

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (Rev. Sarah Roelofs, Director)

I. Introduction

For over 100 years, the CRCNA has become increasingly invested in chaplains. In 1917, Rev. Leonard Trap became the first CRC chaplain as a volunteer in the US Army. Since then, the CRCNA has called 337 chaplains to serve in the military, hospitals, prisons, hospices, workplaces, and other institutions. The denomination provides support through Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (CCM), which provides endorsement, training, and advocacy for chaplains in their ministry.

Chaplaincy has grown particularly fast recently, as the number of endorsed chaplains has increased by 25% in just the past five years. Today, the CRCNA endorses 144 active chaplains that minister to an estimated 2 million individuals each year. This growth is projected to continue in the coming years due to a growing number of people pursuing careers in chaplaincy and an increased need for chaplains and other spiritual care providers in institutions and communities throughout North America.

A. Mandate - Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional and specialized settings (Acts of Synod 2003, p. 685-687)

B. Mission - Chaplaincy and Care Ministry's mission, overseen by the Council of Delegates, is to implement, regulate, and develop the denomination's commitment to chaplaincy. We carry out this mission by:

- a. overseeing the denominational endorsement process
- b. providing pastoral support and advocacy for endorsed chaplains
- c. facilitating the shared supervision with chaplains' calling churches
- d. informing and educating the CRCNA on chaplaincy and related ministries
- e. administering training grants
- f. recruiting chaplains
- g. conducting training
- h. promoting the development of chaplaincy
- i. participating in national endorsement-related organizations

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

1. Servant leadership

CCM has seen a large increase in the number of people inquiring about chaplaincy, specialized training, and endorsement. In the past five years, the number of inquiring individuals has more than tripled. In 2019, CCM encouraged this through six colleges and seminary visits, personal meetings with forty-two individuals, and interactions with 180 others who were interested in chaplaincy. Through these connections, CCM guides individuals as they apply for endorsement, complete specialized training, and connect with others working in their field of interest.

Interested individuals represent a diversity of backgrounds, ministry experiences, and vocational goals.

Chaplain leaders are specially trained for their ministry. To work in clinical settings, chaplains complete a minimum of 800 hours of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or equivalent training. This is in addition to formal theological and biblical training, and it requires time and energy to acquire. CCM supports these new and future chaplains through a donor-driven development fund. In 2019, CCM granted \$30,613 in funds to twenty-seven individuals for specialized training.

Through endorsement, chaplains are taking opportunities to become leaders in their communities. Thirty-seven CRC chaplains are board certified through several professional chaplain organizations, which demonstrates their advanced skills, and enables them to step into leadership and specialized roles in their workplaces. Four chaplains are Clinical Educators, training dozens of new chaplains annually. Fifteen military chaplains are field grade officers who have significant responsibility leading others and advising their commanders in matters spiritual wellness and moral responsibility. Many more serve in important roles on ethics committees, advising managers and advocating for peoples' needs on a large scale. Through the leadership of chaplains, the church has a significant influence in the communities and institutions around them.

2. Gospel Proclamation and Worship

Chaplains proclaim the Gospel through their work with individuals every day. They enter into the lives of people in crisis, bringing the peace, healing, and grace of Christ to those that the church otherwise cannot reach. This work is different from other forms of ministry, and has unique challenges that can be isolating for chaplains. CCM addresses these challenges in three major ways: an annual conference, monthly Zoom meetings, and meaningful individual interactions.

CCM supports chaplains through hosting an annual Chaplains Training conference. In 2019, 131 people attended this event. Several main speakers gave opportunities for further learning in specialized areas. Daily worship and breakout groups enabled chaplains to have fellowship and share about their lives and ministry. In addition, Chaplains Training 2019 included a new session entitled Tools for Care, in which four CRC chaplains, gave brief, TEDx-style presentations, dynamically presenting a tool, experience, or resource from their ministry. Chaplains can attend other conferences, but many choose to come to this one because it is deeply rooted in their faith tradition and community.

In addition to an annual gathering, chaplains benefit from connecting with one another on a regular basis. Since October, CCM has been hosting monthly Zoom meetings. These hour-long meetings focus on unique topics relevant to different areas of chaplain ministry. Endorsed chaplains are invited to attend, share stories, trade resources, and offer encouragement to one another in their ministry. In three months, thirty-two different chaplains have attended a meeting, with seven people attending multiple times. Through these meetings, CRCNA chaplains are connecting across great distances, finding support and encouragement from each other.

While enabling chaplains to connect with one another, CCM provides individual support throughout the year. In 2019, Chaplaincy and Care totaled 2835 distinct interactions with chaplains, including 384 meetings and visits to individuals in Michigan, Ontario, Texas, Iowa, Edmonton, Germany, and Italy. For further communication, CCM provides regular updates through a bi-monthly newsletter, email conversations, and phone and video meetings. A closed Facebook group and the Network are used almost daily for posting resources, sharing stories, and providing encouragement. Through these ministry activities, CCM encourages chaplains to provide spiritual and emotional care in contextually appropriate ways to those God has entrusted to their care.

3. Faith Formation

Chaplains serve throughout our communities, hospitals, prisons, long-term care facilities, and workplaces. Chaplains also serve in the military, hospice care, veterans administration, pastoral counseling, and more. These communities need chaplains for their ability to handle crises, have difficult yet meaningful conversations, and care for people from many different backgrounds.

Chaplains are trained to provide care to people in difficult situations. In a given day, a military chaplain provides counseling to a soldier having suicidal thoughts. A hospital chaplain cares for

someone who has just received a diagnosis, helping them to process their purpose and trajectory in life. A pastoral counselor helps someone through a relationship crisis. A chaplain in a nursing home visits with a dementia patient who feels like the world has forgotten them. CRCNA chaplains touch the lives of around 5,500 individuals each day, meeting them in any situation they face. They help people struggling with dying, addiction, depression, stress, grief, and more. They are there when people need to ask hard questions about life and faith. They pray with people, and direct them to resources and faith communities. In this way, chaplains embody Christ's grace in the world.

As North American communities become more secular, the presence of chaplains becomes more crucial. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, 29% of Canadians are increasingly becoming "religiously unaffiliated", and about half seldom or never go to church or other worship services. In the U.S., only 36% attend worship services once a week, and 30% only once a month to a few times a year. While fewer people are going to church, spiritual needs still abound. People struggle to find meaning in a world that is constantly changing and filled with death, grief, and fear. Chaplains go beyond the walls of the church to meet these people in their spiritual crises, bring them hope, and offer the support of the church.

III. Connecting with churches: Our Journey 2020 (Ministry Plan)

Chaplains connect with the church through calling, resources, and support. Local churches empower chaplains to serve in specialized settings. CCM facilitates the relationship between the chaplain and their calling church, enabling chaplains to get much needed support in their ministry and connecting churches with important spiritual resources. Through this relationship, the church can effectively extend their mission into unique areas of their surrounding community.

The CRCNA endorses 144 chaplains representing 107 individual CRC churches. Endorsement is an essential process for a denomination to ensure that their chaplains have the training, experience, and skills to flourish in specialized ministry. CCM oversees the endorsement process, reviewing a prospective chaplain's life and ministry, and giving them the tools to ensure that they are ready for chaplain ministry. Endorsements are renewed every five years, ensuring that chaplains continue in their work and are sustained by their local churches.

CCM supports the relationship between the calling church and chaplain through a Covenant of Joint Supervision. This document, signed by the chaplain, church council, and the director of

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, demonstrates the church's commitment to support and supervise the chaplains' life and doctrine. The chaplain agrees to report regularly on their ministry and to participate in the church through pastoral care or leadership. CCM agrees to assist in the supervision of the chaplain, while also providing specific resources, tools, and support for their ministry.

Beyond local churches, CCM ensures that chaplains have a meaningful relationship with the denomination. Chaplains share their unique skills and experiences, providing greater depth into challenging topics such as death and dying, caring for the elderly, and facing addiction. The denomination's support is also crucial for chaplains to be successful in their ministry. Every November, churches observe Chaplaincy and Care Sunday. On this day, congregations recognize and support the work of chaplains in their community through education, prayer, and financial gifts to Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. Chaplains are invited to preach and share about their experience. It is a meaningful experience for everyone involved, and it reinforces chaplains' faith and passion for their ministry.

IV. Chaplaincy statistics

A. The Chaplaincy and Care Ministry Advisory Council and the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry present the following statistics:

1. Total CRCNA endorsed chaplains: 144 (full-time 92; part-time 41; endorsed and seeking employment 11); in the United States: 120; in Canada: 24
2. 13 chaplains were newly endorsed in 2019: Kenneth Krause, Scott Van Voorst, Paul Van Dyken, Abigail De Zeeuw, Amie Spriensma, Victor Perez-Ballesteros, Peter Janssens, Sea Ho, Derrick Lee, Chantal Huinink, Steven Agler, John Luth, and Israel Alvaredo
2. The CRCNA supports 26 military chaplains: 14 active duty in the United States; 2 active duty in Canada; 4 in the US National Guard and Reserves; 1 Civil Air Patrol; 5 military chaplain candidates
3. Eight chaplains retired in 2019: Rev. Perrin Werner, Rev. Siemen Speelman, Rev. Edward Hommes, Rev Douglas Einfeld, Rev. Louis Korf, Rev. Frederic Koning, Chaplain Carol Flietstra, Chaplain Barbara Schultze

4. In the past year, military chaplains who have served, or are currently serving, overseas are: Jon Averill, Richard Hill, David Jeltema, Joseph Kamphuis, Lloyd Wicker, and Sang Joon (Tim) Won.