



The History of the
Wasatch Chapel at
Utah State Prison

Previously released as "Chapel by the Wayside, Pamphlet Edition"

By Mark P. Helms
Edited by Carol Webster

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Utah State Prison
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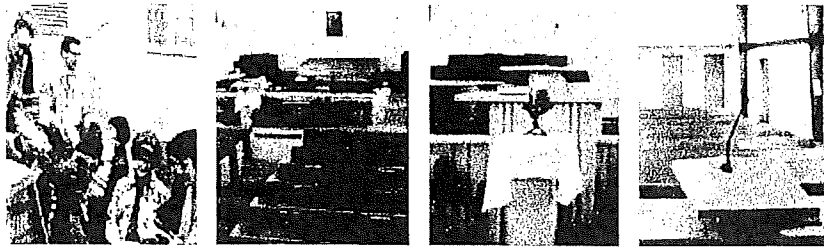
Draper Site Warden: Steven Turley
Deputy Warden, Wasatch: Colleen Gabbitas
Deputy Warden, Volunteer Services: Jerry Pope
Administrator, Volunteer Services: Jack Evans
Lieutenant, Volunteer Services: Jeff Koehler

Supervising Chaplain: Father James Blaine
Wasatch Chaplain: Ferrell Hill

"Raising the Bar" by Dennis Brown

To Heber J. Geurts, a man of great valor, who contributed forty years of his life as a volunteer at the

Utah State Prison. His name will be remembered as one of the giants amongst the lost souls.



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Wasatch Chapel

In Memory

Monsignor Mark O. Benvegna

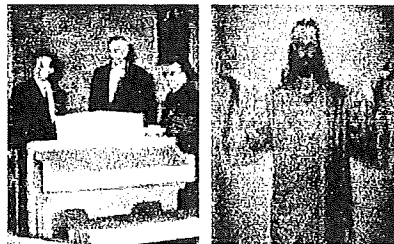
Born in Utah, Father Benvegna began his service as a chaplain at the Utah State Prison in 1958 and continued through 1962. He also served as Pastor of St. Francis Xavier in Kearns from 1955 until 1962, and St. Vincent de Paul in Salt Lake City from 1962 until 1986. Father Benvegna conducted groundbreaking services for the prison chapel in 1957 and was one of those instrumental in getting the "Chapel by the Wayside" built. He was actively involved in the Utah Army Reserves and had achieved the rank of Colonel. Father Benvegna passed away on December 12, 1995.

Ray Fred Smith

Ray Smith was born in Murray, Utah to Ray F. and Mary Taubman Smith and married Ethel Naylor in June of 1923. She died in 1975. Ray started as a chaplain at the Utah State Prison in July 1955, but had served as a representative for the LDS Church nine years prior to that. He was co-chairman of the building committee that was responsible for building the Wasatch Chapel. Chaplain Smith retired in February of 1959 and died ten months later. He served as a postal employee for 29 years. Ray and Ethel had seven children. One of his passions was growing fruit trees.

Crozier Fitzgerald

Crozier Fitzgerald was also born in Murray, Utah, and was educated at the U of U in Salt Lake City. His first job at the prison was that of a guard. He was approached with the idea of being a chaplain in 1961 and eventually accepted. Chaplain Fitzgerald served at the prison until 1965, when he accepted a commission as a chaplain with the U. S. Air Force. Chaplain Fitzgerald was not the only member of his family to work at the prison. His brothers Printess, Bliss, Walter and Paul were also employed at the Point of the [Home](#) Mountain. Crozier enjoyed real estate, music, and the scriptures.



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Acknowledgments

So many people have been a part of the writing of this history. So much so that it would be prudent to

start mentioning them now. To all program leaders and volunteers who took the time to write out their own history at the chapel, thank you.

Thanks to Gary Topping of the Archives Office of the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City; Officer Rube Martinez, E. M. R. O. director; Darrell Haller of the Episcopal Church; Gary Webster, Noel Ennis, and Marilee Funkhouser of the South Point Family History Center for providing important early history.

Special thanks to Gordon Fletcher for giving me the assignment four years ago to write a history of the Wasatch Chapel Men's Chorus. Because of that assignment, I started researching the history of the chapel.

To Barbara Garrison for providing rare and unique histories, photos and insights that weren't known or seen before. To all the Chaplain's clerks for sharing their office with me. To Father James Blaine for encouraging me to continue and be as accurate as possible.

Thanks go to all my fellow chapel clerks for their help. Particularly Inoke Mo'unga, Darin Nielsen, Tim Smith, Tim Hansen, and Steven James.

To Carol Webster for patiently putting up with my very rough drafts. To Ray Short for taking pictures of the chapel, for going where I couldn't, and being the priceless resource that makes this history as complete as possible. To George Brown for sharing his life and his work.

The legacy of this chapel is owed to the inmates and their perseverance. However, George Brown made it possible for the inmates to see their dream of a completed chapel. To Sergeant Jesse Beales, GRAMA Coordinator, for providing much needed information and photos. To Lieutenant Jeff Koehler for his support and direction. And of course, to Chaplain Ferrell Hill for asking me to pick up where I left off and actually finish this history. T.A.

A Message from Father James Blaine

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In the second book of Samuel in the Old Testament, King David wanted to build a suitable place for the Ark of the Covenant, which was the visible presence of God among His people. The suitable place, which eventually was built by King Solomon, son of David, became the Temple in Jerusalem. Throughout the centuries, the Temple became the center of the spiritual life of God's people. Through prayer and sacrifice the people would offer praise and worship to God and became closer to Him.

In our world today, God's people gather in churches and chapels to worship God and to come closer to Him. God is present in a special way to His people in these gatherings and in these buildings.

The chapel in the prison serves the same purpose. As we gather in prayer, no matter what our faith is, we offer worship to God and become closer to Him. The chapel should always be a center of prayer and provide an atmosphere in which we can encounter our God. Special areas, called sacred spaces, are essential as centers of worship. The spirit of the chapel needs to be different from the spirit in the rest of the prison. This is possible if all remember that we are in the chapel for prayer, worship and reflection.

A Message from Chaplain Ferrell Hill

This first edition is a culmination of many people coming together and contributing ideas, knowledge, and of course, histories. It has been remarkable how the right people with the right information have been available for this endeavor. But when you're doing the Lord's work, isn't that how it should be?

Remember the Winter Olympics of 2002 held in our own Salt Lake City? The theme for that great event was, "Light the Fire From Within." What billions of television viewers saw was a well organized, well executed, and well developed 15 days of courage and performance. It was truly magnificent.

Yet, the most striking element of those games was the way people, athletes, volunteers and

spectators alike rekindled from within them a spirit of harmony. In our own land, it seems that spirit emanated in all areas of life including personal as well as commerce. The desire to “light the fire from within” was what this country needed, especially in the wake of 9/11.

Now a new opportunity to light that fire from within is extended as we celebrate the refurbishing of the Wasatch Chapel. I admonish each of you who are reading this to refurbish your own life and to do as the scriptures state to “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

May you find peace and joy as you enter this sacred building and seek the desires of your Father in Heaven so you too may let your light so shine, here or wherever you are.

Introduction

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On any given morning, neighbors of Noel Enniss can see him climb into his vehicle and begin his journeys for the day. After checking his mirrors, he pulls out and heads for one of the largest complexes in the Salt Lake valley. For those who know Bishop Enniss, a title ordained on him by his church and honored by its people, they have seen him start that same direction time after time.

Once catching his desired exit, Bishop Enniss looks out his window and views his destination which looms for acres and acres. For people who are new in the area, the many buildings clustered in plain, almost drab designs, can be nearly mistaken for a campus of a school or perhaps a vast network of warehouses of some fast growing company. That is until they see the rows and rows of high fences and razor wire wrapped like stretched Slinky's® along their tops. Or the universally recognized towers where armed personnel sit and watch for out-of-place activity.

Bishop Enniss turns down the road which continues on a long steep grade and empties out into a large parking lot. Before getting there, he passes a sign that welcomes him to the place he travels to so often. The Utah State Prison. The lump that Bishop Enniss used to receive in his throat whenever he saw that sign is now long gone. To him going to the prison is not much different than going to work for many people.

Before long, Bishop Enniss is walking the concrete walk to the main entrance of one of the clustered set of buildings. Up until the 1970s, this particular cluster was the whole prison.

Completed in 1951, the cluster, now known as “Wasatch” or “The Building,” housed no more than 500 inmates. Today that number is nearly doubled and adds only a small part to the thousands of other inmates housed elsewhere on the complex. But Wasatch is where most of the activity for the prison still originates from. The infirmary is located here, along with the kitchen supplying a majority of the food. A large gymnasium is here and offices for prison officials weave their way wherever room is available. And it's in Wasatch where a chapel can be found, the chapel where Bishop Enniss is going.

The bishop passes through more security checks and enters the heart of Wasatch known as the “Corridor.”

The Corridor, tall and wide enough to drive a double-decker tank down the middle with room for a row of soldiers on either side, shoots out in two directions from where Bishop Enniss first enters its span. Housing units are on his left and more on his right. Without even thinking, he curves left until he

reaches the other end where nearby a small metal door with a narrow window is located.

Suddenly a large metal-grated door clicks and clanks in front of him and he enters to retrieve a set of keys assigned to the chapel, returning quickly to the small metal door with the narrow window. [<Home>](#)

It's still early as the bishop opens the door and turns on the lights to the unique building located on the other side of the large corridor wall. At one time there wasn't a small metal door with a narrow window and there wasn't a unique building on the other side. And at one time Bishop Enniss used to follow this routine almost daily. Not any more. That was in 1986. Different people make the same pilgrimage every day. Twenty-one years later, the bishop shows up directly at the small metal door and knocks until someone inside lets him in. No longer an actively serving bishop, Enniss arrives several times a month to help inmates find their history. – Mark P. Helms, February 19, 2007.



Prelude

The Salt Lake Weather Bureau had forecasted the low temperature to hover around 27 degrees the evening of February 6, 1957.

Those who weren't braving the cold for longer than a quick drive from point A to point B were enjoying indoor activities, or keeping close to a warm source of heat. The occupants of the Utah State Prison at the Point of the Mountain were no exception.

In the gymnasium at the prison, a basketball game was scheduled that evening and members of the Granger 2nd LDS Ward basketball team were playing against a prison team. Little did they know that they would become hostages of a slowly escalating riot that would carry on for twelve hours.

Just the day before, Chaplain Ray Smith had delivered a speech to the student body at Brigham Young University addressing some of the frustrations as well as successes at keeping spiritual order at the prison. Unfortunately, the speech was not broadcasted to the inmates, and their plans were already set in motion.

Some time during the last quarter of the basketball game, members of the Granger 2nd Ward were in a full press, when several inmates entered the gym and suddenly overpowered the refs. After getting the game participants attention, one of the inmates shouted, "Stop the game. This joint's been taken over by the convicts!"

Some of the players didn't take the inmates seriously and thought the whole thing was a comic set-up. Even the guards didn't seem excited about the situation at first. However, it didn't take long for the matter to get serious when the inmates quickly brandished a sub machinegun and other weapons. A nervously hasty guard fired off a round of ammunition before releasing his gun to the inmates. The aggressors countered by pointing their weapons at the visitors, threatening to kill if the guard didn't comply.

Twenty-nine hostages, including 12 basketball players, 12 prison guards, and 5 South Park Academy student instructors were corralled in the auditorium. They were informed that no harm was intended against them and explained the reason the riot was being [<Home>](#) staged. The complaints, mostly concerning prison conditions, were lengthy. To voice their injustices, the inmates had quickly elected amongst their ranks a six-man committee. Before the night was over, the public was going to find out why "enough was enough." By 7:00 p.m. 511 inmates had most of the prison under siege. And the public was already noticing.

One of the lieutenants on duty tried to take a stand and got stabbed for his efforts. An inmate, who spearheaded the riots in 1951, was unmercifully beaten and left on the floor of Baker Block. No one knew for sure why.

In the meantime, acting warden, Captain John Turner, was trying to subdue the already increasing numbers of reporters and excited family members of inmates and guards gathering at the prison entrance. The officers and prison officials were kept at bay in the administration building, while a call was sent to Warden Marcel Graham. He was in Washington D.C. at a meeting but had cut it short and was flying home.

Two of the hostages were purposely released to deliver a message from the inmates to the public. They (the inmates) wanted to meet with the governor with a list of 43 grievances or demands. Governor George D. Clyde responded by agreeing to meet with the impromptu committee, but only if all the hostages were released first. No deal. The governor ended up spending the night on a make-shift cot in the administration building.

Back in the auditorium, a large number of inmates ordered food, clothing, and bedding for their hostages and promised, the shaken men, their stay would be as pleasant as possible. Around 11:30 p.m. the power in the auditorium suddenly went out and smoke began pouring through the ventilation system. Thought at first to be a ploy by prison guards, it turned out to be the result of a small fire in one of the lower warehouse rooms beneath the kitchen. The cause was apparently electrical. But when firefighters attempted to enter the area, they were kept at bay by armed inmates.

Suddenly, the cold crisp air in the courtyards was filled with the sound of shattering glass as inmates began smashing out windows of the riot-controlled parts of the prison, particularly the windows closest to the fire. Those who were outside could only watch in dismay. Inmates, who were not aware of the fire, thought the glass smashing to be an act of defiance and followed. Some time went by and it stopped. For a moment, the prison seemed to be quiet but what happened next took everyone by surprise.

A boiler in the prison basement was being pushed to its limits and pressure mounted until there was no room inside to expand. The prison complex was abruptly rocked when the boiler exploded and reverberated through the main corridor. Everyone dropped and imaginations were ramped. The inmates thought the prison was under attack from outside, and the outside thought the inmates were dismantling the prison. Luckily, no one seemed to be harmed and reports were quickly gathered to the collective sighs of interested parties. But there was still the matter of a growing fire. The prison officials were already setting their plans in motion.

The smoke-filled auditorium was evacuated in the dark, and with the aid of a couple of flashlights, the hostages were hurriedly removed to the weight room next to the gym.

The Utah Highway Patrol and other law enforcement agencies were responding in droves. Before any negotiations were finalized, over 350 armed officers had swarmed to the Point of the Mountain. They came from three counties to take part. Nobody at the compound was sleeping for a while.

A half hour had passed with relatively little movement. It wouldn't be long before

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two local engineer units of the Utah National Guard filed in with their trucks and gear. Word of the recent outside activities was relayed to the inmates and preparations, maybe even panic, became the ruler for the moment. And then they waited. The men outside, however, didn't.

When it was learned that the National Guard was climbing the prison fence, leaders of the committee took three of the hostess and walked them out the front door. Standing behind the hostages with the machine guns, the inmates threatened to gun down the visitors if the armed battalions didn't back off. The threat worked, and the hostages were taken back inside. Officers and inmates were scrambling to take cover on both sides. Who knew what card would be played next or how extreme it would be.

Prison officials demanded the wounded lieutenant be released along with the beaten inmate for medical care. Hostilities were subdued for the time being. Eventually the warehouse room fire was controlled and everyone took a breath again.

One of the hostages had explained that his wife was expecting a baby and he wanted to be with her.

The inmates were compassionate towards his plight and released him. To make the release complete, however, the inmates demanded an exchange and an officer volunteered to take the place of the expectant father. It was now 2:00 in the morning.

Slowly, more hostages were allowed to leave and the governor, accompanied by Attorney General E. R. Callister, kept his promise to talk. The talks lasted well into the early morning. The press was not permitted to attend the meetings or to step inside the prison. To get a feel of what was happening, it was agreed to let the inmate photographer, who was equipped with a camera, take snapshots of various activities. Chaplain Smith represented the prison to the press and gave reports when warranted.

During the talks, inmates continued to demonstrate and party. For the most part they were out of control. Damage and vandalism was extensive. At one point while the governor was meeting with the committee, an inmate bellowed through the public address system, "You guys in A Block knock it off! Shut up in B Block! We can't negotiate in here with that racket!"

At 5:10 a.m. some of the inmates stood on the front steps and were broadcasted live on national and local television to repeat some of the grievance list. The riot was finally coming to an end.

By 6:00 a.m., all the hostages were released and the governor was heading home. Some of the inmates exclaimed they had never met a real governor before and asked for his autograph. The governor declined.

All weapons were unloaded and turned over to officers in front of Mr. Callister. Most of the inmates were back in their cells before 8:00 a.m. and the riot of '57 was history.

Unfortunately, the inmates had made total shambles of the prison, and the repair and cleanup would be extensive.

Of the 43 grievances and demands presented to the governor, one pertained to the religious affairs of the inmates. It was number 20, and it read simply, "Give us a real chapel."

It appears that a plan to build a chapel was already proposed by the inmates and the riot had become a vehicle to influence the possibility. Now the possibility was rapidly turning into a reality.

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Why wasn't there a chapel to begin with?

No information is available to answer why a chapel wasn't part of the original plans for the new site.

The Sugar House Prison did have a chapel; however, it was damaged during a fire and research is being conducted to ascertain to what extent that fire had been, and to what extent the fire had affected the religious services at the old prison. It is believed that after the fire the Utah State Prison did not have a formal facility in which to worship.

It is believed as well, that before the 1957 riots, there were discussions for a chapel. But for reasons, such as the lack of money, politicking, or religious caution, the idea of a chapel wasn't a priority.

Notes

According to the Deseret News, February 8, 1957, this riot would be the third at the Point of the Mountain. The first occurred on May 20, 1951 when 530 inmates took part. This May riot was over food and alleged abuses and lasted five hours. Seven guards were seized as hostages. No one was hurt. The second riot was on August 14, just a few months later where death row was seized by 22 inmates. During all three riots, inmates went on drug and alcohol binges. The director of the medical facility was pumping stomachs for hours after the '57 riot.

Deseret News and Salt Lake Telegraph, Thursday, February 7, 1959.

The auditorium has been remodeled and is now the offices of the Sex Offender Treatment Team.

Not all the inmates in the '57 riot were running wild. Inmate Barton K. Kirkham, waiting for his day at the gallows, was not let out of Death Row by the inmates.

Deseret News and Salt Lake Telegraph, Thursday, February 7, 1959.

The well-fed hostages, especially the basketball players, later reported they were treated well and joked about not seeing that much food in a long time.

Deseret News and Salt Lake Telegraph, February 7, 1957.

It was later determined that the initial reason for smashing out windows was to let the smoke out due to the warehouse room fire.

Besides the broken windows, the wasted boiler and the fire damage from the warehouse room, the medical facility was ransacked and prescriptions along with supplies were stolen. Damages to the electrical units in the warehouse room were estimated at \$10,000.

The weight room is now the current sally port leading from Wasatch to the Oquirrh's, U.C.I., SSD, and North Gate.

Other complaints include, No. 1: Inmate Council; No. 4: Repeal of the indeterminate sentence law; No. 7: An inmate paper; No. 25: Reinstate the power of pardon with Gov. Clyde; No. 40: ...the public has a right to know what is going on - make - it - mandatory - for health inspectors and physicians to inspect periodically; No. 43: Provide ample funds for education so that rehabilitation can be more than a word used to cover a multitude of odors. The

biggest grievance seemed to be that the inmates thought they were doing too much time for the offenses they committed. They also thought the parole board was not considerate enough and not doing them justice. The inmates also complained about how the food was being prepared. They wanted a civilian cook. Before all the hostages were released, the inmates expressed their apologies and hoped the hostages didn't look upon them as being "too bad." An investigation was headed by a panel of legislators the very next day on February 8, 1957. The governor requested a full-scale probe into not only the riots, but the conditions that led to it. (Deseret News, February 8 & 9, 1957.)

Amazingly enough, the "Felon Follies," an inmate talent show, continued as scheduled about four weeks after the '57 riots. Tickets were sold and the outside attended, almost impervious to evidence of a riot just a month before.

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Part I

The Building

Chapter One

The Groundbreaking

"This is a happy day for us all."



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In a matter of six months after the inmates had given the governor their list of demands, the prison approved the go ahead to build a chapel. This of course was no small feat. Somehow the inmates had to convince the warden and prison officials that their proposal to build the chapel themselves would actually be carried out.

Along with the construction labor, the inmates also promised to assume the burden of raising the necessary monies and materials needed to complete the project. This meant connecting with contractors, building suppliers and businesses that would be willing to donate the needed provisions. It didn't always work. And when it didn't, the inmates had to supply the money, ready cash, to continue on.

When most employed inmates earned less than forty cents an hour, it would be difficult to believe that a large pool of inmate funds could be available. However, using their resources as well as talents, the inmates made hobby crafts, sold tickets to talent showcases called "Felon Follies," and organized rodeos, yes rodeos, to generate some money.

Perhaps recognizing the inevitable lack of money, the chaplains, as well as the construction chairman, approached the LDS Church for some insurance, and the Church quietly nodded. As additional public donations started filtering in the plan for a groundbreaking was set in motion and the date decided upon was Wednesday August 14, 1957.

Harry Christiansen of the Inmate Advisory Council was undoubtedly excited as this particular Wednesday morning arrived and many prison and church officials began to gather in a vacant field. Christiansen's comments that day to the local newspaper must have echoed many of the anticipated

inmates. He said, "This is a happy day for us all. We feel that religion is important in our lives and we thank our leaders for permitting us to start construction."

Situated on a piece of ground facing the front entrance of the prison, and next to the Housing Unit called D-Block, approximately seventy people gathered for the special ceremony.

Ominous clouds gathered above, dumping irregular thundershowers on the prison site and splashing the complex of stucco styled buildings with large droplets. Not wanting to let the unsettled weather discourage the event, the participants of the ceremony continued as planned. [<Home>](#)

Reverend and Chaplain Mark O. Benvegna, of the Roman Catholic Church, did the honors of leading the small congregation of dignitaries and inmates, while Chaplain Ray F. Smith stood nearby to lend his support.

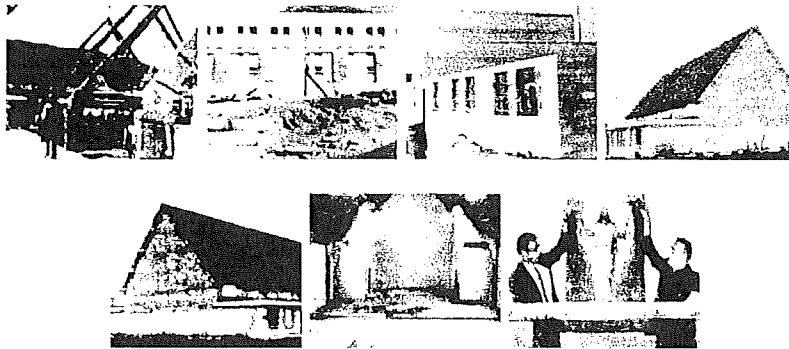
Elder Oscar A. Kirkham, of the First Council of the Seventy, represented the LDS Church. He was accompanied by Warden Walter D. Achuff; Dr. Leslie Burbidge, Chairman of the Utah State Board of Corrections; W. Ray Curtis, a board of corrections member; Don Neilson, of the Orem Church of Christ; and W. Keith Wilson, chief agent of the Department of Probation and Parole.

The chaplains announced at the ceremony what the intentions were concerning the chapel. The building would hold 180 people, have a choir loft of 30 singers, and classrooms running on the east and west sides of the main hall. Local architects R. Bruce Folsom and McConn E. Hunt agreed to design and draw the plans for the chapel, which was estimated to cost \$80,000.

Chapter Two

The Construction

"Although the completed structure will not be a towering skyscraper, it will be a splendid chapel."



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Shortly after the groundbreaking in August of '57, production on the chapel began with excavating the ground and pouring the footings, normal happenings when starting a construction project. But then the construction seemed to stop, adding no additional activity until the following year. It is likely the halt of work was due to the lack of material and funds.

The inmates began the push to raise necessary funds, along with addressing the need to have donated material from local contractors. When assessing the basic materials, the inmates figured it would take 14,000 cinderblocks, 600 sacks of cement, and about 20 tons of reinforced steel to continue. Until these needs were addressed, there would be no point or purpose to move on especially with the cold weather months closing in.

Ambitious goals were set including having the chapel completed before acting Warden, Walter Achuff, returned to California in 1958. Marcel Graham, the Utah Prison Warden, had essentially traded places with Warden Achuff, an executive from the [<Home>](#)

infamous Folsom Prison, so Graham could receive necessary training at that facility. Graham took with him the assistant warden. But since the training would take no longer than six months, the goal to have the chapel completed within that time was no more than that – ambitious.

A new Industrial Engineer from England by the name of George Brown had become a member of the prison staff. His job was to head up the departments of Education, Industrial Maintenance, Technical Trade and sponsor the Rodeo, Felon Follies, and Toastmasters. About the same time, a committee was formed to oversee the chapel construction. The committee would consist of inmates and prison staff, with George Brown as the chair.

The plea for materials was not unanswered and they started to arrive. Carl Buehner, of Buehner Block Company, donated the desired cinderblock, and Utah Sand and Gravel contributed...well, sand and gravel. Various steel supply companies gave their support by donating such things as mooring and rebar.

But if there were any construction progresses during 1958, there is little evidence of such. In fact, it appears as if the chapel was put on hold again until the following year. Newspapers, who published articles on the chapel early in 1959, indicate minimal progress even then. However, later in 1959 it appears as if the construction took off with a boom. But not without some unexpected...snags.

The first of these snags had nothing to do with the chapel per se. On June 4, 1959, two inmates pried their way through the bars of their cell window and climbed out to temporary freedom. The two inmates, living on the third tier of D Block, used the unimaginative mode of escape by fastening together a sheet rope and worked their way down the stucco wall. In the dark, the two made their way to the chapel construction site and commandeered a shovel which they used to dig under the fence and take flight. The inmates may have thought of great plans with their new-found freedom, but it wouldn't last long as they were captured within the week. Nonetheless, new safety measures were to be instilled to keep tools of the rising chapel from disappearing. And if the measures had actually worked, the next snag wouldn't have happened, elevating further suspicion on the chapel.

Just little over a month after the last snag occurred, officers were going through the prison boiler room when they discovered an empty jug. After inspecting the jug, it was determined the container once held homemade brew. Hooch. Why the hooch led officers to the chapel is not clear, but officers were ordered to the chapel construction site to look around. That's when they noticed a pile of wet sand.

Near other piles of sand used to mix with cement, the wet pile seemed very much out of place to the officers. So much so that the discovery deserved more than just a casual glance.

Other officers arrived to help look for suspicious activity. After all, that was the only logical solution for the out-of-place sand pile. Now legend has it that Captain L. Birchel was walking across the dirt floor, when he stepped on some boards and the floor moved. The ground from under him just simply caved in. Thank goodness he wasn't hurt and didn't actually fall into the hole itself, twelve feet underneath... into a tunnel. The officers, following the contours of the caving, were able to locate its beginnings, beginnings that originated under the stairs just below the access hole to the chapel plumbing.

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When an officer climbed down the newly dug shaft, he shined his flashlight and ascertained the tunnel to be approximately thirty feet long. Within the tunnel were various paraphernalia such as rope, pulleys, buckets, gloves and an alarm clock. The clock apparently was used to help the inmates involved in digging the tunnel from missing afternoon count.

The new warden, John Turner, reported that the sand used to dig the tunnel was immediately applied to the making of concrete – thus, “they saved us a lot of sand.” This tongue and cheek remark was obviously the only light area of an otherwise very serious find.

Five of the twelve-man inmate crew working on the construction were targeted as suspects after all the workers were interrogated. Warden Turner also commented, “It is possible that men from any industrial job could have worked on the escape tunnel but not for very long stretches... they would have been discovered missing from within 30 minutes to an hour.” No further news of the suspects was reported and as far as construction was concerned, it continued soon after.

During the month of May, the floor was poured and the walls for the east and west side classrooms were taking shape. Warden Turner, in an interview concerning an upcoming rodeo to be held in June, said, "The chapel now has all four walls up to the square and the ceiling beams have arrived." The proceeds of the rodeo were to go towards the chapel fund. Interior doors became evident and preparations were under way for the most distinct part of the soon-to-be chapel.

On August 16, eight thirty-four foot support beams were being prepped for installation. The glue-lam wood beams, fastened together two at a time and facing each other in opposite directions, were delivered to the site from the state of Washington at the cost of \$4,700. Measuring ten feet at its arch, a special crane borrowed from the Geneva Steel Company lowered each conjoined beam into place creating a sort of modern gothic effect. At sixty percent complete, the structure was finally looking like a chapel. Excitement was high.

More money was trickling in from the "Felon Follies" and the prison rodeos. Churches from within the Salt Lake Valley and beyond were donating small portions here and there. Their donations were received with much gratitude and set aside for purchases of items not donated. Some of the money went to specialized sub-contractors when inmates were not able to do the job themselves.

One more snag had to be dealt with before the chapel would start to take its final shape. An inmate attempted to escape through one of the side roofs and George Brown wouldn't let the project move until a reinforced wire mesh was installed the length and breadth of the roof top.

The Chapel Committee began talks on what to call the church building and when it would be readied for dedication and use. The inmates in the committee came up with the idea of calling it "Chapel by the Wayside." When asked about his involvement in the decision of the title, being that he was from England where chapels are often called waysides, George adamantly denied any involvement.

Whether these planning's were premature or not, no one really knows. The whole of 1960 and half of '61 were times to concentrate on interior finishing's and the purchasing of fixtures. All the wood in the chapel common still needed to be stained and the <Home> cinderblock needed to be painted. By 1960, the inmates had raised a total of \$14,472, of which \$3,250 came from the Catholic Churches of Utah. Schools such as Christ Lutheran and other organizations gathered money for the purpose of donating to the chapel fund.

Major construction on the chapel was completed by mid 1961, and George Brown, along with the committee, had set a date of September 10th for the dedications. All that was left to do was get the chapel ready for services.

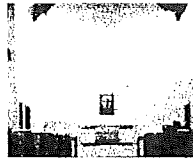
Notes

During the Christmas season of 1957, the inmates were treated with a unique showing of the movie "The Ten Commandments." The Utah State inmates wrote to the movie's director, Cecil B. DeMille, and suggested he make the epic available to prisons throughout the country. In response, Mr. DeMille had a special \$2,000 print made of the film with instructions to give its first showing at the Utah State Prison. No money was to be raised for the viewings as Mr. DeMille didn't want any profit in return. This was to be a freewill gift.

George Brown, Esquire, began working for the prison in 1958. He refused to wear a uniform and eventually convinced other executives to do the same. He became Deputy Warden over all the trade tech, industrial areas and education. Not only was Mr. Brown an Industrial Engineer, he was an expert ballroom dancer and mindful of the cultural aspects needed in a chapel or any building. Mr. Brown was also instrumental in helping Crozier Fitzgerald get his chaplain assignment. He also directed crews of plumbers, and electricians, which were vital in the completion of the chapel. Being that these crews were paid by the prison, it could be said that not all inmate labor was donated. Mr. Brown also had a tailor shop. Besides being a Deputy Warden, a position given to him by Dr. Leslie Burbidge (a local dentist and Chairman of the State Board of Corrections), Mr. Brown was involved in many facets of the prison. He designed the prison's license plate plant and the culinary tables where the inmates sat to eat their meals, taking away the long rows and replacing them with octagonal tables giving more security and safety. When Gary Gilmore was executed in 1977, it was Mr. Brown who designed the chair he was executed in. During my interview with Mr. Brown, he recalled taking the prison doctor with him to attend to Mr. Gilmore prior to the execution and pinning a piece of paper on his chest. The paper had a heart shape drawn on it. Just as Mr. Brown and the doctor were turning to walk away, the row of executors opened fire, missing the two by seconds. Mr. Brown claimed that a fragment of wood from the chair he designed hit him in the arm. The chair, he said, was ordered destroyed directly after the execution. But rumors have it the order was never carried out. Not long after the Gilmore execution, Mr. Brown was forced to retire due to having three heart bypasses.

Chapter Three

Preparing For Worship



Click on Photo

Now that the chapel walls were built, the ceiling beams in place, the roof tarred and shingled, and the plumbing and electrical completed, the order of business was how the interior should look.

Originally, the plans were to install a giant rose-wheel stained glass window in the main wall of the chapel common. That part of the construction didn't pan out – at all. The usual construction amenities were in full swing: painting, hanging of doors, staining ceiling beams and laying asbestos laced linoleum.

When the interior was completed, and everything was paid for, inmates who worked on the chapel must have wanted to show off their labors to others and give regular tours.

Before entering the chapel, the tour was immediately met with a painting or mural on the corridor wall above the chapel door. It depicted a quaint little chapel with a path which ran along its side, signifying the name of the building, "Chapel by the Wayside." The moniker was hand-lettered above the painting in Old English script and in a half [Home](#)

circle.

Once inside about four feet, another arch, this time wooden, stretched across the ceiling above them. To the left, just past the arch, was a door that could hold coats and be used for storage. To the right was another door which led upstairs to the balcony where thirty people (usually the choir) could sit. The pews for the upstairs balcony were donated from a refurbished LDS Ward house somewhere in the Avenues of Salt Lake City.

Just past the door to the balcony was an alcove or small foyer which led to another door. This door opened into a classroom, also accessible from inside the chapel common.

Two double doors were then opened allowing the tour to step inside the main hall. The sight must have been surreal to the first-time viewer. The immediate thing to catch their eye was a painting on the opposite wall approximately seventy-five feet away. The colors were of predominant earth tones, and even though the painting appeared to be small, the subject could easily be recognized. With his outstretched arms inviting all to come unto Him, the painting of the Savior Jesus Christ has been a symbol of love and hope to those enter the walls of this sanctuary. According to George Brown, the painting, by Warner Sallman and called "His Presence," was donated by Chaplain Fitzgerald.

As the tour moves forward, they walk on a shiny linoleum tile floor with a green and white checkered pattern circling around two symmetrical rows of pews. George Brown didn't want second-hand pews for the main hall, but instead ordered twenty-five plus new benches from a Salt Lake company, built to specifications. The bill for the pews came to \$4,000, which Mr. Brown paid out of a ready but depleted account.

On to the left directly below the balcony were two small closet size rooms designed to be confessionals for the Catholic Church. A third room was actually used as a closet. As the tour made their way around the pews, running along the west wall, they passed three wooden doors with signs above each. These rooms were meant for the chaplains and were identified with either "LDS," "Episcopal," or "Catholic" on the doors. The chaplains could use the rooms for instruction and/or counseling.

Passing the third door, the tour was standing in front of the banister styled railing that would begin the stand. The podium, donated by the Episcopal Church, was a blond stained wood and could be moved for portable purposes. It didn't have a microphone attached to it as it would in later times. The podium was off-center to the left behind the banister and could be accessed by entering the stand from the middle where the banister allowed an open gap. On the stand, which was raised about six inches higher than the rest of the floor, were more pews for additional visitors or congregations. They were off to the right and faced directly towards the west wall, much like the seats in the choir of a cathedral. Two

sets of pews were on the left side of the podium for those participating in various religious programs.

Another item with the same price tag as the pews was a new Kimball organ. It was on the stand sitting directly behind the pews on the far right. When the organ arrived, the chaplains, Benvegnu and Fitzgerald, took a moment to have the press take pictures. The Warden, John Turner, was on hand for the photo-op and installation of the new instrument. The piano, its origins unknown and sitting near the organ, was believed to have been donated.

At the furthest end of the stand directly below the painting of Christ is a multi-tiered set of steps leading to an ornate marbled altarpiece. Most, if not all the money donated by the Catholic Churches, went directly to the purchase of this altar. It was certainly the <Home>pinnacle of the stand and could be easily seen from the back of the chapel. Two vases with beautiful flowers are positioned on the altar on either side.

Stepping off the stand, the tour then rotates to the east side of the building and encounters the first classroom. The room is actually designed to be a smaller or "mini" chapel with smaller pews and a raised floor on one end and a podium at its front center. This room could be used when the larger main hall wasn't warranted.

Two more classrooms along the east wall accommodated Sunday school instruction and the like and were given the same linoleum tile treatment as the rest of the chapel. Hanging overhead were four sets of hanging chandeliers looking like upside-down ranger hats. The heating was controlled by the standard steam-heat available throughout the building. There was no air-conditioning, save opening the windows along the ceiling of the chapel common and the classrooms.

The very first service held in the chapel was scheduled Sunday morning, July 2, 1961. Starting at 8:30 a.m. the Roman Catholic Church celebrated Mass, which was presided by Father Mark Benvegnu. At 9:30 a.m. the LDS Church held Worship Service, conducted by Chaplain Crozier Fitzgerald. Following the hour-long service, the Episcopalian Church held services, although it is still unclear who conducted. After the lunch break, an organ recital was held at 2:30 p.m., to show the range of the new organ and was showcased by Gus Farney.

Church services continued as the inmates and religious leaders prepared for its dedication. The date was planned for September 10th.

Notes

When George Brown became chairman of the chapel building committee in 1958, he was given \$9,000 to work with. He knew right away the monies available would not be enough and so turned to the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was assured that whatever funds were needed at any given time would be covered by the Church. And they were. Since most of the material and labor for the building of the chapel was donated, the only expenses would be the interior fixtures, special outside contractors and ornamentations.

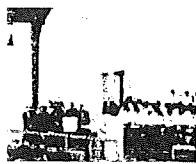
Father Benvegnu had requested all the new pews to be kneeling pews, but doing so drove the price way out of reach for the meager chapel funds. A compromise was made by having the first four rows be kneelers.

Michael Robinson, a former literacy volunteer, remembers visiting the prison on a tour when he was fourteen-years old. He said the mural above the chapel door on the corridor side was "so quaint it was pretty."

Chapter Four

The Dedication

"To the Glory of God... and the Salvation of Men"



Click on Photo

High praises from many people and organizations were pouring into the prison. The remarkable story of how inmates at the Utah State Prison built a \$130,000 chapel for less than a quarter of that price tag was making headlines everywhere. No state funds were ever used or even requested. Warden John Turner

hailed the completion of the chapel as one of the major accomplishments of 1961 at the Utah State Prison. <Home>

As early as June 30th, newspaper articles were announcing the upcoming dedication dates and when the first church service would be held. The Chapel Building Committee chose to hold more than one dedication. The main dedication, to be held September 10th, at 7:00 p.m., would include dignitaries of churches, the prison and the community.

The weather was hot and muggy with no sign of rain for several days on the night of the first dedication. Each guest entered the main doors of the building, and after having a chance to soak in the sight, was escorted to one of the brand-new benches. Up on the stand, those who were speaking at program were conversing with each or contemplating their remarks. A 60-voice women's choir from the South Salt Lake Stake filled the alcove directly behind the podium and the organ was moved to a more prominent position in the middle.

George Brown, the Building Committee Chairman, escorted President Hugh B. Brown, of the First Presidency in the LDS Church, to the stand and seated him next to Dr. Leslie Burbidge who was conducting the meeting. President Brown declared the chapel to be of fine construction which produced a spirit "that makes us all brothers."

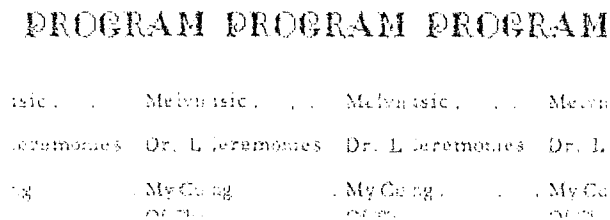
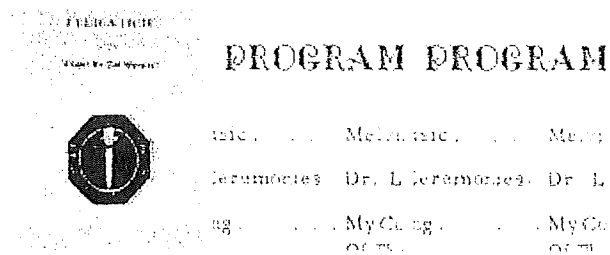
The meeting commenced with introductions and the opening song, after which the invocation was given by Chaplain Crozier Fitzgerald. A welcoming message was offered by Warden John W. Turner, where in his remarks he said, "Not a dime was spent from state funds in this building." He also related the difficulties they had had holding church services in the old Sugar House Prison.

Those who gave additional talks were the Reverend Glenn Van Vactor, president of the Salt Lake Ministerial Association; former Acting Warden, Walter D. Achuff; Rabbi Sidney Strome; Monsignor Joseph Moreton, retired prison chaplain; and Bruce Van Wyck and Raynor Larson, two inmates involved in the construction of the chapel.

Two musical numbers were provided by George Makin, who was accompanied by Melvin Dunn, a technician for the Salt Lake Tabernacle organ. President Brown then gave the dedicatory prayer. At the conclusion of the prayer, the women's choir sang "Bless This House" and Chaplain, Father Mark Benvegnu, gave the benediction.

It was believed at first that the only inmates at the dedication were those participating in the program. In the dedication photo, there are no inmates, save the two sitting on the stand. However, additional records show many inmates were acting as ushers at the special service. It would then be reasonable to believe the remaining inmates were either sitting in the back pews or in the balcony.

<Home>



Click on Photos

Four more dedications would take place for the LDS, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faiths. These particular services would be held for the benefit of the inmates, and each inmate who was interested was permitted to invite three outside guests. At no other time in the prison's history have such accommodations been allowed.

Each church, namely the LDS Church (September 17), the Roman Catholic Church (September 21), and the Episcopal Church (early October), invited their leaders to pronounce a dedicatory prayer. President Brown returned to the Chapel on the 17th to repeat the dedicatory prayer he gave earlier.

It should be noted that as of this writing, the Wasatch Chapel or "Chapel by the Wayside" has been dedicated six times by five different religious leaders (twice by the same person). The last time the chapel was dedicated (accounting for its sixth occurrence) was in 1996, after major renovations, by Chaplain Dennis Jenkins.

Notes

The quote listed under the title is from the cover of the dedication pamphlet "Dedication of the Chapel By The Wayside," dated September 10, 1961.

At least four newspapers in the Salt Lake, Davis and Weber county areas announced the dedication of the chapel to be September 10th. A couple of those papers also gave an outline of the upcoming dedications for the inmates and their invited guests.

A newspaper article out of one of the main papers in town reported the chapel to have a seating capacity of 400 persons. This was later corrected to be closer to 160.

The old Sugar House Prison had a chapel located over the women's section and the hospital which was also next to the bath house. Some time later, the chapel sustained fire damage and perhaps made the chapel unusable.

Bruce Van Wyck thanked the inmates, those who donated monies for the chapel, and gave thanks to the three men who supervised the chapel construction. He said, "This chapel is a symbol to every man in the institution, a reminder to be ready to enter the other world. A touch of beauty means much to those who are deprived of beauty." Raynor Larson was given the assignment to be an inmate supervisor over fund-raising and said, concerning the four years it took to build, to be a "dream come true."

Rev. Van Vactor in his talk said, "Men will come here and find feelings not expressed in words. God will have opportunity to speak with them. Here, in this place, new life will be born through contact with the teachings of God."

Governor George D. Clyde was not in attendance. In the dedication pamphlet, the Utah State Board of Corrections was listed as: Dr. Leslie D. Burbidge, Chairman, with Calvin Behle as Vice Chairman. Those listed as board members were: A. Ray Curtis, George Handy, Harold Van Wagenen, George B. Wilcox, and Ernest D. Wright as the Executive Director. Also listed in the pamphlet were members of the Utah State Prison Administration. They are: John W. Turner, Warden; G.M. Fitzgerald, Deputy Warden; Robert A. Ashpole, Director of Classification; George Brown, Director of Industries; Robert Divine, Director of Minimum Security; Dr. William Knott, Medical Director; Paul Cropper, Director of Business Management; and Lt. Samuel Smith, Training Officer.

The dedication pamphlet listed the chaplains who offered the invocation and benediction correctly but not in the correct order. The pamphlet listed Father Benvegna giving the invocation and Chaplain Fitzgerald the benediction when the opposite was true.

An inmate at the dedication service proudly pointed to the floors and commented how he helped to cover and buff them. He said, "I did this work outside and I was glad to do it here. Everyone was glad to give a hand."

The opening song at the dedication was "My Country 'Tis Of Thee." The two musical numbers sung by George Makin and accompanied by Melvin Dunn were "I'll Walk With God," and "My Task." The Women's Choir also sang "The Lord's Prayer," after inmate Raynor Larson spoke on the construction of the chapel. Melvin Dunn performed the postlude music.

The last page of the pamphlet reads: "We live in the present... We Dream of the Future... We learn eternal truths from the past."

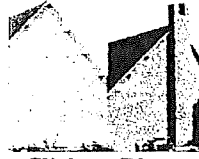
The pamphlet was printed at the USP (Utah State Prison) Print Shop. <Home>

Another account of the September 10th dedication comes from George Brown where he gives a slightly different view of events. Mr. Brown claims he was assigned to pick up President Brown and bring him to the prison. After having a discussion about the Brown family line (it was never clearly understood if the two were related) they arrived at the prison. In those days, a clearance wasn't required to enter the prison and both Browns made their way to the chapel with relative ease. George Brown said the meeting on September 10th was not intended to be a dedication service. However, during the opening portion of the meeting, President Brown leaned over to George and asked, "Is the chapel paid for?" To which George responded, "Yes, it is." President Brown then said, "Then I'll go ahead and dedicate it." Apparently this caused quite a stir amongst the other religious representatives, George said, as they did not expect the sudden announcement of a dedication. Mr. Brown also went on further to say that the dedication pamphlet was printed after the fact.

The only dedication information available of the four services held after the main service was for the LDS Church. A copy of the program, provided by Barbara Garrison, shows Chaplain Fitzgerald to be the program chairman. Lynn Eaton provided the prelude music and the opening song was "We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet." Harry H. Christiansen gave the invocation and Ricardo Archuletta provided a scripture reading from the Book of Matthew (25: 35-36). William Birk, accompanied by Melvin Dunn, sang "Bless This House." They were followed by three two and one-half minute talks given by Grant Thornley, Jock Dean, and Armond Earl. The Lucero Ward Choir then sang, "Cancion de los Redimidos," and Ernest D. Wright gave an address of welcome. Mrs. Ray F. Smith, widow of the late chaplain, gave remarks and she was followed by another vocal solo. Mrs. Joan Gregg sang "Teach Me to Pray," and she was accompanied by Mrs. La Vera Martin. Craig Bramwell then gave some remarks as did Assistant Chaplain Robert Gehring. A. Ray Curtis, a member of the Utah State Board of Corrections, spoke and he was followed by the Lucero Ward Choir which sang "Onward Christian Soldiers." The B.Y.U. Girl's Quartet with Lynne Harrison, Miriam Harrison, Rose Mary Thomas, and Sheila B Krogue, sang "The Lord's Prayer." They were accompanied by La Ree Gardner. Prior to the dedicatory prayer, President Hugh B. Brown gave a few appropriate comments and spoke of the love of our Heavenly Father. The closing song was "How Beautiful Upon the Mountains," by Marion Griffith and the benediction was given by Ronald Hurst. The service was in memory of Ray F. Smith, former chaplain, and Elder Oscar A. Kirkham who passed away in 1958 and were present at the groundbreaking.

Chapter Five

The Rock Façade & Bell



[Click on Photo](#)

Before the prison was built, the land was purchased with the intention of moving the old Sugar House Prison. From 1938 until the 1950s, inmates were hauled by bus to the Draper site to farm. On top of a maintenance building located near the present site of SSD, a bell was positioned. As the day ended or when meals were readied, the bell was rung, signaling the inmates to come in from the fields.

The bell was brought over from the old Sugar House Prison which was tolled whenever there was an execution and also used to summons the workers from the fields. How old the bell is may be anybody's guess. Some speculate it was cast in the 1880's. There are no inscriptions on the bell to confirm or verify that information. And how it ended up on top of the chapel was, until recently, a complete mystery. Prior to its installation, the bell was hidden by George Brown, the chairman of the chapel's building committee, in an old potato cellar attached to the Deputy Warden's house. Apparently there were threats of the bell being pilfered.

When Calvin Rampton was governor of Utah, he wanted to beautify some of the government buildings, including those at the prison. Mr. Brown was asked in the 1970s to do something with the façade of the chapel and so he designed a red stone wall which included a bell tower.

The rock façade on the south exterior wall, made of red flagstone, was added some time in the 70's, but when exactly is not certain. According to George Brown, chairman [Home](#) of the building committee that oversaw the construction of the chapel, the red flagstone was purchased from Little Willow Canyon and was installed by a professional stone mason.

Chapter Six

Early Services



[Click on Photos](#)

At first, there were four main religious groups who conducted or facilitated programs in the Wasatch Chapel in 1961. Roman Catholic, LDS, Protestant, and Jewish groups held their own respective services.

Father Benvegna celebrated Catholic Mass, Chaplain Fitzgerald held LDS services, and The Reverend Roger Wood, from the Episcopal Church, had Protestant services, each of which were in the chapel every Sunday. On such occasions as Mother's Day or when special agendas were in order, an "All Faiths" service was held where all inmates regardless of faith attended.

During that same time, members of the Utah Council of Churches announced the selection of Rev. Douglas Uhls, pastor of the American Fork Presbyterian Church, to conduct regular Protestant services. He started a bible study on Oct. 1, 1962.

Another participant was Wilbur I. Nelson, director of Wasatch Broadcasting Fellowship, who started a bible study program on November 5, 1965. He was director of a radio program called "Beams of Blessings," aired on KSOP.

Some time in the late 70's, an exterior door was installed on the south wall where pews used to sit, and the families of the inmates (and the volunteers) would enter the chapel from the south gate. No coats from the outside were allowed in the chapel and so the families were required to leave them at the chapel entrance across from where the Sweat Lodge office is now.

This same rule or privilege was applied to inmate families for Sunday morning worship services. At the conclusion of the meeting, the visitors, if they chose, relocated to the prison's visiting room, and after a strip search, the inmates were allowed to rejoin [Home](#)

them and continue the visit. All inmates leaving the worship service, whether being visited or not, were searched. Most inmates didn't mind, and the after-service practice discontinued sometime after 1985.

Notes

At the time of the 1961 dedication, the prison had three areas of population, minimum, medium, and maximum. The mountain range identification such as "Wasatch" and "Timpanogos," wasn't established until approximately 1985.

Minimum security was "The Farm" (now Oquirrh 5) and medium security was main population, or "The Building," which is what is now called Wasatch. Maximum security started in the main building, then branched to Uinta 5 (built in 1976, now R&O) and eventually Uinta 1-4. The women's facility was at one time above the old administration building, and even at the current Olympus (Mental Health) building. The "SSD" (Special Services Dorm) building started in 1978 as a "Lifer," "Revamp," "Merit," and "Advantage," program. It is considered part of medium security. It wouldn't be until the year 2000 that SSD would become what it is today.

The Chapel at the Oquirrh's was dedicated in June of 1980 and those who attended were "The Farm," and SSD. The Oquirrh 1-4 housing facility wasn't added until 1987.

In 1985, Timpanogos (currently the women's facility) was built and began as a youth facility. The Timpanogos Chapel was dedicated on October 28, 1995 and is called the "Marvin J. Ashton Memorial Chapel."

Chapter Seven

The Chaplains



Click on Photo

Compiling a history or list of all the chaplains who have served in the Wasatch Chapel has been one of the most intriguing parts of this history as there is no official list of chaplains to speak of.

However, with relative certainty, the very first two chaplains as far as the Wasatch Chapel is concerned were Reverend Mark O. Benvegna of the Roman Catholic Church, and Ray Fred Smith of the LDS Church. Chaplain Benvegna was part-time and salaried by the Utah Council of Churches, whereas Chaplain Smith was full-time and paid by the state.

Both chaplains were at the groundbreaking and both would have been at the dedication. However, due to ill health, Chaplain Smith retired his position in February of 1959, and then on December 3,

1959, he died at the Salt Lake Veterans Hospital of cancer. It's not certain who took over the LDS chaplaincy or if Father Benvegno ran the religious needs at the prison without a counterpart. The Assistant Chaplain at the time was Robert Gehring who had been serving in that capacity since 1947. It's reasonable to believe he took over the LDS chaplain duties until a full-time position could be filled.

It wasn't until March 16, 1961 when there is mention of a new full-time LDS chaplain. His name was Crozier Fitzgerald and he was already working at the prison as a guard. This caused some conflicts for a few of the inmates as they were at odds with him being able to "shoot an inmate one day and save him the next." Any reservations about Crozier Fitzgerald's ability to function as a chaplain were quickly dissolved as he proved to be a great advocate in the minds of the inmates and the prison. In other words, he was perfect for the job. <Home>

Chaplains Fitzgerald and Benvegno worked closely together to fill the new chapel with soul searching inmates and make available any program that would help bring about a change to the repentant.

The Reverend Thomas J. Meersman was appointed to the prison for the second time in 1962, replacing Father Benvegno. He first began his association with the prison in 1955 when he was appointed by Bishop Duane Hunt of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City to be the chaplain. He served until 1958 when he left and Father Benvegno took his place. Father Meersman served for an additional twenty-one years. He still to this day, has the distinction of being a prison chaplain longer than any other at the Draper site prison.

In 1965, when Chaplain Fitzgerald was ordered to report as a chaplain for the Air Force, he resigned his position at the prison and went to Texas. Before he left, a special "Family Church" service was conducted by George Marsh. Assistant Chaplain Ray B. Hansen also attended. This service was held on October 31st. Chaplain Fitzgerald's last day was November 4th. The new LDS Chaplain was Allen Baird.

Several men were listed as assistant chaplains who served in that capacity on a volunteer basis. Some of the names that come up are Harry H. Christiansen, Ray B. Hansen, and Bishop Heber Geurts. Bishop Geurts labored as a volunteer at the prison for over thirty-five years. His service is still well remembered by inmates today.

Up until 1980, when the Oquirrh Chapel was dedicated, some of the chaplains listed were Aldus Chappell, Jack R. Price, and George Pemberton.

George Pemberton continued as a chaplain while other chaplains conducted special services for both chapels.

The Reverend Victor G. Bonnell was appointed as the Roman Catholic chaplain in August of 1983. He replaced Father Meersman who went on to serve as Rector of the Cathedral of the Madeleine. While Father Bonnell was the Roman Catholic chaplain, the Protestant chaplains were France Davis and Herb McGuinn.

Dennis Marsh was assigned through the CES program to teach LDS Institute in 1984, when George Pemberton was planning to leave. Six months later, Brother Marsh would be hired as a chaplain. At this time period, the prison had six chaplains.

Five years after Father Bonnell arrived he was reassigned to Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church and The Reverend Reyes G. Rodriguez was appointed as the Catholic chaplain in August of 1988.

It is unclear when chaplains were assigned specifically to various chapels. However, in the 1990's, Chaplain Marsh moved to the Oquirrh's and Paul Steinfeldt became the new Wasatch chaplain. Father Rodriguez left in 1996 and Reverend James Blaine was appointed as the new Roman Catholic Chaplain. When Father Blaine arrived, he was appointed to a new position as Supervising Chaplain. It would be at this time when all chaplains were identified as "non-denominational." One of the first non-denominational chaplains hired was Robert Feland. He was already in the prison system as a CES instructor for about six months.

Willie Dunn and Dave Wilson were the chaplains representing the Protestant Churches and were assigned to care for certain areas of the prison.

Chaplain Steinfeldt was here when the Freedman's Bank Project was in full swing. When the project

first started as the Elijah Abel Family File, Chaplain Steinfeldt was the name listed to correspond with the outside world. [<Home>](#)

Chaplain Steinfeldt resigned and Jeff Price was the new Wasatch chaplain. However, he only stayed for six months. In the meantime, Chaplain Feland became the Wasatch chaplain until the prison hired CES instructor Dennis Jenkins to take the helm as the Wasatch chaplain. Chaplain Feland went to the Oquirrh's. Chaplain Jenkins had been a prison CES instructor for several years before his appointment as a chaplain.

After Chaplain Jenkins left in the year 2000, CES instructor Robert Monson was hired as the new Wasatch chaplain. He would serve for approximately one year.

While looking for another chaplain, Father Blaine took over as the chaplain for the Wasatch Chapel and remained as such for a year and a half. In the meantime, Lonn Buckley transferred from New Mexico to take a position as a CES instructor at the prison, and CES instructor Ferrell Hill was teaching at other parts of the prison.

Brother Buckley, who started the first Institute choir, was then hired as the Wasatch Chaplain and served until 2005 when he left to continue with the LDS Business College in Salt Lake City.

Chaplain Buckley's departure left an opening which was filled by Ferrell Hill. Retired from the Army as a Colonel, Chaplain Hill brings with him a quality unique to each and every chaplain and that of compassion. The religious programs continue to move forward with sights on improving and expanding in the new months and years ahead.

As of this writing, Chaplain Dennis Marsh has served as chaplain for the Utah State Prison longer than any other chaplain currently employed. He retired as director of the CES program at the prison in 1998, but retained his chaplaincy position. In this, his twenty-second year as chaplain, we commend Chaplain Marsh for his dedication and service to the souls who have gone... by the Wayside. Thank you.

Chapter Eight

Renovations and Improvements



[Click on Photos](#)

Once the chapel was completed and dedicated in 1961, there were seven and a half classrooms available for various functions. On the east side, each of the three main religions had their own designation. At one time during the seventies, lettering was painted above each of the doors to indicate which religion used it. One of the classrooms on the east side was being used as a library and storage area.

At the end of the 1960's and early 1970's, the chapel went through major changes. The open rail running along the front of the podium was removed, the linoleum was covered with carpet and the stand was raised. The open rail was replaced with an enclosed wood paneling with a fixed pulpit, which is still in use today.

The open balcony, balcony photo3) on the north end, intended for a 30 voice choir, was filled in with framework and windows, but unfinished. [<Home>](#)

One of the most unique features of the chapel was an inmate caretaker who lived in the south east room now used by the Family History Center. Remnants of brackets for a bunk bed, plumbing for a sink, toilet and a shower are still evident today.

Another unique feature was the murals either hanging or painted right on the chapel walls. From various biblical scenes of the Old and New Testament, the murals were often reported as being stark or

gloomy. The lighting was not always that dependable in the chapel and the murals, combined with curtains hanging on the windows, made the chapel's main hall a dreary looking place. At one time, murals were on all four walls of the chapel common.

Track lighting was added to accentuate the paintings and murals which at that time adorned the walls running along the walls above the classrooms.

There are reports by returning volunteers and inmates of a mural painted on the corridor side above the chapel door. The artist had depicted a small country chapel being led to by a small path, implying the "Chapel by the Wayside" name. The name of the chapel was also lettered above the artwork in a bold Old English style script. It was described as, "being so quaint it was pretty."

Eventually, the marble altarpiece situated in the center of the stand was removed to one of the classrooms. However, before Father Bonnell was hired as a chaplain, the beautiful marble altarpiece was removed completely from the chapel.

Additional renovations would take place in April of 1997, when new carpets were laid throughout the building, benches re-stained, and doorjambs and frames sanded and repainted. Overhead lights were replaced and added upon.

The rock façade on the south exterior wall, made of red flagstone, was added some time in the 70's, but when exactly is not certain. According to George Brown, chairman of the building committee that oversaw the construction of the chapel, the red flagstone was purchased from Little Willow Canyon and was installed by a professional stone mason.

The ceiling is supported by 8 large wooden supports that extend from each side and meet at an apex of approximately 34 feet in the center of a 45 degree pitch. The exposed wood of the A-frame has been stained a dark reddish brown and presents a modern gothic style which is reminiscent of chapels in England. The congregation faces the stand as well as the alcove situated directly behind it. Prominently displayed in the center of the alcove wall is the painting of the Savior purchased in 1961. From here, the white-washed cinder block wall climbs upward until reaching all of its towering height and creating a sort of large diamond effect.

The organ and full-size matching grand piano used today were acquired from a soon-to-be demolished LDS stake center, providing excellent spiritual music and occasional entertainment.

Doors have been added while others have been removed, and wheelchair accessible ramps lend aid on either side of the stand. A more updated public address system has been installed, and new lights and ceiling fans illuminate far greater than their predecessors.

Murals are no longer visible along the walls above the track lighting, nor are they on the south wall where the painting of the Savior hangs in the alcove.

On April 1, 1994, the prison decided to finally replace the old steel door entrance to the chapel with one that had a small glass covered window and a crash-bar on it. Prior to [Home](#) this, the door had to be opened with a key on the inside as well as the outside and it had a small square hole in the top part of the door with no glass covering it.

Many other changes have taken place, such as a new heating and air-conditioning system, and carpeting (April 2005 in the Family History Center and May 2006 everywhere else).

However, one set of fixtures that still remains as they did in 1961 are the pews. They may have been refurbished and repaired and repaired again, but they are the original articles. In fact, besides the bell on top of the building which came from the old Sugar House Prison, the pews would arguably be the oldest moveable part of the chapel.



[Click on Photo](#)

Part II

The Programs

Chapter Nine

The Catholic Church



[Click on Photo](#)

From the very start of the Utah State Prison at the Draper site, the Catholic Church has been involved in the harvesting of inmate souls. By appointment of Most Reverend Duane Hunt, Bishop of the Salt Lake Diocese, Reverend Monsignor Joseph P. Moreton began serving at the Utah State Prison when it was at Sugar House. Father Moreton's primary responsibility in the meanwhile was Pastor of the St. Therese of the Child Jesus Church in Midvale. (Catholic Mass before the chapel was built). Before that he served as Pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church in Brigham Canyon. When the Draper-site prison was completed, Father Moreton moved to the new facility and served for a few more years.

In 1955, Bishop Hunt appointed Reverend Thomas J. Meersman to be the Catholic Chaplain at the Draper prison. In 1958, Father Meersman left and Bishop Hunt chose another chaplain. However, this would not be the only time Father Meersman will serve <Home> as chaplain at the prison as he would return some years later.

Reverend Mark O. Benvegna, an active Colonel of the Utah Army Reserves, became the new chaplain and would be instrumental in seeing the chapel come to its fruition. He conducted the groundbreaking ceremony and collected money for the chapel construction. He also conducted the very first church service in the Wasatch Chapel on July 2, 1961. In 1960, Bishop Hunt passed away and Most Reverend Joseph Federal was appointed Bishop in his place. Two years later, Father Benvegna, who was Pastor of St. Francis Xavier in Kearns, was reassigned to St. Vincent De Paul in Salt Lake City, thus ending his chaplaincy at the prison.

This is when Father Meersman became the Pastor of St. Francis and was again given the assignment of the prison chaplain for the Catholic Church. He served in this capacity for twenty-one years, making him the longest serving chaplain at the prison until Chaplain Dennis Marsh earned that distinction in 2006.

Bishop Federal retired in 1979 and the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City would be graced with a new bishop later in the year. Most Reverend Bishop William K. Weigand relieved Father Meersman of his position as Pastor of St. Francis in 1975, but allowed him to continue as the Catholic Chaplain at the prison until 1983. Father Meersman then went to the Cathedral of the Madeline to serve as Rector until he passed away in 1991.

Having already served in such places as Vernal, Utah, Reverend Victor G. Bonnell arrived as the prison chaplain in August of 1983. At this time, Ken Shulsen was Warden of the Draper site.

Father Bonnell held Mass at the Wasatch Chapel on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings. He also had a weekly bible study during the week. The large marble altarpiece used for Mass since the 1961 dedication was moved to somewhere else in the prison before Father Bonnell had arrived on the scene. He was given the use of a wooden altar that could be moved wherever he wanted. That altar is still being used in the Wasatch Chapel today. During the years he served as the prison's Catholic

Chaplain, Father Bonnell said he learned about the “real world.”

Shortly after Christmas Mass was celebrated in 1988, Father Bonnell was reassigned to St. Rose of Lima, in Layton, Utah where he is currently assigned and there would be no Catholic chaplain for nearly a year.

Father Reyes Rodriguez, who wasn't assigned to any parish duties at the time, was available to work at the prison and was assigned here in August of 1989. He recalls being paid as a part-time employee of the prison. Whatever remaining time he spent at the prison beyond his usual pay was on a volunteer basis. It seems the chaplains do a lot of volunteer work.

Catholic Mass was celebrated on Friday afternoons and a prayer service was held on Saturdays for the Diagnostic inmates. Much like the preceding Catholic chaplains, Father Rodriguez was given the use of the entire chapel common. However, he saw that the group he had on Fridays was too small and it was moved to one of the classrooms.

During his time as chaplain, Father Rodriguez witnessed the removal of all the murals in the chapel and the dismantling of the mini-chapel set up by Father Benvegnu in 1961. He ended his service in 1996. The nineties was a decade of many changes in the chapel. The nineties also saw the passing of Father Meersman (1991) and Monsignor Benvegnu (1995). Bishop Weigand left the Salt Lake Diocese in 1993 and Reverend Monsignor George Neiderauer was ordained its new bishop in 1995. [<Home>](#)

When the decision to assign a new Catholic chaplain was placed before the new bishop, the prison had also decided to remove the distinction of religious preference amongst its chaplains. All chaplains would be known from that time forward as non-denominational chaplains. And the prison felt the need to create the new position of “Supervising Chaplain.”

When Reverend James Blaine left his assignment as spiritual leader of three Salt Lake hospitals he went to American Fork where an established mission was located. While serving as its administrator the mission became a parish and Bishop Neiderauer, recognizing Father Blaine's leadership abilities, decided to appoint him as a prison chaplain. Father Blaine became the first Supervising Chaplain, an appointment he still holds today.

At a quarter to ten on Thursday mornings, Father Blaine brings his wheeled cart into the main hall and prepares for Mass. A wooden altar is placed into position by a clerk earlier in the day and Father Blaine sets up his closely watched candles and Mass items, and then puts on his vestment and waits. Inmates who attend Mass arrive and make their own preparations as Father Blaine opens with prayer and song. A reverence is honored throughout the chapel and all activities outside of Mass are kept to a minimal amount of movement until it's over.

On February 7, 2008, The Most Reverend John C. Wester, the newly ordained Bishop of the Salt Lake City Diocese, celebrated a special Mass with the assistance of Father Blaine. A large group of Catholic inmates attended along with Warden Steve Turley, Deputy Warden Dale Wright, Deputy Warden Colleen Gabbitas, Lt. Jeff Koehler, Program Director Craig Burr and other dignitaries.

Chapter Ten

Native Americans



[Click on Photo](#)

Perhaps the one religious group who have had the most difficulty at starting a program has been those who started the Native American movement at the Utah State Prison.

In 1989, a small group of inmates won the right to have a Native American Sweat Lodge. The first fire ceremony to be held at the Utah State Prison was located on the Wasatch Chapel grounds with volunteers Art Tracy, Darrell Gardner, Mike Estitty and Lenny Foster supervising.

All interested inmates no matter where they lived on the prison site were allowed to attend. However, to qualify for the Sweat Lodge, you had to prove Native heritage. At [Home](#) its peak, 38 to 42 inmates attended the Sweat Lodge and more outside volunteers became a necessity.

Eventually, the responsibility of caring for the chapel grounds was handed to the Native American inmates, something they gladly accepted and still do.

The prison also contributed to the needs of Native American inmates by introducing a Cultural Learning class. Speakers came to speak, videos were shown and the first Talking Circle was conducted. Officers Rube Martinez and Rodger Williams, both Native American Tribe members, gathered interested inmates for the Talking Circle into the Wasatch Visiting room and sat around a round table.

The visiting room was obviously a temporary repair of what would become a sustained fixture in the prison. Not long after the Talking Circle was inaugurated Officer Martinez joined the brothers on the grounds in front of the Wasatch Chapel. Now a proper fire, so important to the ceremony, could be added.

Thursday morning Officer Rube Martinez, the EMRO director, and Jorge Alvarado head for the back door of the chapel to go outside. There they meet Art Martinez, who is responsible for the grounds and for attending the fire during the hour-long Talking Circle ceremony that starts at 9:00 a.m. Shortly thereafter, inmates begin to arrive and approach the fire which has been surrounded with folded blankets arranged in a circle. They enter the circle to the left and keep to that direction to make a full rotation until completing the circle and then finding a place on one of the blankets. Tradition dictates that all those entering the circle at any time make the previously described pass before taking or retaking their seat.

To help alleviate confusion about the two ceremonies (Talking Circle and Sweat Lodge) in reference to the prison's presence, it has been made clear that Talking Circle itself is not a religious ceremony. Otherwise Officer Martinez or any other officer could not attend. Yet, the Sweat Lodge is a religious ceremony and is conducted by a Spiritual Leader who at present is Jorge. Sometimes he will be accompanied by a special guest. Sweat Lodge is held approximately four times a year.

Jorge Alvarado has been attending Talking Circles and Talking Circles at the Draper Site Prison as a counselor and spiritual leader. While driving past the prison one day he saw in the distance a Circle, and was impressed by the sight. He pulled his car over and contemplated the scene. After much praying, he decided he wanted to be a part of what was happening here at the prison. His contact with Rube Martinez ultimately led him to a journey at the prison that started as a four-year commitment. That commitment has now been fulfilled and has carried over for two more years. And even though he isn't planning to stop as of yet, he recognizes the possibility that some day his commitment will end.

Like Jorge, there have been many volunteers who have participated in the ceremonies here at the prison.

All inmates are welcomed to attend regardless of race or religious background. As Officer Williams puts it, "All two-leggeds may attend – even four-leggeds if they will sit still."

A certain amount of preparation is desired before attending Talking Circle and Sweat Lodge. Those who were raised in the Native culture are already familiar with these preparations as most of them have spent a life-time with the fire. But for those who have never attended, Officer Williams offers this advice: [Home](#)

Learn its purpose. Whether attending Talking Circle or Sweat Lodge, find out why the Natives attend these ceremonies. (NOTE: Talking Circle, conducted by Officer Martinez, is not a religious ceremony. However, the Sweat Lodge, conducted by Jorge, is.)

Learn how the Talking Circle or Sweat Lodge is put together. Do your homework; be informed

before attending for the first time.

Find a sponsor. All participants should be invited by someone who will sponsor you. The sponsor will guide you through the process and help you maintain proper decorum.

Prepare yourself spiritually. In the privacy of your cell, sit in prayer and meditation.

Prepare yourself emotionally. Ask yourself: what is my motivation? Why do I want to attend? These ceremonies are sacred and important to those who attend and should not be approached lightly.

Prepare yourself physically, especially if attending the Sweat Lodge. The purpose for these ceremonies is to bring to the fire yourself, your family or your relations. Many will suffer for their relations and sweat from every pore like they may never have done before. It takes a measured amount of physical preparation to endure such a thing particularly when combined with the emotional and spiritual aspects involved.

Be committed. (Jorge recommends that all commitments involve the number four.) Whether you commit to weeks, months, or years, stay committed.



There is the standard procedure after finding a sponsor of making sure you are on the clearance to attend before joining the ceremonies. To do so, contact:

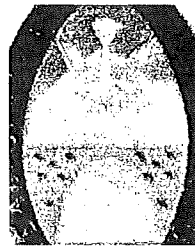
RUBE MARTINEZ, E. M. R. O. DIRECTOR, OQUIRRH FACILITY.

Be sure to include your name, inmate number and housing unit. You must also indicate whether you want to attend Talking Circle or Sweat Lodge, or both, in your facility. Talking Circle and Sweat Lodge are two separate clearances. And please be sure to print legibly.

The need for more volunteers looms heavily as people like Jorge works alone in his capacity. Each week, as the inmates assemble for the Circle, words of appreciation are offered for Officer Martinez and Jorge as they know the sacrifices required keeping these ceremonies going. The inmates are mindful that without volunteers or officers like Rube Martinez, the Circle and Sweat Lodge would come to a stop. That is why more volunteers are in great need as well as greatly appreciated. [<Home>](#)

Chapter Eleven

The Episcopal Church



Click on Photo

In 1962, The Reverend Roger Wood, rector of St. Mary's in Provo, was informed that one of his former parishioners was in prison for murder. His concern for this inmate and related family led Rev. Wood to make a visit to the prison and assess his needs. When his visit was over, it became apparent there were other inmates who were members of the Episcopal Church needing spiritual attention. Rev. Wood promised to return and was soon attending to other inmates, Episcopalian or otherwise.

From that simple beginning, the Episcopal Church has been present in this prison and chapel to this very date.

Rev. Wood continued his ministry in the prison until 1966, when he was succeeded by The Reverend J. A. Frazer Crocker as the new rector at St. Mary's. Along with being the new rector, Rev. Crocker also carried on the Episcopal ministry at the prison.

When the protestant chaplain, a Presbyterian pastor from Springville, left his duties at the prison, a

vacancy for a new chaplain was created. The natural choice for the position fell on Rev. Crocker, and the Rt. Rev. Richard Watson, bishop of the Utah Episcopal Diocese, gave his recommendation. Just as it had been with the previous Presbyterian chaplain, Rev. Crocker was employed on a 15 hour per-week basis and paid by the Utah Council of Churches, not the prison. As far as it is known, Rev. Crocker has been the only chaplain at the Draper site prison to represent the Episcopal Church.

For the next seven years, Rev. Crocker held Protestant services in the chapel every Sunday afternoon.

On one occasion, a prison official would not allow Rev. Crocker to take wine into the prison for his Sunday services. The reverend expressed his concerns to the chancellor of the diocese and in return was given a strong admonition. If the prison would not allow the wine to be part of the religious services, the Church would take legal action on the grounds of Freedom of Religion. So important were the views of the Church concerning the wine that they were willing to expend any energy necessary to continue its practice. A compromise was reached and wine was allowed, however, it had to be in very small quantities and must always be in the physical control of Rev. Crocker.

During Reverend Crocker's tenure, many important and significant events took place. One remarkable incident involved the Maximum Security Unit of the prison, when The Right Reverend Otis Charles confirmed an inmate on death row. This type of activity was not unusual, for in the eyes of the Episcopal Church; there was no distinction between Max and the rest of the prison concerning the sacramental wine or other services offered to the main population inmates.

Over time, the Rev. Crocker was re-employed. The state wanted to hire two more chaplains at the prison, one Roman Catholic and one Protestant. Rev. Crocker was hired as the Protestant chaplain and given a 19-hour pay slot. He continued in this function until his retirement from the prison.

Although not part of the history of the chapel, it should be noted that Rev. Crocker was asked to become the director of the Prison Alcohol Treatment Program. Under the direction of Warden Sam Smith, Rev. Crocker ended his duties as chaplain and converted "C" block into a therapeutic community. He served in this capacity for another seven and a half years.

The vacancy left at the prison was filled by The Reverend Quentin Kolb, a member of the Ute Tribe, in 1974. He left in 1985 and the Episcopal Church would not be [Home](#)

represented again on a regular basis until 1994 with the introduction of the Reverend Lee Lowrey. However, his ministry was focused mainly at the Uinta's and Oquirrh's.

In 1997, Mr. Darrell Haller joined Lowrey in facilitating the Episcopal needs and eventually set up a regular service the in the Wasatch Chapel a year later. This service continues today. By the year 2002, Rev. Lowrey had left and Mr. Haller stayed on.

Looking towards the new century, Mr. Haller and Jamie O'Shea, coordinator of the Prison Ministry Group for the Diocese of Utah, introduced a long standing tradition within the Episcopal Church. During the Christmas season, a special service called "Lessons and Carols" is held throughout the world. There would be no exception to the Wasatch Chapel.

Every year, on the second Thursday of December, students of the LDS Institute class and those attending Catholic Mass are invited to attend the Christmas service in the Chapel Common. Traditional hymns are sung and readings from the bible are recited by inmates who are invited to participate. A choir or small group sings an interluding musical number and Father James Blaine, Supervising Chaplain of the prison, gives a special reading and blessing to the congregation.

The Episcopal Church continues today, giving valuable help for all inmate needs in and out of the Protestant faiths.

In the middle of November (15th) 2007, The Right Reverend Carolyn Tanner Irish, Bishop of the Utah Diocese, came to the Wasatch Chapel and confirmed two inmates into the Episcopal Church and answered questions at an answer-question session afterwards. [Home](#)

Notes

The confirmation by the Right Reverend Charles of the inmate on Death Row was not the only time an inmate was confirmed. He baptized and confirmed an inmate in Olympus. Then in 2001, The Right Reverend Carolyn T. Irish confirmed an inmate in Uinta 3.

Chapter Twelve

Bible Study Groups



Assembly of God

Answering a call to serve from the Mt. Calvary Assembly of God in West Valley City, Bob Aguilar began in the Oquirrh facility. The year was 1983 and Bob had joined the ranks of Pat Marino, Lefty Espinoza, and Albert Gomez, who were also from Mt. Calvary. Together, their mission was to “bring light through the scriptures.”

Approximately seventeen years later, Bob, who is a Church Education leader, wanted to take on new responsibilities. That’s when he was given the charge to bring his leadership styles to Wasatch, and Albert Gomez came with him. While Bob expertly led the excited inmates in worship music on guitar, Albert raised their scriptural knowledge in spirited preaching. Every once in a while the two would switch roles giving each other a variety of experiences.

Eventually other volunteers arrived to assist Bob and Albert. One was Albert’s nephew. One was Dave Guavara. While sitting in church, an announcement was made at Mt. Calvary for more volunteers at the prison. Dave said he felt the calling was from God and for him, so he signed up. When Albert Gomez moved on to other callings, Bob was left to minister by himself, and Dave was a welcomed and a needed sight.

When movement is called at 1:00 p.m. for Wasatch, inmates show up for family history. By 2:00 p.m. Bob Aguilar and Dave Guavara, of the Mt. Calvary Assembly of God, are waiting in the sidelines as the inmates file out to return to SSD. Bob retrieves a guitar from one of the chapel closets and 2:00 p.m. movement is called. Bob sums up his service with the inmates in the Wasatch facility as “a wonderful opportunity to get even one in the right direction.”

Calvary Chapel

Another religious program was started when Cavalry Chapel of Salt Lake City sent Jerry Reesor to the prison to start a bible study in the year 2000. Jerry was part of a prison and jail ministry designed to minister to inmates along the Wasatch front. With approved curriculum by the leaders of Calvary Chapel, Jerry introduced bible studies, discipleship, a Pen Pal correspondence, and an aftercare for inmates who leave the prison or jails. The group started in one of the classrooms upstairs.

By 2003, a new group called Prison Fellowship had joined with Jerry and Calvary Chapel to help support their cause. Prison Fellowship brought to the table, in addition to what was already being facilitated, opportunities for inmates to reconcile with God, family and community through the power of Jesus Christ.

A new feature of recent years, led by Jerry Reesor and Calvary Chapel, has been contemporary Christian concerts enhanced with a message. The first concert was held on Christmas Eve in the year 2001. When the first Christmas Eve performance was planned, it was realized that not enough

volunteers would be available from Calvary Chapel. Jerry then appealed to an unlikely but willing group of people. They were LDS volunteers from the family history center who gladly accepted the opportunity.

Owing to the success of talents loaned by inmates and volunteer Todd Anderson of Prison Fellowship and plenty of other volunteers, the concerts have been a major part of the Christmas Eve calendar since. But Christmas hasn't been the only time for these special musical offerings. Easter has also been a time when music was presented for the edification of inmates and volunteers.

To cap off the Saturday evening programs, Jerry Reesor will arrive and hold bible study. He is accompanied by David Gibson and Al Chanonia. The class starts with [<Home>](#) music emanating from a portable stereo system helping to get the inmates moving with the Spirit. Once again 8:00 p.m. movement is called and everyone goes home.

Christian Bible Study

Pastor Dave Wilson, of the Christian Bible Studies, was conducting a bible study in 1989, when he recruited Richard Delgado's help. After assisting for a month, Richard wanted more and to do more.

Richard got his wish and ministered with the Diagnostic inmates in A-West for nearly four years. From there, he went to the Uinta's, serving with Super Max and R&O inmates for a combination of six years, and then venturing to the other remaining facilities. It wasn't much longer when Richard decided he wanted to retire. However, his wife Jessie was keenly interested in his ministerial work and encouraged him to keep going by becoming a volunteer and joining him at the prison.

One of Richard's favorite stories involved him, at a time early in his ministry, while still at A-West. In those days, he says, volunteers were allowed to go directly into the inmates cells. While talking to an inmate, the dreaded nightmare that many volunteers have worried about occurred. He said apparently an announcement was made over a public address system that he didn't hear and the next thing he knew, the cell door behind him—slammed shut.

The officers (who were doing count) came by and realized Richard was still sitting in the cell. Apologizing for the oversight, the officers assured him he would be released as soon as possible. Richard said this was accomplished some twenty minutes later.

Richard and Jessie Delgado will be here on Monday afternoons for Christian Bible Study as the inmates return from lunch and noon count. Their shining faces greet each inmate who may opt to go to the bible study, family history, or LDS Institute. All three are held at the same time.

Anchor Baptist Bible Study

On Wednesday afternoons Dean McLain and B.J. Nordgren, who represent Anchor Baptist Church, set up for their bible study class and welcome those inmates who come to participate. Al Anderson, who came on a regular basis, has not been able to attend. Those who know him have been praying for his speedy return.

Jehovah's Witnesses

In the afternoon, Raef Huggins, Richard Abel, Ryan Robertson, Raul Ortiz, and Dave, Kobiashi representing the Jehovah Witnesses, arrive in their dress shirts and ties and head to one of the classrooms. These young men are always eager to greet the inmates who come to their bible study class and share the message they have to give. [<Home>](#)

Prison Fellowship

Starting in 2003, Prison Fellowship is a separate bible study program but in conjunction with Calvary Chapel of Salt Lake City.

The first volunteers include Todd Anderson, who was a noted musician and included live guitar at his studies on Tuesdays and some Saturdays. Todd was also involved in some of the Christmas concerts sponsored by Calvary Chapel and Prison Fellowship. He brought with him a quiet and calm demeanor which helped to encourage inmates to do the same.

Rudy Rael joined the team and has been attending to Saturday morning bible studies for several years. Matt Dailey has also been holding bible studies on Saturday mornings for many years and switches off with Rudy.

Others who have supported the Prison Fellowship program here at the Wasatch Chapel have been Daron Lees, Rob F., and Dennis Trujillo.

Prison Fellowship continues today with a strong inmate base and most recently (2007) sponsored a special one-man play called "Bema," which starred Michael Sewell. The three-hour play was filled with music and an amazing rendition of the Rapture and what Heaven and the judgment will be like in the next life. The once-in-a-lifetime event was the largest showing of attendees at any Prison Fellowship event. The chapel was to near capacity.

Spiritual Journey

Introduced by Norm Zurn, a prison employee, the Spiritual Journey service is held on Sunday afternoons. Norm has shown and discussed such life changing studies such as "The Secret" made popular in recent times. [<Home>](#)

Notes

Dave Wilson was a Utah State Prison Chaplain at Wasatch, 1991-1995.

Chapter Thirteen

Islamic Prayer Service



Click on Photo

Although a fairly new religious program at the Wasatch Chapel, Islamic services have had a history in this chapel that dates before the year 2000. However, little is known about the services earlier than 2002.

Muslims and those wanting to know about Islam in the Wasatch housing facility had wanted to start an Islamic service. But they were unsuccessful and the volunteers at the chapel could see their frustration. It is believed the volunteers started to enquire about the possibilities of getting a Muslim leader to the chapel.

In the spring of 2002 the first Jumu'ah Service was held in the Wasatch Chapel in many years. Since

there were no outside Muslims available, the LDS Church facilitators offered to sit in the services until such time as a proper leader could be obtained. As thankful as the inmates were, having a non-Muslim leader wasn't the same as having an actual Muslim.

Finally, in the fall of 2005 Benan Zahawi, along with Zayd Al-Barzanjani, alternately held the most special weekly prayer service every Friday. Attendance was sparse at first. The Muslim leaders were also leading a separate evening Islamic service where a study of the Qur'an was the classes main focus. They also studied general religious understandings and initiated evening prayer. However, the Friday Jumu'ah came to a temporary end in November of that year. Three months later, two Muslim volunteers arrived to lead Islamic prayer service and committed to re-establish Jumu'ah every Friday.

All interested parties are welcomed to the Friday Jumu'ah and the Wednesday night Qur'an study class. Respect is maintained by keeping all arguments away from the study.

The Jumu'ah service is both formal and informal. The service begins with a sermon from the Iman who will then lead the congregation in prayer. Prayer is accomplished by standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting in unison. When completed, the Iman will engage the congregation in discussion and converse the aspects of Islam while sitting in an informal circle.

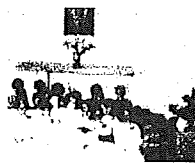
For those also interested in the study class on Wednesday nights, readings of the Qur'an are conducted in both English and Arabic. There is no formal course of direction for this study group where prayers may be offered or a question and answer period can fill portions of the evening. On some occasions, passages from a scholar of Islam are read and contemplated.

Those who induct the beliefs of Islam in their lives will concur that Islam is comprehensive in its beliefs and acts. There are many fundamental aspects of the social religion which are best explained in the weekly studies and at Jumu'ah and by corresponding with others involved.

In the Salt Lake area, two Mosques (a Muslim house of worship) have been established and are open to contacts from inmates by mail or in person upon release from prison. The Al-Noor Mosque in Salt Lake City has available a phone number (801-364-7822), whereas the Khadeeja Mosque in West Valley has provided an address. That address is: 1019 W. Parkway Ave., West Valley, Utah 84119 (801-972-6555). [<Home>](#)

Chapter Fourteen

Singing, Singing, Singing & the Wasatch Music Education Program



[Click on Photo](#)

Early Music

No music has been lost in the Wasatch Chapel. Even as this chapter is being written for the history, there is music lofting into the office from inmate performers rehearsing for a musical concert.

The earliest known record of any singing in the chapel begins with the Catholic Mass held on July 2, 1961. An organ solo was also rendered that same day to showcase the new organ's abilities. Right away, music was introduced to this house of God and it hasn't stopped for nearly fifty years. Thank goodness.

Credit goes to the South Salt Lake Stake Women's Choir for being the first performing group in the chapel, by singing "The Lord's Prayer" at the 1961 dedication service, and many more choirs would follow. George Makin offered the first solo singing "I'll Walk With God" at the same service.

There have been outside quartets, trios, choirs, a trumpet player, and of course, inmates. Inmates