

## **Talking Points – Army Religious Education**

**KEY MESSAGE** – Religious education (RE) in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps provides comprehensive, lifelong RE/faith formation (FF) programs and processes that include all ages, respond to diverse life situations and faith perspectives, and facilitate the spiritual resilience of the Army community.

### **Talking Points:**

#### **1. Mission and Role of Chaplaincy Leaders in Religious Education**

- The Chaplain is a teacher of religion, provides religious instruction and manages RE programs and processes.

- Civilian Directors of Religious Education (DREs) have been supporting Chaplains in their RE mission since 1948 when E. Bryan Johnson went to work at Ft. Bragg, NC where she served until 1978.

- DREs are Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) with general knowledge of the interpretation of religious literature, theology, religious history and contemporary faith practice, and expert knowledge in RE theory and practice, teaching & learning theory, education program design and implementation, human and faith development theory, and curriculum design and evaluation.

- DREs are SMEs in all RE and youth ministry (YM) matters for Chaplains. They provide guidance, direction, advice and training to Chaplains, Soldiers and Families, distinctive faith groups, volunteers, civilians, and contractors.

- DREs remain in garrisons for long periods of time providing needed continuity of service with other civilian professionals, and with Chapel volunteers, the largest volunteer force in the Army.

#### **2. Religious Education Supports the Army Community**

- The Chaplain's religious support mission includes providing RE that would otherwise be denied as a practical matter to personnel under the various circumstances of military contingencies.

- RE programs and processes are open to a diverse constituency.

- U.S. Army installations have provided RE programming and support to Soldiers and Families in Buddhist, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Islamic, Latter Day Saints, Orthodox, Protestant, and Wiccan communities.

- Attitudes towards organized religion fall along a continuum including increasing numbers of people who identify themselves as “spiritual” but not necessarily “religious.” RE programming provides support for Soldiers and Families at various points along this continuum.

- Young people, including significant numbers of Soldiers, between the ages of 18-29 have unique, culturally-shaped outlooks on religion and spirituality. RE programming provides generationally appropriate opportunities to explore matters of faith and life as emerging adults seek to renegotiate their primary relationships and role in the world.

- High mobility brings unique skills and challenges to Soldiers and their Families. RE programming provides practical wisdom for successfully navigating life transitions in a variety of cultural contexts.

- RE contributes to Army well-being by addressing the spiritual state of the Army community and providing opportunities for connection and personal growth.

- RE contributes to readiness and resilience by providing opportunities for reflection and self-development focused on the domain of the human spirit.

- Multiple bodies of research show a high positive correlation between participation in RE/FF practices and well-being.

### **3. Religious Education Supports Army Leadership Development**

- Teaching is a leadership function of the Chaplain. As teachers of religion Chaplains ground other military leaders in their respective faith traditions as a part of Army full spectrum learning.

- Religious teaching explores basic questions of identity, meaning, purpose, and value towards the goal of participants becoming and being whole, integrated persons.

- Religious teaching guides participants in identifying and coming to know “the good” towards the goal of living moral and ethical lives.

- Religious teaching challenges participants to do what is right for self and others.

**4. Models for Army Religious Education.** RE is inclusive of, but not limited to Chaplain-led Bible studies, Catholic Religious Education, Protestant Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School. Though these traditional programs provide needed stability and continuity to Soldiers and their Families, they do not represent the fullness of RE/FF in today’s Chaplaincy. Other models include:

- Generational and Intergenerational Formation: Programs that address the lives and religious concerns of generational cohorts help to mitigate generational stressors. Intergenerational programs promote lifelong faith development that “sticks.” Both

generational and intergenerational programs highlight the positive role that community plays in building resilience.

- Religious Practices: Programs that foster formation in religious practices such as prayer and meditation provide Soldiers and Families with helpful resources for coping with major “stress windows” in the Composite Life Cycle.
- Composite Life Cycle: Targeted programs reach out to the larger garrison community to provide support and sustainment through transitions within the Composite Life Cycle.

POC: Dr. Grace C. Yeuell, Religious Education Program Director, DSN 314-544-2106, [grace.c.yeuell.civ@mail.mil](mailto:grace.c.yeuell.civ@mail.mil)