

PUBLIC SAFETY CHAPLAINCY



Public Safety Chaplaincy (PSC) is a Christian non-profit 501c3 ministry that provides qualified Chaplains to First Responder agencies, (police, fire and 911), across Northwest Oregon.

Our Mission:

To Enlist, Engage, Equip and Empower qualified Christian Chaplains to serve First Responder Agencies (local police, fire and 911 dispatch personnel), and the communities they serve.

Currently, PSC provides over 55 chaplains and services to over 80 municipal, county, state and federal law enforcement, fire, EMS and dispatch communication agencies: representing seven counties in and around the Portland metropolitan area. PSC continues to experience significant growth. From 2018 to 2023, PSC has added 37 chaplains (16 new chaplains in 2023 alone).

In addition to being a supportive and strengthening presence to first responder personnel, chaplains are often at the scene of an incident to support families who lost loved ones, such as a fatal car crash or other family tragedy. Some of you, or those in your church body, may have lost a loved one through tragedy. Our hearts go out to you.

No one should ever go through this sudden or devastating trauma alone.

In such times as these, the role of our chaplains is to help shine the light of God's presence, and offer a tangible expression of God's love when it is needed most.

Our chaplain's foundation of faith provides them the strength to serve those who are suffering in what is likely the most difficult time in their lives. They provide a ministry of

presence and support that is unique and specific to each circumstance as they are to everyone involved. They come alongside with a listening ear and offer counsel and resources as appropriate to the families of those who are trying to process tragedy and trauma.

However, traumatic incidents are not isolated, and the rippling effects are often exponentially felt in the church and our communities.

With a compassionate and engaging approach, chaplains provide spiritual and emotional care to people from all walks of life. They are compassionate listeners and guides who meet people where they are on their personal journeys.

First responder agencies recognize this trauma and negative impacts it can have; not just with the agency's personnel but also with the involved victims and the community at large. Often the heart of a first responder agency feels the pain and grieves with the community it serves when tragedy occurs. It is for this reason many first responder agencies use chaplains.

Chaplains can assist in fostering positive relationships between their agency and the community. They represent themselves as ambassadors of goodwill from the agency and an essential source of support to instill a sense of peace and resilience in individuals who may be facing overwhelming circumstances.



Why Christian Chaplains?

Where does one turn when the waves of tragedy, pain, loss and trauma crash into our lives? The role of the Christian Chaplain is to help shine the light of God's Presence and to offer a tangible expression of His love when we need it most.

Our First Responders willingly and vicariously bear the weight of much of this pain, stress and trauma as they live out their calling to serve and protect our communities. As a result, they need our Chaplains to come alongside them to provide prayer, a ministry of presence, a listening ear, as well as counsel, and resources to those who are trying to process tragedy and trauma.

What We are Learning:

- As brokenness, trauma and stress increase in our lives, the cost is exponentially felt everywhere, especially in the lives of our First Responders.
- Because the costs are grave and the sacrifice is great, the career tenure of First Responders is decreasing.
- These same factors result in fewer young people choosing to serve in First Responder roles.
- The Christ-like response of our Chaplains is ever more vital in helping build resilience, faith, hope and healing in the lives of these public servants.
- While the need is great, we are seeing more potential Chaplains stepping up to help meet this need.

Our Ministry Methods are Threefold:

1. Chaplain Training

More than ever First Responder agencies are working with PSC with the desire to bring trained chaplains to their departments. PSC continues to oversee the **Oregon Chaplains Academy**. OCA has a direct impact on a chaplain's knowledge of public safety cultures and introduces new Chaplains to the nuances of living a life of faith in settings and circumstances that may differ from one's faith experience.

As well, the training stresses their own need for emotional, physical and spiritual wellness if they are to be effective ministers. It is our hope and prayer that these new Chaplains gain personal confidence and the necessary trust from the agency they serve because of their improved knowledge and learned skills that are needed to match the heroic duties and stressful life of First Responders.

In the past four years, 250 new and experienced Chaplains attended our Oregon Chaplains Academy. This increased need for more trained Chaplains is ongoing.

Best of all we are conducting this centralized training with the full support of the State of Oregon in coordination with the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) which is held at the police academy in Salem.

2. Building a Chaplain Culture of Resilience and Support

Since 2021, Kay Bruce and Wayne Patterson (Co-Directors of Chaplain wellness) fill the roles of “Chaplains to the Chaplains.” Their goal is to help build resilience, promote healing and increase capacity by supporting Chaplains with spiritual, emotional, and pastoral care, as well as educational resources, counseling referrals, prayer and one on one interactions. In 2024, Wayne Peterson assumed the role of Executive Director and Brian Forbes, the previous Executive Director is now our Chairman of the Board.

Because the work of First Responders is dangerous and highly stressful it is critical that the Chaplains who are standing alongside them are responsive, Spirit-led, helpful and fully present when serving First Responders in those challenging situations and calls. It is critical that we provide or make available direct assistance to our Chaplains regarding their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

3. Community Assistance Fund

PSC provides gift cards to be used for short term community support. Our Police and Fire personnel often come across individuals who need a little bit of financial assistance to help them through the immediate crisis. Often the officers just pull money out of their pocket to support these needs.

PSC has created a Community Assistance Fund to provide Visa and Fred Meyer gift cards to our Chaplains and the First Responders they work with. These cards are an easy way for a Chaplain or an officer to bless the community and this often allows the individual supported to view the First Responder in a positive light.

Recently our community assistance funds were used to help Tom, who is confined to his wheelchair, who recently lost his wife to an illness and as expected, was struggling to even want to live himself. The gift cards were used to pay Tom’s electric and rent bill. More importantly, our Chaplain Eric was able to share the Gospel with Tom and reported back that a few days later, Tom’s spirits have lifted considerably.

PSC Growth initiatives

1. Provide Comprehensive and timely Chaplain resilience support and training

We are working to ensure our Chaplains have the necessary tools to step in and effectively help First Responders who are struggling with the effect of Post-Traumatic Stress, depression, abuse and addiction issues, as well as sleep deprivation and failing relationships. We are continuing to expand, research and develop curriculum and spiritual growth opportunities that build greater resilience in our Chaplains.

PSC is seeking to enhance our training opportunities beyond the once a year, four-day Basic Training Academy and the once-a-year Advanced Training Academy. Because of increased number of new Chaplains needing training, and the complex and multifaceted issues that First Responders encounter, it is our desire to develop accessible and timely high-quality training experiences by partnering with other national and regional organizations seeking to assist First Responders.

Our current training modules are excellent but limited, our Chaplains need access to greater understanding. This includes more self-awareness in their own trauma-informed experiences and how they show up and respond to a critical incident, and in how they need to adapt to difficult and changing circumstances. Providing chaplains with as much experience and understanding as possible enables them with the skills they need to be more effective in their roles.

2. Develop and train Senior Chaplains to mentor current and new chaplains

We are seeking to expand the Wellness Program (mentoring chaplains) beyond Kay Bruce and Wayne Patterson to include seasoned Chaplains within PSC who are able and available to provide consistent mentoring and support for the emotional and spiritual health and resiliency of our younger Chaplains.

Due to PSC's Chaplaincy growth, we recognize the importance of seeking out and leveraging additional help in this area. We would like to provide specific training and support to those who are willing to take an elder chaplain position and serve as a mentor to newer chaplains. Identifying and encouraging mature and seasoned chaplains to step forward for the purpose of mentoring provides an opportunity for all to grow. It helps communicate to them someone cares about them, builds a culture of partners and fosters a chaplain team mindset.

In part, the goals of the Wellness Program include increased individual confidence and empowerment by giving our chaplains on the job feedback and support as well as building deep relational connections that promote healing and health spiritually, emotionally and physically.

3. Expand the Community Assistance Fund

We continue to bolster our community assistance fund so that each of our 55 Chaplains can have gift cards to be able to use in their community. We believe this is an easy but critical way for First Responders to be seen by the community as human and caring.

PCS's growth of chaplains has resulted in an incredible number of new opportunities to immediately assist and bless others who are needing assistance in a very tangible way.

Prayers for Protection and the Lord's Covering

Lastly and most importantly, we ask for your prayers for our local Police, Fire and 911 dispatch agencies and the Chaplains that serve them. This is an incredibly difficult time for those individuals who are diligently serving their communities and they need the Lord's protection and guidance.