

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**The Pandemic's Impact on the Efficacy of Chaplaincy at the Baldwin State Prison**

Submitted to Professor Dr. Scott Edgar, Ph.D., D. Min

In fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of  
the Doctor of Ministry Degree

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

John Gomez

April 12, 2022

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Abstract

### THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON THE EFFICACY OF CHAPLAINCY AT THE BALDWIN STATE PRISON

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Chaplains usually provide pastoral care for inmates, staff members, and counseling for offenders and offenders' families. Due to the pandemic, they have not provided adequate pastoral care and counseling in their respective facilities. The restrictions imposed by the pandemic have negatively impacted the chaplain's ability to adequately provide pastoral care and counseling in most federal and state correctional institutions. The Department of Georgia Correctional facilities, particularly at the Baldwin State prison, has also experienced this decrease in pastoral care and counseling due to the pandemic. In the Georgia Department of Corrections, all visitations, including lawyers and clergy, have been suspended since March 2020. Due to these restrictions, the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison in Georgia cannot coordinate the various religious services representing the different religious groups housed in the facility. Secondly, the facility has seven dormitories that house one hundred and seven inmates (107) per dormitory, and the COVID-19 virus can spread exponentially due to this overcrowded condition. The pandemic has severely hindered the Baldwin State prison's chaplain's ability to provide this critical pastoral care and counseling for staff members and offenders. This body of research implications is discussed: the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and the overcrowded conditions at this facility have impeded the Baldwin State chaplain's ability to

adequately provide the pastoral care and counseling required for this facility during the COVID-19 pandemic. This lack of pastoral care and counseling results in morale issues and increased mental health challenges throughout the facility.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this doctoral study to the loving memory of my friend and mentor, the late Reverend Michael Parsons. Reverend Michael Parsons introduced me to prison ministry in 2000 and was instrumental in providing me with a vision for prison ministry. Thank you, Michael, for consistently demonstrating the love of God to the offenders that we ministered to collectively throughout the years. My friend, this doctoral study is the fruit of your labor of love. May your reward in heaven be abundant for all the peace, solace, mercy, and grace you provided to these precious souls incarcerated in Georgia's Department of Corrections for over two decades and to me.

To my incredible wife, you are my rock. I could not have undergirded this project without your support or your love. We have been together now for almost 39 years, and I love you now more than ever; my life has been enriched because of our relationship.

To all chaplains struggling to provide pastoral care and counseling to marginalized communities in harsh environments. May God grant you strength in your inner man to continue with your labor of love.

To minister Udo, he provided me with a vision to become a chaplain; thank you, my esteemed colleague.

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, thank you for caring so much about marginalized communities and providing me with guidance on this project. Thank you for salvation and your unconditional love. I pray that this project brings you glory and honor by providing a means to virtualize pastoral care and counseling to marginalized communities.

## **Acknowledgments**

May the Lord receive all the glory and honor for allowing me to undergird this project that outlines the pain, hurt, and suffering of the marginalized communities in America's carceral institutions. May this project serve as a living document for those who will come after me who desire to minister in America's prisons and hospitals. May God use the contents of this project as a roadmap for their respective ministries.

I am grateful for the mentoring that Dr. Scott provided during this project. He provided me with encouragement, guidance, and support to successfully meet my goals. Thank you, Dr. Scott, for your mentorship and your guidance, and may God bless you for being a great mentor. Thank you, Dr. Rice, for partnering with Dr. Scott and being part of the journey towards achieving this doctorate.

To the excellent team of professors who imparted their wisdom in this doctoral study, who made this journey worthwhile through their dedication and instructing me with academic excellence and grace.

I acknowledge Dr. Adam McCLEndon, the program director, for his consistent concern and prayers. I have been transformed by undergirding this project, and I thank you for your prayers.

## **Abbreviations**

DMIN *Doctor of Ministry*

LUO *Liberty University Online*

CRC *Course Requirement Checklist*

WHO *World Health Organization*

CDC *Centers for Disease Control*

HIV *Human Immunodeficiency Viruses*

NIV *New International Version of the Bible*

MSG *The Message Bible by Eugene Peterson*

RCT *Random Control Group*

MSRA *Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus*

COVID-19 *Coronavirus Disease of 2019*

SARS-CoV-2 *Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2*

PPE *Personal Protective Equipment*

IFOC *International Fellowship of Chaplains*

CPE *Clinical Pastoral Education*

YDC *Youth Detention Center*

DBA *Doing Business As*

GPOP *General population in a prison*

ANE *Ancient Near East*

GDC *Georgia Department of Corrections*

CO *Correctional Officer*

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

Chapter one of this action-research thesis project addresses the issues and nuances in America's carceral institutions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter also includes the introduction, ministry context, stated problem, purpose, basic assumptions, definitions, limitations, delimitations, and thesis. The introduction of this action-research thesis project provides a high-level synopsis of chapter one. This project's ministry context evaluates and discusses the theological problem created by the lack of pastoral care in America's carceral institutions, including the facility located in Georgia. The COVID-19 imposed impediments represent a significant theological issue/challenge for the church to meet the mandate as per Matthew 25, particularly in carceral institutions, including hospitals. The pandemic has negatively impacted and hindered the ministry to marginalized communities who are imprisoned, hospitalized, oppressed, and in nursing homes (the at-risk populace). The ministry is minimal or non-existent in these institutions posing a significant theological challenge. One must be mindful that the church cannot sit pat and do nothing to address this critical problem in America's institutions.

The problem discussed in chapter one of this project addresses the pandemic's negative impact on America's carceral institutions. Visitations were restricted, including clergy, family, and lawyers. Therefore, no religious services or limited services were being scheduled and implemented by prison chaplains. Due to these issues, the Baldwin State Correctional facility chaplain has not provided pastoral care or religious services due to the pandemic. Secondly, prisons and jails have become a hot-spot or ground zero for infections. Nine out of ten most significant outbreaks of COVID-19 in the United States have been associated with its carceral

institutions.<sup>1</sup> The pandemic's advent seriously impeded chaplaincy's efficacy in America's carceral institutions, including the Baldwin State prison.

This action-research thesis project aims to resolve, or at least address, the lack of pastoral care in the Baldwin State carceral facility by providing realistic, cost-effective solutions for virtualizing pastoral care and counseling in this institution. This action-research project's basic assumptions are that the virtualization of the pastoral care and religious services will improve chaplaincy's efficacy in America's carceral institutions, particularly in the Baldwin State prison. Secondly, another assumption is that virtualizing pastoral care and religious services must be augmented with adherence to the Center of Disease Control (CDC) protocols to reduce the rate of infections in these institutions.

The definitions included in chapter one will expound on the acronyms utilized in this action-research project, including biblical abbreviations and various terminologies. This action-research project's limitations are that few scholarly books have been written about the pandemic's adverse effects in America's carceral institutions. However, there is a plethora of information and data available in articles, medical journals, and peer-reviewed documentation to conduct a thorough action research on this project. Secondly, this researcher depends on interviewing the chaplain of the facility, and he might not provide objective facts about the efficacy of his efforts in this institution.

The delimitations, or the boundaries, that this researcher will address are the pandemic's general adverse effects that only worsen when the virus became full-blown in these institutions. This body of research will not fully address the diseases, racial disparity, abuse, or any other nuances that existed before or after the advent of the pandemic. These topics are too broad, and

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<sup>1</sup> Sonia Shah, *Pandemic: Tracking, Contagions, from Cholera to Coronaviruses and Beyond* (New York: Picador, 2016), 1.

this researcher focuses mainly on chaplaincy's efficacy due to carceral institutions' environments. However, as a caveat, these issues will be included in the body of research to "paint" a proverbial picture of the adverse conditions before and after the pandemic. This researcher attests that this is a narrower scope for this action-research project.

This project's thesis aims to provide a solution for the Baldwin State prison located in Milledgeville, Georgia. If a solution is not obtainable, this body of research will address the problem at hand, improving chaplaincy's efficacy in America's carceral institutions, including the Baldwin State prison located in Georgia.

### **Ministry Context**

This researcher is a senior chaplain in the International Fellowship of Chaplains (IFOC) and has provided religious instruction, guidance, and services in Georgia's carceral institutions for over two decades. This researcher has conducted religious services in a state-funded geriatric correctional facility and a regular Georgia State correctional facility. Also, this researcher has based his chaplaincy and prison ministry on the biblical premises and theological constructs discussed in Matthew 25. Prison ministry is unique, and the prison environment is stressful. The assignments of a prison chaplain are enormous, and the distractions are plentiful. Inmate after inmate may come knocking on the door seeking solace and refuge from their harsh prison environment. The meetings seem to be endless, often discussing the stringent budgetary constraints of the facility. The administrative work never ceases, and correspondences between offenders' loved ones and inmates increase exponentially daily. Phone calls from offenders' family members are never-ending, and often there is criticism from inmates of other religions that claim that they are being mistreated. Due to budgetary constraints, there is usually just one chaplain in each facility responsible for providing pastoral care for inmates and staff members.

This list is not all-inclusive, yet most prison chaplains offered a reasonable amount of pastoral care and counseling in America's carceral institutions before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, most of America's carceral institutions were already challenged by low morale, inadequate staff, lack of correctional health services, disease, racial disparity, low budgets, overcrowding, and mental health issues before the pandemic. These issues only worsen in all carceral institutions with the advent of the pandemic. The full-blown outbreak of the pandemic in America's institutions has severely impacted the efficacy of chaplaincy in America's carceral institutions and has presented a significant theological challenge for the church.

It is vital to comprehend that ministry in prisons can be categorized as an "outreach ministry." An "outreach ministry" is implemented and conducted outside the church's confines, thus the name "outreach ministry." Also, all Christian-orientated activities that Christian ministers administer and undergird must be "Christocentric" in their nature. This implies that all Christian ministries must have a biblical reference or principle that they adhere to in order for it to be considered biblical. This researcher attests that ministry to the marginalized community in carceral institutions is biblically sound and supported by holy writ. One must be mindful that the Bible is replete with various verses concerning Christian's care to marginalized communities. Matthew 25 clearly outlines the anatomy of an outreach ministry. The Bible states,

“The King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; Then take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in, I needed clothes, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” “Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me (Matthew 25: 31-40, NIV).”

This scripture unpacks several elements that are crucial for addressing the needs of marginalized communities. This scripture explicitly informs the church that they should provide a practical and spiritual ministry for people who are disenfranchised, oppressed, downtrodden, and in need. Basic sustenance, food, water, and clothing should be provided for marginalized communities suffering from hunger and lacking basic "creature comforts." This scripture also exhorts Christians to address the needs of sick people and visit those that are imprisoned. Therefore, this researcher attests that prison ministry, including pastoral care in hospitals, nursing homes, and mental facilities, is biblically sound and expected by God. However, it is noted that these outreach ministries require financial support from the church or congregates to meet any marginalized community's needs adequately. One must be mindful that food and water are not free of cost, and the institutions that the outreach ministry is being conducted in could require much travel, and there are associated costs. The bottom line is that ministry costs money, and there is no outreach ministry without money.

### The Advent of the Pandemic

The advent of the pandemic resulted in several restrictions. Prisons and jails restricted the visitation of offenders' families, clergy, lawyers, and friends. Also, most carceral institutions' overcrowding conditions did not provide the optimal opportunity to adhere to the CDC's social distancing protocols, and the rate of COVID-19 infections escalated exponentially in these institutions. Most institutions did not allow hand sanitizers in their facilities due to their alcohol contents, and prison officials were concerned with the potential abuse of alcohol by inmates.<sup>2</sup>

Correctional officers were permitted to travel in and out of their respective facilities, and often they were not concerned with following the CDC guidelines during their tour of duty. In

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Brakke, *A Guidebook for Dealing With COVID-19 in Major Institutions* (Colombia: Independently Published, 2020), 7-8.

many prisons, there are more prisoners than the capacity limits for its prisoners. Prisoners are crowded together in prison units or sleeping dormitories, and they often have to bunk in rooms in proximity with other prisoners with beds that are pushed very close to each other. There is not enough room in prisons to quarantine offenders who are infected or exposed to COVID-19. It has been noted that people in prison are infected at a rate over five times greater than the nation's overall rate.<sup>3</sup> During the pandemic, the death rate in prisons was also higher at 39 deaths per 100,000 compared to 29 deaths per 100,000 nationally.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 160,000 prisoners and staff members were infected with COVID-19, and about 1002 died by August 2020.

All these issues have impeded the operability of America's carceral institutions, including the provision of pastoral care and counseling in these facilities. Essentially, carceral institutions are truly hot-spots, or ground zero, for infections from COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> When the coronavirus spreads within the prison, it quickly and readily spreads outside to the surrounding community and eventually around the nation. These issues have created a massive challenge in providing the care mandated biblically in Matthew 25 to marginalized communities. However, the church cannot sit pat and not address this lack of ministry in America's carceral institutions. With God's help, a solution must be discovered during the pandemic to provide this critical care for inmates. The Bible does not give the church a reprieve for ministry when times get tough or when the conditions are not conducive for ministry. The pandemic's advent appears to have made it more critical for this biblical mandate to be met. Pastoral care and outreach ministry are needed now

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 15.

more than ever in America's carceral institutions, which is the rationale for this action-research project.

As mentioned previously, this researcher has provided religious instruction and services in Georgia's correctional institutions for over two decades. However, this researcher has provided these religious services in the Baldwin State prison for the last ten to twelve years, located in Milledgeville, Ga. This facility is approximately seventy to eighty-five miles southeast of Atlanta. This researcher is acquainted with the nuances and challenges of this facility before and after the pandemic. This researcher was also considered for the chaplain position for this facility and has a personal interest in ensuring that pastoral care and counseling continues during this pandemic. The facility's chaplain asked this researcher to assist him with pastoral care and counseling before the pandemic. The COVID-19 restrictions imposed by Georgia's state law have not allowed this researcher to help the chaplain as per his request. Please be mindful that over nine hundred inmates are not receiving this critical pastoral care and counseling, not including staff members. The chaplain also informed this researcher that he was infected with COVID-19 and could not work for several weeks until he recovered from the virus's impact. Budgetary constraints already impacted the facility before the pandemic, and the facility's financial issues have worsened. The facility is overcrowded, and it has about 754 inmates in the "general population" who live in seven housing units (107 per dormitory) which are open dormitories. These inmates live in a highly crowded environment. The prison officials in this institution cannot effectively endorse a quarantine protocol or adhere to the social distancing protocols outlined by the CDC. It is safe to state that the mandate of Matthew 25 is not being met in this facility. This researcher realizes that an action-research project about all the nuances and issues hindering all of America's carceral institutions' chaplaincy efficacy is not feasible. Since

this chaplain is familiar with this particular facility's nuances and issues, it is prudent and pragmatic for this researcher to address this facility's theological/ministerial challenge.

In summary, N. T. Wright states in his book *God and the Pandemic* that some people think that they know that the COVID-19 pandemic is a "Sign of the End."<sup>6</sup> They say it is all predicted in the book of Revelation.<sup>7</sup> Others claim that it is a clarion call to repent because God is judging the world.<sup>8</sup> Wright claims that these responses are, at best knee-jerk responses to catastrophic events. He exhorts that the best response is one that is both pragmatic and spiritual. He based his premise and syllogisms on an exegesis of the Bible, mainly Acts 11. Wright presents Christians with a challenge. In the book of Acts, Antioch's ancient church decided to send aid to the church in Jerusalem when confronted with a global famine. They did not sit pat and wondered what God was doing throughout the famine. Instead, they decided to send aid to the population that the famine could significantly impact due to their lack of resources. That population was in the church in Jerusalem. Also, during a plague, early Christians would attempt to nurse people back to health, and sometimes they caught the disease and died. When they were asked why they did what they did, they replied that Jesus put His life on the line, which all Christians are to do as well.<sup>9</sup> Again these early Christians did not sit pat in addressing the needs of marginalized communities. Modern Christians must follow their lead, and this researcher must attempt to resolve, or at least address, the lack of ministry in the Baldwin State prison. This researcher considers this issue a sacred duty and not just the means to obtain a Doctor of Ministry degree from Liberty University. This researcher is vested in providing a vehicle to

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<sup>6</sup> N. T. Wright, *God and the Pandemic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

enhance chaplaincy's efficacy in this facility's marginalized community. God made these precious inmates in His image, and Matthew 25 informs this researcher that He identifies with their hurt, pain, and suffering. Therefore, this researcher must act and do something, and this researcher believes that this action-research project can lead to a solution for the theological dilemma in this facility.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A new virus was discovered in Wuhan, China, which eventually circulated globally, leading to the COVID-19 pandemic. On December 31, 2019, in Wuhan, China, the government reported that its health authorities treated numerous people for an "unknown" virus. The health officials in Wuhan, China, had identified a new virus that had infected dozens of Asians. At that time, there was no empirical proof that this virus was contagious or highly spreadable.

In March 2020, the United States had more confirmed cases of COVID-19 than any other country, including China, Italy, or Iran. This COVID-19 virus outbreak presented a monumental problem/challenge for America's health institutions. The advent of the pandemic severely impacted another institution in America: its carceral institutions. As mentioned previously, one must be cognizant that most of America's carceral institutions were already suffering from overcrowding, lack of correctional healthcare services, disease, abuse, racial disparities, violence, and a critical shortage of staff members before the pandemic. These issues only worsened and were amplified in carceral institutions with the advent of the pandemic. These problems have severely compromised America's carceral institutions' operability and have created challenges and hurdles for prison chaplains to provide pastoral care and counseling.

The problem is that the efficacy of chaplaincy at the Baldwin State prison has been severely compromised due to the pandemic and the challenges mentioned above. The Baldwin

State Correctional facility in Georgia also does not have adequate resources to procure enough equipment for the chaplain to facilitate virtual counseling sessions or provide virtual pastoral care for the entire facility. There are approximately nine hundred inmates in the facility. Also, Baldwin State prison provides mental health evaluations and support services for six facilities, and it has a 17-bed infirmary. Currently, only one chaplain provides pastoral care and counseling for the nine hundred inmates, not including staff members. The chaplain cannot coordinate or implement religious services because the Georgia Department of Corrections does not allow any visitation, including clergy, due to the pandemic. As mentioned previously, about 754 inmates in the general population live in seven housing units (107 per dormitory) that are open dormitories; infections from COVID-19 can spread rampantly due to this overcrowding condition. This propensity for increased infections in the general populations, the lack of equipment for virtualizing pastoral care and counseling, limited budgets/finances, limited or no visitation policies, and the sheer number of inmates that need this counseling are all impediments to chaplaincy in this facility. The inmates have a paucity of morale due to the lack of pastoral care and counseling in this facility. Secondly, since there is only one chaplain in this facility, he cannot address all of the offenders' and staff members' mental health challenges and issues precipitated by the pandemic.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The chaplain of the Baldwin State prison has advised this researcher that no one is allowed in the facility except staff members and the warden. Due to these restrictions, he has not provided critical pastoral care for inmates or staff members. Therefore, this action-research thesis aims to survey the problem and provide reasonable, cost-effective solutions to increase chaplaincy's efficacy in this facility. This researcher will solicit information from the chaplain of

the Baldwin State prison and the chaplains in the (IFOC) employed by prisons (state or federal) and hospitals who can participate in the research and evaluation of this problem.

The rationale for undertaking this project is that this researcher has facilitated biblical studies and religious instructions for inmates in Georgia for over nineteen years. This researcher has participated in a three-day training session with the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison and has a high-level understanding of the pertinent areas of the ministry: direct ministry for the inmates and all staff members; development and the vetting of all volunteers; administrative duties that augment the chaplaincy services; the advancement of community relations; and providing for the basic needs of the inmates by issuing hygiene products and other "creature comforts" to those that have no means to procure these items. This researcher personally knows the chaplain of this facility, has ministered in this facility for about ten to twelve years and has been asked by the chaplain to assist him with his daily duties and responsibilities. Due to the pandemic, this researcher has not helped the chaplain as per his request. Therefore, it is prudent for this researcher to perform this research thesis and attempt to address this particular facility's critical problem caused by the pandemic.

### **Basic Assumptions**

This action-research project contains some assumptions. First, the assumption is that pastoral care and counseling's virtualization is the meta-solution for enhancing chaplaincy's efficacy in the Baldwin State prison. Another assumption is that the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison has the wherewithal, or the technical ability, to effectively utilize automation and technology to provide virtual pastoral care and counseling in this facility. The chaplain of the Baldwin State prison might need additional training to use technology to administer virtual counseling services and pastoral care effectively. This researcher also assumes that this facility's

Warden will allow the inmates to utilize kiosks, laptops, or hand-held devices to attend religious services or participate in counseling sessions virtually. The facility's warden must also allow the chaplain to utilize the technology to provide these critical services. Another assumption is that the chaplains in the IFOC employed by carceral facilities and hospitals are willing to participate in the research and disclose information on chaplaincy's effectiveness in their respective facilities.

A metric should be developed during this action research project to measure the efficacy of chaplaincy during the pandemic in the Baldwin State prison. Suppose a survey is utilized to measure the effectiveness of chaplaincy in this institution. In that case, it is an assumption that all respondents of the survey will fully comprehend the questions asked and respond objectively to the survey. Suppose a survey or a randomized control test (RCT) is conducted with a control group in the facility. In that case, the RCT or survey information might not include full disclosure, transparency, and honesty from the sampled participants.

### **Definitions**

*Abuse*: "Improper use of equipment, a substance, or a service, such as a drug or a program, either intentionally or unintentionally."<sup>10</sup>

*CDC*: CDC is the abbreviation for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "The CDC headquarters is located in Atlanta, Georgia, and its main objective is to control the introduction and spread of infectious diseases. They also provide consultation and assistance to other nations and international agencies to assist in improving their disease prevention and control."<sup>11</sup>

*Chlamydia*: "Chlamydia is a microorganism of the genus Chlamydia. Chlamydia is one of the most common sexually transmitted organisms in North America, which causes sterility.

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Anderson, *Mosby's Medical, Nursing, & Allied Health Dictionary* (St. Louis: Times Mirror Company, 1998), 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

Three species of Chlamydia have been recognized, and all are pathogenic to humans, and Chlamydia has been classified as a specialized bacterium by medical professionals."<sup>12</sup>

*Correctional Health Care:* "Correctional health care is the carceral institution's health systems and personnel that routinely handle medical and mental services within its facilities. Some institutions employ medical staff, others contract with outside agencies to provide on-site services, and some partner with the local medical professionals and hospitals to provide services for inmates."<sup>13</sup>

*COVID-19:* "'COVID-19' is an acronym. In its complete form, COVID-19 stands for coronavirus disease of 2019. The World Health Organization created this acronym to categorize the disease caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2."<sup>14</sup>

*Decarceration:* "'Decarceration' is the process of reducing the number of people in correctional facilities by releasing those currently incarcerated and diverting those who might otherwise be incarcerated. The method also includes minimizing arrest, court appearances, parole, and probation revocation for those still in the community."<sup>15</sup>

*General population:* "means inmates who are typically classified as medium-risk. This group may also include reclassified inmates from special-management or minimum-security status. This group is most often the majority of inmates in a facility. General population excludes special-purpose cells and intake or booking."<sup>16</sup>

*MSG:* MSG is the abbreviation for the Message Bible written by Eugene Peterson. "The Message is a personal paraphrase of the Bible in English by Peterson from the original languages, and the contemporary American slang used in the translation deviates from a more neutral International English."<sup>17</sup>

*MRSA:* "MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a type of bacteria that is resistant to several antibiotics."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>13</sup> Emily A. Wang, Bruce Western, and Julie Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academy Press, 2020) 31-32.

<sup>14</sup> Sophie Vergnaud, "What Does COVID-19 Stand for in Its Full Form and Who Named It?", accessed April 03, 2021, <https://www.goodrx.com/blog/what-does-covid-19-mean-who-named-it/>.

<sup>15</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19*, 31-32.

<sup>16</sup> "General Population Definition - Law Insider," accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/general-population>.

<sup>17</sup> "The Message Bible," accessed April 3, 2021, <https://messagebible.com/>.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Anderson, *Mosby's Medical, Nursing, & Allied Health Dictionary*, 5th ed. (St. Louis: Times Mirror Company, 1998), 1056.

*NIV*: NIV is the abbreviation for the New International Version of the Bible. "In 1967, the New York Bible Society (now Biblical) generously undertook the financial sponsorship of creating a contemporary English translation of the Bible. The NIV Bible was produced by more than one hundred scholars working from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts."<sup>19</sup>

*Outreach Ministry*: "An outreach ministry is a ministry to reach the un-churched individuals and families that visit your church and live within your community. As Christians, we are to live the examples of God's love by inviting and sowing seeds of hospitality through our churches. The objective is to provide everyone with an opportunity within the church's sphere of influence the opportunity to decide for Jesus and His church."<sup>20</sup>

*Pandemic*: According to the Mosby medical dictionary, "a pandemic is a disease that is occurring throughout the population, a people, or the world. It is a Greek word, 'pan' indicating all and 'demos' indicating people."<sup>21</sup>

*Pathogens*: "Any microorganism capable of producing disease or diseases."<sup>22</sup>

*PPE*: PPE is an abbreviation for personal protective equipment. "Personal protective equipment is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. These injuries and illnesses may result from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards."<sup>23</sup>

*SARS-CoV-2*: "SARS-CoV-2 stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. SARS-CoV-2 is the strain of coronavirus that causes the *COVID-19* disease."<sup>24</sup>

*WHO*: WHO is the abbreviation for the World Health Organization. "The World Health Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health, and their headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland, and its main objective is to provide or attain the highest possible health for all people."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> New International Version (NIV) - Version Information.,” accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/>.

<sup>20</sup> “CAA Ministries – Church Administration Assistance (CAA),” accessed April 3, 2021, [The Jesus Touch Manual.pdf \(caaministries.org\)](https://www.caaministries.org/).

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, *Mosby's Medical, Nursing, & Allied Health Dictionary*, 1194.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1176.

<sup>23</sup> OSHA - Personal Protective Equipment - Overview - OSHA,” accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.osha.gov/personal-protective-equipment>.

<sup>24</sup> Brunilda, Nazario, M.D., “What Is a Coronavirus?” accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.webmd.com/lung/qa/what-is-a-coronavirus>.

<sup>25</sup> WHO” | *World Health Organization*,” accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.who.int/>

### **Limitations**

There are various limitations to this action-research project. This action-research project's effectiveness could be decreased due to the sampling procedure or the random control test conducted to measure the efficacy of chaplaincy in the Baldwin State prison. The random control test (RCT) might be limited to the staff members and inmates willing to participate in the survey or the RCT. As mentioned previously, the facility's warden might grant this researcher access to the chaplain, inmates, and staff members for a particular shift to ensure the safety of the officers and inmates housed in the facility. Secondly, the facility's warden might allow this researcher limited access to the facility. If this occurs, this researcher might not be able to conduct a survey or a random control test that will adequately measure the lack of pastoral care and counseling in this facility. If this occurs, this researcher will have to create a baseline for the survey or the random control test to obtain an objective synopsis of the issues and nuances that impeded chaplaincy's efficacy in the facility. There are approximately nine hundred inmates and one hundred and fifty correctional officers in this facility. At least thirty to forty percent of this population will need to respond to the survey or participate in a random control test to adequately measure chaplaincy's efficacy in this facility. This researcher is fully aware that this is a stretched goal, but this researcher believes it should be the baseline for obtaining qualitative data from the survey or the RCT.

This researcher acknowledges the possible threat to the validity of the information gathered in a survey form or via a random control test. The inmates and the staff members might not provide objective and honest answers or responses to the survey or the RCT. The inmates might believe that they cannot respond honestly to the survey by believing that if they annotate a negative response in the survey, it demonstrates a lack of leadership within the facility. In other

words, they do not want to expose the harsh environment that they are living in due to a fear of retribution from the prison officials, and one must be aware that inmates are already in a compromised environment and do not want any further contentions with the institution's correctional officers. The survey might provide empirical proof that the facility's correctional officers have struggles and weaknesses and need additional training to maintain safety, including law and order, in the Baldwin State facility during the pandemic. The survey might provide information about the institution's prison official's lack of adherence to the CDC and WHO COVID-19 guidance for detention centers and carceral institutions. However, these hurdles, nuances, and challenges might not come to fruition since this researcher has been conducting religious services in this institution for over a decade now and is well acquainted with the chaplain.

### **Delimitations**

There are several delimitations in this action research project. As noted in Ernest Stringer's book, *Action-Research*,

“Action-research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems. Action - research is not a panacea for all ills and does not resolve all problems but provides a means for people to more clearly understand their situations and to formulate effective solutions to problems they face.”<sup>26</sup>

This indicates that a collaborative approach is a critical element in this action-research project. This researcher might have limited or minimal collaboration in conducting both a survey or an RCT to adequately investigate the lack of pastoral care during the outbreak of COVID-19 in this facility. Secondly, this action-research project will not address all of the ills, challenges, and nuances plaguing America's carceral institutions. This action-research will focus on the issues,

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<sup>26</sup> Ernest T. Stringer, *Action-Research* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), 6.

challenges, and nuances currently impeding chaplaincy's efficacy in the Baldwin State prison. This approach will provide a narrow focus for evaluating, studying, and investigating the issues hindering the chaplain's ability to provide pastoral care in this facility. Secondly, this action-research will not provide a panacea, as stated by Stringer, for all of the ills and problems in this facility, causing the lack of pastoral care. However, as stated above, this action-research will catalyze the "means for people to understand their situations more clearly and formulate effective solutions to their problems."<sup>27</sup> With God's help, this action-research project will provide an understanding of some of the problems that are hindering the chaplain's efficacy in this facility. This project's ultimate goal is to identify the significant issues and challenges impeding the chaplain's ability to provide pastoral care in this facility and resolve or address these problems. The result of this action-research project should lead to a realistic, cost-effective solution to enhance the chaplain's ability to provide these critical religious services and instructions during the pandemic.

### **Thesis Statement**

This body of action-research intends to resolve, or at least address, the issue of chaplaincy's efficacy in the Baldwin State prison. This action-research might lead to a panacea for resolving the effectiveness of chaplaincy in all of America's carceral institutions by providing realistic, cost-effective solutions for virtualizing religious instruction and pastoral care by utilizing state-of-the-art automation. Suppose the action-research leads to a solution for increasing the efficacy of chaplaincy in this facility. In that case, God will be glorified, and the offenders and the staff members will all reap positive benefits from this body of research. This action-research might provide or catalyze a cost-effective real-time solution(s) to assist the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

current chaplain's efforts to offer chaplaincy in this facility and improve the efficacy of his efforts. Secondly, these action-research results might lead to a solution that can be implemented throughout all the country's facilities, thus increasing the efficacy of chaplaincy in all institutions that have experienced a lack of pastoral care and counseling due to the pandemic.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Literature Review

This global COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted society around the world in various ways. It has caused economic challenges with a severely compromised stock market, an increase in suicides and mental health issues due to the isolation imposed by lengthy lockdowns, and an alarming rise in unemployment due to the demise of small businesses, including the entertainment industry, to name a few.<sup>28</sup> The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has critically impacted most of the world's prisons and jails that were already suffering from a lack of resources and support from their local governments and politicians. This literature review covers the pandemic's effects on society and the theological and theoretical nuances created by the pandemic, including the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in prisons and jails, hindering their operability during the pandemic.

#### Pandemic /Coronavirus and Its Effects on Society

Before the pandemic's full-blown global effects, the World Health Organization (WHO) insisted for weeks that the rapidly spreading contagion was not a pandemic, and it was categorized as an "unprecedented outbreak."<sup>29</sup> By the time the world's top public health officials admitted that the virus was a pandemic, the virus had infiltrated the bodies of more than a hundred thousand people around the globe.<sup>30</sup> Due to this unprecedented spread of this virus, massive graves were being dug in various countries, and it appeared that the earth was cracked open to receive the bodies of the dead.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, there was a litany of unclaimed bodies in

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<sup>28</sup> Shah, *Pandemic*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1-3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Shah, *Pandemic*, 1-3.

the morgues during this time. For example, on Hart Island, less than a mile offshore of the Bronx, aerial footage captured white-suited figures digging long, shallow trenches from space; they looked like wisps of cotton.<sup>32</sup> According to some researchers, the coronavirus pandemic was first documented in America in early 2020, and it spread quickly throughout the country after that. As of September 08, 2020, the United States was responsible for twenty-three percent of the world's confirmed cases of COVID-19 (6,318,978) and twenty-one percent of the world's COVID-19 deaths (189,456).<sup>33</sup>

Also, politicians and local governments initiated a concentrated effort to reduce the rate of infections with lockdown/quarantines. These lockdowns/quarantines increased overdoses, suicides, depression, and domestic violence, negatively impacting American society.<sup>34</sup> It was noted that most of humanity was suffering; never before, as a society during this era, have people experienced the lockdown of cities and countries, the closing of borders, the banning of travel, the shutting of all but essentials and city services, the prohibition of large sports gatherings and the silence of towns and cities that shout of fear and self-isolation.<sup>35</sup> Wright attests to the fact that the COVID-19 crisis has exposed government and politicians' weaknesses to address catastrophic events.<sup>36</sup> This researcher agrees with his premise. One must be cognizant that part of society includes those who have been incarcerated. The statistics provided for the population of inmates in 2019 noted that there were an estimated 1,435,500 people in state and federal prisons by the end of the same year. Most of these prisons already suffered from overcrowding, violence,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Betrus, *COVID-19 Lockdowns on Trial 2ed.* (Columbia, South Carolina: Independently Published, 2020), 293.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Wright, *God and the Pandemic*, 5.

abuse, disease, and racial disparities.<sup>37</sup> This large population of incarcerated people represents a significant problem in the United States. It is a problem because inmates are mostly considered a disenfranchised population that is not worthy of the general populace's attention during the advent of catastrophic events. Regrettably, the advent of the COVID-19 further exposed the government and politicians' weaknesses in addressing these issues, and these preexisting nuances only worsened with the advent of the pandemic. Wright's premise about the COVID-19 crisis exposing government and politicians' weaknesses to act during a crisis has been proven to be factual in America's prisons and jails. America's prisons and jails have become a hot-spot for the transmissions of this deadly disease. This disease is highly transmissible in jails and prisons due to the high flow in and out of prisons. According to the experts, COVID-19 in jails and prisons presents a threat to inmates, the staff, and the larger community. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many stumbling blocks and complications in society, including in jails and prisons. This deadly disease's ramifications can be categorized as catastrophic for humanity at large and its correctional institutions.

#### Wearing Face Masks During the Pandemic

Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), particularly wearing a face mask, has been problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>38</sup> Dean Hashimoto states in his book, *The Case for Masks*, that a face is the public symbol of a person's identity.<sup>39</sup> He claims that no two faces are identical. People have forty-three muscles capable of creating more than seven thousand expressions, intuitively and instantly understood by others and offering the first impression of a

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<sup>37</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Dean Hashimoto, *The Case for Masks: Science- Based Advice for Living During the Coronavirus Pandemic* (New York, NY: Sky Horse, 2020), 154-155.

<sup>39</sup> Hashimoto, *The Case for Masks*, 154-155.

person's character.<sup>40</sup> A face appears on identification badges because it tells more about a person than can be easily communicated in words.<sup>41</sup> Covering up a person's face represents a significant loss of an essential part of their identity for all these reasons.<sup>42</sup> The extreme response to government masking mandates is understandable due to the immutable link between a person's face and identity.<sup>43</sup> This indicates that healthcare and public safety professionals face an uphill battle in cultivating a culture that accepts and promotes universal masking benefits.<sup>44</sup> Hashimoto claims that there have always been historical and sociological factors underlying the resistance to masking in the United States. According to Hashimoto, U.S. culture lacks a history of universal masking. While many photographs of people wearing masks were taken during the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, universal masking was not widely embraced, except in the Midwest and parts of the West Coast.<sup>45</sup> Experts suggest that controversial public mask requirements failed because government officials only required masks to be worn outdoors and not inside public buildings during the Spanish flu pandemic. Besides, masks were neither worn correctly nor consistently. It has been noted that masking must become universal if society wishes to control the pandemic.<sup>46</sup> Face masks should be worn in public areas where there is the possibility of coming in close contact with others. Medical professionals have noted that it is probably safe to walk or jog unmasked when no one else is around.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 158.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Meghan A. Novinsky, Chelsey S. Narvey, and Daniel C. Semenza, "Institutional Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in American Prisons," *Victims & Offenders*, 15, no. 7-8 (2020): 1244-1261, DOI: 10.1080/15564886.2020.1825582.

However, if a person approaches or passes others in public, face-covering is the primary means of protecting them from the invisible droplets one expels while breathing.<sup>47</sup> For the general populace to accept wearing face masks, it must be woven into the fabric of society. One must be mindful that universal mask-wearing is not a silver bullet that will halt the pandemic in its tracks, nor is it a panacea for reducing the spread of the virus.<sup>48</sup> Instead, it is a public health tool that needs to be initiated to protect the whole community. In other words, wearing face masks should be considered and viewed as a culture of safety for the general populace during the pandemic.<sup>49</sup> It appears that the culture has not entirely embraced this new normality of wearing masks in society. This issue has negatively impacted carceral environments throughout America's institutions because of the inconsistent wearing of masks.<sup>50</sup>

Megan Novinsky, et al. noted in their research that most prisons attempted to adhere to the CDC guidelines.<sup>51</sup> These guidelines include one maintaining a distance of at least six feet from another, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as facemasks, and practicing rigorous hand-washing.<sup>52</sup> However, most prisons in America struggled to maintain these CDC guidelines, primarily due to inherent limitations within the structure, including the overcrowded situations in most institutions and the functions of the facility.<sup>53</sup> One must be cognizant that the prison population increased from 350,000 to 2.3 million during the past twenty-five years, and

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<sup>47</sup> Hashimoto, *The Case for Masks*, 154-155.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Novinsky, Narvey and Semenza, "Institutional Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in American Prisons," 1244-1261.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Novinsky, Narvey, and Semenza, "Institutional Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in American Prisons," 1244-1261.

there was much flow in and out of these institutions.<sup>54</sup> Also, this significant increase in the carceral population led to overcrowding in most of these institutions. This overcrowding presented an epic challenge when COVID-19 entered the already overcrowded facilities. The coronavirus can quickly spread in these overcrowded conditions. Consequently, the inconsistent wearing of masks in America, the constant flow in and out of jails/prisons, and the overcrowding environments assisted the transformation of America's carceral institutions into hotbeds and ground-zero for this virus.<sup>55</sup> If society fails to wear face masks during the pandemic, reducing the rate of infections in America will be challenging, particularly in its carceral facilities.

### COVID-19 Pandemic in Prisons

It has been difficult to verify what the conditions in jails and prisons have really been like during COVID-19. Formal oversight of prisons and jails has dropped off, as state agencies, independent groups, and court-appointed monitors have either lost their access to prisons or have voluntarily halted their inspections.<sup>56</sup> Simultaneously, due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, jails and prisons have suspended legal visits, including clergy and family. A prison oversight expert has remarked: "In some of these places, we now have no idea what is going on inside."<sup>57</sup> The Brennan Center for Justice noted, "there is an enormous disconnect between what is being reported publicly and what people are experiencing; in jails and prisons."<sup>58</sup> Still, journalists have collected anecdotal evidence suggesting that conditions are

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> C. Strassle and B. E. Berkman, "Prisons and Pandemics," *San Diego Law Review* 57, no. 4 (2020): 1083–1125, <http://search.ebscohost.com>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Strassle and Berkman, "Prisons and Pandemics," 1083-1125.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

worse than expected in many correctional facilities.<sup>59</sup> Also, the SARS-CoV-2 can survive for prolonged periods on materials highly prevalent in custodial/carceral environments, including nonporous surfaces and metallic surfaces, complicating disinfection practices.<sup>60</sup> It is exceedingly difficult to comply with established infection prevention protocols recommending repeated disinfection and decontamination of all surfaces in jails and prisons.<sup>61</sup> This is due to the overwhelming number of inmates per capita in these institutions and the intricate interactions between inmates and staff members.<sup>62</sup>

Also, there is empirical proof that the transmission of this virus in closed spaces with a significant presence of individuals increases the frequency of infections and exposures. To drastically reduce COVID-19 infections, prisons and jails must comply with social distancing tenets in imprisonment settings. This is quite a feat to accomplish in an overcrowded environment where inmates live and work close to each other and are exposed daily to this virus's pathogens.

Jails and prisons are hot-spots and ground-zero for the transmission of the COVID-19 pathogens. Since the first case of the COVID-19 was confirmed in the United States on January 21, 2020, the most significant clusters of infection have occurred within prisons and jails, distantly followed by meatpacking plants and nursing homes.<sup>63</sup> All five of the top five incidents chronicled of COVID-19 infections around the country were in correctional facilities, and

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Franco Paredes et al., "COVID-19 in jails and prisons: A neglected infection in a marginalized population," *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* 14, no. 6 (2020): 1–4, <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxygsu-ncll.galileo.usg.edu/login.aspx>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Paredes, et al., "COVID-19 in jails and prisons," 1-4.

incarcerated people are at least two-and-a-half times more likely than the general population to acquire COVID-19.<sup>64</sup> Also, heightened fears surrounding COVID-19 have led to mass prison releases and protests, reflecting a growing sentiment among incarcerated people.<sup>65</sup> As the virus began to spread domestically, many jurisdictions took unprecedented steps to reduce their incarcerated populations, such as halting the intake of new inmates and releasing people who had been imprisoned for minor offenses.<sup>66</sup> Although these measures were being implemented, inmates throughout the country have claimed, "we are all on death row now."<sup>67</sup> However, these efforts barely put a dent in the total number of incarcerated people. A May report from the Vera Institute, a nonprofit organization focused on justice reform, found that federal, state, and local prison populations had decreased by only 1.6% in the first few months of 2020. The incarcerated populations in five states had increased instead.<sup>68</sup>

Since the prison population has a higher rate of COVID-19 infections, it affects offenders, offenders' families, staff members, correctional healthcare personnel, correctional educational staff, vendors, and others who deal directly with the prison system.<sup>69</sup> It has been noted that when the coronavirus spreads within the prison, it readily spreads outside to the surrounding community and from there around the nation.<sup>70</sup> Medical professionals and experts

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> C. J. Ciciaramella, "Covid-19 Pulls Back the Mask on America's Prison System," *Reason* 52, no. 4 (2020): 10, <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxygsu-ncl1.galileo.usg.edu/login.aspx>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Brakke, *A Guidebook for Dealing With COVID-19 in Major Institutions*, 15.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 17.

have conducted various experiments to study the rate of infections in prisons and jails. The results of their studies and experiments demonstrate that prisons are indeed hot-spots for infections from the coronavirus pathogens.<sup>71</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, who are members of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, have concluded that the COVID-19-related death rate among correctional facilities was three times higher than in the U.S.-related population.<sup>72</sup> They believe that this issue is amplified by the significant racial and ethnic disparity in incarcerations, and correctional facilities are not isolated environments conducive to reducing the rate of COVID-19 infections.<sup>73</sup> They also note that incarcerated individuals move between facilities and the community, and staff members go home at night and return to the facility regularly. They claimed that by August 2020, the incarcerated infection rates were five times more than in the general population.<sup>74</sup> In his research, Don Hummer noted that in Spring 2020, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) made the startling announcement that of its 2,700 initial screenings of inmates for the virus, 2,000 had tested positive, which is a 70% positivity rate.<sup>75</sup> His research noted that this high infection rate was due to prisons' overcrowding conditions and the lack of correctional healthcare systems in these facilities.<sup>76</sup>

In summary, it is essential to understand that custodial settings and environments (prison, jail, juvenile detention, and immigrant detention facilities) in America are incredibly vulnerable to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Essentially, they are the ideal environment(s) for spreading

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19*, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Don Hummer, "United States Bureau of Prisons' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Victims & Offenders* 15, no. 7 (October 22, 2020): 1262-1276, Doi: 10.1080/15564886.2020.1829765.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

the virus's pathogens. The United States has 2.3 million people in involuntary confinement, including 2.2 million adults and 44,000 youths in corrections, and 42,000 people in immigration detention centers.<sup>77</sup> Many incarcerated individuals have considerable health challenges, and a significant proportion is older than sixty years old. It is a known fact that people with underlying health issues that get infected with this virus do not have favorable outcomes; they usually suffer fatalities and morbidity after being infected with the virus.<sup>78</sup> This issue represents a significant problem for American prisons and jails. Also, most inmates live in overcrowded dormitory-style housing or small double- or triple-occupancy cells. These cells and dormitory-style housing usually have poor ventilation and are not regularly cleaned or adequately disinfected, increasing the risk of COVID-19 infections. This researcher has conducted biblical studies in several Georgia correctional facilities and can attest that various Georgia facilities have these dormitory-style housing and occupancy cells.

Additionally, the inmates in America's prisons and jails usually have adverse physical and emotional reactions to these custodial settings and environments. These negative responses to carceral environments can weaken the immune system. For example, when involuntary confinement is imposed as a means of discipline, it is stressful, and poor sleep is common.<sup>79</sup> Catherine Heard noted that in late April 2020, there were around 14,000 reported cases among prisoners in 14 countries, and at least 385 prisoners had died.<sup>80</sup> By September, confirmed COVID-19 cases had exceeded 205,000 in 101 countries, with almost 2,200 deaths among those

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<sup>77</sup> E. Barnert, C. Ahalt, and B. Williams, "Title of Article," *American journal of public health* 110, no. 7 (2020 July): 964-966.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Catherine Heard, "Commentary: Assessing the Global Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Prison Populations" *Victims & Offenders* 15, no. 7 (October 20, 2020): 848-861, Doi: 10.1080/15564886.2020.1825583.

cases.<sup>81</sup> It is safe to state that COVID-19 is not just an issue in American prisons and jails; it is a significant global problem affecting all prisons and jails worldwide that must be addressed aggressively by politicians and local governments. If they fail to act accordingly, this deadly disease will continue to spread exponentially, and reducing infections in these institutions will not be an obtainable goal.

#### How Prisons and Jails are Dealing with the Pandemic in General

As mentioned previously, it is critical to understand that U.S. prisons and jails have long been a hot-bed of infectious disease outbreaks.<sup>82</sup> Historically, one of the primary focuses of the 1918 influenza pandemic was San Quentin Prison.<sup>83</sup> Detained populations in the United States have shown increased rates of bloodborne infections, sexually transmitted infections, and airborne infections, including HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, syphilis, gonorrhea, Chlamydia, and influenza, varicella-zoster, MRSA, and tuberculosis.<sup>84</sup>

Globally, there are widespread concerns about large COVID-19 infections sweeping through the incarcerated populations in China, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and several African nations.<sup>85</sup> This widespread transmission of the virus in these prisons leads to a clarion cry for more paroles or early releases throughout these facilities. In the U.S., there are many confirmed cases of COVID-19 (in the thousands), resulting in many deaths among prisoners and staff members tied to prisons and jails. These outbreaks have occurred in some of America's largest and most populated jails, including Cook County Jail, Los Angeles County Jail System,

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<sup>81</sup> Heard, "Commentary," 848-861.

<sup>82</sup> Strassle and Berkman, "Prisons and Pandemics," 1083-1125.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Paredes et al., "COVID-19 in Jails and Prisons," 1-4.

Sterling Prison in Colorado, and many others.<sup>86</sup> However, the harsh realities of the rate of COVID-19 infections inside the prisons and jails in the U.S. are mostly unknown due to under-testing and under-reporting. As the number of cases of COVID-19 continues to spread in the U.S., there will likely be an increasing number of infections and outbreaks in carceral facilities with implications for the larger community and the healthcare system.<sup>87</sup> One must be cognizant that the capacity to handle a large influx of critically ill patients from jails and prisons is at best minimal at this point in the pandemic.<sup>88</sup> Local hospitals and medical facilities are already struggling due to the massive number of COVID-19 patients they must address; inadvertently, they cannot address the incarcerated and general populations simultaneously infected with the virus. Due to these issues, the federal, state, and local levels are attempting to reduce the number of incarcerated individuals; the initiative has been categorized as "decarcerating" prisons.<sup>89</sup> Decarcerating prisons is not the panacea for reducing the rate of infections in these facilities.<sup>90</sup> Without widespread availability of testing in jails and prisons to guide isolation and quarantine practices, inadequate supply of personal protective equipment for inmates, including masks, and the revolving door of jails, hampers the ability to block transmission as the current outbreak inside many correctional facilities has uncovered.<sup>91</sup> Most experts agree that facing the COVID-19 pandemic calls for worldwide efforts to include joint planning by public health institutions with federal, state, and local authorities.<sup>92</sup> Experts claim that these institutions need to explicitly

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<sup>86</sup> Paredes et al., "COVID-19 in Jails and Prisons," 1–4.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, "Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19," 27-28.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Paredes, "COVID-19 in Jails and Prisons," 1–4.

<sup>92</sup> Paredes et al., "COVID-19 in Jails and Prisons," 1–4.

and transparently implement and monitor preventive and mitigation interventions in correctional facilities.<sup>93</sup> As mentioned previously, one methodology that can be deployed to control the widespread of COVID-19 in jails and prisons is to depopulate jails and prisons. According to Paredes et al., depopulating jails and prisons during this pandemic is the only way to achieve meaningful social distancing and protect medically vulnerable persons.<sup>94</sup> Secondly, correctional facilities need to implement effective population management by using sequestration, isolation, and quarantine practices, expanding testing of prisoners and correctional officers inside these facilities.<sup>95</sup> These facilities can monitor and slow down this disease's transmission by depopulating the population and practicing aggressive preventive measures. However, depopulating prisons and jails and using quarantine practices, including prisoners' and correctional officers' testing, have not proven to be a meta-solution for eliminating this disease's spread in correctional institutions. To further control the transmissions of this disease, public health, and medical professionals have recommended a series of preventive efforts to reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks in correctional facilities that include the increasing provision of cleaning, rapidly improving testing and isolation capacity, granting early release for medically high-risk and low-level offending segments of incarcerated populations, and consulting with experts in gerontology to prepare for the unique challenges posed by COVID-19 to older incarcerated adults.<sup>96</sup> Since correctional facilities are uniquely vulnerable to outbreaks, these facilities must practice and adopt stringent COVID-19 control protocols, policies, and practices.

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<sup>93</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, "Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19," 25-26.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Novinsky, Narvey and Semenza, "Institutional Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in American Prisons," 1244-1261.

To drastically reduce the rate of COVID-19 infections, these facilities can deploy the published resources which have been provided by WHO and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to guide their efforts and strengthen their resolve in slowing down the transmission of this disease in their respective locale. If these facilities adhere to screening, social distancing, education, hygiene, disinfection, isolation, testing, face-covering, and prompt treatment, they can significantly slow down the transmission of the disease within their institutions.

However, there is hope. Correctional facilities are implementing several strategies to reduce infection rates in prisons. One is the reduction of prison populations, which has proven beneficial in depopulating prisons and jails. Various facilities release prisoners over fifty years old and have health conditions or inmates scheduled to be released within a few months. Police officials are reducing arrests, and the judicial systems have reduced bookings and sentencings.<sup>97</sup> Correctional institutions are conducting more testing to identify prisoners who have the virus and isolate them from other prisoners if they are infected with the virus. Although social visits have been suspended, including clergy and lawyers, inmates' telephone systems have generally been increased to five hundred minutes per month.<sup>98</sup> It appears that correctional institutions, including local governments, are now taking a more balanced approach to reducing the infection rate in prisons and jails. Correctional healthcare providers have also been asked to screen incarcerated persons and staff members regularly and administer screening tests. They also must respond quickly and safely to those with symptoms.<sup>99</sup> Correctional facility health providers have access to emergency medical equipment to treat a few inmates with acute respiratory failure. As a

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<sup>97</sup> Brakke, *A Guidebook for Dealing With COVID-19 in Major Institutions*, 25.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Brakke, *A Guidebook for Dealing With COVID-19 in Major Institutions*, 25.

caveat, these providers usually cannot treat large numbers of infected inmates, including widespread infections within their respective facilities.<sup>100</sup> However, their concentrated efforts to reduce the rate of infections within their respective facilities make a difference in reducing this disease's transmission.

### Environmental Conditions in Prisons and Jails

Experts attest that most custodial settings operate at or above capacity.<sup>101</sup> Overcrowding is the norm, and many are understaffed. Should COVID-19 infect residents and staff members, facilities will be challenged to identify the housing, staff, and equipment needed for effective quarantining.<sup>102</sup> Facilities may also face secondary health crises if they become under-resourced for mental health care and crisis management.<sup>103</sup> There is limited respiratory care available in most custodial facilities, including face coverings. If there is a widespread infection in these institutions, correctional healthcare services will become quickly overwhelmed. These institutions will have to rely heavily on emergency and inpatient care outside of the prison, located in community health systems. For these reasons, correctional health experts have called for limiting all nonessential movement while maintaining access to adequate legal and psychosocial support to the extent possible.<sup>104</sup>

According to the Prisons and Jails magazine, U.S. federal prisons were at twenty-six percent above capacity in 1995 and thirty-one percent overcapacity in 2000.<sup>105</sup> Overcrowding is

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<sup>100</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19*, 31.

<sup>101</sup> Barnett, Ahalt, and Williams, "Title of Article Needed," 964-966.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Barnett, Ahalt, and Williams, "American journal of public health [Am J Public Health]," 964-966.

<sup>105</sup> Roger Smith, *Prison Conditions: Overcrowding, Disease, Violence, and Abuse* (Broomall, PA: Mason Crest Publishers Inc., 2007), 32.

also an issue in juvenile residential facilities. In 2000, thirty-nine percent of juvenile detention centers had more residents than available beds. Overcrowding affects all the other issues of prison life: disease, violence, and abuse. One must be cognizant that most inmates do not come to prison with high coping skills; most inmates have a history of alcoholism and drug abuse and are usually victims of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse.<sup>106</sup> These overcrowding conditions catalyzed the amplification of the impact of the COVID-19 when the disease became full-blown in America. These conditions are causing inmates and correctional officers to interact in close quarters and rendering outbreak prevention more difficult because of the greater population density in many prisons and jails.<sup>107</sup> Since correctional settings represent particularly high-risk locations for COVID-19 outbreaks, researchers and medical professionals have concluded that many jails and prisons are likely to experience COVID-19 outbreaks, and targeted preventive efforts for correctional facilities that must be included in any national outbreak mitigation strategies.<sup>108</sup>

The University and College Union surveyed several prison and jail educational staff members, and it was noted that most prison educational staff members responded similarly. According to the University and College Union survey responses, nearly half of the prison educational staff did not feel safe at work. The prison education staff survey revealed that over a third (37%) of respondents had reported no regular cleaning on-site, fifteen percent had been

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Novinsky, Narvey, and Semenza, "Institutional Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in American Prisons," 1244-1261.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

asked to undertake cleaning themselves, and almost half (45%) did not feel safe on site.<sup>109</sup>

Enclosed are the similar responses of the educational prison staff:

“There was not enough cleaning, poor social distancing, too many people on-site, a lack of risk assessments, and a desire by the prison and providers to return to business as usual. Social distancing had not been regularly taking place within the prison education department. There was inconsistent social distancing in our respective departments, including other areas within the prison site.”<sup>110</sup>

This is a significant problem because the CDC has provided various guidelines for employers.

These CDC guidelines or measures that all employers should be employing in the workplace are,

“Employers should provide disinfectant wipes for work areas, regularly decontaminate high-touch shared areas, enforce daily symptom monitoring, regularly remind everyone in the organization that daily monitoring is the organization's expectation, offer paid time-off policies that encourage and support their need for illness leaves of absence, support and enforce CDC guidelines for staying away from work, make arrangements to support clinical evaluation and appropriate testing, enforce social distancing, provide signage and floor/wall markings that support social distancing maintain lower building occupancy and use of space, encourage remote work when possible. Arrange work breaks and eating areas to support social distancing, support universal mask-wearing, offer access to high-quality masks, install Plexiglas protective barriers for extra protection, provide face shields to supplement masks where necessary, optimize airflow and ventilation, and promote flu vaccinations, since flu and coronavirus are closely related threats, and evaluate whether to support coronavirus vaccinations based on effectiveness and safety.”<sup>111</sup>

Most jails and prisons throughout America could not adequately implement these CDC guidelines because of the government's lack of resources and support. In addition, the layout of most prisons is not conducive for implementing aggressive social distancing regiments. This is a monumental dilemma for chaplains, staff members, wardens, offenders, and offenders' families.

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<sup>109</sup> Novinsky, Narvey, and Semenza, "Institutional Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in American Prisons," 1244-1261.

<sup>110</sup> Smith, *Prison Conditions*, 27.

<sup>111</sup> Hashimoto, *The Case for Masks*, 45.

Also, it has been noted that many prisoners are already in poor health and susceptible to illness when they enter the justice system.<sup>112</sup> A high proportion of inmates have various underlying physical and mental health issues, and their needs are often involved. Many prisoners have been diagnosed with significant physical, psychiatric, and mental conditions.<sup>113</sup> Most prisons and jails have imposed strict restrictions on all visitations, including lawyers and clergy, to compound these issues further. The prisoners' access to their lawyers has also had new challenges. Given the considerable increase in phone calls and online communications, contact and communication between clients and their lawyers can take time (and even a phone call can be canceled at short notice if a prison goes into lockdown), and there can be delays in seeking legal counsel.<sup>114</sup> Getting the balance right between COVID-19 and prisons has been an enormous challenge for prison officials.<sup>115</sup> The anxiety and concern of staff members, chaplains, wardens, offenders, and offenders' families are justifiable. The pre-existing prison environment only worsened when the COVID-19 infiltrated America's correctional institutions. A lot of energy, planning, and policies must be administered by prison officials, politicians, and local governments to drastically reduce this disease's transmission in these facilities. However, officials are now proactive in taking preventive measures in these institutions to slow down the rate of COVID-19 infections in their respective locales, and there is a glimmer of hope.

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<sup>112</sup> Clare Johnston, "Getting the Balance Right with COVID-19 and Prisons," *Eureka Street* 30, no. 18 (2020): 1–4, <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxygsu-ncll.galileo.usg.edu/login.aspx>.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Hummer, "United States Bureau of Prisons' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," 1262-1276.

## Theological Foundations

### Introduction

If one performs a careful study of Job's character, it is well known that he was an extremely successful businessman and "owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yokes of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants" (Job 1:3, NIV). The Bible states that Job was the most remarkable man in all the east and was found blameless and upright by God. He cared for the poor, the fatherless, the dying, the blind, the lame, the needy, including the stranger.<sup>116</sup> However, when Job was afflicted by pain, hurt, downtrodden, and suffering immensely, no one came to his aid (Job 20:26). One of the dilemmas associated with his immense suffering was based on the issue that those who formerly respected and listened to Job because of his significant influence and wealth made fun of him when he was afflicted and immensely suffering.<sup>117</sup> Even his friend was mocking him during his sufferings, and Job stated, "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?" (Job 32:25, NIV). Job's heart was genuinely grieved when he witnessed the distress and misery of the poor and trodden. Job wept as a heartfelt concern for their distress and hardships. Job attempted to alleviate their pain and suffering by distributing liberally to their necessities (Job 31:17).<sup>118</sup> Some theologians interpret his words, "was not my soul like a pool of water, not only his head and his eyes, his soul melted and flowed like water with grief for them."<sup>119</sup> Job's tears and compassion demonstrated a genuine heartfelt concern for the needy and the downtrodden.

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<sup>116</sup> Anthony Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Hollman Bible Publishers, 2019), 499.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> "Job 30:25," accessed July 4, 2021, <https://biblehub.com/job/30-25.htm>.

Still, no one reciprocated the mercy, compassion, and assistance he needed to navigate his dire circumstances when he was afflicted.

This researcher attests that sometimes society does not respond with compassion to the needy, downtrodden, imprisoned, and those in dire circumstances like those who previously respected Job before he was afflicted, including Job's friends. The body of Christ should echo the sentiment and the words of Job. The church should weep for the hardships and distress that people are experiencing in America's prisons, nursing homes, homeless shelters, and any marginalized communities. "Our souls should be like pools of water and flow like water with grief for them."<sup>120</sup> Just like Job, the body of Christ should address the marginalized community by "distributing liberally to their needs."<sup>121</sup> This researcher firmly believes that one way to meet the needs of the downtrodden is to visit them in their respective environment. Therefore, prison ministry, or visiting those imprisoned, is a means of liberally meeting their needs. This researcher has conducted religious studies and instruction for over twenty years, and many times the inmates thanked this researcher for just coming out to visit them. The visit was just as crucial as the sermon, but they were grateful that someone took time out of their busy schedule to visit them.

In this section of the literature review, this researcher will discuss and elaborate on the theological constructs of Imago Dei, keywords used in Genesis to describe the Imago Dei, prisons, and the Bible, social ministry and prison ministry, the impact of the prison visitors, the theological challenges in prisons created by COVID-19, theology of prison ministry, and the essential principles of the Kingdom of God. This researcher is fully aware that these theological

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<sup>120</sup> "Job 30:25," accessed July 4, 2021, <https://biblehub.com/job/30-25.htm>.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

constructs are not a panacea for providing compassion or ministry for marginalized communities. Instead, this researcher believes that if someone embraces and comprehends these critical theological constructs, principles, tenants, and philosophies, they will be better prepared to provide compassion and ministry to the downtrodden, mainly the imprisoned. The premise is that those who understand and embrace these theological constructs will eventually “weep for those in need and distress, may their souls be like pools of water and flow like water with grief with them,” as they empathize with their hardships and arduous life circumstances.<sup>122</sup> The intent of the theological foundation in this literature review might be categorized as a “stretched goal”; however, this researcher believes that it is a goal worth striving towards. There is a considerable need for ministry to marginalized communities, and all of these needs are elucidated and addressed in the Bible. Providing rational, theological, and biblical justification for addressing the needs of those imprisoned is the rationale for the theological section of this literature review.

### Imago Dei, the Image, and Likeness of God

The image of God (Imago Dei) is a theological construct in Christianity and Judaism that describes the uniqueness of humanity that God has imprinted on His creation. Imago Dei is a Latin term which means “the image of God.” The image of God is crucial in understanding what makes one human and how humanity is different from animals, which also were created by God.<sup>123</sup> However, what the image of God is, and its implications, have been misunderstood and debated throughout history. This researcher attests that it is crucial to understand what the image of God is and how it relates to interacting with one’s supervisor, spouse, pastor, son, daughter, mother, father, neighbor, etc., considering that all of humanity has been created in God’s image.

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> “Job 30:25,” accessed July 4, 2021, <https://biblehub.com/job/30-25.htm>.

The foundation for the theological construct of the Imago Dei is built on Genesis 1:26-27.

Genesis 1:26-27 reads:

“Then God said, Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground (NLT).”

This scripture must be carefully examined to understand its implications and significance in the Old Testament to interpret this ancient text correctly. One must be cognizant that an unfamiliar author wrote the Old Testament to an unfamiliar audience in an unfamiliar language in an unfamiliar culture. The Old Testament was written in the ancient Near East (ANE), and it contains verbiage that is germane to that era and culture.<sup>124</sup> Theologians who are subject matter experts (SME) in the Old Testament have asserted that throughout the ANE, an image was believed to be the essence of what it represented. The essence of the image represented by the image essentially enabled the image to have a function.<sup>125</sup> For example, in Egypt, a story depicting a group of people created in an image of a deity was included in Egyptian literature. However, this is not the norm, and it is usually the king or the pharaoh that is spoken of in such terms. In ancient Egypt, the pharaohs were respected and revered. They were also viewed and considered one of the most significant of all Egypt's gods.<sup>126</sup> During a pharaoh's reign, he took on the "incarnation" and the personification of the god Horus and the son of Re.<sup>127</sup> Upon his death, he was identified with the god Osiris, the god of the underworld.<sup>128</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>124</sup> NIV Cultural Study Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 8.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> “Ancient Egyptian Pharaohs - AllAboutHistory.Org,” accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.allabouthistory.org/ancient-egyptian-pharaohs-faq.htm>.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

image in the ANE culture is the source of a pharaoh's power, including his prerogative to do the will of the source.<sup>129</sup>

Another example of this image and source relationship is found in ancient Mesopotamian literature and culture. In Mesopotamian literature, the king is described as a deity's image, as in Egypt. Therefore, an idol contained the image of a deity in Mesopotamia. Also, usually, when the king conquered a territory, monuments featuring the image of the king were erected. It was noted that it was not the physical attribute of the erected monument that was significant; instead, it was the abstract, idealized representation of the identity relating to the significant office of the king. In this case, the monument (image) represented the king's splendor, majesty, and rule in his captured territories. In ancient Assyria, King Esarhaddon is referred to as the "perfect likeness of the god."<sup>130</sup> In this ancient Assyrian literature, the word likeness describes his qualities and attributes. This description implies that the image of the god (King Esarhaddon) did the god's work on the earth during his reign. Therefore, speaking parenthetically, the source (unknown deity) provided the image (King Esarhaddon) to describe his non-corporeal attributes during his reign as a king. The Bible also contains these concepts, and the biblical view is that people were created in the image of God, reflecting and embodying His qualities, including performing His work.<sup>131</sup> Theologians attest that humans are the "symbols" of His presence and have the wherewithal to act on his behalf as His representative on the earth.

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<sup>129</sup> NIV Cultural Study Bible, 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 8.

### Key Words Used in Genesis to Describe the Imago Dei

The passage in Genesis 1:26-27 contains two keywords that must be defined to understand the significance of Imago Dei. The writer of Genesis utilizes the word “tselem” to describe how man’s image is similar to God.<sup>132</sup> Conversely, the writer uses “demuwth” to describe man’s likeness to God.<sup>133</sup> These two words used in this text differ in their meaning and nuance. James Strong notes that “Image refers to something that contains the ‘essence’ of something else. Conversely, the likeness is connected to substance, which expresses a resemblance to the ‘source’ at some level.”<sup>134</sup> This nuance found in the creation story describing the Imago Dei corresponds with the ANE culture and literature. However, one must be cognizant that humans were not created in the image of an unknown deity; they were created in the image of God (Yahweh), a personal and relational God who is the sovereign of His universe.

The Hebrew word “tselem” occurs seventeen times in the Old Testament. It is used five times in Genesis (twice in Genesis 1:26-27 and in 5:3 and 9:6), five times in the history books (twice in 1 Sam. 6:5 and in 6:11; 2 Ki. 11:18, 2 Ch. 23:17), once in Numbers (33:52), twice in the Psalms (39:7; 73:20), and four times in the prophets (Eze. 7:20; 16:17; 23:14,<sup>135</sup> and Amos 5:26).<sup>136</sup> The use of “tselem” suggests it was a widely known word since more than one author used it in more than one period of Israelite history.<sup>137</sup> The word “tselem” means to shade, a phantom, resemblance signifying a representative figure.<sup>138</sup> The word also signifies or means

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<sup>132</sup> James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Incorporated, 2010), 238.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> “Imago Dei - Religion Facts,” accessed June 30, 2021, <https://religionfacts.com/imago-dei>.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 238.

image in the sense of intrinsic and essential nature.<sup>139</sup> In Genesis 5:3, *tselem* describes how God created man in His image. “*Tselem*” in this passage describes how man reflects some of God’s own perfections, which are perfections in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This term also expounds on man’s dominion over God’s creation. The term also means the shadow of the thing representing the original very imprecisely, which is connotative of a phantom.<sup>140</sup> Also, the term is understood to be cut in the Old Testament as of a statue or chiseled likeness.<sup>141</sup> The word “*demuwth*,” a noun, denotes likeness, shape, form, or pattern.<sup>142</sup> In Hebrew, likeness can be used as a verb or a noun.<sup>143</sup> In Hebrew, the verb for likeness is “*damah*,” meaning “to be like,” resemble, be or act like, liken or compare, devise, balance, or ponder.<sup>144</sup> This verb appears in the Bible about 28 times.<sup>145</sup> In biblical Aramaic, it denotes to be “like.” This word is used in Psalm 102:6, “I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I am like an owl of the desert.” In Genesis, this word is used to describe how man was shaped or formed in the image of God. It signifies the original (God) after which a “thing” is patterned. In other words, man was created or patterned by God to reflect God’s image in His creation. Conversely, the term “*tselem*” explains what the pattern (image) looks like. Essentially man was created by God and patterned in such a way to reflect God’s attributes such as His holiness, intellect, righteousness, holiness, and the power of His volition.

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<sup>139</sup> Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 238.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Robert D. Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2005), 248.

<sup>142</sup> William Edwy Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine* (City of publication: Thomas Nelson Incorporated, 1996), 137.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 238.

<sup>145</sup> Vine, Unger, and White, *Vine*, 137.

Most theologians and Christians have espoused the four definitions of the Imago Dei.<sup>146</sup>

One definition is the “image of God as a similarity.” This definition describes humanity's similarity to God. However, those that embrace this definition focus on the physical similarity humanity has with God, yet others expand the definition to focus on humanity's non-physical elements/attributes similar to God. The premise is based upon the physical attributes of Adam.<sup>147</sup>

Another definition is the “image of God as counterpart others.” This definition implies that the Imago Dei defines and ascribes humanity as God’s manager or counterpart in the universe.<sup>148</sup>

The last two definitions are God's image as dominion and the image of God as representation. The former describes humanity's dominion over the earth. It is indicative of humanity’s rule over creation.<sup>149</sup> This view or focus is spoken of in Psalm 8. The Bible states,

“GOD, brilliant Lord, yours is a household name. Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble. I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous, your handmade sky-jewelry, moon, and stars mounted in their settings. Then I look at my micro-self and wonder, why do you bother with us? Why take a second look our way? Yet we have so narrowly missed being gods, bright with Eden’s dawn light. You put us in charge of your handcrafted world, to us your Genesis-charge, made us stewards of sheep and cattle, animals out in the wild, birds flying and fish swimming, whales singing in the ocean deeps. GOD, brilliant Lord, your name echoes around the world (Psalm 8:2-9, MSG)”.

This passage of scripture supports the premise that humans are stewards of God’s creation and have dominion. The fourth definition is the image of God as representation. This definition implies that Imago Dei describes humanity as God’s representatives on earth. This view focus is primarily on people’s relationship with others.<sup>150</sup> This premise is spoken of in 2 Corinthians

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<sup>146</sup> “Imago Dei - Religion Facts.”

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> “Imago Dei - Religion Facts.”.

5:20: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” It is also spoken of in Ephesians 5:1-5:

“Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us\*and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshipping the things of this world (NLT).”

Several theologians have provided definitions for the Imago Dei. Irenaeus was one of them, and he asserted that human likeness to God is based on Christ and his likeness to God. Essentially his theological view is Christocentric. His premise was based on the fact that Jesus is God in the flesh, and he demonstrated how that likeness is reflected in a person. Irenaeus also believed that becoming more Christ-like reflects the correct image of God to non-believers. This view is supported in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into His image with intensifying glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit.” The Imago Dei is a vital element in theological anthropology. The theological implications of the Imago Dei must be embraced to comprehend that all humanity, which is God’s creation, are to be respected and treated with dignity. This issue of Imago Dei is crucial in interacting with people, and if it is understood and embraced, one will realize that prisoners also are created by God and are subject to the Imago Dei. All prisoners and those in need should be treated with respect and dignity since they were all created in the image of God. This researcher attests and believes that embracing this truth will help the church provide an effective and compassionate ministry to imprisoned people and those in dire straits.

### The Doctrine of Man and the “Imago Dei”

This researcher attests that the doctrine of man, categorized as anthropology, is profoundly connected and congruent with the theological construct of the Imago Dei. One must be cognizant that one of the primary concerns that the doctrine of man addresses is the origin of man, where he came from, and where he is going. The three main theories concerning man’s origin are atheistic evolution, theistic evolution, and theistic creation. The atheistic evolution holds on to the theory of spontaneous generation. The premise is that all forms of animal life eventually evolved from more primitive life forms. This theory is based on the survival of the fittest, and it rejects God as the creator of life, including the source of all life. This theory espouses the premise that man evolved from another primitive life form called the “missing link.” The theistic evolution claims that higher forms of life evolved from lower forms; however, God created the lower forms of life. However, God created all creatures, including man, to reproduce “according to their kind” in Genesis. If one utilizes the tenants of logic or deductive reasoning, the argument can be such; since God created animals and man in their order to reproduce “after their kind,” He also created all of the species, not their evolution. The theistic creation holds to the scriptural fact that God is the ultimate creator and source of all life. He alone originated all life forms and is the sole omnipotent maintainer of all life.

The final creative act of God in Genesis 1:26-31 was also the highest creation of God on this earth. Genesis 1: 26-31 states, “Then God said, “Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth.” (NASB) This scripture in Genesis provided the origin of the “Imago Dei,” which comes from the Latin version of the Bible, translated to English as “image of God.” This researcher

attests that this scripture's proper exegesis is needed to understand that the Imago Dei is defined as the symbolical connection between God and humanity. This scripture does not imply that man looks like God or that God figuratively is in human form. This researcher believes that this scripture describes the non-corporeal attributes humanity possesses, which are similar to God. Man was created with the affinity to be moral, spiritual, and intellectual. The most remarkable attribute that man possesses is the power of volition, the ability to choose. These non-corporeal attributes definitely reflect God's divine nature. Therefore, it is logical to state that humans reflect God's divine nature in their ability to achieve the unique characteristics with which they have been endowed.<sup>151</sup> These unique qualities make humans different than all other creatures since God created man in His image and likeness.

This researcher attests that the image of God or the Imago Dei is a theological construct that defines and identifies how all of humanity is connected with God by their non-corporeal attributes. God is a spirit, and man's anatomical features are not spiritual but physical. Man has the capacity for rational understanding, creative liberty, the capacity for self-actualization, and the potential for self-transcendence.<sup>152</sup> Man has a unique spiritual nature since he is the only created being on the earth with whom God holds communion.<sup>153</sup> Scientists and philosophers state that in six areas, physical, governmental, matrimonial, spiritual, moral, and intellectual, provides a summation of human nature and a distinctive perspective of the only creature who alone was

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<sup>151</sup> "What Does 'Imago Dei' Mean in the Bible? What Is the Image of God?" accessed February 22, 2022, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/image-of-god-meaning-imago-dei-in-the-bible.html>.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> James Dixon Douglas, Moises Silva, and Merrill Chapin Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 643.

created in the image of God (Imago-Dei).<sup>154</sup> This researcher agrees with this premise and believes that these six areas provide a true-to-life “portrait” of the Imago Dei.

In summary, this researcher believes that if one understands that all of humanity possesses these non-corporeal attributes, they will treat their fellow human with respect and integrity. This researcher also fully understands that humanity is intrinsically evil in a “fallen state.” However, the Bible does not state or imply that man no longer possesses the image of God. According to the Bible, sin has separated humanity from God. However, God sent His only son, Jesus Christ, to redeem humanity from the ramifications of sin and to bridge the chasm created by sin between God and humanity. Therefore, this researcher firmly believes that if local governments, politicians, and particularly Christians espouse and understand the Imago Dei and how it relates to humanity, they will not feel comfortable sitting pat and doing nothing to alleviate the pain, hurt, and suffering of marginalized communities. The Imago Dei provides a biblical motivation to minister to all marginalized communities and individuals, treating them with respect and dignity since they were all created with non-corporeal attributes similar to God, which are not eliminated if they are “deep” in their sins. This researcher believes that understanding the Imago Dei and its relation to humanity is the precursor for implementing and executing all benevolent outreach ministries, particularly prison and hospital chaplaincies.

### Prisons and the Bible

A prison is where persons suspected, accused, or convicted are kept. The legal definition of a prison is a public building for the confinement or safe custody of persons, whether as a

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

punishment imposed by the law or otherwise during the administration of justice.<sup>155</sup> Most of the Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible imply the concepts and ideas of restraining individuals.<sup>156</sup> For example, Joseph was thrown into a pit in Genesis 37:22-28 while his brothers deliberated on disposing of him. Samson was confined to a Philistine prison at Gaza in Judges 16:21-25. Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching about Jesus in Acts 4:3. John the Baptist was imprisoned for criticizing a king's marriage in Matthew 4:12. Jeremiah was threatened with prison and was subjected to long imprisonment in the court of the king's house in Jeremiah 32:2. Jeremiah was also kept in a dungeon before being transferred to Jonathan's house, later transformed into a prison.

Paul, before his conversion, led Christians to prisons, and later in his ministry, he was often imprisoned. Paul also predicted that they would be put in prison and suffer persecution for their faith in Christ. Paul's prediction about Christians being imprisoned is spoken of in the book of Hebrews.<sup>157</sup> Also, according to New Testament scholars, the Apostle Paul wrote at least thirteen to fourteen letters in the New Testament. According to these New Testament scholars, Paul wrote four letters while imprisoned; Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon during various imprisonments. According to church history, Paul was imprisoned in the Mamertine prison. According to the Roman historian Gaius Sallustius (Sallust), the Mamertine prison could have been described as the "House of Darkness." Few prisons in

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<sup>155</sup> "Legal Dictionary | Law.Com/ "The Law.Com, Law Dictionary & Black's Law Dictionary, 2nd ed," accessed June 30, 2021, <https://dictionary.law.com/>.

<sup>156</sup> J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1172.

<sup>157</sup> R. Albert Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, eds. David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel Akin (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 221.

antiquity were as dismal as the Mamertine prison.<sup>158</sup> The lower chamber of this prison where Paul was imprisoned was dim, dark, dirty, moisture-laden, and chilly. The prison was known in earlier times as the Tullianum dungeon or prison; its “neglect, darkness, and stench” gave it “a hideous and terrifying appearance,” according to Gaius Sallust.<sup>159</sup> Also, this prison was usually utilized in antiquity to execute political prisoners. According to Tobias Brander, Paul portrayed his imprisonment as an opportunity to grow spiritually.<sup>160</sup> Therefore, it is safe to state that the Bible is replete with information about imprisonment and how Christians should treat those imprisoned, which are considered marginal communities.

The Bible informs us that the church must demonstrate love toward prisoners who are Christians and remember the imprisoned and mistreated. The premise is that a Christian could face the same experiences of suffering one day.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, Christians need to focus on the sufferers as if the former were themselves victims of suffering and mistreatment.<sup>162</sup> The book of Hebrews elucidates on this issue. It states, “Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (Hebrews 13:3, NIV). This passage addresses the church's responsibility to those imprisoned who are also part of the body of Christ. Those imprisoned are usually forgotten and neglected, including Christians. This passage of scripture exhorts the church to focus and pay attention to those imprisoned for their faith in Christ. The church needs to identify and aid those imprisoned

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<sup>158</sup> Derrick G. Jeter and Chuck Swindoll, “Historical Background of Paul the Apostle,” accessed October 3, 2021, <https://www.insight.org/resources/article-library/individual/historical-background-of-paul-s-final-imprisonment>.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Tobias Brandner, *Beyond the Walls of Separation: Christian Faith and Ministry in Prison* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 159.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas D. Lea, *Holman New Testament Commentary*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Hollman Reference, 1999), 236.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

and mistreated for their faith in Christ.<sup>163</sup> This assistance or help for those imprisoned could involve providing food, warm clothing, and making personal visits to provide encouragement and moral support.<sup>164</sup>

However, the historical contents of ancient jails need to be explained to interpret the exhortation included in this passage. In the first century, prisoners were not sent to prisons for a specific length of time. The prison was a place where one was held, usually for debts or awaiting a trial.<sup>165</sup> Suppose one was in prison in the first century. They were most likely there for failure to pay outstanding and substantial debts. Usually, the person imprisoned would have to pay the considerable debt or be sold into slavery.<sup>166</sup> The writer of Hebrews exhorts the body of the church to “put (oneself) in (someone else’s) shoes.” This idiom or adage signifies that one should imagine oneself in the situation or circumstances of another person so one can understand, sympathize, and empathize with the imprisoned person’s perspective(s) and view(s) of their circumstances and nuances. This view might be deemed philosophical or pragmatic, but it is a spiritual nuance for a Christian. The church should treat those in the body of Christ who are imprisoned just like they would want to be treated if they were imprisoned. This researcher attests that the church needs to provide the same empathy and compassion for those imprisoned who are not in the body of Christ. All individuals imprisoned need to experience the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, and the church is the agent of this magnanimous love.

Also, another aspect of prisoners is noted in Numbers 21:1 and Isaiah 20:4. This passage informs readers that prisoners who were taken in war were usually annihilated or enslaved by

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<sup>163</sup> Lea, *Holman New Testament Commentary*, 236.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, 221.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

their captors.<sup>167</sup> The fact is that the Bible is replete in describing the dreadful state of those in prison. The dreadful state of those in prison is elucidated in Psalm 79:11, Isaiah 14:17, and Lamentations 3:34. Those who were imprisoned sometimes declared their hope in God to endure the hardships of their captivity.<sup>168</sup> The fact is that God is concerned about people who are incarcerated. In Luke 4:16-19, the Bible addresses the nuances of prisoners and how God addresses the quandary associated with captivity. The Bible states,

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:16-19, ESV).”

Generally, this passage is associated with salvation since non-believers in Christ have dull senses and are captive to perform the will of him who has ensnared them. This is also referenced in 2 Timothy 2:24-26: “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the devil's snare after being captured by him to do his will.” It is accurate and scriptural to claim that non-believers in Christ are held captive by their transgressions and quirks, which lowers their inhibitions and weakens their moral compass. However, the careful exegesis of Luke 4:16-19 reveals that Jesus is not referring to liberating those in captivity due to their sins. Jesus was quoting Isaiah 61:1, and the word captive in this verse can be transliterated as

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<sup>167</sup> J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1172.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

“shabah.”<sup>169</sup> Shabah is used forty-two times in the Bible. Its definition is to transport into captivity, drive (take) away, be carried away captive, or be taken captive.<sup>170</sup> In Genesis, this word (shabah) describes Lot’s plight when he was taken captive by Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, and his allies. In Luke 4, Jesus refers to those who have been taken captive, most likely in military exploits. Jesus claims in Luke that he has been sent to proclaim liberty to those taken captive (prisoners). The premise is that Jesus is concerned with those imprisoned, and Luke 4 and Isaiah 61 supports this premise. This researcher attests that any concern that Jesus has is also a concern for the church. The church is God’s vehicle to alleviate the pain, hurt, misery, and misfortunes experienced by humanity. People who are in prison are experiencing pain, hurt, and misery. They are considered a marginalized community and are downtrodden, misunderstood, and usually treated without respect or dignity.

In summary, it is reasonable to state that the restrictions imposed in America’s carceral institutions have created a significant challenge/problem for the church to meet the mandate of scripture to minister to those imprisoned and downtrodden. Due to the mandate of the holy writ to minister to those imprisoned and the lack of pastoral care in carceral institutions, it is prudent for this researcher to conduct this action research project and secure a solution to enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in these institutions with the help of God.

#### Theological Challenge Created by the Pandemic in America’s Carceral Institution

A theological challenge has been created globally by this lack of pastoral care in carceral institutions. The foundation for this theological issue can be unearthed by a thorough exegesis of Matthew 25. The Bible states,

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<sup>169</sup> F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs, and W. Gesenius, “Shabah Meaning in Bible - Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon – King,” accessed June 27, 2021, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv/shabah.html>.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why: I was hungry, and you fed me, I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink; I was homeless, and you gave me a room; I was shivering, and you gave me clothes; I was sick, and you stopped to visit, I was in prison, and you came to me (Matthew 25:37-43, MSG).”

This verse clearly puts a mandate on the church to tend to the needs of the oppressed, sick, imprisoned, and disenfranchised. However, the pandemic’s restrictions have impeded the church’s ability to visit and minister to those that are sick, imprisoned, oppressed, and disenfranchised. These COVID-19 imposed impediments represent a significant theological issue/challenge for the church to meet the biblical mandate as per Matthew 25, particularly in carceral institutions, including hospitals. The pandemic has negatively impacted and hindered the ministry to those that are imprisoned, hospitalized, oppressed, and in nursing homes (the at-risk populace); the ministry is minimal or non-existent in these institutions posing a significant theological challenge. Nevertheless, there is hope, and this researcher believes that these challenges can be navigated successfully if the church works in unison to resolve, or at least address, the issue.

### Social Ministry and Prison Ministry

According to Tobias Brandner, prison ministry can be categorized as a social ministry.<sup>171</sup> A social ministry is described as a ministry directed to those in need and the attempt to remedy the social or economic conditions or environment that causes the need. For example, feeding the poor is a social ministry, but the ideal remedy for addressing poverty (not alleviating poverty) is to empower communities with the wisdom and tools to create wealth. Programs that provide adult education, resume writing, job-seeking strategies, basic computer skills, and technical

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<sup>171</sup> Brandner, *Beyond the Walls of Separation*, 159.

training can all be categorized as social ministries. Social ministries in the church are usually associated with food, clothing, and financial support. The most customary social ministries or outreaches are food banks, clothes closets, and financial support. However, visiting the sick, providing religious instruction or guidance in prisons, volunteering at retirement homes or hospitals, ministering to those in hospice, and anything that the church does to meet the physical need of a person is social ministry. When the church is engaged in an outreach prison ministry, it is involved in a social ministry that impacts the inmate and the visitor.<sup>172</sup>

For example, this researcher was transformed by the prison ministry. According to Brandner, the prison ministry impacts the visitor spiritually as the encounter with the inmate's pain, hurt, and suffering helps them discover the painful dimensions of their life that have been buried, never addressed accordingly, and have been hidden under the rationality of everyday life.<sup>173</sup> For example, in 2014, this researcher was admitted into the graduate program of Christian Apologetics at the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University. At this point, this researcher had ministered in carceral institutions in Georgia for fourteen years and was thoroughly satisfied with the ministry. However, upon admittance to the graduate program in the seminary, this researcher started to feel apprehensive and doubtful about the prison ministry. This researcher already had an advanced degree in business (MBA), and upon completing this advanced degree in theology, this researcher will potentially have two advanced degrees. This researcher started to believe that it was time to seek another ministry, such as the director of a ministerial development program or a biblical education program. In other words, pride and arrogance started to saturate this researcher's psyche, which viewed the inmates as unworthy of a

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

person who has achieved two graduate degrees. This researcher believed (at this point) that someone with the academic prowess consisting of two graduate degrees was above the menial task of providing religious instruction/guidance to inmates. However, one fateful day this researcher was reading Matthew 25 and was transformed by the contents of this scripture. This researcher learned after reading Matthew 25 that God personally identifies with marginalized communities such as those in hospitals, prisons, and the disenfranchised. The Bible explicitly states, “I was in prison, and you came to visit me” (Matt. 25:35-36). Matthew 25:40 says, “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” The Holy Spirit utilized this verse to methodically and incrementally convict this researcher of his arrogance and pride demonstrated toward the less fortunate, the inmates who needed ministry at the Baldwin State prison. After embracing this scripture, this researcher repented and understood that advanced theological training was required to provide these inmates with the best religious service. In other words, the advanced graduate degree in theology was not for this researcher’s edification; instead, the purpose of obtaining the degree was to serve the precious inmates in the Baldwin State prison efficaciously.

The Lord used prison ministry as the vehicle to reveal and discover this researcher’s pride, arrogance, and superiority complex caused by the acquisition of knowledge. The prison ministry impacted this researcher’s spirituality and was transformed by discovering and repenting of pride and arrogance that would have hindered the ministry to these inmates. When this researcher participates in prison ministry now, there is much joy because the biblical mandate outlined in Matthew 25 is being met; this researcher provides some comfort and solace to someone in need who is created in God's image. Again, God used the prison ministry to

transform harmful and unbiblical thinking. This transformation is a sterling example of prison ministry affecting positive change in visitors' spirituality.

Another example of how visitors' spirituality is impacted is noted in Brandner's book, *"Beyond the Walls of Separation."* In his book, Bradner describes a spiritually imprisoned woman from unforgiveness toward her father. She explains that her father was not evil, but she claimed that he was "never present."<sup>174</sup> She claimed that she and her brothers were like strangers to him, and they all seemed transparent to him. This feeling of being neglected by her father resulted in her resenting him. This resentment resulted in unforgiveness, which manifested as a struggle with food. This unforgiveness and struggle with food plagued this woman for many years.

This woman also read Matthew 25 and was taking verse 34 literally. She eventually decided to practice the charitable elements described in this scripture by taking steps to give a glass of water to the thirsty, clothe those who are naked, and visit the sick and the imprisoned. Eventually, she visited a prison, and she recalls that after walking into the prison chapel for the first time, she had no idea that she was so broken. It appeared that she had negative experiences with various males, including her male friends from her home. She explained in the book that she was fearful of them, but oddly she felt at peace within the confines of an all-male prison. She claimed that in prison, she discovered gentleness and kindness. She did not feel threatened by the all-male fraternity represented by the inmates; instead, she felt safe since all inmates were locked up, which gave her assurance. She reminded herself that since the inmates are locked up, they could not hurt her, so the prison provided her with a place of refuge, peace, solace, and, most importantly, a place to encounter God.

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<sup>174</sup> Brandner, *Beyond the Walls of Separation*, 161.

In prison, this woman felt no pressure to be anyone but herself. She was not sure why she felt so much peace in prison, but perhaps the brokenness and the humanity she felt from the fellowship and the inmates caused her to examine her life which was full of unforgiveness, resentment, and personal struggles. She explains that many of her friends were heading towards a marital and monetary prosperity life in her church, which she describes as a middle-class professional church. She also pontificates about friends that are rolling in the mud of a vicious cycle of sin-confessions-sin confessions.<sup>175</sup> She explained that she does not have to pretend to be weak or strong when in the prison chapel. The prison chapel became her sanctuary, a safe haven to examine her fears, idiosyncrasies, unforgiveness, and resentment towards her father. She felt at peace in the prison chapel, and eventually, God ministered to her, and she learned to love within the confines of a carceral facility. After learning to love, she explained that healing and forgiveness were possible and when she forgave her father for not being present in her life, the struggles she had with food dissipated. A carceral facility is a home for the imprisoned, a disenfranchised society that is usually sick, maltreated, or forgotten due to their diminished status as unproductive citizens or evildoers.

Nevertheless, in this environment, Christians can find solace, peace, and biblical perspective about the issues in their life that are hindering their walk with Christ. Someone finding biblical perspective and healing in prison appears to be a perfect dichotomy, but “God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.” (1 Corinthians 1:27, NLT) This researcher thought he was potent and wise due to his pedigree as an academic but was actually foolish due to pride and arrogance. God used the prison ministry to reveal this

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<sup>175</sup> Brandner, *Beyond the Walls of Separation*, 161.

researcher's foolishness and conversely used prison ministry to reveal a woman's weakness and uncover her power to forgive. Forgiveness, strength, repentance, correct biblical perspectives being found in a dank place full of hurting people who are sick and have no freedom does not seem possible. However, with God, all things are possible. The positive impact of the prison ministry, which is a social ministry of the church, impacts the visitor's spiritual growth, the inmate's spirituality, and the church at large.

### What Impact Does the Prison Visitor Have on Inmates?

Inmates are often viewed as monsters or socially defiant individuals that fully deserve to be punished for their heinous crimes against society and humanity. However, it has been noted that some prisoners have committed horrendous crimes such as serial rapes, arson, treason, espionage, and terrorism, but others have not committed these crimes. The violent crimes can be categorized as capital crimes which include first-degree murder (premeditated), murder with particular circumstances (such as intentional, multiple, involved with another crime, with guns, of a police officer, or a repeat offense), and rape with additional bodily harm, and the federal crime of treason.<sup>176</sup> According to the statistics provided by Britannica Pro-Con.org, 1,249,700 prisoners were sentenced in 2018 for violent crimes such as murder, rape, sexual assault, and robbery; conversely, 106,500 were convicted for burglary and 176,300 for drugs, including 153,100 for public order.<sup>177</sup> In 2018, 435,000 prisoners were incarcerated for non-capital or non-violent crimes. Therefore, according to the statistic provided in 2018, one can conclude that many prisoners are not hardcore felons or violent. One must be cognizant that the average

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<sup>176</sup> "Capital Punishment Law and Legal Definition | U.S. Legal, Inc.," accessed October 29, 2021, <https://definitions.uslegal.com/c/capital-punishment/>.

<sup>177</sup> Anne Carson and Elizabeth Anderson, "Incarcerated Population by Type of Crime Committed - Felon Voting," accessed October 29, 2021, <https://felonvoting.procon.org/incarcerated-felon-population-by-type-of-crime-committed/>.

sentence for drug possession for the first offender is twenty years; however, it varies from state to state. Therefore, it is safe to state that many offenders in prisons are not hardcore murders or rapists; they most likely were in the wrong place with the wrong crowd and at the wrong time.

One must be cognizant that prisons invoke negative images within the general populace. According to Brandner, prisons have become a metaphor for a myriad of negative imagery.<sup>178</sup> The term prison is associated with negative connotations such as moral depravity and evil, social marginality, educational failure, racial disparity, and disease. Those incarcerated in America's carceral institutions are often viewed as evil, depraved, and unworthy of compassion and mercy. According to Brandner, many traditional cultures associate prison with negative spiritual energies. He states that prisons are believed to be sources of bad luck in many superstitious faiths.<sup>179</sup> For example, enclosed is one case study of a young participant involved in a prison ministry:

A young participant in an evangelic meeting recounted how he was worried about failing to wake up in time and being late for prison ministry. He was well aware that his mother would not wake him up, as she strongly discouraged him from joining the ministry. His mother knew that he was part of a church group, but she was sure visiting prison would bring him bad luck.<sup>180</sup>

The case study above is a sterling example of how the imagery and negative connotations associated with prisons and inmates taint someone's perception of prison and those incarcerated. The imagery created by the prison's appearance usually results in the general populace viewing prisoners as wild beasts who need to be locked up to protect society. Also, prisons have security fences lined with barbed wire and security guards located in remote areas, which create a

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<sup>178</sup> Brandner, *Beyond the Walls of Separation*, 163.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

negative idea or philosophy of those inside its walls. Also, the strict entry procedures provide the philosophy or worldview that there is a stark difference and separation between the world inside and outside of the prison.

It has been noted that the visitors in prison assist in demythologizing inmates and making them real people. Most importantly, they make it possible for the community to see them for who they really are. However, one must exercise wisdom and caution upon entering prisons because prisoners tend to be con-artists and manipulative. However, prisoners are not monstrous, inhuman robots with no feelings and are devoid of the ability to love and behave appropriately. They all are human beings created in the image of God that need to be respected as such. However, their behavior is not that of a wild beast that needs to be tamed or shot-down like a rabid wild dog. Inmates have made poor decisions requiring compassion, mercy, and grace like any other human being. The Bible states that “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23, NIV). This passage states “all,” which includes those that have not been incarcerated. Essentially, inmates have experienced individual, familial, employment, financial, or social problems and have responded to these stressors negatively. Visitors usually make this observation with inmates after several visits with prisoners, and they conclude that inmates are just people who have made egregious mistakes that resulted in their incarceration. Visitors also learn about the nuances in prison life; the reality of the offender’s social and personal life in incarceration usually sharpens the visitors’ perspective of the social context of crime and punishment.

Visitors also learn that crime is not committed in a vacuum; individuals' choice to commit a crime to satisfy their greed or nefarious impulses negatively impacts society. Therefore, a visit to a prison, particularly for a Christian, can make them aware that society

needs healing, not just the individuals in prison. One must be cognizant that inmates/prisoners at one time were part of the general populace. Christians should view prisoners as moral agents who have free will, just like the general populace, and have used their free will to their detriment. The Christian carceral institution visitor should surmise that incarcerated people are part of a social network they have failed. Christians who espouse these views can interact with inmates with grace, mercy, and compassion.

Most prisons/jails are overcrowded environments and are epicenters for disease, racial disparity, and isolation. The prison where this researcher provides religious services has approximately 1000 inmates. About 754 inmates in the general population live in seven housing units (107 per dormitory) that are open dormitories; infections from the COVID-19 can spread rampantly due to this overcrowding condition. Therefore, visitations to this carceral prison and other carceral institutions in America are critical. The visits help break the isolation experienced by both the inmates and the staff members, leading to unhealthy and destructive dynamics. The Standard Prison Experiment of 1971, a psychological test, demonstrated how good people could do “bad and harsh things” when placed in a harsh environment designed to foster mistreatment.<sup>181</sup> The test also demonstrated how the prison environment specifically creates oppressive behavior patterns. The bottom line is that carceral institutions are not friendly social institutions, and they are harsh environments that can foster enhanced destructive and deviant social behavior. A visit from an outsider (particularly a Christian) can assist an inmate in curtailing the development of this destructive social behavior.

One must also be cognizant that inmates need an outlet or a conduit to the outside world. The visitor provides this conduit to the outside world. For example, this researcher conducted

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<sup>181</sup> Brandner, *Beyond the Walls of Separation*, 165.

religious studies and instructions in Georgia's carceral institutions for over twenty years, and many times the inmates thanked me for the visit. Apparently, the visit was just as critical as the sermon, and it could have been the only visit that the inmate encountered in a month, and the visit was the outlet/conduit to the outside

This researcher interviewed a chaplain who visited a county jail in North Carolina and provided a religious service. The chaplain that this researcher interviewed explained that he felt apprehensive about providing the service in the jail. He believed that the inmates in this carceral institution were monstrous and reprehensive individuals. However, after he offered religious service to the inmates in this institution, he concluded that they were just ordinary people who made poor choices in their lives. He needed to enter the jail and interact with the inmates to demythologize his premise: inmates are monsters and hardcore, violent individuals. The chaplain learned that these individuals are just people who need to be respected and treated with respect and, most importantly, that God loves and identifies with them.

In summary, a visitor to prison impacts both the visitor by changing their worldview of inmates and the inmate by providing them an outlet to the outside world, including a break from their isolated environment. The visitor also serves as a liaison between the prison and the community. Essentially, he/she is a critical resource for community involvement in the rehabilitation and care for ex-offenders, which can reduce recidivism for those reentering the general populace.

### Theology of Prison Ministry

Theology has been defined as the study of God and religious truth. It is defined as an organized set of opinions concerning God and man's relationship with God. Theology is not faith, nor is it pastoral care, and it can be categorized as talking about God. This researcher

attests that theology is about life; when Christological theological constructs are studied and espoused, it results in a deep, intimate relationship with the creator God. For example, if one thinks God is cruel, ostentatious, and a harsh taskmaster, their interaction with people will demonstrate that skewed view of God. For example, a false theological construct was espoused and introduced in early America to enslave Africans. Slave owners often claimed that the Bible was on their side by using biblical passages about slaves obeying their masters. According to Mark Noll, many theologians contended that God's providence had brought Africans as slaves to America since they would be able to encounter God in their new environment and become Christians.<sup>182</sup> However, these theologians ignored the Biblical passage in the Old Testament that declares, "Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession," (Exodus: 21,16, NIV). Kidnapping an individual was a capital crime in the OT. The point is that wrong or false theology impacts society negatively; conversely, good, and faithful theology impacts society positively. Essentially what individuals and society believe about God affects how they interact with people and their community. Therefore, studying theology that provides individuals with the correct view of God will teach them to see the world and fallen humanity through the eyes of God. God loves people, and that love for people includes inmates and those less fortunate than others.

A proper theological construct must be utilized in prisons to provide ministry and the appropriate view for incarcerated people. Matthew 25 provides the proper theological construct for prison ministry:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my father! Take what is coming to you in this Kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why: I was sick, and you stopped to visit, I was in prison, and you came to me. And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you? Then

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<sup>182</sup> Douglas Ambrose, "Religion Nationalism and American Identity. - SIC Journal," accessed February 5, 2022, <https://www.sic-journal.org/Article/Index/256>.

the King will say, I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me (Matthew 25: 37-43, MSG)."

The key to this theological construct is that Jesus claims that what one does for the hurting individual can be directly reflected in doing that action for Jesus. If one uses logic to unpack this statement, it can be read that one will meet Jesus by ministering to people in need. The theological premise is that Jesus claims that He is the one who is hungry by the roadside and in need. He is the one in need of clothing and shelter; He is the one imprisoned and in need of a visit; He is the one wearing rags and in a dank prison lying sick and in desperate need of compassion, mercy, and grace. This verse informs Christians that Christ identifies with those who are disenfranchised to the extent that He explicitly states in Matthew 25, "Whatever you do or do not to the least of my brethren, so you did to Me." This verse informs readers that Jesus is already in prisons/jails and hospitals and all places with hurting and disenfranchised people. The theological construct presented in Matthew 25 has two critical factors; one is that visitors do not bring the presence of Christ to the environment; He is already there. Secondly, hurting people and inmates are not monsters or people that should be treated with disdain and hatred since Christ Himself is in this dire environment and situation. Essentially when one encounters Christ in a carceral institution, one encounters God. This statement can be viewed in another vein; one also sees God when one sees Christ in a carceral institution.

Secondly, this scripture does not exempt individuals who break the law from incarceration. This researcher is not claiming that Christ is condoning the criminal behavior of the incarcerated individual. However, this researcher attests that this scripture frames the visitor with the correct theological construct for providing ministry to incarcerated people. Incarcerated people are not second-class citizens who should be viewed as less than human, and they are

people God has created in His image that require His mercy, grace, and compassion, just like the rest of humanity.

In summary, one should approach prison ministry with a deep respect for those incarcerated and with the premise that they are lenses through which to see God.<sup>183</sup> One must understand that suffering is a reality in this world and learn how to process the negative realities of life, especially prison life. Finally, approach prison ministry as an opportunity to grow spiritually as God empowers one with His mercy and compassion to provide ministry to “His” people in prisons.

### Essential Principles of the Kingdom of God

According to Wright, one of the most essential principles of the Kingdom of God can be discovered by carefully studying and observing Acts 11. In Acts 11:28, it states, “One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius).” According to the book of Acts, Agabus was an early follower of Christianity who was a prophet. Agabus, the prophet, proclaimed to the church in Antioch that there would be a great famine worldwide. According to Wright, a careful observation of the Antioch church’s response to Agabus’s proclamation is crucial in understanding this great principle of the Kingdom; this researcher agrees with his premise. Antioch’s church did not respond in kind by stating that this must be a sign from the Lord that He is coming back; they did not say that they sinned and needed repentance and did not believe that this was an open door for enhanced proselytizing.<sup>184</sup> Nor did they start ascribing blame to the government officials or politicians for the impending famine. The Antioch church

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<sup>183</sup> Brandner, *Beyond the Walls of Separation*, 183.

<sup>184</sup> Wright, *God and the Pandemic*, 31-32.

was not trying to determine the cause or the rationale behind the catastrophic event. Instead, they pragmatically asked, who will be at special risk when this occurs? What can we do to help, and to whom shall we send?<sup>185</sup> They decided to assist the church in Jerusalem during the famine since the church in Antioch, located in Syria, was a bustling, cosmopolitan city with more resources than Jerusalem.<sup>186</sup> The point is that God always wants to work through His loyal human beings; the famine provided the opportunity for God's people to address a catastrophic event.<sup>187</sup> They learned that God's Kingdom, inaugurated through Jesus, is all about restoring the creation the way it was meant to be.<sup>188</sup>

They were not passing judgment on sinners or claiming that God was punishing the world for its sin; instead, their modus operandi were based upon providing help to those who need it. Wright argues that the modern-day Christian's reactions and responses to COVID-19 are, at best, knee-jerk responses.<sup>189</sup> His premise is based upon the fact that many Christians are trying to analyze and figure out what God is doing during the pandemic. Questions about enhanced proselytizing are being asked and if this is the end of time. He argues that most modern Christians wonder why God does not do something about the widespread suffering and pain people are experiencing due to the pandemic. The answer is, according to Wright, that God wants to do something through His church.<sup>190</sup> The modern church needs to ask the same pragmatic questions as the church in Antioch when they were confronted with a worldwide

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>187</sup> Hummer, "United States Bureau of Prisons' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, 1262-1276.

<sup>188</sup> Wright, *God and the Pandemic*, 34.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>190</sup> Wright, *God and the Pandemic*, 37-38.

famine. The questions posed in the book of Acts do not appear to be theological or spiritual; they appear to be material and pragmatic. However, if the church attempts to answer these questions, it will quickly learn that geriatric people, those who are incarcerated, and hospitalized people are at “special risk.” Collectively the church should respond to these needs in such a manner that all Christians can join in addressing the at-risk populace.<sup>191</sup> This researcher agrees with the premise presented by Wright.

This researcher is a chaplain, and most chaplains are altruistic persons who genuinely want to help disenfranchised people in need. Inmates were already at risk due to the preexisting conditions and environments in prisons/jails. Most chaplains in prisons and jails have already evaluated the unique risks associated with those incarcerated.<sup>192</sup> This researcher attests that the pandemic has seriously impacted the ministry in prisons due to the pandemic’s restrictions, social distancing nuances, and disinfecting of porous and nonporous areas within carceral facilities. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine stated that “COVID-19 related death rates in carceral facilities were three times higher than in the U.S. population; this issue cannot be ignored.”<sup>193</sup> According to Wright, Christians should not be so self-absorbed in attempting to figure out why God allows this evil to infiltrate His creation or if this is the end time, including who has sinned, resulting in this deadly outbreak of a nefarious virus.<sup>194</sup> Perhaps they should focus more on addressing society’s needs by meeting individuals’ needs, particularly those that are disenfranchised, downtrodden, and oppressed.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Smith, *Prison Conditions*, 32-33.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19*, 1.

<sup>194</sup> N.T. Wright, *God and the Pandemic*, 35.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

This researcher attests those chaplains in prisons and jails who cannot effectively provide pastoral care in these institutions due to the outbreak of COVID-19 are in dire need of assistance from the church to overcome some of these hurdles. Inmates need church services and the message of Jesus to circumnavigate the harsh realities within the prison walls, particularly during the pandemic. Chaplains need the church's collective assistance to provide these essential services to inmates. This researcher believes that some of the hurdles and challenges of ministry in prisons hindered by the pandemic can be addressed if the church works in unison to address them. Perhaps the church can provide more computers for inmates for virtualizing services, masks for personal safety in institutions, or virtual mentors for those who need them. With God's help, the church can collectively assist and enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy within prison walls by providing resources and creative ideas to overcome these obstacles for ministry in prisons. This researcher believes that Christians need to glean and learn from first-century church brothers and sisters as they navigate the troubled waters of COVID-19, particularly in prisons/jails, hospitals, and nursing homes.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

#### **History of Zoom**

Zoom was discovered and created by Eric Yuan. Yuan is a Chinese American and worked as a software engineer at WebEx, which was one of the first videoconferencing companies. Video conferencing platforms provide virtual means for users or businesses to collectively conduct face-to-face meetings without relocating to a single location. This technology is hugely conducive to conducting business in different locations, cities, and countries. Essentially the businessman did not have to travel long distances to conduct business or broker deals for their respective company. This technology catalyzed saving time, travel

expenses, and the complexities associated with long-distance travel. The technology can be utilized for conducting regular meetings, interviews, negotiating contacts, and various other uses.

Yuan was noted as a pioneer in WebEx, and he added more than 800 additional engineers to his team of ten, creating a world-class engineering team for the WebEx company. Eventually, Yuan was promoted to the position of Vice President of engineering for WebEx. It appears that the watershed event for his career occurred when Cisco acquired the WebEx company in a deal worth approximately 3.2 billion dollars. After Cisco acquired WebEx, Yuan spent a considerable amount of time discussing the efficacy of the WebEx video conferencing program with various customers. The WebEx customers informed Yuan that they were concerned with the program; they claimed it was generally complex to navigate and “clunky.”<sup>196</sup> In other words, the program was not user-friendly and difficult to navigate. A few years passed, and there was no apparent improvement to Cisco’s WebEx video conferencing platform.<sup>197</sup> Yuan was contemplating if Cisco had the wherewithal to improve the performance of the video conferencing program. During this year, cloud computing was available, and Cisco could provide a video conferencing product that could utilize the cloud, which could easily be scaled up or down due to the advent of cloud computing to meet the needs and expectations of the WebEx customers.<sup>198</sup> Yuan wondered if Cisco was willing to invest the resources and time to create a new or robust video conferencing platform/program to meet the demands of its video conferencing customers. Also, Yuan understood that tweaking the current video conferencing platform would not suffice, and the platform had to be replaced with a new one. He understood that a new ground-up product would

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<sup>196</sup> Phil Simon, *Zoom for Dummies* (Hoboken, NY: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2020), 10.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Simon, *Zoom for Dummies*, 10.

be needed to enhance the current video conferencing platform to meet his customers' expectations.

Yuan had an affinity for video conferencing platforms/programs, and he was also aware that the internal politics at Cisco would not allow him to undergird a project to build a new video conferencing platform. Due to his desire to build a new video conferencing platform/program and the contentions he experienced in the political environment at Cisco, he decided to leave Cisco in June 2011. Yuan took forty accomplished technicians with him and founded Zoom Video Communications with their assistance. Yuan claimed that he wanted to refine a concept that he first conceived during the 1990s as a college student in China.<sup>199</sup> Zoom currently is the most widely used video conferencing program and has a considerable base of over 300 million daily users worldwide. Zoom also has become one of the most widely used video conferencing platforms worldwide, and its use has resulted in the reduction of the spread of the virus since people and businesses do not have contact during virtual meetings. Therefore, it is reasonable to state that places of worship can use this program to conduct their religious services safely and remotely. The theoretical section of this literature review will provide practical information on how Zoom can provide a safe and virtual environment for places of worship to provide ministry and religious services for their congregants.

#### Coronavirus and Zoom

In late 2019 China reported that several of its citizens were suffering from an unidentified disease. The unidentified disease caused severe upper respiratory problems and illness, resulting in death. During the advent of this unidentified disease, it was also noted that people with comorbidity such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes, cancer, and compromised immune systems

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

were highly susceptible to this disease. WHO did not claim that the disease was a pandemic; they first categorized the disease as an “unprecedented outbreak.” When the disease was finally categorized as COVID-19, it had spread to every country in the world.<sup>200</sup> WHO eventually declared the COVID-19 as a pandemic. The pandemic caused worldwide havoc and panic. COVID-19 was highly contagious. According to John Hopkins University, from March 2020 to the summer of 2020, more than 500,000 people have died worldwide. Secondly, more than five million have become infected by COVID-19 but fortunately recovered.<sup>201</sup> However, most epidemiologists agreed that the propensity for a second wave was inevitable for the fall of 2020.<sup>202</sup>

Several experts noted that the United States' response to the COVID-19 was similar to the pandemic of 1918, the Spanish flu. The Spanish flu caused havoc in society, and as the virus progressed and infiltrated society, the politicians and the government decided to take aggressive countermeasures to reduce the spread of the disease. On October 10, 1918, state governments ordered all public institutions closed. The state also ordered all schools, theaters, and libraries to be closed. Secondly, they canceled football games, and eventually, they issued legislation against spitting and coughing. In Kansas City, KS, weddings, and funerals were banned if more than twenty people were in attendance. The city of New York ordered different and staggered shifts at factories to reduce the rush hour traffic in the city. The mayor of Seattle, WA, ordered his citizens to wear face masks. These responses are similar to the responses experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, during the 1918 pandemic, the nation's healthcare system was

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<sup>200</sup> Simon, *Zoom for Dummies*, 15.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Michael Waters, “Spanish Flu Quarantine: Life During 1918,” accessed July 4, 2021, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2020/04/spanish-flu-1918-quarantine-life-coronavirus.html>.

stretched beyond its capacity. One must be cognizant that the Spanish flu claimed approximately between 50 and 100 million lives. Statistically, this number represents about 2.5% and 5% of the global population. As a response to reduce the spread of this nefarious disease, politicians and governments issued stay-at-home orders. State governments closed businesses, and doctors advised using face masks for outdoor travel. Indeed, one can quickly glean that the state governments, politicians, and federal government responses in the 1918 pandemic were similar to the government's responses in the 2020 pandemic.

Like the 1918 pandemic, the 2020 pandemic resulted in psychological, social, and economic challenges. Also, parks, movies, theaters, schools, retailers, and all places of worship were closed. All professional sports venues were also canceled, including all previously scheduled musical concerts. It was noted that tens of millions lost their employment during the pandemic, and America experienced an unemployment rate of 15% during this era.<sup>203</sup> The economy was compromised, and companies, industries, and workplaces needed a vehicle to remain solvent and employ their staff. Companies and industries needed a vehicle to virtually employ their staff and remain solvent.

In March 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom decided to lock down his state and issued a stay-at-home edict for all Californians, which negatively impacted the state's economy. However, a small company in Danville, California, decided to use a video conferencing program to continue its classes and instructions online, and they decided to use Zoom to keep their business solvent and meet the needs of their clients. The company is Redeemer Music Academy which employs twenty-eight workers. The fact is that most companies and industries decided to utilize Zoom as their primary vehicle to employ their staff by working remotely from their

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<sup>203</sup> Waters, "Spanish Flu Quarantine: Life During 1918."

residence and conducting virtual meetings to continue the vital communication required to conduct business effectively and meet the needs of their respective customers. A licensed Zoom is not expensive, and it provides several essential services for conducting video conferencing. Zoom is categorized as a Unified Communications technology because Zoom provided a collection of integrated communications services (enterprise-grade). These services are instant messaging (chat), voice, audio web, video conferencing, desktop sharing, data sharing, conveying one presence on the video conference (presence information), and unified messaging such as integrated voicemail, email, and fax. With all these integrated services, it is prudent and pragmatic to use Zoom during the pandemic in places of worship to conduct religious services and communicate with respective parishioners and members. The business world was utilizing this video conferencing program to meet their clients remotely to meet their demands, so it was wise for the church to follow suit and meet the needs of the body of Christ using Zoom.

As mentioned in the theological foundation section of this body of research, there is a biblical mandate for the church to provide ministry to marginalized communities, and the pandemic has created a theological challenge for the provision of this care. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic created a colossal challenge for religious institutions to provide religious services and instructions for their respective parishioners or congregates. Most religious institutions had to temporarily close their doors and find means to minister to their congregants.

However, several religious institutions decided to open their doors to minister to congregants temporarily, but the outcome was usually not favorable. Most pastors did not know how rapidly this disease could spread in a crowded environment during the pandemic's genesis. An elder in the New Covenant Ministry church in Georgia informed this researcher that a pastor had decided to open the church; however, his uncle died after contracting the COVID-19 virus.

Issues like this were common during the disease's genesis, and the religious institutions had a dire need to incorporate a means to provide religious services and instructions to their respective congregates. Eventually, most religious institutions discovered that they could provide religious services and instructions remotely by using video conferencing applications like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Go to Meeting. Religious institutions eventually made a mass transition to video conferencing applications that remotely provided religious services and instructions. Several experts claim that the mass transition from brick-and-mortar services to remote video conferencing services has provided more access to religious services than ever before. Corporations, educational institutions, hospitals, banks, real estate agents, and various businesses utilized video conferencing platforms to remain solvent during the pandemic. Therefore, it was highly logical and expeditious for religious institutions to utilize these video conferencing platforms since secular institutions and businesses kept their doors open to conduct business using these technological platforms during the pandemic.

#### Using Video Conferencing Platforms in Religious Institutions

Zoom has its limitations, and Zoom church services can become loud due to people not muting their microphones during the service. A litany of background noise will be heard if all Zoom church service participants keep their microphones "hot" during the service. Secondly, "Zoom bombing" and "trolls" are common issues when using Zoom as a video conferencing platform. "Zoom bombing" essentially is a cyber-attack in which an uninvited person(s) hacks the Zoom video call and takes it over. When this occurs, the person initiating the "Zoom bombing" can introduce explicit content in the Zoom meeting. Zoom bombing is exceptionally uncomfortable, and embarrassing, and it compromises a Zoom church service. The person(s)

initiating these hacks in Zoom, or any other video conferencing platform, can be categorized as “trolls.”

A troll is a person on the internet who deliberately starts arguments and contentions on the internet by posting inflammatory and contentious messages in a particular online community, such as a Zoom church meeting. They aim to sow discord in an online community. Due to these issues, another medium had to be utilized by religious institutions to provide church services succinctly and safely, and the remedy was live-streaming. Live-streaming provided the means to transmit and receive live audio and video events (church service) remotely, safely, and without trolls or hackers to a targeted audience. Eventually, most churches in America decided to use live-streaming to provide religious services to their congregants, and conversely, they utilized Zoom to provide Sunday school or bible studies. The church now had capable tools to remotely provide their religious services to their congregants. This researcher attests that these tools can also be implemented and utilized to enhance pastoral care and counseling efficacy in America’s carceral institutions, particularly in the Baldwin State prison located in Milledgeville, Georgia.

#### Potential Solutions for Providing Pastoral Care and Counseling in Baldwin State Prison

This researcher believes that the video conferencing applications/platforms or the live-streaming platforms mentioned above can be utilized effectively to virtualize the critical pastoral care and counseling needed in the Baldwin State prison. However, this researcher is fully aware that there will be challenges in incorporating and implementing these video conferencing platforms in a carceral environment. First, if Zoom is used to provide pastoral care or counseling in this facility, it must be safeguarded from “trolls” and “Zoom bombing.” Secondly, there are not enough kiosks, laptops, or network devices in the Baldwin State prison for all inmates to log on to the virtual Zoom church service. Also, several religious groups are represented in this

institution: Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, and Judaism. Therefore, one generic church service will not meet the spiritual needs of the inmates in this particular facility. Also, Zoom requires individual logins to eliminate “trolling” and “Zoom bombing.” However, this researcher attests and believes that the Baldwin State prison should use both Zoom and live-streaming to provide pastoral care and counseling in this institution.

As mentioned previously, this researcher worked in a technical department for over twenty-one years and has an affinity for using automation, software, and applications to conduct daily business processes and resolve issues. However, the caveat is that this researcher is not approaching the problem as the subject matter expert (SME) with all solutions or a panacea for the dilemma at hand in this facility. Instead, this researcher desires to use the technical expertise gained in twenty-one years of being a technologist to partner with the chaplain and the warden to advise them on a technical solution to their lack of pastoral care caused by the pandemic. This researcher believes that Zoom can provide pastoral care and counseling to the inmates and the staff. Also, live-streaming applications can virtualize religious services in this carceral institution. The virtualization of pastoral care, counseling, and religious services will assist this institution in reducing COVID-19 infections in this overcrowded carceral environment.

This researcher believes that the action research will lead to a cost-effective, realistic, and objective solution for enhancing chaplaincy’s efficacy in this institution. A collaborative process will be utilized for this body of research, and the stakeholders will be afforded the maximum opportunity to participate in the discovery and implementation of a solution that can enhance spiritual care in this facility. At a minimum, this body of research will address the issue at hand if a solution is not possible for enhancing the efficacy of chaplaincy in this institution. However, as

noted, this researcher believes that technology can be used as a solution to meet the biblical mandate outlined in Matthew 25 to provide ministry to marginalized communities.

### Summary

In summary, Emily Wang, Bruce Western, and Julie Schuck state that “the COVID-19 pandemic has in general exposed and exacerbated long-standing health inequalities in the United States. These long-standing health inequalities have detrimentally impacted socioeconomically disadvantaged people and people of color, notably African American and Hispanic populations.”<sup>204</sup> As a result, these populations are experiencing disproportionate risks of infection, severe morbidity, and death.<sup>205</sup> They argue that these inequalities have always existed in prisons, and due to the pandemic, they only worsen.<sup>206</sup> Wang, Western, and Schuck’s explanations about the conditions in jails/prisons are well-grounded with verifiable facts and have been highlighted in this literature review.

Also, noted in this literature review, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has created global economic challenges, health, and societal issues imposed by the pandemic’s restrictions on society.<sup>207</sup> This literature review also noted the CDC and WHO guidelines that institutions should significantly embrace to reduce COVID-19 outbreaks throughout America.

In summary, this literature review emphasizes that if the local governments, politicians, and prison officials work collectively to address the myriad of challenges created by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the COVID-19 infections throughout America’s carceral environments can be drastically reduced. Secondly, although there were preexisting adverse

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<sup>204</sup> Wang, Bruce, and Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19*, 32-33.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Wang, Bruce, and Schuck, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities During COVID-19*, 32-33.

<sup>207</sup> Shah, *Pandemic*, 15.

conditions in jails and prisons that only worsened when the pandemic became full-blown, they might be able to significantly reduce the rate of transmissions in their respective facilities if they follow the CDC and WHO guidelines and work in unison to do so. Finally, this literature review also addresses the theological and theoretical challenges/ nuances created by the pandemic.

Additionally, the literature review reveals that the church needs to work in unison to address the theological challenges imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak. The premise is, that if local governments, politicians, and prison officials work collectively as “cohesive corporate citizens” to reduce the transmission of the virus, they should be able to enhance the operability of their respective carceral institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, the church should collectively address the theological impediments created by the COVID-19 outbreak. In that case, perhaps more pastoral care can be implemented in America’s carceral institutions, including other institutions lacking this critical pastoral care desperately needed during this tumultuous era in America.

## **Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to present the intervention design that will address the purpose, problem, ministry context, and the central theme of the action-research project. The primary purpose of this action-research project is to resolve or address the lack of pastoral care and counseling, including religious services, at the Baldwin State prison in Milledgeville, Georgia. This chapter will elucidate how the data analysis project is related to this action-research's central theme (thesis). Also, this chapter will include how the intervention design will be aligned and implemented to meet the criteria presented in the project's thesis and the problem stated. The intervention design's action items, including the step-by-step tasks, are included in this chapter.

In summary, this chapter elaborates on the implementation of the intervention design. A detailed explanation of how data triangulation will be achieved is included in this chapter, including the specific types of data gathering, the timeline or the sequence for this data collection, and why this sequence will be chosen. As part of the action-research project, this researcher will interview eleven chaplains in the International Fellowship of Chaplains who work in hospitals or prisons, including the chaplain of the Baldwin state prison. The questionnaires and the survey are included in the action-research project's appendixes.

### **Purpose of Intervention Design**

The purpose of this action research project is to identify and resolve the issues and challenges encountered at the Baldwin State prison located in Georgia during the pandemic that severely compromised the pastoral care and counseling in this carceral institution. The intervention design is based on technology and automation to virtualize religious services and

pastoral care. If this researcher is allowed to implement an intervention in the Baldwin State prison, the intervention design included in this chapter will address the ministry context problem of this research project based on the exegesis of Matthew 25:31-36. This passage of scripture explicitly implies that God expects the church to address the needs of people who are disenfranchised, oppressed, sick, and in need (marginalized communities).

Finally, the intervention design addresses the lack of chaplaincy due to the pandemic in this carceral institution using technology and automation. Therefore, according to Matthew 25, inmates in a carceral institution can be categorized as marginal communities since many are sick, oppressed, and disenfranchised and require ministry. However, the administrative restrictions imposed by the state of Georgia during the pandemic, including the environment in this prison, severely impeded the church's ability to visit and minister to the sick, imprisoned, oppressed, and disenfranchised. These COVID-19 imposed restrictions represent a significant theological challenge for the church to meet the needs of marginalized communities, particularly in carceral institutions.

#### Summary of Intervention Plan

Zoom should be used only for individual counseling or pastoral care. The chaplain will need to have a licensed Zoom account, and he should be the administrator of the Zoom application. He can send a link to the person in need (inmate or staff member) and schedule a specific time for the pastoral care or counseling session. Staff members of the prison usually have access to most of the institution's rooms and offices and can access computers or kiosks to participate in a pastoral counseling sessions. However, the inmates will have to be authorized to use the facility's network devices and be adequately supervised by correctional officers during their counseling sessions. A lack of correctional officers poses a significant logistical problem

for any carceral institution. Another issue is PPE. There might not be adequate PPE for inmates attending the virtual services. After each virtual service, all areas used during the virtual service, including the equipment, will need to be adequately disinfected. Several oversized rooms in this institution can be used to broadcast the church service via a live-streaming platform. Secondly, a large auditorium adjacent to the chaplain's office can be utilized by the inmates to view the live-stream church services.

Conversely, the appropriate live-stream platform must broadcast the event, such as DaCast, Brightcove, Vimeo live-stream, MUVI, or Panopto. These platforms do have an associated cost, and if there is a budgetary constraint not allowing the platform's acquisition in question, the church or a charitable organization should raise the money to pay for this service. One must be cognizant that all religious groups must be considered in church services in a carceral institution. At least four to five different services must be live-streamed by the appropriate minister representing their religious beliefs, such as a priest, minister/pastor, imam, elder, or rabbi. More costs will be associated with these religious services' several live-stream broadcasts; however, live-streaming a religious service in this institution is feasible.

A sizeable smart television (about 65 inches or greater) can be used in the auditorium for viewing the live-stream church service, and the oversized room used for recording the live stream will need to be outfitted with the equipment for broadcasting the live event. However, the auditorium has a capacity of about one hundred fifty to two hundred inmates, and another large room might need to be identified to view the live church service. Also, one must be cognizant that the inmates attending the church service will all have to be tested for the virus before the church service, and the protocols outlined by the CDC must be adhered to avoid further COVID-19 infections in the facility. This researcher is aware that there are several kiosks throughout the

institution, and more kiosks will have to be procured if the warden decides to utilize them for viewing the virtual church service. This researcher attests that a charitable organization should provide these kiosks for the facility if needed to view the live-stream church event. These kiosks are basically “dummy terminals” that only provide access to the facility’s network, and they do not have access to the World-Wide-Network or domains outside the institution.

In summary, this intervention will allow the chaplain to utilize technology to provide pastoral care and counseling in this institution. Also, virtual counseling is a safe environment that will protect the counselor (chaplain or his designee) and the counselee from exposure to the COVID-19 virus. These virtual sessions can serve to reduce the rate of infections encountered in a crowded environment and still provide critical pastoral care for both the staff members and the inmates. The intervention includes the broadcasting of religious services via live-streaming platforms. Again, critical religious services can be provided without inmates, staff members, or live-streaming providers contracting the COVID-19 virus. The intervention’s ultimate objective is to provide virtual services for inmates and staff members while reducing the threat of contracting the virus, and this researcher attests that these are verifiable and practical solutions.

#### Process/Protocols Before Developing Step-by-Step Action Items

For the action-research project and intervention to succeed, this researcher must obtain access to the facility to gather information and data to plan and implement the intervention. This researcher will need to coordinate access to the facility with both the warden and the chaplain. Secondly, since the research project includes a thorough inventory and analysis of the facility’s current network, this researcher will need to coordinate a reasonable date and time via the warden to conduct this action item. The process for obtaining access to this facility can be cumbersome. To enter the facility, one must be fully trained and vetted by either the warden or

his designee. After someone is vetted and granted access, a list must be created by the warden or his designee and provided to the appropriate administrative department. The administrative department must forward the list to the front desk (main entrance to the facility). Also, the visitation dates must match the documentation at the front desk; entrance to the facility is granted only if one's name is on the list at the front desk. This process appears to be straightforward, but it is not; one can be trained and vetted by the warden to access the facility, but if the administrative department does not forward the list to the front desk before the date of the visit, access to the facility is usually not granted. Since this researcher is familiar with the nuances of obtaining access to this facility, it is prudent for this researcher to safely state that it will take two to three weeks to commence with the project after IRB approval.

Also, the trial period for the intervention will take at least two to three months. As mentioned above, the critical issue is obtaining access to the carceral facility. However, the evaluation of the intervention is straightforward. This researcher's intervention will enhance chaplaincy's efficacy in this institution by using software, live-streaming platforms, and Zoom to virtualize pastoral care, counseling, and religious services in this institution.

However, the warden, chaplain, and the technology department in this institution all need to agree to this intervention. If all stakeholders agree with the intervention, an initial test will be conducted to determine the efficacy of the virtual services (a dry run). After all, stakeholders agree that virtual services are a reasonable alternative to brick-and-mortar services; virtual services could become the norm.

This researcher plans on explaining the project in a focus group (only if granted access to the facility). A sample of the focus group memorandum is provided in Appendix P. However, technological jargon or abstract ideologies will not be utilized to explain the project to the

participants. Hopefully, the explanation will be succinct, and it will explain, in layman's terms, the project's intent. The project intends to resolve or address this facility's lack of pastoral care by using technology to virtualize services. If the focus group is not possible, flyers with the verbiage for the focus group can be distributed to the prison's staff. Also, the warden can authorize the distribution of a memorandum that explains the project in-depth to all the staff in the prison, including the inmates. Usually, these memorandums are posted on bulletin boards throughout the facility in areas that all staff can access

### Intervention Design: Zoom Step-by-Step Action Items

Before the advent of COVID-19, pastoral care, counseling, and religious services were all brick-and-mortar services. The action items below detail the steps vital for using the Zoom application for virtualizing pastoral care and counseling.

- i. This researcher, chaplain, and the institution's Technology Department will need to perform an inventory and analysis of the current network.
- ii. The network might need various updates, such as updating the ethernet network to a fiber-optic network or installing a wireless router and providing wireless access points for specific wireless devices.
- iii. The servers, routers, and switches might need to be updated to provide the needed bandwidth for these video conferencing applications.
- iv. Firewalls or DMZ's (demilitarized zones) might need to be created for security. A network firewall or a DMZ is specialized software or hardware that acts as a barrier that protects a computer network from unauthorized access. Firewalls and DMZs can be software programs or hardware devices.
- v. This researcher, chaplain, staff members, and the institution's Technology Department will need to canvas the areas in question and determine the number of computers or devices needed to support zoom meetings.
- vi. A budget must be established to procure equipment and pay for the Zoom application. If new equipment is needed to support the Zoom meetings, a technology team must be identified to install and configure the equipment.
- vii. If the network needs to be updated, a specific network team will need to install the switches, routers, and firewalls needed to support the updated network, including configuring the network equipment.
- viii. Several areas will need to be identified for conducting pastoral care and counseling. One must be cognizant that these sessions should be confidential, even if there are virtual sessions.

- ix. Only specific devices should be authorized for access to the Zoom meetings. The devices in question should only be used for Zoom pastoral care meetings and counseling and designated as such.
- x. The chaplain and the inmates will need to be trained in the proper use of the Zoom application.
- xi. The chaplain or his designee must be the administrator of the Zoom application to schedule the Zoom meetings.
- xii. To avoid trolls or Zoom bombing, the chaplain or his designee will need to send the specific Zoom URL to the counselee with all pertinent information.
- xiii. The Zoom session should be restricted to one hour. A system will need to be established to determine what inmate is in dire need of counseling or pastoral care. One must be cognizant that some inmates will need extensive pastoral care, and conversely, some might need little or no pastoral care at all.
- xiv. The chaplain will have to establish a schedule of his availability and broadcast it to the staff members and the inmates, and he cannot be available on a 24/7 basis.
- xv. The warden or his designee must properly authorize inmates to utilize the Zoom meeting devices, and they must be escorted in and out of the designated Zoom meeting areas.<sup>208</sup>
- xvi. Policies and protocols must be created and enforced to ensure that the inmates and staff members are appropriately informed on the scheduling of the Zoom meetings and the use of the Zoom meeting's computer equipment.

This process enables the chaplain to conduct his pastoral care and counseling in his office without being exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Also, when the COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed, he can still use the technology to conduct “tele-chaplaincy” just like medical professionals do in telemedicine. Technology is being utilized by professionals to remotely provide therapy for mental health issues, medical issues, and counseling, so it is prudent to use these steps to incorporate virtual Zoom services in this carceral institution.

#### Intervention Design: Live-Streaming Step-by-Step Action Items

The following steps outline how the institution can use live-streaming platforms to conduct religious services in prison.

- i. A live-streaming platform will need to be identified by the institution's Technology Department to broadcast the live event (religious services).
- ii. A budget must be established to pay for the services. Additional equipment might need to be procured to support the live-streaming events.

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<sup>208</sup> Community Standards - Housing and Residence Life, accessed December 02, 2021, <https://www.boisestate.edu/housing/housing-help-center/policies-and-standards/community-standards/>.

- iii. Specific devices will need to be identified to view the live-view streaming events.
- iv. Specific areas will need to be identified in the prison to support the live-streaming events, an area to broadcast the event, and, conversely, several areas to view the live event.
- v. The chaplain needs to set a schedule for the live event and consider that all religious groups in the institution should be provided with a virtual service.
- vi. There are about five different religious groups in this institution, and each group requires a particular minister, such as an imam or a rabbi.
- vii. The schedule for each service needs to be vetted by the minister providing the service and the inmates participating in the service.
- viii. Logistics is crucial in planning these different religious services. As mentioned above, the network and the computer network need to be checked to ensure that the network and its associated equipment can support the live event.

As a caveat, all the nuances/challenges for providing virtual church services and Zoom meetings will not be discovered until this researcher canvases the areas and the network equipment with the Technology Department and the chaplain. More action items might be needed to provide these virtual services; however, these steps are crucial for an efficacious intervention in this facility. The implementation of this intervention plan will take approximately two to three months, pending access to the facility.

#### Triangulation for Data and Information Gathering

Initially, this researcher planned on using four methods for gathering data to perform this action-research intervention. However, due to the COVID-19 variant in Georgia's carceral institutions, no one was granted access to Georgia's jails or prisons. Due to these stringent restrictions, this researcher interviewed twelve chaplains, including the chaplain of the Baldwin state prison, who provided current issues and real-world problems, including various solutions to enhance the efficacy of their respective chaplaincy during the pandemic. This researcher utilized specific pertinent questions to ascertain data about the Baldwin State prison's chaplain's willingness to use technology for remote counseling sessions. The questionnaire is provided in Appendix B of this action-research project. Also, this researcher utilized the questionnaire in

Appendix A to interview the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison and, conversely, Appendix D to interview the chaplains in the IFOC.

Essentially this researcher will mainly utilize qualitative research processes for data and information gathering. The qualitative process for gathering information and data will consist of interviews conducted with the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison and other IFOC chaplains who work or are affiliated with prison or hospital chaplaincy. The ultimate purpose of these interviews is to gather information on the “who, what, where, why, and how” of the phenomena/issues experienced by the lack of pastoral care in these institutions. The interviews with the IFOC chaplains will be conducted individually via Zoom. However, the interview with the chaplain will be conducted via email to capture his point of view on the issues experienced during the pandemic. A questionnaire will be transmitted to him with several pertinent questions to obtain his input on the efficacy of chaplaincy pre- and post-pandemic in his facility. The information-gathering process will be conducted with a congenial and confidential decorum. As mentioned by Stringer, one of the tasks of action-research is to ensure that the ways that stakeholders describe the events become the central focus of the research process.<sup>209</sup>

This researcher attests that a partnership must be cultivated between the researcher and the stakeholder to provide them the latitude to chronicle “their story” according to their unique experiences. This researcher will allow the stakeholders to tell “their story.” A plethora of information will be provided with this approach, and this researcher attests that rapport will be established by utilizing this approach. This researcher will allow the interviewee to articulate their story during the interviews to obtain concise information about their struggles and

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<sup>209</sup> Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Incorporated, 2014), 39.

challenges during the pandemic. It will approximately take one to three months to complete these interviews; it depends on the interviewee's availability.

### **Summary**

If the focus groups are allowed, they will be mainly utilized to ascertain how the personnel, including the inmates, interpreted their dilemma during the pandemic and explain the intervention plan's general details. However, if the warden authorizes creating a memorandum highlighting the intervention plan, it will lessen the time to explain the intervention to the stakeholders. As a caveat, if the intervention plan memorandum is vetted and disseminated in the facility, this researcher will not need to facilitate a focus group to explain the intervention plan. If this occurs, the focus group sessions will only serve to interview the stakeholders (staff members and inmates) and provide them an opportunity to chronicle their perspectives about the pandemic in this carceral institution. A one-on-one interview will be conducted with the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison via email to obtain his perspective about the impediments and challenges he experienced during the pandemic that compromised his ability to provide chaplaincy services in this institution. A questionnaire will be provided to the facility's chaplain to obtain data about his willingness to use technology for remote pastoral care and counseling sessions. Secondly, interviews will be conducted with IFOC chaplains who work or are affiliated with hospitals and prisons to obtain their perspectives about the impediments and challenges they experienced during the pandemic that compromised their ability to provide chaplaincy in their respective ministries.

Due to the visitation restrictions imposed by the Georgia Department of Corrections, this researcher will mainly use qualitative research processes to gather the data and information during this action-research project. As a caveat, one must be cognizant that COVID-19 in a

carceral institution cannot be addressed like it can with the general populace. Inmates are constantly being transferred from other facilities, and the population in this environment is in constant flux. The population never remains the same in these carceral institutions, and even if prison officials allow brick-and-mortar services in these institutions, this researcher believes that there will be a need to provide virtual services to reduce further the potential for spreading the virus in these institutions. COVID-19 will not be an issue in these institutions if all staff members, inmates, wardens, correctional officers, offender's families, correctional healthcare staff, and correctional educational staff get tested and vaccinated for the virus in every institution in America. Unfortunately, these action items are not possible; therefore, this researcher attests that virtual services are needed to provide critical care and chaplaincy in these facilities. This researcher believes that the results of this action-research project will prove to be highly beneficial in enhancing the efficacy of chaplaincy in the Baldwin State prison even if the restrictions are lifted, and no virtual services are conducted during the pandemic. The rationale for this premise is that virtual services will prove beneficial after the pandemic has been deemed to be in "control" in the general populace; most likely, it will not be in "control" in any of America's carceral institutions. Carceral institutions are unique, overcrowded, and totally different from "normal" institutions. Eradicating or normalizing the spread of the virus in this harsh, overcrowded environment will be difficult. Therefore, it is safe to state that virtualized services might be needed to provide the most critical care (medical, spiritual, or visitation) to inmates even after America's medical experts claim that the virus is under control in the general populace.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### **Introduction**

To execute an extensive qualitative research process, this researcher interviewed twelve chaplains that were either affiliated with county jails, state prisons, hospitals or were in the process of obtaining a certified pastoral education (CPE), including the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison. Ten of the chaplains interviewed are in the International Fellowship of Chaplains (IFOC), one works in the Youth Detention Center in South Carolina. This researcher asked them pertinent questions to ascertain how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their chaplaincy in their respective locales, including how they navigated the obstacles imposed in their ministries by the pandemic. Secondly, this researcher provided the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison with a questionnaire that measured his willingness to participate in a pilot program to virtualize religious service and pastoral counseling in his facility. Additionally, this researcher provided the Baldwin State prison chaplain with a second questionnaire that allowed him to chronicle the issues, challenges, and nuances he experienced as a chaplain during the pandemic in his facility. Four of the chaplains interviewed provide chaplaincy in a medical facility (hospital), and the remainder provides chaplaincy in a carceral institution. Some provide chaplaincy in both a carceral and hospital institution. This chapter will provide the essential and pertinent data provided by these interviewees. The interviews intended to capture the challenges they encountered to provide chaplaincy in their respective ministries, including how they struggled to overcome these challenges during the pandemic. This chapter is divided into two subsections. One section will cover how chaplaincy was managed, executed, and implemented in carceral institutions and the other in medical facilities (hospitals) during the pandemic. Also, this researcher attended a five-hour credentialing course sponsored by Georgia's Department of

Corrections to gain access to the carceral facility in Milledgeville, Ga, to conduct research and implement a pilot program and the intervention design. However, due to the visitation restrictions imposed by Georgia due to the pandemic, no one was granted access to any state prison in Georgia. The fact is that no volunteer has been granted access to any state prison in Georgia as of the time of this writing (12/30/2021) due to the advent of the COVID-19 variants.

However, this researcher still affirms that the intervention design provided in this research project is robust and worthy of implementing and executing virtual services for providing pastoral care and counseling in any carceral institution. The rationale for this statement is based upon the fact that this researcher was employed in the technology field for over twenty-one years and has supervised a myriad of highly technical projects that were successful.

#### Chaplaincy in Medical Facilities (Hospitals) During Covid-19

This researcher interviewed four IFOC hospital chaplains, and several topics were discussed and chronicled during the interviews. The main topics discussed during the interviews are as follows: how COVID-19 impacted their ability to provide chaplaincy in their respective facilities, the impact of COVID-19 on staff members and patients, how training was being conducted, adherence to the CDC's guidelines for social distancing, and quarantines and dealing with the sheer number of deaths experienced in their respective facility during the pandemic. All the interviews were conducted via the Zoom application, and this researcher recorded the conversations on the Zoom cloud to capture their conversations accurately and provide precise information/data for the action-research project.

All the interviewed chaplains noted that the advent of COVID-19 impacted their chaplaincy. For example, Chaplain Jeo Olsen of Taos, New Mexico, stated in her interview, "before the pandemic, I was a free agent, and my main ministry was with the facility's staff

members; however, during the pandemic, the ministry changed.”<sup>210</sup> She also stated during her interview that she functions as a crisis interventionist for the hospital.<sup>211</sup> Olsen had to perform the death notification of the emergency room charge nurse to other staff members when she died of suicide. She also elucidated during the interview that the hospital created a COVID-19 hotline, and chaplains primarily monitored the crisis hotline during the pandemic.

However, during the pandemic, Chaplain Olsen was called upon several times to provide chaplaincy for a patient dying of COVID-19. The caveat was that she was allowed to provide chaplaincy to the dying patient upon request only. During the pandemic, most clergy in Taos, New Mexico, declined to visit their congregates in the hospital dying of COVID-19, most likely due to the fear of being infected with the virus. Olsen was essentially the last resort for providing chaplaincy to a soul dying from COVID-19 in the hospital. If she had declined to provide chaplaincy (ministry of presence) to these people, they would have died alone without their family members or spiritual leader. Also, during the pandemic, the medical professionals in the institution that were eligible to retire were all considering retirement to escape the stressors and pressures experienced by the sheer number of people dying from the virus in the facility. If they all retired at once, it would have created a monumental problem for the hospital. The least experienced medical personnel in the hospital would have been left to address the needs of COVID-19 patients in the facility during a pandemic, including routine procedures and emergencies. The results of the most seasoned staff retiring at the same time would have been catastrophic in this hospital. One must be mindful that Taos has a population of approximately six thousand people with one medical facility to serve its citizens. A mass exodus of seasoned

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<sup>210</sup> Jeo Olsen, interview by author, New Mexico, October 28, 2021.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

medical personnel from this facility would have severely compromised the medical care for the people in this small town in New Mexico. Olsen also explained in her interview that there was an increase in mental health issues. She stated, “the community had a significant need for mental health professionals.”<sup>212</sup> She also experienced a significant increase in addressing the needs of the facility's staff members, and she utilized Zoom to provide them with pastoral care and counseling.

Also, a chaplain in the Tampa Bay area, Shelley Westbrook, was participating in CPE training before the advent of the pandemic, and when COVID-19 became rampant in that area, she was unable to continue her training in the facility. The CPE training had to be completed virtually, which represented a hurdle for this type of training. One must be mindful that CPE training should be conducted in a hospital environment to meet the College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy learning objectives. Westbrook stated in her interview, “the instructor allowed the students to use Zoom as the medium to continue their training.”<sup>213</sup> She also stated, “the hospital provided us a list of staff members (nurses mostly) that needed pastoral care; secondly, the list of chaplains in the virtual team was utilized to minister to those in need remotely.”<sup>214</sup> Essentially she provided chaplaincy telephonically to the staff members of the hospital and the chaplains in the virtual team to satisfy the criteria of the clinical portion of the CPE.

Westbrook was not granted access to the hospital from March 2020 until May 2020. When she was finally granted access to the facility, she noted that the hospital strictly adhered to the CDC and WHO guidelines for conducting business in a COVID-19 environment. She stated

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<sup>212</sup> Olsen, interview.

<sup>213</sup> Shelly Westbrook, interview by author, Florida, September 03, 2021.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

in her interview, “all chaplains including staff members had to wear a face shield with a mask underneath the shield which hindered patient communication.”<sup>215</sup> The advent of COVID-19 did provide an impediment for ministry for Westbrook. The rationale for this statement is that she could not minister to patients due to not having access to the hospital for several months.

However, she was allowed to contact staff members of the hospital to minister to them. Secondly, when she was allowed to reenter the facility, the wearing of PPE resulted in communication obstacles between clergy, staff members, and the patients. The patients could not understand them because the mask muffled their communication and provided minimal amplification to project their voices. However, this interview provided empirical proof that this researcher’s premise, or syllogism, is correct. The premise, or the syllogism, is that technology that is not a substitute for a face-to-face interaction can be utilized effectively to provide chaplaincy, ministry, and pastoral care for those in need. She explained that the hospital utilized an iPad to connect patients remotely with their families, including clergy, to receive pastoral care and counseling. The hospital also allowed patients who have an iPhone to communicate remotely with their loved ones and clergy via Facetime, including the chaplains employed by the hospital. She also explained that the Zoom platform was utilized effectively and efficiently by the CPE proctors to train CPE candidates. However, since the CPE candidates were not allowed to enter the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic, they could meet their clinical hospital requirements by participating in a telephonic ministry outside of the hospital. This researcher attests that Westbrook’s interview strengthened this researcher’s premise. The premise also includes the perspective that virtual services deliver a viable, potent tool to provide chaplaincy, pastoral care, and counseling remotely. This researcher firmly believes that using these technologies for

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<sup>215</sup> Westbrook, interview.

ministry by hospital staff members, including hospital chaplains, is paving the way for other institutions to utilize virtual services for ministries, such as in America's carceral institutions. It is an efficacious tool to assist chaplains in carceral institutions in providing ministry and pastoral care.

Chaplain Brook Colburn utilized Zoom to meet the theoretical requirements of her CPE training. Although the theoretical requirements of the CPE training should have been met in a clinical environment, they had to be met virtually via the Zoom platform. As noted in this researcher's action-research introduction, COVID-19 imposed impediments represent a significant theological issue/challenge for the church to meet the mandate as per Matthew 25, particularly in carceral institutions, including hospitals. Essentially the pandemic has negatively impacted and hindered the ministry to marginalized communities who are imprisoned, hospitalized, oppressed, and in nursing homes (the at-risk populace). The ministry is minimal or non-existent in these institutions posing a significant theological challenge. Secondly, Colburn elucidated that the lack of pastoral care and counseling resulted in morale issues and increased mental health challenges throughout the facility. This researcher's premise is that technology can be used effectively to advance or continue pastoral care during the pandemic. Colburn's use of Zoom to complete her CPE training is an excellent example of how technology can be utilized to administer pastoral care or religious instruction or guidance. However, most religious leaders, pastors, and chaplains agree that virtual pastoral care and counseling is not as robust as a face-to-face session, but it is considered doable, viable and effective for providing pastoral care and counseling during the pandemic.

Colburn also explained that the hospital suffered from a significant increase in patients in 2020 due to unvaccinated people, and she described this increase as the "pandemic of the

unvaccinated.”<sup>216</sup> During her interview, it was noted that the ministry had morphed due to the sheer number of active COVID-19 patients and the increased care needed for doctors, nurses, and staff members.<sup>217</sup> She also claimed that most chaplains in her facility were overworked during the pandemic due to the sheer number of deaths experienced in the facility.

Chaplain Gale Yandell from Houston, Texas, meticulously explained in her interview that the facility she works at during the pandemic required all staff members, including clergy, to remove their outer clothing, take a “decontamination shower”, and wear a hazmat suit after the decontamination process. Yandell claimed that this cumbersome process resulted in tensions between the chaplains and the hospital’s staff.<sup>218</sup> Also, if a patient was about to die from COVID-19, the chaplain could not interact personally with them.<sup>219</sup> Olsen experienced similar problems in her facility. The difference was that the ICU unit of the Taos hospital is a negative pressure room. A negative pressure room is a hospital room that keeps patients with infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, isolated from other visitors, patients, and staff members. In the hospital in Taos, if a patient dying from COVID-19 requested their spiritual leader to be present with them before they died and refused, the chaplain was allowed to be present with them as a last resort. However, in most medical facilities, patients who died from COVID-19 were alone.

Yandell explained that not being able to comfort a patient dying from COVID-19 in her institution was a significant issue for her and the other employed chaplains. She explained in her interview that during the transition of the dying patient, chaplains wanted to embrace the

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<sup>216</sup> Westbrook, interview.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Gale Yandell, interview by author, Texas, September 08, 2021.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

individual(s) and hold them close so that they would feel that they were not dying alone.<sup>220</sup> The lack of providing the ministry of presence to a dying patient in this facility resulted in a significant theological challenge for the chaplains employed in this institution. One must be cognizant that chaplains are uniquely trained and gifted to provide the “ministry of presence” to people experiencing the worst day of their lives. Any chaplain deprived of providing this ministry of presence to a dying patient will contend that this denial deprives them of performing their sacred responsibility to alleviate the pain, hurt, and suffering of those in need; indeed, this is a significant theological challenge.

Yandell also explained another issue that surfaced during COVID-19 in her facility. The doctors and nurses were constantly dealing with life and death issues in her facility. She explained that approximately 520 patients died in this facility within a short period.<sup>221</sup> According to Yandell, doctors and nurses became overwhelmed with the deaths they experienced in this facility in this short time, and the result was an increase in pastoral care and counseling for staff members in this facility. She also explained that morale was low, and tempers were ignited from minor issues, such as cold coffee in the cafeteria. The hospital did not employ sufficient chaplains to provide enough chaplaincy services for staff members, patients, and family members, and due to the extreme stressors experienced in this facility from COVID-19, the chaplains were overloaded attempting to provide this critical care.

Yandell is employed in this hospital's breast cancer infusion ward, and she experienced ninety-six deaths during COVID-19. She regularly receives counseling, comfort, and solace from a therapist to remain focused and objective as she provides chaplaincy services in the hospital's

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<sup>220</sup> Yandell, interview.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

tense and stressful environment. She also explained that most of the chaplains employed in the facility feel inadequate to assist those with COVID-19. She also explained that most chaplains in her facility had worked non-stop for eighteen months during COVID-19. Yandell stated, “most chaplains and staff members in her facility are overworked, stressed, and are tired of working daily in a life and death environment.”<sup>222</sup>

However, her hospital has implemented technology for training and utilized automation (Zoom) to provide pastoral care and counseling to its staff members. The hospital also issued tablets that must be decontaminated frequently to communicate remotely with the patient’s family from the facility’s confines. She noted that she utilized the tablet for communicating with a dying patient’s family remotely to provide closure for their loved ones and family before transitioning. Using these virtual platforms for chaplaincy is an example of how automation can enhance chaplaincy in a COVID-19-rich environment. This researcher attests that these virtual platforms, tablets, and Zoom can be utilized in carceral institutions to virtualize religious services and instruction.

In summary, the information provided by the interviewees supported the premise that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the medical facility’s operations, including its staff members and patients. In most medical facilities, patients dying from COVID-19 were alone without their family, clergy, and close friends. Doctors and nurses became overwhelmed and overworked as they attempted to address the sheer numbers of patients in their respective facilities suffering from COVID-19. In most cases, chaplains employed by medical facilities became overworked, addressing the increase of ministry caused by the stressors and pressures experienced by the staff members of their respective facilities. They had to provide chaplaincy to

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<sup>222</sup> Yandell, interview.

both the patients and staff members during COVID-19, and some of them worked consistently for eighteen months attempting to provide this critical care. To continue operating in a COVID-19 infected environment, hospitals had to strictly enforce the CDC and WHO protocols of decontamination, social distancing, and quarantining to protect their employees and patients. In other cases, volunteer chaplains were not granted access to the facility, resulting in a decrease in chaplains needed to meet the spiritual needs of the staff members and patients in most medical facilities.

However, some hospitals allowed chaplains to use Zoom, tablets, Facetime, or automation to provide chaplaincy to dying patients, staff members, and family members. The virtualization of these religious services provided hospital clergy with a robust and doable tool to provide chaplaincy remotely. It is not as robust or consequential as a face-to-face session, but it did prove to enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in the hospital environment. The fact is that the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, the Holy Cross Medical Center in Taos, New Mexico, and the hospitals in the Tampa, Florida, and north Georgia areas have employed automation to interact with its patients or provide the “ministry of presence” with much success. This researcher believes that virtualizing pastoral services in hospitals will become the norm, just like an E-visit to a medical professional. This virtualization of services in medical facilities (clergy and medical) will likely be the norm even after COVID-19 has been eradicated in America.

#### Chaplaincy in Carceral Facilities (Prisons and Jails) During Covid-19

This researcher interviewed six (IFOC) prison chaplains, one chaplain employed by the South Carolina’s Youth detention Center (YDC), and the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison. Seven interviews were conducted via the Zoom application, and this researcher recorded the

conversations on the Zoom cloud to capture their conversations accurately and provide precise information/data for the action research project. As a caveat, this researcher utilized a questionnaire to obtain the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison's perspectives on the challenges he encountered in his facility during the pandemic. Enclosed are the main topics that were discussed and chronicled during the interviews.

Chaplain Charlie Weiley was interviewed by this researcher on 09/14/2021, and the details provided in his interview further strengthen this researcher's hypothesis. He explained that offenders need an outlet or conduit to the outside world. Due to the restrictions imposed during the pandemic, they were denied two outlets to the outside world.<sup>223</sup> They were denied visitations from their clergy and their families. Weiley also explained that this lack of connectivity to the outside resulted in a significant increase in mental health issues and nuances and a sharp decline in morale. Also, no volunteers were granted access to the facility throughout the pandemic; essentially, the offenders were isolated and devoid of spiritual guidance. Eventually, the offenders decided to sue the state of Wisconsin for not being provided with religious services, which is mandated by Wisconsin state law. The fact is that all states have this requirement; offenders must be provided with religious services; it is their right. However, due to the rate of transmissions of COVID-19 in carceral institutions, the lawsuit against the Wisconsin Department of Corrections was not honored. At this point, the environment in this carceral institution was quite dismal. Eventually, the prison officials decided to virtualize religious instructions and guidance; their decision to use automation was quite promising.

This researcher thoroughly believes and attests that carceral institutions can virtualize religious services to provide religious instruction and service for offenders. The details of

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<sup>223</sup> Charlie Weiley, interview by author, Wisconsin, September 14, 2021.

Weiley's interview validated this researcher's belief in the virtualization of religious services and instruction in carceral institutions. Weiley explained that after the prison officials allowed inmates to attend services in the chapel during the pandemic, the chaplain was authorized to use the internet for providing services.<sup>224</sup> Weiley utilized his laptop, or state-issued device, to provide the service to the inmates. He explained that he could log on to the internet and log on to a religious service on his device. It was noted that the inmates were not allowed to manipulate the device. Secondly, a minister employed by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections could provide a Zoom service from his/her respective location to various facilities within the state. However, the minister facilitating the virtual religious Zoom service was allowed only to project his image; no other person was allowed in his/her Zoom session.

Conversely, the inmates associated with their religious group were the only duly authorized personnel to participate in the Zoom service. Also, last year, the prison officials allowed ten inmates to view and participate in remote religious service, and after a while, they increased the number to forty inmates that were allowed to participate in the remote religious service. Weiley has a firm belief that technology can be used for providing religious services within the confines of a carceral institution.<sup>225</sup> Please note that this researcher's body of action research intends to resolve, or at least address, the issue with chaplaincy's efficacy in Baldwin State prison located in Milledgeville, GA. The goal of this researcher's action-research is to provide a vehicle or means for resolving the efficacy of chaplaincy in all of America's carceral institutions by providing realistic, cost-effective solutions for virtualizing religious instruction and pastoral care utilizing state-of-the-art automation to do so. This action-research might

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<sup>224</sup> Weiley, interview.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

provide, or catalyze, a cost-effective real-time solution(s) to assist the current chaplain's efforts to provide chaplaincy in this facility and improve the efficacy of his efforts. The utilization of technology in Wisconsin's Kettle Moraine Correctional facility is a sterling example of how technology can be used to provide virtual religious services in a carceral facility. The details provided in Weiley's interview strengthen this researcher's premise for using technology to virtualize services in a carceral institution. Weiley provides pertinent data in his interview on how prison chaplains can use technology to increase pastoral care and counseling efficacy within their respective facilities. Therefore, the contents of this interview provide validation and rationale for undergirding this researcher's action-research project, which is to provide cost-effective solutions to virtualize services in the Baldwin State prison.

Chaplain Pamela is a chaplain in the IFOC who sponsors an online prison mentoring program. She is the founder and CEO of Life Changers Legacy Chebar I.N.C. Pamela started Chebar Ministries in prison through the class called "Daughters of Zion, Women of God, Using Their Time Wisely." She was released from prison in November 2010, and since her release, she has created programs under the name of Life Changers Legacy. God has called her to a ministry for women in prison on drug-related charges, including their families.<sup>226</sup>

Chaplain Pamela Hillman stated during her interview that COVID-19 hindered her ability to access religious institutions and other institutions to provide the word-of-mouth marketing needed for soliciting mentors for the online program.<sup>227</sup> She meticulously stated that the harsh and volatile environments in prison(s) only worsened during the pandemic due to the state-imposed visitation restrictions; no one was allowed to enter these facilities, including the

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<sup>226</sup> Beth Bennett, "Pamela Hillman, Founder & President – Life Changers Legacy," accessed January 2, 2022, <https://www.lifechangerslegacy.org/team/pamela-winderweedle-hillman/>.

<sup>227</sup> Pamela Hillman, interview by author, Georgia, October 21, 2021.

offender's families and clergy.<sup>228</sup> She elucidated in her interview that security, food distribution, and sanitation became monumental issues and challenges for inmates, including the prison's correction officers and staff members during the pandemic. She noted that in a particular facility, the food contained worms and was contaminated.<sup>229</sup> Secondly, the offenders were on a 24/7 lockdown in most institutions, and mental health issues only worsened due to the constant isolation. She stated that gangs have emerged as the dominant force in prisons and have taken over the prisons.<sup>230</sup> She also explained how automation could be used in carceral institutions to provide pastoral care and counseling, providing hope to these marginalized incarcerated communities. This interview provides empirical proof that virtual platforms such as Zoom provides a cost-effective, real-time solution(s) to assist any chaplain's ability to provide chaplaincy in their respective facility. Therefore, the contents of Hillman's interview further strengthens the syllogism presented in this researcher's body of research. The syllogism is that COVID-19 impeded the efficacy of chaplaincy in carceral institutions; secondly, automation can be used to overcome this COVID-induced environmental impediment. The contents of this interview both prove that this syllogism is accurate and that using automation can increase the efficacy of chaplaincy in any institution that has experienced a lack of pastoral care and counseling due to the pandemic.

Chaplain Billy Williams, an IFOC chaplain who resides in the Galveston, Texas area, was interviewed by this researcher, and he provided pertinent information about the impact of COVID-19 on his ministry. He explained that he provides pastoral care and counseling for the

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<sup>228</sup> Hillman, interview.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

county prisons and hospitals within the confines of his locale. Williams also explained that he felt disappointed and disheartened because he could not provide this critical pastoral care for offenders during the pandemic.<sup>231</sup> His interview further defines and outlines that lack of pastoral care and counseling in a carceral institution impacts the inmates and the overall environment within the facility. According to Williams, the presence of a chaplain in a carceral institution provides a conduit for the outside world for inmates.<sup>232</sup> He believes that when COVID-19 severed this outlet/conduit to the outside imposed visitation restrictions, it enhanced the inmates' seclusion and loneliness, which he describes as isolation.<sup>233</sup> Williams explained that the county jails in the Galveston area utilize their internal communication equipment and network to virtualize religious services and broadcast them to inmates to individual monitors located in the dormitories. However, he stated, "no human contact was allowed."<sup>234</sup> Williams also explained in his interview that morale in these institutions was extremely low; he noticed a significant increase in mental health issues among the offenders.

Therefore, it is safe to state that the details provided in Williams' interview are congruent with this researcher's premise. This researcher's premise is that utilizing virtual services to provide religious services is a vital tool to enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in any COVID infected carceral environment. Secondly, this researcher attests that COVID-19 has negatively impacted the efficacy of chaplaincy in carceral institutions. Williams' interview provided reasonable plausibility for this researcher's premise, further strengthening this researcher's hypothesis. In summary, COVID-19 has negatively impacted carceral institutions,

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<sup>231</sup> Billy Williams, interview by author, Texas, September 15, 2021.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

and using platforms to virtualize religious services is a robust vehicle to meet the mandate of ministering to marginalized communities, as per Matthew 25.

Chaplain Kim Rock and a chaplain that resides in west Texas (the name was admitted upon request from the interviewee) were interviewed by this researcher, and they also were negatively impacted by the advent of COVID-19. Rock resides in Pennsylvania, and he provided pastoral care and counseling in the county jail (Westwood) pre-COVID but was denied access to the facility during the pandemic due to the state-wide visitation restrictions. As noted during the interview, clergy, lawyers, family, and friends were also denied access to the facility due to the pandemic. He explained during the interview that this severed outlet to the outside world, which volunteers provide, negatively impacts the inmate's morale and mental health, including staff members.<sup>235</sup> He also explained that this facility did not allow automation to virtualize services. He carefully explained that this facility was on a complete "lockdown" for eighteen months; no visitation, no volunteerism, and automation was not allowed to virtualize religious services or instructions.<sup>236</sup> Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the environment in this county jail was quite uninviting, most likely resulting in increased mental health issues/challenges among its offenders and staff members. It is apparent that the advent of COVID-19 negatively impacted Rock's ability to provide the critical pastoral care counseling needed in this county's carceral institution.

The chaplain that resides in west Texas experienced similar challenges during the pandemic. He also provided chaplaincy to both a state prison and county prison pre-COVID-19. He explained during the interview that he procured a large galvanized six-foot steel horse trough

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<sup>235</sup> Kim Rock, interview by author, Pennsylvania, September 13, 2021.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

and painted it blue.<sup>237</sup> He utilized this trough to baptize the offenders in various institutions, and he baptized approximately two hundred offenders pre-COVID -19.<sup>238</sup> However, when the pandemic started, he was denied access to state and county jails and could no longer provide this religious service to the offenders, which was detrimental to these institutions. He also noted that clergy, family, friends, and lawyers were also denied access to these carceral institutions.

However, he elucidated during his interview that the city he resides in (Denver, Texas) has a Ministry Alliance team that consists of ministers and pastors throughout the city. He explained that the Ministry Alliance Team of Denver, Texas provided pastoral care and counseling remotely by utilizing Zoom.<sup>239</sup> They facilitated various opportunities, including the National Day of Prayer in Denver, Texas, prayer for the school systems, Thanksgiving Day religious services, and various special events throughout the city. He meticulously explained that the virtualization of religious services increased participation in these services throughout the city.”<sup>240</sup> For example, the Denver City Church of the Nazarene provided a virtual Thanksgiving Day service under the umbrella of the Ministerial Alliance, utilizing virtual platforms such as YouTube and Facebook Live.

In summary, the details provided in this interview highlighting the robust utilization of virtual platforms for providing religious services and the total lack of religious services during the pandemic in carceral institutions further strengthens this researcher’s hypotheses. This researcher firmly attests that the advent impeded the efficacy of chaplaincy in carceral institutions and that virtualizing religious services in these institutions can enhance the efficacy

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<sup>237</sup> Interview with west Texas prison and jail chaplain, interview by author, Texas, September 16, 2021.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

of chaplaincy in these institutions. Denver's Ministerial Alliance utilizes Zoom to provide virtual services; therefore, this researcher attests that those virtual services can be provided in carceral institutions to enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy. Although virtual religious services are not as robust or personal as a brick-and-mortar service, it is an efficacious tool to provide religious services and instructions to those who are incarcerated.

Chaplain Cynthia Lovingood is a chaplain with the International Conference of Police Chaplains and is a contract chaplain in the York County Detention Center in South Carolina. This researcher interviewed her, and during the interview, she stated that visitation was restricted due to the advent of the pandemic. She stated during the interview, "the volunteers who ministered in the facility were denied access to the facility due to the advent of the pandemic."<sup>241</sup> She explained that she encountered several obstacles during the pandemic. One obstacle was that the prison officials reduced her workday to five hours instead of eight, and she was expected to provide chaplaincy to approximately one-thousand personnel, including staff members. Secondly, the volunteer assisting her with chaplaincy was denied access to the facility during the pandemic.<sup>242</sup> Essentially, she provided pastoral care and counseling to the offenders and staff members in this facility without assistance from her volunteer and less time during her workday. She explained in her interview that she was responsible for ordering supplies, writing reports, distributing religious materials to the rank and file, and providing pastoral care and counseling to the offenders and staff members in this carceral institution.<sup>243</sup> She also stated that these daily administrative duties and responsibilities took most of her time and were a deterrent for

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<sup>241</sup> Cynthia Lovingood, interview by author, South Carolina, October 27, 2021.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

providing ministry.<sup>244</sup> The facility was on lockdown due to the pandemic, and no one was granted access to the facility due to the high rate of transmission of the virus. She also noted that no religious services were allowed during the pandemic; however, she could minister to offenders (provide chaplaincy) individually or as needed. Essentially, she was allowed to provide individualistic chaplaincy, but collectivistic chaplaincy was not allowed due to the pandemic. She had to provide chaplaincy, pastoral care, and counseling to one person at a time, all within a five-hour workday. The impediments imposed by the pandemic to providing chaplaincy in this institution were quite severe. However, since this institution housed minors who must complete their education, the center planned to virtualize their education by utilizing Zoom. Therefore, there is potential for virtualizing religious services using Zoom since the center must meet the educational requirements for the youths housed in their facility.

Lovingood's interview provides credibility to this researcher's action-research project's hypothesis. This researcher hypothesizes that automation such as Zoom, GOTO meetings, live streaming, podcasts, etc., can be utilized by clergy to provide chaplaincy, pastoral care, and counseling. Although Lovingood has not used Zoom to virtualize religious services, the center that she is employed with is planning on using Zoom to meet the educational requirements for its youths using laptops. Therefore, this researcher attests that Zoom can provide religious instructions and guidance on these laptops. This researcher also hypothesizes that the pandemic significantly decreased the efficacy of chaplaincy in carceral institutions. During the interview, she explained that she could not minister to the offenders effectively during the pandemic. Volunteers were not granted access to the facility, there was a decrease in staff, offenders were

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<sup>244</sup> Lovingood, interview.

subject to enhanced isolation and quarantines, religious services were non-existent, and the offenders of the facility experienced a general lack of faith.

In summary, the details of this interview strengthen these researchers' hypotheses: the pandemic did negatively impact the efficacy of chaplaincy in all carceral institutions. Additionally, the virtualization of religious services in these institutions can enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy for its offenders.

Chaplain William Stankiewicz of Pennsylvania experienced many challenges and impediments that other prison chaplains have experienced throughout the country. He is the spiritual advisor for the state of Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections. The details of Stankiewicz's interview informed this researcher that the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted his ministry. The visitation restrictions imposed by Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections impeded his ministry to inmates. He stated during the interview that he could not administer the critical program and guidance needed to newly released inmates to reduce their recidivism for eighteen months.<sup>245</sup> Secondly, he could not provide the religious services and instruction he provided quarterly before the pandemic.<sup>246</sup> One must be cognizant that recidivism is an issue for newly released inmates, and the lack of well-structured transitional programming to reduce recidivism is a huge issue. Also, according to Stankiewicz, the lack of religious services resulted in a significant increase in gang-related activities, which worsened the prison environment.<sup>247</sup> Stankiewicz also explained that he firmly believes that the virtualization of pastoral care and services is a viable option for providing these services.<sup>248</sup> Therefore, the

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<sup>245</sup> William Stankiewicz, interview by author, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2021.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

information provided by Stankiewicz in this interview strengthens the action-research hypothesis in this body of research, which is that COVID-19 impeded the efficacy of chaplaincy in the Baldwin State carceral institution. Secondly, Stankiewicz believes that using virtualizing pastoral care and counseling is an effective tool that can enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in carceral institutions. Stankiewicz's interview further defines and outlines that the lack of pastoral care and counseling affects the inmates and the overall environment within the confines of a prison. According to Stankiewicz, the presence of a chaplain in a carceral institution produces a calming effect in prison and injects hope into its inmates.<sup>249</sup> This researcher agrees with his premise that utilizing virtual services to provide religious services is a vital tool to enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in any COVID-19 infected carceral environment; Stankiewicz's interview provided reasonable plausibility for this researcher's premise, and it further strengthens this researcher's hypothesis.

The chaplain of the Baldwin state prison chronicled the challenges and issues he encountered during the pandemic in a questionnaire provided to him by this researcher. The responses and information provided in the questionnaire demonstrates that the advent of COVID-19 in his prison severely impeded chaplaincy in his facility. He mentioned that his pastoral care ministry was negatively impacted due to the restrictions imposed by the prison officials due to the pandemic. For example, he was not allowed to canvas the dormitories and provide individualistic ministry to the offenders to provide solace and hope in this volatile environment. He described this challenge as "movement protocols." He also noted that volunteers were not granted access to the facility during the pandemic resulting in a complete lack of religious services and instruction. He noted that he had to extensively address the ongoing lack of

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

religious services for the offenders in this institution. Also, just like the other state carceral institutions, clergy, lawyers, family members, and friends were not granted access to the facility during the pandemic. The fact is that visitation has been recently allowed in most Georgia state prisons, but all visitations must be done remotely via virtual platforms. At this writing, no volunteers have been granted access to conduct religious services or instruction in most Georgia's state prisons, including Baldwin State prison. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that ministry in this institution is minimal and almost non-existent; one chaplain cannot effectively provide chaplaincy for one-thousand offenders and staff members. Also, since volunteers are not allowed to provide religious services in this institution due to visitation impediments, the whole gamut of religious services and instruction that offenders once offered is no longer available. The environment in this institution is quite dismal.

The chaplain also mentioned in his interview that there is a significant increase in substance abuse in the confines of his facility due to the isolation experienced by the offenders coupled with the lack of religious services. Drugs such as "ice" and "strips" are widely used and distributed in this facility, and the increased use of these illegal substances has resulted in mental health challenges. One must be mindful that drugs are purchased in prison just like in the "outside" world. If the buyer of the drugs incurs a large debt they cannot pay, retaliatory violence is inevitable to get the debtor motivated to pay their debt. It works the same way in prison; the difference in prison is that the offender does not have the luxury to move to another locale to escape the violence of the retributory act. They are in a closed, hostile, and volatile environment in prison, and they cannot run and hide like their counterpart in the "outside" world. They must face their debtor and the retribution for debt incurred for purchasing drugs beyond their financial means. The chaplain of Baldwin State prison believes that this fear of retribution is causing

increased psychosis for offenders in his facility. He also mentioned that some offenders experience guilt and shame because they believe they are violating their religious values and beliefs by using drugs to alleviate their pain, hurt, and suffering. He describes these issues/challenges experienced by these offenders as a psycho-spiritual crisis.<sup>250</sup>

In his response to the questionnaire, the chaplain also explained an increase in ministry to the facility's staff members, and the warden sent his staff to him for counseling and pastoral care. The facility experienced a shortage of correctional officers resulting in long work hours, burn-out, and excessive stress due to the stressors encountered daily addressing the needs of the offenders in this facility. The lack of correctional officers has increased violence in this facility since there are significantly fewer corrections officers to provide security and safety for the general populace of the institution. He mentioned in a questionnaire that he is unsure if a virtual religious service is as robust as a brick-and-mortar service. He believes that virtual ministry is not wrong, but it is insufficient.<sup>251</sup> However, the chaplain has not been allowed to virtualize religious services or instruction and has not experienced the impact of a virtualized religious service but is willing to participate in a pilot program to ascertain the efficacy of virtualizing religious services. He also noted in the questionnaire that he does not have an affinity for utilizing virtual platforms for providing ministry but is willing to participate in training to increase his technical acumen. It is apparent that the advent of COVID-19 negatively impacted his chaplaincy in this carceral institution. Additionally, utilizing technology for virtualizing services would have benefited the offenders and the staff members of this institution by providing remote pastoral care and counseling.

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<sup>250</sup> Interview with the chaplain of Baldwin State Prison, Georgia. November 29, 2021.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

In summary, the chaplain's responses in the questionnaires provided to him eluded that pastoral care and counseling in his institution was minimal due to the sheer number of those who needed it and the restrictive “movement protocols” established by the prison officials. This researcher attests that the utilization of virtual services would have increased the efficacy of pastoral care in this institution. Also, it is apparent that the advent of the pandemic negatively impacted the operation of this institution with increased gang-related activities, violence, and substance abuse. The details provided in the questionnaires strengthen this researcher’s syllogism. This researcher’s syllogism is that COVID-19 has negatively impacted chaplaincy in carceral institutions. Secondly, technology/automation can be utilized effectively to overcome the negative impact created by the pandemic by providing virtual religious services in a carceral institution.

### **Summary**

The visitation restrictions imposed by prison officials and correctional departments restricted clergy, lawyers, family, and friends from entering carceral institutions and providing an outlet/conduit for the outside world. All the chaplains affiliated with prisons who were interviewed mentioned this fact and detailed how these restrictions resulted in isolation, mental anguish, and a general lack of hope for offenders. They also mentioned a general lack of correctional officers in most carceral institutions resulting in a lack of security and safety for both offenders and staff members. Volunteers were not granted access to state prisons, and the typical full array of religious services offered in these institutions pre-COVID-19 was no longer available for offenders. One chaplain mentioned that gang-related activity significantly increased in all of Georgia’s state prisons, resulting in a rise in violent gang-related violence and drug/substance abuse proliferation in these institutions.

The chaplain of the Baldwin State prison mentioned that violent retribution has become inevitable in his facility due to the widespread distribution of drugs resulting in large debts for some offenders. Most prison chaplains have experienced increased ministry to staff members, particularly correctional officers. Correctional officers are experiencing burnout, stress, and contentions throughout these institutions due to the stressors encountered, providing safety and security in a COVID-19 infected, hostile and violent environment. Chaplains needed a vehicle to provide this critical pastoral care and counseling to offenders to inject hope, peace, and some solace to offenders and staff members.

In Georgia, Hillman utilized the internet to provide an online mentoring program to offenders. This mentoring program provided hope and a conduit to the outside world for an offender in need. In Wisconsin's Kettle Moraine prison, the officials decided to use television and Zoom to virtualize services for its offenders. In West Texas, the Ministry Alliance of Denver utilized Zoom effectively to conduct religious services and prayer for its citizens. In Galveston, Texas, the county jail used its internal camera system to provide religious services for its offenders. In a South Carolina YDC, Zoom was utilized to meet the educational requirements for the minors housed in the institution. The chaplain of this institution believes that Zoom can provide religious services and instruction to its offenders since they already have the infrastructure in place to provide virtual services. Another chaplain in Pennsylvania attests that he believes that virtual services can be utilized effectively to provide instructions and information on the avoidance of recidivism for offenders being released in his facility. In other words, Zoom can enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in a carceral institution.

The advent of the pandemic also negatively impacted medical facilities. Chaplains that work in hospitals were either denied access to the facility or were not allowed to provide

chaplaincy to an active-COVID patient. All the chaplains that were affiliated or worked in hospitals that were interviewed mentioned that patients dying from COVID-19 were usually alone and dying without their loved ones or spiritual leader. One chaplain mentioned that she experienced ninety-eight deaths during the pandemic in her facility. They mentioned that doctors and nurses were overworked due to the sheer number of patients that needed medical attention due to the COVID-19, including regular medical procedures and emergencies. Chaplains were also overworked because they had to provide chaplaincy to staff members, including doctors and nurses and the patients who were not active-COVID. Secondly, chaplains were not allowed to provide the “ministry of presence” to dying patients. It was explained to this researcher that most chaplains wanted to hold the patient dying from COVID-19 close to their bosom so that they would not feel that they were dying alone. Family members were not granted access to medical facilities to reduce the rate of infections resulting in family members not having closure when their loved one died from the COVID-19.

However, tablets, iPhones, Facetime, telephones, and Zoom were utilized by several medical facilities to provide ministry to patients and staff members. In Florida, the volunteer chaplain utilized the telephone to provide ministry to the medical facility's staff members. In Texas, the chaplain was authorized to use Zoom to provide pastoral care and counseling to staff members. This chaplain also explained that she used a tablet provided by the hospital that must be decontaminated frequently. She explained that she utilized this tablet for communicating remotely with the patient’s family members from the hospital. She noted that she utilized the tablet for communicating with a dying patient’s family members remotely so their loved ones could say their goodbyes before they transitioned. In Taos, New Mexico, the chaplain utilized Zoom to provide pastoral care and ministry to doctors and nurses in her facility. Therefore, it is

apparent that virtual platforms effectively provided a vehicle for pastoral care and counseling in a hospital/medical environment.

In summary, the interviews' contents and the questionnaires' responses validates two critical issues outlined in this action research project: first, that the advent of the pandemic negatively impacted carceral institutions, and second, virtual platforms can enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy. Technology has been utilized in both prisons and medical facilities effectively by chaplains to provide chaplaincy to offenders and hospital patients, including staff members. The contents of this chapter highlights and provides pertinent information about these two critical issues discussed at length in this action-research project.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

Prisons and offenders have a lengthy history that is congruent with the biblical contents of sin, evil, guilt, and expiation.<sup>252</sup> According to Smith, the motto of one of the first prison reform organizations was “Sin No More.”<sup>253</sup> Therefore, the incarceration of people has a religious and theological connotation, and the person incarcerated for committing a crime is there for redemption. For example, the term penitentiary is a derivative of the word penance. Penance is a religious concept or principle, and it is considered a Christian sacrament. Penance occurs when a member of the Church confesses sins to a priest and is given absolution for their sin. In the Roman Catholic church, it is considered an act of reconciliation. However, reconciliation is not taking place in America’s carceral institutions.

In America, politicians and society have attempted to modify deviant behavior with various programs and treatments but to no avail. Eventually, stricter laws were created to deter deviant criminal behavior. These stricter laws have resulted in more incarcerations, and the biblical concepts of reconciliation and redemption are not the values incorporated in America’s carceral institutions. As of 2007, approximately two million people were incarcerated in America’s carceral facilities. Winston Churchill stated that the treatment of criminals and crime is one of the “most unfailing tests of any country.”<sup>254</sup> This large number of incarcerations has resulted in the overcrowding of prisons, worse living conditions, and severe financial shortages in most of America’s carceral institutions. These issues worsened during the pandemic, and the incarcerated also experienced a secondary problem. They were unable to receive pastoral care

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<sup>252</sup> Smith, *Prison Condition*, 6.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

and counseling during the pandemic, and the environment in most prisons became unbearable for offenders and staff members. As mentioned above, there was a spiritual connotation for the incarceration of people; the incarceration of a person should have been redemptive, not necessarily punitive. Therefore, this researcher attests that the lack of pastoral care and counseling in a carceral institution is a theological issue that needs to be addressed. This action-research project addresses the theological nuances and challenges created in carceral institutions, including the Baldwin State prison in Georgia, due to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### The Problem Re-Stated in the Baldwin State Prison

On January 09, 2020, the World Health Organization proclaimed that a deadly virus was discovered in Wuhan, China. Unfortunately, this virus was extraordinarily contagious and deadly. In a couple of months, the virus spread worldwide, infecting 20 million people and at least 751,000 deaths. This virus, categorized as the coronavirus by WHO, catalyzed a global recession as numerous countries went into lockdown to reduce the spread of this nefarious virus. The lockdowns imposed by these countries resulted in the Dow Jones plummeting to the lowest single-day drop ever on March 09, 2020. Indeed, the advent of the pandemic created problems and challenges for society at large. Schools were closed, musical concerts and sports gatherings were canceled, and most churches closed their doors in fear that their congregants would be infected by the COVID-19 virus. Football, baseball, basketball players, and professional boxers were not allowed to participate in the craft they had dedicated their lives to. Politicians told people to remain in their homes to reduce the rate of transmission of this deadly virus. It is apparent that the advent of the pandemic negatively impacted all institutions worldwide; however, this researcher attests that the pandemic's advent crippled the operations of carceral institutions that were already experiencing financial constraints, racial disparity, overcrowding, diseases, and

high morbidity within the confines of its volatile environment(s). Prisons and jails became hot-beds, or ground zero, for spreading the virus, and prison officials could not successfully manage the rate of infections in their respective facilities due to the overcrowded conditions and a general lack of correctional officers. These issues and challenges existed pre-COVID-19 and only worsened when the pandemic infiltrated the confines of America's carceral institutions. To reduce the rate of transmissions of this virus in carceral institutions, prison officials and the state department of corrections prohibited visitation from clergy, family, friends, and lawyers to these institutions. These COVID-19 imposed restrictions resulted in another issue: offenders' lack of religious services. One must be mindful that most carceral institutions employ one to two chaplains, and there are usually one-thousand five hundred offenders in each state prison. Therefore, the chaplains rely heavily on the religious services that volunteers provide, and since volunteers were not granted access to carceral facilities, religious services were not conducted, including pastoral care and counseling. The lack of pastoral care and counseling impacted all carceral institutions, including the Baldwin State prison in Georgia. Since this researcher is a volunteer prison minister in the Baldwin State prison, it is prudent to undergird an action-research project to address the lack of chaplaincy in this institution.

The problem stated in this action-research project is that the efficacy of chaplaincy at the Baldwin State prison has been severely compromised due to the pandemic and the challenges mentioned above. The state-imposed impediments for visitation at the Baldwin State correctional facility in Georgia resulted in canceled religious services and a lack of pastoral care and counseling in the institution. Currently, only one chaplain provides pastoral care and counseling for nine hundred inmates, not including staff members. The chaplain cannot coordinate or implement religious services because the Georgia Department of Corrections does not allow any

visitation, including clergy, due to the pandemic. Therefore, the Baldwin State prison's chaplain cannot provide adequate pastoral care and counseling to offenders and staff members. The contents and details of this research project provide credible data and information on how COVID-19 negatively affected the carceral institutions.

Also, this researcher hypothesized in this research project that COVID-19 negatively impacted the efficacy of chaplaincy in the Baldwin State prison, and the efficacy of chaplaincy could be enhanced by virtualizing religious services. The results of this action research project strengthened this researcher's hypothesis; the advent of COVID-19 negatively impacted pastoral care and counseling in the Baldwin State prison, and virtualizing services would have improved the efficacy of chaplaincy in this facility. However, gaps were noted in this research project.

One of the gaps in this action research project is the execution and implementation of the intervention design. This researcher did not have an opportunity to partner with the prison officials or the chaplain of the Baldwin State facility to conduct a pilot program to measure the efficacy of virtualizing religious services. The state-imposed visitation restrictions did not allow this researcher to enter the facility to analyze and implement the intervention design, which uses Zoom, or another virtual platform, for religious services.

However, other facilities throughout the country use virtual platforms to provide religious services with much success, so this researcher affirms that virtual religious services are efficacious. Also, as noted in this body of research, hospitals and hospital chaplains are effectively using Zoom and technology for ministry. If the Baldwin state relaxes the visitation restrictions in the future, this researcher should attempt to partner with the prison officials and the chaplain and implement a pilot program using the intervention design described in this body

of research. This researcher attests that the action items chronicled in the intervention design are necessary to perform an effective pilot program to virtualize religious services.

### Future Research Opportunities

More research will be needed to provide virtual pastoral care and counseling platforms in carceral institutions. The research project revealed that offenders must receive religious instructions and services; it is their right. Secondly, according to state laws, every religious group represented in the facility must receive religious services or instructions. However, state laws do not necessarily explain how this religious instruction or service must be provided. If a Protestant service is provided in a carceral institution and the other religious groups in the facility are denied a religious service, their rights have been violated. Therefore, this researcher will have to partner with the chaplain of the Baldwin State prison to assist him in virtualizing religious services for all religious groups within the confines of this facility.

However, some alternatives can be implemented in carceral institutions for virtualizing religious instruction or services that can enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy. For example, in Georgia, Hillman uses the internet as a vehicle to provide religious instruction to offenders, and she utilizes the internet to promote the “I See Me Free” program. The program is an online mentoring program and is under the Life Changers Legacy Corporation umbrella. The program is conducted in four phases. It is a resource-based program based on therapeutic interventions coupled with biblical principles, which the program categorizes as “specialties.”<sup>255</sup> The program uses the trauma recovery empowerment model (TREM), motivational interviewing (MI), motivational theory (MET) social learning curriculum, and other applications. This program addresses anger and conflict resolution, strongholds from past trauma, triggers and solutions, the

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<sup>255</sup> Pamela Hillman, *I See Me Free Workbook* (Atlanta, GA: Life Changers Legacy Chebar Ministries, 2017), 2.

brain and emotions, and family reconciliation.<sup>256</sup> Hillman has explained that she has successfully used this program in numerous state prisons, and Muslims have signed up and used it to navigate their harsh realities in prison. Any religious group in prison can use this program, and it is not a program that proselytizes offenders to become Christian. It is a program that helps offenders reach their potential as human beings while navigating their harsh environment in prison. This researcher plans to partner with Hillman in the future to introduce this program to the chaplain of Baldwin State prison. This program will provide an outlet to the “outside world” and perhaps lift the low morale in the Baldwin State prison.

### **Summary**

In summary, this action-research project provides credibility to this researcher’s hypothesis. This researcher hypothesized that automation such as Zoom, GOTO meetings, live streaming, podcasts, and other automation can be utilized by clergy to provide chaplaincy, pastoral care, and counseling. Several of the chaplains interviewed by this researcher effectively used several of these platforms to provide chaplaincy in their respective work environments.

However, it has been noted that using automation to virtualize pastoral services is not as effective as a brick-and-mortar session, but it is a vital tool that clergy should embrace to minister to their respective congregants and those in need. Therefore, this researcher submits that virtualizing services in a carceral institution should be considered a vital, powerful, and dynamic tool to provide chaplaincy in a carceral facility or environment. Several carceral institutions and medical facilities are currently using these tools effectively and, in doing so, can minister the love of Christ to someone in need and not be exposed to the virus. The remote interaction between the counselee and counselor serves as a medium to reduce the rate of COVID-19

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<sup>256</sup> Hillman, *I See Me Free Workbook*, 2.

infections in their respective workplace and protect both the counselor and counselee from infection from the virus. Therefore, this researcher attests that these virtual services will likely be the norm for providing ministry moving forward in this COVID-infected 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix A: Interview with Chaplain of Georgia Baldwin State Prison

\*(Name of the interviewee is withheld upon mutual agreement)

- i. What were the main issues you experienced during the pandemic that hindered your ability to provide pastoral counseling and chaplaincy? Please provide your perspective as you “see it.” In other words, “tell me your story.”

Since I became the chaplain in March 2021, this pandemic has been the reality I have had to navigate. Personally, I think my ministry's pastoral care function was negatively impacted in terms of accessibility, feelings of isolation due to “movement protocols,” and breakdown of much community by believers of all sorts due to COVID-19 restrictions regarding social distancing. However, on the other hand, I believe that the chaplaincy function here at Baldwin and my appropriation would have been enhanced in the context of more freedom of movement, the presence of the full array of services provided by religious volunteers, and others.

- ii. How did you feel about not providing this critical care to the facility’s staff members and inmates?

Again, because this job/vocation has arisen in the context of COVID-19, periods where there were flurries of activities like ministering to inmates who had deaths in their families made it seem somewhat “special” when it would be considered routine in regular times. Thus, at times, it felt as though I could be doing more but recognizing that these rhythms work themselves out by themselves or by divine providence.

- iii. How did you inform the inmates about the religious services that were canceled during the pandemic?

This was not an issue I had to address. I came into the job of chaplain about a year into the pandemic. So, I did not have to deal with this issue specifically. On the other hand, I have had to address the ongoing lack of religious services with offenders numerous times. I always speak about the primacy of the health and safety of the institution and the offenders, which is framed as a reflection of a theological virtue and value. Then I speak about support from the Chaplaincy office via religious literature, the pastoral care function of this office, and prayer with offenders.

- iv. Did you notice an increase in mental health issues in the facility during the pandemic?

Yes, the lack of movement has affected access to religious services and other matters for a long time. This has, in my opinion, contributed to the prevalence of substance abuse, especially with drugs like “ice” and “strips,” which has led to violence due to psychosis and fear of retribution due to incurred debt. This intensification of this “hothouse”

environment due to the social implications of the pandemic has fed into the cycle of substance abuse, mental health issues, and violence. I have counseled offenders caught in the cycle of addiction and guilt (by betraying their religious scruples and familial relationships), which has cascaded into psycho-spiritual crises.

- v. Did staff members approach you to discuss their fears, issues, and problems experienced during the pandemic?

I have been approached by corrections leadership in the facility, and the warden has sent correction officers to me to counsel. In some ways, many issues, from a job perspective, revolve around burn-out (i.e., an ongoing, critical, and debilitating exposure to work stress) brought about by the staff shortages and the overwork resulting from adjusted schedules. The effects of the pandemic have exacerbated this dynamic which has occurred in the context of increased inmate violence. Furthermore, this dynamic has added another stressor to personal issues the officers in question may face at home or in their lives.

- vi. Did you have any opportunities to provide chaplaincy to inmates during the pandemic?

Yes, there are opportunities for prayer as I make my chaplain rounds in the Administrative Segregation Unit, the Infirmary, and occasionally in the dorms. During these times, this writer and his aides distribute religious literature. Furthermore, this writer also can lay in inmates for appointments in the Chaplaincy office where counseling can occur.

- vii. How did the visitation restriction imposed by the pandemic impact the inmates' morale?

It was one more layer of absence that highlighted how broken their lives are in the GDC. For some, as expressed to me, it was experienced as a separation from their *raison d'être*. I have instituted a more open-door policy for inmates who want to talk and be counseled. Typically, inmates would have to be on a call out to see the chaplain, but with the lockdowns, extended limited movements, etc., there was a need to be more flexible. In content, this revolved around grief and bereavement counseling for inmates who have lost loved ones. Additionally, issues surrounding substance abuse have become prevalent. In both cases, this writer has actively involved Mental Health at the facility in these matters. I will consult with them and refer inmates to them and vice versa. I feel this is very important! Furthermore, with all the uncertainty and increased violence, the carceral context has become close to unbearable for some inmates and correctional staff. A focus of my counseling has dealt with these issues. Navigating this context psychologically, spiritually, and vocationally has been an increasing phenomenon.

- viii. What is your perspective about virtualizing pastoral care and counseling during the pandemic?

I have mixed feelings about this. Yes, there can be a transfer of knowledge in virtual space, which is better than nothing. Nevertheless, Christian theology and praxis are incarnational, and sacramentality is fundamentally bodily and physical. In virtual spaces, one can miss nuances that being in the presence of real human beings' manifests. Virtual ministry is not wrong, but it is not entirely sufficient, in my estimation.

- ix. What were your primary duties and responsibilities during the pandemic? How did these duties impact you?

My primary duties were making rounds to ascertain spiritual needs, distributing hygiene supplies to inmates, providing pastoral counseling to inmates and staff, and making sure that inmates who died in their families were ministered to. I also have a supervisory role in the Integrity Program, a programming pod in a dorm in the facility. This regimen became a routine that felt like I was not entirely doing ministry at times, especially as it revolves around acquiring and distributing hygiene items, which can occupy much time. I had to recalibrate my mind and heart that Jesus embodied himself while the disciples had other mistaken notions about what being a servant of the Kingdom meant, like feeding the multitudes.

- x. How did you protect yourself from the virus during the pandemic?

I religiously wore a mask and later was vaccinated, along with my wife, with the Moderna vaccine. I also washed my hands after making rounds in the facility and on other occasions.

- xi. Did you receive any additional training from the state or outside agency to prepare you to address mental health issues or the residuals of working in a carceral institution during a pandemic?

No, I was put in this position when the previous chaplain obtained another job closer to his house. Before he left and I officially started, I spent time with him to learn about the nut and bolts of the job and job duties. However, there was no training whatsoever about the mental health challenges or specific challenges related to the pandemic.

- xii. Do you have any suggestions for the provision of services during the pandemic?

This is difficult since such matters occur within and are constrained by (changing) protocols during this pandemic. I would like to see an ongoing series of information sessions for inmates and staff regarding the latest developments and how they impact the institution and its operations. This would give context to inevitable changes but can exhibit instability or lack of control/vision. This is a fundamental precursor to the successful provision of services in this context. It can be done dorm by dorm, etc, and it has a more "hit and miss" proposition. COVID-19 protocols have made the provision of some religious services impossible while supporting organized groups is being realized, for instance, the Muslim and Catholic communities that meet regularly. So, in a nutshell,

in my limited experience as a prison chaplain, my office has not been able to provide a full-orbed program for the inmates and staff.

## Appendix B: Questions to determine the willingness of the Baldwin State Prison's Chaplain

### utilization of technology for virtualizing services

1. On a scale of 1 to 4 (one to 4), what is your level of competency in using technology?

|             |  |                 |             |
|-------------|--|-----------------|-------------|
| 1= beginner | <b><u>2 = fairly competent xxx</u></b> | 3= intermediate | 4= advanced |
|-------------|--|-----------------|-------------|

2. Will you require any training for utilizing technology for virtual services?

|   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <b><u>Yes, I need training? xxx</u></b> | No, I do not need any training. |
|---|---------------------------------|

3. Are you familiar with the Zoom application?

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| <b><u>YES xx</u></b> | NO |
|----------------------|----|

4. Are you familiar with live streaming?

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| <b><u>YES xxx</u></b> | NO |
|-----------------------|----|

5. Do you think that virtual services will meet your spiritual needs?

|     |                      |
|-----|----------------------|
| YES | <b><u>NO xxx</u></b> |
|-----|----------------------|

6. Are you willing to participate in a pilot program to determine the effectiveness of virtual services?

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| <b><u>YES xxx</u></b> | NO |
|-----------------------|----|

7. Are you interested in exporting the possibilities for virtual services?

|                   |                                     |               |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1= not interested | <b><u>2 = fairly interested</u></b> | 3= interested | 4= extremely interested |
|                   | <b><u>xxx</u></b>                   |               |                         |

## Appendix C: Baldwin State Prison Chaplain's Recruitment Letter

\*(The name of the interviewee was withheld upon mutual agreement.)

To: Chaplain of Baldwin State Prison,

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research to fulfill a Doctor of Ministry degree with a cognate in Pastoral Counseling. The title of my research project is "**The Pandemic's Impact on the Efficacy of Chaplaincy at the Baldwin State Prison.**" The purpose of my research study is to examine the impact that the pandemic had on providing pastoral care and counseling in this facility (Baldwin State prison). Secondly, this research intends to resolve or at least address the lack of pastoral care in the Baldwin State carceral facility by providing realistic, cost-effective solutions for virtualizing pastoral care and counseling in this institution. If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that determines your willingness to use automation, Zoom, or live streaming applications to virtualize the services in the institution. The questionnaire consists of seven generic questions to determine your level of training or skills utilizing computers, Zoom, or other technologies that can provide the virtualization of services within the facility. The questionnaire will take approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes to complete.

Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal identifying information will be collected. Also, if you are willing to participate in this research study, the principal investigator (Chaplain John Gomez) asks if you can participate in a confidential interview. The interview consists of twelve questions, and it should take approximately one hour to complete. No personal information will be collected during the interview. Please note that your responses to the questionnaire are **anonymous**, and the interview will be confidential and conducted with professional decorum. As a caveat, the information gathered in the interview will be utilized only to ascertain the impact COVID-19 had on your ability to provide chaplaincy and religious services in the facility. No personal information will be gathered in this interview, and the information gathered in the interview will be used for the reasons mentioned above in the action-research project. A pseudonym will be used in the final report of this action-research study.

Your participation in this research study will be instrumental in researching and implementing a reasonable and cost-effective solution to virtualize the various religious services, including pastoral -care and counseling, in this institution. Please note that medical professionals and various businesses now utilize web-based applications and technologies to virtualize their services, such as telemedicine or mental health therapies. This research study intends to ascertain if these technologies can be used in a carceral environment to virtualize services. The direct benefit of virtualizing services in this institution is the reduction of the spread of the COVID-19 virus since the interaction of its personnel is restricted and limited during the virtual session(s).

Sincerely,

Senior Chaplain John Gomez

International Fellowship of Chaplains, D.MIN. Candidate, M.A. Christian Apologetics, MBA

Appendix D: Interview Questions for International Fellowship of Chaplains (IFOC) Prison and  
Hospital Chaplains

1. What is the location and the name of the institution you are currently employed or seeking employment?
2. Can you perform all your duties and responsibilities as per your job/position in the current environment in your respective workplace?
3. How has COVID-19 impacted your ministry in your respective place of work? What do you currently think is the reason the problem exists?
4. How is training being facilitated in your respective institution so you can remain competent in all your core competencies and perform all of your duties and responsibilities with excellence?
5. How has COVID-19 impacted the people you are serving? In other words, can you effectively minister to the people whom you were providing pastoral care and counseling before the outbreak of COVID-19?
6. What are your fellow ministers /chaplains saying about the ministry /chaplaincy during the COVID-19 outbreak?
7. How are they dealing with this problem?
8. Are the guidelines/instructions of the CDC and the WHO being adhered to in the institution you are working in? Are social distancing, hand washing, and the disinfection of porous surfaces doable or feasible in your respective workplace?
9. How did the advent of COVID-19 impede your training to assume the duties and responsibilities of a hospital, police, prison, or fire chaplain/minister, mainly if you started your respective training before the outbreak of the pandemic?
10. How are you providing chaplaincy in your environment if you work in a carceral institution?
11. How is the morale of the staff members, Warden, and inmates in the respective carceral institution you are assigned to?
12. How are you providing chaplaincy in your environment if you work in a hospice facility?

13. How are you providing chaplaincy in your environment if you work in a hospital?
14. Are you familiar with Zoom, GOTO Meeting, Free Confernce.com, Podcast, live streaming, and other services that can be utilized for virtualizing services? Are you willing to use these services to assist you in providing pastoral care and counseling in your current position?
15. Do you feel that the COVID-19 impediments imposed by local politicians and officials, such as limited visitation privileges in prisons/jails, including hospitals and hospice centers, represent a significant theological challenge in your ministry's execution, implementation, and regularity? If possible, use Scripture/Bible to elucidate your answer.

## Appendix: E IRB Review FY20-21-1024

**Subject:** IRB-FY20-21-1024 Review

IRB approval for this action research project was not needed since it was categorized as a quality improvement project; please see the IRB response below.

Thank you for returning your IRB application. The IRB agrees that the project can be considered a quality improvement based on your responses.

- Quality improvement projects do not require signed consent from the individuals engaged in the project.
- You can still provide individuals with information about the project, but please be sure to replace the word “**research**” with “**project**” on all documents.

## Appendix F: Chaplain Interview, Gale Yandell

Chaplain Gale Yandell was interviewed on 09/09/2021 by this researcher (Chaplain John Gomez), and enclosed are the details of her interview. Gale J. Yandell is the Executive Director of Training Development for the International Fellowship of Chaplains. Yandell holds a degree in Education and Social Work and attended B. H. Carroll Theological Seminary. Yandell is committed to excellence in training and education, and she is a primary instructor for the week-long IFOC Chaplain course. Yandell has an affinity and calling to teach others to serve their communities through chaplaincy. Yandell is also a small business owner in Houston, Texas, and she is a licensed minister and an ordained chaplain. Yandell has been employed by the Baylor College of Medicine for over thirteen years and works in the hospital's breast cancer infusion clinic, a facility located outside of the hospital's main campus. However, she has been granted the privileges and latitude to provide chaplaincy and pastoral care on the main campus. During the interview, Yandell was asked several questions to ascertain how the COVID-19 impacted her ministry and the measures she took to continue her ministry in the hospital, including the nuances she encountered in working in a COVID-infected environment/setting.

During the interview, Yandell elucidated the various difficulties she encountered in performing all of her duties and responsibilities throughout the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. She explained that there is tension between the chaplains and the hospital staff. The protocols imposed by the hospitals due to the pandemic have caused these tensions. The hospital requires all staff members (including clergy) to remove their outer clothing, shower for decontamination, and wear a hazardous material (hazmat) suit after the decontamination process. A hazmat suit is a piece of personal protective equipment (PPE), a whole-body garment suitable to provide personal protection against hazardous materials, chemicals, or biological agents. Also,

if a patient is about to die from COVID-19, the chaplain cannot interact personally with the patient.

During the pandemic, family members, including clergy, could not visit their congregates or loved ones in most hospitals. Essentially the individual that is about to die in the hospital will die alone without the presence of his/her spiritual leader and their family member(s).

Additionally, the hospital chaplain cannot touch or embrace the person before his/her death. This lack of embracing those (physically embracing someone about to die) who are transitioning to death presents a problem for most of the chaplains employed in the hospital (according to Yandell). During their transition, the chaplains want to embrace the individual(s) and hold them close to their bosom to feel that they are not dying alone. One must be cognizant that chaplains are altruistic people and want to provide the ministry of presence for people experiencing the worst day of their life. One of the tenants of the ministry of presence is to serve people even when it might make the chaplain uncomfortable. Chaplains have been trained to stand with people amid anxiety and fear.

Most importantly, in these difficult times, chaplains are to be realists. Chaplains are not chartered to pretend things are better or worse than they actually are. Chaplains will address the situation appropriately, pointing people to the fact that in Christ all things new.”<sup>257</sup> Chaplains were restricted to just being present for a patient dying of COVID. This issue presented a significant theological challenge for chaplains who desired to provide the ministry of presence to a patient before they die alone from COVID -19.

Another issue surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The doctors and nurses in the hospital were constantly bombarded with life and death issues daily. Yandell recalled an incident

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

when a nurse was confronted by a patient who asked her if she would succumb to COVID-19 and die. The nurse responded to the patient in a gruff and calloused manner, and she informed the patient why she felt that she was different from the other 520 patients that recently died in the hospital. The nurse had experienced so much death in a short period resulting in her developing a coping mechanism, so she did not have to feel anything when a patient died under her care.

Yandell noticed that morale was low and that tempers were ignited from the most straightforward issues, such as cold coffee being served in the cafeteria. Yandell explained that COVID-19 increased the need for pastoral care and chaplaincy. The increased deaths per capita in the facility resulted in more staff members needing counseling, pastoral care, and religious instructions. It was noted during the interview that before the pandemic, chaplains did not have a large or abnormal number of staff members who required chaplaincy or pastoral care. During the pandemic, the number of staff members needing chaplaincy and pastoral care increased exponentially, including the patients, and the hospital did not have enough chaplains employed to address the needs of its staff members and patients adequately. The chaplains employed at the facility were overloaded with ministerial duties and responsibilities due to the sheer number of people that needed pastoral care in the facility.

Yandell explained, with many tears, that she experienced ninety-six deaths in the breast cancer infusion room during the COVID-19 pandemic. She explained that she must see a therapist regularly to remain focused on her responsibilities as a chaplain and have a safe place to vet her emotions as she is confronted with the nuances of life and death as she ministers the love of God in her chaplaincy. Yandell explained in the interview that fellow chaplains feel inadequate to help those with COVID-19. Chaplains want to sit with the patient, hold them in their arms, pray with them and not provide ministry remotely. Yandell explained that chaplains

must remain flexible and alter their expectations for providing chaplaincy. In other words, most chaplains have been trained to provide chaplaincy with a “personal touch.”

However, in this COVID-19 environment, a personal touch is not possible most of the time; they must be “comfortable being uncomfortable in their new COVID-19 environment.” Most of these chaplains need another clergy member to receive therapy to address their stressors and needs. It has been noted that staff members, including chaplains, have been working non-stop for eighteen months in a COVID-infected environment, resulting in an abnormal volume of deaths. Yandell explained that most chaplains and staff members in her facility are overworked, stressed, and tired of working daily in a life-and-death environment.

Yandell also explained that automation, particularly videos, has been implemented by the hospital to provide training in order for her to remain competent in her core duties and responsibilities. Yandell also elaborated on using a tablet provided by the hospital that must be decontaminated before each use. The chaplains utilize this tablet to communicate remotely with the patient’s family members from the hospital. She noted that she utilized the tablet for communicating with a dying patient’s family members remotely to have some closure with their loved ones before they died and say their goodbyes before they transitioned. Yandell is familiar with automation such as Zoom, GOTO meetings, podcasts, and other virtual platforms. She has used these virtual platforms to provide chaplaincy, pastoral care, and counseling. Using these virtual platforms to provide pastoral care and counseling has assisted Yandell in continuing her ministry without compromising her health. During a remote counseling session, she is not exposed to the virus nor her patient or counselee.

### Appendix G: Chaplain Interview, Shelly Westbrook

Chaplain Shelly Westbrook was interviewed by this researcher on September 03, 2021, and is a senior chaplain in the International Fellowship of Chaplains (IFOC). She serves the IFOC organization as a virtual team leader, and she provides leadership, coaching, and mentoring remotely to approximately thirty chaplains. Westbrook is seeking employment as a hospital chaplain in the Tampa Bay area. She was participating in clinical pastoral education (CPE) before the advent of the pandemic, and the COVID-19 pandemic impacted her CPE training. When COVID-19 became rampant in the Tampa area, all the CPE students/candidates were not allowed to continue the curriculum within the confines of the hospital. Due to the advent of COVID-19, all the CPE students had to complete their training virtually. One must be cognizant that the CPE training curriculum is designed to train its candidates to meet the standards of the College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy (CPSP) learning objectives.<sup>258</sup> One of the training goals is to utilize theological constructs and social sciences to gain a high-level understanding of the human experience.<sup>259</sup> The majority of this training is usually facilitated in a clinical environment and due to the advent of COVID-19 other measures had to be initiated for the CPE students to continue with their training. During the interview, Westbrook explained to this researcher that her instructor allowed the students to use Zoom as the medium to continue their training. The instructor also allowed the candidates to continue their training by participating in a telephone ministry. Essentially candidates fulfilled their clinical training requirement by providing remote pastoral care by telephonically contacting staff members (nurses) and those who needed ministry. The list of the staff members that needed to be

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<sup>258</sup> “Clinical Pastoral Education - UC Davis Health,” accessed September 20, 2021, [https://health.ucdavis.edu/pastoral\\_services/CPE-Programs/about-cpe.html](https://health.ucdavis.edu/pastoral_services/CPE-Programs/about-cpe.html).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

contacted was generated and provided by the hospital, and Westbrook utilized the list of the IFOC chaplains in her virtual team as the second list to meet the criteria of the CPE unit. This telephone ministry intended to allow people to explain their negative feelings to the CPE candidates to effectively process the harmful and harsh realities encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Westbrook also explained that most of the candidates expressed that they preferred to minister to people face-to-face, but eventually, they adapted to utilizing technology to minister to people in need. She also explained that most of her peers in training believed that utilizing virtual services for ministry was adequate but not quite as robust as a face-to-face session.

During the interview, Westbrook was not allowed to enter the hospital facility for CPE training from March 2020 until May 2020. When she was allowed to reenter the facility, she noticed that the facility strictly adhered to the COVID-19 CDC and WHO's tenants of disinfection for porous surfaces, including wearing PPE.

Additionally, she explained that wearing the PPE impeded ministry because patients could not hear adequately during face-to-face sessions due to the masking protocols. All chaplains, including staff members, had to wear a face shield with a mask underneath the shield, which hindered patient communications. The communication between the staff members, including the chaplain, was more effective when utilizing the hospital's telephone system to interact with their patients. She also provided details about utilizing technology to minister to a patient dying from COVID-19. The attending nurse provided the dying patient with a hospital-issued iPad, and Westbrook connected with the dying patient remotely to pray with him (using Facetime from an iPhone) and provided him with some solace and peace before he transitioned. Secondly, the nurse was able to contact his family, and they also were able to connect with him remotely to say their final goodbyes to their loved one. Using technology to minister to this

dying patient by the chaplain and his family is a sterling example of effectively utilizing technology to provide chaplaincy within a hospital environment during the pandemic.

## Appendix H: Chaplain Interview, Brooke Colburn

Chaplain Brooke Colburn was interviewed on 09/08/2021. Colburn is the training officer for the Peachtree4Him chaplain corps, and enclosed are the details of her interview. A chaplain corps is a group of chaplains that usually serve their communities by providing Critical Incident Stress Management services, disaster response, suicide prevention, death notifications with law enforcement personnel, and other chaplaincy services. Essentially the corps provide their respective communities with first responder chaplaincy. The chaplains in the corps must be appropriately trained in several aspects of first responder chaplaincy to provide these chaplaincy services. The corps training officer is responsible for implementing and coordinating the training in the corps to provide these essential chaplaincy services in their locale.

Colburn started with her CPE training before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and is currently working as a volunteer chaplain (chaplain intern) in northern Georgia. Her intern program lasted about six months. The CPE program consists of theoretical aspects and clinical constructs, and her theoretical training in CPE was accomplished via Zoom. Her internship consisted of providing chaplaincy services in an ICU, including pastoral care for their families. Colburn explained that most of her CPE training was administered via the Zoom application. However, she noted that the CPE training (theory) should have been administered in a clinical/hospital environment; it had to be administered virtually due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Colburn explained that she is not allowed to disclose the location of her workplace due to her status of being an intern and not a board-certified hospital chaplain. She explained that her workplace is experiencing a significant increase in the hospitalization of active COVID-19 patients. The increase of active COVID-19 patients, according to Colburn, is due to the spread of the disease among the unvaccinated populace in her locale. She categorized this increase of

active COVID patients as the “pandemic of the unvaccinated.” She explained that since she is an intern, the hospital will not grant her access to an active COVID-19 patient’s room; therefore, she cannot minister to the patient transitioning due to COVID -19. She claims that not providing the “ministry of presence” to a dying patient is an issue. Chaplaincy is based on the ministry of presence, and the increased rate of the transmission of this disease in her locale is hindering her ability to provide this “ministry of presence” to those dying from COVID. Also, the staff members, including clergy, are overworked due to the high number of active COVID patients. Essentially the need for pastoral care has increased. The ministry has morphed due to the sheer number of active COVID-19 patients, including the care needed for the doctors and nurses who provide medical care for these patients. Colburn has also expressed that hospital chaplains are overwhelmed with addressing issues with suicides.

Colburn has also experienced impediments to ministry due to the personal opinions of some patients. She meticulously explained that patients’ political and religious beliefs impede pastoral care, mainly anti-vaccinators, and maskers. The hospital chaplain must remain neutral about these issues to provide ministry. Most likely, if the chaplain engages in a conversation with a patient with a draconian political or religious belief against vaccinations and face masking, they will not be able to minister to that patient effectively. Inadvertently, the negative stereotypes people have politically or religiously about the COVID-19 serve as obstacles for ministry. She explained that some patients asked her to remove the facemask before she ministers to them. She also explained that one of the facilities she was scheduled to work at recently had to implement strict protocols due to the increase of transmissions in the facility, and they had to wear PPE, face shields, and face masks. Secondly, the staff had to quarantine in place, and ministry to the

patients was minimal. Therefore, it is safe to state that the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic caused obstacles and impediments to providing chaplaincy and pastoral care.

Colburn also explained during her interview that her fellow hospital chaplains require ministry. She carefully explained that hospital chaplains are overworked and are experiencing an increase in addressing mental health issues, particularly suicide. They are also witnessing an increase in deaths due to COVID-19, and there are not enough chaplains employed in the hospital to address all of the patients and the staff members. Also, most staff members, including the clergy, have been working about eighteen months under adverse conditions due to COVID-19. Essentially, she explained that the hospital chaplains need chaplains to receive encouragement and support to continue with their respective ministries. The hospital chaplains are overwhelmed, and if they do not get any relief soon, the ministry will inadvertently suffer and be compromised due to the sheer numbers of those that require pastoral care.

### Appendix I: Chaplain Interview, Charlie Weiley

Chaplain Charlie Weiley was interviewed on 09/14/2021, and enclosed are the contents of his interview. Weiley is a chaplain in the International Fellowship of Chaplains (IFOC) and is currently employed as a prison chaplain in Wisconsin's Kettle Moraine Correctional facility. Weiley explained that during the advent of the pandemic (about 03/20), the Wisconsin Department of Corrections decided to cancel all visitations, including clergy and volunteers, due to the widespread transmission of the virus. The institution's chain of command informed the inmates of the restrictions imposed by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Weiley did notice a significant increase in mental health issues due to the isolation imposed by the COVID-19 restrictions and impediments. Also, the isolation experienced by the inmates due to the COVID-19 restrictions and the lack of religious services negatively impacted the morale of the inmates.

One must be cognizant that inmates need an outlet to navigate and cope with the harsh realities of prison life. At this point, two significant outlets were unavailable in this institution: religious services and visitations. The lack of visitation and religious services represents a significant challenge in any carceral institution. Therefore, Weiley was confronted with a significant theological challenge; he could not provide ministry for the inmates. Also, volunteers were not granted access to the facility to provide religious services, and the outcome was quite dismal at this point.

He explained that he was responsible for providing religious services for various religious groups such as Agnostics, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims. He explained that the Wisconsin state law required him to provide these various religious services, so the inmates decided to sue the state but to no avail. Essentially religious services and instruction(s) were not

conducted in this carceral institution due to the onset of the pandemic. However, there were two chaplains employed by the prison at this time, and they decided to canvas the dormitories daily and mine out the spiritual needs of the inmates by speaking directly to them. After some time, they discovered that most inmates wanted information or resources about their respective faith. Weiley also experienced an increase in ministry, and the staff needed more ministry due to the advancement of the COVID-19 virus.

Weiley explained that these limitations imposed by the prison officials for religious gatherings were a significant obstacle for providing religious services and instruction within this carceral institution. He explained that several carceral facilities in Wisconsin had an “institutional channel” and could utilize this channel to broadcast religious services remotely on their intranet. However, the institution that employed him did not have the wherewithal to effectively utilize the institutional channel to broadcast religious services remotely on their intranet. Eventually, around August 2020, the facility procured several 85-inch televisions and commenced using Zoom to virtualize religious services. However, there were still some obstacles for providing comprehensive religious services within this facility. The prison officials allowed a certain number of inmates to be present at the chapel for religious services; the institution adhered to the social distancing guidelines of the CDC and the WHO.

However, before procuring the 85-inch televisions, no inmate was granted access to the chapel due to the pandemic. Therefore, allowing a limited number of inmates to participate in a religious service after the procurement of the televisions was considered a significant improvement for providing these critical religious services. It was noted that an Imam employed by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections utilized the institutional channel in his respective

facility to remotely broadcast Islamic services from his facility to other facilities in Wisconsin. Weiley explained that in November of 2020, a bus arrived at the facility with inmates that supposedly were vaccinated but unfortunately were not. The newly arrived inmates infected the inmates already housed at the facility. The rate of transmission of the COVID-19 virus increased exponentially upon the arrival of the new inmates in November, resulting in most of the inmates and staff contracting the virus, according to Weiley. The widespread of COVID-19 in November of 2020 in this facility was also a significant impediment and a substantial obstacle for providing religious services in this carceral institution.

### Appendix J: Chaplain Interview, Pamela Hillman

Chaplain Pamela Hillman was interviewed on 10/21/21 and is an IFOC chaplain in the Peachtree4Him chaplain corps in Georgia, located south of Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson airport. Hillman is the founder and president of the Life Changers Legacy Foundation. Hillman, certified in various aspects of substance and alcohol abuse, is a Paracletos Biblical Specialty Counselor and has an affinity with the levels/stages of the Stages of Change (Trans-theoretical Model). She is currently working towards obtaining her certification as a correctional chaplain. The Life Changer's Legacy Foundation/Program provides an online mentorship program throughout the state of Georgia. The program consists of a workbook that both the mentor and the mentee must use during their online experience. She received fifteen to twenty-five requests weekly from inmates who wanted to be mentored, creating a critical need for mentors to meet the needs of these mentees. Enclosed are the contents of her interview. "The Life Changers Legacy Program/Chebar prison ministry is a prison and reentry program that helps women find their path through our specialized therapeutic interventions combined with biblical specialties program, 'I See ME Free' incentive mentorship program. We are a 'Station of Hope' through the Department of Community Supervision."<sup>260</sup> The program aims to reduce recidivism by delivering a Christ-centered evidence-based program significantly. It has been noted that people who participate in a faith-based program experience a recidivism rate of 20% versus the high recidivism rate of 60% for those that do not participate in a faith-based program during their incarceration. This program is not limited to Christians; Muslims have requested to be mentored, and currently, this program is in forty prisons in other countries, including Uganda, Kenya, the United Kingdom, Panama, and Jamaica. Hillman explained that Canada wants to utilize the program in their carceral

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<sup>260</sup> "Mentoring Program – Life Changers Legacy," accessed October 22, 2021, <https://www.lifechangerslegacy.org/programs/mentoring-program/>.

institutions. Also, California has expressed a desire to utilize the program in its carceral institutions. Currently, approximately 640 mentees are participating in this program. She obtained approval from the director of chaplaincy for the Georgia Department of Corrections to provide the mentorship program in Georgia's carceral institutions. There are thirty-three state prisons in Georgia which house about 49,000 inmates, and the need for mentors is significant.

Hillman explained that the conditions in Georgia's carceral institutions are horrendous. She explained that during the COVID-19 pandemic, inmates were not allowed contact with their loved ones and could not interact with their loved ones dying from COVID. Hillman also explained that most prisons in Georgia were on complete lockdown and were allowed one weekly phone call, one serving of food daily, and no outlet to the outside world. She also explained that some inmates were allowed one shower weekly, and sometimes maggots and worms were found in the food in several institutions. The inmates did not have ample access to the medical facilities and were only allowed to access them if seriously ill. Mental issues escalated in these institutions, and suicides significantly increased in Georgia's carceral institutions. She passionately explained that there were only five correctional officers on duty to provide safety and security for one-thousand inmates and staff members in one Georgia state prison.

However, she is unsure if this situation occurred for the entire week but was informed by a reliable source that this situation occurred once in the facility. She also explained during the interview that during the pandemic in most of Georgia's carceral institutions' gangs have emerged as the dominant force within the confines of the prisons, proliferating their culture of drugs and violent criminal activities. She stated that gangs had taken over the prisons, including

the drug culture. Hillman passionately explained that chaplains and the body of Christ are the advocates for these prisoners who are experiencing these horrible conditions.

Hillman also explained that COVID-19 impeded her ability to market the Life Changer Legacy program. She carefully explained that she depended on word-of-mouth as the primary means of marketing the program, and since most churches and religious institutions were subject to COVID-19 restrictions, she could not enter these institutions to solicit mentors. Since she was limited to speaking in religious institutions and engaging religious leaders due to COVID-19, the word could not be spread about the need for additional mentors for the program. This word-of-mouth marketing impediment for the Life Changer Legacy program resulted in a deficit of 320 mentors for the program. Essentially, 320 inmates were deprived of this critical mentorship during the pandemic; the lack of mentors for this life-changing program is a significant issue that must be addressed, according to Hillman. She also explained that most carceral institutions are severely understaffed, and the morale in these institutions is desperately low. The correctional officers are underpaid and are highly susceptible to the virus due to the environment(s) within the prisons. Due to the high rate of transmission of COVID-19 in prisons and jails, many COs have resigned, resulting in a massive security issue within these carceral institutions.

Hillman explained that inmates are authorized to use an electronic device (tablet) issued by the Georgia Department of Corrections to listen to music and obtain emails from the J-Pay application, and most notably, the device cannot access the world wide web. The J-Pay application allows people to stay connected and support their loved one or friend that has been incarcerated. J-Pay allows people to quickly send money to a trust account and send and receive emails, photos, Ecards, and videos. Secondly, one can purchase a tablet for his/her contact who is

incarcerated and fund their media account via the J-Pay application.<sup>261</sup> This state-issued device can be loaded with applications that provide training opportunities.

There is a caveat about using these devices; if the device is stolen or the inmate loses it, they must replace it at their own expense. The mentee relies solely on this state-issued device to receive and transmit emails with their respective mentor, so maintaining this electronic device in an optimal condition is paramount for inmates to remain in the online mentorship program. Hillman explained that she would partner with an individual in Arizona who has training software applications that provides training in these state-issued devices. The training he provides in this platform uses various modules, and the “I See Me” Life Changer Legacy curriculum can be embedded in one of these training modules via Zoom. She explained that she would be limited to providing information/data pertaining only to the Life Changer program on the Zoom session. The Zoom session can be initiated in the confines of her home and conversely broadcasted in the confines of the prison via state-issued electronic devices. However, the chaplain of each institution must agree to the Zoom sessions, and currently, she has met with the officials in Georgia’s Washington State to initiate these Zoom session(s) in this prison.

This researcher’s project aims to resolve or at least address the issue of chaplaincy’s efficacy in Georgia’s Baldwin State prison. Secondly, this researcher attests that this action-research might lead to a panacea for resolving the efficacy of chaplaincy in all of America’s carceral institutions by providing realistic, cost-effective solutions for virtualizing religious instruction and pastoral care utilizing state-of-the-art automation to do so. Also, this researcher firmly believes that COVID-19 significantly impeded chaplaincy in most of America’s carceral

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<sup>261</sup> “Www.Jpay - About Jpay - The Trusted Leader in Inmate Services,” accessed October 22, 2021, <https://cs-directory.com/www-jpay/>.

institutions, including the Baldwin State prison in Georgia. The contents of Pamela Hillman's interview validates the issues discussed and outlined in this body of research.

### Appendix K: Chaplain Interview, Billy Williams

Chaplain Billy Williams was interviewed on 09/15/2021 by this researcher. Enclosed are the details of his interview. Williams is a chaplain in the International Fellowship of Chaplains. He resides in Texas in the Galveston area and provides religious services for the county prison and hospitals within his locale. Williams explained that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in isolation; he describes this isolation by explaining how inmates are restricted from all visitations, including clergy. Essentially the inmates were isolated from the clergy; conversely, the clergy was isolated from interacting with the inmates during the advent of COVID-19. Williams explained during the interview that inmates are already isolated from the outside world, and the restrictions imposed by the county for visitations only enhanced their seclusion and loneliness. He thoughtfully explained that chaplains provide a critical outlet, or conduit, to the world outside the prison environment's confines. Therefore, this critical conduit to the world outside the confines of the prison was severed during the COVID-19 due to the lack of interactions between clergy and inmates. Williams expressed disappointment and seemed disheartened knowing that he could not provide the critical pastoral care and counseling inmates needed during the pandemic. However, he did explain that the jails did utilize their internal camera system(s) to provide religious services, but no human contact was allowed during COVID-19. Williams also explained that morale was extremely low, and there was a significant increase in mental health issues in these carceral institutions during the pandemic. The jails were on lockdowns; the offender's families were not allowed to visit their families; thus, inmates were in strict and prolonged isolation during the pandemic.

Williams also mentioned during his interview that he ministered in various hospitals in his locale before the pandemic. During the pandemic, he was not granted access to them. He

carefully explained that faith-based chaplaincy outreach is critical for people's recovery time from catastrophic illnesses. The hospital staff members noticed that the isolation experienced by hospitalized persons during the COVID fueled their fears and negative idiosyncrasies. They noted that isolation breeds fear and a general lack of hope and that spiritual care is a critical component in patient recovery. He explained that in June 2020, the county jail officials lifted the visitation restrictions and allowed clergy to provide pastoral care and counseling for one day out of the week.

Additionally, Williams explained that he would have to adhere to all the protocols and mandates outlined by the CDC and the WHO upon being allowed to enter the facility. He had to wear personal protective equipment, including masks, and be subject to temperature checks upon entering the facility. However, when the Governor of Texas lifted the masking mandates, clergy and visitors were not required to wear masks or wear PPE for accessing the facility. The jail officials reported to him that the clergy's visit to the institution provided a sense of normalcy to the inmates and made a difference in the quality of life for the offenders. However, the renewed access to the facility was short-lived; the officials reimposed the visitation restrictions, most likely due to the COVID-19 variants.

Williams explained that the jails allow clergy to use the equipment inside the jail located in the courtroom to live stream religious services. He explained that the courtroom's equipment is networked with the jail's internal network or intranet. This equipment is part of the jail's infrastructure, and it is connected to the monitors in the individual dormitories and pods within the facility. These monitors were already being utilized for virtual training and information before COVID-19, so it is only prudent to use the institution's internal communication system to broadcast religious services. The head chaplain supervises the religious services, and he solicits

three to four clergypersons to provide the religious service. Each clergyperson was assigned a specific role throughout the service. One was assigned to preach, lead the worship service, the altar call, and the call for prayer. The service is live-streamed and broadcasted via the facility's equipment and network on Sundays. Willimas also explained during his interview that the jail's officials occasionally allow clergy to visit the dormitories, resulting in limited interactions between inmates and clergy. Essentially, some pastoral care and counseling are provided by clergy in this institution with these occasional clergy visits to the dormitories, including the virtual services provided on Sundays.

This researcher's action-research project focuses on two critical factors. One factor is that the advent of COVID-19 has impeded the efficacy of chaplaincy within carceral institutions, and the other critical factor is that automation such as Zoom, GoTo Meeting, Podcasts, or any technology that can be utilized for live-streaming services is a robust and doable tool for enhancing the efficacy of chaplaincy in a carceral institution. This researcher extended this premise to the efficacy of chaplaincy in the Baldwin State prison located in Georgia.

### Appendix L: Chaplain Interview, William Stankiewicz

Chaplain William Stankiewicz was interviewed by this researcher on 09/16/2021 who is the spiritual coordinator/advisor for the state of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. Stankiewicz is an ordained chaplain in the IFOC and is also a chaplain in the Billy Graham rapid response team, Southern Baptist disaster relief team, and is VOAD (voluntary organizations involved in disasters) certified. VOAD partners with various religious organizations, including the Red Cross, to address the needs of communities and cities that experience catastrophic events or natural disasters and have been negatively impacted by them. He is also involved in the Christian Motorcycle Association and serves this organization as its chaplain. He was an associate pastor, has been involved in many ministries, and has diverse ministerial experiences. During a deployment to assist the communities in Louisiana decimated by Hurricane Katrina, he decided to join the Billy Graham rapid response team and the Southern Baptist disaster relief team to minister to people affected by catastrophic events and natural disasters. During this interview, Stankiewicz was asked various questions to ascertain how the COVID-19 impacted his ministry and the measures he took to continue his ministry in the prisons, including the nuances he encountered in navigating in a Covid-19 infected environment.

Stankiewicz explained that before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, he was responsible for ministering to newly released inmates to facilitate a well-ordered transition to a citizen to reduce recidivism. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, recidivism is “falling back,” which implies “falling back into bad habits.”<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Recidivism | Definition of Recidivism by Merriam-Webster,” accessed October 13, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recidivism>.

Recidivism is a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior that connotes relapsing into criminal behavior.<sup>263</sup> Upon their release, many inmates will continue with their “bad habits,” resulting in being incarcerated again. Therefore, an inmate that participates in a well-structured transitional program from prison is crucial in deterring his/her recidivism. Stankiewicz was also responsible for providing religious services within a carceral institution every quarter. He was providing these religious services for several carceral institutions; however, upon the advent of the pandemic, he was not granted access to these facilities due to the state of Pennsylvania’s COVID-19 visitation restrictions imposed due to the rate of transmissions in its carceral institutions.

Stankiewicz explained that he was not granted access to these facilities for about eighteen months and felt he neglected the inmate’s spiritual maturation due to the lack of religious services. He explained that he started to write letters to the inmates that were sermonettes to provide them with a quasi-religious service so they would not be without a religious service for the entire eighteen months. Stankiewicz explained that the pandemic significantly harmed the morale of the inmates. He meticulously explained that inmates rely on routines in a prison environment, and the advent of the COVID-19 in prisons resulted in confusion, disorganization, and lower morale. He also explained that the gang activity in prisons increased due to the lack of an outlet that religious activities and instruction provides. These gang-related activities only worsen the harsh environments within these carceral institutions. Stankiewicz was not granted access to Pennsylvania’s carceral institutions from March 2020 until May 2021; inmates were deprived of the vital critical care provided by Chaplain Williams for about eighteen months.

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<sup>263</sup> “Recidivism | National Institute of Justice,” accessed October 13, 2021, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/corrections/recidivism>.

Stankiewicz explained that he could minister in several hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, from December 2020 until this writing, he was only allowed to minister to people in hospitals whom he had married or who attended his church. This researcher's hypothesis states that virtual platforms such as Zoom, GoTo Meeting, or other technology platforms can provide pastoral care and counseling in carceral institutions and enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy. This researcher firmly believes that using virtual platforms to provide pastoral care and chaplaincy in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections would have enhanced the efficacy of chaplaincy throughout the state.

### Appendix M: Chaplain Interview, Kim Rock

Chaplain Kim Rock was interviewed on 09/13/2021 by this researcher. Enclosed are the details of his interview. Rock was the deputy commander for an IFOC region. His duties and responsibilities were to coach and mentor the lead chaplains in his region, ensuring that the chaplain units in his region operated as a DBA (doing business as) under the umbrella of the IFOC. His region consists of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Maine, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. However, on October 15, 2021, he was promoted to the lead chaplain of the region and is currently directly responsible for all the virtual teams and corps commanders (lead chaplains) within the region.

Rock was ministering in a county prison located approximately thirty-five miles east of Pittsburgh. He explained that he provided pastoral care and counseling in this county jail for about six years. Rock explained that he was responsible for providing religious services on Sundays and could not provide this service during the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also noted during his interview, due to the COVID-19 impediments imposed by the county and state, this carceral institution did not allow visitation, including clergy, family, and lawyers. Essentially, pastoral care, counseling, and chaplaincy were severely compromised, and the volunteers who provided these religious services could not provide these critical religious services.

As mentioned in other interviews, inmates depend on volunteers to provide an outlet to the world outside the prison's confines. This severed outlet to the outside world, which volunteers provide, negatively impacts the inmates' morale and mental health, including staff members. Also, he explained that this carceral facility did not allow automation to virtualize these religious services. This facility was on a complete lockdown; visitation was not allowed for about eighteen months, and no automation was allowed to virtualize services. However, Rock

explained that the inmates were most likely to perform these religious services and provide pastoral care and counseling.

In September 2021, Rock explained that he could access a nursing home to minister to those in need. However, when the outbreak of the COVID-19 variant commenced, the nursing home's management did not allow him access to the facility to reduce the transmission rate for the COVID-19 variants.

This researcher asserts that Rock's interview provides plausibility for several issues and challenges presented in this body of research. This body of research states that “in March 2020, the United States had more confirmed cases of the COVID-19 than any other country, including China, Italy, or Iran. This virus outbreak presented a monumental problem/challenge for America's health institutions. The advent of the pandemic severely impacted another institution in America, its carceral institutions.”<sup>264</sup>

In summary, the other issue presented in this body of research is that automation can be utilized to virtualize religious services to enhance the efficacy of pastoral care, and counseling, including chaplaincy in carceral institutions. The advent of COVID-19 unquestionably impeded Rock from providing religious services in the Westwood County prison, and he was not granted access to the prison during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 until the time of this writing. Chaplain Rock did not provide information or data on the use of automation to virtualize religious services in his interview. Apparently, the county jails in his locale were not using automation to virtualize religious services or instruction.

However, carceral institutions in Texas, Georgia, and Florida have used automation to virtualize services in their prisons and hospitals. Therefore, the contents of this interview

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<sup>264</sup> John Gomez, *The Pandemic's Impact on the Efficacy of Chaplaincy at the Baldwin State Prison*, Liberty University, Rawlings School of Divinity, 9, October 31, 2021.

empirically validate one of the premises presented in this body of research: COVID-19 impeded the efficacy of chaplaincy in all prisons, including Baldwin State prison in Georgia.

In summary, this researcher affirms that enhancing the efficacy of chaplaincy by virtualizing religious services would have resulted in a significant improvement in the morale, mental health, and the general environment in this county jail.

### Appendix N: Chaplain Interview, Jeo Olsen

This researcher interviewed chaplain Jeo Olsen on, October 28, 2021, a senior chaplain in the IFOC. She is the Regional Commander (head chaplain) for region six, and she is responsible for ensuring that the chaplain corps and virtual teams under her tutelage operate as a DBA (doing business as) of the IFOC in Temple, Texas. She is also an associate instructor in the IFOC and has the wherewithal to provide instruction in the chaplain leadership course, including the introductory IFOC chaplain course. Region six consists of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. There are seven corps in her region, and one of the chaplain corps in her region operates in the Navajo Reservation. The Navajo Reservation is the largest Indian reservation in the country. It is 27,000 square miles, and approximately 290,000 Native Americans live on the reservation. The reservation is in the upper northeastern corner of Arizona, and it extends into southern New Mexico and Utah.

Olsen resides in Taos, New Mexico, a town in Taos County in the north-central region of New Mexico in the Sangre de Cristo mountains. She has been a volunteer chaplain in Taos's Holy Cross Medical Center since 2012; she describes her ministry in the hospital as a "free agent." Her primary function as a chaplain in this facility is to provide chaplaincy to staff members; however, the ministry changed during the advent of the pandemic. She recalled during the interview that her first call as a chaplain in this facility was when the head nurse in the emergency room committed suicide. Olsen explained that she functions as a crisis interventionist for the hospital, and she had to perform the death notification of the head ER nurse to all the different departments in the hospital with the director of the human resources department. She explained that she also works extensively with the ICU nurses and has worked alongside them and the emergency room staff on several high-profile cases. For example, she had to provide

chaplaincy for the ER staff for two avalanche deaths; one person was from Colorado, and the other from Boston.

She elucidated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospital created a COVID-19 crisis hotline for the staff, and the chaplains in her corps assumed the responsibility for monitoring the crisis hotline during the pandemic. However, the ICU staff called upon her several times to provide chaplaincy to a patient dying from the COVID-19 virus. She explained that she was only granted access to the ICU if the patient or the patient's family asked for a chaplain. Olsen explained that in most cases, when she was allowed to minister in the ICU during the pandemic to a terminal patient, the patient's priest, pastor, or spiritual leader declined to visit their respective congregation in the hospital prior to their death.

It has been noted that during the pandemic, most hospitals did not allow anyone access to the ICU, including clergy. Due to these restrictions, most patients died alone in the ICU without their loved ones and spiritual leader throughout the pandemic. Olsen's presence with a dying patient in the ICU during the pandemic provides both the patient and their family closure and solace before their death. She explained that she played a hymn in the ICU to a patient dying from COVID-19, which made a considerable difference prior to his death. Essentially, during the pandemic, she was allowed to minister the love of God to a dying patient in this facility by employing the "ministry of presence." She explained that she was not required to wear PPE or hazmat uniforms because the ICU is a negative pressure room. A negative pressure room, also called an isolation room, is a hospital room that keeps patients with infectious illnesses isolated from other visitors, patients, and hospital staff members.<sup>265</sup> The air pressure inside the negative room is considerably lower than the air pressure outside the room. Essentially, when the door is

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<sup>265</sup> Lois Zoppi, "What Are Negative Pressure Rooms?" *News-Medical*, last modified February 18, 2021, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://www.news-medical.net/health/What-are-Negative-Pressure-Rooms.aspx>.

opened in a negative pressure room, the contaminated air, including the hazardous particles inside the room, will not flow outside into non-contaminated areas within the facility.<sup>266</sup>

Olsen has resided in Taos for over thirty-two years, and she knows most of the people in the hospital dying from COVID, including the hospital's doctors and the nurses. One must be cognizant that Taos is a tight-knitted community where most of the community interacts with each other and are friends. Therefore, her ministry is personal since she knows most of the people in her community that require her ministry. She also explained that she ministered to the staff members from the hospital during the pandemic. Since most of the hospital's staff members resided forty to sixty minutes from the hospital, they usually contacted her during their journey to their residence to coordinate a Zoom meeting for addressing an issue. She noted an increase in mental health issues, and the community had a significant need for mental health professionals during the pandemic. It was noted during the interview that Olsen utilizes Zoom to minister to the hospital's staff members that need chaplaincy.

Olsen explained in her interview that the ICU charge nurse in the hospital resigned after her mother died and moved to Florida. She explained that the pandemic impacted the Taos community negatively. The experienced medical professionals in the facility will most likely retire to get away from the stressors of working in a COVID-rich environment where patients were dying consistently from the pandemic. Retention is an issue in Taos since the facility cannot offer the high wages that other hospitals can offer, such as in Colorado Springs, Santa Fe, or Denver. Currently, all Taos citizens must wear a mask in public and private locations. She explicitly explains that if all the medical professionals in the hospital who are eligible for

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<sup>266</sup> Zoppi, "What Are Negative Pressure Rooms?"

retirement resign, very few seasoned or experienced staff members will be left in the facility to provide critical medical services for the citizens of Taos.

Olsen was also involved in the Youth Detention Center, Eagle Nest reintegration center for youths, and since the advent of the pandemic, she has not been granted access to the facility. She explained that one of the chaplains under her tutelage was recently promoted to the social worker and chaplain of the facility. The center provides services for youth such as education, mental health, substance abuse, and health care. Olsen used to provide guitar lessons to the youths, and upon their graduation from the program, they would be provided with a guitar donated by the community. According to Olsen, visitors, including clergy, have not been granted access to the facility due to the pandemic. Also, due to the virus's variant in New Mexico, no access has been granted to this facility. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the ministry in this facility is limited or non-existent due to the pandemic. This institution's reintegration processes and programs are severely compromised, negatively impacting the youths needing these critical services.

This researcher has presented two critical hypotheses in the action-research project. One hypothesis is that the advent of the COVID-19 impeded the efficacy of chaplaincy in carceral institutions, and the other is that the virtualization of religious services can enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in prisons.

In Olsen's interview, it was noted that COVID-19 negatively impacted the Taos Holy Cross Medical facility since most spiritual leaders were unwilling to enter the facility to minister to their congregants due to the virus. In her interview, it was also noted that many of the medical professionals in the facility eligible for retirement were considering retirement due to the stressors encountered daily in the hospital. If they all retired, the facility would not have

seasoned and experienced medical personnel to address the medical needs of the general populace of Taos. Also, the clergy was not granted access to the reintegration center during the pandemic to provide chaplaincy to the youths in the program.

However, it was noted that Olsen utilizes Zoom to minister to the hospital's staff members in need. Therefore, this researcher attests that the nuances, challenges, and issues mentioned in this interview that negatively impacted or impeded ministry during the pandemic prove that this researcher's hypothesis about the negative impact of COVID-19 in carceral institutions is valid. Secondly, the use of Zoom by Olsen to provide ministry to the hospital's staff members validates this researcher's hypothesis about the utilization of automation to enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy for carceral institutions.

In summary, although ministry via Zoom is not as robust as a brick-and-mortar ministry, it is a powerful tool for providing ministry effectively and safely for those that need it. It is being used in various environments throughout the country to provide chaplaincy for disenfranchised, stressed, and people in mental anguish. Olsen is a sterling example of a chaplain who uses Zoom to minister to people in need of the "ministry of presence."

#### Appendix O: Chaplain Interview, Cynthia Lovingood, Th.D.

Chaplain Cynthia Lovingood is a chaplain with the International Conference of Police Chaplains and is a contract chaplain in the York County Detention Center in South Carolina. The York County Detention Center is at the Moss Justice Center located in York, South Carolina. The facility has 565 beds, and its primary mission is to hold individuals who have been arrested by various law enforcement agencies in the York County area. Usually, these individuals in the center are waiting to be bonded out of jail, including those waiting to be released to a South Carolina state facility after being sentenced by the court. The York County Detention Center receives compensation from the government by housing inmates for the U.S. Marshal Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The jail's population is approximately one thousand, including staff members and inmates. During the interview, Lovingood was asked several questions to ascertain how COVID-19 affected her ministry and the measures she took to continue ministry in the jail, including the challenges she encountered in working in a COVID-rich environment; enclosed are the details of her interview.

Lovingood encountered various challenges during the pandemic, which negatively impacted her ability to provide chaplaincy in this carceral facility. She explained that the volunteer assisting her with the ministry was not allowed to enter the facility due to the advent of the pandemic. Secondly, she was not employed full-time during the pandemic, and due to the lack of help, she had to perform all the administrative work without any assistance. The administrative work she had to perform in the center was quite extensive, and it impeded her ability to provide chaplaincy to the offenders. She explained that she had to order office supplies, write reports, distribute religious materials and paraphernalia to the rank and file in prison. These daily administrative duties took most of her time, and she did not have ample time to provide

critical pastoral care and counseling to the offenders. She also explained that the facility was on lockdown due to the pandemic; clergy, lawyers, family members, and friends were not granted access to the facility to reduce the spread of the virus in the facility. However, the prison officials did allow her to minister to inmates on an individual basis, and she was occasionally allowed to minister to an individual in the facility who was active COVID. When she was allowed to minister to an active COVID inmate, she had to wear PPE and hazmat gear to minister to the individual.

Also, no religious services were conducted throughout the facility; she was severely restricted in providing chaplaincy to the offenders. The chaplain raised another issue in the center if an offender was active COVID, he/she would be removed from their respective area and relocated to an area with the offenders who are also active COVID. Secondly, the personnel adjacent or cohabitating with the offender who tested positive for COVID would be removed from their respective areas and relocated to another area to be monitored for COVID-19 symptoms. Isolation, loneliness, and quarantines became a norm during the pandemic in this center. According to the chaplain, these nuances impacted the mental health of those that were isolated or quarantined. She also explained that the lack of religious services and instructions in the center resulted in many offenders losing their faith, and many of them started expressing belief in other religions. For example, according to Lovingood, some offenders in the center were vacillating during the pandemic between Judaism, satanism, and other religions in the center as an attempt to find solace and peace for their troubled hearts. She also expressed to this researcher that the facility needs more chaplains to enhance the efficacy of chaplaincy in the center.

To provide some religious instruction and guidance to the offenders in the institution during the pandemic, she provided articles, journals, or magazines according to their faith tradition. However, she was not allowed to print the information, articles, or magazines from the internet, and the general populace of York County donated all the materials.

During the interview, she highlighted that morale, which was already low in the facility, became worse due to the restrictions imposed by the county due to the pandemic. A significant decrease in correctional officers occurred during the pandemic, and those that remained employed by the facility had to work extra hours due to a lack of staff. Due to the increased stressors that the staff experienced during the pandemic, her ministry increased. Essentially her ministry morphed during the pandemic; the staff and the inmates in the center required more ministry during the pandemic. There are approximately five hundred inmates in this facility and one chaplain to address their spiritual needs, and she was unable to address all their needs effectively, including those of the staff members. She also explained that she noticed increased mental health issues in the center because many of the offenders could not adapt to the isolation and quarantine imposed by the center officials due to the pandemic. Therefore, it is evident that the pandemic's outbreak severely compromised Lovingood's ability to provide chaplaincy in this carceral institution. At the time of this writing, the facility was not allowing brick and mortar visitations; all visitations had to be done remotely utilizing a secure video conferencing platform. It is apparent that the advent of the pandemic negatively impacted the offenders and the staff members in this carceral institution.

However, there is hope, and there are multipurpose rooms in the center with televisions and CD players. The equipment is mainly used to train volunteers and host virtual classrooms for the youths who need to complete their education during incarceration. According to Lovingood,

the center has attempted to use Zoom in one of its programs but has not decided to move forward in virtualizing its programs via Zoom. However, since the center houses youths who must complete their education, the center plans to use Zoom to provide remote schooling to meet the educational requirements of these students. The students in this center will utilize laptops issued by the institution to further their education. Therefore, there is potential to utilize these instruments to provide virtual religious services and instructions via the Zoom platform in the center. Religious instruction or guidance can be embedded in a training module via Zoom, so there might be opportunities to provide pastoral care virtually creatively utilizing Zoom. Lovingood is not opposed to virtualizing religious services; however, the caveat is that all religious groups in the center must be recipients of a religious service via Zoom.

## Appendix P: Chaplain Interview with West Texas IFOC Chaplain

\*(The name of this interviewee was withheld upon mutual agreement.)

This west Texas IFOC chaplain was interviewed by this researcher on 09/16/2021. He is a senior ordained chaplain with the IFOC and is the Regional Commander for Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas. His primary duties and responsibilities as the regional commander are to ensure that the chaplain's corps and virtual teams under his tutelage operate as a DBA under the IFOC's headquarters' umbrella in Temple, Texas. He also serves as the chaplain's chaplain in his region, which indicates that he provides pastoral care and counseling for the chaplains in his region under duress. He lives in west Texas in Denver City, near the New Mexico border. He has been involved with the prison ministry since May 2014 and the county jail ministry since 2009. He ministered in the Lee County jail in New Mexico for one year. He explained during his interview that he procured a large galvanized six-foot steel horse trough, painted it blue, and used it to baptize inmates in various carceral institutes. According to this chaplain, he baptized about two hundred and forty inmates. This west Texas chaplain was a missionary to the Dominican Republic and has myriad experiences as a minister. He was asked several questions to ascertain how the COVID-19 affected his ministry and his measures to continue the ministry in the prisons and jails.

As mentioned above, this west Texas chaplain ministered in various carceral facilities, providing religious instruction and guidance, including baptizing inmates. He elucidated that when the outbreak of COVID-19 started, he was not granted access to state prisons or county jails. No one was allowed to visit carceral institutions in Texas due to the visitation restrictions imposed by the Governor of Texas due to the advent of the pandemic. Clergy, family members, friends, and lawyers were all restricted from accessing carceral institutions during the pandemic.

Due to these COVID imposed restrictions, inmates were subject to enhanced isolation and quarantine in the prisons and jails in Texas. Therefore, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic impeded the ministry this chaplain provided to state prisons and jails in his area.

However, he was provided another opportunity to minister in his area under the Denver City, Texas “Ministry Alliance” umbrella. He explained that the “Ministry Alliance” consists of various ministers and pastors in Denver City, Texas, and they provided religious services, instruction, and guidance via Zoom during the pandemic. The “Ministry Alliance” facilitated the “National Day of Prayer” in Denver City, including praying for the school system. He explained that using Zoom enhanced ministry because any church or denomination in Denver City can join the Ministry Alliance and pray for the city’s needs. The Ministry Alliance provides various religious services for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and special events and has experienced increased participation due to the virtualization of religious services. He explained that mothers who have young children at home in Denver City have benefited tremendously from these virtual religious services since they do not need to acquire babysitting services to take care of their children.

It was evident that the advent of COVID-19 impeded his ability to provide chaplaincy in the carceral institutions in Texas. He was not granted access to both the state and county institutions due to the COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the Governor of Texas to reduce the rate of infections in carceral facilities throughout the state. He could not provide the ministry of presence, including baptizing the offenders in various facilities. However, he elucidated during his interview that the city’s Ministry Alliance utilized various platforms such as Facebook Live and Zoom to provide religious services. For example, the Denver City Church of the Nazarene provided a virtual Thanksgiving service under the umbrella of the Ministerial Alliance via YouTube and Facebook Live.

Appendix Q: Focus Group Memorandum for Inmates and Staff Members,

“Only if access is granted.”

Memorandum of Understanding

To: Inmates and Staff Members of the Baldwin State Prison  
140 Laying Farm Road  
Hardwick Ga, 31034  
Baldwin County  
From: Chaplain John Gomez, Volunteer

This action-research intervention aims to provide virtual services using the Zoom application and live streaming platforms. The recommendation is to use the Zoom application for individual counseling or pastoral care. The rationale for this recommendation is that Zoom can provide personal one-on-one interactions for meeting the needs of the staff members and the inmates. The chaplain will be provided with a licensed Zoom account, and he should be the administrator of the Zoom application. He can send a link to the person in need (inmate or staff member) and schedule a specific time for the pastoral care or counseling session. Staff members of the prison usually have access to most of the institution's rooms and offices and can access computers or kiosks to participate in a pastoral counseling sessions. The offenders will have to be authorized by the warden or his designee to utilize the facility's network devices (kiosks). Secondly, the chaplain will not be exposed to the virus during the virtual session. These virtual services can catalyze the reduction of COVID-19 infections throughout the facility.

The appropriate live stream platform will be selected to broadcast live religious services. These platforms do have an associated cost, and the church or a charitable organization should raise the money to pay for this service. All religious groups must be considered in church services in a carceral institution. At least four to five different services must be live-streamed by the appropriate minister representing their particular religious beliefs, such as a priest, minister/pastor, imam, elder, or rabbi. More costs will be associated with these religious

services' several live-stream broadcasts; however, live-streaming a religious service in this institution is feasible.

A sizeable smart television (65 inches or greater) can be used in the auditorium for viewing the live-stream church service, and the oversized room used for recording the live stream will need to be outfitted with the equipment for broadcasting the live event. However, the auditorium has a capacity of about one hundred fifty to two hundred inmates, and another large room might need to be identified to view the live church service. The inmates that attend these virtual services might need to be tested for the virus before the church service; the warden or his designee will guide this issue. The protocols outlined by the CDC must be implemented and executed in the facility in order to avoid further COVID-19 infections. This researcher is aware that there are several kiosks throughout the institution, and more kiosks will have to be procured if the warden decides to utilize them for viewing the virtual church service. The kiosks in the facility, which are basically "dummy terminals," will provide access to the facility's network to view the virtual service.

Sincerely,

Chaplain John Gomez

*John Gomez*

## Appendix R: Credentials for Accessing Baldwin State Prison

