

Chaplain Ross Fearing

Report to Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery

March 2, 2021

Overview

In addition to serving as pastor at Sparta RPC, I serve as a Chaplain in the US Army Reserve assigned to the 77th Quartermaster Group (Petroleum) (QM GRP) station at Ft. Bliss, TX, near El Paso, TX.

Duties

As Group Chaplain to the 77th QM GRP Chaplain I perform and provide religious support to over 1,000 Soldiers multiple duty locations in Texas and New Mexico. Some of my key responsibilities are performing regular chapel services, providing pastoral counseling, supervising and mentoring subordinate chaplains, and providing ethical and moral leadership and advise to leaders and Soldiers.

Ministry Update

I have been serving in my current position for one year, having previously served at the battalion level first in Harlingen, TX and then El Paso, TX. One of the greatest challenges is that I was assigned as the nationwide shutdowns began and as a result I have had limited in-person presence with my unit.

Despite these challenges, when I have been on site I have been able to provide regular chapel services – introducing Soldiers to the richness of Reformed preaching and the joys of singing the Psalms. In addition, I am routinely counseling Soldiers regarding a host of personal and spiritual issues, some in formal counseling settings and many more in informal settings. Finally, I get to be the personal spiritual and moral advisor to the commander, a man who sets the tone for over 1,000 men and women.

One new thing about this assignment is for the first time I oversee other chaplains and chaplain candidates within our organization. This responsibility is in many ways a joy, as I get the opportunity to help young chaplains, many passionate about ministry, to learn how to serve the Lord effectively in the Army, and hopefully avoid a few of the mistakes I made in the past. At times it can be challenging as I deal with the fact that Soldiers and Chaplains come from a host of different background and have very different beliefs.

The Army requires that I perform religious duties only insofar as I can do so in harmony with my conscience and the standards of the RPCNA, but I also provide for all Soldiers as an Army officer through coordination with other chaplains of other convictions, through providing space and resources for religious services, and supervising chaplains of faith different than my own. Yet, I have found in this pluralistic environment, many opportunities to share what is wonderful about Christ, because we have the opportunity to speak about how our faiths are different.

Oversight

Most of my day to day church oversight comes through the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCC), which is the Endorsement Agency for the RPCNA and 6 other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. They provide oversight

by receiving reports from me and by conducting regular in-person visits, advise me on my responsibilities to church and state, and can provide help in the event of conflict between our ministerial standards and the requirements of the Army. The PRCC thus serves to Credential me to the Army, Care for me as a chaplain, Cover me in time of need, and Connect me to local churches.

That said, it is important for me that I have an established avenue to report to the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, as you are ultimately the oversight of my military ministry. If any of you have further questions about the nature of my chaplain ministry, please follow up with me using the contact information below. In addition while at the time of this report I have not yet finished arrangements, I will be working with the presbytery to work out how I should communicate throughout the year.

Conclusion

It has been an unusual year for my chaplain ministry, but I am thankful to the Lord, to Sparta RPC, to the PRCC, and to the Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery for the opportunity to serve our country and Soldiers in my role as a Chaplain.

In Christ,
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