

The Chaplaincy Report

LA County General Medical Center
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Happy Independence Day to You All!

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for the chaplaincy ministry at LA GMC. I am delighted to share the news that the chaplains established by the LA Archdiocese through St. Camillus Center will continue to serve during the new fiscal year, from July 2026 through June 2027.

Fr. Al, the new priest at St. Camillus, effective July 1, 2026, and the church committee have decided to sustain the ministries that are most urgently needed by patients and community members, such as chaplaincy and the Angel Interfaith Network (AIN), while discontinuing other ministries, including the CPE program and ministries serving supporters for Pax Christi, people living with HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ communities, and advocacy against the death penalty.

Graduation of the Spring 2026 CPE Unit – June 2

Five CPE students successfully completed their CPE unit this spring. The graduates' families and several former CPE students joined the graduation ceremony and potluck luncheon to celebrate their accomplishments and bless them as they continue their journeys. As I mentioned above, St. Camillus Center will not operate the CPE program for an indefinite period due to financial and administrative challenges.

Chaplain Team's Visit to the LA County Jails – June 4

Visiting the county jails was an entirely new experience for me and my colleagues. This visit was in response to an invitation from the chaplaincy team at the Central Men's Jail in Downtown Los Angeles, whose members had first visited LA GMC a couple of months earlier. The chaplains serving at the LA County jails are funded by nonprofit organizations independent of LA County government. According to the chaplains, the Central Men's Jail and the neighboring Twin Towers Correctional Facility, which houses many inmates with mental health needs, hold some of the county's most notorious inmates.

Extreme institutional control was evident everywhere. Inmates walking through the hallways with correctional officers wore uniforms in different colors that indicated their custody classifications. Unlike ordinary buildings, there were no windows, and the entire lighting and air circulation were controlled artificially. The loud HVAC system generated powerful air currents throughout several areas of the building to help reduce the spread of communicable diseases in the densely populated housing units enclosed by thick concrete walls.

Their current chaplaincy team includes eight staff chaplains and numerous volunteers. While walking through the hallways, I noticed signs on the restroom doors that read, "No Paper Towels Until the New Fiscal Year." The chaplains shared that they had to bring their own soap and paper towels from home. As we walked out of the building for lunch fellowship at the nearby LA County Endowment Center, I immediately felt blessed by the natural breeze and the warmth of the sunlight on my skin. The freedom to choose what to

eat and where to sit felt especially precious that afternoon. I am thankful for the relationships we have built with chaplains serving in different settings. We can continuously learn from one another while encouraging each other in challenging work of caring for souls who are walking difficult paths.

San Gabriel Presbytery (SGP) Meeting & Day of Service – June 13

I reported on the chaplaincy ministry at LA General during the San Gabriel Presbytery meeting and facilitated the assembly of hygiene kits during the Day of Service that afternoon. Together, we assembled 46 hygiene kits. The remaining supplies - hundreds of toothbrushes and travel-sized tubes of toothpaste - will be used in future service projects.



After the meeting, I brought the completed kits to St. Camillus and later delivered them to Shower of Hope in the parking lot of Clínica Romero, across from the hospital, on June 26.

The Shower of Hope program in Boyle Heights is a collaborative effort among local health care, mental health, substance use treatment, and prevention organizations that come together every Friday to provide essential supplies and services to individuals experiencing homelessness. The program offers mobile showers, clothing, hygiene kits, meals, and connections to supportive services. Participating organizations include LA General, Clínica Romero, Exodus Recovery, Social Model Recovery Systems, and Substance Use Disorder Integrated Services. Together, they serve approximately 90-100 community members each week.



During my visit, I observed a mental health workshop led by a psychiatrist from Clínica Romero for 15-20 community members experiencing homelessness. I introduced myself as the Presbyterian Chaplain at LA General and explained that I had come to deliver hygiene kits along with words of hope and encouragement. I also accepted the program director's invitation to provide a workshop in the future.

Juneteenth Celebration – June 18

The African Americans Advocating for Better Health (AAABH) Committee at LA GMC hosted its Juneteenth Celebration and Health Fair in the hospital's Breezeway and Courtyard. Because employees observed the Juneteenth holiday on June 19th, the event was held one day earlier. I had the privilege of offering the invocation for the ceremony. It was meaningful for me to participate in the celebration and to lead the invocation for the Juneteenth for the first time.

Sacred Verses, Presented by San Fernando Presbytery - June 30

Sacred Verses is a booklet containing 50 of the most beloved Scripture passages in six different languages (English, Spanish, Armenian, Korean, Mandarin, and Farsi), published by San Fernando Presbytery. According to Bobbie Putnam, an elder at Sherman Oaks Presbyterian Church who compiled the passages, the project began in February 2025 as a post COVID-19 response to serve the diverse communities within the boundaries of the San Fernando Presbytery. Distribution has grown rapidly, reaching recipients ranging from a store manager at Ralphs to a Methodist congregation that requested dozens of copies for prayer groups and Sunday worship services. The chaplaincy team at LA General is deeply grateful for this free and practical resource, especially because it enables us to share God's Word with patients who speak a variety of languages.

Living at Heart – a Story of an End-of-Life Patient

A patient in his early forties was admitted to the ICU in critical condition. Day by day, his condition continued to worsen. His prognosis was poor, and during each visit, his partner of several years sat faithfully at his bedside with tear-filled eyes. She shared that they had been looking forward to getting married for years. The care team recognized their deep desire, which now seemed to be tragically slipping away. The interdisciplinary team, led by the Palliative Care team, decided to help the couple create a lasting memory before his passing.

The pale ICU room was beautifully decorated with artificial flowers (fresh flowers are not permitted in the ICU), garlands of twinkling lights, balloons, a wedding cake, and a bottle of champagne with two elegant glasses. Respecting the patient's Catholic faith tradition, a Roman Catholic priest chaplain and I, the Palliative Care chaplain, worked together to lead a special blessing ceremony. The bride wore a white dress and veil as tears flowed continuously down her cheeks. In the presence of dozens of the interdisciplinary ICU team members, she gently placed the wedding ring she had prepared onto the patient's finger.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the team helped the couple create a lasting keepsake by making a cast of their joined hands. The ceremony deeply touched everyone present, bringing tears, smiles, and prayers. A week later, I saw the completed hand cast waiting to be picked up by the bride.



The photograph of this cast may stir difficult emotions for some readers, especially knowing that one of hands belongs to someone who has since died. I encourage you to sit gently with those emotions rather than trying to deny or fix them. Instead, I invite you to embrace your thoughts and feelings as you reflect on your own life's journey and on those who have gone before us to their heavenly home.

May we all have a safe and blessed Fourth of July, celebrating and giving thanks for the freedom we enjoy on earth while drawing one day closer to our eternal home in heaven.

In Christ,
Stephanie