



The Balancing Act of Correctional Chaplaincy

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**GOD OUR
PROVIDER**

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Presentation

- Identify and discuss the issues Chaplains face in balancing ministry and the various components of the correctional environment.
- Discuss strategies for navigating the potential minefields.



Security vs. Religious Accommodation

- Security-first culture
- Hierarchy and Chain of Command
- Rules, policies, and procedures that impact chaplain activities
- How correctional settings differ from traditional ministry settings
- Navigating changes in leadership

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Are You a Chaplain or Correctional Officer

- Creating and Maintaining a Pastoral Identity – Hack in Black
- Handcuffs, Firearms, and Fog Watch
What is inconsistent with the mission of a Chaplain?
- Cameras in the Chapel
Intrusive or necessary?
- The Chapel as a House of Worship
Creating Sacred Space
- Religious Programming
Equity vs. Equal
- When and how to be an Advocate

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Security vs. Compassion

- Integrating Security Requirements with Pastoral Presence
- Educating Prison Officials vs. Reactionary after the Fact
- Working within Restrictions while Maintaining Empathy
- Maintaining Professional Boundaries
Rotating Chapel Staff



Neutrality vs. Advocacy

- Remaining fair among diverse faiths and non-faiths
- Advocating for religious rights without appearing biased
- Navigating requests that conflict with policy

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Support for Incarcerated Individuals vs. Support for Staff

- Serving two groups with different needs
- Understanding chaplains as part of the wellness ecosystem
- Avoiding conflicting loyalties



Personal Well-Being vs. High-Demand

- Emotional and compassion burnout
- Maintaining personal spiritual health
- Importance of supervision, mentorship, and self-care

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Ethical Challenges in Correctional Chaplaincy

- Confidentiality in a controlled environment
- Manipulation awareness and risk mitigation
- Handling religious extremism

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Cultural and Religious Diversity

- Serving multifaith populations
I believe what I believe, so I believe that what I believe is right.
But so do you, so let's talk
- The importance of partnering with external religious volunteers

Strategies for Successful Balance

- Establishing trust with administration and custody staff
- Clear communication and documentation
- Effective boundary setting. You are not there to negotiate.
- Clear communication and documentation
- Stay in your lane. The power of referrals to professionals.
- Training and ongoing professional development

Case Studies or Scenarios

Small Group Discussion

- Scenario illustrating a security/compassion conflict
- Scenario illustrating ethical dilemma
- Scenario showing Chaplain-staff collaboration
- Scenario where you had to approve meeting space to a group in conflict with your morals and values

Conclusion

- Recap of balancing acts
- The Chaplain's unique and essential role in corrections
- Encouragement for resilience, professionalism, and compassionate presence
- Q&A