

# **The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring Essentials for Ministry**

**Browning, Jim and Jim Spivey, eds. *The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring Essentials for Ministry*. Birmingham, AL: Iron Stream Media, 2022, 370 pages.**

I ordered *The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring the Essentials for Ministry* (HofC) because I am passionate about chaplaincy and it certainly both improved my knowledge and challenged my practice.

Structurally HofC has five parts: 1) What is chaplain ministry? 2) Who are chaplains? What do chaplains do? 3) How is chaplain ministry unique? 4) Qualifications and development of chaplains. 5) Chaplaincy types. Each of these parts has a number of chapters, collectively written by thirty-seven authors all of whom are highly qualified and experienced United States Chaplains.

This diversity of voices is the greatest strength and weakness of HofC While collaboration is not unusual in chaplaincy resources (e.g. *Professional, Spiritual and Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook* [36 contributors] and *Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care in Mental Health Settings* [23 contributors]). The

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quality, academically and experientially, of the contributors to HofC is amazing. Additionally, the diversity of voices and clear chapter titles make HofC readable both in a cover-to-cover sense (different voices make it more engaging) and allow the reader to read specific chapters at need. I also greatly appreciated that a number of the contributors were brutally honest about their failures which showed humility and was reminiscent of the Gospel writers (and Mark particularly). HofC's articulation, evidence and examples of why chaplaincy is powerfully different to, but not lesser than, local church ministry was also impressive. Finally, the diversity of Christian traditions within the contributors was very helpful.

The major limitation of HofC is the chaplaincy presented is USA-centric. For example, there is significant emphasis on how chaplaincy is informed by the US constitution and the history of chaplaincy skips British chaplaincy. Additionally, HofC repeatedly states that chaplaincy does not including proselytising on the basis of the constitution. While the US constitution is pivotal for US chaplaincy, it is irrelevant for non-US settings. Furthermore, the US focus meant forms of chaplaincy which are critical in other parts of the world (e.g. Sports Chaplaincy) were not mentioned. As an aged care chaplain, I struggled with the designation of aged care as a subset of health chaplaincy, particularly as aged care is

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more similar to prison ministry (e.g. the people cared for are 'in' for long periods and often express feelings of imprisonment).

In conclusion I certainly appreciated, learnt and was challenged by HofC. Globally people whose focus is chaplaincy will benefit from reading HofC. I suspect it is critical reading for American chaplains.

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