

WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY

RESEARCH: A REVIEW

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide a succinct review of the existing academic study of workplace chaplaincy in the United States. Every source that could be accessed that fits within the rubric of academic study – thesis and dissertations, journal articles, [academic] conference papers, and books—were reviewed for the purposes of learning what they have to say about chaplaincy, with a focus on the private sector/business world rather than those places traditionally associated with chaplains (hospitals, prisons, etc).

In summary, there are only a few relevant sources that could be reviewed for this paper. There were some dissertations written by chaplains about their experiences as well as how to engage in chaplaincy, what kind of training chaplains need, how to make the transition from serving a church to becoming ‘a minister without portfolio’ serving people where most can be found—in the workplace. These documents serve a useful purpose of providing very detailed descriptions of the experiences of chaplains, though they were all dated prior to 2003.

There were some books reviewed that cover chaplaincy and written for a scholarly audience: Winnifred Sullivan’s “*A Ministry of Presence*” provides the most detailed description and evaluation of chaplaincy, though the focus is on those serving within government organizations such as the Veteran’s Affairs and other agencies rather than the business workplace. David W. Miller’s (2007) “*God at Work*” explores chaplaincy as an example of the growing faith at work movement. Lake Lambert, III discusses chaplaincy in the context of the practice of religion in the US workplace. He similarly views chaplaincy as existing within the broader spirituality and religion at work arena in his book “*Spirituality, Inc: Religion in the American workplace*”.

The bulk of my analysis comes from academic journal articles and conference presentations. Three of the articles are part of my work, co-authored with David W. Miller

(Princeton Faith and Work Initiative) and James D. LoRusso (Georgia State University), based on our research with executive leaders, human resource professionals, rank-and-file employees and the chaplains who serve them in a variety of companies and industries.

The themes covered in the various sources reviewed include:

- a) a description of what chaplaincy in the workplace is, including the history of chaplaincy in the US and beyond.
- b) A discussion of the socio-cultural realities that precipitate the need for chaplains in today's workplaces
- c) Discussions about the unique realities that chaplains manage at the nexus of the sacred and the profane, being religious clergy in the secular, religiously and culturally diverse workplace
- d) The perceived benefits of workplace chaplaincy services as explained by business leaders, employees and other stakeholders. These benefits include the perception that employees feel cared for by their leaders who invest chaplaincy services; this care contributes to employees' feelings of connectedness and commitment to the organizations, a reduced likelihood of quitting, a reduced likelihood of showing up but not being fully present (presenteeism), a reduced likelihood of absenteeism, and an enhanced sense of wellbeing. These contribute to enhanced productivity as well as a more positive organizational culture – more caring, more welcoming, more inclusive.
- e) Whereas quantitative results are hard to come by, various sources suggest that chaplaincy has a much higher usage rate than traditional employee assistance programs (55-95% compared to 5-7%), making chaplaincy an inexpensive yet very valuable employee benefit.

Though not from an academic source, this quote illustrates the prevailing perception about the value of chaplaincy:

According to a 2014 [release](#) from the C12 Group, an executive roundtable for Christian CEOs and owners, General Motors and Ford found a \$9 return for every \$1 invested in their chaplaincy programs.

“All of these things have a business ROI for companies,” Brown said. “We’re in a war for talent now to get qualified employees. . . . People want to work in a place where they’re valued and cared for, where they’re valued as a person and not an employee identification number, and corporate chaplains are a great way to do that.”

<https://www.madetoflourish.org/resources/how-workplace-chaplains-are-changing-the-face-of-corporations/>

That sentiment was echoed in our own research and in other articles and sources reviewed: the value in chaplaincy lies in the perception that employees derive that, as we sub-titled one of our articles, “the suits care about us”. While more scholarly research, metrics and connections to the ROI are still necessary, the bottom-line argument from all the reviewed sources is that workplace chaplaincy provides a benefit that cannot be replicated by EAPs or by any other source.

Introduction

The scholarly literature on workplace chaplaincy is sparse at best—a situation that scholars have decried owing to the growing importance of the practice in the business world. The purpose of this paper is to analyze and synthesize existing scholarly literature on the current iteration of chaplaincy in the workplace, with a primary focus of the United States (Cardone, 2009; Paget & McCormack, 2006; Plummer, 1996), and a secondary focus of other recent study in other countries. My co-author and collaborator David W. Miller and I defined Corporate, workplace or industrial chaplaincy as *“an ecumenical spiritual counseling and social services referral system for workers at any level who may not be members of a worship community, or who experience personal and work-related crises that require immediate attention (Miller & Ngunjiri, 2015, p. 132).* As Religious Scholar Chad Seales argues, modern-day corporate chaplaincy differs from its industrial foundations in that it “rebranded the pastoral care of their industrial mission antecedents, translating its confessional particularities of protestant religiosity into noncommittal generalities of secular spirituality (2012 p. 192) that Miller and Ngunjiri (2015) add, “is better suited to the secular and religiously diverse workplace of the present-day US marketplace” (p. 132).

Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, a professor and chair of religious studies at Indiana University Bloomington, and affiliate professor at the Maurer School of Law, wrote the book *“A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care and the Law”* (OUP, 2014). Sullivan argues that “a significant amount of religious work is performed by chaplains who do not necessarily routinely publicly identify themselves with a particular religious community but who do their work rather within secular institutions caring for persons with whom

they may not share a common religious creed or practice...the chaplain is...a strangely necessary figure, religiously and legally speaking, in negotiating the public life of religion today” (ix-x). Sullivan describes chaplains as operating at the nexus of the sacred and the profane, they are ‘ministers without portfolio’, providing that ‘ministry of presence’ in all manner of workplaces, private as well as public, business and non profit, from Veterans Affairs to the Military to law enforcement, from schools to universities and everywhere in between. Sullivan’s text is perhaps one of the most incisive scholarly description and analysis of present-day workplace chaplaincy, with a focus on the intersections of chaplaincy with the constitutional environment. She explains that her book

Is about a religious practice that sits at the intersection of democratic governance and the multiplicity of religious ways of life in the United States today It is about the spiritual care delivered by governmental and quasi-governmental chaplaincies —as well as chaplaincies within private but regulated industries such as hospitals and schools —a religious practice that interestingly epitomizes many of the ambiguities inherent in imagining religion under the modern rule of law. Chaplaincies both normalize religion through the situating of religious work alongside that of other modern bureaucracies and set it apart through the multiple allegiances of the chaplain herself and the client; it is an unstable encounter between strangers, strangers stranded in the gaps created by modern life (p. 2-3).

Whereas most of our research has focused on the private sector business organizations, Sullivan’s description of chaplaincies as ambiguous and as situated at the nexus of the universal and the unique search for human flourishing seems to be quite spot on

irrespective of where the chaplain is located. Their presence in the workplace helps to ameliorate the pressures and stressors of modern-day organizational life.

Some of the studies available were written by chaplains themselves, using first-person narratives to describe their experiences in the for-profit work world. For Example, R. J. Barnes wrote a doctor of ministry dissertation that focused on his own journey from parish pastor to chaplain at a fire station (Barnes, 1992). With the support of his church board, Barnes formed a company through which he could continue to offer chaplaincy even as he served as a part-time pastor. His study concluded with a proposed training program for occupational chaplains. Similarly, Rev Robert Lee Rector wrote his doctoral dissertation for Union Institute (Rector, 1991), where he sought to figure out, through a survey of corporate chaplains' perceptions, what ought be included in a clinical pastoral education (CPE) training program for workplace chaplains. David Emerson Mullis, Sr wrote his doctoral dissertation for Regent University primarily focusing on providing material for pastors to use towards creating a chaplaincy ministry plan for the business context (Mullis, 1999). He articulates the boundaries that workplace chaplains must be aware of in order to build effective opportunities for ministry.

Lynn Ashley wrote her doctoral dissertation at Andover Newton Theological School focusing on a rationale for chaplaincy in the workplace, whereby chaplains would serve people from diverse backgrounds and be ecumenical in their approach (Ashley, 2003). Other thesis or dissertations essentially are similar in that they are descriptive—what chaplains do, and prescriptive —what chaplains should do and how they should do it, and the kind of training chaplains need in order to be effective in the workplace (Gendron, 2010). While useful, these do not offer the reader anything new that hasn't already been

described or explained by others (e.g. Hunt & Corwin, 1989; Paget & McCormack, 2006). They are helpful though in helping to demonstrate the similarities when it comes to the activities, challenges, and opportunities for chaplaincies in a variety of workplaces. Indeed, the current iteration of chaplaincy in the workplace has several unique characteristics that differentiate it from those historical foundations.

History of Chaplaincy in the US

Tanya Wolf and Birgit Feldbauer- Durstmüller conducted a literature review covering the US, UK, Germany and Austria, they found that there isn't much scholarly literature covering the history of chaplaincy in the workplace in the US. They found the US case interesting because there has traditionally been a separation between the church and chaplaincy, such that workplace chaplaincy operated "*at a distance from traditional churches*" (2018, p. 47) a situation that is more true today than in the past. Writing for the *Journal of Pastoral Care*, Robert E. Eades who at the time was serving as the President for the National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains (NIBIC) provided a brief history of chaplaincy. He stated that, whereas it is not clear who the first chaplain was,

We know that The Reverend Francis Fletcher sailed the Pacific and Indian Oceans with Sir Francis Drake and his crew in the late 1500s...The first known industrial ministry in the United States was established in 1643 at the Saugus Iron Works in Massachusetts...the modern concept of industrial chaplaincy began in 1931, when industrialist R. G. LeTourneau brought The Reverend Marion Reynolds at the work sites where a highway was being built to connect Hoover Dam with Boulder City, Nevada...[offering] non-denominational Christian services...In 1941, LeTourneau

went on to establish the first full-time industrial chaplaincy program in the United States at his Illinois and Georgia plants and later in Mississippi and Texas. (1988, p. 45)

Another early advocate for chaplaincy was the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in Winston, North Carolina, which hired a former military chaplain to provide care for employees in 1949. The ecumenical NIBIC was inaugurated in 1970 to serve as an association for workplace chaplains, though at the time it was called National Association of Industrial Chaplains, formed for “*the furthering, promotion, and encouragement of workplace ministry*” (Eades, p. 246). I spent several days at the NIBIC headquarters reading up on the existing literature back in 2008, Dr. Diana C. Dale was and continues to serve as executive director of the organization. It appears not to be as active though, as one of the newsletters on the website decries the lack of paid up membership and the challenge of affording 1,500 toward the subscription to the Journal of Pastoral Care

<http://www.nibic.com/templates/System/details.asp?id=47362&PG=xcast&LID=5752>

Lake Lambert III, writing in his book “*Spirituality, Inc: Religion in the American Workplace*” (2009), adds that the Pullman Palace Car Company had a chaplain who served a pastoral role for the company town. Lambert indicates that though there was some ecclesiastical sponsorship for workplace chaplaincy, as observed earlier, “*most chaplaincy has had a characteristically American free enterprise bent in the spirit of the company town and American welfare capitalism*” (p. 127). Other scholars similarly describe industrial/workplace chaplaincy as working alongside and supporting the goal of instilling free enterprise powered by Christian ethos (Fones-Wolf & Fones-Wolf, 2015). Historians Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, writing in the *Business History Review* journal,

explain that business leaders in the post-world war II period, inspired by both religious convictions and the need for loyal productive employees, hired clergy to care for their employees' spiritual needs. They describe the complicated history of workplace chaplaincy in the U.S. prior to WWII and in the context of fast changing face of protestant Christianity after the war. They explain that *"industrial chaplaincies were but one, although admittedly the most intense, manifestation of religion in the workplace...a complex mix of motives underscored this phenomenon"* (p. 121) —religious convictions and applying Christian principles in their businesses, as well as managerial desire for productivity and reducing the power of the unions. They demonstrate that these competing demands worked in tandem and were further informed by the growing human relations movement that taught managers to treat their employees in ways that would promote satisfaction. *"Industrial chaplaincy, then, was in part a spiritually motivated program linked to this effort to build and retain a productive and loyal workforce"* (p. 124).

Chad Seales, writing in the *Religion Compass* journal, provides another historical overview of workplace chaplaincy in the US. adding that, *"industrial chaplaincy programs begun during the 1940s set the institutional mold for the vocational presence of pastoral care givers in the workplace, a mold that was later replicated as corporate chaplaincy in the 1980s"* (p. 196). Seales further adds that as Protestantism spread in the 1950s, *"industrial chaplains promoted personal faith in American production, proffering moral prescriptions for everyday economic practice"* but as secularism and religious pluralism increased post 1970s, *"corporate chaplains rebranded the pastoral care of their industrial mission antecedents, translating it's confessional particularities of protestant religiosity into noncommittal generalities of secular spirituality"* (p. 196). In Seales' analysis, the practice of

corporate chaplaincy in the 1950s was informed by an association with management rather than labor, *“Using the chaplain as medium, companies starting in the mid-20th century officially extended the offer of experiential piety to all workers as a personal rather than a collective relationship...”* with the expectation that, quoting Historian David Watt (1991, p. 61-4) *“chaplains would reduce labor unrest and insure that employees would follow management’s direction more conscientiously”* (Seale, p. 197). Further, Seales argues, as consumerism redefined the economy, *“companies sought new strategies for managing worker emotions. To produce more profitable states of mind, they found religion, utilizing corporate chaplains to process their people. Wielding their real instrument of power, chaplains performed the role of silent partner in the corporatization of evangelical experience as a spiritual commodity fit for the management profile”* (p. 197). Chad Seales concludes his historical analysis by arguing the following:

Most Americans no longer work in factories, but they are still measured by its standards of efficiency and productivity. In U.S. history, industrial and corporate chaplains have exercised influence greater than the sum of their numbers in their use of pastoral care to mediate spiritual and economic meaning in the workday. Their functional role in the American workplace helped structure the matrices of efficiency and productivity that include emotional, relational and profitable measures...to produce and promote industrial religion, the dialectical partner of consumptive capitalism in the post-industrial societies, for which spirituality is the medium that connects both into a singularizing expression of modern religiosity” (p. 201).

This distrust of the role of chaplaincy is reflective of some in the religious and management academies who view chaplaincy as a tool for management's control over labor/employees – the risk of abusing workplace spirituality as a whole and chaplaincy specifically by *instrumentalizing* it to improve performance. As Miller observes in “God at Work”, opponents of chaplaincy “*assert that corporate chaplains are apologists for management and not critical enough of structural issues; have a hidden agenda of evangelizing workers; are not uniformly trained or held to a professional code of ethics; and are difficult to implement in diverse interfaith environments*” (p. 114). We will engage these critiques in a later section of the paper.

Why Workplace Chaplaincy?

As researchers, one of the questions we seek to answer is why chaplaincy, and why now. What is it about our current society and the world of organizations that makes workplace chaplaincy a necessary service? Most of the literature reviewed did not include a rationale or much explanation about why chaplaincy has gained such popularity. There are a few answers though.

One school of thought argues that chaplaincy fits within the wider Faith at Work, or Spirituality in the Workplace movement. David W. Miller for example argues that

The changing societal, economic, and ecclesiastical environments...are together driving this fresh interest in faith at work...the quest to integrate one's personal faith teachings with one's professional work responsibilities. Workers and professionals of all kinds no longer want to live bifurcated lives, where work and

spiritual identity are compartmentalized into disconnected and unrelated spheres.
(p. 6).

This desire to live an integrated life was one of the reasons provided by business leaders as justification for hiring chaplains for their businesses. Business leaders reported to us that hiring chaplains was one way they could communicate their Christian faith and values, *“they applied Biblical principles of loving God and/through loving others, which includes employees as internal stakeholders”* (Miller & Ngunjiri, 2015, p. 146). Having chaplains on their manufacturing or food processing factory floors was a way for them to integrate their faith into their work, and enable their employees to do the same.

The sociocultural changes that have necessitated chaplaincy vary. One change that is well described in *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000) is the disintegration of traditional sources of community in the US, leaving folks disconnected and altering the support systems—*“as a result, it becomes necessary for employers to provide resources to cover the gap of missing social support networks that would have traditionally been provided by outside organizations, such as the church, the family, or other civic organizations”* (Miller & Ngunjiri, 2015, p. 144). The organization, business or otherwise, has become the new source of belonging and community. Chaplains facilitate the creation/and or sustenance of such community.

In spite of the current tide of anti-immigration rhetoric in the U.S., many of the workplaces we visited during our research were staffed by large numbers of new Americans and/or recent immigrants, who were not only ethnically diverse, but also religiously and culturally different. Further, church attendance and belonging to religious communities has reduced over the recent decades, and, Lake Lambert argues, *“the ‘demand’*

for corporate chaplains is based on the fact that a much larger percentage of Americans say they believe in God than are members of religious communities with their own spiritual leaders” (p. 128) This increasing diversity and difference necessitates the skills that chaplains bring, their ability to reach across religious, cultural and ethnic diversities to serve the spiritual needs of any employees.

What do Chaplains Do?

There are a variety of sources used in determining what chaplains do in business organizations today. In his *“God at Work”*, Miller describes chaplaincy as the ministry of walking the floor, whereby chaplains offer a *“listening ear and a comforting voice for employees, many of whom have spiritual needs but are not members of a particular congregation and do not know where to turn in times of personal or professional crisis”* (p. 114). In our research with employees served by chaplains, with HR professionals, and with business leaders, we found that the activities of chaplains can be categorized as below:

Pastoral Services – chaplains in the workplace provide pastoral care to employees irrespective of their faith or lack thereof. Every source reviewed describes the clerical or pastoral care role that chaplains play in the business environment. Meeting the spiritual needs of employees is at the forefront of the job description. Rank-and-file employees, as well as those with managerial or leadership positions in organizations seek out the spiritual guidance of the chaplains—Bible studies, prayers, worship services on or off the organization’s grounds, book studies, prayer groups, etc. We found that, *“generally, companies stipulate that chaplains may act in a religious capacity only when expressly invited*

to by an employee; participation in prayer or other activities must be voluntary; and proselytizing is not permitted...chaplains find careful ways to navigate this space” (Miller, Ngunjiri & LoRusso, 2018, p. 389).

Counseling – chaplains serve as first point of contact for many employees when they find themselves dealing with personal or work-related stressors. As one respondent in our research study stated, *“100% of our employees have personal problems that they bring to work...”* (Miller & Ngunjiri, 2015, p. 147), making the chaplain a free source of counseling and initial point of contact. Depending on the nature of the needs for which the employee seeks counsel, the chaplain may refer said employees for further help from trained professionals (therapists, social workers, psychologists). Chaplains are on hand to counsel employees on a variety of life stressors such as money, depression, divorce and spousal conflicts, issues with parenting, pre-marital counseling and relationship stress, substance abuse issues, etc. The list is literally as long as there are human problems being brought into the workplace.

Crisis Intervention – most of the scholarly studies as well as the personal stories that one finds in the media indicate that chaplains respond to all manner of crises —personal, familial, organizational —providing immediate help and support for employees and their families when they need it most. Crisis intervention includes material as well as emotional support. *“Frequently, chaplains are literally the first people on the scene when something goes awry, providing emotional support to employees, friends, family...in the hospital, at home”* (p. 387). Further, chaplains not only respond to crisis, but also frequently intervene

in time to stop a crisis from happening, such as speaking to a suicidal employee before he acts on his suicidal ideation and ensuring he gets help. As we found out, *“the mere presence of chaplains not only complements and supports workers and managers in a crisis, it means that someone equipped with the expertise to avert disaster proactivity and steer employees toward appropriate referral resources is readily available”* (p. 388).

Work-related issues – in our interviews with employees from a variety of organizations, they told us that chaplains were on hand to help them untangle the stressors and issues that arise when human beings work together (Miller, Ngunjiri, & Lorusso, 2018). Examples of issues that employees bring to the chaplains include interpersonal conflicts, sexual harassment, too much pressure to perform, insecurity about downsizing/potential job loss, conflicts with supervisors etc. *“Our research suggests that employees see chaplains as bridges between the divides that often impair communication and impede a sense of community...[including] cultural misunderstandings and barriers”* (p. 384). With the increasing diversity of workers, differences can be implicated in conflict – cultural, ethnic, religious and other social identity differences can be a source of conflict. Our research revealed that effective chaplains hold their specific denominational affiliation and other social identities, but they are equipped to serve the needs of diverse stakeholders by having an ecumenical worldview. When tensions over religious differences do happen, chaplains can and do teach employees about those differences in a respectful manner that leads to understanding and conflict resolution. Our research further clarified that human resource professionals deeply appreciate this boundary-crossing, intercultural competency of

chaplains as it helps them learn how to manage diversity and individual differences (Miller, Ngunjiri, & LoRusso, 2017).

Life Issues – chaplains help employees to deal with the practical and social needs that employees have outside of the workplace, issues that cause them stress, frustration, and could lead to absenteeism or presenteeism. The list of activities that chaplains engage in to serve these needs can be as long as there are human needs, theirs is a full-service for whatever...depending on the social and geographic location of the business. For example, in several companies located in large urban areas, the manufacturing or factory floors are often staffed by recent immigrants. In such cases, chaplains may help employees access resources in the community to help them with immigration issues, English-language learning, and understanding how to access relevant services. At one organization, the chaplains explained and showed the researchers a huge binder which they called “the referral Bible” which contained information about all kinds of legal, social, and community resources. Financial challenges, and access to appropriate medical care fall into this category of practical and social needs that employees brought to the chaplains. In fact, in some of the companies we studied, the chaplains had helped employees to organize a benevolence fund that could be used for crisis as well as for practical needs that workers face that needed immediate attention.

Administrative Activities – this category covers the functions that chaplains engage in as a part of their job description, such as writing reports, meeting with the leaders of the client companies, program start up, etc (Nimon, Philibert & Allen, 2008). Such administrative

tasks are a necessary part of serving in the work environment, and staying accountable to their stakeholders.

Alternatives to Chaplaincy

In reading the available studies and in our own research, we constantly ask whether it is possible for these services – social needs, practical needs, psychological counseling, interpersonal conflicts, religious or clerical services —is there a competing source to meet employee needs? In an article published in the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* Kim Nimon, Nanette Philibert and Jeff Allen were interested in this question too, specifically seeking to understand how corporate chaplaincy and employee assistance programs compare or contrast. Their study “*explored the functions that workplace chaplains perform and related those functions to EAP activities*” (2008, p. 232). What they found is that there are both similarities and differences between what workplace chaplains and EAP providers here from employees. Employees were as likely to bring their issues with their jobs, finances, and stress to EAP as to chaplains; substance abuse and legal issues were brought to EAP more than to chaplains, and relational issues were brought to chaplains more than to EAP providers.

However, their study found a lower percentage of psychological issues discussed with chaplains, an area they suggest might be because “*there is strong positive association between strength of religious faith and psychological functioning, the lower percentage of psychological issues observed could be a positive by-product of a corporate chaplaincy program*” (p. 255). And as discussed previously, the substance abuse and legal issues that employees may bring to the chaplains would result in referral to the right professionals.

Our research suggests that the ministry of presence makes it more likely for an employee to speak to a chaplain about any kind of problem, as opposed to the invisible stranger on the other side of a phone. For smaller organizations in our research sample, the Chaplaincy Assistance Program covered the needs of employees, making it unnecessary to also have an EAP. Larger organizations had both. Other than Nimon and colleagues, other authors did not bother to compare chaplaincy to any other service, recognizing the unique role that chaplains serve as not necessarily replicable in other ways (Cadge & Skaggs, 2018; Gendron, 2010; Sullivan, 2014).

Parish Ministry and Workplace Chaplaincy

Unlike Industrial Missions in the UK, workplace chaplaincy in Germany, and other places where chaplaincy services are most often provided by churches, workplace chaplaincy in the US is mostly provided either by service providers (e.g. Marketplace Chaplains, Corporate Chaplains of America – the two largest providers, plus a host of smaller providers) or by chaplains hired as employees of their business (examples include Tyson Foods and Cardone Industries). Chaplains may be ordained clergy from various denominations, or they may be lay leaders who are active members of a church but not formally ordained by their denominations. As mentioned earlier, the practice of chaplaincy at work in the US has developed outside of the church, even though most chaplains are ordained and/or credentialed members of their churches and denominations. Chaplaincy affords clergy the opportunity to meet people where they spend most of their time—at work, exposing them to a much larger diversity of individuals than would be present in any congregation, and inviting them to minister to not just the employees but their families as

well. Some chaplains are active ministers or pastors, some are retired, and some choose to minister as chaplains without also serving as parish ministers/pastors.

Training and Credentialing of Chaplains

Whereas organizations can choose to hire a chaplain who is not trained or credentialed as I recently found out in Alexandria, Minnesota, where several of the workplace chaplains are lay people with no formal religious training, ordination or credentialing, most organizations want chaplains who are trained and credentialed as clergy. In *“The Ministry of Presence”*, Winnifred Sullivan describes the credentialing of chaplains in terms of the requirements to have a Master of Divinity (MDiV), Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and ecclesiastical endorsement such as ordination or a similar process. In our research, we found that some organizations prefer chaplains who have work experience outside of the church, as they are seen as being better able to relate to the realities of workers. Earlier in this paper, I described dissertations written by chaplains that all concluded with the necessity for training programs that are specific to the role and reality of workplace chaplains. Rector’s (1991) study focused on crafting a training model, Barnes (1992) ended with a suggested training program to help pastors’ transition into chaplaincies, while Mullis (1999) provided a ministry plan for chaplaincies.

Ashley’s (2003) dissertation was a call for clergy to engage with chaplaincy in order to meet the needs of workers where they are. Clearly, the requirements for training and credentialing are partly dependent on the denominational affiliation and on the requirements of the hiring organization and/or the service provider organization. Our own research suggests that having some theological training, as well as exposure to the world of

work outside of the church, serves as minimal preparation for the realities that workplace chaplains face in cubicles, factory floors, assembly lines, etc. Ongoing professional development is also critical for ensuring chaplains are on top of the needs, expectations and challenges of their role in the workplace.

Benefits of Corporate Chaplaincy

Whereas quantifying the benefits of workplace chaplaincy has proven elusive at best, a few studies do provide a discussion of the perceived and/or empirical outcomes. Nimon and colleagues found that, when compared to an EAP, “employees *were more willing to talk about relationship issues. Given the importance of work-family integration for employee and organizational wellbeing,*” they were convinced that it was a significant finding that supported existing research and anecdotal evidence that “*corporate chaplains can play an important role in reducing turnover, retaining employees, improving productivity, reducing stress, and improving morale* (p. 258). Similarly, our research at a variety of businesses in manufacturing, food processing, retail, waste management, and restoration indicates that employees, human resource personnel, and business leaders all attest to the benefits of chaplaincy for individuals and organizations (Miller & Ngunjiri, 2015; Miller, Ngunjiri & LoRusso 2017, 2018):

Business Leaders Perceptions of Chaplaincy Benefits

Caring for employees, enabling them to feel understood and appreciated contributes towards positive outcomes —positive organizational culture, a sense of community, a sense of belonging to a caring supportive community

Chaplaincy contributes to improved productivity by reducing costs associated with turnover, training replacement employees, increased retention
Chaplaincy improves productivity by increasing employee wellbeing (e.g. through direct care, or referral to appropriate services and resources)
Chaplaincy contributes to improved productivity because employees feel more committed and engaged in their [caring] organizations

Benefits as Perceived by HR
Chaplains support and enhance a positive organizational culture – a culture that is caring, supportive, personable, helping to build trust between employees and management
Chaplains are a complement (give more choices) or an alternative to traditional EAP. Chaplaincy perceived as more effective because the chaplains are on-site, visible, knowable, available and trustworthy individuals
Chaplains provide care that HR personnel cannot or should not attempt to meet – the psychosocial and pastoral care.
Chaplains support the HR function by bridging cultural divides, they help HR understand the needs of their diverse employees
Chaplains help HR understand religious differences and figure out appropriate accommodations, thus avoiding lawsuits

From the point of view of the human resource professionals, chaplains support their function by caring for employees as a complement or alternative to EAP and providing spiritual and psychosocial support. They also support the HR function in their diversity and inclusion work, by helping them figure out religious accommodations and bridging cultural

divides, supporting the organizations in becoming welcoming and inclusive for employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. For human resource professionals, chaplains had become invaluable to the HR function, because their experience and expertise aided their efforts in having positive, welcoming organizational cultures and also to avoid discrimination lawsuits that arise when employee’s religious expression and observance needs are infringed upon.

Benefits as Experienced by Employees



This figure shows how as employees explain the services they receive from chaplain, they use language that is indicates feeling more positive about their workplace, and therefore they become more committed, they experience improved wellbeing, and they feel that they are well supported by their leaders. As we titled our article, employees expressed that they

felt “*the suits care about us*” – that their leaders cared enough about them as human beings to be invested in meeting their needs.

Why no quantitative results? Whereas Nimon and colleagues study utilized quantitative approaches to compare chaplaincy and EAP, all it tells us is that employees use both programs to have their needs met; that employees are more likely to bring their relationship issues to chaplains than to the EAP. Other [non-academic] studies comparing chaplaincy and EAP indicate that chaplaincy usage rates range between 55-95% while EAP rates stand at between 5-7% (Chestnut Global Partners EAP Trends Report 2016). The challenge of being able to provide statistics to connect chaplaincy or any spirituality at work program with the bottom-line benefits is felt by both academic researchers and chaplaincy practitioners. However, there is no denying that providing employees with access to care for their work-related and non-work needs is ultimately beneficial to both the individual employee and the organization.

Critiques of Workplace Chaplaincy

The aforementioned dissertations and thesis papers written by chaplains include discussions of the challenges that the chaplains faced in trying to explain the role and value of chaplaincy to potential organizations —however, these studies are all dated, with the most recent study reviewed being from 2003. With all the attention that chaplaincy has gained in the national and global media, from *The Atlantic* to *The Wallstreet Journal* and everything in between, perhaps it’s not as difficult to explain the rationale for chaplaincy today as it was 20 years ago. Further, increasing diversity, rising issues with loneliness and mental health struggles make it easier for potential providers to demonstrate why

chaplains assistance programs are necessary and more effective than traditional EAPs. And should business leaders indicate they already have an EAP program, providers can illustrate the feasibility of chaplaincy program costs and utilization rates, as well as the general positive feeling that employees who may not even have used the chaplains express towards their workplace because *“it means they really care to go above and beyond the usual benefits package to take care of our felt needs.”* Chaplaincy assistance programs are a complement to traditional EAP.

However, chaplaincy is not without critics. As mentioned earlier in the paper, some scholars express their concern that chaplaincy is yet another way that businesses commoditize spirituality in order to gain more control over their employees. They suggest that chaplains are tools of management to enhance the productivity of their employees *“that include emotional, relational and profitable measures”* as Chad Seales observed (p. 201). As we found among human resource professionals, most were hesitant at first; they were concerned about proselytizing, they feared that those who were not Christians would be offended by the presence of chaplains in the organizations, and they worried that it could lead to religious discrimination lawsuits (Miller et al., 2017, 2018). Instead, they found that chaplains were trained and experienced in meeting the needs of diverse employees —and whenever this was not the case, such a chaplain would be let go. Similarly, Winnifred Sullivan’s text demonstrates that chaplaincy is legal, constitutionally protected within the limits and practices of religious expressions and freedoms in the United States. Our observation has been that, when it comes to religious discrimination lawsuits, they are more likely to occur in the absence of a chaplain, rather than because of one.

Criticism notwithstanding, most scholars, particularly those coming from the field of management studies, for example, Nimon and colleagues, argue that paying attention to spirituality at work such as through chaplaincy “*represents the right thing to do, not because it leads to profits*”, and echo Robert Greenleaf’s test of servant leadership – whether those served grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous...and the less privileged benefit or at least are not caused further harm (p. 260-261). The test is in the pudding of the benefits that employees attest to experiencing and the positive outcomes that human resource professionals and executive leaders say they observe in their organizations due to the ministry of presence provided by chaplains.

Conclusions

This review paper has discussed the roots of workplace or corporate chaplaincy to its predecessor industrial chaplaincy in the US, demonstrating the continuities from the past in as far as chaplains are still meeting the social and emotional needs of employees; however, modern-day chaplaincy differs from its predecessor in that it is primarily offered by chaplaincy provider organizations or chaplains hired by businesses, rather than by churches or denominational bodies. Further, mid-century chaplaincy was perceived as being a tool for quelling worker disturbances or affiliation with organized labor, a position that ultimately appears to have led to its demise (Fones-Wolf & Fones-Wolf, 2015). Present day chaplaincy in the workplace may sometimes be perceived as a tool of management control; however, our studies indicate that it is perceived as an ultimately beneficial service meeting needs that cannot be as well met by EAP or others due to the nature of the relational ministry of presence (Miller, Ngunjiri, & LoRusso, 2018). Further, for chaplaincy

to be effective in its present-day iteration, employees have to perceive it as a service provided by management but that is not beholden to management. Employees demand confidentiality and expect that chaplains will give that to them; they expect chaplains to be worthy of trust. And with most chaplaincy services being provided by external service providers, the issue of being tools for management control are not as salient. People want to feel cared for, to feel that their employers are concerned about them as whole human beings not merely as workers —whatever other motivations leaders may have for hiring chaplains other than goodwill and a desire to love them, employees seem not to be too bothered by that (Miller et al., 2018).

What does the future hold for workplace chaplaincy?

Our studies, as well as others reviewed here, suggest that chaplaincy is likely to continue to rise in popularity and demand, because human beings will bring their problems to work, and no other service is as well equipped to meet those needs and help employees deal with those problems. As a chaplain quoted by Tanja Wolf and Birgit Feldbauer-Durstmüller in a paper presented at the Academy of Management stated,

In an age of rapidly advancing artificial intelligence and electro-relationships, having a personal chaplain is a unique proposition to provide hope, care, concern and compassion that electronics cannot provide. Empathic listening cannot be accomplished artificially (2018, p. 25).

Our research suggests that there are indeed some best practice-skills and competencies that can continue to guide the work and relevance of chaplains:

- Ecumenical worldview

- Intercultural competence
- Language competency – bilingual or multilingual chaplains
- Interfaith understanding and relationships
- A global mindset

Implications for the training and development of chaplains

As we found out, not every parish pastor or priest would make a good chaplain. In fact, one of the challenges that chaplains discussed in our study was the difficulty with getting clergy from some denominations and religions to serve people at work because such were not willing to serve those outside of their own religious groups. As such, effective chaplains bring a broad worldview, an understanding of the basic beliefs and practices of a variety of religious traditions, the ability to recognize the common values shared across different religions, and the ability to simplify and explain such to a diverse employee base. The requirement for training and credentialing will likely continue to be influenced by the needs of the spiritual marketplace, the demands of chaplaincy service providers, and the needs of specific organizations. As mentioned before, in one community, we found a mix of clergy and lay chaplains effectively serving in manufacturing companies. However, what remains salient irrespective of prior exposure to theological training, chaplains need to continue to engage in professional development to stay abreast of the needs of their ‘congregations’ — for example, continuing education in counseling, religious studies, business ethics, and intercultural understanding. Those chaplains who bring an ecumenical spirituality plus additional skills and credentials in the care for humans as

whole persons will be more marketable than those who don't have a broad skill base (Cadge & Skaggs, 2018; Holm, 2009a, 2009b; Sullivan, 2014).

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