

What Exactly Is A Police Chaplain?

According to the International Conference of Police Chaplains:

A law enforcement chaplain is a clergy person with special interest and training for providing pastoral care in the high powered and dangerous world of law enforcement. This pastoral care is offered to all people, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, creed, or religion. It is offered without cost or the taint of proselytizing.

The law enforcement chaplain is led in his or her own faith to be available and ready to serve those in need. The chaplain's ministry provides a source of strength to the law enforcement officers and their families, and other department members...

A chaplain from Charleston, SC put it this way...

A chaplain is a life-officiant: Regardless of background we all have life experiences during which we could benefit from having someone at our side. The chaplain can be that person, stepping in to listen, put a hand on our shoulder and offer guidance to keep us on the rails.

Another chaplain observed...

An MD cares for our bodies. A psychologist can explain to us the pathways our minds might take encountering diverse experiences. Chaplains work in the realm of meaning... they guide us in search of the "why," behind any situation.

I subscribe to both these definitions, and would add the following...

A chaplain is a bridge between the support and love we receive from family/friends and our experience in the professional law enforcement on-duty environment.

At Washington's MPD here are some of the specific works in which we engage:

- Praying with and for members
- Station visits
- Ride alongs
- Meetings to offer personal counsel or simply to listen to members
- On-site responses to critical incidents
- Facilitating connections/referrals to other forms of support (spiritual, medical, social, educational, online, in person etc.)
- Home visits
- Ceremonial events/memorials/funerals

In bad times **and** in good...

It's important that members know we're here to walk with them through the whole of life... not *just* the tough times. Regular conversations, face time and other interactions

in help chaplains and officers alike to build a rapport so that when crises do come up we aren't starting from zero facing challenges together.

What you say to us stays with us...

Our chaplains exist outside the chain of command and enjoy the protections of privileged communication with officers. The only exceptions to this rule are: (1) if a chaplain is concerned that you are suicidal. (2) If you admit to the commission of a crime. (3) If other people are present when you discuss matters with a chaplain.