

Caring Connections

An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling



*Technology as Opportunity and Challenge
in Pandemic Times and Beyond*

The Purpose of Caring Connections

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written primarily by and for Lutheran practitioners and educators in the fields of pastoral care, counseling, and education. Seeking to promote both breadth and depth of reflection on the theology and practice of ministry in the Lutheran tradition, *Caring Connections* intends to be academically informed, yet readable, solidly grounded in the practice of ministry, and theologically probing. *Caring Connections* seeks to reach a broad readership, including chaplains, pastoral counselors, seminary faculty and other teachers in academic settings, clinical educators, synod and district leaders, others in specialized ministries and concerned congregational pastors and laity.

Caring Connections also provides news and information about activities, events and opportunities of interest to diverse constituencies in specialized ministries.

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When the Inter Lutheran Coordinating Committee disbanded a few years ago, the money from the “Give Something Back” Scholarship Fund was divided between the ELCA and the LCMS. The ELCA has retained the name “Give Something Back” for their fund, and the LCMS calls theirs “The SPM Scholarship Endowment Fund.” These endowments make a limited number of financial awards available to individuals seeking ecclesiastical endorsement and certification/credentialing in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education.

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Contents

Editor's Introduction to This Issue of <i>Caring Connections</i> 1 <i>Bruce Hartung</i>	Zoom: The New Caring Connection 25 <i>Ed Treat</i>
Let's Talk about "Daily Bread for the Journey" 5	The Virtual Office: Caring for Souls During the Global Pandemic 30 <i>Justin Hannemann</i>
CPE PROGRAMS AND STUDENTS ENGAGE TECHNOLOGY IN A PANDEMIC	MINISTRY, SPIRITUAL CARE, AND TEACHING ENGAGE TECHNOLOGY IN A PANDEMIC
Supervising CPE Groups during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Finding the Right Balance! 7 <i>Anurag Mani</i>	A Chaplain's Journey Through the Pandemic 35 <i>David Rumbold</i>
Chaplaincy Education in Hawai'i in the COVID-19 Pandemic 11 <i>Anke Flohr, John Moody, Phyllis Hoermann and Brianna Lloyd</i>	My Journey in Technology: Parish and Seminary 40 <i>Alec Fisher</i>
Virtually Rich 15 <i>Fredi Eckhardt</i>	My Favorite Apps 45 <i>Anna Speiser</i>
ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGE TECHNOLOGY IN A PANDEMIC	Care Ministry Through Texting 49 <i>David Ficken</i>
Technology: A Servant's Towel in Changing Times 19 <i>Amy Smessaert</i>	Uses of Technology in Chaplaincy 51 <i>Steve Arnold</i>

Call for Articles

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran Pastoral Care Providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight within the wider Lutheran community. We want to invite any Lutherans interested in writing an article or any readers responding to one to please contact one of the co-editors, Diane Greve at dkgreve@gmail.com or Bruce Hartung at hartungb@csl.edu. Please consider writing an article for us. We sincerely want to hear from you!

And, as always, if you haven't already done so, we hope you will subscribe online to *Caring Connections*. Remember, a subscription is free! By subscribing, you are assured that you will receive prompt notification when each issue of the journal appears on the *Caring Connections* website. This also helps the editors and the editorial board to get a sense of how much interest is being generated by each issue. We are delighted that our numbers are increasing. Please visit lutheranservices.org/newsletters#cc and click on "Click here to subscribe to the *Caring Connections Journal*" to receive automatic notification of new issues.

In 2022 we plan to focus on:

2022.2 Rituals, Grief and Mourning (Deadline for articles May 15, 2022)

2022.3 Responses to "A Thousand Foot View" (Deadline for articles August 15, 2022)

Editor's Introduction to This Issue of *Caring Connections*

Bruce Hartung

This issue of Caring Connections is made possible by the generous contributions of our readers and the hosting of Lutheran Services in America. Contributions are welcome and needed. Send them to Lutheran Services in America, 100 Maryland Ave NE Ste 500, Washington, DC 20002, and note the contribution is in support of Caring Connections.

IT IS A BIT HARD TO KNOW how to introduce this issue. It is very full of stories of courage, innovation, struggle, and grace. Our theme is “Technology as Opportunity and Challenge in Pandemic Times and Beyond.” Our articles are all about adaptation. They engage their ministries, the pandemic and technology to continue to bring the light of spiritual care into the darkness of human struggle, as well as the light of educational opportunity into the world of learning and spiritual growth.

I continue to be moved by the competence, skill, and imagination of those who are sharing in this issue as I have been in previous issues as well.

The next issue, to be edited by Diane Greve, is themed **Rituals, Grief and Mourning**. Diane is still accepting proposals from spiritual care providers and others for this issue. Contact her at dkgreve@gmail.com.

This issue begins with an invitation. Please read the invitation and accept its challenge. The third issue of *Caring Connections* (September of 2022) will focus on responses to [Christopher Otten's article](#) in our previous issue, “A Thousand Foot View.” Please read the invitation, be moved to write, and then do so.

There are three sections of articles following this initial **Introduction** and the **Invitation**.

They engage their ministries, the pandemic and technology to continue to bring the light of spiritual care into the darkness of human struggle.

CPE Programs and Students Engage Technology in a Pandemic

- Anurag Mani builds from where he left off in [his 2020 article in *Caring Connections*](#). We asked him to discuss how things have evolved in his offering of CPE since he wrote his first article two years ago. In the nature of “balance” in the way CPE is conducted and in the search for a healthily centered understanding of ambiguity (my way of reading how he unfolds his practice) he finds growth and strength.
- Four chaplains associated with Pacific Health Ministries, Anke Flohr, John Moody, Phyllis Hoermann and Brianna Lloyd, collaborate to offer a view of CPE via technology that had already been developed beginning over a decade

ago and was the impetus for further growth stimulated by the pandemic. “We, like everyone everywhere, had to adapt to what the virus forced us to do. While frustrating and irritating, it let us develop new and creative ways to pastorally serve.” The article describes a number of those creative ways.

- Fredi Eckhardt describes being in a virtual unit, her 4th unit, of CPE. “The pandemic demanded we do it this way, thankfully, and I had an experience I did not anticipate: a cherished one, to be honest.” Fredi takes us on her journey in a way that carries us (at least it did me) along every step of the way. In reading her article the reader can join her on her journey. That will also prepare you for some of the articles to come.

Organizations (Lutheran Diaconal Association, Center of Addiction and Faith, GracePoint Institute) Engage Technology in a Pandemic

- **Lutheran Diaconal Association** Director of Development and Public Relations Amy Smessaert, herself a deaconess student, takes the reader through the movement of the LDA through these pandemic years. “While the pandemic has necessitated a deeper dive into the virtual experience, the LDA is no stranger to using tech to educate and form its diaconal students.” The reader will have a birds-eye view to see how it was done and continues to move forward.
- **Center of Addiction and Faith** Director Ed Treat traces the use of technology from its beginning uses by the Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy to its use now by the robust Center of Addiction and Faith. The core of his journey is embodied in his closing paragraph: “It seems inevitable to me that, as we emerge from this pandemic, the church will have to rethink how it does business. It is hard to imagine how we would ever go back to what we were doing before. Besides, that all felt like its days were numbered anyway, didn’t it? Didn’t something need to change? We now have before us some great new ways to gather people, share the Gospel and create spiritual community. I think it’s exciting and marvelous.”
- **GracePoint Institute for Relational Health** CEO Justin Hannemann takes us into the opportunities and the struggles of a relatively young counseling center and its staff as the pandemic closed off the possibility of person-in-person contact. “While there are some reflections on ‘technology’ in the broad sense, I will focus primarily on what the GracePoint staff and I have observed utilizing audio-visual technology as clinicians and as colleagues.” And focus, transparently and creatively, Justin does.

“Didn’t something need to change? We now have before us some great new ways to gather people, share the Gospel and create spiritual community. I think it’s exciting and marvelous.”

Ministry, Spiritual Care and Teaching Engage Technology in a Pandemic

The first two articles (David Rumbold and Alec Fisher) in this section could as easily been placed in the previous section. They span both institutional life and using technology in their ministry and/or teaching. The reader will see that mix. Yet both of these first two articles develop the theme of technological use for a purpose of service to people. The next three articles (Anna Speiser, David Ficken, Steve Arnold) all focus directly on aspects of spiritual care during the pandemic. Look for creative initiatives and practical suggestions in them all.

- David Rumbold grabbed my attention immediately: “Inside a secure facility lies those infected with the COVID virus, many deathly sick, along with the dedicated staff isolated with them on the COVID unit. The staff will go many long weeks without outside contact and minimal interaction with others both at work and at home — to avoid becoming infected and prevent the possible spread of the virus. They are fulfilling their responsibilities and adjusting to the ever-changing conditions. Even with amazing resilience, grief and the effects of isolation were beginning to surface. This has been our reality time and time again since March of 2020.” The reader’s attention may also be grabbed.
- Alec Fisher shares with us, in poignant and meaningful ways, his journey in and with technology. Identifying it as a “complicated relationship” and himself as perhaps even “technophobic.” As a parish pastor and guest instructor at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, he has “come a long way.” “With the improvement of my classes, I’ve discovered strengths of online participation that I now appreciate and can highlight because of these changes. Online classes are not in-person light—a mere consolation for remote learning, they’re simply different. They have their deficiencies, but they also have their strengths just like anything else.”
- Anna Speiser reviews for us 18 apps from her own practice, from conversation with other chaplain colleagues and from professional reviews. Her goal: “I hope ... this small list might offer some helpful tidbits — perhaps introduce you to something new or inspire you to look further into this ever-changing world of apps.” Does it introduce the reader to this world!!!
- David Ficken takes the reader into his ministry world — a world that includes texting. “The invention of texting has allowed for quick instantaneous interactions with people. I’m still of the generation where a quick phone call or leaving a voice message is an important way to connect with someone. I would say that texting is now #2!” He shows us ways that texting has risen to this position for him and could, also, for us.

The staff will go many long weeks without outside contact and minimal interaction with others both at work and at home — to avoid becoming infected and prevent the possible spread of the virus.

- Steve Arnold shares his diaconal ministry: “With the onset of Covid 19, my role had to drastically change because I, myself, was considered a vulnerable senior citizen with underlying health issues. I could no longer enter the facility and do direct patient care. In addition, the facility did not permit gatherings of residents, who were often confined to their rooms due to quarantine.” How did he adapt? The reader will find out.

I believe that there is considerable excellent and helpful reading in this issue by very thoughtful and insightful spiritual care colleagues. Good reading!

Let's Talk about "Daily Bread for the Journey"

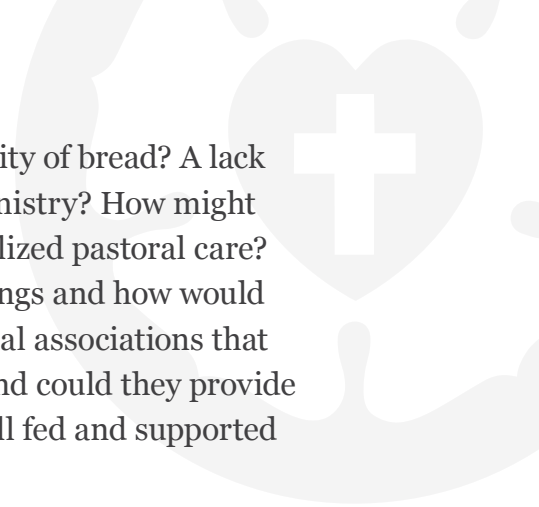
THE PREVIOUS ISSUE of *Caring Connections*, "Daily Bread for the Journey" (Vol 18/2021/ Number 4) reflects a concern frequently discussed at our monthly editorial board meetings. Are Lutherans in specialized pastoral care ministries being called to serve in a time of scarcity? Is there bread still available to feed us in our journeys? How much do our congregations, colleagues, church bodies, and institutions still support and value the work we do?

Most of our board members are of an age which makes it possible to look back to a time when there seemed to be stronger support systems for those serving in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education. Our national church bodies each had a full-time endorser/coordinator (plus support staff) responsible for specialized pastoral care ministries. Zion, the triennial national inter-Lutheran gathering, was funded by church-affiliated fraternal organizations and jointly by our respective national church bodies. Zion conferences brought us together at relatively low participant cost. Lutheran Services of America's Chaplains' Network was active and provided LSA chaplains an opportunity to gather annually in a pre-conference event at the LSA national conference. Lutheran calling/hiring agencies, and even secular institutions, were more aware of and financially supportive of continuing education needs and opportunities for their pastoral staffs. Local bishops/presidents and districts/synods were better connected to pastoral care providers on their territory and were more likely to hold them to a higher level of accountability for their relationship to the church.

Perhaps we, the board, idealize the past, but it seems to us as we talk to colleagues across our churches that there is a hunger for mutual support and collegiality, especially in times such as these. Christopher Otten observed in his article, "A Thousand Foot View," "COVID has accentuated the weakness in our Lutheran networks for chaplaincy recruitment, formation, endorsement, and support." He challenges us to address these weaknesses with creativity. Chaplain Otten calls us to raise awareness in churches and institutions of our disciplines' needs, to re-invent a national inter-Lutheran conference, to reinvigorate chaplain connections with local and national judicatories for support and accountability and to nurture local networks of mutual support.

Perhaps we, the board, idealize the past, but it seems to us as we talk to colleagues across our churches that there is a hunger for mutual support and collegiality, especially in times such as these.

We as an editorial board want to accept Otten's challenge to creativity by opening a dialogue with you, our readers. We invite your responses to the entire issue "Daily Bread for the Journey" and especially to Otten's analysis and recommendations in



his article “A Thousand Foot View.” Are you experiencing a scarcity of bread? A lack of support from church and institution for your pastoral care ministry? How might we work to raise awareness of the needs of those called to specialized pastoral care? Do you see benefit to regional or national inter-Lutheran gatherings and how would you envision such events? Have you found ecclesial or professional associations that renew, engage, and sustain you? What local networks feed you and could they provide a model of mutual support for other communities? If you feel well fed and supported in your ministry what or who is providing that?

Your responses will be included in an issue of *Caring Connections* later this year so we might be challenged, informed, and inspired by one another. It is also our hope through this dialogue to identify people with the creativity, passion, and leadership skills to help us move from conversation to action — for the sake of our siblings in ministry who hunger now as well as for those who will follow us into these ministries.

We eagerly await your responses and ensuing dialogue. Please send your comments and perspectives to co-editor Bruce Hartung at hartungb@csel.edu. You can access Christopher Otten’s article [here](#).

Your *Caring Connections* Board and Editors:

Dave Ficken, Diane Greve, Bruce Hartung, Lee Joesten, Phil Kuehnert,
James McDaniels, Christopher Otten, Dana Schroeder, John Schumacher,
Lorinda Schwarz, Anna Speiser, Eric Wester, Nancy Wigdahl, Mark Whitsett,
David Wurster

Supervising CPE Groups during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Finding the Right Balance!

Anurag Mani

"Your hand opens and closes, opens and closes. If it were always a fist or always stretched open, you would be paralyzed. Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding, the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as birds' wings." — Jelaluddin Rumi, The Essential Rumi

I VIVIDLY REMEMBER SPRING 2020. Firstly, because that is when the COVID-19 pandemic began to have an impact on how I teach Clinical Pastoral Education. And, to further etch it in my memory I wrote a reflection for *Caring Connections* (Mani, 2020) on my experience of facilitating CPE group as the pandemic was starting to become part of my personal and professional life.

As I write this reflection, I am in the midst of preparing to welcome a new group of CPE students for the Spring 2022 unit of CPE. Two years have passed, and the pandemic still remains, impacting, restraining, and enhancing my practice and understanding of CPE group education process. I recall in my former reflection, in the midst of the looming pandemic I found comfort in theory. Through the lenses of System Centered Theory I was able to draw some clarity in the midst of a fuzzy and anxious context. In this reflection, I reengage my thoughts making use of the last two years of personal experience of supervising CPE groups during the pandemic.

I love the way Rumi captures in simple language the depth of spiritual wisdom on being *'beautifully balanced'*. I am reminded of my childhood Sunday School experience in my birth country India where the Sunday School teachers shaped my theology of care. Every year the teachers asked us to bring our old clothes in good shape for donation to the children at Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charities orphanage. What made this experience powerful for me was that they physically took us to the orphanage to engage with the sisters and the children. This allowed me to not only care about (thought) but also care for (action) the children through my active presence. As I reflect on this theme of balance I am reminded of Christ's presence and absence through his physical ministry on Earth and through his redeeming grace through the cross, and the work of the Holy Spirit in his physical absence.

As I reflect on this theme of balance I am reminded of Christ's presence and absence through his physical ministry on Earth and through his redeeming grace through the cross, and the work of the Holy Spirit in his physical absence.

Throughout this pandemic I am learning about the power of balance in every aspect of my work as a CPE Educator. This is what remains unchanged: I continue to experience the power of videoconferencing for the group process in the ways it directs the work energy of the group towards the group learning goals. I experience this not only during the CPE group learning but also in other meetings. For example, during our CPE center's faculty and staff meetings the work done appears to be more goal directed cutting down the noise caused by side-talks or other digressions that can occur naturally during an in-person meeting. In videoconferences we often mute our microphones in order to avoid accidentally bringing in the noise when someone else is speaking. I wonder how this also is teaching us to listen more patiently to each other rather than just responding out of our own projections and self needs. This is indeed a driving force as it relates to effective communication.

In the last group I supervised, I could assess how this ability to mute one's microphone if not managed effectively by the student and directed by the educator could become a hiding place and communicate a defensive and non-engaging attitude.

On the flip side, the restraining force is the lack of spontaneity via videoconferencing that is present in the real person-to-person communication. I wonder when we mute our microphones in what ways we are also muting the voices that can be helpful. In the group process this becomes challenging for the students who identify themselves as introverts or those whose pastoral identity is new and not well formed. In the last group I supervised, I could assess how this ability to mute one's microphone if not managed effectively by the student and directed by the educator could become a hiding place and communicate a defensive and non-engaging attitude. Recognizing the complexities and subtleties in group meeting via Zoom I created a Zoom etiquette document that I give to each incoming CPE students. Our CPE handbook now has an updated policy on CPE learning via videoconference. I am learning the balance.

In my prior reflection I had observed how looking at another person through the camera lens lowers the human tendency to stereotype based on one's outward appearance, skin color, race etc. Looking through the System Centered Theory lenses I observed how this is a driving force for group work. I still observe this is a strength yet now I also see how this is not fully balanced, especially for a CPE group where the intention is the formation of compassionate pastoral persons. I wonder in what ways does this keep us from seeing the other person fully. As an educator my goal is to teach students to embrace the full personhood of the other human being. This embrace can take place not by restricting one's view of the other but by seeing how the other person wants to be seen. I wonder about balance here. I am learning to use the driving force of the videoconferencing to assist the group in bonding and deeper work yet also confront the restraining force of being in relationship with another

human being through the camera lens which can be de-humanizing as it does not communicate the fullness of the other.

Distractions in group process are more visible to me and in some ways challenging to manage. During the in-person group interactions I would undo distractions directly with the student, assisting, challenging, and supporting the student in lowering the distractions. With videoconferencing the group has another layer of distraction to tackle. It is technology. The challenging part is that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish if the distraction is a learning issue for the student or if it is indeed a technological issue that is out of the control of the student. Moreover, the ability to turn on and turn off one's camera and microphone creates unique challenges which I am learning to address with grace and patience. For example, in my last group during a class session a student signed out of the video conference leaving a chat message telling the group that he needed to go pick his child from childcare. It was so quick, and he was gone. I wondered how different the group dynamics would have been if he did that in an in-person group. Would the physical act of getting up, moving his body, and leaving his space impact the group differently? I imagine this would certainly invoke some deeper feelings for the group than it did when his small square screen disappeared from our computer screens.

The ability to turn on and turn off one's camera and microphone creates unique challenges which I am learning to address with grace and patience.

I am learning that CPE group education through videoconference does not necessarily require students who are technologically sound but students who are committed to the group process. If one is committed, then both the student and the group can work to address any technological challenges. But a student who is not committed to the group learning process can take advantage of the technological distractions to engage their defense. Moreover, the ability to be present and absent through just one click creates complexities and challenges to the very essence and meaning of human presence and absence.

In an unofficial survey I asked my student group during the last day of the unit about their preferred choice between an in-person versus an online CPE class experience. While the students were thankful for the availability of learning through videoconferencing, they stressed the value of the personal interactions. One particular reason was the loss of casual interaction during class breaks and hanging out and bonding during lunch breaks. This was especially powerful for the students who had experienced a pre-Covid unit of CPE.

This feedback has been very helpful to me. I take pride in my ability to offer a safe, dependable structure that emerges from my theory. The use of technology supports me in keeping this structure and I am learning to provide the balance by offering more opportunities within the group time where the group can get some

feeling of connection that in some imperfect way capture the spontaneous in-person casual interactions.

Technology has been a powerful support to us in this time of global health crisis. We have a lot to be thankful for. Yet, like with anything in life the use of technology has its challenges and while I use it to support and encourage the learning of my students I am constantly learning to find the right balance!

References

Mani, Anurag. "Driving and Restraining Forces for a CPE Group during COVID-19." (2020). *Caring Connections: An Inter Lutheran Journal for Practitioners of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Volume 17, Number 4.



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Chaplaincy Education in Hawai'i in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Anke Flohr, John Moody, Phyllis Hoermann and Brianna Lloyd

Queen's Prayer (Ke Aloha O Ka Haku) by Queen Lili'uokalani

<i>ʻO kou aloha nô Aia i ka lani A ʻo Kou ʻoia ʻiʻo He hemolelo hoʻi</i>	<i>Your loving mercy Is as high as Heaven And your truth So perfect</i>
<i>Kôʻu noho mihi ʻana A paʻahao ʻia ʻO ʻoe kuʻu lama Kou nani koʻu koʻo</i>	<i>I live in sorrow Imprisoned You are my light Your glory, my support</i>
<i>Mai nânâ ʻinoʻino Nâ hewa o kânaka Akä e huikala A maʻemaʻe nô</i>	<i>Behold not with malevolence The sins of man But forgive And cleanse</i>
<i>No laila e ka Haku Ma lalo o kou ʻêheu Kô mâkou maluhia A mau loa aku nô</i>	<i>And so, o Lord Protect us beneath your wings And let peace be our portion Now and forever more</i>
<i>ʻÂmene</i>	<i>Amen</i>



Queen Lili'uokalani

WHEN YOU ATTEND LUTHERAN WORSHIP IN HAWAII, you will most likely find the Queen's Prayer as part of the liturgy. Queen Lili'uokalani was the reigning monarch of Hawai'i when it was overthrown. She was imprisoned in 1893 by the United States military. Her faith, she said, carried her through times of deep turmoil. That faith is reflected in the Queen's Prayer which has been an inspiration for all people living in Hawai'i until today. That is the context for life and education in our islands. It is that understanding that allows us to change and pivot, rooted in strong island history and values. It is the basis of the most valued understanding for island people. It is Aloha – to respect each other, help each other, live peacefully with each other, and with God's help make this world a better place.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in Hawai'i was not new to using technology or other means of education that allow learning over significant distance. Living on an isolated island chain in the middle of the ocean caused Pacific Health Ministry (PHM) to adopt distance learning long before the pandemic. As the only ACPE accredited CPE center in the western Pacific Ocean, we had started more than ten

years ago using technology to connect students on three Hawaiian islands and to educationally support CPE programs in Hong Kong and other parts of Oceania. When the pandemic hit, we had already worked out many of the initial problems and had just installed a new remote learning system in our education center. Many of us were comfortable relying on technology in the CPE classroom but we had to adapt to the circumstance under which we provided spiritual care in the pandemic. That was also true for all the spiritual care programs throughout the Asia Pacific region.

The pandemic struck in the middle of the 2019/2020 CPE residency year. The CPE group had met in person for CPE seminars but shifted to a virtual classroom early in 2020. Chaplaincy education traditionally happens with person-to-person hands-on clinical pastoral encounters. With the hospitals severely limiting access to patient units, new ways of serving patients and families had to be found. We, like everyone everywhere, had to adapt to what the virus forced us to do. While frustrating and irritating, it let us develop new and creative ways to pastorally serve. This continued in close collaboration with regular Chaplain staff at the institutions we serve.

The CPE residents were considered “essential” and allowed to serve patients/residents, families, and staff. They were an integral part of the inter-professional teams of caregivers and very much appreciated. They listened, prayed, and offered words of hope, gratitude, and encouragement. They were a non-anxious presence, calm and compassionate listeners in times that were overwhelming and uncertain. They used technology, tele-chaplaincy (including smartphones, iPads and other media) to connect those who could not be physically present with each other due to no-visitor policy. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to be a tremendous learning experience for all of us.

Chaplain Phyllis Hoermann described it this way:

“Reflecting on my last two years serving as a Pacific Health Ministry chaplain assigned to Kaiser, Moanalua Hospital, we had to find new ways to show up and be present. Although nothing can replace one’s real, physical presence and all that one brings to an encounter in that way, we continued to show up. Sometimes it meant just holding space outside the door. Sometimes it required the person’s nurse or aide to answer the room phone and place it next to the patient’s ear so that the chaplain could have a conversation. If the person was vented and unable to talk as well as sedated, it meant offering words of encouragement and prayer over the phone. It meant sometimes contacting family members by phone and supporting them when visits were not allowed. We relied on unit staff to assist with the use of iPads for visitation between patients and their loved

With the hospitals severely limiting access to patient units, new ways of serving patients and families had to be found. We, like everyone everywhere, had to adapt to what the virus forced us to do.

ones. Family meetings and consults often happened by phone. We had to listen extra attentively for body language and tears we could not see. We had to listen through masks and look into the person's eyes, the window to their souls, for clues. And also, it meant tuning in ever more attentively to over stressed and exhausted staff members. The challenges continue but always with the hope that we can arrive at a new normal that will allow more real presence again."

Learning how to be Chaplains in layers of PPE, socially distanced and not touching anyone or anything was the hardest in the beginning. The CPE remote classroom time was often considered a relief from needing to wear PPE but looking at each other's faces and one's own face as well for hours had its own challenges.

Chaplain Brianna Lloyd wrote about her CPE experience at that time:

"Online access to relatives and faith communities, as well as phone calls, did bridge the isolation, but it did not entirely make up for the loss of embodied connection. There is some significant connection that only happens in person. Staring at a screen for hours at a time has a real effect on eyes, on sitting bodies. And being able to see oneself, like on Zoom, in a box amidst other dialogue partners who are also in boxes, changes attention and conversation significantly, in my experience. It is so odd to periodically come across your own face when others are talking. This never happens in person."

The highlight of every residency year is an interprofessional simulation seminar at the University of Hawai'i. Participants include social work graduate students, spiritual care residents, nursing students, and resident physicians. In the past, the students came together in person to practice end-of-life conversations in different situations (children and adults) as care teams with family members in a controlled simulation center working with actors. Studies show that learning to work well as interprofessional teams improve patient outcomes. In the pandemic we had to convert the simulation to an online format. We compared the evaluation data (pediatric simulations) from years prior and from the pandemic years. The survey results showed that online interprofessional simulations were positively received by trainees. Despite advantages of in-person interactions, the data showed that an online platform offered similar benefits.¹

"Being able to see oneself, like on Zoom, in a box amidst other dialogue partners who are also in boxes, changes attention and conversation significantly."

¹ *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling (JPCC)* April 2021) dedicated an entire issue to the impact of COVID 19 to Chaplaincy in healthcare globally pointing out the resilience of chaplains, being flexible and creative. *JPCC* in January 2022 published a research article addressing "COVID -19 and CPE: How ACPE Educators Pivoted Amid the Pandemic" showing the rapid changes toward remote learning. Overall, chaplains have demonstrated that they are essential to the global response to COVID-19

When meeting with the CPE students online and talking about what gets them through the days serving under those difficult circumstance in the hospitals, they often referred to Father Damien (1840–1889). He came to the Hawaiian island of Molokai to serve for 11 years in what was then called the “leper colony.” Persons diagnosed with Hanson’s Disease (leprosy) were taken from their homes and families and isolated on a remote peninsula on Molokai. The place was called Kalaupapa. There was little food and water, no sanitation, and no medical care. It was a primitive response to what was the pandemic of the time. Damien asked the Bishop of Honolulu permission to live with the residents of Kalaupapa. There he contracted Hanson’s disease and died. Sisters from the Franciscan Community heard a similar call to ministry and service. Mother Marianne Cope led a group of her sisters to Kalaupapa to serve people struggling and dying from the contagious illnesses.

Both Mother Marianne and Father Damien died in the place they served with the people for whom they cared. Today Hawai’i has two Saints — Saint Marianne and Saint Damien. They served the people to whom they were called in the most difficult of circumstances. They served like the “saints” of today — Chaplains, therapists, physicians, nurses, administrators, technicians and all who stepped up to meet the medical challenges of this day.



Four Pacifica Synod ELCA pastors from O’ahu, Hawai’i collaborated on this reflection (Clockwise from top left): Anke Flohr, Executive Director, Pacific Health Ministry, Board Certified Chaplain Association for Professional Chaplains (APC), Certified Educator Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE)/ Dr. John Moody, BCC, ACPE Certified Educator Emeritus / Phyllis Hoermann, retired Hospital Chaplain with Pacific Health Ministry / Brianna Lloyd, Associate Pastor at The Lutheran Church of Honolulu and on-call Chaplain with Pacific Health Ministry.

Virtually Rich

Fredi Eckhardt

I UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) is for the work of both the parish and chaplaincy, but I was never what you'd call a big fan of it. Pursuing it beyond what was needed for ordination in the ELCA (one unit) was never a passion like it was for some of my colleagues, who clocked so much CPE I wondered what was wrong with them.

Over time, and because of the requirements of the Veterans Administration (VA), I completed two more units. That got me to three. I also had what would be considered an “equivalency” of one unit — hours and supervision over a year's time at Memorial Sloan-Kettering in New York, when I was a seminary student.

A couple of years ago the VA started insisting on 4 units of CPE for its chaplains which is the number needed to apply for “board certified chaplain” (BCC). We had, thankfully, crossed a threshold that was a long time coming, a path towards greater parity with other disciplines, and a way to insist upon and monitor clinical expertise. Nothing is perfect. However, this is seen as a good move for chaplains and for the people we serve.

I had not yet applied for board certification (and had all kinds of excuses for why that was so), but a nagging voice in my head kept after me. Even though I was theoretically “grandfathered” in, I felt that finally, after so long, I had to just get the thing done. The challenge was to submit an application that included one “equivalency” unit. That was possible, but tedious. An equivalency requires lots of justification for why all those hours way back when would equal one CPE unit.

Then I saw an announcement for a virtual unit offered from another VA facility and thought this might solve the issue of the equivalency and, with any luck, make applying for BCC less anxiety producing.

I was very honest about my reasons for taking the leap. I needed that fourth unit. I was also up front about my hesitancy and general air of malaise towards CPE. After a lively interview process, they took a chance on me.

And I'm so glad they did! Who would have guessed? Not me, that's for certain. At the start, a series of root canals sounded more pleasant than sitting through 5 months of verbatims, inter-personal group sessions (now called Covenant Group) and individual supervision. In my final evaluation I talked about the change of heart that evolved. This unit was unexpectedly wonderful. The students, myself included, formed a coherent and resourceful cohort. The educator was seasoned, able to see what each of us needed, how far we could be

At the start, a series of root canals sounded more pleasant than sitting through 5 months of verbatims, inter-personal group sessions (now called Covenant Group) and individual supervision.

pushed and prodded. He invited us into the depths to which we might be able to go, without coercing us there. On the last day it was difficult to say goodbye, to have this journey end. Who would I confide in and laugh with next week?

I came to believe that chaplains, especially those who may be in the latter years of their career, should take a unit of CPE. I went in to round out the requirements for board certification and came out clearer about the full spectrum of my work and practice. It ended up being a real opportunity to reflect on my journey so far, think about where I was going and, finally, ponder next steps. It was humbling, and instructive, to open up about my foibles and mishaps, and celebrate the times when I offered solid, smart, and compassionate care.

What made it that much more unique was, of course, the fact that it was entirely virtual. Initially I wondered how this would work. CPE is generally close-up, personal, and emotionally laden. Much depends on how the group can trust one another as they share struggles both personal and professional. Could a two-dimensional platform allow for this?

CPE is generally close-up, personal, and emotionally laden. Much depends on how the group can trust one another as they share struggles both personal and professional. Could a two-dimensional platform allow for this?

It could, and it did. We acknowledged that the strange times we are in includes a mandate for distancing from one another. Virtual was the only safe and doable option. All of us were on site in our facilities so our work would continue to be a mixture of face-to-face care with some phone and screen contact with patients, depending on the need. But all the rest would be virtual.

The computer became our friend, one we depended on to bring us together, one that was sometimes slow on the uptake but, for the most part, was true to us. We arrived to each session from different parts of the country and different VA facilities. Two were city kids, three were country kids. I was the only female – that was noted, but not dwelt on. We went from zero units to three (me), but that wasn't an obstacle. What seemed more significant was that we had all been around the block, so to speak, with many years of practice under our belts. And, we all committed to meeting each other in cyberspace, week in and week out. Not everyone would sign on to this, but we did.

A few weeks into the unit I mentioned to the group that I felt this seemed more intimate than meeting in person. I said that the screen forced one to look at everyone both individually and all at once – as you're looking at a screen, you can see expressions, and hear little quips, almost simultaneously. It seemed, to me anyway, that we were drawn together in a tighter circle than we would have been, closer. And yet, there was room to pull back if need be. We were highly encouraged to stay focused, not look at phones, take sips of coffee too often, or get distracted with anything on our desks. But we could crack our knuckles or take our shoes off and

stretch our feet if we wanted to. We had breaks pretty frequently too. Being onscreen for 2–4 hours at a clip can be exhausting, so these were little freedoms that made a difference.

We all agreed that our time together was as meaningful as it would have been in person. It was simply another way to gather. Would we have preferred in person? If surveyed the answer would probably be yes, but the configuration would have been different — not this set of students, not this particular educator. The pandemic demanded we do it this way, thankfully, and I had an experience I did not anticipate: a cherished one, to be honest.

We either say yes, or no, to gathering virtually. We might complain mightily about how limited and cold it all is. Or we might jump in and enjoy a sometimes bumpy, but very rich, ride.

A postscript: About a month into meeting on-line for worship, in April of 2020, my church decided to include the sacrament of Holy Communion each week. Here's what I wrote to the congregation:

Virtual Communion has been debated across the wider church and at the local level. Some think we should fast from the sacrament as long as we are apart physically because nothing can replace receiving it in person. This argument says that providing it “through the screen” would be second best and simply not up to par with the “real thing.”

I disagree. We are indeed prevented from being physically present in our sanctuaries, but that doesn't mean we are prevented from being together. Our virtual connections may not be ideal for many, but why not think of them as just as powerful, just as beautiful. In fact, the reach of virtual gathering, including virtual Communion, may be a gift to those who do not, or cannot, leave their homes, even under normal conditions, and who have long felt the pain of separation from their beloved churches.

This pandemic seems to go on and on, and it's not over yet, so let's be as creative as the earliest Christians in their attempts to share the Lord's Supper and support one another. The story of Jesus himself, and the absurdity of grace bestowed through the cross, is a vivid reminder that God is present in the most unexpected places.



Though the CPE unit was all virtual, most of our spiritual care continued. in person – Fredi with a Veteran in the chapel.

How I initially approached and thought about the virtual unit, and how I came out of it at the end, turned out to be quite different I jumped in and enjoyed a sometimes bumpy, but very rich ride.



Fredi Eckhardt (on the left, with VA Chaplain Lucy Pierre) has been with the Department of Veteran Affairs as a chaplain since 1996, in a variety of iterations from contract chaplain to, currently, Chief of Chaplain Service at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center. She also serves as coverage and stated supply pastor for a small parish in The Bronx, NY. Church services recently resumed in-person worship — they were virtual from March 2020 to June 2021, and again during the month of January 2022.

Fredi is rostered with the Metro NY Synod of the ELCA, and endorsed by the Federal Chaplaincies Ministries of the ELCA.

Technology: A Servant's Towel in Changing Times

Amy Smessaert

"Just as a towel is flexible and is shaped by the feet it washes and dries, so the members of the diaconate must be adaptable and their ministry shaped by the needs of those they seek to serve."

— Hallmark on Flexibility/Adaptability, Lutheran Diaconal Association

IN ITS 103-YEAR HISTORY, the Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA) has embraced a posture of flexibility and adaptability in responding to people's needs, whether across the street, around the world — or even during a pandemic.

"When COVID-19 struck in early 2020, we realized that our second century was beginning like our first century: finding ways to meet the needs of God's people during a pandemic," said Deaconess Lisa S. Polito, LDA Executive Director.

And in the current pandemic, the LDA has leaned hard into technology as a tool to support the diaconate, as it forms, sends, and nurtures communities of deaconesses and deacons to serve in all walks of life.

"Technology is the towel that's enabled us to adapt the ways we serve across the diaconate — from the way we form students, minister to others, conduct board business, and raise funds to further our mission," Lisa said. "At the same time, we've had to be intentional, discerning, and creative. We've had to be mindful of the health and safety of one another, as well as the very human needs of those we are caring for."

Building on a foundation

The LDA is one diaconate with a women's community of 445 deaconesses (with four candidates awaiting consecration), and a men's community of seven deacons. There are currently 19 deaconess students and six deacon students in the education/formation program. Students study theology, practice hands-on ministry, grow in their own spirituality, and become members of a lifelong community of deaconesses or deacons.

While the pandemic has necessitated a deeper dive into the virtual experience, the LDA is no stranger to using tech to educate and form its diaconal students.

"Because we already had a distance-based formation program prior to the pandemic, in some ways we were set up fairly well to add new technology to formats we were already utilizing," said Deaconess Valerie Webdell, LDA Co-Director of Education and Formation. "For example, in 2018–19, the LDA moved all aspects of our paperwork to JotForm. Our process involves a lot of

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input and feedback from outside sources about our students, and JotForm allowed us to streamline that.”

The LDA also uses Moodle, an e-learning platform, Valerie added. All assignments, handbooks, reflections, and other aspects of the formation process are available through student accounts on Moodle.

And because LDA students live all over the United States, they have been regularly engaging in monthly Zoom “hang-outs” to get to know one another, share their formation experiences, and build community.

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“So when we had to cancel our in-person, week-long Student (formation) Seminars because of COVID, it was not a monumental leap to continue our program. It then became about learning to utilize Zoom in ways that were conducive to student formation and community life,” explained Valerie. “While we greatly missed seeing each other in person, our general competence in technology for a remote learning model meant that our education/formation process was not impacted as severely.”

Adapting the formation process

Deaconess Debra Lennox, LDA Co-Director of Education and Formation, emphasized that while virtual learning and formation are no substitute for face-to-face gatherings, technology enabled the LDA to keep students and members of the diaconate connected. Debra and Valerie planned and facilitated three virtual Student Seminars in 2020 and 2021. Anywhere between 7 and 15 students gathered on Zoom, along with four LDA staff members, and 12 to 15 presenters, many of whom were LDA deaconesses and deacons.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, when we were in lock-down, we took some of methods we were using for other things, and adapted them for the education process,” Debra said, adding that the experience of the LDA’s first virtual Student Seminar in September 2020 helped shape Seminars the following year.

“When in person at the Center for Diaconal Ministry (Valparaiso, Indiana) for Student Seminar, days typically begin at 8 a.m. and sometimes go until 8 p.m.,” she noted. “At first, our goal was to keep the days shorter to prevent Zoom fatigue, as we were still living into what a virtual Seminar meant. This resulted in some scheduling challenges to fit everything in a shorter time frame. For 2021, we realized that we could have longer days with more frequent breaks, as well as incorporating more small group time for community building.”

Creating a virtual chapel

During Seminar, students used the Moodle online platform to access presenter materials, take part in discussion forums, and coordinate daily worship and group

project work. Creating an atmosphere conducive to the spiritual growth that happens during Student Seminar was a bit more challenging.

“One of the significant issues we faced was creating a sacred, retreat-like environment online,” Debra said. “When in person at the Center for Diaconal Ministry, students gather for Seminar in a homelike setting. With a virtual Seminar experience, we had to think about what we could do to help students carve out time and space in their own homes that would support them spiritually as they moved through Seminar week.”

“One of the significant issues we faced was creating a sacred, retreat-like environment online.”

The answer? A Virtual Chapel. The students, as well as Debra and Valerie, used this space in three different ways:

- **Chapel Space** — Each day a reflection, poem, piece of art, or similar item was posted that related to the daily readings or the spiritual practice for each day of Seminar. Students were encouraged to share their reactions, thoughts, and reflections.
- **Prayer Requests** — Students and facilitators shared and responded to prayer requests throughout the week.
- **My Worship Space** — Students were encouraged to create their own altar in the space they would be attending Seminar to help ground them in the presence of God during the week.

“The idea behind the worship space,” Debra said, “is that when we used to gather in person at the Center for Diaconal Ministry, each day an altar would be created by the worship leader, incorporating various objects that both reflect the person creating it as well as their theological understanding. Shifting to a virtual mindset, we asked students to get creative with what they did in their home or office and to share a picture of where they would be worshipping during the week. The students really embraced this invitation — the expression of the sacred was thoughtful and diverse.”

Deepening identity in community

Another important consideration during the pandemic was finding ways to form students in the context of diaconal community. Intentional Community is an integral part of student formation, and engaging in community is a way of life for LDA deaconesses and deacons.

“The community gathers in large and small groups for worship, prayer, discernment and sharing mutual concerns. Within that community, members of the diaconate seek to nurture, support and challenge each other. ... The community seeks to serve as a sign in a lonely and broken world that, in the midst of diversity and commonality, wholeness and brokenness, unity is truly a gift of God’s Holy Spirit.”

— *Hallmark on Flexibility/Adaptability, Lutheran Diaconal Association*

“For Student Seminar, deaconesses and deacons from the LDA are invited as presenters and guests so they can get to know students, to speak to their ministry experiences in the context of the Seminar theme, as well as to build community,” Debra said. “And members of other diaconates from around the world also join us to broaden the students’ awareness of diaconal communities beyond the LDA.”

A treasured community ritual toward the close of Student Seminar is the Round Robin Dinner. Deaconesses and deacons in the Northwest Indiana area come to the Center for Diaconal Ministry to enjoy a four-course meal with students. With each course, the groups switch tables so students can meet several people from the diaconal community. The evening concludes with prayer and new students are officially received into the community.

“We had to think about how to translate this intimate, community experience to an online context,” said Valerie. “We got very good at utilizing the Zoom breakout room features. We told students ahead of time to make a special meal or have food delivered. One student went all out and used her china and crystal! Deaconesses and deacons joined in from around the country for the Round Robin Dinner and for the prayer service. With a few adjustments, we were able to share a meal in community and celebrate our new students.”

Student formation in community also takes place apart from Student Seminars — again with the help of technology. Each student is assigned a mentor, a deaconess or deacon, who accompanies them throughout the formation process. Many student-mentor relationships were already taking place virtually, given geographic distances. Additionally, students joined consecrated members of the community via Zoom for monthly Area Conferences and for Annual Meetings during the pandemic.

Re-imagining retreats

As part of their formation, LDA students participate in a year-long internship and create an intern reflection team to support them along the way. While many intern reflection team members use Zoom to gather, Debra or Valerie conduct an in-person visit, touring the internship site and meeting one-on-one with the student and supervisor. During the pandemic they met with students and supervisors via Zoom, and students submitted photos of their internship site.

Debra and Valerie also had to consider how to support students who were ready to move into the final phase of their formation. Usually, these students gather at the Center for Diaconal Ministry in Valparaiso for a two-day facilitated retreat to



The LDA Round Robin Dinner was shared online during the pandemic.

help them prepare for consecration. During this retreat, students reflect on and evaluate academic/theological issues, skills for work/ministry, spiritual readiness for servant ministry, and the relationship within the diaconal community.

“We were able to create a virtual format that simulated as much as possible a face-to-face retreat experience. It is important for students to complete their formation process together — in community,” Valerie said. “Again, while there’s no substitute for in-person gatherings, our facilitators and students entered into these retreats with an open mind and a willingness to explore other ways to engage in reflection, sharing, and community.”

“It’s such a joy to find ways to help the students — who have worked so diligently through their formation — prepare for their final interviews with our board and anticipate their consecrations without missing a beat,” Debra added. “The feedback we’ve gotten from students reflects their gratitude for being able to continue moving through the process, especially given the delays some had experienced during lockdown when they had to wait to complete their formation requirements for clinical pastoral education, internship, or field work.”

Planning for the future

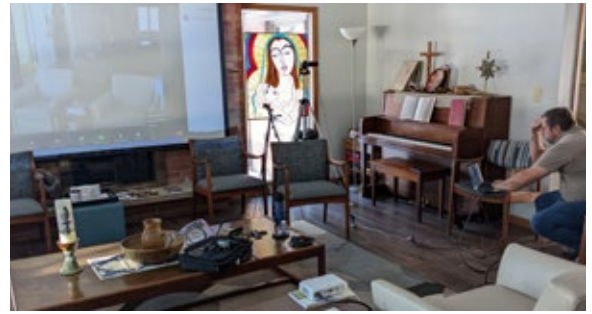
Debra and Valerie cultivated other ways to bring students and the consecrated community together in response to pandemic-imposed meeting restrictions.

“We have offered Wednesday morning worship, weekly Scripture study, and soup suppers for Lent and Advent online,” Debra said. “This allows the whole student community to participate, along with the entire consecrated community, whereas previously, these gatherings were available in person only.”

Added Valerie, “For our regular Wednesday morning worship services, we tried for the first time this winter a hybrid model that brought together people at the Center for Diaconal Ministry, our larger community on Zoom, and those joining via live-stream on Facebook. Because of advance planning and preparation — thanks to our tech guru, Deacon Student Jeff Hazewinkel who set everything up — it went off smoothly. We can now reach three different groups at once, which is really wonderful.”

“Technology has enabled us to pivot, to meet the education and formation needs of our students and the broader community. It has enabled people to gather who normally would not have been able to do so,” Debra said.

The LDA continues to evaluate the use of technology as it explores new ways to live its mission to prepare and support the whole people of God in Christ’s call to serve.



Jeff Hazewinkel sets up for Wednesday morning worship.

“The pandemic gave us a pause to look creatively at our process and re-imagine how we can give students the best experience in diaconal identity formation in the context of community,” noted Lisa. “I’m thankful for the imagination and efforts of Debra and Valerie, the contributions of our tech guru Jeff, and the willingness of our students to be flexible and adaptable right along with us.”

She added, “COVID has further exposed the suffering of God’s people. The world needs deaconesses and deacons to serve as Christ’s hands and feet now more than ever. And technology has been a gift, helping to keep the LDA nimble and spurring us on to find new ways to equip women and men for ministry – even as the pandemic persists.”

To learn more about the LDA, visit us at www.thelda.org or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/deacserv



Amy Smessaert has served as the LDA’s Director of Development and Public Relations since November 2020. Amy is an LDA Deaconess Student, and she anticipates completing her formation in the spring of 2022. She currently is Lay Deaconess and Stephen Leader at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Mishawaka, Indiana. Prior to joining the LDA staff, Amy was Communications Director for the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana, for 13 years, and held other communications positions in the Sisters’ health ministry for 15 years.

Zoom: The New Caring Connection

Ed Treat

MY NAME IS ED, AND I AM AN ADDICT. In 1997 I was serving in my first call in rural Nebraska. I was in recovery from addiction eleven years then and still needed my 12-Step meetings to keep me grounded. However, in rural Nebraska in 1997 there was but one AA meeting in a 30-mile radius. Furthermore, that once-a-week meeting was in my small town and attended by parishioners from my church. It was not a meeting that worked well for me. It is hard to get open and honest about your recovery in a place that is not safe. In fact, a small-town pastor sharing openly about his or her feelings is a great recipe for gossip and misery for said pastor. What is a pastor to do? Drink?

The internet was relatively new at that time. Dial up connections were unreliable and so, so slow. But I could see even then an answer to my problem. The internet could connect me to others like myself—other pastors in far flung places who are in recovery and who need safe quality recovery meetings but cannot get to them.

I have been the director of the Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy (FRLC) for the past 18 years. The FRLC formed 30 years ago when recovering pastors from the LCMS and ELCA came together and organized to support other pastors needing recovery support. At that time, because of the stigma around alcoholism and other addictions, pastors were not supposed to have this problem and therefore were treated horribly when it was discovered they had it. We knew pilots, physicians, and other professional organizations were successfully rehabilitating their members, but in the church we were shooting our wounded. The FRLC has worked to change that.

Since its inception the FRLC worked through technology to make its work known. We created a website; we sent out snail mail newsletters; we developed an impaired clergy policy to help guide judicatories on how to best rehabilitate a pastor with addiction; we attended our church assemblies and gatherings with exhibits and brochures; we used the telephone to call Bishops and District Presidents to tell them about us; we hosted a free “800” hotline; we held annual retreats. The FRLC has become a loose network of more than 200 clergy members nationwide in recovery and another 300+ friends and supporters. Even so, we have not been able to gain much attention in the larger church about our work. We have felt invisible, but we carry on.

Driven by my own need to attend good recovery meetings myself, I attempted to create an online meeting in 1997 for my FRLC fellows. It was cumbersome. You had to dial-up the internet and listen to the funky sound while waiting for a connection. If the internet was having a good day, you could get connected.

Driven by my own need to attend good recovery meetings myself, I attempted to create an online meeting in 1997 for my FRLC fellows. It was cumbersome.

I opened a private chat room where we could talk to each other—by typing. No sound, no video, just text. It takes a long time to spill your guts in writing. There were many weeks when nobody showed up and I would sit there staring at the screen watching the cursor blink. When people did show up, I would spend far too much time helping them figure out how it worked. It was mostly annoying and frustrating. There were a couple times it did work well, and, in those times, I could sense the exciting potential this could have to help people if only it worked better. But it wasn't time.

We moved those online meetings to an older, more reliable technology, the telephone.

We moved those online meetings to an older, more reliable technology, the telephone. You could conference call in those days for a small fee. We sent the toll-free conference number out to our members, and it worked. Since 1998 the FRLC has been holding weekly recovery meetings for clergy only on the phone every Thursday at noon. Over the years the group has remained small but committed to mutual support. These have been great meetings and a lifeline, especially to the far-flung pastors in lonely, isolated settings who need to talk privately and to know they are not alone.

In 2016 the FRLC gathered at the Mt. Olivet Retreat Center south of Minneapolis to talk strategy about the organization and possibly extending support out to the lay members of our church. Surely there were other non-clergy Lutherans who struggle with addiction who would like mutual support.

In the process of exploring this possibility I attended a meeting at the University of Minnesota to hear state and federal leaders talk about the opioid crisis. They were out of ideas and crying for help. Senator Klobuchar said, "Everything we are doing is making the problem worse. By making legal drugs harder to get, those addicted are compelled to buy illegal drugs and those drugs are killing more people. Using laws to control drugs is making the problem worse."

I had an epiphany. There is a faith community on every corner in every town in this country. What if each of them started doing something about addiction? The FRLC should be educating our colleagues and faith communities about addiction so they can better respond to it. Let's face it. What most clergy know or believe about addiction is outdated and mostly wrong. I only have anecdotal proof of this statement but after 35 years in personal recovery and leading a recovery organization for 18 years and being a pastor for 25 years I continue to marvel at the ignorance out there. What is generally known and believed about addiction even among professionals is about 50 years out of date. How will we ever successfully deal with this crisis when most of us do not really know what it is.

From hearing Senator Klobuchar's appeal, we decided we needed to try and educate the church—its leaders. We held a conference in 2018 in Minneapolis. It was a bold step knowing how little interest we felt there was in the church about this

topic. Perhaps the opioid problem has changed that some. We anticipated forty to fifty pastors and other local faith leaders to attend but ended up cutting off registration at two hundred—it's all the hotel could allow. What was more impressive to us was they came from thirty-four states and Canada representing seventeen different denominations.

After the 2018 conference I learned about a pastor impacted by our first conference and was returning for the second. I asked her to share that experience. What she said could have been a keynote address.

She came away from the 2018 conference with the serious realization that she had an addiction to food and what it was doing to her life. She went home, joined Overeaters Anonymous, and is now in recovery from addiction. She lost eighty-five pounds and says she now has a meaningful relationship with God and a loving supportive community. What I most remember about her testimony was her saying, "I'm a Lutheran pastor and I never heard about this. I have a doctorate from Luther Seminary, and I have never heard about this. We have some work to do!"

I decided to resign my call as senior pastor of a great church in Bloomington, Minnesota, and start this new ministry. I walked away from the parish at the end of November 2019 to strike out on this new mission. Just in time for Covid.

When our 2019 conference was even more successful the leaders of the FRLC began pushing me to make this into a new ministry and so the Center of Addiction & Faith was born. Our mission statement is: *"The Center of Addiction & Faith saves lives by awakening faith communities to respond to addiction with faith, science, justice, and compassion."*

After long and prayerful discernment, I decided to resign my call as senior pastor of a great church in Bloomington, Minnesota, and start this new ministry. I walked away from the parish at the end of November 2019 to strike out on this new mission. Just in time for Covid.

As I was laying plans to travel the country and tell everyone I could about our important work, we all got shut down by a global pandemic. The timing could not have been worse for me, I thought at the time. What was I going to do? I left a job with pay and benefits, I still have a son in college, a mortgage etcetera—what the hell was I going to do?

As it turns out, the timing could not have been better. Being forced to stay home I put all my energy into building a robust website with tons of resources for clergy and faith communities. I built a smartphone app so that pastors and other faith community leaders could have important resources at their fingertips. We held addiction ministry training sessions online. But the best gift of all we got from Covid? Zoom. Some may say it's a curse, but think about this: what would we have done without Zoom these last two years? It has kept us connected.

Two years ago, you could not have a zoom meeting. Not enough people knew how it worked. Meetings were doomed to tech support sessions. Now, because of Covid nearly everyone does Zoom. Because of Zoom I am more connected now to my family than I ever was before. Because of Zoom I have meetings with people from all over the world. I am able to enlist the help and involvement of people in far flung places who have the same interest and affinities that I do. I am able to reach far more people than I ever could have before Covid.

My hunch is that post-Covid the vast majority of our faith communities will spend far too much time and energy trying to put the church back to where it was before the pandemic instead of embracing these amazing new possibilities. We can gather in all kinds of new ways now and we can include people in all kinds of new ways. The church can really think outside the box now—if it really wants to.

At the Center of Addiction & Faith we engage technology in many exciting new ways that could be adapted to any faith community. We hold monthly webinars on Zoom about important topics with the smartest people in the country. These webinars get never less than two hundred registrants and as many as four hundred.

People who are experts on things are more than glad to talk about what they do—for free. You can put together great classes that will enrich lives with little effort. It is so much easier than trying to hold an event in a physical location. It is convenient and safe and people from outside the already established community are much more likely to attend. At each webinar we get from 50 to 100 new attendees—from all over the country and beyond.

We are able to train people online in easy, convenient, and inexpensive ways.

We moved our phone-in clergy 12-Step meeting to Zoom, and the meeting has blossomed. Where we once got 3 to 6 people per week, we are now gathering 12 to 20 clergy from all over the U.S. and Canada—many of them from rural places where meetings are hard to find. I have gained a lot of incredibly good friends these last two years.

We added a Sunday night meeting for clergy and lay leaders and it is already 12–20 per week strong. These are great meetings that draw people in recovery who love the church. These people speak the language of both worlds—the church and recovery, so the sharing and wisdom is rich.

We promote an Episcopal all-12-Step meeting on Wednesday night that has thirty attending regularly, with many clergy and lay leaders present. This is one of the best meetings I have attended in my 36 years of recovery. It's open to all.

We have a podcast called “My Story of Addiction & Grace,” the personal stories of clergy who got addicted and found recovery. These are all available through Apple

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music, Google, and Spotify. I recommend you find these highly inspirational stories on our free smartphone app—in your app store under Center of Addiction & Faith.

Our ministry is mostly virtual and online. We use Facebook; we use Google ads; we use email. Every single day I get at least one new subscriber. Every single day I get at least one appeal from a third world pastor begging for help. We hope our ministry can go global before too long.

Because of Zoom and the internet we imagine all the ways we can connect people and create community that would have been impossible before. We did a special Veterans in recovery webinar on Veterans Day. From that webinar we are developing a 12-Step meeting online for veterans only. Veterans, for understandable reasons, prefer to meet with other recovering veterans. But recovering veterans are spread out geographically. Now they can meet and support each other. We are talking with members of the Native American Community who would like to have recovery meetings for Native Americans and even a worshipping community for Native Americans in recovery.

It seems inevitable to me that as we emerge from this pandemic the church will have to rethink how it does business. It is hard to imagine how we would ever go back to what we were doing before. Besides, that all felt like its days were numbered anyway, didn't it? Didn't something need to change? We now have before us some great new ways to gather people, share the Gospel and create spiritual community. I think it's exciting and marvelous.



Ed Treat has been in long-term recovery from addiction for 36 years. He received his Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry from Luther Seminary. From 1994–2019, he was a parish pastor, serving congregations in rural Nebraska and around the Twin Cities including a mission start. To provide addiction-recovery support to professional clergy and their families, Treat joined the newly formed Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy (FRLC) in 1990 and eventually became its director. He is the founder

of the Center of Addiction and Faith.

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The Virtual Office: Caring for Souls During the Global Pandemic

Justin Hannemann

IN LATE FEBRUARY OF 2020, I was in Nashville leading a group of pastors and other ministry leaders in a seminar aimed at developing critical competencies in relational leadership. It feels a bit weird to have to clarify that I was actually present in the room with them. The entire world of affect, which is so critical to human interaction, was available to us. I loosely define affect as the physical representation of internal states. Being present with one another allowed us to catch conversations in the hall after sessions, put a steadying hand on each other's shoulders during moments of disclosure and care, and shake hands and hug as we departed. It is incredible how easy it is to take these incarnational feedback loops for granted when they are unrestricted.

On the last day of the seminar, I received a phone call from my brother. He is a medical doctor in the United States Army. He was recently home from a tour of duty in Iraq and asked me to pray for him as he was given the word that day that he needed to prepare for domestic deployment in response to a virus popping up around the country. He asked if I had checked my flights to make sure I could get home to Nebraska. I was on one of the final flights through Chicago O'Hare before what we now refer to as "The Shutdown."

Like many of you, that was the last time for face-to-face ministry for some time. I serve as co-founder and CEO of GracePoint Institute, a counseling and consultation ministry with clinical offices in Lincoln and Omaha. My leadership in this organization and in the church at large changed dramatically. In those days, my clinical office was a Zoom link, while consultations and presentations moved to online platforms. Communication among our staff and board of directors no longer occurred in regular in-person meetings, coffee breaks, or working lunches.

Technology allowed us to carry on our mission to function as an extension of the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. I have seen God use the pandemic and our subsequent reliance on technology to prompt us to move toward more efficient and effective processes, in both the care of souls, and the day-to-day functioning of a dynamic care ministry. Yet, I have seen technology take a toll on patients, clinicians, and support staff in other ways.

I have seen God use the pandemic and our subsequent reliance on technology to prompt us to move toward more efficient and effective processes, in both the care of souls, and the day-to-day functioning of a dynamic care ministry.

It is important to note that while there are some reflections on “technology” in the broad sense, I will focus primarily on what the GracePoint staff and I have observed utilizing audio/visual technology as clinicians and as colleagues.

The Blessing

“Open my eyes that I may see...”—Psalm 119:17 NIV

I vividly remember standing in the kitchen of a childhood friend when the phone rang. In the mid-’90s, I must have been in the 4th or 5th grade. We must have recently watched a sci-fi movie because when my friend’s mom began trying to describe the kitchen appliance that she wanted her husband to get at the store on his way home from work, my friend and I started a conversation about how cool it would be if she had a way to show him. We lived in rural Michigan in those days, and cell phones and the internet hadn’t caught on yet. We didn’t call it “video conferencing,” but we spent all afternoon talking about how “someday” we would be able to see each other’s faces over the phone. I can remember how excited we were about this possibility. As 10 and 11-year-olds, we had a duality of faith. First, this technology would surely come to pass. Second, the technology would be exciting, novel, and incredibly beneficial. Little did I know that my livelihood would one day depend on it for a couple of years due to a global pandemic.

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The Gift of Seeing

Humans are seeing creatures. Much of our sensory input comes through our eyes. In particular, and most importantly for our purposes here, much of our social ability comes from seeing the slight changes in another person’s affect. Physiologists tell us that the human face has more muscles than all other vertebrates. This gives us the ability to communicate internal states of sensation and emotion without saying a word. A technology that allows humans to see one another’s faces in near real-time and across vast distances is a profound blessing.

In March 2020, our clinicians moved exclusively to virtual offices. In those anxious days, this accomplished two essential things. First, it allowed us to stay on track with treatment plans. For many, the empathy, care, and concern of our faces, along with the rhythm of sorting through their sensations, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, was not something that could take an indefinite hiatus.

Second, it helped us gain and maintain some level of proximity to those at particular risk of the social, emotional, financial, and domestic cost of both the pandemic itself and, maybe, more importantly, society’s response to it. In the last couple of years, I have called it the Windshield Effect. The windshield repair business here in Nebraska sees an uptick in business in late November and

December. Many people enter winter with chips and nicks in their windshield. Those reading this in cold-weather climates know what happens to windshields with chips after the weather turns cold. The chip becomes a crack after the first pothole. Many of our clients entered this pandemic season with “chips in their windshield,” with very little margin emotionally, spiritually, etc. And when the “winter” of the pandemic hit, cracks began to form. This technology allowed us to keep existing treatment plans on track and meet the novel symptoms that resulted from at-risk individuals, couples, and families colliding with the consequences of a global pandemic and social upheaval.

Like many of the people we care for who do not have large amounts of margin in their lives, many of the non-profit institutions we serve do not either. In a very practical way, the technological gift of seeing our clients allowed us to “keep our doors open,” both in terms of fulfilling the mission and financially. I have had many conversations with ministry leaders whose ministry model did not allow for the opportunity to use technology to deliver their services and, as a result, have taken significant steps backward since the onset of the pandemic. In our work of providing pastoral care and counseling, this technology has been a profound blessing.

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Meeting Specific Need

While we have resumed in-person sessions, many clients have opted to remain virtual. The immunocompromised, stay-at-home, and work-from-home parents whose schools and daycare options were impacted and healthcare professionals who are consistently exposed to pathogens and don't want to spread them have all benefited from the opportunity to meet virtually. And for some, the convenience of logging on to a therapy session from home or place of work has made it possible for them to initiate or maintain presence in a therapeutic relationship.

The Cost

It is hard to measure, but there seem to be some costs and limitations associated with taking care and counseling online. This has manifested in several ways for the GracePoint staff.

Limitations

The face isn't the only communicator of affect. Body posture and movements, hidden in the virtual setting, are also critical sources of clinically relevant material. I often switch between virtual and in-person contexts on a given clinical day. In this switching, I notice just how much I am missing in the virtual context. I have

also noticed that online sessions seem to be oriented more toward cognition and behavior, but in-person sessions have a more holistic feel, tending to sensation and emotion more readily. Additionally, the use of silence during in-person sessions seems much more effective than in the digital realm. Much is missed in the 2-dimensional virtual world.

The GracePoint staff has also noticed a significant loss of control of the therapeutic context. Virtual sessions can often be interrupted by a child waking up from a nap, a ring of a doorbell, or other regular daily occurrence that is mitigated when in the office. The safety of the therapeutic office is diminished in the virtual world. Steps can be taken to mitigate that. In the first session, I talk about “virtual counseling etiquette.” Initial conversations about making sure they are in a safe and confidential space, lighting and camera placement, and post-session decompression are all ways to help create a therapeutic context while utilizing online forms of care.

Ethical Challenges in the Work Itself

There are significantly higher liability levels and lower levels of proximity working with self-harm clients in the virtual setting. The client is one click away from you when discussing difficult things. It is critical to know where they are physically so you can summon help quickly if needed.

Sometimes the process of virtual therapy can be a form of enabling. We have noticed this in the case of particularly anxious and/or obsessive clients. Therapists are taught early in their development to pay attention to process. We have found that virtual therapy can, at times, be a capitulation to fear and obsession. It is important to explore that reality when that seems to be the case.

Grieving Proximity & High-Fidelity Connection

Many conversations with caregivers, clients, family, and friends in the last couple of years have ended with a version of this, “...we really need to get together.” There is a longing of the human heart to be in physical proximity with one another. Virtual contexts are indeed a gift and open additional lines of communication where they might not have existed before. We should be grateful for this in our personal and professional lives. However, the high-fidelity connection of in-person counseling is preferable. Many people don’t know what wi-fi stands for. It is an abbreviation for “wireless fidelity.” We usually think of fidelity as simple faithfulness. While it does mean that, it has another connotation. It can also refer to the robustness and the strength of connection. When our connection seems slow, we often look at those wi-fi bars at the top of our screens. We are looking to see how strong our connection to the internet is. Our connection with our God in heaven is robust and secure because Jesus took on flesh and dwelt among us. I

believe that we, too, have a high(er)-fidelity connection with those God has called us to serve when we are incarnationally present with and for them.



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Health. More information can be found at www.relationalhealth.org

A Chaplain's Journey Through the Pandemic

David Rumbold

Relying on Faith

Inside a secure facility lies those infected with the COVID virus, many deathly sick, along with the dedicated staff isolated with them on the COVID unit. The staff will go many long weeks without outside contact and minimal interaction with others both at work and at home — to avoid becoming infected and prevent the possible spread of the virus. They are fulfilling their responsibilities and adjusting to the ever-changing conditions. Even with amazing resilience, grief and the effects of isolation were beginning to surface. This has been our reality time and time again since March of 2020.

Outside stood a vested priest on one occasion and two local ELCA pastors on another occasion — holding us in prayer. The power of that still brings tears to my eyes, as we were all to learn how very important our reliance on God was for the everyday things that would make up life in a pandemic.

As the Director of Spiritual Services, I was to learn how very important it was to the community to know that it was being held in prayer. Because of this, I began listening more closely to the pain and sorrows, fears and struggles, cries for help and mercy of our team, elders, family, and friends and from my own heart, as I sought to bring it all before God. This prayer, shared daily through email, validated the messages brought to me and allowed me the priestly function of lifting up the needs of the community to God on their behalf. I was surprised to hear the appreciation many expressed for these prayers and became strengthened in knowing they were praying along with me.

What seemed to evolve was a familiarity with speaking of God and seeking God's help openly. We were no longer just doing our jobs; we were people living out a call within the context of a spiritual grounding. This cohesiveness provided a strong foundation for interpreting the many blessings and miracles we were to witness.

Toward the end of the second year, the leadership team gave the spiritual services team a cup with "essential worker" printed on it in celebration of spiritual care week. An ancillary service, previously required by culture, became recognized as essential to the team. Spiritual life took its place at the center of who we are and what we understood ourselves to be doing. In this way we began to look for God to guide us through the pandemic.

We were no longer just doing our jobs; we were people living out a call within the context of a spiritual grounding.

Theresa Bertram President/CEO of Miravida Living wrote, “Absolute reliance, trust, and faith in God helped us set aside our fears and compelled us to move forward when faced with the unknown and almost certain death for the residents in our care if we failed in our efforts to keep them safe.”



Here I am getting vaccinated.

Consequences

A devastating consequence of the effort to control the spread of the virus was the impact of prolonged isolation. For those accepting these conditions, there was a deep wounding happening. Isolation proved to compromise the spirit of our elders. Losing weight, becoming lethargic, some filled with grief because they could not be with their loved ones — all contributed to what looked like a failure to thrive due in large part to our efforts to protect them at most from certain death if they should become infected by COVID. For the healthcare team, this caused deep internal distress. It was vital to us all to restore connections and lift their spirits.

Working within the guidelines for safety and infection control required a great deal of innovation and teamwork. Upon receiving approval related to HIPAA concerns, video conferencing soon became a functional alternative, except for equipment limitations and technical knowledge which hampered the success for many. I learned this firsthand as my wife was among those in care. We tried the phone, but the battery was inevitably dead. Next was the iPad, which she could not hold. With assistance, we explored video conferencing, but that, too, was a challenge. Alexa seemed like a solution, but others were often caught in the picture. Consequently, while there were some wonderful new tools, many elders were not ready to employ them effectively. And for elders with memory issues, these technologies were often disorienting. Many people tried to visit through the windows of their rooms. While they could see each other the audio component was often lost. The needs were painfully clear. The in-person connection was critical for the spiritual health and welfare of our elders, patients, and their families. And so, we began three different efforts to address the feelings of isolation and disconnection.

Solutions

Having heard about an opera singer standing in the street singing, the spiritual care team set up amplifiers, microphones and speakers outside the rooms and sang spiritual songs. Those that wanted to listen and sing along could open their windows; the rest would simply know that we had come and were thinking about them. We became a roaming troupe moving throughout the campus and soon had people looking forward to our outdoor sing-along. Some may even say we had a few groupies

who followed us and would pull up a lawn chair wherever we were. Though we were restricted from entering buildings or meeting in-person, we were present, and we gathered around spiritual hymns that feed our souls. This soon led to an outdoor worship service that formed a worshipping community which continues to meet to this day. I will never forget sitting outside in the snow as people came together for the Sunday service; some completely covered up with scarves and blankets.

Following infection control guidance and enforcing isolation from family was hard. So, we took steps to creatively work within the framework of the regulations. We built on ideas being tested elsewhere and developed what we called tent-visits. These tent-visits were held outdoors and allowed people to meet in person with a plastic barrier between to maintain all infection control protocols. This worked well during the warm months, but given our Wisconsin climate, our tent arrangements became quite limited and cold. With a great deal of planning and creativity, we evolved these tent visits to an indoor space and even created a way for people to hold hands.

Over time more visitation approaches emerged as the critical need for allowing visitation gained acceptance. For us, we were able to accomplish creative visits while keeping our people as safe as possible. The joy felt by everyone, when an elder and her family were able to sit together again was transformative. Watching a husband hold his wife's hand with tears in his eyes because it had been so long since he had felt her touch (even through an arm length plastic glove) was powerfully healing for me.

As invitations to experience this alternative visit exploded, the website became a hub for scheduling so we could support as many visits as possible. In addition, the website kept loved ones up-to-date daily, provided a portal for sending messages and pictures which were printed and delivered daily, as well as a team page to connect with our employees. Our marketing and development person received national recognition for this work and deservedly so. This is where technology truly shined!

The joy felt by everyone, when an elder and her family were able to sit together again was transformative.

The Absence of Worship

Another aspect of isolation was being felt across the country; we missed going to church. Worship has always been a central aspect of daily life at Miravida Living. Our beautiful chapel is centrally located, and elders have commented on the joy of frequenting the space whenever they desired. Internally, infection prevention protocols required activities to be canceled and residents restricted to their rooms when in outbreak status. This isolation would sometimes go on for months at a time. What was different now was that not only was the nursing home employing restricted activity, the whole community was encouraging people to stay home as well. As feelings of disconnection became acute, we expanded our outside hymn sings

to include celebrating Holy Communion. Because they had not been to church for a very long time this was one of those powerful moments when we were able to attend to a deep yearning and hunger than many of us were feeling. On these occasions staff picked up the sacrament at their front door and carried it to the individuals in their rooms as they sat in their windows participating in the service. Staff later spoke of how meaningful it was for them to be able to help in this way. Broadcasting the service on the inhouse video link provided a pretty good alternative for those in our nursing home. We would don proper PPE and take the sacrament to each one who wished to receive it that day. The video component was limited to our nursing home. We would still needed a way to connect to the rest of the campus.

One limitation to all the great tools and innovations we employed was the gap between what we could do and what people were ready to use.

Building Connections

We wanted to be able to reach the entire campus, including the nearly 300 independent apartments and two additional buildings up to two miles away. This propelled our YouTube efforts, and we soon launched a YouTube channel to make services available to the public.

One limitation to all the great tools and innovations we employed was the gap between what we could do and what people were ready to use. A big part of this included access to and familiarity with computers as well as access to the internet and costs of the equipment. So even as I can share about the exciting things we were able to do, making these things available to all remains a challenge.

In the process of exploring ways to reach out to the broader community, we gained the ability to develop our own internal channel on the cable TV network. Two worthy outcomes of this effort are our News From Home program and the broadcasting of our Memorial Services. Our “News From Home” program invites family and friends to share news, greetings, songs and home videos of themselves and grandchildren. In addition, we are able to share photo stories of the activities across the campus. This helped residents stay connected with one another and family members to see all that was going on within the protections that were keeping us apart. Because all live-streamed sessions are stored on our YouTube channel, people who missed it could, if interested, watch it later or share it with other family members. This was particularly helpful on the occasion of our Memorial Service. A Memorial Service is offered semi-annually to remember all who died while in residence on our campus. Because many people had postponed family funerals and memorials this service provided some much needed bereavement support even as it allowed people who could not be present to share in a time of reflection and prayer.

The opportunity to develop our own channel on the cable system was something we had long hoped to do but it also involved a number of significant hurdles, some of which we are still working to overcome. As we looked at what we might add to

the daily schedule we readily saw how we could provide programmatic support and enhanced communication of campus activities and the daily menu. We discovered a wealth of nature videos and many music collections for relaxation and meditation that help reduce the stress and anxiety often stirred up by the constant barrage of news, commercials and action shows that could be heard throughout the hallways. The chaplaincy department recorded morning devotions which helped set the tone for the day. Namaste Care, a program to provide care and support to those living with dementia, gave us the inspiration to create blocks of time for relaxation and visual stimulation. We also explored programming that would speak to the desire to learn and grow. One highlight was our “Travel With Wonder” project which took residents to different places around the world. We introduced the destination through documentaries on our station and then invited elders to a virtual reality tour. The entire experience provided the opportunity to learn a few phrases in the local language and was topped off by tasting some of the local cuisine. The program quickly became a favorite.

Looking Back

We have learned that our faith and relationship with God are powerful sources of strength and hope for the challenges we face every day. The pandemic has shaken us to our core and forced us to confront what is most important: living meaningfully with a sense of joy and peace. We know now, more than ever, that as employees, residents, and family members, we are all in this together — and it has taken the greater part of this journey to really appreciate what that means. We have learned to treasure each other and appreciate what often went unnoticed. We have come to realize that together we are able to do what we once felt was impossible.

Without a doubt, this has been the most difficult period of my adult life and ministry. Never has so much been upturned all at the same time, never have I felt so stressed, never have I been a part of such pain at such deep levels, and never have I witnessed such grace and blessing as I have over these two years. God’s presence has been palpable, and I was given the opportunity to be God’s presence for many in ways that brought me to tears and enlivened my soul.



Miravida Living is a community where life is met with vibrant opportunities to unleash, embrace learning, honor meaningful dialogue and silence, and find joy in a season of life individualized by each elder. Our community includes independent living, assisted living and respite, memory care, rehabilitation and skilled nursing care. Affiliated with the ELCA, Miravida emerged through the efforts of a pan-Lutheran initiative seeking to provide needed housing and services for the elderly of our community.

Chaplain David Rumbold, is the Director of Spiritual Services and CPE Educator. David is an ordained member of the East Central Synod of the ELCA under call to Miravida Living since 1992.

My Journey in Technology: Parish and Seminary

Alec Fisher

AM I AFRAID OF TECHNOLOGY? MAYBE. It only takes one defective adapter or one faulty cable for the whole system to come crashing down. What do you do then?

Born in the late 1980's, I have a complicated relationship with technology. My generation grew up as the household computer was undergoing many developments, taking many forms. What I had known as the “car phone,” the “mobile phone,” the “cell phone,” and eventually the “smart phone,” my kids simply now know as “phone”—“dad’s phone” or “mom’s phone.” We have no landline. Unlike the reliable, corded rotary phone that used to sit in our kitchen, our phones are now touchscreen video interfaces reliant on our WIFI and data plans. Remember dial up internet? I know that prior generations can give parallel testimony, but, over the last 30 years, the paradigm of communication around the world has changed quite dramatically at an increasingly rapid rate.

I never spent a lot of time with technology as a kid beyond watching TV or playing video games. Even then, never could I have imagined a technological landscape in which different video game users from all over the world might interact with each-other in the same digital space. For us, the video game was a local event—something we did sitting next to each-other on the couch during a rainy day or between basketball games outside.

Technology was always a language I could identify, a language I could appreciate and even utilize when necessary, but it was not a language I could speak—at least not with any fluency. I was never particularly good with new technologies, never a first-generation user, never on the cutting edge. I never cared about the newest technological gadgets. Nobody ever considered me to be a “tech person.” I was one of the last of my friends on social media when it came out. For the longest time I didn’t know what a *blog* was. My peers were always surprised to learn that I didn’t have an email address. I could barely manage my own AOL Chat account when that was popular, and I wouldn’t dare touch the *input* button on the TV remote.

Technology was always a language I could identify, a language I could appreciate and even utilize when necessary, but it was not a language I could speak—at least not with any fluency.

I might even characterize myself as technophobic—a luddite. Technology made me nervous, because it was something so distant and unapproachable, useful but also confusing and dangerous. The systems were foreign. The jargon was foreign.

Going into college, I could use a basic internet browser and word processor. I could create a PowerPoint slide show, if necessary, but I didn’t know what an

operating system was. I had a laptop and eventually bought a tablet, even a smart phone. I could use them all for basic functions; anything more was superfluous.

This all changed in the Fall of 2017. I had just become a pastor. Moving with my family to our new parish was a major transition. I also began teaching a distance course: a German course for graduate students seeking to demonstrate competency in the language as a requirement in their program. My students and I all participated in the class remotely. Everything was online.

I will always remember plugging in my brand-new USB Logitech C920 webcam in preparation for my very first class session. I had never used anything like it before. To my surprise the webcam worked exactly as intended.



My first Logitech webcam.

I taught the course live online through a program called Adobe Connect. In addition to the live camera function, this program had a live chat feature, and I was able to share presentations. The software was somewhat outdated, but it took me a while to understand it. It seemed sophisticated to me. I never did use it to its fullest potential because I was too timid to go beyond the bare minimum technology needed to execute the course. I didn't want to push too far. What if something went wrong? What if it all came crashing down?

The next year I began teaching a Latin course as well, and then some additional others from time to time. It wasn't perfect. Sometimes the screen would freeze, the presentation wouldn't load, or the program itself would crash, but those were generally atypical. It worked well enough to execute the class with relatively little frustration.

In December 2019, our congregation was completely redesigning our website. As an avid learner typically interested in exploring new things, I observed the process and even practiced building my own. Designing a website and purchasing a domain went well beyond my own comfort zone, but the desire for a new learning experience outweighed my hesitancy toward technology.

When the pandemic hit a few months later, I was forced to use the little I knew about internet broadcast for a completely different purpose. We had no live-streaming capabilities in our sanctuary, and YouTube was foreign to me. Thankfully, we had a lot of very capable technology users in the congregation, who taught me a lot. I also learned from watching YouTubers discussing audio/video (AV) equipment.

I went live on YouTube for our first online service in March 2020. I was broadcasting from my desk with the webcam that I had purchased for my online classes. A member of our newly established tech team offered to let me borrow his USB microphone, but I was too timid to do so. I had never used anything like that before. This was all too new and frightening. I graciously declined the offer.

As the months went on, the services I broadcasted from my desk were not without their frustrations. Everything that could go wrong often did. Some Sundays, I wasn't sure whether or not we'd have an online service at all, but every Sunday it worked out in the end. We began to discuss outfitting the sanctuary for live streaming.

Encouraged by the support I had received, I overcame my initial hesitancy and bought my first USB microphone. I also learned how to use open access streaming software to incorporate into the online services, which allowed me to play prerecorded videos of hymns and put words on the screen during the live service from my desk. The more I watched and read reviews of AV hardware and software the more I understood the possibilities.

The more I watched and read reviews of AV hardware and software the more I understood the possibilities.

Over the summer I purchased a new camera and a capture card which converted the HDMI output into a USB output effectively turning this relatively nice Sony vlogger camera into a webcam. I replaced my USB microphone with an XLR microphone plugged into a preamp that doubled as an interface with USB output. My original USB webcam and relatively new USB microphone were now replaced by *prosumer* grade equipment—an instant improvement in picture and sound. I collected several XLR microphones—broadcast mics and condenser mics. I upgraded my laptop. I had also begun my own YouTube channel and podcast as creative outlets. The new equipment enhanced what I was doing on the congregational level and in my online courses. The congregation built a new desktop computer for my office that could also handle the increased workload.

During the Fall of 2020, our attention turned toward outfitting the sanctuary with a camera and improved internet connection. The tech team installed a new point to zoom (PTZ) camera and spent hours running wires through the walls to make it all possible. The AV booth in the back was upgraded with a newly built computer and an audio interface to incorporate the old sound board into the new system. We finally began streaming live from the sanctuary, and I watched our tech team do an incredible job making the system work.

Late in the Fall, I accepted a call to a new congregation, and my family and I moved right after Christmas. I now knew a lot more about AV than I ever had before. To the average individual I appeared to be a “tech person,” though I knew differently.

In January 2021, I was back to prerecording online services in the new congregational setting but soon began to live stream from the sanctuary with the equipment that I had previously used at my desk. Later in the spring, due to a missional grant we upgraded from my equipment to a mounted PTZ camera. That was soon upgraded to a three-point camera system purchased through a very

generous donation. I had never previously used or seen a video switcher, but the new sanctuary system now had one.

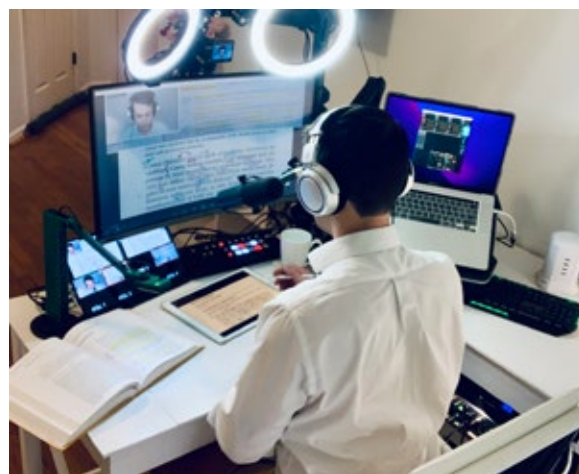
The newly formed tech team had worked hard to strengthen internet capabilities in the sanctuary, bolstered the necessary infrastructure to make it possible, and has spent many hours making it work. This has taken a lot of dedication on their part. We are now training more people on this new system. Although watching a service online is no replacement for being together in person, it's proven to be of great value to those who are homebound, sick, in the hospital, those travelling, and even potential visitors. Some members even watch the service later in the day or in the week after having initially attended in person.

During the 2021 spring semester, I switched my online courses from Adobe Connect to the recently ubiquitous Zoom and began sharing my iPad screen through the program as a whiteboard. This feature was a major improvement for my classes, and it worked most of the time with sparse connection issues.

Later on, in the summer and fall, I upgraded my system again with a low tier professional microphone interface—a costly improvement, which is now rack mounted with a mic activator and power conditioner under my desk in my home office. I also upgraded my headphones. In January 2022, I added a video switcher, which now allowed me to move between three HDMI video inputs from my main camera, my iPad, and a newly bought desktop camera for displaying textbooks and documents. By this time, I had also collected several condenser, broadcast, and shotgun microphones all for varying purposes. My primary studio space is now at home with my secondary equipment in my church office.

I now use a system that I never could have imagined in March 2020. I had come a long way from my Logitech webcam as I was now learning a new technological language. With dozens of cables in use, I know each one very well. Today, I have the technological infrastructure to execute an online class with relative ease and even some sophistication. I've even flipped the classroom allowing students to watch the prerecorded lessons at their own convenience in addition to their assigned reading and translation work, which gives us more time in class to discuss specific translation issues. To create online content for congregational use, I now have a well-equipped studio.

The pandemic was the catalyst. Whereas crises beget necessity giving rise to creativity and innovation, sometimes we must lean into our fears and be open to where it will take us. When we take advantage of potential opportunities rather than



My current studio.

shying away from them out of our own timidity, new things become possible; better things become possible.

I have come a long way since Fall 2017, and I look forward to whatever is next on the journey. With the improvement of my classes, I've discovered strengths of online participation that I now appreciate and can highlight because of these changes. Online classes are not *in-person light*—a mere consolation for remote learning, they're just different. They have their deficiencies, but they also have their strengths just like anything else.

It only takes one defective adapter or one faulty cable for the whole system to come crashing down. That's still true. What do you do then? You do the best you can to prevent the problem with decent equipment—having backup equipment ready, and you learn to fix any potential problem that might arise. You also resign yourself to the fact that sometimes it's just the occasionally unpredictable nature of the online experience. Am I afraid of technology? Maybe not.



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My Favorite Apps

Anna Speiser

IN 2010 THE WORD “APP” WAS CHOSEN as the “Word of the Year.” Since then the diversity and use of this downloadable software has only continued to increase. Last year alone over 230 billion apps were downloaded to various devices. There seems to be an app available to assist, organize, entertain, or even distract you from nearly every task, interest, or hobby known. In the world of chaplaincy and pastoral care there is an ever-increasing number of apps available to enhance and aid the work of professional spiritual caregivers. As with every tool or technology, these apps can be both a blessing and a hindrance. In the end, however, they are tools, and while often helpful, their true impact lies in the gifts, heart, and spirit with which they are employed. In this spirit, I offer a small review of some apps which I hope you might find helpful. With over two million apps available today, this list is in no way meant to be an exhaustive review. Personal opinion and preference colors every user’s experience. I hope, however, this small list might offer some helpful tidbits—perhaps introduce you to something new or inspire you to look further into this ever-changing world of apps.

I gathered these apps from my own personal practice, from informal conversation with other chaplains, and from professional reviews. I focused on apps related to categories that might be helpful for chaplains, either for their own spiritual lives or for those in their care. While I do try to note whether apps are free or fee-based, in fact many apps are a combination of both, with simple versions available without cost and more involved or ad-free versions available for a one-time or ongoing subscription fee. Please always use precaution about any purchases made online, particularly those that involve sharing financial or personal information.

MEDITATION and MINDFULNESS

I’ve used these resources for my own spiritual life, as well as with others. These resources help me center and focus, and live into the idea of “be still, and know that I am God.”

- **Insight Timer:** This is my favorite app for finding meditation resource. It includes guided meditations (many from well-known practitioners), mindfulness exercises, courses, and masterclasses. The app started as a timer for meditation but it is now more of a marketplace for all kinds of meditation resources, and incredibly, it’s free.
- **Calm:** This is one of the most popular apps in the genre, Calm has a relaxed approach to meditative practices, schedule-friendly options, and ease of use.

In the end, however, they are tools, and while often helpful, their true impact lies in the gifts, heart, and spirit with which they are employed.

Daily meditations and popular bedtime stories are available. (Free trial, then fee based.)

- **Mindbell:** This simple app is a part of a more developed app from Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hahn's community. The app periodically rings a bell throughout the day as a reminder to calm awareness and mindful presence. It's simple, but for me, it's a helpful reminder and a good conversation starter. (Free)

NATURE SOUNDS and RELAXATION

I've found Nature Sound apps to be a wonderful way to create a soothing and relaxing atmosphere. I've used the apps with patients, especially those who are non-verbal, or in our staff care room to help create a relaxing and refreshing atmosphere.

- **Sound Sleep:** This is an app that offers various relaxing nature sounds, bundled by theme (rain, summer forest, waterfall, etc). (Free)
- **Atmosphere: Relaxing Sounds:** This app features a variety of sounds, from white noise to a huge variety of nature sounds, many customizable for intensity, length, etc. (Free)

Although it has faced some recent controversy, Spotify can hardly be beat for sheer volume of songs available—more than 82 million.

MUSIC* and SCRIPTURE

These have been helpful apps when I'm searching for a specific hymn, type of song, or Scripture passage that I'd like to share, or that the patient/family has said is important to them.

- **Spotify:** Although it has faced some recent controversy, Spotify can hardly be beat for sheer volume of songs available—more than 82 million. And it's wonderful for making a playlist of songs: for example, when a hospice patient shared how he adored going dancing with his wife in their younger years, I made a playlist of "1940s Big Band music" which he loved. (Basic service is free with additional services like offline or ad-free listening available for a fee.)
- **Ultimate Guitar:** A great source for guitar chords, lead sheets, and tablature for a wide variety of songs (over a million!). It is perfect for finding chords or tablature for worship planning or bedside guitar playing. (Free)
- **Bible Gateway:** This is my go-to app for searching, reading, listening, and sharing of Bible passages. You can search for keywords to find a specific verse and choose from over 230 translations and 74 languages. The app is currently run by Zondervan, a subsidiary of HarperCollins. (Free)

GRATITUDE PRACTICES

I've found journaling and gratitude practices to be helpful for myself, as well as an activity for small groups, such spiritual care groups, staff care, or grief support groups.

- **Three Good Things:** This app focuses on journaling with an emphasis on gratitude/happiness. Easy to use, it guides you to jot down in 100 characters or less three things each day that have gone well or created joy. Previous entries can be viewed. (Free)
- **Five Minute Journal:** Based on the popular book, this app uses tenets of positive psychology with a guided gratitude journaling format. (Free)

MEMORY SHARING and LIFE JOURNALING

I've found both of these apps to be helpful and easy to use ways to help patients and families share and record memories.

- **Story Corps:** This non-profit is focused on preserving stories and oral histories. The free app allows users to record interviews on a smartphone, then upload the recordings to the StoryCorps' archive or the Library of Congress where the stories can be stored publicly or privately (shared only with selected friends and family). It includes sample questions and tips for making recordings. (Free)
- **RecordMeNow:** This app offers opportunity to record legacy videos or life reviews. It has question prompts with audio or video-recording capabilities. I find it highly adaptable. Although usable by anyone, it is specifically intended for parents to leave memories for their young children. It was founded by an expert in childhood loss and trauma. (Free)

There seems to be an ever-growing world of digital tools to assist in end of life planning, and many families seem to find these helpful as resources or just as a way to open up conversation.

END OF LIFE PLANNING

There seems to be an ever-growing world of digital tools to assist in end of life planning, and many families seem to find these helpful as resources or just as a way to open up conversation.

- **Empathy:** Designed for the loved ones and bereaved, this app provides resources for preparing for a loved one's death and navigating post-loss logistics, including such practical tasks as obituary writing, opening probate proceedings, locating a will, canceling subscriptions, managing estate planning and paperwork, etc. as well as emotional support, including grief resources and self-care tips. (Free trial then fee based)
- **MyWonderfulLife:** Focuses on end-of-life planning, including funeral planning, composing letters to loved ones, memories recording and sharing, obituary writing, photo and music selection for funerals and services (website only: free trial then monthly/annual fees)
- **Everplans:** A unique combination of end-of-life planning and secure file storage, including document and password storage and organization (It is website only with a: free trial then fee based)

- **SafeBeyond; RememberMe; AfterNote:** These apps provide resources to write farewell messages or select photos/videos to be sent after death, at designated times or all at once as well as manage how social media accounts will be handled. Users typically designate “trustees” who will be given access to information (passwords, login data, account numbers, etc) after death.

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Care Ministry Through Texting

David Ficken

ALREADY BEFORE COVID, EMAIL WAS DEEMED OBSOLETE by the upcoming generation. One can tell when they look at their phone and see 1000+ unread emails! It is nice having email access on the phone, too, but one gets so many advertisements that important emails end up getting buried.

The invention of texting has allowed for quick instantaneous interactions with people. I'm still of the generation where a quick phone call or leaving a voice message is an important way to connect with someone. I would say that texting is now #2!

I appreciate texting because I can reach out with the heartfelt intent of truly checking in on the wellbeing of the person in mind. A quick text does that. Specifically, I'm referring to care for people who need some extra TLC. They might be in the hospital or in a dark place. The text can reach in and grab them right where they are. We have been trained to respond to the notification that pops up on our phones. Right away, we know we've made (or re-established) our connection. Typing long texts might be cumbersome for a few but not for others. And we can reply with words or emojis that let the person know we are in their camp — and here for them 24/7. I and we can love on them, pray for them, cry with them, laugh with them and even show anger depending on which emoji we grab for emphasis (or fun).

Texting has opened up doors of communication with family members of someone in the hospital. A child that lives out of town is brought into the conversation with the Chaplain on the topic of care for their sick/injured loved one when they otherwise might not have made contact with the care team. I have seen texting bridge some gaps.

Texting has also been a great tool that helps to stay in contact with staff. It is easy to send a quick touch base text to a very busy nurse that you briefly bump into in-between units. Likewise, it is a good way to keep the lines of communication open with management, sending a “can we meet for a quick coffee in the cafeteria” to the CEO (because you've built that relationship with him/her). It's never a bad time to ask how they are doing or if they have a prayer request too! “I heard the shareholder meeting was difficult, how are you doing?” We talk about “ministry of presence” and a quick text reminds the person that you are there for them.

One might want to be cautious on sharing significant details through texting but they can check in and ask if the person is overwhelmed (puzzled emoji) or angry or sad. For sure, all chaplains can certainly send the reminder that they are loved and that God loves them!

I and we can love on them, pray for them, cry with them, laugh with them and even show anger depending on which emoji we grab for emphasis (or fun).

It might feel like a cold way to communicate but I believe that receiving one's personal cellphone number is a gift and privilege. I work to use it wisely. I keep to normal hours of contact from 9am to 9pm unless of course it is of the utmost importance. Don't shy away from sharing the comfort and peace of Christ when this might be the only way to get in touch with them.

I thank God for the advent of technology that helps us all remind people that we are walking with them on their journey. Blessings to you as you reach out and care for people through texting.



David Ficken is a third career Pastor with his first career as a Field Rep for GE Aircraft Engines and second career as a Financial Rep for Thrivent Financial. He went to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, graduating in 2007 and has been a Pastor at Beautiful Savior LCMS in Plover, WI ever since. He serves the community as a volunteer Police and Fire Chaplain. Dave is a LCMS Circuit Visitor in North Wi District. He is married and has 3 children and enjoys projects around their home and going to their children's events.

Uses of Technology in Chaplaincy

Steve Arnold

THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY HAS AN INTERESTING HISTORY. Today's popular understanding of technology often implies "gadgets." Merriam Webster defines gadget as "an often small mechanical or electronic device with a practical use, but often thought of as a novelty."

Personally, I find the Merriam Webster definition limiting. While the emphasis on electronic devices would be useful in today's world, placed in the context of history the concept of technology is much broader than Merriam Webster's definition. One would have to argue that somewhere in history a person developed a "gadget" to rub two rocks together to develop fire or someone developed a "gadget" to chip stone in order to create a wheel. Electricity was not a part of the process.

The world-famous caves of Lascaux and Chauvet in France feature some of the most spectacular prehistoric cave art in the world. Painted and engraved images, as well as bas relief sculptures, were made by Homo sapiens and probably also Neanderthals between about 36,000 and 12,000 years ago, a period that coincides with the end of the last Ice Age. These caves are considered to be some of the earliest "schools," as one generation of hunters passed on stories and techniques to the next generation with the illustrations in the caves. The illustrations became possible because someone invented "gadgets" to carve and paint the walls.

It would be fascinating to explore the history of gadgets over the centuries, wondering about both the enthusiastic acceptance of technology as well as the strong objection to technology, but the task at hand is to explore the use of technology in chaplaincy.

Chaplaincy was an extension of my career, which ranged from parish ministry to university teaching, and then chaplaincy. The common thread of all of those positions was to support spiritual formation and spiritual care. I moved into chaplaincy in 2007 after open heart surgery. My first experience was to serve as chaplain through campus ministry at a Lutheran university. When it came to technology, the university students were my teachers and mentors. They pushed me kicking and screaming into the technological age. It wasn't enough to learn to use the computer to format worship folders, I also had to learn how to do special lighting and project videos and songs on large screens. Students put me on Facebook, then showed me how to use various forms of social media. To this day, I am a total failure with Twitter, but I have learned to use other venues.

When it came to technology, the university students were my teachers and mentors. They pushed me kicking and screaming into the technological age.

While going through Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), I experienced the transition from paper charting to electronic charting. This was a technological innovation that I fully embraced because I had taught at a laptop university and

wasn't used to dealing with so much paper. Electronic charting was a real gift that made my work much easier.

After finishing CPE, I moved into chaplaincy at two different continuous care campuses. One of the first items of technology that I found helpful was my iPad. I was able to download recordings of hymns and spiritual songs that I could use in public worship, but it was also helpful to use in one-on-one settings or in small groups.

I also was able to use pictures or paintings to illustrate Bible stories or for the practice of Visio Divina. The iPad allowed me greater freedom in supporting residents in their spiritual journey.

No other major changes came with technology until the pandemic hit. With the onset of Covid 19, my role had to drastically change because I, myself, was considered a vulnerable senior citizen with underlying health issues. I could no longer enter the facility and do direct patient care. In addition, the facility did not permit gatherings of residents who were often confined to their rooms due to quarantine.

So we developed two new approaches that utilized technology: personal visits on Zoom and recorded devotions for the website. These had both effective and ineffective attributes.

With the onset of Covid 19, my role had to drastically change because I, myself, was considered a vulnerable senior citizen with underlying health issues.

Zoom Visits

The Zoom visits were to people that I had visited prior to the pandemic. We limited the practice to those I already knew, so I don't really have a sense as to how it would have worked with new people. At this time I was very part-time (six hours per week) so I only visited six people. The process involved having a member of the life enrichment team take the tablet into the resident's room and set up the visit. I would spend about 15 minutes with each resident and results were somewhat mixed. The life enrichment staff person would then return in about 15 minutes and I would move to another person.

Zoom visits with memory care residents were not as effective as hoped. The residents I visited in memory care recognized me but had trouble understanding how we were talking through a computer. Residents engaged in conversation, and we even could sing and pray together. However, memory care residents were so easily distracted by any noise that it was difficult to sustain anything for any length of time. There was too much activity in the area to allow them to focus on the tablet screen.

Zoom visits with residents outside the memory care unit were much more effective. Visits with 90-year-old Harold were very satisfying, and we had to lengthen the time to thirty minute sessions because he wanted to tell me more and more stories about his life, particularly about his time serving in the Korean War. I had been visiting with him and his wife prior to the pandemic, so we had established a good relationship. However, his wife died shortly after the pandemic started. Shortly

thereafter, he moved from assisted living to skilled nursing and my relationship with him changed. He was lonely and had many stories to tell. It was a fascinating experience, and we used Zoom until he died a few months later.

Visits on Zoom with 92-year-old Clare were truly enjoyable. She was a delight to visit face to face, but her charm came through Zoom as if we were sitting in the same room. Again, life enrichment staff had to set up the iPad and get her going, but that process got easier each time. Clare was a woman who raised eleven children, ran the farm, milked the cows, made the clothes, and cooked and baked. She was active in her church and coordinated the Fall Bazaar for several years. Clare was still very sharp and won every card game she played. Members of her extensive family visited numerous times throughout the week, but that all came to a halt with the pandemic. Clare did not know what to do and was growing increasingly despondent. Our visits on Zoom became times of reminiscing and joyful connection. Eventually, family members connected on Zoom as well. Although Clare missed having people present in the room with her, she found great joy in being able to see and talk with her family.

Web Based Devotions

The pandemic quarantine meant that residents could no longer come together in the same room for worship. Various options were explored and tried, but eventually we decided to have devotions recorded and placed for viewing on the Crest View web site. Each week, I would construct a liturgy and devotion based upon the assigned Gospel lesson. The devotion would include a spoken hymn and a devotion. This was recorded using Zoom and then placed on the Crest View website and on the Crest View Facebook site. The service folder was printed and distributed each week so residents could take part in the liturgy while still present in their homes. Again, technology helped us stay connected and in touch during the time of required isolation.

The stories could go on and on, but as we ponder the use of technology, we rejoice in the opportunities that present themselves during challenging and isolating times. Although I prefer face to face teaching and face to face chaplaincy, technology is here to stay, and the face of chaplaincy will adjust and grow as needs change and opportunities present themselves.



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