AIR FORCE
Chaplain
SERVICE

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A Global Ministry

Air Force people live and work around the world serving our country. Chaplains serve side-by-side with them, leading worship services and observances, providing pastoral care, and advising leadership. Consider becoming a chaplain in the United States Air Force. You can become a member of this worldwide team, a participant in this global ministry.

Interfaith - Multicultural Air Force

Life as an Air Force chaplain is both exciting and rewarding. As members of a multicultural community, chaplains provide ministry to persons of their own faith group, yet also act as guardians of the free exercise of religion for all Air Force members and their families. You will never be required to perform religious services contrary to your endorsing denomination. However, the ecumenical and inter-faith opportunities to grow, while supporting the religious freedoms guaranteed in our nation's Constitution, are truly unparalleled!

As an Air Force chaplain you will become part of a responsive, agile Chaplain Service providing world class ministry to the Air Force community. Anytime. Anyplace. Military service can be stressful. Officers and enlisted members and their families may face family separations, frequent moves, living and working in challenging and sometimes dangerous circumstances. Plus, Air Force people share the same joys and celebrations, losses and tragedies as those experienced by people who never leave their hometown. It is the chaplain's privilege to be the visible reminder of the holy in all the circumstances of military and family life.

In today's rapidly changing world, many Air Force people are sent on peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. It may be exciting, dangerous, or even tedious. But it will always be challenging. Chaplains share these experiences. You will provide religious services and spiritual comfort. In cases where our forces are stationed in lands with markedly different cultures and traditions, you will provide expertise to guide behaviors respectful of religious and cultural distinctions. It is also the chaplain's privilege to provide ethical guidance and support to commanders as they lead missions.

Core Values

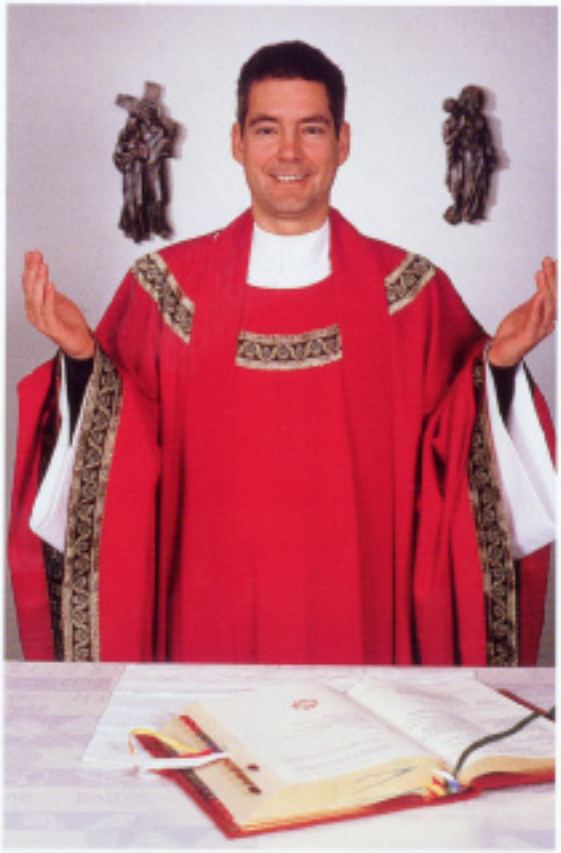
Chaplains combine the roles of clergy and military officer. That is, they provide ministry and provide for the free exercise of religion for all military members and their families, but also uphold the standards of the Air Force Core Values: *Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do*. Each year about 35,000 new people enter the Air Force. Not all share the same values. The ministry and officership of the chaplain helps instill the personal ethical standards that provide a strong foundation for the Air Force Core Values. The Air Force expects all officers to model the Core Values in their personal lives as well as in the practice of their profession.

As both an Air Force officer and chaplain, you will be part of your unit commander's staff. Your role will be particularly important when you may be deployed. In addition to keeping the commander apprised of the religious and cultural uniqueness of the area where the unit is located, you will be in a position to inform the commander of the state of the unit's morale. As well as providing ministry and providing for the free exercise of religion, the chaplain is the principal advisor to the commander regarding religion, ethics, morals, and morale. Your input will be a significant part of the commander's decision-making process. That is another reason it is important that members of diverse faiths serve in the Air Force Chaplain Service.

Chaplain Privileged Communications

Whether you are deployed away from home or at your normal duty station, one of the most important expressions of Pastoral Care is listening. The Air Force is a community of individuals and families, and there are both formal and informal support groups. As in any community there are times when an individual or family facing problems needs the assistance of an empathic and confidential advisor. Anything shared with a chaplain in a confidential or privileged setting can never be revealed by the chaplain to any other person. That privilege belongs to the Air Force member or their family, but the chaplain must maintain their confidence. No legal authority may compel a chaplain to disclose what others may have shared in a privileged communication. The chaplain is the only person in the Air Force who enjoys this total privilege.

Highly stressful conditions can affect people in different ways. Some may experience a variety of adverse health conditions. There may be absenteeism, risk of accidents and poor job performance. Studies have indicated that religion and spirituality help battle stress and increase wellness. In the Chaplain Service, you will help provide the religious framework and spirituality that contributes to family



stability, increased self-esteem of members and less participation in harmful activities. Your ministry will contribute to the well being of our Air Force members and their families, supporting retention of the high quality people our nation needs in its service.

All Faiths Needed

The Air Force accepts endorsed and qualified applicants from every faith, to include: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim clergy. To qualify, you must have an ecclesiastical endorsement from a Department of Defense recognized endorser. Current endorsers are listed in the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces Directory. Members of your own faith group will certify that you have the necessary credentials to serve as a representative of your religious tradition. It is also important to keep in mind that chaplains are there not only to bring ministry to people of their own tradition, but also to support the free exercise of religion for all Air Force members and their families.

To Qualify

You must also qualify to serve as an Air Force Officer. United States citizenship is required, plus a bachelor's degree and a three year in-residence Master of Divinity degree or equivalent from an accredited institution. Other requirements include passing an Air Force physical exam and passing a background security investigation. Applicants must be able to work in an environment that supports the free exercise of religion for all Air Force people and their family members.

In addition, you must be commissioned prior to your 40th birthday unless you have at least two years of satisfactory active duty military service and then you can be commissioned before your 42nd birthday. A minimum of two years of full-time ministry experience is desired.

After you are selected for active duty, your initial tour of duty will be three years, usually in the United States. All Air Force assignments during an active duty career will consider your preferences, but needs of the Air Force will come first.

Pay and Benefits

Most chaplains enter active duty with the rank of first lieutenant. Based on experience or prior military service, you may enter at a higher rank. Usually chaplains entering as first lieutenants can expect to be promoted to Captain after one year. Chaplains compete for promotion only with other Chaplains. Many career officers achieve the senior rank of colonel. The Chief and Deputy Chief of the Chaplain Service are general officers.

As a member of the Air Force you'll have an excellent pay and benefits package. Your salary increases with each promotion and time in grade, and there are tax-free allowances for food and housing. You'll receive comprehensive medical and dental care, plus there are low-cost medical and dental care plans for your eligible family members. There's low-cost life insurance and a non-contributory retirement plan too.

Each year you will receive 30 days of vacation with pay. Chaplains are also entitled to an additional 15 days of permissive time away from work to meet with leadership of their faith group or make a spiritual retreat.

For Information

If you are interested in serving in the active duty Air Force Chaplain Service, write:
HQ AFRS/RSOCC
550 D Street West Suite 1
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4527
Or call:
1-800-803-2452 or (210) 652-4700.

Chaplain Candidate Program

If you are a seminary student and interested in service as an Air Force Chaplain, the Chaplain Candidate Program is for you. To be eligible you must be enrolled full-time in seminary and pursuing a Master of Divinity degree. If selected, you will be commissioned as an Air Force Reserve second lieutenant and serve during the summer (or other time your academic schedule permits) supporting ministry on an Air Force base under the supervision of a senior chaplain. Some seminaries grant field education credit for this program. You must enter this program prior to your 35th birthday.

Anytime, Anyplace.

Air Force chaplains are willing to go anytime, anyplace to provide spiritual comfort and guidance to Air force people. It is truly a global ministry, and it may be just what you are looking for. Phone 1-800-803-2452 or visit airforce.com or usafhc.af.mil for more information.