

## THE SOUL OF A CHAPLAIN

### Belonging

**W**orking as a chaplain has created in me a greater sense of belonging

in the world. I have found that as I engage in chaplaincy, I see a broader swath of the human family as my very own.

There is something about worshipping or sharing my spirituality with someone that makes me feel that they are included in what I subconsciously understand as “my people.” Up until I began work as a chaplain, “my people” were highly conservative Korean American Christians (the worshipping community that reared me), the Presbyterian seminary community, and also the very progressive end of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It was not so much broad as bipolar and compartmentalized. I often felt lost and misdirected as I lived out my vocation. This also translated to how I walked in the world. My people were divided and separated theologically and culturally, and I did not fit anywhere.

As a chaplain, I began to be deeply spiritual with people that I had experienced in the world but with whom I had not found myself ever before sharing an honest, striving, searching, and stretching spiritual experience. I shared my spirituality with people with whom I had never before shared my most intimate and vulnerable self. The very rich, the very poor, the incarcerated, the homeless, the Native American, the Muslim, the Jew, the Buddhist, the non-Christian, the ‘none,’ the drug addict, the abused, the abuser, and the neglected in my community and I met each other in our deepest humanity, our truest selves. Yes, these people whom I had met but had never known became “my people.”

By meeting, serving, and loving these people, I have felt embraced and loved myself. You see, as a Korean American woman, I have more often felt that I am the outsider rather than the privileged citizen. Belonging is something I long for but have not known. I had believed that if I delved deep within to understand who I am or if I answered God’s call on my life as one with a vocation in Christian ministry, that I would find my place in the world. But, no, I have tried many things, and I have not found a profound sense of welcome in the world. Rather, I have found belonging as I share my spiritual life with each new patient—by serving my community and all its people. They have loved me. They have embraced me. They have affirmed me—my call and my humanity. There could be no greater embrace for my soul than this.

Because I know, now, that I belong here in my own city, country, and

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world and that the whole of the human family is indeed my own, I feel empowered to simply live my life in freedom and joy. It is the diversity of the people that I meet that has somehow fed the longings of my subconscious being. It is chaplaincy that has given me the ability to reflect on this in such a way that I can articulate and finally know that this has happened to me. For this, my soul rejoices.

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