

Volunteer Chaplaincy

Exploring the Community Chaplains Concept

Context

This **Chaplaincy Opportunity Document** will be best understood after first reviewing the– **YMCA Christian Emphasis and Chaplaincy Roles Document**– which describes 8 different kinds of Christian Mission related roles that could exist within a YMCA Association or at a YMCA Branch.

Background

The idea of chaplaincy in the YMCA goes back to the early beginning of the YMCA. The Y provided chaplains for troops during the Civil War. Oswald Chambers was a chaplain to soldiers in WWI. There are many other examples as well.

Today, many YMCAs have chaplains associated with their summer camps. Branches also have experimented with part-time chaplains roles at their locations for staff and members.

Current Chaplaincy Expression

Chaplains for summer camps is pretty easy to execute. Camp is structured. It is a certain length of time. It is to a specific target audience (campers and staff). And it is a “manageable” number of people. Branch Chaplaincy or Association-wide Chaplaincy has significantly greater challenges than the camping environment.

Some of these include: 1) the scope audience (when undefined it can be full-time staff, part-time staff, board members, members, etc... - a huge amount of people), 2) the scope of role – traditionally, chaplains provide a kind of pastoral care – not necessarily strategic planning, leadership development, coaching Christian emphasis team etc... trying to do too many roles breeds burnout 3) Branch usage patterns – at least for members, they are on the go, so chaplaincy connections are hard to make and 4) who to “recruit for volunteer/hire” – typically we think of seminary trained clergy – most of whom are serving in local church in some way and have many other responsibilities.

The opportunity “Community Chaplaincy” provides

Corporate Chaplains of America (CCA) (www.chaplain.org) has provided seminary trained workplace chaplains to companies over the last 10 years. God has greatly honored their efforts and there are hundreds of Corporate Chaplains working with several companies each all over the United States

Community Chaplaincy is an innovative outgrowth of **CCA’s** years of experience. *The basic idea is that there are mature believers in the local church that are looking for something more. They feel called to go deeper with God and to minister to those that are around them and they would be highly interested in being trained in Chaplaincy skills if it would allow them to have a greater impact for the kingdom.*

Corporate Chaplains of America has streamlined their training into a 84 hour training curriculum that would equip such believers to have a ministry of Chaplaincy to any number of target groups where they naturally live out their life. For instance, if a believer regularly spends time in a local coffee shop, they can offer to be a chaplain for staff and customers there. If they are a member of a golf club, they can offer to be a chaplain for staff and members there. (the idea is that a trained Community Chaplain can simply engage some area of their life where they are already involved, but in a new way, in a way that opens doors to conversations and kingdom impact).

YMCA Context

Where this idea has merit in a YMCA context and provides new possibilities for a lasting chaplaincy impact is in having a number of Community Chaplains involved at each individual branch and having their chaplaincy focus be on some specific audience within the YMCA. For instance becoming chaplain to a group exercise class, to a cycle class, to a sports league, to the fitness instructors, to the full-time staff, etc...

Two general definitions of Chaplaincy – Association level – Branch level

Association Staff Chaplain - this role is primarily one of pastoral care – this would include: staff care, light counseling, life crisis, life on life mentoring, prayer, some Bible Study leader, some leadership development, and some mission training. [roles/gifts - pastoral, care, compassion, light counseling, small group, life issues]

Branch Chaplain – This staff person has part of their role at the branch dedicated to chaplain related activities. Caring for a targeted group at a local YMCA Branch which would include caring for people, being available for crisis, and light counseling. Sometimes chaplaincy is provided at a branch level through partnering with several churches to have a pastor be available or at the Y during certain times. (Chaplaincy targeted groups are numerous – i.e. - group exercise class, to a cycle class, to a sports league, the weight room, fitness instructors, full-time staff, part time staff, volunteers, board members, etc.)

Excerpts from Corporate Chaplains Website explaining Community Chaplains

What is a Corporate Chaplains of America?

Corporate Chaplains of America (CCA) was initiated in 1996. While there are some Christian owned companies that have their own chaplains on staff, CCA saw a need for Chaplains to be available as a resource to business owners that wanted to offer their employees the services of a spiritual caregiver who is available 24/7 to care for their needs. In just over a decade, CCA has grown to nearly 100 chaplains serving some 600 company locations throughout the U.S.

What is a Community Chaplain?

Simply defined, a Community Chaplain is a personal and spiritual caregiver whose primary job is to serve the emotional, physical, spiritual, and personal needs of people in the community around him. This individual is a mature believer that has gone through 84 hours of Chaplaincy training and is approved and commissioned by their local church or another ministry.

What is the objective of the Community Chaplain?

“To build caring relationships with the hope of gaining permission to share the life changing Good News of Jesus Christ in a non-threatening manner.”

The value of Community Chaplaincy

In spite of the stress brought on by the competing demands of family and work responsibilities, people continue to ignore avenues such as counselors, employee assistance programs, and the church as sources of strength and support. Data from the Barna Research Group indicates that 60 percent of people do not attend church on a typical weekend. What this data indicates is that a significant majority of people encountered in the community environment have no pastor or other caregiver to turn to during a time of crisis. Perhaps an even more alarming statistic indicates that adults over age eighteen have only a 6 percent likelihood of accepting Christ as Savior. What this statistic tells us in simple terms is that only 6 percent are likely to discover a long term spiritual solution to the problems they face. It is the

remaining majority that Community Chaplains seek to reach with the life-changing Good News of Jesus Christ.

What is a process-managed approach to community chaplaincy?

A process-managed approach to community chaplaincy stipulates that chaplaincy care look the same in Raleigh, NC as it looks in Grants Pass, OR. Does this mean the chaplains look the same? The simple answer is no. Process management in chaplaincy means that the process of care provided to the community utilizes a consistency that spans culture, age, geography, and uniqueness of circumstances, in order to ensure that chaplains are responding in similar fashion throughout the various communities they serve. Process management is accomplished significantly through a proper training model, extends through the chaplain introduction process, and finds its completion through a consistency of response among chaplain team members to the variety of crises encountered.

Process management can be applied to community chaplaincy in this way: each chaplain has a specific mission field in which he serves. Relationships are built with those in his community, or mission field, over a period of time. As these relationships develop, the chaplain is positioned to serve as a pastoral caregiver to those found in their mission field. In essence, the chaplain is serving as a pastor to people who have no pastor. Care can include hospital visitation, marriage or family caregiving, and assistance with a variety of other difficult issues. The care provided is always at the initiation of the individual, and only after permission is granted by them. The community chaplain will act as a conduit of care between the church and those in the community.

Possible YMCA Next Steps for a Branch or Association

Each Branch and/or Association will have to explore and determine the best next step for their situation. The training kit is excellent with 12 Audio CD Lessons, a thorough Chaplaincy workbook and other tools. A YMCA staff person who may not serve in the Chaplaincy role, but has a zeal for the mission might consider getting the kit and working through it themselves to improve their own chaplaincy skills. This could be the first step then to inviting other staff or volunteers to go through the training as well. Then for them to “put it into practice” within a specific part of the YMCA community.