

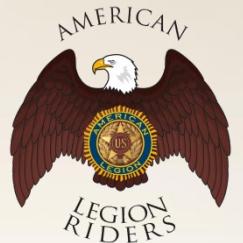
# American Legion Riders

# Chaplain Training\*

**For God and Country**

\*Adapted from AMERICAN LEGION “Chaplain’s How to...” Manual

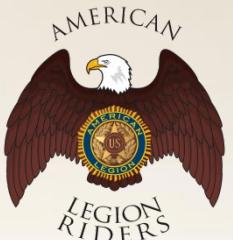
Bill Musto, ALR Department Chaplain



# Ok, I'm the Chaplain, Now What?

Duties and responsibilities of the riders' chaplain

- Provide spiritual guidance to the director and the chapter
- Provide opening and closing prayer at all riders' meetings and before all rides
- Provide back-up to the Post/Auxiliary/SAL Chaplain(s) when needed



# 1. Provide Spiritual Guidance

## **Qualifications** (from the American legion chaplain's how-to manual edited for riders)

### ➤ How is the chaplain selected?

- Chapter chaplains are either elected or appointed in keeping with specific standard operating procedures (sop).

### ➤ Must the chaplain be ordained?

- No, most are not. Anyone can serve who is willing. However, any person serving in the office should have demonstrated a sense of spiritual maturity and be committed to the chaplaincy. Otherwise, the chaplain will not provide the spiritual counsel needed by the director and members alike.

### ➤ What other characteristics should the chaplain possess?

- He/she should be a caring person. There should be a desire to help others.



# Qualifications

Continued

- The chaplain should have a positive attitude toward himself/herself, spiritual matters, the unit served, and The American Legion riders. Knowing that attitudes show, all chaplains should be proud of their positions and determine to do a good job.
- The chaplain ought to be willing to serve where there is a need. We can't be selective in our service for we have a responsibility to all. Neither can we serve only when it is convenient because chaplains should provide support as needed. Death, illness, family problems, and other concerns seldom take place at the convenience of the chaplain. Rather, it is the chaplain who is to change his/her schedule to provide time to serve when there is a need. Remember that the chaplain's office door should always be open!
- The ability to keep things confidential is an absolute necessity for any chaplain. Never reveal those things learned or discussed in a private situation while serving as chaplain and spiritual advisor. Integrity can be immediately lost while revealing those things to which one is privy.



# Qualifications

Continued

- The chaplain should seek to be neutral when helping settle disputes. A Legionnaire should never be political while serving in the capacity of a chaplain. If he/she is, it ought to be made clear that such an act is being done as a private member not as a chaplain.
- It is helpful, but not necessary to be a public speaker. It is perfectly in order for the chaplain to read prayers and other comments relative to the office.
- No one should be appointed/elected chaplain against his/her will. Neither should a person accept the position just to hold an office. Furthermore, no one should be either elected or appointed just to fill a spot on the roster. In other words, someone who is able and willing to serve as chaplain in the best sense of the word should fill the office. The chaplain should seek to be a model in matters related to the ethical and moral. When one does not live up to either expectations or set standards of conduct it reflects adversely on the unit served; indeed, the entire American Legion.



## 2. Provide Prayer

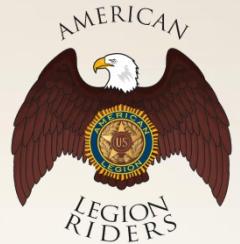
- Faith is an integral part of the legion. Religion is not.
- Opening and closing prayers for meetings are part of the ceremonial aspect of the Legion.
- Prayers should be as basic as possible for the situation at hand without regard to denominational bias.



# Prayer Continued

## Prayers:

- Every Legionnaire knows that the chaplain gives the invocation and benediction at meetings.
- What prayers should be given? Should they be limited to the written ones found in our manuals?
  - No, those are always appropriate, but one need not limit himself/herself to those provided in the resource tools. It is always acceptable and fitting to use your own prayers providing they are in good taste. The chaplain should always be aware of the ecumenical nature of our constituency.



### 3. Provide Back-Up

- Regardless of your affiliation, help out where needed
  - Be present at all unit events. By simply being there he/she is saying this is a significant occasion and it is recognized that one has a responsibility to be present regardless of whether or not there is a particular role to fill. In other words, a chaplain's presence is essential.
  - Be willing to fill in as needed. If the post chaplain asks, help if you can.
- Generally, our task is to serve and minister where there is a need. The chaplain, being on the staff of the director, is to serve as spiritual advisor for all members of the chapter.
- Be available to help the Post/Auxiliary/SAL chaplain in performing his/her duties. Sometimes you might know something they do not and it can help them.



# Additional Information

- The chaplain should list letters/cards sent; telephone calls made in the interest of the chaplaincy; miles traveled as a chaplain; hours spent on chaplain's activities; and money spent on travel, cards, postage, telephone, etc. all this information should go to the commander as he/she prepares the annual report.
- There will be times the chaplain must go beyond The American Legion to obtain the necessary resources to do the task required. There are many places to look for necessary assistance if one only knows where to turn. Each chaplain should be aware of the resources available in his/her community.



# Additional Information

Continued

The chaplain should participate in as many of the following as possible:

- Four Chaplain Days and Religious Emphasis Weeks
- Independence Day events
- Veterans Day Memorials
- Installations
- Initiations
- Funeral and memorials when requested
- Visit the ill, bereaved, shut-ins, disabled, and prospective members.
- Send cards and make telephone calls as needed
- Take part in all rituals and ceremonies of The American Legion
- Communicate with officers, members, and community organizations
- Provide spiritual leadership through the Legion's "Service to God and Country" program



# Chaplain's Calendar\*

- ✓ The chaplain will find it helpful to be aware of coming events around which he/she can
- ✓ plan his/her work. Prayers and service can be built around special occasions during the year. The chaplain's calendar below should prove most helpful in anticipating service responsibilities.
  
- ✓ January.....New Year's Day; Vietnam Cease-Fire - January 27, 1973
- ✓ February.....Americanism Month; First Sunday - Four Chaplains Sunday; Religious Emphasis Week; President's Day; Valentine Day
- ✓ March.....American Legion Birthday
- ✓ April.....Holy Seasons; Children & Youth Month
- ✓ May.....Mother's Day; Armed Forces Day; Poppy Day; Memorial Day
  
- ✓ JUNE.....D-DAY - JUNE 6, 1944; FLAG DAY; FATHER'S DAY
- ✓ JULY.....INDEPENDENCE DAY; KOREAN WAR ENDED - JULY 27, 1953
- ✓ AUGUST.....NATIONAL CONVENTION
- ✓ SEPTEMBER.....V-J DAY - SEPTEMBER 2, 1945; LABOR DAY; CITIZENSHIP DAY; REGIONAL CONFERENCES
- ✓ OCTOBER.....COLUMBUS DAY
- ✓ NOVEMBER.....ELECTION DAY; VETERANS DAY - ARMISTICE - NOVEMBER 11, 1918; THANKSGIVING DAY; FAMILY WEEK
- ✓ DECEMBER.....PEARL HARBOR DAY - DECEMBER 7, 1941; FESTIVAL OF HANUKKAH & CHRISTMAS

\*Source the "Service to God and Country" Chaplain's Handbook.

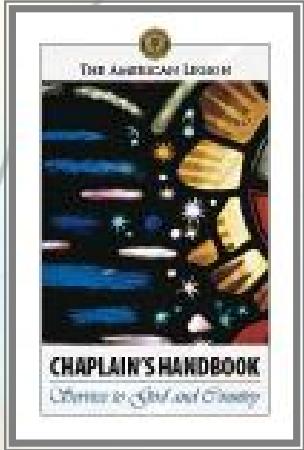


# Conclusion

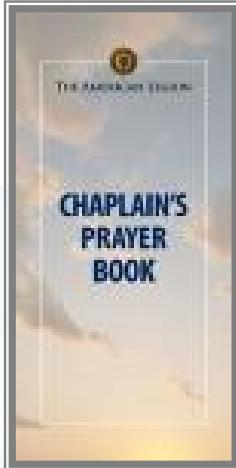
- The chaplaincy is essential to the work of The American Legion. No program will be complete without it. The position of chaplain is an important one. Each chaplain should take pride in serving God and Country. Be positive in your attitude toward the chaplaincy and the total work of The American Legion. Remember, at all times, you are to keep confidences. Your integrity and that of our organization depend upon it.
- A chaplain's presence is needed for all events. Mingle with the people. Make it possible for the members to easily contact you with their concerns and problems. Look sharp and be sharp! Properly wear a clean cap. Wear it with pride because it is our uniform. The cap tells people who you are. As you pass a mirror look to see if all is well.
- The chaplaincy is more than reading printed prayers, as important as they may be, at regularly scheduled events. It can be as important and productive as you are willing to make it. We exist to serve others. New opportunities for the chaplain's ministry are opening daily. The aging of our members make it essential that we be alert for all service needs.
- One final statement. **Look like a Chaplain - act like a Chaplain - and be a Chaplain !**



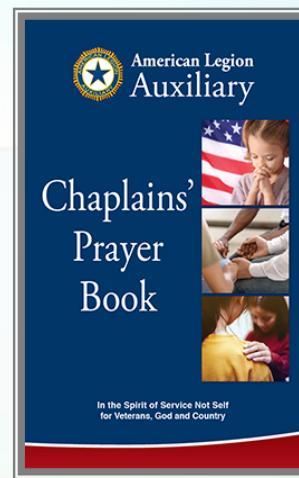
# Available Resources



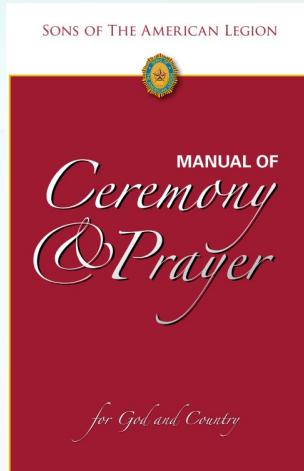
"Service to God  
and Country"  
Chaplains  
Handbook



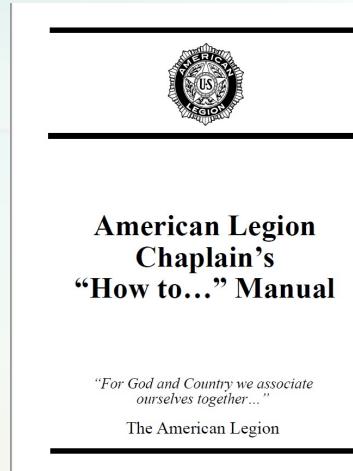
The  
Chaplain's  
Prayer  
Manual



Auxiliary  
Chaplains'  
Prayer book



SONS OF THE  
AMERICAN LEGION  
CHAPLAINS' "MANUAL  
OF CEREMONY AND  
PRAYER"



American Legion  
Chaplain's  
"How to..." Manual

"For God and Country we associate  
ourselves together..."  
The American Legion

AMERICAN LEGION  
CHAPLAIN'S "HOW TO..."  
MANUAL

And if you must have something to read from, GOOGLE it!

All these manuals are available through Emblem Sales or for download at Legion.org

Don't limit yourself to written works. Take time to write down poems, scripture, words of encouragement that you come across and use them to help you. You can find information anywhere. You just have to change it to fit your needs.

