



International Fellowship of Chaplains

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Hello I.F.O.C. Chaplains,

In response to the COVID-19 (CoronaVirus) situation across the United States, and the world, I.F.O.C. would like to share with you some information from our Director of Disaster Response, and Executive Director of Corps, on things to remember during this time as we fulfill our Chaplain mandate to be the hands and feet of Christ to those in need.

Our first priority as Chaplains today is to lean into peace. What makes us different than the world, and therefore a witness to those who don't know God, is that we respond to chaos and fear with peace. Peace is a weapon against what has gripped the world over the last few weeks (Ephesians 6:15). We are in this world, but we are not of this world. Our citizenship is with Jesus and we know that God is in control (Ephesians 2:6-7). Be cautious of ingesting too much of the fear-based media stories as what we put in us can alter our perspective. Choose to get your information from governmental and CDC-type sites (www.cdc.gov and your local governmental agencies that have jurisdiction over your communities). This is a time to show the world that we are secure in the knowledge of how much God loves us and will take care of us through this ordeal. When they ask you why you are not freaking out like they are, you will get the opportunity to share Jesus with them. It is our different behavior, lived out before people, that gets their attention and makes them want what we have. We, as Chaplains, have an opportunity to shift our perspective on the situation surrounding this virus. There is an opportunity here to be a powerful witness for Jesus to people who have just woken up to the reality that they are not as in control of their own lives as they thought they were. There are real, practical things that they need help with. Chaplains can provide some of those services and demonstrate the love and peace of Christ in the process.

Our second priority is to use wisdom (James 1:5). We do not walk in fear, but in wisdom. As a Chaplain you need to make sure that you are using wisdom to keep yourself healthy and taken care of. If something happens to you, you will not be able to minister to others. Follow the CDC and governmental orders and recommendations. Wear a mask when appropriate, avoid large gatherings of people, wash your hands well more often than you want to, use hand sanitizer frequently, if there are age recommendations to quarantine, follow those if they apply to you, etc. If you need a mask, and are having trouble finding one, often times hospitals will have them at the doorway for people to get. Use wisdom and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and

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peace with every decision you make, especially as it pertains to your safety and the safety of those you come in contact with. Get enough sleep and eat healthy meals. These will help keep your immune system healthy.

Thirdly, make sure your family is taken care of, to the best of your ability. Our family is our first ministry after God. 1 Timothy 5:8 says that if someone doesn't take care of their family, they have denied faith and are worse than an unbeliever. This is a time to remember our ministry priorities so that we can be effective in the tasks that God has for us right now. Often a Chaplain will look outward for their Chaplain ministry. It is possible that the ministry God has for you to do right now is to your own relatives and church family. If that's what God has called you to do, then it is more than enough. Many Chaplains believe they aren't doing "ministry" if they aren't working to make an impact with strangers in the world. Those same people are often their family's and friend's "go-to" person, and don't even realize the large ministry they already have. Being a Chaplain isn't about what you do, it's about who you are, and that begins with those you do life with.

Finally, how can we minister to others right now? How can we, as Chaplains, help our communities? A Chaplain's ability to be available to help others is always found in the relationships the Chaplain has developed with others. It is found in the circle of influence God has given you and that you have developed.

1. Do you have a relationship with someone in authority like the police, fire, ems, or emergency managers in your area? If so then they may be able to give you some direction on what you can do to help, and who you can do it for. These folks may know of people who are quarantined and what practical assistance they may need. If you do not already have these relationships, now is the wrong time to try to make them as these folks are all potentially very busy. It takes time for these folks in authority to trust a Chaplain. For those of you who have been working at these relationships, these folks may be able to help get you in touch with people you can help serve. If there is an established Emergency Operation's Center (EOC), and you are able to have access to it through a relationship with the above listed people, they will have meetings you may be able to attend where you can offer your service.
2. Do you have a relationship with a hospital that allows you to work or volunteer in their facility as a Chaplain? As hospitals are increasing their screenings and reducing access to the facility, there may be a role for a Chaplain in their emergency plan. Hospitals may be a higher risk place for a Chaplain to serve, so use wisdom, but as visitors begin to be denied access, a Chaplain visit can make all the difference to someone who is admitted. Be sure to follow appropriate precautions while in the facility. Do not enter an isolation room

(should have a sign posted on the door) unless you have been allowed entry and trained how to wear the appropriate protective equipment. Nursing homes, and other vulnerable places such as hospice centers, etc., are likely already off limits to visitors or will be soon. Chaplains should honor those rules. Many of the deaths in the United States have been from older people in nursing facilities. As much as they may need a Chaplain to visit with, we want to follow the facility's rules to help keep them safe.

3. Do you know people who are quarantined? Does your church? This doesn't necessarily mean people who are suspected of being sick. In many areas people over the age of 60 have been asked to stay home and not go out. They may need someone to help them grocery shop or pick up their medications. A Chaplain may be able to do both of those things. It would be important to remember to speak with someone who is quarantined from their front porch and not enter their house or come within 6 feet of them. This is for their safety and yours. If you are picking up medications for someone, be sure they call the pharmacy and let them know you will be getting the medication for them. Be available to hang out on the porch and talk to them for a while. After being isolated for a few days, their biggest need may be simple human conversation. They may need to express their fears and concerns. Be quick to listen and encouraging when you talk. This situation can be a trauma in their lives, as it has affected how they do everything.
4. What skills has God gifted you with? Are you a musician? Are you skilled at social media? If so, find a place in this situation to use those gifts. Be creative and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. The world needs a message of peace and joy and laughter. The Holy Spirit is in you (1 Corinthians 3:16). This is the time to let the world see that through how we act and the things we do. Spread peace.

Lastly, we want you to know that our leadership team and our prayer teams are praying for you and your families daily. Our offices will remain open to phone calls and emails. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to help you through this time in our nation.

With Much Love,

I.F.O.C.