



CIC MINISTRIES

Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy Newsletter

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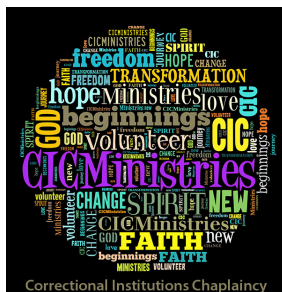
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June 2014

Dear Louann,

As Chaplains respond to the individual spiritual needs of incarcerated youth and adults in Santa Clara County facilities, and present the good news of God's love and forgiveness, they do a lot of listening. Inmates carry an immense amount of pain. Chaplains, in sharing this pain, must find way to release this burden to God. Following are some writings and musings by CIC Chaplains about their ministry to incarcerated men, women and youth.

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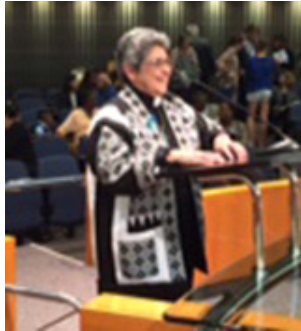
Jailbird

By Rev. Evelyn Vigil,
CIC Chaplain

"So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good." - Genesis 1:21

The blue heron crossed the sidewalk and walked toward the gate, which was locked, and so he turned around and started

Chaplains in the community



Rev. Evelyn Vigil prays at Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors meeting.

The Rev. Evelyn Vigil, who serves as main jail chaplain, was invited by Supervisor Joe Simitian to provide the invocation for a recent meeting of the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors.

Working With God

By Rev. Jenni Bales,
CIC Chaplain

Over the past few weeks, I have been overwhelmed by seeing the Holy Spirit move in unexpected ways. And while I am called to this ministry, I am still learning, and in this case, learning that God truly walks with everyone, not just those in church.

I found that God had a history with someone with a criminal record and tattoos from head to

across the meadow - and I hoped he would fly away.

No, he made wrong turn after wrong turn, walking awkwardly on the sidewalks of Elmwood Correctional Center. A blue heron, a proud and beautiful bird, with his head nodding and his long, lanky legs moving in tandem. An official "jailbird."

I stood still, afraid to scare him, but he had grown accustomed to humans. A sergeant walked by and I thought the bird would take off. Nope. The sergeant told me the bird came here often, and when I had a chance, I should check on the egrets, so many of them crowded into their own arboreal apartments behind the chapel that he was sure they each had their own branches on the family trees.

When convicts talk of their time behind bars, they say they were "down" for however many years. I was afraid this noble bird might have a similar tale to tell, though he didn't need to stay "down," he could fly away. And part of me hoped to see him lift his wings and take off.

Maybe this is the same blue heron that stood outside the chapel one night when our team offered a worship service. We took it as sign of blessing because he stood so quietly and looked in on us so intently.

But, no, this egret refused to look up. He kept looking for something he couldn't find, so much like the rest of us who keep running into blank walls, dead ends and unfulfilling relationships.

He continued to amble along, looking here and looking there, and then he stopped to look around again. Maybe the creek alongside the jail had run dry. Maybe fish were hard to find. Maybe he was looking for gophers and mice for a snack. I had to move on, the old story of promises to keep, but I wanted to see him fly. I wanted him to remember that he had wings and choices and all kinds of places to see.

Like so many of us, he had forgotten that this world - filled with sorrow and joy and all kinds of beauty - awaited his courage.

I hope he found it and made his escape - on the wings God gave him.



Blue Herons nest behind the minimum camp at Elmwood

Thirty-two-year Veteran of Jail Ministry Kept The Message Simple

By Rev. Evelyn Vigil,

toe. In my mind, he had some kind of gang association, and if we listen to society then we think gang members couldn't possibly know God. However, this man spoke of a voice that prompted him to pray -- a voice he usually pushed away. At the present moment, a loved one was in the hospital with a life-threatening illness and this man was emotionally overwhelmed at the separation. A friend in his unit challenged him, point out that he was pushing God away. Why not work with God? After listening to both this other inmate and me, this man realized it had been the Holy Spirit prompting him to pray. And he did start to pray again, asking God to come into his life and help him.

Yes, we are here as Chaplains to share the Gospel message, but we are also here to draw out what God is already doing in the lives of those we serve. Being able to recognize when the Holy Spirit is at work and pointing it out to people stirs their hope and builds their faith, and that is what we are called to do.

CHAPLAINS DURING HOLY WEEK

CIC Chaplain

After 32 years of service to the men at the Main Jail, Nelson Noelle is calling it quits and moving to Oklahoma.

He and his wife Donna decided to leave the Bay Area to join family at a Christian life care retirement facility in Tahlequah, OK - "the pretty part of the state," Nelson is quick to add. "My sister and her husband are there, and my folks served out their final years there."

He and his wife came to the Bay Area after they got married during one of Nelson's leaves from officer training school in the Air Force. "Do the math. Fifty years ago, the day after Christmas this past year. We still love each other. We still have a good time."

So as he prepares for the future, he looked back at the number of years and the countless number of men he served with the Good News of the gospel and the promise of God's love.

They have lived in Sunnyvale for 33 year and attended Trinity Church the entire time. "It's been a blessing to be there and to serve over the years in a variety of capacities," he said.



His steady and wise approach to issues that face people in church and in jail have endeared him to the congregation. And he started his jail ministry with a team from Trinity back in the 1980s. Now he is the last of that team to still be serving.

"I never went to the jail but I was uplifted. I went to serve, but I was served. Their attention...their faith. When I left I was rewarded," he said, encouraging others to consider jail ministry.

As the jail population has changed, he said he has had as few as one inmate show up for a service and then as many as 64 since the CIC Ministries program is open to all who want to attend.

He said his most memorable part of serving is the fact that "I have trouble getting into the jail a few times - but no problem getting out."

And the only problem he had was a man who fainted dead away during the service. "It was a medical thing. There were no issues with our safety, but they did terminate our service."

As for sharing the Good News, he said he tries to engage the inmates, but "I didn't open the floor up too much."

His training as a former choir director showed in the songs they sang. He always brought song sheets and made sure they sang "Amazing Grace," a hymn they like and one they know. He always asked them what "grace" means. They had different answers, but he told them it is "unmerited favor."



Rabbi Moshe Weinbaum awaits the arrival of two maximum-security inmates who will celebrate Passover with him.

Holy Week, the most important time of the Christian calendar, culminating in the Day of Resurrection, brings out the best in jail chaplains and CIC volunteers. Jewish Passover seders were celebrated in all facilities by rabbis and volunteers.

Then throughout Holy Week, CIC volunteers carried communion to every unit in the facilities. At the Main Jail nearly 300 men participated in communion and prayer in anticipation of Easter. At Elmwood 600 men and more than 500 women participated.

It was a blessed time, made more special by the devotion of those called to serve.

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He kept the message simple. "God loves you. There is nothing that could keep God from loving you."

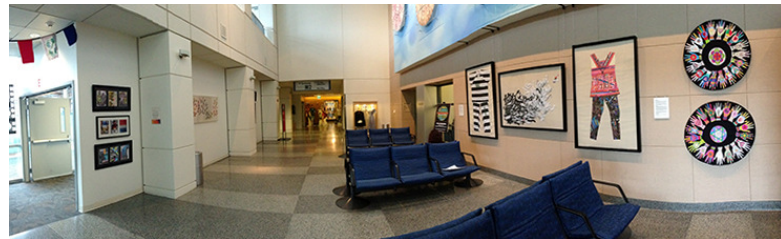
And the most rewarding part of his decades of service, "The guys who came up afterward and thanked me for coming and those who came up, heavily burdened with their situation in life and asked for prayer."

"I never came away from the jail feeling beaten. They were an encouragement to me. You just have to trust the Holy Spirit."

His wife "supported me in the ministry. She made accommodations, but God has blessed her in women's ministry over the years.

"It has been a good experience. I will miss the ministry." And we will miss him.

CIC's "Transformation: Art From Within" Exhibit Finishes at Valley Medical Center. Next stop?



By Rev. Louann Roberts,
CIC Chaplain

There was a tremendous response to the "Transformation: Art From Within" exhibit in the lobby of the Valley Medical Center on Bascom. Thank you to Valley Medical Center Foundation for allowing us to showcase this inmate community art for three months. We are grateful for Sheriff Laurie Smith's help in connecting us to VMC.

Space does not allow us to tell all of the thanks and comments made about this exhibit at the hospital. One was by an employee from the gift shop. As we were taking down the art she said, "I'm so sad to see this art leaving. It gave so much hope to our patients and their families as they came through the lobby. They were reminded that God is present."

The exhibit is moving on. Stay tuned for its next address.

**HELP
NEEDED**

Volunteers are needed to sort and distribute Bibles and books to units within the jail facilities. Must be able

to lift boxes of books and walk them on carts to buildings at Elmwood.

**For more information contact: Rev. Louann Roberts
(408) 957-5822 or email ccwrev@aol.com**

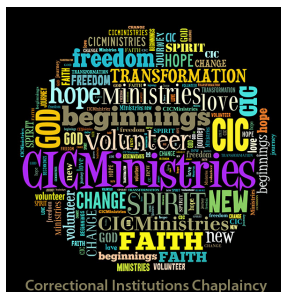
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If you would like us to come speak to your congregation, a Sunday school class or other group, please contact us. We welcome opportunities to talk about the amazing ministries of our chaplains and volunteer chaplains.

Contact: (408) 957-5822 or ccwrev@aol.com

Sincerely,
The Staff and Board
Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy

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