



FCM Newsletter

Volume 59 - Issue 4

July - August 2025

A Blessing for a Minister's Heart

I imagine it was because of your heart that you went into this work in the first place.

So I imagine you have a heart that wanted to extend beyond itself, to stretch to love God's people.

So may God bless the parts of your heart that receive their stories so openly, and comfort their sufferings so compassionately, and share their joys so thoroughly.

And may God also heal the parts of your heart that have been wounded by the very people whose stories you receive and whose sufferings you comfort and whose joys you share.

And may God revive the parts of your heart that have grown protectively cold.

And may God protect the parts of your heart that are well-loved by those who know you best.

And may God gently place God's own heart right behind yours so that the sorrow of those in your care can move your heart but find a landing place in God's.

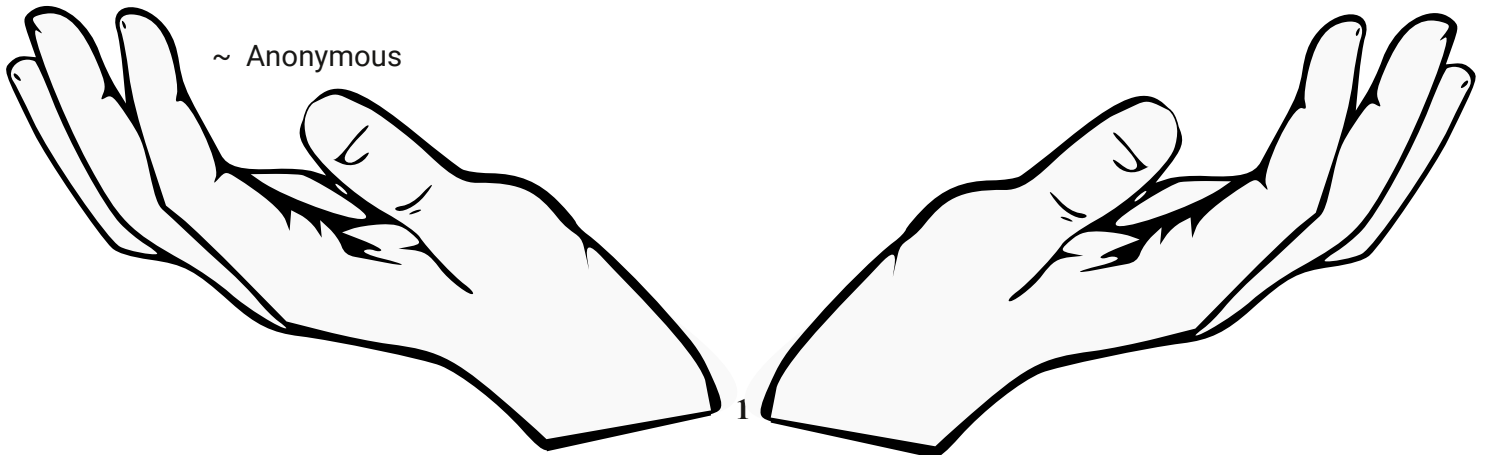
And may God gently place God's own heart right behind yours so that the love you give in this work can come through you but doesn't have to come from you.

And as the love of God moves from God's heart through your own to those in your care, may your heart soak up all it needs in the process.

Because your heart is a human one too, and it deserves to be well tended to.

AMEN

~ Anonymous



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*A Blessing for a Minister's Heart and Ordination Prayer were submitted by Randy Dawson



Christy Howard-Steele Chair Circle of Directors

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Farewell

Chairperson, Rev. Christy Howard-Steele

FCM Friends and family, I write this as my term as Chairperson comes to an end with the upcoming July Circle meeting. I both look forward to this change and grieve the loss of regular engagement. It has been such an honor and privilege to serve on the Circle for the past 14/15 years --- first as endorsing agent and chair of Specialized Ministries, and then for the past 6 years as chairperson. I have worked with and come to know amazing, talented, and inspiring members of FCM through my time working with endorsement, Realm, planning assemblies, and guiding the business and future direction of FCM.

Though my term on the Circle is ending, my member responsibilities do not end (though I am planning to take a period of respite).

From my years with FCM, one thing is clear: FCM cannot function without a strong cast of volunteers. While we have hired an executive director and an administrator to oversee many of our daily or routine administrative responsibilities, the beauty and ministry of FCM lies in the hands of our volunteers. While I know we have family, jobs, and other responsibilities, I encourage each and every one of you to find the way you can contribute your time and talent to FCM. As the saying goes, "teamwork makes the dream work."

It is my hope that my time of service has blessed FCM. I truly have been blessed by the time and people with whom and for whom I have served. May G-d continue to bless the community of FCM.

Return to TOC

Scuff Marks in the Sand

Senior Moment? Don't ask!!! I can't remember where I found it. It was framed in gold and had a drawing of a violin over which was printed a poem: The Touch of the Master's Hand (Myra Brooks Welch). It spoke of a battered and scarred violin that was being auctioned off.

The auctioneer picked it up, blew off the dust, and held up the violin and its bow to the crowd. "What am I offered? he asked. One dollar? Two dollars? Do I hear three? Going once, going twice..., but before he could say "SOLD!!!," a gray bearded man rose from his seat, took up the violin and bow, tightened the strings, and played music sweet. The auctioneer turned to the crowd again and asked, "Now what am I offered? One thousand? Do I hear two? Two thousand, Who makes it three? Going once, going twice, SOLD!!! he barked.

Myra Brooks asked what made the difference?

"The audience cheered, But some of them cried, We just don't understand. What changed its' worth? Swift came the reply. The Touch of the Masters Hand. And many a man with life out of tune, much like that old violin is going once, is going twice. He's going and almost gone. And the foolish crowd never can quite understand, the worth of a soul and the change that is wrought, By the Touch of the Master's Hand."

I was on an adventure of rediscovering myself. Some people might call it a mid-lifecrisis. I went for individual and couple therapy, maybe not so much as to reinvent myself, but as to try to understand the reasons why I made certain life choices that were coming back to haunt me. Professionally, I was facing the prospect of being excessed after 15 years in the classroom due to declining enrollment in the high school. I decided to take credits towards a School Counseling degree hoping that it would keep me working in my school district.



The timing was impeccable. Every class I took corresponded perfectly with the events in my life at precisely the same time. I remember sitting in a classroom when the professor asked this question. What kind of a life would a person have if he cared more about the wants, needs and desires of others' rather than his own? My hand shot up. "He would be Codependent. He would try to please everybody!!!" After class I told the professor my life's story. He encouraged me to change therapists. At the same time my CoDA of AA sponsor was recommending his therapist. I made an appointment with Joe and launched a 20 year working relationship with him that ended recently when Joe passed away. I took another course dealing with the stages of psychological development based on the work of Erik Erikson. It helped me navigate my mother's final illness and guided me through her Alzheimer.

I was also on a spiritual journey finding my way to a more personal relationship with the Lord. Throwing off the lessons of Dogma that were instilled in my childhood which were keeping me spiritually trapped in my adult life. Joseph Campbell says that Dogma is the solution to the problems of another age. The problem with Dogma today, he says, is that it hasn't kept up with social progress in our times. I sought spiritual counseling and went on a number of retreats to reconfigure my relationship with the Lord. In CoDA of AA I made the decision to turn my life and my will over to God, as I understood God. But, to tell you the truth, sometimes, I never understood God. In the rooms, I learned that the problem wasn't Him, it was me.

There was a man standing on his roof during a torrential rainstorm pleading with God to rescue him from the raising flood waters creeping ever closer. He turned to Heaven and beseeched the Lord for help. Along came a canoe and he was offered a paddle in the canoe. He waved off the canoe saying, "No, the Lord will rescue me!!! At little while later, along came a rowboat. When he was offered a bench in the craft, he waved off the rower saying, "No, the Lord will rescue me." Finally, a CG helicopter lowered a basket. He waved away the Coast Guardsmen telling them, "No, the Lord will rescue me!!! He drowned. When he got to Heaven, he asked the Lord, "Why did you abandon me?" "What?" replied the Lord. "I sent you a canoe, a row boat, and a helicopter!!!"

In CoDA of AA I learned the attitude of gratitude. Instead of looking at the glass halfempty, CoDA helped me to see the glass as half full. Today, I can say, I am grateful for yesterday, thankful for today, and hopeful about tomorrow. In Heaven, it is said, there is a room assigned to each person. It has his or her name on it. When a newcomer asked the Lord what was behind the door with his name on it, the Lord replied, "All the gifts that I sent to you that came back marked "Returned to Sender!!!" Now, I have a simple prayer of gratitude that covers all the bases. Thank you Lord for the many ways you show your love for me. Those I see, those I don't see, and those struggling to break through. Amen!!!"

I am reading *Myths To Live By* written by Joseph Campbell, the renowned mythologist.

He's a difficult read. Sometimes, I have to reread a sentence more than once, maybe even twice, to comprehend his meaning. But, sometimes his words jumped out at me. Such was the case when he was comparing the Occidental and Oriental attitudes towards life. The people of India use the word "play" as an action verb. Instead of he died, they say, "he's playing at being dead." Going to Tokyo becomes, "he's playing at being in Tokyo." Campbell says that this is a "rather refreshing" outlook on living. He concludes the paragraph with, "It is what the old Roman Seneca referred to in his often quoted saying. "Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt." "The Fates lead him who will, him who won't, they drag." (p. 122) I might have missed something along the way, but my gut response to this passage was instantaneous.

It was a prayer card that I found on a rack in a holy store. A sandy scene at the water's edge. It may have had an image of a Star fish or a seashell. Printed over the image was *The Footprints in the Sand*. It's the story of a sets of four footprints in the sand which became two.

The poet wants to know what happened. Looking back over her life she remembers times when the Lord abandoned her. Why did the four prints become a pair when I needed you most? The Lord explains that the four footprints were the times when they walked the beach together. The Lord tells her that He didn't turn his back on her!!! "My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

I see the sandy scene slightly different. Yes, there are four footprints that become a pair. There is a set of foot prints between two scuff marks going way back towards the horizon. It looks as if a car has "burned rubber" in the sand. "Lord," I said, "I understand the four footprints in the sand as the times when we walked the shoreline together explained to me how the two sets of prints became a pair when you carried me on your back. But, what's with the scuff marks? He puts His arms around me saying, "You wouldn't go willingly Son, so I had to push you through!!!"

Respectfully submitted

Rev. Anthony Di Bartolo

Return to TOC



Tom Stricker Endowment Chair

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Report on the state of the FCM Permanent Endowment Fund. \$206,212 currently

Securing The Future of Inclusive Ministries is what the FCM Endowment is all about!

The FCM Permanent Endowment Fund was established in 2017/2018 to enable FCM members, organizations, and friends to express their commitment to Christ through gifts that will support in perpetuity the inclusive and ecumenical missions and programs of FCM. In the first year and a half we raised \$13,110, which enabled FCM to start an account with Vanguard Investment Brokerage.

Our FCM Permanent Endowment Fund is a professionally-managed fund that exists to financially support the activities and missions of FCM. The Endowment Committee authorizes annual distributions from the Accumulated Appreciation in accordance with the Endowment Fund Policy. In the past 5 years FCM members and other donors have grown our FCM Permanent Endowment fund to \$206,212. Helping to achieve this growth in a big way, our sister organization, CORPUS, made a Legacy donation of \$31,412 to our Endowment this year. CORPUS did this as part of their corporate dissolution. CORPUS was no longer a viable organization, and so they stopped operations and dissolved. Please read more about this gift below.

DISTRIBUTIONS AND INVESTMENTS In the past two years we have been able to distribute 10,200.00 so that members could receive scholarships to attend the National Assembly in 2024, This year \$6,600 will be distributed for FCM Faith Community grants and for FCM members to receive tuition grants and a grant for research. Only a percentage of the growth from investments is used for grants. None of the principal is ever used. This conservative approach secures the Endowment's ability to support our communities and members long into the future.

Our FCM Endowment Committee has worked diligently to preserve and grow our fund. In 2024 our investments with Vanguard earned 12.5%. Then, early in 2025, the Endowment Committee decided to substantially reduce the amount of funds invested in variable instruments, such as mutual funds. This defensive approach has protected the value of our Endowment, even as the investment markets have been very unstable since January.

CORPUS To explain more fully the CORPUS donation: Upon their dissolution, the Board of CORPUS donated \$31,412.02 to the Federation of Christian Ministries Endowment. Since the donation amount was more than \$25,000, a Named Legacy Account could be formed. This is the first such account in our Endowment. With the Circle's approval, the CORPUS Board specified how the distributions from the account should be directed. Now the name CORPUS will be remembered as long as the FCM Endowment continues. The goals set forth by CORPUS are as follows:

1. Support investment in certification efforts by Roman Catholic Women priests or other organizations supporting the public presbyterial ministry especially the certification of women
2. Support of progressive reform efforts
3. Support for theological studies leading towards ordination

As you can see, these goals align with those of FCM.

We invite you to make an investment in the future. A large gift of \$10,000 will memorialize named individuals or organizations. A larger gift of \$25,000 or more may form a Legacy Named Account, just as CORPUS has done. This account memorializes persons or organizations and may in addition specify the use of the account's distributions. So, large or small, your gifts will support in perpetuity the inclusive and ecumenical missions and programs of FCM. Contribute today. Start with \$5 per month. Then grow it. Your gift will keep on giving in perpetuity, generating support for FCM for generations to come.



Donate to the FCM Endowment Fund

NO GIFT IS TOO SMALL!

Regular Donation

Go to the FCM website www.federationofchristianministries.org or go to your personal account on Realm www.onrealm.org and make your donation.

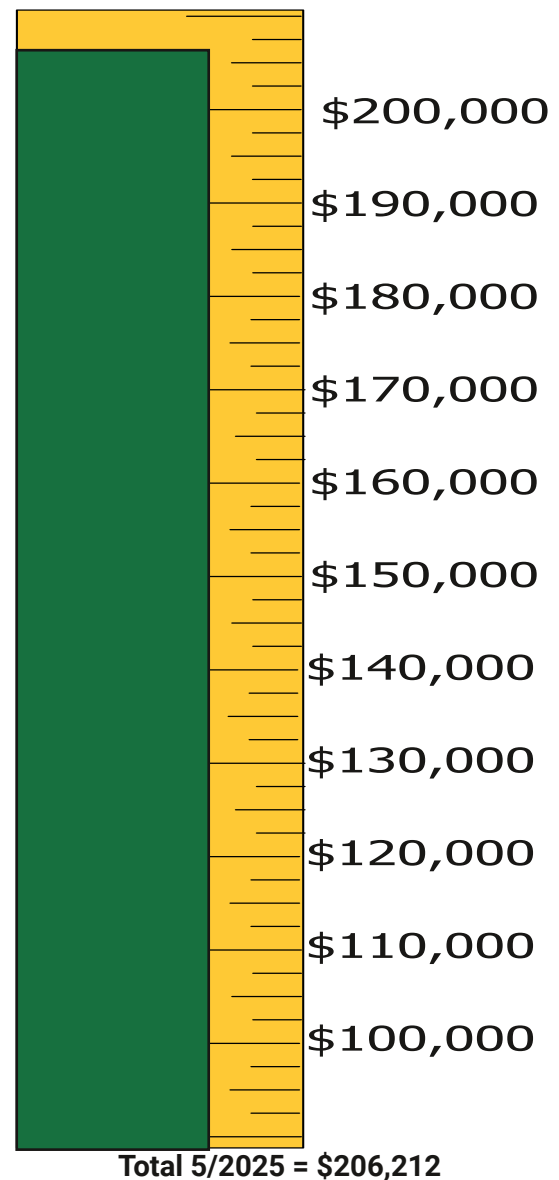
1. Sign in to Realm or, if in the FCM Website, use the "Donation" button to get there.
2. Click on "Giving" (left hand column) and this will take you to donation page
3. Click on the "+ Give" button
4. You will see a pull down (FCM General Account); click on the pulldown arrow
5. Click on the "FCM Endowment Fund" button

Tribute Gift

Is there a friend, family member, teacher, or mentor you would like to honor on their special day or send an expression of sympathy?
Consider a small donation to the FCM Endowment Fund.

A notice of your gift will be sent to the honoree or a member of their family. You will also know that your gift will help ensure that FCM will be able to support future generations of ministers and congregations.

For more information go to the FCM web site under FCM Endowment Fund for the online Tribute Gift Form orendowment@fcmmail.org



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Ministries Unfolding

by Susan Russell, Roman Catholic Woman Priest

I was ordained a Roman Catholic Women Priest on July 8, 2023, at Brecksville United Church of Christ. I have been involved in ministry with the Community of Saint Bridget. This spring, as my leadership with Toastmasters International District 10 is coming to an end June 30, I feel called to begin offering Masses in my home and community.

I offered my first Mass at Ray Mellert Park in Medina Ohio, on June 13, 2025. This date happens to be the date our mother would have turned 100 years of age. This date seems particularly appropriate given that our father married her at a time when many Catholics did not marry outside their faith. Our mother was raised in the Church of Christ and never converted to Catholicism. I can recall being told as a young student not to associate with non-Catholics and that only Catholics were going to heaven.

I was extremely grateful to Pope John XXIII and the ecumenical council. I did not fully realize the depth of my emotion until I was privileged to be at Corpus Christi University Parish, when the tapestry of Pope John XXIII by John Nava was unveiled to our community. I am grateful that I grew up in an ecumenical family, and in that particular time period, as it has helped me embrace many forms of spirituality.

Our nonprofit organization, In the Footsteps of Rabboni, is named for the Gospel of John, when Mary Magdalene sees Jesus in the garden and does not immediately recognize him until he speaks to her. She calls out to him "Rabboni," which means Teacher. This was to be the name of a book I planned to write about my journey to the priesthood. I had planned to write it after visiting Israel in May 2024. The war broke out in October 2023 making our planned trip too dangerous. The book may still happen, but not quite as I had planned.

Another ministry that is opening for me is singing with the Threshold Choir-Cleveland. I learned of this organization from one of my sister priests in the Roman Catholic Womenpriests. I had been wanting to join for several years and now I have space for it. I joined them for my first practice last Tuesday, June 2, and felt like I had come home. Threshold Choirs sing at the bedside for those in hospice or nursing homes. The songs are very simple, with harmonies, and sung acapella.



This photograph is one of my cups and plates I plan to use for masses.

Return to TOC



Judy Lorenz Faith Communities Chair

faithcommunity@FCMmail.org

Hello FCM Members!

How many of you belong to a church?

Or, a congregation?

Or, a small faith community?

Or, a spiritually centered group?

Have you ever thought about your “church” or whatever you consider your spiritual home, joining FCM as a Faith Community? FCM currently has nineteen faith communities. Some meet in person and some meet by zoom, but all strive to live the Gospel message by serving their members and their neighboring areas in many ways.

FCM would love to grow that number. We hope to have every region represented with a variety of faith communities. At this very uncertain and trying time in our nation’s history, we need each other more than ever. I am hoping communities can find ways to partner with each other so we can work for peace and justice together.

The address below will connect you to our FCM website to learn more about our Faith Communities.

<https://fedcm.org/faith-communities/>

Or, email me directly at faithcommunity@fcmmail.org for more information.

Ordination Prayer

"Living God, _____ has dedicated himself/herself* to joining you in your love for the world.

Empower * to love the poor first and also the rich, the doubters first and also the believers, the powerless first and also the powerful, the afraid and confused first and also the confident and clear.

Help * to see with the compassionate eyes of Christ, to listen with the perceptive ears of Christ, to understand with the deep mind of Christ, to embrace all, no exceptions, with the wide arms of Christ.

As * is a channel of your love poured out to others, let * feel your love poured out for *.

Help * to serve from a deep center of stillness and receptivity, and even when * is weak or struggling or in pain, guide * to trust you to be strong in * weakness.

When * suffers, as all who serve you will, help * do so with grace and courage.

When * withdraws for rest and recreation, as all who serve you must, help * to enjoy the abundant life that * proclaims to others.

Let your light shine upon him, Lord, and so let * shine with grace, joy, justice, and peace in the Holy Spirit.

In joyful trust, we pray ... Amen."

~ Brian McLaren

Return to TOC

Chaplaincy to Me

by Chaplain Larry Mitchell

Chaplaincy, at its core, is a profound expression of pastoral care. It's a sacred calling to minister to individuals' spiritual and emotional needs within a particular religious tradition. It is a dynamic and evolving discipline, deeply rooted in compassion and a commitment to holistic well-being.

Pastoral Care in the Context of Chaplaincy

Pastoral care, within chaplaincy, is a specialized form of spiritual support offered by a trained member of a specific faith tradition to individuals who identify with that tradition. It goes beyond mere comfort; it's an active engagement with the human spirit, aiming to provide solace, guidance, and hope during times of vulnerability, crisis, or transition.

Here are key aspects of this care:

- **Active Listening and Empathetic Presence:** Often, the most powerful form of care is simply being present and truly listening without judgment. This involves creating a safe space for individuals to express their fears, hopes, and struggles.
- **Spiritual Assessment:** Understanding an individual's spiritual worldview, beliefs, and practices is crucial for tailoring appropriate care. This involves respectful inquiry and sensitivity to diverse spiritual paths.
- **Ritual and Sacrament:** For many, the familiar rituals and sacraments of their faith provide immense comfort and a sense of connection to something larger than themselves. Chaplains facilitate access to these vital expressions of faith.
- **Theological Reflection and Guidance:** Drawing upon sacred texts, theological principles, and the wisdom of their tradition, chaplains offer spiritual guidance, helping individuals find meaning and perspective in their experiences.
- **Crisis Intervention and Bereavement Support:** Chaplains are often present during moments of acute crisis, offering immediate emotional and spiritual support and walking alongside individuals through the grieving process.
- **Advocacy and Resource Provision:** Beyond direct spiritual care, chaplains often act as advocates for their patients and families, connecting them with appropriate spiritual and practical resources within their faith community and beyond.
- **Self-Care and Peer Support:** Recognizing the emotional demands of the role, effective chaplaincy also involves a commitment to personal well-being and seeking support from colleagues.

The Discipline of Pastoral Care: Meeting Needs, Giving Hope, Providing Resources

Ultimately, the discipline of pastoral care, as embodied in chaplaincy, is about meeting the holistic needs of those we serve. This extends to:

- **Patients:** Offering spiritual comfort, helping them cope with illness, fear, and uncertainty, and affirming their dignity.
- **Families:** Supporting them through the emotional rollercoaster of a loved one's illness or loss, providing a spiritual anchor during turbulent times.
- **Staff:** Recognizing the emotional toll on healthcare professionals, offering a confidential space for debriefing, and providing spiritual encouragement.
- **Ourselves:** Acknowledging the spiritual and emotional investment of the chaplaincy role, fostering resilience, and ensuring our well-being to sustain our capacity for compassionate service.

Chaplaincy, then, is not merely a profession; it is a vocation, a ministry of presence, and a powerful conduit for healing and hope in a world often marked by suffering and uncertainty. It is a constant journey of learning, adapting, and growing in the sacred art of caring for the human spirit.



My Ministry Journey in the Prison System

Youth and Adults: Distinct Paths in Prison Ministry

Providing spiritual care behind bars requires a nuanced approach, particularly when ministering to juveniles versus adult prisoners. While the ultimate goal of chaplaincy remains the same—to foster spiritual growth and transformation—the journey to achieve it differs significantly between these two groups.

Ministering to Youth: Building Bridges of Trust

For juveniles in correctional facilities, the need for attention, affection, and affirmation is paramount. Many young inmates come from backgrounds marked by a lack of love, dysfunctional families, child abuse, and other challenging circumstances. They often lack positive role models and struggle with a sense of belonging, frequently turning to gang affiliation for identity.

Building relationships with incarcerated youth takes time and patience. It can take a year or more to truly understand their needs and begin to bridge the gap in trust, fellowship, and spiritual connection. The chaplain's role extends beyond traditional religious instruction; it involves creating a safe space where young people can explore their specialness, develop self-awareness, and find hope despite their past. This requires consistent effort to overcome barriers such as non-religious backgrounds and mental health challenges. Programs focused on discipleship and positive direction are crucial for giving these youth a sense of purpose and fostering unity.

Ministering to Adults: Cultivating Deeper Understanding

In contrast, adult prisoners often possess a greater maturity and openness to self-reflection. While they may also grapple with group identification, many are more receptive to learning about Christianity and engaging in discussions about their personal development.

The chaplain's role with adults emphasizes formation—a process designed to deepen self-awareness and integrate it with an understanding of one's attitudes, values, and relationships. Building trust through intentional programs, discipleship, and clear direction can lead to a powerful sense of purpose and unity among inmates. Our greatest aspiration is to guide them toward becoming Christians, fostering collaborative relationships, and empowering them to lead positive peer interactions.

Ultimately, both youth and adult ministries strive to meet the religious needs of inmates and help them find spiritual fulfillment. However, recognizing and adapting to the unique developmental and emotional landscapes of each group is essential for effective and impactful spiritual care within the prison system.

FCM Anniversaries

5 YEARS

Elias Burgos	8/21/2020	Southeast
Phillip Crenshaw	7/7/2020	Southeast
John Diller	8/1/2020	Heartland
Nina Goulet	8/12/2020	Southwest
Chera Wertz	8/28/2020	Northeast
Michelle Joachim Brathweite -	7/13/2020	Mid-Atlantic

10 YEARS

Peter Kim	7/8/2015	Mid-Atlantic
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15 YEARS

Mark Meyer	7/26/2010	Heartland
Peter Strening	7/26/2010	Southcentral

20 YEARS

James Hayes	8/8/2005	Lakes&Plains
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25 YEARS

David Efimetz	7/10/2000	Mid-Atlantic
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30 YEARS

Ed Knight	7/7/1995	Northeast
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Carolyn Horvath, Central/Membership Office



Riverside with AJ

**"I write from rivers and hospital rooms
about grief, dignity, and the slow work of becoming."**

Andrew Zimmermann

A few summers ago, I was putting some finishing touches on my home renovation (more of a "habitability project" since it was a 20-year rental) when I decided to check local job boards. After a day of snapping laminate floor planks together, I sat on the floor in what would become the living room, and pulled out my phone for local job boards. Summers in Montana are beautiful, and I enjoyed the late afternoon sun shining in the windows. I was about to conclude my remote work position, and to be honest, I craved being in person with people again.

I have a good friend I was trying to convince to move to Montana, and I was looking at the job boards for him when I saw a part-time chaplain position available at a local hospital. Knowing he needed full-time work and was pursuing a different career path, I applied for me.

It is a bit of an HR miracle story, as it only took three days from submitting my application to being on my first interview with my new supervisor. I went on the interview and felt at ease in the interview process for the first time in a long time. I could share my convictions, uncertainties, and shortcomings in a way that wouldn't be a hindrance. I am thankful for the system I work in, which values identifying and working on those growth edges.

Within a short few weeks, I was out of my online role and beginning to knock on patient doors, introducing myself as part of the spiritual care team, and learning about patients' spiritual history, personal journeys, and gaining language for talking about the different types of spiritual distress a person can encounter. Initially, I felt like I had no idea what I was doing, but committed to reading, processing, and asking questions.

It took a few months, but I began feeling confident about my chaplain work. Providing for the spiritual, religious, and emotional needs of patients, families, and caregivers is the extent of my job description, and it takes on many forms. I am on-call for crisis and trauma. I've been called in in the middle of the night to be with family members who are grieving. I was awakened out of a sleepy slumber to learn about the loss others are experiencing; and, because I believe we are all connected, the loss I am experiencing. I've had long days and just crawling into bed when the pager goes off. And yes, I am finally living my 90's dream of holding a pager.

Being a chaplain is hard to describe. I am part of an interdisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, CNAs, and therapists of all sorts (respiratory, physical, and psychological). I am there to hold space for a patient's needs, support other caregivers, and ensure I am charting correctly. There are things that seminary didn't prepare me for, and that is okay. I loved the formation I got to experience in seminary. But there are things that none of us are really prepared for. And nothing prepares you for the smells. So,,Many,,Smells.



Then, I enrolled in CPE. I felt like I was back in the beginning all over again. I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. I am thankful for the words of Brian Zahnd who, when talking about the Christian faith, reminds us that we never start at square one. We are handed a tradition; we bring reason and experience into the room. One of our early CPE lessons is the 80/30 principle. In chaplaincy, 80% of what we bring to the table is from our own processing, experience, and tradition. 80% of chaplaincy is who you are as a person. 30% is what you learn, theories of care, spiritual assessments, etc. And if you are doing the math, yes, it is 80/30 because you always bring more into a room than you need.

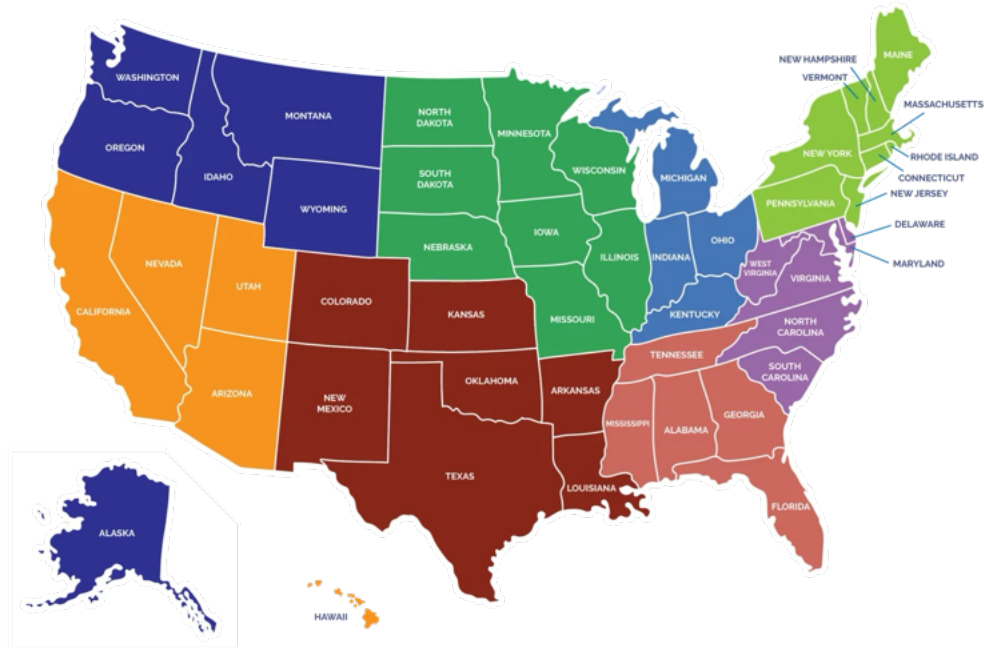
I am about six weeks away from finishing my first unit of Clinical Pastoral Education. There is an accrediting body that oversees these units and has given us a list of 25 competencies to work on. Each unit is a lot of hours, 400 to be precise. Three hundred are clinical, and 100 are educational (met through weekly meetings and 3 onsite trips to Spokane, WA). I am thankful for the opportunity to get to do a total of 4 units over the coming years.

Here are the things I am holding closely from this educational environment:

1. We can still provide good care, even though we make mistakes and don't always say the right things. Don't get caught up in the words; lean into the moment.
2. Be on the lookout for deeper and spiritual needs. Depending on faith tradition, sometimes these are the same.
3. Our culture hasn't taught us well about compassion and empathy. These are skills to be learned and nurtured, not tools we are handed.
4. Each emotion is good and valid, and anger always brings a friend. Sometimes, the feelings of others don't make us feel safe. Try to become curious about why.
5. The right way to grieve is to do whatever you are doing while you grieve. There is no wrong way to grieve.
6. Others will try to "should on you." Don't let anyone "should on you"; please, don't "should on yourself."

While hard to summarize the unending things I am learning about the nature of spiritual care, humanity, grief, and the slow work of becoming human, I am thankful to be part of this community. May your contributions this week remind you of the cherished gift of ministry to which we are called.

FCM Regions



Northeast

Pennsylvania
New Jersey
Rhode Island
New York
Connecticut
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
Vermont
Maine

Mid-Atlantic

West Virginia
Virginia
Delaware
Maryland
Washington DC
North Carolina
South Carolina

Southeast

Tennessee
Mississippi
Alabama
Georgia
Florida

South Central

Colorado
Kansas
New Mexico
Oklahoma
Arkansas
Texas
Louisiana

Heartland

Michigan
Indiana
Kentucky
Ohio

Lakes & Plains

North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Minnesota
Iowa
Missouri
Wisconsin
Illinois

Southwest

California
Nevada
Utah
Arizona
Hawaii

Northwest

Alaska
Washington
Oregon
Idaho
Montana
Wyoming



Michelle Graham VP Mid-Atlantic

midatlanticvp@FCMmail.org

This summer marks one full year since I stepped into this role for our MidAtlantic region. I've met so many wonderful people, and it's been my greatest joy to walk with some of you through your credentialing process. So, I invite you to join me in celebrating these commissionings and endorsements.

July 2024

Dana Moulds:

Dana is currently a PICU Trauma Chaplain at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis, and over the next year she hopes to complete requirements for Board Certification.

Demetrio Penascoza:

While Demetrio has resettled in the Northeast region since his commissioning, he has continued on as a staff chaplain at a hospital in Connecticut.

Jeff Alred:

As Jeff is finishing his second-year residency at WakeMed Health & Hospitals in Raleigh, he is working on board certification and excited to discover what's next.

February 2025

Heather Olson:

Since completing her work at the VA serving veterans, Heather now serves as both a hospice chaplain and also provides pastoral counseling.

Wendi Steinberg:

Wendi came to us through the Roman Catholic Women Priests and continues her vocation as an ACPE certified educator and board certified chaplain.

Jesse O'Neal:

As staff chaplain for emergency services, Jesse has been engaged in meeting the pastoral needs of patients, their families and hospital staff for almost 10 years.

May 2025

Camber Herrig:

Camber continues working on staff at a United Methodist Church and is pursuing full-time work in chaplaincy, with the hope of going into prison ministry.

Alexandria Bravard:

Alex is finishing her second-year chaplain residency at the Asheville VA working in outpatient mental health, and she hopes to continue into board certification while serving Veterans.

Emily Nyce:

Emily is serving as associate pastor at First Mennonite Church of Richmond and is excited to utilize her commissioning to officiate weddings, funerals, other unique life rituals and blessings, and spiritual direction.

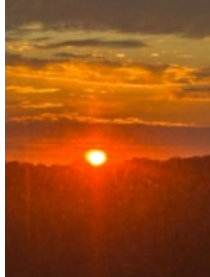
[Return to TOC](#)



Jennifer Friedman & Barbara Zeman

VP s Southeast

southeastvp@FCMmail.org



As the day begins

Like any other... no earth shattering.
In the stillness the sun transforms.
Night into day, the moment holds its breath.
Then, as if not wanting to disturb,
it rises, slowly hugging the skyline.
Finally, day breaks free in a cacophony of light.

Just another day

Like no other ... no trumpets blaring.
In the stillness the light penetrates.
The day begins breathing in and out.
All at once the darkness fades,
it's here, the sun to light the way.
Dawn is gone as if it never struggled to be.

Another day

History is made.

~ Barbara Zeman ©



Bishops: Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger, Martha Sherman, Jane Kryzanowski, Jane Via, Suzanne Theil Paula Hoeffler, Nancy L. Meyer

Fifty plus years ago Roman Catholic women priests would have been un-heard of. The fact that laicized male married priests had the audacity to form a conflation of churches (FCM) to continue their ministry of marrying, baptizing, burying and leading small faith communities was still being digested. But that was 50 plus years ago.

Just over 20 years ago Roman Catholic women priests were just a flickering light in the heart of the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC). In 2002 the first seven Roman Catholic women were ordained on the Danube River in Europe. In 2006 the US witnessed the dawn of their first public women's ordination on Three Rivers in Pennsylvania and Roman Catholic WomenPriests (RCWP) appeared in the US horizon. At the National Call to Action Conference in 2007 Bishop Patricia Fresen, the first South African, English speaking, Roman Catholic Women Bishop, spoke to a packed crowd of over 400 in Milwaukee (some of whom were FCM members and their wives), bringing hope and inspiring progressive Catholic women and men throughout the US.

On May 24, 2025 in Cincinnati, Roman Catholic Womenpriests began to arrive from south, north, east and west... from Canada and Austria ...even some snowbirds in the Southeast Region like Mary Ellen Robertson and Judith McKloskey, and Florida transplant, Barbara Zeman. Fourteen priests and seven bishops came to witness the Episcopal Ordination of Paula Hoeffler, a Roman Catholic Womanpriest. Just another day like many others.

Fifty plus years ago FCM had only a few members nationwide, most, if not all, were laicized Roman Catholic priests without a church home but with a dream that all are welcome. Many helped build and strengthen Call To Action (CTA) born in Chicago in 1973 as a response to Vatican II. From 1976-2017 this social justice movement calling for reform and renewal was supported by well over 4,500 progressive Catholics nationwide. FCM, Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW), and Dignity USA played a large part in their yearly conferences of 400+ in Detroit and Milwaukee.

FCM provided the seeds that nurtured hope for those who believe that we all deserve a place at the table. Today, thanks in part to our founding members, FCM offers those who have been marginalized in many faith traditions... those who never dreamed that they could minister, an opportunity to be heard, included and nurtured.

In the Southeast, alone, we have over 75 members and growing.

Nate Schweigert and Jasyn Banks have been newly commissioned,

Theresa Nicholson is moving toward Board Certification in the ACCC.

Shannon Webb is moving toward endorsement.

Garth Battick has taken a position as Chaplain Supervisor with Trustbridge Hospice of Palm Beach County.

Konomi Puffer, Ruth Ostler, Christopher D. Williams, Roberto Pereira Miguel, Christopher Young and Kevin Deck are all moving toward commissioning and/or endorsement, ministering at hospice and in hospital as chaplains. Spirit continues to move FCM in ways not thought of just a few years ago. Not Just another day.



Row 1:

Judith McKloskey, Carmella Cicirelli, Paula Hoeffler, Martina Thompson, Ellen Robertson, Dagmar Celeste,

Row 2.

Katherine Elsner, Kathy Bean, Erlin Perlado-Mertens, Elsie McGrath, Barbara Zeman

Row 3.

Daniel Frachey, Kathleen Blank Riether, Susan Russell



No Place at the Table

By Barbara Zeman ©2025

He left in silence not knowing how to express his pain.

She walked away alone after years of struggling to be a round peg in a square hole.

They never got a chance to tell their tale.

Because the world has turned.

He hung up his alb and stole and cried in vain.

She could no longer bare the rejection of the whole.

They disappeared behind illusion's wall.

Because the world has turned.

He walked softly into the night.

She tripped in the darkness without a light.

They fell under the weight of freedom's fight.

Because the world has turned.

FCM offers a place at the table.

ZOOM Monthly Meets:

Join us every third Tuesday at 8:00-8:30 pm, EST for a Southeast Regional check in
Click [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4261272157?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4261272157?pwd=TkNrBm5aY3R6bXZ0Y2hlZksZ3Y1UT09&omn=87313774732)

[pwd=TkNrBm5aY3R6bXZ0Y2hlZksZ3Y1UT09&omn=87313774732](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4261272157?pwd=TkNrBm5aY3R6bXZ0Y2hlZksZ3Y1UT09&omn=87313774732) to join our scheduled Zoom Meeting.





Christopher Breen VP South Central

southcentralvp@FCMmail.org

Greetings fellow FCM Members!

This summer, I've found myself tracing the arc of the sun across our expansive region, marveling at how each landscape wears this season differently, and how your ministries reflect that same spirit of diversity and variety.

In Colorado, dawn still feels crisp, the high-country air tinged with pine as wildflowers bloom on mountain meadows. Across Kansas, the flat horizon shimmers with waves of golden grass, under a gentle sun that shines on members and those whom they care for. In New Mexico, the high desert crackles under cobalt skies. Sagebrush and juniper hold their vibrant color through dust and drought, in a similar way that the ministries of our members find resilience and thrive even in the midst of harsh conditions.

Across Oklahoma and Arkansas, it's storm season. We watch heavy clouds gather over the plains and Ozark foothills, bringing with them sudden afternoon rains that leave the air sweet. A reminder that preparation and prayer go hand-in-hand, whether for literal storms, or the emotional and spiritual challenges our communities face.

Down here in Texas and across our neighbor Louisiana, humid conditions wrap around us, reminding us of our every move, and of every moment outside the chilling relief of air conditioning.

Across our region, as July turns toward August, these landscapes will shift again, fields will lean towards harvest, mountain nights will grow longer, and dusty roads will be cooled by the early morning dew.

Wherever you serve, may this season's vibrant contrasts renew your vision of The Divine's creative breadth. Continue to share our stories, offering rest under a shade tree, or on Thursday night prayer gatherings, so that every corner of the South Central region feels the breadth of our care.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Chris



Peter Wolf VP Heartland

heartlandvp@FCMmail.org



A Moment Just for You

The challenging part of writing these articles is creating the first sentence. To my surprise I found the answer in the least likely place - a tea bag. As I prepared and poured my daily cup of tea thinking about the opening sentence the wording on the tea bag package read "Take this Moment just for you. (signed by the Biglow family)" Wow, what a spiritual insight from a non clerical source. Who better then the FCM community can resonate on the need for this invitation in our lives.

This is the vision on the dashboard of our upcoming Maria Stein Retreat (October 24-26th) The planning committee that meets every month over the past year is truly inspired by prayer leadership experiences, creative application of multiple faith backgrounds, job related pressures and an appreciation for our ministerial needs of self care. We understand that the members of FCM deserve to be spiritually pampered.

We invite the members of the Heartland Region to consider taking an October weekend in the middle of an Ohio corn or soybean field to renew your spiritual self care. Be good to yourself and join us.

We believe so much in this time together that we are making personal phone calls to all of you to let you know how important this time of gathering brings to the whole FCM community and specifically the Heartland Region.

The Early Bird Registration (until August 1st) registration provides a discount for you and gives us a sense of how many participants to plan for this event.

[Return to TOC](#)



Jo Brenneman-Fullwood VP Lakes & Plains

lakesplainsvp@FCMmail.org

Greetings & Salutations,

Summer is nearly here! The tulips are gone, and the dandelions are everywhere! Recently I was able to spend some time in the beautiful state of Minnesota. It was joy to see some of the members of Lakes & Plains and enjoy a yummy meal. I look forward visiting again soon! I was there for several conferences and celebrated those who graduated and are now APC certified chaplains!!!



Congrats Daniel Galvin on becoming board certified

Other celebrations are from one of our members from the Illinois area. Reneé Cunningham shared receiving several recognitions as a chaplain Resident at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. She shares about why she join FCM below.

For me, FCM is a collective I want to be a part of. The values of FCM invite me into deeper relationship with the Spirit and continuing formation. I appreciate the way FCM encourages its members and ministers to steward these values in their individual lives, local communities, churches and workplaces. Within FCM I am welcomed to bring my whole self, my story, my gifts and interests and my vocational call and experience a collective, diverse group of people seeking to respond to the life and move of the Spirit of God

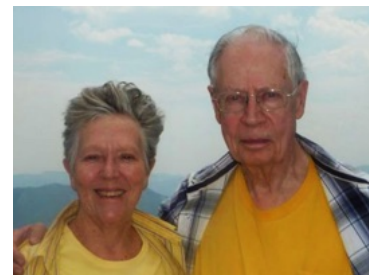


We welcome our new members to the Lakes& Plains community. When you have a moment, please drop an email to reach out to following members:

Let's welcome our member(s):	Name	Area	Email
	John Graham Sinclair	Illinois	j.grahamsinclair@gmail.com
	Kelley Lynn Ackerman	Minnesota	kladelsman@gmail.com
	Fred James Everson	Minnesota	fjeverson63@gmail.com

Member(s) Forever in Our Thoughts:

Let's remember to keep the family of Clem DeWall in our thoughts and prayers. Clem DeWall (Aurora, Colorado) died on May 5, 2025. Clem and his wife, Eileen Mackin, served as Vice Presidents of the Mountains and Plains Region now Lakes & Plains and served as Co-Presidents of FCM. He will be dearly missed.



Open Volunteers Position:

• The FCM Endowment committee is looking for one member to join their efforts. The time commitment is low at a single 1-hour meeting per month via Zoom. Contact me at lakesplainsvp@fcmmail.org to express interest and I will connect you with the chair of the committee

Meet the VP monthly zoom will be the first Monday of each month at 8:00 CT. Through this recurring link. Just click on the following link below or use the Meeting ID and Passcode below!
Looking forward to meeting you soon!

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87595770893?pwd=3c5tvK2tSxVuGbVPqnOFuBywSW9wjT.1>

Meeting ID: 875 9577 0893

Passcode: 028163



Final Thoughts: Please send me a text or email with moments of celebration or prayer requests that you would like the region to know. We want to celebrate with you and to join in prayer when needed. Another prayer request is for our members affected by the recent assassination and assassination attempt on the lawmakers in MN. While I was there, several members raise concerns for our region and our country. I hope you will join me in praying for all who were affected by this tragedy.

From my family to yours, Happy Mother's Day, Happy Father's Day and Happy Juneteenth to all who are celebrating and lifting up prayers for those are grieving during this time. I pray that you and your family are doing well!

Peace Be with You All,
Rev. Jo

Return to TOC



Zachary Wheat VP Northwest

northwestvp@FCMmail.org

Welcome to summer from the Northwest region.

Things are moving along well up here in the northwest as we enter our much more habitable and friendly season. I hope everyone is doing well and enjoying the sunshine. We are planning to have a Portland area gathering on July 19th at 6pm PST at Steeplejack on the east side of Portland. There will also be a zoom option for those who aren't able to make it in person or would prefer that.

I also want to say that watching what is happening across our country has been haunting.

These are certainly unprecedented times. I want you all to know that I am always available to catch up, yell, or cry with anyone about what we have seen happening. A special shoutout to our VA chaplains as they navigate a nearly constant changing landscape navigating this administration and it's policies.

I want to end with a blessing for us all from John O'Donohue. I have been feeling the business creep up on me as I try to fit all the things from being pent up all winter. My partner and I have been going what feels like nonstop and this one always help me when my plate is feeling more and more full.

When the rhythm of the heart becomes hectic,
Time takes on the strain until it breaks;
Then all the unattended stress falls in
On the mind like an endless, increasing weight,

The light in the mind becomes dim.
Things you could take in your stride before
Now become laborsome events of will.

Weariness invades your spirit.
Gravity begins falling inside you,
Dragging down every bone.

The tide you never valued has gone out.
And you are marooned on unsure ground.
Something within you has closed down;
And you cannot push yourself back to life.

You have been forced to enter empty time.
The desire that drove you has relinquished.

There is nothing else to do now but rest
And patiently learn to receive the self
You have forsaken for the race of days.

At first your thinking will darken
And sadness take over like listless weather.
The flow of unwept tears will frighten you.

You have traveled too fast over false ground;
Now your soul has come to take you back.

Take refuge in your senses, open up
To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain
When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,
Taking time to open the well of color
That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.
Learn to linger around someone of ease
Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

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FCM Directory

FCM Circle of Directors

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FCM Website: <https://fedcm.org>

FCM Additional Contacts

Prayer Support Leader/Coordinator:
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Email: prayersupport@FCMmail.org
Realm Administrator
Randy Dawson - Email: connect@FCMmail.org
Membership Administrator
Carolyn Horvath - Phone: 216.571.7698 Email:
membership@FCMmail.org

FCM Certificates

These lovely certificates are available from the FCM Central Office. Please specify your choice: Baptism, Marriage, Holy Union, and the number of certificates you need. Certificates are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. Each certificate is printed on certificate-weight paper in blue ink; they carry the FCM logo and seal.

FCM Baptism and Wedding Registries

are now on www.onrealm.org Sacramental Registry - Click EVENTS and follow directions for additional help. Email: registry@fcmmail.org or connect@fcmmail.org

Endorsement for Specialized Ministries

Qualified FCM members may apply for "Religious Body Endorsement" for the specialized ministries of Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Pastoral Education. Such endorsement is required by professional certifying organizations and many institutional employers. The FCM Circle of Directors acts on endorsement applications three times yearly. Endorsement application materials are available for downloading on the FCM website at: www.fedcm.org. Inquiries may be made by email at: specmin@FCMmail.org

Global Ministries University, GMU,

offers degree completion programs, certificates, a Celebrant Training Program, and individual courses online. FCM members are eligible for a 10% discount on degree programs. For more information, visit the web site:

www.globalministriesuniversity.org.

Email: info@globalministriesuniversity.org, Phone: 866.419.8020 toll-free

FCM Job Board

As part of our mission to empower and nurture ministers & ministries, we have launched a members-only job board on Realm! To add to the job board, click "resources," -> "add resource," -> "link," -> and then type in the title, location in the notes, and include the link in the appropriate section. Sign into Realm, then request to join the Job Board community. After approval, you may sign into Realm at the address below and browse jobs folks have submitted under "Resources." You can add a job by clicking "Add Resource."

<https://onrealm.org/fcm/Groups/GroupResources/5453c084-88cc-458c-a9da-b2ec00f04ef4>

FCM Newsletter-

The FCM Newsletter is published bi-monthly. As the informational publication of FCM, its mission is to keep members current with the organization and its activities, to provide ideas to further ministry, and to promote community-building among local FCM groups and the national organization. All current members receive a copy. Articles and feedback are welcomed and can be sent to: newsletter@FCMmail.org (text) and fcmnewsletterproducer@gmail.com (text and photos). FCM member-submitted articles should aim for 500 words and 2-3 selected photos.

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