



## SPIRITUAL CARE AWARENESS WEEK

OCTOBER 20-26, 2024

**E**VERY DAY across Canada spiritual care professionals offer their ministries in health care settings, university and college campuses, corrections facilities, in the Canadian Forces, and in social service settings. Sometimes known as Chaplains or Pastoral Care ministers, these lay people and clergy work to bring the light of Christ, the love of God, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit to many. Theirs is a 'worldly' ministry, one that brings the 'sanctuary' of church into the daily lives, sufferings, challenges and joys of people in those outside-of-the-church-walls places where those encounters take place. With loving compassion and tender strength, they hold space for the sacred and tend to the presence of grace, often at times of crisis, pain, and confusion.

The Anglican Church of Canada supports a number of chaplaincies, from the Military Ordinariate to Campus Ministry personnel and Anglican Health Care Chaplains; there are many more working in varied contexts across the country.

Especially during *Spiritual Care Awareness Week*, annually in late October, we encourage dioceses to honour and to offer prayer for those who exercise ministries of spiritual care. We offer our gratitude and call God's blessings upon their ministries. We thank God for the ways these ministers serve as the hands and feet and heart of Christ in the world that God loves so deeply.

A couple of vignettes here attached provide a window into some of the realities in the ministries of Anglican Health Care Chaplains, and a Litany is provided that may be offered during the Prayers of the People.

Additional information about the Ministry of Spiritual Care can be found through the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC): <https://spiritualcare.ca/>.

*Although the work of Spiritual Care chaplains is rarely visible to public parish life it is an essential ministry of caring for those isolated by illness or incarceration; those serving for our safety; and those engaged in education. They touch the lives of families at so many critical times when life is raw and the hope and promise of the gospel is needed.*

*Pray for all who offer themselves in these ministries – and honour their vocations during Spiritual Care Week (October 20-26). —Archbishop Linda Nicholls*



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## A Litany for Spiritual Care Awareness Week

Scripture tells us ...

... from God's fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. *John 1:16*

We pray that each spiritual care provider and chaplain continue to know the grace of God in their ministries. May their skill, care, and wisdom be God's grace poured out. Amen.

Scripture tells us ...

...Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. *Matthew 5:8*

We pray that chaplains and spiritual care providers continue to see God in the faces of those whom they serve. May their hearts remain joyful in God's promises and at peace in God's providence. Amen.

Scripture tells us ...

...For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. *Jeremiah 29:11*

We pray that spiritual care providers and chaplains may be renewed in hope. May the flame of their faith in human goodness and witness to a future of promise burn brightly in spite of the darkness of disease and suffering, social injustice and cultural division. Amen.

Scripture tells us ...

...The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace. *Psalms 29:11*

We pray that chaplains and spiritual care providers may continue to feel God's power and steadfast presence in their ministries. May they always find refuge in their weariness and renewed strength in God's peace. Amen.

Scripture tells us ...

...And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. *Philippians 1:6*

We pray in gratitude for chaplains and those who provide spiritual care. May they know themselves to be a part of a ministry that has existed before them and will outlast them. May that knowledge allow them to do the good work of their vocation with full hearts and unfettered spirits. Amen.

—Adapted from *The Catholic Health Association of the United States, 2023*



*Stained glass window of St Martin of Tours,  
from St Martin's Church, Stoney Middleton, Derbyshire*

## St Martin of Tours and Chaplaincy

**T**HERE IS A variety of nomenclatures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for folks who work in Spiritual Care departments of hospitals, hospices and long-term care homes. In many ways it is about our search to introduce ourselves to folks of many faiths or none, with a myriad of spiritualities, values and cultures, to support their understanding of who we are and what we do.


Spiritual Care Provider or Spiritual Care Practitioner are the choices made by many. I have struggled with my naming. I know I want to name who I am and what calls me to work in healthcare. I began more intentionally to reflect about spirituality, healing, care and the connection to me as an Anglican who works full time in a hospital Spiritual Care department. I am doing my best to prayerfully respond to Christ's call to love, to live well together in creation and to participate in healing.

I pray to remember that in creation, as embodied spirits, we are all part of one another. This is my daily prayer that I carry to guide my being with patients, families and staff. I call myself Chaplain. The origin of this name expresses clearly what I do, and who I am. So, when people ask me what a chaplain is, I know what the name means to me.

What is a chaplain? Where does the word come from? The story of St Martin of Tours (316 – 397 AD) answers both these questions. The story tells me the meaning of hospitality and the connection to my hospital work, and my vocation. When I learned Martin's story, I found a devotion to inform my days as a chaplain. I recently discovered a blog, *A brave faith*, written by Kieran Bohan, who is a chaplain in England. He too is inspired by St. Martin of Tours, who provides Kieran's understanding of who he is as a chaplain. The following quotation is from the blog.

"Martin was a bishop in Gaul (modern-day France) who shunned the privileged status of that role to live in a monk's cell in the wilderness. Before Martin became a Christian, at fifteen he was forced to join the army of the occupying Roman Empire.

One day Martin was on duty in Gaul when he noticed a beggar, freezing in the cold. Martin, moved with compassion, went to his aid. He took off his thick army cloak and cut it in two with his sword. One piece he wrapped around the beggar and the other he kept for himself.



This act echoes the ‘Golden Rule’ common to many spiritual traditions, which Jesus called one of the two greatest commandments: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mark 12:29)....This story reveals that it is at the heart of all chaplaincy everywhere.

That night Martin had a dream in which he saw the beggar with the piece of his cloak on his shoulders. But in his dream the beggar was Jesus. Sulpicius records that in Martin’s dream-vision, Jesus said to the angels, ‘Here is Martin, the Roman soldier – he has clothed me.’ This recalls the parable of the sheep and goats from Matthew’s gospel: ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’ (Matthew 25:40). So chaplains are called to honour each person as a beloved child of God, made in the image of God (though they may not know that for themselves), as if they were Jesus among us today.

This vision of Jesus as the beggar transformed Martin, convincing him to give his life in service to the poor and neglected in his society as a monk. Finally he was able to leave the army to take up his calling, becoming a fierce advocate for the powerless to whom injustices were easily done.

The people loved Martin and wanted him as their bishop, but Martin wanted to remain a monk and refused to take the office. So they tricked him by sending someone to beg Martin to come to visit his supposedly sick wife. When Martin arrived in the city, he was carried by the crowd into the church, where bishops had gathered to consecrate him. The bishops were repelled by this dirty, dishevelled man and thought his unkempt appearance proved him unfit for the office. But the people insisted – they hadn’t chosen Martin for his outward appearance, but for his compassion, humility and commitment to justice. Overwhelmed by the acclamations of the people, the bishops consecrated Martin as bishop of Tours.

Martin’s activism for the poor and love of people was matched by his commitment to solitude and prayer. He developed regional spiritual communities as places of hospitality for anyone, regardless of background, who sought direction or sanctuary. He instituted the practice, which continues today, of the bishop making pastoral visits to each of his communities at least once a year. This visitation was significant at a time when those in authority, who lived in the towns and cities, often neglected country people.

He lived simply and humbly, resisting status-seeking for himself. When he died, Martin was buried at his request in the cemetery for poor people. The Frankish Kings kept Martin’s half of the cloak he had shared with the beggar as a precious relic. The guardian of this cloak became known as the *capellanus* in Latin, derived from the word *cappa*, meaning a cloak or cape. *Cappellanus* came to the English language via Old French as ‘chaplain’. The place where the relic of Martin’s torn cloak became known as the *capella*, which is the origin of the word ‘chapel’. The values and example of St Martin began to provide a legacy for the work of chaplains since the inception of the early European universities.

St Martin of Tours, reputed as the founder of the vocation of Christian chaplaincy, is the chaplain’s prototype. He often travelled to the countryside, meeting ordinary people neglected by town officials. So chaplaincy today is also a fluid occupation, not confined to a desk and appointment schedule, but mobile, unobtrusively engaging with people in their everyday life, particularly those in need of support. Chaplaincy is defined by the same compassionate impulse as the incident of Martin with the beggar, and chaplaincy sees such acts as sacred.

The hospitality of St Martin changed the lives of the people he met. To sustain their transformed lives, he encouraged them to form communities of hospitality, in which Christians offered hospitality to each other as a context for hospitality to others.”

The prayer for hospitality and love I carry with me are imaged in my mind as the chapel on my back. My own form of a St. Martin’s cape.

—The Rev. Canon Joanne Davies, Chaplain





## Pictures from the Ministries of Anglican Health Care Spiritual Care Professionals:

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**I** **HAS BEEN** said Health Care Chaplains are not well understood by their institutions or their faith communities. It may be so. I have worked for more than a decade in both acute and long-term care communities and I now specialize in dementia care. We have jobs that are hard to define. We search for personhood in people who cannot always clearly articulate their needs at any given time. We help people make sense and meaning out of their stories. We attend the sacred times of life, including crises and death. I attend to people's spirits. It is very hard to completely define on a CV.

Some of my weekly tasks include placing a chair in exactly the right place so one resident feels safe and comfortable enough to attend worship. Another, when a resident exhibits "disturbing behaviours," I listen to hear what is behind them and validate and comfort her while frazzled staff attempt to stop the outward disturbance.

Some of the most sacred work I do however, is with families and residents at this life's end. I often receive the privilege of learning more about who the resident was before they arrived at this stage of life. I also am sometimes able to help send them to God. One such experience was when I was called at 3am to attend a hospital. I remember being a bit grumbly until I saw how the family was distraught. A 90+ woman had been imminently dying for five days. They were at their wits end watching. Finally someone had realized she'd not had prayer, something which had been vital to her all her life. I began to pray and heard soft sobbing from some of the family as soon as I did. When I looked up the family spokesperson said, "She died as you were praying, we can never thank you enough." I was awed by the privilege I had been given that night.

Perhaps the most stunning and difficult death in recent memory was a woman I'd known for years through my work. The family had become close as well. I had been attentive during her dying process. As I came to check in, the staff waved me in urgently saying she'd died, but when I arrived her daughter, also a cleric, was in obvious crisis. After an eleven-minute span, the resident had begun breathing again. Her pulse had come back strong. I'd never seen anything like it! The daughter was exhausted and traumatized. I stayed. I witnessed another long span of non-breathing. Then their own pastor attended and began to pray with her, and her son came. She still hung on. I prayed a strong directed prayer asking God to be a channel for whatever the resident needed to let go. Immediately I felt a surge like a freight train hitting me, then it rose and peace settled in my head like a hug and was gone. So was she.

I feel that what we as chaplains may do best is channel from God whatever the residents need. We meet the people at their place of need. It is hard to describe. Some days, it is hard to do but I would not want to be called to anything else.

—The Reverend Chris Salstrom, Rupert's Land



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**I AM A CHAPLAIN** in a hospital setting in Northern Ontario. Recently I read that addressing a person's spiritual life is the most overlooked factor in relieving physical and emotional pain. This was reinforced when I met Bill who was diagnosed with COVID, near the end of the pandemic and I saw *again* how valuable our work is.

Bill wanted to see a chaplain. To prevent the spread of COVID, patients with COVID were seen by a limited number of people – usually nursing staff. However, the nurse called and asked if I would be willing to see Bill. “Certainly,” I said, “Just help me to dress properly before entering the room.”

It was in the dressing that the severity and isolation of COVID were reinforced. At the same time the important gift of fellowship was highlighted. It probably took about five minutes to get the gear on – gown, gloves, hair cap, a special mask with a face shield. I had to find a place for my gear. Regardless of the reason that I am called, I bring prayers for healing and anointing oil, just in case they are needed. I also had to bring the chaplaincy phone. Finally I was ready to go into the room when I realized I had forgotten my eye glasses!

Bill was weak. It took tremendous effort for him to speak. He fatigued quickly. I cut to the chase and asked him if he wanted prayers for healing and anointing. “Yes,” he whispered and gently nodded his head.

As I reached for my prayers and oil, I told him I had forgotten my glasses. With a little chuckle he said...“Surely you must know the words.”

After I said the prayers we sat together quietly. I held his hand. He whispered, “You know, I love that song Amazing Grace.” We sang and hummed it together many times very quietly. Then he asked, “What is that word-wretch- what does it mean?” Briefly I explained it, Then he said, “That is me.”

Bill gave me an edited version of his life. He had attended church minimally as a young person, now had little contact with his ex-wife, and two kids. He loved his alcohol. His last residence was a single room in an old dilapidated motel. Now scared, lonely and near the end of his journey he wanted to reconnect with God.

We sang the song again. Upon hearing “it was grace that set you free,” Bill said, “I am feeling some peace, now.”

I met with Bill two more times before he died. He lapsed into that unconscious state, not awake or speaking but hearing what is said. I sang Amazing Grace and a few other songs and said prayers.

There are times I am at a loss of what to say or do. However, with Bill and many others, I realized *again* that the value of our ministry is our presence and practicing the ministry of presence. We are the messengers who have the privilege of being with people - like Bill -reminding them that God is front and center now in this final part of their earthly journey.

—The Reverend Beth Hewson, Diocese of Algoma