

The Westside Church of Christ in Imperial has become involved in supporting the church that meets within the walls of the prison in Sterling, Colo.

Not many think of a church when they think of prison, but with a total population of nearly 2,500, the church that meets there on Sunday mornings might rival many others in the area.

Bill Lewis, who had preached for the Westside Church of Christ here from 1996 to 2006, is now serving as one of the chaplains. Lewis said he resigned "the easiest job he ever had and took on the most challenging," referring to local church ministry as opposed to prison ministry.

With needs ranging from spiritual counseling in times of loss of family members to providing long term guidance to offenders with life sentences, each day brings a new challenge for prison chaplains, Lewis said.

To stay focused on a Biblical perspective is of utmost importance as most who attend the church services have never heard the basic gospel message, being prejudiced by the worldly view of Christianity, he added.

The Colorado State Legislature removed the funding for the prison chaplains several years ago, leaving the work of the local chaplains at their own expense.

Imperial's Westside Church of Christ made the commitment to fill this need and supports Lewis in this ministry that is challenging, sometimes heartbreaking and, at the same time, the most fulfilling of anything imaginable.