

I completed a step gaining certification as a chaplain — the Interview by APC

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I recently completed an important step toward gaining board certification as a chaplain — the INTERVIEW — by the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), which oversees more than 5,000 members.

The requirements to become a board-certified chaplain (BCC) are very high and include: undergraduate degree, graduate theological degree, four units of clinical pastoral education (CPE), endorsement from a recognized faith group, references from professional colleagues, written

essays, an interview before a committee of chaplains, and work experience of at least 2,000 hours.

Recognized faith groups are listed in The Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches. When I checked, sadly my faith group, the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) was not listed. So my first order of business was to deal with that. Thanks to Dr. Tyler Hendricks and the HSA Legal Department, the proper paperwork was submitted and, I'm happy to announce, as of March, 2016 HSA-UWC is now recognized and included in the prestigious Yearbook.

The Interview

The interview was held in Baltimore at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center. The four-member committee was made up of a Baptist, a Catholic, and two rabbis.

In preparation I discussed possible responses and strategy with my mentor, an already-certified chaplain at the hospital where I'm working, and practiced my answers in the privacy of our basement. I was ready with the answers and examples. On the day of the interview, my mentor texted me, "U will do great William!!! You are in my thoughts and prayers!! Bring your whole self into the room." Later I found out that he'd made a prayer request on my behalf at the hospital's morning devotion service. Before driving to Baltimore, my wife, Donna, encouraged me, "You got this."

In the parking lot outside Johns Hopkins, I prayed to God, my Heavenly Parent. I gratefully acknowledged my amazing spiritual journey, including the forty years of organizing conferences, seminars, pilgrimages around the world, and then the past three years as a hospital chaplain, holding the hands of complete strangers to offer comfort and presence during confusing, difficult, and sad times: trauma cases where people die suddenly, chronic diseases that kill people slowly, and babies who don't make it home.

Just the day before the interview I was called to the ER. A young man had been fatally stabbed and was placed on life support. Weeping by the bedside were his mother and sister. There was an atmosphere of devastation and confusion. "How could God let this happen?" I sat with the family and walked with them in their suffering. We read Psalm 23 together. Ever so slowly the pain began to ease. God doesn't say believers won't have any problems or that we'll never enter the valley of the shadow of death, but He does promise that whatever happens He will walk with us. There is something astonishingly powerful about knowing that we are not alone.

And that's precisely what I heard as I entered the interview room. Heavenly Parent said: "Bill, you're not alone." I sat at the end of the table with four sets of eyes on me. I had prepared by reviewing the various study materials and was ready to talk: theories on grief counseling, group dynamics, etc., but to my surprise, they didn't want to hear about academic texts and facts; they wanted to hear about ... me.

"Tell us about your spiritual journey. How has your faith shaped your ministry? How does your faith and sacred scriptures inform your conversations with patients? Name three aspects of chaplaincy that you like the most. What do you consider your strengths and limitations?"

After a stunned moment, I collected my thoughts and shared my story. I testified to the Divine Principle, the True Parents, the Bible — we are created as the sons and daughters and in the image of God, and therefore we are one family, and the words of Paul to the Colossians, "Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

I explained that every day I prayerfully remind myself that the patients are all children of God. Some are hospitalized because of unhealthy choices (such as drug and alcohol abuse), but others are there through no fault of their own (such as auto and home accidents). Regardless of what brought them to the hospital, they deserve respect and dignity.



In July Dr. Selig arranged for Religious Youth Service (RYS) participants to come to the hospital and attend worship service and tour the facility. Selig is 3rd from the right.

I said that the essence of pastoral care is to look past the externals and see the person inside; that God doesn't look at our outward appearance or status. He looks at our inward spiritual state. I recalled the Bible story when God commissions Samuel to find the next king of Israel. He counsels him and says, "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7). Similarly, when I'm with a patient, I try to see them as a child of our Heavenly Parent who loves his/her children unconditionally.

The interviewers agreed with what I said. I felt validated as a member of the Unification Church and as a human being whose heart and conscience have been transformed by my unique spiritual journey.

Thanks to True Parents who have taught me that true happiness and peace is in living for the sake of others. When we do so, we are well situated, not only to be accepted on equal footing, but to help lead the way toward the fulfillment of God's plan for restoration and the establishment of a one-family world society.

I wanted to share the good news with my fellow UTS alumni that with the success of last week's interview, I now have the status of a Provisional Board Certified Chaplain (PBCC). The requirement for the work experience must be completed within two years.