

Pastoral care and Advocacy: There are some remarkable differences between Federal chaplains, and the parish model. All are about God's business and that is good! The first notable difference is the tyranny of distance and communication for the Federal Chaplain, in many cases it is thousands of miles. The second is the pluralistic and diverse faith based environment the Federal chaplain must operate in. Ordinarily in the parish model, the priest is engaged within the immediate Episcopal community; whereas for the Federal Chaplain that rarely happens. The Federal chaplain is on the frontline; he or she is the Episcopal Church. There are only a few Episcopal Federal Chaplain gatherings to reinforce the priest, unlike within a diocese with regular deanery, diocesan and commission meetings. These simple gatherings assist in keeping the priest connected. A fair example of this out there alone and disconnectedness is addressed in the following.

I had been on active duty only a few months, when during the General Protestant Service (glorified Morning Prayer), the senior chaplain sitting next to me, directed me to step to the altar and commence with a generic communion service. My immediate reaction was "can't be done." This quickly became a rather painful, horse-whispered dialogue, where I, the Captain, Episcopal, was directed by the Lieutenant Colonel, Baptist, to comply. He, in the end, concluded the service himself by celebrating communion with the grape juice trays and an ad-hoc Eucharistic canon. The norm today would be for me to call the Suffragan Bishop or other Senior Episcopal priests for help; however I had not encountered any priests on active duty, had yet to meet the Bishop (all interviews had been handled by his executive assistant) and that was not the norm. It took an additional nine months before I arrived at Chaplain School and was taken under the wing of a senior Episcopal Federal Chaplain who happened to be on staff.

Over the years and with this experience, I have already instituted a rather informal mentorship program for all USAF Federal Episcopal Chaplains that come on active duty. Given the success of this informal system, it would be formalized for all Federal Episcopal Chaplains. The intention would be to expand this practice for all Active, Guard and Reserve within the first months of duty where a Senior Episcopal Chaplain would guide and mentor the Junior through many of these same discussions and minefields. This Senior Episcopal Chaplain would ensure by regular phone and email, their mentorship with the Junior Episcopal Chaplain, and then alerting the Suffragan Bishop of any concerns or issues, where the Suffragan Bishop could advocate of behalf of the Junior Episcopal Chaplain. This mentorship would enlarge upon and continue the current intense accession process of interviews by a panel of Federal Episcopal Chaplains and the Suffragan Bishop. In this accession process the spouse of a married candidate should be included and a spouse of a Federal Episcopal Chaplain would be added to the interview panel. To complete the accession process, the new Federal Episcopal Chaplain would spend two days with the Bishop Suffragan prior to accepting their new position. The calling of a Federal Episcopal Chaplain whether, VA, Prison or, Military is a singular vocation within the priesthood. One must have a distinct call to this ministry.

The initial step of interview and mentorship continues the Pastoral Care and Advocacy on behalf of the Federal Episcopal Chaplain. It is most appropriate for the Bishop Suffragan, given his or her knowledge of the Federal system, to step in, advocating directly on behalf of

the Episcopal Federal Chaplain who may be at cross purposes with supervisors or colleagues. It can mean directly contacting the Ch, Lt Col in the example used, or it may mean directly contacting the Chief of Chaplains of that division and asking for their support and assistance to resolve the issue or concern. In any case, direct communication by the Bishop Suffragan to the Federal Episcopal Chaplain is a necessity for their well-being. Hopefully, the Chaplain will be able to move from the position of "I am out there alone" to the position of "they are out there with me." As well, it is necessary for all bishops to regularly call and visit their priests just to find out how they are doing, Federal or not.

It is not just good for communication, but to ensure the Federal Episcopal Chaplain truly realizes they are an extension of the Suffragan Bishop's own ministry, and that of the Episcopal Church. I would closely follow the extraordinary examples of previous Suffragan Bishops, who would be at the bedside of one of their Federal Chaplains during pastoral needs even if it was halfway around the world! That is what the relationship between bishop and priest must be in the bad and good times.

Counseling and Spiritual Well-Being: Because of the nature of ministry of Federal Episcopal Chaplains, Post-Traumatic stress can develop. Especially for the Military Episcopal Federal Chaplains, when they return from a combat deployment, they would be directed to some serious R & R within the context of a retreat. The same holds true for the VA and Prison Federal Chaplains, as Post-traumatic Stress can develop following repeated ministry to those in confinement and serving veterans. Ending each of these retreats with opportunities for the sacrament of penance and unction serves well in the reintegration.

In life and in relationships with those in formal relationships, one frequently runs into hills and valleys. The Bishop Suffragan must be sensitive to those concerns, particularly in relationship to married couples and family issues. I would make myself personally available to encourage and ensure the couple seeks and receives counseling and support. I would be ready to suggest additional resources to them.

One of the wonderful things about doing the daily office is the constant reminder of the need to study the Holy Scriptures and to read that which assists spiritual growth. As Bishop Suffragan, I would provide each of the Chaplains frequent gifts to their libraries for their continued spiritual growth. The use of regular, required conferences and retreats for all Chaplains is a means to further the collegiality and community of Federal Episcopal Chaplains, which also can further spiritual growth.

These are but a few necessities I see in the future responsibilities of the Bishop Suffragan for Federal Ministries.

Carl M. Andrews  
218 Baseview Drive  
San Antonio TX 78227  
(210) 673-1512  
Currently serving as a USAF Chaplain, Colonel at Lackland AFB Texas