

**Mitchell-Wiedefeld Funeral Home, Inc.
Baltimore, Maryland**

Mitchell-Wiedefeld Funeral Home, Inc. prides itself on the close and positive relationships that we have enjoyed with our local clergy for many, many years. We annually host a program that is coordinated with the Center for Spiritual Support Training program at Greater Baltimore Medical Center (GBMC). The chaplain interns affiliated with GBMC come to the funeral home for a program and a tour of our facility. The program is put on by our most senior director (now of 49 years), Dennis Xenakis, and most recently took place on February 25, 2022.

The hope is that the clergy will come away with a better understanding of what occurs for a family between the time that their loved one dies and the time that the funeral takes place, the decisions that families are faced with at that time, and how a collaborative relationship between funeral director and clergy during that time can make that experience much more manageable and comfortable for the family. While we, as funeral directors, understand the important role that we play in helping families through part of their grieving process, we also understand that clergy play a significant role at the time of death. The intent of the program is to help the clergy be able to provide holistic care to families as they experience the death of a loved one, and at the same time to establish a familiarity as to one another's roles in helping families through that grieving process.

As families walk through the grieving process that starts with their loved one's death and continues through the funeral and beyond, the experience is much more comfortable and manageable if they feel the familiarity and collegial relationship between funeral director and clergy. It is generally better for the grieving community, so to speak, if funeral directors and clergy have an understanding and respect for one another's roles and work collaboratively to provide the best end-of-life (and after) care for grieving families.

The program stems from a long standing relationship that Mitchell-Wiedefeld has enjoyed with Fr. Joseph Hart, the chaplain at GBMC who has also served as pastor at several area churches. Our firm has taken care of his parents and many other family members and friends over the years. Fr. Hart has always recognized the importance that funeral directors play in helping families through the dying, death, and funeral process. And we have the same respect for the role that clergy play. This collaborative program we feel makes the families of our community better served when that most difficult time comes.