

Illinois Corps Of Fire Chaplains (ICFC)

Serving Responsibly, Supporting Faithfully, Training Effectively and Setting New Standards for Fire and Emergency Response Chaplaincy in Illinois.

April 2009

Holistic Care as a Critical Component Of Emergency Response



“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

Teilhard de Chardin

The work of the Illinois Corps of Fire Chaplains, Inc (ICFC) is a state wide effort to establish a standard of care and training for fire department and emergency management chaplains.

Local clergy have for generations faithfully responded to a calling to work as servants to those who serve and to be a help in times of crisis. Chaplains provide an extra measure of care to families and victims left fearful and injured from the wake of their day of disaster. Often times we think that such volunteer services should be reserved for major incidents, benedictions at memorial services or presence in the line of duty death or serious injury of a firefighter. It is a core principal of the Illinois MABAS Chaplain Program that utilizing chaplain services in the everyday work of the fire department is the right thing to do. We can significantly lessen the impact of trauma on victims and responders, connect people to needed services and facilitate the stabilization of their lives after devastating events. This does not make us qualified to play the role of psychologist, or to go beyond the bounds of Psychological First Aid, but the emotional and spiritual triage that the fire chaplain provides goes a long way toward mitigating the incident. We help keep the scene safe by caring for the victim whose house is burning or the family of someone whose life is in immediate peril. Chaplains provide a light in dark times and a beacon of calm in the midst of chaos.

This ambitious initiative is not without cost. Institutional change cannot occur without sacrifice. The ideals of establishing a standard of care and training require that we reeducate ourselves and personnel in an accurate understanding of emotional and spiritual care. It requires not concession but compromise on the part of religious professionals to leave their egos at the door and use their faith as a foundation for strength and motivation. Training protocols and requirements must be broad enough to prepare the chaplain for any incident that the fire service might respond to including fire operations, terrorism and natural disasters. Training must also be targeted enough to address the real issues of emotional trauma and critical incident stress. Funding in the midst of budget cuts makes chaplaincy an easy target when more critical needs for personnel and equipment are at risk. Some protective equipment, including appropriate turnout and safety vest, should be issued and training provided for its proper use and maintenance. We can make use of email and the internet to share resources, information and training materials. We can keep costs to departments and volunteers at a minimum by building a strong network and capitalizing on our strengths and experiences.

If we focus our efforts on the provision of holistic care we can address the physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual needs of those we serve and protect. Including chaplains as a part of the response team gives us a tool that is needed for stabilizing a crisis, providing support and education for our personnel and ensuring our community's needs are met. Whether a local emergency response or disaster of national significance, we have the duty, obligation and opportunity to do all that we can.



Chaplain Spotlight

Chaplain David Volkert has served the Chatham Fire Protection District for 15 years and was appointed in March of 2008 as Fire Chaplain. He is now the Chaplain Coordinator for MABAS Division 48. Dave has been married to Debbie for 34 years and has a daughter and grandson. David is a Firefighter II/EMT and a member of the Illinois Terrorism Hazmat Team. Dave is a member of the ICFC and the FFC, has completed his FFC Basic course and will soon have completed his Group CISM class. When there is a structure fire or a critical incident in the community, Dave is right there with his department. Dave has been instrumental in establishing a solid and effective chaplaincy program in Chatham, IL. He sees the positive difference it makes for the Fire Chief, firefighters and the community and is putting all his 15 years of experience to use to help people. He is active in his church, has been a Sunday School Teacher and was asked to be a Deacon. He has previously worked as a police volunteer in the Green Bay area doing homicide investigation. He strives to do the best he can in all things.

He recently ran into a resident who was impacted by a fire a couple weeks earlier and she recognized him when he opened the door for her at the library. "Thank you Chaplain," is what she said. That makes it all worthwhile. It's why we're here.

You make a difference, Dave! God bless you!

1st ANNUAL ICFC/MABAS FIRE CHAPLAIN CONFERENCE

Thursday, May 28, 2009

Chatham Fire Protection District
#1 Fireman Square Chatham, Illinois 62629
0800-1600

COST: \$15 per person includes lunch and materials (Payable On Day of Program)

Target Audience: Fire Chaplains, Fire Chiefs, Training Officers

Schedule

0800-0830	Registration/Refreshments
0830-0900	Welcome and Opening Remarks
0900-1030	MABAS Chaplain Program /Illinois Corps of Fire Chaplains Orientation MABAS Overview What is Holistic Care? Training Recommendations and Planning Policy, Reporting and Accountability
1030-1045	Break
1045-1145	Panel Discussion: Holistic Care as a Critical Component of Emergency Response
1145-1230	Lunch On Site
1230-1530	Psychological First Aid – Mitigation, Stabilization and Resiliency
1530-1600	Closing, Questions, Station Tours Certificates Distributed

Seats are limited. Sign up today.

To Register: Email Chaplain Roberta Preston (Octavia FPD)
at revrlp@hotmail.com by May 20, 2009