A close-up photograph of a yellow and black butterfly, likely a Papilio glaucus, perched on a purple flower. The butterfly's wings are spread, showing distinct black markings on a yellow background. The flower is a vibrant purple, and the background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

Spiritual caregiving in the hospital

Windows to
chaplaincy
ministry

Leah Dawn Bueckert
and Daniel S. Schipani,
editors

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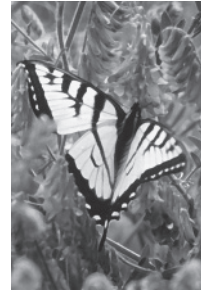
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Book design by Mary E. Klassen. Cover photograph—"Tiger swallowtail on purple flowers"—by J. Tyler Klassen, used by permission; all rights reserved. The editors chose the image of the butterfly as a fitting symbol for spiritual caregivers as ministers of hope, healing, and transformation.

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Introduction

Daniel S. Schipani and Leah Dawn Bueckert

The paradoxes confronted within a hospital are the paradoxes of life: suffering people's infinite aspirations running smack up against their finite boundaries. It's an ageless struggle, true for all peoples, for all generations, and no less true for us, in and out of the hospital. Hospitals do not create paradoxes and mysteries; they merely focus them. Suffering dispels the illusion that we are infinite, without limits. In that regard, suffering can be a great moment of truth for the sufferer. It is the hospital chaplain's privilege and responsibility to share in that rich moment of truth. ...

If the hospital is a place of paradox for its patients, it is not less so for its chaplains....That paradox or tension is most dynamically experienced in the dual identity of the chaplain....The hospital chaplain walks between two worlds: religion and medicine. The tension can be painful, confusing, exciting, creative.... It is never fully resolved and perhaps never will or should be. ...

To effect and maintain a balance in pastoral functions ... is the compelling challenge that confronts today's hospital chaplain....When this freedom and balance are maintained, a chaplain can remain faithful to a basic pastoral role (to help others experience as fully as possible the reality of God's presence and love) and yet fulfill that role in a variety of creative and relevant ways. For indeed, a hospital chaplain has one primary role, which can be carried out through many functions.¹

Daniel S. Schipani is professor of pastoral care and counseling, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. Leah Dawn Bueckert is a chaplain resident at Lutheran Hospital, Fort Wayne, Indiana; the publication of this book coincided with her completion of an M.Div. degree at AMBS.

¹Lawrence E. Holst, *Hospital Ministry: The Role of the Chaplain Today* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 11, 12, 52.

In these paragraphs from *Hospital Ministry: The Role of the Chaplain Today*, Lawrence Holst succinctly describes the context, nature, and purpose of the ministry of spiritual caregivers in health care institutions. We are honored to continue the work of this important volume in examining hospital chaplaincy in the contemporary context. Participation in this ministry involves the sacred privilege of being available and present to people—patients, their relatives, and staff. The spiritual caregiver embodies and communicates good news in word and deed or in silence. Competent hospital chaplaincy includes a commitment to provide holistic care for the sake of healing and wholeness.

With Holst’s vision of the ministry of spiritual caregiving in mind, we crafted this volume centered on the following three goals:

- To acknowledge and celebrate the unique, essential contribution of hospital chaplains as spiritual and pastoral caregivers.
- To foster understanding and encourage support for the work of hospital chaplains.
- To elicit interest in the ministry of spiritual and pastoral caregiving in hospital settings.

As we began to develop the design for writing and publication, we chose to make the project bi-national, involving chaplains from Canada and the United States, in part because Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, where Daniel Schipani teaches, is jointly sponsored by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Further, we sought contributions from a wide spectrum of perspectives within the Anabaptist-Mennonite Christian faith tradition. On the one hand, the essays reflect this tradition’s shared vision of spirituality and healing expressed through a polyphony of voices; on the other hand, these essays are meant to be a resource for the wider Christian community and beyond.

This publication addresses a perceived need for a collection of real-life experiences and stories, accompanied by brief reflective analyses. We offer the book as a complement to existing texts in the field. We believe that chaplains, pastors, health care professionals, and other caregivers, whether in training or already practicing, will find it valuable. We hope that professors, supervisors, and students of Clinical Pastoral Education and pastoral care and counseling will also read this work. Chaplains in various healthcare settings, some of whom experience a measure of professional alienation and isolation because of their unique role, will find it a helpful resource as they engage in caregiving ministry. We wish to provide support to chaplains who are already practicing and motivate others who are considering this type of ministry.

The book contains three parts. Part 1—“The place of spiritual care in the hospital”—explores the unique function of spiritual care in the hospital as one discipline among others (medicine, nursing, social work, and so on). The essays focus on the chaplain’s role in promoting integration of these disciplines for the sake of healing. Part 2—“The chaplain as caregiver in

specific settings”—explores particular contributions of chaplains with patients, families, and staff, in contexts of crisis, death, grief, and illness. Part 3—“Special concerns in chaplaincy ministry”—consists of four essays that reflect systematically on foundations and guiding principles for the practice of hospital chaplaincy.

We introduce here our understanding of certain key terms that we use within this book. When we use the term *holistic* to describe care, we imply a commitment to the ethic of care we have outlined in chapter 18. Holistic care further implies the comprehensive nature of professional hospital chaplaincy, involving functions such as supporting and comforting, officiating in administration of sacraments and worship services, counsel and guidance or ethical discernment, consulting and resourcing with medical and other staff, and witnessing and confronting for the sake of justice.

We wish to distinguish between the *pastoral* nature of many instances of caregiving with patients, relatives, and staff, on the one hand, and the *spiritual* significance of chaplaincy ministry in its many forms, on the other hand. *Pastoral care* is the dimension of the ministry of the church that has concern for the well-being of individuals, families, institutions, and communities. It may include various functions—guiding, nurturing, sustaining, comforting, reconciling, and healing—in diverse settings, including hospital chaplaincy.² Christian chaplains may view their ministry as an expression of pastoral care; however, care-receivers do not necessarily share this perspective. Increasingly, patients, their relatives, and staff represent a variety of faith traditions, backgrounds, and frameworks. We adopt the understanding of *faith* as a human universal that may or may not find expression in terms of a specific religious tradition and content (beliefs or rituals).³ Because such traditions include both religious and nonreligious faith, we find the term *spiritual* to be more inclusive of the diversity of understandings chaplains encounter. Further, many care-receivers nowadays prefer to identify themselves as spiritual but not religious. We understand that every person is spiritual by virtue of being human. By *spiritual*, we mean the fundamental capacity to have faith, to make meaning, to create community and culture, to long for and practice love, peace, and justice, and to be oriented toward wholeness. We recognize that understandings of the sources and nature of human spirituality are diverse. According to our Judeo-Christian tradition, human beings are spiritual in the sense of bearing the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26).

² Alastair V. Campbell, “Pastoral Care,” *The New Dictionary of Pastoral Studies*, ed. Wesley Carr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 252–53.

³ This is the understanding articulated in the faith development theory and writings of James W. Fowler: *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); *Weaving the New Creation: Stages of Faith and the Public Church* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996); *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

Finally, we offer a word about the title and subtitle of this book. Growing out of the understanding of spirituality just described, we chose *Spiritual caregiving* as an inclusive way to state the purpose of hospital chaplaincy. The subtitle—*Windows to chaplaincy ministry*—refers to the promise within this book and to its limitations. Through the windows that our authors open into hospital chaplaincy, readers will see portraits of spiritual caregiving, shared from a variety of viewpoints. Firsthand accounts in each chapter lead into interpretive reflections on the nature of spiritual caregiving in health care institutions. We hope that readers will be inspired to open other windows, describe what they see, and join us in the conversation.

Even as hospitals increasingly recognize spiritual care as an essential component of holistic care, chaplains are still in the process of defining their role. This book acknowledges and celebrates the unique contribution of hospital chaplains, fosters understanding and support for their work, and seeks to elicit interest in their ministry of spiritual caregiving.

The writers bring together a wealth of conceptual and practical information for those engaged in the challenging ministry of caring for persons in crises. Required reading for any chaplain or spiritual care provider, this book is also an excellent resource for those training professional caregivers. —*Teresa E. Snorton, Executive Director, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education*

This resource addresses the unique contributions of professional chaplains and the foundations and guiding principles that help spiritual care providers respond to specific concerns and difficult issues.—*George Abram Neufeld, Provincial Coordinator of Spiritual Care for Manitoba Health*

This book fills a gap in the literature of healthcare chaplaincy. A must read for chaplains, it will also be helpful to CPE students and supervisors as well as pastoral theologians. —*Mark LaRocca-Pitts, Staff Chaplain, Regional Medical Center, Athens, Ga.*

Here are the voices of Mennonite spiritual care providers who have claimed their places as healers in the health care institutions of our countries. Their stories and reflections convey compassion and competence, discerning spirits and deep faith, and an integration of theory and practice. —*Glen*

R. Horst, CPE Teaching Supervisor Coordinator, Pastoral Care Services, Riverview Health Centre, Winnipeg, Man.

This valuable guide provides tools to empower and assist professional chaplains in articulating their education, training, and contributions to administrators and other members of the multidisciplinary team. It presents an engaging, in-depth overview of the competencies and expertise clinically trained chaplains offer.—*Sue Wintz, Staff Chaplain, St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, Phoenix, Ariz.*

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