

**A Special Message For
The Chief
and Department Officers**

From Chaplain Robby Jernigan

Thank you for your interest. Please consider starting a chaplaincy program in your department. We believe that a chaplaincy program will greatly benefit your department's personnel and enhance the quality of service you provide the citizens of your community. I have personally visited with leaders in fire departments and law enforcement agencies from Florida to Colorado. I must admit, some were a little skeptical at first. One chief told me, "We don't want someone coming in here and telling us we are all going to hell!" I assured him that is not the purpose of a chaplain.

The first duty of a chaplain is to provide a ministry of presence in the department. We tell chaplains that who THEY ARE is just as important as what THEY DO. Here is an excerpt from our suggested SOGs regarding the qualifications of a chaplain:

A chaplain shall be an individual that, in both character and conduct, is above reproach. He/she shall be exemplary in his/her fulfillment of the rules governing the general conduct of all department personnel as defined by the department's SOGs. . . He/she shall be above reproach in interpersonal relationships, marriage relationship, finances, parenting, sexual conduct, communications, and any other matters that might reflect on the position of chaplain or on the department. He/she shall have and maintain a good reputation in the community.

Along with having good moral character, there are certain duties a chaplain is expected to perform. A partial list of chaplain duties might include:

To spend time with and get to know the department's personnel and their families. To provide support in any matters affecting members' overall well-being, providing practical helps where needed and wanted. The chaplain should be ready to provide spiritual guidance, marital counseling, financial counseling, inter-personal conflict resolution, and critical incident stress debriefings; as well as ministering through hospital visitation, performing funerals, weddings, etc.

The chaplain should also respond to emergency scenes. Part of his/her job is to care for citizens in their times of crisis. Victims of crime, and those who have experienced a fire, a motor vehicle crash, a serious medical emergency, or even a death, may benefit from the help of a chaplain. We train chaplains to operate by "informed consent," being very sensitive to people's wishes and not pushing anything on anyone.

We have found that the services of a chaplain enhance the community's view of a department. A widow once wrote letters to the chief, to the chaplain, and to the editor of their local newspaper on the one year anniversary of her husband's death. She said that the help and care offered by the chaplain made a positive and lasting impact in her memory of that otherwise dreadful day. Words of gentle encouragement and a focused, caring presence can make a world of difference to a hurting soul.

Please contact us. We look forward to hearing from you!