

Standardizing the Profession of Chaplaincy

A Message from HealthCare Chaplaincy Network CEO Eric J. Hall

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, December 14, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When [HealthCare Chaplaincy Network](#) (HCCN) was conceived 60 years ago, its focus was to recruit chaplains from local clergy to provide spiritual support to patients in hospitals on the east side of Manhattan. I wonder if those founders could have imagined the complexity of the profession of chaplaincy today.



Eric J. Hall

In the past, most chaplains serving in hospitals and the armed forces were seminary trained and religiously affiliated. Today, spiritual care providers in a wide variety of professions from healthcare to military to the corporate world to first responders and more bear the title of “chaplain.” But I venture to say that most of their employers have little understanding of what they should expect a chaplain to do -- and even less about how a professional chaplain should be properly trained.

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Eric J. Hall, HCCN President and CEO

Modern chaplains run the gamut in terms of background and training. Some are second career chaplains with no seminary education. Many are interfaith chaplains with no specific religious affiliation. There are humanist chaplains

who believe in caring for their fellow human beings without a belief in God or a Higher Power. And, of course, others from a broad range of religious backgrounds have come into chaplaincy through more traditional channels, as I myself did.

Several organizations have been formed over the years to offer education and certification for professional chaplains, but not one has addressed the complex needs of today’s chaplain work force. None, that is, until HCCN answered the call by forming the [Spiritual Care Association](#) (SCA)

in 2016. This is the first and only professional organization to provide education, training, and certification for chaplains based on standardized, evidence-based practice and quality indicators. Now the skills and performance of chaplains and other spiritual caregivers in a wide range of society's settings can be measured objectively, offering assurance to hiring managers that SCA chaplains will provide the quality of spiritual care that their patients, their clients, and their colleagues need.

Before SCA, no other national organization had a vision of the breadth and depth of the problems to be addressed in the training of chaplains for today's needs -- or the resolve to do so. In the five years since it was formed, SCA's membership has grown to encompass over 2,300 members in more than 15 countries. Our Learning Center is now the most extensive and successful online chaplain education program available. Here individuals at any level can enroll in the educational courses they need to advance their knowledge and skills in spiritual care. To complement these courses on an academic level, SCA recently joined with the [University of Theology and Spirituality](#) (UTS) to meet the needs of students seeking Master's and Doctoral degrees in chaplaincy and related fields. These three distinct organizations -- HCCN, SCA, and UTS -- which I guide as president and CEO, are closely joined and interconnected, forming a strategic platform to address the void around the integration of spiritual care into healthcare and other aspects of human life.

It's time for me to press the point to those making decisions about the hiring of chaplains. In these increasingly stressful times, do not disregard the spiritual needs of your patients, your clients, or your frontline employees. Chaplains trained, educated, and credentialed in evidence-based best practices of spiritual care should be on your strategic hiring list. If you need an industry partner to help you make the right choice, HCCN and SCA are here as the ultimate advocates for spiritual care.

--Eric J. Hall

Reverend 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. Eric also 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

The logo for HealthCare Chaplaincy Network is displayed on a solid blue rectangular background. The text "HealthCare" is in a white sans-serif font, with "Chaplaincy" directly below it in the same font. "Network" is positioned below "Chaplaincy" in a larger, bold white sans-serif font, followed by a small white trademark symbol (TM).

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