



The Role and Responsibility of a District Chaplain

Rev. Peter R. Hook, State Chaplain

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is essentially a volunteer organization made up primarily of unpaid people who share a common bond. We joined the VFW for various reasons, and in time, some of us get elected to various positions. In my case, someone found out that I was a “Reverend” and I was then asked to be the Post Chaplain. When I became the Post Chaplain, no one explained my duties or what was expected of me besides offering the meeting prayers. Since that time, I have written quite a bit about the role and responsibility of a Post Chaplain and how to go about ministering effectively to Post members and their families. I have developed a new edition of the Handbook for Chaplains and a number of other resources which can be found at vfwpahq.org. Just look under District Tools, and you will see Chaplain’s Guide.

Up to this point, I have written virtually nothing about the role and responsibility of the District Chaplain. And, there is quite a bit of ambiguity when it comes to the role and responsibility of District Chaplains. Take for example what is said on page 82 of the Manual of Procedure for District Chaplains:

“During the annual District Convention, the District Chaplain shall see that a fitting tribute is paid to our departed comrades. The Chaplain shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.”

Even after being a District Chaplain for a number of years, and functioning at the State and National level, I am not sure what it means to perform such other duties *“as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.”*

At the present time, we have twenty-four Districts and twenty-four District Chaplains. Each of the District Chaplains should realize that in addition to saying the prayers and conducting the annual District Memorial Service, the District

Chaplain should serve as a role model, coach, and mentor to the Post Chaplains within the district.

Where to begin

- The District Chaplain should take the lead and reach-out and attempt to establish a collaborative relationship with each of the Post Chaplains within their district. Developing relationships takes time, but begin by calling each Post Chaplain in your district. Be genuine and honest. First introduce yourself and then explain that you recently learned that as District Chaplain you want to make yourself available to support and help them, if and when they may need it. Ask them how they are doing and try to find out how they view their role and responsibility as a Post Chaplain.
- Be available to answer questions and provide advice when appropriate.
- Help them become familiar with the resources that are available at vfwpahq.org.
- Respond to e-mails and texts in a timely fashion when questions are asked.
- Encourage them to attend the District meeting, and set a time to meet with them.

In almost every organization, and particularly within the Veterans of Foreign Wars, those in leadership positions are expected to work with those under them to provide support and encouragement, serving as their “coach” or “mentor.”

Blessings as you serve.

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