

## Comment

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*Hauna Ondrey, editor, teaching fellow in church history,  
North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois*

**T**he Covenant has a rich legacy of chaplaincy. Even before the Covenant's official organization in 1885, Mission Friends supported chaplains who offered practical and spiritual care to Swedish immigrants arriving in a strange land. Currently approximately 10 percent of the Covenant Ministerium serves in chaplaincy roles in locations as diverse as military, hospitals, correctional facilities, hospice, universities, corporate workplaces, and retirement communities.

In this issue several of our chaplains reflect theologically on the distinct opportunities and challenges they experience in chaplaincy ministry. In doing so they offer practical insight to all pastoral caregivers.

Drawing from thirty years as a U.S. Navy chaplain and thirty-six as professor of Old Testament (Denver Seminary and North Park Theological Seminary), Robert L. Hubbard Jr. explores the incarnational nature of chaplaincy. He traces God's long journey toward humanity, from tabernacle, to temple and prophets, culminating in God's assuming flesh in the incarnation. Chaplains too have a ministry of incarnation, giving "skin" to God's presence in the world—*going out* to people who may never step into a church.

Tim Fretheim, chaplain at Vancouver's Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, considers the particular difficulty of providing spiritual care for those suffering from delusions of grandiosity with religious content. When a pathology manifests in religious forms, how does the chaplain nurture genuine religious experience while not inhibiting the healing of pathological experience? Fretheim offers an accessible introduction to grandiose delusion with religious content—its definition, diagnosis, and origin—and offers practical tools for the chaplain's unique role in the care of persons suffering from such delusions.

Joel Jueckstock and Kyle Vlach, both chaplains and clinical pastoral education supervisors in the Twin Cities, call pastoral caregivers beyond a passive notion of “presence” to an active use of self in providing pastoral care. They affirm the agency of caregivers in “co-creating” healing narratives with the subject of care and the Holy Spirit. Jueckstock and Vlach provide specific resources for pastoral caregivers to assume responsibility for the healthy use of self in ministry and the constant growth in self-knowledge this requires.

Finally, Amy Simpson, senior editor of *Leadership Journal*, addresses how the church body can support families struggling with mental illness, in a paper originating in North Park University and Theological Seminary’s symposium, “Being Present: A Faithful Response to Mental Illness” (November 8, 2014), sponsored by the Good Shepherd Initiative and Covenant Ministries of Benevolence. Drawing from research and her own family’s experience with schizophrenia, Simpson offers practical ways for the whole church to walk alongside families struggling with mental illness.

We are indebted to our chaplains for ministering to diverse communities beyond the walls of the church—and to the reflections they offer here that invite and equip the whole church to mediate Christ to those suffering physically, emotionally, and mentally in our pews and in our communities.

For more resources and discussion, join us at [Forum: Dialoging with the Covenant Quarterly](#).