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New Release

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ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Air Force Chaplains provide spiritual care, facilitate religious activities and deliver 100 percent confidential counsel for the personnel in their care. It's been said, takes a special person to be a chaplain. But where do they come from?

The Chaplain Candidate Program provides chaplains to the Chaplain Corps. A candidate spends three to six years training and qualifying to become Air Force religious officers.

Eighteen such candidates in their first year of the program visited several Air Force bases in August with their cadre as a part of a 35-day intensive internship. The internship is nonstop training in which the candidates visit several military bases to get a sense of the diversity of jobs and lifestyles in the Air Force.

Chaplain, Lt. Col. James Danford, 94th Airlift Wing, and Master Sgt. Justin Erwin, Air Force Chaplain Corps College chaplain assistant, planned and scheduled the internship along with the program's cadre.

"Over the 35 days, we try to see as many mission sets as we can to show the candidates the different areas that the chaplains work in," said Danford. "This allows them to see how chaplains, from a particular faith group and faith tradition, minister and interact with people across the board. A phrase we like to use is, 'I'm a minister to some, but I am a chaplain to everybody.'"

Each year of the program, the candidates participate in a rigorous internship during the summer. After the first year, they stay at a single base working with the chaplains there.

"The intensive part is really the hours of the day and the pace of the program," said 2nd Lt Nathan Newman, chaplain candidate. "It's teaching us that we have those resources at our disposal. We see the total force of the Air Force and a bigger view of a chaplain's involvement. It is a really great program and has really been eye-opening and a lot of fun."

The program also teaches the candidates the importance of chaplains outside of religious parameters.

"Being able to be a ministry of presence and a listening ear is what I find amazing," 2nd Lt. Azariah Terrell, chaplain candidate. "It doesn't have to be religious; it could be just someone listening. That drives me. I believe that is a great honor. I don't necessarily have to have all the answers but one of the biggest things is just allowing that Airman to release whatever is on his or her mind."

While they are in the program, the candidates are Air Force Reserve officers and are in seminary working on their religious education and accreditation. The Air Force requires chaplains to have a Masters of

Divinity or equivalent theological degree and be ecclesiastically endorsed by a faith group recognized by the Department of Defense.

According to Erwin, this batch of candidates is showing great promise

"It's very rewarding to be a part of the development of new chaplains," said Erwin. "In my three year experience this has been the best group we have had. Attitudes have been very positive, and they are very eager to learn and are very engaged."

Lieutenant Col. Will Magee, 44th Maintenance Squadron Commander, helped facilitate the candidate's training on Tyndall. He understands the importance of having quality chaplains serve today's Airmen.

"I think the chaplains across the Air Force are underutilized for their talent," said Magee. "They are a very valuable asset, and the 44th Fighter Group is glad to help. Anytime we get to showcase Team Tyndall is great. We are extremely proud of what we do here."

The Chaplain Candidacy Program is just one way to become a part of the Chaplain Corps. People interested in becoming a chaplain or chaplain assistant should speak to a recruiter or visit <https://www.airforce.com/chaplain/> for more information.