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## PERSPECTIVE

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

By **Ivan H. Omaña, D.Min., BCC**

Director/Endorser, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

This is one of my favorite topics in chaplaincy! For me, clearly, I have found a fulfilling profession in chaplaincy that gives me satisfaction and a sense of safety in doing what I believe God has called me to do. Many chaplains in general, whether they have chosen ministry in health care, military, correctional, educational, police, fire department, or community, have identified in the Ministry of Presence a tool that enhances their ministry and gives them a sense of accomplishment. As a pastor, I have even prepared and delivered sermons on the Ministry of Presence to share with the saints the expectation that God has for us to extend that presence beyond the boundaries of the church building.

Then, I decided to enroll in a Doctor of Ministry degree program and eventually had to write a thesis. I intended to demonstrate that the

model of chaplaincy ministry in the local hospital affects patients' perception of the compassionate, connected care patients receive. These attributes affect their scoring of the spiritual and emotional questions in patient satisfaction surveys in the United States. I compared the conventional responding model of chaplaincy and the new embedded chaplain model. Both these models are an approach to the Ministry of Presence, where the traditional model responds to calls for presence, while the embedded model is a proactive permanent presence approach.

While doing my literature review, I came across the work of Wendy Cage. She is an anthropologist who found a niche in chaplaincy research and is one of the founders of the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab. In her book *Paging God*, Cage asked chaplains to identify their primary ministry tool, which

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# IN THE WORLD OF EVIDENCE-BASED MINISTRY AND RESEARCH-BASED SERVICES, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE OUR PROFESSION DEFINED AS “HOLY LAZINESS.”

was reported as “the ministry of presence.” Then Cage did something creative. She asked hospital CEOs, CNOs, and CMOs to define “ministry of presence.” She reported that the people who make financial decisions regarding everything that happens in the hospital defined ministry of presence as “holy laziness.”<sup>2</sup>

That message blew me away. At the same time, it explained why as soon as hospitals begin to have financial troubles, the first department that falls victim to the cuts is...you guessed it! The Pastoral Care Department. In the world of evidence-based ministry and research-based services, we cannot afford to have our profession defined as “holy laziness.”

In this issue of *The Adventist Chaplain*, you will have an opportunity to look at an Old Testament story from the lens of a modern view of chaplaincy. As I read the story in the Book of Job, I wondered how things would have been different if the four friends who came had a little chaplaincy training. I believe this to be a creative approach to the ministry of presence!

Yet now that I think of it, it is a great model for understanding chaplaincy ministry. So, I invite you to think about it too—chaplaincy as a non-judgmental presence with unconditional positive regard. It certainly brings new light to the concepts expressed by Jesus in one of His last registered parables.

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne

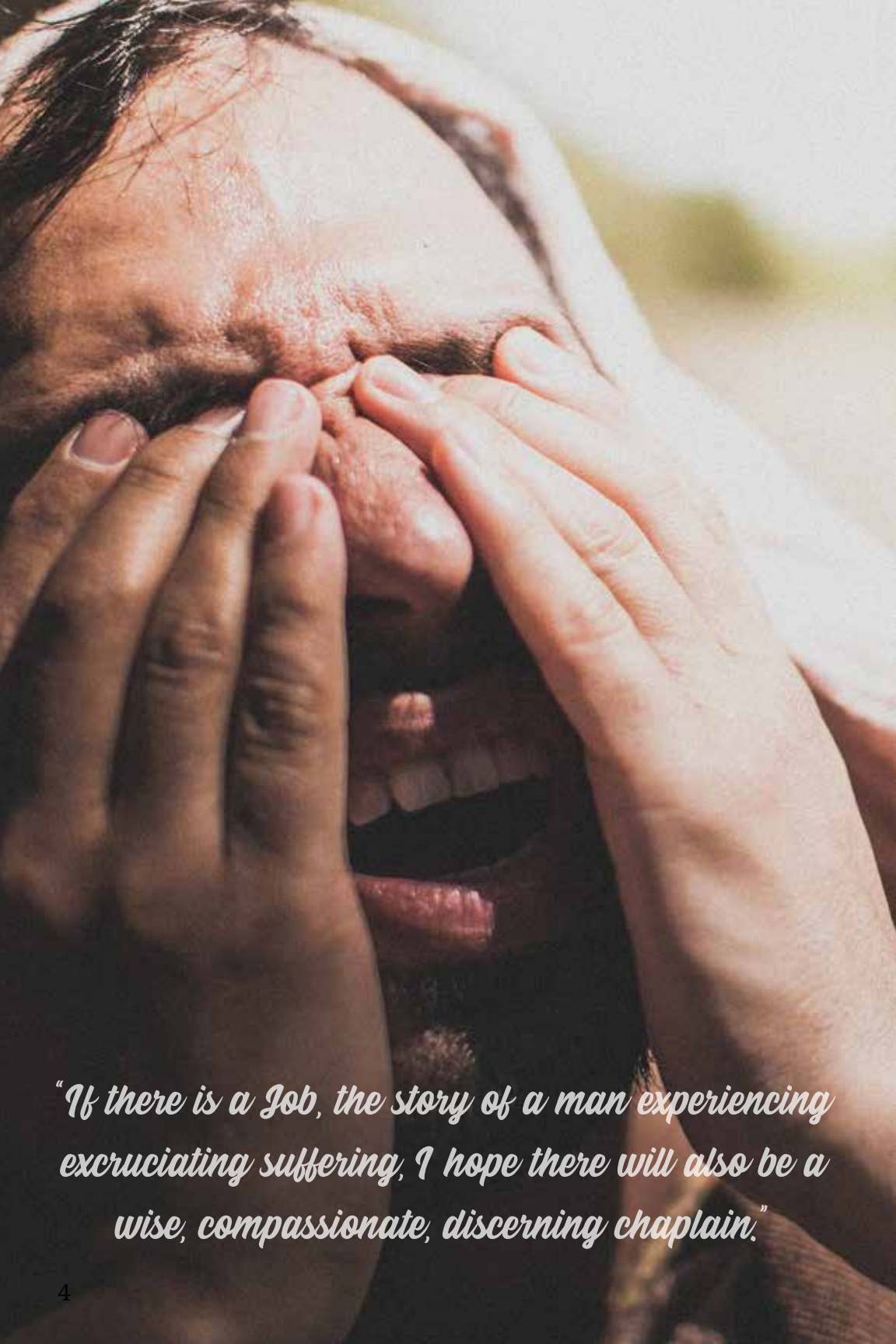
of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides His sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”<sup>3</sup>

Let us find ways to model our ministry after Jesus’ model and ask ourselves, “Would Jesus be saying or doing what I am doing or saying right now? If the person I am visiting was Jesus, would I treat them the way I am treating them right now?”

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see “A Correlational Study of Compassionate Care: The Pastoral Care Paradigm in Advent Health and Its Effects on Patients’ Perceptions of Care.”

<sup>2</sup> Cadge, Wendy. *Paging God Religion in the Halls of Medicine*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 25:31-40, New King James Version



*"If there is a Job, the story of a man experiencing excruciating suffering, I hope there will also be a wise, compassionate, discerning chaplain."*



# THE BOOK OF JOB AND THE WORK OF THE CHAPLAIN

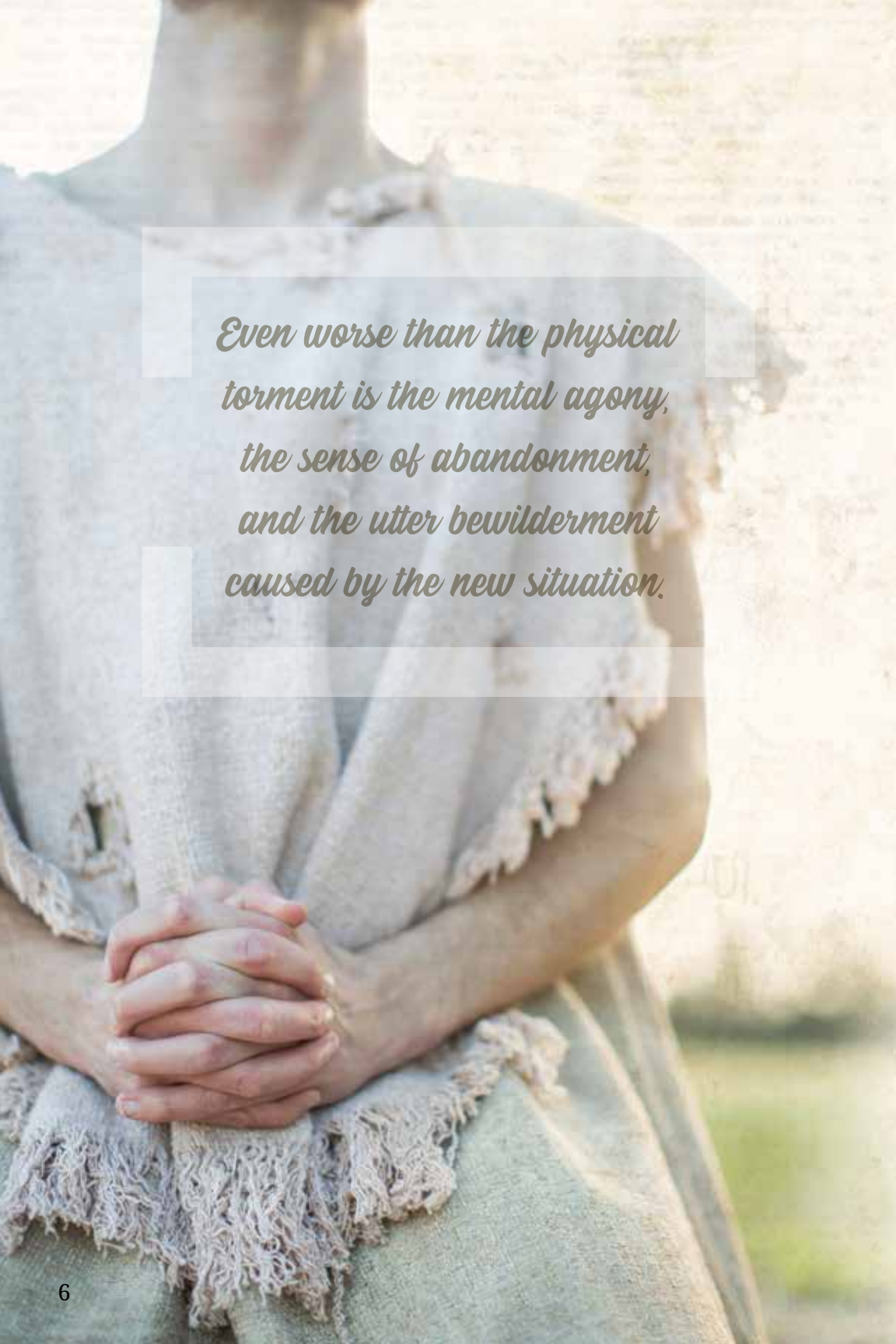
By Sigve K. Tonstad, Ph.D., MD  
Research Professor, School of Religion, Loma Linda University

I wish there had been a chaplain.”  
The comment is my own, a  
deeply felt wish as I ponder again  
the message and dynamics of the  
Book of Job. I have written on Job in  
the past, engaging exegetical nuances  
in the text, scholarly literature, its  
impact on world literature, and its  
meaning for the world as we find it.<sup>1</sup>

I am now immersed in it again,  
exploring a radically new  
translation and secondary  
literature that put other  
meanings to bear on

the message of the book.<sup>2</sup> I know it is  
futile to argue against a story that it is  
the way it is. Indeed, I have moments  
when I am quite happy with the  
story as it stands. Thus, I will change  
my deeply felt wish to read like this:  
“If there is a Job, the story of a man  
experiencing excruciating suffering,  
I hope there will also be a wise,  
compassionate, discerning chaplain.”

As the story now stands, the most  
in-depth account of human suffering  
in the Bible, the chaplain’s voice is  
missing. The book has voices aplenty  
and speeches aplenty, all taking place  
at the bedside of a man in the throes  
of debilitating pain.<sup>3</sup> At the end, God  
speaks, too.<sup>4</sup> Scholars are divided as to  
the meaning of God’s message, but all,  
or nearly all, are quick to say that God’s

A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a light-colored, frayed garment. Their hands are clasped together in their lap. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the upper part of the image, containing a quote in a cursive font. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with greenery and a bright sky.

*Even worse than the physical  
torment is the mental agony,  
the sense of abandonment,  
and the utter bewilderment  
caused by the new situation.*

visit, for all its grandeur, falls short of what is expected of a chaplain.<sup>5</sup>

The first part of the book, called the frame story and written in prose, describes loss and suffering so devastating that no human being is likely to experience worse.<sup>6</sup> In the first cycle of the frame story<sup>7</sup> after Satan has gone forth “from the presence of the LORD,”<sup>8</sup> the Sabeans kill Job’s servants, sparing no one<sup>9</sup>; fire falls from heaven, burning up “the sheep and the servants,” leaving only ashes behind<sup>10</sup>; the Chaldeans raid the camels and kill “the servants with the edge of the sword” with only a messenger escaping<sup>11</sup>; and a great wind falls on the oldest son’s house where Job’s sons and daughters are gathered to celebrate. “They are dead,” says the messenger to Job. “I alone have escaped to tell you.”<sup>12</sup>

In the second cycle, after a conversation between God and Satan like the first one,<sup>13</sup> Satan again goes forth “from the presence of the LORD,” this time to inflict “loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.”<sup>14</sup> The narrator depicts a man forlorn, saying that “Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.”<sup>15</sup>

After losing his children and his property, then, Job loses his health. The health issue must be specified. Job is struck with an excruciatingly painful disease. David J. Clines says that it is best to describe the term used for Job’s ailment “with some general phrase like ‘running sores’ (NEB), ‘severe boils’ (NAB) or ‘painful sores’ (NIV); the repeated eruption of pustules (7:5) and blackening and peeling off of the skin (30:30) are the most definite signs in the poem of a skin disease, and correspond to the itching purulence mentioned here.”<sup>16</sup> I know from my experience as a physician that the patient who suffers debilitating pain around the clock

will likely say that his or her life is rendered meaningless and that death is preferred.

Even worse than the physical torment is the mental agony, the sense of abandonment, and the utter bewilderment caused by the new situation. “Truly the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me,”<sup>17</sup> Job says in one such moment of reflection, “I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest; but trouble comes.”<sup>18</sup> Later, he deepens the disclosure: sleep eludes him; night intensifies the sense of terror. “When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,’ then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that I would choose strangling and death rather than this body.”<sup>19</sup> Bodily pain is compounded by mental and spiritual darkness. Of the two, the inner turmoil is worse. William Blake’s depiction of Job’s nightly agony offers great help to the imagination. He shows Job in the grip of darkness that has a demonic quality, a message attempting to remove the last glimmer of light from his mind.

A chaplain is needed. I say this advisedly, and I have said it in actual life in my experience of caring for patients with terminal illnesses or who face existential crises of other kinds. The person needed is one who, by disposition and training, has empathy, knows the limitation of words, and masters the skill of silent presence. In Job, at least at first sight, visitors appear that seem to have the disposition and training of a chaplain. Perhaps the wish expressed at the outset — *that there had been a chaplain* — is unwarranted?

*Now when Job’s three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite.*



*They met together to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.*<sup>20</sup>

The visitors described in this text exemplify chaplaincy at its best. Although, at face value, they seem to belong to the fraternity of the rich and the famous, the three visitors are deeply affected by the news of their friend's calamity. "They met together to go and console and comfort him," we read. I can hardly think of a better job description for the chaplain. Distance is an issue in the story; "to go" may be a major inconvenience. If so, it is an inconvenience easily overcome by deeply felt compassion. The gift they will offer their friend, perhaps the greatest gift of a chaplain's visit, is the gift of *presence*.

"Console and comfort" describe their mission further, but those aspirations, too, are mediated through presence. While a chaplain comes to his or her patient in a professional capacity, he or she cannot deliver what is needed were it not for a *personal* affinity that surpasses professional obligations.

When they arrive—"when they saw him from a distance"—the suffering that radiates from Job rises as though from a mushroom cloud, suffering akin to the anguish felt after the nuclear bomb that dropped on Hiroshima. William Blake's depiction of the scene once again helps the imagination. Look at this—and hear it, too: "They raised their voices and wept aloud." Other expressions belonging to the currency of grief are also evident.

And then comes the clincher, the ultimate proof that the mindset of a chaplain might be at work. "They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great."<sup>21</sup> We should break this verse into pieces to savor each element: (1) "They sat with him on the ground." This is the body language of presence and might, in my experience, be a telling difference between a physician and a chaplain. I shall not deny that physicians, too, *sit* at a patient's bedside, but he or she is more likely to *stand*. The person who *sits*, in this case, "on the ground," is more likely to participate unhurriedly and as an equal in the patient's predicament.

(2) "Seven days and seven nights." This is the material expression of presence: it takes time. I shall not discount the concept of "quality time." In this case, however, it does not work well when the quality needed is time itself, not some version of time. A person's suffering is hard on the sufferer and the one seeking to ameliorate the suffering, especially when there is no prospect of recovery. It is tempting to make quick work of the visit, to retreat to the safety of distance. However, Job's friends do not retreat. Their participation is resilient.

(3) "And no one spoke a word to him." Could this be chaplaincy at its best, the gift of the wordless presence? We see silence not as a feature of strategy, or as ineptitude, or as proof that the chaplain had an inadequate grasp of his or her calling. Job's friends seem aware of the limitation of words, of the fact that some conditions cannot be explained away or talked into submission. They seem to acknowledge not only that words will be inadequate but also that they can make things worse. Silence of this kind may be intuitive and



visceral, dictated by the magnitude of the person's plight, but it can also be a learned skill. In our time, there is a need for the latter, living as we do in a therapy-oriented culture that has lost the ability to acknowledge limitations and inadequacy. Like Job's friends, we may be at our most eloquent when we say nothing.<sup>22</sup>

We cannot impose this stricture on Job. When the seven days are over, he speaks. A sufferer is entitled to speak in a way a witness to suffering is not. Job speaks honestly, from the depths of his experience, unfiltered, unconstrained by whatever ideas there could be of what he *ought* to say. The book now shifts to poetry, in part because there is an immediacy to poetry that prose lacks. And partly because poetry is the native language of something deeply felt.

And what does he say? He "opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth."<sup>23</sup> His outburst is vehement, and he seems to find God at fault.<sup>24</sup> This will be familiar turf for the chaplain, and this is where things go awry in Job.

At this critical juncture, we are compelled to acknowledge that the visitors who, until now, exemplified the disposition and skills of the chaplain, fall short. Indeed, they violate the first commandment of chaplaincy. Not only will they *talk*, but they will talk *back*. Not only will they *talk*. They will *argue*. While they set out to *comfort and console*, they end up *arguing and accusing*. It is not a pretty sight.

This shall not be the place to discuss theology, but we can summarize the theological dispute now emerging as follows. First, Job and his friends hold in common the belief that piety and prosperity are somehow connected. The reverse will also be true—that there is a connection between sin and suffering. Second, Job's experience challenges this paradigm to the point of breaking it asunder. We see, in fact, the power of human experience rising against the power of dogma, with experience getting the upper hand.<sup>25</sup> Third, Job's friends are stuck in place, trapped within the confines of dogma

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and, to salvage the dogma, ready to misrepresent Job and to defend God with tenets of theology that are belied by reality.

For this, mere glimpses must suffice. Here is Eliphaz, who at first landed soft blows on Job but, in the end, takes the gloves off. “There is no end to your iniquities,” he fairly shouts at Job. “For you have exacted pledges from your family for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry.”<sup>26</sup> This is patently untrue. The reader knows it because Job’s integrity is attested in the frame story by the narrator and by God.<sup>27</sup> The friends know it, too. Nevertheless, the explanatory paradigm (‘theological tradition’) matters more to them than reality; it also matters more than showing mercy toward their suffering friend.

Job is not cowed, but it must not be lost on us that his friends add insult to injury. We hear him scoff at the friends’ notion that suffering is proof of sin and that piety and prosperity go hand in hand. “Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony?”<sup>28</sup> he asks. Have you not heard them say “that the wicked are spared in the day of calamity, and are rescued in the day of wrath?”<sup>29</sup> *Suffering is not proof of sin. Prosperity is not proof of piety, nor is it piety’s reward.* The explanation they bring to bear on his experience is false—and an aggravating factor in his suffering.

“Will you speak falsely for God, and speak deceitfully for him?” Job says to his friends as the conversation becomes heated.<sup>30</sup> Other translations sharpen the rhetoric. “Why are you lying? Do you think your lies will benefit God?” (GNB) “Do you mean to defend God by prevarication and

by dishonest argument?” (NJB) “Are you defending God with lies? Do you make your dishonest arguments for his sake?” (NLT) Job finds his friends guilty of theological and medical malpractice. “As for you, you whitewash with lies; all of you are worthless physicians,”<sup>31</sup> he contends. Were a chaplain to do the same, he or she would fare no better.

In my view, there is a genuine chaplain in the story. Most interpreters do not think so, but I do, and there is no lack of support for this view.<sup>32</sup> Here, we can only sketch what God-as-chaplain entails. First, Job would like to hear directly from God, expressing this desire ever more boldly.<sup>33,34,35,36</sup>

Second, and contrary to the counsel and convictions of his friends, God appears.<sup>37</sup> His friends believed it would not happen, and Job was unwise wishing for it.<sup>38</sup>

Third, and now in contrast to scholars’ reading of Job, Job is not the victim of “cosmic bullying” when the voice spoke from the whirlwind. Instead, God shows Himself respectful of Job’s questions and, in respect for the questions, offers an answer that is existentially and intellectually meaningful. Central to God’s answer, in the most soaring poetry in world literature, is God’s account of Leviathan.<sup>39</sup> In that part of the speech, Job gets to know what readers of the book have known from the frame story. Fourth, Job is vindicated in the end after the visit of the heavenly chaplain: Job’s words did not offend God, and the friends’ attempt at defending God was misguided and unwarranted. The friends, who showed such promise with respect to understanding chaplaincy at the beginning, stood in need of a remedial course. “After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: ‘My wrath is kindled against you and



*God shows himself respectful of Job's questions and, in respect for the questions, offers an answer that is existentially and intellectually meaningful.*



against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.”<sup>40</sup>

This surprising turn at the end of the book carries weight with respect to whose words counts the most in the context of suffering, whether the words of the sufferer or the words of the comforter. In Job, it can hardly be denied that the comforters, like

chaplains, are at their best when they bring the gift of presence, when they participate in silence, and when they resist the urge to talk *back*. Let Job speak his mind, as he does.<sup>41</sup> And then, for the person overcome with grief and the persons overcome with grief at the plight of a friend and loved one, let the voice from the whirlwind have the last word.

<sup>1</sup> Sigve K. Tonstad, *God of Sense and Traditions of Non-Sense* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 3–21; 217–237, chapters entitled “God of Sense and Traditions of Non-Sense” and “The Sense of the Voice from the Whirlwind.”

<sup>2</sup> See Edward L. Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Edward L. Greenstein, “The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job,” in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. Hili Sacher Fox, David A. Glatt-Gilad, and Michael J. Williams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 333–362; David J. A. Clines, *Job*, 3 vol. (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1989–2006).

<sup>3</sup> Job 3:1–37:24.

<sup>4</sup> Job 38:1–41:34.

<sup>5</sup> For an example, see David J. A. Clines, “Job’s Fifth Friend: An Ethical Critique of the Book of Job,” *Biblical Interpretation* 12 (2004), 233–250.

<sup>6</sup> Job 1:1–2:13.

<sup>7</sup> Job 1:12–19.

<sup>8</sup> Job 1:12.

<sup>9</sup> Job 1:15.

<sup>10</sup> Job 1:17.

<sup>11</sup> Job 1:16.

<sup>12</sup> Job 1:19.

<sup>13</sup> Job 2:1–6.

<sup>14</sup> Job 2:7.

<sup>15</sup> Job 2:8.

<sup>16</sup> Clines, *Job* 1–20, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Job 3:25.

<sup>18</sup> Job 3:26.

<sup>19</sup> Job 7:13–15.

<sup>20</sup> Job 2:11–13.

<sup>21</sup> Job 2:13.

<sup>22</sup> Michael V. Fox, “What Do Job’s Friends Want Him to Do?” in *Ve-ed ya’aleh (Gen 2:6): Essays in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to Edward L. Greenstein*, ed. Peter Machinist, Robert A. Harris, Joshua Berman, Nili Samet, and Nogah Ayali-Darshan (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2021), 747–764.

<sup>23</sup> Job 3:1.

<sup>24</sup> Job 3:20–23.

<sup>25</sup> Edward L. Greenstein, “‘On My Skin and in My Flesh’: Experience as a Source of Knowledge in the Book of Job,” in *Bringing the Hidden to Light: The Process of Interpretation. Studies in Honor of Stephen A. Geller*, ed. Kathryn F. Kravitz and Diane M. Sharon (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 63–77.

<sup>26</sup> Job 22:5–7.

<sup>27</sup> Job 1:1, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Job 21:29.

<sup>29</sup> Job 21:30.

<sup>30</sup> Job 13:7.

<sup>31</sup> Job 13:7.

<sup>32</sup> Tonstad, *God of Sense*, 256–263.

<sup>33</sup> Job 9:3, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Job 13:3.

<sup>35</sup> Job 23:3–7.

<sup>36</sup> Job 31:35–37.

<sup>37</sup> Job 38:1–41:34.

<sup>38</sup> Job 37:19–20.

<sup>39</sup> Job 41:1–34.

<sup>40</sup> Job 42:7.

<sup>41</sup> Edward L. Greenstein, “Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* (2006), 238–258.

# TELL IT TO THE PEOPLE

By **Geert Tap**, Lead Chaplain, Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy, Watford, United Kingdom  
with Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—General Conference



When he's not ministering to others, you'll find Geert enjoying his second great interest—the outdoors, especially in the mountains.





**T**he Nazi soldiers jostled the group of conscripted Dutchmen as they lined up against the wall. Death stared them in the face, but they didn't flinch. Among the men was Geert, a Seventh-day Adventist, who refused to work on Sabbath—the “crime” that brought him to this moment.

Geert determined that his faith and commitment to God could not be compromised, even if it meant death. For a reason only known to himself, the SS officer who was there to call out the command to fire the guns decided to let the men live. He told them that if they worked harder on the other six days of the week, they could have their Sabbaths off. Geert's stance and ultimate reprise was the story his grandson and namesake heard throughout his childhood. A grandfather's actions influenced his grandson's choices.

Left: Geert Tap was Opa to his grandson and namesake, Geert. His stand for truth and his example inspired his grandson to become a pastor. Today, his legacy continues as grandson Geert ministers to the vulnerable.

Right: Geert “preached” from a children's Bible at age six. Today he shares the Good News in creative ways with people he meets.

## AN ADVENTIST CHILDHOOD

“I grew up in the Netherlands as a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist and was named for my grandfather,” says Geert Tap. “His World War II story was told often, and its message influenced my life in many ways. As a child, I attended Sabbath School and church and enjoyed participating in youth group, choir, street witnessing, and musicals.”

These creative ministry methods engaged Geert. “Sitting in church for the worship service was less attractive to me,” admits Geert. “My friends and



I often sat in the back of the sanctuary waiting for the service to end.”

At fourteen, he decided to be baptized. “Although I chose baptism, I was going through the motions and not making a decision for Jesus Christ,” says Geert.

Enrolling in university meant choosing courses to study. “Throughout my childhood, I was an active child, often to the dismay of my teachers and parents. I didn’t enjoy studying, but I loved the outdoors and everything happening around me,” says Geert. I didn’t want to study mathematics or science, so I chose classes in the arts and languages.”

## TRAINING TO LISTEN

At that time, a poor economy affected many, especially those working in the creative arts. “People were struggling, and the government introduced a plan to provide benefits if you created something such as a poem, a painting, or a sculpture,” says Geert. “I knew I wouldn’t be able to

work in that setting. So, although I’d just started art school, I dropped out and decided it was time to fulfill my required military service obligation. There was an exemption if I’d been studying for the ministry, but I didn’t feel called to ministry yet.”

Feeling conflicted about training with and carrying weapons, Geert registered as a conscientious objector. “Because I chose this route, I had to serve two years of civil service instead of the required 14 months in the army,” says Geert. “My assignment was to be a cleaner in an elderly home.”

During the next two years, the exposure to the residents immersed Geert in their wisdom and very human position. “These people were of my grandfather’s generation, and they’d experienced the Second World War. Some had even lived through the First World War. So many had to make difficult life choices,” says Geert. “As I listened and interacted daily with them, I began to wonder about my life and the impact that I could make.”



Left: Geert has served as parish pastor at the Stanborough Park Church in Watford, United Kingdom.

Right: Wife Miranda, daughter Melody, and Melody's fiancé, Stephen, are significant source of support and encouragement for Geert.

## A DEAD MAN SPEAKS

Shortly before Geert's two years of service were completed, his grandfather Geert, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimers, suffered a broken hip following a fall and was in the hospital. "During a weekend off, I attended a Christian festival where I enjoyed the music and speakers. On Friday night, the speaker talked about the love of Jesus," says Geert. "With my civil service time finishing, my mother had encouraged me to consider attending seminary. So, I decided I had nothing to lose and applied for admission."

During the festival, Geert received word that his grandfather wasn't doing well and that his parents would pick him up on the way to the hospital. Although his parents had tried to prepare him, Geert was shocked when he entered the hospital room. "I didn't recognize my grandfather at all. He'd always been a big man,

close to two meters tall," says Geert. "This person lying in bed hooked up to beeping machines seemed so small and frail. He'd been in a coma for weeks and unresponsive."

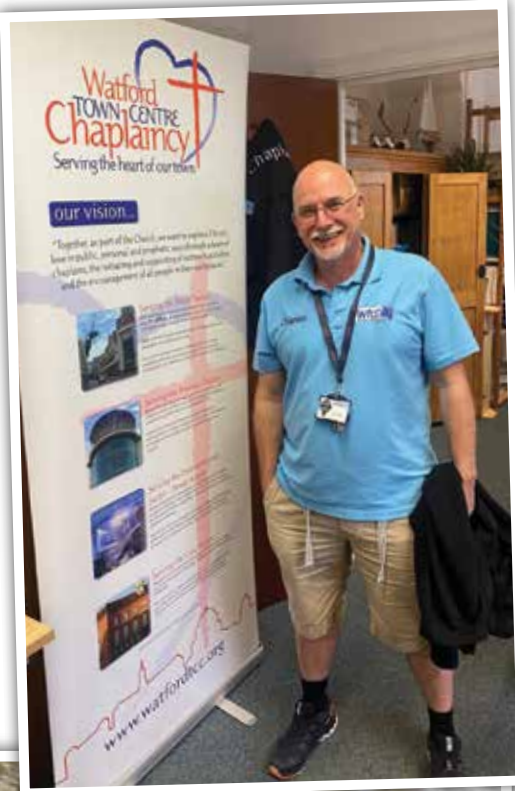
Geert's mother encouraged him to tell his grandfather about his plans to attend seminary. "I decided to make my mother happy, so I stood by the bed and said, 'Opa (Dutch for granddad), I'm going to seminary.' My mother told me I hadn't said it loud enough, so I said it two more times. The third time I shouted it. My grandfather opened his eyes, looked directly at me, and said, 'Geert, tell it to the people. Tell of Jesus' love.' After that, he closed his eyes again and was unresponsive for the last three weeks of his life."

Geert was flabbergasted. "If my mother hadn't witnessed this also, I would have thought I imagined it," says Geert. "At that moment, I knew my calling. I said, 'Okay, Lord. There's no more running for me. You needed to talk through a dead person to get my attention, and now you've got it.'"

## BACK TO THE BOOKS

Although his academic prowess didn't change overnight, Geert applied himself and completed his courses. "I studied for three years at our seminary in the Netherlands and then completed my degree at Newbold College in England. The complete course through our Master of Religion and Divinity degree is about five years," says Geert. "During my studies in the Netherlands, I met and married my wife, Miranda."





Top: Recently, Geert became the new lead chaplain for the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy. Hot summer days require a summer uniform.

Bottom: Kayaking on the Thames River is not only a hobby but provides stress relief for Geert

## THE FIRST YEARS OF MINISTRY

Following seminary, Geert's pastoral journey began near the border of the Netherlands and Belgium, a predominantly Roman Catholic area of the Netherlands. After four years in that district, he received a call to return to Newbold College and serve as the dean of men. "Then six years later, I was asked to be the college chaplain," says Geert. "That became my first experience in chaplaincy. I became a spiritual caretaker of the students, the children, and the staff who were part of the church and the community. I served in that role for 14 years."

World events impacted student enrollment, which led to downsizing. "I returned to pastoring at the Central London Church (also known as Advent Center)," says Geert. "I enjoyed working with the young adults, many of whom held professional positions. In addition, our members came from all over the world and wanted to make a difference."

From there, Geert moved to the Stanborough Park Church. During his time there, his ministry outside of the church walls coalesced.

## ON THE STREETS

"In 2019, I joined the Street Angels. This group of community chaplains works with the homeless," says Geert. "I asked them about their ministry, and they invited me to come see for myself. So, after my first visit, I was hooked. We meet Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. in the center of Watford. Everyone in the group is issued a rucksack with water,



slippers, sick bags, and a vest so we can be recognized.”

Then they fan out in groups of three and begin walking the streets where the pubs are. “Being raised as an Adventist, initially, it felt strange going into where everyone was drinking,” says Geert. “Today, when I meet very drunk people, I can look past that and see them as people whom Jesus loves. This can sometimes be difficult because they might be in terrible situations and not at their best.”

The chaplains are there to support and look out for the vulnerable. They also contribute to the community by cleaning up after the crowds. “Often, broken glass is strewn everywhere because bottles and glasses are smashed. We try to clean that up as much as possible,” says Geert. “The women take off their high heels after they’ve visited several clubs and pubs. The broken glass becomes a danger to them as they walk barefoot down the street. So, we give them the slippers from our rucksacks to protect their feet.”

When the partying is over, it can be perilous for women to find their way home. “They may try to flag a taxi at the main road, but cars that aren’t taxis will stop and pick them up. This has become a huge concern recently because some terrible things have happened to young women,” says Geert. “We intervene by getting a taxi or calling a family member to come and pick them up. Their parents are always grateful for our call.”

Through this active symbol of caring, the chaplains are building respect for the ministry they provide. As a result, the community sees Christians in a different light. Geert also reaches out to the shop owners and staff. “I start a conversation with them and ask how they are doing,” says Geert. “That leads to being able to ask if there is anything I can pray

about for them. Often, they ask for prayers for a family member.”

## COVID DIDN'T STOP THE COMMUNITY WORK

During the COVID pandemic, when his congregation could not meet in person, Geert began volunteering with other charities to help minister in mental health. “You were exempt from travel restrictions during the pandemic if you indicated you were a pastor,” says Geert. “I met people to learn about their needs, listened to their pain, delivered food from various charities, and offered comfort. Many felt ashamed that they needed assistance with the basics of life.”

Helping others also provided much-needed relief for Geert, too. “This ministry opportunity re-energized me,” says Geert. “Meeting people and their needs supplied a missing piece for me.”

## A NEW MINISTRY

The YMCA in Watford has a strong program for the homeless community. “Watford is close to London but outside the city’s limits,” says Geert. “There are many homeless in the area, and the YMCA works tirelessly to provide support. They’ve constructed well-run shelters, which has brought even more desperate people into the area.”

His volunteer work with the Street Angels and during the pandemic in September 2022 led to an offer for Geert to work with the YMCA as a faith and community liaison chaplain. This transition was a step of faith for Geert and his wife. He left full-time employment with the denomination and took a half-salary, hoping to find another part-time job. “Needs in the community are overwhelming,” says Geert. “When they provided my printed job description, I saw it was five pages long. I told them that even full-time, this

*Continued on page 26*

# FOOTFAILS IN MINISTRY'S SOJOURN

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**By Carol Campbell-Norris, BCC,**

Staff Chaplain, Advent Health Celebration, Florida with  
Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Carol (fifth from left, back row) with  
the oncology medical team and staff at  
AdventHealth Celebration.





*The vast ship plowed through the water as a massive storm roared and overtook it. Carol stood with her friends in terror as the boat pitched to and fro. Then, looking around, Carol suddenly saw a giant of a man standing before her, garbed in a Roman soldier's uniform. Carol couldn't see the man's face, but she heard his voice speak, "One day, I will make you a fisher of men." And where the man's face should have been, Carol could only see a brightness.*

The night-time dream of an 11-year-old girl was soon forgotten, but it was the first footfall of a lifetime sojourn of service and ministry for Carol Campbell-Norris.

"My grandparents raised me in my home country of Jamaica," says Carol. "They made their livelihood with the grocery store and bar they operated. They were Christians but didn't attend church regularly. Typically, this meant attendance on special days such as Easter Sunday and Christmas."



# FOLLOWING HER BAPTISM, CAROL HAD THE DREAM ABOUT THE BOAT IN THE STORM, AND THE PROOF OF HER CALLING BEGAN BEING DEMONSTRATED IN HER LIFE.

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## OF NIGHT-TIME DREAMS AND INVITATIONS

One day, a woman walked past the family store and stopped to ask Carol if she wanted to attend a church meeting with her. Carol eagerly requested and received permission from her grandmother. “That night, I asked Jesus into my life for the first time,” says Carol. “My family didn’t believe it would last long because I loved to dance and do other things that I decided to give up.”

The evidence bore out Carol’s commitment to Christ. Following her baptism, Carol had the dream about the boat in the storm, and the proof of her calling began being demonstrated in her life. She became a child evangelist and prayer warrior; at school, her friends and teachers considered her a spiritual counselor.

Following her high school

graduation, Carol worked in a government office. “At this job, I met a young lady who was also a Christian. We’d meet in the restroom each morning and worship together,” says Carol. “She’d share out of a booklet that she called a Sabbath School quarterly. I eagerly listened about the Sabbath but then grew scared,” says Carol. “My pastor warned against worshipping on the Sabbath because it had been done away with. I finally gathered my courage and began to visit the Adventist church.”

During this time, Carol stayed in town with her godmother and returned home on the weekends. “It was closer to my job and made things easier for me,” says Carol. “One day, while I waited at the bus stop, a good-looking young man began talking to me. I didn’t like the looks of him and thought he’d be trouble.”

Carol’s godmother thought otherwise. “She told me he was a nice Christian man and a well-known singer in Jamaica,” says Carol. “One weekend, while I was home, a car drove up to the house. It was the man from the bus stop.”

Confused about how he found her, Carol finally remembered she’d mentioned her grandparents and the business they owned. “That visit turned into our lifelong love story.”

## DID YOU KNOW YOU ARE A COUNSELOR?

After Carol and her family moved to the United States, an unusual career path eventually led Carol to chaplaincy. Her training included nursing school, becoming a licensed massage therapist, a respiratory therapist, and a marriage and family therapist.

“When I worked as a massage therapist, one of my clients was a pastor,” says Carol. “During one of our conversations, she asked, ‘Did you know you are a counselor?’ I



Carol with (left to right) her daughter Monique, her husband Dohen, and her daughter, Marisol.

was not surprised as I heard that comment throughout my life. So, I began thinking about it and pursued a bachelor's degree in Behavioral Science. Later, I studied to become a Marriage and Family Therapist."

During her studies, the deaths of three family members impacted Carol deeply. Bereaved family members came to her for advice and counseling on how to cope with their feelings. "During a conversation with my professor, I mentioned this and thought I might eventually want to work with grieving people," says Carol. "She suggested that I consider

hospice. I'd never heard of it before but was intrigued. So, I volunteered at a local hospice center while completing my therapist internship at an oncology center."

## **MORE FOOTFALLS IN THE JOURNEY TO CHAPLAINCY**

After completing her master's degree in marriage and family therapy, Carol believed she had found her niche and enjoyed her work at a hospice specializing in bereavement counseling. "As a licensed marriage and family therapist, I knew the



CHAPLAIN OMAÑA  
ASKED ME WHY I  
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I TOLD HIM THAT,  
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INTERVIEW BEGAN.

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regulations would require me to keep my Christian beliefs to myself,” says Carol. “I needed Christ to take center stage.”

Pursuing a doctoral degree became another factor that Carol wrestled with. Resistant to online courses, she put studying for another degree on hold. “About two months later, I received a call and learned there was a local university where I could study,” says Carol. “I applied and eventually earned my doctorate in pastoral community counseling specializing in grief, death, and dying.”

While working as a marriage and family therapist specializing in grief, she was surprised when a co-worker from the marketing department stopped by her office. “She said she wanted me to join the marketing department,” says Carol. “I told her I was a bereavement therapist and didn’t know anything about marketing.”

Carol soon learned that the

marketing director noticed her work while conducting an educational seminar for hospice volunteers. After much prayer, Carol accepted the offer and began a new phase in her work life.

## **BE MY HANDS, FEET, AND MOUTH**

Shortly before Carol moved to the marketing department, an encounter with a family member of a hospice patient altered her ministry. “I arrived at work one morning and sensed the staff had something to tell me but were hesitant to do so. Then, finally, my supervisor told me that a patient had died, and his partner needed a visit and lived in my region,” says Carol. “In the past, I had struggled with what to do if I was asked to counsel a gay couple. Now I was faced with the request to visit a man who’d lost his partner. In that instant, I knew my responsibility was to go and make that visit.”

During the drive, Carol talked to the Lord. “This is what I do all the time. I have a relationship with God that goes back to when I was a child. Since I didn’t have a daddy in my life while growing up, God became my Big Daddy, who became my confidante and counselor,” says Carol. “During that drive, I asked him what I should do.”

*Go be my hands. Go be my mouth.* Carol clearly understood God’s command to her. When she arrived at the home, the opulence and grandeur of the home signaled that these were influential people. Yet, despite the wealth and power, Carol witnessed a man devastated by his loss. “In those moments, I sat by him, hugged him, and let him cry,” says Carol. “We met for six succeeding sessions and I became good friends with him. During those encounters, God taught me something. If someone needs my

ministry, I leave the judgment about lifestyle choices to God. I don't care who you are. I am there to be God's hands, feet, and mouth."

## **WHAT'S NEXT, GOD?**

After a few years in the marketing position, financial upheaval and downsizing of staff led to Carol's job ending. "My husband told me I'd worked all my life and I should take a year off and write a book," says Carol. "So that is what I did. I expected at the end of the year to easily find another job. However, that didn't happen, and I couldn't find work."

Then Carol's pastor suggested she enroll in a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) unit. "I didn't know what CPE was, but I became interested when Pastor Edwards explained it."

Before the initial CPE interview, Carol poured out her heart to God. "I was firmly impressed to ask to be able to pray before the interview started," says Carol. "The Holy Spirit brought to my mind the image of one person conducting the interview, even though I knew five people were scheduled to be there. I recognized the one individual I had treated while I worked as a massage therapist."

Concerned there would be a conflict of interest, Carol continued to pray and was assured that this wouldn't be a hindrance for her.

Arriving at the interview, Carol learned that the five-member panel had been called into an emergency meeting. So instead, she would only be interviewed by one person—Ivan Omaña. "He greeted me and said he remembered me. I questioned him about my conflict of interest concern, and he reassured me with the same words the Holy Spirit gave me—there was no problem," says Carol. "Then I asked if I could pray before we began the interview. Chaplain

Omaña asked me why I wanted to pray. I told him that, honestly, the Holy Spirit told me I needed to pray before the interview began."

Chaplain Omaña asked Carol if she always did what the Holy Spirit told her to do. "I admitted that sometimes I fight and wrestle, but when I don't do what the Holy Spirit says, I always end up in a lot of trouble."

When it was over, Carol felt it was the worst interview she'd ever given and was convinced she wouldn't be accepted into the CPE program. But, to her surprise, she was accepted and began transitioning into chaplaincy ministry. "During my CPE training, I met Chaplain Omaña again. "I told him that at the end of the interview I felt like I'd failed because he'd been so tough on me during the interview," says Carol. "He responded that he had to be since he was the only one conducting the interview. And then he told me something that I didn't expect. He said that I was in the program from the moment that I said the Holy Spirit told me to pray, and I obeyed."

## **PURIFY, MOLD, AND FULFILL**

Today Carol ministers as a Board Certified Chaplain at Advent Health Celebration and was recently commissioned as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. Looking back on her journey, Carol believes that throughout her life, God gifted her with nuggets of knowledge that He used to teach and purify her, molding her into whom she's become today. "All of my experiences helped me to become a better person and helped me to forgive myself and others," says Carol. "Today, as a chaplain, I see God's perfect plan fulfilled in my life. I am living my purpose and know for certain that I am walking in my calling."

is the work of four or five people.”

During that conversation, Geert felt affirmed when he was told why the job description was so extensive. “The team wanted me to know the scope of everything they are trying to do. Then they told me they believed God would use me and my giftedness to form the program,” says Geert. “This team loves Jesus, and what a difference that makes. They’ve already given so much appreciation and support to me.

In April 2023, Geert transitioned to another position. He is now the Lead Chaplain for the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy. His title may have changed, but his work with the Street Angels and oversight of chaplains for the region continues, often working in partnership with his former colleagues, the chaplains of One YMCA.

The people group Geert now interacts with are often overlooked. “Although some are homeless, others struggle with addiction, mental anxiety, and other issues. Meeting these people where they are will eventually open conversations about Jesus,” says Geert. “We also have families struggling with relationships, jobs, finances, and self-esteem who need support.”

## OPENING THE DIALOGUES

Adding to his educational skills as he began this new role, Geert enrolled in the Clinical Pastoral Training offered through the Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries department of the Trans-European Division, held in coordination with Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—General Conference. “I wanted to gain additional skills and be better equipped as a chaplain and pastor,” says Geert. “My first unit was incredibly useful, and I’m still processing what I learned. I will be able to use the tools I gained as I reach out to other faith leaders and local people.”

His chaplaincy work in the community will include reaching out to local faith communities. “Part of my role is coordinating all faith groups in the region. We hope to open dialogues and build bridges to work together to meet the community’s needs. I want to build bridges so we can all work together to meet local needs,” says Geert. “The various faith communities must work together to solve many things. I’ve already met with a local Imam and Sikh leaders.”

Although some government funding is available, Geert must also find funding through various charities. “I plan to connect with local faith congregations and ask them to partner with us as we minister in the community.”

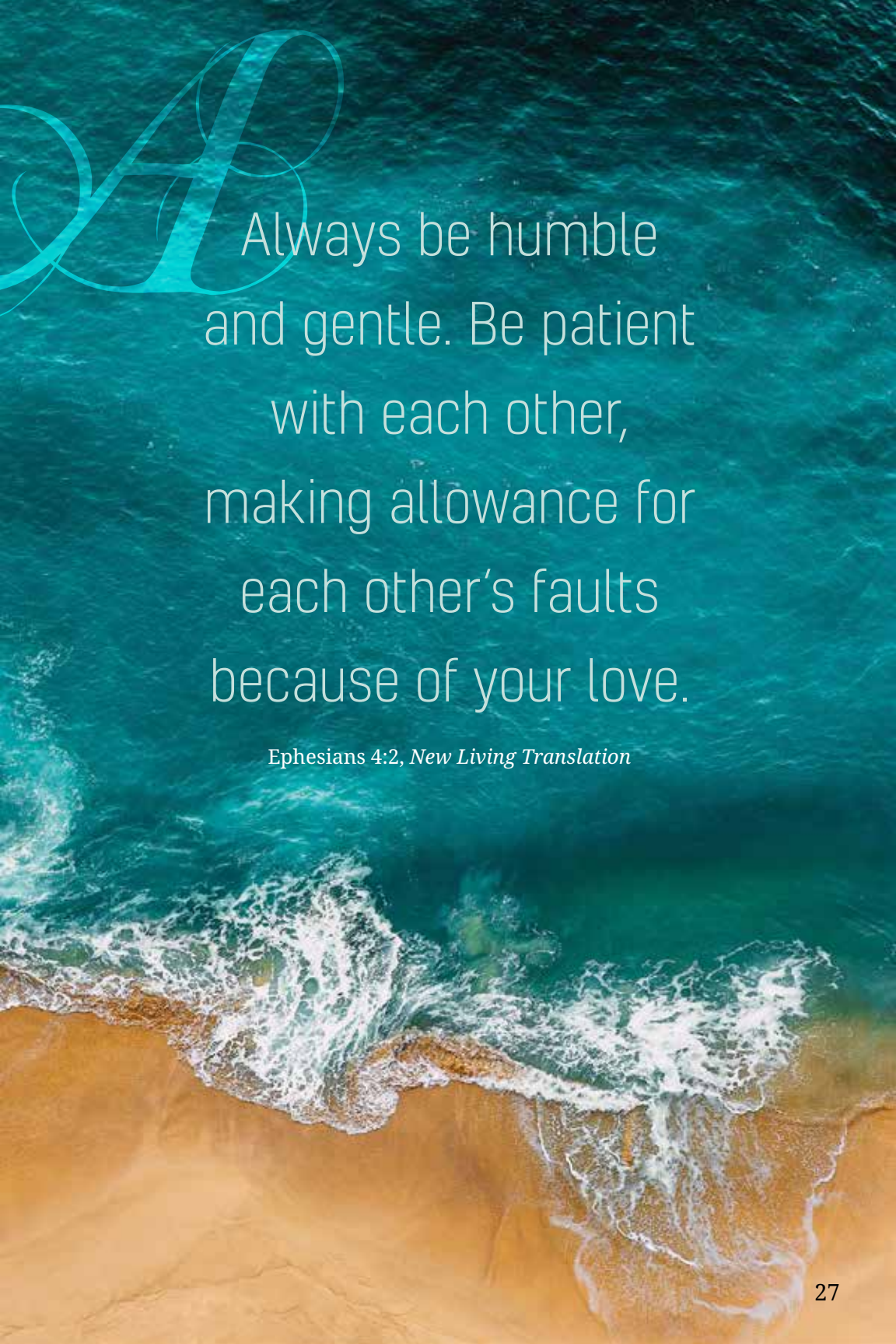
## ANSWERING THE DEEP QUESTIONS

The way ahead will require Geert and those he partners with to be more creative. “As I connect with people in town, in the hospitals, and on the street, I notice something,” says Geert. “They may not call what they are feeling faith, but they have deep questions about what is happening in the world, their role, and how they can be a better person and make a difference. I had those same questions as a teen and young adult. I know the answer to many of their questions, but if I don’t have a relationship with them, they are unlikely to listen to me.”

## GOD’S IN THE EQUATION

Working among people who aren’t settled into a comfortable life drives Geert Tap to understand his community better and make a difference. “Today, I want to make whatever years I have left in this life count even more,” says Geert. “My grandfather’s words echo in my ears. ‘Tell it to the people. Tell of Jesus’ love.’”





Always be humble  
and gentle. Be patient  
with each other,  
making allowance for  
each other's faults  
because of your love.

*Ephesians 4:2, New Living Translation*

# Depending on Faith LEADERS

by Sean Facchinello,  
Corrections Chaplain

## SAVORING THE MOMENTS

The weather was hot and humid, and the scenes were beautiful in the mid-90s when I served with the United States Marines in Thailand. Our unit was conducting joint operations with the Thai military. One community relations project was to visit an orphanage on Pattaya Beach. Marines are serious about visiting orphans who have no parents to love them and care for their personal needs. My memories go back to those children we played with on Sabbath afternoons and enjoyed a prayer and meal with them.

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” James 1:27, ESV.

These orphans depended on volunteers from worldwide who donated their time and energy to this orphanage. Our military unit traveled from Okinawa, Japan, yet we were not the

only volunteers. Civilians from Sweden and other nations actively volunteered and showed love to the orphans caring for their needs. How beautiful when we love children who do not have parents, we can be faith leaders.

## PREPARING FOR FREEDOM AND CHRIST’S KINGDOM

Incarcerated people aim to re-enter society and start their life over again.<sup>1</sup> Prison chaplains seek faith leaders to volunteer alongside the incarcerated. You can help by teaching a re-entry-to-society class. You can be a role model by demonstrating what a good Christian citizen looks and acts like. Prison life is not a perfect environment, but you can help those interested in a different life make that necessary change as you volunteer at your local prison. This is a faith leader’s mission for the Kingdom of Christ Jesus and positive change for re-entry to society.

# Faith leaders like you let their light shine for Jesus and share their Adventist faith as role models make a positive difference.

## VOLUNTEERING

At prisons, ask the chaplain about teaching a First Step Act (FSA) class and how you can help the incarcerated prepare for returning home. Those who take these classes become more resilient. You can make a positive impact to help incarcerated people increase their resilience and faith when they enter society.

Volunteering and teaching a First Step Act Class can impact an incarcerated person for freedom and give them hope for re-entry to society. Faith leaders like you who let their light shine for Jesus and share their Adventist faith as role models make a positive difference. First Step Act (FSA) Classes teach that incarcerated enter the threshold of society and stop recidivism from occurring. Recidivism occurs when an inmate returns to society, re-offends or breaks the law, and is back in prison. Faith leaders are needed today in prisons nationwide to

teach FSA Classes promoting freedom and success. Reintegrating into society and teaching FSA Classes can stop the swinging door for inmates returning to prison.

## OUR BIBLICAL MANDATE

“I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you visited me.” Matthew 25:36, ESV.

“And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” Matthew 25:39, ESV.

We see Jesus when we visit the incarcerated who are doing time for their crime. Our love and care are just as crucial for incarcerated people as for children in orphanages.

<sup>1</sup> Banfield, Lori E. (2019). “Fostering Spiritual Resilience and Vitality in Formerly Incarcerated Persons of African American Descent.” *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 73, no. 4: 222–231. <https://dx.doi.org/>





# Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries **WORLD DATABASE**

**A**dventist Chaplaincy Ministries is the church entity that supports Adventists who serve as chaplains in both church-related, public, or private institutions.

To support you, we need to know who you are and what you do. We have created a system to collect this information and store it securely. This information will be available to your Division and Union ACM director to help them also serve you better.

## **YOU CAN CREATE YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE AT [PORTAL.ADVENTISTCHAPLAINS.ORG](https://portal.adventistchaplains.org).**

- Click the Create Account button.
- Create your login information, supplying your email address and a password. Your password must be at least 8 characters long and must contain at least one uppercase and one lowercase letter.
- Complete the User Information section.
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Be sure to complete the section on subscriptions to receive your complimentary digital copies of the ACM magazines *The Adventist Chaplain* and *For God and Country*. You can also choose to receive occasional email updates and texts from Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—General Conference. Don't forget to click submit.

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**Executive Editor:**

Ivan H. Omaña, D.Min., BCC, BCPC

**Editor:**

Deena Bartel-Wagner

bartelwagnerd@gc.adventist.org

**Layout and Design:**

Emily Harding

*HardingDesign*

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

Ivan H. Omaña, Director/Endorser

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CONTACT US: Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, Adventist World Headquarters, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. Phone: 301-680-6780; fax: 301-680-6783; e-mail [acm@gc.adventist.org](mailto:acm@gc.adventist.org); Website: [AdventistChaplains.org](http://AdventistChaplains.org).

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**ACM DIVISION DIRECTORS****East-Central Africa Division (ECD)**

Samuel Mwebaza, *ACM Director*  
[mwebazas@ecd.adventist.org](mailto:mwebazas@ecd.adventist.org)

**Euro-Asia Division (ESD)**

Oleg Goncharov, *ACM Director*  
[ogoncharov@esd.adventist.org](mailto:ogoncharov@esd.adventist.org)

**Inter-European Division (EUD)**

Ventsislav Panayotov, *ACM Director*  
[ventsislav.panayotov@eud.adventist.org](mailto:ventsislav.panayotov@eud.adventist.org)

**Inter-American Division (IAD)**

Hiram Ruiz, *ACM Director*  
[ruizh@interamerica.org](mailto:ruizh@interamerica.org)

**North American Division (NAD)**

Washington Johnson, II, *ACM Director*  
[washingtonjohnson@nadadventist.org](mailto:washingtonjohnson@nadadventist.org)

**Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD)**

Jonas Arrais, *ACM Director*  
[arraisj@nsdadventist.org](mailto:arraisj@nsdadventist.org)

**South American Division (SAD)**

Jose Espinoza, *ACM Director*  
[josue.espinoza@adventistas.org](mailto:josue.espinoza@adventistas.org)

**South Pacific Division (SPD)**

Sven Östring, *ACM Liason*  
[svenosting@adventist.org.au](mailto:svenosting@adventist.org.au)

**Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID)**

Irvin Gwatiringa, *ACM Director*  
[gwatiringai@sid.adventist.org](mailto:gwatiringai@sid.adventist.org)

**Southern Asia Division (SUD)**

Ramesh Jadhav, *ACM Director*  
[rameshjadhav3383@gmail.com](mailto:rameshjadhav3383@gmail.com)

**Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD)**

Rudi Situmorang, *ACM Director*  
[rsitumorang@ssd.org](mailto:rsitumorang@ssd.org)

**Trans-European Division (TED)**

Patrick Johnson, *ACM Director*  
[pjohnson@ted-adventist.org](mailto:pjohnson@ted-adventist.org)

**West-Central Africa Division (WAD)**

Elems Ugochukwu, *ACM Director*  
[elems@wad.adventist.org](mailto:elems@wad.adventist.org)



*It is a privilege to have the time to  
practice this simple ministry of presence.*

Henri Nouwen



**General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®**  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

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