

## *Why Have Chaplains at a Raceway?*

Motor sports competition has been around from the early, early days of the development of the automobile. And, as racing has progressed as a sport, so has the level of attention and popularity. In fact, for the past few years, auto racing—especially NASCAR—has been identified as the fastest growing spectator sport in America. All of this simply means that when you have a racing event, you are going to have a sizeable gathering of people—competitors, spectators and employees and staff who operate the raceway property, facilities and programming. It may be a local, weekly dirt track where a few hundred gather each weekend to watch the local competitors battle to be first to take the checkered flag; it could be a parking lot or an airport runway where road racing takes place under the guidance of a group like the SCCA; or it may be a super-speedway where up to 200,000+ folks come to watch the major series of racing, such as NASCAR, the Indy Racing League or the Champ Car Series.

It follows, then, that when you have gatherings of people in attendance at such events, things are going to happen. Someone will experience trauma, demanding a response. The most obvious trauma is that which involves the competitors in accidents on the speedway which result in injury or fatality. Sometimes, however, others—employees or spectators—find themselves victimized by racing accidents. Or, injury or fatality might occur as a result of some disastrous event having to do with things such as the collapse of a portion of the facility, the striking of lightning, or a fall on a stairway. And, of course, those unpredictable incidents of heart attacks, seizures, strokes and allergic reactions to insect stings occur as well. We all hope and pray that such occurrences do not take place at racing events, but the odds of something eventually happening at a facility such as a speedway are pretty high.

When such traumas occur, a variety of people should respond. Raceway management and staff certainly should respond appropriately regarding the current status of the event and in terms of providing all necessary care. Typically, medical and/or rescue personnel are needed when traumatic events take place at the speedway, and at any competent facility, these always will be available. However, another essential piece of the trauma response puzzle is that of the chaplain—someone who is called, trained and equipped to offer consolation, encouragement, guidance and counsel from a Biblical and Christ-like perspective.

