



Operational Ministry in Extremis

A Guide to Religion-specific End-of-life Ministry



Drake C. Cottman

**This book is dedicated to my wife, Shayli,
and our children Cole and Gracie. This
book would not exist without their sacrifice
and support.**

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Guidebook Objectives:

The primary purpose of this guidebook is to provide a readily-available resource for chaplains on how to conduct religion-specific end-of-life ministry.

This guidebook contains suggestions for chaplain ministry for 9 distinct faith backgrounds:

- Catholicism
- General Christianity
- Judaism
- Islam
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Wicca
- Asatru/Norse Paganism
- Hinduism
- Buddhism

There are three major sections to this guidebook. The **introduction** provides a brief literature review on the benefits of religious support at the end of life. The following section provides source material and **suggestions for chaplain ministry** for these 9 religious faiths. The final section is a **simplified version** of these suggestions which is intended to be printed out and carried by chaplains.

Introduction

All humans will die. This fact led authors Ferguson and Oliphint to state that “Death, we say, is the great leveler, the ultimate equalizer” (Ferguson and Oliphant 2004, 44). As much as modern science and medicine work to prolong the inevitable, death is, in fact, inevitable. Despite death’s being an integral part of human existence, it remains a universal fear. Even for those who have strong religious convictions and believe in an afterlife, when confronted with death, we cower. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross put it this way, “Death is still a fearful frightening happening, and the fear of death is a universal fear even if we think we have mastered it on many levels” (1990, 12). This universal fear of death is exactly the reason that ministry and support at the end of life is so crucial. Supporting the dying spiritually will do much to alleviate this fear.

Even religious individuals experience spiritual struggles when facing death (Pargament, et al. 2005, 252). Therefore, attending to the emotional and spiritual needs of the dying is critical to their overall well-being in their last moments of life. Spirituality and religion are some of the strongest predictors of positive attitudes in terminally ill patients, and are negatively correlated to feelings of hopelessness and suicidal ideation. In a study of palliative care patients with less than three months to live, researchers found that those high in spiritual well-being were less likely to desire hastened death, feel hopelessness, and experience suicidal ideation. This was true even when variables like depression were controlled. The analysis even showed that those with depression were much less likely to experience suicidal

ideation if they had high spiritual well-being (McClain, Rosenfeld, and Breitbart 2003).

Individuals who know they will die have also been shown to display increased abilities to cope with the emotional stress of their own death the more religious they are. Koenig, et al. studied over 800 ill patients over the age of 50 to investigate the effect their spirituality had on their overall health. They found that higher levels of religiosity or spirituality were strong predictors of greater social support, decreased levels of depression, and better cognitive functioning (2004). Another investigation involving hundreds of hospice patients over a two-year period explored the effects of religiosity on emotional health and suffering at the end of life. The study found that those who had an internalized religion experienced less emotional suffering and greater acceptance of their own death (Neimeyer et al. 2011).

In a study of over 1,600 terminally ill cancer patients, researchers determined that levels of personal spirituality were positively correlated with overall quality of life (Brady et al. 1999, 421-423). In other words, the stronger people's personal spirituality, the more capable they were of coping with their own impending death. Another study supported this conclusion, suggesting that those with strong religious beliefs are better able to handle their own deaths than those who reported that religion was of little or no importance in their lives (Gordon et al. 2002, 162). This is likely the reason that patients often report that it is important for their physician and other members of their medical team to understand their religion and spirituality (MacLean et al. 2003).

In addition to overall quality of life leading up to death, spiritual support and religious faith have also been shown to improve overall health and mortality rates in patients (McCullough et al. 2000). This could be due to the fact that most religious traditions have some theological teachings about death and its succeeding stage which provides solace and peace to the individual. It could also be that individuals are able to move past a conceptualization of death as an enemy or a problem to be solved or overcome. Whereas a nonreligious person might experience more anger, frustration, and hopelessness, a religious person often feels peace and is able to maintain hope despite the outcome of their experience.

Another body of research strongly suggests that religious coping at the end of life can also increase mental health and the ability to process complex emotions. Ano and Vasconcelles conducted a meta-analysis of 49 studies which investigated the effects of religion on terminal patients. These studies included over thirteen thousand participants, both male and female of varying ages and ethnicities. Ano and Vasconcelles found that there was a significant positive correlation between positive religious coping and positive psychological adjustment, as well as for negative religious coping and negative psychological adjustment (2005). Put another way, people who had higher levels of positive religious coping also experienced higher ability for positive psychological adjustment, while those with higher levels of negative religious coping strategies experienced increases in negative psychological coping.

The physical, emotional, and psychological benefits of religion and spirituality in these extreme circumstances are

likely what led many to seek out opportunities to receive religious support from family, clergy, and chaplains. A 2008 study reported that over 62% of hospitalized patients desired regular visits from a chaplain at least every few days (Piderman et al. 2008). The same study also reported that of those who received visits, close to 90% of them reported that the visits were helpful. Arora explains this by writing, “People need spiritual caregivers who create and nurture healing relationships with narrative competence and compassionate presence to help facilitate ongoing meaning making of illness experiences” (2020, 53). While these caregivers could obviously be family or even medical professionals, chaplains occupy a unique role in facilitating this meaning-making process for those who are nearing their own death. When confronted with spiritual distress, people are better equipped to resolve their issues if they have relationships of trust in which they feel comfortable addressing difficult topics with people who will respect their spiritual beliefs (des Ordonis et al. 2018). Chaplains are imbued by others with a type of innate trust which allows them to connect with people, even in this most vulnerable of positions, and provide them much needed spiritual support.

Conversely, some who have had negative or even traumatic experiences with spirituality and religion may employ negative spiritual coping methods when confronted with death (Arora 2020, 104). While these cases exist, various studies have shown that the rate of positive spiritual effects at the end of life are much higher than negative (Harrison et al. 2001). Regardless, chaplains should be aware of the possibility that religion could potentially exac-

erbate mental, emotional, and spiritual distress at the end of life. For example, a person who is working to accept the reality of their imminent death may feel increased distress if her religious conceptualizations or experiences have been negative or traumatic (i.e., convincing herself that she is unworthy of Heaven and will be punished in Hell). It may be that a chaplain's role in such a situation would be to help the individual work through some of these negative religious beliefs, or perhaps simply provide comforting words in the final moments of life.

In addition to conducting religious services, chaplains in the Armed Forces frequently engage in pastoral counseling and support for service members and their families (Besterman-Dahan 2012, 1029). This pastoral counseling may or may not be religious in nature, but it certainly can be. Though the majority of both the Armed Forces and the Chaplain Corps professes a Christian faith, many other non-Christian faiths are also represented. In a 2009 comparison of five datasets on religious demographics in the Armed Forces, approximately 8.5 percent of the entire force identifies with a non-Christian religion (Hunter and Smith 2009, 2). These include Jewish, Muslim, and Pagan, among others. Assuming the trends already mentioned regarding religion in the United States have continued, it is likely that these numbers may be even greater today.

One Army Field Manual states, "Memorial ceremonies, services, and funerals reflect the emphasis the American people place on the worth and value of the individual" (DOA 2012). Extending this statement to casualty and end of life ministry helps illustrate just how significant ministry in extremis can and should be. In fact, two of the three core

competencies of the US Army Chaplain Corps are “Care for the wounded” and “Honor the dead” (DOA 2019). In order to better equip chaplains to fulfill these competencies, the following section outlines recommended end-of-life ministry practices for the nine religions included in the field guide.

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Religion-Specific End-of-life Ministry

A Field Guide for Armed Forces Chaplains

By Drake C. Cottman

Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church, like the rest of Christianity (but perhaps more so), can trace its genesis back to the object of their devotion, Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church has published official guidelines for church operations and ministry in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). Those practices which are reserved for the dying are often referred to as last rites. These last rites are some of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, which are “Religious ceremonies considered to confer special grace” (Dysinger 2012, 244). The seven sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, The Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders (Ordination), and Matrimony. The CCC identifies three of these sacraments under the umbrella of last rites, each of which will be discussed.

It is critical to note that these last rites are provided here for the purpose of understanding end-of-life ministry in the Catholic Tradition. However, these sacraments can only be performed by an ordained priest or bishop of the Catholic Church (Dysinger 2012, 243-244), and are, therefore, not given here as guidelines for how a non-Catholic chaplain should minister to a Catholic casualty (which will be discussed later). Chaplains should work to facilitate these rites with an ordained priest if at all possible. “Penance, the Anointing of the Sick and the Eucharist as viaticum constitute at the end of Christian life ‘the sacraments that prepare

for our heavenly homeland’ or the sacraments that complete the earthly pilgrimage” (CCC, 1525).

Penance and Reconciliation

The sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is generally administered when a person is near to death. Penance and Reconciliation is a sacrament given throughout a person’s life, but efforts should be made to allow for it before death. This sacrament is commonly referred to as confession, because the person is confessing their sins to a priest (and God), but also because a person, by so doing, is also confessing to “...the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man” (CCC, 1424). In an end-of-life situation, this sacrament is an opportunity for the individual to confess any unforgiven sins and gain reconciliation before God prior to passing into the afterlife. If all three rites are performed, Penance should be first, followed by the Anointing of the Sick and finally the Viaticum (CCC, 1517). As mentioned previously, this sacrament can only be performed by an ordained member of the clergy of the Catholic Church, specifically a priest or bishop.

Anointing of the Sick

Christ showed compassion time and again for those who were sick. He healed the blind, the infirm, the deaf, and the diseased. Christ called his apostles to do the same when he said “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils...they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16: 17-18). This sacra-

ment is reserved for those who are seriously ill or nearing death. The manner of its performance is as follows:

The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing them on the forehead and hands with duly blessed oil - pressed from olives or from other plants - saying, only once: “Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up” (CCC, 1513).

Again, this sacrament can only be performed by an ordained priest or bishop, and should never be done by a chaplain who is not also an ordained Catholic priest.

Viaticum (Final Eucharist)

Sometimes called the Last Sacrament of the Christian, the Eucharist as viaticum symbolizes the transition from mortal life to the afterlife and entering the presence of the Father. “The sacrament of Christ once dead and now risen, the Eucharist is here the sacrament of passing over from death to life, from this world to the Father” (CCC, 1524). This is the last of the sacraments, hence its nickname. It symbolizes the “‘passing over’ to eternal life” (CCC, 1517).

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

Since chaplains who are not Catholic priests cannot perform the last rites explained above, the question remains as to what such chaplains are to do in end-of-life ministry when a priest is not available. Prayer is the lifeblood of

Catholic faith, which emphasises both personal and communal prayer. Many types of prayer are practiced by Catholics, including verbal prayers of rote repetition (i.e., rosary), the use of a scriptural passage or teaching, mantra-like repetition of a holy word, and a number of others (Lescher 2014, 268-269). In addition, many Catholics place religious significance on images, pictures or the rosary. When available, a chaplain should offer a rosary and crucifix to the individual. These can bring great comfort to the dying (Dysinger, 246). If a Catholic chaplain or ordained priest is not available, then a chaplain (or commanding officer) should recite the “Hail Mary”, the “Act of Contrition”, and the “Sign of the Cross” with the dying (DOA 2014, 248).

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of Grace! The Lord is with Thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offended Thee, my God, Who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy Grace, to sin no more, and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.

The Sign of the Cross

Make the sign of the cross over the individual while

Emergency Baptism

If a dying individual requests a Catholic baptism and there is no priest available, an emergency baptism may be performed by any person (i.e., chaplain) regardless of that person's religious faith (CCC, 1256). It is to be done according to the Catholic Church's proscribed practice, which is to pour water on the head of the person three times while saying "(Person's name), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (CCC, 1240) Any and all emergency baptisms performed should be reported to the local parish (Dysinger, 246).

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General Christianity

Of course, it is difficult to combine the dozens of Christian denominations into one group without overlooking some important differences between them. However, given the fact that most of these denominations on their own represent a smaller percentage of the overall population, and that roughly fifteen percent of the military report being nondenominational Christian, this category of General Christianity was created. General guidelines for Christian-based ministry for the dying is probably sufficient for most cases, especially considering that many denominations do not have stringent rules governing last rites as the Catholic Church does.

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

Some universal options for ministry include recitation of the “Lord’s Prayer”, the “Apostles Creed”, and the “Prayer for the Sick and the Wounded” (DOA 2014, 247). Offering an impromptu prayer on behalf of the dying would be another great option which could bring comfort to the individual as well as those in the vicinity who are witnessing his or her passing.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver

us from evil; For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father, almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayer for the Sick and the Wounded

O Lord, in your mercy behold, visit, and relieve your servant. Give him (her) comfort in the knowledge of your love and sure confidence in your care. Defend him (her) from the danger of the enemy and keep him (her) in spiritual peace and safety; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Judaism

While there are certainly nuances in the different sects of Judaism (Orthodox, Reform, Conservative), each shares a general set of beliefs and tradition. Judaism is one of the oldest religions in the world, dating to the ancestral prophet Abraham. While Christians are familiar with some aspects of Judaism as a result of a shared history, scriptural text, and tradition, Jewish beliefs differ in significant ways that many Christians may not realize. In relation to death and the afterlife, the scriptural depiction of the afterlife is that the deceased will be “gathered unto their fathers (i.e., ancestors)” (Judges 2:10). While no clear conception of the afterlife has been established for Jews, this illustrates a belief that they will be able to be reunited with loved ones in the hereafter. Prayer and the study of scripture are important to Jewish worship. While Jews may not believe in receiving revelation the same way many Christians do, they do believe that prayerfully studying God’s word will bring us closer to Him (Dorff 2012, 173-174). Therefore, prayer and the reading of scripture are two of the best ways to minister to a Jew in extremis.

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

If there is a chance that an individual might live, it may be appropriate to provide a prayer of healing. Generally for Jews, the Mi Sheberach prayer would be given in such a situation. This prayer is often given by a rabbi in the synagogue on Shabbat, but it can be said by anyone, at any time, and in any setting (Dorff, 174). If the Mi Sheberach

is unfamiliar and unavailable to the chaplain, any prayer of healing from any religious perspective would be appreciated and accepted by the individual. Reading from the book of Psalms is another effective way to minister to Jews who are sick or dying (Dorff, 175).

In addition to the Mi Sheberach, the Tzidduk Ha-din is another prayer that expresses acceptance of God's justice. Though primarily read at the burial of the deceased, it can also be read as an individual is nearing death. The Viddui is the Jewish confessional prayer in which the deceased (or someone praying on their behalf) seeks forgiveness for their sins before they pass to the afterlife (Dorff, 176). The Army also recommends the use of the "Confession for the Critically Ill" and the 23rd Psalm (DOA 2014, 249). In all cases, the dying should be encouraged to recite the "Shema", but if unable, the chaplain may recite it on their behalf (Dorff, 173).

The Shema

Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

The Confession for the Critically Ill

Lord my God, God of my fathers, before Thee I confess that in Thy hand alone rests my healing or my death. If it be thy will, grant me a perfect healing. Yet if my death be fully determined by Thee, I will in love accept it at Thy hand. Then may my death be an atonement for all sins, transgressions, and for all the wrong which I have committed before Thee. Amen.

The 23rd Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Mi Sheberach

May the One who blessed our ancestors — Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah — bless and heal the one who is ill: (individual's name) son/daughter of (parents' names). May the Holy Blessed One overflow with compassion upon him/her, to restore him/her, to heal him/her, to strengthen him/her, to enliven him/her. The One will send him/her, speedily, a complete healing — healing of the soul and healing of the body — along with all the ill, among the people of Israel and all humankind, soon, speedily, without delay, and let us all say: Amen! (Weintraub)

Tzidduk Ha-din

The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice; a G-d of faithfulness and without iniquity, righteous and just is He. The Rock, perfect in all His works. Who can say to Him 'What have You done?' He rules below and above, He brings death and restores life, brings down to the grave and raises up from there. The Rock, perfect in all His deeds. Who can say to Him, 'What do You do?' You Who says and fulfills, do undeserved kindness with us, and in the merit of him [Isaac] who was bound [on the altar] like a lamb, hearken and grant our request. Righteous One in all His ways, O Rock Who is perfect, slow to anger and abundant in mercy, take pity and spare both parents and children, for to You, O Lord, pertain forgiveness and mercy. Righteous are You, Lord, to bring death and to restore life, for in Your hands are entrusted all spirits. Far be it from You to erase our memory. Look towards us with mercy, for Yours, O Lord, are mercy and forgiveness. A man, whether he be a year old, or whether he lives a thousand years, what does it profit him? For is it not as if he has never been? Blessed be the True Judge, Who brings death and restores life. Blessed be He, for His judgment is true, as He scans everything with His eye, and He rewards man according to his account and his judgment. Let all give praise to His Name. We know, Lord, that Your judgment is right. You are righteous when You speak and pure when You judge, and none shall question Your judgments. Righteous are You, Lord, and Your judgments are just. You are the True Judge, Who

judges with righteousness and truth. Blessed is the True Judge, for all of His judgments are righteous and true. The soul of every living creature is in Your hand, righteousness fills Your right and left hand. Have mercy on the remnant of the flock under Your hand, and say to the angel of death, 'Hold back your hand!' You are great in counsel and mighty in action, Your eyes are watching all the ways of man, to give man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. That is to say that the Lord is Just; He is my Strength, and there is no injustice in Him. The Lord has given and the Lord has taken. May the Name of the Lord be blessed. He, being compassionate, pardons iniquity, and does not destroy; time and again He turns away His anger, and does not arouse all His wrath (Goldstein).

Viddui

I acknowledge before You, Lord my G-d and the G-d of my fathers, that my recovery and my death are in Your hands. May it be Your will that You heal me with total recovery, but, if I die, may my death be an atonement for all the errors, iniquities, and willful sins that I have erred, sinned and transgressed before You, and may You grant my share in the Garden of Eden, and grant me the merit to abide in the World to Come which is vouchsafed for the righteous. Our G-d and G-d of our fathers, may our prayers come before You, and do not turn away from our supplication, for we are not so impudent and obdurate as to declare before You, Lord our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that we are righteous and have not

sinned. Indeed, we and our fathers have sinned. We have transgressed, we have acted perfidiously, we have robbed, we have slandered. We have acted perversely and wickedly, we have willfully sinned, we have done violence, we have imputed falsely. We have given evil counsel, we have lied, we have scoffed, we have rebelled, we have provoked, we have been disobedient, we have committed iniquity, we have wantonly transgressed, we have oppressed, we have been obstinate. We have committed evil, we have acted perniciously, we have acted abominably, we have gone astray, we have led others astray. We have strayed from Your good precepts and ordinances, and it has not profited us. Indeed, You are just in all that has come upon us, for You have acted truthfully, and it is we who have acted wickedly (Goldstein).

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Islam

Islam is a religion introduced to the world through the prophet Muhammad. For Muslims, Islam is the perfect religion and the culmination of both Judaism and Christianity, with Muhammad being the last prophet called by Allah (God). Islam is a monotheistic religion; Muslims believe in Allah and no other god. The two main branches of Islam are Sunni and Shi'a, with Sunnis comprising some eighty percent of Muslims worldwide and Shi'a about fifteen percent. Muslims believe that when a person dies, the spirit waits in slumber until the Day of Judgement in which all will be judged according to their faith and the works they performed in life. This will determine whether a person enters paradise or hell. Generally, Muslims who are dying will be comforted by reassuring them of this belief in the afterlife. Even if they feel they have sins, Muslims believe that Allah is all-forgiving and all-merciful if they pray for forgiveness (Denney 2016, 213).

Allah is the Arabic name for the one true God. It may be important for Christian and Jewish chaplains in particular to understand how Muslims generally conceptualize Allah, or who they are referring to with this name. Islam is an Abrahamic religion. Counter to the account in the Bible where Isaac received the birthright from Abraham, the Qur'an teaches that Ishmael was the heir to Abraham's household and his blessing. As descendants of Ishmael, early Muslims, as taught by Mohammad, reintroduced the worship of the God of Abraham (Allah) to the Arab pagans. Therefore, when a Muslim speaks of Allah, he or she is referring to the God of Abraham.

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

It is critical in Islamic belief that the dying should recite the Shehada before they die. Therefore, chaplains should encourage any Muslims to recite the Shehada (verbally or in their heart) as they near death, if at all possible (Ali 2012, 218). The Chaplain may recite the “Prayer for the Dying” in ministering to the dying. When a Muslim dies, his eyes should be gently closed while reciting the “Supplication Prayer” (DOA 2014, 251). In addition to these, any reading from the Qur’an will bring comfort and peace to the dying.

The Shehada

There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah.

Prayer for the Dying

Allah is Great! Allah is Great! Allah is Great! Allah is Great! Oh God, I ask of Thee a perfect faith, a sincere assurance, a reverent heart, a remembering tongue, a good conduct of commendation, and a true repentance, repentance before death, rest at death, and forgiveness and mercy after death, clemency at the reckoning, victory in paradise and escape from the fire, by thy mercy, O mighty One, O Forgiver, Lord increase me in knowledge and join me unto good. O Lord, may the end of my life be the best of it; may my closing acts be my best acts, and may the best of my days be the day when I shall meet Thee.

Supplication Prayer

O Allah! Make his affair light for him, and render easy what he is going to face after this, and bless him with Thy vision, and make his new abode better for him than the one he has left behind.

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Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in 1830 in upstate New York. Members of the church, referred to as Latter-day Saints, believe it to be the restored version of the primitive Church of Christ that the Savior Himself established during his mortal ministry. Latter-day Saints believe that Joseph Smith, as a young boy seeking answers about which church to join, was visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ, who called him to be a modern-day prophet and restore the fullness of Christ's Church to the Earth in preparation for His second coming. Through this process of restoration, Latter-day Saints also believe that Joseph Smith, as well as other early leaders of the church, received additional heavenly visions and revelations which provided additional scripture and guidance. These additional scriptures are the *Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* and the *Doctrine and Covenants*. The *Book of Mormon* is believed to be an ancient record of God's covenant people in Ancient America, translated by Joseph Smith through the "gift and power of God" (Book of Mormon, vii).

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

Anointing and Blessing the Sick

Latter-day Saints believe in the anointing and blessing of the sick by the laying on of hands and under proper

priesthood authority (Mark 16:18). Only worthy holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood can administer an anointing and blessing of the sick (General Handbook, 18.13.1). However, all worthy, male members age 18 and older are eligible to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. Additionally, anointing and blessing the sick does not require permission from church leaders. Therefore, if there is another soldier, sailor, marine, or airmen available who is a Latter-day Saint and holds the Melchizedek Priesthood, he can be asked to perform the anointing and blessing in the absence of a Latter-day Saint chaplain. The anointing is performed by placing consecrated olive oil on the head of the recipient of the blessing, and, while laying both hands on the head, saying a prayer to anoint them with the oil. The hands are then placed on the head again, the anointing is “sealed” and a blessing can then be given. Typically, two priesthood holders perform the anointing and blessing, but both can be done by the same person if no one else is available. A blessing can also be given without the anointing if there is no olive oil available (General Handbook, 18.13).

Prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ

In general, Latter-day Saints do not have specific prayers to be recited as death approaches, or particular practices that need to be performed. Latter-day Saints believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, the Creator of the World, and the Son of God. Offering a prayer in the name of Jesus Christ on behalf of a Latter-day Saint at the end of life would help in bringing the dying comfort and peace.

Reading of Biblical or Book of Mormon Verses

Latter-day Saints “believe the Bible to be the word of God...[and] also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God” (Articles of Faith 1:8). While there are no set verses prescribed to be read or recited at death, Latter-day Saints would find comfort in hearing verses read from either the Bible or the Book of Mormon as they are nearing death. Reading verses that speak of the afterlife or the eternal destiny of the soul would especially bring comfort to a Latter-day Saint who is approaching their transition out of mortality. Some Book of Mormon examples are provided here.

2 Nephi 9: 10–11

O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.

Mosiah 15: 7–9

Yea, even so he shall be led, and crucified, an slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father. And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men— Having ascended into heaven, having

the bowels of mercy, being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.

Alma 11: 42–44

Now, there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death. The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God... Now this restoration will come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost, but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame...

Mormon 9: 13

And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass the redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come

**forth, both small and great, and shall stand before
his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal
band of death, which death is a temporal death.**



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Wicca

Wicca is a Neopagan, or modern pagan, religion and a form of modern witchcraft. Wiccans, for the most part, are duotheistic, believing in a God and a Goddess (Reeder 2014, 50). Some covens (term for a group of Wiccans) believe that the Goddess is more powerful or more important, while others believe the two to be equal (Lewis 1999, 123). Either way, the female deity of the Goddess is at least as important as the male God. These are typically depicted as the Horned God and the Triple Goddess (often symbolized by the three major phases of the moon) (Kirk 2012, 208; Harvey 2011, 38-39). Wiccans believe the Goddess to be imminent in all matter, leading to a belief that everything in the natural world is sacred and holy (including the human body) (Harvey 1996, 83). Since there is no governing body or hierarchical clergy in Wicca, beliefs can vary somewhat. However, most Wiccans believe in an afterlife where spirits go to a place called the Summerlands to rest and reflect on the lessons they learned in life. After a time, they return to Earth and are reborn into this world to continue their learning. Wiccans do not believe in a concept of hell or a place of endless torment in the afterlife (Kirk, 207). Therefore, in ministering to a Wiccan at the end of life, reminding him or her of the Summerland and the immortality of the soul should bring great comfort.

A significant text in the Wiccan tradition is the Legend of the Descent of the Goddess, in which the Goddess, who represents life and fertility, descends into the underworld to meet the God, who represents the bringer of death. In her descent, the goddess must shed all the symbols of her

own will and her own power, until she stands naked before Death. A common initiation ritual for Wiccans involves a symbolic reenactment of this journey in which they too stand naked and blindfolded before the coven to which they are joining themselves (Harvey 1996, 88-89). In the exchange between the God and Goddess, each teaches the other important lessons as they exchange and adopt one another's characteristics. Prior to this culmination, the Goddess complains to Death, asking him why he destroys all that she loves, namely humans and all living things in the world. Death responds by explaining that death is inevitable, but that he is there to provide rest and peace to the souls of all creatures when they die until it is their time to be reborn in the realm of the living. This represents a revelation or paradigm shift for the Goddess, as the sadness of death is lessened by the peace and hope of the Summerland.

Another key Wiccan belief surrounding death and reincarnation is the Threefold Law. The Law states that whatever deeds one has done in this life, good or bad, those will be returned three times stronger. Rowan Morgana, a High Priestess of a Wiccan coven as well as the author of the book *Modern Wicca: Beliefs and Traditions for Contemporary Life*, spoke with the author about the implications of the Threefold Law on end-of-life care. She explained that the Threefold Law "...may cause some anxiety if the person has done some things that they regret. A way to ease this would be to give assurances that the Goddess does not punish us when we do wrong. We are her children, and she loves us. We may not have learned all the lessons that she has placed before us, but there will be another chance in another life" (Morgana 2020).

As previously mentioned, Wicca is a varied religion with many covens, each with its own interpretation and its own Book of Shadows (book of spells). As such, after becoming familiar with the following suggestions for ministry, it would be wise for chaplains to have a conversation with any Wiccans whom they serve to evaluate which of these would be most appropriate to use in ministry to that individual. The history of persecution for witches as well as various depictions by the Hollywood film industry result in many Wiccans being hesitant to share the details of their beliefs and practices with outsiders. A combination of having some knowledge prior to asking a Wiccan about their beliefs and a genuine curiosity should help mitigate these barriers.

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

Legend of the Descent of the Goddess

“My Lady,” replied Death, “it is age and fate, against which you speak. I am helpless, for age causes all things to wither; but when men die at the end of time, I give them rest and peace, and strength. For a time they dwell with the moon, and the spirits of the moon; then may they return to the realm of the living” (Sacred Wicca).

Charge of the Goddess

Hear the words of the Star Goddess,
The dust of Whose feet are the hosts of Heaven,
Whose body encircles the universe:

I Who am the beauty of the green earth
And the white moon among the stars
And the mysteries of the waters,
I call upon your soul to arise and come unto me.
For I am the soul of nature
That gives life to the universe.
From Me all things proceed
And unto Me they must return.
Let My worship be in the heart that rejoices,
For behold, all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals.
Let there be beauty and strength,
Power and compassion, Honor and humility,
Mirth and reverence within you.
And you who seek to know Me,
Know that the seeking and yearning will avail you not,
Unless you know the Mystery:
For if that which you seek, you find not within yourself,
You will never find it without.
For behold, I have been with you from the beginning,
And I am That which is attained at the end of desire
(Starhawk 1999).

Deep Peace (Gaelic Blessing)

Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the infinite peace to you (Morgana,
2020).

Calling of the Quarters

May the Eastern Element of Air bring blessings of peace.

May the Southern Element of Fire bring blessings of transformation.

May the Western Element of Water bring blessings of purification.

May the Northern Element of Earth bring blessings of comfort and guidance (Morgana 2020)..

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Asatru/Norse Paganism

Asatru is one of two main branches of Norse paganism. The name Asatru is derived from the Norse word *Aesir* which is the name of one of the pantheons of the Norse pagan tradition. The Aesir are the sky gods, including Odin, Frigga, and Thor among others. While Asatru is a derivation of this pantheon, Asatruars also believe in the other pantheon of earth-based gods called the Vanir. The other branch of Norse paganism, Odinism, only recognizes the Aesir gods (Lewis, 1999, 16). Asatru (as well as Heathenry and Odinism), has been conceptualized as a revival or reconstruction of the Norse Pagan tradition after nearly a thousand years of suppression under the religious and political power of Christianity in Europe (Calico 2018, 56). Calico explains that in the eyes of many Asatruar, "...this remarkable and sudden religious awakening is clear evidence of divine activity. In their eyes, the old gods have stirred, becoming active again after their long dormancy and are calling their people back to the old ways" (Calico, 59).

Asatruar, like Wiccans, believe the gods to be imminent in all matter and, therefore, a person can have direct knowledge of an intercourse with the gods without the need for clergy. Each Asatruar is considered his or her own priest or priestess. The two largest Asatru groups in the United States are the Troth and the Asatru Alliance. However, there is no fixed practice or a set of holy scriptures from which to draw consensus (Kirk 2012, 205-206). This fact led Stefanie von Schnurbein to conclude that "...day-to-day, Asatru groups are primarily involved in their own affairs" (von

Schnurbein 2016, 77). Therefore, the advice previously given for Wicca would be apt for Asatru as well; asking an Asatruar about their specific beliefs would be helpful.

Norse Paganism in general uses a group of texts called the Lore to guide their beliefs and practice. The two most important of these texts are the Prose Edda and the Poetic Edda, both considered to be writings of the Norse pagans themselves. The categorization of Lore is rather loose, and often includes historical texts in addition to devotional ones. Asatru, as well as heathenry in general, recognizes that the texts that make up their Lore are both incomplete and flawed, thus the Lore should not be considered the equivalent of, say, the Bible in Christianity. However, pagans use the Lore to learn about the old ways and to put them into practice (Calico, 64-65).

As far as death is concerned, Asatruar view death not as an end, but as a literal beginning as they are transported to the Asatru equivalent of heaven, Valhalla (Kirk, 207). However, Asatruar do not focus on this destination, nor do they see it as some reward for good deeds. Rather, they focus on the present and on living a code of ethics in which they are honest, keep promises, treat others with respect, and develop strong familial bonds. Family is very important to Asatruar, as is paying reverence and respect to one's ancestors who have come before. Therefore, they accept death as a natural part of life, and as a means of reuniting with their ancestors in the afterlife. Even more important than the eventual destiny of their souls, Asatruar care deeply about their reputation and the legacy they leave behind, because it is in the remembrance of their posterity that they will live on (Lafayllve 2020).

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

Parting Blessing

This phrase was provided by Patricia Lafayllve, High Steward of the Troth, as a general blessing of comfort that a chaplain could provide to Asatruar or other heathens who are dying. The chaplain can simply repeat the phrase “May your ancestors welcome you.” Because of the reverence paid to the ancestors, this phrase would bring comfort to any heathen in the final moments of life.

Hávamál Reading, from the Poetic Edda

Cattle die,
kinsmen die,
the self must also die,
I know one thing,
which never dies,
the reputation of each dead man.

Old Norse:

Deyr fê,
deyja frændr,
deyr sjalfr it sama,
ek veit einn,
at aldrei deyr:
dómr um dauðan hvern (Viking Rune).

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Hinduism

Hinduism is the third-largest religion in the world, and possibly one of the oldest with texts dating back to around 1700 BCE. Similar to any religion of such scale, Hinduism is comprised of numerous sects and denominations, each with its own beliefs, customs and practices. As a result, it is always a good idea for chaplains to speak to Hindu service members about their particular beliefs (Firth 2005, 682). Despite these differences, there are a number of fundamental Hindu beliefs that are shared by most Hindus (Dasa and Srivastava 2012, 145). Hindus believe in an ultimate God, Brahman, who is genderless and shapeless. However, many Hindus believe that Brahman has taken on physical forms throughout history, such as in Krishna and Rama (Fowler 2014, 7-8).

Other basic beliefs in Hinduism include *samsara*, *kharma*, *dharma*, and *moksha*. Samsara is the cycle of reincarnation, which is undergirded by the belief in the immortality of the soul. When a person dies, Hindus believe that, after a period of reflection, their soul will return and be reborn into another physical form requisite to the deeds and accomplishments of their former life or lives (Fowler, 8-9). Kharma, sometimes referred to as the law of cause and effect, can be summed up in the mantra “as you sow, so shall you reap” (Broo 2014, 101). Every action has a reaction or consequence. Some consequences are immediate, while others may not materialize until someone dies and is reborn. Thus, the beliefs of kharma and samsara are intimately related (Fowler, 9-11).

Dharma has no English equivalent, but is often trans-

lated as “What is right,” and refers to the way one should live in order to gain good kharma. Others translate it as “duty,” which refers to the role dharma plays in maintaining social harmony in the universe (Fowler, 11). Barbara Holdrege defines dharma as “...the cosmic principle that is transhistorical, eternal, and universal, structuring the separation of functions among the various classes of beings on each plane of existence and interconnecting them in the complex network of symbiotic relations that constitutes the cosmic ecosystem” (Holdrege 2004, 228). Living by dharma affects kharma, which in turn affects samsara or reincarnation. This leads to the ultimate motivation and goal of Hindus, which is to achieve moksha, or liberation. Moksha is the state of the soul once it has learned all it can from the physical world, and has reached a point where it can become one with Brahman. In achieving moksha, one overcomes the need for samsara and attains eternal unity with Brahman (Fowler, 12).

Because of the importance of death in the greater cycle of life in the Hindu tradition, the treatment of the dying, and even more so the dead, is extremely important. A “good death” is important for the soul to be able to move on, and involves a number of symbolic and ritual practices at the end of life. The body of the dying should be laid on the ground, if possible, with the head to the North. Water from the Ganges River, if available, should be put on the person’s lips along with a basil leaf. A Brahmin (priest) or other person may also sing devotional hymns (*bhajans*), or chant the “Ram Ram”, “Om”, or *Gayatri Mantra* (Firth 2005, 58, 64-65; Firth 1997, 683).

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

OM

OM is the most important spiritual symbol in Hinduism. It refers to both atman (the divine nature of the soul), and Brahman. The syllable is found before many of the Vedas and other sacred texts, and is chanted during rituals and prayers (Wilke and Moebus 2011). The visual symbol of *OM* is provided below. Chaplains who feel comfortable doing so can chant the *OM* for a Hindu who is dying, as the recognizable sound would bring comfort and peace. An audio example of *OM* can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Veziy5H-KVQ8>.



The Funeral Fire

The following are excerpts from the Vedic poem referred to as the Funeral Fire, found in *Rig Veda* 10.16. The full poem involves the speaker invoking Agni, the fire god, as well as speaking to the dying or the deceased. Since chaplains of other faiths may not feel comfortable invoking or speaking to a deity unknown to them, this excerpt includes one of the stanzas meant to be spoken to the one who is dead or dying.

May your eye go to the sun, your life's breath to the wind. Go to the sky or to earth, as is your nature; or go to the waters, if that is your fate. Take root in the plants with your limbs (Doniger 2015, 84-86).

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Buddhism

Buddhism traces its roots to the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, who lived from 563-483 BCE in what is now Nepal. Gautama was a prince, who was sheltered from pain and suffering by his father until he witnessed it at the age of 29. He abandoned his former life to embark on a years-long quest for enlightenment and understanding. Buddha is a title, which translates to “the Awakened One.” After achieving his own Enlightenment, the Buddha spent his life teaching others to achieve the same (Titmuss 2014, 109-111). Though variations exist, Buddhism is typically non-theistic (except Mahayana Buddhism), and Buddhist tend to focus more on developing the self to the best of one’s ability (Toneatto and Ongley 2012, 129).

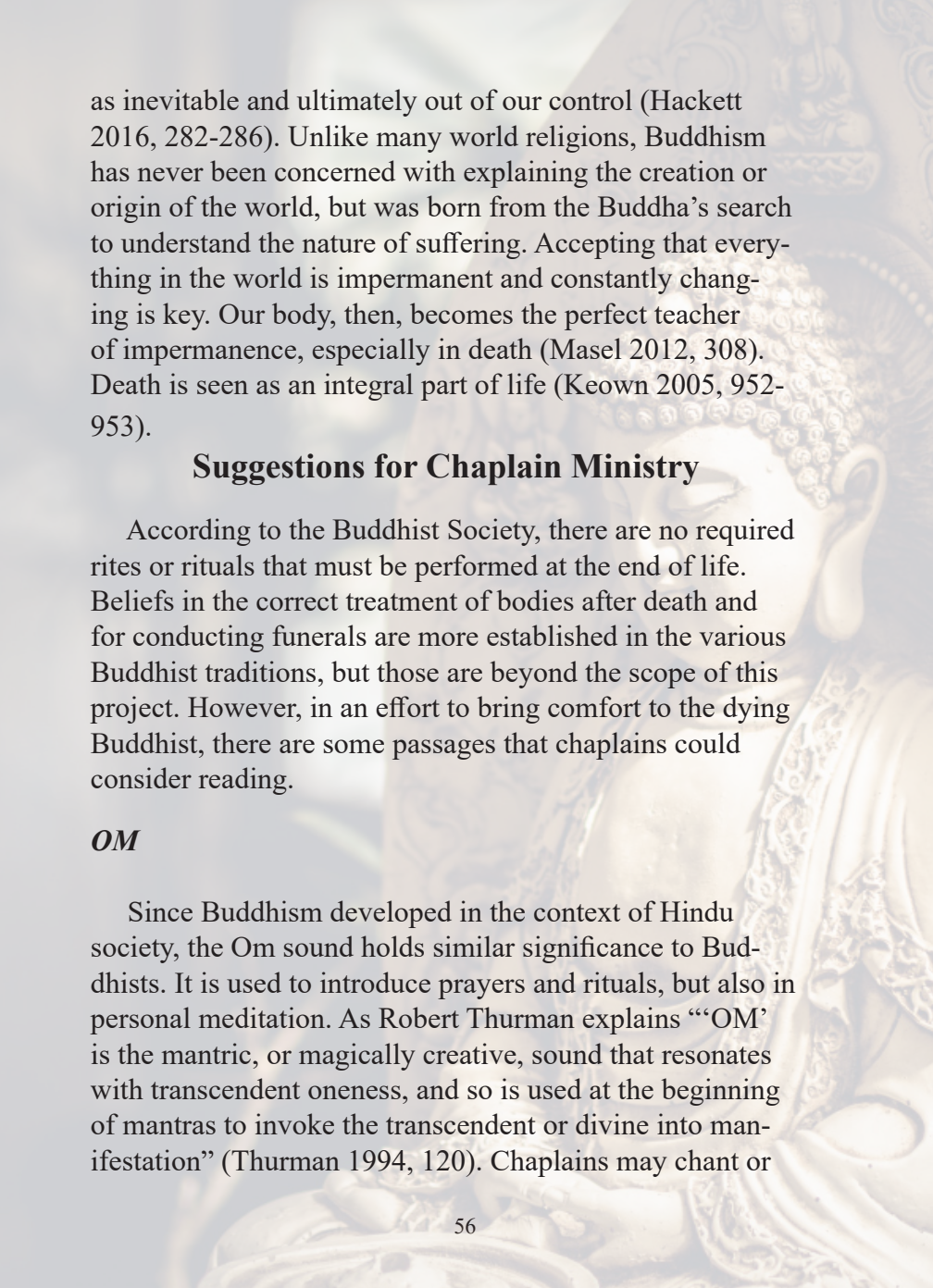
As of 2010, it was estimated that there were about 488 million Buddhists worldwide; about ninety-eight percent of those reside in Asia and the Pacific Islands. North American had the second-largest population, with nearly 4 million Buddhists in 2010. Of the three major Buddhist traditions, Mahayana Buddhism is believed to comprise at least half of all Buddhists, with Theravada Buddhism having the second-largest population (Pew 2012).

Foundational beliefs in Buddhism include the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths are (1) the arising of suffering, (2) causes and conditions for the arising of suffering, (3) complete resolution (also referred to as nirvana or liberation), and (4) the way to the resolution. The Buddha said that suffering arises as a result of not having what we want, losing what we already possess, being separated from our attachments (i.e., rela-

tionships), and clinging onto part of ourselves (i.e., ego). Suffering arises because we live in a world with causes and conditions that create suffering, not through chance, fate, or God's punishment. Regarding the third truth, the Buddha said that resolution comes through wisdom, realization, and the discovery of freedom which comes from liberation through the letting go of our attachments. The fourth truth refers to the Noble Eightfold Path, or the Way (Titmuss, 112-113).

The Noble Eightfold Path provides guidelines for how to live a good life. The eight links are (1) right understanding, (2) right intention, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right meditative concentration. The ultimate goal of this path is to find the *Middle Way*, as the Buddha described it. The *Middle Way* describes the place in between complete hedonism on the one hand (seeking and indulging in pleasure) and extreme asceticism on the other (depriving oneself of all physical pleasure). The Buddha described this Middle Way as the place where one can receive enlightenment and liberation (nirvana) (Strong 2015, 114).

Buddhist beliefs about death share some similarities with Hinduism (not surprising in that the Buddha lived in a Hindu society), but also some important distinctions. While they do believe in a form of reincarnation, Buddhists do not believe in atman, which is the Hindu concept of the soul which comes from God (Brahman). Instead, Buddhists believe that one's consciousness leaves the body at death and enters an "intermediate state" until it can be reborn into a new body. Buddhists are encouraged to meditate on death from an early age, in order to recognize and accept death



as inevitable and ultimately out of our control (Hackett 2016, 282-286). Unlike many world religions, Buddhism has never been concerned with explaining the creation or origin of the world, but was born from the Buddha's search to understand the nature of suffering. Accepting that everything in the world is impermanent and constantly changing is key. Our body, then, becomes the perfect teacher of impermanence, especially in death (Masel 2012, 308). Death is seen as an integral part of life (Keown 2005, 952-953).

Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

According to the Buddhist Society, there are no required rites or rituals that must be performed at the end of life. Beliefs in the correct treatment of bodies after death and for conducting funerals are more established in the various Buddhist traditions, but those are beyond the scope of this project. However, in an effort to bring comfort to the dying Buddhist, there are some passages that chaplains could consider reading.

OM

Since Buddhism developed in the context of Hindu society, the Om sound holds similar significance to Buddhists. It is used to introduce prayers and rituals, but also in personal meditation. As Robert Thurman explains “‘OM’ is the mantric, or magically creative, sound that resonates with transcendent oneness, and so is used at the beginning of mantras to invoke the transcendent or divine into manifestation” (Thurman 1994, 120). Chaplains may chant or

sing *OM* in order to bring peace and comfort to a dying Buddhist. For an example of an OM chant see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Veziy5HKVQ8>.

Categorical Sayings (Udna-varga 1.7–10)

Meditating on the following verses is meant to put death in perspective and help the individual overcome the drive to remain attached to their bodies, which is seen as a hindrance to achieving awakening.

In the morning one sees many people,
But in the evening some will not be seen;
In the evening we see many people,
But in the morning some will not be seen.

When many men and women
Die even at a young age,
When someone says, “this person is young,”
Why do they have such confidence that they will
remain alive?

Some die when they are in the womb;
Some on the ground where they are born.
Some die just as they learn to crawl;
And some just as they learn to walk.

Some die old, and some die young,
Some in the very prime of life.

All people pass away in turn,
Just like the falling of ripened fruit (Hackett, 282-
283)..



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Religion-specific End-of-life Ministry

Simplified Suggestions for Chaplain Ministry

By Drake C. Cottman

Catholicism

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of Grace! The Lord is with Thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offended Thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy Grace, to sin no more, and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.

The Sign of the Cross

Make the sign of the cross over the individual while repeating the following: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Emergency Baptism

If a dying individual requests a Catholic baptism and there is no priest available, an emergency baptism may be performed by any person (i.e., chaplain). It is to be done according to the Catholic Church's proscribed practice, which is to pour water on the head of the person three times while saying "(Person's name), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Any and all emergency baptisms performed should be reported to the local parish.

General Christian

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father; almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayer for the Sick and the Wounded

O Lord, in your mercy behold, visit, and relieve your servant. Give him (her) comfort in the knowledge of your love and sure confidence in your care. Defend him (her) from the danger of the enemy and keep him (her) in spiritual peace and safety; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Judaism

The Shema

Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

The Confession for the Critically Ill

Lord my God, God of my fathers, before Thee I confess that in Thy hand alone rests my healing or my death. If it be thy will, grant me a perfect healing. Yet if my death be fully determined by Thee, I will in love accept it at Thy hand. Then may my death be an atonement for all sins, transgressions, and for all the wrong which I have committed before Thee. Amen.

The 23rd Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Islam

The Shihada

There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah.

Prayer for the Dying

Allah is Great! Allah is Great! Allah is Great!
Allah is Great! Oh God, I ask of Thee a perfect faith, a sincere assurance, a reverent heart, a remembering tongue, a good conduct of commendation, and a true repentance, repentance before death, rest at death, and forgiveness and mercy after death, clemency at the reckoning, victory in paradise and escape from the fire, by thy mercy, O mighty One, O Forgiver, Lord increase me in knowledge and join me unto good. O Lord, may the end of my life be the best of it; may my closing acts be my best acts, and may the best of my days be the day when I shall meet Thee.

Supplication Prayer

O Allah! Make his affair light for him, and render easy what he is going to face after this, and bless him with Thy vision, and make his new abode better for him than the one he has left behind.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Latter-day Saints "believe the Bible to be the word of God...[and] also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." While there are no set verses prescribed to be read or recited at death, Latter-day Saints would find comfort in hearing verses read from either the Bible or the Book of Mormon as they are nearing death.

Suggested Readings from the Book of Mormon:

2 Nephi 9:10-11

O how great the goodness of our God, who prepared a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.

Mormon 9:13

And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass the redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trumpet shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

Wicca

Deep Peace (Gaelic Blessing)

Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the infinite peace to you.

Calling of the Quarters

May the Eastern Element of Air bring blessings of peace. May the Southern Element of Fire bring blessings of transformation. May the Western Element of Water bring blessings of purification. May the Northern Element of Earth bring blessings of comfort and guidance.

Legend of the Descent of the Goddess

"My Lady," replied Death, "it is age and fate, against which you speak. I am helpless, for age causes all things to wither; but when men die at the end of time, I give them rest and peace, and strength. For a time they dwell with the moon, and the spirits of the moon; then may they return to the realm of the living."

Asatru/Norse Paganism

Paring Blessing

May your ancestors welcome you.

Hávamál Reading, from the Poetic Edda

Cattle die,
kinsmen die,
the self must also die,
I know one thing
which never dies,
the reputation of each dead man.

Old Norse:
Deyr é,
deya frendr,
deyr sjálf it sama,
ek veit einn,
at aldrei deyr:
dömr um dauðan hvern.

Hinduism

Om

Om is the most important spiritual symbol in Hinduism. It refers to both atman (the divine nature of the soul), and Brahman. The syllable is found before many of the Vedas and other sacred texts, and is chanted during rituals and prayers.

The visual symbol of Om is illustrated in Figure 1. Chaplains who feel comfortable doing so can chant the Om for a Hindu who is dying, as the recognizable sound would bring comfort and peace.

The Funeral Fire

The following are excerpts from the Vedic poem referred to as the Funeral Fire, found in Rig Veda 10.16. The full poem involves the speaker invoking Agni, the fire god, as well as speaking to the dying or the deceased. Since chaplains of other faiths may not feel comfortable invoking or speaking to a deity unknown to them, this excerpt includes one of the stanzas meant to be spoken to the one who is dead or dying.

May your eye go to the sun, your
life's breath to the wind. Go to the sky
or to earth, as is your nature; or go to
the waters, if that is your fate. Take
root in the plants with your limbs.

Buddhism

Om

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But in the evening some will not be seen;
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Die even at a young age,
When someone says, "this person is young,"
Why do they have such confidence that they will
remain alive?

Some die when they are in the womb;
Some on the ground where they are born.
Some die just as they learn to crawl;
And some just as they learn to walk.

Some die old, and some die young,
Some in the very prime of life.
All people pass away in turn,
Just like the falling of ripened fruit.

