



*Mission Chaplain*

*Home Study Course*





# INSTRUCTIONS FOR TAKING THE MISSION CHAPLAIN HOME STUDY COURSE



Welcome to the Mission Chaplain Course, intended to prepare you for meeting the requirements for obtaining the Mission Chaplain (Trainee) ES Rating. This home study course will provide the chaplain with a basic understanding of the skills that are required for mission chaplains and serve as a refresher for current mission chaplains. It is strongly suggested that before you begin this on-line course you obtain a copy of CAPR 60-3 (CAP EMERGENCY SERVICES AND OPERATIONAL MISSIONS) and CAPP 221A (Chaplains Helping Chaplains).

There will be an on-line exam to take. One needs to pass it with a score of 75% to receive credit.

## CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction..... 1
- 2. The Responsibility of the Mission Chaplain..... 2
- 3. Assignment of Chaplain Personnel to Search Missions..... 2
- 4. Planning for Assignment as Mission Chaplain..... 2
- 5. The Incident Command System (ICS)..... 3
- 6. Planning Mission Base Ministry..... 5
- 7. Critical Incident Stress Management.....6
- 8. Pastoral Duties of the Mission Chaplain..... 7
  - The Field Worship Service..... 8
  - The Death Notification..... 9
  - Comforting the Bereaved.....11
- 9. Reporting.....13
- 10. Appendices

## INTRODUCTION

There is a difference between a Mission Chaplain and a chaplain at the mission. The United States Air Force Auxiliary regulations permit chaplains to acquire a Form 101 (Emergency Services Card, upon completion of prescribed training and an examination.<sup>1</sup> This training, however, does not pretend to prepare the chaplain for the responsibilities that may be uniquely his/hers when faced with stress among mission participants; friends and family members of missing aviators and passengers; conduct of field worship services; death notification; coordination with local clergy; and reporting requirements that are peculiar to chaplains.

In order to obtain the specific Mission Chaplain rating, the chaplain must complete certain additional training requirements that will lead to a more practical, useful and competent ministry

---

<sup>1</sup> The chaplain must understand that he/she will not be permitted on a SAR or SAREX base without the proper credentials including a CAPF 101 or CAPF 101T. In addition, the chaplain must be attired in an acceptable uniform and be in possession of his/her USAF Auxiliary identification card.

for search and rescue/disaster relief mission activities. These additional training requirements include completion of the Chaplain's Helping Chaplains Course (221-A); knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS); knowledge of mission facilities and resources; demonstration of the role of the Mission chaplain on SAR/DR missions and demonstration of crisis ministry skills. A detailed listing of these requirements can be found on CAPF 101-T-MC for the rating of Mission Chaplain.<sup>2</sup> Following the attainment of this certification, periodic advanced training is required.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MISSION CHAPLAIN**

(ref. CAPR 60-3; Chapter 8-3)

The Chaplain Staff officer, commonly called the mission chaplain, is usually the highest-ranking chaplain involved in the mission. The mission chaplain ministers to both spiritual and emotional needs of all individuals, families, and mission staff alike. The chaplain arranges for religious services or observances on Sundays or other holy days of obligation. During the mission, the chaplain may serve as a liaison for victim's families (with the IC's concurrence), providing information on the progress of the mission and coordinating the families' needs with the logistics chief or other mission personnel and agencies as necessary. When serious injury or loss of life has occurred, the mission chaplain may provide pastoral care to the mission staff, victims, survivors, and their families.

## **ASSIGNMENT OF CHAPLAIN PERSONNEL TO SEARCH MISSIONS**

Any chaplain who possesses the required CAPF 101 or CAPF 101T may report to the mission base as a participant in a SAR or SAREX. Assignment of the Mission Chaplain, however, may differ from wing to wing. It is recommended that the Wing Chaplain establish an assignment procedure that will assure competent Mission Chaplains are available to oversee chaplain ministry. In the absence of appointment by the Wing Chaplain, the ranking Mission Chaplain will assume this responsibility when reporting to the base. Other chaplains who participate will do so at the direction of the designated Mission Chaplain. The Wing Chaplain may elect to re-assign this responsibility as more experienced Mission Chaplains become available. The SAREX is an excellent place for chaplains to obtain training in the skills needed for ministry as a Mission Chaplain. Chaplains are encouraged to participate as often as possible.

## **PLANNING FOR ASSIGNMENT AS MISSION CHAPLAIN**

It is unwise for a minister to enter the pulpit without adequate preparation. So it is with the Mission Chaplain. Effective preparation begins before notification that an aircraft is missing or a

---

<sup>2</sup> CAPF 101T-MC may be downloaded from the national web site. This form lists all of the requirements for attainment of the Mission Chaplain rating. In CAWG, all 101T cards must be issued by unit commanders via the WMU system. The various tasks listed must be completed and signed off by a qualified trainer (Standard mission chaplain rating) who is certified as an instructor (TTT or SET qualified). All trainees must participate in at least two SAREX exercises as a Mission Chaplain trainee in order to be signed off..

response to a disaster is requested. In a time of crisis, it is easy to overlook important equipment and supplies. Chaplains should prepare a kit containing important tools to assist in ministering during the search and rescue operation. This "SAR kit" should include the following:

- State highway maps to assist in locating the Mission Base.
- Personal identification, i.e. current USAF Auxiliary Membership Card, current Civil Air Patrol Driver's License, current CAPF 101 or CAPF 101T Emergency Services Card, current ROA card and etc. Periodically, check to be sure that these documents are up to date. Expired documents are of no value when signing into a mission base.
- Important phone numbers and radio call signs of those you may wish to contact during the mission. The Wing Chaplain, for instance, should be informed of important needs and developments.
- Chaplains from liturgical traditions should have copies of their denominational rituals and any special supplies needed.
- Pencil and paper to accumulate data for preparation of reports.
- Hand outs on Critical Incident Stress for distribution. (See Appendix A)
- Materials needed for conducting field worship. It is recommended that chaplains prepare appropriate messages, orders of service, readings, etc. for their respective faith group in advance. These field worship services should be kept to no more than 30 minutes. There is rarely more time allotted for this activity amidst the need for pilot briefings, etc.
- Civil Air Patrol pamphlets and information about the chaplain program. A full color brochure entitled "*The Civil Air Patrol Chaplain Service*" is available from the National Executive Chaplain or your Wing Chaplain. These pamphlets are useful when meeting visiting clergy who may visit the mission base during the SAR or SAREX.

(Refer to the **Mission Chaplain Checklist**: unofficial, advisory only – Appendix B)

## **THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS)**

The USAF Auxiliary Incident Command System (ICS) is outlined in detail in CAPR 60-3 (Chapter 8). The Mission Chaplain must have a working knowledge of this document and his/her function in ICS. The Mission Chaplain serves on the staff of the Incident Commander in the Command Section and is responsible directly to the IC. Other members of the Command Staff are the Liaison Officer, the Information Officer and the Safety Officer. It is advisable for the prospective Mission Chaplain to study CAPR 60-3 in detail before proceeding with this course, completion of additional ICS training offered by CAWG, or completing the FEMA independent study ICS course (IS-195) is recommended for a basic understanding of ICS. This course is available free from FEMA, <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is195.htm>.

The people who perform the four major activities of operations, logistics, planning and finance/administration are called sections and designated as the general staff. These four activities serve as the primary sections of ICS and can be sub-divided as needed.

Under the ICS, facilities are established depending on the kind and complexity of the incident or event. There are five types of facilities listed and given a detailed description in CAPR 60-3: Incident Command Post (ICP); Staging Areas; Base; Camps; Helibase; Helispots. Most of CAP's SAR missions will be conducted at a base. At a Mission Base the principal areas of activity are Command, Administration, Air Ops, Communication, Flight Line, and Ground Team. As a Mission Chaplain, practicing "*the ministry of presence*" is vital. Try to strike a balance of being unobtrusive yet always visible.

Common responsibilities or instructions that anyone, with any ES specialty, assigned to an incident should follow:

- a. Receive your incident assignment from your organization. This should include, at a minimum, a reporting location and time, likely length of assignment, brief description of assignment, routine information, and a designated communications link if necessary. Different agencies may have additional requirements.
- b. Bring any specialized supplies or equipment required for your job. Be sure you have adequate personal supplies to last you for the expected stay.
- c. Upon arrival, follow the check-in procedures for the incident. Check-in locations may be found at:
  - 1) Incident command post (at the resources unit)
  - 2) Staging areas
  - 3) Base or camps
  - 4) Helibases
  - 5) Division or group supervisors (for direct assignments)
- d. Radio communications on an incident should use clear text, that is, no radio codes. Refer to incident facilities by the incident name, for example, Rossmoor Command Post or 42nd Street Staging Area. Refer to personnel by ICS title, for example, "Division C" not numeric code or name. The reason for this is that personnel may change or become unavailable, and not all organizations use the same codes.
- e. Obtain a briefing from your immediate supervisor. Be sure you understand your assignment.
- f. Acquire necessary work materials, locate, and setup your workstation.
- g. Organize and brief any subordinates assigned to you.
- h. Brief your relief at the end of each operational period and, as necessary, at the time you are demobilized from the incident. Shift changes can make or break the continuity of operations. Smooth transitions from one operational period to the next can often only be accomplished easily

if personnel are organized, consistently maintain detailed unit logs, and thorough briefing and debriefings occur between the departing and oncoming staff. This will also reduce the fatigue and frustration of the mission staff that can easily be overwhelmed during transition periods.

- i. Complete required forms and reports and give them to your supervisor or to the documentation unit before you leave.
- j. Demobilize according to plan.

## **PLANNING MISSION BASE MINISTRY**

Immediately upon signing in at the mission base, the Mission Chaplain should report to the Incident Commander (IC) to inform him/her of his/her presence and discuss the needs that can be met by a chaplain. Remember that all operations at the mission base are the responsibility of the IC. In the ICS, the Mission Chaplain serves on the immediate staff of the IC as a member of the Command Staff. It is imperative that you understand the needs of the IC. It is not the job of the Mission Chaplain to instruct the IC, but it may be wise to explain the services that chaplains can provide to assist in the overall success of the mission. After reporting to the IC, the Mission Chaplain should begin laying out the strategy of ministry for the mission. The Mission Chaplain is the single point of contact on pastoral ministry for the IC. The IC will have regular times for briefing the mission base staff. As a member of the Command Staff it is imperative that the Mission Chaplain attend these briefings. Throughout lull times you may want to check-in with the IC and see how he/she is doing and if you can be of any service.

- Obtain a briefing from any chaplains that may already have signed into the mission. Discuss a division of responsibility and confer on recognized areas of ministry.
- Conduct a needs assessment. Consider the stress level; number of personnel; whether friends and/or family of the downed airmen are expected; availability of adequate facilities; food and refreshment requirements and availability. This assessment must be re-evaluated as circumstances dictate. *"Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be broken."*
- Determine a priority for ministry. Which areas of need are more critical to the success of the mission and morale of the participants? Again, flexibility is important. Priorities can change during the course of the mission.
- Determine how many chaplains will be needed at the mission base and other locations. One chaplain, for example, might be assigned to stay with the family/friends at a location distant from the mission base. Chaplains might be assigned to assist with transportation or food distribution. These assignments will allow chaplains to get acquainted with mission personnel to determine their emotional/spiritual needs. More often than not, however, no other chaplains will be available. It is important that you prioritize the pastoral needs of the mission base so that you will not be overwhelmed. A word of caution with regard to the use of Moral Leadership Officers: USAF Auxiliary policy prohibits MLOs from performing the duties that are typically those of a

chaplain. They may be utilized to assist the chaplain where appropriate, but they may not be assigned clerical responsibility.

- Locate a private area where you (or an assigned chaplain) can provide pastoral care of mission personnel and friends or relatives of the downed airmen. This area should be away from operations, but near enough for the family to receive periodic briefings on the status of the search and mission personnel to have access to the chaplain without neglecting their responsibilities. In the event that friends and/or relatives of the downed airmen insist on visiting the operations area, you must tactfully caution them that their presence may complicate the efficiency of the mission. You may wish to arrange for a brief tour of the operations area at a time when the IC feels it is appropriate. Suggest that the IC have all mission personnel briefed that family members may be visiting immediately prior to the visit.
- Consider whether field worship services will be needed. Locate an appropriate location or arrange for services in local churches or synagogues. Coordinate the time with the IC as far in advance as practical. Usually, these services will take place quite early in the morning, before the crews are briefed. If you have prepared in advance, you will be able to provide flyers to the mission participants as they check in. If you have time before leaving for the search base, you should also prepare a list of churches in the area of the search base and make it available at check in. The Chamber of Commerce nearest the base will usually have an extensive list of area churches. Retain the list in your SAR kit for future operations.
- Arrange with the IC to schedule prayer each morning and evening. Some mission personnel will be indifferent; however, many will be greatly encouraged. If several chaplains are present, rotate them. Keep in mind that participants will come from all religious backgrounds and pray in a manner that will minister to all. A brief prayer for the safety of the mission and welfare of participants and the nature of the mission - search for a downed aircraft and personnel onboard or assisting in disaster relief affecting residents of a community or local area - is always appropriate.
- Make sure that food and refreshments are provided for the mission personnel. This responsibility may already be assigned to someone else. You may wish to confer with that person and offer your assistance. If possible, have an area where people can gather for periodic breaks. As difficult as it may be, try to avoid food and refreshment items that contribute to stress. Juices are better than carbonated beverages. Fruit and vegetables are better than donuts and cookies. Be aware that caffeine is the number one chemical stressor. Most soft drinks contain more caffeine than does coffee. Encourage those who provide food and refreshments to have ample "healthy" food and drinks, so that participants will at least have a choice. This is especially important in the event of an actual SAR. Chemical processes relating to the stress of a crisis are exacerbated by sugar, caffeine, alcohol and refined carbohydrates. There should be an ample supply of water to guard against dehydration, and the chaplains should stress that all mission personnel stay well hydrated.

## CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

(ref. CAPP 221A - Chapter 3 CAP Chaplain Service Emergency Preparedness;  
3-2-2 Critical Incident Stress Debriefing)

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is simply a comprehensive approach to help people (particularly crisis responders) deal with and control the harmful aspects of stress. Anyone who desires to function as a Mission Chaplain should endeavor to obtain this training. The importance of such preparation cannot be stressed too strongly. CISM training is commonly offered through critical incident responders, such as police and fire departments; EMT and nursing organizations and other emergency service workers. The basic course requires that you attend two days of instruction (16 hours). There is usually a course fee of about \$150. It is considered by many to be absolutely essential for those who are likely to participate regularly as responders to crisis situations. On occasion, USAF Auxiliary chaplains may participate with active duty chaplains to receive this important training. After taking the course, you should exercise diligence to refresh your knowledge periodically. Follow up the basic course with the advanced training; if possible, participate in a local CISM team; stay current with emerging trends.

During a search and rescue operation, mission chaplains should remain alert for signs of critical incident stress.<sup>3</sup> It is useful to provide information to all mission participants such as that provided in Appendix A. In situations that result in critical incident stress, you should recommend to the IC that a CISM team be asked to "debrief" or "defuse" the mission participants. It would be useful for you to know the availability and location of CISM teams in your area. You may obtain this information from fire departments, police agencies, and county offices or on the internet at <http://www.icisf.org>. Information of this sort may be obtained in advance and constitute a part of your SAR kit. Keep in mind that in the event of an incident resulting in critical incident stress, the assigned Mission Chaplain is himself a "victim" of the stress and is not the person to conduct a CISD or debriefing. He may, however, be charged with managing the initial response during the mission, and may be responsible for obtaining the services of a CISM team.

The Critical Incident Stress Management system employed by the U.S. Air Force and most specialists in the field is called the *Mitchell Model* after Dr. Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D. Dr. Mitchell developed the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) process for emergency personnel now utilized by over 700 communities in all 50 states and in nineteen other countries. Certification in CISM and its components is offered through:

The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc  
10176 Baltimore National Pike, Unit 201  
Ellicott City, MD 21042  
410-750-9600  
[www.icisf.org](http://www.icisf.org)

You may wish to join the International Critical Stress Foundation and receive their periodic bulletins. ICISF offers CISM training in many cities throughout the US on a regular basis. Membership in ICISF begins at \$35 per year.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A

## **PASTORAL DUTIES OF THE MISSION CHAPLAIN**

Though many chaplains have become proficient in other areas of service, i.e. Scanner, Observer, Radio Operator, Pilot and etc., we should bear in mind that our primary responsibility is pastoral. As chaplains, we are at least a symbolic representation of the presence of God. Let that be our first priority. Chaplains who wish to fly or assume other duties during the mission are not able to give full attention to ministry. The Mission Chaplain especially, should be available to the IC, mission personnel, friends, and family of the missing airmen and local clergy who might visit the base. In the ideal situation, several chaplains will share the responsibility under the direction of the Mission Chaplain. Unless adequate chaplain service personnel are available, it is unwise for the chaplain to fly in a grid. If, for instance, a family member arrives at the mission base, it might take hours for the chaplain to meet them if he is in a grid. If you must, utilize the SAREX to develop those skills. On the other hand, it might be prudent to have a qualified (ground team qualified and equipped) chaplain accompany a ground team to the site of a crash.

We will not endeavor in this course to instruct chaplains in their pastoral duties. It is useful for us, however, to include several areas of ministry that are not common to civilian pastoral service.

### **• THE FIELD WORSHIP SERVICE**

When mission personnel are utilized at a mission base during traditional times for worship, it is the responsibility of the Mission Chaplain to provide services. These field services will usually occur on Saturday and/or Sunday. The Mission Chaplain should discuss this need with the IC to arrange for a time and place that will result in the least amount of interference with the mission. These services held in the field should be voluntary and general in nature. Following are some considerations for preparation:

- Locate a meeting place where worshippers can gather apart from other activities. It may be necessary to hold the meeting outdoors in a quiet area.
- Since time is of a premium, you will probably have only 30 minutes -- so keep it brief.
- Try to include elements of other traditions within your faith group, so that worshippers feel comfortable.
- Try to involve others in the service. They can read scripture, pray, lead singing, assist in the set-up and etc. Involve any MLOs that are present, but be careful that you do not assign them clerical duties.
- If there are worship needs for other faith groups, arrange for local clergy to provide for them, or provide them with information about local services.
- If you play a portable instrument, such as accordion or guitar, use them. You may wish to employ some form of recorded music. An inexpensive tape recorder can be a useful tool.

- Don't forget to inform mission personnel that a service will be conducted. They can't attend if they don't know about it. Ask the IC if you may make a short announcement during the briefings.

- **THE DEATH NOTIFICATION**

Hopefully, it will never be necessary for you to be involved in notifying the next of kin of the death of an accident victim, but it does happen. A recent study completed by Col. Jim Bigelow (after serving as an IC for nearly 30 years) found that Civil Air Patrol suffers an average of three deaths per year in search aircraft accidents. Of particular concern to Civil Air Patrol chaplains are "line of duty" fatalities involving our members.

There are several important considerations with which you must be familiar.

- In most, if not all, U.S. jurisdictions, the death notification is the responsibility of the Sheriff's department or local law enforcement agency where the death occurred. We must not take it upon ourselves to make a notification without authorization. There are specific laws that govern the "official" notification of the next of kin. ALWAYS coordinate the death notification with the IC and Sheriff or Coroner who has jurisdiction. Of course, in the event that one of our members loses his/her life in a mission activity, we are more likely to be involved, and your ministry will be of utmost importance.
- The Air Force model for death notification calls for a notification team, rather than a single individual. The team includes a notification officer, mortuary officer and a chaplain. A chaplain is always present, but is prohibited by regulation from making the actual notification. Sometimes the next of kin will react against the person who makes the notification. The Air Force model provides that a chaplain is there to minister to the bereaved immediately after they are informed and without the above noted disability. This is rarely the case in the civilian world, however. It is quite common for the chaplain to make the notification itself. The ultimate responsibility for notification is that of the unit commander. You must coordinate your ministry within that framework. The unit commander may wish to make the notification himself. It would be appropriate for the chaplain to brief the unit commander on effective techniques for making a death notification. Death notification procedures are covered in CAPR 35-2. It specifies that **IN NO CASE SHOULD THE NEXT OF KIN BE NOTIFIED BY TELEPHONE, WIRE, OR LETTER.**
- When participating in a death notification, you will find it useful to take your own vehicle so that you can stay and minister after the notification team leaves.
- Plan **the notification procedure.** The process should be outlined before the team leaves the mission base: who is going to do the talking; what is going to be said; how much can be said, etc. Chaplains must be prepared to provide instruction to assist the notification team. Discuss this with the unit commander and other members of the team.
- Obtain **as much information as possible.** Be absolutely certain that you are notifying the right person and that you have positive identification of the victim. There have been many instances of

pre-mature death notification resulting in damaging stress and even medical complications. Try to determine beforehand if the next of kin has any medical condition that would warrant the assistance of a doctor. You may, for example, find it wise to contact the family doctor if you are aware of a serious heart condition and etc.

- Never **make the notification by phone**; the consequences could be too great and, as mentioned above, it is specifically prohibited by CAPR 35-2. There may be circumstances when some other agency has notified the next of kin, or they may learn from some other source. Under these circumstances, the chaplain must make a personal visit to the bereaved as soon as possible. You must take every appropriate measure to insure that the news of a death is not released prior to the proper notification through some careless revelation to the media or early speculation on the part of mission participants.
- Never **go alone**. It is not unusual for the recipients of a death notification to experience some sort of adverse reaction. It may be of a medical, emotional or physical nature. Someone may need to go for help while the other(s) remain with the bereaved. Often, it is helpful if more than one person can confirm the truth of the death. Denial is a common immediate reaction on the part of death notification recipients.
- Never **carry a personal item of the victim with you**. Leave all those items at the hospital or morgue. A simple note pad with the name or description written down will suffice. There will be plenty of time later to deliver the personal effects of the deceased after the initial shock has passed.
- **By all means, get inside the residence before you deliver the message**. If a medical emergency occurs behind a closed door, you may not be able to help. NEVER make a death notification through a closed door.
- **Get the person to sit down** (preferably in a comfortable easy chair with their knees above their hips) before informing them. If they are seated in this position, you can minimize violent reactions to the notification. You should be as close as is appropriate so that you can extend a sympathetic touch or even mitigate any violent reaction. Be patient. Do not make the notification until the recipient is seated and everyone in the house is gathered. (Note: It may be appropriate to withhold the information from small children until you have notified the parent and discussed how to deal with the children. This is another reason why it is wise to take someone else with you to do the notification.)
- Relate **the information straight out using a direct approach**, i.e. *"I'm sorry to inform you that your husband, Bill, has been killed in an aircraft accident."* There is no way to soften the initial blow of this reality. Avoid jargon such as *"your husband has been **injured** fatally."* Use of the word "injured" may allow for a false hope. It may seem cruel, but experience has taught us that it is not wise to beat around the bush in this circumstance. Pause after breaking the news and allow the person to process the information. They will probably have some questions about the circumstances. Answer their questions directly and factually. **DO NOT SPECULATE** about the cause of the accident. Most of this information will be under investigation for some time. Questions regarding the specifics of the accident should be answered simply: *"That information*

*is still under investigation.*" Avoid "jargon" when explaining the situation. Use plain and simple language. Be prepared for any kind of reaction. Some people may even pass out or become hysterical. This is one of the reasons why you should never go alone.

- **Try to assess the stability and state of mind of the individual** to whom the news has been broken. As soon as possible, determine if there is anyone who can and will assist the bereaved - a pastor or friend. Ask if there is a friend you can call for them to come to be with them. Ascertain if there are other relatives that need to be informed. If possible, arrange to go with them to do the notification or arrange for someone else to do so. Discourage them from breaking the news over the telephone if it is possible to make a personal notification. Of course this is not always possible, especially if the person lives in a distant city.

- **Be prepared to answer their questions about the process.** You should be familiar with the procedures for claiming the body and help them to begin thinking about how they should proceed with funeral arrangements, etc. The time you take in advance to glean this information will be of considerable importance to the bereaved. You should have the phone number of the authorities they must contact, i.e. the coroner's office or Sheriff's office.

- **Be prepared to spend some time there.** Don't just drop the bomb and walk out. Watch for clues that will indicate you can leave. Ideally, you will not leave until (1) the bereaved begins to refer to the deceased in the past tense; (2) you can be replaced by adequate support from a pastor/priest/rabbi/spiritual leader, friend or relative; or (3) you are asked to leave.

- **A word about your ministry.** Unless you already know the attitude of the bereaved, ask permission to pray. Often, you will not be familiar with the religious background of the person. This is not a time for you to preach through prayer. Avoid statements that may cause confusion or a perception of judgment. They may hold religious viewpoints that differ from yours. Simply express that you understand that they feel as they do without agreeing or disagreeing. Always ask if you can contact their pastor, priest, rabbi or spiritual leader if they have a church home.

- **COMFORTING THE BEREAVED**

It is more likely that you will be called upon to minister to the bereaved after the death notification. Often, you will be called upon to minister to people with whom you are not as familiar as the members of your congregation. This section will provide some suggestions to assist you in this important ministry.

A well known Christian psychologist aptly expressed the dilemma that most of us experience in the face of tragedy:

"I would like to help. I really would. But I just don't know what to say. I'm sure I say too much, and sometimes I think what I say hurts more than it helps. So, most of the time, I stay away and don't do anything at all." An uncommon response? No. It is probably the most common feeling of frustration we experience when a friend or loved one is going through a loss. We all struggle with what to say, how to say it, and when to respond. But it is possible to learn how to minister to others in a way that is supportive and caring.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> H. Norman Wright, *Recovering From the Losses of Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revel, 1997) 179.

Many people feel uncomfortable in situations where friends or strangers are suffering a serious loss. Chaplains are expected to be "experts," but often feel the same inadequacy. Involvement in a crisis situation such as an aircraft accident may require that you become involved in this important ministry.

"As [chaplains], we have an opportunity to share Christ's [God's] love by the way we reach out to comfort and support others when they have endured a loss. But there are guidelines for us to follow in reacting to the grief of a friend or relative. You will need to acknowledge that the loss has occurred in this person's life and see it through the person's eyes rather than your own."<sup>5</sup>

Much of the time, the Mission Chaplain will have a somewhat short-term ministry to victims and their families. It is important that we carefully lay the groundwork for those who will provide them with continuing support.

Following are some suggestions that may be helpful:

- "There are four major '**Do Nots**' that need to be followed: (1) Do not withdraw from the relative or friend. (2) Do not compare, evaluate, or judge the person or his or her responses. (3) Do not look for sympathy for yourself. (4) Do not patronize or pity the person."<sup>6</sup>
- Do not minimize the event. Statements like: *"It could have been worse"; "How fortunate you are that it wasn't worse"; "Don't you appreciate what you have left?"; "You 'll get over it"; "There are worse things than death"* don't help or comfort.
- Be understanding of their feelings. Statements like: *"It is natural to feel anger about your husband's death. I feel angry too,"* or *"It must be hard to find the words to express your anger, helplessness and frustration,"* will show that you understand their feelings. Accept grieving people and let them know that their feelings (whatever they are) are normal. There is no right way to react to the death of a loved one. It is important that the bereaved understand that their feelings are normal. Often they will experience conflicting emotions that make little sense even to them. They may feel guilty, relieved, responsible, angry and etc. Interestingly, they may feel all these at once. Assure them that they are experiencing a normal reaction to an abnormal event and **THAT IS NORMAL**.
- One of the greatest gifts you can give to a grieving person is the gift of listening. Don't feel that you have to say anything. Sometimes, just being there is enough. Jobs friends sat with him for 7 days and nights before they spoke.<sup>7</sup> It was only when they began to talk that they became *"miserable comforters."*<sup>8</sup> When you can't improve on silence - don't!
- This is a time to *show* God's love, not preach it.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Job 2:13

<sup>8</sup> Job 16:2

- Don't be afraid to discuss how they feel. It is important for the grieving to talk about it. It is beneficial for them to talk about their deceased loved one and remember the good times they had together. Encourage them to talk openly about it. Assure them that their tears are acceptable and normal.
- Try not to engender pity for yourself. Your bad experience will not make them feel any better. Though you may simply inform them that you have been through the loss of a loved one, don't share the details of your similar bad experience with them. Under the circumstances, their own experience is enough with which to deal.
- Avoid giving them coffee, carbonated beverages and sugary snacks. Encourage friends and family members to provide them with healthy food.

**Additional reading:**

*Comforting The Bereaved*, by Warren W. Wiersbe and David W. Wiersbe, 1985, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

*Recovering From the Losses of Life*. H. Norman Wright. 1997. Fleming H. Revel Grand Rapids MI

## REPORTING

You have heard it truly said that the job is never finished until the paperwork is done. CAPP 221-A (1 March 98) has established reporting requirements for all chaplains serving on a mission base and an additional report by the Mission Chaplain (3-3 Emergency Services Documentation). They are as follows:

1. **Chaplain's Personal Events Log:** All chaplains are expected to maintain a personal events log in which they record a running commentary of their mission activities. The chaplain retains the log to maintain confidentiality. He/she will find it useful in preparing the CAP Form 34 when it is due. The CAP ICS form 214 may be used for this purpose.
2. **Chaplain's After Action Report:** Every chaplain participating in the mission must file an after action report outlining his/her participation in the mission. Three copies are required, one each to the Mission Chaplain, the chaplain's commanding officer and the chaplain's personal file. Chaplains should complete this report before leaving the mission base.
3. **Mission Chaplain's After Action Report:** The Mission Chaplain compiles the after action reports of all the chaplains, and combines them with his/her own to provide a comprehensive report of the chaplain ministry. Copies are sent along the chain of command to the Incident Commander, the Wing Commander, Wing Chaplain, Region Chaplain, and National Chief of Chaplain Service.

The format for the After Action Report is prescribed in CAPP 221-A, Appendix B.