



The NAJC Conference: One Spirit, Many Paths May 11-14, 2025 in Skokie, IL

Provided Meal

Meal On Your Own

Workshop

Plenary Speaker

Prayer Service

Sunday, May 11

3 PM – 8:30 PM CDT

- 3:00 pm Registration opens
- 5:15 Mincha (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- 5:30 President's Reception / New Member Welcome (by invitation only)
- 6:30 Provided Dinner
- 7:15 Plenary Speaker I: **From Self-Care to We-Care: Supporting Ourselves and One Another** with Rabbi Josh Feigelson, President and CEO of Institute for Jewish Spirituality
- 8:30 Ma'ariv (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- 8:45 Optional: Hospitality Room with Games, Activities and Open Processing Space

Monday, May 12

7 AM – 9:30 PM CDT

- 7:00 am Shacharit (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- 8:00 Provided Breakfast
- 9:00 Plenary Speaker II: **New Approaches to Spiritual Assessment** with Rev. George Fitchett, D.Min, Ph.D.
- 10:45 Workshop Session #1:
 - **Chaplaincy Game Jam** with Rabbi Dr. Sandra Katz, BCC and Professor David Schwartz
 - **Could Jonah Have Been a Hospital Patient in the Big Fish?** with Chaplain Russell Braman, BCC
 - **A Taste of Refresh-ment: Bringing American and Israeli Chaplains Together** with Rabbi Beth Naditch, BCC, ACPE Certified Educator

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Monday, May 12 (cont'd)

- **12:00 pm** Provided **Lunch** and **Plenary Speaker III: The Role of Healthcare Chaplains in Promoting Ethical Care: From the Bedside to the C-Suite and Beyond** with M. Jeanne Wirpsa, MA, BCC, HEC-C
- **2:00** Skokie outings led by locals to [Illinois Holocaust Museum](#) (discounted tickets) or [Chicago Botanic Garden](#)
- **3:30** Certification panels. **Meal provided** for candidates and panelists.
- **Dinner** on your own
- **7:45 Mincha/Ma'ariv** (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- **8:30** NeshamaCast Live!
- **9:30** Optional: Hospitality Room with Games, Activities and Open Processing Space

Tuesday, May 13

7:25 AM – 10 PM

- **7:25 am Shacharit** (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- **8:00** Provided **Breakfast**. Opportunity for affinity groups to meet: Pediatrics, Hospice, Hospital, Community Chaplains, Long Term Care
- **9:00 Plenary Speaker IV: Understanding and Responding to Moral Injury: Clinical and Jewish Frameworks for Spiritual Caregivers** with Stanley G. McCracken, Ph.D., LCSW and Rabbi Nancy H. Wiener, D.Min.

Workshop Session #2

2A 10:45-11:20am

a) Perinatal Loss: The Challenges of Providing Comfort in the Face of Suffering

David Balto

b) Addressing Spiritual Needs in Outpatient Palliative Care: Lessons Learned

Rabbanit Alissa Thomas- Newborn, BCC

2B 11:25am- 12pm

a) When Professional and Personal Grief Collide with Rabbi Andrea Gouze, BCC

2C 10:45am-12pm

a) Simulation Lab: Utilizing Deliberate Practice to Enhance BCC Candidates' Professional Practice Skills with Cantor Rabbi Dr. Rob Jury, BCC

Tuesday, May 13 (cont'd)

- **12:05 pm** Lunch on your own, Board Meeting Lunch
- **1:40** Mincha (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- **2:00** Workshop Session #3:
 - Addressing addiction in small to mid-size Jewish Communities with Rabbi Renee Bauer
 - Current Controversies in Brain Death & Liberal Jewish Perspectives with Dr. Michael Rezak and Rabbi Dr. Neal Loevinger, BCC
 - Disease Based Tele-chaplaincy: Supporting Folks with Chronic Illness in a Virtual Setting with Rabbi Rebecca Kamil, BCC
- **3:45** Denominational Groups
- **4:45** Simcha Chair Yoga: Movements for Restoration and Rebalance with Rabbinic Chaplain Joni Brenner
- **6:00** Gala/Honoree Provided Dinner
- **8:30** Ma'ariv (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- **8:45** Singing Circle / Jam Session
- **10:00** Optional: Hospitality Room with Games, Activities and Open Processing Space

Wednesday, May 14**7 AM – 12:30 PM**

- **7:00 am** Shacharit (Egalitarian & Orthodox Minyan)
- **8:00** Provided Breakfast
- **8:45** Plenary Speaker V: Navigating End of Life Situations with Rabbi Yona Reiss
- **10:30** Workshop Session #4
 - Learning to Thrive Through Organizational Change with Rabbi Michelle Stern, BCC
 - Bikur Cholim With Patients in Isolation with Rabbi Pinchas Eisenbach, BCC
 - Modifying Jewish Spiritual Resources for the Interfaith Population with Rabbi Ruth Smith, BCC, Chaplain Dr. Maia Conrad, BCC
- **12:00 pm** Closing ritual

PLENARIES



From Self-Care to We-Care: Supporting Ourselves and One Another

Rabbi Josh Feigelson, PhD, *President & CEO, Institute for Jewish Spirituality*

The world continues to be a profoundly challenging place, and the work of Jewish chaplains remains vital yet profoundly challenging sacred work. To begin our time together, we will engage in some study, spiritual practice, and song to reconnect with ourselves, each other, and the Source of Life.



New Approaches to Spiritual Assessment

George Fitchett, D.Min., Ph.D., *Professor in the Department of Religion, Health, and Human Values, Rush University Medical Center*

Spiritual assessment is one of the central tasks for healthcare chaplains. Spiritual assessment summarizes the spiritual concerns and resources of patients (or their caregivers). It provides direction for the chaplains' spiritual care, informs the work of other members of the clinical team, and provides a baseline for evaluation of changes in the patient's spiritual concerns. Until recently, models for spiritual assessment used narrative descriptions of the patient's concerns and resources. In 2010, Monod and colleagues introduced the SDAT, a model for spiritual assessment that provides a quantified summary of the patient's spiritual concerns. Our team has built on this work and developed quantified models for assessment of spiritual concerns in palliative care (PC-7), adult oncology (ONC-5), and gerontology (GERO-4). This presentation will summarize these models for spiritual assessment and the research related to them.



The Role of Healthcare Chaplains in Promoting Ethical Care: From the Bedside to the C-Suite and Beyond

M. Jeanne Wirpsa, MA BCC HEC-C, *Program Director and Clinical Ethicist Medical Ethics, Northwestern Memorial Hospital*

How might healthcare chaplains fully leverage their foundational knowledge and skills to promote ethical care at all levels of their organization? Do chaplains have a unique prophetic responsibility to advocate for justice, equity, and patient-centered care? This plenary draws upon original research conducted by the speaker over the past decade in clinical ethics, interprofessional shared decision making, and the intersection of religion and bioethics to invite healthcare chaplains to re-envision the scope and significance of their work in the current climate of attacks on religious/cultural pluralism and cost-cutting in healthcare.



Understanding and Responding to Moral Injury:

Clinical and Jewish Frameworks for Spiritual Caregivers

Stanley G. McCracken, Ph.D., LCSW, *Retired social work faculty, University of Chicago, with over forty years' experience as a clinician, educator, and consultant. He was a Vietnamese linguist with the US Army in Vietnam*

and **Rabbi Nancy Wiener**, D.Min. *Director, Blaustein Center for Pastoral Counseling Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*

This plenary will provide an overview of the history and development of the field of Moral Injury. Participants will gain an understanding of how to recognize those who are suffering from moral injury and how clinical findings can guide us as we develop supportive healing strategies. We will then explore Jewish teachings, texts and sensibilities to deepen our understanding of and appreciation for the unique contributions we can make as Jewish pastoral care givers.



Navigating End of Life Situations

Rabbi Yona Reiss, *Av Beth Din of the Chicago Rabbinical Council*

Jewish law exhibits a strong sensitivity towards the sanctity of Jewish life, as well as the dignity of the dying process. A Jewish chaplain needs to navigate between these two values in a way that is affirming of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the patient's life. Often this requires a balancing act together with the patient, the medical professionals, family members, and other health care proxies. The goal of this session is to explore strategies towards making the process as comfortable, streamlined and spiritually uplifting as possible.

WORKSHOPS



- **Chaplaincy Game Jam** with Rabbi Dr. Sandra Katz, BCC and Professor David Schwartz

Explore a new way to engage with a growing population of game players through learning to design and run your own chaplain game! The Director of the School of Interactive Games and Media at Rochester Institute of Technology (igm.rit.edu) has offered to co-lead chaplains in an interactive, hands-on

experience to explore the chaplain's role and experience in an encounter, the patient/client's experience, and how to tell the story of our sacred endeavor. Participants will work hands-on with materials that spark their creativity in conversation with others to emerge with a game prototype that expands our narrative. Participants only need creativity and familiarity with games. Have fun and take steps toward solving one of our biggest problems: how do we share the message?



- **Could Jonah Have Been a Hospital Patient in the Big Fish?** with Chaplain Russell Braman, BCC
- Many commentators on the Book of Jonah focus on Jonah as a sinner, who went against God's word, and had to be brought to task. In this text study, the presenter will propose an allegorical reading where Jonah can be compared to a patient/care seeker, and the big fish can be compared to a hospital or other care facility. Many hospitalized patients go through a process of denying their diagnosis, being frightened of it, and later, after some time in the hospital to process the news, coming to terms with it and developing an effective coping strategy for their time inpatient. Our

study will mix traditional and modern commentaries on Jonah with research literature on hospitalization and how patients cope to evaluate if this comparison actually makes sense.



- **A Taste of Refresh-ment: Bringing American and Israeli Chaplains Together** with Rabbi Beth Naditch, BCC, ACPE Certified Educator

Session generously sponsored by BENARI CAPITAL

This past November, Hebrew SeniorLife in Boston sponsored a weeklong program for Israeli rabbis and chaplains to visit the states for a spiritual care intensive and a break from the war. In this interactive workshop, we will present the impetus, experience, and takeaways from the highly successful program so that we can continue to dream together of further opportunities for collaboration and connection between North American and Israeli spiritual caregivers. As part of this workshop, we will engage in a small taste of the expressive arts experiences that formed the cornerstone of the October 7th processing during the weeklong program. In addition, participants will have an opportunity to create Story Maps and learn about how this tool works to help move those (of us) immersed in troubling times into relationship with our own resources of resilience.



- **Perinatal Loss: The Challenges of Providing Comfort in the Face of Suffering** with David Balto

One in four pregnancies are unsuccessful and there is an increasing rate of stillbirths and miscarriages. Jewish rituals on dealing with perinatal loss do not fit our current needs since under a traditional view you do not mourn a child until they have lived for 30 days.

The National Bikur Cholim Conference (which I run) and I Was Supposed to Have Baby held the first conference on Jewish approaches to perinatal loss earlier last year. We dealt with the challenges of providing spiritual and emotional comfort, developing new rituals for dealing with loss and differences in halachic approaches. The conference was attended by over 300 people and we developed a set of resources on the website of the Bikur Cholim conference. This session will address pastoral concerns in the setting of perinatal loss and how we can provide more comprehensive spiritual care.



- **Addressing Spiritual Needs in Outpatient Palliative Care: Lessons Learned** with

Rabbanit Alissa Thomas- Newborn, BCC

Key Message : While palliative care (PC) focuses on holistic patient care, the spiritual component to a patient's distress or adjustment to the effects of a life-limiting illness are complex. Many outpatient PC settings do not include integrated spiritual care providers and would significantly benefit from a collaborative team structure that includes chaplains to adequately address spiritual and religious patient needs.

Abstract:

Introduction:

Spirituality is the way humans seek meaning, purpose and connection in life. There is a significant presence of spiritual issues and distress among patients with a serious illness being cared for in the ambulatory setting. Healthcare chaplains are trained to work as members of an interdisciplinary healthcare team to address the spiritual/ religious needs of patients, families and staff. The presence of a spiritual care provider as a core member of a Palliative Care (PC) team has been under-represented in the outpatient setting.



- **When Professional and Personal Grief Collide** with Rabbi Andrea Gouze, BCC

After working at a small hospital for 20 years, it closed due to financial difficulties. Staff were informed about 2 months before it occurred and as the only chaplain on board, I was faced with helping other staff, some of whom had been there for over 30 years to help with their anger, their fears of an uncertain future and their grief while also attending to my own feelings. Too often, we associate grief with the loss of a person. However, the loss of a job, the loss of a work environment that was fulfilling and nurturing can also engender grief and mourning. This workshop will explore how I developed grieving rituals and helped others to grieve while also attending to my own sense of loss and grief.



- **Simulation Lab: Utilizing Deliberate Practice to Enhance BCC Candidates' Professional Practice Skills** with Cantor Rabbi Dr. Rob Jury, BCC

For candidates seeking Board Certified Chaplain (BCC) status, demonstrating proficiency in the Professional Practice Skills (PPS) competencies is often the deciding factor in obtaining certification. Without successfully meeting all 11 PPS competencies, candidates cannot be granted provisional or full certification as a chaplain.

The Chaplaincy Simulation Lab: Utilizing Deliberate Practice to Enhance BCC Candidates' Professional Practice Skills workshop is designed to introduce chaplains, chaplain educators, certification mentors, and certification candidates to the key components of a virtual simulation lab focused on mastery education through deliberate practice. This workshop specifically targets using deliberate practice to enhance the 11 PPS competencies required for BCC certification. Drawing from research-based methods of skill-building, deliberate practice offers a structured, feedback-driven approach to developing professional chaplaincy skills. Participants will engage with video and written scenario prompts to simulate and rehearse specific PPS competencies, gaining hands-on experience through behavioral rehearsal and expert feedback.

By the end of the workshop, chaplain candidates, educators, and certification mentors will have the tools and techniques to better address the PPS requirements, equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in the certification process and advance their chaplaincy practice.



- **Addressing addiction in small to mid-size Jewish Communities** with Rabbi Renee Bauer

Our country is in the midst of an addiction crisis. There is a persistent belief that Jewish people are less likely than other groups to have substance use disorder (SUDs). There are no wide-scale studies on addiction in the Jewish community (this is a symptom of the problem of addiction not being currently addressed in a serious way in the Jewish community). A large study in New York did find that 10 % of adults in Jewish households

indicate they have a substance abuse problem and we know anecdotally from our communities that substance use is a problem in the Jewish community. This workshop will provide participants a model for bringing spiritually grounded and community-based addiction support, awareness and education to small and mid-size Jewish communities. Rabbi Bauer will present her work that started as a demonstration project of Chaplaincy Innovation Lab's "Strengthening Jewish Chaplaincy" grant and funded by the Charles H. Revson Foundation.

Participants will learn both about practical steps to more fully welcome and support people with SUDs and their families into the Jewish community while also exploring the particular challenges for smaller Jewish communities. Rabbi Bauer will share individual stories about families her program has assisted and elicit similar case studies from participants. She will discuss how she is building partnerships to sustain the work over time. Participants of this workshop will also have an opportunity to explore how Jewish spiritual care tools, holidays and texts can be used to support recovery, and how Jewish tradition can be helpful in addressing the grief that is folded into addiction and recovery work.



- **Current Controversies in Brain Death & Liberal Jewish Perspectives** with Dr. Michael Rezak and Rabbi Dr. Neal Loevinger, BCC Neurologist Dr. Michael Rezak (MD, PhD, D.Bioethics, HEC-C)) and Rabbi Dr. Neal Joseph Loevinger (BCC, Dmin, HEC-C) will co-present a didactic on current controversies in the diagnosis of death by neurological criteria, AKA "brain death." This will include a brief overview of the history and recent controversies in the medical and bioethics literature regarding

brain death, including proposals to revise the Uniform Declaration of Death Act and a new procedure in organ donation (NRP) which has stirred up much commentary pro and con. The session will then pick up and review a few t'shuvot by liberal (Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist) rabbis on brain death, organ donation, and the end of life, in order to see if those t'shuvot could inform a Jewish perspective on NRP in particular.



- **Disease Based Tele-chaplaincy: Supporting Folks with Chronic Illness in a Virtual Setting** with Rabbi Rebecca Kamil, BCC

Session generously sponsored by the CLL Society

Telehealth has become increasingly popular, with almost every type of provider available to be seen virtually. Could the same be said for chaplaincy? Explore how telechaplaincy works, the ways in which it can expand access to chaplains for those folks who may not otherwise be able to see one, and how disease-based organizations can use chaplains to support people living with chronic illness in a virtual setting.

Rabbi Kamil will also talk about her work with Steadii, an organization supporting caregivers of people living with Alzheimer's and Dementia as well as the CLL Society, which supports people living with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia.



- **Simcha Chair Yoga: Movements for Restoration and Rebalance** with Rabbinic Chaplain Joni Brenner

Please join me as we explore safe and opening movements in our chair yoga sessions. We will start with a Niggun. As we settle into our chairs, we will take a moment to set an intention for our practice.

We will then move into gentle stretches. These postures include stretching the neck muscles, shoulders, arms and legs. We will rebalance the endocrine system. We will bring strength to our muscle-skeletal system.

The Talmud tells us that the 248 limbs of the body, correspond to the 248 positive mitzvot of the Torah.

We will invite our limbs to open and to receive the blessings of strength and balance.

Our sessions will end with a meditation and song. We offer ourselves and others:

Ahava, Chesed, Rachamim and Shalom.

The class is multi-level. Every- Body is welcomed. Chair work only. Wear comfortable clothing



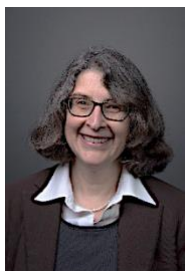
- **Learning to Thrive Through Organizational Change** with Rabbi Michelle Stern, BCC
Session generously sponsored by CJE SeniorLife

What can one do when their agency makes major changes that directly impacts a spiritual care department's workload? How can a department reinvent itself and emerge stronger? Come hear the story of how board-certified chaplain Rabbi Michelle Stern, Manager of Spiritual and Religious Life, responded to the changes of her agency, CJE SeniorLife. During this three-year journey, Rabbi Stern employed strategic management tools that ultimately elevated spiritual care in her organization. Rabbi Stern will share the tools, steps she took, and important partnerships she developed during this period. In this presentation/workshop, participants will be given time to start applying these tools to their own circumstances.



- **Bikur Cholim With Patients in Isolation** with Rabbi Pinchas Eisenbach, BCC

Helping your patients navigate their illness in isolation, assisting them through the maze of what they can and cannot do while maintaining the isolation regulations but still allowing them to keep their faith in a Halachic manner, during a time in their life when they might be questioning their faith and God, Through this presentation you will learn ways to help your patients with their questions of faith but still wanting to follow in their ancestors path, helping them navigate the path to best suit them while uplifting their spirits, Helping your patient navigate the hospital staff of what can and cannot be done in a halachic matter in order for patients to be able to continue their rituals such as Tefillin and wearing a Yarmulke, Through different opinions of different rabbis, such as Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Rabbi Dovid Singer, and sources from the Torah and other publications



- **Modifying Jewish Spiritual Resources for the Interfaith Population** with Rabbi Ruth Smith, BCC and Maia Conrad, Ph.D., BCC

In this workshop we will present a number of resources rooted in Jewish tradition that we have used when providing care for patients, families, and staff of varied spiritual perspectives. We will invite discussion of ways participants have already been modifying Jewish rituals in their practice. We will also provide an opportunity for participants to practice using the resources we provide

through role play. The two presenters have specific resources in mind, but are reaching out to other chaplains to develop a larger tool box. Through this workshop we would like to create a process through which we can continue developing and sharing these resources with each other and making them accessible to NAJC through the NAJC website.