Good morning, MercyOne

The clock strikes 8:30 a.m. at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center, and the sound of bells is heard throughout the halls. Then comes the familiar, booming greeting: “Good morning, MercyOne!” Deacon Dave O’Brien captures attention and shares a morning message and prayer. For 14 years, Deacon Dave has led Pastoral Care, reminding us the healing ministry of Jesus Christ is alive and present for our patients, families and colleagues. During the first week of November, Deacon Dave will start a new chapter in his life when he retires.

A mission, not a cause

Deacon Dave wasn’t looking for a job when God called him to MercyOne Des Moines. With a 32-year career in public and Catholic education and coaching, in 2006 he was teaching at Dowling High School and serving at St. Francis of Assisi parish in West Des Moines. Also a member of St. Francis, MercyOne Central Iowa Chief Mission Officer Laura Wenman experienced firsthand Deacon Dave’s strong faith and energy. She approached him about the need for a director of Pastoral Care at MercyOne.

With no clinical background nor idea of what to expect, Deacon Dave approached then leader of the Diocese of Des Moines, Bishop Joseph Charron, for counsel. “Approaching Catholic health care is a mission, not a cause,” Bishop Charron advised. Soon after, while walking through MercyOne Des Moines with Wenman, Deacon Dave remembered noticing Wenman’s ability to recognize the needs of others with a passion for the vulnerable.

With questions still lingering, Deacon Dave met Wenman on Memorial Day at a local cemetery where she was planting flowers for the Sisters of Mercy who had served at MercyOne Des Moines. This visit helped Deacon Dave make his decision.

Divine intervention

While serving in health care, Deacon Dave quickly experienced joy, and the pain of loss. During his first week at MercyOne, he was called to the pediatric unit where a 15-month-old child had passed away. When Deacon Dave arrived, he saw the nurse gently placing the child in the mother’s arms, much like the Blessed Virgin held Jesus. The family had asked for Deacon Dave specifically, as they knew he worked for MercyOne. “This was very challenging, and I wasn’t sure I could do this,” Deacon Dave recalled.

Shortly after this event, Deacon Dave officiated at a family wedding in Buffalo, New York. During the reception, a woman approached him and asked if he was part of the ceremony, then gave Deacon Dave an image of Jesus watching over a surgeon. The woman said she had been told she should give this to someone one day, and it was for him. Those at the wedding did not know her. To this day, Deacon Dave continues to carry the image given to him. Reflecting back, he said he believes these events were God answering his questions.

When back at MercyOne Des Moines, Deacon Dave said he began to better understand Bishop Charron’s advice. It became clearer that he and his colleagues are here to serve the sick from all faiths, by connecting to others on their...
spiritual journey and walk them through their crisis. “When a person is discharged, their faith should be better as well,” said Deacon Dave.

Christ is here
MercyOne Des Moines Pastoral Care is blessed with wonderful chaplains. In observing their work and services offered, Deacon Dave saw a firm foundation of faith. Like the seasoned coach he was, Deacon Dave worked with his colleagues to strengthen their bonds. During daily huddles, the team read scripture and prayed together for our patients – leaving the office with a common mission of serving the spiritual needs of all patients, families and colleagues.

Over the years, Pastoral Care has expanded its offerings, including morning and evening prayers for healing. Catholic services and prayers, including Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, praying the rosary and the Divine Mercy, were also added.

Deacon Dave has hopes for MercyOne Des Moines; he would like to see colleagues continue caring for each other. “Exchanging something as simple as a ‘God bless you,’ can be powerful,” he noted. “By blessing each other, we show we know He is helping us here.”

As he nears his final “Good morning, MercyOne,” it is Deacon Dave’s hope that prayer will remain an important part of health care at MercyOne – when someone needs a prayer, it is done without delay.

MercyOne Des Moines Radiation Oncology receives ACR re-accreditation
MercyOne Des Moines Radiation Oncology has been granted full accreditation by the American College of Radiology (ACR) Committee on Radiation Oncology Practice Accreditation (ROPA) for the full three-year period through August 2023.

“I want to personally thank the members of the MercyOne Des Moines Radiation Oncology ACR Accreditation / Quality Assurance team for the many hours spent in navigating this rigorous and comprehensive process,” said Dr. Philip Colletier, radiation oncology medical director. “This reaccreditation is a testament to the professionalism, dedication and compassion of the entire team of caregivers.”

The MercyOne Des Moines Cancer Center is one of only two Iowa based radiation oncology departments to voluntarily submit to this evaluation. The ACR accreditation is one of many examples of the commitment to excellence in patient care throughout all areas.

The Radiation Oncology Practice Accreditation program is a peer review and evaluation of patient care. Facility staff, equipment, treatment-planning and treatment records, as well as patient-safety policies and quality control/quality assessment activities, are all part of the assessment.