



NORTH CAROLINA CHAPLAINS' ASSOCIATION

Presbyterian Hospital's Harry Burns Named NC Chaplain of the Year

- by Erica Parkerson for the Charlotte Weekly, 9/5/08, reprinted by permission

There's a picture on the wall of Harry Burns' Presbyterian Hospital office, a place you'll seldom find the busy chaplain. It depicts a nurse, a doctor and Christ, hovering over a patient lying in a hospital bed. Burns rescued the picture from the hospital chapel's closet, considering it a fitting reminder of his role.

Often, those suffering look to Burns for a tangible connection to the God they can't see, the God they feel far from in their pain. Burns helps people cope with suffering and death, frequently finding himself leading people from one life to the next with dignity and faith. But that's not all he does.

A twofold mission

Hired as a health educator for Presbyterian Hospital 18 months ago, Burns, a pastor and chaplain for 20 years, previously worked at Carolinas Medical Center as a community chaplain. "My job was to bridge the gap between the faith community and the medical community," he said.

He's still building that bridge with a twofold mission: ministering to an ever-changing flock of patients, frightened family members and hospital staff, and promoting preventive health care in the community.



Harry Burns receives his Chaplain of the Year award from NCCA President Jackie Allen

Burns was recently recognized for his dedication when he was named North Carolina Chaplain of the Year by the North Carolina Chaplains' Association. He was nominated by fellow chaplain Karen Moore. "She and I served as chaplains at CMC for years and have been active together with the Association of Professional Chaplains on a national level." Burns said. "The recognition has inspired me to work harder at what I do," he explained, noting he was shocked and humbled to receive the award.

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Association Member News

NCCA's condolences go to our president, Jackie Allen, on the death of her father, John Hawkins. If anyone would like to contribute to a memorial fund, it is: [The John Hawkins Fund, ARMC Foundation, PO Box 202, Burlington, NC 27215.](#)

Our own Chaplain Harry Burns was elected to the APC board. Congrats, Harry!

On August 18th, Karen Moore became the new Chaplain at Aldersgate Continuing Care and Retirement Community in Charlotte, NC.

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Save the Date!

NCCA Spring Conference
April 22-24, 2009
Atlantic Beach, North Carolina

Exploring the Meaning of Hope...

Kids are back in school, there's a slight chill in the early morning hours...Fall is in the air. It always reminds me of our Fall Education Day at Caraway. This year we are fortunate to be led by one of our very own. Rev. Barry Morris, BCC is preparing to bring a presentation titled **"Wrestling with Hope: Finding a Life of Meaning in the Midst of Suffering."** This will be a joint presentation with Christine McCarty, MD. Chaplain Morris is the Director of Spiritual Care at Randolph Hospital in Asheboro and has 17 years of chaplaincy experience. Dr. McCarty is an oncologist and is the director of the Cancer Center at Randolph Hospital.

We will be exploring the meaning of hope from both a medical and spiritual perspective. Chaplain Morris and Dr. McCarty have collaborated on a Palliative Care team for five years.

You can find more information at www.ncchaplains.com. Look under Education and then click on the events in North Carolina. The Registration form will be on-line, also.

We look forward to a record turn-out this Fall. Come and enjoy the speakers, the fellowship, and the beauty and peacefulness of Caraway.

See you there!

Rev. Dr. Debby Bradley, BCC
Education Chair



Camp Caraway, Asheboro

Fall Education Day 2008

NORTH CAROLINA CHAPLAINS' ASSOCIATION

Fall Education Day—October 9, 2008

Caraway Conference Center, Asheboro, NC

Wrestling with Hope: Finding a Life of Meaning in the Midst of Suffering
with Rev. Barry Morris, BCC and Christine McCarty, MD



Conference Schedule

8:00	Registration
9:00	Welcome & Introduction of Speaker
9:15	Session I
10:30	Break
10:45	Session II
12:00	Lunch (included in the registration)
1:15	Session III
2:45	Question and Answer
3:00	Evaluations and Closing

**NORTH CAROLINA CHAPLAINS' ASSOCIATION
FALL EDUCATION DAY 2008
REGISTRATION**

_____ Check if any information is new or changed

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: (___ Home; ___ Office): _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Institution/Church: _____

Email Address: _____

**“Wrestling with Hope:
Finding a Life of Meaning in the Midst of Suffering”**

Rev. Barry Morris, BCC
Christine McCarty, MD

October 9, 2008
9:00am – 3:00pm
(lunch included in registration fee)
Caraway – Asheboro, NC

Member/Associate Member	\$40.	\$ _____
CPE Student	\$25.	\$ _____
Non-Member	\$45.	\$ _____
Add Late Fee after (September 28 th)	\$15.	\$ _____

(Registration fee includes lunch at Caraway)
Regular _____ Vegetarian _____

Total: \$ _____

Note: No refunds can be granted after October 1st registration deadline.

RETURN THIS FORM, along with your check payable to NC Chaplains' Association, to:
Chaplain Keith Little
Craven Regional Medical Center
2000 Neuse Blvd.
PO Box 12157
New Bern, NC 28561
(252) 634-6200

NCCA offers up to .5 CCE (continuing chaplaincy education) units for this meeting.
This involves no additional cost to you. Certificates will be available at the end of the Conference

**CARAWAY INFORMATION
Caraway Conference Center and Camp
PO Box 36
Asheboro, NC 27204**

A Day in the Life of Harry Burns, Chaplain of the Year ... Cont'd

That service shows no signs of slowing. After spending a full day at "the office" (aka the entire hospital), Burns pulled an all-night, on-call shift, responding to requests from every hospital corner. His shift, but not his work, ended at 8 a.m., when Burns left to attend a morning men's forum at Fifteenth Street Church of God.

Ministering to the 'in-house' crowd

It's not just the patients who are eager for a piece of Burns. Friendly and approachable, Burns is in high demand with hospital housekeepers, nurses, doctors and administrators alike, who are all in need of comfort and counsel. Occasionally, conversations with employees begin in elevators or hospital corridors. Others are referred to Burns, who has become a familiar face in Charlotte's hospital community.

In January, a female member of Presbyterian's Hospital staff died unexpectedly. Her co-workers requested a chaplain, and when Burns arrived he found more than 20 distraught people waiting to be comforted. "They were really torn up because this woman was always so lively and bubbly, and the last couple days (of her life) they had noticed that her attitude had changed, and they found her dead," Burns said. "Her staff was just shocked."

"Most people ... want you to get over it right away because they don't understand grief," explained Burns. "That's why there's a lot of pain and suffering."

Often, Burns leads mourners, collectively or individually, in prayer. "But instead of praying so much about the deceased, I ask them, individually. 'What are some of your issues?' That is also part of the healing process," he explained.

Coping with death

Death is not something people want to talk about, but Burns said it's necessary. Last month, someone from a Charlotte church asked him to lead a support group for those grappling with a man's suicide.

"I thought it was just going to be (this man's) family, but it was eight different families, so it was eight different issues," he noted. "I was trying to deal with this one family ... but there were eight different stories of people who have lost someone – some recent, some 10 years ago."

Burns conducts workshops on death, dying, grieving and loss in area churches. The average person, he said, doesn't realize the healing process associated with the natural death of a loved one can take seven to nine years. "Most people ... want you to get over it right away because they don't understand grief," explained Burns. "That's why there's a lot of pain and suffering."

Steering clear of the ER

But Burns also tends carefully to the lives of the living. He said people typically consider their health in strictly physical terms, neglecting the spiritual and emotional aspects. Burns advocates a more holistic approach. It's why he helped establish "Structured Health Ministries," an 11-hour course he teaches in Charlotte churches. Instead of hosting health fairs, Burns urges congregations to advocate health ministry year-round.

He's trained 145 people to be congregational health promoters in Mecklenburg County and has pointed them to proactive groups like the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society and the March of Dimes.

"Health care is not about getting sick and coming to the hospital," Burns said. "It's about doing those preventive things that keep you from coming to the ER."

He's spread that concern for others' health as far as Nigeria, where he and his wife, Vara, established a water supply for a village of 5,000 and plan to build a health clinic next.

Homespun faith

He was ordained into the African Methodist Episcopal Church alongside his wife as an itinerant deacon in 1986 and as an itinerant elder in 1988. In 1987, Gen. James Grimmsley Jr., appointed him the first black campus minister at The Citadel in Charleston, SC.

"This poor, African American from the south side of Sumter, SC, was asked to step into a very key role," Burns said. "I reflected on what my parents taught me – to always look for God to open doors that no man was going to open for me."

A Day in the Life of Harry Burns ... Cont'd



Presbyterian Hospital, Charlotte, NC

In the early '90s, Burns started serving in a hospital, largely at his wife's prompting. "I had done a considerable amount of work prior to receiving board certification as a professional chaplain," he said. "A lot of it stemmed from visiting patients and working in ministry in nursing homes and convalescent homes."

"My wife of 31 years this month also had several patients as she taught at a medical school for a while," Burns added. "she later found many others in need through a health clinic where she served on the faculty."

Burns admits there is little variation between serving in a church or a hospital, saying it requires the same compassion, commitment, and consistency. "I work hard to be a shepherd and a servant in both roles," he said.

"Sometimes the church only wants a servant and not a shepherd. It is at that time that I ask the Holy Spirit to order my steps and guide me. Both are rewarding and sometimes challenging. The best is yet to come."

Behind closed doors

Seeing him at work, it's clear that Burns shines the brightest behind hospital-room doors. Some people are stoic and resist opening up to a chaplain, he said, so when meeting patients, Burns talks first about the illness and diagnosis. Then Burns, who believes in specific, not general, prayers, intercedes for and sometimes with patients.

"I deal directly with what's going on because the God that I serve is the God of specifics," he explained. "You have to be very pointed."

Occasionally, he said, the power of silence is effective. "There are times when all a person needs is to know that somebody is there."

For example, in the 1980s Burns ministered to many patients with HIV/AIDS who, as a result, frequently had collapsed lungs, so he prayed for the restoration of respiratory systems.

Occasionally, he said, the power of silence is effective. "There are times when all a person needs is to know that somebody is there." He said, explaining how he once helped a man battling hatred and anger to forgive his father days before he died. "I stayed with him for two hours and that was enough."

While most patients welcome Burns, he also has been rejected, challenged and cursed. "I do not need to be in the room to pray with (those patients)." He admitted, saying he politely excuses himself and prays in the hall. "You have to get to that place where you respect people where they are."

Ministering to the minister

While gifted with an ability to touch people, Burns acknowledged he can't do it alone. He said he often leans on the hospital system's eight other chaplains for support, particularly on difficult calls, such as families affected by stillbirths.

"I don't handle those very well," said Burns. "I have to go to one of my colleagues and ask them to lift me up."

Yet knowing he'll make a difference in someone's life makes it all worthwhile. "If I can help somebody – it doesn't have to be the whole hospital population – it's worth getting up in the morning," he said.



FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER

Call or email for additional copies of this
newsletter issue:

Rev. Suzanne Franklin
Director of Pastoral Care
Wayne Memorial Hospital
2700 Wayne Memorial Drive

Phone: 919-731-6322
Email: suzanne.franklin@waynehealth.org

We're on the Web!
www.ncchaplains.com

Prayer/Meditation

Holy One,
I come to work today, and this is what I offer:
Me. Here. In this place.
Use this life of mine for a higher cause, a greater good.
If this is not a place that is good for me or for the world,
then help me to move on from this work.
May this be a place of transformation. May I learn the
lessons here that I am to learn.
May I convey hope or healing to those I encounter today
in person, on the phone, or via email.
If there is chaos or a problem here today, may I listen
deeply, beyond the din of that noise.
If there are politics played out, please help me to act
wisely.
May I keep my ego in check. May I be generous and
compassionate. Amen.

Susan Baller-Shepard

Nominate Someone for 2009 Chaplain of the Year

If you've visited our website, www.ncchaplains.com lately, you've seen the wonderful picture of Chaplain Harry Burns receiving the 2008 Chaplain of the Year award at our Spring Conference. Harry's story is moving and it is exciting to know that he represents us as a professional chaplain. As an organization we have recognized some great chaplains in our past. But remember, there are more out there, including you!

Many times, as chaplains, we are very hesitant to talk about the great jobs we do in our places of employment. The Chaplain of the Year Award is an excellent avenue for us to celebrate each other. Do you know another chaplain who:

1. *Participates in the North Carolina Chaplains Association;*
2. *Supports colleagues;*
3. *Participates in advocacy for professional chaplaincy and pastoral care;*
4. *Contributes to the field of pastoral care/chaplaincy;*
5. *Provides education.*

If you do, I strongly encourage you to go to the NCCA website, click the *Chaplain of the Year* tab; complete a nominating application; **and send it in!** Let's continue to recognize and celebrate each other.

Blessings,

Darryl I. Owens, Vice President
diowens@unch.unc.edu

Submit your nomination today!