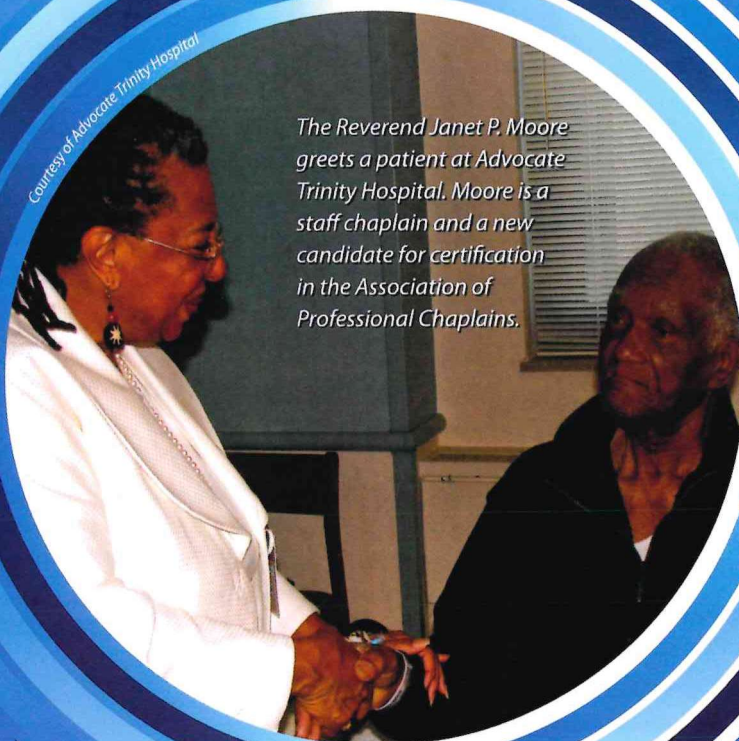


Courtesy of Advocate Trinity Hospital



The Reverend Janet P. Moore greets a patient at Advocate Trinity Hospital. Moore is a staff chaplain and a new candidate for certification in the Association of Professional Chaplains.

The circle of care

Professional
chaplains integral
to organization
mission

by Rita Kaufman CAE

Imagine yourself in an institution facing a crisis, scared, uncertain and vulnerable. It could be a hospital, mental health center, nursing home, hospice, correctional facility, disaster-relief shelter or even your workplace. Loved ones may have their own worries – about you or themselves – and you want to be strong for them. The staff is busy addressing your physical, mental or safety needs, making assessments, providing assistance or prescribing treatment. Though they offer information and support as they go along, they can't dispel the sense of aloneness or answer the nagging questions that remain: Why must you go through this? What does it all mean?

Professional chaplains help persons tap into their own spiritual resources as they search for answers to those questions of meaning. They understand and respect the various beliefs, cultures and worldviews of those they serve, do not impose their religious beliefs on those under their care or even expect a person to be religious at all. They advocate for people regarding cultural or religious traditions, connect individuals with loved ones and resources in crisis situations, support people as they make end of life or organ donation decisions, lend an objective ear to the concerns of the person and the family, pray if prayer is desired, or simply comfort with their pastoral presence. In other words, they help people find hope, healing and wholeness.

Professional chaplains serve in many diverse settings, promoting the spiritual health of the individuals as well as the organizations they serve. In this article, two healthcare executives will discuss how professional chaplains are an essential component of the holistic care of the mind, body and spirit in their hospitals.

Professional chaplains complete the circle of care

"A hospital visit is one of the most intimate and vulnerable moments in life, and chaplains help patients navigate that experience. Even if you're not religious, a hospital visit draws on your spiritual side," says Nancy Steiger, CEO and chief mission officer at St. Joseph Hospital in Bellingham, WA. "Our chaplains walk with people. They can't always relieve pain and suffering but they're walking with them through it so they're not alone – and that changes the whole experience."

"When chaplains ask the question, 'how are you doing?' they mean it. They want to know how you're doing, and they stay with you and listen and talk through it," says Jon Bruss, president of Advocate Trinity Hospital and vice president, supply chain management, of Advocate Health Care. "Chaplains are skilled at noticing and asking the questions that allow you to walk through the door and state how you're doing and what your needs are."

Professional pastoral care contributes to health

"Chaplains improve patient satisfaction, promote healing and decrease length of stay," says Steiger. "They participate in multidisciplinary rounds and are very much a part of the patient care team."

"Insofar as the spiritual needs of patients are met, there is a spiritual sense of peace and security. Studies show that when

people have a deeper sense of spiritual well-being, they recover faster and have a better sense of health on an ongoing basis," says Bruss. "Spiritual health contributes to physical health. Studies have statistically demonstrated these types of outcomes."

"Our chaplains affirm the faith values of our patients, and calm anxious patients and family members," says the Reverend Dick Cathell PhD BCC, staff chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital. "This, in turn, helps reduce the length of stay of

our patients, helps them use fewer medications and reduces the number of times they use their nurse call buttons."

Professional chaplains add value to organizations

Advocate Trinity Hospital in Chicago, IL is part of the Advocate Health Care System, comprised of seven acute care, two children's and one long-term acute care hospital. The staff at Trinity Hospital includes four chaplains: two Association of Professional Chaplains board certified chaplains, one National Association of Catholic Chaplains certified chaplain and one chaplain who is preparing to meet an APC certification committee. Certification is supported at Advocate due to "the level of competence that comes with being a professional chaplain, ►

Our chaplains give emotional support and spiritual care to 3,000 employees and hundreds of physicians. When you work in a caring environment, you are better able to attract and keep staff members because they feel good about working there.

*Nancy Steiger, CEO and Chief Mission Officer
St. Joseph Hospital, Bellingham, WA*

in a range of ways," says Bruss. "Their education and training gives them the skills to integrate spiritual care with disciplines like psychology, sociology and ethics. They have knowledge of best practices and a deeper appreciation of the needs of patients. They also have a deep self-understanding of their own capabilities and limits."

Although patients are not billed for their services, professional chaplains positively impact the bottom line of the institution. Bruss cites several ways chaplains do this:

- The presence of a professional pastoral care department plays a vital role in patient satisfaction. Improving patient satisfaction leads to greater return-patient and new-patient volumes.
- Employee satisfaction is strengthened. They provide support to staff members. Employees are more satisfied, which leads to greater employee retention and less turnover.
- Physician satisfaction is improved. Professional chaplains work with physicians as partners. They help care for their patients, and help physicians through difficult situations with patients and families. As a result, the physicians are more loyal and more dedicated to sending their patients to the institution.
- Staff is more productive, particularly in critical care units. In the midst of critical care, chaplains are present. They assist with families and the spiritual needs of the patient. This frees up other staff members to focus on clinical care and doing what they do best. Without that, staff would have to carry the emotional and spiritual load, as well as provide clinical care in those situations, and they would quickly become overburdened.
- Community connectedness and ownership of the institution is increased. The presence of professional pastoral care helps the community feel good about the institution, which could lead to greater market share. It also leads to philanthropic opportunities and community support, in terms of gifts.

"The chaplaincy program improves the hospital environment," says Steiger. "When you have an environment that so

honors each human person, you change the way the organization feels about itself. Our chaplains give emotional support and spiritual care to 3,000 employees and hundreds of physicians. When you work in a caring environment, you are better able to attract and keep staff members because they feel good about working there."

Professional pastoral care departments are integral to the organization's mission

St. Joseph Hospital is part of the Peace Health system of six hospitals – three in Oregon, two in Washington and one in Alaska. St. Joseph first began 115 years ago as a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. The hospital served loggers and miners in the community, and has grown with the development of the Northwest. St. Joseph has upheld the same mission, ministry and

values since its beginning – to carry on the healing mission of Jesus Christ by promoting personal and community health, relieving pain and suffering, and treating each person in a loving and caring way.

Today, St. Joseph has a spiritual care department of five chaplains and one parish nurse who supervises more than 50 parish nurses in over 35 faith communities. Staff chaplains include one clinical pastoral education supervisor, who educates and oversees chaplains in the residency program; two

APC board certified chaplains; two chaplains currently working toward board certification; and one who is almost ready to apply for certification.

"Professional chaplains are integral to the organization's ability to live our mission and values," says Steiger. She cites St. Joseph's four values and the ways chaplains help uphold them:

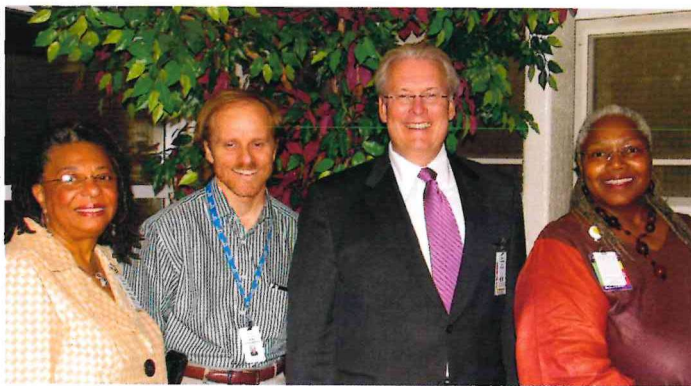
Respect – chaplains live respect.

Collaboration – chaplains are all about collaboration with patients and staff.

Stewardship – chaplains are stewards not just of our money but also of our human resources.

Certification is supported at Advocate due to the level of competence that comes with being a professional chaplain, in a range of ways. Their education and training gives them the skills to integrate spiritual care with disciplines like psychology, sociology and ethics. They have knowledge of best practices and a deeper appreciation of the needs of patients. They also have a deep self-understanding of their own capabilities and limits.

*Jon Bruss, President of Advocate Trinity Hospital
Vice president, Supply Chain Management of
Advocate Health Care, Chicago, IL*



Mr. Jon Bruss, president of Advocate Trinity Hospital, enjoys a collegial relationship with the chaplains. Pictured from left are the Reverend Janet Moore MDiv; Chaplain Vernon Blackwood, NACC-Certified; Jon Bruss and the Reverend Brenda S. Jackson MDiv BCC, vice-president of the Office for Mission & Spiritual Care.

Social justice – chaplains are very cognizant of and helpful with social justice issues within our institution and our community.

At Advocate, the vice president of mission and spiritual care is a chaplain who sits on the executive team and is responsible for

ensuring that the organization is fulfilling its mission. Chaplains help fulfill Advocate's mission, says Bruss, "through spiritual support of patients, physicians and staff, memorial services, public address prayers that begin and end each day, individual pastoral care, and crisis debriefings that help people cope with their emotions in difficult situations."

"An extra dimension is added," he continues. "Chaplains help bring the perspective of faith having an impact on what we do – moment to moment, day by day. It causes the institution to be more grounded. We don't expect people working in our institution to share the same faith. But having a faith basis is appreciated and adds to the quality of care and the quality of the institution in general."

At St. Joseph, says Steiger, "Our vision is that every patient receive safe, evidence-based, compassionate care every time and with every touch. Chaplains are an essential part of that. I don't know how we'd make it without them."

Rita Kaufman CAE is the marketing and public relations manager at the Association of Professional Chaplains. She may be contacted at rita@professionalchaplains.org.

Monday, September 22, 2008 10:25 AM CST
Surgery went well! John did not get put under; they gave him an epidural so he would be more with it when the kids come today. He will be in recovery for about 25 hours. The surgery was a success today. I will be a difficult time for them all. It looks like if all goes well he will have the final surgery on Monday. Can you believe? We're so happy that he's alive. Despite the setback John's positive attitude and optimistic spirit have continued to amaze me. Thank you for your love and support. We will post some pictures after the kids visit today! As always we will keep you posted.

HIS SURGERY WENT WELL.

This is news worth sharing.

Challenging events in life require more than a card. CaringBridge.org is the right place for your patients to have those conversations - not with the whole world, just their own. Tell them to set up a free, personal website at www.CaringBridge.org. They'll discover how a CaringBridge website can make their lives a whole lot better.


Share. Because others care.