

CHAPLAINCY TASK FORCE REPORT:

A
PLACE
OF
GRACE

A Witness to God's Grace in the World.

February 22, 2001

A PLACE OF GRACE
A Metaphor for Chaplain Ministry

Grace is a place where....

The gifts of God are freely recognized and honored in everything.

Everyone is free to discover life, learning to love and trust.

All experience being valued, loved, and accepted.

Men and women discover and develop the gifts that God the creator-redeemer bestows on human beings.

Every child is valued, treated with respect and dignity because she belongs to a caring community.

Gifts within persons are discovered, explored and given expression in unlimited creative ways.

People find hope and meaning in the midst of pain and anguish.

God's justice and mercy make reconciliation possible in situations of abuse, terror and retribution.

Jesus Christ through God's Spirit brings redemption and healing.

One day all things and people will be inscribed with "Holy to the Lord."

**Where God is worshipped, and gratefully adored
as the giver of every good and perfect gift.**

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I. INTRODUCTION

By his Spirit and Word God calls the church, individually and corporately, to bear witness to the redemptive reign of Christ in the world he loves. The Christian Reformed Church in North America embraces Chaplaincy Ministries in its vision and mission statements as it underscores the provision of nurture, care, advocacy, and justice for all God's children. In response to this mission and to the recommendation of the Board of Trustees that Chaplaincy Ministries be placed in the administrative framework of Home Missions, we offer the following material for your reflection on chaplaincy as “a place of grace.”

Many chaplains first heard of the Board's recommendation at the 1999 Chaplains Conference. At that time, reservations and concerns about this change in administration and governance were expressed, and an opportunity to review this recommendation was requested and granted. We were heard, and we are thankful.

On August 5, 1999, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director of Ministries, convened a special consultation group of chaplains and Home Missions personnel to consider the Board's recommendation. The members of this group were: Peter Borgdorff, Convener; Chaplains: Nell DeBoer, Jake Heerema, John Hoogland, Herm Keizer, Ron Peterson, Curt Roelofs and Siebert VanHouten; Home Missions: John Rozeboom, Bill VanGroningen and John VanTil.

The group decided to appoint a Chaplains Task Force, with a mandate to review previous missional statements, to collate synodical statements regarding chaplaincy ministry, to articulate a theological statement of mission for the CRC chaplaincy; and to reflect on these statements in relation to the mission and vision of Home Missions. The purpose of this mandate was to assess how Chaplaincy Ministries might fit in the Home Missions structure.

On September 24, 1999, Craig Van Gelder, hired by the denomination to facilitate the work of the Task Force, met with a design team of seven chaplains: Stan Bultman, Al Dreise, Jake Heerema, Hank Post, Curt Roelofs, Al Schipper and Siebert VanHouten. These seven nominated the following to serve on the Chaplains Task Force: Al Dreise, Carol Flietstra, Jake Heerema, Ray Hommes, Marv Hoogland, Herm Keizer, John Lamsma, Curt Roelofs, Al Schipper and Siebert Van Houten. They recommended the following protocol as a way of fulfilling the mandate: 1) developing a clear identity, 2) developing organizational capacity, and 3) reviewing organizational structure. Craig Van Gelder wrote up a protocol, defining the process in three stages with a timetable for each. The protocol was reviewed and approved by Peter Borgdorff and accepted by the Chaplains Task Force at its first meeting on November 16, 1999.

PHASE I: Research and exploring the Issues. October 1999 - February/March 2000.

During this phase, the Task Force gathered information relevant to chaplaincy ministry and studied issues that related to the specific work of CRC Chaplains. A list of areas/issues studied is attached to this document as an appendix. This research and study helped the Task Force gain clarity on the ministry of chaplains and provided a database for formulating the values, mission, vision and strategy described in this document. We met with Dr. Dan DeWitt and Rev. Bob Heerspink, representatives of the dissolved Pastoral Ministry Board. We learned that the

operative words in any restructuring are accountability, governance and administration. We also learned that a clear identity, a common understanding of that identity and open lines of communication are vital if a governance relationship is to be effective.

We also met with Dr. Peter Borgdorff and two Board of Trustees members, Revs. Duane Kelderman and Al Hoksbergen, to make sure that we had a clear understanding of our mandate. The question we needed to address was how to fit within the Home Missions administrative structure, not whether or not we fit. We reviewed the history of CRC chaplaincy, including the synodical decisions that defined its governance and impacted its administration.

In order to involve as many chaplains as possible in the process, the Task Force developed a communication strategy and budget, which was presented to and approved by Dr. Peter Borgdorff. A series of cluster group meetings, e-mail messages, and other mailings kept all CRC chaplains informed and enabled them to participate in the process of articulating a theology of chaplaincy.

PHASE II: Defining Values, Mission, and Vision. March - June 2000.

During this phase, the Task Force used the research and study information developed in Phase I to define a theology of Chaplaincy that reflects the varied ministry settings where our nearly 100 chaplains serve. We affirm our deep theological grounding in the Reformed faith. We celebrate the highly effectual Reformed world-and-life view that is rooted in the Scriptures. We highlight the reality that chaplains embody divine authority and presence in a world where the divine often seems absent. We capture the heart of chaplaincy in our mission and vision statements. We use the metaphor “A Place of Grace” to describe chaplaincy in the CRC. We tell stories to illustrate the person-centered character of this specialized ministry. This material was presented to Peter Borgdorff, the consultation group and to our colleagues in chaplaincy ministry for their review, and their input was solicited.

PHASE III: Focusing Strategy and Reviewing Structure. September 2000 - January 2001.

In this phase the Task Force reviewed the input received and revised “A Place of Grace.” We developed a strategic ministry plan for chaplaincy that reflected our values, mission and vision statements. We asked what structure would be needed so Chaplaincy could best achieve these goals. Realizing that form follows function, we listed the non-negotiables of chaplaincy and proposed four administrative models, each requiring some restructuring of Home Mission if a fit was to be achieved.

Peter Borgdorff recommended that a Conversation Committee, later called the Implementation Committee, be appointed to discuss specific structural concerns. Peter served as the convener, and Craig Van Gelder served as the facilitator. Jake Heerema, John Lamsma, Al Schipper and Siebert VanHouten represented CRC chaplains. John Rozeboom and Bill Van Groningen represented CRC Home Missions. This committee met on October 23 and November 23, 2000 and on January 9, 2001. At its January 9 meeting, a mutual agreement was reached that the theological/missional gap between Chaplaincy and Home Missions could not be bridged and that the Home Missions framework would not offer the best support for Chaplaincy Ministries.

The Implementation Committee will report this outcome to the March meeting of the Board of Trustees. Along with that report, we submit this document with the prayer that it will help the reader see how, through the ministry of its chaplains, our denomination creates “ A Place of Grace” in situations where God so often seems absent.

I. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CRC CHAPLAINCY

The spirit and courage of the immigrant reside deep in the Christian Reformed psyche. Our ancestors left the security of the known and came to North America to seek freedom and opportunity in the unknown. They brought with them a strong commitment to family and an unwavering loyalty to a religious heritage that produced a vitality that enabled them, even in the face of many crises, to make a new life in a new world.

This commitment was the driving force behind the effort to gather “our people,” meeting them as they disembarked in places like Hoboken and Halifax, and moving them inland to form Christian Reformed communities all across the continent. These newly established communities continually saw crisis as opportunities for further ministry. Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen, who served as a part-time chaplain at Bethesda for 26 years, wrote:

In 1913 the new Bethesda opened its doors. It is a monument to the Christian charity of our people, who have always contributed generously to its needs. For about 26 years I served in the hospital as spiritual adviser....Once a week I went to visit the patients, especially those who were confined to their bed.... It took tact and grace to minister to those sick. One needs an understanding, sympathetic heart as pastor of those sorely afflicted people. Calling upon patients week after week, sometimes for years, and going from room to room speaking and praying with them easily becomes routine work. I have caught myself being too much in a hurry, and taking out my watch in the presence of the sick. That, of course, is all wrong. One also has to watch his prayers. Praying five or six times in succession tends to make our speaking to God a formal, cold affair. In order to pray with and for others we ourselves should often be found in the secret place of the Most High.

Later the same concern for people in crisis was evident in the establishment of Pine Rest Christian Hospital for the mentally ill, a hospital where Rev. Ralph Heynen served as full-time chaplain for years.

The same driving force of commitment was evident in times of military conflict. Rev. Leonard Trap and Rev. C.H. Oldenberg served as CRC chaplains in World War I. With the outbreak of World War II, there was a concerted effort to meet the spiritual needs of “our boys” serving around the globe. However, those early military chaplains encountered a major problem. “Our boys” were so scattered that most of the time the CRC chaplain had none or only one of “our boys” in his vicinity. Thus, our chaplains responded to the needs of young men and women from a variety of faith communities. When the War ended, returning chaplains brought home a concept of ministry that significantly expanded the notion of ministry beyond “our boys” to include ministry to those beyond the boundaries of our own heritage.

Chaplains cannot claim exclusive ownership of this expanding concept of ministry. The desire to proclaim the Good News was evident in a number of areas. In the years following the War, the CRC established new churches for the many post-war immigrants who came to Canada. It expanded missionary efforts at home and around the world and set up maritime ministries and campus ministries. It also created and expanded educational institutions, published quality

religious literature and developed a worldwide ministry of radio broadcasting. This ministry expansion was more evidence of the commitment of healthy congregations of faithful people in both the United States and Canada.

During these exciting decades of expansion, our chaplains added their unique contributions to the mix. With the War finally over, troops were cut back and many chaplains were decommissioned. At this point they faced two questions. First, what would they do when they returned to civilian life? Some became chaplains in VA hospitals and at secular universities. Others became teachers in colleges and seminaries. Second, would there be any future for the CRC ministry of chaplaincy now that the war had ended? The number of CRC military chaplains did diminish, but the demand for chaplains in all three branches of military – the army, the navy and the air force – continued. New chaplains continued to be recruited from our seminary, and younger men and women are entering the military chaplaincy.

The demand for chaplains increased in civilian institutions also. Younger men and women sought specialized training to serve in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, hospice organizations, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, counseling centers, and even in business establishments as industrial chaplains. By 1973 CRC chaplaincy had expanded to the point where Harold Bode was appointed its full-time Executive Director. Under Bode's leadership, both military and civilian chaplaincies continued to grow. Today there are approximately 100 CRC chaplains, a number worth noting because it represents almost ten per cent of our active clergy.

Canadian Chaplaincy developed in its own unique manner, unencumbered by the strict separation of church and state found in the United States. Following the British church/state model, the Canadian government placed chaplains in many civilian institutions. Very influential in this process was Rev. Carl Tuyl, who represented the CRC in the highest levels of provincial government. Other CRC chaplains also played prominent roles. For example, in Ontario three of the nine chaplains appointed as supervisors to all chaplains were CRC.

As the denomination responded to the need to minister in many areas, the presence of chaplains created "places of grace" in such diverse settings as:

- military bases around the world,
- prisons,
- hospitals and nursing homes,
- hospice work,
- educational and treatment centers for alcohol and substance abuse,
- counseling centers,
- retirement homes,
- centers for training of the developmentally disabled,
- industrial settings,
- medical clinic serving the poor.

All ministries of the CRC share in a common theological commitment to the Reformed faith, and in all of them our denomination proclaims and embodies the grace of God as it witnesses to her own people and to the world. Each ministry adds its contribution to an incredibly diverse and beautiful tapestry that constitutes the ministry and theology of our denomination, thereby enhancing the richness of our common faith. Chaplaincy, too, provides a unique lens through which that faith is viewed and embodied.

To feel the pulse of CRC chaplaincy, we first address the essence of what chaplaincy is; next we describe chaplains as they carry out their special ministries in Christ's name; and finally, we examine in more detail the actual practice of chaplaincy.

II. WHAT IS CHAPLAINCY? WHO ARE CHAPLAINS? “A PLACE OF GRACE”

The story of Chaplaincy is deeply rooted in God’s own story told in scripture. At its heart chaplaincy is a healing, reconciling ministry of God, an expression and extension of God’s activity and mission in the world from the beginning of time. It is a pastoral ministry in specialized settings to people who are hurting or in crisis, uprooted or dislocated.

Chaplains embody, or make present, the grace of God to these people where they live or work. This “ministry of presence” frequently occurs in places where God’s presence is least recognized or expected. Like the ministry of Christ, it is an incarnational ministry that is holistic in word and deed. Like Christ, chaplains find occasion to speak of God’s grace. Like Christ chaplains “embody” the grace of God to hurting people. Because of the presence of chaplains the very settings in which they minister and the institutions of which they are a part become surprising places of grace.

What characterizes a “place of grace”? What happens in a “place of grace”? Where is such a place of grace to be found?

The Garden of Eden was a “place of grace.” Eden was a place where the man and the woman discovered the entire world as a gift from God.

A place of grace is a place where

life can be lived in gratitude,

trust is total,

love is experienced in everything,

peace--*shalom*--flows deep and undisturbed,

every life is a gift from God to be used

for God's glory and our enjoyment,

God and persons live in fellowship,

the entire cosmos displays the glory of

God.

Yes, the Garden of Eden was a place of grace, a place where the gifts of God were for the people of God.

The world as we know it is not much a place of grace. The world has become a place of un-grace, a place full of dis-grace. In many ways the holy place has become a most unholy place. Darkness has suppressed light, and bondage has replaced freedom. Suspicion has supplanted trust. Injustice and retribution have displaced justice and mercy. Fear has replaced peace, and *shalom* seems absent. We limit and diminish ourselves. No, the world as we know it is not much

Music touches feelings that words cannot. She was 93. She had said good-bye to a son, a daughter and two husbands and now was facing her own decline and death.

We spoke of her faith and church experiences. She especially missed music. She said, “I don’t know why I miss singing because I never sang very well; I just enjoyed it.”

Together we sang her favorites, “Great is Thy Faithfulness”, “Morning by Morning” and “Jesus Loves Me,” the confession of a child.

That morning we sang our prayer, too. As I held her wrinkled hand, she smiled and joined me in inviting her Precious Lord to “take my hand, lead me on, help me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn... lead me home.”

She thanked me. And her roommate, barely visible under the bedcovers, thanked us both for the morning songs.

a place of grace.

Can a place of grace be found in a world of dis-grace?

Abraham was a place of grace for all nations. The Lord called him to go to a land that he would show him, a place of grace. God established a covenant with him, a covenant of grace. Abraham himself was to be a place of grace, the one in whom his numerous seed and all the nations of the world would be blessed. In Abraham, the nations would again find a place of grace: the gifts of God for the people of God.

Israel was to be a place of grace. God freed her from bondage and led her through the wilderness to a promised land. That land, flowing with milk and honey, was to be a place of grace for all nations of the world. Her people, who owed their existence as a nation to the grace of God, were called to respond to God's gifts with gratitude. Israel was to be a "light to the Gentiles." She was called to be a place of grace for a world in dis-grace, a gift of God for the people of God. Even in exile, she was called to be a place of grace, a blessing in a foreign land.

Esther was a place of grace in a land of dis-grace. Grace, as a word, is not mentioned in the book devoted to her, nor is the name of God. But Esther was a place of grace for her people in captivity and for King Ahasuerus, who ruled much of the world.

Many others, too, were each a place of grace in their time: Joseph, Tamar, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Hannah, Samuel, Ruth, King David, Bathsheba, Solomon, Josiah, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, to name a few.

God always maintained a place of grace for those who are creatures of his hand, keeping alive the hope that someday the whole earth would again be a place of grace for all people. And yet, in spite of the faithful who bore testimony to the God of grace and called Israel to be a place of grace for the world, Israel did not live up to her calling. Like a faithless spouse, she repeatedly turned to her own ways.

Where will we find a place of grace that will endure, that can be counted on to renew us like a refreshing stream in a desert place?

Jesus Christ, now here is a place of grace. Jesus is the Word made flesh, who made his dwelling among us "full of grace and truth." The virgin womb in which he developed was a place of grace. Bethlehem's stable that cradled him was a place of grace. More than anything, the cross on which he was lifted between heaven and earth, is an enduring place of grace for the entire world. The tomb where he lay is a place of grace. The right hand of God to which he ascended is a place of grace. Wherever Christ is present, there is a place of grace.

In his relationships with sinners our Lord embodied the grace of God. In his person Jesus embodied God's desire that sinners be reconciled to their Creator. The outcast and despised were drawn to him as to a place of grace, a place where they experienced the love of God for them, where they experienced divine acceptance. Jesus was a place of grace where prostitutes and cheating tax collectors were valued, where little children were held in high esteem, where women were not pushed aside but were taught to value themselves and see in themselves the gifts of God.

In Jesus are life and light and liberty. In the Prince of Peace is Shalom, the place where faith, hope, and love are renewed. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. In him the place of grace that Eden was designed to be comes to full expression. Everything that Abraham and Israel were meant to be as a place of grace for the world is found in Jesus. He not only talked about grace and not only related to others out of grace, but in his person he became the place of grace for the world. In him all the gifts of God are present for the people of God. His body...his blood...remember...and believe.

Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit, became a place of grace for the whole world. The Spirit of Christ graces each of us with the fruits of his presence, fruits intended to be discovered, enjoyed and multiplied as in Eden. Yes, there *are* places of grace to be found in this world, for where the Spirit of Christ is present, *there* is a place of grace. *There* is liberty. *There* is life. *There* is faith. *There* is hope. *There* is love.

The Church as the Body of Christ is a place of grace where Christ is still present in the world through his Spirit. In the bride of his beloved son, God is present to will and to work for his good pleasure. The church is a place that incarnates the holiness, faith, love, freedom and hope that come from discovering the gifts of grace of God in everything and everywhere. The worship service is a place of grace. Where church planters call people together to form a new fellowship, there is a place of grace. Where world missionaries call people of many nations to receive and celebrate together all the gifts of God, there is a place of grace. Where relief workers enter a place of poverty to carry out community development, there is a place of grace. Wherever Christians embody the love of God to their neighbors, valuing them for who they are, there is a place of grace. If we look hard enough, we may discover a place of grace in many unexpected places and persons. After all, we do not limit or control where God is present in a place of grace.

I was present when a riot broke out in the prison where I served. The air was thick with tension even after all the prisoners were herded back to their cells. I walked along the rows of cells, greeting the inmates personally but saying little more. It was not anything I said but what I represented that seemed to bring calm to the prisoners. I represented the presence of God, the invasion of the holy into a very unholy, troubled situation.

Where is a place of grace found in our world?

Chaplaincy is a place of grace in this world. Chaplains, too, find their place within God's story as the church commissions them to demonstrate in their persons and in their ministries the church's confession that "our world belongs to God." They diligently seek to discover and uncover God's gifts and presence in the most unlikely places: on battlefields, in prisons and in places where sickness and death, addiction and denial, disabilities and broken relationships are the order of the day. They are beacons of light for those who experience life in all its darkness, heralds of hope for those whose lives are filled with despair and streams of living water for those who thirst to be valued and loved. They bring liberty to those in prison and life to those who serve on the fields of battle. Chaplains establish beachheads of grace in places where grace appears least evident. In all its varied expressions, chaplaincy brings to light the gifts of God for

Ron was shy, full of shame and would blush crimson red at any mention of sex. Six months ago he told me he had called an escort service a few times for sex and companionship. He found that unsatisfying and, at \$400 an hour, much too expensive. Today he said he had to tell me something even though I might not want to see him again after hearing it. He confided that for the last three months he had been calling for the services of an escort. One of them, his favorite, told him he was “too nice a guy to be calling someone like me.” When our hour ended, I scheduled another appointment. He seemed genuinely surprised.

the people of God and becomes a place of grace for many.

This is not an easy calling, for our world is one where grace is often denied and where God’s gifts are minimized or despised. There are times when, conscious that grace and justice walk hand in hand, chaplains must take a persistent stand for justice even in the institutions they serve and in the society in which they live.

As they respond to God’s sovereign working in grace, chaplains participate in the *missio dei*, the mission of God in the world. Their very presence is a sign that God owns every inch of the cosmos and lays claim to every nook and cranny of human life. Their very ministry is a foretaste of the day God’s kingdom will come in its fullness and the entire cosmos will be renewed as a place of grace, full of the glory and light of God. On that day all of us will be fully free to live and love and grow – without restraint. Then all the gifts of God will be for all the people of God.

He had been brought to the hospital by caring relatives. We talked about mom for a while in the lobby because none of us really wanted to walk down the hall to that room with a five-year-old. When I asked if he wanted to see his mom, he nodded his head, and surprisingly, held my hand as we made the journey to the room.

I could feel the tear-stained eyes of the staff as we passed by the nurses’ station. We went through the doorway and we got close to the cart, but he couldn’t see over the railing. I picked him up, and he looked closely into his mother’s blue face. “Your Mommy has died,” I whispered into his ear. “She isn’t going to be able to talk to you anymore.” I was ready to say something else, but his widening eyes brought tears into mine. How could I share with this little boy that he was now an orphan?

He rubbed his mom’s cheek for just a second. Then he hugged me. We turned away, and he helped me shut the door. His life would be different now. So would mine.

III. MINISTRY AS A PLACE OF GRACE: THE PRACTICE OF CHAPLAINCY

When we look at the ministry of chaplaincy, we can first look at three distinctive dimensions of chaplaincy: the added training that is required for ministry as chaplains, the specialized settings in which chaplains carry on their ministry, and the vision that inspires chaplains in their ministry. We can then go on to look at seven characteristics of the actual practice of CRC chaplaincy.

A. THE CONTEXT FOR THE MINISTRY OF CHAPLAINCY

1. The Added Training for Chaplain Ministry

In addition to the education prescribed for all CRC ministers, further specialized training is required of those who enter chaplaincy. Where pastoral counseling is the primary activity, training normally occurs in a broadly ecumenical setting in Clinical Pastoral Education. Along with other Protestants, Roman Catholics, Orthodox priest, Jewish Rabbis, Buddhist priests and Muslim clerics, CRC chaplains-in-training are encouraged to reflect on pastoral care from their own theological perspective. Such reflection gives chaplains self-awareness as they minister to hurting human beings and also an awareness that some of the people to whom they minister may not share their theological perspective. This training prepares chaplains for their unique ministry in which they minister to people of various faith communities. Typically, the hospitals, prisons and other institutions in which chaplains serve provide additional training designed to ensure that chaplains understand the customs, language, values and issues unique to that institution's life and service.

Additional training is also required of military chaplains. They receive special training in the Services Chaplain Schools and the training provided for all officers, so they are able to serve on the commanders' staff.

This added training, unique to chaplaincy, is essential if a chaplain is to obtain the ecclesiastical endorsement that is required of every person who enters chaplaincy.

2. The Settings in Which Chaplains Work

Although some chaplains work within specifically Christian organizations, the majority of Christian Reformed chaplains do not. They work in and for organizations that have a non-sectarian and even secular purpose. As a result, they are members of two distinct and separate organizations. The ministerial mandates come from the denomination and not from the institution that pays them. At the same time chaplains adapt their religiously defined ministerial role to fit the mission, goals, rules and regulations of their respective institutions so that their dual role can function as harmoniously as possible.

As an army chaplain, I was called to the side of a young Jewish soldier who was dying. No Rabbi was available. I read Psalm 23 from our common scripture. It seemed to give him comfort as he breathed his last.

Many chaplains provide ministry in a multi-faith context. Their institutional mandates include performing worship or sacred rituals for those of their own specific faith tradition as well as providing for the religious needs of all faiths represented by their constituents, including working with a diverse, professional staff. Hospital chaplains, for example, are called to provide pastoral care to persons of many different religious faith traditions and work with spiritual directors or mentors belonging to other faiths. Hospice chaplains minister to the dying who may belong to religions far different from their own, but their organization mandates that they address the common spiritual needs of such persons and their families. Military and prison chaplains provide pastoral care to those who are separated from their own religious organizations either by the judicial system or deployed and stationed far from home. Developing and administering a viable, vibrant and complex religious program in this context requires much expertise on the part of chaplains

The ministry of some chaplains is unique because it is provided in what are called total institutional settings, of which prisons and the military are good examples. Such institutions control, to a considerable extent, the lives of the persons involved. Often there is a barrier—a wall, a double fence or a particular kind of clothing—between members and the outside world. There is a sharp distinction between the keepers and the kept, the officers and the enlisted, and this distinction creates a power imbalance. In such settings chaplains must make sure they do not take advantage of their positions.

3. The Vision that Inspires CRC Chaplains

The Bible describes a day when all creation will participate in God's *shalom*. On that day the wolf will live with the lamb, and nations will not train for war anymore. On that day people will live in perfect harmony with God and in unbroken fellowship with each other. It is in the context of that cosmic embracing reality that chaplains offer their persons and their ministries with the heartfelt desire that God's kingdom may come and God's will may be done now on earth. It is in the context of a kingdom that is "not yet" but which is ready breaking through that chaplains seek to be and to create "places of grace."

I walked with the chaplain down the long corridor of a Psychiatric Hospital. We met a lady coming from the other direction. The chaplain stopped to chat with her, and I introduced myself. When she did not mention her name, I asked: "What's your name?" "I don't know," she answered, but then, pointing at the chaplain, she said, "but he knows."

B. THE ACTUAL PRACTICE OF CHAPLAINCY: SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS.

1. Chaplains recognize and address the deepest core of human spirituality.

John Calvin observed, “God himself has implanted in all people a certain understanding of his divine majesty.” All people have a religious core that creates in them the sense that there is an authority and a reality beyond the observable power structure. Chaplains respond to this spiritual longing by attempting to draw forth from people the spiritual resources that are already there, though often unrecognized or unnamed. Chaplains also stir up that hunger so they can help hurting people recognize the movement of the Spirit in their hearts and lives. The well known church father, St. Augustine, exclaimed, “O God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” Chaplains help restless people attain God’s *shalom*.

A major temptation in war is to reduce the enemy to something less than human. We name them as krauts, japs, dinks, VC, anything but fellow human beings. One of my biggest challenges while serving in Vietnam was to teach soldiers to see the enemy as a human person. I asked soldiers to collect personal belongings from the dead enemy soldiers. When they saw the pictures of wives, children, and other family members, they saw the human side of the enemy. I held a service before we gave these personal items to the Red Cross for return to the families in the North. To “love your enemy” is to see them as human beings, fellow creatures of our common God.

2. Chaplains often function as members of a professional team.

Hospital and hospice chaplains are part of a team that consists of physicians, nurses, social workers, other health care providers and administrators, all of whom have the healing and wellbeing of patients and their families as their primary objective. As part of this team, chaplains speak the language of the Kingdom in a multi-faith context. They use the language of faith, hope, and love in a manner that enhances healing and restoration. Chaplains also minister to members of their team.

3. Chaplains deal with people in crisis.

Dealing with crisis is not merely one part of a chaplain’s work; it is at the heart of what defines the ministry of chaplaincy. Military personnel face the real, imminent threat of danger and loss of life in time of war, and even in time of peace are frequently in transition with no place to call home. Military chaplains are called to address crises that result from these realities. Hospice chaplains are constantly dealing with individuals and families facing terminal illness and death. Hospital chaplains tend to those who have left their homes to undergo surgery or some other treatment. Prison chaplains minister to those removed from society through incarceration. In the privacy and confidentiality of their offices, pastoral counselors enable individuals to explore the events, attitudes, and traits that give rise to repeated crises in their lives, their

She was a young lady, with terminal cancer. The doctor asked me to tell her. I did. Her response wasn't all that uncommon: "Finally I can talk with somebody about dying."

marriages, and their families. Chaplains repeatedly embody divine authority and presence in crises where the Divine seems most absent.

4. Chaplains help hurting persons become connected to others as well as to God.

All people have a deep longing to belong to a community of people who value them as they value others. Sin, sickness, and death sometimes produce a sense of isolation that separates people from those around them and even causes them to question their own worth and value. Chaplains help such persons rediscover their own worth by exploring with them new possibilities of connecting to other human beings as well as to God. In so doing, chaplains enable the person to discover the ever new possibilities and meanings of faith, hope and love, including the possibility of forming a new connection with a practicing faith community. Thus, in their unique settings and by the relationships they establish, chaplains proclaim the revolutionary message that God's Kingdom has come into the here and now. A promise of healing and wholeness comes to the world's broken people and creates "a place of grace."

As hospice chaplain I had visited her once a week for about three months. She was an elderly stroke victim, who was bed-bound and couldn't talk anymore, although she understood everything I said. We had spoken about her faith and her feelings many times before, and she would respond either by moving her lips or shaking her head or with her sparking eyes. She was so lonely. Today she did not want to talk. I held her hand as I sat next to her bed. She grasped it tightly, and it seemed like we saw each other's soul. I held her hand for at least 20 minutes. It felt very comfortable. We prayed, we said good-bye and entered our own worlds, each with hearts full of grace and love.

5. Chaplains offer "church" to people away from the institution of church

In a post-modern society dominated by chaos, internet anonymity, disconnected families, and the rejection of authority, chaplains meet with people on their own turf and offer the message of unconditional love. Often where only two or three are gathered, the Kingdom truths are proclaimed: in hallways, wards, between prison bars, in crowded public areas, and in quiet corners. The hospital chaplain leads a religious service in a hospital chapel or brings the Lord's Supper to a patient's bedside. The hospice chaplain conducts a special bereavement service for families who have lost loved ones in death. Military chaplains conduct services at the chapel on base, in the field with troops on maneuvers and on the airfield with pilots on duty.

A young mother-to-be gave birth to a premature baby who died immediately after birth. When I came to see the mother, the baby had already been brought to the morgue and they were ready to dispose of the body. The young mother became more and more certain that she wanted to have a funeral service and asked me if I would conduct it. Before I could officiate, I had to find the tiny corpse, only about four inches long. I found the baby in a jar and then found a doll's dress to put on the little body. But in what should the body lie? I laid the body in a cigar box decorated like a coffin. With a handful of friends and family present, I performed the funeral service in the mother's room.

6. Chaplains at times become advocates for justice on behalf of those to whom they minister.

Chaplains may be called to take up the cause of the poor and helpless, of patients denied care by a health maintenance organization, of women and children who have been abused, or of soldiers discriminated against because they are perceived as gay. Chaplains make present the words of Isaiah that Jesus applied to himself: “I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.... He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth” (Isaiah 42:1,4).

As a patient's family looked on with wide-mouth bewilderment, a doctor left the Critical Care Unit cussing about a nurse who had the audacity to criticize her treatment of the patient. The nurse took me aside and complained loudly about the doctor. After dealing with some very complex personal and professional dynamics for the next few hours, I left the unit exhausted. The doctor was able to identify the sources of her anger. The nurse gained some perspectives on her reactions. The bewildered family was freed to focus on their grief--to cry, to tell stories and then to send their loved one on to be with Jesus.

7. Chaplains have a dual prophetic role in their ministries.

Chaplains are sent by the church to perform a ministry within the context of the organization they serve. As part of their ministry, chaplains remind their organizations of the core values inherent in the mission of these organizations that perform specialized functions in society. Chaplains call organizations to ensure that their policies and practices promote the worth and value of all individuals in the organization. When necessary, they speak against policies and practices that have a corrosive effect on the self worth of individual. At the same they struggle with their organizations to define justice, equity, care and service.

Because chaplains are sent by the church, they also speaks a prophetic word back to the church, reminding it of the destructive power of sin evident in the carnage of the battlefield, in the devastation of disease and in the painful fracturing of relationships in the human family. At times the chaplain may speak against injustice that occurs in the church as well as in the world. Chaplaincy ministry holds up the painful results of sin while still proclaiming that “our world belongs to God.”

The General had just established a policy that adversely affected the families of soldiers. He asked his advisor on family matters, and me what we thought the impact would be. We indicated that the Army had no policy or philosophy statement concerning families at a time when more and more soldiers had families. The Army's neglect of families was best illustrated by the fact that it had no idea of how many or what kind of families were in the Army. He ordered that a “White Paper” be written and a Family Action Planning Process established. These have made a tremendous difference for the families in the Army.

Written on Horses' Bells
Zechariah 14:20

In that day there will be written on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the Lord."

A great day is coming!
What a magnificent day is coming!
A day of the Lord is coming!
Watch the day dawn on Holy words:
"Holy to the Lord."
These are God's words written
On Aaron's High Priestly headband.
Israel's most sacred words.
As the day dawns the words will move
From holy headband to horses' bells.
Now written on the bell's of war horses –
War horses prophets proclaimed
An abomination to the Lord.
"Israel take no pleasure in the strength of a horse."
The horse – secular military might.
God claims the secular because he has redeemed it.
God makes the unholy holy.
That great day is not coming,
That great day has come.
Bright Resurrection day!
Christus Victor!
Christ Victorious!
Today a holy cross
On a soldier's uniform.
God writes on the symbol of military might,
"Holy to the LORD"
I claim you. I redeem you.
In the midst of war,
My presence, my chaplain.
In the harms way,
A PLACE OF GRACE.
Chaplain - a place of grace.

'In that day there will be written on the uniform of the soldier, "HOLY TO THE LORD."

Herm Keizer

IV. CORE VALUES

The core values of Christian Reformed Chaplaincy are rooted in the mission of God, and reflected in the Contemporary Testimony. As God's people sent into the world we value the following:

1. Identifying with God's presence and mission in the world and in the lives of all persons.

Following the apostles, the church is sent-
sent with the gospel of the kingdom
to make disciples of all nations,
to feed the hungry,
to proclaim the assurance... of forgiveness of sin...
to tell the news that our world belongs to God....
... this mission is central to our being.
Section # 44

2. Enabling the church to be dispersed in the world.

The Spirit thrusts
God's people into worldwide mission...
to go next door and far away
into science and art.
media and marketplace
with the good news of God's grace.
The Spirit goes before them and with them...
Section #32

3. Embodying the presence of God in diverse contexts.

The rule of Christ covers the whole world.
To follow this Lord is to serve him everywhere,
without fitting in,
as light in the darkness,
as salt in a spoiling world.
Section #45

4. Loving and caring for people unconditionally.

...Saved by the patient grace of God,
we deal patiently with others.
Knowing our own weaknesses and failures,
we bring good news to all sinners
with understanding of their condition,
and with hope in God.
Section #42

5. Affirming and respecting the dignity and worth of every human being.

No matter what our age, or race, or color,
we are the human family together,
for the Creator made us all.
Since life is his gift,
we foster the well being of others...
Section #12

6. Affirming the provision of pastoral care to people as our primary focus.

The Spirit empowers each member
to take part in the ministry of all,
so that hurts are healed
and all may rejoice
in the life and growth of the fellowship.
Section #41

7. Pursuing justice and peace in chaplaincy ministry contexts.

We call on governments to do public justice
And to protect the freedoms and rights
of individuals, groups, and institutions,
so that each may freely do
the tasks God gives.
We urge the government to ensure the well-being of all its citizens...
...by promoting the freedom to speak, to work, to worship, and to
associate.
Section #54

Following the Prince of Peace,
we are called to be peacemakers,
and to promote harmony and order...
Section #55,

V. MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement guided by core values expresses succinctly what the central activity of a ministry is. The focus here is on how the chaplain provides ministry in diverse settings. Although the list within each context is not exhaustive, the activities give a sense of what the primary pastoral activities are.

MISSION: CRC CHAPLAINCY EMBODIES THE PRESENCE OF GOD BY BEING A PLACE OF GRACE IN DIVERSE SETTINGS.

Chaplaincy is a place of grace in:

THE MILITARY:

- being present in times of war, in harms way, in risk of injury and death, and in honoring the dead
- giving support in times of dislocation, deployment, and separation
- performing and/or providing ministry of Word and sacrament, and pastoral care in peace and war
- calling for just conduct and righteous cause in peace and war in order to preserve the honor, dignity, and worth of service members.

PRISONS:

- communicating with dignity, value, worth and acceptance of all human beings
- caring for the alienated, rejected, and despised
- offering grace in the face of guilt, shame, and bondage
- performing the ministry of word and sacrament
- providing for the religious needs of inmates of all faith traditions
- advocating restorative justice for inmates and victims
- promoting community integration

HOSPITALS:

- affirming faith and hope in the face of illness- physical, mental and spiritual
- advocating for respect and dignity of all patients
- encouraging ethical decision-making by hospital staff, patients, and families
- providing spiritual resources and pastoral care to all patients
- offering an accepting non-judgmental listening ear
- challenging dehumanization in the health care system

LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES:

- reckoning with those trapped by frailties of age or impairment
- affirming the worth and contribution of all persons
- performing and providing spiritual and religious services as needed
- assisting residents and families in addressing end of life issues

HOSPICE:

- assisting patients in life review, giving meaning to life
- encouraging use of faith resources in the face of pain and death
- supporting patients and families in coping with grief and loss
- providing empathic services

INDUSTRY:

- affirming each person's value in the workplace (we are more than what we do)
- giving meaning to work
- serving as liaison between labor and management
- providing counseling in dealing with personal and family issues

MENTAL HEALTH AND PASTORAL COUNSELING:

- creating an unconditional accepting atmosphere
- providing empathic listening
- providing pastoral services for those in mental and emotional pain
- encouraging and empowering people to new possibilities.

EDUCATION:

- providing a setting where clinical methodology and the art of pastoral care can be learned.
- to provide the degree of self awareness and acceptance including one's wounds that enable the student to use their self in being a medium of grace.
- assist persons in developing a pastoral identity that equips them to be effective pastoral care givers.

VI. THE VISION OF CHAPLAINCY

A vision statement paints an overall picture of what we foresee happening in the future because the mission of chaplaincy is actively carried out. The vision of Chaplaincy Ministries is:

By being a place of grace in a broken world the chaplaincy ministry of the Christian Reformed Church will be a vital, vibrant, valued ministry by the Christian Reformed Church, the people served, the institutions where we serve, the professional chaplaincy organizations, and society at large

COMMENTARY:

“...a vital, vibrant, valued ministry...”

We desire that this ministry be enthusiastically embraced so that chaplaincy
-continues to meet the needs of persons in crisis (*vital*),
-is supported with Spirit-filled exuberance (*vibrant*), and
-is prized by all who have contact with this ministry (*valued*).

“...by the Christian Reformed Church...”

The Christian Reformed Church sends nearly 100 full-time, and additional part-time, chaplains into institutions and centers to bring a message of God’s care for his world. We love the denomination that sends us into ministry, and we want the church on all levels, congregations, classes and synod, to embrace and fully integrate this ministry as its very own in Christ’s name.

“...by the people served...”

Our primary focus is to be “places of grace” to people in crisis. We want to minister with excellence so they can testify to burdens lifted and hope renewed.

“...by the institutions where we serve...”

We want to carry on a vital, spirit-filled ministry in the institutions where we serve so these institutions will value our ministry as relevant and effective to their well being.

“...by professional chaplaincy organizations...”

We want to build on the good reputation we already have with religious, governmental and professional certification institutions that support chaplaincy and pastoral care.

“...by society at large...”

We want to incarnate the love of God and the grace of Christ so society at large recognizes the presence of the divine in our ministry.

We know we can only achieve this vision if we are truly God’s servants to the church, to the

people we serve and to the world.

VII. STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLAN FOR CHAPLAINCY

Goals and strategies identify specific actions that need to be pursued in accomplishing the mission of chaplaincy so that the vision can be fulfilled. The following goals will be completed by 2010.

- 1. Christian Reformed Church congregations understand, value and support chaplaincy ministry, and chaplains connect and integrate their ministries as an integral part of the denomination's ministry and ministry plan.**

Strategies:

- a. Educate chaplains about the goal, and facilitate chaplains' participation in the goal.
- b. Educate churches, and especially calling churches, about chaplaincy being an integral part of their ministry.
- c. Establish public relations and promotion protocols in a denominational and bi-national context.
- d. Establish a panel of chaplains to explore collaborative ministry planning with other agencies.

- 2. Christian Reformed Chaplaincy has 150 chaplains (including replacement of 50 who will have retired.)**

Strategies:

- a. Develop denominational strategy for placement of new chaplains in strategic locations, including standards and rationale.
- b. Develop ecclesiastical standards, including alternate routes, for chaplaincy ministry and chaplain personnel.
- c. Develop a recruitment plan including "capacity" of staff.
- d. Develop protocol for training and salary support protocols.

- 3. There is mutual accountability between Chaplaincy Ministries, calling churches and chaplains with respect to credentials, ecclesiastical supervision and ministry support.**

Strategies:

- a. Implement the approved supervision policy.
- b. Assist calling churches to understand and own their responsibilities as calling churches.
- c. Assist chaplains and calling churches to acknowledge that chaplaincy is a vital part of the denomination's ministry.

- 4. All chaplains will be effectively equipped and supported to carry out their ministry consistent with professional standards.**

Strategies:

- a. Implement synodical decision on continuing education.
- b. Provide and promote professional development events.
- c. Develop information-sharing system among chaplains.
- d. Participate in training events and provide adequate staff time for research.

5. Christian Reformed congregations are assisted with the development of programs and volunteers are trained to engage in chaplaincy styled ministries

Strategies:

- a. Develop resources for chaplaincy styled ministries in congregations
- b. Provide training in order to effectively address needs related to chaplaincy ministry
- c. Encourage and mobilize chaplains to provide training and resources to local congregations.
- d. Explore avenues to partner with other denominational agencies, especially CRWRC.

6. Chaplaincy Ministries assists the churches in developing effective pastoral care.

Strategies:

- a. Chaplains offer their expertise by conducting seminars and workshops on pastoral care.
- b. Chaplaincy expertise is used by the denomination to address issues that arise out of the contexts in which chaplain's minister.
- c. Chaplains are invited to actively participate in ecclesiastical assemblies and in such committees as Classical Ministry Committees.

7. CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES' structure, location and administrative connection is effectively organized to support ministry.

Strategies:

- a. Develop strategic connections with denominational administrative structures.
- b. Develop internal administrative support and structure for Chaplaincy Ministries.

8. Chaplaincy Ministries maintains effective relations with professional chaplaincy organizations, governmental agencies, certifying bodies and the faith communities.

Strategies:

- a. Hold membership and participate in above-mentioned organizations.

- b. Encourage chaplains to maintain and participate in professional organizations.
- c. Work with other faith groups in developing effective chaplaincy.

VIII. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

We affirm the mutually agreed upon conclusion of the Implementation Committee that Chaplaincy Ministries not be placed within the administrative structure of Home Missions. We ask the Board of Trustees to appoint a new committee to recommend to the Board an effective and viable governance and administrative structure.

APPENDIX

Identified Issues/Areas of Study for the Task Force.

- Explore theological issues from perspective of Kingdom of God
- Identify how our theology works itself out in our practice of ministry
- Study Acts of Synod in relationship to studies and actions about chaplaincy
- Develop a working history of chaplaincy ministry in the CRC, noting patterns, trends, and changes over time.
- Gather information on chaplaincy ministry from other denominations, noting especially theological rationales provided, and any formulations of values, mission, and vision.
- Gather information on the role of chaplains and changing patterns of chaplaincy work in the institutions served, drawing especially on information available from regional, state and national associations. Also study the language of chaplaincy in these broader systems.
- Study the issues related to multi-faith and inter-faith arrangements that most chaplains are required to work with.
- Consult with other CRC agencies for ideas and perspectives on understanding the role of chaplaincy in the CRC.
- Research the ways in which chaplaincy ministry is presently viewed by CRC constituents.
- Identify who are our partners and who are our competitors.
- Identify present revenue flows related to chaplaincy ministry.
- Review the mandates, mission statements, and ethical requirements of specific chaplaincy ministries within the whole range of types of chaplaincy.