

A chaplain's calling: The road to guiding others

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HEIDELBERG, Germany -- Kevin Scott Forrester, who first enlisted into the U.S. Army in Dec. 1984, felt that it was a calling from God that made him want to become a chaplain, and that calling continued to evolve over the next 10 years.

He grew up in the rural southwest corner of Louisiana and spent ample time with his friends and with his church when he discovered faith at the age of 14.

"I lived the country boy life," he said. "There was hardly a day that I did not do anything outdoors whether it was hunting, fishing, riding horses, camping in the abundance of woods, and riding my bike all over creation. I would wish more kids could experience what I did.

"There was also a sense of community and faith which had a profound impact on me and my future," he said.

Forrester was commissioned as a chaplain in April 1996 and entered as an active duty chaplain in July 2001. Now at the rank of major, he currently serves as the brigade chaplain for 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

"As a chaplain I have the opportunity to impact lives through multiple venues," Forrester said. "I get to share with people in some of the greatest joys of their lives, and I get to walk with people through some of their darkest moments and give them assurance that they are not alone. The intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in this calling are endless."

The Chaplain Corps has a unique application in the Army as it ensures that all Soldiers, family members and Department of the Army civilians have a chance to receive their Title 10 religious support. Those title supports vary from duty station to duty station and can range from religious services to family life ministry, but at all times chaplains are ready to provide any of their support functions.

"There is no monolithic answer to what chaplains do because the roles and responsibilities change with job and rank," the 28-year-veteran said. "However, the basic role of all chaplains is to be a good faith representative of his or her denomination. That means I must be true to my denominational beliefs and practices.

"We promote a culture of life and hope, which at times is counter to the prevailing philosophy of our contemporary culture. Finally, we are to be the ones who model love and acceptance without prejudice," Forrester added.

Right now, Forrester executes religious support at the brigade level and supervises and mentors the battalion chaplains and religious support teams. Recently he attended the Chaplain Annual Sustainment Training for Europe at Garmish, Germany and was excited about the training and the great opportunity to catch-up on the Chaplain Corps.

"The CAST-E is a chance for all chaplain personnel to come together and receive the latest training in what is happening as a branch; what current trends are and where we are going in the future," Forrester said. "It is also a place to pull together as various organizations and hear from senior chaplains on what is happening within their various organizations.

"Having missed this the last two years due to train up and deployment, I will learn the latest on chaplaincy developments and get a chance to connect with many chaplains I have not seen in a few years," he added.

To Forrester, being a chaplain is one of the few opportunities that comes along to assist the entire team of the U.S. Army. His path to guide others in their time of need and celebrate with them during times of happiness comes from a history in faith.

"We are to be agents of hope and change," Forrester said, "and offer change that has eternal impacts according to our spiritual and theological convictions."

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