Religion & Health Care Costs

--Health care costs have risen faster than any other correctional costs.\(^1\) Prisoners are adversely affected beyond the intentions of prison mission goals, often developing more severe emotional problems added to their own criminal behavior problems and outside the realm of abnormal diagnosis in DSM IV.\(^2\)

--Religion gives faith, hope, meaning, optimism and security to persons, impacting the well-being of persons and their ability to handle stress.\(^3\) In a review of over 200 articles,\(^4\) religious commitment indicated a positive impact with over 80% of the studies indicating, with over 15% of persons in prison are at a risk for suicide, and “Published studies consistently have shown that religious commitment is inversely related to suicide rates.”\(^5\) Furthermore, given the ever-increasing cost of health care to corrections, Johnson and Larson state, “there is considerable empirical evidence concerning the beneficial effect of religious practices and commitment upon various health-care issues.”\(^6\)

Religion & Institutional Adjustment

--Religion helps inmates deal with criminal behavior and issues of denial, helping them cope with the deprivation of prison life and understand the issues inherent in the loss of freedom; religion provides them with the opportunity to start a new life while in prison.\(^7\) No one doubts that religion fosters coping skills in prison.\(^8\)

Religion & Recidivism

--Given the above, reduced recidivism is a by-product, clearly the most healthy and well-adjusted inmates are the ones who stay out. Every chaplain (and regular volunteers) know several inmates who have stayed out as a direct result of their programming. Moreover if two ex-inmates do not return, such offsets more than entire TDCJ monetary cost for a single chaplain in a given fiscal year. For example, Senior Chaplain Gerald Saffel of the Ferguson Unit tracked inmates baptized in three months (12-91 to 2-92) to July of 2000 and found a 7.7% recidivism rate; 13 did not return; Senior Chaplain Saffel more than recovered the entire cost of his own salary for seven plus years in three to six months.\(^9\) With the volunteers supervised, the facts and vision go far beyond expectations; Texas’ full time chaplains reduce recidivism and recover more than their entire operating cost several times over. Why are superlatives like these not blazoned in the sky?\(^10\)

TDCJ Need

--Good News: from 1990 to 1997 the total crime rate dropped 30%; from 1988 to 1998, the crime rate has dropped significantly in direct proportion to TDCJ’s increase in inmate population.\(^11\)

--Greater Needs Coming to TDCJ: from 1970 to 1999 the mental health system has increasingly de-institutionalized its services, down from 12,413 in state hospitals in 1970 to 2,309 in 1999.\(^12\) “Between 1988 and 1998, while the TDCJ incarcerated population increased by 262%, the number of mentally ill offenders in prison receiving outpatient mental health services increased by 429%.”\(^13\) Work’s increasing.

TDCJ Professional Chaplains: The Greater Picture

--Chaplains Supervise Pastoral Care of a Multi-Religious Environment.\(^14\)

- Christians ................. 104,481
- Muslims ..................  9,151
- Native Americans ........ 1,277
- Jehovah’s Witnesses ...... 1,206
- Jews .......................  871
- Buddhists ..................  458
- Wicca ......................  289
- Muslims ..................... 9,151
- Buddhists ..................  458
- Wicca ......................  289
- Native Americans ........ 1,277
- Jehovah’s Witnesses ...... 1,206
- Jews .......................  871


--Point Question: with 120+ categories of adherents, do the Religious Constituents of Texas have a vested interest in the Professional Chaplains charged with supervising Faith issues?

--152 Chaplains Supervised in One Month, July 2000\(^15\) – Little has Changed in 2011

- Employee Volunteers ........ 65 w/ 552 hrs - Mentor Volunteers .......... 1,729
- Hospitality Volunteers ..... 150 w/ 853 hrs - Voyager Volunteers .......... 328
- Volunteer Chaplains ....... 403 w/ 7,192 hrs - Marriage Seminar Volunteers .... 41
- General Volunteers ....... 10,697 w/ 41,897 hrs - Contract Chaplain Hours ......... 926
- Chaplain Classes Taught .......... 705
- Chaplain Counseling Groups ...... 465
- Individual Counseling Attending ... 5,126
- Family Death Messages to Inmates .... 931
- Contract Chaplain Hours ......... 926

--152 Chaplains Led or Done in One Month, July 2000\(^16\) – Little has Changed in 2011

- Primary Worship Services .... 2,158
- w/ Volunteers .................. 2,859
- Total # of Inmates Attending ... 150,190
- Additional Services ........ 1,701
- w/ Total # Inmates .......... 63,919
- Spiritual Growth Classes .... 1,734
- w/ Total # Inmates .......... 73,102
- Community Service Hours ...... 699

- Mentor Volunteers .......... 1,729
- Voyager Volunteers .......... 328
- Marriage Seminar Volunteers .... 41
- Contract Chaplain Hours ......... 926
- Chaplain Classes Taught .......... 705
- Chaplain Counseling Groups ...... 465
- Individual Counseling Attending ... 5,126
- Chaplain Counseling Groups ...... 465
- Total # of Inmates Attending ... 150,190
- Family Death Messages to Inmates .... 931
- Contract Chaplain Hours ......... 926
- Chaplain Classes Taught .......... 705
- Chaplain Counseling Groups ...... 465
- Individual Counseling Attending ... 5,126

-- Chaplaincy: the only department that supervises, facilitates & instructs inmates in the finer aspects of family values rooted in faith

Religion: Human History’s Most Significant & Powerful Source for Change

--Harvard Professor Gordon Kaufman said addressing the ultimate questions of life is a necessity for thinking persons. In the words of John Newport of Fort Worth’s Southwestern Theological Seminary (the largest in the world) said this necessity is built into human nature and “has been true through the ages; as long as humans have existed, we have asked ultimate and crucial questions.”\(^17\) “Religion has existed in every society, from the most primitive to the most culturally advanced.”\(^18\) All of the major religions have always spoken to and provided interpretations about existence and influenced every aspect of human behavior, thought, feelings, family, culture, life, death and afterlife.\(^19\) There is no more complex a profession.

Religion & Texas Chaplaincy: Full of Superlatives

--How can a 22 year old entry level Programmer or Engineer make more than a fully credentialed chaplain? Most Texas Chaplains have decades of experience (and graduate degrees), supervise older volunteers, counsel Texas’ most troubled persons, impact general inmate morale and reduce recidivism in a hugely cost effective manner. With the cost savings and superlatives like “human history’s most powerful source of change” and a “no more complex a profession,” the superlatives show a clear case and need for Parity and Professional Equity for Texas Chaplains. Let’s empower Texas’ Chaplains to do more of what they already do and grant Chaplains parity with the other professions—Chaplains more than earn it. They deserve it. Someone will be supervising all the religions … might as well continue to be chaplains with a heart.

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\(^1\) Except there are fewer chaplains doing same work … about 110.\(^16\) Little has Changed in 2011
Texas Prison Chaplains – references have no end
See www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy/index.htm for one of the largest collections of chaplaincy data in the world


7 Ibid., Johnson & Larson, 30.


9 See Johnson & Larson, “Linking Religion to the Mental and Physical Health of Inmates: A Literature Review and Research Note”; Gartner, et al, “Religious Commitment and Mental Health: A Review of the Empirical Literature.” See Kaufman, Relativism…; Newport, Life’s Ultimate Questions…; Gaer, What the Great Religions Believe; the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and all of the millions of volumes in the major seminary libraries of the major faiths in the world.

10 Gerald Saffel, Independent Study, Maximum Security Ferguson Unit, Midway, Texas (July 2000). Of course, Saffel did mention the faith work prior to and after baptism for the group prior to release, which certainly impacts whether it was actually three or six plus months of faith work for the 13; but of those he did baptize, there was a 7.7% recidivism on an 8 year span, which is still far better than the current rate of 30-40% recidivism on a 1 to 3 year span of general population inmates in other programs. And Saffel is still baptizing. See also, Byron R. Johnson, et al, “Religious Programs, Institutional Adjustment, and Recidivism Among Former Inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs,” Justice Quarterly 14:1 (March 1997).


14 TDCJ Chaplaincy Department Statistical Run, Huntsville, Texas (August 29, 2000).


16 Ibid.


20 See Kaufman, Relativism…; Newport, Life’s Ultimate Questions…; Gaer, What the Great Religions Believe; the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and all of the millions of volumes in the major seminary libraries of the major faiths in the world.

SAVE Texas Prison Chaplains
FULL Documentation at more at www.PreciousHeart.net/Save_Chaplaincy.htm
Everyone Wins ... Especially the Inmates’ Families
Some has to facilitate religion ... should be professional chaplains