

Serving those who serve our country

Chaplains, prayer books make a difference

On this weekend of Veterans' Day – with its prayers, parades and speeches remembering U.S. military personnel, including those now deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq – Episcopalians are mindful of the churchwide ministries of the Office of the Bishop Suffragan for Chaplaincies.

“It is on this precious day of remembrance that we recall the lives of those who have served our country with honor, sometimes in spite of fear, often in spite of loneliness, and always with courage and commitment to duty,” said the Rt. Rev. George E. Packard, the Episcopal Church’s Bishop Suffragan for Chaplaincies.

“Veterans are not only steeped in years of service, they hold up before us all the higher values of life – and in that, particularly, we thank God for them.”

There are approximately 500 Episcopal clergy and lay people endorsed as chaplains. Some serve those deployed overseas, while others serve families who await the return of loved ones. Each chaplain is a primary resource for counsel that affirms holistic health of spirit, mind and body.

Central to this ministry is the Prayer Book for the Armed Services, a pocket-size abridged version of the Book of Common Prayer adapted for military use, in both Episcopal and ecumenical contexts. The books are available through Episcopal Books and Resources (www.episcopalbookstore.org), and produced by the chaplaincies office, which is now coordinating a reprinting to meet extensive demand.



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Led by Packard, the Office of the Bishop Suffragan for Chaplaincies is responsible for the recruitment, development and support of clergy and lay people for service as federal chaplains, and for their training and advocacy on behalf of diocesan bishops for state and local chaplains. Communication is also maintained with more than 400 retired chaplains.

These chaplaincies include armed services, healthcare, prisons, fire fighting, emergency medical response, law enforcement, maritime and others except chaplaincies in educational settings. Chaplains are endorsed to specialized ministry with the concurrence of diocesan bishops.

Recruitment, development and support form the office's core focus of the work. The Rev. Gerald J. Blackburn, director for federal chaplaincies and executive officer to the Bishop Suffragan, leads the search for qualified individuals willing to answer God's calling to service and pastoral care in the settings of the Federal Bureau of Prisons Chaplaincy, the Military Chaplaincy and the Department of Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy.



To help develop and support the chaplains, advocates encourage relationships with diocesan bishops through reports and contact; activity in a local support group or clericus; and maintaining a lively connection with a congregation that will sustain the clergy through prayer.

- For more information visit: <http://www.ecusa-chaplain.org/index.html>

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