

**While most of our Baptist Care chaplains serve our residents, clients and staff, our civil chaplains are dedicated to providing support to people in prison, bringing them meaning and hope in a place of loneliness, isolation and despair.**

Jericho Nyatoro is one of two chaplains serving more than 1,000 inmates in Junee Prison. Since 2013, Jericho has provided daily pastoral care and support to inmates, and leads the Sunday chapel service twice a month.

In 2021, during the month of Ramadhan, some of the Muslim inmates became agitated towards Jericho. “Muslim inmates would aggressively voice their perceived thoughts that I gave special preference to Christians since I was a Christian,” he said.

While chaplains, like Jericho, can help clients explore issues regarding faith, their role is more about building meaningful relationships and providing personal support, than about religion.

“When I provide pastoral care to inmates, I don't discriminate on their religious affiliation or nationality. I always ask myself, ‘If it was Jesus providing this care, how would he do it?’ Jesus gave his full attention to everyone including prostitutes and thieves. He would go into homes and eat with people who were despised by society,” he said.

Practising this love of Christ, Jericho’s strained relationship with the Muslim inmates changed when he provided support to one of them. “What I have done, not only in this case, is listen and provide what the inmate wanted, not what I felt he wanted. I went out of my way to provide support and source Islamic items for the inmate.”

Although the support Jericho provided was nothing out of his ordinary practice, this had a lasting impression on the inmate. Sharing his personal experience of Jericho with his fellow inmates, they were taken aback by Jericho’s willingness to help a Muslim, admitting that an Islamic chaplain would not always provide the same support to a Christian inmate.

When we asked Jericho why that was the case, he explained, “Some chaplains are not comfortable in handling religious artefacts of other religions. I see it as an opportunity to show the difference between my faith and theirs.”

Since then, Jericho has regularly been consulted by Muslim inmates and at times his support is sought after by new prison inmates. “All I do is show them the love of Christ and a few of them have come to my church services to check me out. Some now attend both the Church services and their Friday Prayers,” he shares. “My relationship [with the inmates] continues to grow as I allow Christ to shine through me.”

During the month of Ramadhan this year, Jericho encouraged the inmates to intensify their prayers. “I challenged them,” he said. “Ramadhan is a month of fasting not feasting, and I needed to see bruised foreheads from prayer.”

When we asked about what lessons he’s learnt about his role as a Chaplain in Junee Prison, Jericho says, “I am just an instrument being used by God. Every morning, I show up at work ready for God to use me in any way he pleases. We are all employed by God and we serve at his pleasure and for his glory.”

We are grateful to all our chaplains, like Jericho, who are dedicated to providing personalised care and support to our clients and the communities we serve. Their impact through their compassion and deep connections continues to play an invaluable role in the lives of many.