



## *Pastoral Care at Children's of Alabama*

*<https://www.childrensal.org/PastoralCare>*

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Children's of Alabama is a world-class, not for profit, pediatric medical center in the heart of Birmingham, which was established as Holy Innocents Hospital for Children in 1911. Initially operated by the Episcopal Church, the first patients were cared for in the All Saints Parish House on the southside of Birmingham. Though it is no longer a faith-based healthcare institution, Children's of Alabama remains committed to the spiritual care of its patients and families.

For many years, the hospital relied on the faith leaders in the community to provide pastoral care for patients and families. In the late 1980s, under the leadership of Dr. Jim Dearth, Children's hired its first staff chaplain. Today, the Pastoral Care Department's 12 chaplains provide 24/7 coverage for 351 inpatient beds as well as the Level 1 Trauma Center and 49 bed Emergency Department. Pastoral Care Services provided by Children's of Alabama chaplains include:

- Visiting at the bedside with patients and families
- Serving as a liaison between the medical team and family
- Providing religious rituals and resources (sacraments, prayer, sacred texts, etc.)
- Facilitating contact with faith community representatives and resources



Pastoral Care is integrated into the Family-Centered Care model at Children's of Alabama. Clinically trained chaplains care for patients and families by helping them identify and use the spiritual resources that are meaningful to them.

In addition to the daily work of spiritually guiding and sustaining patients and families, the Pastoral Care team at Children's provides care through two donor supported programs:

## Simon The Loving Lion

Telling a hospitalized child that God loves her/him is one thing; giving a child a tangible expression of God's love is quite another. Simon the Loving Lion is just that—a squeezable and huggable sign of God's love. In January 1999, the chaplains at Children's of Alabama began giving a stuffed animal named Simon to children admitted through the hospital's trauma service. Over time, and with the help of generous donors, Simon's work has expanded to include all patient care areas at Children's of Alabama.

**Meet Simon:** <https://youtu.be/avZg2m4oqno>



## Partnership in Caring

Through the Partnership in Caring program, we extend Family-Centered Care beyond our hospital doors to serve patient families who experience the death of a child. When a patient passes, families often encounter a significant financial burden in addition to immense emotional distress. Approximately 65% of the patients cared for at Children's of Alabama receive Medicaid benefits, an indication that the family is financially strained. Since 1996, Partnership in Caring has provided financial assistance and/or a gravesite to qualifying families at Children's. Approximately half of the families who experience the death of a child receive assistance at an average of about \$1,200 per family. Partnership in Caring has time and time again, "made a way where there was no way" when families are faced with these trying circumstances.



## How You Can Help:

Pastoral Care services are not reimbursable through health insurance, and we therefore must rely on community support to provide this level of care for our patients. Furthermore, COVID-19 has increased stress and intensified the need for emotional support at Children's. For quite some time, visitation restrictions meant that patients and families were not able to have their faith leaders at the bedside except for end of life care. COVID-19 brought about innumerable physical, emotional, and financial needs that continue to affect a family's ability to heal. We are committed to providing unwavering care during times of crisis and to help these families navigate uncertainty, no matter what. In honor of Clergy Appreciation Month, our goal is to raise \$50,000 in October 2021.

With your help, we will continue bringing peace, comfort, hope and strength to the children and families in our care. On their behalf, we thank you.

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**Every Gift Matters:** whether it's a \$20 Simon the Loving Lion, \$1,200 in support of a family facing loss, or any amount in between. To support Pastoral Care at Children's directly, please visit:

[give.childrensal.org/pastoralcare](https://give.childrensal.org/pastoralcare)



**Better Together:** To start a virtual fundraising team where you can amplify your impact with your congregation, Sunday School Class, or to honor a loved one, please visit:

<https://www.childrensal.org/team-childrens>





"We just wanted you to know how appreciative we are for doing all you could to save our little son. Words don't express how much we appreciate the kindness, care, prayers, and words of support. You made a way where there was no way. Rather, God did through you."  
-Patient Family



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