Within the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the role of the Correctional Chaplain is both clearly defined yet very broad in scope.
All readers are encouraged to submit articles, letters, comments and ideas for future issues. Copy should be submitted by e-mail to marcella.reed@doc.state.ok.us or CD. All articles are subject to editing, with every effort made to preserve the integrity of the submission.

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INSIDE CORRECTIONS

March/April 2012 • Volume 24, Issue 2

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OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
MISSION:
TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC, THE EMPLOYEES, AND THE OFFENDERS

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INSIDE CORRECTIONS 3
Welcome to Inside Corrections

Hopefully you will enjoy and learn from the material contained in this edition on the role of chaplains in a correctional environment. Fortunately we were able to fill some of our vacant positions in recent months, including several chaplain positions. However, the ratio of chaplains to offenders is twice what the Federal Bureau of Prisons has and many large jail operations. Their invaluable service can be objectively measured in many ways but their contributions are sometimes less tangible; such as adding that element of humanity to a prison system, which, by its very nature, is designed not to accentuate the human elements of one’s existence.

As we have advised stakeholders and particularly our legislative leaders, it takes all levels of staff to create an efficient, effective and safe working environment within our correctional system. The outcomes for inmates the agency assisted with, then we have provided the ultimate in public service and safety.

special thank you is extended to Mr. Dale Carroll, Ms. Carroll was more than eager to provide us with his personal accounts, recollections, and history of the facility throughout the tour, which made the tour that much more interesting. His knowledge and years of service to the Department of Corrections is surpassed by none.

In closing, if I, or anyone within the District 21 Drug & Violent Crimes Task Force, can be of any assistance to you, your staff, or Mr. Carroll please do not hesitate to contact me. If you or Mr. Carroll are ever in the Norman area, lunch is on me.

I am writing to express my gratitude to Warden Franklin and Chaplain Adams, for allowing members of the District 21 Task Force and their attorney to visit your facility on October 14, 2011. Your hospitality was beyond expectations and we are very grateful for the work that you and your staff do for our state.

A special thank you is extended to Mr. Dale Carroll, Ms. Carroll was more than eager to provide us with his personal accounts, recollections, and history of the facility throughout the tour, which made the tour that much more interesting. His knowledge and years of service to the Department of Corrections is surpassed by none.

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Sincerely,

Mike Thompson
DIRECTOR
OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
BP AMERICA, INC.

Mr. Blevins,
Thank you for your support and the contribution of Alicia Maddocks to our PSN training in Oklahoma City and Chickasha. It was quite successful. We look forward to continued cooperation and support in the future.

Sincerely,

Sanford C. Coats
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Inside Corrections welcomes your comments. Letters must include name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Send letters to Inside Corrections, Attn: Editor, 3400 Martin Luther King Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK 73111, or fax to (405) 425-2578. Address electronic mail to marcella.reed@doc.state.ok.us.
At approximately 9:30 a.m. on August 3, 1989, Officer Denton was transporting five offender road crew workers in a Department of Corrections van on Highway 9, approximately six miles west of Granite, Oklahoma. Officer Denton suffered a heart attack while driving causing him to lose control of the vehicle, striking a bridge abutment and turning over. Officer Denton was pronounced dead at the scene and five offenders received minor injuries.

Officer Chandler was off duty at a laundry mat in Norman, when a former offender walked in, and a fight ensued. As the two struggled, both fell through a large plate glass window. A large piece of glass cut Officer Chandler’s jugular vein as he fell. After falling through the window, the semi-conscious officer, dressed in street clothes, fired one shot from a handgun at the offender who was running away, but he did not strike the ex-offender. Chandler then collapsed and died at the scene.

At the time of his death, Officer Chandler was assigned to the offender unit at Griffin Memorial Hospital.

On the afternoon of July 28, 1989, at the Oklahoma City probation and parole office, a parolee was being arrested during his visit to the office to have his parole revoked. The offender violently resisted arrest, and Officer Young was one of five officers called to subdue him. A short time later, Officer Young suffered a heart attack and died at Presbyterian Hospital in Oklahoma City.

May we never forget their sacrifice...
FINDING GOD IN PRISON

As Robert made his way to the stage, the packed house had no idea what they were about to hear. He had been asked to share his life’s story as part of the church’s Christmas candlelight service. It was a story that most of the church did not know. The night had been filled with music and scripture but now he stood alone in the spotlight and began to speak. “Tonight I would like to share the greatest gift I have ever received...The gift of redemption...My personal story of redemption...” With passion and clarity he told everyone there how he had been raised in a broken home and as a teen became involved in drugs and crime. His lifestyle led to a 10 year sentence to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. However, what most people thought would be one of the darkest places on earth – far removed from the glow of their church that night – he discovered that God was there. Like multitudes of others, he found redemption that led to a changed life. Through people of faith and a prison chaplain, he learned a new way to live. Today, 15 years later, he is married with three children; he is a successful business man and was recently chosen to be a deacon at his church.

PRISON CHAPLAINCY IN AMERICA – THE BEGINNINGS

Finding God in prison is not a new story. In fact, religion has been involved in corrections from the very beginning. In the late 18th and early 19th century, religious beliefs played a significant role in shaping the first prisons on American soil in New York and in Pennsylvania. According to the New York Correction History Society, in 1827 Rev. Jared Curtis became the first full-time prison chaplain in the United States. He served at the Auburn, NY prison. Just as chaplains were placed in the military and in hospitals to tend to the spiritual needs of those far from home due to military service or illness, chaplains were placed in prisons to tend to the spiritual needs of those incarcerated. Throughout the 19th century, almost all rehabilitative work in prisons came through the prison chaplains. They oversaw literacy and education classes, using the Bible to teach offenders to read. There were music programs, and of course teaching and preaching in addition to the counseling they offered.

In 1885, the American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA) was formed. It is the oldest affiliate organization of the American Correctional Association (ACA). Today, the ACCA is the largest professional association of prison chaplains. The ACCA encourages professional Correctional Chaplaincy, works with the ACA to formulate standards for religious policy and through its regional associations it provides training and support for Correctional Chaplains across the country.

Leo E. Brown is the Agency Chaplain and Volunteer Coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. In addition to coordinating the religious services and volunteer programs within the agency, he oversees the development of the agency’s Faith and Character Community Program and serves as the liaison to faith-based community organizations. Chaplain Brown received a Bachelors of Arts in Religion from Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma, and completed the International Christian Leadership Program at Riddlesden College in Bradford, England. After working for several years in business management, he returned to Phillips Graduate Seminary and began local church ministry in 1988. He came to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections in 1996 as a Correctional Chaplain. As a Chaplain, he served at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center (a women’s minimum security prison) and Jess Dunn Correctional Center (a men’s minimum security prison) prior to assuming his current responsibilities in 2005. He and his wife, Cindy, have been married for over 30 years. They have been blessed with two children and six grandchildren.

...in what most people thought would be one of the darkest places on earth - far removed from the glow of their church that night - he discovered that God was there.
The night had been filled with music and scripture but now he stood alone in the spotlight and began to speak. “Tonight I would like to share the greatest gift I have ever received…The gift of redemption…”

THE ROLE OF PRISON CHAPLAINS TODAY

Within the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the role of the correctional chaplain is both clearly defined yet very broad in its scope. It generally involves three areas: Addressing offender religious rights and practices, overseeing facility volunteers and all of the programs and services they provide, and providing pastoral counseling.

ADDRESSING OFFENDER RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AND PRACTICES

Addressing the religious requests from offenders is more challenging today than ever before for two reasons – the growth in variety of religious beliefs and the changes in our laws protecting the religious rights of offenders.

In recent decades, there has been substantial growth in the number of offenders in our system involved in non-Christian religions. The information age has made it easy for those seeking alternative religious expressions to learn about different belief systems, for example, the Neo-Pagan religions such as Wicca, Odinists or Druids; and others such as Asatru, Rastafarian or Left Hand Path. The growth of these world religions among incarcerated persons has increased substantially. These changes have made it easier for offenders to prevail in legal challenges when their religious requests are denied. It also means that facilities and facility chaplains must be diligent in responding to offender religious requests appropriately and advise the facility heads as necessary regarding the religious practices of offenders.

Right Hand Path. The growth of these world religions among incarcerated persons – the largest population of which are those incarcerated in federal, state and local facilities. It changed the standard that courts use to determine religious rights cases brought by offenders. Now a government agency denying a religious request must demonstrate a “compelling governmental interest” for restricting the practice, which is a very high legal standard. In addition, if the practice is limited, the agency must show that the limitations placed on the religious practice are, “the least restrictive means” of fulfilling that governmental interest. The burden of proof for the agency has increased substantially. These changes have made it easier for offenders to prevail in legal challenges when their religious requests are denied. It also means that facilities and facility chaplains must be diligent in responding to offender religious requests. Part of the role of a correctional chaplain is to respond to these requests appropriately and advise the facility heads as necessary regarding the religious practices of offenders.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Volunteers are vital to our agency’s rehabilitation efforts. The Oklahoma Department of Corrections has over four thousand volunteers. Every day these volunteers are providing religious services and various programs at facilities and in the community throughout our state. Our prison chaplains have historically served as their facility’s volunteer coordinator because the vast majority of our volunteers come from the faith community. Coordinating their work requires establishing working relationships with people of various faith backgrounds as well as those from secular programs. Scheduling can also be a challenge. With the limitations of space and times available for meetings, it is not easy manage a schedule that meets the religious and programmatic needs of the offenders. At most of our prisons we do not have enough time and space available for all of the services and programs that our volunteers want to provide. However, at some of our remote facilities chaplains must recruit volunteers to meet the needs of the offenders.

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections has over 4,000 volunteers. Every day these volunteers provide religious services and various programs at facilities and in the community throughout our state.

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"I was born in Hobbs, New Mexico and raised in the United Methodist Parsonages in Oklahoma. I have worked in retail sales and served 19 years as pastor in United Methodist Church. I became a prison chaplain at the request of Dr. Tim Wilkins who had been OSR Chaplain and was serving as the coordinator for the new Faith and Character program at OSR. I served as a Chaplain in seminary for CPE and also for Hospice in Altus.

The most rewarding aspect of serving as a prison chaplain is to make sure the religious needs of offenders are met. The Chapel program at OSR is very diverse and I am grateful to have the opportunity to see the religious needs of offenders met. I am also proud to watch and see changes in offenders as they progress through various programs and ministry opportunities.

It is wonderful to receive a phone call from offenders who have served time at this facility calling back to say, 'Hey, I made it, I am doing fine and wanted to thank you for all you did for me.' That of itself makes the job rewarding and worthwhile.”

-- Chaplain Mark Sewell, OSR

I was born in southern Louisiana in a small town called Donaldsonville.

Becoming a prison chaplain seemed to be the natural progression of the para-church, Faith to Faith Prison Ministry, I founded as a course requirement for my Master’s program while matriculating at Oral Roberts University. This program was started in 1996 at what was then called Freedom Ranch located in Turley, Oklahoma. We conducted weekly Sunday morning services for female offenders.

The most rewarding part of correctional chaplaincy is its ecumenical quality. While committed to Christ, I am privileged to participate with various Christian denominations; I value the call to take the Gospel into every man’s world. I am pleased to facilitate non-Christian services such as the Neo-Pagan rituals, Jumah, Native American Sweat Lodge, Sabbath services and Buddhist meditations. This allows every person the privilege of practicing the faith traditions of their choice.

- Chaplain Vernell Bell, NOCC

The role of the correctional chaplain is to address offender religious rights and practices, oversee facility volunteers and all programs/services they provide, and provide pastoral counseling.
I grew up in the surroundings of New Orleans, Louisiana. After graduating from high school in 1979 I attended Southeastern Louisiana University and earned a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Speech and Communications. In 1982, I attended the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and earned the Master of Divinity with a concentration in Counseling and the Master of Arts with a specialization in Youth Education. In 1997, I moved to Arkansas where I began my career in Corrections serving as chaplain at two different facilities for 14 years before moving to Oklahoma in October of 2011 to serve at the Mabel Bassett Correctional Center. While attending a prayer breakfast, I met a medical professor who shared his experiences delivering bibles in prisons in his home country in Africa. He shared he had been turned away and so he returned the next day and asked the warden if he would allow him to pass out bibles for one day; he would do a physical on the warden and his family members. He was allowed in and each man received a Bible. There was such a transformation in the lives of those incarcerated the warden wrote the professor and invited him back upon his return. Even in the conditions men were living, hearts were renewed and their lives were changed through their newfound faith in God.

Working in corrections, anyone can see the broken lives and relationships in offenders. My reward is to be used of God to help mothers and fathers receive their son or daughter with a renewed mind and heart. Adult children they could trust with their checkbook if they needed to. To see the men and women learn to become a dad to his son or women become a mom to her daughter. At the end of the day, I can say of all of the problems and frustration I experienced was worth it.

-Chaplain Charles Freyder, MBCC

...facilitate non-Christian services such as the Neo-Pagan rituals, Jumah, Native American Sweat Lodge, Sabbath services and Buddhists meditations.

I am from the Tulsa area of Oklahoma. I became a prison chaplain because the night before I was licensed and ordained, I was in prayer when God spoke to my heart: “You are going into women’s prison and this will be your great harvest.” I thought God had the wrong number because I had never been in a prison and knew nothing about them. But inside, I knew it was God.

The most interesting or rewarding parts of my work are, ALL OF IT! I found that there were women who were, yes, responsible for their actions, but actions followed abuse, abandonment, etc. I am proud to work for the Department of Corrections and proud of the ladies who are incarcerated here who are working to leave healed. I am grateful for the Department of Corrections allowing me to facilitate, as well as teach, life-changing classes here at EWCC.

-Chaplain Kathryn McCollum, EWCC

...hold the offenders accountable in order to aid them in becoming better people.

I grew up in Edmond and was called by the Holy Spirit to be in Prison Ministry. (Isaiah 61:1) The most rewarding part of my work is seeing men come to the revelation knowledge of Jesus Christ!

-Chaplain Joe Spears, JHCC

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I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, and raised in Valliant, Oklahoma. Just after high school, I married my high school sweetheart and we have two wonderful daughters. After serving as law enforcement chaplain for several years, I felt that there was a great need for chaplains in corrections and began exploring the possibility of becoming a correctional chaplain. I attended college in Little Rock, Arkansas, and finished my degree at Oklahoma Missionary Baptist Institute in Marlow, Oklahoma, in 1999 as a qualification to becoming a corrections chaplain. I have been a correctional chaplain for seven years, serving in the private prisons and now with DOC.

I believe the role of a chaplain is to help people and that an offender is still a person when they are incarcerated. An offender might lose a lot of things when coming to prison, but one thing that will never change is that each offender is an individual. I strive to treat each person as I would like to be treated. I believe it is important to make meaningful daily contact with offenders and to equip volunteers to be a big part of that contact. I see a correctional chaplain being a bridge that brings together the religious volunteers and the offenders for the betterment of society.

The most rewarding part of my work is to see offenders get their lives back on track and prepare to become the men, husbands and fathers God always willed for them to be.

-- Chaplain Wade Scott, OSP

I grew up in Western Kansas and spent most of my adult life in South Texas. My wife became the Director of Testing for Southern Nazarene University and the move to Oklahoma resulted in my work with private education. Several friends were working as chaplains and encouraged me to apply. This job field provides a way for me to utilize my formal religious education and my concern for the well-being of individuals. Since becoming a prison chaplain I have developed a desire to help these men change their life-styles.

The most rewarding part of my work is being able to play a role in the everyday life of a prison facility that makes it more humane and safer place to live.

Chaplain Larry Adams, LARC

I am originally from Alabama, though I have been in Oklahoma for approximately 20 years. Specifically, I am from Tallasee, Alabama, which is in the central part of the state between Montgomery and Auburn.

The reason I became a chaplain is I am a never-married but still hopeful single adult Southern Baptist preacher. Lots of churches won't talk to me about becoming their pastor due to my marital status. I became a chaplain because it was ministry-related and marital status was irrelevant.

I prescribe to the three “f”s philosophy which is friendly, fair, and firm. I hold the offenders accountable in order to aid them in becoming better people. Sometimes they don’t immediately see that and conflicts arise. It is rewarding when they finally understand that I’m not nearly the “jerk” that they think I am.

- Chaplain Jeff Flourney, MACC

...to show offenders there is a way out of prison and they can have a valuable and productive life when they are in right relationship with Jesus Christ.
I am from Helena, Oklahoma.

In 1997, my Pastor, at the church that I was attending, came to me and asked if I would pray about becoming a volunteer for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections and starting a prison ministry as an outreach for our church. The answer to his question was “yes” and I came to James Crabtree to be trained as a volunteer. The first facility that I went to was BJCC and that first night I stepped on that yard, as I left Central Control, I knew that part of my purpose on this earth was to reach those who are in prison, and to share with them the skills that can change lives. After volunteering for the Chapel Program at JCCC and traveling to many of the other DOC yards, holding chapel services for 17 years; the opportunity to positively influence the lives of those who are involved with the Department of Corrections became available. After much consideration and prayer, I could not pass up the opportunity to apply for the chaplains position at JCCC. In August of 2011, I became the fulltime chaplain at James Crabtree Correctional Center.

For me, the most interesting or rewarding parts to being a chaplain is also one of the greatest challenges. It is learning about all of the different faith groups, what they believe, how they practice their faith, how to communicate and gain the trust of someone whose belief system may be different than mine. Once the differences are overcome, the rewards are in seeing lives change.

-Chaplain Jay Drawbridge, JCCC

I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and currently reside in Antlers, Oklahoma. I was licensed to preach the Gospel by Winnetka Heights Baptist church at the age of 16. I was ordained by the Brooklyn Heights Baptist Church in Carthage, Missouri, in 1977, and have been pastor of churches in Oklahoma since then. I am currently pastor of Grace First Baptist Church. About 5 years ago, God began to move me to step into the world of chaplaincy. I made contact with Paul Bettis, the Chaplain Ministries Director of Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, who put me in contact with Eddie Coast (now chaplain in Lawton) who inspired me to think out of the usual box of ministry opportunity. Chaplain Coast encouraged me to contact Leo Brown, DOC Agency Chaplain and Volunteer Coordinator, who guided me in the process to become a prison chaplain. I did some training in residential care and applied for jobs in that field and filled out the state employment requirements and applied for chaplaincy openings in DOC – and now I am one.

There are many interesting and rewarding parts of this work. Foremost is the opportunity to serve as an encourager or helper to the staff at Howard McLeod Correctional Center. Corrections is a tough job because we work with dysfunctional personalities of offenders daily. Employees need to be shown that somebody cares and that they are doing something important for the world we live in. I try as best I can to provide moral and spiritual support for them. When I see them smile – that’s a great reward to be treasured.

The offender side of my work is interesting in the sense of encountering so many people who need to be guided to move in a positive direction. An offender has two worlds to deal with – survival in a corrupt and dangerous world with their peers and trying to abide by the rules of DOC. My goals are to provide offenders with preparation for reentry and/or better coping skills for living in prison. I seek to do this by providing religious ministries programs and education conducted by outside volunteers. The reward comes when an ex-offender calls and tells me his success story.

-Chaplain Thom Chappell, HMCC

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-Chaplain Thom Chappell, HMCC

An offender has two worlds to deal with -- survival in a corrupt and dangerous world...and trying to abide by the rules of the Department of Corrections.

FACTS AT A GLANCE
(February 29, 2012)

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Pictured above is the the chapel building (left) located at James Crabtree Correctional Center in Helena, Oklahoma, and (right) renovation continues on the interior of the chapel.
Meet the Chaplains

Meet the Chaplains

Fact at a Glance

(Febuary 29, 2012)

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<tr>
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Offender Information

I was born and raised in the north-central part of Louisiana, called the "great piney woods," because of the incredibly tall and slender pine trees that were so common across that part of the state. My hometown was, and still is, very small. With a population of about three hundred people, we depended on the local public school and nearby churches to provide activities for the entire community. My congregation was no exception. Though few in number, they were great in spirit and enthusiasm. In time, however, my favorite place to live and work became Baton Rouge, New Orleans and all places east. Filled with rich and fertile history, delicious foods and wonderful people, it is a beautiful place. Finally, just because I am from Louisiana does not mean I am Cajun. That is reserved for only a small amount of folks. But proud I am that their state is my state, too.

At the end of my first year of college, I was appointed to serve two congregations in southeast Louisiana. I was 19, young, green and terrified. Located over 300 miles away, I moved away from everyone and everything I knew, I began a journey that would last over a span of 37 years. There was never a time in which I was not serving at least one congregation; and, this included my years in college and seminary. After all these years, I decided to step away from this style of ministry. I was ready to try something else. In time, and in a way of utilizing the ministerial skills I had gained as a pastor of congregations of various sizes, I made the decision to step away from the pulpit. Shortly after that, I began to explore and, later, pursue a career in the Department of Corrections as a chaplain.

Immediately upon entering this work as chaplain, I realized it would be so vastly different from anything I had ever done. Warren Emma Watts and Deputy Warden Rick Moham quickly recognized this and, as a result suggested that I follow two very important rules --- take my time to learn and absorb; and, always be willing to ask questions. This has been the most interesting part for me … searching people out, asking questions, depending upon others for help. And, let me add that the surrounding staff has been exceptional in taking the time to talk to me, to answer my questions, to explain why; to help me grasp and understand my role as the facility chaplain. Thankfully, the staff know their jobs, work hard, and perform their responsibilities in a very professional manner. I feel exceedingly fortunate to be the chaplain of the Jackie Brannon Correctional Center.

- Chaplain Tom Logan, JBCC

The Jackie Brannon Correctional Center Chapel is estimated to have been built in the 1940's. Built as an extension of OSP, the current chapel sat beside a 5 winged Trustee building. Its original purpose was that of a movie theater and multipurpose building for the maximum security trustees. During those days, the trustee gang pay was issued by using a ticket system. The tickets were spent at the canteen or could be used for a night of entertainment at the little movie house. For the duration of that movie, the offender audience was able to escape the reality of their prison life. Just like the free world, the offenders were able to purchase popcorn and additional movie concessions using their hard earned ticket currency. A former JBCC warden used to tell stories of his boyhood and growing up on what were then the OSP prison grounds. He would tell of his father's position as a Night Rider in the 1950's. The stories would include tales of being allowed into the offender movie theater where he was entrusted into the care of a 'lifer' who operated the projector. From his perch in the projection room, under the protection of an offender, the young boy who would one day be watched movies along with the convicted felons.

(Continued on page 27)
I am from Seminole, Oklahoma.

I became a prison chaplain because God took what I thought was important, which was my worldly possessions, away from me and called me to this Ministry.

What is one of the most interesting or rewarding parts of your work? Being able to work with, witness to, and be able to encourage and be a tool in helping lead many to the Lord.

-Chaplain James Crabtree, JLCC

I was born in Duncan, Oklahoma, and currently reside in Dill City, Oklahoma.

I was the pastor of a church just 7 miles from the prison when I received a phone call from a person asking me to go to the prison and minister to an offender there. They lived in Colorado and could only get to see him once or twice a year. I arranged it with the warden and visited the man. The warden asked me to be a volunteer chaplain – in which I did for two years and decided the call of God was all over it and beside that, if I’m going to do it anyway I might as well get the pay and the benefits.

Chaplaincy has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It still moves me deep inside to see life change from criminal behavior, hate, hurt, shame, guilt ridden, suicidal, to non-criminal behavior, loving, caring, head lifted, hope-filled and joining the ranks of leaders. I have actually seen offenders getting out and restoring their families, going back to the same work locations and proving to their boss that they are brand new people – law abiding, God honoring, men of integrity. I’ve seen them become pastors of churches, leaders in communities, and givers of themselves to help others. One of the most interesting things about my work is dealing with so many different religious groups with different beliefs and practices. But it has been heart wrenching as well – death of fellow employees, constant death notifications to offenders of their family members, gang wars, and senseless killings and fighting. I have thoroughly enjoyed ministering to staff and volunteers. I’ve done funerals, weddings, counseling, worked on committees with them, trained with them, suffered loss with them and helping one another through the stress and pressures of constant policy and procedural change. All in all, the last 24 years of working as a state prison chaplain has been a very rewarding experience – yes, I’d do it all over again!

-Chaplain Ron Roskam, WSKCC

When the William S. Key Correctional Center opened its doors in December 1988, the chapel was located in the education building; on June 1, 1997, it was moved to the Babgy Building, which is currently the Administration Building; and then in September 1999, it was moved to the basement of the C-Unit. Chaplain Roskam arrived at WKCC on July 1, 2001, with a vision of changing the location of the chapel to a bigger and better place so again it was moved, this time to the auditorium in the Education building. In 2003 the chapel was moved to its current location at the Taylor building. The building was built in 1925 and used as a Mental Health Hospital for the severely insane. It was closed down in 1960 and used only for a storage building until 1996. The building was sound and solid but in bad need of repair.

Chaplain Roskam teamed up with the administration, maintenance, safety consultants, offenders, merchants, churches, offender families and volunteers to totally remodel the building to what it is now – a beautiful place of worship. However, for six years it did not have proper heating and cooling so volunteers and offenders wore heavy coats, hats and scarves in the winter and burned up in the summer. In 2010, Chaplain Roskam
In my daily interactions with people, conversations usually turn to a common subject. It is voiced in a familiar question, “So, what do you do for a living?” My response is usually accompanied with a smile, “I am a prison chaplain.” The responses to my declaration vary, but frequently it is the beginning of a lengthy conversation.

So what is it that a prison chaplain does? What does a typical day look like? As many in the Department of Corrections would echo, there is no such thing as a “typical” day. Each day, the challenges of working with offenders, staff, and volunteers pull constantly with the ebbs and flows of deadlines, demands, and emergencies that often arise. So what is typical is the fact that each group mentioned occupies my energies and time.

**OFFENDERS**

As a prison chaplain, my main responsibility is to assist the offender population at my facility with religious issues and concerns. Offenders come into the system with various beliefs and faith backgrounds. Part of my job is to be familiar with many different beliefs as well as be prepared to research the practices of a faith to which I am not familiar. My goal is to meet the religious needs of the offender within the guidelines of our operating procedures. When new concerns present themselves, I work with the offender and administration to best meet the security needs of the facility while trying to accommodate the offender’s religious need at the same time.

But this is not all I do for offenders. At times, offenders come to me with different issues that are happening in their lives. These difficulties take different forms. It may be dealing with a child that is making some bad choices, a spouse that has sent them divorce papers, or maybe it is simply the difficulties of dealing with life in prison. I may offer advice or insight. I may even point them to someone better equipped to offer help. Often times, I just listen.

Also, I am the point person for emergency notifications. When an offender has a death in their family or other types of emergencies, the phone calls are typically routed to my office. After the information is verified, I am responsible for notifying the offender. This is often viewed by many as an unwanted or difficult thing to do. To sit down with an offender and tell them that a child or parent has died or that a member of their family is in the hospital is never easy to do. But, for me, it is often a time when I can really offer an offender compassion and understanding. At these times, my calling as a minister is met with the needs of someone in need of an understanding heart. I have never had an offender during these difficult times refuse my offer of prayer.

In addition, I help offenders get into programs to help address their specific needs. At Jess Dunn, the Religious Programs Building offers over 450 hours of programming a month to accommodate such needs as: parenting...
and relationships, anger management, addiction recovery, healthy living, and educational classes. Most of these are done from a faith perspective. I attempt to involve men in these programs in order to improve their ability to make better choices. My desire is that offenders leave here better men than when they came to me.

Dealing with offenders is not always easy. Many of these men come and go without much contact with me or the programs and services that I offer. But, for those that take seriously the need for change in their lives and follow through with what is being offered, they can succeed. Hearing from an ex-offender that is doing well, reconnecting with family, or maybe even currently volunteering in the department makes it all worth it.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are important to the programs and services offered through the chaplain’s office. I am one person, therefore, I cannot do it all nor would I even want to attempt it. My volunteers are responsible for most of what happens in the Religious Programs Building as they bring their passion of offering hope and support to the lives of offenders. It is up to my office to share that with the volunteers. There are approximately 350 active volunteers at Jess Dunn. We communicate information directly to our program leaders, those men and women directly responsible for the program. It is their responsibility to pass the information on to those on their program team. When the issue involves a specific volunteer, I contact that person directly. Because volunteers are so invaluable, every attempt is made to resolve issues with as little interruption to their program as possible.

Another way I interact with volunteers is through our annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet. I am fortunate to have a building with several meeting areas in order to accomplish this. The building itself was built with volunteer labor and donations which is a testimony to their belief in what is happening here. It is a high priority to make sure all faith groups and beliefs are represented in the scheduling of volunteers.

Occasionally, there is a change in policy or facility concern that is brought to my attention. It is up to my office to manage and encourage one another. Though this area of chaplaincy is not emphasized to the extent as the others, it is still just as important to me.

As part of the staff, I am responsible for the security in my area. This means that I monitor the offenders in my building with the same vigilance as a security officer. I am not exempt from this because I am a chaplain. How a chaplain does this varies from one chaplain to another. For me, this means I do recounts, incident reports, and even occasional misconducts. My first priority is security.

Also, a chaplain is often the presence of faith and hope to staff in the facility. Fellow staff members have asked me to facilitate weddings as well as funerals. I have also been asked questions of faith and belief. People have expressed their hurts and struggles as well as their joys and triumphs with me. As a chaplain, I hope that I represent what I would share in my own place of worship; I am a real person with a real faith that is available for anyone.

Religious Services - A Day in the Life

Volunteers are vital in many areas of the facility. They function as educators, mentors, and encouragers. Without them, many of the programs and services that are needed would simply not happen.

STAFF

As chaplain, the one thing that I can never forget is that I am part of the staff at my facility. We look out for each other and encourage one another. Though this area of chaplaincy is not emphasized to the extent as the others, it is still just as important to me.

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(Meet the Chaplains - WSKCC, cont. from page 23)

invited a volunteer from Wichita Falls, Texas, to lead a worship service. He had a passion to help gather funds for a central heating and air conditioning unit and so he did. Two churches consolidated and sold one of their buildings and supplied the funds for the chapel to have a complete central heat and air conditioning unit plus insulating three walls. Paint and texture was added to the decor along with carpet, cabinets, a plumbed in baptistry, half wall around the clerks desk area, a welcome center and book shelves. It has a library, an educational area as well as a worship area. Ceiling fans and new light fixtures were installed.

(Meet the Chaplains - JBCC, cont. from page 21)

The slanting floor demonstrates the builder’s attention to the needs of the viewing audience. The brick lined-outlines of the concession stand windows are still visible in the chaplain’s office. Hidden in the rafters above that same office are the remnants of the old projection room.

After the 1973 Riot, the trustees were moved and the movie theater is thought to have been utilized as a storage space. On a Wednesday night in 1975, a fire engulfed the old trustee unit. The flames were so intense that the roof of the theater also caught on fire. The trustee building was irreplaceable and the theater narrowly escaped. Hidden today within the chapel’s false ceiling, remnants of those charred rafters can still be seen. The blackened scars lay visible beside what remains of the wall where the projector lens once sat.

Under the leadership of OSP Warden Richard Crisp, the damaged building was brought back to life. The old theater was repaired and remodeled using offender labor. Warden Crisp and OSP Chaplain Bill Donovan began their search for pews and all of the furnishing that would complete a much needed chapel. Together the two men went to Ada, Oklahoma, to visit a company that made church pews. The pews were approved by the two men and purchased using canteen funds. The warden and chaplain then made a trip to Joplin, Missouri, to pick up the combination Communion Table & Baptistery that is still in use today. This specialty item was built specifically with the needs of the prison in mind. As with the pews, the baptistry was purchased with canteen funds. The Canteen Board was comprised of the chaplain, warden and business manager. Chaplain Donovan was joined by Chaplain Frank Marks in 1980. Together, the two chaplains continued to facilitate the spiritual needs of both the trustee’s and the offenders behind the walls. Eventually the need was recognized for the growing trustee population to have a separate administration from its maximum security counterpart. The trustee unit became an independent correctional facility on July 1, 1985. Christened as Jackie Brannon Correctional Center, the minimum security prison would not have its own full time chaplain until Mr. Del Allen was hired in 1986. By that time, a strong religious}
I have worked in human services and ministry for more than 40 years. I was at a transition point in my life and some guy said, “Hey, there’s a place in Alva that needs someone like you.” They made me an offer I couldn’t refuse. I was hooked. And then they dropped the news on me. “Oh yeah, now that we have you where we want you, you also have to do this job with a brand new 6,000 square foot chapel that has multiple uses, built with tremendous community support, with a brand new audio/visual sound system, 50 inch plasma TV screens, lots of new plush chairs, built-in baptistery with a heater, a private office with a separate library full of books, a dedicated team of community volunteers and a wonderfully supportive administration.”

Fortunately, the Lord doesn’t give us more than we can bear. Do you have the picture yet? I am the grateful recipient of the hard work and dedication of a team of people who devoted themselves to creating a trend-setting State of Oklahoma, DOC minimum security facility specializing in treatment programming for alcohol and drug offenders. I feel sure that my previous life and work experience has prepared me well for this opportunity. I truly appreciate the work done by the former chaplain and his volunteer support staff. There is no way to measure the difference that a new multi-purpose, well equipped, community supported, chapel building can make in providing the spiritual, intellectual, social and community support that is an essential part of the reclamation of human lives. But I am convinced without a doubt that the people of Alva, Oklahoma, the ministry leaders that make this style of chapel building possible, uncounted DOC employees and the visionary staff of the Bill Johnson Correctional Center are making a truly meaningful contribution to achieving the enormous mission statement of the Department of Corrections.

Since our chapel opened in April 2011, we have had 112 volunteers involved, 7 churches/groups who bring programs and services to the offenders and we have had over 190 baptisms. In addition to the religious services available in the Eversole Chapel, we also have AA/NA and Celebrate Recovery groups, marital and family relationship classes and various treatment and reentry classes in the Benson Center.

I am confident that in the months and years ahead, measurable standards will demonstrate that the investment made in building similar chapel facilities throughout the DOC system will continue to pay great dividends to our system.

I must confess...I can't hid the truth...My name is Mike and I'm a new chaplain with a new chapel.

--- Mike Culbreath, Bill Johnson Correctional Center

Religious Services - Confessions of a New Chaplain

With a New Chapel

By Michael Culbreath, Bill Johnson Correctional Center

“You might say. “Well Mike, what lead you to this point in your life?” It’s a long story but here is the long story made short.

I was born in Oklahoma and raised in California. I came back to Oklahoma in 1976 and have lived in the Tulsa area for the past 35 years.

I became a prison chaplain because it utilizes many of my skills including spiritual liaison and leader, classroom teaching, marriage and family counseling, grief counseling, program development and management, implementing best practices in policy and procedure and facilitating caregiving services in a complex and stressful environment.

The most interesting and rewarding part of my work is creating relationships with offenders, security officers, ancillary service providers and administrative leaders to influence the outcomes of incarceration, i.e. to make a positive difference in someone’s life today.”

--- Chaplain Michael Culbreath, BJCC

Pictured (top right) is the new 6,000 square foot chapel located at the Bill Johnson Correctional Center in Alva; (bottom right) is the interior of the chapel, featuring 50 in. plasma TV’s, built-in baptistery with heater, and private office.
volunteer system was in place and services were being conducted in the chapel every night of the week. Volunteers were in such numbers that the Volunteer Orientation would require an entire Saturday to indoctrinate its eager participants.

During his tenure at JBCC, Chaplain Allen coordinated the volunteer leadership and development of an offender choir. The choir ministered in the JBCC Chapel and went on to travel throughout Oklahoma visiting small church congregations. Chaplain Allen and an assigned officer traveled with the musical group, allowing them to share their talents and testimony with the general public.

Chaplain Allen left JBCC in 1994, at which time Chaplain Don Perteet began to look after the ever growing diverse spiritual needs of the minimum security population. The aged building has been maintained with diligence. Through Chaplain Perteets’ efforts, a new chapel roof was donated by private citizens and the Celebrate Recovery organization. Offenders and volunteers worked together to insure that the roof project was completed. With a seating capacity of 200, the chapel has seen revival services that have stretched the limits of the established safety code. The chapel maintains the records for the prison cemetery and burials are coordinated through the chapel office.

In times past, the chapel has been used for high profile events that required higher security measures. These same events usually drew more than average scrutiny as well as media coverage. Educational, news and crime related television shows will occasionally show media clips of a select few high profile parole hearings that took place within the chapel walls.

The Jackie Brannon Chapel continues to be utilized for religious services as well as a multi-purpose building. Much like the Department of Corrections, the JBCC Chapel has changed throughout its years of existence. The structure itself is a testament of the Department’s versatility and ability to overcome adversity. It has proved to be a valuable and interesting part of our Corrections History.

*The above information has been gathered through phone interviews with the following:

DON PERTEET  
JBCC Chaplain 1994-2010

DEL ALLEN  
JBCC Chaplain 1984-1994

FRANK MARKS  
JBCC Chaplain 1980-1985  
(continued to serve at MBCC until 1990)

DR. BILL DONOVAN  
OSP Chaplain 1973 – 1983  
(served as Administrative Programs Director)

JOHN EAST  
OSP/Retired

LEATHA BRANNON  
Education (daughter of the late Jackie Brannon)

DALE CANTRELL  
OSP

JOHN GRUBBS  
JBCC Warden/Retired

BOB JAMESON  
Former JBCC Wardens Assistant

PAM FINK  
JBCC Wardens Secretary/Retired

SID YOUNG  
JBCC Maintenance Supervisor/Retired

JERRY HOLT  
OSP/Retired

Tracy McCollum began his career in corrections in 1988 as a correctional officer at James Crabtree Correctional Center, where he promoted through the security ranks to captain. During his time in security at James Crabtree Correctional Center, he was active with the CERT team, served as K-9 officer, and was assigned to the horse mounted armed gun gang working medium security offenders away from the facility. In 2002, Mr. McCollum promoted to chief of security and transferred to the minimum security, Northeast Oklahoma Correction Center in Vinita, Oklahoma. In 2004, Mr. McCollum relocated to Granite, Oklahoma as a captain at the Oklahoma State Reformatory. While at the Oklahoma State Reformatory he has promoted to unit manager, chief of security, deputy warden and has served as interim warden since December 2011. Mr. McCollum earned his bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice at Mid-American Christian University in 2006. He is a member of the Southern States Correctional Association and active with the Greer County Chamber of Commerce.

Doug Byrd, Warden  
John Lilley Correctional Center

Tracy McCollum, Warden  
Oklahoma State Reformatory

Warden Byrd began his career with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections in January of 1985 as a correctional officer at the James Crabtree Correctional Center. While at JCCC, he promoted to correctional case manager supervisor. In 1994, he served as a probation and parole officer at the Northwest District in Enid. In August 2008, Mr. Byrd promoted to deputy warden at the Dick Conner Correctional Center. Warden Byrd received his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a minor in Psychology from Northwestern Oklahoma State University.
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The Gift of LIFE

In the past few years the number of volunteers offering faith-based programs has grown tremendously. Faith-based programs are activities that address a criminogenic need from a faith perspective. We also have a growing number of volunteers being trained to offer non-faith based programs. Due to these dedicated volunteers and our chaplains, we now have reentry programs such as Genesis One, Fitting Back In and Redemption Church. We have substance abuse programs like Celebrate Recovery and Alcoholics Anonymous. We have family relationship and parenting programs like PREP, Within My Reach, Walking the Line, On My Shoulders and the Messages Project. We have life skills programs like New Life Behavior and Life on Purpose. We also have more volunteers trained to offer programs that used to be facilitated by DOC staff alone, like Thinking For A Change and Cage Your Rage. All this thanks to our amazing volunteers and the work of our chaplains that recruit, train and manage their service to the agency.

**PASTORAL COUNSELOR**

The role of pastoral counselor has always been at the heart of what it means to be a chaplain. In a correctional setting this is a constant need. At most of our facilities the chaplain is the staff member that usually notifies offenders of a family emergency or the death of a family member. Having someone equipped to help offenders deal with these losses is not only good for the offender but benefits the facility as well by helping the offender cope with the loss in a positive manner.

It is not only death notifications or illnesses that can require pastoral counseling. Offenders are dealing with stressful situations, family issues and personal problems. As a result, many turn to the facility chaplain for help. Others are asking themselves, some for the first time, significant questions about their life and spirituality. The chaplain, working with mental health staff and others, is there to help the offender work through these issues in a positive manner.

At most of our facilities, the chaplain is also available for any staff member that desires pastoral counseling. Providing chaplaincy services to employees is a growing trend in the nation and through our facility chaplains, as well as the Correctional Officer Chaplaincy Program, the agency is able to offer those services to our staff.

The vast majority of our chaplains were clergy in the community before becoming a chaplain with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Many have said that in their pastoral counseling alone, they believe they have touched more lives as a chaplain than they did in their previous ministerial roles.

**CONCLUSION**

The history of the word “Chaplain” is tied to the use of ancient icons – symbols of God’s presence and reminders of God’s power. Today, prison chaplains are a living symbol of faith and spirituality, whether it is making sure offenders are receiving appropriate accommodations to practice their religion or that volunteers are able to bring potentially life changing messages of faith and hope or that they are available to provide pastoral counseling for those going through very difficult times. God will always be found in prison but thanks to the faithful work of our prison chaplains, it is much easier for offenders to find God, and like Robert, find redemption that can lead to a changed, rehabilitated, life.

(A Day in the Life, cont. from page 26)

Being a prison chaplain is often challenging whether you are interacting with offenders, volunteers, or staff. But the challenges are tempered by the pride I feel in being a positive influence on those around me, as well as their influence on me. This makes me a better man and a better chaplain. I would not trade this experience that I have had for any other. Each day, a prison chaplain has the ability to make this world we all live in a better place. I only hope for many more days to come.
Your friendly wellness coordinator has been researching “bad food-good food” and wishes to share information you may not be aware of. What should you not eat? Avoid trans fat! It’s found in hydrogenated oils. Read the ingredient labels of the foods you consume.

The good news is, it’s gradually being eliminated from most of the foods we purchase.

I like to find good news about the things I like to eat and drink. Here’s what I found: I have the blessing from medical science to eat dark chocolate and nuts, have morning coffee, drink milk and drink red wine in moderation (no more than two glasses per day). Milk consumption should not exceed 16 ounces daily. More than that and the calories offset the benefits of the calcium. Calcium binds with fat in the digestion process which means you absorb less of the fat. The benefits of dark chocolate, in moderate consumption, have been well documented so let’s dwell on coffee and red wine. Coffee has been found to be the highest source of antioxidants in the Western world and studies have found that it’s associated with lower incidences of dementia, Type 2 diabetes and Parkinson’s disease. Drink just the right amount. The right amount will make you alert while too much may cause nervous agitation. Two glasses of red wine daily, preferably in the evening, reduces the impact of bad cholesterol, which reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease. It also causes nervous agitation. Two glasses of red wine daily, preferably in the evening, reduces the impact of bad cholesterol, which reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease. It also offsets the benefits of the calcium. Calcium binds with fat in the digestion process which means you absorb less of the fat.

The good news is, its gradually being eliminated from most of the foods we purchase. Your friendly wellness coordinator has been researching “bad food-good food” and wishes to share information you may not be aware of. What should you not eat? Avoid trans fat! It’s found in hydrogenated oils. Read the ingredient labels of the foods you consume. The good news is, it’s gradually being eliminated from most of the foods we purchase.
May is OLDER AMERICAN MONTH

CALENDAR

APRIL

17-20 Pardon and Parole Board Hearing Hillside CCC
22 Earth Day
26 Board of Corrections Hillside CCC

MAY

13 Mother’s Day
15-18 Pardon and Parole Board Hearing Hillside CCC
24 Board of Corrections DOC Administration
28 Memorial Day

JUNE

14 Flag Day
17 Father’s Day
19-22 Pardon and Parole Board Hearing Hillside CCC
29 Board of Corrections Howard McLeod CC

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BOUNCE BACK FROM A WORK MISTAKE

By Anna Davies

Hey, nobody’s perfect. But a mistake on the job — whether it’s missing an important meeting, accidentally sending a whiny e-mail to your boss instead of to your best friend, or forgetting a deadline — can really cost you. And, sorry, there are no do-overs in the professional world; just recover as gracefully as you can with these tips from Andrea Kay, author of Work’s a Bitch and Then You Make It Work.

BREATHE. Once you realized you’ve screwed up, take a step away from the situation — and your computer — with a few deep breaths or a quick walk outside. “Fear and emotion can cloud your judgment and could cause you to make a hasty decision you’ll regret,” says Kay.

OWN UP. Don’t just hope your boss didn’t notice that you slunk into an early-morning department meeting 10 minutes late — acknowledge your flub. “In your apology, take a moment to let your boss know how you’ll avoid similar errors in the future (‘I’ll make sure to leave earlier on meeting days’) rather than just offer an excuse (‘The traffic was terrible!’),” says Kay.

BRAINSTORM A SOLUTION. If the mistake was major — like an incorrect budget report — or affects people besides your boss, come up with a few ideas for correcting the error, then run them by your supervisor in a memo or a meeting, suggests Kay. Even if your boss decides that she’ll be the one to handle the situation, you’re showing initiative by trying to find a solution instead of hiding from the problem.

MOVE ON. “The best way for everyone to get over a mistake is to follow it up with great work,” says Kay. Reclaim your confidence by putting forth your best effort on your future assignments. Like it or not, the spotlight is on you now, so use the moment to shine.

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