

Ministry Emphasis – September

Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education

A Place for Support and Guidance

"My name is Rev. Tom Hehenberger and I do specialized ministry for Duke Hospice in Durham, NC. I am a chaplain offering spiritual comfort, insight, and support for hospice patients, their families, and friends. I also offer the emotional support that goes hand in hand with the spiritual support. I am part of an interdisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, social workers, and certified nursing assistants. Working together as a team we address the comfort needs of patients with a prognosis of less than six months to live; in the home, skilled nursing/assisted living facilities, or our inpatient care facility.

This type of ministry is unique. I visit and support people without prior agenda, meeting them in their spiritual understandings as they seek to make meaning, manage their relationships, and begin to know healing peace in their particular life context. This ministry is very fulfilling for me as I work to establish relationships with our neighbor in need."

Tom is one of twenty rostered persons in the North Carolina synod who serve or have served in a pastoral care ministry to people with special needs. His synodical peers are employed by agencies and institutions from the Asheville area in the west to Wilmington in the east. Some of the settings for their ministries are general medical hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals, pastoral counseling centers, pastoral training programs, and state prisons. Another twelve persons are discerning or seeking to serve in pastoral care ministries. Some of our group are currently attending seminary or participating in clinical training programs in preparation to be chaplains.

The synod's Specialized Pastoral Care Committee exists to support persons who feel a special calling to the vocation of pastoral care. The Committee provides financial scholarships to those in training programs. For persons seeking appropriate credentials for their work, the committee provides consultation, guidance and recommendations.

A high point for our group of thirty-two women and men is an annual retreat during which time we experience worship, fellowship, a workshop and peer consultations. Everyone has a scheduled individual consultation where joys, challenges, and future plans can be shared. This non-threatening event provides support and guidance for persons who may work in very challenging and stressful settings. The retreat can also be a place to get answers to questions like: What do I need to be a chaplain?



Any questions about this ministry can be addressed to Claude Deal, Chair of the Specialized Pastoral Care Committee, 3823 Swarthmore Road, Durham, NC 27707. Phone: 919-493-8775. E-mail: Claude.V.Deal@gmail.com.