

Police Chaplain

Pastor Matt McNelly has been the Pullman Police Department Chaplain since February 10, 2010. Matt is the Co-Pastor of the Pullman Presbyterian Church (www.pullmanpc.org) along with his wife, Amy.

No one is confronted with more situations that demoralize and create emotional, mental and spiritual burdens than today's law enforcement officer. These burdens also affect the officer's family and other members of his or her department. Law enforcement agencies need the specialized guidance, counseling and assistance for their officers, families and communities.

A law enforcement chaplain is a clergy person with special interest and training for providing pastoral care in the world of law enforcement. This pastoral care is offered to all people, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, creed, or religion. It is offered without cost or the taint of proselytizing. The law enforcement chaplain is led in his or her own faith to be available and ready to serve those in need. The chaplain's ministry provides a source of strength to the law enforcement officers and their families, other department members, the community, victims, and the incarcerated. The law enforcement officer's clergy person or religious advisor in private life, although trained in ministry, is not necessarily abreast of the particular problems and dangers faced by officers. Chaplains listen and participate in the workplace of law enforcement officers with empathy and experience, advising calmly in the midst of turmoil and danger, and offering assistance when appropriate or requested.

The chaplain brings experience, training and skills to a tragedy that are as specialized as the law enforcement resources every officer develops with training and experience. As a team, both chaplain and officer make an important difference in the lives of persons touched by tragedy.

When the chaplain is working in the police world, he is a chaplain for everyone, not the religious leader of a particular tradition serving a particular congregation or service agency. Chaplains serve many personal and spiritual needs of individuals where they are, when they need the support of another person who comes to them without judgment, with openness, and cares for them until the crisis moment is over. Chaplains respect the persons they serve, even though

there may be profound differences in race, gender, economic status, religious experience and many other factors.

Chaplains come at any hour, in all kinds of weather. Mostly, they listen. But they also comfort people who are shaking with fear with a gentle touch . . . or perhaps, if someone asks, a prayer will be offered in guarded privacy to support the trembling of spirit that comes in difficult moments. Chaplains also understand the difficulties of public bureaucracies, assisting with the "red tape" moments of life for officers and the public alike. They spend many hours riding as active passengers with officers on patrol duty.

Law enforcement chaplains do some or all of the following:

- Counsel Department members in response to stress or family crisis problems. Any such assistance will be privileged and confidential between the officer and chaplain involved.
- Visit sick or injured officers and departmental personnel in homes and hospitals.
- Provide assistance to victims.
- Teach officers in areas such as stress management, ethics, and family life.
- Serve as liaison with other clergy in the community.
- Provide for the spiritual needs of prisoners.
- Furnish expert responses to religious questions.
- Offer prayers at special occasions.
- Ride along with officers on routine patrol on various shifts.
- Accompany police officers to assist with notification of any suicide, death or serious injury.

- Work with police officers to assist in any kind of crisis situation where the presence of a trained chaplain might help.