

What is Chaplaincy in a Correctional Service of Canada context?

(Based on the *Handbook on Chaplaincy in the Correctional Service of Canada*)

We as Chaplaincy are able to pastorally respond to the ministry needs of both offenders and staff involved in a crisis, other-offenders, non-involved staff and families of all persons involved.

As well as our traditional roles:

- To conduct formal religious worship service for the institution
- To undertake death notifications and any grief counselling required
- To arrange for religious daily requirements of offenders

We are able to pastorally respond to the following issue and concerns among the men and their families as well as staff: grief and loss, loneliness, substance abuse, parenting issues, marital concerns, loss of meaning, powerlessness, sexuality, suicide, alienation, spiritual and religious issues, violence, relationships.

By definition Chaplaincy is the work of the faith community. Chaplaincy is described as 'visible Presence' which represents the spiritual dimensions of life and the value system that faith and a restorative process upholds.

The fundamentally spiritual nature of what Chaplaincy does reminds all who it touches of the reality and importance of spirituality within human existence and of the spiritual aspiration and dilemmas experienced by each person. It holds up to the spiritual scrutiny the foundation of our criminal justice system, the harm that some people inflict on other people, the opportunity to seek, to overcome and repair the harm, and the challenge of finding ways to live in community despite the diversity of the Canadian socio-cultural context.

Human spirituality calls forth people's desire and capacity to restore that which has been compromised by the actions of some at the expense of others. While harm cannot be undone, the human spirit can create avenues to pursue so that people can move beyond their pain, fear, confusion, depression, and even despair. Chaplaincy, therefore, presents to the people who live and work in a correctional environment, or who are impacted by the effects of crime, incarceration and reintegration, the possibility of engaging in a relationship that can restore them to fuller and more satisfying human experiences. Built on the pillars of relationship and restoration, Chaplaincy presents a message of hope that people can change and that a power from beyond our humanity can make possible things which our limitations appear to be impossible.

It is no wonder, then, that Chaplaincy is categorized as an "Essential Service".