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WHO ON EARTH AM I?

PERSPECTIVE

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I'm sure that the minute you saw the title I chose, your mind may have wandered off to another form of that statement. Yes, you know what I mean. I will let your mind wander off and deal with the consequences of your thoughts. As for me, I'm sticking to, "Who on earth am I?"

This question is one that chaplains often deal with in their ministry. It is a question of identity. I am fully aware there is an internal struggle in answering this question, especially for chaplains. For many years, in our denomination, chaplaincy ministry has been viewed as "the dumping ground for failed pastors." This created a tendency among those of us who came to chaplaincy as a post-pastoral specialty of ministry to feel the need to explain away our relevance. Often, this happened during the discussions to make our case and the many hoops we had to jump through to

become Board Certified Chaplains or Endorsed Chaplains.

Although there is a need to provide a professional definition of what we do and who we are, it is also crucial for pastors and chaplains to conform to the high standards established by our denomination and its working policies. In the Bible, the prophet or the priest is the biblical representation of today's pastor or chaplain. What I find most relevant in this depiction is the simple description of these roles. They were individuals who responded to the call that came from God for a specific time within the history of the people of God.

There were reluctant prophets, such as Jonah. He went in the opposite direction to where God had sent him. Still, he ended up in the place he wanted to avoid, and on top, of that he smelled like fish. Abused prophets, like Jeremiah, suffered in person the

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The identity of those called is not what makes them good instruments. It is their willingness to allow God to use them, or even their unwillingness in the case of Jonah.

consequences of delivering a message that was not to the liking of the king. There were self-doubters like Isaiah, who was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the vision he was shown. He realized how unworthy he was, yet he still responded to the call by allowing God to purify his impure lips.

One thing becomes quite apparent. The identity of those called is not what makes them good instruments. It is their willingness to allow God to use them, or even their unwillingness in the case of Jonah. Speaking of Jonah, the guy was what I would call a “reluctant respondent to the call.” Perhaps you can relate. Indeed, there have been times when I reluctantly went to do a visit or approached a person. What I find most impressive,

and perhaps the primary source of learning for me, comes from digging deeper. If you take an original language journey, you’ll discover when Jonah finally arrived at the place where God needed him, he simply shouted three words as he walked across Nineveh. But those three reluctantly-shouted words transformed a wicked city and caused a great revival.

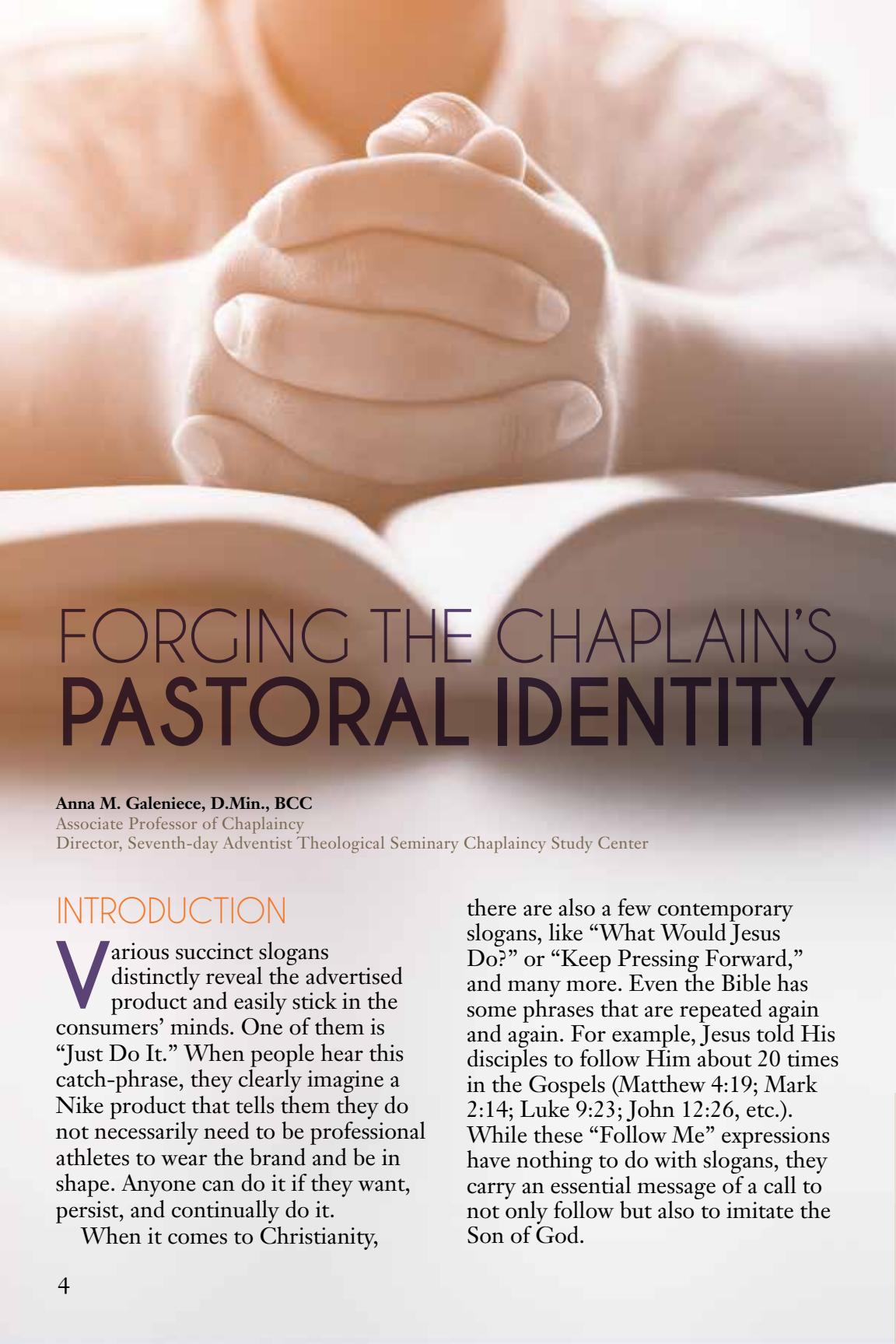
So, remember that you are God’s instrument wherever you are. God will use you, even when reluctantly responding. After all, He is the One who gives you the identity and the authority. And, as Paul said at the end of his life, “He shall complete the work that He began!”

WHAT'S

Please share what is happening with chaplaincy in your part of the world.



- Send it to ACMEEditor@gc.adventist.org
- Copy your Union and Division ACM Directors.
- Include your email and phone number.



FORGING THE CHAPLAIN'S PASTORAL IDENTITY

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INTRODUCTION

Various succinct slogans distinctly reveal the advertised product and easily stick in the consumers' minds. One of them is "Just Do It." When people hear this catch-phrase, they clearly imagine a Nike product that tells them they do not necessarily need to be professional athletes to wear the brand and be in shape. Anyone can do it if they want, persist, and continually do it.

When it comes to Christianity,

there are also a few contemporary slogans, like "What Would Jesus Do?" or "Keep Pressing Forward," and many more. Even the Bible has some phrases that are repeated again and again. For example, Jesus told His disciples to follow Him about 20 times in the Gospels (Matthew 4:19; Mark 2:14; Luke 9:23; John 12:26, etc.). While these "Follow Me" expressions have nothing to do with slogans, they carry an essential message of a call to not only follow but also to imitate the Son of God.

When talking about one's identity, it is important to consider the following philosophical basic questions that arise concerning self by virtue of being a person. These questions are: Why am I alive? Who am I? Why am I here? Is there right or wrong? What happens when I die? In paraphrasing these questions in a chaplaincy setting, they may sound like this: What is the cause or origin of my calling? What is my pastoral identity? What is the meaning and purpose of my ministry? How am I supposed to serve in this immoral world? What mortality means to me? Let's take a more in-depth look at these vitally important questions from the perspective of a chaplain's pastoral identity.

ORIGIN

The first words of the Bible, "In the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1), disclose the authorship or the earth's origin of. Everything that is admirable and commendable starts with God and is for His glory. In this regard, Paul's statement, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things," (Romans 11:36) reveals the Almighty God as the Source, Sustainer, and Significance of all things. Similarly, the origin of the chaplain's call to a unique pastoral ministry beyond the borders of a local church starts with God and is for His glory. It was God who considered calling Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5) and John the Baptist

(Luke 1:13-17) for prophetic ministry before they were even born. In a similar way, the Lord called Samuel (1 Samuel 3:3-10) and Timothy (2 Timothy 3:15) early in life for their appropriate service. Others received similar calls to engage in diverse ministry areas at various times of their life. However, the common ingredient of every person who responds to God, whether in biblical times or in a contemporary setting, is the fact that the origin and the cause of his/her calling is no one else but God.

In this regard, Ellen White states that "The work to be done is the Lord's, and He has entrusted this work to man. Our call to ministry is received from no human being. To every man God has given his work."¹ Our obligation is to respond to God with an open heart and to cherish our relationship with Him and His trust. Moreover, His call is to faithfully fulfill that which has been entrusted to each one of us in order to advance God's kingdom on all fronts and battlefields of a person's mind and heart. And this fact eliminates any human superiority or preeminence in the Lord's eyes.

IDENTITY

Pastoral or chaplaincy identity is not shaped in a vacuum, as it is mentioned above. This concept of identity speaks about self-sacrifice and willingness to accept what God wants from the person. While theological

WHAT IS THE CAUSE OR ORIGIN OF MY CALLING?
WHAT IS MY PASTORAL IDENTITY? WHAT IS THE
MEANING AND PURPOSE OF MY MINISTRY?

identity is mostly shaped and polished during the academic years in a college and a seminary, personal identity takes a longer time to be revealed through practice. No person engaged in pastoral care fully knows oneself—one's strengths and limitations—until he or she passes through the moments of challenge and crisis that could be divinely arranged for growth to happen. As gold needs to be refined, so does the chaplaincy identity. It must be rooted in Christ in order to be ready to reveal Him through everything the chaplain is and does.

Identifying the chaplain's role in his book *Foundations of Chaplaincy*, Baker highlights chaplaincy's four functional capabilities in an institutional setting: provision, facilitation, caring, and advising.² First of all, chaplains provide spiritual care support, worship experiences, and administration of the sacred truths, which should not be confused with a pastor's responsibilities in a church setting. The delivery of sacred truth

is not performed through active public evangelism or a compromise of the chaplain's faith. The sowing of the Gospel seeds is done through the provision of spiritual care on a daily basis, while its consequences of maturing the growth of the seeds and reaping of the harvest are left to the working of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). At the same time, the beauty of chaplaincy is the fact that there exists an alternative non-compromising way of offering spiritual care to those who request something that stands against the biblical theological truth, or the chaplain can refer the needs of the client to another caregiver or spiritual leader of another denomination.

Chaplains facilitate by helping organizational leaders to determine the religious and spiritual needs of the people within the institution and beyond it. For example, a respected hospital chaplain who utilizes available support within the organization and in the community helps in the

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accreditation of the hospital. Under the caring functional capability, Baker speaks about counseling that is based on active listening and hospitality or relational refuge. Thus, care means being with people in a time when they need it the most. If Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane needed His disciples' support of (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:34), how much more this support is required by human beings in the time of their distress. As the last capability, mentioned earlier, the advising is mentioned. It can be performed on all levels to any person in rank or position when it deals with something that involves religion and its implications on the institution, cultural, or social norms.

Thus, the chaplain's identity not only reveals his/her job description, but pinpoints the very calling of Jesus to follow Him in His service to humanity. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24), for "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

MEANING AND PURPOSE

It has been viewed by many that a failed church pastor or a seminarian who is not hired by a conference may end up in chaplaincy. This perspective has no biblical or theological foundation. The Bible is clear that there are various ministry types

(1 Corinthians 12:5) and spiritual gifts (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4, etc.), and the gift of a pastor is not above the gifts of healing (1 Corinthians 12:9) or any other gift. Moreover, the very fact that chaplaincy ministries require post-seminary studies speaks for itself. Whether it is clinical pastoral education, military chaplain training, or any other required professional chaplain preparation, the necessary training and skills puts the chaplaincy ministries on the level of highly professional specialists. This is slowly, but surely, changing the old approach to the reality of the demanding meaning and purpose of chaplaincy.

Based on the fact that all chaplains are pastors in the first place, their pastoral identity has a unique meaning and purpose. It continues to be shaped while they minister to the hurting ones in the most painful circumstances or conditions one can imagine. "Chaplains make their feet stick where others may wish to run. Chaplains accompany others through life's celebrations, as well as the darkest nights of the soul, without any agenda beyond the persons [they] are serving."³ That is why many individuals and institutions, especially when facing trauma or crisis, view chaplains as the persons who represent God. This unique privilege gives chaplains incredible access to places where pastors cannot go. Not leaving

BASED ON THE FACT THAT ALL CHAPLAINS ARE PASTORS IN THE FIRST PLACE, THEIR PASTORAL IDENTITY HAS A UNIQUE MEANING AND PURPOSE.

the hospital after visitation hours, being privileged to visit hospice patients in their private homes, praying for soldiers on the battlefields, conversing with the death-row inmates, or providing emotional support to a stressed and tired police officer—these are a few examples of an active ministry of presence and stillness. Just as God was heard in the “still, small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), “a chaplain’s loudest message may be through the silence of simply being present, still, and available.”⁴

Simultaneously, the chaplain’s spiritual approach to an ethical dilemma is listened to in a board room when a complicated bioethical case is discussed. His/her advice is looked for when a grieving and depressed person loses any purpose for life. The

chaplain’s words of wisdom are desired in premarital counseling sessions on a university campus. A friendly chat with the chaplain in the middle of an unfriendly and unsafe environment can calm and reduce the stress level and bring comfort and peace. These and many other similar ministry cases, when the chaplain’s voice is crucially important, support the meaning and purpose for the calling. Moreover, these can express the need for the chaplain to continue in his/her educational journey to be more useful in advanced circumstances or with people of high position who deal with issues like social or religious justice, stewardship of earth resources, education or politics, and many other areas of contemporary life’s demands.



MORALITY

The pastoral identity is shaped by the biblical standards of what is right or wrong. This consideration is based not on a horizontal level but a vertical one. While human beings have multifaceted approaches to and views about morality, Adventist chaplains live by what the Lord says in His Word (Psalm 36:9). Their morality is founded on Christ's authority, and it is God-centered.

As an example, the Jewish leaders possessed political, economic, and social authority. The nature of their authority demonstrated egocentricity and selfishness, for it was human. By contrast, Jesus exercised His godly authority by breaking down the enforced class, wealth, and religious barriers. Jesus used His authority to demonstrate God's love, grace, and mercy. The religious leaders' decision to put Jesus to death shows that the nature of their authority was a destructive one, while God's authority was restorative of a human race. Jesus' crucifixion highlights the question of who truly represents and manifests God's authority and His morality, and who does not. Thus, God's use of His authority and power is not manifested in the death threats, but in the restoration of life.⁵

When the words that come from one's mouth are full of God's wisdom, truth, and insight, people will notice it and follow regardless of position, title, or degree. This pattern was characteristic to Jesus, especially in contrast to the status-conscious Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 7:28-29). God's strong and morally pure chaplains do not need to rely on position, title, or any human authority. Their passion, wisdom, and authentic love carry the moral

authority. Therefore, the chaplains who represent the living Christ should never use their own authority or rely on changing standards of morality to prove or gratify one's feelings or advance one's own ambitions. They stand on the authority of the Most High, who calls them to a specially assigned service (1 Peter 2:9).

MORTALITY

Human mortality is a broad term that includes in itself everything that sin has distorted and destroyed. It has left a stain on human beings' lives, including physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, moral sickness, and death. Although chaplains are called by God for a notable ministry, they are not an exclusion to mortality, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). While we could elaborate on the effects of sin in the life of God's chosen ones, there is no need to major in these vices into which chaplains may fall. Attention needs to be directed to the way out of sinfulness to the One who forgives and restores (Psalm 86:5; Isaiah 61:7; 1 John 1:9), gives life (John 14:6), and light (John 8:12). In other words, while mortality is still a part of the chaplain's being, there is much more to this that needs to take priority and superiority that can be summarized as a complete surrender to Christ and His leadership through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ perfectly modeled His life of submission to His Father's will, which was reflected in loving compassion to human beings and an empathetic approach to the sufferers. For instance, His seven Sabbath miracles are the very representation of this fact. Jesus drove out an evil spirit (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37), healed

Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38, 39), healed a lame man (John 5:1-18), cured a man with a shriveled hand (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6: 6-11), restored a crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17), healed a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6), and gave sight to a man born blind (John 9:1-34). Contemplating on one of these miracles, Ellen White writes that "Christ had come to open the blind eyes, to give light to them that sit in darkness. He had declared Himself to be the light of the world, and the miracle just performed was in attestation of His mission."⁶ What a powerful example to embrace in a broken contemporary world!

Regarding the demanding and, at times, not appreciated chaplain's ministry, Ellen White directs the chaplain's attention to following in the footsteps of Christ. While she beautifully elaborates on the health

care chaplain in this long quotation, the same principles can be applied to any other chaplain:

It is of great importance that the one who is chosen to care for the spiritual interests of patients and helpers be a man of sound judgment and undeviating principle, a man who will have moral influence, who knows how to deal with minds. He should be a person of wisdom and culture, of affection as well as intelligence. He may not be thoroughly efficient in all respects at first, but he should, by earnest thought and the exercise of his abilities, qualify himself for this important work. The greatest wisdom and gentleness are needed to serve in this position acceptably yet with unbending integrity, for prejudice, bigotry, and error of every form and description must be met.

This place should not be filled by a man who has an irritable temper; a sharp combative ness. Care must be taken that the religion of Christ be not made repulsive by



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harshness or impatience. The servant of God should seek, by meekness, gentleness, and love, rightly to represent our holy faith. While the cross must never be concealed, he should present also the Saviour's matchless love. The worker must be imbued with the spirit of Jesus, and then the treasures of the soul will be presented in words that will find their way to the hearts of those who hear. The religion of Christ, exemplified in the daily life of His followers, will exert a tenfold greater influence than the most eloquent sermons.⁷

Thus, a difficult and taxing chaplain's pastoral identity on a daily practice can become successful in the eyes of eternity only when it is done in the Spirit of the Lord, including a proper self-care approach. Various consequences of human mortality can easily be developed by compassion fatigue or anything else when the chaplain puts a hold on his/her spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical restoration or re-creation. Because of this, Christ commanded His disciples to "come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest for a while." (Mark 6:31) He knew they would be able to give out much more after they receive much-needed rest. How much more present-day wounded healers need to follow Christ's self-care approach in order to continue their service in this mortal world!

CONCLUSION

It is more than important to discern and assess one's pastoral identity and its influence, which function as an integral part of a chaplain's ministry. Because this unique assignment originates with God Himself, it requires from a chaplain an unreserved dedication to this calling, maintenance of high standards of morality, which include spiritual health and growth, a definite and explicit purpose of one's ministry, and an understanding that faith is inseparable of the true meaning of one's life. Although the pastoral identity of a chaplain deals with various competencies, a chaplain should also be able to recognize and define one's limitations and boundaries. Thus, a chaplain's pastoral identity is hidden in this brief statement of Jesus: "Follow Me."

¹ White, Ellen G. "Brethren in Positions of Responsibility," December 26, 1902, Letter 208, 1902.

² Baker, Allan T. *Foundations of Chaplaincy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), pgs. 43-45.

³ Baker, p. 190.

⁴ Baker, p. 21.

⁵ Saunders, Stanley P. "Matthew, Gospel of," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), pgs. 872-874.

⁶ White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 475.

⁷ White, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4*, pgs. 546, 547.



Julie Fehlberg

It's Not Your Timing, But Mine

By Julie Fehlberg, Chaplain and CPE Supervisor, Sydney Adventist Hospital, with Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—General Conference

Compassion and empathy are often noted in the work of nurses. They are taught about understanding the needs of their patients. Being an active listener and relieving physical suffering make up part of the daily care that nurses pour into the lives of their patients.

Julie Fehlberg took her nurses training seriously and sought to provide care that made a difference in her patients' lives. "I trained here at the San as a nurse, and spent 40 years working as a registered nurse," says Julie.

Some of those years in nursing included working as a mission nurse in the Solomon Islands in New Guinea. Many years after her time in the Solomon Islands, Julie reflected on a thought that re-directed her ministry and career. "I asked myself the question, 'If you could do what you wanted to do, if you had the money to do that, what would it be?' And quick as a flash, the answer came back

to me. I wanted to learn more about God," says Julie. "So, at the age of 53, I enrolled in the Graduate Diploma of Theology and Ministry at Avondale College in Cooranbong, Australia."

For two years Julie immersed herself in her studies. "At that point, it was just so that I could learn more about God. But during those two years of study, I felt God pulling me into ministry," says Julie. "I had no idea how He was going to use me. As I became more and more involved in the ministry side of things, I felt God talking to me and telling me that this is where He wanted me in His work."

Graduation came and with it much anticipation about what was next. "When I graduated, I wasn't given a job in ministry. I felt extremely angry and said to God, 'What is with You? You are the One who brought me into learning. You've given me the skills and the knowledge to be a minister, and yet you haven't given me a job.'



In 2018, Julie ministered to a small Adventist church company in a small company in Sodankyläwhere, Finland, and read her sermon in Finnish!

What is with this?"

Then, within herself, Julie heard the answer. "His still, small voice answered me," says Julie. "He said, 'I have a job for you, but it's in My timing, not yours."

Peace flooded through Julie and she knew the way would be made clear. Suffused with that confidence, she enrolled in a master's program and began volunteer work as the Avondale College Church associate pastor. "I worked under Pastor Bruce Manners and thoroughly enjoyed the work," says Julie. "Halfway through that year a phone call changed everything. I was asked if I would be interested in a chaplaincy job at the retirement village in Wahroonga, and I said, 'Yes.'"

As a chaplain at the retirement village, Julie found herself in a unique position. "Some of the residents knew me as a child," says Julie. "In one instance, I was with a dying woman whose husband had actually been

instrumental in my grandparents' conversion in India. Their family asked me to perform her funeral."

The Sense of Coming Home

This was Julie's introduction to chaplaincy. "I felt a sense of coming home to something that God had made for me," says Julie. "I completed my first CPE unit at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. It was the last unit to be offered before the CPE director retired."

With subsequent CPE units, Julie witnessed a transformational journey in herself and in the lives of fellow students. "My CPE training taught me how to come alongside people of all faiths, including agnostics and atheists. Everyone has their own faith journey. Everyone believes in someone or something, and it's my job as a chaplain to listen to their journey, to experience that within. God says that He is with us, He will be with us

Left: On December 12, 2020, Julie was commissioned as a minister of the Gospel. Pastor Lyell Heise (left) and Pastor Albon Matohiti (right) welcomed her into ministry.

Right: Before training as a chaplain, Julie was a registered nurse.



no matter what we go through. He will be with us as we pass through the waters. And that to me is the essence chaplaincy—to be with patients as they go through their traumas.”

Julie’s personal experience with CPE grounded her belief in the training’s effectiveness “What CPE teaches you is something that will never go astray. It’s a transformative process, and it will make you a much better chaplain. The CPE center that was operational over eight years ago had a very good name within Sydney. When it closed, it was a sad time.” says Julie. “My biggest dream has been to see an active CPE program here at the hospital. It’s been an enormous privilege to be a part of the journey to reopen the program.”

Growth Through Pain

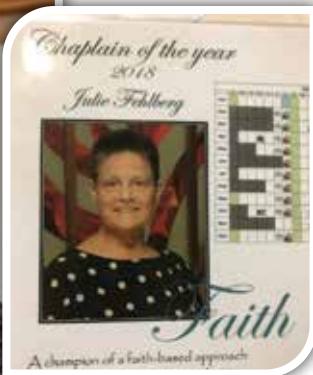
During her chaplaincy sojourn, Julie experienced her own needs of ministry. Those times built her empathy for others. “When I began my advanced unit of CPE, I lost my father two weeks before the unit started,” says Julie. “Within two weeks of the unit starting my mother was admitted to the hospital. She died 73 days after my father. In amongst my own grief journey, God actually placed in front of me so many other families who were going through the same or similar journeys.”

This could be overwhelming, but Julie overheard a conversation between the CPE Supervisor and another student that provided her guidance. “He said, ‘When you’re faced with a difficult situation, you have two choices. Either you run away from anything to do with the problem and avoid it at all costs. Or you hit the situation head on and you choose to learn from that journey.’”

Julie mulled over that advice. “After very deep reflection and prayer, I felt impressed that I needed to face death and grief head on, so I actually did. I journeyed with many people facing death, who wanted to reflect on their lives. And to go over into death, talking with someone who they could actually do that reflection with,” says Julie.

We Remember Your Compassion

Shortly after Julie started at Sydney Adventist Hospital as a full-time chaplain, she received a message to go to the emergency unit. “An elderly gentleman had died unexpectedly. When I received that call, I didn’t know that the man’s wife lay dying in



Left: In the pulpit, Julie uses her pastoral skills to bring messages of hope.

Right: In 2018, Julie was named Chaplain of the year.

the oncology ward," says Julie. "As I arrived, four members of the family were experiencing trauma because they witnessed their father die. As I stayed with them, other family members arrived. Eventually, we ended up with around 30 family members in the emergency care department."

As the family began their grief journey, they asked Julie to accompany them to speak to their mother. "I was a part of telling her and bringing her down to say her goodbyes to her husband," says Julie. "My ministry touched them through that journey. To this day, when I see some members of the family, they remember the contact that I had with them."

Training and Instinct

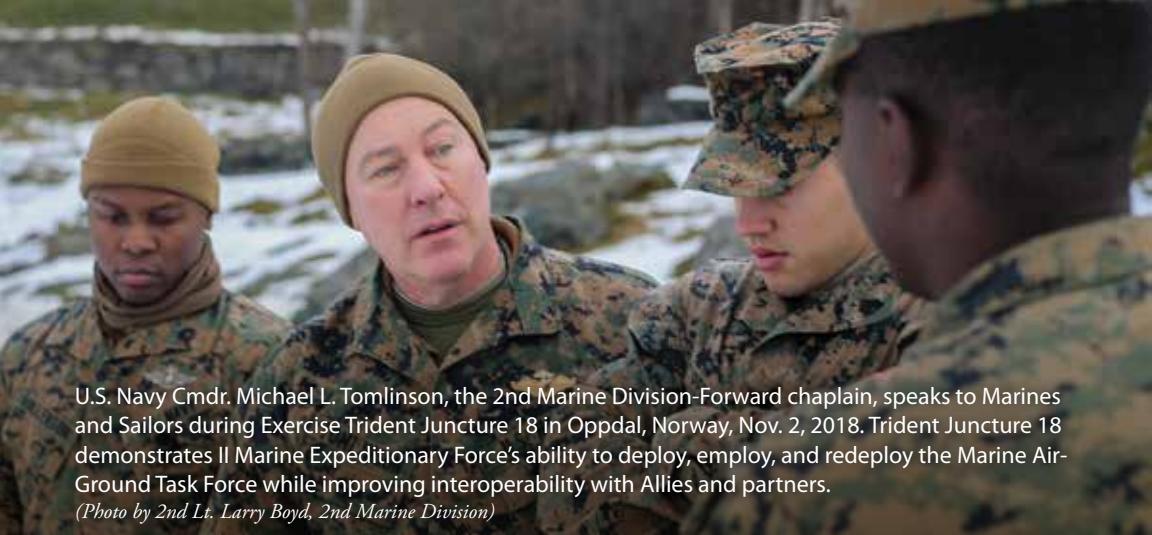
A Hindu family from India was another opportunity for Julie to walk alongside a family as they grieved their loss. "I met the family in the intensive care. Around 15 family members were present, including several via Skype because they were in the United States at the time. I returned to check on them several times," says Julie. "The

final time I went into this room, the husband of the dying woman met me at the door and bowed to me. So, I bowed back to him as I stepped into the room. In that moment, all of the family members turned to look the woman as her monitor flatlined. The family's immediate words to me were, 'She went into death the minute that this angel came into the room.'"

Unsure of how to respond to the statement, Julie allowed her training and instinct to guide her by just being with them. "I asked them if they had any special request and they asked me to say the Lord's Prayer," says Julie. "So we stood around the bed, with Skype still going. We held hands and I recited the Lord's Prayer with this Hindu family. Knowing God led me in that moment is so precious."

Chaplaincy as the Front Runner

Julie believes that God places people in to our lives in all situations. "Ask him to open your heart and your mind to who He's placed there," says Julie. "Chaplaincy needs to be the front runner of what Jesus' life means. What it is to be living in the Kingdom of God."



U.S. Navy Cmdr. Michael L. Tomlinson, the 2nd Marine Division-Forward chaplain, speaks to Marines and Sailors during Exercise Trident Juncture 18 in Oppdal, Norway, Nov. 2, 2018. Trident Juncture 18 demonstrates II Marine Expeditionary Force's ability to deploy, employ, and redeploy the Marine Air-Ground Task Force while improving interoperability with Allies and partners.

(Photo by 2nd Lt. Larry Boyd, 2nd Marine Division)

WHO'S LIFE WILL YOU SHAPE TODAY?

By Commander Michael Tomlinson, Deputy Command Chaplain at Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command, Portsmouth, Virginia, United States, with Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

In 1960, the world experienced several significant events. Theodore H. Maiman constructed the world's first laser at Hughes Research Laboratories in Malibu, California. At a meeting in Baghdad, Iraq, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed. The world's first female Prime Minister was elected in Sri Lanka. The first American troops were sent to Vietnam. John Kennedy was elected President of the United States. And in a home in Little Rock, Arkansas, a biblical, life-saving message took root in the heart of a father.

"My dad's best friend was taking Bible studies from one of the members of the local Adventist church," says Mike Tomlinson. "As they drove to work, Dad's friend repeated what he'd learned to Dad." The casual studies

hit the mark, and eventually, baptism for both men took place.

"Following Dad's baptism, he took me to church every Sabbath, even though I was only a year old," says Mike. "My mom began attending with us when I was four."

FAITH FOUND ON THE KANSAS PLAINS

For this military family, frequent moves meant meeting new church families. "When I was 12 years old, our family was stationed at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas," says Mike. "When Dad learned about a scheduled evangelistic series at the church, he wanted our entire family to attend. The conviction of the need for a Saviour and my belief in the Adventist message helped me decide to be baptized. My mother joined me and was baptized at the same time. I

became very close to Roger Brewer, the pastor, and Bobby Potter, the associate pastor during that time.”

The seeds of being a presence for those in the military were beginning to sprout as Mike heard the news reports from Vietnam. “I prayed for the release of the prisoners of war and their safety during their imprisonment,” says Mike.

Mike began to sense God calling him to ministry, and this seemed to be confirmed when Pastor Brewer told Mike’s parents that he’d be praying for him to become a pastor. “These two men deeply influenced me, and I did begin to think about entering the ministry.”

When Mike’s dad transferred to Okinawa, Japan, Mike became active in Pathfinders and other church-related activities. “I had a growing conviction that I was called to ministry,” says Mike. “At times, I tried to shake the feeling but couldn’t. After Okinawa, we moved to England Air Force Base in Alexandria, Louisiana. I joined the high school speech team and other extra-curricular activities. This led me to a decision to attend law school.”

REROUTING FROM LAW SCHOOL TO THEOLOGY

While attending the University of Arkansas (UA) as a political science major, Mike made sure he was at the local Adventist church for Sabbath services. “Elder Keith McBeth was my pastor, and he fostered and encouraged my spiritual growth,” says Mike. “The church was supportive and sponsored me to attend the Festival of Faith in Lincoln, Nebraska.”

When Mike left Arkansas to attend this youth rally, he had no idea it would be a turning point for him. “During the meetings, I could no



Chaplain Tomlinson provides the 2020 Easter Communion at the Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command, Portsmouth, Virginia.

longer deny that God was calling me to ministry,” says Mike. “I made my decision to leave UA and attend Southwestern Adventist College (SAC) in Keene, Texas.” Every summer during his college years, Mike honed his pastoral skills at Camp Yorktown Bay, the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference youth camp.

Graduation from SAC was followed by Mike’s marriage to his wife Rhonda and moving to the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to study for his Masters of Divinity degree. “During seminary, I considered military chaplaincy. But I felt pushback and didn’t pursue it then,” says Mike. Following seminary, my first district took me to Baton Rouge, Louisiana.”

During the next nine years, the pull to chaplaincy continued. “In 1990, I began the process of becoming a Navy Chaplain,” says Mike. “Everything seemed on track until budgetary cutbacks closed the door.”

BUILDING A PASTOR

Although somewhat deflated, Mike continued to pour himself into

ministry for the next ten years. He built his skills as an administrator, a public speaker, a pastor, a writer. He also became a liaison with elected officials at all levels of local and state government. Community involvement with organizations such as Mothers



U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Andrew Stanley (left), religious program specialist chief, and Chaplain Michael Tomlinson, 2nd Marine Logistics Group Forward, visit with Marines and sailors on Forward Operating Base Edinburgh, Afghanistan, Sept. 17, 2011. Spiritual services are offered weekly to service members supporting International Security Assistance Forces.



U.S. Navy Chaplain Lt. Cmdr. Michael Tomlinson, 2nd Marine Logistics Group Forward, provides a communion service with Marines and sailors on Forward Operating Base Edinburgh, Afghanistan, Sept. 17, 2011. Spiritual services are offered weekly to service members supporting International Security Assistance Forces.
(Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Kaus, Defense Imagery Management Operations Center)

Against Drunk Driving, local ministerial associations, and others developed an awareness and skills for ministry outside of church walls.

“During those ten years, I continued to receive mail from the Navy, but most of it I threw away without opening,” says Mike. “Several personal events caused me to pause. Rhonda became seriously ill and needed multiple surgeries. Local church issues tested my leadership skills. On the positive side, our congregation experienced positive growth. The tithe was increasing, and I hosted a television show on a local access channel. Despite the positive, I had an overwhelming sense that I was supposed to be doing something different.”

WELCOME TO THE NAVY

Another letter arrived from the Navy, and Mike decided to open it. “It was a recruiting letter, and at the end were the words, ‘If you are over 39 years of age, we can get you a waiver,’” says Mike. “When I talked to Rhonda about it, she said, ‘Well, the worst they can say is no.’” Once again Mike began the process of becoming a Navy chaplain. Remarkably, his original 1991 application package was still in his file.

Mike soon found himself in Naval Chaplains Training School with orders to report to Pearl Harbor. “Those orders changed within a week of reporting to school,” says Mike. “Instead of Hawaii, I would be going to Sardinia, Italy.”

DAY ONE—WE ARE AT WAR

Reporting for duty was delayed due to a visa snafu for Rhonda which changed Mike’s arrival date in Sardinia from September 8 to September 10. “My first full day on the USS Emory S. Land started out with a tour of the

ship and meeting the sailors,” says Mike. “Suddenly, without warning, the nightmare erupted. An attack on the United States and I began my naval career at war. I recalled seeing the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers during one of the flights to Italy. I had no idea that just two days later, they would become rubble.”

SHAPING PEOPLE POSITIVELY

Mike believes that his experiences on the USS Emory S. Land, with the Coast Guard, and his first tour in Afghanistan provided a sound foundation for his naval career. “My Command Chaplains set me up for success. I’ve spent more than half my career with or in support of Marines,” says Mike. Since those early days, Mike has served at the Navy Yard, deployed with the 1st BN 2d Marines (2008-2009) in Iraq, the 2d Marine Logistics Group Chaplain (Forward) (2011-2012) in Afghanistan, and was Deputy Command Chaplain for the 2d Marine Division (2016-2019). During his naval career, he’s supervised 81 chaplains and 94 support staff and had the privilege of writing over 300 Fitness Reports for other chaplains.

Working at the Concussion Restoration Care Center, Mike witnessed 52 Marines recover and return to their units. A stint of Veterans Administration work changed his perspective. “I didn’t have a good opinion of those who abused drugs and alcohol,” says Mike. “The Holy Spirit transformed my attitude as I gained a deeper understanding of what drives people to this kind of abuse.”

Although Mike tried to avoid Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), he became a believer in its effectiveness after taking a unit. Today he’s a Board Certified Chaplain, has earned



Cmdr. Michael Tomlinson, a staff chaplain at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP), speaks during Lessons and Carols in Naval Medical Center Portsmouth’s (NMCP) Chapel on Dec. 11. Pastoral Care department hosted and streamed Hanukkah Alive, and Lessons and Carols honoring the faiths during the holiday season amidst COVID-19.

(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kris R. Lindstrom/Released)

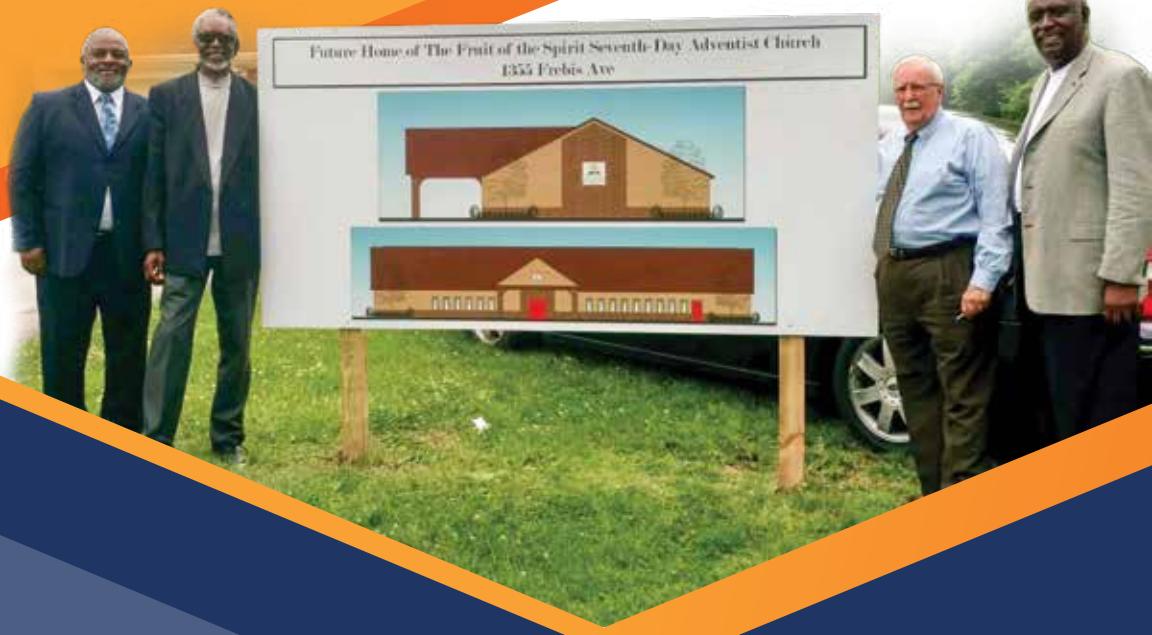
four CPE units, and is working on a Doctor of Ministry with an emphasis in Clinical Pastoral Education.

With most of his military career being operational, Mike now looks ahead to what comes next. “As a Chaplain, you can do things you wouldn’t normally get to do as a pastor. Chaplains have to be open to growth and think outside the Adventist box. This doesn’t mean you give up your theology and lifestyle. But you should remember that conscience is sometimes more likely your prejudices,” says Mike. “I love to positively shape people and help them move forward.”

You never know when you’ll have the opportunity to positively shape a person’s life. What if a family friend hadn’t thought outside the box and given Bible studies on the way to work? Would the Tomlinson family have been exposed to a message that changed their lives? Or, if two pastors hadn’t taken an interest in a young boy? Or a church hadn’t invested in a college student attending a youth rally? Who’s life will you shape today?

RETIRED, BUT STILL CALLED

By **Chaplain James Benton**,
Corrections (retired) with Deena Bartel-Wagner
Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries



(Left to right) Elder Cross, Chaplain James Benton, Elder Slonaker, and Chaplain Harold Palmer

It's often said that all chaplains are pastors. The path to chaplaincy requires academic training, building of pastoral skills, and experience in ministering to a congregation. These building blocks lay a foundation for the training in the chaplaincy specialization that a chaplain pursues. But, in the heart of the chaplain, the pastoral identity is established.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

James Benton, a former Corrections chaplain, and Harold Palmer, Jr., a former Army chaplain, have not forgotten their pastoral identity during retirement. "When I retired in May of 2010, I said that I wanted to spend time with my grandkids, continue with the nursing home ministry that I'd been involved in for 20 plus years, and begin pastoring a small church," says James. "In 2011, Pastor Harold Palmer, Jr., a long-time personal friend asked me to co-pastor with him at the Hillside SDA Church in Zanesville, Ohio. I prayed over it and soon accepted his invitation."

Two years later, a request came to Harold to pastor the Fruit of the Spirit Church in Columbus, Ohio. "The Allegheny West Conference considered closing the church because there were only four faithful members attending," says James. "Harold asked me if I would consider working with him if he accepted the new call of

service. Again, I told him I'd pray about it and discuss it with my family."

The decision to work with the congregation meant major changes for James, his wife Pat, and their daughter Angelique. James had been an elder and held other offices at the Ephesus SDA Church for over 22 years. Transferring their membership to a smaller congregation meant wearing many different hats in various positions. "I filled the role of head elder and personal ministries director," says James. "My wife, Pat, became the clerk and health ministries director. Our daughter, Angelique accepted the role of communication director and social media."

As Harold and James met with the members, they asked them what their vision was for the church. There was no doubt in their mind. "They told us, 'We know that God has blessed us with this land, and we want to build His church,'" says James. "Harold told them that through faith in God that's we will do."

BIBLE STUDIES, BAPTISMS, AND GROWTH

The members met faithfully every Sabbath and word began to spread of the services being held. The members shared with family members and friends about the church services. Bible study requests began coming in. James organized the studies and began

"We know that God has blessed us with this land, and we want to build His church," says James. "Harold told them that through faith in God that's we will do."

(Left to right) Chaplain James Benton and Chaplain Harold Palmer



meeting in individual homes to give them studies. “I became a Seventh-day Adventist through personal Bible studies and the fact that Pastor Henry Wright and the local church showed personal interest in me,” says James. “I’ve always used that model in my ministry.”

Soon the number of Bible studies grew to more than James could give by himself. “I decided to start training others in the church to help conduct the studies. I was the only one officiating the studies at the time and I did not want to experience ministry burnout as the studies take a lot of dedication and time to execute,” says James. “This also helped our congregation gain confidence and prepare themselves for witnessing outside of the church walls, and practice training new believers once our new church facility gets up and running.”

Both James and Harold recognized their weekly sermons had to meet the needs of not only the new believers, but also the original members, and those “seasoned” members who transferred their membership to the church. “We also had conversations with our members on how to interact with visitors and new believers, including how to encourage them,” says James.

After completion of the study guides, Harold and James scheduled baptisms for the new believers. “We conducted the baptism services at our sister churches Ephesus or Central SDA Church, we did not have a baptismal pool in our little house church,” says James. “We’ve been able to baptize over 65 new believers and counting!”

PASTOR, WE NEED TO BUILD

When the revival of this small church began to take place, the members were meeting in a small house that came with the purchase of the property. “Our members, both the original four and the newly baptized, longed for a church building where they could meet,” says James. “The house is small and crowded for today’s congregation.”

Raising the funds to construct the building might have seemed to be an unattainable goal, but the members wouldn’t be deterred. “Pastor Palmer posed a challenge to the congregation to start out giving \$2 every Sabbath towards the Building Fund. In his sermon he reminded us of the way God blessed at the feeding of the 5,000

“When you are called to be a pastor, you never retire. That pilot light always burns and the desire to bring others to Jesus keeps burning bright.”

with only five loaves and two fish and that God would bless our humble efforts as well,” says James. “I created a poster using a thermometer as a visual representation to show the weekly growth of funds. The more money raised would raise the “temperature” on the thermometer. After some time passed, we finally started seeing the temperature rise on the thermometer meeting our monetary goals bit by bit by the grace of God.”

COVID-19 DOESN'T STOP US

Similar to many other congregations, COVID-19 created the opportunity to take Sabbath online. Initially, the members called into the church’s prayer line, but they quickly transitioned to using Zoom meetings.

Although they weren’t meeting in person, this didn’t deter the group moving forward with their building project. The building construction was completed during the summer of 2020 and the church has a seating capacity of 150. Presently, the parking lot needs to be paved and some equipment must be purchased for the building.

“We were only given one year by the city for occupancy to be ready to continue servicing the Columbus South-side community,” says James. “Anticipation is high and we are eager to open our doors. There are many young families in this area.

We’ve coordinated several outreach programs and are asked when the church building will open. Many have told us that they will begin attending.”

KEEPING THE PILOT LIGHT LIT

“This whole adventure has been riveting and joyful knowing that we are doing God’s work!” says James. “However, we have lost several pillars of the church along the way. They were dedicated members and workers for the Lord. We really miss them, but know that their work was not in vain, and we will see them again when we all get to heaven. What a day of rejoicing that will be!”

Two retired chaplains could have chosen to take it easy after they completed their work in Corrections and the Army. Instead, they adhered to their pastoral identity and breathed life into a dwindling church congregation.

“After I became an Adventist, God lit a pilot light within me,” says James. “When you are called to be a pastor, you never retire. That pilot light always burns and the desire to bring others to Jesus keeps burning bright.”

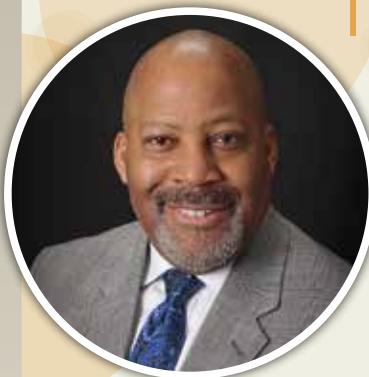
To stay connected and hear more of what the Fruit of the Spirit members are doing, follow their social media pages on Facebook and Instagram—@fruitofthespiritsda.



The Fruit of the Spirit Church Building

NAD Director's Thoughts

INTERCEDE LIKE EBED-MELECH



Chaplaincy is a wonderful profession. By title and function, chaplains are invited to be part of life-changing events in the lives of individuals and family systems. We are also looked to as the beacon of rectitude in our institutions' board rooms and passageways.

Sometimes we see and grieve with those who witness the tragic, traumatic, or lovingly expected ends of life. Sometimes we see the celebrations of healthy births, restored hearing, and restored vision. Occasionally we get to participate in bell ringing ceremonies on the oncology ward. We get to walk with and guide people into transformational realizations. We are blessed to be involved with guiding corporate culture and change management.

Recently, I was re-reading the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. I saw a story I had not noticed in prior readings. It seemed apropos to me as an illustration of a

chaplain's role as an ethicist and special advisor in the C-Suite.

Ebed-Melech enters the Jeremiah story in chapters 38 and 39. Ebed-Melech was a eunuch from Ethiopia who lived in the service of King Zedekiah. When Jeremiah's prophetic ministry grated on the ruling elite's nerves in Jerusalem, they complained to King Zedekiah. They characterized Jeremiah as a prophet of gloom and doom.

These "princes of Israel" hatched a plot to rid themselves, once and for all, of Jeremiah's voice of warning. They petitioned the vacillating King to execute Jeremiah and silence his prophetic alarm. Rather than a summary execution, these princes preferred to torture the prophet with isolation, deprivation, and starvation by lowering him into a cistern. Some commentators suggest it was more like a cesspool.

Ebed-Melech, a servant to the

His intervention shifted history and subsequently saved his own life because he had responded to the prompting of God to stand up for what was right and best.

King, leveraged his relationship at the peril of his own life and spoke out on behalf of moral rectitude and justice. He appealed to King Zedekiah that the ruling elite had done evil in their recriminations and abuse of Jeremiah.

Ebed-Melech's passionate intercession for Jeremiah won the day. He was chartered by the king to enlist 30 men to help him extract Jeremiah from the pit. Once rescued, Jeremiah stayed in the court of the prison under the protection of the King's staff.

Ebed-Melech saw a wrong and tried to right it. He saw suffering and tried to heal it. He was successful as an ethicist and an advocate for what was right and best. He used the influence that he had cultivated within his professional sphere to alter the course of his institution. Had he not intervened, the course of his country would have careened into degradation and demise even faster than the prophetic declaration.

His intervention shifted history and subsequently saved his own life

because he had responded to the prompting of God to stand up for what was right and best.

You may not sit in the C-Suite with the ruling elite of your organization. I think that you should, or at least know them and be known by them for your proficiency in leadership and soul care. When you as a chaplain are well regarded, a word from you to the powers that be may positively shift a policy or circumstance.

As you move through your organization, be sensitive and situationally aware. Do not tilt at windmills like Don Quixote. Instead, use the quiet power of earned influence, as did Ebed-Melech to brighten the corner where you are. Be the icon in your organization that points to True North. When you are, your presence and voice can be the echo of justice and mercy in the organization's strategic plans and missional executions.

Peace and blessings.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul S. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Paul" on the first line and "S. Anderson" on the second line.

My Journey to **ADVENTHEALTH MANCHESTER**



by **Marlon C. Robinson, PhD, LMFT, AAMFT-S, BCC,**
Director of Pastoral Care AdventHealth Manchester,
Manchester, Kentucky

The journey to AdventHealth Manchester was a divinely orchestrated one. Following my Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Residency, I applied to AdventHealth (formerly Adventist Health System) ten years ago, and again a few years later. I did not receive an offer with either application. The truth be told, I had no intention of applying again. My job profile indicated I did not want to receive email notifications whenever a new position matched my profile.

One day while I was checking my emails and was about to delete all the junk email files, my email box accidentally opened. Immediately, my eye was drawn to an email in my junk box that said AdventHealth. Curious, I clicked it open and read it. The email indicated a new job was posted that matched my profile, and I

should apply if I was still interested in opportunities with the company.

I almost did not apply, but my wife encouraged me to do so. A couple of days after I submitted my application, the recruiter contacted me. After completing four interviews (two by phone, one by Zoom, and one on-site), I was offered the position.

My supervisor and several team members have echoed their conviction that God brought me to AdventHealth Manchester. I have received several messages that affirmed God's leading. I have never worked at another place like Manchester that is so welcoming and affirming. The entire team makes it easy for me to integrate into my new work family. The welcome and embrace I received from fellow associates are evidence that God brought me to AdventHealth.

Manchester. I knew I was going into an extraordinary environment when my CEO called to wish me safe travels on the very day I was relocating to Manchester, Kentucky.

Two months after my arrival, one team member wrote me a note that said, “Appreciate you setting this up. Your energy and spiritual leadership have been a great blessing already! Glad you are here, my friend.”

Another associate wrote me three months after I’d arrived, “Our new chaplain has quickly won everyone over here as a compassionate, thoughtful, and God-loving man.”

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SERVE?

Another experience since my arrival brought more clarity that it was God who brought me to this place started with an individual who visited our hospital and saw my picture running across the screen welcoming the new chaplain.

A few days later I received a call inviting me to discuss the possibility of serving on the Thompson Scholars Foundation Board. I immediately thought one of my colleagues recommended me. Later I learned the back story from the person who visited our hospital and saw my picture running across the screen.



She was impressed to recommend me to sit on the board, and she followed that impression.

After a very productive meeting, I willingly accepted to serve on the foundation’s board, named in honor of Dr. Aaron Thompson. I decided to serve because the foundation’s mission is close to my heart due to my own experience of overcoming some of the same challenges the foundation addresses. I was oblivious of who Dr. Aaron Thompson was but later learned he is the current President of the Kentucky Council on Post-secondary Education. Interestingly, they were selecting officers, and I was selected as the Vice-President of the board.

Undoubtedly, I was divinely commissioned to AdventHealth Manchester.

My supervisor and several team members have echoed their conviction that God brought me to AdventHealth Manchester.

IS THERE A GOD?

A Chaplain's Poem

Is there a God?

A question. A statement. A cliché.

A cry. A sigh. A plea.

A thought. A doubt. A wish.

Is there a God?

The beginning of a theological debate.

The opening of a philosophical statement.

The intro of a college paper.

The ad for a bestseller.

Is there a God?

The scream of a bipolar tormented by a confusing mind.

The search of a teenager torn by what he can't find.

The whisper of a surgeon at the end of the road.

The struggle of a mother with only a preemie to hold.

The question of a wandering soul.

Is there a God?

The despair of a husband whose heart has gone numb.

The tears of a father holding the body of his son.

The breath of the dying, wondering what's next.

The anxiety imprinted on the results of a test.

The fatigue of a nurse with bills and debts to pay.

The skeptical pastor with no more heart to pray.

Is there a God?

Is there a God? I listen.

Where is He now? I sit

How do you know? I pause.

How do I know? I ponder.

What do I say? I wonder.

Suspended in space,

I then stop, and remember.

Remember.

The God defined in my questioning mind.
The God revealed in my journey of time.
The God permeated in my path left behind.
The God unveiled when my heart was cold.
The God embedded in my suffering soul.
The God planted in my bumpy, winding road.
The God woven in life's crazy twists.
The God reflected in the eerie morning mist.

You are Thou.

You entered my journey.
You guided my journey.
You redirected my journey.
You shaped my journey.
You nurtured my journey.
You carried my journey.

The end of my road met the beginning of Your eternity.

You are my journey.
You are Thou.

I hold both of her hands,
And look into her misty eyes.
He is in your journey.
Can I pray for you?
A nod.

The veil that separates mundane and holy is lifted.

A hospital room is transformed.
The ordinary becomes a sanctuary.

—by Cristina Grys
Director, Mission and Ministry
AdventHealth North Pinellas
Tarpon Springs, Florida

I will give you
shepherds after
my own heart, who
will guide you with
knowledge and
understanding.

Jeremiah 3:15, New Living Translation



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THE SERVANT OF GOD SHOULD SEEK,
BY MEEKNESS, GENTIENESS, AND LOVE,
RIGHTLY TO REPRESENT OUR HOLY FAITH.

—Ellen G. White



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