Advance Praise for *Mantle of Mercy*

“Applause for *Mantle of Mercy*. This extraordinary compilation of personal essays provides insight into Muslim chaplains’ experiences and contributions to the field of chaplaincy in the United States. Readers gain a glimpse of the foundational Islamic principles and values that undergird the writers’ ministry and leadership within the diverse institutions they serve. *Mantle of Mercy* is a must-have resource for theological schools, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Centers, and students pursuing a career in chaplaincy.”

—CHAPLAIN TAHARA AKMAL, MA, BCC, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education Certified Educator

“*Mantle of Mercy* fills an important void within the emerging body of research and writing about the field of chaplaincy. While chaplaincy may be unfamiliar to many Muslims, the writers in this volume generously engage with both the educational formation processes and spiritual practices of chaplaincy while thoroughly and authentically integrating them with the Islamic faith. Careful, scholarly attention is paid throughout the text to the core principles of Islam, demonstrating through story and reflection how a chaplaincy is an ideal form of practice for the faithful Muslim leader. The result is a beautiful witness to the many ways that Islamic chaplaincy embodies the kind of compassion that is at the heart of professional spiritual care. This text is an incredible resource to chaplaincy educators, professional chaplains, and those Muslims seeking to serve as professional spiritual care providers.”

—TRACE HAYTHORN, PHD, executive director & CEO, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education

“Islamic chaplaincy, a relatively new field of inquiry and practice, has been skillfully outlined in this first volume of its kind, *Mantle of Mercy*. The editors have done a wonderful job in assembling a chorus of diverse
voices of practitioners from the field. Critical perspectives from chaplains serving in universities, the healthcare sector, the military, and underrepresented communities provide fascinating insight into the world of fostering human souls. In a world where cynicism, distrust, and division have impaired our collective ability to engage with one another, this volume offers a reprieve, and perhaps even a way forward to reacquaint ourselves with our inherent humanity.”

—SHAYKH WALEAD MOSAAD, PhD, Chair and Resident Scholar, Sabeel Community

“In this superbly curated collection of essays, trailblazing Muslim chaplains provide intimate portraits of their professional lives and how they arrived at their vocational calling; how they create healing spaces through the Prophetic example; and how they provide pastoral care by drawing upon Islamic theology. As readers amble into this garden of stories, they will surely feel the hearts of these chaplains speaking to their own. And by taking in the vista, they will come to recognize the value Islamic chaplaincy adds within hospitals, prisons, college campuses, the armed forces, and, indeed, even within mosques and third spaces.”

—AASIM I. PADELA, MD, MSc, chairperson and director of the Initiative on Islam & Medicine, and professor of Emergency Medicine, Bioethics, and the Medical Humanities at the Medical College of Wisconsin

“I really loved this book. Muslim chaplains do amazing work for religious identity, pastoral care, and civic pluralism. This volume captures the complexity and range of such work remarkably well.”

—EBOO PATEL, author of Acts of Faith and president of Interfaith Youth Core

“In the last few decades, Muslim chaplains have emerged as a profoundly important model of spiritual accompaniment. Mantle of Mercy brings together most of the leading Muslim chaplains in North America who bring a tradition-centered approach to healing in their various settings. The chapters are as spiritually rich as they are accessible. It is lovely to see how they advance the concept of healing and care beyond the Western obsession with ‘self’ care to the heart-community-Divine
level. Particularly poignant and bittersweet are the chapter and the farewell from the departed and much beloved Imam Sohaib N. Sultan. I commend Ali, Bajwa, Kholaki, and Starr for this urgently needed volume and enthusiastically recommend this book to all who work with the Muslim community and in pastoral care in the context of universities, hospitals, and beyond.”

—OMID SAFI, PHD, professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University and director of Illuminated Courses and Tours

“Ali, Bajwa, Kholaki, and Starr have created a watershed moment with the publication of Mantle of Mercy. By assembling North America’s leading lights in Islamic chaplaincy, the editorial team has provided an essential resource not just for Muslim chaplains but for all spiritual care providers who are rightly attentive to contemporary spiritual and religious diversity. Students, educators, and chaplains in the field will benefit from Mantle of Mercy. This essential addition to the literature makes it definitely clear that North American spiritual care cannot develop further without taking Islamic chaplaincy into much greater account.”

—MICHAEL SKAGGS, PHD, director of programs, Chaplaincy Innovation Lab

“This is an important and much-needed scholarly contribution to the literature on chaplaincy in general and, more specifically, Islamic chaplaincy. It gives insight into how far the field has come and how Islam is establishing itself into the fabric of North American life in such a beautiful way. The contributors and the topics they write beautifully demonstrate how diverse the Islamic tradition is and how interesting and wonderful such diversity can be. This compilation is a moving and inspiring book and a must-have for anyone interested in chaplaincy, pastoral care, the healing arts, Islam, Islam in North America, and many other related fields.”

—CARRIE M. YORK, PhD, president, The Alkaram Institute
MANTLE OF MERCY
Bismillah al-Rahmân al-Rahîm
We begin in the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

This book is dedicated with the deepest gratitude to Dr. Ingrid Mattson, whose tireless pioneering efforts planted the seeds for our training, and to the late Chaplain Sohaib Sultan, who helped nurture those seeds by building joyful communities.
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A NOTE ON CONVENTIONS

Language can fall short in translation. We have therefore chosen to use Arabic terms and provide close English equivalents in parentheses. In doing so, we honor the richness of our own tradition while giving non-Muslim readers an opportunity to experience the challenges and insights involved in translating a term in a way that resonates with our being and practice.

The medallion (ﷺ) placed after the name of the Prophet Muhammad at the first mention in each paragraph serves as a reminder to Muslim readers to utter the pious blessing “salla llâhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam,” which translates to “God, send blessings and peace upon Muhammad.”

Qur’anic references are cited by surah (chapter) name and number, colon, and verse number; for example, al-Baqarah/2:163. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are from The Study Quran (HarperOne, 2015).

Hadiths are reports of the Prophet Muhammad’s actions, statements, and practices. They are cited here by collection name and number.

We use a simplified transliteration for Arabic words, where circumflexes represent long vowels. Familiar terms and names are spelled according to English convention.

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Islamic Chaplaincy in its modern form is the fruit of hard-fought battles waged by Black American Muslims for religious freedom and dignity. The sinister structures of anti-Black racism guarantee that disproportionate numbers of Black folks populate American prisons. When incarcerated Black American Muslims and their communities on the “outside” began advocating for religious accommodations and freedom decades ago, they demonstrated their commitment to their faith, resistance to oppression, and knowledge of how American legal and political systems, while deeply biased against them, could nevertheless be used to fight for their rights. The first Islamic chaplains in American prisons owed their positions to the advocacy and litigious activity of mostly incarcerated Black Muslims.

Black Muslims in the United States military were the next significant group to fight for their rights to religious accommodation. Like incarcerated Americans, although usually to a lesser extent, those in the military are restricted in their movements, even hour to hour, often can only eat the food provided to them, and wear uniforms provided by the state. Religious accommodations in the form of lawful food, the ability to fast and break the fast, to perform the daily salat and attend Jummah prayer, and to meet the requirements of modest dress are necessary to meet the constitutionally protected religious rights of Muslims. While Muslims have served in the U.S. military since the founding of America, it was not until 1993, in the wake of large numbers of Black Americans who converted to Islam during the “First Gulf War” (Operation Desert Storm), that the U.S. military hired an active-duty Muslim chaplain. Who could have anticipated such a development, except perhaps a

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believer who trusts that Allah can bring good out of bad, light out of darkness: “Allah knows and you do not know.”

When I started my PhD, Islam was not taught in any seminary, divinity school, or theology faculty in the United States; it was only taught in departments of Middle East, Near East, or Oriental Studies. I was fortunate to supplement my academic program by studying with Muslim religious scholars. I stayed involved in Muslim communities on the South Side of Chicago because I had a husband and children—an ivory tower life was neither possible nor desirable.

In 1998, Hartford Seminary, which had a few years earlier made history as the first American seminary to hire a Muslim to teach Islam (Ibrahim Abu-Rabi), hired me to teach Islamic Studies and to develop “some kind of leadership program” for Muslims. Community leaders such as Imam Qasim Sharif of Masjid Muhammad and Dr. Saleem Bajwa, a Hartford Seminary board member, had advocated for such a program and were key advisors. To develop this program, I employed the same methodology I had used two years earlier when I was hired by a Canadian Muslim relief organization to develop some kind of support program for Afghan women living in Pakistani refugee camps: understand the context, study other programs with similar goals, consult widely with Muslim leadership, and find the people already stepping forward to serve their communities and support them.

What I learned about the context of Hartford Seminary was that religious communities were respected and valued. Students could study Islam and be Muslims without being presented with a false choice between academia and faith. What struck me most, however, was Hartford’s emphasis on offering academic study and credentialing to believers for whom the standard program for religious leadership (an MDiv) was unattainable due to the students’ social, economic, or political marginalization in the broader society, or because their own religious communities did not deem them worthy of leadership. I was in awe at the respect and support given to students in the Black Ministries Program, Women’s Leadership Institute, and Programa de Ministerios Hispanos. I wanted a program like this for Muslims, where those who served their communities, even when they had no resources, could have access to quality education and training.

When I looked for other initiatives for Muslim religious leadership, and consulted with academic and organizational leaders in the American Muslim community, it became clear that other programs had failed or not flourished for some similar reasons: they were centered around one scholar, they were
isolated from the broader academic and faith community, and they did not take the American context seriously.

Imam Qasim and Dr. Bajwa connected me with local and regional Muslim leaders; I attended meetings and consultations, and I listened. I met many men and women, almost exclusively Black Muslims, who had been volunteering or working as prison chaplains. They told me about the challenges they faced doing their work due to racism, anti-Muslim discrimination, and marginalization, often justified by the administration because they lacked the credentials and academic degrees of the Christian chaplains.

Before the end of my first year of research and consultation, we were approached by some Muslims who were seeking an MDiv equivalency program so they could serve as military chaplains. The path had become clear: our Muslim leadership program would be an Islamic chaplaincy program, with Islamic studies, pastoral care, and interfaith and intercultural engagement as key components.

In designing the original program, there was one major reason I chose to make it an MA plus graduate certificate (GC) program. I wanted to ensure that the original Muslim chaplains, specifically the Black Muslim men and women who struggled as volunteers and marginalized employees in American prisons, would not be deemed unqualified once our graduates entered society. The GC gave credits for “relevant life experience,” did not require the student to write a thesis, and could be completed in a relatively short time.

I was not trained as a chaplain, but it has been my honor to train chaplains. My confidence has been in the Qur'an and the example of the blessed Prophet ﷺ as sufficient for giving Muslims the theological, spiritual, and ethical teachings we need for chaplaincy. Allah, Who is Exalted, destined that my beloved daughter Soumaya, may Allah have mercy on her soul, would be struck with a terrible illness while I was in the early years of the program. For a dozen years she was my teacher in Islamic pastoral care; she taught me not to judge her reactions, not to give her cheap advice, not to offer answers to unanswerable questions, but to be present, to see her, to listen to her, to affirm her beauty despite her wrecked body, to affirm that her life was meaningful, despite being confined to a bed in a room—a room that became my ribât.

Islamic chaplaincy is not a magical space where ideological, political, and social disparities do not exist; we will not agree on all approaches to this service. But I have always believed that sincere Muslims could uncover and discover how to manifest the sacred teachings of Islam in this work. This volume is a witness to the truth of this belief.
Notes

2. al-Baqarah/2:216.
MANTLE OF MERCY
AT ITS ROOT, the word “chaplain” derives from the Latin word for “cloak” or “mantle,” representing security, comfort, protection, and warmth—qualities that a chaplain aims to bring to the careseeker. The symbol of the mantle appears in connection with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in myriad ways in the Islamic tradition, each demonstrating the mercy he embodied, such as when he laid his cloak on the ground for Halîmah (his former wet nurse) as a gesture of love and respect when she visited. He also gathered his cousin Ali, his grandsons Hasan and Husayn, and his daughter Fatimah under his cloak as a declaration of their status as his beloved family. Imam al-Busîrî, the author of the Qasîdat al- Burdah, or “Ode of the Mantle,” composed this oft-recited poem following a dream in which the Prophet used his cloak to cover the ailing poet, who awoke completely and mysteriously healed of his illness. In a display of compassionate care some Muslim chaplains point, as a source of inspiration, to the Prophet’s wife, Lady Khadîjah, lovingly wrapping the Prophet in a dîthâr, or cloak, to provide comfort immediately following his jarring experience of receiving his first revelation. In his time of doubt, she affirmed his beautiful qualities and gently accompanied him to her cousin, the monk Waraqah, for additional support. Lady Khadijah—through her compassionate presence, affirmation and validation, and “referral,” demonstrated what chaplains strive to provide.

This connection between the cloak or mantle and chaplaincy proves significant for Muslim chaplains, for whom the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ remains the foremost model and example of compassionate spiritual care. The pastoral way he used questions in lieu of direct advice, the full presence and deep
listening he provided in conversation with careseekers, and his emphasis on community all inform the ministry of Muslim chaplains. According to the Spiritual Assessment and Intervention Model (Spiritual AIM), a chaplain strives to embody three roles as part of their intervention: valuer, guide, and truth-teller. As a valuer, the Prophet communicated to a careseeker their innate worth and belonging when he turned his entire body toward the person he was speaking to, such that the person felt like they were the most important person. As a guide, the Prophet asked meaningful questions to help the careseeker discern their way forward. As a truth-teller, the Prophet tolerated the anger of others, understood the deeper emotions beneath the anger, and addressed brokenness and tension in relationships. Muslims remember the Prophet as a gentle, loving, and merciful example who embodied the Qur’an’s teachings of spiritual advancement, which appropriately fits the characteristics of a spiritual guide and caregiver.

To inform their ministry, most Muslim chaplains draw on two main sources: the Qur’an, the scriptural text, considered the revealed word of God, and the Sunnah, the example and practice of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Both the Qur’an and the Sunnah emphasize one key characteristic: rahmah, a term which encapsulates mercy, love, and compassion. All but one of the Qur’an’s 114 chapters begin with Bismillah al-Rahmân al-Rahîm—In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful—an invocation that reminds the reader of these central attributes of the Divine. What is more, God refers in the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad as rahmatan lil-ʿâlîmîn, “a mercy to all of creation.”

A more nuanced definition of rahmah emerges when we break it down into its constituent Arabic root letters r-h-m, the same root letters from which comes the word rahm, or womb. This feminine attribute of God, rahmah, is a direct link to the cushioned home of the growing fetus nestled safely within the mother, underscoring this similarly protective, nurturing, and loving nature of the Divine. God—every created soul’s First Guardian—protects, nurtures, and remains present with us before our own parents protect, nurture, and love us. Notably, many hospital chaplains share that patients coming out of surgery or in the active death phase will call out for their mother, suggesting that the comfort of a guardian’s love is perhaps the closest thing we have in this terrestrial life to understanding God’s love for us.

As rahmatan lil-ʿâlîmîn, the Prophet ﷺ served everybody around him, from the most vulnerable to the most powerful, whether a follower or not. In the essays gathered here, readers will learn how the mantle of mercy, as demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad and his wife Lady Khadijah, is brought
Editors’ Introduction

to life in the compassionate spiritual care provided by Muslim chaplains. The
diverse collection of contributors use storytelling to demonstrate the work of
professional chaplaincy, the teachings and doctrines that inspire it, and the
obstacles they have overcome entering into this predominantly Christian field.
Notably, while chaplaincy has its roots in Christianity, traditions we recog-
nize now as pastoral care have existed throughout Muslim history. These essays
present contemporary North American manifestations and offer vibrant con-
tributions toward the field of professional chaplaincy. Muslim chaplains,
through their service to careseekers of all belief systems in colleges, hospitals,
correctional facilities, community organizations, and the armed forces, offer
a vision of their lived service in the way of God.7

Islamic Chaplaincy—Muslim Chaplains

As we developed the idea for this book, we struggled with a topic that has long
been a point of discussion: is it properly Muslim chaplaincy or Islamic chap-
laincy? One reason not to use “Islamic chaplaincy” is that it suggests a nor-
mative guide to one form of correct chaplaincy rooted in a specific praxis of the
dîn (religion). “Muslim chaplaincy,” on the other hand, implies that we only
care for Muslims when, as chaplains, we are often called to serve non-Muslims
in the institutions where we work. Since we are examining a multiplicity of
understandings of chaplaincy—informed by Islam through engagement with
the Qur’an, Sunnah, religious scholarship, and ‘urf (custom)—we have cho-
sen “Islamic chaplaincy” to characterize our work and “Muslim chaplain” to
describe who we are.

“Chaplain” itself is a title that many Muslims have questioned using, point-
ing out that Muslim careseekers are often not familiar with the title, particu-
larly international students and immigrants. Unlike Christian and Jewish
chaplains who are also clergy holding titles such as “minister” or “rabbi,”
Muslims do not necessarily have another title given the lack of ordination in
most forms of Islam. For a variety of reasons, including a desire on the part of
hiring institutions to consolidate their authority8 and/or showcase their diver-
sity in ways “chaplain” alone does not convey, many males and some women
have also embraced the title “imam,”9 while some others use ustâdh/ah
(teacher) or shaykh/ah (elder, or scholar).10 Yet many excellent and otherwise
well-trained chaplains do not possess the depth of formal Islamic knowledge
these titles suggest. Any understanding of the term “chaplain” is further com-
plicated by the fact that the term “imam” itself is not clearly defined nor is the
training standardized.11 We hold that, ultimately, the work of chaplaincy often
extends beyond the roles these titles imply and requires specialty in pastoral
care; as such, we believe chaplain to be the most appropriate title for our North American context.

Drs. Nancy Khalil and Celene Ibrahim identify three primary characteristics of chaplains: an absence of any perceived gender restrictions; a focus on pastoral care as the central skill set; and employment within institutions that are either typically interreligious or secular, where they are called to serve everyone regardless of their faith affiliation (though we see an exception in Ch. Dr. Joshua Salaam’s essay about chaplaincy in a masjid [mosque] context). There have been various attempts to distinguish the two roles such as the idea that “imams preach, chaplains listen,” or that imams are the holders of the faith while chaplains are the holders of the faithful.

While the role of a chaplain is unique, chaplains are often a collaborative complement to masjid imams as Ch. Kaiser Aslam shares in his essay. Some male chaplains (and at least one female, Ch. Sondos Kholaki) are also members of their local imams’ council, which provides opportunities to offer their pastoral care expertise during tragedies as well as their interfaith skills (as seen in Ch. Samsiah Abdul-Majid’s essay), while providing access to scholars when religio-ethical cases surface in chaplains’ institutions.

The professional nature of chaplaincy with its more consistent hours, work-life boundaries, and reliable paycheck with benefits has appealed to many masjid imams and scholars. However, their hire by institutions (e.g., prisons) without chaplaincy-specific training has resulted in confused expectations for the “chaplain,” the institution, and the careseekers, as well as the broader Muslim community. Meanwhile, many masjid imams have found that they have benefited from one or two units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or from a weekend course on compassionate care, a core part of chaplaincy training. Does that make them chaplains? Not necessarily, but it may help to bring some of the best skills of chaplaincy into their work as imams.

Our goal in understanding and parsing out the difference between chaplains and imams is not to undermine one profession or prefer one over the other; rather, we aim to develop an understanding of the diversity of religious leadership styles and roles. Ultimately, much of the difference and similarity between the roles of chaplain and imam, irrespective of the title adopted, depends largely on the individuals themselves—what they are called to do in their chaplaincy work, for whom, and in what their training consists of. As has been said, when people contact someone as a mufti (jurist), his job is to give his interpretation of their shari’ah obligation; when he is preaching at the masjid as an imam, his job is to uphold the faith as he understands it; and when...
he visits people in the hospital as a chaplain, his job is to accompany them with compassion.

**Islamic Chaplaincy in North America**

Islamic chaplaincy has manifested uniquely in the different national contexts where chaplains serve. There is increasing interest in pastoral care professionals in Muslim majority contexts responding to the contemporary displacement and fragmentation of communities as seen in Ch. Dr. Kamal Abu-Shamsieh’s essay. The foundations of Islamic chaplaincy in the United States were, in fact, overwhelmingly laid by African Americans, many of whom began as dedicated volunteers during the second half of the twentieth century at a time when training and paychecks did not yet exist. The earliest chaplains were predominantly men, with varying degrees of training as imams. Many early hires occurred in correctional institutions beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. Some were hired while affiliated with the Nation of Islam and subsequently the community led by W. D. Muhammad.

There has been a distinct theme of professionalization within Islamic chaplaincy in the United States. In addition to the groundbreaking work of Hartford Seminary, which established the first graduate training program under the leadership of Dr. Ingrid Mattson in 2000, the efforts of three chaplains to professionalize the field cannot be overlooked: Dr. James (Jimmy) Jones, Matiniah Yahya, and Abdul-Malik Negedu. Through a decade of organizing an annual conference and establishing an endorsement agency, a professional association, and an educational foundation, they built the institutions that significantly advanced the professionalization of the field of Islamic chaplaincy. A profession is typically defined by having an established training process, an association with a code of ethics, and credentialing criteria. For Muslim chaplains in the United States, this consists of a combination of study of Islamic sciences (such as *tafsir* or Qur’anic exegesis, *aqeedah*, doctrine, and history of the early community), relevant graduate-level studies, clinical training, endorsement, and membership in a professional association.

In contrast to England, where the majority of Muslim chaplains are South Asian, trained in Islamic schools affiliated with the Deoband Madrasa movement from India, and have no graduate education, in the United States the majority now hold a Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree in Islamic Chaplaincy (or the equivalent) and come from a variety of cultures and traditions. MDiv programs typically consist of a combination of Islamic studies, interfaith studies, and pastoral care, including counseling. Unlike modern psychology,
which comes out of a secular framework, chaplaincy developed from the field of sociology. Islamic studies, as a subset of religious studies, focuses on the study of belief and the ways in which believers engage with their faith through fields such as history, sociology, and anthropology. For example, in learning about the sciences of aqeedah (creed), kalam (theology), and hadith, students look to understand how Muslim engagement with these subjects has been impacted by the socio-political milieu. Through the Islamic studies component of chaplaincy training, students develop an appreciation for the different ways in which Muslims have connected with their faith and draw inspiration from pastoral examples in scripture and the Sunnah. As they progress into chaplaincy work, this appreciation allows them to ask careseekers how their faith informs their decision-making rather than instructing them in how their faith should be informing their decision-making. Both academic Islamic studies and traditional Islamic sciences are important fields of knowledge and training for a chaplain and, as Ch. Dr. Bilal Ansari articulates in his essay, critical for developing the skill of theological reflection.

Similarly, interfaith studies are a core component of chaplaincy preparation, as chaplains are called to provide spiritual accompaniment for all those in their institution’s purview, regardless of what faith (if any) a careseeker practices. To do this, chaplains require foundational knowledge of the major religious and spiritual traditions, as well as an ability to engage in interfaith dialogue with curiosity, respect, and appreciation.

Pastoral care classes make up the final critical component of the education of chaplains. These include courses on mental health, pastoral counseling, professional ethics, and other coursework specific to different experiences such as addiction, gender-based violence, and trauma. Many chaplains report that what they learn in these classes is what they employ the most in their daily work.

**Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)**

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) provides clinical field training, ideally in an interfaith cohort, where students provide direct chaplaincy services under a supervisor. Through a reflective process, students come to recognize how their own lived experiences impact the care they provide. This self-awareness is critical for limiting malpractice. Hospitals, where most CPE placements occur, offer an ideal setting for pulling students out of their comfort zones. In the midst of difficult emergency department cases, the aspiring chaplain may not be able to consult a religious scholar and must sometimes develop their own practical theology in the moment, a process Ch. Ibrahim Long calls *ijtihād* (exertion) of the heart.
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The various CPE curricular components provide an opportunity to authentically self-evaluate with the help of peers, similar to the Muslim practice of *tazkiyah*, or refinement of oneself, with the aim of recognizing how one’s lived experiences, triggers, and biases impact one’s caregiving. In CPE, students engage in an exercise aptly named the Verbatim, which nicely mirrors the Islamic spiritual processes of *murâqabah* (self-observation) and *muhâsabah* (self-assessment) through the reflective process that it calls students to partake in as they examine their encounters, as discussed by Ch. Jawad Bayat in his essay. Current MDiv programs focused on Islamic chaplaincy require students to complete a unit of CPE, recognizing that students benefit from practicing what they’ve studied under supervision.

*Professional Association, Endorsement, and Certification*

Contemporary professions have associations responsible for maintaining standards while providing accountability, advocacy, and continuing professional development. In the United States, the Association of Muslim Chaplains (AMC) has emerged at the forefront of several efforts. Established in 2011 for all chaplaincy sectors, AMC’s commitment to developing professionalism (including a code of conduct), advocacy, and *suhbah* (companionship) has made significant contributions to enriching the field of Islamic chaplaincy.

Endorsement provides secular institutions with a means of evaluating a candidate as a competent, representative member of a specific faith tradition. Importantly, endorsement allows government agencies to stay within the boundaries of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. While mosques have precipitously provided letters of endorsement, chaplaincy-specific endorsing agencies look to evaluate a person’s practice and knowledge of their own tradition as well as their mastery of the foundational chaplaincy competencies.

The concept of endorsement and certification, through which the professional practitioner is held accountable, has long existed in Muslim spaces, according to Ch. Abdul-Malik Negedu of the Muslim Endorsement Council. When an individual masters a topic or subject, an *ijâzah* (license) is conferred. Through established initiation processes, Sufi orders elevate apprentices to full membership. Scholars have, at different points in time, organized themselves into guild-like organizations. In many Muslim majority countries today, the government undertakes the oversight and licensure of imams.

Board certification, typically only required for healthcare chaplains, does not certify a person’s religious convictions and practices but rather their ability to apply them to the work of chaplaincy and their mastery of an identified
chaplaincy skills set. In addition to the competencies, for board certification by the Association of Professional Chaplains, a chaplain must hold a Master of Divinity degree and have completed four units of Clinical Pastoral Education as well as 2,000 supervised hours of care.

Why This Book

Professional chaplains augment the spiritual caregiving of the Muslim community through their specialized training in trauma response, healing, and compassionate presence. Chaplains excel as first responders, in part because they are adept at facilitating referrals to longer-term care—particularly important given the stigma around mental health in many Muslim cultures. Muslim chaplains have emerged as key figures in the American Muslim landscape, particularly as leaders able to engage with the North American cultural context, yet many Muslims do not understand the role and function of chaplains. Indeed, as one example, many assume that chaplains are agents of da’wah (proselytization) despite the fact this is clearly prohibited by chaplaincy codes of ethics. This lack of understanding often manifests as the underutilization and underfunding of chaplains by Muslims.

Additionally, institutions have often hired well-intending Muslims without chaplaincy training, such as social workers, imams, academics, and religious scholars, resulting in confused expectations. While many have provided valuable care, chaplaincy-specific training would enhance the ability of these individuals to provide appropriate pastoral care and to reduce burnout, boundary crossing, and the risk of spiritual malpractice, which can manifest as spiritual bypassing to spiritual abuse.

Finally, aspiring and current chaplains, regardless of their faith affiliation, have few resources to turn to as they try to understand what pastoral care by and/or for Muslims looks like. This dearth of resources contributes to feelings of isolation and inadequacy among Muslims in CPE and undermines the richness of what Islam and Muslims offer the profession. We hope that this book will enrich the discourse by adding to the earlier foundations developed through theoretical contributions, personal reflections, important theological works pertaining to pastoral care, as well as the work of our colleagues in the Islamically integrated psychology and Muslim mental health fields.

How This Book Came to Be

This book has come into being only through the mercy of God and the assistance of many along the way. We began by putting out a call for proposals. To our delight, and to our heartbreak, we received many more abstracts than
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could be accommodated, and many we have not included would have been
enriching additions. While the essays do not necessarily represent our own
views, we recognize chaplaincy as a discursive community. We have sought
to create a diverse collection of voices representing the different areas of
chaplaincy; we do, however, acknowledge the absence of several important
topics, including care for converts, refugees, those struggling with substance
abuse, domestic violence, infertility, spiritual abuse, as well as disaster chap-
laincy, the role of art in healing, and the development of Islamic chaplaincy
in Canada. We are also acutely aware that the voices of the pioneers without
whom we would not have this profession are largely missing from this anthol-
ogy. We compiled this book entirely during the COVID-19 pandemic and,
accordingly, rely on our readers’ spirit of generosity. These have been chal-
lenging times for chaplains; we pray that this will not be the last such collec-
tion of essays and that the depth and breadth of such publications will only
grow from here.

How to Read This Book

We compiled this book to give readers a glimpse into the work and practical the-
ologies of Muslim chaplains, a Muslim theology of engagement to use Dr. Martin
Nguyen’s term—that is to say, how we engage religious teachings and practices
in relationship to the work of chaplaincy. Depending on what brings you to
this collection, some essays may be of greater interest to you than others: if
your attention drifts, skip ahead. Remember that for the profession and the
individual contributors, you are seeing only a glimpse of a moment in time.
This is a profession still in its infancy, our views and understandings of things
are in constant evolution, but we believe by risking the vulnerability to share
honestly where chaplains are in this moment, we create a foundation for delving
deeper into conversation that we might grow together.

Anything beneficial herein comes from God; the shortcomings remain ours
alone.

Notes

and the Work of the Chaplain: A Model for Assessing Spiritual Needs and Outcomes
2. Martin Lings, Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources (Inner
Traditions, 2006), 221.
3. Consider the hadith where the Prophet advised Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal by asking
4. A Bedouin came to the Prophet ﷺ complaining angrily that he owed him a camel, and the Prophet responded to the man’s abrasiveness with utter gentleness and generosity. See Sahih al-Bukhārī 578 and Sahih Muslim 3898.
5. al-Anbiyāʾ/21:207.
6. The Prophet ﷺ said to his companions, “Do you think this woman nursing the infant would throw her baby into the fire?” We said, “No, not if she was able to stop it.” The Prophet said, “God is more merciful to His servants than this mother is to her child.” See Sahih al-Bukhārī 5999 and Sahih Muslim 2754.
7. Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Mansur Ali, and Stephen Pattison, Understanding Islamic Chaplaincy (Routledge, 2016) provides an exploration of the ways Muslims have held pastoral care roles throughout history.
8. Corrections departments have generally required staff (including some women) to use “imam” for the purposes of consolidating their authority over inmates; see more in Ch. Dr. Fiazuddin Shuayb’s essay in this collection.
9. “Imam” may be used to denote the leader of prayer, as an honorific title regardless of gender, or—as commonly used in a North American context—as the leader of a masjid or community. For more on chaplains using the title imam, see Timur Yuskaev and Harvey Stark’s “The American ʿUlama and the Public Sphere,” in Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West, ed. Roberto Tottoli (Routledge, 2021).
12. Khalil and Ibrahim, “From the Madrassa to the Seminary.”
16. For a rich and detailed look at Muslim chaplains in England and Wales, see Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Mansur Ali, and Stephen Pattinson, Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy (Routledge, 2013). The Association of Muslim Chaplains has been collaborating with Boston University to conduct similar research in the United States.
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17. From 2000 to 2020, Hartford Seminary’s Islamic Chaplaincy Program consisted of an MDiv equivalency furnished through an MA in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations and a graduate certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy. Current degree programs are described in note 18 below.

18. Currently, there are three Association of Theological Schools’ accredited programs: Bayan Islamic Graduate School (MDiv in Islamic Chaplaincy, conferred through Chicago Theological Seminary); Hartford Seminary (MA in Interreligious Studies and MA in Chaplaincy, both with Islamic concentrations); and the Islamic Seminary of America (MDiv in Islamic Chaplaincy, conferred through Unity Theological Seminary). Additionally, American Islamic College (MDiv in Islamic Studies, with chaplaincy focus) holds candidacy status for accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission.


20. Data provided by the Association of Muslim Chaplains from its 2021 Employment Survey.

21. For more on the impact of AMC, see Long and Ansari, “Islamic Pastoral Care,” 111.

22. Nationally in the United States, endorsement is provided by the Islamic Society of North America, the Muslim Endorsement Council, and Muslims for Progressive Values.


26. Muslims apply for board certification through the Association of Professional Chaplains or the Spiritual Care Association as there is not yet a Muslim certifying body.

27. “Using religion to manipulate, control, and bully through the guise of religion, religious principles, or claims to spirituality. This includes using religion for personal gain, such as sexual or financial” (HEART, https://hearttogrow.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Important-Definitions-Sexual-Violence.pdf). Dr. Ingrid Mattson addresses this abuse as a violation of one’s hurmah (sacred inviolability) through her work with the Hurma Project.

28. See publications by Bilal Ansari, Ibrahim Long, and Nazila Isgandrova.

29. Almost all the available published personal reflections appeared in the journal Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry 29 (2009), ed. Herbert

30. See publications by Ingrid Mattson.
