

Good afternoon,

My name is Major Stewart, and I am privileged to serve as a Board-Certified Staff Chaplain at VIA Health Partners, where I provide spiritual care to patients and families navigating their end-of-life journeys. Additionally, I am honored to serve as the Senior Pastor of Greater Mt Sinai Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC—a pillar of strength in our community for over 91 years, currently serving more than 700 members.

Today, I come before you to emphasize the crucial importance of culturally competent hospice care, a cause that is deeply personal to me and the reason why I continue to serve as a hospice chaplain today. In 2021, my wife of 28 years succumbed to an aggressive form of breast cancer, and it was through hospice care that she found comfort and dignity in her final days.

I wish to share a moving experience that underscores VIA Health Partners' profound impact on the Mecklenburg community. This connection is forged through proactive community outreach, which builds trust and ensures that underserved populations have access to essential hospice services.

Recently, I had the honor of providing spiritual support to a patient and their family over the course of 30 days. Though the patient had no church affiliation, they had grown up near Greater Mt Sinai Baptist Church, passing it often on their way to a

favorite local restaurant. As the patient's health declined, our hospice team provided compassionate care, respecting their cultural background and beliefs.

On the day of the patient's passing, I arrived to find family members and caregivers visibly grieving. Offering pastoral presence, support, and prayer, I sought to bring comfort and peace during their time of sorrow. Moved by our connection, the primary caregiver approached me, expressing a wish to hold the funeral service at Greater Mt Sinai Church—a place of deep personal significance for the patient. Our church kindly welcomed their request, providing a familiar and comforting setting for the service.

This experience vividly illustrates VIA Health Partners' commitment to our community. Through culturally sensitive care and dedicated outreach, we not only earned the trust of this family but also ensured their access to vital hospice services. By hosting the funeral at a community church, we enabled neighbors and friends to gather, offering crucial support to the grieving family and creating a meaningful funeral service.

In closing, I firmly believe that culturally competent healthcare, particularly in hospice settings, is essential for honoring the dignity and preferences of individuals from diverse backgrounds. It ensures that every member of our community receives the compassionate care and respect they deserve throughout their end-of-

life journey. VIA Health Partners, with its 46 years of commitment to all in our community who need compassionate hospice care, has the cultural competence to serve our diverse communities.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Major Stewart