

Three Year Strategic Plan Checklist: Chaplaincy

So, you are thinking about chaplaincy? Here are some steps you can take while at Wake Forest University School of Divinity to help prepare you to become a chaplain:

Year 1

Fall/Spring

- **Take Pastoral Care or Other Relational Care Courses.** Since chaplaincy is largely driven by providing relational care to persons, taking these classes early on in your divinity school career can help you discern if this is the type of work that energizes you. Please note that some students find taking the course Pastoral Care *after* having some experience in providing spiritual and relational care is more beneficial. Talk with Dr. Jensen to see when it would be best to take Pastoral Care.
- **Consider applying for Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).** CPE is a great way to hone in your pastoral skills. There are two formats that you can complete a first unit of CPE: Full time over the summer and part time during the school year. What would work best for you? Consider during CPE during the summer because it is a full time 10-week commitment where you can be fully immersed in chaplaincy. Plus, a summer unit of CPE gets you 5 credit hours! If the summer does not work in your schedule, you can still complete a unit part time in coordination with a CPE class taught by Dr. Jensen.
- **Explore what CPE program is right for you.** There are many different places you can do a unit of CPE. Many Wake Forest students chose to do CPE at Wake Forest Baptist Health. However, there are programs all across the nation that offer CPE. Although many CPE programs are offered through Hospitals, there are also CPE programs that take place in different settings.
- **Begin working on your CPE application.** CPE applications for a summer unit are typically due in March. However, because CPE programs only accept a certain number of applicants, it is best to finish application over winter break. CPE applications are extensive and may take you several weeks to complete. This is the case for Fall/Spring applications too.
- **Begin by exploring your denominational tradition.** What is the tradition in which you were formed? Does this denomination reflect your current theological understanding? Does this denomination support the ministry you are interested in? In order to be a board-certified chaplain, you will likely have to have a denomination backing. Thus, it is important to begin discerning your denominational affiliation. If you have a denominational identity, do some research to find out what the ordination process looks like or how your denomination endorses ministers for specialized ministry like chaplaincy. If you do not come to divinity school with a denominational tradition, you should explore denominations by talking with students and faculty. For more resources on denominations and how you can learn about them at the School of Divinity follow this link: <https://divinity.wfu.edu/academics/academic-resources/denominational-studies/>
- **Reach out to your denominational organization to begin the ordination process.** Many mainline protestant denominations have the ordination process align with your three years in divinity school. As such, if ordination for chaplaincy is required for you, go ahead and start your denominational ordination process as soon as possible.
- **Consider what you have to do to be ordained in your denomination.** Some denominations require students to take Greek and Hebrew or a Polity and History class. As such, explore your denominational requirements. Even more, many denominations require you to be a member of a denominationally affiliated church for at least a year before you can be ordained. Hence, you will want to know the concrete steps you need to take in order to be ordained so that you can receive the appropriate denominational support.
- **Volunteer or intern at specialized places.** Often times nursing homes and other settings need people to perform weekly religious services or spiritual care. To continue to discern if chaplaincy is for you, explore what type of populations you feel called to work with, expand your professional network, and hone in your pastoral skills, you should consider finding opportunities to volunteer.
- **Develop your own spirituality practices.** Develop and nurture spiritual and self-care practices that can keep you healthy. Who are your support systems? What supports you and nurtures you so that you can do this work?

Summer

- **Complete a summer unit of Clinical Pastoral Education.** Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) allows students to gain spiritual and relational care experience, experience in crisis situations, and fosters a better understanding of how our personal stories shape our ministry practices. Each year the School of Divinity hosts a CPE Day where various CPE programs gather to talk to students. Besides the great professional experience CPE provides, CPE is also worth 5 credits. The application process for CPE is lengthy, requires supplemental materials, and can be a competitive process. As such, if a summer unit of CPE is an option for you, then you should have your application

completed as soon as possible. If chaplaincy is a serious option for you, completing a summer unit of CPE allows you to understand what full-time chaplaincy feels like.

- **Gain experience in religious leadership.** Complete an internship in a setting that provides you experience in religious leadership and spiritual care. The School of Divinity has connections at Greensboro Urban Ministry, Peacehaven Farm, and Forsyth Prison and Jail Ministries. These are all options outside of CPE that would provide you experience in relational care. If chaplaincy is your vocational goal, talk to Dr. John Senior, director of the Art of Ministry program, about appropriate internship settings for you.
- **Find an internship placement in a congregation.** If you are interested in chaplaincy, a congregational ministry setting would provide you applicable experience. Besides providing spiritual care, chaplains also create and lead worship services and many also create educational curriculums. As such, finding a congregational ministry setting that gives you opportunities to preach, teach, and provide leadership in other capacities will help build skills pertinent for chaplaincy.

Year 2

Fall/Spring

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- **Explore what populations you feel energized to work with.** Now that you have some experience in religious leadership, begin exploring what populations you would like to work with. Do you feel called to working with elderly persons? Differently abled persons? Children? Etc. Doing intentional discernment on these questions will help you as you explore different opportunities.
- **Discern what type of chaplaincy are you interested in.** There are many types of chaplaincy, including military, prison and jail, law enforcement, hospital, hospice, college and university, and community-based chaplaincy to name a few. Some of these chaplaincy settings have different requirements on the number of CPE units you have completed, denominational endorsements and ordination, and other certifications. Hence, as you discern the type of chaplaincy you are interested in, you should then research the specific requirements for that chaplaincy.
- **Do a self-assessment of your interests.** Are you called towards crisis ministry? Death and dying? Being able to name your professional interests is an important step in determining the opportunities you should seek out.
- **Find a denomination.** Becoming a chaplain requires a denominational endorsement. As such, if you do not already belong to a denomination, begin searching for a denominational base. If you do belong to a denomination, start conversations with your denomination to figure out what steps are necessary to garner a denomination endorsement.

Summer

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Year 3

Fall/Spring

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- **Research requirements for Board Certification.** Many chaplains have to be board certified. You can explore the requirements for certification at apc.org.
- **Research CPE Residency Programs.** In order to become a board-certified chaplain, you will need 4-5 unites of CPE. Hence, after you have completed your first unit you can apply for a full-time residency program for post-graduation. There are thousands of CPE Residency programs across the United States and a quick google search can initiate the search process. You can also look for CPE Residency programs on the ACPE website: https://www.acpe.edu/ACPE/News/ResidencyOpenings_PostingDate.aspx
- **Consider these important questions when looking at Residency programs.** What populations do you prefer to work with? Children? Elderly? What setting? Trauma centers? Extended care facilities? What geographic location do you want to work in? What specialized programs (i.e. mental health, neonatal)? Become clear on your discipline and pastoral goals and what programs fit those goals. How can these programs help you achieve your board-certified competencies? Does your residency program support your preparation for board certification?
- **Begin applying for CPE residency programs.** Once you have found residency programs that you are interested in, begin putting together the application materials. You need to work with your professors and mentors to make sure all supplemental materials are completed in a satisfactory manner.
- **Find a denomination.** Becoming a chaplain requires a denominational endorsement. As such, if you do not already belong to a denomination, begin searching for a denominational base. If you do belong to a denomination, start conversations with your denomination to figure out what steps are necessary to garner a denomination endorsement. You are encouraged during residency to complete your ordination endorsement if possible so that you can step into the chaplaincy field ASAP.

IMPORTANT SKILLS TO FOSTER:

- **Speaking:** Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- **Active Listening:** Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- **Writing:** Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
- **Teaching:** Creating and implementing curriculum.
- **Complex Problem Solving:** Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
- **Systems Evaluation:** Identifying measures or indicators of system performance and the actions needed to improve or correct performance, relative to the goals of the system.
- **Cross Cultural and Interfaith Communication:** Working and providing spiritual and relational care to diverse cultural and religious populations.

CHAPLAINCY JOB OUTLOOK:

The Bureau Labor of Statistics lumps chaplains under the category of clergy. Hence, it is difficult to see the specific job outlook for chaplains. However, unlike congregational ministry, the field of chaplaincy is strong and stable because most health care, prison and jail, college and university, and military facilities are required to offer spiritual care as a part of the larger services they offer.

RESOURCES TO CONSULT:

- Association of Professional Chaplaincy <http://www.professionalchaplains.org>
- ACPE <https://www.acpe.edu>
- North Carolina Chaplains Association <http://ncchaplains.com>
- Board of Prisons Federal Chaplaincy <https://www.bop.gov/jobs/positions/index.jsp?p=Chaplain>
- Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy <https://www.navac.net> <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/chaplain/index.asp>
- Military Chaplaincy <https://www.namb.net/chaplaincy/military>

PEOPLE TO TALK TO:

- Professor Mark Jensen
- Reverend K Monet Rice Jullah
- Rachel Revel
- Christon Fulton
- Maria Jones (Hospital)
- Anne Dalton
- Rodney Stillwell (Prison)
- Jimmy Gong