When I was growing up, a common comment from my mother was “Keep the Faith.” To her, that meant to believe in God and His mighty power. Our faith is our beliefs, and our beliefs are our faith. But there are other definitions.

The most common is that of St Augustine: “Faith is believing in what you do not see.” In other words, faith is the personal confirmation of things we do not see and the conviction of their reality, perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses. “We walk by faith and not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

There are different faiths, religions, and doctrines--but one common denominator is faithfulness. I believe faithfulness is a key factor in protecting ourselves from feeling overwhelmed in a crazy, mixed-up atmosphere, because it is your faith that saves you. Therefore, jail personnel who keep their faith alive at work will find serenity in times of stress and discouragement by relying on their faith in their God, or Higher Power, as their inner small voice.

In our everyday life, we experience insights and have reactions to events or occurrences that are from within ourselves. This is often referred to as a gut reaction, instinct or inspiration. Correctional officers and jail personnel may learn to rely on their own inner small voice by first acknowledging that there is a Higher Power available to them at any given moment. The key is to stay calm, reach out to their own Higher Power and think, “What is the right path here, in this situation now, for me and for those now with me? Help me to know what to do and say. Lead me, now in the right way.”

Trust in your God to guide you. Of course, pre-emptive prayer for help during an upcoming known situation is best, but impromptu prayers made in good faith are also heard. As a night shift nurse, I relied on my own instincts and inspirations to guide me in caring for my patients. Many times, I would suddenly think to check on one of my patients, or even that of another nurse, to find the patient had an immediate health care need. I was there for the patients when otherwise they would have had a serious health issue.

Some said I had an angel on my shoulder. Perhaps, as I do believe in angels. But I know it was my faith in action. Each of us makes decisions based on our own motivations. Those who go into service for others such as nurses, correctional personnel, police officers, soldiers, etc. are
very special in God’s eyes. Your God is waiting to help you in your every need. As in most things, all you have to do is ask.

On my mantle at home, I have a plaque that is held by a small picture frame. It reads: “Faith is believing God has a better plan.” At times, we are led by our God to follow a path. An opportunity that cannot be passed up, for example. That is God in our lives. God chooses correctional officers in much the same way He chooses those in any other service profession: with a vision to inspire them to be a catalyst for the epitome of goodness in themselves and others with whom they come into contact, whether it be coworkers or inmates.

For instance, it may be the fatigued nurse who takes one last call to reassure a fretful mother who needs a gentle word of encouragement and advice. Or, perhaps God works through the correctional officer who unselfishly takes time to commend a coworker or listen to an inmate in need of a willing and nonjudgmental listener. Correctional officers have a great opportunity to be the source of intervention that leads inmates to have faith in themselves and others by exempling their own faith in their Higher Power. Our God gives us the ability to pour out love and know within ourselves love’s ability to change the perception of any given situation. There is never despair in a life that is ruled by faith because where faith abides, love and hopefulness stand firm and are rooted in divine intervention.

When faith is weak, feelings of hopelessness and despair will overtake us, if we allow. Spiritual weakness occurs when one feels hopelessness, a sense of loss, or being lost to God’s love. When life can easily get the best of us, spiritual warfare occurs. This is a time to acknowledge our own weaknesses and our need to reach out to friends and colleagues for support and a reminder to never give up hope.

Support comes in a variety of ways. Inspirational books, music, and visits to a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or attendance to a prayer or AA meeting would be beneficial. There are multiple ways to remedy the anxiety and angst encountered with spiritual malaise. One is to rev up our spiritual life by listening to spiritual music. Meditation and relaxation also can cause serenity to overtake our souls.

An analogy often used is that of the potter and the clay. We are the clay and find ourselves to be nothing but a big blob. But, the clay is not in control. The potter is in charge of molding the clay. The potter takes the clay in His hands and lovingly and gently attempts to guide the clay to surrender to the molding. Of course, the clay may not be malleable. Then, the clay rejects the work of the potter. For harmony, to avoid complete failure, the clay and the potter have to work together. The clay must allow the potter to guide its form to become beautiful.

The correctional officers who choose to find harmony and peacefulness through the guidance of their potter, their Higher Power, will ignite an inner flame that proves to be a source of
power and a well-spring overflowing with fruitful inspiration. They will respond rather than react to a given situation. Meditation and relaxation are key elements in finding your source of power from within.

There are many useful apps. The Mindfulness App (www.themindfulnessapp.com) and Relax Melodies (www.relaxmelodies.com) are two of my favorites. For the correctional officer seeking online resources, www.mindful.org has a multitude of links with ways to be mindful at work.

Often when things go wrong, the human reaction is to forget God’s life within us--our own divine nature. We forget that we are loved unconditionally by One greater than ourselves. We forget we have God in us. Our divine nature, also called our spirit or soul, is cemented by the fact that we are children of God. However, because we are for now earthly bound, we must nurture our Godly and holy nature, lest we succumb to worldly and evil ways. For correctional officers, this may mean acknowledging faults or failures, knowing forgiveness by the power of love, and striving to pay it forward.

The correctional officer who realizes the importance of bringing the power of love into their personal life in every interaction will find there is a peacefulness in reaching out to inmates and peers. This mindfulness takes practice and is achieved with a conscious effort to give attentive consideration to focusing all thoughts and actions on making faith come alive. The easiest way is asking through prayer for your own Mighty Power to come be with you now, to help you, to guide you, to protect you.

As faith flourishes, always be mindful of spiritual warfare. The devil will always try to interfere with any attempt on the correctional officer’s part to become more loving because God is Love. Again, the easiest way to banish the devil is to pray for strength and perseverance, and to evict the devil by simply telling the devil that he is not welcome in your life or anywhere near you and those around you. A simple mantra may help: “Come, Divine Powerhouse of Love” or “Divine Love, I place my trust in you.” Whatever you choose, repeat your mantra often, especially in times of trouble and doubt.

For a peaceful life, we need to remember we are born holy people with a divine and human nature. There are times we falter, but our faith sustains us. In times of trouble, the most important thing for us to do is to remember we have a Higher Power in control and on our side. We live by faith in action when we invite our God into our daily lives and our daily battles. In our daily circumstances, we have to truly make the conscious decision to choose our human nature which will fail us, causing increased conflict and angst, or to choose to nurture our divine nature.

It sounds easy, but since we live in a fallen world, our tendency is to lean toward our human nature. But, NO – through our faith in God to be our answer, our guardian, and our shield--we
recognize our role in this plan is to strive to be God-like in our thoughts, words, and--most importantly--our deeds.

As we strive to be more faithful and more God-like, we must cultivate our faith. We must grow it from the size of a mustard seed into the big tree – our whole person turning and reaching toward our own Higher Power in faith and with trust.

Correctional officers and jail personnel may nurture faith by being active members of their own community of faith. Faith in action is sharing the gifts received from God and by being open to listening for the still small voice within that prompts a smile when one would rather frown, to lend an ear when the preference is to walk away, to stay calm when anxiety screams to act out.

For the correctional officer and jail personnel who allow their divine nature to overrule their human nature, these are all ways to use God-given gifts and talents in peaceful service. For it is through service to others that we find Love in action. Galatians 5:6 says, “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”