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Community Chaplaincy: Chaplaincy in the Margins

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Abstract

Community Chaplaincy: Chaplaincy in the Margins

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American culture has accepted spiritual care in institutional settings in which individuals face significant barriers to accessing spiritual care in the community. These institutions include hospitals, prisons, the military, and hospice care, and chaplains are regularly found in these organizations. However, there are other populations of people who face significant barriers to accessing spiritual care in our communities. Individuals experiencing homelessness, addiction, re-entry after incarceration, domestic violence victims, and many more, face significant social and physical barriers to accessing care. This paper proposes that just as it is accepted to have access to chaplaincy in institutional settings, chaplaincy should be available at the community level with high risk communities to assist in providing whole person care.

Through partnership with local nonprofits working with identified populations, The Oklahoma Conference of Churches will work in collaboration to provide chaplaincy services to clients accessing services with these organizations. The chaplains will be available to work within the framework of the existing nonprofits in order to integrate into the care processes being provided in the specific setting. Chaplains might spend a full work week in one location, or work in multiple locations based on need and desire for frequency of service.

A truly collaborative approach, this model for ministry seeks to fill a gap found in spiritual care offerings, by providing access to those not in an institution which typically provides care, and that faces significant barriers to obtaining care in a local community of faith.

Community Chaplaincy: Chaplaincy in the Margins

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<u>The Problem</u>

While engaging communities one becomes increasingly aware of all the systems at play which create the layers of existence for its inhabitants. These systems, form a web around humanity that is complex and intertwined, but often finds itself with immense gaps in service or access for certain individuals living in the web. Ultimately, it is the job of the faithful to find the gaps effecting lives in individual communities and help to fill them, for in those gaps, individuals are lost and broken, or ignored and discriminated against actively. Faith communities are called to be the eyes to see and the arms and legs to respond.

One of the largest gaps in American life is attendance and membership in a local community of faith. Over the last two decades, the U.S. has seen a sharp decline in the number of people who attend an organized religious service weekly. The number has more than doubled since 1998, keeping it on track with the numbers of Americans who additionally report no religious affiliation.[1] This number was reflected in an earlier study from the Mental Health Foundation in 1997 when they reported that 50% of their study's respondents "expressed the importance of their religion and spirituality to their mental health".[2] When one looks toward this growing gap within the culture and lives of Americans, it is hard to ignore its effect on spiritual care opportunities throughout the country. If the care provided by a local community of faith is removed, what is left in our world to provide spiritual care to members of the wider community?

Chaplaincy is a consistent source of spiritual care outside of local faith organizations. Typically, chaplaincy has been confined to institutions such as hospitals,

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[1] Jeffrey M. Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades," Gallup, April 18, 2019, https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx.
[2] "Knowing Our Own Minds" (Mental Health Foundation, 1997).

prisons, hospice organizations, and the military. Within these established organizations, spiritual care has been present in the history of their development and is valued as a contributing factor to maintaining spiritual and personal well-being.

It appears that patterns and models surrounding care of an individual have been shifting and evolving throughout the country. Robert G. Anderson Jr. presented studies and research from E. Mansell Pattison[3] and Edward Wimberly[4] in the 1980's saying that "focus has been primarily upon the individual process of healing, with models of pastoral care primarily person-centered and interpersonal. Both have called for a corrective, a study of pastoral care as an activity carried out within and by communities and systems looking beyond the person-to-person focus".[5] These studies begin the conversation of placing spiritual care into the hands of the community, thus, spreading the participant level of spiritual care offerings to the community at-large. Anderson goes on to place this commitment into biblical imagery to help make the case that a community's involvement in the implementation of spiritual care is vital. "Our traditions provide us with useful images: In the wilderness the children of Israel were called upon to collectively care and provide for orphans, widows and sojourners. St. Paul spoke of the church as the Body of Christ wherein each part played a decisive role in the functioning of the body."[6]

In placing the fact that there is a decline in church attendance in our country, and the compelling need to make spiritual care a widespread community offering, one can see the need. Fewer and fewer people are in locations where access to spiritual care takes place, i.e.

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[3] E. Mansell Pattison, *Pastor and Parish--A Systems Approach* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977); E. Mansell Pattison, "Systems Pastoral Care," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 26 (1972): 2–14.

[4] Edward Wimberly, *Pastoral Care in the Black Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979).

[5] Robert G. Anderson Jr., "The Assessment of Systems in Promoting Collaborative Aftercare: Religious and Mental Health Organizations in Partnership," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 39, no. 3 (1985): 236–48.

[6] Anderson Jr., 237.

churches, and there are so many individuals that are not a part of the traditional systems or institutions that offers chaplaincy services. This is a gap in the way we care for one another spiritually, in that many simply do not have access to spiritual care. The question of faith communities is how to fill this gap.

This paper will argue that spiritual care opportunities can and should be a priority placed in community-based organizations. By placing chaplaincy and spiritual care in locations with the most need, care will be attainable without potential barriers, thus providing total person care where the individuals are located at the time. The church often speaks of going to where people are to serve, and some do, however, the structure for nonprofit ministry has not always followed suit. Chaplaincy is not something meant to remain in monolithic institutions, but is something to be accessible to any individual that seeks its care.

This paper will also argue that by adding spiritual care to a slate of individualized care, whole person healing can and will take place at a more thorough pace. By looking at other opportunities that have utilized spiritual care mechanisms in their models, it will be evident that spiritual care provides an added benefit to any care system being provided. Local communities would benefit from adding this model to their current structures in order to see an increase in effectiveness while serving at risk individuals.

First, I will talk about OCC as a context in ministry and how it is the likely home for such a program in the state of Oklahoma. I will delineate the structure of the organization as well as some barriers that have existed in the past that might have influence over effectiveness going forward. Then I will discuss various forms of chaplaincy that have been found throughout my research, which include the emergence of community-based chaplains

in various contexts and functionalities. Although the emergence of this new form of chaplaincy has begun to emerge in areas like I am proposing, there has been no program of immense community-based collaboration developed.

The Context

      The Oklahoma Conference of Churches is delicately positioned in order to help address gaps found when it comes to spiritual care in our communities. As an organization, OCC holds space for a collective religious enclave in a coalition model, but its societal ecology is what makes it different. When examining the organizational ecology of the OCC, or looking into its organizational position within the community in relationship to other organizations,[7] one can see its unique location. OCC places itself in the center between the faithful and the secular worlds that exist in Oklahoma. Through its placement, OCC helps to keep faith communities informed of secular and civic engagement opportunities, and helps the civic world connect with faith communities as a resource. A recent example of this is a partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services in which OCC helps provide connection and education opportunities to help combat the opioid epidemic in the State of Oklahoma. Through connecting resources into faith communities, OCC is assisting ODMHSAS in equipping faith communities, which are often on the front lines of human care, with helping those who are both experiencing opioid addiction, and to help prevent addiction from occurring. In April 2019, the Oklahoma Conference of Churches partnered with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to begin an extensive program of outreach education and awareness on opioids. The focus of this project is to equip churches and faith

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[7] Nancy L. Eiesland and R. Stephen Warner, "Chapter 2: Ecology: Viewing the Congregation Contextually," in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 40–77.

communities with the necessary information to understand the proper use of opioids, the risks that come with their use, the proper storage of medication, and what to do if you suspect that someone in your family or community is at risk for an overdose. We hope that the outcome of this project will lead to more faith communities have important conversations around the topic of opioids and their use and helps connect faith communities to broader topics that may not necessarily be at the top of their particular theological agenda.

It makes particular sense that OCC would be able to then make the connection between secular organizations and spiritual care, in a way that other organizations could not. Through its ability to navigate different systems, OCC can see gaps and can work with varying sides of the need to formulate a response. It is through this capability the OCC will work to address the need of spiritual care access for individuals unable or incapable of seeking it for themselves, either by a lack of institutional involvement or lack of church attendance.

OCC has done this work before, through our Disaster Spiritual Care program. The DSC program was created in response to severe tornadoes that ripped through the metro area of Oklahoma City in 2013. This program sought to create a training program that would train local faith leaders in disaster response techniques so they would be able to be deployed to disaster areas in order to provide spiritual care to those individuals, families, and groups who were suffering from the after effects of the disaster. This was a special endeavor, which was funded by the United Way of Oklahoma City for this particular project, even though we are not United Way members. Their ability to see OCC as a resource capable of engaging this type of work was instrumental in our ability to train over 175 faith leaders across Oklahoma to respond to disasters if called upon to do so. The training courses for this particular program were as follows:

- Local Spiritual Care Responder
- Intermediate Disaster Spiritual Care

- Spiritual Care Team Leader
- Religious and Cultural Competence
- QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)
- Psychosocial First Aid
- ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)

The training worked because of a collaboration between OCC and Oklahoma VOAD (Volunteers Organized Against Disasters). After an individual completed different levels of training, often centered around listening skills and sessions, suicide awareness training, and the logistics of working in a post disaster situation, Oklahoma VOAD would provide licensing through a badge that the individual would show once they were deployed by OCC to a disaster site. Although this particular ministry ended in 2018 due to lack of funding, collaborative efforts have always been a part of the work of OCC in order to achieve the kinds of ministry necessary in order to make a difference in people's lives, however, the organization has not always had the best practices internally.

The Oklahoma Conference of Churches has a unique situation from other congregations and organizations, in that there has never been a priority in keeping historical information on the organization. The reason for this is unknown, but can be assumed that it was due to a lack of motivation or awareness of the importance of documenting the evolution of the organization over the years. One might wonder if it has to do with an underestimation of the level at which the organization would spread its wings over the years, evolving into an entity that would do more than just bring Christian denominations together for conversations.

The Oklahoma Conference of Churches has seven focus areas in which it performs ministry and advocacy throughout the state. Each of these focus areas has an accompanying theological statement that explains why we do the work in that focus area. These areas are

criminal justice, education, the environment, health, immigration and refugees, poverty, and race/anti-discrimination. The last area, race and anti-discrimination, is the most recent addition to an existing lineup of focus areas. Its glaring absence was noticed in the fall of 2017 after the Charlottesville, VA and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement across the country in the wake of numerous national events. The silence of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches on matters of race and other forms of discrimination was a sinful choice and one that needed to be rectified.

However, as conversations surrounding a theological statement for this focus area began, the immediate pathway led to other forms of discrimination other than race. It was clear, at least to me, that we would need to take a stand for all matters of human discrimination, or none at all. Therefore, a journey began that would take OCC into new territory, and the question of its willingness to stand up for every person equally, or remain in its cocoon of silence.

This work is significant when it comes to partnerships and collaboration with secular nonprofits and even secular government organizations. After all, how many religious based organizations can truly say they have adequate methods of proving their anti-discrimination, which is vital to many secular organizations. More and more organizations adopt public anti-discrimination statements that are included in their personnel policies, and making Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings mandatory. It seems only fitting, that OCC be a first of its kind in Oklahoma. We would become an umbrella organization with a broad anti-discrimination stance which would encompass a blanket of inclusion and equity across all people, no matter what. It was bold, but a crucial move if such partnerships were going to be successful going forward.

The words of the statement are divided into two parts. Race is the first part, and anti-discrimination is the second. It was decided that Race still needed to be addressed as its own sin,

and named as such, even though it would inevitably be encompassed in the broader anti-discrimination statement. Racism, and the plague it has cast on our nation, is a thread that weaves its way into every one of our other focus areas. It was foundational to the work we were doing, and yet it was not named. Therefore, it gained its own emphasis within the words of the statement. I include the words of this particular theological statement, in order to highlight its importance, power, and vitality as we seek as an organization to move forward into diverse, collaborative spaces. The full, two-part, statement can be located on the Oklahoma Conference of Churches' website,[8] but for the purposes of highlighting our anti-discrimination stance, which will be so important going forward, I will paste our statement below.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

What We Believe

We believe in the equality and equity of all God's children, without exception, and that no person should experience discrimination regardless of their sex, religion, race, immigration status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, age, gender identity/gender expression, ability, or socio-economic status. We will advocate for the rights of every person to live as they are, to the point that it does not affect another's rights to live as they are. We affirm that all people are beloved by God, and should be treated as such, in cohesion with the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Why We Believe It

The reaches of the ministry of Jesus was never limited, just as the love of God comes to each person without strings attached. Love of neighbor was extended to every individual

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[8] https://www.okchurches.org/race-and-antidiscrimination

regardless of social circumstances. This was such an emphatic part of the ministry of Jesus, that Paul emphasizes this point as he writes to the churches in Galatia reminding them that "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus". In this statement, Paul reminds churches that the ways in which individuals used to separate one another is no longer valid, for all are welcome in the love and way of Christ Jesus.

The ways in which humanity has drawn lines around people in order to decide who to separate, exclude, or praise, and uplift, are a social distinction that should be erased through the sacrificial love of Jesus. Through the actions, ministry, and death of Jesus, the love of God was expanded far and wide to include each and every individual on earth regardless of social circumstance.

What We Advocate

The insistence on individuals to make stands around who is and who is not worthy of the love of God is something we commit to working to correct within the body of humanity. We will do this by committing to the following:

· Respect for and recognition of the human dignity of every person;

· Advocate for pay equity, employee protections, equal access to healthcare, amongst other programs where individuals are not regarded as equal;

· The determination that all people have the right to live equally under the law;

· An emphatic position that abuse or mistreatment of any individual is unacceptable no matter the circumstances.[9]

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[9] Shannon Fleck, "OCC Theological Statement: Racism/ Anti-Discrimination," September 2020, https://www.okchurches.org/race-and-antidiscrimination.

Throughout my experience exploring the history and engaging the current status of the organization, I uncovered three themes that are at play within the Oklahoma Conference of Churches. The first is the lack of intentionality and direction in the mission of the organization. The second is a lack of visibility within the community at large. The third is a lack of clarity about the role OCC plays within existing ministries within the state of Oklahoma.

The first theme, a lack of intentionality and direction is evident within the current operations and governances of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches. During the eight-year tenure of the previous executive director, the board played very little role in the organization. The board was not asked to engage in true governance work, and were simply asked to show up and say yes to whatever the executive director had put before them that particular day. There was very little communication in between board meetings and major decisions were never run by the board prior to enacting within the organization. This model of leadership has led to a board that is not engaged in the organization, is uninterested in doing the necessary governance asked of them, and has not interacted with the true mission and ministry of the conference of churches.

The Oklahoma Conference of Churches is in a period of transition. The previous executive director retired in March of 2018, which is still quite recent in the scheme of things considering his tenure. He enacted a culture of a monarchy in his leadership. He was the ruler of the organization, and anyone else's relationship with OCC was dominated and ruled by his domain and whims. This method of leadership afforded the leader a lot of autonomy, with which he freely operated. Unfortunately, this was not always for the good of the organization.

Upon taking over as the acting executive director, I discovered several discrepancies within financial reports that he had submitted. Due to the dictator nature of the structures of OCC, financial reports were not composed by the treasurer of the board, but rather the executive

director. All finances were done with in house accounting and only passed through his hands prior to being presented to the board. This scenario, lent itself well to numbers being manipulated on financial documents for the purposes of reflecting a more positive financial picture than was actual reality.

Because of the lackadaisical culture that was established within the workings of the board of directors, there was a stagnant effect when these facts were revealed to them. This is to say, they were paralyzed by a stark unawareness of how to respond to such information, as they had never been asked to take ownership of the organization before. This was also evident in a lack of personnel file for the outgoing executive director, as well as no formal employee reviews being completed at any point during his employment. Additionally, he never signed a contract where pay or benefits were spelled out, resulting in no member of the board being able to communicate how much he was supposed to be paid.

This displays a culture that developed where intentionality and engagement were set aside in favor of ease and convenience. Theologically speaking, this speaks to me as a testament to current culture within the structures of how we live out our faith. More than ever, individuals seek a faith with definitive explanations, comfortable pews, and a worship service that gets them into the restaurants for lunch before the crowds. It is indicative of a culture that does not necessarily seek to "put in the work" to reap the reward of all lives of faith have to offer. Our leaders and volunteers are busy, overworked, overscheduled, with constant and consistent requests upon them for their time on top of the mountainous list already piled upon their desks. As a culture, we have turned away from what is hard for what is easily attainable, and the Oklahoma Conference of Churches is no different. As the United States continues into a

downward spiral of church attendance[10], and other activities occupy hearts and minds, the OCC will have to work hard to find its place in the modern predicament.

It was easy to hand over blind leadership to an individual willing to carry it, because it absolved everyone else of having to put in the work. It was easy to become the "yes people" in order to accommodate the developing culture and to feel as if something positive was achieved. It was easy to forego the realities of the organization by turning a blind eye and hiding in one's ignorance. Unfortunately, those days are behind OCC, as the new executive director (me) is unwilling to carry the burden alone and absolve those in leadership of active engagement. This narrative has caused a negative impact on the efficacy of OCC as we seek to engage in active ministry throughout the community. As we move forward into the work of seeking to serve the community in different ways than its history, this will be a narrative we will all have to work together to shift alongside the active work of building something new within our ministry framework.

This culture, and its need to change, is a huge challenge facing the organization moving forward. The need to "flip the house", is of paramount importance if OCC is to thrive and evolve going forward. If I am unable to instill these institutional and cultural changes in leadership, it will greatly affect the future trajectory of where the organization will be able to go next.

The Oklahoma Conference of Churches also has an issue with visibility within the state of Oklahoma. Many throughout the state that I meet on a daily basis have never heard of the conference, let alone have a clear understanding of what we do in ministry. I believe this issue has contributed to the lack of archival documents, as the footprint of the organization has

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[10] Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades."

traditionally been quite low. This is something that I have worked to change since coming on staff in May of 2017.[11]

It is also likely that the lack of visibility can be attributed to the lack of engagement with the leadership of the organization which was previously discussed. Because the board of directors and volunteers have not been engaged at a level to have appropriate buy in to the activities of the organization, there has not been an effort on their part to assist in the process of spreading the word about the mission and ministry of the organization. The issues surrounding visibility cannot change by the efforts of one individual, but will require a united team of people who are committed to the mission of the organization and are on the same page regarding its work in the state. This is also indicative of OCC's lack of ability to provide or demonstrate its value to our stakeholders as we engage in the work. This can be seen in a general lack of engagement from those we work with, as well as those we seek to work with.

Some general things that have been done in order to increase visibility are increasing the use of social media within the state. Because of our new and more creative engagement with modern uses of technology, we have been able to reach a broader audience and increase visibility throughout the state. Additionally, we updated our website to reflect a more modern look and format. The previous web page was very dated and was overrun with information that was no longer relevant to the organization's programming. What was highly limited was the prior web format, which was not user-friendly resulting in a conglomeration of information that provided a confusing experience for the user as well as staff. This transition was a huge undertaking that took several months to launch, and is still a work in progress. However, it is a much more user-friendly experience and has resulted in a lot more engagement with our organization.

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[11] Enacting digital file keeping, archival procedures, document policies.

Additionally, I have made a very concentrated effort at being out in the community more. I feel that it is important to be seen engaging in ministry in physically present ways in order for people to make the connection between the organization and an active presence in the community. This particular engagement is definitely a marathon, not a sprint and will take time to see the fruits. I will say that it has already yielded a lot of feedback about the visibility and engagement of the organization and people are beginning to link my presence at events with the presence of OCC in general, which has resulted in increased opportunities to be present publicly within the community. It is very important that we be present engaging in the work of community witness and ministry if we seek to be a leader in the state in community-based ministry.

Again, the challenges to increasing our visibility are present within the fact that only one of us is engaging in the work full time. I will require buy in from the volunteer leadership and board members in order to increase the fruits of our visibility. I feel that over the last year and a half, since arrive at OCC, I have been able to gain some visibility and trust within members of the community, but it remains a continual effort to grow the sustainability of the organization.

There has generally been an approach that people either get it or they do not when it comes to the ministry of OCC. The people who understand OCC are clearly "worthy" of its services and ministry, and those who do not, are clearly not worthy of what we have to offer. Since I became executive director, I have done extensive work to try and understand what the community needs from us as an organization and worked to find ways to be relevant to what they are communicating their needs and wants are within the world of ministry. This is vastly different than expecting them to understand who and what we are without taking the time to engage the community we claim to serve and find out what is valuable to them. This is likely

going to be a very slow process, one of getting to know the community and engaging their desires and needs as a part of our mission and ministry. However, I certainly feel it will benefit the organization in the long run as we seek to maintain relevance and impact in the state of Oklahoma. As for the measurement of relevance and impact, an increase of web traffic, donations, and social media engagement has indicated an increase of roughly 40% since the beginning of 2019.[12]

Throughout my work with OCC, even before this semester, I have engaged in individual interviews with several denominational leaders at the state level, as well as congregational leaders who are a part of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches membership. Questions that have been asked have a lot to do with identifying the role of OCC in the state and how our ministry could most benefit their organizations and ministries. Also, I wanted to gauge some level of passion amongst the leaders and inquired a lot about what their organizations are working on and passionate about right now, and if we might be able to help them develop those ministries and expand them beyond their individual groups. I also engaged volunteers within OCC via survey to gain their input, but received very little participation. Of the 25 surveys I sent to volunteers, I received 3 responses in return. This lack of participation likely has to do with its proximity to our annual fundraiser event, which burned people out of hearing from us I'm afraid.

The Innovation

In the spring of 2019, I found myself sitting in a training for new executive directors with the Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits. It was a six-month long training, in which we would meet with one another as a group once a month. Throughout the series, all of us became close as we

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[12] Internal OCC data. (Squarespace, QGiv, and FB data)

worked through problems of being a new director and navigating the ins and outs of nonprofit work, some of which, we had never faced in prior employment. In the midst of one of our sessions, the executive director of the Oklahoma Halfway House mentioned the struggle that was not only facing their clients, but that the staff can also have a hard time dealing with the stress of the work. Without skipping a beat, I asked her whether or not they had a chaplain. Her eyes widened into a forming thought as she responded that they did not, but that would be amazing. It was in that room that an idea was born.

For the population she served, most individuals came to the halfway house from incarceration. While incarcerated, the individuals likely had access to a chaplain or spiritual care provider, but upon release likely do not unless they have a local faith community, they feel comfortable returning to or attending. While incarcerated, it would have been optional for inmates to see the chaplain or participate in regular spiritual care activities. This paints the picture that individuals can make their own decisions regarding what is best for them as they care for themselves as human beings. This idea is echoed in research put forward with regards to the connection of spiritual care and mental health services.

John Foskett put forward in his writings that he believes "the patient/service user is the expert of their illness and that they have to be trusted to find their spiritual resources and overcome the spiritual abuse they may have suffered".[13] This idea suggests that individuals are capable and should be expected to be able advocate for their own needs when it comes to spiritual care. However, if these services are not available or offered, individuals who may be in need of this care face a significant barrier in access to an element of care that could benefit them in helping to gain the wholeness of care they need as an individual.

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[13] John Foskett, "Is There Evidence-Based Confirmation of the Value of Pastoral and Spiritual Care?: An Invitation To a Conversation," *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 1, no. 1 (2013): 83–90.

Julian Raffay utilizes the example of John the Baptist when he says "we need to be willing to allow ourselves to become less, that they (they patients) might become greater".[14] When we begin to explore the nature of the ministry of Jesus and the spiritual care he provided, we remember that he spent his life in the community, not in the synagogue. He journeyed to people where they were, and did not expect them to come to a formal house of worship to have their spiritual needs met. It is in the spirit of this model; the idea of community chaplaincy has grown.

When beginning to examine what such a model would look like, other examples were examined. The first example of such a possibility looks at a program from Glasgow, Scotland called Community Chaplaincy Listening (CCL).[15] "Since 2010 the Department of Social Care within NHS Education for Scotland (NES) has been working with Scottish chaplains, General Practice teams and patients to design an innovative model of spiritual care in the community. CCL places chaplains or trained volunteer 'listeners' in GP practices to offer a listening service to patients who are referred by GP's."[16] Through the commitment of these institutions to place spiritual care access alongside a secular care provider, potential significant barriers to spiritual care access have been removed and positive results were able to be found. It was reported that "positive changes in patients' behavior after the listening intervention, as well as fewer GP appointments and even reductions in prescribed medications".[17] This study shows that access to spiritual care improved individual well-being when accessed as needed.

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[14] Julian Raffay, "Are Our Mental Health Practices Beyond HOPE?," *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 12, no. 2 (2012): 68–80. 71.

[15] Sarah Giffin and David Mitchell, "The Evolution of Spiriual Care and Healthcare Chaplaincy in Scotland," *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 6, no. 1 (2018): 36–45. 41

[16] H. Mowat et al., "Listening as Healthcare: Working with General Practice to Support Patient Well-Being," *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy* 16, no. special (2013): 35–41.

[17] H. Mowat, S. Bunniss, and E. Kelly, "Community Chaplaincy Listening: Working with General Practice to Support Patient Well-Being," *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy* 15 (2012): 21–26.

Another example of Chaplaincy and its movement into the community is seen in the actions of Chaplains from the Gwinnett Health System.[18] After a critical incident, resulting in death, which happened in a workplace setting in the local community. After the death the health system's chaplains connected with the HR department in the local workplace. After making this connection, the chaplains were able to provide spiritual care to co-workers of the deceased, as well as participate in the organization of a memorial service. Through this relationship, it is seen that Chaplains provide a vital and untapped resource for their communities.[19]

The next example is that of Movement Chaplaincy. "Movement Chaplaincy is the work of spiritual accompaniment to justice movements and their leaders. Just as there are chaplains who attend to the spiritual needs of people in hospitals, colleges, corporate environments and other settings, there is a need for those who can fill this role within our movements for social change."[20] As the rise of social justice and change movements sweep across the United States, movement chaplaincy recalls the movements of the past, of which faith played a central role. Through placing trained chaplains in the midst of social movements and the activities that surround them, access to spiritual tools becomes attainable for those engaging in the work of social change. In this sense, movement chaplains play a critical role of bringing faith back into the work of moral justice when it may have been left out altogether. This act reminds people of their spiritual nature, and helps to keep the overall wellness of the people working for justice in the center of conversations around the work.

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[18] Charles Christie, "Beyond Hospital Walls: Gwinnett Health System Takes Chaplaincy into the Community," *Chaplaincy Today* 17, no. 2 (2001): 5–9.

[19] Christie. 8.

[20] "Daring Compassion: The Role of Movement Chaplaincy in Social Change," *Faith Matters Network* (blog), 2019, www.faithmattersnetwork.org/daringcompassion.

The last example in regards to this type of model is from a city in Georgia. Smyrna, Georgia noticed that the success of their fire and police chaplaincy programs were undeniable in their service to members and their families and, in 2015, made the unanimous decision to enact a city-wide chaplaincy program to serve all city employees and their families.[21] This program will be available to any city employee or family member who requests it and will be available 24 hours a day.

As I looked toward the idea of placing spiritual care and chaplaincy into a more attainable, community-based format, I looked at these examples, as well as ways to possibly implement a program in our city. It seemed the most thorough way to begin the work would be through partnerships and collaboration with local nonprofits who are working with at risk populations who would face significant barriers to spiritual care access.

I approached 10 nonprofits in the local Oklahoma City area. These nonprofits work with the homeless population, drug addiction/recovery, human trafficking victims, domestic violence victims, adults living with mental illness, and those recently released from incarceration. In each instance, I asked the directors of the nonprofits if having a spiritual care provider on site and available to their clients would be beneficial to their programming and service to their clients. All 10 nonprofits answered with a resounding YES. In working with at risk clients day in and day out, each director could easily see the added benefit of spiritual care being available to the clients they serve. Each of these populations also face barriers to accessing spiritual care due to not being in a tradition institution that offers chaplaincy, and the likelihood of being unable or uncomfortable with attending a local faith community in person.

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[21] Carolyn Cunningham, "Smyrna Forms City Chaplaincy Program," February 27, 2020, https://www.ajc.com/news/local/smyrna-forms-city-chaplaincy-program/uDreipTHIV7i8TaHpZysoM/.

In looking towards a model for collaboration, I examined what has been done in the past through a collaboration between a local church and a mental health facility in which a partnership and collaboration was developed to offer spiritual care to patients in the mental health setting. This program utilized various steps in developing the partnership and collaboration that it recommended to others going forward.[22] The steps are as follows:

Step 1: *An organizational decision is made to explore the feasibility of mental health-religious collaboration*. As has been the case in every network with whom we have worked, the agency first decided to explore collaboration and proceeded to generate interest among community faith groups through publicity, direct contacts and meetings. [Usually this involve] a broker who has access to both systems who can play a vital role in the early steps.

As an organization, OCC feels that it would be able to greatly offer this service to the community and has made a commitment to pursuing the feasibility of such a program. We believe that spiritual care is a necessary component to whole person care and are willing to be in partnership with organizations that wish to add this to their service offerings.

Step 2: *Religious and mental health partner organizations are identified.* Once the partners are identified key leaders delegated by each organization facilitate the flow of information across the boundaries. This usually involves the broker identifying buy in from the partnering organization in order to establish shared ownership of the idea.

In this sense, we serve as the religious partner, but several nonprofit partner organizations have been identified as possible collaborators in this ministry opportunity. These organizations range in work from a Family Justice Center who works with victims of domestic violence fleeing unsafe circumstances, to a Human Trafficking center that works with victims of Human Sex

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[22] Anderson Jr., "The Assessment of Systems in Promoting Collaborative Aftercare: Religious and Mental Health Organizations in Partnership." 242-247.

Trafficking, with the Oklahoma Halfway House who assists those returning to society post incarceration, and a drug treatment facility specifically designed for mothers in order to keep a relationship with their children, as well as the Homeless Alliance of Oklahoma City, which is a coalition of groups who work with the homeless population in OKC. All of these organizations expressed a significant interest in having spiritual care as a part of their programs and remain in contact with OCC about the possibility of having such a service soon.

Step 3: *Information sharing and exploration of possible collaboration is conducted by key members of potential partner organizations.* Once the partner organizations agree to exploration, representatives of each organization go through this step on behalf of their respective systems. Information sharing builds the capacity of two organizations to develop resource sharing and collaborative activity.

OCC has worked with these organizations to discuss what the possibility of partnership and collaboration would look like. It has been limited to discussions surrounding logistics at this level, which would place the chaplain under the employment of the OCC, but placed within the local nonprofits to provide service. Some nonprofits may not require a full-time chaplain and some might. Because the OCC staffs the chaplains, it is capable of ensuring that each nonprofit has access to the chaplain and spiritual care service it needs, when it needs it, whether that is one day a week for a few hours or seven days a week for 24 hours.

Step 4: *A collaborative structure and program is designed by key members of partner organizations*. When the planning of a program finally becomes an agenda, a structure of trust develops. Negotiations bring into play the resources and constraints with which each organization will be working.

Thus far, this process has been completed with one of the potential nonprofit partners. We have discussed structure and placement within their facility and operations. Additionally, the option for access to spiritual care was added to their intake forms to better gauge the desire for the service. It is the plan that, once funding is in place, this facility will house a full-time spiritual care provider and will be executed through a Memorandum of Understanding between our two organizations in order to finalize our formal collaboration.

When it comes to putting resources on the table financially, there is more of a struggle. OCC would, ideally, like to have the funding internally to provide this program to the community without cost to local nonprofits. However, many foundations and organizations capable of giving larger gifts do not give to religious organizations. This is where OCC's anti-discrimination can foreseeably be utilized to gain trust within the philanthropic community, although it is anticipated that it will be a slow transition to make within the giving community.

The particular nonprofit we have reached this step with is a Family Justice Center located in Oklahoma City. They are very invested in seeing this program come to fruition within their facility, and added funding to a government grant they submitted to potentially fund a full-time chaplain with their organization. This grant was submitted in the fall of 2020, and was not approved. Therefore, we are both organizations committed to seeing this program come to life, but will continue the journey of mutually seeking funds to ensure its creation.

It is likely, however, that much community education and trust building will need to continue to be built through showing value as a religious organization that is different in nature, because we truly seek to serve all people equally, without judgement, or precursors. In Oklahoma, the culture has very much seen a religious community that seeks its own way first, and therefore, if a philanthropic organization opens itself up to giving to one religious organization, it would have

to give to all religious organizations. It is hoped, that through showing our anti-discrimination stances, we can open a door that has been previously closed, and give the philanthropic community the opportunity to give to a religious organization with the caveat that they, too, have anti-discrimination policies.

Step 5: *A collaborative structure and program is jointly sponsored and implemented.* Lines of communication and collaboration had already been set in place prior to the program startup, so the implementation will begin on a strong foundation.

Unfortunately, we have not reached this step in the implementation journey. We continue to work to try and seek funding in order to begin this process.

Step 6: *An ongoing collaborative program is jointly maintained, evaluated, and redesigned (as necessary).* According to this article, they had learned that once a program has begun, the ongoing work is more challenging and difficult that the planning and start-up. Once the interplay between the systems becomes more complex, and active engagement in evaluation and maintenance work by each organization is needed. This is the point where partner organizations' tendency to turn to new priorities need to be checked or else the program will have a short life span.

When looking at the steps above, it would appear that I have made it through Step 4 with two organizations. We have worked together to develop a structure and program, but are working on getting the program sponsored and funded so we can implement the program. As we work towards getting the program funding, we are working with local philanthropic organizations to propose this as an option as we all work to better the lives of those we serve. An example of the proposal is below, with a proposed funding structure attached as the second addendum.

<u>The Proposal</u>

Objective

The objective of the Community Chaplaincy program is to provide Spiritual Care to members of the community who are left out when it comes to accessing spiritual care in their daily lives. The Community Chaplain will be a staff member of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches and will be available to provide spiritual care within the community upon the request of organizations working with populations in need.

Goals

The goal of this program is to close the gap of spiritual care services being provided to members of the community. Recognizing that currently there are members of our community who are without access to spiritual care, the Oklahoma Conference of Churches seeks to provide this care through a qualified, multi-faith Community Chaplain who will travel to those in need.

Many institutions in our society offer chaplaincy outside of a traditional house of worship. Chaplains exist within our hospitals to serve those under the care of the facility, the military to serve those who are defending our country, the prison system to serve those who are rehabilitating, and hospice patients to serve those who are in their final days. These institutions recognize the need for holistic spiritual care in these life situations because of their extreme need, they also recognize individuals as innately spiritual, who need care for their spiritual selves, as much as the rest of their selves.

The Oklahoma Conference of Churches is committed to the work of spiritual care, and recognizes a gap in care being provided. Not every individual is in a life situation that warrants institutional chaplaincy, but they aren't necessarily in a place in their life to find their way to a local house of worship for care. They may be dealing with other extreme life circumstances that take priority over seeking spiritual care from a church. Our community's nonprofits are doing sensational work with these populations, the homeless, the addicted, those re-entering society from incarceration, those fleeing violent situations, but often they lack a spiritual care component due to funding or structure.

Additionally, once an individual is no longer in contact with an institution providing chaplaincy or spiritual care, they are back in the community without such spiritual support. A Community Chaplain could help with community transitions, and help link individuals to local houses of worship when they are ready to seek long term relationship with a local community of faith, if that is something that is desired.

Solution

The Oklahoma Conference of Churches proposes a new model for providing for the spiritual care needs of individuals in need within the community through a Community Chaplaincy program. Modeled after institutional chaplaincy, this program seeks to provide spiritual care throughout the community with individuals who are currently left out of access to spiritual care. The Oklahoma Conference of Churches will staff a multi-faith, fully credentialed Chaplain, who will work with local nonprofits to provide services as needed to individuals receiving services in the

local nonprofit. Not every individual will want or need chaplaincy services, but the Community

Chaplain will be available for those who could benefit from the care.

This program is meant to be an additional service for the work of local nonprofits, and utilized as

an asset to the work already being done within their organizations. By housing the staff person

with the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, local nonprofits are not forced to make a choice of

whether or not to staff a chaplain, because they will have access to one if needed.

Long Term Goals

After initial implementation within the nonprofit community, the Community Chaplain program

could expand by partnering with government and institutional entities to provide continuity of

care upon release or discharge from the care of an institutional chaplain (military, prison,

hospital, etc.). By providing continuity of spiritual care, the individual might have more access to

successful re-entry and could potentially be linked with a local faith community by the

Community Chaplain for continued and long-term spiritual relationship.

Although initially implemented in urban locations within the state, the Oklahoma Conference of

Churches would develop a formal Community Chaplain Training Program to target rural

communities. Through this program, local clergy would be trained with specialized training (I.e.

domestic violence, addiction, suicide) and linked with nonprofits and institutions within their

local communities to serve as a Local Community Chaplain. This would extend the model into

rural parts of the state so that the Spiritual Care gap would be filled state wide. They would be

certified and approved through the Oklahoma Conference of Churches in order to maintain chaplains able to serve in an open, multi-faith setting.

The Community Chaplain program would expand, seeing Regional Community Chaplains on staff covering all areas of the state. These Regional Chaplains would oversee the Local Community Chaplains and continue to provide services, education, and training throughout the state. Formal education opportunities would become available by partnering with local seminaries to offer Community Chaplaincy as a formal ministry setting in the State of Oklahoma.

By utilizing Chaplaincy services, each organization involved would likely experience an increase in positive outcomes with clients served, due to the implementation of whole person care which also focuses on the individual as a spiritual being as well as a physical being.

Tentative Project Outline

The following is a tentative outline for the Community Chaplain Program

- **1-3 years**: Introductory phase- Community Chaplaincy Program introduced to the Community. Services begin within local nonprofits.
- **3-5 years**: Relationship building phase-
- Nonprofits become more familiar with the program and begin utilizing Community Chaplaincy regularly after trust is developed in the introductory phase.
- Conversations begin with Institutional Chaplaincy programs to discuss continuity of Spiritual Care possibilities.

- **5-8 years:** Sustainable growth-

- Committed nonprofits begin paying monthly or yearly partnership with the OCC Community Chaplaincy Program to assist in sustaining the program.

- After engaging in the ministry for the initial years and becoming familiar with the ins and outs, formal training for Local Community Chaplaincy is developed and offered in local communities for a fee. Network of Chaplains grows.

- Connection with local theological schools for internship possibilities and formal curriculum development begins. Potential funding from institutions.

Connection with Institutional Chaplaincy programs formalized and continuity of care programs begin. Potential funding from various government and institutional sources.

Tentative Budget

Budget for one Chaplain: Introductory Phase (3 years)

The following are estimates of expenses to fully fund the Community Chaplaincy Program, for a total of one chaplain, for 3 years through the Introductory Phase. By funding the first three years, the program would be able to garner data and detailed metrics in order to diversify funding sources going forward.

Description	Annual	*After initial Cost	3 Year Total
Staff Salary: Community Chaplain	65000		$ 195,000
Administrative Support	10000		$ 30,000
Office Space	8000		$ 24,000
*Equipment Costs: Computer, Cell Phone, Printer, Supplies	5000	1000	$ 16,000
Software, Hardware, Tech Support	3000		$ 9,000
Mileage Allowance (5000 miles at 58 cents per mile)	2900		$ 8,700
Indirect costs	6100		$ 18,300
Total	100,000		$ 301,000

In summation, a Community Chaplaincy program would be a wise investment in the communities in which we all live and serve. Chaplaincy programs have been utilized in a variety of settings with positive results for many decades, and continue to evolve into entities that provide uplifting and impactful change for those who are served. By placing chaplains in communities directly, through collaborative partnerships with nonprofits, spiritual care becomes readily available for those who may most benefit from the care of self it provides. Chaplaincy reminds individuals of their spiritual and human worth and brings an element of care no other discipline can, especially for those facing significant life events. This program seeks to empower individuals through the empowerment of their very being as holy and worthy of love and value.

The evaluation of this program internally would be through impact statements from those who are served and the nonprofits who serve them. Just as the Community Chaplaincy Listening program in Glasgow, Scotland showed fewer doctor's visits and positive change in the lives of their participants, OCC feels that such results could be expected in our community through a spiritual presence which is there to listen and care for individuals' needs on a different level than has been given to them previously. Therefore, achievement can also be marked through a lessened need to access services by which the individual has participated in previously, thus indicating a more stable life circumstance. Through the stories of those involved, OCC will be able to see the evolution of impact, and tell the story of vitality of life through the gauge of how individuals see themselves in the light of the world in which they live, and recognition of the value and worth they possess in God's world.

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ADDENDUM 1

Sample Job Description (Based on Domestic Violence Nonprofit Partnership)

Community Chaplain-Domestic Violence

In this small and emerging organization, the Community Chaplain is responsible for building and executing the Community Chaplaincy model with victims of Domestic Violence and/or Human Trafficking.

Reporting to the Executive Director (ED), the Community Chaplain will work diligently and ethically within the framework of trauma-informed spiritual care, and provide multi-faceted/multi-faith spiritual care to those in need of this care. This position provides an excellent opportunity and experience for the right candidate, and will have the opportunity to build a new form of community-based chaplaincy through partnerships with valuable nonprofit organizations within our communities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work with partner nonprofits to provide affirming spiritual care to those who have suffered from Domestic Violence and/or Human Trafficking.

- Serve as a spiritual care liaison within the organizational setting by communicating with staff and leadership of partner nonprofits.

- Manage an effective and thorough case notes system for internal data reference and any requested contribution towards treatment/safety plans developed in partner nonprofits.

- Develop and maintain ongoing relationships with nonprofit agency staff, as well as clients served.

- Create a safe environment for pastoral counseling. This includes maintaining standards of ethical behavior, ability to be respectful of all cultures, as well as a dedication to service in a multi-faith setting.

- Attend weekly meetings with OCC's Executive Director to report on the program, either in person, via phone, or video conferencing.

- Participate in community awareness and programmatic efforts of OCC, as requested by the Executive Director and Director of Engagement.

- All other duties as assigned by the Executive Director.

COMPETENCIES

- Strong Pastoral Care

- Strategic Thinking

- Ethical Conduct

- Technical Capacity

- Collaborative Work Ethic

- Independently Motivated

- Professional Development

- Communications

QUALIFICATIONS

- Master's Degree from an ATS Accredited Theological School, in Divinity, Theology, Leadership, or another related program.

- Be in good standing within the individual's faith tradition or denomination.

- 3-5+ years in ministry, chaplaincy, nonprofit leadership, or another relevant field.

- Be highly detail-oriented, thorough, and self-motivated with excellent communications skills, including grammar, editing, and content development.

- Possess the ability to multi-task and establish priorities.

- Possess strong commitment to Interfaith respect, cultural openness, and affirming theological viewpoints, as well as adhere to ethics of confidentiality.

- Possess proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite productivity software, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Publisher.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- CPE units in addition to Master's Level Theological Degree.

- Experience working in a pastoral care role.

- Experience working with people of different races, ages, sexes, religious affiliations, creeds, identity, and socio-economic backgrounds a plus.

ADDENDUM 2

Potential Funding Structure