

APPENDIX B

PARISH DEVELOPMENT AND BATTALION MINISTRY Chaplain (MAJ) John K. Stake

The chaplain entered the mess hall while most of his battalion slept. He greeted the mess steward and made brief small talk with the cooks who were busily preparing the breakfast meal for eleven hundred soldiers. He sat at a small table just ahead of the head-counter's booth. From there he would be able to meet and chat momentarily with many of the troops as they began their day.

He mentally prepared his answer for the head-counter's inevitable question, "Why Chaplain! What are you doing here?" He thought of an academic answer, "I'm carrying out a proactive intentional ministry of presence in support of parish development within the battalion," but abandoned it as too difficult for zero-five-fifteen in the morning. He toyed briefly with a flippant response, "I'm on a mission from God," but when the question finally came, he simply said, "I'm here to meet our people."

As the first soldiers went forward to the head-counter's booth, the chaplain greeted them with a cheerful "Good Morning!" The day had begun. In the next hour, the chaplain spoke with over four hundred and fifty of his people, logged seventeen counseling sessions into his appointment book for the upcoming week, felt the pulse of the battalion's morale and gave away most of his peppermints.

A BATTALION MINISTRY

Ministry within a battalion can be done by the people of the battalion. The chaplain is a key linking person who can stimulate battalion structures, groups and individuals to effective ministry. His task is one of enabling within his organization. Ministry within the battalion will take shape and form from the nature of the battalion and the activity of the chaplain.

A battalion is different from a church parish. Webster¹ defines "parish" in its original context as "the ecclesiastical unit of area committed to one pastor," and differentiates it from the Protestant concept of a "local society composed of persons who choose to unite under one minister." Since a battalion chaplain bears responsibility for the religious welfare of all members of his/her battalion, the wide implications of "parish" are to be preferred. The specific ministry of word and sacrament will be enjoyed only by those who choose to participate in the religious services and programs.

This article is about ministry within a battalion and is intended to be descriptive, not definitive. Many of the concepts here are familiar to experienced chaplains. This article is directed toward the new battalion chaplain who

¹The concept of "linking person" is essential to understanding the operational dynamics of a battalion (or parish) organization. A linking person acts in the interest of all groups as distinguished from a group representative whose interests are primarily with his group. Two articles in the Center for Parish Development Center Letter amplify this: "The importance of Being a Linking Person." (Vol. III, No. 10, Oct 73) and "The Pastor as a Linking Person" (Vol. 10, No. 1, Jan 80).

aims to build community within his unit. The model for ministry presented here is based upon the Model of the Church in Ministry and Mission² created by the Center for Parish Development. This model identifies the three major functions of ministry as spiritual journeying, caring and empowering. These have four entry points into a community for change and vitalization: purpose, structure, personnel and operational dynamics.

Purpose

The mission of a battalion will vary according to its composition, deployment and capabilities. As a staff officer the chaplain advises and assists the commander in all matters of religion, morals and morale as affected by religion. The chaplain is expected to give ethical input to the commander on the activities and decisions of command. As clergy, the chaplain's mission is to bring people to God (worship) and God to people (meeting human needs). He/She and others are linking persons,³ who can empower and vitalize for ministry various structures, groups and individuals of the battalion.

Structure

The formal structures of a battalion are established by Army Regulations. Battalion councils and other informal structures are created to meet specific purposes by order of the commander. Both can be used to accomplish ministry.

²"Parish." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield, Mass.: G&C Merriam Co., Publishers, 1959), p. 610.

³Center for Parish Development, A Model of the Church in Ministry and Mission. (320 East School Ave., Naperville, Ill. 60540: 1976). Copies available from the publisher.

MTO&E

The Modified Tables of Organization and Equipment (MTO&E) of the battalion provide ready-made structures to be cultivated for ministry. The meeting of human needs is not solely the arena of the active faith community.

In Korea, soldier skilled in masonry and carpentry willingly responded to a chaplain's request for volunteer help in constructing a storage building at the battalion-sponsored orphanage. Many of the volunteers were not in the habit of attending chapel. The logistics were handled through the MTO&E structure. The project brought all the soldiers closer together and opened valuable avenues of communication between them.

Chain of Command

The chain of command provides for flow of authority, delegation of responsibility and communication within a unit. The religious program of a battalion is the responsibility of the commander, and he carries this out through his chaplain.

The chaplain supervises the activities of the chapel, but understands that the command chain primarily involves the battalion commander and his company commanders. The executive officer and the command sergeant major are valuable resources to help the chaplain present the religious program to the commander.

Army Regulation 165-20 provides the chaplain with clear access to the commander. His credibility as a staff officer is enhanced as he keeps both the executive officer and the commander informed. Normally, he will first approach the executive officer with mundane matters.

Staff

The other officers of the commander's staff are available for coordination and assistance. The personnel officer (S-1) and his section can provide specific and current information about battalion personnel including unit rosters with dates of birth, religious preferences and assignment rotation dates. Information concerning hospital admissions, new orders, port calls, unit punishments, as well as awards, budgeting and funding data are also available.

The intelligence officer (S-2) and his section can provide maps, weather and terrain data, and current information on the tactical situation. The operations and training officer (S-3) can supply training schedules, and offer valuable advice on scheduling field visits and worship services.

The supply, motor, communications and medical officers can provide both information and services. Some units have a repair and utilities (R&U) section which offers the resources of carpenters, plumbers and electricians.

At Fort Leonard Wood, I organized and sponsored a self-help project for thirty-five battalion families living in substandard housing. The commander approved the project and the S-3 scheduled self-help maintenance training into the

operations and training schedule. Through supply channels, the S-4 was able to locate available building materials and the soldiers did the work.

The project raised the morale of the men, accomplished needed repairs and involved the battalion. I actually expended very little time since much of the project was undertaken by the appropriate staff sections and residents of the housing area.

Councils

Each battalion has requirements to maintain regular councils for a variety of concerns race relations, human relations, drug and alcohol abuse, equal employment opportunity, safety, crime, fire prevention and the battalion morale welfare fund. If improperly motivated, these councils can become lethargic "paper organizations." The chaplain can inspire, vitalize and empower these councils effectively to meet human needs.

Acting through the human relations council, I secured Thanksgiving and Christmas turkey dinner and food baskets from the Army Community Services for about fifty needy families within my battalion. This project was seen as "ministry," although the work and verification were done by the human relations council.

Chapel Council

The chapel council is not an MTO&E organization, and usually exists only to administer the chapel fund. The fund is frequently consolidated above battalion level. In Korea, distances of over two hundred miles separated component units

of a support battalion, which made a chapel council of all companies impractical. At a garrison installation in CONUS, a battalion having its own chapel worship center might effectively organize a chapel council, which could administer the chapel fund and plan worship services, religious education and retreat activities.

Linking Person

Individuals can be found who are willing to serve as linking persons between their units and the battalion religious program. These linking persons can be the nucleus of a formal or informal chapel council. In the field they can act as coordinators between the company and the chaplain for visitation and worship services. Some can be trained to conduct barracks Bible studies and crisis counseling. Small groups linked throughout the battalion can be a spiritual resource and positive influence, and provide a vital flow of information.

Specialist Smith was a linking person from Company B. Late one night he called me and asked if I was aware that PVT2 Jones' baby had become seriously ill and was taken to the hospital. I arrived at the hospital shortly after the Jones family and was able to provide a significant and timely pastoral ministry. This ministry opportunity would have been lost without the valuable channel of communication provided by the linking person.

Linking persons are volunteers. Arbitrarily placing individuals on orders to serve on the chapel council could destroy the spontaneity of lay ministry and may violate personnel convictions. Members of the chapel fund council do

serve on orders to provide accountability and responsibility, but their selection usually reflects their voluntary participation.

Personnel

Commanders

Working relationships with battalion and company commanders include clarification of roles and expectations. Commanders are generally under pressure and need ministry from their chaplains. The "loneliness of command" is an expression not without basis in fact.

Attempting only to please the expectations of the commander could lead to the chaplain being perceived by the troops as the "colonel's spy." Identifying too completely with the troops could result in being perceived by command as a meddlesome "rebel" who is constantly "trying to get" for the troops that which has been legitimately denied them through the chain of command.

Staff

Staff officers and the chaplain are peers before the commander. The staff usually controls the primary resources within a unit. Staff members are often pressured by the commander, and the chaplain can provide valuable ministry to them.

After my battalion had failed an annual inspection, the commander ordered all sections to "work day and night" until the deficiencies had been eliminated. Strain began to show on

key staff members after several days of round-the-clock activity. I notified the commander that only a few key staff officers and NCO's were actually involved in the mechanics of the corrective work. The rest of the staff sections, unable to assist in the corrections, were idle at their duty stations without assigned tasks. The commander re-evaluated the situation and relaxed his order. This allowed the key staff members to get their needed rest, and placed others on a more realistic work schedule. The staff appreciated my intervention and corrected the deficiencies in time for the re-inspection.

Senior NCOs

Senior NCOs are the largest source of experienced soldiers within a battalion. They are key linking persons within the companies and usually have a developed internal communications system.

My efforts to organize a junior enlisted wives' group largely failed until I solicited the support of the senior NCOs. I attended a monthly meeting of the senior NCOs and presented the need. The NCOs then shared their own experiences and trials as young enlisted married men and joined together in support of a junior wives' club. Some of the wives of the senior NCOs volunteered to become sponsors of the group. The chapel annex was utilized for the meeting place.

Junior Leaders

Junior officers and NCOs direct and implement the programs and policies of the commanders and carry out the mission. Many have vital leadership roles and images to the soldiers. By their enthusiasm, they can promote or obstruct the religious program of the battalion. Junior leaders also constitute the first echelon of problem-solving within a unit and their involvement in the process will assist in meeting many of the presenting problems of the soldiers. Crisis intervention and interpersonal communication skills may be shared with these leaders.

Soldiers

The soldiers are the primary focus of ministry. Many are religiously sensitive individuals who can effectively minister to the needs of their companions. They can be empowered to be effective linking persons within their units and trained to be small group and Bible study leaders. In a mobile situation these lay leaders can provide company and platoon level ministry. Identification, training and support of these lay persons are intentional goals of the religious program.

Dependents

Family units of a battalion constitute both a resource and focus for ministry. A caring couple can effectively minister to other couples. Helpful activities to broaden the wives' horizons are "welcome wagon" organizations, wives' clubs, transportation pools and organized field trips to places of interest. Frequently, a skeletal structure is all that is

needed to help battlion dependents participate in the strong programs of the Army Community Services (ACS), the Post Chapel Center or the Recreation Services Center.

Couples from my battalion who had attended marriage enrichment weekends developed a network of marriage support. They met together frequently and became a positive influence throughout the battalion. Eventually, the commander and his wife attended such a weekend and encouraged other couples to do the same. I publicized the marriage enrichment opportunities within the battalion, but most of the enthusiasm was generated by the married couples themselves.

Chaplain Assistant (CA)

Although little has been mentioned specifically about the CA, that person is a key linking person within the battalion religious program. In addition to the responsibilities of chapel, office and vehicle, the CA can extend the chaplain's ministry of presence, be trained for crisis counseling and screen prospective counselees. The relationships which the CA enjoys among the personnel can greatly enhance or diminish the effectiveness of the religious program.

Operational dynamics

The various structures, groups and individuals of a battalion can be coordinated and vitalized for ministry. The chaplain is the key linking person in the building of awareness to human needs. In his interaction with each group described above, he can expand the base of chapel mission involvement, and provide effective channels for matching ministry needs and resources within the existing structure. Operationally,

the chaplain will find greater success in empowering and vitalizing existing structures rather than attempting to create new ones.

Councils

The formal organization of the chapel council (if feasible), can serve as a forum for the linking person within the battalion. The council can meet worship, education and retreat program needs. They can administer the fund. But it will be the informal organization of linking persons established by the chaplain which will vitalize the battalion for ministry.

Counselor

The chaplain's time is valuable. The largest portion will be occupied as a counselor. Knowledge of referral resources and the use of small interest groups to treat common presenting problems like AWOL or drugs alcohol abuse, can multiply the counseling time dramatically.

Image

The chaplain's role and image as a person of God are often stereotyped and fixed in the minds of his people. Sensitivity to people's perceptions can assist the chaplain as he seeks to establish linking person relationships. Mechanical performance of religious rites will not build the individuals of the unit into a caring community. The chaplain and the CA need to involve themselves in the total life of their unit.

Intentional Ministry

Commanders have said, "I like a chaplain who spends his time out with the troops." In practice, the chaplain could become ineffective by spending too much of this time visiting units in the field. The balance is found in an intentional ministry of presence which plans the purpose, the frequency, the time and the place of the visit. This should take place in the soldier's environment, and allow for mutual interaction between the soldier and the chaplain, such as in the mess hall example at the beginning of this article.

The S-3 operations section can give the chaplain a good idea of the mission, location, and mobility of a unit to be visited. The S-1 personnel section can fill in personnel indicators for each unit such as recent unit punishments, sick calls, AWOL's, assignments and departures. These can supply more than enough people to visit with an intentional purpose.

My visit to 2d platoon, Company B at the work site was generally appreciated, but on one occasion evoked the response from a soldier, "Wish I had the time and a vehicle and could just ride around." On the next visit I asked the NCOIC for a few minutes with PFC Brown, whose wife had recently miscarried: PVT2 Green, just back from three days AWOL; and SSG White, who would retire in thirty days. After a few minutes with each, I greeted all the soldiers. The general impression of the second visit was one of intentional care.

Visitation

A program of individual visitation can be built from a birthdate roster. A card could be sent to each member of their birthday or the chaplain could pay a visit with a wrapped present of scripture or prayerbook. The S-1 personnel section can provide the birthdate information to the chaplain or CA. The key to this program is consistency. Forgetting someone could negate the thoughtfulness of remembering many others. Ministry of presence will build the image of the members of the faith community as caring, available and giving individuals.

Linking persons are a source of immediate help within their unit. SP4 Smith was such a source of help to PFC Red. During a unit party some troops overindulged and lost control of their behavior. SP4 Smith took PFC Red back to the barracks and put him to bed. The next day the two discussed the "drinking problem" and SP4 Smith suggested that PFC Red see the chaplain. After our visit together, PFC Red decided to enroll in an alcohol abuse counseling program.

Hospital visitation by concened memmbers of the battalion are also important. Many soldiers do not realize how important a visit to a sick buddy can be, and the chaplain can encourage these visits. The commander can be kept informed about hospitalized soldiers and hardships which the illness may be working in the soldier's family.