

Spiritual Care Association's CEO Has Message of Thanks for Chaplains

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Rev. Eric J. Hall, CEO of Spiritual Care Association and HealthCare Chaplaincy Network, has a message for his fellow chaplains.

Hall said, "We hear the word 'unprecedented' thrown around a lot these days. But in the 300,000 year history of our species, little has happened to homo sapiens that is truly unprecedented. Our ancestors have dealt with disease, famine, wars, natural disasters of every kind, and yes, plagues that have decimated populations time and again. Coronavirus is just the new face of an old enemy. Through it all, humanity has survived and civilization has flourished. We have always found ways to get beyond the fears, ignorance, and superstitions of the past.

"This pandemic is not the first the world has faced. Ancient Greece and Rome were ravaged by plagues. Europe lost a third of its population to the Black Death in the Middle Ages, while the 'Spanish Flu' may have killed as many as 50 million people in the final years of World War I. Trying to put the current pandemic in perspective, some would point out that more people have died from cancer, smoking, alcohol, HIV, road accidents, suicide, Malaria and the common flu, than from the coronavirus. Still the numbers are staggering. At the time of this writing in mid May, nearly 4.5 million cases have been confirmed worldwide and almost 300,000 people have died, while the

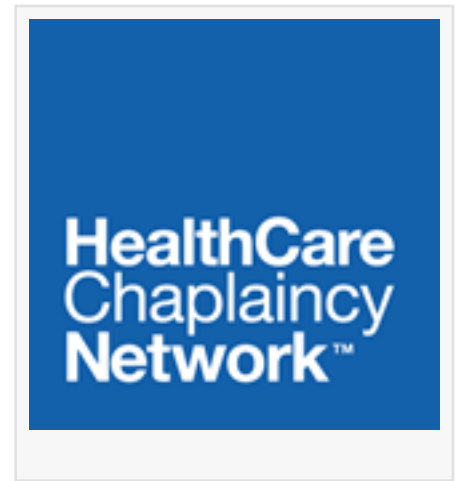


The Rev. Eric J. Hall



USA leads the world with 1.4 million infected and more than 85,000 deaths.

"Yet on a personal level, the total number of deaths doesn't matter. There is only one number that matters: ONE! People are saddened when they hear of someone dying from COVID-19, but it is the one person in their family, it is their one friend who dies who is their focus. It doesn't matter that their one was one of a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand. It is their one who matters most. A thousand, a hundred thousand, a million are all abstract numbers. The bigger they grow, the less we are able to appreciate them. Intellectually, we get it. But we can't see a million faces. The number that makes the biggest impact on us is the number one.



"As chaplains, we get the importance of one. The one person lying in the bed, sprawled on the ground, crouched in the corner, huddled in a chair. The one person who is suffering, alone or terrified for their loved one, isolated in fear, crying out in pain, longing for hope, craving forgiveness, afraid of death. Some compare fighting the coronavirus to war. In the United States, chaplains have been serving the military since 1777. We know war. We know pain. We know suffering. But we also know hope. We know faith. We understand the importance of meaning and purpose in the midst of human suffering. And we lean on the wisdom of Scripture that assures us no matter how unprecedented events seem, there is truly 'nothing new under the sun.'

"People are afraid and lonely. They are literally forbidden to have personal contact with anyone outside their home. And, in spite of what some would tell us, in profound ways, we are NOT all in this together. When an individual is dealing with death, knowing that everyone else is in the same boat, so to speak, makes absolutely no difference. It brings no comfort to say, 'We are all in this together' to a person whose loved one is dying, intubated in an ICU, behind closed doors that no one can enter but gowned and masked medical staff. Death is a very personal thing. Grief is a very personal thing also. You can't share your grief. You can't give 10 percent to nine different people so it won't hurt so much. It's all yours to bear, 100 percent. But, of course, people don't have to deal with fear, loneliness, death, and grief alone. There's help from friends, family, and, dare I say, chaplains.

"As hard as things are right now in our medical facilities across the country, we chaplains signed up for this. So did the nurses. So did the doctors. We all know, even in the best of times, that when we enter a hospital or a nursing home, we are entering a place that, by definition, is dangerous. In fact, it can be deadly. This is a risk we take because our personal mission as chaplains is to comfort and support others in the hardest and saddest times of their lives. Of course, none of us ever thought that we would be on the front lines of something this big. Unprecedented even. But then, there is nothing new under the sun. This is simply where we find ourselves now, in our time and place on this planet.

"We at HealthCare Chaplaincy Network and the Spiritual Care Association recognize that you are doing great and important work in the worst possible conditions. You are conduits for life, conduits for caring, conduits for compassion. We know the work you are doing takes its toll on you, so we are here to contribute, even in a modest way, to your mission. Our website www.spiritualcareassociation.org is full of helpful resources for a time such as this. Reach out to us whenever you need help to stay strong and safe, and we'll be here for you.

Thank you for all you do."

The Rev. Eric J. Hall, DTh, APBCC, is President and Chief Executive Officer of HealthCare Chaplaincy Network, Inc. and the Spiritual Care Association. He is also Chancellor of the SCA University of Theology and Spirituality. Hall serves as pastor of the Eastchester Presbyterian Church and the Lincoln Academy for early childhood learning. Formerly, he was the founder, President and CEO of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America. He can be reached at EJHall@SpiritualCareAssociation.org.

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