

Annual Report
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Duke University Medical Center
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Many people wonder how I could "survive" 27 years of ministering in a general hospital without getting depressed or discouraged. The thing that people fail to realize is that I am not ministering to the broken, diseased, damaged, or dying bodies. I am ministering to the vital spirits that reside in those bodies. I never cease to be amazed at the vitality of human beings when they are dealing with adversity and I am thrilled by the graciousness they possess and the integrity they claim even while their bodies are dying. "The flesh may be weak but the spirits are truly strong." Having been here for this many years, my work is almost exclusively that of providing close pastoral support to people who are in great and intense struggle with disease or illness or who are clearly dying and want me to see them through their death. My referrals come from physicians, nurses, former patients and clergy colleagues. There is never a dull moment and there is truth to the promise --- when two or more are gathered together in His name there He will be also.

This has been a busy patient care year and perhaps the busiest summer in the history of Duke Hospital. Needless to say this has placed increased demand on our service. We are presently staffed to meet this kind of demand but it certainly does stretch our limit at times. With a permanent senior staff of four we must also maintain a training staff or "house staff" of approximately twenty in order to meet these demands.

Over all of these years, we have enjoyed the continuing support of the Gideon Society in providing Bibles for all of the patient rooms. With 1008 beds, we replace as many as 450 Bibles per year. People use them but also take them home. The most worn page in the large Bibles in our two hospital Chapels is the page that contains the 23rd Psalm. We have had to replace pulpit Bibles merely because that particular page is completely worn and falls apart.

I was most pleased this year to have Bishop Thomas Fraser of the North Carolina Diocese of the Episcopal Church join our staff parttime at the time of his retirement. Bishop Fraser is enjoying an active pastoral ministry to patients and family members on the wards of our hospital. We look forward to his personal and professional contributions to our program in continuing education, development, pastoral consultation and the informal instruction and guidance of our students.

This has been a full, active and satisfying year.

