understanding of the scriptures. She began to express Christ like qualities of wisdom, resolve and unselfishness. She said that she asked God to show her how to be useful while in her present circumstance and described how she was able to help other women inmates and has been able to defuse some very tense situations in the tank. She had a particularly difficult decision to make regarding her upcoming court case and found peace by placing it in God’s care. Some very favorable opportunities have opened for her. She has been accepted by a Christian halfway house after her release that will provide a safe and stable environment.

**Report from a Christian Science Church:** “We are in our third year of presenting a monthly Bible Study, based on the Ten Commandments, where 75 to 80 inmates join us for each service. About 20 copies of *Science and Health* are delivered every month to those in attendance. Our postal address is made available to the inmates and we correspond with them about Christian Science when they request it. We answer their questions, ship literature to them and pray with them when healings are needed. Private counseling is offered at the inmates’ request. There has been many physical and mental healings through this work. Colds, flu, teeth problems, drug withdrawal problems, family and personal problems are those we encounter most frequently. Some inmates work with church groups after being released, some have visited our Reading Room, and a few have attended church. There are two Muslim inmates that converted to Christianity and they both testified that it has saved their lives.”

**Why be a Christian Science Volunteer Worker:** A Christian Science Worker writes, “A visit with an inmate particularly touched me. The young man came in very distressed and looking like a thundercloud. He seemed confused and had a hard time expressing himself coherently. Things settled down and he became very receptive to the healing verses from the *Bible*. He requested a copy of the *Bible* and showed interest in, and accepted two copies of the *Christian Science Sentinel*. As our meeting concluded, we said the Lord’s Prayer together. He got up to leave, but sat back down. He said, ‘Sister, I want to sing you a song.’ He sang a lovely gospel spiritual in a beautiful, clear voice. He then offered one of the most simple, heartfelt prayers I have ever heard and left with a shining face. During that brief thirty-minute visit, both, he and I witnessed the uplifting, healing Christ. That, it seems to me, is what volunteer chaplain work in jails is all about.”

\* References to *Science and Health* are to the book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy

Psalm 142

1. I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.
2. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble.
3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.
4. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.
5. I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.
6. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.
7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me

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