Hi All:

My name is Ken Burg and I am a full-time C&MA chaplain at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis. I have served in this role for seven years. I am also an on-call crisis/trauma chaplain at Children’s Hospitals of Minnesota.

Several months ago, Don Wiggins asked me if I would be willing to be the "point person" for chaplain ministry in our district. I eagerly said “Yes.” To be clear, with the elimination of the national endorser position held by Rich Gorman, the endorsement task will be fulfilled by our new District Superintendent, Dr. Dan Scarrow. Licensing and ordination will be done by our LO&CC Committee.

I see my volunteer role as being one of encouragement and support for our men and women in chaplaincy. Having also been through the entire process of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) and professional board certification, I am available for consultation. It can be a tricky path for an evangelical.

We have many wonderful chaplains in our district who serve in various settings: hospitals, military, prisons, police forces, and more. Institutional chaplaincy provides a unique angle into the lives of hurting people. Whereas many folk would never darken the door of a church, we are there with them during stressful critical times to be the light of Jesus, providing comfort, grace and hope.

Kevin Norton has been doing an amazing job of encouraging our chaplains and getting us together each year at District Conference. Thank you Kevin! I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Dr. Don Wiggins has been a strong supporter of our chaplains and deserves our gratitude as well. I also want to thank Richard Gorman for his faithful and encouraging ministry these past many years.

If you know of someone who is interested in chaplain ministry, I am here to help. Please send them my way.

Blessings on you all,

Ken   kennethburg@gmail.com   612-246-5374
BIOS, UPDATES, AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Below you will find updates from some of our North Central District C&MA Chaplains. Some also include bios. More bios can be found in the June 2018 issue.

Please keep all of our Chaplains in prayer.

“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

Ken Burg

I've served since 2011 as a full-time institutional chaplain at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis. I provide patient, family and staff care, especially focusing on cardiology. Prior to that (1980 - 2010) I pastored churches in Philadelphia, PA, Albany, NY, New Hope, MN, and Northfield, MN. I did my CPE at Park Nicollet Methodist in 2010-2011 and worked alongside our own Michelle Griffith and Jim Ferguson!

I am also an on-call chaplain at Children’s Hospitals of Minnesota, covering campuses in Minneapolis and St. Paul for emergency situations, deaths, Level 1 Traumas, and patient/family distress.

ENCOURAGEMENT! I am very encouraged at how chaplaincy in a secular environment has helped me to understand our world better. Just as Paul had to "translate" the gospel in Acts 17 by knowing his audience, it has been fascinating to "marinate" in the hospital culture and find new ways to talk about faith. I have never before had so many unchurched friends. It is a joy and honor to work alongside them, hear their triumphs and sorrows, meet them where they're at, pray for them, and be the light of Jesus.
CHALLENGE! By the same token, it is challenging to work in a culturally diverse environment. Our chaplain staff, interns and residents, come from a wide variety of faith traditions: Buddhist, Sufi Muslim, Unitarian Universalist, Lutheran (ELCA & Missouri Synod), United Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Catholic, Baptist, Evangelical Covenant, Theological Progressives, Cosmological Spirituality, and yes, C&MA. It is a microcosm of the world we live in.

STORY! About four years ago when I started my on-call job at Children's Hospital, I was called in to a serious trauma in the Emergency Room. It was my very first case in that role and I was nervous. Everything was new about this place. It turns out that the family in need was a C&MA family. They were surprised that I was a C&MA chaplain. They blessed me and I believe that I blessed them, and their little one made a full recovery. Since that night I've responded to hundreds of cases. In all that time, I've only had a few other such C&MA families. I still smile as I recall the surprise gift of that first night..."Thanks, God! You knew what we all needed that evening!"

FUN FACT! Our own Ike Kingson will be doing a one-year Chaplain Residency at Abbott NW Hospital Sept/2018 so we get to hang out!

John Braland

In addition to being a CMA pastor, I serve with International Ministerial Fellowship. We partnered with the National Association of Evangelicals to put on a conference specifically designed for military, hospital, and prison chaplains. This year, we discussed the legalities chaplains face, encouraged them in ministry, and also had the opportunity to have a prescreening of the movie Indivisible. The movie is based on a true story about a military chaplain and his family. What made it even more special was that the couple the movie is based on were at the conference. I brought my 19-year-old son with me on this trip to equip and minister to chaplains.

Equipping chaplains is a unique ministry. They can feel isolated and alone serving all over the world. It was great to pour into these men and women, helping to develop them so they can minister effectively. Being a chaplain offers believers the opportunity to serve with so many people groups. As soon as I returned home, I was able to pray for two large motorcycle clubs in their annual fundraising runs. My calling to make disciples extends far outside the walls of the local church. Yours does too. Thank you for serving.
Gary Dorn
Chaplain Reality from Rugby –

A recent decision to add an ambulance driver (after regular hours) to the hospital chaplain role has been beneficial. Most of the runs are transfers to a bigger hospital an hour away, with a few 911 calls mixed in. The experience and additional training have literally opened doors for when the CODE call comes, and the trauma team moves to ER. There are light moments such as when a patient notices you are a chaplain and asks the doctor if there is something they aren’t telling them. But other moments dealing with SIDS and teenage heart attacks drive home the reality of life and importance of sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world. And then the wonderful moments when someone comes to know Jesus as their Savior – and the joy in their heart is reflected on their face! Praise the Lord for His amazing grace! Challenges of late would include finding that fine line between absorbing so much pain that I become ineffective and becoming so cold to death and pain that I become ineffective at sharing HIS love. It is a very fine line indeed!

Mike Hardesty

I was born on June 7, 1966, as the ninth of twelve children raised in the Akron, Ohio area. My mom became a Christian when I was young and taught me Bible stories, but church was not part of our lives. As a teenager, I was not exactly a model student or citizen, but, thankfully, I was able to enlist in the Marine Corps. In November, 1984, I was stationed at the same base as my brother John, who had become a true follower of Jesus Christ. After hearing the Gospel of Grace at a Bible Study with the Navigators, I put my faith in Christ. I was baptized and immediately joined a local church, where I was discipled, grew in my faith and even began to hear the call into ministry.

While stationed on the Island of Okinawa in Japan, I saw missions firsthand as I was able to be involved with the planting of Naha Evangelical Free Church. I also met my future wife, a missionary teacher at Okinawa Christian School. Darla and I married on June 16, 1990. God blessed us with two amazing children, Jonathan, who is now 23 and starting seminary, and Lydia who is 22 and serving with Child Evangelism Fellowship. They are both walking with God and involved in ministry. Darla presently teaches fourth grade at Lakeview Christian Academy in Duluth, Minnesota.

I am presently serving as pastor of Gethsemane Covenant Church in Hermantown, Minnesota, as well as a volunteer chaplain with Saint Louis County Law Enforcement Chaplains. My interests include spending time with my family, target shooting and reloading, hunting, fishing, and reading.
Kirk Knutsen

I am the Lead Pastor at Trio Community Church in Mora, Minnesota, where I started in August of 2016. Though I am ordained with the CMA, Trio is an independent church. I have been married to my lovely wife Jenny since we graduated from Crown College in 2001, and we now have a son who was born in 2007, and a daughter who was born in 2009, in 5th and 4th grades in the Mora schools. I served as a volunteer police chaplain with the Sartell and Sauk Rapids Police Departments for 8 years, and now am serving as a marketplace chaplain at Imperial Plastics in Mora, employed part-time as a chaplain with Marketplace Ministries. I started at Imperial in the middle of May 2018.

**Ministry updates & Stories:** I have been serving as a paid Marketplace Chaplain for about three months. Imperial Plastics has hired Marketplace Ministries to provide exceptional employee care to their employees that is free, confidential, voluntary, and available to their families as well. Having enjoyed serving as a police chaplain, a door that is not currently open in my location, this opportunity seemed like a good fit. I thought it would take several months to get to know people enough to trust me. Yet, less than a week after I first visited the plant, I received a call from an employee whose 20-year-old daughter had died in a tragic situation the previous evening. I met this family at their home and spent two hours with them walking them through next steps and options for arrangements, counseling, and funeral concerns. (It turns out I went to elementary school with the employee’s wife for a while, which added a level of trust and comfort for them). They were completely unfamiliar with the death/funeral process. There were some unusual circumstances around this death, which I had worked through with a family previously, and so felt well equipped to explain the situation and help them know what to do with it. I have followed up with this family regularly and they are recovering. I have become friends with this employee, and he and his wife invited my wife and me to sit with them at the company picnic a couple of weeks ago.

More recently, at the beginning of July, an employee told me he was dealing with serious depression and was trapped in a relationship he wasn’t sure how to get out of. I listened and asked him questions to help him think through what his next steps could and should be. A week later he called me in my office and asked me to meet him at the workplace, which I did. He said he was feeling suicidal, so he agreed to let me have him admitted to the hospital. He asked if I could visit him in treatment a few days later, and he was like a completely different person. He had ended his destructive relationship, and decided to move back home to live with his parents to avoid the negative influences surrounding him. He is now being treated for his depression, and he thanked me for helping to save his life. My being available as a chaplain and learning his name was our only connecting point, and this young man sought me, a Christian chaplain at his workplace, for help which I was able to offer, when no one else was available for him. God is opening these doors and more, and I have only been on site for three months so far.

*(Continued)*
What’s encouraging: I was encouraged by the open doors at my work site. I have had meaningful and deep conversations with at least eight employees so far who are dealing with heavy and difficult situations. I have been able to pray with two of them.

What’s challenging: Imperial Plastics recently replaced both their CEO and CFO. There is a strong push to save/cut costs wherever they can, so though HR and the plant managers are very positive towards chaplains, our future at Imperial is under scrutiny and in some flux right now.

Prayer requests: Pray that the new leadership at Imperial sees the service and value the chaplains are providing, and chooses to keep their chaplain program going. We are also adding a chaplain into the Mora plant (Wendy), so pray her transition goes smoothly. Thank you.

Clyde Leimberer
Dear North Central District Chaplain Friends;

As a retired NCD Chaplain, I applaud the appointment of you, Ken, as our leader. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you in your respective positions.

I am probably the second oldest (by age) chaplain in the district. The oldest is Phil Sorenson, who currently lives in Winona, and had been a hospital chaplain in Colorado before retiring to Minnesota to be close to family. He was active with me in the South-east Minnesota Pastors Prayer Fellowship before family health issues limited his involvement.

As for me, I pastored C&MA Churches throughout the Midwest including Wadena and Huron in this District. At age 50, I went to the North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls and earned a Master’s Degree in Adult and Family Ministries with a focus on Gerontology. In the providence of God, I landed a position as Chaplain/Assistant Administrator at The Baptist Home in Bismarck, North Dakota. There were around 265 residents in independent living, basic care and skilled nursing care there with another 275 on staff. The year that I retired (2009), I was named the Chaplain of the Year by the North Dakota Long Term Care Association and the state Chaplains Association which included hospital chaplains.

Continuing education has been a passion of mine that led to travels and friendships from coast to coast and meeting people from National Association of Evangelicals, the Good Samaritan Association, Southern Baptists, Evangelical Free and other organizations. We worked hard to develop a support network for chaplains in long term care facilities and senior adult groups around the country. It is gratifying to see how this
support of non-federal chaplains has developed in districts now in the Alliance.

In retirement, I have had the opportunity to have a ‘tool belt ministry’ after the earthquake in Haiti and to serve with the Red Cross in New York City after Hurricane Sandy. I also served as a reservist and chaplain to the Northfield Police Department and Rice County Sheriff’s Department. I still enjoy leading Bible studies at our cooperative housing complex and filling the pulpit whenever asked.

Rest assured, my friends, of our continuing support and encouragement.

Michelle Griffith

This summer has been busy at the hospital. I had the opportunity to support several families going through perinatal loss. These losses are always sudden and unexpected, with immense grief. I continue to be amazed by the way God gives me what I need for those moments. The ministry is challenging, for their grief is so intense and their stories so sad. But I am encouraged knowing that God is using me to care for them in this moment of time; after that, I refer them to our bereavement RN and release them in prayer, knowing they continue to be in the care of God. I also continue to support the care team and staff who serve these families.

I assist in planning and conducting a yearly memorial service for families who have experienced perinatal loss. And sometimes I do hear from them several weeks or months after their loss: “Dear Michelle, Thank you for providing us with support during our time of loss. It was so comforting to have you speak with us. We are so thankful for the beautiful prayer and blessing service you performed for us.” I am thankful that God brings words of encouragement our way, often when we need them most.

I continue to work in the NICU, supporting families with sick or premature babies. Part of my ministry is also responding to requests for pre-surgical prayer. While some patients and families are regular church-goers, many have not set foot in a church for many years. Please continue to pray for both of these ministries.

I am one of several Chaplains who conduct Sunday morning services for Auburn Homes, a facility of assisted living, rehab, and skilled nursing care. I have appreciated the opportunity to worship with some amazing souls singing traditional hymns (only hymns allowed!) and reflecting on the Word of God. I will be taking a break from Auburn for a couple months to lead our youth Sunday school class. (God certainly has a sense of humor!) Please pray that God will help me make the transition and be able to pour into the lives of our youth.
Smoke and Tire Barbecue Fest at Falls Ballroom to benefit Morrison County Chaplaincy

By Sheila McCoy, staff writer, Morrison County Record (Reprinted with permission)

This article appeared in the Morrison County Record in August. While the event has passed, I thought you would enjoy reading it and learning more about Gregg’s work. - Michelle

It has been an adventurous journey for Chaplain Gregg Valentine since the Morrison County Chaplaincy was established in 2003. Not only in his role as a chaplain, but also in his personal life.

“It’s been good,” he said.

The Morrison County Chaplaincy is one of 39 chaplaincies in a state with 87 counties. One thing Valentine has found is that most people see the value of having a chaplaincy.

In an effort to support the chaplaincy and what it does, the Smoke and Tire Barbecue Fest, will be held, Wednesday, Aug. 22, from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the Falls Ballroom, at 15870 Highway 27 in Little Falls.

Visitors are asked to park in the former Walmart parking lot near Tractor Supply Company at 18th St. SE in Little Falls. Shuttle buses will bring visitors to and from the event.

Valentine said the need for a chaplaincy became evident more than ever after the World Trade Centers in New York City, N.Y. collapsed in a terrorist attack, Sept. 11, 2001. Many emergency personnel were debriefed, not only because of what they had witnessed or the fact that the country was under attack, but because people they knew died or were injured, as well.

People in general also showed their support for emergency workers — something Valentine has observed decline since then, he said.

Valentine wears many hats as a police chaplain. He is called upon whenever there has been a serious accident, crime, homicide or possible suicide.

He handles the emotional aspect that come as a result of an incident and offers support to victims, family members and others. He also notifies family members when a loved one has died.

Because Valentine handles this side, emergency workers are freed up to do their job, such as law enforcement officers investigating a crime.
Because police officers, emergency medical technicians and others face many horrific situations frequently, being able to debrief keeps the individual from developing compound trauma.

Just like the emergency personnel needs to be debriefed, Valentine stays on top with his own mental health.

He meets twice a week with Chaplain Dave Greaver with the Central Minnesota Chaplaincy of Todd County. They get together to train, to eat breakfast, talk about different situations they have faced that week, attend conferences and more.

One thing they both have encountered lately are more suicides, Valentine said. The best part of the job for Valentine is the opportunity to support people in their time of need.

Valentine has responded to more than 1,500 incidents since the chaplaincy was established and remembers many incidents.

Valentine recalls an incident several years ago when an individual threatened to jump off a tall building to commit suicide.  

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He was successful in talking the individual down from the building. Several years later, the two met again. Not a word was spoken, but yet everything was said when the individual walked past and squeezed Valentine’s shoulder with a slight nod.

“Everything was said loud and clear. That is the reward of this job,” he said.

When Valentine started working as a chaplain, he weighed 420 pounds. The weight gain was a result of a misdiagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis.

As soon as he was placed on Prednisone, he started retaining fluids. Another side effect of the medication was that it gave him an appetite like he had never seen before.

When his weight gain reached the point where he had trouble buttoning his shirt, he returned to the doctor about it.

“He asked me if they had ever taken out any fluid from my ankles or joints to make sure that it was rheumatoid arthritis,” Valentine said.

After he was tested, it became clear he wasn’t suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. Instead, he had a severe case of gout, Valentine said.

Valentine had a gastric surgery in 2010 and has since lost about half the weight he once had.

“Looking back, I was like two of me. It was like I was carrying another person around,” he said.

Valentine is looking forward to the Smoke and Tire Barbecue Fest. The event also includes a car show on the lot in front of Falls Ballroom, along with the new Morrison County Sheriff’s Office Command Center and a fire truck that people can see at no cost.

Tickets to the event will be sold at the door at the event and also includes a live band, brewery sampling and pit masters competing for the best barbecue.