

Distinctions Between Local Clergy and Trained Chaplains

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The following lists a number of distinguishing characteristics between local clergy and trained Chaplains. There are not always clear, sharp boundaries. These characteristics function more like different ends of the same spectrum. In certain situations, local clergy may work from the distinctives of the trained Chaplain quite well. I am thankful to Jack Poe, Chaplain for the Oklahoma City Police Department, whose conversations helped highlight these distinguishing characteristics.

<u>Local Clergy</u>	<u>Trained Chaplains</u>
Minimal training in crisis situations.	Trained and experienced in crisis ministry.
Not as experienced in an ecumenical setting, less knowledge of diversity.	Accustomed to working with various faith groups in an ecumenical setting.
Accustomed to talking more than listening.	Understand the importance of listening and talking only when it facilitates or provides a supportive role or intervention.
Unaccustomed to pastoral interventions.	Understand important interventions (anywhere from, “You appear real tired,” to “It’s time to consider getting away from here for a while.”).
Accustomed to working independently without consultation or inter-disciplinary experience.	Accustomed to working as a team with multi-disciplines. The role is for a larger purpose towards which all are pulling together.
Focus of attention. People do come to church and synagogue to “hear” the preacher or Rabbi.	Not the focus of attention. One of many equals.
Clergy unprepared for what they see and hear.	More experienced to trauma scenes and their appearances (emergency room, auto and fire scenes).
Risk of traumatizing the volunteer clergy. (One clergy had a breakdown about two months later, in part attributed to his work at the site.)	Less risk of traumatizing the Chaplain. Some knowledge of the importance of talking through their own story.
The risk of re-traumatizing the recovery workers through a lack of understanding their role.	More helpful to the recovery and rescue workers.
Health risk to clergy. Not sure of updated medical history and important immunizations or tests. (Biohazard at bomb site.)	Chaplains more likely to be up-to-date on Tetanus and TB. Accustomed to working closely with the ill and injured.
No tests for chemical dependency.	Tested for chemical dependency.