



Alfred Merwald calls pastoral care "an important component of health-care delivery."

PHOTO BY AMY LYNN SCHERBECK

## Be of Good Comfort

The pulpit isn't the only option for the ordained  
By Kathryn Kingsbury

**In the last quarter century**, Alfred Merwald has seen significant changes in the way the medical community views faith. "More and more, spirituality is seen as an important component of health-care delivery," says the new director of the pastoral services department at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics. Merwald is an expert in the field of clinical pastoral education (CPE), the formal name for supervised ministry training in hospitals, prisons and other places where people are in crisis.

Chaplaincy, too, has changed with the times. Patients can still call on a chaplain for prayers, sacraments and religious guidance, but today's chaplain also helps patients figure out their own answers to spiritual questions, even if those answers don't fit into a particular religious mold. "We do a lot of ... responding to the spiritual needs of people whether they are traditional or New Age," says Merwald. "We meet people where they are."

Merwald came to Madison nine months ago, leaving behind sultry Houston weather

### A Career in the Cloth

**Salary\*** \$39,460  
**Education\*\*** Master of Divinity (M. Div.) from an accredited seminary  
**Where to look for work (besides your local pulpit):** The military, health care, state Department of Corrections, church youth programs, private schools

\*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003 Wage Estimates for Madison, Wisconsin  
\*\* Most denominations also require passage of a rigorous examination for ordination.

and a star role at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, where he had charge of 10 staff chaplains, five CPE residents and 80 volunteers. By comparison, the department at the UW Hospital is tiny, with just one full-time and three part-time chaplains certified by the Association of Professional Chaplains. But it won't stay that way for long.

Merwald says the UW is interested in "expanding its pas-

toral and spiritual presence to meet the ... needs of the staff and patients." That means a number of things: hiring and training more chaplains – one for each major treatment area. Proactively educating medical, nursing and food service staff on religious holidays and dietary observances. Ensuring that people have appropriate prayer and worship spaces.

"We're a complex university and we have people representing all faiths across the globe here," Merwald says. Serving the spiritual needs of such a diverse group can be a daunting task, but Merwald says there are many simple steps hospitals can take to help meet this goal. One example is recognizing the major holy days of a number of religions – "not just Christmas and Rosh Hashanah" – by posting them on hospital calendars, coordinating worship opportunities and working with medical teams to ensure that patient schedules allow for necessary observances. In Houston, the hospital set aside a room where Muslim staff, patients and visitors could have a quiet environment for their requisite five daily prayers. And in the new children's hospital in the works, "there is interest that when that chapel is built, it will accommodate people from all faiths," Merwald says. Currently, volunteers represent a wide variety of faiths, he says.

Merwald also hopes to add a clinical pastoral education (CPE) component to the department, which could add four resident chaplains-in-training. He also plans to offer CPE to area clergy and qualified lay people.

Merwald is one of only 600 professionals nationwide certified to supervise CPE programs, quite an accomplishment for some-

one who never would have considered chaplaincy had it not been for a mandatory school course. Raised in a devout Baptist family, Merwald attended Memphis Theological Seminary in Tennessee with the intent of becoming a youth minister. But his path took an unexpected turn when he began his required coursework in chaplaincy. "It was people who were really in need of spiritual counsel, and I found that refreshing," he says of the people he met during his clinical training at the University of Tennessee Medical Center. "I fell in love with this training process that looked at the spiritual, psychological and social needs of patients."

Merwald's story illustrates the reality that careers in the ministry don't always involve Sunday morning sermons and praying over church potlucks. While it's still a calling more than a job to most of its practitioners, chaplaincy offers a vocation to those who feel called to serve in a manner other than tending the flock.

Following the change in his career outlook, Merwald spent a few years working toward certification by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). He trained at the University of Chicago Medical Center, moved to Madison for a couple of years to work at Mendota Mental Health Center, then returned to Chicago to complete his training in 1979. He also earned a doctorate in pastoral counseling at Chicago Theological Seminary in 1980.

Now Merwald is steering the UW Hospital through the process of becoming ACPE-accredited to provide chaplaincy training. He's also helping the institution integrate pastoral services into its overall work while respecting and meeting the needs of a population that is increasingly diverse in its religious beliefs. "We would like a board-certified chaplain in each of our major disease sites – transplants, oncology, pediatrics, cardiology, emergency medicine, intensive care, psychiatry, et cetera – so we can be part of the interdisciplinary treatment team along with the nurse, the doctor, the pharmacist and the social worker."

The changes in chaplaincy are "reflective of changes in society," Merwald says. "There's a rebirth of spirituality."

*Kathryn Kingsbury is a contributing writer to Madison Magazine.*

*TND ... continued from page 125*  
residents, not just the developers, are required to be responsible for the neighborhood's sustainable stormwater project. For example, homeowners must retain up to 2 inches of rainwater on their property by growing rain gardens. In turn, developers will dig nearly a dozen holding areas for water and will use ditches, instead of storm sewage pipes, to manage runoff.

"The site itself, with the stretch of the Yahara River that's there and the quality of the river, warrants some exceptional treatment," Ring says. "And what's nice is you get a lot of trees in your back-yard. We're not cutting down trees to build houses here. We are preserving a lot of this."

The first of five neighborhoods, Woods Glen, with 15 single-family homes, opened in 2002. Hawthorn Point, with room for 83 single-family homes and 155 condo units, opened for development this fall. Homes will range in value from \$250,000 to \$500,000 in a village where the 2003 average home sale price was about \$167,000.

It's a bit pricey – even some homeowners admit that. But they and Madison officials say the developments are worth every penny. In Madison, the average home value from 1997 to 2003 rose from \$133,000 to \$190,000, or 43 percent, while the average income in the

city inched up only 30 percent. So even while the gap between home prices and salaries grow and TNDs don't necessarily promise an abundance of more affordable housing (even with new zoning codes set to increase access to affordable housing), city planners like the idea of TNDs and tell developers in and out of Madison: keep building them.

"It took 10 years [for TNDs to develop in Madison], but they are here to stay and we couldn't be happier," says Bradley Murphy, Madison planning unit director. In his office, clutter reigns with stacks of large plats and maps glued to foam board – the product, on paper, anyway, of a dozen years of planning. Plans for TNDs only started to appear on city maps four years ago, but since then the numbers have grown substantially. Now, sections throughout the city maps are color-coded for these types of developments with a preference for dense development which makes sewer, water and maintenance service a lot easier on the city.

"You will still see a lot of non-traditional neighborhoods in Madison," Murphy says. "Not every new neighborhood is going to be a traditional neighborhood, but we think this is the way to go."

**Robert Gutsche, Jr., is a freelance writer living in Madison.**



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