

Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani

November 14, 2025

c/o Transition Team
City of New York

Dear Mayor-Elect Mamdani,

I am writing as a native New Yorker and as an experienced interfaith hospital chaplain to offer a proposal for a **Street Chaplaincy of New York City**, a program designed to strengthen your administration's vision for a prevention-first, public-health approach to community safety. I have submitted this letter and my résumé through the transition team portal to make the ideas available to you and your staff as you build the Department of Community Safety and prepare the City's early initiatives, and am sending it to you separately here.

The proposal outlines a city-aligned, interfaith, non-proselytizing chaplaincy model that supports the emotional and spiritual needs of residents in public space. Street chaplains would provide calm presence, trauma-informed listening, and immediate stabilization during moments of distress. They would work in cooperation with NYPD Community Affairs, the Department of Community Safety, Health + Hospitals, DHS outreach teams, and nonprofit service providers. Their role would complement, rather than duplicate, existing systems by meeting people at the moment where human vulnerability first becomes visible: on sidewalks, in subways, in shelters, and in the liminal spaces between institutions.

My background includes serving as a chaplain at Massachusetts General Hospital during the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, at Boulder Community Hospital, and at Lowell General Hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have served in emergency departments, psychiatric emergency units, pediatric and cancer units, and multiple intensive-care environments. I have extensive training in trauma-responsive care, contemplative communication, and debriefing first responders.

This project also reflects the lineage of **Zen Buddhist social-justice work in New York City**, which has contributed significantly to compassionate community-based initiatives. The late **Roshi Bernie Glassman** founded the **Greyston Bakery** and the **Greyston Mandala** in Yonkers as pioneering models of socially engaged Buddhism. These organizations created employment for people facing homelessness, incarceration, and poverty, and they helped establish supportive housing, workforce development programs, and community services that continue to this day. The same lineage also developed the **Zen street retreats** in New York City, in which participants live on the street for several days in deliberate homelessness practice in order to learn from the city's most vulnerable residents through direct experience. I participated in two of these retreats, one in Washington, DC and one in New York City. These experiences deepened my understanding of dignity in public space and informed the foundation of the Street Chaplaincy model.

The chaplaincy proposal aligns with your administration's goals in several concrete ways:

- **Public Health and Safety:** Chaplains reduce unnecessary crisis escalation by stabilizing emotional distress before it becomes a 911 call.
- **Homelessness and Housing:** Chaplains connect individuals directly to DHS outreach and shelter pathways while providing respectful, nonjudgmental interaction.

- **Gun Violence Prevention:** Chaplains support communities after incidents, provide emotional grounding, and work with violence-interruption networks.
- **Mental-Health Response:** Chaplains complement mobile crisis teams by offering nonclinical, interfaith support and follow-up.
- **Interagency Cohesion:** Chaplains serve as connective partners among NYPD Community Affairs, EMS, hospitals, shelters, and community organizations.

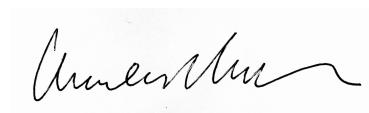
The program is designed to be cost-efficient by combining a small cohort of paid chaplains with **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) interns**, who are supervised through accredited NYC partner institutions and who pay tuition for their training. Experienced volunteer clergy from all faith traditions can also contribute. These elements significantly reduce operating costs while strengthening the program's reach and diversity.

My intention is to contribute to the public good, support your team's goals, and help the City build an innovative, humane model of compassionate public presence.

If the concept is of interest, I would welcome the opportunity to speak with members of the transition team, the future Department of Community Safety, or any designated staff. I believe this proposal can help New York City model a new form of civic compassion that complements government, strengthens public trust, and supports your broader commitments to safety, equity, and community well-being.

Thank you for your leadership and for the work you are doing on behalf of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Huschle", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charles Huschle

Resume follows

Charles Huschle

+1-617-756-4703 WhatsApp

917-979-3378 US cell | charhuschle@gmail.com

Professional Overview

- Independent social justice activist, with current book and blog publications
- Experienced interfaith hospital chaplain, specializing in Psychiatric Emergency Department patients' emotional assessment and intervention, children, addiction units, and critical care units, in both rural and urban hospitals
- Experienced in debriefing first responders after traumatic events, through a team approach using Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) techniques
- Witness to combat (war correspondent in Afghanistan, 1980s) and to high-stress situations (Haiti, post-earthquake 2012)
- Recovery Coach (in Emergency Department and other settings) for clients in addiction recovery
- Independent experience in counseling male survivors of sexual abuse and referring them to legal recourse, with success in winning multi-million-dollar awards for victims of sexual abuse
- Strong education and experience in mindfulness meditation practices
- Deep grounding in Buddhist-oriented emotional care, providing compassionate and nonjudgmental "ministry of presence" to individuals suffering from mental or physical distress
- Deep grounding in Buddhist social justice training and practice
- Meditation instructor (insight, Zen, and non-denominational mindfulness)

Chaplaincy Experience

Lowell General Hospital, Lowell, MA 2019 – 2020
Staff Chaplain, attending to patients, family, and staff in all hospital departments, before and during the COVID pandemic.

Boulder Community Health, Boulder, CO 2016 – 2017
Chaplain Resident

Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, NY. 2013
Chaplain Intern (half-CPE unit, in partnership with the NY Zen Center for Contemplative Care)

Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston MA 2013
Chaplain Intern (Winter and Spring unit)

Other Work Experience

Querencia Street Chaplains, LLC, New York, NY (2021-present)

- *Founding Member.* Founder of newly-established (2022) non-profit organization to provide interfaith spiritual care in urban and rural settings
- *Meditation Instructor,* St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Shelter Island, NY. Instruction in basic mindfulness meditation, discussion of Buddhist principles (2021 – 2023)
- *Meditation and Mindfulness* instructor at Shelter Island Senior Center (2023)

- *Wedding officiant*: interfaith ordained minister through Universal Life Church

Educational Alliance, Co-Op Village NORC, New York, NY (2020 – 2022)
Meditation Leader, in connection with the New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care, providing weekly, guided meditation for retirees in this New York City housing development

Dempsey Center, Portland, ME (2018 – 2022)
 Mentor to newly-diagnosed prostate cancer patients

Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, Frederick, MD 2018 - 2022
Consumer Reviewer for Grants by Department of Defense Prostate Cancer Research Programs

Windhorse Community Services, Boulder, CO 2016 – 2018
Basic Attender, providing emotional and household support for mental health clients

Cambridge Insight Meditation Center, Cambridge MA 2012 – 2013
Resident, maintaining major meditation center in Cambridge, MA

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Cambridge, MA 2009 – 2012
Senior Associate for Foundation, Corporate, and Individual Giving. Managed Veatch Foundation million-dollar grant.

Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice, Cambridge, MA. 2011 – 2013
Experiential Learning Program Leader, co-leading three service-learning trips to post-earthquake Haiti

Charles River Yoga, Cambridge, MA 2004 - 2013
 Anusara-affiliated yoga teacher and Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapist (sole proprietor)

Universities and Schools, Teacher/Professor, New York and Massachusetts 1988 – 2004
 Teacher of English (literature and writing) at various elementary, secondary, and college institutions, including The Buckley School, Marymount School, Dedham Country Day School, UMASS Amherst, Fitchburg State College, Amherst College Summer Arts Program, Middlesex Community College.

Training in Critical Areas

Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, NM 2016 - present
Socially Engaged Buddhist Training program (certification 2022)

- One-year online and Zoom training in all aspects of providing social services in many different settings from a Buddhist perspective
- *G.R.A.C.E. Training in Cultivating Compassion-based Interactions* 2021 - 2023
 G.R.A.C.E.®, developed by Roshi Joan Halifax, is a technique designed primarily for health care providers to use in creating better interactions with patients while preserving one's own emotional health and avoiding "compassion fatigue" (also known as "burn-out").

Abbey of Hope, Portland, ME December 2019

- One unit Clinical Pastoral Education

Massachusetts Firefighters Association, Holyoke, MA October, 2019

- *Critical Incident Stress Management* certification for debriefing first-responders after traumatic critical incidents

Healthy Acadia, Ellsworth, ME October, 2018

- *Recovery Coaching in the Emergency Department* and *Recovery Coach Academy*, certified in offering coaching and ministry of presence to recoverees

Prison Mindfulness Institute, South Deerfield, MA January – March 2019

- Mindfulness-based emotional intelligence training in working with at-risk and incarcerated youth and adult prisoners

New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care, New York, NY 2012 – 2013

- *Foundations In Contemplative Care*, year-long program with graduate points in Buddhist contemplative care in hospice, hospital, and other settings

Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, Lenox, MA 2006 – 2008
Certified Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapist (600-hour training)

Yoga Teacher Training 2002 - 2010

200-hour training in *Anusara* Yoga, NYC; other trainings with Shiva Rea, Baron Baptiste, Rodney Yee, Ana Forrest, Patricia Walden, Elena Brower, Amy Ippoliti, Douglas Brooks, Krishna Das, totaling approximately 1000 hours of formal asana and philosophical training; Certified Reiki Level 1 Provider

Education

Naropa University, Boulder, CO 2015 –2018

- MA in Contemplative Religions, specializing in Buddhist approaches to emotional and spiritual care in hospitals, hospice, and other social service organizations, including art therapy

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 1990 – 1994

- MFA in fiction writing (4 year PhD equivalent program)
- Walker Gibson Prize for best essay on the teaching of writing

Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 1980 – 1984

- BA in English

Spiritual Affiliations

Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, NM: Received *jukai*, conferring and commitment to Zen precepts (lay vows), March 2019, through Roshi Joan Halifax.

Artist Overview

Published author

- *Boom*, a manual about non-violent protest (2025)
- *Mother Firetrucker Riffs on Love*, short stories (2017)

Exhibited painter with works shown and sold at:

- Ray New York, Greenport, NY, USA
- Folly Cove Fine Art, Rockport, MA, USA