Holy Joe's Café is seeing an urgent increase in the need for coffee and support for U.S. military chaplains in response to the Russia–Ukraine conflict.



Holy Joe's Café has supported U.S. military chaplains since its origin at a UCC church in Wallingford, CT in 2006. PSEC Conference Minister, Rev. Bill Worley's Iraq deployed unit, 3/14th Marines, was among some of the first recipients of Holy Joe's coffee in 2007. The organization provides coffee to military chaplains to help them make connections with active-duty military personnel. The simple act of providing coffee to people in their units gives chaplains a meaningful way to comfort anxious troops and initiate conversation to share concerns and offer guidance that help keep them mentally and spiritually healthy.

The duties of military chaplain are broad and go beyond both facilitating and providing for religious practices. Chaplains pray with units and provide them with a way to share their concerns about the home front or their deployed situation. Chaplains report to leadership on troop morale and weigh in on ethical and moral questions regarding the use of force and the law of armed conflict. The armed forces acknowledge moral leadership as critical support for troops and one of the most important keys to the prevention of moral injury. Military chaplains are also the only officers granted the right of full confidentiality with those who seek their council.

"As an ordained UCC minister and an Air Force chaplain the ministry we do amongst our troops is a critical one. We help to spiritually ground their deepest fears, anxieties, and hopes with compassionate accompaniment," said United Church of Christ Air Force Chaplain Ryan Tyler-Byers.

Tom Jastermsky, Founder and Executive Director of Holy Joe's, says that with the rapid deployment of troops to Europe in response to the Russia–Ukraine conflict, the need to get coffee supplies to these deployed troops is urgent. Holy Joe's regularly provides coffee to hundreds of chaplains at bases around the world, but changes in deployment require logistical plans to move coffee where it is needed.

"It's not enough," said Jastermsky speaking about the current supplies and shipping schedules. "The chaplains have their hands totally full."

UCC churches have a long history of supporting Holy Joe's. More information on how to assist with this ministry can be found on the Holy Joe's Café website.

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