

KEYNOTE BY ALAN T. “BLUES” BAKER, CEO, CHAPLAINCARE
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM & BUSINESS FOUNDATION
DARE TO OVERCOME CONFERENCE - MAY 25, 2022
HOW CAN CORPORATIONS PROVIDE THE SAME QUALITY OF SPIRITUAL CARE FOR MEMBERS
AS THE MILITARY DOES?

PURPOSE

We gather together to focus on, and to share, how chaplains integrate into the workforce. This presentation will articulate how chaplains can best serve and empower the workplace team including every employee, their CEO, HR, & Employee Resource Groups.

One of today’s preeminent workplace issues, and challenges, that ChaplainCare is committed to explore is to answer the question, “How can we empower, care for, and help every person?” ChaplainCare’s experience in the workplace has taught us that our caring presence and commitment to nurture strong relationships are the cornerstone of workplace success. My 40-plus years of chaplain experience affirms that chaplains are a unique and necessary resource to accomplish this goal.

I was on my first ship as a chaplain heading for the Strait of Gibraltar. I was under observation by a senior, more experienced chaplain. The ship provided me a very small office for counseling. It also served a dual-purpose as a place for me to sleep as well. I broke out in a rash of self-pity. I asked my seasoned running mate where his office was located. He simply pointed to his shoe and he said, “My office is size 13.” He taught me that chaplaincy didn’t need a place for people to come to.

The senior chaplain understood his calling as his presence. He exercised his access to others within the organization by going to people wherever they were, in whatever condition they may be found, and whatever circumstance they may be facing. Care and love for people is the heartbeat of our Chaplains.

I recognize that all of us here today are committed to helping corporate America. ChaplainCare helps people thrive by embracing religious diversity and allowing it to create space where employees are invited to bring their “whole-self” to work.

CULTURE

We bring our “whole-self” to work within a culture of work. As an example, when I reported to my duty assignment as senior chaplain to the aircraft carrier HARRY S TRUMAN, I quickly learned about the ship’s culture. The aircraft carrier flight deck is the size of 4 ½ acres with a full crew complement of 5,500. The crew presented me with my uniform nametag as soon as I arrived. In grand ceremony, they gave me the customized ships nametag with my name embroidered on it.

Just a little background – In President Harry S Truman’s 1948 re-election campaign he was visiting a west coast Navy town called Bremerton Washington. An enthusiastic Truman

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supporter, probably a sailor, shouted out "Give 'em hell, Harry!" This phrase became a lifetime slogan for Truman supporters.

Not surprisingly, the official battle flag of the aircraft carrier TRUMAN is a red flag with crossed cannons and white letters saying: "Give 'em hell!" The battle flag was also embroidered on the nametag – As I stood there before the crew, I read the nametag: It simply said, in two lines, "Give 'em hell, Chaplain Baker."

Can you believe it? Only sailors can get away with that. It was completely innocent. It never occurred to them that might send a mixed message. After some confusion, they appropriately changed my nametag to "Give 'em heaven, Chaplain Baker."

TRIBES

Why do I share that story? Because we bring our whole-self to work within a culture of work. Aboard ship, the culture was "Navy." And those people, called sailors, formed a tribe. My role in that tribe was Chaplain. Some in that tribe saw me as a lucky charm, "Chaplain, bless my dog-tags." Others saw me as a medicine man, "Chaplain, we need clear weather to fly tomorrow." Others saw me as a threat to their lifestyle. When I walked into the barbershop the conversation suddenly went silent. I would ask, "Is this a barbershop or the ship's library?" Yet others viewed me as a person, bearing the presence of God, walking among them.

My tribe changed while I served in the military. Former military chaplains understand the value of adaptability and appreciate contextualizing their ministry toward those they serve. As an example, I wore service dress blues when I was with Sailors, combat boots and camouflage with the Marines, and a sky-blue suit when I served with the Coast Guard. These uniforms identify the wearer as a member of their distinct tribe.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

As chaplains, our cultural expertise accelerates our adaptability. We contextualize ministry according to our tribe—our workplace team. I ask you, within the context of your business, to identify three characteristics within your own setting as you answer, "What is your tribe?" and, "Who is your team?" Chaplains understand that each tribe has its own culture and personality. Tribes group according to their own ability, interest, purpose, product, and service. Tribes invest resources to develop their particular culture, competencies, and brand. Good leaders of *tribes*, or in today's marketplace vernacular, good leaders of *companies and businesses*, form a vision for movement. Corporate leaders place a higher priority on adapting rather than on conforming.

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This is what makes chaplains, especially former military chaplains, uniquely suited to the corporate environment. Our executive team at ChaplainCare represents over 200 years of active military chaplaincy. ChaplainCare’s executive team understands the value of adaptability. We translate into the corporate workplace the same high standard of quality care for employees as we previously gave to those who volunteered to serve in the military. Moreover, we have a successful model and foundation of chaplaincy that started in 1775.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION

Why is adaptability even necessary for chaplaincy? The reason is driven by societal and global events. Those who study business, whether experts at Harvard or the Wall Street Journal, tell us that the workplace is facing a time of rapid change. These experts say that the Great Resignation, already identified prior to COVID, spun into high gear during the pandemic. This Great Resignation was characterized by a deep unrest already felt throughout the workforce. It was aggravated by years of anxiety and soul searching as well as burnout and layoffs. Whether it was service-focused fast food or product-focused high tech, employees began to reassess their lives.

THE GREAT RESHUFFLE

This reassessment stimulated the Great Reshuffle. Employees at all levels looked for jobs with higher pay, greater flexibility, better work-life balance, and a couple of intangibles. What are the intangibles? The Chief Executive network put it this way, *“Employees began to look for happiness, satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue and close social relationships – not from church, not from sports teams, not from their neighborhood, but from their place of work.”* [chiefexecutive.net]

In an affirming way, that is a very positive statement about work. Employees don’t want to simply turn dials or push paper. They want to be valued and to apprehend their contribution to something significant. They want their whole selves to be integrated into what they do. Today’s workforce requires leaders to create a workspace where everyone can meaningfully contribute; where everyone can be challenged; where employees are confident that their company leadership understands the importance of physical wellness, psychological health, and spiritual wholeness.

This integrated “whole-person” approach results in the deepest job satisfaction. This integrated “whole-person” approach leads to increased productivity and the organizational bottom-line of profitability. As David W. Miller, Director of the Princeton University Faith & Work Initiative writes, “Faith and work are not meant to be separated or isolated from each other. Business people want the ability to bring their whole selves to work – mind, body and soul. Employees are no longer satisfied with sacrificing their core identities or being mere cogs in the machine.”

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Miller makes it clear that employees simply don't want to disconnect mentally, socially or spiritually.

THE GREAT REIMAGINATION

Business leaders offered a healthy response to the Great Reshuffle. Their reaction places us in this season that many are calling the Great Reimagination. The whole workforce ecosystem is under review. Academic degrees are balanced by experience and skills. Domain expertise is balanced by the need for multiple points of view. Companies are realizing the ever-increasing value of distributed teams, decentralized workspaces, and virtual employment. Both Human Resources and executive management bring their needed expertise to these upcoming challenges whether it be around compensation, healthcare, benefits, better use of skills, or flexible work hours.

Yet how can organizations address those intangibles mentioned earlier in the Chief Executive network such as happiness, satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue and close social relationships? Who within the organization nurtures spiritual and faith needs? Who is chartered with expertise in ethical decision making and character formation? Who inspires the workforce to find meaning and purpose in their daily work? Who cares for those seeking spiritual healing from emotional, physical or psychological trauma which may have happened in the workplace? Who visits the sick? Who responds to a crisis? Who consistently uplifts virtue and builds character? Simply put, it is the chaplain. It is the caring presence of your chaplain in the context of your workforce.

CHAPLAINS

It is widely recognized that faith-based Employee Resource Groups (ERG) bring deep value to the workplace. Along with other ERGs, they bring an awareness of the growing desire employees have to live authentically in the workplace. Chaplains are a natural ally with faith-based ERGs. Additionally, because of ChaplainCare's commitment to pivot the best of the military chaplaincy model to companies and corporations, ChaplainCare is a natural ally with veteran-based ERGs.

As a practical example, Tyson Foods, a corporation of 139,000 employees, successfully experiment with chaplaincy. Tyson's former Director of Chaplain Services, who first served a 24-year career as a military chaplain and made history as the army's first female chaplain paratrooper, Chaplain Karen Diefendorf, explained in an interview with the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab that corporate Chaplains made a difference in four areas:

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1. *absenteeism*
2. *presentism* which is defined when someone is present but their head is not in the game because they are thinking about personal issues and that often leads to safety issues
3. *life and death* issues
4. *crisis and trauma* which can include workplace violence

In fact, chaplains made such a huge difference at Tyson Foods that part-time chaplains were brought on full-time. Tyson Foods continues to expand their corporate chaplaincy. In 2022, ChaplainCare partnered with Tyson Foods by sourcing talented, diverse, and experienced professional chaplains. This clearly affirms the vital and essential value chaplains bring to the corporate team.

Areas that continue to concern companies include absenteeism, presentism, job satisfaction, and employee retention. It is easy to recognize that battles in the corporate sector are different from battles in the military. Yet all battles present challenges unique to their times. In order to win, companies are fighting a battle to recruit top talent and retain top talent. It seems the aircraft carrier's battle-flag of “give ‘em hell!” is rewritten by corporate chaplains to say “**give ‘em hope!**” Chaplains bring hope to the employee and the company.

Who are these hope-filled people? Let me describe our typical ChaplainCare Chaplain to you:

1. They previously completed an accredited college and master's degree.
2. They previously completed several years of ministry experience within their own faith context. They already gained their pastoral identity.
3. They must be approved by their faith group or spiritual organization before they can apply for a position. They need certification of this approval through an official endorsement.
4. They likely have previous experience as a chaplain in organizations and setting such as industry, health care, college, first responder, military, or disaster relief.

CORE CAPABILITIES

What can organizations expect from ChaplainCare chaplains? They trust their chaplains to bring expertise in the four core capabilities of providing, facilitating, caring, and advising.

Providing ministry for employees who identify with the chaplain's faith. Chaplain Greg McBrayer of American Airlines shares an appropriate Ash Wednesday story of providing ministry. An executive in a glass-walled room, leading a top-level meeting, saw Father Greg in the area. The exec briefly left his meeting to receive ashes in the hallway, then returned to his meeting.

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Facilitating and accommodating the faith needs of employees who are from another faith tradition or spiritual background, including those of no faith. Our ChaplainCare chaplains understand that each person’s faith or personal beliefs are important and sacred to them. ChaplainCare chaplains do not challenge or seek to change those beliefs. ChaplainCare does not proselytize or evangelize. In fact, our chaplains go to extremes trying to ensure that people of all faiths are able to practice their faith. As a Rabbi Chaplain said to me, “I don’t want my faith to change you, I want your faith to change you.” Whether you’re religious, nonreligious, or searching for a spiritual home, ChaplainCare chaplains accompany you on your journey and help you lead a life of deeper meaning, belonging, and purpose. When chaplains are part of the team, we are better together.

Caring for all people, especially outside a faith-group context. ChaplainCare chaplains care for all employees by being advocates for lifelong learning, affirming competencies that strengthen leader confidence, providing pastoral care, teaching essential life skills, visiting the sick, and advocating for those in need. Care is hallmarked by confidentiality and genuine respect for others. When affirming the core capability of giving care, a chaplain confidently says, “Everyone else is focused on the mission. I am the one person, chartered by the institution, to care for everyone else while they remain focused on the mission.”

I served as a corporate chaplain. At work I got to know the top youngest employee. He is from a blue-collar family, the first to go to college in his family. He is also an athlete and sportsman. Awarded a football scholarship to college he becomes a four-year starter & two-time captain. He is a role model for his 2 younger siblings. Noted as a quick study, he started as a credit analyst and quickly works his way up to “Leader on the Floor” of 500 employees. I discover his superpower to be competitiveness. He embodied the culture of the company. The CEO decides to ridge-line him as an example to everyone! At the all-hands award presentation, as he receives the award, this 23-year-old “Junior Employee of the Year” says, “I love building interpersonal relationships with people. I love ‘lifting as we climb’ – helping others achieve their goals.”

And then, before the applause, in front of everybody, he drops dead. Right on stage.

Three employees rush forward. They try to keep him alive and stable until the ambulance arrives. It’s too late. Everyone is in shock. No one is answering the phones. No one is responding to email. The whole business stopped frozen. As the chaplain, I responded. I was present. I met with the three employees who felt guilt and shame for not keeping him alive. I listened to stories shared by the various work teams who spent their majority of time with him. I met with the CEO and prepared his remarks for both an in-house memorial service and a

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community funeral. I met with the family and offered prayer. This is called grief-processing. It was a legitimate time to mourn. This cycle regrettably repeats throughout every organization. Soon, the cry of, “Where is *the* chaplain?” morphs into, “Where is *my* chaplain?” A chaplain is a first responder. Presence and crisis response is part of a chaplain’s DNA. Chaplain Margaret Kibben, Chaplain of the U.S. Congressional House of Representatives and also a former military chaplain, says “Chaplains are where it matters, when it matters, with what matters.”

Chaplaincy, whether military, or corporate, or congressional is not office-centered, but people centered. People don’t come to us, we go to them. And together, we are better. Presence and Care is the heart-beat of our chaplains.

Advising is the fourth core capability. It is every bit as essential to the company as the first three. Chaplains assist organizational leadership by providing advice at every level of management. Chaplains are historically known as principal advisers in faith, ethics, and humanitarian matters.

It is necessary to have a chair at the corporate table for the in-house counsel. The lawyer offers an opinion as to whether an action is legal. It is just as necessary to have a chair at the corporate table for the in-house chaplain to articulate whether that potential action is right or possibly wrong. Determining whether a policy is legal or illegal serves as a baseline but is not the sole standard for decision making. The chaplain brings a valued and necessary voice speaking into the goodness of decisions and the rightness of how they are made.

Chaplains are clearheaded advocates for that which is right, true, and good. Where was the chaplain when a supervisor expected gifts for a promotion? Where was the chaplain when a car company rigged pollution emission tests? Where was the chaplain when a dietary supplement was caught using false advertising? Where was the chaplain when a tobacco company recruited doctors to push smoking? Chaplains bring organizational due-diligence to their highest level. They have dual access to the C-suite and HR. Chaplains become the WD-40 within the organization, reducing friction and “turning heat into light” by their presence.

It is important that chaplains not only team with Human Resources, but that they partner with faith ERGs to provide resources, support and advocacy. Chaplains serving with ChaplainCare avoid competing. Their intent is to complete, not compete.

CONCLUSION

How can corporations provide the same quality of spiritual care for members as the military does? First, by recognizing and embracing religious diversity. Second, by inviting employees to bring their “whole self” to work. Third, by encouraging faith-based ERGs in the workplace.

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Finally, by integrating chaplains into the workforce team and giving their chaplains a workplace presence as well as access to people at every level. Chaplains are a resource to the faith ERGs, an advocate to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a partner to HR, an advisor to the CEO, and an immediate resource to every employee.

This conference has fueled our passion for what we can do together to help our colleagues and reaffirmed both the obligation and the privilege to nurture our workplace team with an expanding circle of caring chaplains. Please contact me at chaplaincare.com for a deeper conversation.