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Being There

hearts full of grace

A Newsletter for & about
Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chaplains

*"Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve.
You don't have to have a college degree to serve.
You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve.
You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."*

-The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Rita Constantini, Executive Director:

Sonoma County Chaplains have been serving local law enforcement since 1999. Our collective chaplains make up a small yet mighty team of daring and courageous volunteers who willingly stand in the face of trauma and grief response with the intention to be *of service*.

I am immensely proud of every active chaplain serving today and I am equally grateful to all of those who came before us. We truly stand on the shoulders of giants. As a tiny non-profit our aim is to support our local first responders as they field thousands of traumatic calls every year. We do it on a shoestring budget because we are driven by service, not the dollar. It is a true labor of love.

Twenty-five years ago a handful of folks set out to make a difference in the lives of officers and deputies in Sonoma County. It is my mission to uphold the legacy and ensure the sustainability of this fine organization. I consider it an honor to serve the Sonoma County Chaplains. This newsletter is intended to close the gap between us all, bring us all closer together and offer encouragement. This issue scratches the surface on what it takes to be a law enforcement chaplain. We share some of our own personal approaches, thoughts, and reasons for being of service. I offer the video below as insight on how I experience and manage this level of service:

<https://youtu.be/wN5BqCKO9DY?si=37qKLLIVTfI8DDRJ>



From the Editor

So much to celebrate in this fledgling new year, beginning with the first anniversary of *Being There* LECS Newsletter.

With the publication of the inaugural issue one year ago, we made a commitment to provide a communication channel for and about and *by* LECS chaplains, to keep us connected and motivated between on-calls and call-outs, meetings and periodic information flow from our leadership.

We had a blank slate when we started, so we first polled you for your preferences. Working on those guidelines, we went to work on crafting the newsletter with content we felt was useful, informative, hopefully entertaining, but most important, worthy of your time. We hope that we have achieved that in the first year and, as the cliché goes, we hope to exceed your expectations going forward.

I am honored to be your newsletter editor and chaplain colleague, and I again invite each one of you to participate in the newsletter in whatever way is right for you: provide your own stories or story ideas, send pictures, share resources with your fellow chaplains, or even just read and react to what we offer here (no Yelp reviews, please).

→ [Good news: Every issue of *Being There* is now available on our website.](#)

We are also celebrating this incredible milestone: the 25th anniversary of Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Services (1999-2024). Read on for a very interesting look back at our agency's beginnings and how we've evolved into who and what we are now, starting with a retrospective by LECS founder Warren Hayes.

A final note: As we are an organization of volunteers I started doing some preliminary research into volunteerism and came across this encouraging factoid:

*"Even if it can be assumed that healthy, socially competent, and secure individuals are more likely to volunteer, it can be shown that volunteering keeps people healthy, promises recognition, and serves to fulfill meaning."**

Live long and prosper, fellow Chaps!

Agápē,

Inese



"Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take nothing that you have received ... but only what you have given; a full heart enriched by service, love, sacrifice and courage."

-St Francis of Assisi

* 2022. S. T. Güntert et al., Organizational, Motivational, and Cultural Contexts of Volunteering, SpringerBriefs in Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92817-9_6



The History of Sonoma County Chaplains*, by LECS Founder Warren Hayes



Santa Rosa chief of police from 1996 to 2004 was Mike Dunbaugh. Chief Dunbaugh contacted his good friend, Dave Powell who was an ordained Episcopalian minister who was also a retired police officer to discuss the possibility of creating a chaplaincy program locally. Both, having had experienced law enforcement chaplaincy programs in the past developed a plan to form a Chaplaincy to serve the local law enforcement agencies in Sonoma County. In 1998 the plans were formed, and the organization applied for 501c non-profit status and began the first chaplain academy.

David Powell was the academy director and patterned the chaplaincy after other models yet unique to Sonoma County. One the most unique attributes of the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Service in Sonoma County is its inter-faith ideology, which is all-inclusive of various religious denominations and spiritual views.

The idea was to offer diversity to best serve the demographics of the citizens of our county as well as the various law enforcement personnel. Our first Academy was made up of mostly Pastors of various churches, male as well as female, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, all of which provided a wide range of diverse influences. The Academy was held from September to April, classes were held weekly, each class lasting about 3 hours. We had about 23 candidates. The subjects included, police culture, death notification, listening skills, stress management, mortuary procedures, coroner procedures, education on various kinds of drugs and many, many roll plays regarding death notification as well as classes on policies and procedures of our Chaplaincy.

In our class curriculum we were sure to include many officers, and law enforcement personnel as well as officials from local fire agencies as well as EMT personnel to make presentations. We also included two FBI Chaplains from other cities to instruct the class offering a wide range of training. While our mission was to serve mainly law enforcement, we were also available for other first responding agencies as needed. Our motto was "Being There." A Board Of Directors was formed which in included various business men and women as well as representatives from law enforcement agencies. We secured an answering service to handle the callouts from officers from all the agencies in Sonoma County including, not only Police Departments but California Highway Patrol as well as the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department along with the local FBI office in downtown Santa Rosa.



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2023: LECS BY THE NUMBERS

ACTIVE CHAPLAINS
SERVING SONOMA
COUNTY

34



17,500 TOTAL VOLUNTEER
HOURS

600 ON-CALL HOURS PER
CHAPLAIN

LAW
ENFORCEMENT
REQUESTS FOR
A CHAPLAIN

137



8

CRITICAL
INCIDENT
DEBRIEFINGS

CHAPLAINS
TRAINED &
COMMISSIONED

8



14

COMMUNITY & LAW
ENFORCEMENT
EVENTS

TOUR DE FUZZ

TOTAL # OF RIDERS 1,700

TOTAL NET \$
RAISED FOR LECS \$100K+





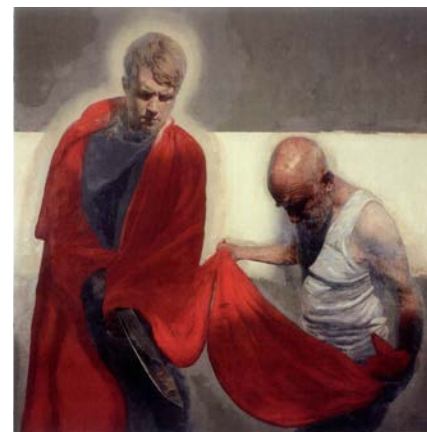
The DNA of A Chaplain



Originally, the term 'chaplain' referred to a religious official in the Christian church. In modern times, the word chaplain has come to refer to a cleric (e.g., a minister, priest, rabbi, imam, etc.) or a non-religious professional who serves as a spiritual advisor and counselor within secular organizations and institutions. Examples of organizations that employ chaplains include hospitals, universities, prisons, the military, law enforcement, and various other settings.

The etymology of "chaplain"

The word *chaplain* comes from the Latin word *cappella* for "little cloak," originally denoting a custodian of the cloak of St. Martin of Tours (316-397 CE). It evolved into Old French *chapelain* to Middle English *chaplain*. As a young man, St. Martin was a Roman officer in Gaul. In this story St. Martin, encountering a man begging in the rain with no cloak, tore his own cloak in two and shared it, half for the beggar and half for himself. If he had met the man's need by giving him his own cloak, he would have shifted the problem to himself. From this comes the understanding that a chaplain is someone who shares support with those in the storms of life and offers spiritual help and direction in difficult times.



"St. Martin Divides His Cloak" by Hughie O'Donoghue (2018), a contemporary interpretation of the well-known moment.



Helping, Fixing or Serving? by Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.

Fixing and helping create a distance between people, but we cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected.

Helping, fixing and serving represent three different ways of seeing life. When you help, you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. Fixing and helping may be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul.

Service rests on the premise that the nature of life is sacred, that life is a holy mystery which has an unknown purpose. When we serve, we know that we belong to life and to that purpose. From the perspective of service, we are all connected: All suffering is like my suffering and all joy is like my joy. The impulse to serve emerges naturally and inevitably from this way of seeing. Serving is different from helping. Helping is not a relationship between equals. A helper may see others as weaker than they are, needier than they are, and people often feel this inequality. The danger in helping is that we may inadvertently take away from people more than we could ever give them; we may diminish their self-esteem, their sense of worth, integrity or even wholeness.

When we help, we become aware of our own strength. But when we serve, we don't serve with our strength; we serve with ourselves, and we draw from all of our experiences. Our limitations serve; our wounds serve; even our darkness can serve. My pain is the source of my compassion; my woundedness is the key to my empathy.

Serving makes us aware of our wholeness and its power. The wholeness in us serves the wholeness in others and the wholeness in life. The wholeness in you is the same as the wholeness in me. Service is a relationship between equals: our service strengthens us as well as others. Fixing and helping are draining, and over time we may burn out, but service is renewing. When we serve, our work itself will renew us. In helping we may find a sense of satisfaction; in serving we find a sense of gratitude.

Rachel Naomi Remen, MD is Clinical Professor Emeritus of Family and Community Medicine at the UCSF School of Medicine and Professor of Family Medicine at Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine in Ohio. In 1991 she founded the Remen Institute for the Study of Health and Illness (RISHI) a national training institute for health professionals who wish to practice a health care of compassion, meaning, service and community.

**The Four Chaplains** by Ve Hsieh, Academy XVIII

When I was attending the LECS Academy each Candidate had to present a class opening. The opening was not so much about yourself personally but what about the Chaplaincy attracted you to serve.

I started my research for topics that would fit my vision of service as a LECS Chaplain. I discovered the story of the Four Immortal Chaplains. If you are not familiar with the story of the Four Chaplains, it is a story of interfaith at its best.

It was the evening of Feb. 3, 1943, and the U.S.A.T. Dorchester was crowded to capacity, transporting 902 servicemen from Newfoundland to an American base in Greenland. The captain ordered the men to sleep in their clothes and keep life jackets on as the passing would be dangerous. Many soldiers disregarded the order due to the crowding and extreme heat from the ship's engines.

At 12:55 am a German submarine fired three torpedoes and struck the Dorchester. The ship started taking on water and the order was given to abandon ship; it would sink within 20 minutes. As crew members panicked, encounters with four Chaplains brought calm, hope, and light to the men. The four Chaplains were of different faiths: Lt. Alexander D. Goode (Jewish), Lt. Clark V. Poling (Dutch Reformed), Lt. John P. Washington (Roman Catholic), and Lt. George L. Fox (Methodist).

The Chaplains opened the storage locker topside and were handing out life jackets. Crew member John Ladd witnessed, when there were no life jackets left, the Chaplains giving theirs to four frightened men. In doing these selfless acts none of the Chaplains called out for a Jew, a Catholic, or a Protestant. They simply gave their guidance, support, prayers and life jackets to those in need.

Private William B. Bednar: *"As I floated in the dark waters, I could hear the chaplains preaching courage. Their voices were the only thing that kept me going."*

Petty Officer John J. Mahoney: *"I tried to reenter my cabin, but Rabbi Goode stopped me." Mahoney was returning to his cabin to retrieve his gloves because of the cold. "Never mind, Goode told him. "I have two pairs." Then he gave him his own gloves and Mahoney realized that the rabbi was never intending to leave the Dorchester; he had only the one pair.*

As the ship went down survivors in the rafts could see the four chaplains, arms linked and braced against the slanting deck. Their voices could be heard over the waters offering prayers and encouragement to the men.

Of the 902 men aboard the USAT Dorchester, only 230 survived.

In 1948 a US postage stamp was issued to commemorate the Four Chaplains. In my Academy I gave a Four Chaplain stamp to each of my fellow Chaplain candidates. My hope was it would give them the feeling of "Being There Together."



I continue to tell this story to Chaplain Academy candidates to let them understand we are in service together. Though they will be responding physically to a call by themselves, they are never alone; a fellow chaplain is always there for them. I describe the strength, pride, and presence of other chaplains when I wear my uniform. I hand out Four Chaplain stamps to them and explain my hope of that little extra strength they may draw on when carrying the stamp.

Watch the documentary: *The Four Chaplains: Sacrifice at Sea* <https://youtu.be/8ewJp8HhYzA?si=ZTE-jVtRCiKnacnR>

Source: <https://fourchaplains.org/>





The Chaplain's Voice: Inspiration

A poem about loss and compassion, submitted by Chaplain Pam Taylor, Academy XXII

new normal by ullie-kaye, poet

"I don't think we talk enough about how quiet the road gets. how long the waiting feels. how lonely healing can be. i don't think we talk enough about how undone we become in the valley of grief. or how enormously we must stretch just to fit ourselves into some kind of new normal and dare to call it life again. and i don't think we talk enough about how we have no other thing left but to gather up our heavy limbs and carry on. because the earth keeps spinning. the sun keeps on rising. and the days keep on bleeding, one into the next, regardless of the moment that made all the minutes inside of our heart stand still."

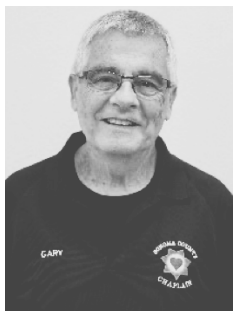


Current Media about Hospital Chaplains, submitted by Chaplain Gary Passarino, Academy XXII

There's an old adage: 'Don't just stand there, do something.'

We flip that: We say, 'Don't just do something, stand there... be there.'

Chaplain narrator, "A Still Small Voice"



A STILL SMALL VOICE follows Mati, a chaplain completing a year-long hospital residency, as she learns to provide spiritual care to people confronting profound life changes. Through Mati's experiences with her patients, her struggle with professional burnout, and her own spiritual questioning, we gain new perspectives on how meaningful connection can be and how painful its absence is.

(Ed. note: As of this writing the documentary is not available on streaming platforms, only in select theaters. Stay tuned.)



An article about the documentary is available in the magazine *America: the Jesuit Review* (scan the code to access the full article).



"Chaplaincy is the work of holding opposites, the ability to accept another's pain and see through to their wounds and dress them. The indignation of an unexpected death, coupled with isolation was horrific to witness at times. I learned not to be afraid, not to need to change anything except be witness to and stay with the grieving and suffering... Chaplaincy at its best incorporates the grounding of faith, self care and support. Most of all, bearing witness to all voices, still, small or loud."

- Anne Hood, a palliative care chaplain with 8 years experience prior to, during, and post pandemic, commenting on "A Still Small Voice"





Query: What KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED in your work as a law enforcement chaplain?

Gisela Babb: *What keeps me going is being able to help others through direct action and the incredible camaraderie of the LECS team. I deeply appreciate the LECS Leadership and the Board of Directors because they create a clearing for the Chaplains that allows us to effectively do what we do. I hear this during our meetings when Chaplains share about their call-outs. We know we are well trained and fully supported. That is very important to me. I am deeply humbled to be part of a group of people that care so much and I cherish the friends I have made by being part of the LECS.*

Susan Strong: *A desire to be supportive for those experiencing trauma.*

Shalimar Vavra: *What keeps me going is hope. Hope that I can bring even a moment's peace to the bereaved. Hope that I do the best I possibly can every single time. Hope that I am always up to the task and never fail in any way those that I am there to serve.*

Susan Keehn: *It feels important to be of service to Law Enforcement and to those who are grieving. It has a positive impact on the officers, our community, and me. Self growth is involved. I love my fellow chaplains.*

Debra Carter-Hope: *What keeps me motivated....First Responders, we see just a fraction of their day....my way of Giving Thanks and Support.*

Carole Cole: *NEED...The need for human connection on the worst day.*

Gary Gerloff: *I do it to help take away some of the stress our LEO's deal with.*

Thomas Craig: *The other chaplains...the camaraderie and community of the chaplaincy.*

Elizabeth Goodson: *I am motivated by the response I get from our first responders when we come on scene. Looks and words of camaraderie and gratitude are my "go-juice" for this work.*

Gary Passarino: *Service, and the knowledge that I am serving my community whether or not I receive a call. When I have a quiet shift, I remember the line from John Milton: "They also serve who only stand and wait."*

Meghan Murphy: *There are two things that keep me going: the honor of serving law enforcement and our community at their time of need and the camaraderie I feel with our chaplains, I'm honored to be in connection with such amazing humans.*

*"Volunteers do not
necessarily have the time;
they have the heart."*

- Elizabeth Andrew





Welcome to Academy XXIV

This month we kicked off Academy XXIV! We have eight wide-eyed hopeful community members who endeavor to join our ranks. We wish them our heartfelt encouragement as they seek to find out if this is the right place to serve. - *Rita Constantini*

In their first official training session, the Academy trainees learned LECS Policies & Procedures and observed two role-play scenarios performed by commissioned chaplains.



“Explaining the information in the Resource Guide to a grieving family member”



“Getting the details for a death notification from the officer on scene”



Academy Instructor Angela Perkins observing the role play interactions.





First Responders
on Peer Support



This is the third article in our series on the impacts on first responders working in the world of trauma. With input from current working professionals, retirees, and mental health professionals involved in wellness and peer support, we aim to learn how we as chaplains can best support them. (Ed.)

In this issue we hear from Dian Barkan, LCSW, of West Coast Post-Trauma Retreat

LECS: What is West Coast Post-Trauma Retreat, and what is your role there?

Dian Barkan [DB]: WCPR is a six-day residential program for police, fire, dispatchers, EMS and some others. The staff is made up of Peers (most of whom have experienced PTSD and have been through the program themselves), a chaplain, and culturally competent clinicians whose primary professional focus is First Responders. We utilize education, therapeutic intervention, and group debriefing work to help clients move past post-traumatic stress injury and to integrate what they learn into their work and family lives. To date, we have helped hundreds of First Responders and have created satellite programs in 4 states. I am a founding member and a Lead Clinician.



LECS: Different agencies have developed programs around wellness. What does West Coast Post-Trauma Retreat do that promotes whole health or wellness? What can you share with us that will help us understand your approach?

DB: The program focuses on defeating PTSI (post-traumatic-stress-injury), but also targets the family dysfunction that can occur in its wake. We utilize individual and group treatment modalities that are research-proven to be effective, and tailor them to the First Responder population. This is because the way that PTSD manifests for a FR differs from that of a civilian. There is also a substance abuse component.

While we use EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) in individual work to target the most intrusive symptoms of PTSD, much of the healing happens in the group milieu. Many clients are encountering a safe, culturally appropriate treatment space for the first time in their lives - and their relief is palpable. At the close of the program, clients often admit that when they arrived, they thought they were alone with their symptoms. But meeting the other clients and the peers, in a safe confidential space, overcame their isolation and neutralized the stigma associated with mental health. Hearing the peers share their own experiences, as well as the growth they have achieved, is particularly powerful.

LECS: How would you describe peer support as it applies to wellness in the agencies you serve?

DB: That's somewhat difficult to answer. The structure and specific function of a Peer Support Team varies from agency to agency - there is no standardized model. Some larger agencies have dedicated units with multiple officers that are exclusive to Peer Support- and who have had considerable training. Some peer support teams are

(continued on next page)





First Responders on Peer Support

volunteer, some are paid. Unfortunately, there are agencies who have yet to implement a program and/or lack the resources. However, most departments have some peers with some training. In terms of wellness, Peer Support is invaluable. First Responders are more likely to utilize the various resources available to them when they have been referred by a fellow officer or firefighter. Additionally, in a crisis, they are far more likely to reach out to each other than to a clinician or EAP company hotline.

LECS: As law enforcement chaplains we understand that talking about feelings is not the most comfortable thing for first responders to do. We also know that talking does help to alter one's perspective and can be a healthy coping strategy. From your experience, what is the best approach to getting a first responder to talk?

DB: Don't push. The therapeutic relationship is like any other relationship, it takes time to build trust, and feel comfortable with each other. By the time a First Responder picks up the phone to make an appointment they are usually ready to address whatever it is that prompted them to make that call, but they must first trust the counselor. Ask questions when there is something you don't know. Let the Responder ask you questions, too. Be open and honest. And above all else, be genuine.

LECS: What do you do now or have done to take care of yourself that really works for you? What kind of support would you, from your knowledge of and experience with first responders, like to have that can contribute to your wellness?

DB: Those who know me will probably agree that humor is my go-to stress reliever. I am fortunate to be able to see the irony in most situations, which allows me to laugh, and let it go. I try to balance work, fun, and alone time to recoup. I love my job, so working is actually energizing for me - and yet time to relax with a good book, a walk in the outdoors, or lunch with a friend are all vital for keeping balanced. I try to stay curious, active, and I love to try new things. I travel. It keeps the mind open and my personality flexible.

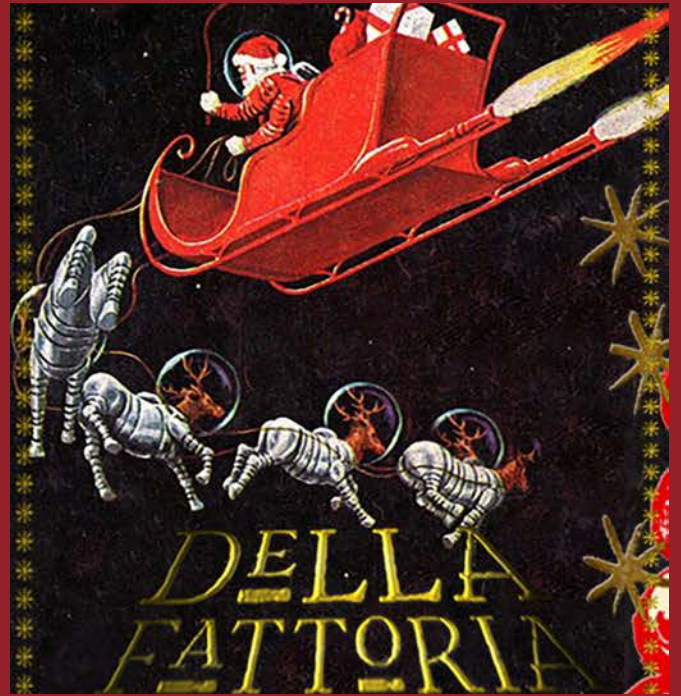
LECS: How can our chaplains be helpful and impactful for our first responder community?

DB: Chaplains are invaluable. They can provide a calming presence in the chaos. Sometimes "just being there" is the greatest gift. The First Responder community has a long history with the chaplaincy, and are accustomed to the presence of chaplains in situations where a clinician might stand out. The Chaplains I have worked with offer presence, along with warmth, compassion, and spiritual guidance if desired. In my experience speaking with First Responders, it is sometimes a chaplain that can lead a responder to much-needed therapy when other referrals go unheeded.

LECS: Thank you.



The very popular, very hip Della Fattoria in Petaluma hosted the Chaplains' annual appreciation dinner on December 4. Holiday lights, cool displays, delicious eats and bubbly welcomed chaplains and families.



Lynnette Casey, Rita Constantini, Judith Mattingly



LECS Board VP Kevin Kilgore & ED Rita Constantini



(L to R): Rita Constantini, Angela Perkins, Gloria Morrison, Meghan Murphy, Ted Briggs





(L to R): Gary Passarino, Kelly Egan, Susan Keehn, Susan Strong, Inese Heinzel



Retired Chaplain Ted Briggs
(Could this be a new flashlight?)



The Boss



DELLA FATTORIA



(L to R:) Brenda Hoff, Leslie Warren, Ve Hsieh, Susan Keehn, Angela Perkins, Elizabeth Goodson



Pam DeMarco &



(L to R): Jeanette Barclay, Pam DeMarco, Teresa Schramm, Steve Babb, Terri Boyer, Mike Schramm, Inese Heinzel, Bob Williams, Debra Carter-Hope, Rita Constantini, Gisela Babb, Lynnette Casey, Susan Strong, Leslie Warren, Gary Passarino



LECS Chaplains & family members worked a shift at REFB on January 4. It was a great way to start the new year: check out the smiles 😊 And we bagged 3,000 lbs. of pears!



Holy One, grant us the strength and endurance for this day's work.

Grant us clarity of mind as we care for the distressed.

Grant wisdom and help us to be sensitive to the one who is especially in need of our services.

Place the right words in our mouths to soothe the hurting soul.

May we show compassion and gentleness to all who cross our paths today.
Amen.

- prayer, Chaplaincy Innovation Lab

