



# Newsletter

Winter 2026

## FOUR CHAPLAINS DAY: FEB 3, 2026

Four Chaplains Day honors the memory and legacy of four Army chaplains of different faiths and backgrounds who gave their lives to save others to demonstrate courage and unity in the face of adversity. Since that date, Feb. 3 has become an observance of their sacrifice, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds to recognize our shared humanity.

## HONORING VETERANS

On my first day on base during my last Annual Tour at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), I received an email from my Wing Chaplain assigning me a funeral. (JBER is in Anchorage, AK, and home to the Ft Richardson National Cemetery, and one of our missions here is to provide Chaplain Support to those who choose to make their final resting place here.) I've done many military funerals since entering the chaplaincy in 2009. However, this funeral was different. When I received the information sheet, I immediately noticed that the line for Next of Kin simply said one word... "UNCLAIMED". This gentleman was a homeless Vet who had died here in Anchorage. As I walked to the pavilion where I would offer scriptures, prayers, and blessings on behalf of this man who had served our country, I was struck by how important this was. I don't know his story because no one was around to share it. In attendance were I, the honor guard, a representative from the Department of Veteran Affairs, and the cemetery caretaker. The veteran was carried in by his detail in a simple wooden casket. I stood in my role as an Elder in Christ's Church and offered the prayers and blessings that have been pronounced for centuries. The flag draping the casket was brought to the table top. The firing party was called to attention, and the rifles rang out, and then the bugle began to play taps signaling that this veteran...this hero... could rest. The flag was folded, and the honor guard slowly marched from the pavilion, leaving me alone with the casket. I stood there thinking...this man had served our country during the Vietnam War (a war my dad served in), and in many ways, his country had failed him after that. I laid my hand on the casket, and I thanked this man for serving his country and apologized for the ways we had overlooked him. Then I left, leaving this unclaimed veteran to return to the earth from which he was made.

- John Smith

## Field Notes

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*I continue to feel called to this special ministry. Everyday is a new opportunity to show the love, hope, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for the many ways my education and service as a pastor prepared me for this ministry. It is an honor to come alongside military members and their families on the best days, the most challenging days, and those long cold days of winter.*

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*I have had the privilege of baptizing ten different gentlemen. The large majority of those gentlemen have continued to grow significantly in their faith and have become leaders in our congregation at the Federal Correctional Institution, serving communion, sharing testimonies, delivering a homily, and singing in our inmate-led praise band. Seeing the continual growth and the way their lives are changed has been the most rewarding aspect of ministry.*

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## GRADUATIONS

- Darren Kennemer, VA Chaplain, graduated from Vanderbilt with a D.Min. in Integrative Chaplaincy in May 2025
- Laura Palmer, active duty Navy Chaplain, graduated with a D.Min. in Integrative Chaplaincy in May 2025
- Daniel Haas, Reserve Army Chaplain, graduated with a D.Min from Wesley Theological Seminary in May 2025
- Bethany Grenfell, Air Force Chaplain, graduated from the Air Force Basic Course in Aug 2025
- Joseph Song, active duty Air Force Chaplain, graduated from Officer Training School in Dec 2025



Rev. David Kim being sworn in by Ch, Captain Robyn Kleinschmidt. Ch Kleinschmidt teaches at the Air Force Chaplain School. David is attending OTS and the Air Force Chaplain Basic Course and will enter Active Duty.

## BIRTHS AND WELCOMES

- Justin and Danielle Westfall welcomed their son Robert by adoption on November 22, 2024.
- Mel and Greg Baars O'Malley welcomed their son, John Theo on December 8, 2024.
- David and Abigail Madewell welcomed their new son on January 7, 2025.
- Andrew and Ellen Stokstill, Navy Chaplain, welcomed their third daughter on June 22, 2025
- Ben and Mary Behrend welcomed their fourth child in October 2025



CH (1LT) Irene Choi. CHBOLC Graduation, August 14, 2025, Fort Jackson, SC.



Ch, 1Lt, Bethany Grenfall at her AF Basic Course Graduation with her family and Dennis Hysom in Aug 2025.

## PROMOTIONS

- Robert Bohnsak, active duty Air Force Chaplain, promoted to O-6 on 1 May 25
- Eugene Ansah, Active Duty Air Force Chaplain, promoted to O-4 in June 2025
- Joel Matthew Phillips, Active Duty Navy Chaplain, promoted to O-3 on 1 Jul 25
- Peter Dietz, active duty Navy Chaplain, promoted to O-6 on 1 Sep 25
- David Jeltema, active duty Navy Chaplain, promoted to O-6 on 1 Sep 25
- Bill Sperry, active duty Navy Chaplain, promoted to O-5 on 1 Sep 25
- Jody Paul "JP" Butler, reserve Army Chaplain, promoted to O-3 in September 2025
- Laura Palmer, active duty Navy Chaplain, promoted to O-5 on 29 Oct 25

## DISTINCTIONS

- Jacob Kave, active duty Air Force Chaplain, completed the Norwegian Ruck March in 2024 and earned a Bronze medal
- Holton Sandiford, Prison Chaplain, was awarded Employee of the Month in February 2025
- Laura Kuster, VA Chaplain, was the second chaplain certified in Women Veteran Health in March 2025
- Alice Ridgill, Air Force Reserve Chaplain, was awarded Wing Staff Agencies Company Grade Officer of the Quarter for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 2025
- Hyun Kim, Army Reserve Chaplain, became a US Citizen in November 2025.
- Mel Baars O'Malley, Active Duty Army Chaplain, was accepted into the ACPE Certified Educator program in June 2025.
- Sarah Hoogendoorn, VA Chaplain, was married to Ryan Vanasse in December 2025
- Russ Ferguson, active duty Navy Chaplain, published a book, *Presidential Seclusion: The Power of Camp David*, in November 2025
- Young G. Jung, VA Chaplain, received the ICare Award and earned Certification of Board Certified Chaplain in Hospice and Palliative Care

## RETIREMENTS

- Dwayne L. Brown, VA Chaplain, retired in September 2025, and will be working with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.



## CONDOLENCES

Our sincere condolences to Patrice Mbo, VA Chaplain, and the family as they struggle with the death of their oldest son in a shooting in Killeen, TX, in November. In this time of grief, we pray for healing.

## COMFORT AND PEACE

In August, our ship lost one of our Sailors very suddenly, during a public event with many witnesses. As the Chaplain, I was called to help our crew navigate the grief and shock. I planned the memorial service for our crew, delivered the eulogy for our community, and provided spiritual care to Sailors who were hurting. The memorial had our shipmates standing together. I spoke to the gathered crew about hope in darkness and the bonds that hold us through loss. When taps played, the silence was sacred—our grief and unity mingled as one. In the following days, I walked the decks, checking on Sailors and listening as they processed the event, whether through deep spiritual questions or through a need for a quiet, caring presence. Through it all, I was reminded that ministry isn't only about what's said from a podium—it's about presence. In those quiet conversations, I saw how God's comfort and peace can meet people, even at sea.

- Eliseo Morales, Jr.

## We are PFC strong!

As you discern God's calling to ministry, the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies invite you to consider using your spiritual gifts as a Federal Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Affairs, or Military Chaplain.

Applications and information are available online: [presfedchap.org](http://presfedchap.org)



Linda Conyers  
VA Chaplain



Holton Sandford  
FBOP Chaplain



Heeia Han  
Army Chaplain



Clay Fouse  
VA Chaplain



Alice Hernandez  
Air Force Chaplain



Gabe Cotton  
VA Chaplain  
Ret Army Chaplain



Robyn Kleinschmidt  
Air Force Chaplain



Fred Ehrman  
VA Chaplain  
Ret Air Force Chaplain

## YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Thank you, PFC partners in ministry, for your good support for those of us out here in the field. May the care you extend to others return to you in kind and may God richly bless you in your work.

Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies (PFC) is a non-profit organization, representing four Presbyterian denominations and is recognized by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs as the agency for recruiting, equipping, sustaining, and endorsing those who serve as chaplains within our Federal Departments, Agencies, and/or Auxiliaries, and also ministering to the families who support them.

Please prayerfully consider taking a special offering and/or becoming an individual giver. Donate online: [presfedchap.org](http://presfedchap.org)

NOTE: All of our funding is crowd-funded and community-sourced from sister denominations and local fundraisers directed to the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies nonprofit, a 501(c)(3) organization, and is tax-deductible. Any financial support provided by our donors and supporters is greatly appreciated and is essential to the continuation of our programs and services. We are committed to transparency and accountability, and we ensure that all donations are utilized in the most effective and efficient manner possible to achieve our mission. Thank you for your support!



# Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies

*I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was sick and you took care of me,  
I was in prison and you visited me... Matthew 25*

## CHAPLAINCY: IS IT FOR YOU?

As you discern God's calling to ministry, the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies invite you to consider using your spiritual gifts as a Federal Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Affairs, or Military Chaplain.

## CONNECT WITH US!

Please contact us if you are considering federal chaplaincy and/or if you have a minister or candidate under your care who is considering federal chaplaincy.

Endorsement by the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies is required for federal chaplaincy programs, but does not guarantee an applicant will be accepted into a federal chaplaincy program.

Applications and information are available online: [presfedchap.org](http://presfedchap.org)

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We are a joint ministry of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad, and the Presbyterian Church (USA).