

# Chapel of Hope founder praying, anticipating a lot of little miracles\_92004

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**By Ken Camp**

*Managing Editor*

Frank Graham testifies he has seen God work a few giant miracles in the last decade. Now he is praying for a lot of little ones over the next few years.

In 1994, Graham founded Chapel of Hope ministries and set a goal-build a chapel inside the fence of every Texas prison.

The ministry completed construction of its first chapel in 1997 at the Hutchins State Jail, thanks primarily to a grant from the Hillcrest Foundation in Dallas and a major gift from Pres-tonwood Baptist Church in Plano, where Graham is a deacon.

Chapel of Hope built a half-dozen worship centers between 1998 and 2003. The first three were built at men's correctional facilities-the Hughes Unit in Gatesville, the Stiles Unit in Beaumont and the Connally Unit in Kenedy. The rest are at women's facilities-the Plane State Jail and Henley Unit in

Dayton and the Murray Unit in Gatesville.

Each month, 35,000 inmates worship and 1,400 volunteers minister in those chapels, Graham reported. But of more than 100 correctional facilities in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice system, about 90 lack sufficient space designated for worship.

Chapel of Hope builds its facilities with private funds on state property. The chapels are maintained and owned by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, allowing prisoners a place to practice their constitutionally guaranteed free exercise of religion, he explained.

Every chapel represents the fulfillment of a dream so large, only God could have made it reality, Graham said.

“Seven times, God provided a few people who gave a whole lot to build these chapels,” he said. “Now I believe God wants a whole lot of people to give a little to build the next one.”

Instead of relying on a handful of major donors, Graham hopes to see widespread support to help build a chapel at Woodman State Jail in Gatesville.

“Woodman is where the majority of female inmates are received into the system,” he explained. “About 8,000 women a year go through that facility. ... And those 8,000 women have about 20,000 children whose lives are impacted.”

Ninety percent of the incarcerated women will be out of prison in three to five years, Graham reported.

“Crime is so generational,” he said. “If we're going to break the cycle, we have to get to the women when they first come in. If they make a commitment to Christ, and if involvement in the chapel becomes a big part

of their lives while they are in prison, then that becomes the testimony that makes an impact on their families.”

Since the women who pass through the facility will return to communities around the state, Graham hopes to launch a broad-based grassroots effort to touch their lives. He wants to fund the \$650,000 building effort one brick at a time by asking individuals to buy a \$75 commemorative brick, Sunday school classes or missions organizations to purchase a \$150 or \$300 brick, and churches to buy a \$1,200 brick.

“It's a chance to be part of a ministry that will be here 100 years from now,” Graham said. “The prisons are not going out of business.”

For more information, visit the Chapel of Hope website at [www.chapelofhope.org](http://www.chapelofhope.org).

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