U.S. ARMY













Celebrating 250 Years of

SACRED SERVICE

U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN CORPS

1775 - 2025

MAIN
MENU

CURRENT

CHAPLAIN CORPS LEADERSHIP



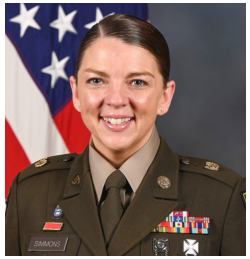
THE MEMBERS OF TODAY'S ARMY CHAPLAIN CORPS

ARE SUSTAINING AND ENRICHING A SACRED LEGACY

WHICH OUR PREDECESSORS BEGAN BUILDING EVEN BEFORE OUR NATION WAS FOUNDED IN 1776.

Chaplain (Major General) William (Bill) Green, Jr.

26TH CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS



Sergeant Major Meaghan B. Simmons

11TH REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR



Chaplain (Brigadier General) Jack J. Stumme

28TH DEPUTY CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS



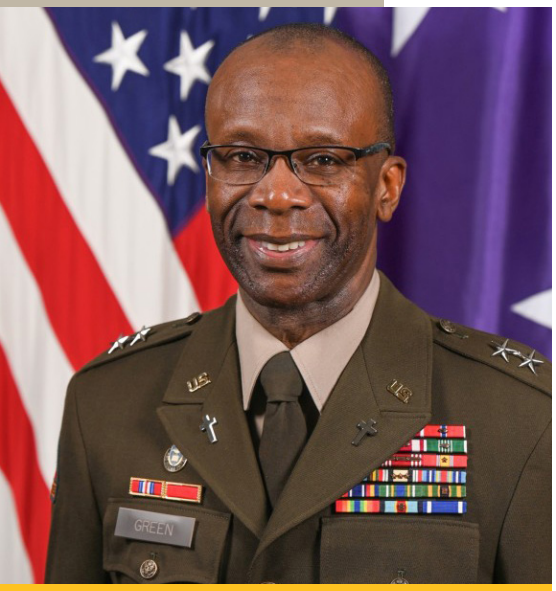
Chaplain (Brigadier General) Charles M. Causey

14TH ARMY RESERVE DEPUTY CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS



Chaplain (Colonel) William B. Hanna

CHIEF, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS



FROM THE
CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS

Our United States Army Chaplain Corps will celebrate its 250th birthday on July 29, 2025. As we close in on that significant milestone, I celebrate the ways our Corps has adapted to changing times and requirements, while continuing to "Care for the Army Family," just as the founding members of our Corps did from the very beginning. The members of today's Army Chaplain Corps are sustaining and enriching a sacred legacy which our predecessors began building even before our Nation was founded in 1776.

Our Corps was established just six weeks after our Army was established on June 14, 1775. General George Washington requested that Chaplains be added to the Army to meet Soldiers' religious and spiritual needs, and to support good morals and morale. The Continental Congress responded by authorizing one Chaplain for each regular regiment of the Continental Army. Many militia regiments serving alongside the regiments of the Continental Army also counted Chaplains among their ranks.

Our Corps has evolved along with our Army. Today our Corps is a team of Chaplains, Religious Affairs Specialists, Directors of Religious Education, and other Army Civilians serving around the world. We are also a Total Force Corps with one mission and one set of standards across the Regular Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve. We are fully aligned across all three Components, as our Corps "provides religious support and advises on matters of spirituality and religion to build strong, ready teams to deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars." Our U.S. Army Chaplain Corps is the most multifaceted and capable chaplaincy in history, and we will remain so, to support our Army's preparations to win during multidomain and large-scale combat operations in the years ahead.

Our Corps is a unique branch of the Total Army that remains a necessary, critical contributor to our Nation's success on the battlefields of the future, just as it was on the battlefields during our Nation's War for Independence. In order to enhance and sustain our capability and our capacity to "Care for the Army Family" within our complex and continuously changing environment in the years to come, we have been transforming our Corps in substantial ways over the course of the past several years. This careful and relentless work has built new infrastructure across our Corps which is further professionalizing the religious support, life-giving ministry, and spiritual readiness advisement we bring to every member of the Army Family.

I am extremely proud of our Army Chaplains Corps' 250 years of sacred service; and I am honored to be a part of today's team of extraordinary Chaplain Corps professionals. Our Corps' People are committed to serving the needs of every one of our Army's People at every level and around the world, in days of peace and days of war, as we live our call - for God and Country!



CHAPLAIN (MAJOR GENERAL) WILLIAM "BILL" GREEN, JR.
CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS



FROM THE
REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR

As we approach the 250th birthday of our United States Army Chaplain Corps on July 29, 2025, I am honored to be a part of the incredible team carrying forward our Corps' sacred legacy. From our humble beginnings in the regiments of the Continental Army and colonial militias during our Nation's War for Independence, we have evolved into an integrated force of Chaplains, Religious Affairs Specialists, and Army Civilians, dedicated to "Caring for the Army Family" wherever our mission takes us.

Throughout our 250-year journey, we've witnessed significant milestones that have shaped our Corps into what it is today. Before 1909, Chaplains had the support of fellow Soldiers, but it wasn't until December 28 of that year that Chaplain Assistants were officially authorized, marking a pivotal moment in our history. Fast forward to 1984, when the concept of the Unit Ministry Team (UMT) was established, revolutionizing our approach to providing spiritual support across all Army components. Another significant milestone was marked on March 20, 2015, when the Chief of Chaplains approved changing the naming convention of the 56M MOS from Chaplain Assistant to Religious Affairs Specialist. This change acknowledged the expanding capabilities of Religious Affairs Specialists in navigating a complex and religiously influenced global landscape. The official implementation of this name change occurred on October 1, 2017. The invaluable perspective our Religious Affairs Specialists bring to religious support operations enhances our Corps' continuous transformation efforts today.

Army Civilians also joined the Chaplain Corps team along the way, to provide mission-essential support in critical, non-combat positions. A significant development among Chaplain Corps Civilians occurred in 1948, when the Corps hired its first Director of Religious Education (DRE), launching the career field. DREs now provide educational expertise and leadership for RE programs in garrisons around the world.

Today, our Corps is comprised of teams of dedicated individuals who serve together in post chapels, family life centers, military hospitals, and UMTs at every echelon of the Army. We continuously adapt to meet tomorrow's challenges while fulfilling today's needs.

United by our commitment to one another and to our sacred mission, we are the most multifaceted and capable chaplaincy in history. Together, we strive to build strong and ready Army teams worldwide - Pro Deo et Patria!



SERGEANT MAJOR MEAGHAN B. SIMMONS
REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR



THE U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN CORPS WAS ESTABLISHED ON JULY 29, 1775

218 CHAPLAINS SERVED IN THE CONTINENTAL ARMY DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. TODAY'S TOTAL FORCE CHAPLAIN CORPS INCLUDES MORE THAN 3,000 CHAPLAINS, NEARLY 3,000 RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS SPECIALISTS, MORE THAN 500 CHAPLAIN CANDIDATES, MORE THAN 50 DIRECTORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, AND NEARLY 100 OTHER DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY CIVILIANS.

U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN CORPS

A HERITAGE OF SACRED SERVICE

As we celebrate the Army Chaplain Corps' 250th anniversary, follow along this timeline to explore key moments in its history. From its founding during the Revolutionary War to its ongoing mission of providing spiritual support, each milestone reflects the Corps' enduring dedication to service, faith, and resilience.

WE CARE FOR THE ARMY FAMILY

THE CHAPLAIN CORPS TEAM DELIVERS RELIGIOUS SUPPORT, LIFE-GIVING MINISTRY, AND SPIRITUAL READINESS ADVISEMENT TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE ARMY FAMILY.



Since its beginnings during the American War for Independence, the Chaplain Corps has evolved and diversified along with the rest of the Army. Roman Catholic Chaplains were added to the Corps during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848); and Jewish and African-American Chaplains were added to the Corps during the American Civil War (1861-1865). The Army commissioned its first woman Chaplain in 1974, its first Muslim Chaplain in 1993, its first Buddhist Chaplain in 2008, and its first Hindu Chaplain in 2011. Today's Chaplain Corps includes Chaplains representing a multitude of faith groups, and the Chaplain Corps recruiting team is actively working to increase the Corps' diversity, with a special focus on increasing the number of women Chaplains in the Corps and the number of Chaplains representing low-density faith groups.

Army Chaplains currently represent approximately 110 religious faith groups; but the Chaplain Corps cares for all members of the Army Family, regardless of their religious preferences, and even when they have no religious preference at all.

Chaplains are at the center of the Chaplain Corps, but Chaplains don't do it alone. The Army established an official position for enlisted assistants to Chaplains in 1909. Known as Chaplain Assistants until October 1, 2017, and now known as Religious Affairs Specialists, these Soldiers assist Chaplains with essential administrative and logistical support, while providing expertise in religious support and religious support operations.

The Chaplain Corps also includes Department of the Army Civilians, chief among them the Corps' Directors of Religious Education, who have been serving with the Army since 1948. Directors of Religious Education provide expertise in religious education theory and practice, teaching and learning theory, educational program design and implementation, human and faith development theory, curriculum design and evaluation, and spiritual formation.



NAVIGATION MENU

THE SOLDIER'S HEART, THE SOLDIER'S SPIRIT, THE SOLDIER'S SOUL, ARE EVERYTHING.



UNLESS THE SOLDIER'S SOUL SUSTAINS HIM, HE CANNOT BE RELIED ON, AND WILL FAIL HIMSELF AND HIS COMMANDER AND HIS COUNTRY IN THE END.

GENERAL OF THE ARMY
GEORGE C. MARSHALL

NAVIGATION MENU

CHAPLAIN ROLES

Army Chaplains are professional military religious leaders who are individually endorsed and authorized to serve in the Army by distinctive civilian religious organizations. In this role, Chaplains deliver religious ministry to Soldiers and Families in their own faith groups, while providing access to ministry to those in other faith groups, and encouraging spiritual readiness in those of all faith groups and of no religious faith at all.

Army Chaplains also serve as professional military religious staff advisors. In this role, Chaplains advise their commanders and their staffs on matters of religion, morals, and morale. These duties include assisting commanders with Soldiers' requests for religious accommodation, i.e. adjustments to work conditions that will allow a Soldier to practice his or her religion in accordance with his or her sincerely held beliefs. The Army's religious program is the commander's program; but throughout the Army's history, Chaplains have advised commanders on the impact of religion both within their own ranks and within the larger operational environment.





RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS SPECIALISTS

RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS SPECIALISTS PROVIDE MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT TO CHAPLAINS DURING MISSIONS AND EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES.

Soldiers of fine character and exceptional capability have enthusiastically served alongside our Army's Chaplains since the Revolutionary War, but we recognize December 28, 1909, as the official birthday of the Religious Affairs Specialist Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). On that day, the War Department issued General Order 253 formally establishing an enlisted Soldier position specifically designated to assist Chaplains in the performance of their religious support duties.

The names for that enlisted Soldier position changed from a General Clerk-Typist in 1909, to a Clerk-Typist with a skill identifier in 1953, to a Chapel Activities Specialist in 1965, and then to a Chaplain Assistant in 1984. Each name change reflected changes in duties, responsibilities, and capabilities. It was on October 1, 2017, when the Department of the Army officially revised the name of the MOS to what it is today, Religious Affairs Specialist. That was an important step in the progressive effort to enhance the contributions of 56Ms and to deepen their identity, as they support Chaplains in the performance of their unique duties and responsibilities.

Our Corps has grown exponentially over the years, in size, scope, diversity, and professionalism. Throughout all that change, our Chaplains' servant-hearted Soldier teammates have been the foundation of our connection with Soldiers and their Families.



DIRECTORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Army's first Director of Religious Education (DRE) was hired at Fort Bragg in 1948, bringing technical expertise and professional leadership to Army Religious Education programs. Since 1948, the career field has expanded across the Army, with more than 50 DREs serving 40 installations around the world, supporting the free exercise of religion, and building Army spiritual readiness.

Our DREs are an integral part of our Chaplain Corps team. They provide leadership to Religious Education and Spiritual Formation programs grounded in their years of education and professional experience in the field. DREs complement the work that Chaplains do in preaching, counseling, and worship leadership, by building programs to meet the diverse and unique needs of the Army community. They are creative and adept at intentionally fostering community for Soldiers and Family members in a multi-faith environment. One of the specialized ways that DREs support the Chaplain Corps mission is by curating, adapting, and writing curriculum resources for both home station and mobilized contexts. From the beginning, DREs have also cared for and managed an invaluable Chaplain Corps asset, the army of Chapel volunteers who provide essential support to Garrison Chapel efforts.

DREs creatively "Care for the Army Family" in partnership with our Chaplains and our Religious Affairs Specialists, and our Corps' other Army Civilians. What DREs bring to the fight makes our Corps stronger and more capable, as we integrate our efforts to provide religious support and build Army spiritual readiness.







CHAPLAIN CORPS FAMILIES AND VOLUNTEERS

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SERVE

Our Chaplain Corps could not care for the Army Family without the support and assistance of Chaplain Corps Family members and volunteers.

Chaplain Corps spouses and children help to sustain the work of the Corps by standing alongside our Chaplains, Religious Affairs Specialists, Directors of Religious Education (DREs), and other Chaplain Corps Army Civilians, supporting their morale and readiness, and partnering in their ministry. Caring for the Army Family is a Family business!

Our Chaplain Corps also relies on the support and assistance of volunteers, especially when it comes to sustaining our Army communities of faith and their worship and religious education activities. DREs coordinate the efforts of thousands of Garrison Chapel volunteers, who are our Army's largest internal volunteer force. They include Chaplain Corps spouses and children, other members of the Army community currently serving, and retiree Families.

CHAPLAIN CORPS
MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

VALOR IN COMBAT

The Medal of Honor was established by Congress in 1862, to serve as the highest military honor presented to military personnel of the United States of America. It is awarded by the President of the United States in the name of Congress, for personal acts of valor above and beyond the call of duty, in action against an enemy force. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton presented the first Medals of Honor on March 25, 1863, and more than 3,500 have been awarded to date.

The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps has eight Medal of Honor recipients, including Chaplain Emil Kapaun who is on the pathway to Catholic sainthood.

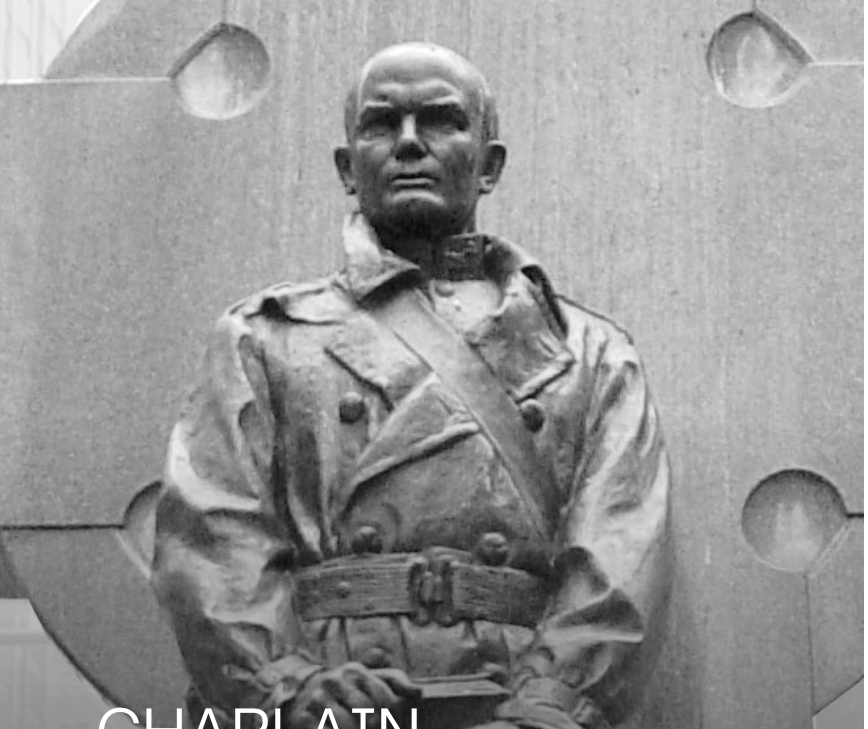




THE FOUR CHAPLAINS

In the early morning hours of February 3, 1943, Methodist minister George Fox, Rabbi Alexander Goode, Roman Catholic priest John Washington, and Reformed Church in America minister Clark Poling helped others board lifeboats as the troop ship Dorchester sank, and then gave up their own life jackets when the supply ran out. The Chaplains then joined arms, prayed, and sang hymns on the deck of the ship as it went down.

The Four Chaplains were all first lieutenants who were new to the Army. Each was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart. In 1960, Congress authorized a special medal for heroism, The Four Chaplains' Medal, which was posthumously awarded to the Chaplains' next of kin by the Secretary of the Army on January 18, 1961.



CHAPLAIN (CAPTAIN) FRANCIS P. DUFFY

CONFLICT/ERA: WWI

Chaplain Francis Duffy was a major figure in the First World War. As the Chaplain for the 165th U.S. Infantry Regiment, he tirelessly rescued wounded and dying soldiers under intense bombardment on the Western Front in France, and he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his extraordinary heroism.

Duffy was also awarded the Army Distinguished Service Medal, New York State's Conspicuous Service Cross, and France's Légion d'Honneur and Croix de Guerre. He is the most decorated Chaplain in U.S. Army history.

CHAPLAIN CORPS NOTABLES



CHAPLAIN JAMES NAISMITH

CONFLICT/ERA:
Pancho Villa Expedition, WWI

James Naismith invented basketball in 1891. He also served as a Chaplain in the Army National Guard and as a volunteer Chaplain in France during World War I.

Naismith hailed from Canada. After attending college there and earning degrees in both physical education and theology, Naismith took a job in Massachusetts teaching physical education at the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA) International Training School - now Springfield College. It was there that he devised basketball as an alternative indoor sport for the winter months. He later became the first basketball coach at the University of Kansas.

In 1916, when the Mexican revolutionary, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, led his guerrilla army in a cross-border raid on Columbus, New Mexico, the Kansas National Guard was tapped to send troops to the border. This motivated Naismith to be endorsed as a Presbyterian minister, and to join the 1st Kansas Infantry Regiment as a Chaplain. He also supported Soldiers during World War I while serving as a YMCA Chaplain in the States and in France.

Known as the “Paratrooper Padre,” Chaplain Francis Sampson was a remarkable figure whose courage and compassion left an indelible mark on the heritage of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps. While serving as a Catholic Chaplain during World War II with the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division, Sampson was renowned for his unwavering dedication to his fellow Soldiers and for risking his life while providing spiritual guidance and comfort on the front lines to those who were injured, including enemy Soldiers. His selfless acts of bravery, including parachuting into Normandy on D-Day, exemplify the essence of service and sacrifice.

Sampson made significant contributions to the development and improvement of the Army-issued Chaplain kit during his service in World War II. Recognizing the unique needs of Chaplains serving in combat zones, Sampson played a key role in advocating for a more portable and durable kit for Chaplains operating in the field, noting his experience in losing and destroying Chaplain kits assigned to him while engaged in parachuting activities. He also emphasized the importance of essential items to be included in the kit to support Chaplains in their ministry and to aid in their missions.



CHAPLAIN (MAJOR GENERAL) FRANCIS L. SAMPSON

12TH CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS

INSTALLED: August 1, 1967

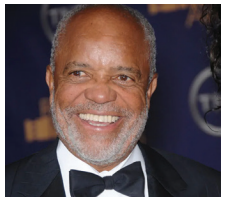
CONFLICT/ERA: WWII, Korean War



CHAPLAIN ELLA GIBSON

CONFLICT/ERA: Civil War

Elvira “Ella” Gibson became the first woman to serve as a U.S. military Chaplain, when the 1st Wisconsin Heavy Artillery Regiment elected her to serve them in that capacity. Sadly, her ministry went unrecognized at the time and it was not until 2002 that Congress granted Gibson the rank of captain.



CHAPLAIN ASSISTANT BERRY GORDY

CONFLICT/ERA: Korean War

Berry Gordy was the founder of Motown Records. He was also a U.S. Army Chaplain Assistant.

Gordy was drafted to serve in the Army during the Korean War, arriving in Korea in May 1952. Assigned to the 58th Field Artillery Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, near Panmunjom, he served as a Chaplain Assistant, and his duties included playing a portable organ for religious services.

After returning home in April 1953, Gordy joined the music industry as a songwriter. He later invested the profits from his songwriting success into producing. Establishing the Motown Record Corporation in 1960, he went on to shape the careers of numerous legendary musical artists. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988.





THROUGH THEIR DEDICATION AND COMPASSION, WOMEN ARMY CHAPLAINS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS SPECIALISTS HELP ENSURE THAT EVERY SOLDIER HAS ACCESS TO THE SPIRITUAL RESOURCES THEY NEED.



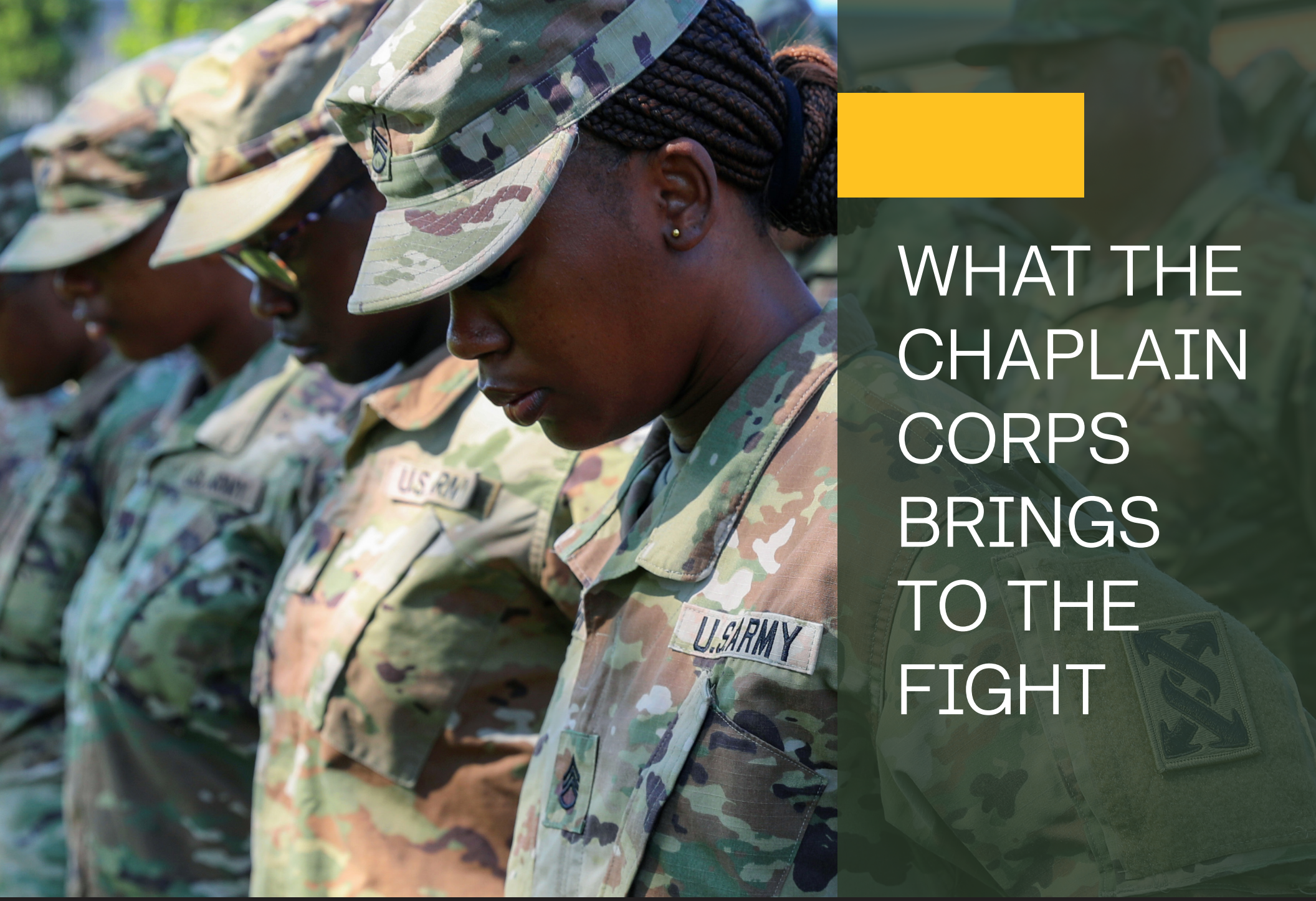
A LEGACY OF INSPIRING FAITH

Since 1974, women Army Chaplains have been endorsed by a variety of faith groups, including the Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim traditions. These Chaplains have achieved many firsts, not only in the Army but across the U.S. Armed Forces.

Alice M. Henderson became the first woman to serve officially as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps when she was commissioned during a ceremony at Fort McPherson, Georgia, on 8 July 1974. Henderson was also the first woman of color to serve as a Chaplain in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. In 2019, she was inducted into the U.S. Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame.

Bonnie Koppell became the first woman rabbi Chaplain in the U.S. military in 1981, while serving in the U.S. Army Reserve. Pratima Dharm became the first Hindu Chaplain in the U.S. military in 2011. And Khady Ndiaye just became the Army's first woman Muslim Chaplain Candidate in June 2024, not long after the Air Force commissioned the U.S. military's first woman Muslim Chaplain in 2021.

These women trailblazers and others like them have led the way for other women into positions of influence in the Army Chaplain Corps. This includes women trailblazers who have served in the Chaplain Corps alongside Chaplains as Chaplain Assistants and now as Religious Affairs Specialists. It was 1972 when Specialist Lorraine Doleshal became the first woman to be school trained as a Chaplain Assistant. Thirty-three years later, Bridgette Smith became the first woman to serve as a command sergeant major in the Chaplain Corps, at the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School. Today, Meaghan Bicklein Simmons is serving with tremendous positive impact as the Corps' 11th regimental sergeant major, since becoming the first woman to fill that role in 2023.



WHAT THE CHAPLAIN CORPS BRINGS TO THE FIGHT



IN CLOSING

The United States Army Chaplain Corps will celebrate its 250th birthday on July 29, 2025. The Chaplain Corps was established in 1775, just six weeks after our Nation's Army was established. Two hundred and eighteen Chaplains served in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, to bring care and support to the Soldiers fighting for America's independence.

Two hundred and fifty years later, today's Army Chaplain Corps spans the Regular Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve, with a unified team of religious support professionals dedicated to caring for all the members of the Army Family. That team includes more than 3,000 Chaplains, nearly 3,000 Religious Affairs Specialists, more than 500 Chaplain Candidates, more than 50 Directors of Religious Education, and nearly 100 other Army Civilians. Those teammates make today's U.S. Army Chaplain Corps the most multifaceted and capable chaplaincy in history.

July 2025 will mark 250 years of sacred service by the Army Chaplain Corps. The members of today's Chaplain Corps are committed to sustaining and enriching that legacy in compassionate and creative ways with each passing day in the years to come.

THE MEMBERS OF TODAY'S ARMY CHAPLAIN CORPS CELEBRATE 250 YEARS OF

SACRED SERVICE

WITH GRATITUDE IN OUR HEARTS FOR

THE LEGACY WE INHERITED.

WE WILL SUSTAIN THAT LEGACY BY SERVING THE NEEDS OF EVERY ONE OF OUR ARMY'S PEOPLE AT EVERY LEVEL AND AROUND THE WORLD, IN DAYS OF PEACE AND DAYS OF WAR,

AS WE LIVE OUR CALL - FOR GOD AND COUNTRY!

Chaplain (Major General)
William (Bill) Green, Jr.

26TH CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS







