



## LEADERSHIP TRAINING: **WORKING WITH YOUR LOCAL CHAPLAIN**

by *Brenda Pace*

### *Leader's Version*

**RELEVANCE:** Protestant Women of the Chapel (PWOC) is a unique chapel ministry that works to enrich women, assist chaplains, and support the military community. PWOC has an opportunity to stand in the gap, in order to assist chapels and chapel staff as they respond to the needs of a military community. This module addresses specific ways the PWOC ministry can assist the military chapel and chaplain in carrying out the Installation Commander's religious program.

**CONTEXT:** This training module would be most beneficial for local PWOC leadership as they begin their tenure of service.

**TIME:** 45 minutes

### **HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE:** (5 minutes)

*Introduce this training module by asking if these statements are True or False:*

1. PWOC does not exist apart from the military chapel. (T)
2. Military chaplains receive a stipend to serve as PWOC advisor. (F)
3. A military chaplain is required to approve any request made by PWOC. (F)
4. PWOC is an integrated program of the Installation Chaplain and Commander's total religious program. (T)
5. The installation commander expects the chapel staff to provide PWOC with any resources requested. (F)

**Obviously, some of these statements are tongue-in-cheek. However, it is easy to become confused and assume the chaplain and chapel staff is in place to serve PWOC, instead of PWOC assisting in carrying out the overall religious program of a military installation.**



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**Let's look at this important relationship and discuss how the relationship between our local PWOC, chaplains and chapel staff can be most effective.**

### **MAKE YOUR POINT 1:** (10 minutes)

#### **PWOC and the MISSION of the MILITARY CHAPLAIN**

**Shortly after family members of U.S. Armed Forces began arriving in Europe in the mid-1950's, women formed chapel support groups to assist their chaplains and to seek Christian fellowship.**

**From its inception, PWOC is a chapel-based ministry for women formed to help chaplains carry out their religious programs and to bring Christian fellowship and spiritual growth to U.S. military communities around the globe.**

### **ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 1:** (15 minutes)

**In small groups of no more than four people, brainstorm answers to the following question. Record and be ready to share your conclusions:**

*Your discussions amongst the small groups and with the large group will be more beneficial if you merely "steer" the conversation with slight course corrections here and there. Be careful not to give the "correct" answers at the end. Better to build on what your participants are offering you. This process honors their intelligence and gives them ownership over the information. If their answers are too basic, encourage them by saying something like, "That's good, but think bigger." "You're on the right track, give me more." "I like the way you think, now apply that to the whole installation." When your listeners do their own thinking and responding, they are better able to process and apply the information. This participation on their part will pay FAR more dividends than you supplying them with the correct list of answers which is likely to be quickly forgotten.*

#### **How can our local PWOC benefit the mission of chaplains in our military community?**

*Allow 5 minutes for groups to discuss before asking for response. Possible responses may include:*

- PWOC ministers to unique needs of military women and female military spouses.
- PWOC equips women to flourish in the face of the unique challenges of the military lifestyle through its emphasis on biblical nurturing and mentoring.
- PWOC provides the environment to nurture personal enrichment and family readiness.
- PWOC provides practical help, emotional and spiritual support during times of deployment.



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- PWOC serves as a force multiplier for the commander through training women in personal and family skills, and by providing a compassionate safety net to hurting women.

## **MAKE YOUR POINT 2:** (15 minutes)

**In your same small group, discuss ideas to cultivate a positive relationship with your PWOC Chaplain Advisor (and staff). Record your responses on your worksheet.**

*Mingle among the groups. Listen to what they are saying. Encourage them when they are on the right track. Reinforce positive elements of their conversations and encourage them to keep building on their ideas. This affirmation may give them the confidence they need to share their answers with the whole group.*

*Allow 10 minutes for groups to complete this activity before soliciting responses. Responses need to include such things as:*

- Local PWOC President must brief Chaplain Advisor (and possibly installation chaplain) on PWOC ministry and find out how PWOC ministry can fit into the overall vision and mission of the installation religious program.
- Cultivate good communication. Learn the preferred communication procedures with the Chaplain Advisor and the chapel staff. Find out what is convenient for THEM. Do everything you can to accommodate their preferences.
- Guard against “too many cooks in the kitchen.” It is wise to appoint a point of contact (POC) to handle communication with the Chaplain or chapel office. Usually, this person is the President. In addition, the Financial Liaison is the designated point-of-contact for funding.
- Learn and follow procedural guidelines and timelines for such things as, reservation of facilities, room set-up, requesting supplies, etc.
- Plan well enough in advance to provide chapel staff a reasonable amount of time to act on requests.
- Respond to chaplain(s) and chapel staff with an *attitude of gratitude* instead of an attitude of entitlement and expectation.
- Take time to ask questions, offer encouragement, or otherwise convey genuine interest in them as individuals.
- Let them know you are praying for them—and be sure to pray.
- Invite them to PWOC events and ask for their feedback and involvement.
- Encourage PWOC women to be involved in chapel and chapel-sponsored programs and events (i.e., Sunday school teachers, VBS, AWANA, youth group/ Club Beyond, etc.).
- Coordinate PWOC events with installation-wide chapel activities.
- Request a PWOC representative to attend chapel staff meetings at appropriate levels and/or parish council meetings.



- Make sure PWOC publicity includes the wording "Ft. Benning Chapel PWOC" or "Peterson AFB Chapel PWOC." The addition of the word "chapel" is a tangible statement of support.
- Follow through on your activity commitments, i.e., do not force the Chaplain and staff to carry your responsibilities, as well as their own.

### **MAKE YOUR POINT 3: Appreciate the Blessing** (5 minutes)

**It is important to remember that the assignment of the PWOC Sponsor or Chaplain Advisor is extra duty for a chaplain. Scripture instructs us, "... to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work." (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; ESV)**

*Discuss the blessings we enjoy from our PWOC Chaplain Advisors.*

### **ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 3:** (5 minutes)

*Discuss possible ideas to show appreciation this year to your Chaplain Advisor, chapel staff, and the chaplains in your community. Assign a point-of-contact to complete the plan and coordinate the event. (October is "Clergy Appreciation Month" and an ideal time to do something special to encourage the chaplains in your community). Along with a special event, discuss some ongoing ways your group can show their appreciation.*

*You may want to do this activity in small groups. Ideas can be written on Post-its which can be easily tucked away for later inspiration.*

*Ideas might include:*

- Pray regularly for your chaplains and find a way to let them know.
- Send cards that uplift and encourage.
- Remember special days, such as anniversaries and birthdays.
- Respect your Chaplain's personal and family time.
- Take initiative for a needed chapel project. Make sure to get prior approval.

### **APPLY IT TO LIFE:** (5 minutes)

*Provide cards of appreciation and introduction for your Chaplain Advisor/Sponsor and the members of the chapel staff. Invite the women to write a note of blessing in the cards. This card campaign is a great way to begin a new PWOC year. After the meeting, deliver the cards with some fresh baked goods to the Chaplain and chapel staff. Pray together for the opportunity to be a blessing to your Chaplain Advisor, the chapel staff, and all the chaplains in your military community.*



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