

The CAM/PS Model

CAM/PS (canine-assisted ministry/pastoral and spiritual care) is a new form of ministry integrating a canine companion directly into one-on-one interactions and prayer service/faith-sharing sessions. The canine's presence helps the participants to connect and lift their minds and hearts to God.

In defining the CAM/PS model upon which the Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral Care Program is based, it is important to understand the distinctions between the treatment modality of animal-assisted therapy and beneficial interactions with a canine defined as animal-assisted activity.

Animal-Assisted Activity can be defined as “meet and greet” encounters where a resident interacts with the dog with no specific therapeutic goal in mind. For example: visiting a resident with a dog.

Animal-Assisted Therapy, on the other hand, is a modality where the canine and owner/handler are part of a treatment plan for a resident. The interactions with the dog are specifically directed to measurable therapeutic goals set by a professional or para-professional including documentation of planned outcomes. For example: brushing the dog to recover arm strength after a stroke as required by a treatment plan that is measurable and documented.

CAM/PS lies somewhere between these two healing modalities because it has spiritual/pastoral care as its goal, though outcomes are often difficult to assess in a strictly empirical, scientific manner.

The Research Project—the CAM/PS Model in the Real World

From May 2010 to May 2011, Dr. Felton conducted a small research project at Maryville where she defined the specifics of the **Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral-Care Program** based on the CAM/PS Model. A group of long-term care residents experienced weekly interactions from a spiritual/pastoral-care teams both in one-on-one and group-prayer interactions. All participants found these interactions helpful for their prayer life.

The possibilities for this unique ministry are endless. The **Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral-Care Program** is a volunteer spiritual-care program that engages volunteer Pet Partner®-registered dog teams in spiritual/pastoral care to residents. **For more information on the Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral-Care Program, please visit www.iUniverse.com for the book, *Four-Footed Ministers in Formation*.**



Right to Left: Jerilyn & Alya; Barbara & Caterina

Photo by Tom Miller, 2011

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How does one have a Four-Footed Ministerial Team visit my loved one?

Unless there are medical indications to the contrary, residents can receive visits by alerting the chaplain or nursing staff to their desire. Depending on the number of FFM teams, the resident would be put on the schedule for visitation.

2. How is this type of dog visitation different from others?

In the Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral-Care Program, the goal of the visit is to offer spiritual comfort and care to residents using the dog to connect the parties physically and spiritually. Thus, this form of spiritual care is not therapy nor a “meet and greet” form of interaction but has as its “goal” the spiritual well-being of the resident and his/her family members.

3. How do I volunteer to become a part of the Program with my dog?

Please contact the chaplain who can provide you with the details. All teams that participate in the program are Pet Partners®-registered teams to insure the highest standard of safety for all who participate.



George & Alya

Photo by Kathryn K. Conrow, 2007

Sample of a Group Service based on the Theme of Loyalty

Call to Prayer:

“Let us all rest in God’s Spirit, as we begin this time of prayer and meditation.”

Silence: Time to center, connecting to God/the Divine.

Scriptural Reading: Reading from “The Book of Tobit,” for example. Present a question on how pet loyalty was important in the daily lives of the group members who had pets.

Silence/Sharing: Reflection time followed by an invitation to share personal pet stories, considering the connection of life experiences to the scriptural reading. *Psalm 51 is recited as hand sanitizer is given to the participants.*

Conclusion: Sending Forth “Let us now pray...Holy One, as we reflect on the beauty of your creation present in the lives of our pets, let us go into our community to spread Your joy, Your love, and Your peace. Amen.”

Mission Statement for this Ministry

The Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral-Care Program presents the opportunity to volunteer Pet Partners® teams, consisting of a volunteer and their dog, to provide spiritual/pastoral care to residents, their families, and staff through the gift of their listening presence.

Jerilyn E. Felton 2014©



Resident with Jerilyn and Caterina and Alya

Photo: Tom Miller, 2011

For More Information on the Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral-Care Program

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Four-Footed Ministers Pastoral/Spiritual Care Program

*Ministry with dogs
rather than
To them*



L to R: Barbara & Caterina; a resident; Jerilyn and Alya

Photo: Tom Miller, 2011