INSTITUTIONAL CHAPLAINCY

A DECADE OF DEVELOPMENT (1960-1971)

1960

On May 1, James C. Peck was added to the staff of the Chaplains Commission as secretary, institutional and industrial chaplaincy, with his work primarily in the field of penal and correctional institutions and industry. Interest in these fields has developed rapidly.

There are 31 Southern Baptist ministers working in the penal and correctional field on the federal and state level with an untold number serving in city and county prisons. There is an urgent need to further develop this field, locating and securing qualified ministers to meet this missionary opportunity.

The industrial chaplaincy is an undeveloped mission field and is our most urgent need. Many workers are not reached by local churches. "Sunday work" is a considerable item in industry. Many employees live in communities which have no churches.

There are 19 Southern Baptist ministers serving as full-time or part-time chaplains in the specialized settings of industry. The Commission reported: "We have a few approved applicants awaiting opportunities for placement." 1

1961

This year the institutional and industrial chaplaincy continued to develop among Southern Baptists on the Convention-wide basis. Some phases of it will likely not make great strides until the seminaries provide more training in these respective fields and institutions and industries come to understand and appreciate the value of the chaplaincy program.
The trend is toward a trained chaplain in his respective field; and due to rising standards, there is an urgent need for qualified applicants.

This year the Chaplains Commission has approved both institutional and industrial chaplains. Several of the approved ministers have been employed by state correctional institutions and others have been nominated to industrial chaplaincy positions.

In cooperation with pastors’ conferences, studies have been made of selected industrial cities with respect to a chaplaincy program. 2

1962

During the year 1961 death claimed two members of the staff of the Chaplains Commission: James C. Peck, secretary, institutional and industrial chaplaincy was killed in an automobile accident on August 12, two miles west of Dallas, Georgia. Mr. Peck had been secretary of this work for over two years and was a pioneer in the industrial chaplaincy field. His outstanding work in this area of the chaplaincy has built a firm foundation for the future. Mr. Peck was buried in Lafayette, Louisiana, the place of his birth.

Death claimed a second member of the staff less than six weeks later when E. L. Ackiss, secretary, Military Personnel Ministries, died of leukemia, on September 17, 1961. Dr. Ackiss has been a Navy chaplain for thirty-three (33) years before coming to this work in 1953. His work for the past eight years in this area was one of outstanding achievement. Dr. Ackiss was a native of Oceana, Virginia, and he was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery on September 22, 1961, with full military honors.

Federal correctional institutions and the majority of the state correctional institutions have full-time chaplaincy coverage. Some state
institutions use local ministers on a rotation basis, as do the county and municipal workhouses and jails. Sometimes these clergy receive remuneration for their services, but in many cases this is a voluntary ministry on the part of the minister.

Some institutions caring for juvenile delinquents have a very effective program, but this is the exception. Southern Baptists have 58 chaplains serving in correctional institutions with numerous programs in operation by local Baptist pastors and churches.

The Southern Baptist minister serving as a chaplain in industry is not an arbitrator to solve labor and management problems. The industrial chaplain’s responsibility is to serve all employees, both labor and management. As a chaplain he remains a man of God and is concerned with the spiritual welfare of each employee. As opportunity avails itself, the chaplain ministers to the families of the employees and bases his ministry on the need of Christ in every life and the importance of Christ’s church in the growth of the Christian personality. He realizes this is an extension of the church’s pastoral ministry to those in industry and he guards against the possibility of establishing a congregation or church outside the framework of the New Testament pattern.

The Chaplains Commission has approved and endorsed institutional and industrial chaplains during the year and some have been employed by correctional institutions and industry.

1963

Chaplain Cecil D. Etheredge came to the position of secretary, institutional and industrial chaplaincy, in September of this year. He is a native of Marengo County, Alabama, a graduate of Howard College, Birmingham, Alabama, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and received his clinical pastoral education at the Baptist Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia. He is an
experienced pastor and served in the Army Air Force for three years.

More than two and one-half million persons comprise the daily population of institutions in the United States....They are young and old and confined to hospitals, correctional, and other institutions. For some the institution is a permanent home. For others it is temporarily "living away from home."

Southern Baptist chaplains are found ministering to these all over our nation. New construction and expansion projects are grim evidence of a relentless need to provide for the spiritual welfare of this institutionalized population.

The industrial chaplain is not new, but a modern application of an old idea. A great portion of Jesus' ministry was spent dealing with people--one by one. This vital aspect of the ministry is now being revived. The industrial chaplaincy is a ministry to one, as though they were many.

More than 400,000 adults and youths are in our correctional institutions annually. An alarming increase is in sight, for crime continues to outpace population growth four to one. Sent to prison for correction, for punishment, 95 percent come out, for the most part within three years for commitment. More inmates are being better equipped for living "on the outside" through the efforts of a treatment team which includes the penal chaplain.

The trained minister-in-correction is leading the inmate to experience the changing power of the Holy Spirit. The prisoner--adult and youth--is being reached for Christ by an increasing number of chaplains.

The institutions and industry gradually are becoming aware of the need for trained qualified chaplains. Our churches and ministers must not overlook the inherent opportunities in the institutional and industrial ministry. We are thankful to have men concerned about this field of the chaplaincy and the chaplain and the opportunity have been brought together in
many instances during the past year. 4 

1964

Thirty million (30,000,000) Americans spend some time in denominational, public, and private institutions each year in our country. No single group receives such inadequate ministry from the church as does this group. There are approximately one thousand two hundred (1,200) full-time chaplains serving twenty-four million Protestants. This means there is one chaplain for every 20,000 persons.

The institutional chaplaincy demands fully qualified men. The Chaplains Commission has long had standards which are thorough and exact for those serving as institutional chaplains.

In addition to this academic training, both college and seminary being required, the chaplain must have a minimum of two years pastoral experience and one year of clinical pastoral education.

The chaplain is identified as a pastor or clergyman rather than as a counselor, therapist or social worker. He is not a substitute for and does not replace the work of the local pastor in his pastoral care visits to the persons of his institution congregation who are in crisis. He represents the extended love and concern of the local church to these persons in special need.

The industrial chaplaincy is revolutionary. Our national economy has moved from the rural-agriculture to the urban-industrial. Many who are caught in the accelerated pace of this new order find little meaning in life. The inner turmoil and confusion is evidenced by vocational discontent, labor turnover, accident proneness, absenteeism, and other such symptoms. A number of companies/highly qualified ministers to serve their people as chaplains. The chaplain works with his people in a "one to one" relationship,
leading them to see the God-givenness of vocation, that work is an expression of one's person, and that work is an expression of worship. Both the words "work" and "worship" are derived from the same Hebrew word **Avodah**. Are not the community at work and the community of worship, one and the same?

Today, there are approximately one hundred Southern Baptist chaplains serving in various institutions and industry on either a part- or a full-time basis.

1965

More than 16 percent of our nation's population spend time in some institution annually: ten (10) percent have some form of mental or emotional illness; 3 percent are mentally retarded; and the federal and state inmate population is nearly a quarter of a million persons.

The nation's economic position has rapidly moved from rural-agricultural to urban-industrial and many persons caught in this transition are confused, tense, insecure, restless and devoid of an adequate goal and purpose in life.

The chaplain represents the call and commission of God as he ministers to men in crisis. He represents the extended love and concern of the church. His ministry tends to facilitate and augment the ministry of the pastor and his congregation.

Visitation has been made to many of the more than 100 industrial and institutional chaplains. These contacts tend to represent the concerns of the denomination to those men but also the needs and concerns of these men to the denomination.

The Chaplains Commission reports: We seek to bring the fully-trained, well-qualified chaplain in contact with the job opportunity. These job opportunities are areas of special need and need ministers who possess the specialized training required in meeting these needs.
It is for this reason that the Chaplains Commission requires, for endorsement to the industrial and institutional ministry, that a candidate must have completed college, seminary, a minimum of two years' pastoral experience, and one year of clinical training.

1966

Baptist chaplains who serve in institutions work in a variety of settings, including adult prisons, youth correctional units, children's homes, military schools, hospitals, schools for mentally retarded, and others. More than 100 Southern Baptist ministers serve in such specialized areas, most often hired and financially supported by the institutions and endorsed by the denomination.

The industrial chaplaincy, presently represented by about a dozen men, includes a ministry to employees, labor, and management. These chaplains recognize they are an extension of the church's pastoral efforts and do not attempt to establish a congregation or church outside the New Testament pattern.

1967

The number of persons who spend some time in an institutional setting seems always to grow larger. This creates the need for a steadily increasing number of chaplains. Presently more than 100 ministers serve as chaplains in institutions for adult and youthful offenders. The Chaplains Commission brings the fully-trained, well-qualified minister into contact with the chaplaincy opportunity. In addition, local churches are encouraged to minister to their people who are institutionalized.

The industrial chaplain’s responsibility is to serve all employees--both labor and management. He is a man of God and is concerned with the
spiritual welfare of both employee and employer. He ministers to families of workmen as well as managers. The chaplain is certain that all men need Christ. 8

1968

Through continuing consultation with seminaries, state and federal agencies, and accreditation authorities, opportunities for employment have been discovered and shared with interested chaplains. Field studies have resulted in the preparation of several significant papers concerned with this work. A study of the chaplaincy needs of the Arkansas prison system was made. A brochure on institutional chaplaincy has been written. Sixteen institutional chaplains were added during the year, and twenty-two (22) volunteer chaplaincy ministries were initiated.

Widespread interest is expressed in the contribution religion is making to business and industry, as evidenced by the increase in industrial chaplains. Ten Southern Baptists are now listed with the Chaplains Commission in this area. A pilot project in Louisville is proving helpful in training seminary students, and in producing research materials. 9

1969

Seven new institutional chaplains were added during the year. The staff leader of this ministry resigned, and a replacement began work the first of 1969. The industrial chaplaincy ministry takes on increasing importance in 1969 for the following reasons: industry is becoming more and more automated; the employment rate is decreasing; leisure time is growing; the educational level of workers increases; and there is decreased interest in the traditional forms of religion. Interest grows and the goal of two new programs was doubled as four were started, and eight students were enlisted in the internship program in Louisville. The story of the
industrial chaplain was told more and more through newspapers, magazines, and exhibits.

1970

There are 61 Southern Baptist ministers serving in the institutional chaplaincy, ten of whom filled new positions during the past year.

There are sixteen Southern Baptist ministers serving in the industrial chaplaincy, six of whom filled new positions during the past year. A booklet entitled, "Business and Industrial Chaplaincy," has received wide acceptance and is being distributed nation-wide.

Of special interest is a working relationship that has developed with a group in San Diego known as "Industrial Chaplaincy, Incorporated," which has been formed for the purpose of research and promotion of industrial chaplaincy. In cooperation with this group a seminar was conducted in January, 1970, with three Southern Baptist industrial chaplains participating.

1971

Eleven institutional chaplains were employed during the year, and there are now eighty-four Southern Baptist ministers serving as institutional enforcement chaplains. There has been an encouraging response from law/officials toward the chaplaincy, and several chaplains, many volunteers, are serving in this area.

Three industrial chaplaincy positions were filled during the year, bringing to twenty the number of Southern Baptists serving in this field. Plans to establish a National Business and Industrial Chaplains Association are under consideration in California. Standards and qualifications for membership have been worked out. Progress is indicated in starting ministries in the horse-racing industry of Florida, and a large construction company in the state employed a chaplain.
Contacts in Alaska may open opportunities for ministry to men employed by oil companies. Crews working on the North Slope need a ministry, together with employees of established companies.

MINISTERING TO PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

A book by this title was written by George C. Kandle and Henry H. Cassler in 1968 (Prentice-Hall, Inc. Engelwood Cliffs, N. J. $3.95.)

The authors point out that nearly 5,000,000 persons a year become entangled in one of society's most complicated processes of social order—the courts of criminal law.

Who are these prisoners who go behind high walls into near oblivion? What are they like? Kandle and Cassler suggest they possess ten traits:

1. They powerfully resent authority. They utter such diatribes as: "You can't hurt me, you dirty, lousy cop." "You are little tin gods and I'm not afraid of you."

2. They have a distorted need for attention. One prisoner wore $200 suits. Another sent himself impressive telegrams.

3. They do not know whether they are men or boys. They are uncertain of their manhood.

4. They are still looking for the rainbow. They often say: "This was my last job....I was quitting the racket right after this job...."

5. They are prone to failure; they think of it as a "way of life."

6. Many possess an inner emptiness; they are suffering from an illness known as "character disorder."

7. Violence. Most men in prison live with memories of violence—done to them or done by them, or both.

8. Fear of people. If they experience extreme rejection from one or both of their parents, they learn early to distrust everyone.

9. Guilt. Some men are plagued with guilt; they cry out to be punished.

10. Desperate need of structure. Some men are happier in prison than in the free world. They are insulated from responsibility. One said: "When they lock the door, they're not locking me in; they're locking the world out."
The pastor and the prisoners. The pastor, or chaplain, represents the church as it reaches over the wall into the life of an inmate.

The chaplains were often the only professional persons in the prisons. They served as legal advisors, athletic directors, marital counselors, release planners, educators, as well as leaders of worship.

The chaplain's role is as follows:

1. He is a minister to his congregation. He conducts worship; he visits the sick; he counsels the distressed. At times he will minister to prison officials as well as to the prisoners.

2. He is a member of the penal institution staff.

3. He is liaison between the prison community and the church.

4. His is a teaching ministry.

5. He has a counseling ministry.

6. He visits the men in prison. "A chaplain needs to see the men where they are so that he knows how they are living."

At this point, there are approximately 250 chaplains now working in state and federal prisons.

The standards for chaplains are:

1. College and theological training.

2. Ordination in a recognized denomination.

3. Approved in good standing in one's own denomination.

4. Experience as pastor in a local church (from 2 to 5 years).

5. Clinical pastoral education (2 quarters or more).

6. Nomination by a representative personnel committee--of local or state or National Council of Churches.

7. Approval of officials (warden, superintendent, commissioner) of penal institution.

The hard road to freedom. Each year over 100,000 adults and 27,000
youths make a precarious move from state and federal correctional institutions to the "free world."

The releasee faces the world with a suit of clothes, a $20 bill (the amount varies) and a bus or train ticket home.

Some two out of three releasees are on parole. Questions which should be asked. Will he go home to a family? What kind? Does he have any savings? What kind of job will he have? Where will he live when he gets out? Does he have any friends?

The first year out of prison is the most crucial period. What may the pastor (chaplain) do to assist the releasee during these difficult days?

Suggestions:

1. Meet him at the prison or the train or bus depot. Take the first step toward him.

2. Make specific appointments for him to come to your office.

3. Talk with him honestly and openly about ways he can restrain his fears.

4. Discuss participation in groups with him.

5. Ask for some help from him.

LINK TO THE WORLD OF FAITH

Mark Shedron reported in 1959 that the largest group of people in this country not yet served adequately by the church are the 30,000,000 residents of public and private institutions (such as youth correctional units, penitentiaries, hospitals for narcotic users, and the like).

The Protestant portion of this group is 24,000,000. They are served by 1,500 chaplains or one clergyman to every 16,000 law violators. He is pastor or clergyman rather than counselor. He is not a substitute for the parish pastor, not a clergyman visiting on a part-time basis.

He has a staff relationship; the days of the freelance chaplain is about over. "The chaplain becomes a part of an institutional team which
ministers to the whole man." As a team he works with men of other disciplines such as medicine, psychiatry, psychology, social work, penology and the law.

The chaplain is expected to learn from specialists in other disciplines ways to make his own contribution more meaningful to the inmate group. The particular contribution of the chaplain to an individual may be in terms of religious education, counseling, visitation, and worship.

To the group within the institution, his contribution may be as leader, teacher, symbol of the religious community--always as a witness of the Good News.

The chaplain is a tangible link to the world of faith, of good will, and of the love of God.

People under stress make many extreme demands upon an institutional staff. The chaplain gets his share of these requests for attention, understanding, love, guidance, assistance, time, wisdom, concentrated concern, continuous planning and effort.

The chaplain as a pastor fulfills the meaning of the shepherding idea. The denomination is remembered as the organization which gives the chaplain his ecclesiastical standing. "The clinical training requirement for chaplains has been developed out of the need to provide pastors with an understanding of people in crisis."

In an address delivered before the General Board of the National Council of Churches at Hotel Statler, Detroit, Michigan, on December 3, 1959, Warden Robert J. Wright expressed appreciation for the help the churches had given in securing chaplains:

Back in the days of the late Dr. Worth Tippy, we asked the Federal Council of Churches to be of assistance in recruiting clergymen to become chaplains as our Federal prisons. This was in 1934.

Mark Shedron of the Department of Pastoral Services of the NCC resigned
this position to become himself the chaplain of the Federal Reformatory in El Reno, Oklahoma. Over the years he had learned the vocabulary used by inmates; e.g.

Love = to assault someone sexually.

Sin = the world in which you get caught -- getting "the finger" put on you. If you can get along without being caught there is no sin.

Hell = To be under someone else's heel; being controlled by someone else. The moment you lose control and are under the domination of another, that is hell.

Forgiveness = To be weak. Someone else has the power. You see a guy who is a "repentant" and you can do nothing but capitulate and you ask for forgiveness but then you are weak.

Heaven = To have ultimate control; you are the boss.

Salvation = To get into a position where you are allied with power. You are in that area where you become God.

Clergy = Specialist in "conning." Real conn artists. They have a pipeline to God.

We must see where the delinquent is, his world. Institutional care may not be the best; but it may help for a brief period of time. The chaplain is a member of a treatment team; he does not work alone. We were born to love people and use things; but too often we've messed up this formula. 14

WHY MEN COME TO PRISON: FOUR REASONS

So writes C. M. Johnston, Protestant Chaplain, Huntsville State Prison, Huntsville, Texas.

They answer: "I was drinking," or "I was framed," or "My family was hungry and I was out of work."

But the real truth: many are confused as to why they are here.

1. Because they are immature. Like little children, they must have attention, support, and constant supervision. Some seek first place in
their leader's heart. They wander aimlessly, forgetting what they're supposed to be doing.

2. Because they are inadequate. Their IQ may be extremely low. Inadequacy may lie in the vocational training field. Or the inadequacy may manifest itself in the absence of social training, lack of parental love, or a host of other things that normal adequate people have...

3. Because they are immoral. This may be due to psychopathology. They may never have felt or learned tenderness due to their stormy childhood and subsequent life. Many do not have "built-in-brakes"; they may have a "diseased conscience."

4. Because God has not been adequately lived before them. Nor has he been taught them, nor worshiped by them. "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is told he will depart from it." Their training is in living before them in the right way more than it is telling them the right way.

The cure from the crime increase in our day is a return to God and a proper restoration of adequate family life. Parents must teach their children to become responsible, creative, Christian citizens of earth and heaven by precept and example.

AND YOU VISITED ME

Alfred C. Hart writes: "There are between 300,000 and 400,000 Americans in correctional institutions on any given day during a year. It is estimated that two million persons are locked up each year in either a jail, police station or institution for juveniles. A recent report indicated that while the population is increasing annually by about 13 percent, crime is increasing by 131 percent. Crime has become, if not the first certainly the second major social problem in the United States today.

"While it has become a major social problem, it has also provided many
opportunities for correctional chaplaincy...

"Some 110 Southern Baptist chaplains now serve in correctional institutions. This is a 40 percent increase over the past ten years."

Today there is a widespread interest in prison reform. The chaplain seeks through his program to stimulate hope. Thus his role has come to the forefront. There is a demand for correctional chaplains. There is a call for ministers who are willing to hide behind prison walls rather than be in the spotlight as pastor. He seeks no easy task but he is a person who has a strong faith and is not afraid of its being tested. Moreover, he is one who feels that regeneration is the very foundation of rehabilitation.

Some chaplains have felt this call because it offers a certain amount of freedom—from the established church and its problems; yet some are challenged by people with problems and seek to satisfy this challenge by ministering in a correctional setting.

Many changes have come about in the correctional chaplaincy during the past ten years. Then prison chaplains were usually retired pastors, political appointees or freelance ministers with several responsibilities not related to their position.

Today it is quite different. Now a correctional chaplain must have special training in clinical pastoral education and denominational endorsement before he can secure a position as a correctional chaplain. It is understood that he is part of the treatment team which seeks to minister to the whole man.

To be sure, the correctional chaplain faces many heartaches; e.g. the return of a releasee to prison. Also the failure of the churches and communities to accept or help the released offender.

The chaplain has many opportunities to minister. For every inmate there
are many problems so the chaplain seeks through individual and group counseling to help those who need him.... For one thing the chaplain ministers through a well-planned, well-prepared, and well-prayed worship service. Moreover, the chaplain's ministry includes that of ministering to families of inmates....

A ministry to the staff of the correctional institution is expected of the chaplain. Some staff members look to him as their pastor. Others refer fellow staff members to the chaplain for counseling.... The chaplain also has a responsibility to share with churches, civic groups, schools, and other groups in the community the role of the correctional chaplain....

The division of the chaplaincy of the Home Mission Board promotes correctional chaplaincy by encouraging state directors of corrections, wardens of prisons, superintendent of schools for delinquents and other such correctional leaders to see the need of a chaplain on the correctional team. Also it provides conferences, workshops, an orientation program, and financial assistance to attend such in order that the chaplain might be updated and encouraged in his ministry.

One of the greatest needs in correctional chaplaincy is found in the local city and county jail. Thousands of individuals pass through the local jails each year awaiting trial and serving short sentences. These individuals are potentials for the penitentiaries and reform schools. They need more than a Sunday school lesson or sermon on Sunday morning. They need a friend, someone who has the time and patience to help, someone who will contact their family, attorney, pastor, employer, or other individual who can help him work through his problem.

A volunteer chaplaincy program should be set up in every city and county jail in our land that does not already have chaplaincy service. (See chapter on "Hospital Chaplaincy."
Every church should have a committee which ministers to offenders because sooner or later every church will have someone or the family of someone in trouble.

This committee can work with released inmates. Someone has said the most crucial time for a released inmate is the first 72 hours after he is released. This is true for several reasons:

1. He will be adjusting from a life of bondage to one of freedom.
2. He will need clothing, housing, food, and employment; and
3. He will need someone who will accept him and care for his well-being.

A high caliber program of rehabilitation within the walls of a correctional institution is of little value if that same concern and interest is not awaiting him on the outside. The task of rehabilitation is the responsibility of the total community....

The church must accept its obligation and come to the rescue of those released from correctional institutions. Two booklets prepared by the Woman's Missionary Union and Baptist Brotherhood are useful:

"Mission Action Group Guide: Prison Rehabilitation" ($1.00 Baptist Bookstore)

"Mission Action Group Guide: Juvenile Rehabilitation" (same as above)

Several Southern Baptist chaplains supervise training programs: e.g., Chaplain Clyde M. Johnson at Huntsville, Texas; Chaplain Adlai L. Lucas at Columbia, South Carolina.

Many chaplains are trying new approaches and methods in their ministry: Chaplain Harold Brown, Bushnell, Florida; Chaplain Leonard R. Perry, Alto, Georgia; Chaplain Grady Criswell, Springer, New Mexico; Chaplain Sander Cakebread, Birmingham, Alabama; Chaplain Hyron Vickers, Richmond, Texas; Chaplain Douglas Dexter, Parchman, Mississippi; Chaplain Huey Perry, Lowell, Florida; Chaplain Joe Wilson, Angola, Louisiana; Chaplain Carl Price, State Prison, Nashville, Tennessee.
Fifty-two Southern Baptist correctional chaplains belong to The American Protestant Correctional Chaplains' Association. Chaplain Jack A. Hanberry, at the Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, is president of this association. He is a Southern Baptist.

THE GOSPEL GOES TO JAIL

Here is a beautiful story of how an anonymous prisoner found his way to Christ and how this conversion changed his life.

I am a prison chaplain's clerk. My prison life did not begin as a clerk, but as an inmate with a number, sentenced to 15 years. The dread of prison and the uncertainty of tomorrow filled me as the gate changed shut behind me.

I was greeted by a member of Chaplain Charles L. Phipps' office. He spoke reassuringly. This was comforting and gave me strength that I needed. It was also a pleasant surprise. About three weeks later I was assigned to the same position, clerk to the chaplain of the Reception, Diagnostic, and Classification Center of Florida State Prison at Raiford. Now I have the privilege of doing the same thing for other men.

I am a happy convict; my work of interviewing each inmate upon his arrival is a joy, giving me an opportunity to explain the program of the chaplain's office, the religious activities of the various denominations, and above all, to witness personally for Christ. Chaplain Phipps, with spiritual wisdom as friend, pastor, counselor, gives much of himself to assist each inmate with personal problems and morale building.

Each man has a story. Mine begins in December, 1959. I was arrested and charged with three violations of the law; namely, assault with intent to commit murder in the first degree, illegal possession of firearms, and forgery. My bond was set at $9,000.00, and shortly thereafter I was released from custody on bail.

In March, 1960, I was tried on the assault charge in Hillsborough County Criminal Court. After a two-day jury trial, I was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years in the state prison. My attorney filed an appeal, and the court set bond at $5,000.00. Unable to raise this sum, I was remanded to the Hillsborough County Jail where, for 25 days I tortured myself with thoughts of hate and revenge. My only wish was to get free and finish what I had started—to completely destroy the man whose life, according to my accusers, I had originally tried to take. I had lost all hope of being freed and sank deeper and deeper into depths of despair.

On Wednesday morning, deciding there was no hope left, I smuggled
out a note to my wife asking her to contact the minister of the church
my son-in-law attended, and have him bring her to the jail Thursday
morning between 9:30 and 10:00. I did not know the man, but I felt
I could use him to see my wife for an unauthorized visit. I wished
to give her some instructions before I was transferred to the state
prison.

Later that same morning I received the allowed six-minute visit with
my wife, but, in the rush, I neglected to mention the note.

My wife, a devout Christian, has brought me a Bible. Purely out of
boredom I accepted it, and took it back to my cell. That evening,
for the lack of something else to do, I glanced through this Bible.
One verse virtually leaped out at me—Matthew 21:22: “And all things
whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” With this
thought in mind I fell asleep, and some time during the night I
made my peace with God. When I awoke Thursday a great change had
taken place. No hate or bitterness was in me, just peace; and though
certainly not free from punishment, I felt wonderfully free from
guilt.

At 9:45 A.M. I was informed that I had a visitor. Downstairs I found
the minister I had asked my wife to call—a man whom I had never met
but planned to use. Dumbfounded, I heard him inquire about my
physical and emotional well-being. I recovered sufficiently to tell
him that during the night I had made peace with God. With this he
prayed, then soon left me.

Friday afternoon at 4:56, I was again taken downstairs, but this time
to be released on bond. Much to my amazement, the man who arranged
my bail had every reason to want me left in jail. A member of the
minister's church, he had been the victim of forgery for which I had
been charged. Although I was proved completely innocent of this act,
he had no way of knowing it at that time. Extremely grateful, I
was taken by the man to my home. I was greeted much in the manner
of the prodigal son, and we sat down to a meal of Thanksgiving for
my return.

Sunday, I attended the Baptist church with my family where I made a
public profession of faith.

Looking back, so much impressed me that I can only be humbly grateful
to all the wonderful people who contributed so much. To the preacher—
a true minister of God; to my daughter and her husband who had asked
the church to pray for me many months before; to the man whose
Christianity was honestly and whole-heartedly practiced; to all the
church members who prayed, hoped, and believed. Most of all, to my
wife. Her devotion and prayer in the face of drunkenness, temper,
abandonment in her hours of need, even to the point of leaving her
alone while her father, a lifelong Christian, was dying, have been
an unfailing source of strength and inspiration. Above all, I thank God, for without his divine help and guidance, leading me to Christ, I would still be living in the dark recesses of my former self.

Even now, as I satisfy the justice of man, one thought remains uppermost in my mind. Without the help and prayers of others, I might still be lost. I say in all sincerity to wives, mothers, children, to everyone, "Cease not to pray for those you love, for this may be the source of their salvation."

Today as an inmate in state prison, I am endeavoring to serve my Lord. As the new men come in, I will remember how I felt and try to be kind and understanding, as well as remind myself that those who come to prison have varied problems and many backgrounds. Some have had training and experience in Christianity, many have not. There will be opportunities to show them what Christ has done for me, and what he will do for them. Being in prison, I will visit them for him.