Chaplains Conference
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Janet Jefford
National President
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Karen M. Boehlter
National Chaplain
2014-2015
“Service to God and Country”

The American Legion family has always emphasized the religious foundations of our freedom. We must reaffirm our faith in God and rely on Him, if we want to retain the freedoms we enjoy.

In 1951 the American Legion family, at its National Convention in Miami, Florida, authorized a “Back to God” program, feeling strongly that our members need to daily seek God’s guidance, and ask His guidance in our organization’s activities. The program was renamed “Service to God and Country” in 1963.
What does “Service to God and Country” mean?

Every Post, Unit, and Squadron is to actively demonstrate their service to God and Country. In this program, which pays homage to God, members of all faiths can work together side by side. The American Legion encourages the following:

1. Attendance at regular worship services. Worship can provide the spiritual strength to counteract daily temptations of greed, lust, hate, selfishness, anger, and conceit.
2. Religious training of children is imperative. The child who knows God and is trained in religious principles will appreciate, understand, and respect the principles of law, government, and justice.

3. Legion family members are called upon to encourage parents to be vigilant in teaching their children about God.

4. Daily family prayer is another objective. Because the family is the basic unit of society, a partnership of faith and hope, tolerance and mutual love, sustains and keeps the family together.
5. As American citizens and as a result of our faith in God, we should model integrity, self-sacrifice, hard work, and a life of caring for one another and members of our communities. That includes caring for our families, helping the elderly, mentoring youth, working for the good of the community, and continuing to support our veterans and active military.

6. We are obligated to uphold and defend our nation’s Constitution, and to foster and perpetuate Americanism.
How are chaplains selected? Am I qualified to be a chaplain?

A member may express her desire to serve as a unit or department chaplain, but in most cases, an election is held. Our National Chaplain is elected during the annual National Convention.

One need not be a degreed or licensed chaplain, or trained clergy, to serve as an Auxiliary chaplain. It is important to have a strong faith in God, be comfortable genuinely reaching out to others, and be willing to serve “For God and Country.”
What are the duties of a chaplain?

• As the spiritual leaders of one’s unit, department, or national organization, it is expected that the chaplain will so dignify her office that others will respect her and seek to model her behavior.

• The chaplain should attend all meetings and have an opening and closing prayer at each meeting. These prayers may come from the Unit Handbook, or they may be others she has found or written herself.
As chaplain, consider:

• Respecting the confidentiality of others, should they so wish. Ask permission to share requests that come to you.
• Bring to Unit or Department meetings names of members who are ill or who are experiencing special needs. Consider passing a card for members to sign.
• Ask what help is necessary; meals, errands, respite care, child care, house or pet-sitting?
• If you suspect or are told finances are of concern, use sensitivity as you discuss a course of action—would a fund-raiser be helpful? Are local resources available? Is the member eligible for AEF help?

• Send a sympathy card to the family, and if appropriate attend services at the funeral home or church. Often an Auxiliary will help with a dinner after a funeral.

• Chaplains are in charge of any religious services the Unit or Department may have, such as draping the charter, calling for a special prayer service in time of crisis, even performing a memorial service.
• Visit members and veterans who are home-bound or who are in nursing homes and hospitals.
• Keep in contact with Gold Star Parents, especially remembering them during holidays.
• Volunteer in community projects.
• Make a prayer and devotional book. Encourage members to contribute.
• Do not hesitate to refer someone to a professional if you feel as though your resources are inadequate to deal with their situation.
• Makes copies of the devotional for members, active military, anyone who could use a resource to encourage them along life’s journey!
• It may be hard to believe, but chaplains may exhibit a sense of humor, using a well-timed bit of levity will bring a smile during an otherwise uncomfortable or sad occasion.

• Don’t be afraid to pray in front of or with others! It is indeed a privilege to go to God in prayer, so enjoy it! If you are in doubt, it’s never a bad idea to ask the person to whom you are ministering if they would like you to pray.

• If in doubt, contact the National Chaplain with any questions.

• Our task as chaplains is to serve as a stand-in for God; and He always is there as a source of comfort!
Now about that prayer book...

Devotional books created at the unit, department, and national levels contain a variety of meaningful prayers, Scripture, devotional thoughts, poems, even artwork. The chaplain and members may submit original prayers and devotions or use the work of others, being certain to give credit to the author. All members are encouraged to contribute to the book.

• If you’re planning a Department-wide competition, circulate the expectations, rules, and deadlines early to all units.
• Many church bulletins have a picture on the cover with a devotional thought or Bible verse. These bulletins may inspire a page or be a page by itself.

• Creating a prayer book can be a delightful labor of love! Invite others to help in its creation. The beautiful prayers, God-breathed scripture, meaningful devotions, and contributions from your members are destined to be a treasure for a Unit, Department President, or National President. Enjoy the journey!
The Universality of the Golden Rule in the World’s Religions

Though the major religions in the world do not share a common God, many of them do espouse a form of the Golden Rule, an ethic by which we all should live!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Passage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confucianism</td>
<td>Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there will be no resentment against you, either in the family or in the state. Analects 12:2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. Udana-Varga 5,1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Quote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>This is the sum of duty; do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you. Mahabharata 5,1517</td>
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<td>Islam</td>
<td>No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. Sunnah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary. Talmud, Shabbat 3id</td>
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<td>Taoism</td>
<td>Regard your neighbor’s gain as your gain, and your neighbor’s loss as your own loss. Tai Shang Kan Yin P’ien</td>
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Some wonderful resources… *

• The American Legion Auxiliary Chaplains Manual

• www.alaforveterans.org  Sign in to your account. Under the “Members Only” tab, click on “Administrative Committees,” then “National Chaplain.” There you will find the 2014-2015 Plan of Action, Chaplains Manual, Chaplains Prayer Book, Chaplains Web Manual, Four Chaplains information, prayers for meetings, and recent Reflections. Included are scripts for ceremonies you will find helpful.

• The American Legion Chaplain’s Handbook

• Sons of the American Legion Manual of Ceremony and Prayer

• *I’ve used some information from these documents in this power point.
Bibliography


• Miller, Patricia A., *Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2002).


When you’re between a rock and a hard place, turn to the Rock. He’ll get you through the hard place.