

## Former Graphic Designer Finds New Meaning as a Healthcare Chaplain

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Day and night, family members gather outside Penn Presbyterian Medical Center's Emergency Department, crying and clamoring for information about the condition of a victim of gun violence who was just admitted. Not knowing if the victim is alive or dead, loved ones must wait outside because they are not allowed inside the hospital during COVID-19 restrictions. Linda Joy Goldner, a healthcare chaplain on staff, meets outside with these distraught families to give them current information, to try to provide some comfort, and to offer to pray with them. She also encourages them to return home, telling any who phone for information to remain at home and assuring them that she and the trauma physicians will keep them updated as their loved one's evaluation is completed and a plan of care is developed.

Gun violence and the COVID-19 pandemic together create a lethal combination, and Goldner's job is difficult. Still, Goldner says, "I find meaning in helping people when they fear the worst, when I can provide them with hope—when realistic—through the remarkable skill of the PPMC's trauma team working on saving their loved ones' lives."

In November, Penn Medicine commemorated Linda Joy Goldner's dedication with special recognition during Penn Medicine Xperience Week. The award states, "In that moment, she is the only connection they have to the patient and she is profoundly committed to the importance of that job."

Goldner also serves part time with Penn Medicine Hospice, providing spiritual and emotional support to homebound patients and families of all backgrounds and beliefs. She is known for her ability to connect with people across a broad range of cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds. She helps to provide emotional support through traditional or personalized prayers, deep and reflective conversations, and explorations of meaning—even with non-believers—at a time when the end of life is approaching.

"I have been told," Goldner says, "I have a talent for connecting with patients and their families, providing them with comfort through compassion and creativity."

About her two jobs, Goldner says, "I like the combination of the trauma center and the home hospice because together they represent the most profound and mysterious aspects of existence—life and death. That is, being present when everything possible is being done to save a life and being present when everything possible is being done to ease the mind and the spirit as a life is drawing to its end."

Prior to becoming a chaplain, Goldner was a communications consultant and graphic designer serving many Philadelphia clients. After many years of experience at several Philadelphia

advertising agencies, she started her own firm, Goldner Communications Design. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from the Rhode Island School of Design.

While she pursued her communications and design career, she worked as a volunteer Pastoral Visitor (lay chaplain) at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, a job that inspired her to switch careers. "My experience as a volunteer led me to want to become a chaplain," Goldner explains, "because of the satisfaction of providing this service to others in need of support when confronted with challenges to their health and well-being."

Becoming a chaplain took several years of study at the University of Pennsylvania, Gratz College, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, where she earned a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies. She served one internship unit and three residency units in pastoral care, and was a part-time chaplain at several other hospices before joining Penn Medicine in 2017. Linda Joy Goldner has lived in Center City Philadelphia for 45 years.



Linda Joy Goldner