

"God's work in the airport concourse"

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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Interesting [piece in today's Times](#) on airport chaplains and the hands-on, tangible care they provide for travelers. I suspect many readers will be genuinely surprised to learn from Mike Tierney that a chaplaincy "offers more than a two-item menu of spiritual guidance and comfort."

Not, however, many readers intimately familiar with the life of the local church and its leaders. While the article is nicely reported, it's hard not to discern a tone of "unlike *some* clergy":

The range of tasks is becoming as limitless as the blue sky, including playing mediator at a ticket counter, buying a hot meal for the hungry, arranging hotel rooms for the stranded and bus rides for the broke. They still offer religious services, and even conduct the occasional wedding, but God's work in the airport concourse is increasingly about solving pressing earthly problems.

Yes, just like God's work in the world generally—work engaged by clergy and lay leaders in parish ministry and a whole heap of other contexts, one of which happens to be airports. It's always nice to see church leaders written up favorably in the mainstream press. But it's unfortunate that *Times* readers may come away from the article thinking that a minister whose work includes buying a sandwich or a bus ticket for someone in need is somehow an exception to the rule.