

## CHAPLAINCY INNOVATION LAB

### CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

Meeting notes, March 17, 2020

Compiled by [David Lewellen](#), newsletter editor, National Association of Catholic Chaplains

[Wendy Cadge](#) and [Will Whitmore](#) welcomed the group.

[Carrie Doehring](#) led a quick deep breathing exercise and talked about moral struggles. “Put on your own spiritual oxygen mask first.” Stress can bring out the best and worst in people, both chaplains and other healthcare workers. As in war situations, doctors may suffer **moral distress** if they have to decide who to treat and who not to. Giving and receiving spiritual care may help alleviate that later on.

[Jennifer Bailey](#): “Everyone is feeling it in different ways, in body and in spirit.” She read the poem “[An Invitation to Brave Space](#)” by Micky ScottBey Jones.

[Elaine Yuen](#): “This is like Katrina, but worldwide.” Work to create a flow of community, ritual, music, etc.

[Bridget Piggue](#): Her hospital, Emory University Midtown, has coronavirus cases. Doctors have been asking for mental health support. Huddles have been taking place at a safe distance or via video. [Trace Haythorn](#): If and when **staff become infected or are exposed**, it will create additional layers of stress. Try to record spiritual care support pieces that can be accessed at will rather than schedule something in advance.

[Tahara Akmal](#): “What I need is connection, to be touched.” Islam has a value of doing no harm and preventing harm. In the current moment, “name the things we have lost.” Such as touch, and such as ritual – she feels cut off from Friday mosque services. Zoom is a substitute that can offer meaningful experience.

Bridget: **Pastoral presence** is real, even if it’s fleeting; let people know you’re there. Nurture moments can be a huddle at a distance, a word or a reading instead of physical touch.

Elaine: “The medical system is built on knowing,” but that is even harder to find than usual in this situation.

Bridget: For **end of life situations**, her system is now allowing one family member per patient, to come in at certain entrances. Zoom or other video connections are one solution. Tahara: Family meetings are also affected, and the same solution is being used.

**Non-healthcare chaplains?** Bridget: “It’s changed a lot in the past week and a half.” Facebook groups are asking what to do about funerals, Passover, Easter. To check in on people, “there’s this thing called a phone” – she is doing more **voice communication** instead of texting for a stronger connection. Online singing circles. Will: A **physical note or an email** goes a long way in reminding someone you are thinking of them.

**Prison chaplains?** Trace, “Everyone is making it up as they go along,” chaplains can make a recording and play it in a solitary space, or write letters. “In times of crisis, lo-tech often comes to the rescue.” He also pointed out the value of voice calls, but they are often expensive for prisoners.

**Moment of levity:** Will's daughter came in to announce she had fallen off her bike.

Wendy: "We all need those moments of brief laughter. **We'll get through this together.**"