

## ACCA MISSION STATEMENT

It shall be the purpose of the American Correctional Chaplains Association [ACCA], an affiliate of the American Correctional Association [ACA], to:

- serve as a professional organization for pastoral care personnel in the corrections field,
- provide a network for sharing of information and resources amongst its members and with corrections administrators,
- formulate standards for chaplaincy and religious programming in correctional facilities,
- develop and implement certification for correctional chaplains,
- advance the role of correctional chaplains, and
- communicate the religious and spiritual aspects of corrections to the larger community.



Prison officials recognize the importance of religious involvement in prison. As an assistant state commissioner of corrections commented, *"In a state of incarceration, especially when you're doing heavy time, you don't have many hope pegs to hang your being on. Religion is one of those hope pegs."*

Even the courts have recognized that *"stripping a prisoner of the opportunity to maintain and strengthen his religious and ethical values would be so counterproductive of good sentencing principles as to require reconsideration of incarceration."*

- excerpted from **Brooklyn Law Review 477**



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For more information and  
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visit the ACCA website at  
[www.correctionalchaplains.org](http://www.correctionalchaplains.org)

**ACCA is a multi-faith organization  
that was established in 1885.**

# IF THEY'RE SO RELIGIOUS



# HOW COME THEY'RE IN PRISON?

A message from the

**AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL  
CHAPLAINS ASSOCIATION**

[www.correctionalchaplains.org](http://www.correctionalchaplains.org)

Of course, most inmates weren't all that ethically, morally or religiously observant before they were imprisoned and became involved in correctional programs.



Fortunately, however, in-custody and post-release religious programs are available to help offenders turn their lives around, to open the doors to them becoming productive, law-abiding citizens.

Members of the **American Correctional Chaplains Association [ACCA]** are privileged to serve as messengers in furthering this objective.

### THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL CORRECTIONAL CHAPLAIN



Much like our colleagues in the military and at hospitals, correctional chaplains provide pastoral care to those

who are disconnected from the general community by certain circumstances – in this case to those who are imprisoned, as well as to correctional facility staff and their families when requested. Where permitted, we also minister to the families of prisoners.

Each correctional chaplain is also a representative of his or her faith community and is required to be endorsed by their religious body in order to qualify as a chaplain.

Correctional chaplains are **professionals**, with specialized training in the unique dynamics of the corrections system and institutional ministry. They are full-time correctional facility employees or part-time contract employees.

### SPECIFIC DUTIES OF CHAPLAINS

Correctional facility staff chaplains act as **Religious Programs Managers**, insuring that all prisoners are afforded the opportunities to practice the faiths of their choice and coordinating the various activities of those faith groups. This requires extensive knowledge of the standards and practices of a diverse range of faiths and denominations therein, as well as policies and procedures that govern all aspects of the prison system.



Chaplains provide **pastoral counseling**, thereby affording opportunities for the imprisoned and others impacted by corrections to dialogue openly about their concerns. This frequently includes **notification** of death or other tragedy and **grief counseling** in such situations – particularly difficult tasks that require special sensitivity.

Chaplains provide **marriage counseling** when needed, both to those already married and those contemplating marriage.



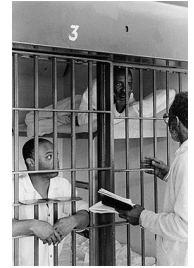
Chaplains perform **liturgical duties** for their own religious denominations.

Chaplains are the primary advisors on and implementers of **religious program policy**, clarifying issues involving various faith practices, religious articles, religious diets and other religious standards and insuring that these are permitted to fullest extent possible within usually restrictive corrections environs.

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Chaplains are responsible for **religious volunteer recruitment, training and coordination**, working closely with representatives of the various faith communities to encourage community participation in correctional facility programs and insuring that volunteer activities are conducted in a diverse, yet secure manner.

Chaplains are very much a part of the **orderly operation** of correctional facilities by providing positive reinforcement and diffusing frustration, anger and stress amongst prisoners and staff, thereby lessening threats, assaults and other negative behaviors. They positively impact the **finances** of correctional facilities by resolving disputes, averting harm to individuals and damage to facilities and the lawsuits that may result from such occurrences and issues of religious rights.



Chaplains **represent Corrections**, particularly in matters of community liaison, advising other clergy and laypersons of corrections matters and thereby raising the awareness of the larger religious and secular communities to the uniqueness of correctional issues.

***"Chaplains are important in a correctional setting because they help offenders develop a healthy attitude toward themselves and staff in the prison where the offenders are incarcerated; Chaplains help offenders develop a positive spiritual reality regardless of religious preference and they help promote spiritual growth that will assist in an orderly transition from a prison environment to the outside community."***

– Tom Rolfs, former Director,  
Division of Prisons,

Washington State Department of Corrections