

## AN EXPLORATION OF CHAPLAINCY ISSUES IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH IN AFRICA AND THE WAY FORWARD

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### **Abstract**

Chaplaincy is a specialized ministry. In contrast to the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists, chaplaincy is still evolving in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa. This study explores chaplaincy issues and the way forward in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa. As indicated by the literature reviewed, personal experience, and observations, and the results of the pilot study conducted, the issues currently confronting chaplaincy in Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa include insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy among church leaders, a shortage of professional chaplains, and tensions regarding chaplains' contributions to the Great Commission. Furthermore, the study identified the following as the path forward for the growth of chaplaincy in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa: Educating leaders to gain a better understanding of the essence of chaplaincy, investing in the workforce, and creating awareness of the contributions of chaplains to the Great Commission. It is hoped that the findings of this study will enhance chaplaincy growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa.

*Keywords:* Chaplaincy, Adventist Church, Africa

## 1. Introduction

Chaplaincy in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Divisions in Africa is still developing compared to the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists. This work aims to increase the understanding of chaplaincy and its benefits within the context of church ministry among SDA Church leaders in Africa. This exploratory study is divided into three main sections. The first section highlights the historical foundation of chaplaincy, the educational qualification of professional chaplains, the biblical foundation for chaplaincy, and the hub of the chaplains' work. The first section is foundational to the second and third sections. The second section focuses on chaplaincy issues in the SDA Divisions in Africa, and the third section suggests the way forward—navigating the chaplaincy issues for effective chaplain ministries. The SDA Divisions in Africa are East-Central Africa Division (ECD), Southern-Africa India Division (SID), West-Central Africa Division (WAD), and the Middle East and North Africa Union (MENA U). The Middle East and North Africa Union is attached to the General Conference of SDA, so it is excluded from this exploration.

To accomplish the purpose of this study, I reviewed chaplaincy literature, conducted a pilot study to collect data on the state of chaplaincy in the Divisions, and drew on my experiences as a professional chaplain who has served as a campus and healthcare chaplain in SDA institutions in Nigeria for over two decades. This article suggests areas for additional research on the chaplaincy ministries of the SDA Church in Africa.

## 2. Definition of Terms

“Professional chaplains”: These are chaplains who are formally trained in the arts of chaplaincy, endorsed, and board-certified (BCC). The terms “formally trained” and “professional” chaplains are used interchangeably in this article.

“The church leaders”: The executive officers at the Divisions, Unions, Conferences, and institutions (schools/colleges/universities/hospitals).

## 3. Historical Foundation for Chaplaincy

The name “chaplain,” as we know it today, originated from the fourth-century legend of Martin of Tours, who showed unprecedented compassion to a needy beggar. As the story goes, it was a cold winter day when Martin, a soldier, saw the beggar. Not having money to give to the beggar, Martin

halved his cloak using his sword. He gave half to the beggar and covered himself with the other half. The story continues that while sleeping that night, Martin had a vision. In the dream, he saw Jesus wearing the half cloak he gave to the beggar. As a result of the encounter, Martin became a Christian. He eventually resigned from the army and became dedicated to the service of Jesus. Martin later became the bishop of Tours. After his death, his cloak (Capella) became a sacred relic and was kept in a shrine—a place of worship or chapel. The custodians of the sacred relics were called *chapelain*, from which the name “chaplain” was derived. The legacy of Martin of Tours gives a clue to the nature of the work of chaplains.<sup>1</sup>

In the twenty-first century, chaplains serve in a wide variety of settings, including hospitals, hospices, prisons, schools, colleges, universities, workplaces, law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and the military. Military chaplaincy is one of the earliest organized forms of chaplaincy. Slomovitz, in his book, *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History*, alluded to military chaplains’ activities in the eighth century.<sup>2</sup>

The origin of the workplace/industrial chaplaincy dates back to the seventeenth century. It was first established in Massachusetts to cater to workers’ spiritual needs regardless of their religious group. The correctional and prison chaplaincy dates back to the 1880s. The origin of campus/school chaplaincy could be credited to the “haystack prayer meeting” at Williams College in 1806. The students organized the prayer meeting to nurture their own spiritual life or dimension.<sup>3</sup> Before the era of modern healthcare chaplaincy, churches have always had representatives ministering in the hospitals.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary healthcare chaplaincy traces its roots to the 1920s,<sup>5</sup> and since then, it has not stopped widening its horizon.

The existing body of literature on the origins of chaplaincy in Africa as a collective entity is limited, indicating a need for further research in this

<sup>1</sup> Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 2–3.

<sup>2</sup> Albert I. Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 86.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly Ewan, “The Development of Healthcare Chaplaincy,” *The Expository Times* 123.10 (2012): 469–78.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Ford and Alexander Tartaglia, “The Development, Status, and Future of Healthcare Chaplaincy,” *Southern Medical Journal* 99.6 (2006): 675–80.

area. Notwithstanding, chaplaincy is not a new term in Africa. David N. A. Kpobi wrote about “African chaplains in seventeenth-century West Africa.”<sup>6</sup> Missionaries coming from Europe and America and going to West Africa were referred to as chaplains. Though the missionaries were called chaplains, their main goal was evangelizing the African people to convert them to Christianity. Kpobi’s work focuses on the entrance of Christianity in West Africa rather than the history of chaplaincy in West Africa.

A considerable amount of literature exists about chaplaincy in South Africa. The formal institution of Military Chaplaincy was created in 1914 and was recognized as a self-governing part of the South African armed forces in 1973.<sup>7</sup> The Association of Clinical Pastoral Education in South Africa was established in 1975.<sup>8</sup>

Despite its long-standing roots in Africa, chaplaincy lacks pervasive popularity and has yet to experience exponential growth even in the twenty-first century. Writing about South African correctional chaplaincy, Maxwell M. Mkhathini wrote:

When reviewing the history, the key factual reality is that chaplaincy has not been given the prominence it deserves because people do not know or undermine what it stands for, what justifies its existence and what it can contribute to South African society.<sup>9</sup>

While the historical development of chaplaincy in Africa, spanning the colonial era to the postmodern periods, is significant, the paramount concern lies in the extent to which Africa has embraced and utilized chaplaincy for its intrinsic advantage.

Chaplaincy is not a new concept within the SDA Church in Africa. Nevertheless, the written record regarding the nascent stages of establishing

<sup>6</sup> David N. A. Kobi, *African Chaplains in Seventeenth Century West Africa*, n.d., chapter 6, [https://www.dspace.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/21579/007\\_Chapter6\\_p140-171.pdf](https://www.dspace.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/21579/007_Chapter6_p140-171.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Izette Bredenkamp and André Wessels, “The Early History of South African Military Chaplaincy: A Case Study of the Variance between British Imperialism and Afrikaner Nationalism, c. 1914–1973,” *Journal for Contemporary History* 39.2 (2014): 60–80.

<sup>8</sup> Olehile A. Buffel, “The Potential of Clinical Pastoral Education in Facilitating Contextual, Effective and Affordable Pastoral Ministry for Impoverished Black Communities in South Africa,” *Black Theology* 20.3 (2022): 235–50.

<sup>9</sup> See Maxwell M. Mkhathini, “A Critical Analysis of the Chaplaincy in the South African Department of Correctional Services after 1994,” (2016), 2, [https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/56962/Mkhathini\\_Critical\\_2016.pdf?sequence=1-&isAllowed=y](https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/56962/Mkhathini_Critical_2016.pdf?sequence=1-&isAllowed=y).

chaplaincy in the SDA Church in Africa is either non-existent or difficult to locate. None of the searches I conducted yielded significant results. Notwithstanding, there is no doubt that oral history concerning the inception of chaplains in the SDA Church in Africa exists. As far back as the early 1960s, the West Nigeria Conference of SDA has designated some pastors to serve as chaplains in one of its well-known hospitals, SDA Hospital Ile-Ife, Osun State.<sup>10</sup>

In light of the limited amount of scholarly literature on the origins of chaplaincy within the SDA Church in Africa, the SDA African Church needs to undertake research initiatives examining the ministry's formative years and contemporary development. The inquiries may aid the church in evaluating the impact of the ministry on the church's mission and life and its overall performance compared to other continents around the world. The expansion of chaplaincy in the SDA Church in Africa is indisputable. However, as expounded in this article, the ministry continues to confront some obstacles.

#### 4. The Educational Qualification of Professional Chaplains

Chaplaincy, as we know it today, has come a long way. It is a specialized ministry that requires training and certification. Typically, one needs no less than 72 units of graduate courses in theology or religion to become a professional chaplain. Further, a professional chaplain must have at least four Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) units from approved CPE centers.<sup>11</sup>

N. Keith Little writes: "Clinical Pastoral Education is professional training for pastoral care."<sup>12</sup> It is a professional education that transcends religious affiliations. Pastors, priests, rabbis, imams, and theological students can participate in supervised experiential learning.<sup>13</sup> CPE employs an action-reflection learning method using real human experience—the living human

<sup>10</sup> Mrs. R. M Solademi, personal communication, February 19, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> "Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Handbook," n.d.

<sup>12</sup> N. Keith Little, "Clinical Pastoral Education as Professional Training: Some Entrance, Curriculum and Assessment Implications," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 64.3 (2010): 1–8.

<sup>13</sup> "What is CPE?," in *Social Justice CPE* (n.d.), <https://www.socialjusticecpe.org/what-is-cpe>.

document.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, in addition to developing pastoral/spiritual skills, which focuses on the spiritual and emotional concerns of patients or clients, CPE helps its recipients develop personal spiritual formation and self-reflection skills, which assists the individual to develop an awareness of who they are as ministers and how their attitudes, values, assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses influence their pastoral/spiritual care.<sup>15</sup> This process also increases the individual's self-confidence and emotional resilience.

It is worth noting that a chaplain is foremost a pastor. However, not all pastors are chaplains. The distinction is not that one is better than the other; they perform different functions and serve in different settings. Unlike the pastor, who serves a religious group or assembly that gathers at a particular place, a chaplain is a clergyperson officially attached to a social institution that is usually not the church. Chaplains officially work in correctional, military, educational, and hospital settings. Others work in counseling centers and even the corporate or business world—workplace settings.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, chaplains undergo specific training to provide spiritual care to individuals going through crises.<sup>17</sup> Of vital importance to the specialized ministry is the ecclesiastical endorsement. A professional chaplain must be endorsed by his or her faith/religious group.

## 5. A Biblical Foundation for Chaplaincy

The biblical underpinnings of chaplaincy extend beyond the selective extraction of biblical verses to justify the role and responsibilities of a chaplain. While the terms “chaplain” and “chaplaincy” are not found in the Bible, the foundation for chaplaincy is the Bible. Chaplains are ministers who concern themselves with reaching out in various ways to those who are hurting and in crisis. Caring for the suffering received a key focus in the incarnational ministry of Jesus Christ. Ellen G. White wrote, “Would you trace the footsteps of Christ, behold Him in that hovel, ministering to the poor; see Him at that sickbed, comforting the suffering, and speaking hope and courage to the desponding.”<sup>18</sup> The account in Matt 25:31–46, the parable of the sheep

<sup>14</sup> Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Buffel, “The Potential of Clinical Pastoral Education,” 235–50.

<sup>16</sup> Jaco J. Hamman, “Being a Chaplain: Call, Conversation, and Charity,” *Reformed Review* 57.3 (2004): 1–19.

<sup>17</sup> AdventHealth University, “Chaplain vs. Pastor: What's the Difference?” (2021), <https://www.ahu.edu/blog/chaplain-vs-pastor>.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen G. White, “Co-workers with Christ,” *Review and Herald* (July 30, 1901).

and the goat, is an indication that Jesus Christ values ministries that take cognizance of the plight of the poor, the sick, the prisoners, and the dregs of society.<sup>19</sup>

The Gethsamane account shows that Jesus values the presence of people in a time of need. When He found His disciples sleeping, in contrast to His expectation that they would watch with Him, He said to them, “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” (Matt 26:40). Elaborating on the text, the Pulpit Commentary stated: “[When] He [Jesus] rose from prayer and returned to his three apostles, seeking their sympathy and the comfort of their presence in his lonely desolation, [he] Findeth them asleep; sleeping. The comfort which his man’s nature craved was denied him.”<sup>20</sup>

To keep watch with, or stay awake with, is called the ministry of presence in chaplaincy. The ministry of presence is at the heart of chaplaincy ministries ; it plays a vital role in bringing comfort to those hurting and in crisis and, of course, gladdens the hearts of those rejoicing.

The inclusive nature of chaplaincy reverberates through Jesus Christ’s method of reaching people. “The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”<sup>21</sup> Likewise, chaplains minister to the needs of all people—people of all faith and religious groups, and people of no religion. Attending to all people and meeting their spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs sometimes leads to deeper religious/spiritual discussions between chaplains and clients.

## 6. The Work of the Chaplain

One may ask, what exactly do the chaplains do? Regardless of the type of chaplaincy (military, campus, hospital, correctional, workplace, etc.), the chaplain’s core duty is to offer clients quality pastoral/spiritual support. The care is comprehensive in that it gives attention to the spiritual and emotional needs of the client. Chaplains aim to assist individuals suffering or in crises,

<sup>19</sup> Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 5–6.

<sup>20</sup> Bible Hub, “Matthew 26:40” in *The Pulpit Commentary*, <https://biblehub.com/comentaries/matthew/26-40.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 143.

to find meaning and purpose in life, and develop meaningful relationships with the transcendent (God, in the Adventist context), self, and others. Chaplains perform spiritual screenings/assessments to identify spiritual distress or struggle and then use the findings to design spiritual interventions to restore the emotional and spiritual well-being of clients. They offer and provide spiritual counseling, guidance, and other specific spiritual care services as required by their employing institutions and as needed by clients.

## **7. Chaplaincy Issues in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa**

The Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) has come a long way in focusing and “professionalizing” chaplaincy in the SDA Church globally for effective pastoral/spiritual care. The General Conference ACM Director (2015 to 2022), chaplain Mario Ceballos, pushed the frontiers of ACM, his influence reaching SDA churches in Africa. The story of the birth of the new dawn of chaplaincy ministries in Africa would not be complete without referring to the contributions of chaplain Mario Ceballos. He facilitated the chaplains’ ecclesiastical endorsement, Clinical Pastoral Education, and Clinical Pastoral Orientation (CPO) in ECD, SID, and WAD. Clinical Pastoral Orientation is a form of chaplaincy training designed for individuals who have yet to obtain Clinical Pastoral Education.

The SDA Church in Africa is beginning to recognize chaplaincy as a specialized ministry requiring specialized training. The three Divisions may not all be at the same level regarding growth; some may be ahead of others. Yet, from all indications, chaplaincy in the Adventist Church in Africa is still evolving. As with every developing program or organization, enrooting comes with many challenges. Based on the available reviewed literature, my experience and observations, and the outcome of the pilot study, the significant issues confronting SDA Chaplaincy Ministries in Africa now are insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy a shortage of professional chaplains, and tensions concerning chaplains’ contributions to the Great Commission.

## **8. Insufficient Awareness of the Essence of Chaplaincy**

After completing a bachelor’s degree in theology, without any background knowledge in chaplaincy, I was posted at an Adventist hospital as an

assistant hospital chaplain and a school chaplain; and to be supervised by a pastor, the head chaplain, who had no training in chaplaincy. Though that was about three decades ago, the practice of employing individuals without a background in chaplaincy as chaplains is still prevalent.

A study conducted in one of the Adventist secondary schools in Tanzania revealed that most participants (students and staff) do not understand the difference between a pastor and a chaplain. The proprietors themselves suppose that any pastor with theological training is eligible to serve as a school chaplain.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the poll's result on "Inquiry on Chaplaincy Ministry in SDA Church in Africa" (see Appendix B) revealed that the practice of appointing pastors with no formal training in chaplaincy as chaplains in schools, university campuses, hospitals, and circular university campuses is still prevalent in all of the three Divisions.

Furthermore, and in the same vein, non-professional chaplains are often appointed as directors of the chaplaincy at the SDA Conferences, Unions, Divisions, and educational institutions (primary, secondary, and tertiary levels). As a formally trained chaplain with four CPE units, I served as a chaplain for almost eight years under a chaplaincy director and a university church pastor who had no formal training in chaplaincy. When I rose to the position of chaplaincy director, my work was still overseen by the university pastor, who did not receive formal education in chaplaincy. The situation indicates an insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy among leaders. A hospital chaplain from SID, alluding to leaders' insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy, said,

Individuals are pronounced to be chaplains without having any basic training. Individuals who are not doing well in mainline ministry and have disciplinary issues are reassigned to be chaplains. Yet our schools and hospitals should have committed workers—highly trained and efficient in areas of competency.<sup>23</sup>

There is a need for further studies on African SDA Church leaders' awareness of the essence of chaplaincy and its importance within and out-

<sup>22</sup> Mwimo Amina, "A Strategy for Improving Chaplaincy Services at Mbeya Adventist Secondary School, in Southern Tanzania Union" (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> Personal communication, April 22, 2020.

side of its establishments—schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, correctional institutions, etc.

## 9. Shortage of Professional Chaplains

In comparison to 32 years ago, when I commenced my career as an untrained chaplain, and nine years ago, when I completed a doctoral degree in healthcare chaplaincy, there is currently a growing number of individuals in the SDA church in Africa who showing interest in pursuing a career in chaplaincy.

The Adventist University of Africa (AUA) recently began to provide a Master's degree in the field of chaplaincy. In 2019, Babcock University partnered with WAD and, under the aegis of the global ACM, established a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) center on the main campus of Babcock University Teaching Hospital. The developments and efforts towards the growth of Chaplaincy ministries in SDA Church in Africa are commendable. Yet still, based on personal observations and the results of the pilot study, it is evident that there are insufficient professional chaplains throughout all three divisions of the SDA.

Thirteen individuals from the three divisions, who responded to the survey, reported a total of 22 professional chaplains. Of the 22, only three completed between three and four units of CPE; only two were Board Certified Chaplains (see Appendix C). Reporting 22 professional chaplains and stating that only two were Board-Certifies shows an insufficient awareness of who a professional chaplain is even among the respondents. Because so few people responded to the question, the exact number of professional chaplains serving in the three Divisions is inconclusive. Nevertheless, the number is still insignificant compared to the enormous ministry field. Odonkor (2017) noted:

There is currently no Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries capacity development plan to clinically train pastors as chaplains in the South Ghana Conference (SGC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This has resulted in the absence of professional chaplains within the denomination in South Ghana.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Nathan. T. Odonkor, "A Chaplaincy Training and Support Program to Equip Pastors for Ministry in the South Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2017) 178.

The shortage of professional or adequately qualified chaplains within the three divisions should not serve as a rationale for assigning individuals without formal chaplaincy training to the role of chaplains. If this is indeed the underlying rationale, it is plausible that the SDA Church in Africa would have allocated resources towards enhancing its chaplaincy capacity, similar to its efforts in other domains such as leadership, Old and New Testaments, and mission studies. The scarcity of professional chaplains can be attributed to a limited understanding of the nature of chaplaincy and its significance within the context of gospel ministry among church leaders.

## 10. Chaplains' Work and the Great Commission

How chaplains contribute to the mission mandate is an ongoing discussion. In churches where the emphasis is on mission and evangelism, chaplains are sometimes confronted regarding the extent to which they are fulfilling their mission mandate. It is not uncommon to hear leaders say to parish priests not to be "mere chaplains to their congregations."<sup>25</sup>

Mario Cebalo alluded to how chaplains are sometimes questioned about their role in the evangelistic mission of the church. He narrated his encounter with a senior church leader:

During a working lunch, a senior leader of my denomination asked me, "Isn't evangelism the most important role of our church?" My response was, "Of course! That is how we fulfill our mission." During my long trip home following that meeting, I began to ponder this profound question that challenges chaplains and their role in the evangelistic mission of the church.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, upon Dick Stenbakken's return from Vietnam as a United States Army chaplain, he was asked by a pastor why he decided to leave ministry to become a chaplain. According to Dick Stenbakken, "The semi-smirk on his [the pastor's] face made his meaning crystal clear: chaplaincy is not real ministry."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Miranda Threlfall-Holmes and Mark Newitt, "Introduction," in *Being a Chaplain* (London: SPCK, 2011), xviii.

<sup>26</sup> Mario Cebalos, "A Hole in the Bucket," *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* 90.7 (July 2018): 5, <https://cdn.ministrymagazine.org/issues/2018/issues/MIN2018-07.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Dick Stenbakken, "I Have Not Left the Ministry!," *Ministry International Journal for*

Feeding the idea that chaplains are anti-mission is the notion that chaplaincy training focuses majorly on human psychology. I recall an instance wherein a professor of mission conveyed to me that chaplaincy is primarily rooted in psychology rather than religion or theology. Individuals who hold such perspectives overlook the fact that professional chaplains undergo initial training as pastors before pursuing a specialization in the field of chaplaincy. A further rationale for such a perspective is the inability of some individuals to see the interconnectedness of psychology, religion, theology, and human matters. This lack of understanding is not exclusive to the field of chaplaincy.

Mark R. McMinn explicated the perplexity experienced by some Christian counselors about the interplay between psychology, religion, and theology.<sup>28</sup> They argue that secular counseling theories are incompatible with biblical principles and practices upheld in dealing with human issues, and that the Bible is a comprehensive resource for resolving all human matters. Conversely, some embrace the amalgamation of psychology, religion, and theology to address issues about the human condition. McMinn proposes incorporating Christian theology, psychology, and personal spirituality as a more practical approach to counseling; however, he calls for careful examinations of every counseling theory underpinning existing techniques to determine their compatibility with Christian teachings.

## 11. Navigating the Chaplaincy Issues for Effective Ministries

### 11.1 Educate Leaders for Better Understanding

Education is vital to the acquisition of knowledge. It is adjudged a vehicle for positive changes in all strata of life. For chaplaincy to thrive in all three Divisions, the leaders need to have a clearer understanding of chaplaincy—the chaplains’ work, the benefit of chaplaincy ministries to the SDA Church and all and sundry, and how chaplains contribute to the Great Commission. On October 23, 2020, a chaplain, in an online chat during the third Adventist Chaplains World Congress, wrote: “We should tactfully and with prayer involve our leaders to understand the chaplains’ role.”

*Pastors* 90.7 (July 2018), 6–9, <https://cdn.ministrymagazine.org/issues/2018/issues/-MIN201807.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Mark R. McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 2nd ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, rev. 1996, repr. 2011), 3–33.

Martin Feldbush, the General Conference ACM Director, 1990–2000, noted that far gone is the era when chaplaincy was considered the job for anyone or everybody, or a ministry setting where ministers who cannot make it in the parish, are almost ready to retire, are too lazy to do anything else, or ministers whose leaders do not know what to do with them are asked to serve as chaplains.<sup>29</sup>

The Church leaders need to understand that despite emphasizing evangelism and mission, the world is becoming more secular, which calls for reevaluating our mission strategy. Chaplains have a lot to contribute to theology and ministry practice—they can show the church “how faith and ministry can flourish in an explicitly secular and even, on occasion, hostile environment.”<sup>30</sup> In his keynote address at the first International Chaplaincy Conference, conducted at Babcock University Ceballos Mario said,

Chaplains are specially trained ministers inside “closed” institutional settings where the church might not otherwise be present.... [They] are an extension of the church—the instruments of the church caring for people as Christ cared—preaching, teaching, healing, [and] counseling inside the using agency. Chaplains are the only face of the church to a host of people during crisis times in their lives. Chaplains are where the people are.<sup>31</sup>

Chaplaincy is indispensable to the church. It is not inferior to any of the church’s other ministries. Chaplains fulfill the church’s mission in distinctive ways. They address the spiritual needs of their clients, influencing their lives with love and hope.

Furthermore, it is crucial to educate the Church leaders about their current practice of having non-Board-Certified Chaplains as the head of the chaplaincy departments at the Division, Union, Conference, and educational institutions, including the current practice of having one person serve as the youth and chaplaincy director at the Division level. This practice is also common at the Conference/Union levels. Youth and chaplaincy ministries are two vast ministry fields, each requiring complete dedication. It is

<sup>29</sup> Martin Feldbush, “History, Mission & Scope of Adventist Chaplaincy ” (Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Department of the General Conference, n.d.).

<sup>30</sup> Threlfall-Holmes and Newitt, “Introduction,” xviii–xix.

<sup>31</sup> Ceballos Mario, keynote address at the first International Chaplaincy Conference, conducted at Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria, on December 9–12, 2021.

good to note that WAD has taken the lead in separating the two offices at the Division level; hopefully, it spills over to the Unions and Conferences.

Similar to the above-narrated situations, pastors with no formal training in chaplaincy are assigned or double up as chaplains on SDA campuses/schools and hospitals. Such a practice is no longer acceptable. Gone is the era when “chaplains and clergy seemed interchangeable.”<sup>32</sup> The current understanding of the meaning of the word chaplain worldwide does not give room for such interchange.

### 11.2 Invest in Workforce Development

As previously indicated, there are insufficient professional chaplains in all three Divisions.<sup>33</sup> The three Divisions have approximately 90 educational institutions and 186 medical institutions. In addition, the Conferences and Unions often send pastors to provide chaplaincy ministries in non-SDA higher institutions. The Adventist Church in Africa has not reached near workforce saturation regarding training and hiring professional chaplains.

While the seminars and workshops on chaplaincy, occasionally held at Conferences, Unions, and Divisions, often lasting one or two weeks, offer valuable insights, they cannot substitute for comprehensive professional training in chaplaincy. Similarly, obtaining endorsement as a chaplain without completing formal training in chaplaincy is insufficient. Out of the total sample size of thirteen participants that participated in the survey, a significant majority of twelve respondents expressed the belief that a pastor’s effectiveness as a chaplain is contingent upon receiving appropriate training in chaplaincy (see Appendix D).

### 11.3 Chaplains and the Great Commission

How the chaplains relate to the Great Commission is a question that deserves an answer. In response to my colleague in mission and others who assume that chaplaincy education is anchored in psychology, chaplaincy education does not consist of a slew of psychology courses. A professional chaplain is foremost a pastor with basic knowledge of theology/religion. The chaplain must be in good standing with his/her faith/religious group

<sup>32</sup> Michele Le Doux Sakurai, “The Challenge and Heart of Chaplaincy,” *Journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States* 84.1 (2003): 26–56.

<sup>33</sup> Statistics Research General Conference Office of the Achieves, “Adventist Yearbook,” (n.d.), [www.adventistyearbook.org](http://www.adventistyearbook.org).

and be endorsed (ecclesiastical endorsement) by the same group. Regarding the connection between chaplaincy and psychology, the knowledge of human nature and behavior is vital to chaplaincy ministries; and based on the importance, I would suggest integrating a few more courses in human psychology and counseling into the chaplaincy education curriculum than is integrated currently.

The hub of the work of chaplains is spiritual care. Chaplaincy is not anti-religion. As part of CPE level 1 objectives and outcomes, as approved by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, CPE interns must articulate the central themes and core values of their religious/spiritual heritage and the theological understanding that informs their ministry,<sup>34</sup> and must continue to do so throughout his/her career life.

In the recent past, there has been an ongoing discussion about the demand for nontheistic chaplains by the US Army's nontheists.<sup>35</sup> The demand for nontheistic chaplains speaks volumes about the essence of chaplaincy. Some individuals have adjudged a nontheistic chaplain an oxymoron.<sup>36</sup> Thus, a nontheistic chaplain is the opposite of what chaplaincy stands for. Although chaplains' training underscores a nondiscriminatory approach to spiritual/pastoral care, chaplaincy is spiritual.

Chaplaincy is not anti-mission. Paget and McCormack stated:

Without proselytizing, the Christian chaplain evangelizes the world through his or her character, integrity, compassion, and witness. As chaplains minister to the spiritual needs of people, they engage in spiritual conversation that often leads to opportunities to share their personal faith and religious beliefs. When direct evangelistic conversations don't materialize, Christian chaplains do pre-evangelism—laying the foundation for future opportunities to share the gos-pel.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, "Standard of Spiritual Care and Education Manuals," (2020).

<sup>35</sup> Antony Barone Kolenc, "Not 'For God and Country': Atheist Military Chaplains and the Free Exercise Clause," *University of San Francisco Law Review* 48.3 (2014): 395–456.

<sup>36</sup> "Atheist Chaplains: An 'Oxymoron' or a Reality?," *The Humanist* (March 18, 2015), <https://thehumanist.com/news/international/atheist-chaplains-an-oxymoron-or-a-reality>.

<sup>37</sup> Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 117.

Relatedly, ACM accentuate the mission of the Church by promoting Christ's method of ministry as articulated by Ellen G. White:

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men [*sic*] as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He invited them, "Follow Me."<sup>38</sup>

Chaplains demonstrate a willingness to align with the objectives of the Church, albeit employing methodologies tailored to their specific circumstances.

There are cases of clients accepting Christ as their personal Savior and clients converting to the Adventist faith through Adventist chaplains' ministries. Chaplain Mabvuto Chipeta, during the third ACM World Congress, narrated some of his clients' conversion stories. Similarly, a chaplain at one of the Adventist hospitals in Uganda and currently a CPE intern in one of the SDA hospitals in Southeast Asia narrated how six ex-patients converted to the Adventist faith through a healthcare follow-up program. It is a truism that chaplains do not proselytize; nevertheless, they do not beg questions revolving around faith and religion when clients ask them why they believe what they believe.

Furthermore, a director of Clinical Pastoral Education at an Adventist Hospital in Southeast Asia expressed that chaplaincy aligns with the principles and objectives of mission work. The individual emphasized that while chaplains refrain from proselytization when providing spiritual care to patients within the hospital, they offer Bible studies on the hospital premises for staff, students, and patients who express interest. They give out Christian literature to patients and conduct one-on-one Bible study at patients' request.<sup>39</sup>

According to the "Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Handbook," a crucial requirement for an Adventist Board-Certified chaplain is the ability to effectively articulate a theology of spiritual care integrated with a theory of pastoral practice, Seventh-day Adventist principles, and beliefs. Adventist chaplains utilize their religious, theological, and spiritual heritage to provide clients care.<sup>40</sup> Adventist professional chaplains, and all professional

<sup>38</sup> White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Rey Salo, personal communication, March 28, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> See the "Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Handbook," [https://www.adventistchaplaincyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ACI-Handbook\\_2023-copy.pdf](https://www.adventistchaplaincyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ACI-Handbook_2023-copy.pdf).

chaplains, of course, possess the necessary skills and knowledge to provide spiritual guidance and support to those belonging to diverse faith groups and religious traditions and those who do not adhere to any one belief system without compromising their own beliefs.

The focal point of chaplaincy ministries revolves around providing pastoral care. Based on the available evidence, one can infer that Adventist chaplains do not hold an anti-mission stance. It is essential that Adventist Church leaders in Africa acquire a comprehensive understanding of the operational dynamics of chaplains in connection to the Great Commission. "Chaplaincy is an equally valid and viable expression of ministry on par with more traditional expressions of pastor and evangelist. They are an integral element of the Adventist ministry."<sup>41</sup>

## 12. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 12.1 Conclusion

The present study is a pioneering examination of chaplaincy issues within the Adventist Church in Africa. The poll findings and my observations as a professional chaplain indicate that the chaplaincy ministry within the Adventist Church in Africa is still evolving. The current challenges confronting chaplaincy ministries within the Adventist Church in Africa encompass a deficiency in comprehending the nature of chaplaincy, an insufficiency in the number of qualified chaplains, and conflicts arising from differing perspectives on the role of chaplains in fulfilling the Great Commission. Adventist Church leaders in Africa need to understand that the chaplain's role is paramount in the Adventist work/mission as it imitates Christ's incarnational ministry.

### 12.2 Recommendations

1. More study on the knowledge and attitudes of Adventist Church leaders in Africa about the work of chaplains is required. It is a given that program success requires leadership buy-in and understanding.

<sup>41</sup> Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries General Conference, "Chaplaincies/Endorsement," (n.d.).

2. Adventist Church leaders in Africa need to consider training chaplains to do the chaplain's work and hold the chaplain's office at the Divisions, Unions, Conferences, educational institutions, and hospitals. Chaplaincy is a specialized ministry that requires proper training for effectiveness.
3. More studies on chaplaincy ministries in the Adventist Church in Africa and chaplaincy in Africa, in general, are required because, as revealed by the literature reviewed, Africa, in general, is still significantly behind in empirical and theoretical studies on chaplaincy.

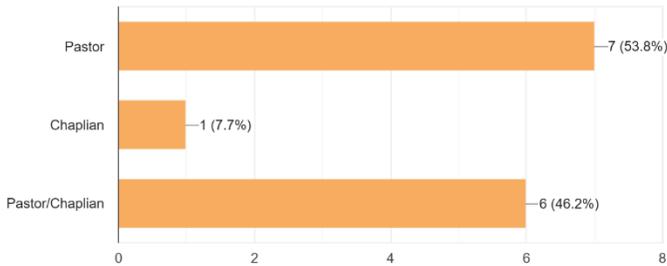
## 13. The Survey Results

### 13.1 Appendix A

#### The Respondents Category

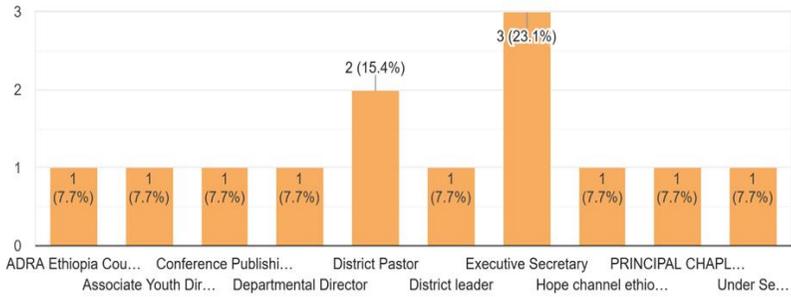
1) What is your current office?

13 responses



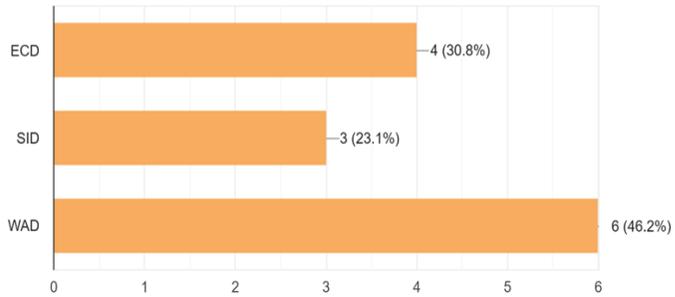
2) Current Administrative Position(If any)

13 responses



3) Your Division

13 responses

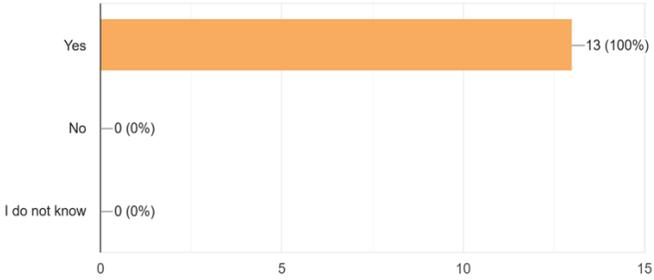


### 13.2 Appendix B

#### Pastors with no Formal Chaplaincy Education Serving as Chaplains

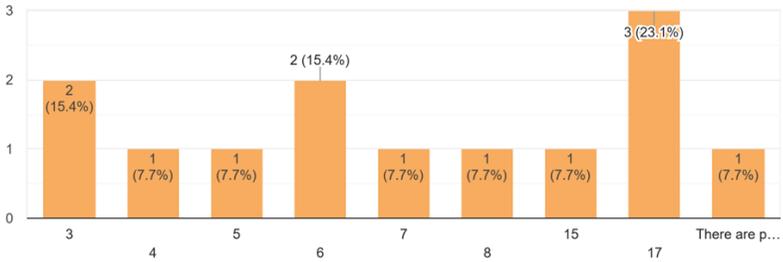
14) In your Division, Union, or Conference (as you indicated in question 4 above) are there pastors who have no formal education and training in chaplaincy, but serve as chaplains?

13 responses



15) If your answer to question 14 is yes, how many are they?

13 responses

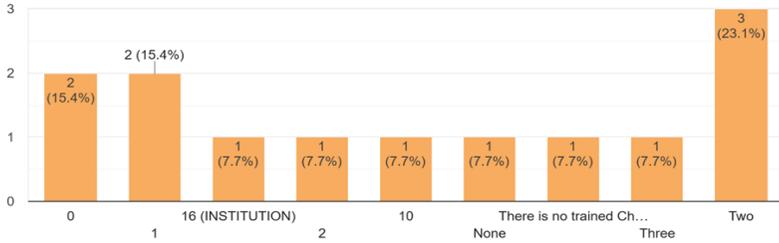


### 13.3 Appendix C

#### Number of Professional Chaplains

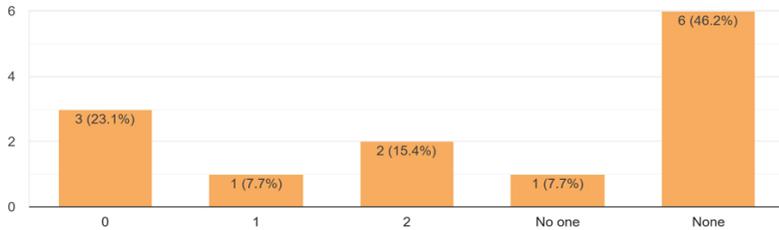
6) Number of professional/trained chaplains in the SDA Church employment in your Division, Union, or Conference

13 responses



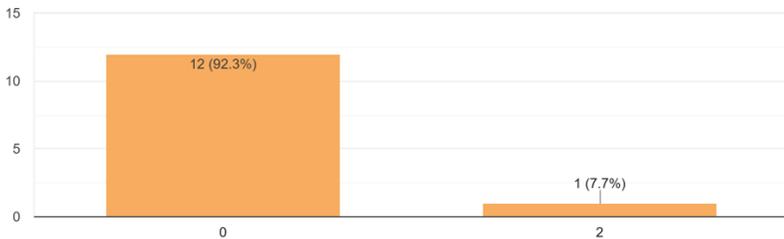
10) The number who completed three and above units of CPE

13 responses



11) Number of Board Certified Chaplains (BCC)

13 responses



### 13.4 Appendix D

#### The Need for Formal Chaplaincy Training for Effective Ministries

27) Can a pastor function effectively as a chaplain without proper training in chaplaincy?

13 responses

