Welcome to the workshop, **Correctional Chaplains: Under Law, Under Grace**

By show of hands how many of you are Correctional Chaplains employed or contracted by a government agency? employed or contracted by a church agency/ministry? Volunteers?

Great. I hope you will find this presentation helpful and I certainly will welcome your questions at the end of my presentation. So let’s begin.
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Do you remember your first visit to a jail or prison? Do you remember the feelings of being nervous, unsure, somewhat apprehensive…. My first prison visit was to the Cook County Jail in Chicago IL. That was about 30 years ago.

I went to visit “Hosta.” That’s the name I knew him by. I don’t remember his real name. He was the leader of the Simon City Royals street gang on Chicago’s Northwest side. He has been arrested for possession of a firearm and he was supposed to talk with a group of seminarians at a local park fieldhouse that coming Saturday about life in a gang. With him being locked up, I knew I’d have to make other plans for these seminary students for Saturday morning.

“I have you covered.” Hosta told me. “I’ll have someone there.” “But you’re in prison?” I reminded Hosta. “Don’t worry. I’ll have someone from the gang there.”

Hosta was true to his word. Punctually at 10AM on Saturday morning, two members of the Simon City Royals were at the park’s fieldhouse to interact with the seminary students. I had no idea that just because one is locked up, didn’t mean one was out of commission. My first lesson.
My first visit to a prison – and by the term prison I am differentiating it from a county jail or lock up – was when I went to Pontiac Correctional Facility in Pontiac IL where I was an official visitor with the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty. Every other months, two or three of us would be permitted to walk the tiers of death row and visit with inmates as they remained in their cells. The purpose was to check in with them, jot down any major complaints, and to let them know someone cared. If my memory is correct, the group of three of us had to be admitted into eight or ten locked doors until we got from the prison gates to death row. It was nothing like visiting patients in a hospital. I was only allowed to take a tablet and a pen with me into the prison. Everything else had to be locked in a locker. Once at the prison and on the unit, we would not be able to pee or eat until after we met with the warden around 3PM. Lesson Number 2: Security runs prisons. Lesson Number 3: Most of the inmates I related to on death row were not the animals the media portrayed them to be.
I remember my first day on the job at the Allegheny County Jail in Pittsburgh PA.
I assumed that like my experience on death row that inmates would be confined in their cells, with only controlled access to me and my office. Boy was I wrong.
When the sound of a loud ear-shattering buzzer went off, all the prison doors flung open and a host of inmates – many twice my size – passed within inches of me en route to yard and the gym.

Lesson Number 4: Inmates always outnumber prison staff by 4 or 5 : 1.
It’s a miracle there are not more riots.

Lesson Number 5: Prison can be a very vulnerable place – not just for chaplains and staff, but for inmates as well.
Like many of us, I imagine, our view of prisons was shaped by what we see in the movies.

Some of you will remember
Escape from Alcatraz, 1979
Shawshank Redemption, 1994
The Green Mile, 1999
In more recent years there has been no shortage of television shows – some reality, some based on truth, about life behind bars. Some of it is truth. A lot if it is fiction or overexaggeration.
Assumptions Christians make about prison ministry...

Based on what we see or hear, my hunch is that many of us entered prison ministry with a list of assumptions. I want to share with you five assumptions that came to mind. Your may want to add to this list.
Assumptions about prison ministry:
1. It’s the same as doing ministry in a church

1st assumption is that doing prison ministry is basically the same as doing ministry in a church.
We preach in our churches.
We do the same thing in prison.

We baptize in our churches.
We baptize in prisons.

We share about Jesus in our churches.
We share about Jesus in our prisons.

SOME things regarding ministry in prison do mirror what we do in our churches. But as we will shortly learn, the context of our work makes all the difference. “It ain’t the same.”
The 2nd assumption about prison ministry is that Christian Chaplains and Volunteers only have to obey God. That is one option.
In fact for many Christians, because they feel called to do this work, for some reason they feel they are exempt from prison rules.
That somehow the rules apply to everyone else, but not to them.
We will learn that acting on this assumption is dangerous.
The 3\textsuperscript{rd} assumption about prison ministry is that prison staff and correctional officers trust us and are always glad to see. In our eyes, we view ourselves as “the good guys.” We are Christian chaplains and volunteers. Why wouldn’t they trust and welcome us?

In reality EVERY individual who steps into a prison from the outside – including Christian chaplains and volunteers - poses a security risk. We are folks who have to be searched, watched. Officers must ensure our safety in addition to the safety of everyone else in a compound.

There are some Christian volunteers who regularly brighten the day of correctional officers. They have gained the respect of staff.
Other well meaning Christians bring in contraband, violate prison rules
The 4th assumption about prison ministry that many Christian volunteers and chaplains make is that officers and staff will trust you.
This is related to the 2nd assumption – that Christians just need to be obey God.

First, prison staff is trained to be suspicious of everyone.
They know human nature too well.
They are tasked with care, custody and control for those who have done horrific acts.
Their job is to treat everyone the same: that means to trust everyone the same = trust no one.

When Christian volunteers and chaplains feel sorry for inmates, feel like they are only ones who care about their plight, then prison officials have every right to be suspicious and on the look out.
Well-meaning but misguided Christians have violated many prison rules cause “they didn’t think it would do any harm.” Christian volunteers and chaplains can make prison officials nervous.
The 4th assumption about prison ministry is inmates will never try to play me or manipulate me or lie to me. After all, I’m a Christian and I’m here to help.
Unfortunately just because inmates are in prison doesn’t mean they have left the deceptive ways and skills that they honed do conduct criminal activity on the outside inside the prison.
Truth is some won’t but many will.

Why do we assume so much?
Why are our assumptions often off base?
Proposed Answer:
We often fail to understand that, within the prison setting, we operate simultaneously Under Law & Under Grace

Why do we make so many assumptions?
My Proposed Answer is this that Christian chaplains and volunteers often fail to understand that, within the prison setting, they operate simultaneously Under Law & Under Grace
By LAW, I’m talking about operating within both Federal and State laws and policies
By GRACE, I’m talking about what we understand to be church or expressions of religion in prison.

Both LAW (STATE) and GRACE (CHURCH) operate under different “Rules of the Road” as we will shortly see.
For chaplains and volunteers, we are more acquainted with living under GRACE/Church so let’s start there.
Most of us feel at home on the GRACE, the church side. Some of us have been Christians for as long as we can remember. And one of the Rules of the Road for Christians is that The first allegiance of every Christian is to GOD. It’s not to man. It’s not to the world. It’s not to tradition or what society does or thinks or what a political party may say.

We follow Jesus…..and it was Jesus who said..(next slide)
The words of our Savior are clear: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Luke 9:23
Deny self, follow Jesus.
Take your cues from Jesus, not from others.
Do what Jesus does
Say what Jesus says
Be about your/our Father’s business.
And if we are torn regarding whom we should follow; If there are competing loyalties demanding our attention, our money, our obedience. (next slide)

No one can serve two masters….Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.
We know that going with Jesus is the way. That Jesus way many not be easy, it may lead to suffering, it may mean living less comfortably, but it is the road that leads to everlasting life.

So you and I will agree, I think, that living under grace, living by the Rules of Jesus, we give allegiance to and follow Jesus.
In our individual churches, we too live under grace. Churches are free to organize themselves as they wish. They decide on the starting time for services. Whether they will have a Sunday morning and a Sunday evening service or just Sunday morning. They will decide if there is or isn’t a midweek service or Bible Study. They will decide if worship services go for one hour or stretch several hours “as the spirit leads…” Pastors have quite a bit of freedom to preach, teach what they want or feel called to speak, knowing that if folks don’t like their sermons or their doctrinal stances, nothing is forcing them to agree with them. There are ample churches on the outside they can visit. Churches collect offerings and decide where the money goes. Many churches utilize members as deacons and elders and many others have church boards or councils who make decisions on behalf of the body. Churches decide who’s in (i.e. a member) and who’s out (who doesn’t qualify for membership) The church, living under grace, enjoys lots of freedom.
At some point, a group of Christians or a lone Christian feels who enjoys freedom in Christ is convicted that he/she/they must visit those in prison. Seeking to be obedient to their/our Lord, they pray about it….and they pray some more.
We take our Bibles and our faith and prepare ourselves to do battle!

And convinced that prisons are filled with lost souls, And convinced that most prison guards aren’t Christian, They prepare for battle. And if they call the chaplain’s office and the chaplain tells them that they have more than enough Bible studies for inmates to chose from, they become indignant and feel that the chaplain is being used by Satan to prevent Christians from coming into prison. For some reasons, many Christians feel entitled to serve those in prison.....but they and we have forgotten one important fact...
It’s NOT our house!
Prisons don’t operate like churches.
Prisons were never meant to operate under grace.
They are intended to operate under the law.

I have found that this concept is one of the hardest of well-meaning Christians to fathom.
The prison is NOT our house.
Prisons are an extension of the government, the LAW

Instead prisons are run by the government. They are government agencies.
Government laws and prison policies are the Bible that prisons adhere to.
REPEAT: Government laws and prison policies are the Bible that prisons adhere to.
Not the KJK, NIV, RSV.
It’s the government’s house.
The rules of LAW apply here.
Superintendents and Wardens call the shots. It’s THEIR house.

Under Law

Superintendents and Wardens call the shots. It’s THEIR house – whether you like it or not. It’s their rules. Rules are there for reasons you and I may never understand….but do remember this.
No rule was created in a vacuum.
You may not know what circumstance brought the rule about.
You may feel the rule is unfair.
You may feel the rule restricts your ministry.
It doesn’t matter.
Rules are there for a reason.
Something that someone did in the past triggered a new rule.
Rules are never created in a vacuum.
Christian chaplains and volunteers must serve within the framework of the government agency in which they serve.

The bottom line is that Correctional Chaplains and Christian volunteers – while called by God to visit those in prison - must be willing to serve within the framework of the Government Agency in which they serve. On in other words, to abide by the Rules of the State (the LAW) OR ELSE they will not be welcome.

While we enter prisons clinging to our faith and our Bibles – and those are always things that Christians should do – in order for us not to overstay our welcome, we MUST fit abide by the LAW of the Prison in which we serve. This applies whether we are chaplains or volunteers or religious advisors…. The same rules apply to all of us.
Let’s explore what it means for chaplains and volunteers to live under the LAW and GRACE at the same time.
Or in other words, what are some implications of being a Christian chaplain/volunteer within the framework of the prison system.

There are some practical implications and there are some legal implications.
We’ll begin with the practical implications.
As many of you know, “TIME” in prison is different than on the outside.

You are called to Respect Prison Time. There are two rules about prison time:

1. Everything has a starting time – but it’s not uncommon for everything to start late.

2. While your group/service/lesson might not start on time, you WILL end on time. That’s a non-negotiable. There are no exceptions!

Christian chaplains and volunteers would do well to respect prison time.
2. You don’t determine what you need.
The prison does.

2nd practical implication of being a Christian chaplain/volunteer within the framework of the prison system.

Is that the prison tell us what tools we are allowed to have at our disposal.
“You don’t determine what you need; the prison does”

The prison determines whether you can bring in:
- Pens, notebooks,
- CDs or books
- Amplifiers and instruments.
- Extension Cords and the like.

In prison, RULES OF LAW sound something like this:
“Take everything out of your pockets!”
“Do you have a Gate Clearance for that?”
“Your name isn’t on the list”
“I can’t let you in with that medicine. You need to lock it up.”
“You’re gonna have to wait to the side while I process these folks first.”
A third practical implication of doing prison ministry is that Patience is a virtue.

In prison, everything has a lock:
Hallway Doors
Office Doors
Boom Closet doors
Freezer doors
Restroom Doors
Doors to get in; doors to get out.

You can’t get anywhere fast or without a key or someone to let you in (or out).
And if it isn’t locked now, it had better be when you leave.

Being KIND TO OFFICERS – even when you have waited more than your fair share of time – over time works magic.
A fourth practical implication of doing prison ministry under the LAW is that Religion DOESN’T come FIRST. RELIGION – even a Christian Worship Service or a special Gospel Concert planned months in advance – doesn’t come first.

SECURITY DOES.

Most of you know what an inmate count is. In the Pennsylvania DOC, every inmate must be accounted for seven – yes SEVEN – times a day!
In 1997, how did the state correctional institution in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania know that six inmates may have escaped?

An inmate count was off.

Only later did the staff know that the inmates dug themselves out of prison digging a Tunnel that they dug With Power Tools.
In 2007, how did prison officials at a state prison near Erie PA know that an inmate may have escaped?

Officials were unable to account for Inmate Kysor (with the ARROW) during the 4:30 p.m. count.

Several additional counts were then required to confirm the inmate's absence.

Once that happened, prison officials immediately notified the Pennsylvania State Police.

It was determined that inmate Kysor was last seen at 3 p.m. on Nov. 25 in the kitchen as he worked loading barrels of food waste onto a disposal truck.

It was later learned that the inmate had escaped in one of the barrels of food waste.
COUNT trumps EVERYTHING!

Yard
Showers
GED Classes
Inmate Visits

The best sermon you were just about to preach

All prison programs must be scheduled around count times.

COUNT takes precedence over EVERYTHING ELSE!

If count doesn’t clear, programs wait until it does or is cancelled.

One of the biggest frustrations Chaplains and volunteers experience.
EVERYTHING – did I say EVERYTHING
MUST BE APPROVED
* in advance
* by someone higher up the chain
* in writing

INCLUDES
* Schedule changes
* Taking a day off
* Bringing something or someone into prison
* Starting a new program, etc.

Now Churches can be slow to enact change…..prisons rival churches re: how long it takes for things to be approved.
Finally there is the practical implication that There is a policy for everything in prison.

And if there isn’t a policy for something, the Department will create one.

Most chaplains and volunteers I have encountered do not take the time to know policy. They often assume that policy applies to others and not to themselves. Truth is that policy applies to EVERYONE. Being ignorant of policy OR Assuming someone else needs to know it but you don’t OR assuming it applies to everyone else BUT YOU, puts everyone in the prison at risk.

The best way to get to know policy is to ask what does policy say?
Under Law, Under Grace

√ Follow the rules
√ Bring in only what’s approved
√ Arrive on time
√ Ask permission
√ Go with the flow; you realize that things happen.

As Christian chaplains and volunteers we may do well at the practical implications of the RULES of the LAW:
√ Following the rules: We have read the rules several times. We respect the dos and don’ts even if we don’t always agree with them.
√ Only bring in what we are approved to bring in: We don’t try to smuggle things in.
√ Arrive on time: even if the prison makes us wait and wait some more
√ Always asking permission, even though in our churches we’ve been taught that it’s easier to ask for forgiveness than permission
√ Going with the flow. We realize that our time in prison can go very differently than planned. We remember whose house we are in and who calls the shots.
But there is one more fundamental implication of serving under the LAW & GRACE...

But there is one more fundamental implication of serving under the LAW perhaps the hardest of all for Christian chaplains and volunteers to fully fathom.
And that is the concept of the freedom of religion. This comes from the US Constitution. This isn’t something new.

The right to practice or NOT to practice religion in prison is guaranteed by the First Amendment.
Christian inmates have a right to worship God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen?
Christian inmates should be afforded opportunities for worship and Bible study. Amen?
But…..let me be clear. This also means that (next slide)
Muslim and Jewish and Pagan faith traditions should be given equal opportunity to worship and study. And not just them but.. (next slide)
Inmates who are Native American, and Rastafarian and Buddhist should also be given time to engage in communal religious expression.
Under Law, Under Grace
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The same US Constitution that protects the rights of Christians to practice their faith, guarantees that same right for every inmate regardless of their faith.

There is not to be just one sanctioned or favored religion.
The same US Constitution that protects the rights of Christians to practice their faith, guarantees that same right for every inmate regardless of their faith.

There is not to be just one sanctioned or favored religion.
Establishment Clause

“This is the only show in town. Like it or leave it.”

“Yes, we have services. They are all Christian, but we welcome all inmates.”

“Turn up the volume so those in their cells can hear us.”

The Establishment Clause means that the state – PRISON – is prohibited from setting up one “recognized” church/mosque/synagogue/coven/other religious community and steer inmates in that directions.

Anytime you are trying to overtly or subtly expose inmates to a particular religious message, you are in violation of the LAW – unless inmates freely and voluntarily choose to participate.
Establishment Clause

YES advent wreath candles; NO Menorah candles.
NO room in the schedule for minority faith groups.
Do you have any literature other than for Christians?

The Establishment Clause also means that the state should not give deference or show favor to one religious group over the other:

STUFF
YES advent wreath candles; NO Menorah candles.

SCHEDULES:
NO room in the schedule for minority faith groups.
Who gets Prime Time?

DISPLAY OF LITERATURE
Do you have any literature other than for Christians?
Establishment Clause

Tax dollars to purchase sacred texts (or pay for postage) to advance the cause of one religious expression over others.

The Establishment Clause also means that the state should not give deference or show favor to one religious group over the other:

Establishment Clause

Tax dollars to purchase sacred texts (or pay for postage) to advance the cause of one religious expression over others.

Bibles to give away
Christian Greeting Cards
Colapsable Baptismal Pools
Under Law, Under Grace

Congress shall make no law ...prohibiting the free exercise of religion...

What does this mean?

The same US Constitution that protects the rights of Christians to practice their faith, guarantees that same right for every inmate regardless of their faith.

There is not to be just one sanctioned or favored religion.
The Free Exercise Clause is concerned about religious persecution.
The constitution protects the rights of all individuals – including prisoners - to hold religious beliefs – whatever they are, and even if they make no sense to a chaplain.
This right absolute.
As Christians, most of us feel more at home when we relate to inmates who share our Christian faith.
And thus we are more than happy to give out Bible after Bible after Bible, hoping to flood our prisons with God’s Word. This is a natural thing for any Christian chaplain or volunteer to do.
But what happens when a Hindu inmate asks for a copy of the Bhagavad Gita; OR
When a Muslim asks for a Qur’an?
OR a nation of Islam inmates asks for a book by Messenger Elijah Muhammad?
And so forth?
Have you ever responded like this? “Hey, buddy, you know that stuff is all false? Good luck getting a copy of that!”
Or
“I don’t have one of those, but I can give you a Bible.”

If so you could very well be violating the law.

If you make Bibles available to inmates, you should at least do what you can to find resources where inmate can obtain the sacred text of their choosing.
Doesn’t mean you have to buy it for them. Just as we don’t buy Bibles for inmates, we can receive donations of such texts and make them available.
YES: Believe....BUT prisons can limit the expression of those beliefs.

So have the right to believe as they please. That is a given. That’s protected by the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. But I need to add that the right to express those beliefs freely is NOT absolute.
We would NOT allow inmates to sacrifice animals or birds in the prison setting.
We would not allow inmates to possess knives, no matter how sacred, in prison.
We might be able to suggest alternatives
c. The Bottom Line
The basic principle behind the First Amendment, is that no religion is to be sponsored or favored and no religion is to be dismissed in a correctional context. No Correctional facility or system should even hint of favoring one religion over another, interfering with religious beliefs - regardless of the faith.
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<th>Which faith(s) do you favor?</th>
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<td>• Saturdays, 9AM</td>
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Which faiths do you ignore?
Which faiths get
Which faiths get everything?
Don’t mock other religions.
THE LAW protects inmates to believe as they choose. You are not to persecute others because of their beliefs. It’s that simple. You may not agree with how they make sense of their world and the role of the Divine in it. You don’t have to agree, but you do have to respect their opinion. Let people believe what they want.
Within reason give inmates opportunities to express their beliefs in similar ways as you would hope is done for your group.

But this is not the only law that chaplains and volunteers have to be mindful of as the “do ministry” with the incarcerated.
There is a law called the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, abbreviated, RLUIPA. It was passed by Congress on July 2000, and was signed by President Clinton on September 2000.

How many of you have heard of RLUIPA?

WHY RLUIPA and what does it mean (Next Slide)
Why RLUIPA?

In the early 1990’s it seemed that religious rights of all citizens were being eroded, including in prison. Prison administrators routinely fabricated frivolous and arbitrary reasons to deny individuals their religious rights. For example, prison administrators generally referred to vague and unsubstantiated security concerns to deny individual requests for religious accommodations.
**Why RLUIPA?**

**Jewish Inmate:** I need a Kosher Diet

**Prison Officials:** If we give you a Kosher Diet, other inmates will get jealous because you’re getting something special. We’ll have a riot on our hands. No!

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**Jewish Inmate:** I need a Kosher Diet

**Prison Officials:** If we give you a Kosher Diet, other inmates will get jealous because you’re getting something special. We’ll have a riot on our hands. No!
Native American Inmate: It’s against my religion to cut my hair.

Prison Officials: If we let you grow your hair long, other inmates will get jealous because you’re getting special treatment, plus you’ll be able to hide all kinds of things in your hair. NO!
“No government shall impose a substantial burden on the religious exercise of a person residing in or confined to an institution. ... unless the government demonstrates that imposition of the burden on that person is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest and is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.”

The Text of RLUIPA:

“No government shall impose a substantial burden on the religious exercise of a person residing in or confined to an institution. ... unless the government demonstrates that imposition of the burden on that person:
  a. is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest?
  and
  b. is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest?”
What does RLUIPA mean?
Take every inmate request to be accommodated seriously.

What does RLUIPA mean in plain English?

Before a DOC limits an offender’s religious exercise, the DOC must have a very good (compelling!) reason.

As long as the request is sincere and the request deals with religion, Departments must take a serious look at it.
What does RLUIPA mean?

The exercise of religion does NOT have to be Central or Required.

As defined by the courts, the term "religious exercise" includes any exercise of religion, whether or not compelled by, or central to, a system of religious belief. The term refers not only to belief and profession, but also “the performance of …physical acts [such as] assembling with others for a worship service.” The act does not have to be central to religious practice or even “mandatory or required.”
What does RLUIPA mean?

- A Christian requests that he be given a palm leaf in observance of Palm Sunday.
- A Muslim inmate requests a Kosher Diet.
- A Catholic inmate wants to receive communion daily.
- A Christian inmate wants to be able to give a sermon.

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What does RLUIPA mean?
Limit the exercise in the least restrictive way.

What does RLUIPA mean in plain English?

A Dept. must limit religious exercise in the least restrictive way.

A government MAY have to incur additional costs to avoid imposing a substantial burden on a religious exercise (e.g., devising additional religious diet choices or accommodating additional holy day observances). This could also mean that job descriptions of chaplains be rewritten to reflect that so that it is the expected it is the number one job function of every chaplain to serve all faith groups vs. just their own.
What does RLUIPA mean?

It’s all about the A – Word

It’s all about the A – Word
Being a chaplain, a volunteer in prison,
Being under both grace and law means that while serving in a gov’t institution you goal is to do what? The A – Word. Any guesses?
The A word is to ACCOMMODATE the practice of everyone’s religion. It doesn’t mean the desk have to all be the same size. But it does mean everyone has a desk. To ACCOMMODATE religious practice – whether an inmate is (NEXT SLIDE)
Jewish, Native American, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim or some other faith. This is ultimately the calling under the law. Under GRACE, your calling is to share the Gospel with inmates who voluntarily want to hear about new life in Christ. Under LAW, you call – if I can use that term – is to be open to accommodating the religious practice of all.

What does this look like? I want to share a very good example of this.
In this country, back at the turn of the century, the three dominant religious groups consisted of Catholics, Jewish and Protestants.

It would not surprise you then, that the three dominant religions with which inmates identified were also Catholic, Judaism and Protestant.
At Eastern Penitentiary, 1829 until 1971, which some of you visited yesterday, there were two worship areas: the chapel, shared by Catholic and Protestant inmates and a Synagogue reserved for Jewish services and holy day observances. But as America was becoming more and more diverse, and new prisons were being built, prison architects were trying to think outside the box as to how structurally ACCOMMODATE different religious expressions.
Lazy Susan Prison Altar
One chapel, three different altars:
Left Jewish Ark
Right Catholic Altar
In this picture taken from SCI Rockview, near State College PA, Catholic altar on Left
Protestant altar – with all percussion instruments to aid in worship, piled on the platform as well.
Both at the Camp Hill and the Rockview prisons, the attempt was made to ACCOMMODATE – to make room for the one chapel to be shared by various faiths.
This is called being Accommodating.
Naturally, the number of different religions present in our society has increased dramatically. This has given rise to the Multi-Purpose chapel or meeting room in most newer prisons (built in the 1990s and on)
These spaces are used by many different faith groups, many of which are foreign to most of us. But our job is to accommodate religious expression.
Correctional Chaplains:

Under Law,

Under Grace
1. We always remember that
“It’s NOT our house”

Chaplains who always remember that “It’s not our house”
This is what it means to be a chaplain Under LAW.
Prisons are gov’t properly and gov’t institutions.
Prisons run by gov’t rules and laws Period.
They are not Christian institutions.
They are not any kind of religious institution
We – as chaplains and volunteers – are guests.
And it behooves us to know and follow prison rules.
We are chaplains for all. This is being a Chaplain under LAW and GRACE

Encounter every inmate – every individual – as an EQUAL. Accept each for who they are: questions, doubts, beliefs of lack there of

Respect how they see the world – no matter if it makes sense to you or whether you see things differently

Affirm them for who they are, for being vulnerable with you, for allowing you to accompany them on this journey

Open to learning from them

We are even opening to learning about their religions which give meaning to their lives.

Those religions may be very different from our own, But we are there to learn and accompany them on their journey.
3. We are chaplains and volunteers who have authority to guide a particular faith community.

We are chaplains and volunteers who have authority to guide a particular faith community. This is the GRACE part. Our calling to be the best Christian chaplains we can be never has been questioned. Likewise we want our imams and rabbis and monks and Native spiritual leaders to be the best chaplains and faith representatives of their communities that they can be.
So embrace your calling to be a representative of the Gospel of Jesus. Boldly proclaim the message you know to be true. “Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison”
Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Colossians 3:16)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)
And with grace and under the Law, plant seeds of hope and grace that will lead those who are incarcerate from bondage to freedom.