Chaplain / From Page 13

the independent board overseeing the airport's chaplaincy would have to fire him.

But the 58-year-old clergyman later changed his mind and agreed to clear the way for what board members hope will be a transformation of the chaplaincy into a high-profile institution.

"That position out there is a lot more than a pastor — like it or not," board chairman George Midgley said.

Board members said they hope within a few months to hire a new chaplain who will spend more time interacting with other airport groups and raising the chaplaincy's visibility among D/FW passengers and employees.

"I'm not saying he [Miranda] didn't do what he did well," board member Rodger Meier said. "I'm just saying he didn't do enough of it."

Miranda, who lives in Dallas, said in an interview yesterday that D/FW's chaplain is needed primarily to counsel people with personal problems ranging from marital trouble to drug addiction.

Although he assumed more administrative responsibilities when asked, the ousted clergyman said, "I have always wanted to focus my energies on helping people rather than running an office."

Hired as D/FW's first full-time chaplain 10 years ago, Miranda earned high praise for his pastoral work following a 1985 airplane crash that killed 133 people and a 1988 accident that killed 14 people.

Most of the nation's largest airports have chaplains on site for such disasters and for the day-to-day church needs of the traveling public and airport employees.

Miranda estimated that D/FW's non-denominational chaplaincy's services last year were used by 20,000 of the 47 million passengers who passed through the airport.

Over the years, donations to the privately funded chaplaincy have increased from $15,000 to $150,000 annually, and operations have been expanded from one to three chapels in D/FW terminals.

"I think we accomplished quite a lot in a positive way and helped a lot of people," Miranda said.

But members of the chaplaincy's board of directors say they long have been dissatisfied with the quantity of services offered, which is why they hired an executive director two years ago in an effort to relieve Miranda of some administrative duties.

The Rev. Jim Dorff, a Methodist minister from Dallas, recalls that he spent much of his time working to improve the chaplaincy's public relations by paying courtesy calls to airlines and other airport groups.

"If you weren't careful, the chaplaincy could end up being a wonderful thing that very few people knew about," he said.

Earlier this summer, Dorff left the airport to return to a conventional church job in Gainesville, although he says his departure was not caused by any dissatisfaction or friction with Miranda.

"Our interests complemented one another," he said.

Rather than seek another executive director, however, the chaplaincy's board of directors — consisting of 25 area church appointees and other community leaders — decided to replace Miranda.

Midgley, who has been associated with the D/FW chaplaincy for six years, said it was difficult and emotional for board members to request Miranda's resignation.

"This really has to be run like a business," Midgley said.

Board member John Votruba, who objected to Miranda's ouster, says a half-dozen other board members also objected. But with a clear majority in favor of the change, Votruba dropped his opposition and privately advised Miranda to resign.

"I didn't like the way it was handled, but he took it like a man," Votruba said.

Miranda said he vacated the chaplain's position out of concern that fighting the board for his job might damage the chaplaincy. The one-time Southern Methodist University faculty member said he will re-enter the job market in Fort Worth-Dallas.

Asked about the future of the chaplaincy, he said it is possible that efforts to achieve greater visibility in the airport can be balanced with conventional pastoral services.

"I think maybe you could make a good case for that," he said. "Time will tell."