

## Chaplain Report July 2021

“You’re a “shepherd”; women are shepherds—not just men,” my chaplain residency supervisor told me midway through my year-long program at Hershey Medical Center.

I had never thought of being a shepherd. In seminary, our professors always asked if we (students) thought of ourselves as either a “prophet, priest, preacher, or pastor?”

Even before I entered chaplaincy studies, during my year-long required church field placement, my “pastor” supervisor asked me the same question. “Do you see yourself as a prophet, priest, preacher, or pastor?” I had never thought of “chaplain,” even though I had just completed my seminary “secular” field placement at a facility for youth diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder.

It was during my church field placement that I “discerned a call” to be a chaplain—preferably in an adolescent treatment center—and, not as a “prophet, priest, preacher, or pastor.” So, after graduation from seminary, I began chaplaincy studies at a “retirement community” with residential, nursing, rehabilitation, and dementia facilities. After completing that chaplaincy internship, I was accepted to Hershey Medical Center’s Chaplain Residency Program. It was during the second half of my chaplaincy residency that I recognized my supervisor was correct: I was a “shepherd” because unlike “priests, prophets, preachers, and pastors,” a chaplain is someone who “sits” with individuals who are alone, uncertain, in emergency situations that require someone to “listen” to them as they describe what brought them to the situation, they presently find themselves. Often they asked me: “Why is this happening to me?” “Can you help me?” “I am a good person.” “I don’t understand.”

A chaplain “shepherds” by a “nonjudgmental presence”—primarily listening and asking questions to encourage the person to “share” their story—provide time—space—for the individual to reflect and recognize how they can deal with the situation facing them now. How can they overcome their present situation?

Chaplains are often employed by hospitals, prisons, mental health facilities, detention centers, nursing and rehabilitation facilities, and health centers. Chaplains are trained to assist with crisis situations.

During the years (over six) I have served as community chaplain, I wrote many reports for Consistory regarding the community agencies and boards I serve on as a volunteer. It takes time to develop relationships with community agencies and to be members of their boards. And, during Covid-19, I have spent hours on Zoom meetings and attend training programs designed to provide community services to individuals in need.

I am always pleased to share updates.

Chaplain Donna