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Research Materials/Source Documents
STUDENT PAPERS

FILE TITLE: Background Paper on the History of the Chaplain Management Career Field

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BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

THE HISTORY OF THE CHAPEL MANAGEMENT CAREER FIELD
AFSC 893X0

INTRODUCTION

There's an old story going around the chapel management career field concerning its beginnings. It seems there was a general officer that enjoyed riding with his entire staff, including his chaplain, on Sunday mornings, promptly at 10:00. The chaplain had his service scheduled to begin at 11:00 and protested the ride. The general would not allow a member of his staff to be absent, so he assigned a man to be at the chapel promptly at 10:45 with the chaplain's robe. After the ride, the chaplain could then go to the chapel, put his robe over his riding clothes, and conduct his service. The man assigned to this detail would then take care of the chaplain's horse. This man, naturally, was the first chaplain's assistant. Of course, that story can't be substantiated. I will, however, give you a "short course" history of the career field from its beginning in 1948. I'll show the need for the career field and address some of the mile stones in the early years. From there we'll explore the need for changes and look at some of the turbulent times during the Sixties and mid-Seventies. We'll then look at the present and look toward the future.

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DISCUSSION

The Air Force has always recognized a need for chaplains' assistants. In fact, AFR 165-3, Air Force Chaplain Program, 6 December 1948, stated, "Only enlisted personnel who qualify as clerk-typists and who possess those qualities of character suitable to the duties performed, will be selected for chaplains' assistants" (7:4). Chaplains' assistants were detailed to chaplains by the commanding officer. The primary consideration for selection was the religious affiliation of the applicant. The denomination was important because the person was assigned to a chaplain of the same faith, and, religious support was the primary duty.

Remember though, the assistant was detailed to the job. Sometimes this policy resulted in assigning men that could not be used anywhere else. Occasionally, commanders would assign misfits to the job, hoping the close relationship with the chaplain would turn them around (18:116). But this arrangement wasn't meeting the needs of the chaplain service at all.

In 1948, the Chief of Chaplains stated that "chaplains' assistants were basically clerk-typists and that, because of on-the-job training and the nature of their duties, a definite career field existed" (18:113). The ball was now rolling.

On 22 July 1949, the Air Force issued AFR 35-479. This regulation established the Airman Welfare Career Field, AFSC 791X0. The scope of the field was "restricted to the layman's functions which pertain to a chaplain's activity in the Air

Force. It includes assistance to beneficiaries of deceased military personnel, and performance of sexton functions on an Air Force Base" (2:1). Specific duties included aiding in the conduct of religious services, playing the organ or piano, leading songs, conducting choir practice, conducting classes in Scripture, and operating sound equipment and film projectors. He was also the receptionist and accompanied the chaplain on sick and emergency calls. He maintained records on counseling, offerings, and attendance, and even organized volunteers, All aimed at allowing the chaplain to spend his time on ministerial duties rather than administrative duties (2:4).

The title, Welfare Specialist, didn't really describe the job, so, in 1954, the name was changed to Airman Chaplain Services Personnel (CSP). The suffixes "P" for Protestant, "C" for Catholic, and "J" for Jewish were added to the AFSC to make assignment and management of the force easier. The assignment level was one assistant to each chaplain (18:119).

Even with a unique job description and an established career field, there was no formal training for the chaplain services specialist. Members went to the clerk-typist school and received the balance of their training on-the-job. It wasn't until 1954 that the chaplain service received authorization to conduct formal classes for it's specialists. Francis E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, was selected as the training site with the first class scheduled for 1955. The course continued until 1957, when it closed for one year, and reopened at Lackland AFB, Texas. That

one year closure also saw a new AFSC for the chaplain services specialist. It was now 701X0 and aligned with the administrative career field (18:119).

Along with the name change came a drop in retention rates. Surveys at conferences showed a need for more professionalism in the career field. Chaplain service specialists felt like "indentured servants." As the field approached the Sixties, the need for change was evident. Ironically, in 1960, there was no mention of the career field in AFR 165-1, The Chaplain Service (7:--). Was this an omen? Let's explore!

The new Airman Classification Manual, AFR 35-1E, 28 December 1960, made the career field more specialized. It still listed performing religious assistant duties as a primary function, but dropped such things as leading choirs and playing the piano and organ. It also added the performance of administrative and clerical duties, preparing and maintaining chaplain fund accounts and records, and managing appropriated fund property and supplies (1:70-11). Becoming more specialized was not the only answer.

Chaplain service personnel were feeling a need for more recognition and self-esteem. A research paper, prepared by Chaplain, Lieutenant Colonel, David P. Jordan, listed a litany of reasons for this dissatisfaction. The list can be summed up by saying that chaplain service personnel felt they were very much taken for granted by the chaplains, and, a little praise for a job well done would never hurt anyone (17:--). Were the personnel not fit for the job? No one really knew.

But, a new CSP selection process began at Lackland AFB. Volunteers were "screened" by a career field supervisor and briefed on duties and responsibilities. This was followed by an interview with a chaplain to try to determine the recruit's motivation, personality, and religious stance (14:175). This process helped ensure the quality of the volunteer. But, that only took care of the people coming in.

Nothing was being done to enhance the job and retain the people. CSP still felt overworked, but underemployed, and wondered if they were making any contribution to the chapel program at all (15:--). In fact, according to an address given at a Chief of Chaplains Conference, by CMSgt Archie Hazlett, Executive to the Chief of Chaplains, retention rates were 2 out of 10 (15:--). Still, nothing was done and the career field plodded through the Sixties with no real changes. But, in 1967 things began happening. It started when the CSP technical school moved to Keesler AFB, Mississippi.

Also in 1967, the USAF Airman Career Motivation Conference said that lack of job satisfaction and poor utilization of airmen should be viewed as solvable problems rather than facts of life. That statement led the SAC Command Chaplain to request permission to do an in-depth study of the career field. That request was approved on 7 January 1969 and in March the study began. The participants set three goals: (1) To write specialty descriptions identifying technical areas of the career field; (2) To find specific ECI, AFIT, and nonmilitary courses that would

give technical training in management functions; and (3) To develop a more professional career field. The study group recommended some major, radical changes including restructuring the career field for management, new manning standards based on functional needs rather than on assigned chaplains, changing the career field to B91XX to align with the chaplain career area, 89, and to drop the P, C, and J suffixes. As the field entered the Seventies, these changes were still being studied (13:--).

The implementation was slow, but, in 1971, the Chief of Chaplains appointed five CMSgts to serve as advisors to him regarding the career field. This group took the recommendations of the SAC study and pushed implementation. As a result, the single manager, sub-manager concept, where the senior enlisted person was responsible for administration, financial management, and professional program support, was planned. The title of the career field was changed again to Chapel Management Personnel (CMP). The specialty descriptions were rewritten to reflect managerial responsibilities. The suffixes were dropped because all chapel managers should be able to support all religions and denominational requirements (23:--). These changes were all implemented with a Chief of Chaplains Policy Letter, Airman Resource Utilization, dated November 1973 (16:--) and placed in AFR 265-1, The Chaplain Service, in 1974 (8:4). The "middle age" of the career field did more to enhance the professionalism, and the retention of personnel than any other period, but there were new challenges on the horizon.

With the restructuring of the career field in 1974, it looked as if the career field would recover from the trauma of the Sixties. But the feeling didn't last long. In his observations for a Chief of Chaplains planning conference in 1975, Chaplain, Colonel, Edward R. Lawler, USAF/IG said, "Management areas still need help. The management of our chapel management personnel needs a lot of attention. Fifty percent of the bases observed had problems in this area..." He went on to say, "The NCOIC's were not sufficiently experienced or qualified to be managers. There seems to be a lot of complacency in this area. You Air Staff guys need to take this seriously" (19:6,7). Obviously, training was still a problem.

The standard practice was to put the CMP into one of the three area of the single manager concept. If he was proficient in that area, that's where he would stay. We were creating our own incompetence by not training our personnel in all areas of chapel management (21:--). Something had to give if the career field was to survive.

AFR 39-1, 15 September 1977, addressed that "something" by making superintendents, technicians, and specialists responsible for conducting "proficiency" training. This training would ensure that all CMP were trained in all areas of the specialty (3:A41). If conducted properly, this would make sure that as people progressed through the ranks, their training would keep up with them. They would be ready to be supervisors and managers.

With the renewed emphasis on training starting in 1975, and

AFR 39-1 emphasizing the need for proficiency training, it looked like the career field was on the right track. Maybe, the leaders had succeeded in turning things around.

As we approached the Eighties, several indicators seemed to say this was the case. A survey, conducted by the USAF Occupational Measurement Center in 1978, concluded that "the career field appears to be stable in all functions. The percentage of people who felt their job was interesting was at 78% (14:200). Chaplain/chapel manager relations were also improving as a result of the Airman Resource Utilization letter. A sense of trust and recognition of each others' professional expertise created healthy relationships. Chaplains relied on CMP for administration and support, and chaplains were able to assist the managers with the "power" structure (14:207). AFR 265-1, The Chaplain Service, 18 September 1981, actually made the chapel manager a "member" of the Chaplain Service "team" (9:4). These new-found feelings were best summed up by Chaplain, Major General, Richard Carr's 1980 Air Force Magazine article. He said, "Chapel Management Personnel are responsible for administrative, financial management, and professional program support for the Chaplain Service at each level of assignment. They are true professionals in the Chaplain Service" (12:--). Maybe now, after all the changes, the career field could "rest" a little.

As it turned out, it did rest. AFR 39-1, 1 January 1982, made only minor adjustments to the duties of the career field

(4:A42). Additionally, AFR 265-1, 1 July 1986, made no changes at all when it addressed chapel management personnel (10:5). The people in the career field were also pleased. A joint survey by Major James E. Young, and the Air Force Human Resources Laboratory, was conducted in 1986. Major Young concluded that "chapel management personnel...were significantly more positive regarding task autonomy." He went on to say, "Members reported more positive feelings about task identity...enrichment, and job motivation. Also, they indicated the job itself provided clearer and more direct feedback about their performance" (24:22). If that wasn't enough of a "pat on the back" the survey recommended, "Air Force commanders and functional managers should view the chaplaincy training/orientation programs with a view toward establishing them as model programs for officers and enlisted personnel" (24:28). But, as with all things, rest does not last long.

The leaders of the career field wanted more mission identity. The career field members, after all, were uniquely trained to support chapel programs. They were not purely administrators. AFR 39-1, 15 September 1988, recognized this training and the AFSC was changed to 893X0. This change took the field out of the "70" Administration Career Area and aligned it to the Chaplain "89" Career Area (5:A48). If you remember, this change was first proposed as a result of the 1969 SAC study, so, this change was almost twenty years in coming (13:--).

The Air Force was changing too! The policy of "deterrence"

was shifting to "global reach, global power." Units were deploying more often and chaplains and chapel managers were deploying with them. Tactical Air Command's motto. "Readiness is Our Profession," applied to everyone. The chapel manager had to be ready to "support" the chaplain anywhere. Since "support" was the primary duty, AFR 265-1, 24 January 1992, changed the title of the career field, again! Chapel Managers were now Chaplain Service Support Personnel (11:5). But there was more!

AFR 265-1, 24 January 1992, also added a new concept to the career field: The Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT). The PMT consists of chaplains and chaplain service support personnel whose mission is "to provide spiritual support, solace, and ministry during emergency conditions" (11:6). This is the career field's most pressing problem right now (22:--). This concept leaves more questions than answers. It is truly a time for looking back, before looking forward.

The concept itself is valid. But, does this lead us back to manning situation of the Fifties, one chaplain to one chapel service support person? Does this mean the title "chaplains' assistant" as in 1949 is more appropriate? Can such a team work during "emergency conditions" without practicing in peacetime? These questions, and probably more, will be addressed as the field continues is metamorphosis. For now, let's look at this historical overview.

SUMMARY

Through this "short course" history, I've shown you the need for the career field, and how the career field came to be. I've talked about the lack of training, and how the training school was started. I've taken you through the "rough times" the Sixties, where the lack of training, self-esteem, and professionalism were driving people away from the career field. I showed you how those problems were met head-on, and how the leadership developed and modified the career field into one that was a model for officer and enlisted personnel. I've also posed some serious questions for the future of the career field. Perhaps this history can be best summed up by Chaplain, Major General, Henry J. Meade, a past Chief of Air Force Chaplains, who said,

"We've made some enormous strides. Not only have we changed the stereotype chaplains' assistant to the more current description of what he does...but we've given him responsible kinds of jobs, where we don't have to look over his shoulder. We've given him...leeway where he can be innovative...initiate things on his own. I'm most convinced that the leadership (of) these people is remarkable. I see a lot of genuine class. I wish we could keep more of them longer. They are that good" (20:123).

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