

UUA Guidelines for Reserve and Guard Chaplain Support

This document sets out the ideal minimum conditions for supporting UU ministers who are also involved as Reserve or Guard chaplains. It is dependent upon cooperation at three levels: the congregation/employing institution, the UU Ministers Association and the UUA. These guidelines have been approved by the National Endorser, and the UUMA.

The support of ministers who enter into Reserve or Guard Military Chaplaincy is something that is best shared across three partner groups: the congregation/institution that employs/calls the chaplain, the UUA, and the UUMA. Military ministry is a way that we “show up” as UU ministers to serve the greater world, and as such is of interest to all groups. The following recommendations are made to help support those called to this form of military ministry.

We understand that there can be great benefits for both ministers serving as military chaplains, and their congregations/institutions, in having a minister being a guard or reserve member. For smaller congregations, this may allow them to have “more ministry” that they would ordinarily be able to afford; for institutions other than congregations, this can provide them with a minister who is connected more deeply with the needs and dreams of young adults, thereby increasing the “beyond” nature of the institution’s outreach. We also believe that the UUMA also benefits from having ministers engaged in reserve and guard duty, as it provides education and experience within a young adult multicultural context, and spreads our message beyond congregational walls.

The provisions of USERRA, the law that protects the employment of reservists and guard members, does not apply to religious organizations. However, we believe it is important to offer protections and support that go a long way toward mimicking USERRA.

Time Away for Reserve/Guard Training Duty:

1. Those serving guard/reserve duty are required to commit a minimum of one weekend a month for training responsibilities. This means that ministers serving in dual roles spend every weekend doing ministry. In order to provide some time for respite, recovery, spiritual renewal and family time, we recommend that ministers in guard and reserve positions be granted a minimum of one extra weekend off every quarter, free from either congregational/institutional or military duties, and that the minister commit to using this time for reflection and renewal and not additional military ministry.
2. Those serving guard/reserve duty are required to commit a minimum of one to two weeks a year for longer term training responsibilities. We recommend that congregations/institutions either:
 - a. Allow up to two weeks for paid military duty leave for chaplaincy related training/involvement, recognizing that the training will benefit their

congregation/institution; this is seen to be comparable to congregations/institutions allowing time away for denominational involvement; or

- b. Allow use of allocated study leave for chaplaincy related training/involvement, and to increase overall study time allotted to insure that the chaplain has at least two weeks of study time outside of military training/involvement to focus on congregational/institutional ministry.
3. Those serving guard/reserve duty may be required to attend chaplain basic training courses for up to three months' time, and other professional development courses throughout their career. We recommend that such time be granted to chaplains as unpaid leave, and that the chaplain work with the congregation/institution, and the UUMA Chapter, to be able to assure ministerial presence be maintained for the congregation during such absence. For active duty assignments of thirty (30) days or more, full military benefits begin, including salary and for the benefits for chaplain and family. The congregation/institution is relieved from payments of salary/housing to the minister/minister's family except for any shortfall between the pay received from deployment/long term duty and the ordinary salary/housing that the congregation pays.¹ It is recommended that the congregation/institution continue to pay into the chaplain's pension plan at the ordinary percentage during such times of absence.

Time Away for Deployment or Other Longer-Term Responsibilities

Part of the responsibility of anyone serving as reserve or guard chaplain is the possibility for longer-term deployment. In such cases, we believe that this can best be addressed by the following:

1. For active duty assignments of thirty (30) days or more, full military benefits begin, including salary and for the benefits for chaplain and family. The congregation/institution is relieved from payments of salary/housing to the minister/minister's family except for any shortfall between the pay received from deployment/long term duty and the ordinary salary/housing that the congregation pays.² It is recommended that the congregation/institution continue to pay into the chaplain's pension plan at the ordinary rate during such times of absence. Should the chaplain and/or family reside in housing provided by the congregation/institution, that housing benefit would continue through the deployment period.
2. For time frames shorter than thirty (30) days, any other benefits provided by the congregation/institution (pension, health, dental, accidental death/disability, long-term disability, life insurance, etc.) would be continued by the

¹ For example, if the military pays \$800 for a time period, and the minister ordinarily receives \$1000 from the congregation/institution, then the congregation/institution would only be responsible for the \$200 difference, rather than the entire \$1000.

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congregation/institution at their ordinary cost³. Should the chaplain and family reside in housing provided by the congregation/institution, that housing benefit would continue through the deployment period.

3. The congregation/institution will take no action on the minister's tenure during the time of such deployment/long term duty. Any entitlement to sabbatical opportunity would be stayed during such deployment, and the deployment time would not count toward years of service in determining sabbatical eligibility. The chaplain agrees to return and serve the congregation for at least one year following return from deployment.
4. It is understood that reserve/guard chaplains have the possibility of both non-discretionary orders, and volunteering for longer term service beyond their required training component. The chaplain will not volunteer for any deployment or long term service without the express permission of their Board or supervisor. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to initiate conversation about whether to accept such possible voluntary service as soon as possible. The discussion shall take into account the impact on the congregation/institution, and whether they will be able to find alternative ministerial coverage suitable to their needs. Should the chaplain depart on such voluntary leave without the consent of the congregation/institution's governing body, they may be found to have abandoned their ministry. The chaplain will be mindful of the needs of the congregation/institution in considering whether to approach the governing body for such conversation. The UUA Federal Chaplaincies Endorser will hold the responsibility of determining whether a chaplain has volunteered for active service or is responding to non-discretionary orders.
5. The minister will work with the UUMA national and chapter leaders and members to provide the same kind of coverage that they would offer to a colleague who was on sabbatical leave. Generally, this is understood as ministerial colleagues being willing to provide up to one-half of the worship services ordinarily performed by the chaplain, with little or no compensation. Ministerial colleagues would also be willing to provide the congregation rites of passage officiating, at the standard UUMA guideline rates.
6. The UUMA national leadership will take a role in helping to educate and encourage chapter members on the desirability of them to be involved in the congregation as a way to increase our mission in the world beyond congregations, and will support the chaplain and chapter in finding ministers willing to serve as preachers and officiants for rites of passage.
7. For UUA Congregational Life Staff who are reserve or guard chaplains, the UUA would provide support to them by encouraging, supporting and expecting the regional teams to cover the responsibilities of the chaplain while they are deployed. Such support could come from the chaplain's regional team alone, and/or by members of other regional teams could be asked to help support the chaplain's region by being willing to provide webinars, workshops, or other services as might be needed. The UUA may also hire an interim staff person to

³ To the extent allowed by each benefit plan document.

assist, should the deployment be for longer than can be reasonably covered by existing staff.

8. For UUA staff who are reserve or guard chaplains, and serve in other contexts within the UUA, the UUA would provide support to them by encouraging in, supporting and expecting members of their staff groups to cover the responsibilities of the chaplain while they are deployed. Such support could come from the chaplain's staff group alone, and/or by other members of the UUA staff who may be skilled in the required area.
9. The UUA and UUMA would work together to provide adequate support, workshops, and rituals, to mark and support the congregation/institution and the chaplain around such deployments. This could include workshops in preparation for departure, farewell rites, celebration of return, reentry workshop to help chaplain and congregation/institution continue their ministry well upon return from deployment, and other such rituals, workshops and coaching as might be appropriate.

Civil Air Patrol Chaplains

The Civil Air Patrol, by charter of Congress is the “benevolent auxiliary” of the United States Air Force “performing essential non-combatant missions” in time of need. The CAP’s mission includes domestic search and rescue, emergency services following natural disasters, cadet and aerospace programming, and volunteer community service. Its members are completely volunteer, but hold themselves to the same standards as reserve, guard, and active duty airmen.

While CAP members cannot be deployed on orders, expectations for service are high. Most members attend a weekly squadron meeting of at least two hours and are expected to participate in monthly exercises. CAP chaplains have the additional expectation of attending week-long annual Chaplain Staff College for training each summer. Promotion and advancement depend on active participation.

Members of the CAP Chaplain Corp are held to similar standards, including endorsement requirements with the Unitarian Universalist Association, as their active duty and reserve counterparts. The following suggestions will help congregations and other employing institutions support those who live our UU values in this setting:

1. Be cognizant of what weekday evening their squadron meets, and be generous by scheduling mandatory work-related meetings on other nights.
2. Be aware that the Sundays “out of the pulpit” (or weekends “off” from expected work in the field) might involve the minister in their CAP chaplain duties, and in ways that are either as (or even more) demanding than their ministry in the congregation/institution (such as working with families who have missing members, death notifications, and the like). Offering an additional day off following such missions or exercises will be deeply appreciated and will help the minister restore themselves to serve more effectively.

3. During times of national or state emergencies, consider allowing the minister to deploy for a week or two apart from vacation or study leave time. This can have a lasting impact on many lives touched by the CAP Chaplain Corps, and extend your congregation's/institution's pastoral outreach into affected areas.
4. Because of the multi-faceted aspect of CAP's mission, a chaplain may choose to volunteer to serve or respond in capacities other than as a chaplain within CAP (such as emergency services, cadet leadership, or aerospace education). When they do so, the chaplain should take the time away from accrued vacation time or as unpaid leave should no vacation time be remaining to them.

Through the work of CAP chaplains, a congregation/institution can participate in a unique outreach ministry that is multi-cultural, multi-generational, and interfaith. CAP members, and those who benefit from their services, come from a wide variety of faiths (and no faith). Having Unitarian Universalism as a beacon for liberal religion within the context of the Civil Air Patrol brings our faith and tradition into the community in unique and widespread ways.