

# INSIDE VIEW

CIC Ministries  
"...when in  
prison, you  
visited me..."  
Matthew 25:36  
Summer 2008

Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy of Santa Clara County, Inc

## Catching glimpses of the Kingdom

BY BRUCE FIESEN  
CIC BOARD MEMBER

It has been nine years now since I entered into full time work with the church. It has been filled with extreme challenges and rewards beyond measure. I want to share three short experiences with you.

About eight years ago while was serving at Trinity Cathedral in downtown San Jose as a Eucharistic Minister, we had a man who faithfully attended our noontime mass. Upon entering the Cathedral he would immediately drop to his knees and would remain on his knees until the service was over.

Odd, I thought to myself, how very odd.

As I would prepare to serve him the cup he would seem to almost tremble but as soon as the wine would touch his lips there was a presence so very strong, so real, and right in front of me. This man looked as though he were looking into the eyes of the Savior.

I would feel so special at those times being able to share this private moment with him and our God.

I was part of a team delivering Eucharist for Easter in the Main Jail. We had already covered several floors and I was becoming somewhat tired, and could think of a million things that I would rather be doing.

We entered our last floor, where, for many reasons, we could not do group services. We usually go door to door offering a prayer, blessing, and Eucharist if they so desired.

I came to my last cell and taped on the door and said, "Chaplain", no response. Just then the officer called out to me saying, "He only speaks Chinese." Hmm, good. Then I'm done and can go home.

Something inside of me told me to hold the bread up to the window and I did. As soon as the man inside saw the Eucharistic wafer he dropped to his knees and made the sign of the cross. I was stunned and become filled with emotion.

As I handed him the broken body of Christ, shed that he might have eternal life through the slot in his cell door tears were streaming down his face. My only form of com-



**An inmate drew this picture to show how his mind changed before he found Jesus and afterward, (left to right).**

munication was a Eucharistic wafer representing the body of Christ. At that point it was as if we had been surrounded by the Heavenly Host.

This past Thanksgiving was a time in my personal family life that was filled with a consuming crisis causing me to wonder and question so many things? Why me, what had I done to deserve this? God, I am always in Church and doing your work. Sure, sometimes I mess up but nothing to deserve this. Jokingly I asked God if he had confused me with Job. I kept hearing, "be still, be still."

As this crisis continued it was necessary for me to back out of some of my responsibilities so that I could devote more time to my family. For a few weeks I was unable to help with the Bible study on 8A and make the visits in the Main Jail. This was a very hard time for me, being tested in so many ways.

My first Wednesday back the passage the Evelyn had

Please see GLIMPSES, Page 2

# Jail ministry stretches former concept of grace

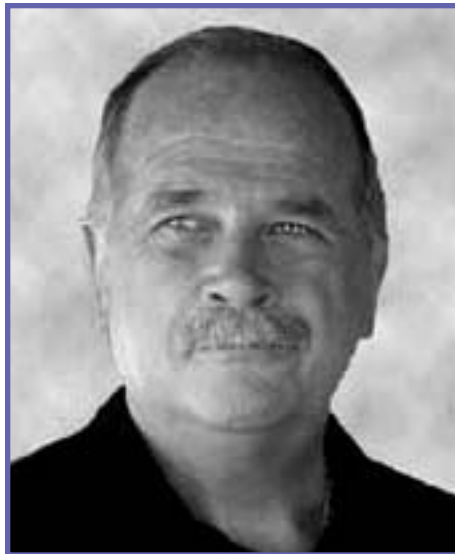
Pastor Wayne Evans has been ministering to men in jail for 18 years because he knows that this is what he is called to do.

"I derive pleasure from it. I enjoy interviewing inmates, and it stretches me more than any of the ministries I'm involved in," Evans said, recalling a time in seminary when he had toured a prison. That's when he realized that he "could tune out the surroundings and focus on talking to the guys."

He enjoys working in the jail "because it puts you in touch with people who have real deep scarring and bruises from life," and these folks, in turn, are "really hungry and welcoming of someone who will talk to them of God."

Sometimes it takes effort "to see God at work in comfortable people," he said, but in jail, there's another measure at work. "It stretches our concept of what grace is. The kingdom of God is not restricted to a local church."

"It has broadened my perspective of what compassion covers," he said.



**The Rev. Wayne Evans**

"if you feel compassion for somebody, that compassion comes first from God and is being funneled through you."

Evans has found himself becoming more compassionate now that he has been exposed to "a greater variety and depth of hurt."

Lately he has been exposed to more of it as he has filled in for chaplains in their absence and has had "a

chance to engage in reflection with peers that I haven't had a chance to do before."

As he started to volunteer more hours to his ministry behind bars, he found that he doesn't have a favorite place to work, but he does prefer the older section Main Jail, the south, become "fewer people go there and the need is greater and deeper."

On the other hand, he also liked working with the women at the women's jail in Milpitas, although "I wasn't quite prepared for the emotion I got over there."

Once he realized how much the women worried about their children, he understood the depths of their pain better. "There's something about a mother being torn from her children...."

He also was taken aback by the violence so many of the women had encountered in their lives. He recalls a woman in her 60s "who had one eye rolling crazy in her head because her husband beat her 30 years ago."

Men, on the other hand, often wear their scars as badges of honor. "It's their way of navigating through this world," he said.

Still, "When you see hurt that is so blatantly on the surface and you become aware of it, you are more aware of it in other people who are maybe better at hiding it."

Spending years behind bars with men and women who need to hear of God's grace has changed Evans.

"It's made me question everything I do," he said. "I'm not quite as glib as I used to be. I engage more often in self-reflection. I'm asking myself questions - 'What am I going to do with this guy the next time?'"

The same with a man he is seeing for the first time. Evans listens closely to what is troubling the man and then works to help the man listen for God

## GLIMPSES, from the cover

chosen was the parable of the lost sheep. Sitting around the table with those men singing the simple hymns of the faith and listening to that passage in Matthew was healing for me. Up in that room in 8A I asked God how much he loved me and through this Bible study I received his answer from His Son. "I opened my arms and died on a cross in order that you might be saved." Humbled and filled with emotion I went on to do my one on one visits. I started my sessions with those who had requested a visit some new to me and some old. As I listened to their stories about what they were so thankful to God for over the Christmas season, I realized how very much I have to be thankful for.

It never ceases to amaze me how I get so caught up in the things that don't allow me to see, feel, and hear God speaking to me. All I need to do is be still and listen and then He will come.

There are many ways to do this: Some people use contemplative prayer, a quiet walk, a place of worship, a great Cathedral and so on. For me and my walk with Christ, it will never be the same because of the time that I have spent in one of the greatest Cathedrals that I have ever visited, the Santa Clara County Main Jail. I have not entered once where I have not felt the presence of God touching me, holding me and showing me the arms of His Son stretched out for me in love.

# There is always room at the banquet

BY THE REV. PEGGY BINGHAM  
JUVENILE CHAPLAIN

For many young people away from their families while incarcerated, birthdays can be very depressing. These days make a kid feel isolated and lonely but also provoke deep contemplation about the direction of their lives.

"I can't believe that I'm spending another birthday locked up," I've heard many young people say. "I've got to figure out a way to get out of here and never come back."

Sofia is a girl whose entire life has been a struggle. Abused at a young age and mentally ill, Sofia sought protection and love from one of the gangs in our community. At age 13, she suffered a serious injury from a gang fight and is brain damaged.

In and out of Juvenile Hall since the age of 12, birthdays haven't been much of a celebration. Recently Sofia's heart sank when she was sentenced to get out of jail a week after her 18th birthday. What she didn't realize was that her mom had been saving money for months to buy pizza, soda and cake for all the girls in the lockdown unit of Juvenile Hall. Even more surprising was that the supervisor had given authorization for such a dinner to take place. Sofia was the guest of honor and I was lucky enough to be invited.

As I walked into the unit that evening, the air was ripe with anticipation. The birthday girl was so excited that she couldn't sit still. "It's my birthday," Sofia repeated over and over again. "We're g

One by one each of the young girls was called out of her cell and given a seat at a long banquet table set up in the middle of the room. "It's been a

long time since I've had pizza," I heard one of the girls say. "I know...I can't wait!" another girl added.

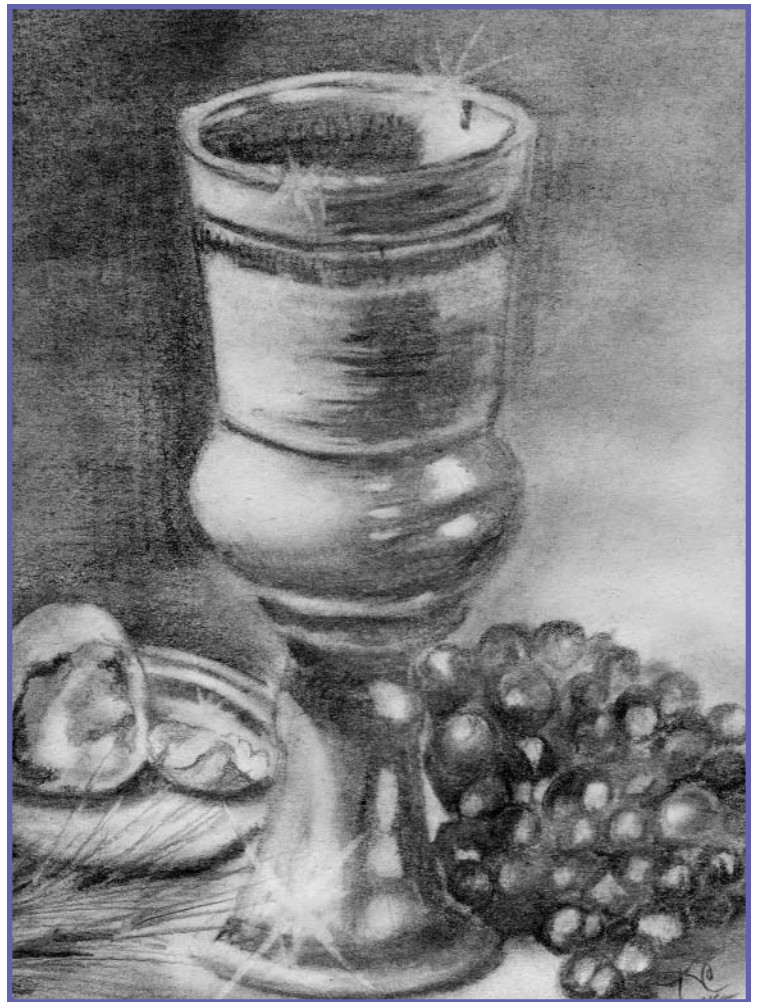
Sophia welcomed each girl as she sat down and they, in turn, wished her a Happy Birthday.

A girl named Rebecca walked over and was visibly upset. She had a scowl on her face and it was obvious that she had been having a very difficult day. As she began to argue with the staff, Sofia whispered in her ear. "It's going to be okay, Rebecca," she said. "Come sit down. Have some pizza. You'll feel better."

Sofia smiled at her, and the girl reluctantly joined the others at the table. As she drank her soda in silence, she began to calm down. Sofia turned to her guests and thanked them individually for their support and friendship.

After I prayed for the meal, upbeat music played in the background and we began to eat. Some girls were quiet but seemed to be enjoying this special treat. Others chatted with looks of contentment on their faces as they ate their food and sang along with the music. A few girls stood up to tell everyone what they appreciated about Sofia.

"You've always been there for me," one girl said. "You light up any room that you enter," said another.



**The banquet table is ready.**

Sofia told a few jokes and teenage laughter rang throughout the unit.

For a few moments, these girls were able to transcend their environment. For a brief time, they weren't in jail.

They were at a Birthday Party. Peace rather than tension filled the room. Love rather than hate won the day.

In these beautiful moments, the girls didn't see each other as rival gang members, as co-partners or as criminals.

We were all welcome guests at a banquet. We were sisters and friends.

*"He brought me to his banquet table," the scriptures say. "And his banner over me is love."*

### CIC led to call additional Chaplain

We need your help to fund the expansion of our ministry. Through the Grace of God our volunteer chaplains and staff chaplains have been reaching out to more and more people. Youth and adult prisoners are responding to the call of faith in greater numbers than we have seen.

The needs of many of these individuals are also significantly increased due to social-service cutbacks in our community. We are seeing more vulnerable individuals who often require the specialized ministry that only our staff chaplains can provide. Some of the people are in the psychiatric or medical hospital units or in maximum security.

We are very thankful the number and expertise levels of our volunteers are growing. Their ministry is progressing so well that the youth and adult prisoners are asking for more and more teaching, counseling and prayer time. This is very important.

We do not wish to neglect anyone who is reaching out for the Lord. So we are being led to call another staff chaplain to help with the training of our volunteer chaplains, to reach out to our congregations and to be available to the prisoners who are in greatest need.

We need your prayers as we interview candidates and your financial contributions to answer the Call of our Lord to some of the least of our brothers and sisters. Thank you for your devotion to this Call -- and your dedication to serving with CIC.

# Women tell how Bible studies help them while in jail

Members of Vineyard-Palo Alto offer a Bible study once a week at the Elmwood Jail in Milpitas, and they conducted a short survey to find out what the women thought of the Bible study and what they get from attending worship and study.

Following are some of the comments from women incarcerated at CCW:

*\* It makes a lot of difference because it's God's followers, who share with us the Word, that kept me from seriously losing my mind. God bless them. - D*

*\* When you come to jail reality hits. You are all alone with no comfort in this place you realize you need God. With the love and prayer you can find a comforter in Jesus you can come to believe God might and could really love someone like me and if this were true I can change if I hold on to him. -- A*

Please see WOMEN, Back Page

### GRACE, from Page 2

in his life.

"What am I going to leave with the guy to help him process what he has to process?" he said. After all these years, "I find I'm a lot less willing to jump in and say something for the sake of fixing somebody. ... It's like I have to hear more before I am willing to say something.. I'm trying to ask questions to get behind what is troubling the person. It's more important what I allow to be said than what I say."

It's important, he said, "to represent Christ to them as honestly and openly as I can, to create a forum for them to explore their relationship with God."

For example, he tells the story of a recent meeting with a man at Main

Jail who needed to hear of God's love.

This man "was despondent and had often contemplated suicide," and the man had no relatives nearby and had come to jail as an indigent. The man faces a possible sentence of 15 years to life.

"With tears on his face, he told me his greatest fear was that God so disliked him because of what he had done that God would never come near him again. He was full of shame, remorse and self-loathing," Evans said. "Yet he was also hungry for God, for God's redemption and for God's love - but he despaired of ever 'qualifying' to receive it.

"I shared the story of the Prodigal Son with him, a story he had never heard before and one which opened his eyes to the scope of God's love

and grace. He received the news of this new understanding with tears but the tears had changed from tears of despair to tears of joy" Evans said. "Understanding that God loves him - and has always loved him - has given him new hope, regardless of how his case goes."

### CIC Wish List

CIC chaplains request Spanish Bibles and literature, concordances, books on overcoming addictions or anger, and banners for the chapel.

The women's chapel would benefit from a standing cross as well.

Thank you for considering us.

# The power of believing -- for others

**BY THE REV. LOUANN ROBERTS  
CCW CHAPLAIN**

The young man before me this morning, 17 years old, let's call him Anthony, was trying very hard to not cry.

He had been in Juv'y before but while he was out this last time, he had tried really hard not to return.

He has two little brothers and a little sister. His mother is a single mom. He said he has a very low IQ but seemed to be starting to understand his studies at the alternative high school probation recommended for him.

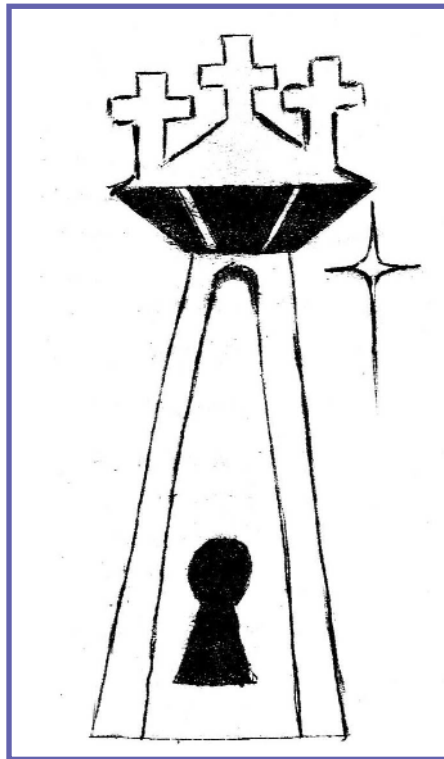
He said his mom is a Christian who worked very hard at her job. Then his mom lost her job. They prayed for God to send help.

He explained his frustration at being in school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and then having to be home by 8 p.m., his probation curfew. There was no time for a job, even if he could get the work permit required by his school and probation.

His mother was going to churches to get food for his family and didn't know how they could afford rent. He couldn't stand it.

He said, "If God doesn't care, then I'll have to take care of things myself!" So he went to his home-boy, where he knew he could get money fast and quite a bit of it. A day later, he and his little brother were pulled over with drugs in the car. So...here he is, and his little brother is in a unit down the hall.

He is laden with a truckload of guilt. His mother had come to visit him once but he told her not to worry about him, he could take care of himself. "She just needs to



**Jesus is the key.**

care for the little ones," he said. He hasn't heard from her since. That was two months ago.

He explained how dumb he thinks he is, how he probably doesn't have the smarts to graduate high school, even as hard as he has tried, that he'll probably just keep going and if he ends up in prison, that will be further proof that God doesn't care.

"God doesn't care, so I'm just going to be myself and be as mean as I want," he said. "If God wants me he'll have to do something drastic."

I told him that I understood why he was so frustrated, angry and why he felt so alone but that he really didn't seem to be a mean type of guy. His eyes welled up with tears but he blinked them back.

Who of us wouldn't wonder if

God had abandoned us in such desperate times? I told him that sometimes when we don't have the faith to see anything good in us, we need someone else to believe for us.

Since he didn't have much faith that God cared, I told him I would believe for him. God created him, maybe he wasn't a super student, or have a lot of money or self-confidence, but that he was a special person even so, with unique gifts and talents.

He shared that he was an artist. He loved to draw. I gave him a project - draw Jesus on the cross - Jesus suffering from Anthony's unique perspective. No one else will have Anthony's unique perspective on the suffering of Jesus. I believe for Anthony that God is going to work in his life, through his gift of drawing.

God is going to give Anthony faith in himself again. When Anthony can begin to see that he has a redeemable quality - he will see God.

## Travel tips

I try to remain optimistic. You know, when a car is traveling in pitch black, it can go from California to New York when the headlights shine ahead two or three hundred feet, and then another few hundred feet. .So it is with life - if you can always always see two or three hundred feet ahead, and thereafter you can see another two or three hundred feet, you can reach any destination or goal you set yourself.

**-- Bruce Cann  
CIC Volunteer**

## CIC MINISTRIES

Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy of Santa Clara County, Inc.  
P.O. Box 360068  
Milpitas, CA 95036-0068

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### WOMEN, from Page 4

*\* It helps me get through each day. I have never been in jail before and when I found out that church was offered I felt relieved. Knowing that I could spend part of my day on Sunday feeling OK. - K*

*\* When church comes in it just reminds me of God's grace and love for me that I frequently forget through out the week. I also*

*get a chance to truly worship and praise God for all the good, even in a place so bad. Fills my heart! Thank you. - M*

*\* It makes a big difference because most people treat you like you are beneath them because you are in jail. It is refreshing to have constant reminders that God is always there for you, loving you even as you are in jail. -- A*

## Volunteer with CIC Ministries

The next training session for current and potential volunteers will be held on **Sunday, June 29, at 1:30 p.m.** at St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Saratoga.

Current volunteers are required to attend a yearly training session to keep their clearance current.

New volunteers are encouraged to attend to find out what is needed to teach Bible studies, lead worship or offer one-on-one pastoral care to the men, women and children behind bars in Santa Clara County.

For more information, please call or access our website.

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### CHAPLAINCY STAFF

**Rev. David Robinson** - Executive Director, Elmwood Men's Facility  
(408) 957-5853  
email: cicdirectr@aol.com

**Rev. Evelyn Vigil** - Main Jail  
(408) 299-2309  
email: mainjailrev@aol.com

**Rev. Louann Roberts** - Elmwood Women's Facility  
(408) 957-5822  
email: CCWRev@aol.com

**Rev. Peggy Bingham** -- Juvenile Hall  
(408) 278-5868  
email: Juvchaplain@aol.com

**Website: [www.cicministries.org](http://www.cicministries.org)**