



VFW Chaplain Service Dispatch

*Dedicated to the ideals of
Commitment, Integrity and Service*

May 2024

Volume 2 Number 2



About the VFW Chaplain Logo

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Chaplain logo motto is: ***Integrity, Commitment and Service.*** The VFW Chaplain always strives to emulate each of these qualities.

Integrity can be defined as: The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change.

Commitment can be defined as: Dedicating yourself to something, like a person or a cause. VFW Chaplains are dedicated to honoring the dead by serving the living.

Service can be defined as: Any activity or benefits that are being offered to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. VFW Chaplains serve without expecting anything in return and do so from the heart.

The United States flag represents a Chaplain's dedication to God and our country.

The torch represents the light that each Chaplain carries to light the way for the veterans and their families that we serve.

The dark red outer ring represents the blood shed by our fellow comrades for our freedom.

Just as gold is precious, The gold rings represent the preciousness of life that each VFW Chaplain holds sacred as we serve veterans and their families.

Artwork by Chaplain Dale Iannello, motto by Reverend Peter Hook

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Message from the National Chaplain



MAY Chaplain's Corner



Dear Fellow Chaplains,

As we step into May, we find ourselves in a month that carries deep meaning for all who have served and for those who continue to serve alongside them. May brings with it Memorial Day, a sacred time to honor and remember our brothers and sisters who made the ultimate sacrifice. It's more than just a date on the calendar—it is a time when we and our nation pause to reflect on the cost of freedom and to honor those who served and gave their lives to preserve the freedoms we enjoy.

As chaplains, we play a vital role in carrying the torch of remembrance. Whether offering prayers at ceremonies, standing quietly with a grieving family, or listening to a veteran process old memories, we offer comfort and connection in moments that truly matter.

May is also Mental Health Awareness Month, another reminder that our work doesn't stop with remembrance—it also includes restoration. Let's continue being available to our comrades who may be struggling silently. A kind word, a check-in call, or simply showing up can make a profound difference. We are ministers of hope and healing, and your role in that sacred work is more important than ever.

In addition to these reflections, I'd like to share a few important updates regarding our Zoom Chaplain Training sessions:

- Our next Zoom training will take place on May 15, 2025, and will be led by Past National Chaplain Jim Jenkins. The topic will be "Lessons Learned by Jim"—a session full of wisdom and real-world insight from someone who has walked the walk. You won't want to miss it!
- Please note there will be no Zoom training in June due to Department Conventions.
- Likewise, no training will be held in July or August, as many of us will be attending the National Convention in Columbus, Ohio, August 9–14, 2025.

- Following the Convention, we'll resume with a special session on August 21, 2025: Past National Chaplain Debb Halter will be offering an Introduction Training Class for newly elected Chaplains—a wonderful way to welcome and equip our newest spiritual leaders.

- Then, on September 18, 2025, we officially begin our new season of Zoom training sessions.

- Missed a session or want a refresher?

You can find past Zoom training recordings under the Training tab at: https://lotcs.org/vfw_chaplain.html

Thank you for all you do, not just this month, but every month. Your ministry is felt in moments big and small, and it carries eternal value.

May your Memorial Day be meaningful, and may your chaplaincy continue to bless those you serve.



**Rev. Peter R. Hook
National Chaplain
Veterans of Foreign Wars
2024-2025**

May 1, 2025



Some Thoughts on the Five Stages of Grief

By Frank J. Correa, DMin, MA, BSN, RN, EMT-P

Five stages of grief. In the classic work by Elizabeth Kubler Ross she identified the five stages of grief. They are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Keep in mind that grief can apply to many things besides the loss of a loved one. It also applies to a terminal or disabling/life changing disease or accident. While these are the typical stages people go through they are not absolutes in terms of each stage, the timing, the order etc. This is just a guide to what is typical and most expected.

Denial: This a state of disbelief. “this can’t be happening to me”, “there must be a mistake”. “I’m a good person this can’t be happening to me”; “bad things don’t happen to good people” etc

Anger: This can vary in that the anger may be directed at themselves, believing their life choices were the cause of their terminal diagnosis for example. Or if the grief is the loss of another person, they may also blame themselves. Perhaps they think they could have done more to prevent the loss. They may be angry at God. This is fairly common. A person may question why a loving God could possibly allow this to happen. They may be angry at friends or loved ones for not understanding how they feel.

Bargaining: This can take the form of someone pleading with God that if they change or do a certain thing then God in return will reverse the diagnosis or bad thing that is occurring. Perhaps they may even plead with God to bring back the lost person if they agree to do something.

Depression: This is self-explanatory but just remember that each person will feel the loss and depression differently. Depression can range from a deep sadness to a state of total inability to function.

Acceptance: This is when the person finally comes to grips with the loss. They are resigned to the fact that it just is and it can’t be changed. They realize the reality of the matter and realize they now have to start the process of adapting to their “new normal.”

Familiar means prepared. The value in understanding or just being familiar with the stages of grief is that familiar means being prepared. Its similar to our military training. If we are trained not only to perform our duties but trained on dealing with contingencies, emergencies, disasters etc. then we are better prepared to face these things. Granted no amount of training can prepare someone for the ugliness of war or the emotional overload of grief

causing events, but having some degree of knowledge of what is to be expected can lessen its impact.

Cultural influences: A significant part of the way people react to grief is learned behavior. We are all products of our upbringing. Much of what we do and the way we respond is programmed into us at an early age. We default to what is normal and expected of us. Different cultures react differently. Some are very stoic with very little visible outward reaction while in other cultures a very physical and emotional response is expected. I've witnessed some cultures where the more demonstrative the better. The belief is that the more demonstrative and physical the response the more you demonstrate your sense of love and loss. Such responses can be frightening to those who have not witnessed these responses. These reactions can include loud wailing, yelling, and even physical to the point of throwing or breaking things. It is important to stay safe and not panic or demonstrate disapproval. The key is to expect the unexpected. "Forewarned is forearmed," as they say.

Individual reactions: We are all unique individuals and thus react differently based on our current state of physical and mental health and our upbringing. So, when ministering to those suffering grief be prepared to expect the unexpected.

Physical and mental influences: A person's baseline at the time of grief will play an important role in their reactions. Mental illness will certainly affect the way they react. For example: A person with a with a serious mental illness that includes hallucinations or delusions may interpret or deal with the situation in a delusional way that may makes no sense to others. Even a person in a state of high anxiety will react differently as they are already agitated, and the bad news can set them off dramatically. These may be situations where getting mental health professionals involved may be indicated. Hopefully they are already under the care of a professional and it may require contacting the provider to update them on the current crisis. They would be in the best position to adjust their plan of care accordingly.

Learning More: I encourage everyone to be committed to being a lifelong learner. As they say "readers are leaders." The more you can read and learn the better equipped you will be. There are many excellent books available that will enhance your understanding and ability to deal with grief when caring for others. I would encourage you to go to a site like Amazon and search for books on the subject. Most books have a "read sample" link that lets you read a sample chapter and most importantly it lets you see the table of contents. This will provide you with a pretty good estimation if this book suits your needs. My suggestions are that you consider the following: *Does it cover matters that interest you most? Does the writing style appeal to you? Are you comfortable with the world view the author takes. Do you feel it will better equip you?*

Here are a few books I've read and found the most helpful on the subject of grief. Most take a theistic, Christian worldview which may or not be consistent with your view. As stated above take a look at the book online and see if it's a good fit for you.

Westberg, Grager. *Good Grief*

Baily, Joseph. *The Last Thing We Talk About*

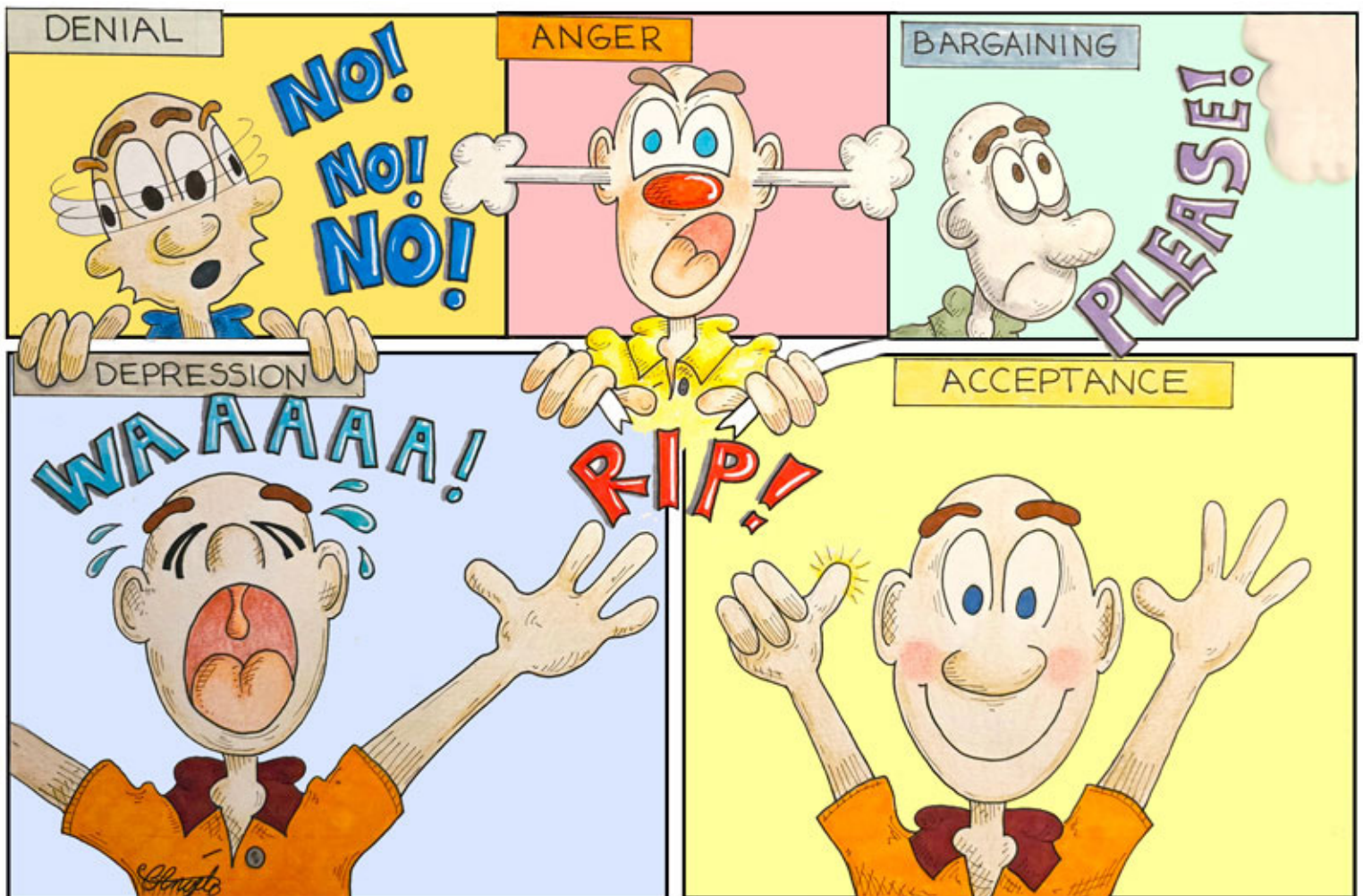
Linn, Erin. *I know Just How You Feel: avoiding the clichés of grief*

Wiersbe, Warren. *Comforting the Bereaved*

Wiersbe, Warren. *When Life Falls Apart*

Wright H. Norman. *Crisis Counseling*

Five Stages of Grief



Hospice Care for Veterans



Hospice Care Companies and Veterans

Rev. Peter R. Hook, National Chaplain

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Hospice care is a great thing. And as hospice care has developed it has become big business. In 2014 it was reported to be a \$17 billion industry. And it has grown every year since then. Hospice care is needed, and hospice care is a good thing. I am not against hospice care companies.

However, as hospice care companies developed and competition for clients grew, they realized there was a niche market they needed to target. That segment of society, consisting of older veterans, is an easy target as they seek to expand their business. Attached are two information sheets from companies that provide hospice care and are specifically targeting Veterans. From my research, these are for profit companies that are specifically targeting veterans in addition to other hospice clients. Take a look at the fliers and notice the picture of the veteran with a service cap on the and the flag under the title "Veteran to Veteran Hospice Volunteering" on the pieces. Both are good marketing techniques.

I believe these two companies provide a good service and are operating in good faith, but they are two of many hospice care companies that exist. While targeting and wanting to care for veterans is not necessarily a bad thing, I want you and our comrades to be informed consumers.

Representatives from both Hospice Companies have contacted me. They would love to have my endorsement and ultimately the VFW's endorsement. They would love to say, as they meet with veteran families, that Rev. Peter Hook, VFW National Chaplain supports their company. VFW State, District, and Post Chaplains and Commanders across our nation no doubt will also be contacted as hospice companies seek potential clients.

In an effort to get the word out to veterans and their families, a representative from a particular hospice company may contact VFW Commanders and Chaplains and ask to make a presentation at Department, District, and/or Post meetings, or to have you distribute literature about their services to veterans. Here is an email I received:

Hello Peter,

Just wanted to touch base with you to let you know I've already met with (Name Removed), District _____ Commander, _____ County. I spoke at their District Mtg this month briefly about _____ Hospice and Honor

Flight. I'm still trying to touch base with other VFWs, and in the meantime, will be meeting with a Marine Corps League local Detachment.

I think meeting with Chaplains would be very beneficial and would like to discuss this with you. When would be a good time to call you?

Thanks so much. Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

(Name Removed)

Veteran Liaison

_____ Innovative Hospice Care

I have not and will not endorse any hospice company. And I would caution you about having any hospice company make a presentation at one of your Department, District, or Post meetings. I have met with individuals from several Hospice Companies. From my conversations and the information, they provided I have made the following observations:

- I am not sure the hospice companies that are targeting veterans provide anything more with regard to hospice care for veterans than other hospice companies would do.
- Keep in mind the sales pitch of hospice companies targeting veterans is designed to leave the consumer with the impression that they are in business to honor and care for veterans. These are for profit companies that exist to make a profit by providing hospice care.
- I am not sure there is any significant monetary savings to the veteran by using one of these companies. Just because they "honor veterans" doesn't mean there is a cost benefit to the veteran.
- Providing information on VA Benefits can and should be done by one of our VFW certified Service Officers. There is no extra or added benefit by getting the information through a hospice company.

Today, when families hear that a company services and caters to veterans, they can automatically jump to the conclusion that they will be getting a discount or some special care. This may or may not be true. They should shop around and compare services and costs. Also, attached is a letter from a Hospice worker on "Choosing Hospice Care When the Time Comes" that I have found helpful in guiding families in knowing what to look for when choosing a Hospice Care Company.

As VFW Chaplains we should be involved in the end-of-life care of our comrades. Whether in the hospital, a care facility, or at home, we should be there to offer supportive care to dying comrades and their families. Help them and their loved ones as they transition to glory and assure the person that he or she will not suffer or die alone. During this time of transition, as Chaplain, encourage the expression of personal feelings, anxieties, and thoughts concerning dying and the afterlife.

Letter on Choosing Hospice Care When the Time Comes

Inspired by the recent hospice articles and the latest Frontline, "Being Mortal", CHAP's Barbara Muntz decided to pen a letter to her four children about selecting her hospice care, when the time comes. She offered to share this letter in hopes of contributing to the conversation on speaking to your loved ones about hospice care.

These are the personal recommendations of Barbara Muntz and are not necessarily representative of all accredited organizations.

Dear ones,

As the time approaches for us to make choices about my healthcare, I realize that one of the decisions that you may have to face is whether or not I should be admitted to hospice care.

After working with countless anguished families through the years, I'd like to offer some guidance that might help you.

Let's get one thing clear at the outset: Choosing hospice care is not a death sentence. It is, in fact, saying "Yes" to life in every possible way. If I have a life limiting condition, like cancer or Alzheimer's or end stage heart failure, hospice can help all of us be together in the most important ways. Lots of folks I know say that hospice is a good thing, but just "not yet." If you are wondering whether or not it is time for hospice care, my darlings...it probably is.

Choosing hospice is one thing, but choosing the right hospice is another matter entirely. There are some things that I want you to consider when selecting a hospice to provide my care. Here are some questions to ask:

Are you accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting organization?

- Accreditation is not a guarantee, but hospices that seek accreditation are inspected more thoroughly, and usually more often, than those that do not.

How long have you maintained your accreditation?

- Hospices that have maintained their standing through multiple cycles of accreditation show that they have sustained the kind of quality needed to provide a high level of care. Many hospices go through one accreditation survey, then do not maintain the requirements over time.
- Look for a hospice that has been through at least two (three year) cycles of accreditation, or even better, three or more cycles.

What has your average daily census been for the last 12 months?

- You would never have brain surgery at a hospital that only does 5 brain surgeries a year, right? Of course not - you would go to a hospital that does a ton of brain surgeries and does them well. The same principle applies in hospice. The more patients with my diagnoses that a hospice has seen in the last year, the more likely it is that the team has the expertise needed to ensure that I will get better symptom management and better care.

How do you manage care after hours?

- The hospice should explain that they have a nurse on call and hospice team members can come to me 24/7. Ask them for their after hours call number. Then call it in the evening (Saturday nights are always good for this!) to see how long it takes to get a return call.

What is your model for providing continuous care?

- Sometimes things get rough, and I may need round the clock care for a few days to manage symptoms or give you a bit of a break. Every hospice must provide this care if and when it is needed. Look for a hospice that has the staff available to do this. Ask if they have a prn pool or their own private duty staff to come when needed. Ask them to give you their average time to staff a continuous care case. This is a statistic that every good hospice should keep.

Life has taught me that the time to make these decisions is before we are forced to make them in haste. I never want you to have a single regret about choosing hospice care for me. Hopefully, this guidance will help.

Thank you, sweet ones, for caring for and about me. Love will sustain us, Mom

Barbara Muntz joined CHAP in early 2013. She is now in the role of Senior Advisor. She is an experienced home care and hospice nurse who previously worked at Texas Health Resources (THR), a multi-hospital healthcare delivery system. More recently, Ms. Muntz served as Chief Nursing Officer for the Visiting Nurse Association of Texas. Ms. Muntz also served on the Board of Directors for the Texas Association of Home Care and Hospice. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Master of Theological Studies from Brite Divinity School. Barbara has four adult children.

Any questions, feel free to contact me.

Blessings as you serve,

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Loyalty Day – Honoring American Ideals on May 1st

Each year on May 1st, the United States observes Loyalty Day—a time to reaffirm our allegiance to the United States and the principles of freedom, democracy, and unity.

While the date is recognized internationally as May Day or International Workers’ Day, in America, May 1st takes on a different meaning—a celebration of patriotic values and a declaration of loyalty to our nation.

A Brief History

The roots of Loyalty Day stretch back to 1921, when it was originally celebrated as “Americanization Day.” It emerged as a counter to growing support for socialism and communism following World War I. The modern observance, however, took shape during the Cold War in the 1950s, when ideological tensions with the Soviet Union were at their peak.

In 1955, the U.S. Congress officially recognized Loyalty Day. Then, in 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed Public Law 85-529, designating May 1st as Loyalty Day—a day set aside for “the reaffirmation of loyalty to the United States and for the recognition of the heritage of American freedom.”

How Americans Celebrate

Though not a federal public holiday, Loyalty Day is marked by:

- - Patriotic parades and ceremonies
- - Veterans’ and civic group events
- - Flag raisings and recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance
- - Educational activities in schools and youth programs

Local VFW Posts, American Legion chapters, and other community groups often lead the way in organizing events that honor the flag, the Constitution, and the values that unite all Americans.

Why Loyalty Day Still Matters

In today’s fast-paced world, Loyalty Day serves as a vital reminder of what binds us together as Americans. It’s a moment to reflect on our freedoms, express gratitude for those who defend them, and recommit ourselves to the ideals that have guided this nation since its founding.

A Presidential Tradition

Every U.S. president since Eisenhower has issued a Loyalty Day Proclamation encouraging Americans to join in observance. These proclamations highlight our shared civic responsibilities and invite all citizens to take pride in their country.

Celebrate Loyalty Day

As May 1st approaches, consider how you can participate:

- - Display the American flag
- - Attend or organize a community ceremony
- - Thank a veteran or public servant
- - Share a moment of reflection or prayer for our nation

Let's join together in celebrating Loyalty Day and all that it represents.

“Let every nation know... that we shall pay any price, bear any burden... to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”

— President John F. Kennedy



Chaplains and Memorial Day: A Legacy of Honor and Remembrance

From the battlefields of the Civil War to today's solemn ceremonies, chaplains have played a vital role in how our nation remembers its fallen heroes each Memorial Day.

A Sacred Tradition Begins

Memorial Day traces its roots to May 1868, when General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic proclaimed May 30 as a day for decorating the graves of Union soldiers. Churches and chaplains were central to the first observances, offering prayers, hymns, and messages of hope amid a still-healing nation.

As communities gathered in cemeteries, it was often a chaplain—military or local clergy—who led the readings, invoked divine blessings, and reminded the living of the price of freedom.

Chaplains on the Front Lines of Remembrance

From World War I through Iraq and Afghanistan, chaplains have been present wherever American service members have fought—and died. Their ministry extended beyond the battlefield: after the guns fell silent, chaplains often conducted memorial services on the front, comforted grieving comrades, and wrote letters to the families of the fallen.

In post-war America, military chaplains continued to serve as key figures in Memorial Day events at national cemeteries, local VFW Posts, and civic ceremonies. Their words offered comfort to Gold Star families and reminded communities of the enduring value of service and sacrifice.

The Chaplain's Role Today

Modern Memorial Day observances often include chaplains leading or participating in:

- - Opening and closing prayers at public ceremonies
- - Scripture readings and reflections that honor all faiths
- - Wreath-laying services at monuments and grave sites
- - Moments of silence or tolling of bells
- - Taps and flag-folding ceremonies in collaboration with honor guards

Chaplains also play a quiet but vital role behind the scenes—supporting grieving families, assisting in military funeral honors, and preserving the sacred tone of remembrance.

Words That Heal and Unite

Chaplains help bridge the spiritual and civic meanings of Memorial Day. Whether speaking to a crowd or comforting a widow, their message is clear: “They are not forgotten.” In times of mourning and reflection, chaplains offer words of hope, unity, and national purpose.

As VFW, VA, and community chaplains lead ceremonies across the country this Memorial Day, they continue a tradition of sacred service that spans more than 150 years.

Honoring the Fallen, Serving the Living

As we remember the fallen this Memorial Day, let us also honor those who guide us through the remembrance—our chaplains. Their ministry helps the nation grieve with dignity and remember with gratitude.



Chaplain Zoom Training Sign-up

Attention Chaplains!

Are you looking to enhance your skills and make a greater impact in your role as a chaplain? Join us for an exclusive Chaplain Training Program via Zoom! This program is designed to equip you with essential tools and knowledge, covering topics such as:

- **Suicide Prevention:** Learn how to provide hope and support in critical moments.
- **Active Listening Skills:** Become a better listener to serve those in need with empathy and understanding.
- **Hospital Visitation:** Understand best practices for providing comfort and care during hospital visits.
- **Chaplain Ethics:** Deepen your understanding of ethical responsibilities as a chaplain.
- **Chaplain Orientation:** Gain insights into effectively fulfilling your chaplain duties.

This is an invaluable opportunity to grow in your chaplain skill set, connect with other chaplains, and strengthen your ability to serve our veterans and community. Don't miss out—sign up today!

Zoom details will be provided upon registration. Let's continue to support each other and the people we serve with compassion, care, and expertise. **Scan the QR code below to sign up now!**

