

Friends,

We have made progress, it seems.

Caveat – From serious conversations with several, chief of among them, Emmett Solomon of [Restorative Justice Networks](#) and Frank Graham of [Chapel of Hope](#), among a few legislators and Suzii Paynter from the BGCT’s [Christian Life Commission](#), let me correct a misconception of mine. At first, I had thought the HB 1 total elimination of chaplains was merely a busy accountants presentation to the House of Reps (in a way). It was not. That elimination took place IN CONSULTATION with chief legislators AND TDCJ. How much Chaplaincy was discussed may have been moot, but it was not a secret. When TDCJ gave its two-page summation of cuts, there were no true surprises to them, it appears to me, and you have seen TDCJ announce that several of those very cuts HAVE been agreed to and implementation HAS BEGUN.

This is the reality – had no one done anything this last month, it is likely that Chaplaincy would have been cut with RIO!

That is to say, what we have accomplished it NOT locked into stone, not yet, and my commentary is fragmentary. As Kenny Rogers says in his famous ballad, *The Gambler*, “You never count your money when you’re sitting at the table.” I do not want to seem over enthusiastic or communicate that we can kick back and relax. But one thing is for certain, we have made an impact across the state. I am aware that SEVERAL Chaplains NOT listed have made contacts too ... and we CANNOT mistake the impact of Emmett Solomon’s huge network or Frank Graham’s leadership in Dallas. **TEAM = Together Everyone Achieves More** – so many have come together, and in part, the diversity of the pockets of networks is also a strength.



KEY Committees and Chairs – Let me say that the importance of committee chairs is front and center. Emmett Solomon and Suzii Paynter spun into action immediately ... and others – we ramped this up and made connections at lightning speed.

When Frank Graham at the very start initiated communication with likely Chair Madden, who became chair of the House Corrections Committee, that was a piece of wise leadership that may, in retrospect, be seen as critical. Madden, I am told, is West Point grad and a speedy processor of data – and when you’re talking about billions for TDCJ, one needs to be. In several communications, it looks like Madden is now in favor of retaining TDCJ Chaplaincy, but cuts will still have be made – YET that is not absolutely certain. He is a careful man who does not appear to make vain promises. Yet several legislators, like him, have expressed a desire to keep Chaplaincy. And, the closest one to Chair Madden is Frank Graham, and Frank has said he now support Chaplaincy retention, to some degree.

This is great news ... but let’s NOT count our money yet – we have to know “when to hold’em and know when to fold’em” in not too metaphorical a sense. This must be seen for what it is. As Frank has continually encouraged, and Emmett and I have continued to encourage in our networks, another legislator is key to this process, [John Otto](#), who has an apartment room next to Madden in Austin, and is chair of the sub-committee under Madden on Corrections.

Good news there ... [John Otto’s District 18](#) is composed of 100% of Polk and Liberty Counties, and 20% Montgomery. I have touched bases with Don Wilkey the pastor of FBC Onalaska in Ott’s District, and Wilkey is behind us, said he was going to call Otto and get the message to his congregation to helpt too. And I know a couple of others, two of my students in

my Angelina College Class, who had friends in Livingston, and Dr. Keith Bellamy who is networking with the churches of Christ in Livingston ... and Chaplain Virginia Haynes has written a letter to him too. This is a GREAT need ... and we CANNOT underestimate the need to CONTINUE to network for the next month or two.

Welcome **Pastor Don Wilkey** to Save Chaplaincy! Anyone else know of anyone in Polk or Liberty Counties? > [John Otto’s District 18](#)



Welcome Dennis & Mary Stephenson of Early, Texas, have been volunteering for a long time in Brownwood and joined us and will be networking too.

Welcome to Dwayne Marshall from Fort Worth who was at Frank’s gathering in Plano and heard about. He is active in Kairos at the Beto unit, and chair of his volunteer committee, and has since also emailed his network the [Save Chaplaincy Handout](#) to encourage them, too, to speak up for the cause.

Welcome a couple of others on the [Facebook site](#) ...



Chaplain Peggy Toussaint from Lockhart said,

WOW! What a strong and beautiful letter [referring to the letter by Woodville’s Chaplain Virginia Haynes, [You Should Have Seen It in Color](#). We are still working here in Lockhart. All our volunteers and many community people are still calling and writing their legislators. I gave a talk last week to a group who are going to each write. Yeah! The community at large sees the benefits of chaplaincy so hopefully the word is out!!

Keep up the GREAAAT work Peggy ... it will be people just like you that turn the KEY and help make this happen!



Rough Ride – In one round of dialogue, a key supporter from Texas Impact got a “grilling” when he testified for Save Chaplaincy in the House, and wanted more info and FACTS. Both Carol Vance and I share more rationale for our cause and substance for our [Save Chaplaincy Handout](#) that Frank Graham and I assiduously put together. Legislators probe and use a variety of tactics ... it was NOT a pleasant experience for that fine supporter, but neither was he discouraged – just caught off guard. And the probing continues. We have NOT won the game yet. We have NOT saved Chaplaincy yet.

In one dialogue – because of criticism of the validity of the statement “If one inmate is prevented from returning because of a Chaplain, that recovers his entire annual salary” – I responded with this: According to [TDCJ’s FY2008](#) report there were 156,127 by the end of the FY (p. 26), and from a total of \$2,886,970,03, \$2,268,449,856 was allocated for “Incarceration” alone (p. 13) budget item alone of incarceration: which equals \$14,530 per offender per year. As you saw in Carol’s summary, there are other factors involved in recidivists ... and the cost of an inmate "coming back" not the least of which is the cost litigation at the local level. For instance, the cost of prosecution can cost bunches, and add to that the cost to the victim. A murder can cost a county a million. If a robber or a minor drug offense costs \$50k or even \$15k to the county, and the offender has a change of heart in prison after two years because of a single

chaplain, and religion, then the TOTAL cost is recovered - clearly by TDCJ's own data, and a SUPER-conservative look at prosecution's cost of retrying a recidivist. If ten offenders "get religion" to use the negative term, or have a change of heart to use the positive term, the cost recovery is multiplied. Carol Vance responded from his experience ... and there are several ways to address that.

The point of sharing this – as with HB 1 at the start, some *powerful* people did in fact offer to totally eliminate TDCJ Chaplaincy. Some *are* reticent to accept the common sense facts of Chaplaincy. Yet – thankfully – several people are coming from surprising quarters and come forward to help.

Not the least of which was that crucial meeting in Austin sponsored by Suzii Paynter and Bobbie Smith. We may never know how critical that was and the networking that came from those 50 or so. And a reporter from the Austin-Statesman was there, too, and quoted several of us! Yes, we made the news, likely in part to Paynter's or Smith's offices giving a press release for that crucial meeting!



Rabbi Goldstein & Happy Passover – Lastly, but not least, on Monday (2-21-11), the Texas Senate Finance Committee held a public hearing, and many of us planned to be there. I planned to be there, had taken off and made travel plans – but a flu-bug slapped me down (turned out to be bronchitis the doctor said today – it is *still* with me). Unfortunately, not very many went. But – God's will I am certain – Contract Chaplain Rabbi Goldstein asked about it, said that his legislative expert for the Jewish faith in Texas said he should go, and I am so very glad to say he did – I asked him to share his visit:

Michael

I waited 4 1/2 hours in order to present at the Senate Committee Hearing. I introduced myself as the Lead Contract Rabbi of TDCJ. I then said that I regretted to be informed that Chaplaincy is not included in the new budget. I talked about the impact Chaplains have on the inmates and that if each chaplain effects only one inmate that Chaplaincy already pays for itself. Spoke about how Colorado Sate cut their program and the difficulties in gards acting as administrators of the Chapel and how they will lack the skills to counsel inmates for deaths etc..

I concluded by stating how Chaplaincy is the soul of TDCJ and that a Body without a soul is dead meat.

This was received well by the senators who seemed to be supportive but blamed the House but that the budget will then come to them (the Senate). I commented that at least I am giving them a heads up.

They then thanked my for my testimony. The female senator [Judith Zaffirini](#) (senior senator – from 1987!) from Laredo and Senator West really like the expression of the Body without soul and wanted me to repeat it. Senator Clark commented that they believe in Body and Souls. Senator Zaffirini from Laredo will post the comment on her facebook.

Shalom, Rabbi Goldstein

He said only one Catholic Deacon was there, but only advocated the retention of programs and said nothing about Chaplaincy. I *know* several others wanted to be there. Perhaps, less is better in some cases. Don't know ... only it was GREAT that Rabbi Goldstein was there! And if I can

say this with a positive light and multiple layers to the metaphor – may we ALL have a **Happy PASSOVER** in the next month or two!



We have made progress. We have weathered one serious TDCJ cut that several of us believe would NOT have been possible without the statewide work of so many in so many pockets of networks. Yet, we cannot relax. We have NOT won yet. Don’t think we can “fold’em or hold’em” and we certainly cannot “walk away” – not just yet. We need few more connections – remember the KEY – constituents *connecting* help a lot, and those who help others to connect help even more. Keep up the great work ... and on behalf of 150,000 fellows in white and their families – yes, [You Should See It in Color](#).

Put Frank Graham in your prayers, he is leaving Sunday for two weeks in Alaska – the poor soul! May he have a blessed respite from all, and thanks again to him for his extraordinary and sustained leadership.

Hopefully, prayerfully, good news will continue to outweigh the bad.

Sincerely, Mike

[Michael G. Maness](#)

[SAVE TEXAS PRISON CHAPLAINCY](#)

