



News Release

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### **Shemek becomes first chaplain at Columbus Community Hospital**

For Immediate Release

**(COLUMBUS, Neb.)** – A new chaplain at Columbus Community Hospital will provide spiritual comfort and support to patients, their families and staff.

Mary Jo “Mitch” Shemek started her work as the first chaplain at CCH the last week of October. Shemek, who lives on a farm between Tarnov and Platte Center, will work for the hospital four days a week, spending half of her time at the main hospital campus at 4600 38th St. and the other half with Home Health and Hospice.

“We have the COVID-19 pandemic going on and we have been really focused on taking good care of our staff, as far as their well-being and morale. One thing that needs to be addressed is their spiritual side. We had nothing like that, so it made sense to create a chaplain position,” said Mike Hansen, CEO and president of CCH.

Dorothy Bybee, vice president of patient care services, said Shemek’s listening skills and ability to relate to people make her a good fit for the job.

“During the stressful and unpredictable time of COVID-19, Shemek will offer a level of caring that CCH did not have before. I am very excited about the role she will play, offering comfort to all who come to her in need,” Bybee said.

Shemek is Catholic but nondenominational in her ministry. She started working as a chaplain in 2004 after getting her pastoral education at Avera Health Care in Yankton, South Dakota. She has served as chaplain at Franciscan Care Services in West Point, Asera Care Hospice in Norfolk and Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton.

In her role as chaplain at CCH, Shemek said she hopes to be a compassionate presence and provide care for people’s spiritual needs, regardless of their religious beliefs.

“Chaplaincy is really about relationships. It’s being a listening ear and helping. It’s not me teaching, preaching or guiding. It’s mainly being a supportive presence in times of need,” Shemek said.



Among her duties at CCH, Shemek will offer emotional and spiritual care to staff, patients and patients' families; facilitate visits and connect patients with a pastor from their home parish upon request.

Shemek has also worked at Region IV Services in O'Neill; the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Prevention Pathways, both in Norfolk; and Behavioral Health Services and Catholic Charities, both in Columbus.

Shemek and her husband, Gene, have been married for 20 years. She has one grown son, a daughter-in-law and two grandchildren.

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