

Vanessa Gardner – President, Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association

Vanessa Gardner is the **President of the Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association (CMCA)**, a professional Christian organization dedicated to connecting, encouraging, equipping, and strengthening Christians as they fulfill the Great Commission in correctional ministry. She is also the **Founder & President of Reentry Consultants of America** and a **Certified Volunteer Chaplain Assistant (CVCA)**.

Professional Background

- **Chaplaincy & Ministry:** Ordained pastor and chaplain with extensive experience in correctional ministry, serving in Texas prisons and jails, including Good News Jail and Prison Ministry and Belle & Sparrow Tice (TDCJ).
- **Education:** Master's Degree in Criminal Justice; additional training in pastoral counseling and reentry counseling from Wheaton College.
- **Leadership:** Former Head Female Chaplain for the Harris County Sheriff's Office.
- **Specialization:** Community liaison in correctional ministry, program planning, curriculum development, and bridging connections between non-profits, churches, and community leaders.

Career & Impact

Vanessa's journey into chaplaincy began unexpectedly when she was incarcerated. She later reflected that her time in prison became the foundation for her life's work, leading her to earn a master's degree in prison chaplaincy and certifications in pastoral and reentry counseling Crossroads Prison Ministries. She has led training sessions for mentors on the emotional needs of incarcerated individuals, particularly women, and has been recognized for her ability to inspire action through storytelling while grounding her work in practical ministry applications.

Role in CMCA

As President of CMCA, Vanessa leads a network of Christians working together to advance Christ's Kingdom and enhance public safety through correctional ministry. The association provides resources, training, and networking opportunities for chaplains, church leaders, law enforcement, and reentry experts, and has partnered on research and outreach initiatives such as the Lifeway Research study on churchgoers' views of prison ministry.

Leadership Style

Vanessa is described as an **inspirational leader and motivational speaker**, skilled at developing strategic vision, creating cohesive ministry programs, and fostering collaborative efforts across diverse organizations. Her approach combines spiritual insight with practical, community-focused solutions.

If you are interested in her work, CMCA's website offers member resources, training tools, and opportunities to connect with other correctional ministry leaders.