

Corresponding Chaplain Guidelines

(revised January 2025)

The following guidelines are designed to protect both the church member and inmate/patient/Adult in Custody (AIC), and are in accord with prison policies and Chaplain experience. In this guideline, the term “Chaplain” refers to the church member that is writing. It is a way of keeping the relationship professional, not personal. “Committee” refers to our Institutional Services Executive Committee and “Secretary” refers to the Institutional Services Secretary.

Please note, Christian Science Chaplains serving in person in facilities are referred to by facility staff as “Religious Volunteers.” This distinguishes them from the Facility Chaplains who have devoted specific time and training to their profession.

You may also refer to the *Embraced:Fully Letter Writing/Corresponding Christian Science Chaplain Guidebook* (EF Guidebook) found at <https://embracedfully.org/resources/>. The EF Guidebook includes sample letters and other useful information. Please note there are some differences in what is allowed in Oregon. See below for items you are not allowed to send in a letter and other items specific to Oregon.

When an AIC is in contact with a branch church, a church representative should notify the Committee and inquire whether a Christian Science Chaplain is available in the AIC’s facility (aka inside volunteer). If there is a Christian Science Chaplain available, the Committee will forward the contact information to the Christian Science Chaplain who will verify the need. It is OK to have a corresponding chaplain AND an inside volunteer working with the AIC. The two chaplains should stay in contact.

If no Christian Science Chaplain is available, the church member serving as a Corresponding Chaplain should stay in touch with the Secretary who can facilitate getting questions and concerns answered. If the church has no qualified (i.e., class-taught) person available to correspond, the Committee will assign someone.

When corresponding, these guidelines will assist in keeping the relationship professional instead of personal, and be a blessing for both AIC and their correspondent. The guidelines are changing as the justice system attitudes change. Follow God and stay in touch with the Secretary.

- As of 1/13/25, mail to Oregon Department of Corrections facilities must be typed or written with pencil or pen on plain white 20lb paper. Colored paper, card stock, crayons, markers, paint, etc. may not be used. Lined, white notebook paper is allowed. Envelopes must be plain white and not heavier than 20lb. “Security” envelopes (envelopes that are lined or printed inside) are not allowed.

- Do not include stamps, envelopes, staples, paper clips, or sticky notes in your letters. These items are not allowed in Oregon facilities.
- Always use the church address or a PO Box as the one where the AIC can reach you and as your return address on the letterhead and envelope. You may also use the committee's address (PO Box 1233, Wilsonville, OR 97070). The Secretary scans any letters received and sends them to the Chaplain.
- In Oregon, you must always use your first and last name in the return address.
- Use the greeting that makes the most sense, however it must be the AIC's first or last name. No nicknames, street names, or pseudonyms are allowed. Refer to yourself by title and first name, e.g. Chaplain Sophia. This puts respect but closeness in the relationship.
- Think of yourself as a Chaplain. As a class-taught Christian Scientist, you are a professional healer.
- Always turn AICs to the Pastor for answers. This encourages study and prevents misstatements of the Truth.
- Read your letters over carefully for correct metaphysics, as they may be studied by an AIC and misconceptions cannot be easily addressed. You may ask another Christian Scientist to proofread for correct metaphysics as long as they understand the privacy of the AIC.
- Be aware that all correspondence to and from the AIC will be read by prison staff.
- If you would not feel comfortable reporting on the things in the letter, don't write it. If the AIC writes things you are uncomfortable with, tell them, correct the thought.
- Remember that the AIC, having never seen you, will form their own opinion of you. In order to help prevent the AIC from forming inappropriate images of the Chaplain, communication should be kept warm but professional in tone. Refer to yourself as "Chaplain." See "Don't be a target for manipulation" on page 13 of the EF Guidebook.
- NEVER give out any personal information - address, phone number, and so on. DO NOT talk about events that happened less than three years ago.
- Practitioner-patient confidentiality applies to Chaplain-AIC relationships. However, the rules of "mandatory reporting" also apply. For example, if an AIC reveals a crime in a letter, the information must be reported to the facility chaplain. They are not supposed to discuss these matters with volunteers. You may contact the facility chaplain directly or communicate through the Secretary. The facility chaplain will need to see the relevant part of the letter in question. Contact the Secretary for the current process, etc. We don't have direct email addresses for many of the facility chaplains. You may communicate by regular mail to "Chaplain/Religious Services" at the facility address.
- Check the Chaplain guidelines to see what literature you may offer to have sent to the AIC, including *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, the KJV Bible, and *The Ultimate Freedom* by John H. Wyndham. Consult the Secretary about the institution's rules regarding mailing books and literature for the institution in question.

- Because letters to and from institutions have been lost in the past, Chaplains should reassure AICs that they will **always** reply, and if the AIC doesn't get a timely response from you, they should write again.
- Chaplains should write on a regular basis, at least once per month, but not more than every two weeks.
- ALL AICs assigned a Chaplain receive a Bible Lesson packet from the Committee, and the Chaplain should receive the articles sent with the lesson. These packets are sent to AICs once a week, three weeks in advance of the lesson start so there is time to read the lesson ahead and include discussion of pieces if appropriate.
- The Secretary checks the mailing list weekly and will forward any address changes to the relevant Chaplain.
- Rules for writing to AICs in county facilities may differ. For example, you may review policies for Multnomah County at <https://mcso.us/site/corrections/jail-overview> or Clackamas County at <https://www.clackamas.us/sheriff/jailmail.html>.
- If you have an AIC who would like to join The Mother Church, please consult the Chaplain Guidelines.
- Write about Christian Science: how you use it, why you are a Christian Scientist. Ask if there is an issue they would like help praying about, a change they would like to make. Often they cannot articulate what they need, they only know they need something different than they have. (Kind of like most teens.) See the EF Guidebook for more.
- Write about life. Ask about their interests like music, books, or TV. Are they employed? Do they want to be? Are they in contact with family?
- Connect with other Chaplains, request a mentor, stay in touch with the Secretary of this committee.
- Participate in the volunteer meetings of this committee. Ask questions, address concerns, listen to how others write letters.

Additional Resources:

- Embraced:Fully Letter Writing/Corresponding Christian Science Chaplain Guidebook by David Fowler: <https://embracedfully.org/resources/>
- Oregon Department of Corrections Letter Writing Guidelines: <https://www.oregon.gov/doc/contact-inmate/pages/letters.aspx>