

SECTION 4 FORUM: CHAPLAIN AS PROPHET



Editor's Introduction

The forum is the section of the journal that features short, personal reflections on a particular theme. This year's forum invited readers to reflect on when and how chaplains might function as prophets. For those not familiar with the concept of 'prophet,' in the Judeo-Christian literature a prophet is God's messenger, one who brings a word of truth, justice, and/or warning to persons in power or to a nation in general. Most would say that a chaplain's primary skill set is listening, whereas prophets primarily speak. Furthermore, the chaplain's primary aim is to comfort, whereas prophets tend to unsettle. Are there ways or occasions when the roles overlap or conflict?

This theme sparked many inquiries and comments from chaplains. Some chaplains immediately thought of work they have done on ethics panels; others noted the ambiguous role they played in a recent strike by hospital nurses; and still others cited examples of how they advocated for patients. It soon became apparent, as you will read, that the subject is much broader and more complex than the single polarity of pastoral versus prophetic. Some of the chaplains who responded with essays are currently serving in an administrative position in their medical institution. Serving as a hospital or institutional administrator opens up another context for this discussion. Chaplains in administrative roles are learning to weave together their pastoral and prophetic roles in new ways. Clearly, chaplains are fulfilling a multiplicity of roles and functions in modern health care institutions, and in each unique role, chaplains conceptualize their ministry differently.

Danielle J. Burhuro, who is CPE supervisor (educator) at Advocate South Suburban Trinity Hospitals in Chicago, leads off this section with her essay "Transforming Trauma into Trust: A Prophetic Model of CPE Supervision in the Age of #Black Lives Matter." She reminds readers that cul-

tural, racial, and economic realities inevitably affect the work supervisors do. In particular, she describes the #Black Lives Matter movement and gives a case example of how racial issues in the larger culture can infiltrate the CPE unit. Working with such an example, Burhuro posits a prophetic, four-stage model of CPE supervision and describes how she applied the four stages to the case study at hand.

Theodore M. Smith, who is a CPE supervisor (educator) and director of mission integration at Baylor Saint Luke's Medical Center in Houston, Texas, continues the conversation with his essay "Prophetic Ministry: A Distinctive Dimension of Professional Chaplaincy." Like many long-time, trusted CPE supervisors, Smith has been promoted to the level of hospital administrator. He reflects on his role as director of mission integration. Although he does not think of himself as a prophet in the usual sense of the word, he sees his role as helping the institution to live out its mission to be prophetic.

Finally, Tom Harshman is another CPE supervisor (educator) who has been given administrative responsibilities beyond the department of spiritual care. Tom is vice president for mission integration at Dignity Health, a network of Catholic health care institutions in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has come to recast his ministry and his understanding of the work of a chaplain by seeing his work as caring for the spirituality of the health care professionals and all other employees of the institution. His reflection on what he does is captured in his short essay "Spirituality at Work: Shaping Institutional Culture from Within."

Scott Sullender
Editor