# Corporate Chaplaincy

***As corporate chaplaincy has grown in popularity, it has evolved into different forms of practice that present different challenges***

***and opportunities to EAPs.***

*by Diana* C. *Dale, D.Min., LMFT, AAC*

Ministry to workers in their places of employment has long been a feature of the American business landscape, dating back to colonial times and per­ severing through the labor struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries. Contemporary workplace ministry came into its own with the hiring of field chaplains by LeToumeau, a construction company, to attend to the needs of the thousands of men building the Hoover Dam in the 1920s. After the dam was completed and the encampments were closed down, LeToumeau hired more chaplains for its manufacturing plants and expanded its workplace chaplaincy program, which included strong attention to employee counseling.

Following World War II, several corporations hired chaplains--many of whom had served in the armed forces--to provide counseling arid related services to servicemen entering (or returning to) civilian employment. Some of these workplace services, which went by such names as industrial chaplaincy and pastoral counseling, became co-mingled with corporate Alcoholics Anonymous programs and the developing employee assistance concept; in other cases, the corporate chaplain worked side by side with the Human Resources Department. Within some companies, the title of the Chaplaincy Department changed over time to, for instance, Employee Counseling, as the employee population became more multi­cultural.

In the mid-1980s, as corporations began to shed workers and restructure themselves, the progressive outsourcing of various business functions prompted industrial chaplains to reevaluate their traditional presence within companies as full-time employees and consider contracting their services to employers. Since then, an increasing variety of external chaplaincy programs have been

marketing themselves to employers, offering employee assistance services **t**ha**t** include a spiritual and, in some cases, a religious component.

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Thirteen years ago, the national director of the Australian Industrial Mission conducted research on the state of industrial chaplaincy in the United States and estimated that some 4,000 people were engaged in full- or part-time in workplace ministry, either in paid or volunteer capacities. While no

reliable figures are available today, industrial chaplaincy programs certainly are more visible than ever before. Having left employers' offices and become external providers, workplace chaplaincy providers have begun marketing their services on the Internet and through other media and thus have become e more easily identifiable.

Likewise, as employee wellness programs have grown in popularity and greater emphasis has been placed on defining and refining corporate values, more attention has been paid to the spirituality of work. At the same time, efforts by some religious denominations to increase their outreach to the "unchurched" has encouraged renewed entrepreneurial activity among some chaplaincy providers, whose literature reflects a dual focus of evangelism (and even proselytizing activities) in tandem with pastoral care and counseling services.

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**Three Streams**

As corporate chaplaincy has grown in popularity, it has evolved into three main streams of practice. The stream that is most closely allied with the employee assistance movement is com­ posed of clinically trained clergy, most commonly with a master of divinity degree and often with other advanced degrees along with clinical pastoral education or other supervision. In addition, many of these clergy hold mental health licenses, have earned credentials in critical incident stress management, mediation, and outplacement, and have participated in various corporate training programs.

These individuals are screened and endorsed by their denominations and faith groups but follow codes of ethics that prohibit violation of religious boundaries. In general, they see their mission as enhancing the spiritual quality of work. They tend to belong to one or more of the national professional pas­ toral care groups, such as the National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains (NIBIC) or the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), as well as to professional organizations such as EAPA, the Society for Human Resource Management, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and so on.

Some of these individuals work in EAPs or as EA consultants; others have developed provider centers, which contract with employers to provide broad EA services and consult on such areas as change management, conflict resolution, and career transition. Many are active members of EAPA and have been since the organization’s inception. A colleague once related to me that some 25 percent of his peers in the EAP Roundtable had been to seminary and were ordained clergy. Employee assistance program management had become, for them, a direct outgrowth of their original service commitment.

The second stream comprises evangelistic organizations. A majority of their members are not trained in industrial chaplaincy or counseling (although some are); they may or may not be ordained or endorsed. Member chaplains typically are asked to subscribe to and sign a particular doctrinal statement and are paid by the hour by their organization. Few of these individuals belong to "secular" professional organizations or even inter­faith pastoral care professional organizations.

In addition to providing pastoral care to employees, some of these organizations also state in their literature that they "disciple" employees. In the 1990s, the marketing materials of many of these organizations mirrored those of mainstream EAPs, and they competed directly with EAPs for contracts. Recently, some of the language regarding the services and credentials of these providers has had to be modified: References to "counseling," for example, have been replaced with language stating that chaplains engage in "pastoral conversations" and listening ministries.

The third stream is union chaplaincy programs, the largest of which is operated by the United Auto Workers. Union chaplains generally are required to be members of the union and be approved by the union leadership.

At present, the majority of union chaplains do not have advanced degrees or professional pastoral care training, though the UAW does conduct an annual conference that has a training component. Most of these chaplains retain their day-to-day work responsibilities and volunteer their spiritual support to employees who are in need but have been reluctant to use the EAP or other forms of assistance.

**Comforting Image**

One of the main advantages of having chaplains serve the workplace, either formally or informally, is that they can encourage employees to be open to using the EAP. Public opinion polls consistently have shown that people in need tend to seek out a minister, priest, rabbi, imam, or other religious representative, and many are familiar with the comforting image of a military or hospital chaplain. Chaplains are trusted both for their care and for their commitment to ensuring confidentiality, and these qualities enhance utilization rates.

Another benefit is that clinically credentialed chaplains are trained to be organizationally savvy, are holistic and interdisciplinary in their approach, and are geared to work in teams and draw on multiple resources. They also have training and experience in dealing with grief, loss, and trauma, and can help employees integrate their own spiritual resources into solutions to the issues at hand.

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Some chaplains, unfortunately, lack the proper training and supervision and may face a role conflict in the provision of workplace services. Chaplains with little or no professional training or continuing education in the services they provide are doing a gross disservice to employees who deserve the best. Poorly trained providers also tend to overstate the services they are competent to provide, yet often are reluctant to refer.

In addition, if a chaplain is uncomfortable with the cultural and/or religious diversity of the workforce or is pursuing an agenda that he or she has not fully disclosed to the employer, it increases the risk of creating an uncomfortable (if not openly hostile) work environment, not to mention liability for charges of religious harassment.

Howcan EA professionals provide traditional EA services and also meet the spiritual needs of employees? EA professionals ought to continue their own professional and spiritual growth and also become conversant with the "spirituality-in­the-workplace" genre of literature and conferences. EA professionals also should seek out colleagues who have ministerial backgrounds and team up with them to provide services.

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