

County-Wide Chaplaincy

Thanks you!

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May 2019

“CHAPLAIN”

We appreciate your taking a moment to read this month’s letter from County-Wide Chaplaincy, answering a question that perhaps you have asked. Exactly what *is* a chaplain? A good question, one we hear and sometimes ask ourselves. It’s definitely a varied field with wide ranging roles and responsibilities. When this question arises, there can be more than one correct response, with some difficulty in nailing down a specific definition and description of what a chaplain does. Originally the title of chaplain specifically referred to a representative of the Christian faith. However, the designation of chaplain now commonly applies to other religious faiths as well.

A somewhat cold and clinical definition might read as follows:

“A chaplain is a spiritually oriented person who works with, or is assigned to an agency or entity whose primary mission IS NOT spiritual.”

A chaplain is normally attached to a secular institution such as a hospital, prison, military unit, school, business, police department, fire department, or university. The courts have determined that the primary task of a chaplain is secular, while a secondary purpose may be spiritual.

Those who are familiar with the various aspects of chaplaincy might see it as stated in the following quote from Chaplain Diane Johnson, displayed by Chaplain Fellowship Ministries:

“A chaplain is trained to talk to anybody of any faith, not to become the patient’s minister. My own religion does not need to enter the conversation. I am there as a friend; I am there for the patient.”

The next definition is better suited for County-Wide Chaplaincy:

“A chaplain represents Christ and is trained to relate to people in the midst of trauma and loss during their initial hours of grief.”

Although our personal faith is a primary motivation for our work, we remain circumspect in regard to the possibility of sharing our faith during calls. The desire of every chaplain is to bring a moment of friendship, love and care into circumstances

that often appear to defy that possibility. Comforting a worried or broken heart and helping those in grief is our purpose and desire.

Most of our calls involve serving people who have just lost a husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. We respond in order to bring consolation and assistance with next steps to surviving family members in their initial time of grief. Each situation is different and often difficult. Comments, sometimes spoken between chaplains, express sentiments as, "I had never been in a situation like this before," or "I was in over my head..."

We look to God for wisdom and guidance. Every situation requires reliance on the Lord and sensitivity to those we serve as we seek to demonstrate the compassion, wisdom and love of Christ.

Whatever the circumstance, time of day, location or environment, we at County-Wide Chaplaincy stand ready to respond to the needs of those we serve. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve our community in this way and give thanks to God who provides His strength and guidance to do this job.

Thank you for reading this letter. We deeply appreciate your care for us and your prayer support.

The Chaplaincy Team

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