

November 5, 2023

Dear COMISS Network Member,

We share warm greetings with you from our Leadership Team, and hope that this letter of invitation finds you doing well.

The Annual Forum of the COMISS Network will be held virtually on **Sunday, January 7, 2024, from 12 noon until 5:00 PM EST**. Recognizing that many organizations may still be experiencing a loss in revenue, there will be no charge for participating in the Forum. Registration, however, is required. We offer our appreciation again to The Association of Professional Chaplains for hosting this meeting via Zoom as they did last year.

- **Please designate and include on the registration form the person who will cast the vote for your organization.**
- **Please prepare a written Celebration Report that will be shared as a part of the materials for the Forum.**

The Registration Form for the COMISS Network Forum is enclosed.

This year's theme is:

Specialized Ministry: Global Perspectives

The objectives are:

1. *Reflect upon methodology in global teaching and training in pastoral care.*
2. *Discuss the efficacy of advocacy and training in standardization of global qualifications.*
3. *Explore the role of Endorsers for Federal Chaplaincies within a global perspective.*
4. *Examine International Pastoral Care Praxis and its Global Implications in Correctional Chaplaincy.*

This year's forum seeks to present a global perspective to pastoral care delivery, education and training. While building upon the familiar domestic model, we shall examine, with creativity, ways to strengthen, empower and raise our commitment to social justice and change by addressing issues of trauma, effects of war and violence found throughout the land. Chaplaincy and spiritual caregiving provides a balm of healing. Come, let us explore together.

Please see the attached agenda outlining our time together. The agenda includes the schedule for the day, the focus of our plenary sessions, and biographies of our presenters.

We hope that the 2024 COMISS Network Forum will be a significant opportunity for learning and fellowship. Please plan to be with us for this important time of communication and sharing together!

The COMISS Network Forum Planning Team



COMISS Network: The Network on Ministry in Specialized Settings

REGISTRATION FORM

COMISS NETWORK ANNUAL FORUM MEETING January 7, 2024

RESERVATIONS: The COMISS Network Forum will be virtual this year. However, registration will be required to receive the virtual Zoom meeting link.

So that we will know how many to expect from each Membership Category and for the breakout groups, please complete this registration form and return it by fax **(817-400-7683)** or by email (info@comissnetwork.org) by **Friday, December 8, 2023**.

Note: The link to join the virtual COMISS Forum will be emailed a few days before the meeting. Registration is required to receive the virtual meeting link.

Name: _____

____ I am the voting member of my organization as named below.

Association Representing: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Please **check here** if this is your first time attending a **COMISS Network** meeting.

Would you attend an **In-Person** COMISS Network Forum in 2025 with a projected registration cost of \$500? Yes:___ No:___

Breakout Room Discussions: **(Please Choose One)**

1. Eco-Chaplaincy _____
2. International Standardization and Credentialing _____
3. Military Chaplaincy _____
4. International Pastoral Care Praxis in Correctional Chaplaincy _____

Specialized Ministry: Global Perspectives Breakout Room Themes

Come, explore and be empowered at the 2024 COMISS Forum, as we highlight Chaplaincy through global perspectives on specialized ministries.

Break Out Room 1.....Eco-Chaplaincy

Regional and worldwide weather catastrophes and biosphere challenges are presenting opportunities for us to hone our skills to provide support to Chaplains and the people they serve impacted by climate events as well as enhance our understanding of the emerging field of Eco-Chaplaincy.

Breakout Room 2.....International CPE/T Standardization and Credentialing

As Chaplaincy evolves and expands globally, the need to provide standardization of the conglomerate of diverse standards found within credentialing agencies such as CPSP, ACPE, APC, and others that are being created as we speak, is ever present. We invite you to join us in examining and sharing perspectives.

Breakout Room 3.....Military Chaplaincy

Explore the realm of military chaplaincy, the role of endorsers and its impact as it relates to challenges specific to this specialized ministry.

Breakout Room 4.....International Pastoral Care Praxis in Correctional Chaplaincy.

Effective communication in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps serves as the crux of this international presentation which underscores the importance of supporting chaplains as agents of change.

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January 7, 2024
Meeting Virtually by Zoom

Specialized Ministry: Global Perspectives

(Please note that times listed below are in the Eastern Time Zone)

Sunday, January 7, 2024

12:00-12:05 Welcome **The Rev. Steven Voytovich, D.Min., LPC, COMISS Chair, COMISS Network**

12:05-12:10 Opening Meditation: **The Rev. Charlotte Bear, M.Div., MFA, APBCC-HPC, BCC**

12:10-12:20 Overview of Agenda, Meeting Format Details, Introduction of Speakers
The Rev. Denise Parker Lawrence, D.Min., CPSP Diplomate, COMISS Chair-Elect, COMISS Network

12:20-1:10 **Plenary 1 : Ivan Omana, D.Min, BCC, BCPC**, Director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries at General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Dr. Asnel Valcin, Psy.D, BCC, BCPC, Diplomate Supervisor in Clinical Pastoral Education, (CPE), Director of the Pastoral Care and Education Department, St. John's Episcopal Hospital

A Global Approach to Training in Pastoral Care: Advocating for the Global Standardization of the Chaplaincy Profession.

Through globalization, the world has become very much like our back yard. This has caused the profession of Chaplaincy to grow beyond the boundaries of countries and ministries. This globalization has a need for standardization of training to accommodate the need of compassionate, committed and competent chaplains

1:10- 1:40pm Plenary 2 : The Rev. Dr. Sarah Lammert , Co-Director of Ministries and Faith Development at the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), Endorser for Federal Chaplaincies; Past Chair of the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces

“Beyond the Barbed Wire: Military Chaplaincy as a Global Ministry”

The Rev. Dr. Lammert will share from her more than thirteen years of experience as a military chaplain endorser about the nature of military chaplaincy, the role of endorsement, and some of the challenges and possibilities particular to this specialized ministry.

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1:40-2:10 Plenary 3 : Maxim Safonov , BCC, a President of Northern California Conference Prison Ministry Association, Secretary of SDA Correctional Chaplaincy Association in North American Division, Correctional Chaplaincy Conference Speaker in North America and Eastern Europe.

Effective Communication: Uniting Chaplaincy in Diverse Global Setting

This international workshop presentation explores the diverse world of chaplaincy and the unique approaches required in various settings worldwide. It emphasizes the critical role of effective communication in unifying chaplaincy practices, despite their differences. The presentation delves into the power of effective communication in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps, fostering trust, and building rapport with individuals and communities. It also provides practical tools, case studies, and strategies to overcome challenges and enhance communication skills for chaplains, emphasizing their role as agents of positive change.

2:10-2:20 Break

2:20-3:10 Breakout Room Discussions (Choose one)

1.....Eco-Chaplaincy

2.....International Standardization and Credentialing

3....Military Chaplaincy

4....International Pastoral Care Praxis in Correctional Chaplaincy.

3:10-3:45 Roundtable Discussions (Questions/ Answer)

3:45-3:55 Break

3:55-4:45 Business Meeting

The Rev. Steven Voytovich

Minutes of Forum 2023

Report of the Chair

Report of Budget & Finance -Treasurer

Adoption of 2024-2025 Budget

Report of CCAPS

Report of Spiritual Care Week Committee

Election of Leadership Team Members

Election of Nominating Committee

New Business

4:45-5:00 Closing Remarks and Adjourn -

The Rev. Denise Parker Lawrence

Specialized Ministry: Global Perspectives

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4. Examine International Pastoral Care Praxis and its Global Implications in Correctional Chaplaincy.

The description of the program:

This year's forum presents a global perspective to pastoral care delivery, education and training. While building upon the familiar domestic model, we shall examine, with creativity, ways to strengthen, empower and raise our commitment to social justice and change by addressing issues of trauma, effects of war and violence found throughout the land. Chaplaincy and spiritual care giving provides a balm of healing. We are excited to have presentations from Dr. Ivan Omana and Dr. Asnel Valcin as they enlighten us about standardizing global qualifications through teaching and training. Dr Sarah Lammert shares her expertise about the nature of military chaplaincy as well as the role of endorsement. And we're honored to have , Maxim Safonov, an international speaker in North America and Eastern Europe, provide globalized insights of Correctional Chaplaincy.

Our Presenters:



The Rev. Charlotte Bear is an Advanced Practice Board Certified Chaplain working in healthcare. She is the founding Chaplain at Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF), the San Francisco Bay Area affiliate of Sutter Health, one of the largest non-profit HMOs in Northern California. With specializations in hospice and

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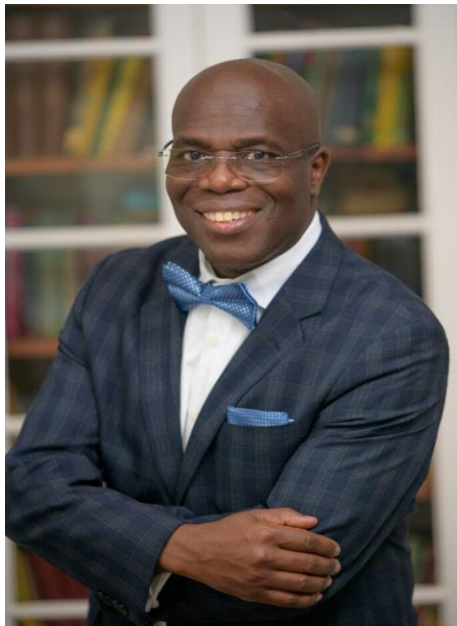
palliative care, grief and trauma informed care, spiritual direction, behavioral health counseling, advance care planning, Veterans end of life care and religious diversity in the outpatient setting, Bear cares for people living with serious illness and their family caregivers. She is a national award-winning Bereavement Manager, as well as former Director of Psychosocial-Spiritual Care in hospice. She also is an US Army Veteran, former American Legion Vice Commander and District Service Officer, and award-winning community organizer for Veterans and military families. Bear has been invited to present at national healthcare conferences about best practices in specialized clinical spiritual care. She has been a presenter at the Parliament of World's Religions and other interfaith conferences.

Bear is a minister of Circle Sanctuary, North America's largest and most established faith community for nature-based religions. She is co-ordained with the Order of Universal Interfaith (OuNI). With Circle Sanctuary, she serves on the Chaplaincy Committee assisting ordained clergy seeking Endorsement. She also leads the Green Faith Circle Ministry for eco-justice and earth advocacy, and she is a regular educator and worship leader. Bear was certified as an "Eco-Chaplain," promoting the growth of resilient communities living in a climate crisis and providing support for first responders, front-line communities, activists and inter-faith leaders who have the courage to speak truth to power in these polarized and threatenina times.



Dr. Ivan Omaña serves as the Director/Endorser of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries and President of Adventist Chaplaincy Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He assumed his duties on November 1, 2021. Born in Venezuela, Omaña's family history is tied closely to the growth of Adventism in that country. During a family trip to Florida, Omaña learned more about chaplaincy in a conversation with a chaplain at FloridaHospital. Before he returned to Venezuela, a chaplaincy position opened and Omaña applied, and was hired. Omaña began his chaplaincy at the Adventist Care Centers in the Greater Orlandoarea. In 2002, Ivan transitioned to Florida Hospital Kissimmee as the full-time chaplain. In 2015 Omaña assumed the duties as an Assistant Director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries for the North American Division.

Omaña holds a Master of Divinity degree from Florida Center for Theological Studies and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Denver Theological Seminary and is an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor. He is a Board Certified Pastoral Counselor by the American Association of Christian Counselors, a Board Certified Chaplain by the Association of Professional Chaplains, as well as the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy and an Associate Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor with College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy. He is also certified in Acute Stress, Grief, and Trauma Intervention by the American Association of Christian Counselors. He chairs the Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Board of Certification and is endorsed as a chaplain by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—North American Division.



Dr. Asnel Valcin is passionate about restoring people to wholeness. He spent the last two decades preparing himself to become an agent of personal change. He earned a Doctorate in Psychology concentration: Clinical Pastoral Psychotherapy from Graduate Theological Foundation. His passion for helping children was born in the crucible of pain and adversity. He grew up with asthma as a child and remembered how he almost died because of lack of medical care. Later, in pursuit of better life and safety for him and his brother, their mother gave them up to be adopted by a family 200 kilometers away from their birth town. Dr. Valcin is no stranger to feelings of abandonment and rejection. After migrating to the United States, he got married to his wife Dorcas Sumawang and his first child was diagnosed with William Syndrome, a rare heart condition which impact development and cognition in a child. While learning to advocate for his daughter's needs Dr. Valcin became an advocate for all other children struggling to climb out of conditions they had no control over such as neglect, poverty, and insecurity. In August 2021 the south of Haiti was devastated by another earthquake, Dr. Valcin was ready. He quickly assembled a team of Chaplains to offer psychosocial help to those who experienced trauma and loss. Dr. Valcin's passion about finding ways to help restore children and youth to wholeness led to the foundation of the Asnel Valcin Ministries International (AMIHaiti).

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Dr. Valcin's passion for education and mental/physical health increasingly propelled him to redefine his life's mission. Today, Dr. Valcin dedicates his life to making a real difference in people's lives. Dr. Valcin is a Diplomate Supervisor in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). He is a Board Certified Clinical Chaplain and Pastoral Counselor. Dr. Asnel Valcin is presently the Director of the Pastoral Care and Education Department for one of New York's healthcare systems. He was most recently the Executive Chair for the Certification Committee with the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP). Dr. Valcin is an international speaker and seminar presenter. Dr. Valcin is the Executive Director of AV Ministries International, Inc. (AMI Haiti) a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to providing disadvantage children the opportunity to fulfill their life's purpose.



The Rev. Dr. Sarah Lammert is a parish minister, denominational leader, published author, and tireless advocate for the revitalization of professional religious leadership in the service of all. Fulfilling her vocation since 2010 as Co-Director of Ministries and Faith Development at the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), she also serves as the UUA's Endorser for Federal Chaplaincies. She served on the Executive Committee of the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces from 2011-2019, including a term as the Chair of the Executive Committee from 2017-2018. In 2017 she also served as the Acting Chief Operating Officer of the UUA. She was ordained in 1993 and served Unitarian Universalist Congregations in California, Utah and New Jersey. She has been a consistent champion of interfaith work at the local and national levels. She embodies an entrepreneurial spirit in ministry, while authorizing and empowering creativity and innovation in others. Her work is dedicated to the all-embracing love at the root of the Unitarian Universalist tradition.

The Rev. Dr. Lammert is married to Tim Brennan and has two adult daughters, Lila and Abby. She lives in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, where she enjoys hiking, cross-country skiing, amazing local cheese, and a strong community spirit. She currently serves on the board of the non-profit Greensboro Nursing Home in her hometown of Greensboro VT, and delivers food for the Hardwick Area Food Pantry on Saturdays. She believes in being a global citizen while also making a difference in her local community. In 2024 she anticipates launching a consulting practice assisting non-profits, interfaith organizations, and congregations in organization changeleadership, strategic planning and conflict transformation.

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Maxim Safonov is an ordained minister with over 23 years of pastoral experience. Within the last ten years, he has served as a correctional chaplain at one of the California State prisons. Maxim is also an ACPE certified healthcare interfaith chaplain. In addition to his professional chaplaincy ministry, he has conducted multiple seminars locally in North America and Eastern Europe, focusing on effective communication, mission, and personal identity of a chaplain. At the age of 17 (September 2000), he became a missionary and moved to a small town in South-West Russia. A year later, he went to Zaosky Theological Seminary to study theology. During his bachelor's degree studies at the seminary, Maxim was elected as the president of the Missionary Student's Club, where he provided mentorship to students studying to be pastors, who were seeking experience in pastoral care. After finishing his bachelor's degree, God called him to become a pastor in one of the local SDA churches in the Kubano-Chernomorskaya Conference in the Euro-Asia Division (Russia). In June 2004, Maxim was ordained as an elder and began performing all pastoral duties and rites. In November 2007, he moved to Seattle, WA, where he joined the Russian SDA church. In August 2010, he completed his education at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, and obtained a Master of Arts in Religion diploma. All the aforementioned ministries led him to the Chaplaincy Residency Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program at the University of California Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, CA. After completing the CPE residency, Maxim served as a chaplain in healthcare and correctional settings.

While serving as a healthcare chaplain, he visited the Sacramento County Jail, providing spiritual and emotional support with the incarcerated. It became his first experience of "coming to those who are in prison" (Matthew 25:36), which prepared Maxim for a new chapter in his chaplaincy ministry as a Protestant Chaplain at Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, CA, which began in June 2013. After ten years serving as a prison chaplain, Maxim currently leads three church services each week at three different yards. He was able to develop his leadership skills, effectively delegating ministry to inmates, and collaborating with volunteers and staff. Besides professional chaplaincy ministry, Maxim serves as a secretary of SDA Correctional Chaplaincy Association in North American Division and a president of Northern California Conference Prison Ministry Association. Maxim is married to Kara Lynell Smith. Maxim and Kara have an eight-year-old daughter, Natalie, and a four-year-old son, Nathan, who bring them great joy.