



## TRANSFORMING JAIL MINISTRIES

# AJC Personal Conduct and Guidelines

### THE ROLE OF A CHAPLAIN

The role of a jail chaplain is to minister to the spiritual life of those who are incarcerated as well as Corrections Personnel. This means, among other things, meeting people “where they are,” not where we wish they were.

### UNIQUE & DISTINCT: WHO WE ARE

Boundary setting is a necessary part of every job, whether volunteer or paid. It is of utmost importance we recognize our capacities, limitations, and our strengths. We ask all volunteers, in all roles, that you remember who you are and whose you are (God's):

1. You are a child of God
2. God made you uniquely you (radically gifted, but also radically flawed)
3. You are a man or woman of faith
4. You are a follower of Christ
5. You are God's representative

In our role as chaplains, we must also remember that chaplaincy is quite distinct from other professions. Even if we may have professional training and licensing in other fields, when we enter a facility as a chaplain, we shed other identities for the sake of God's Kingdom.

In your capacity as a chaplain, you are not a:

1. Social worker
2. Corrections officer
3. Attorney
4. Police officer
5. Judge
6. Member of the media

These are all good and worthy, but they are not appropriate roles or expressions for chaplains who volunteer to meet religious needs.

With that said, you are a part of a:

1. Team
2. Community of faith
3. Ministry of Christ
4. Transforming Jail Ministries

### BE DISTINCTIVE

Never settle for a lesser identity, role or the 30 pieces of silver.

Governments exercise their right to set standards for chaplaincy and select the persons who meet their criteria, but they cannot create chaplains; chaplaincy is a ministry of the church or other faith group which only those it mandates can deliver. The employing authority, fulfilling its responsibility for the spiritual well being of its inmates, engages chaplains to carry out the ministry which the churches define.

- Chaplain J.T.L. James as quoted by Thomas Beckner



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Let us also remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:25:

If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life.  
- New Living Translation

Many times our chaplains are the closest thing to a pastor an inmate or officer may have.

#### **LIMITED ACCESS REQUIRES TOTAL COMPLIANCE**

Being an Adult Jail Chaplain is a huge privilege and responsibility. You serve at the discretion of TJM, the TJM Board of Directors, Hamilton County, the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department, and the Hamilton County Sheriff. While it is unlikely to occur, your access may be revoked with or without cause and with or without notice.

When an individual's status as an approved visitor of the facilities we serve is revoked, it is generally due to one of a couple of reasons (though there are other reasons this may occur). Either the person has been witnessed breaking the policies and guidelines of Transforming Jail Ministries, or the person has been found guilty of misconduct or breaking policies of one of the facilities in which we serve.

While we would love to grant access to as many people as we can find who are willing to enter the facilities we serve, not all people have equal capacity to participate and volunteer, nor do we have an infinite number of volunteer spaces. Due to restrictions on the number of volunteers resulting from security concerns, we can only provide access to those volunteers who are available and present, fulfilling agreed upon rules and expectations.

While it would be a violation of Constitutional rights and liberties to prevent those incarcerated from religious expression, religious rights are not without limit. Volunteering in any capacity is not a right, but a privilege. A person who wishes to volunteer in a secured facility has no legal or Constitutional right to do so. Transforming Jail Ministries will do all it takes in order to maximize ministry opportunities for local churches and faith communities, but we too recognize security restrictions on the total number of volunteers

If a chaplain, or any other volunteer or employee, is found out of compliance with TJM policies (or the policies of the facilities we serve), we will have no choice but to end our agreement to allow you to serve under our banner.

#### **DO'S AND DO NOT'S**

While we have so far covered expectations, we have not covered hard and fast rules, of which there are many, but most if not all should make good sense. Depending on the severity of violations of the below rules, your role as a volunteer may or may not be revoked.

#### ***Assignments and Availability***

1. Our task is to provide primary care of spiritual needs for inmates and officers, and our goal is to lead people farther along in following Jesus.
2. In times of emergency:
  - a. Chaplains may be called on at times to deliver tough news regarding death or serious injury.
  - b. Chaplains should be available for crisis intervention: helping a person get back to the previous level of coping ability.



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3. Prisoner Requests & General Responsibilities
  - a. Blue Kites/Inmate Request Forms: chaplains will be assigned to a unit or set of units depending on need. Chaplains are expected to respond in a timely manner to requests from their assigned units.
  - b. Hours: Chaplains are expected to volunteer each week visiting with inmates and meeting requests. If you are unavailable due to vacation, illness, or some other urgent matter, please let us know and we will work with you.
  - c. Meetings: TJM has three joint meetings with chaplains and worship team leaders throughout the year. We expect chaplains to attend these meetings in order to stay current with TJM updates, facility policies, and to receive ongoing training as needed.
  - d. Reports: TJM uses chaplain reports in order to track involvement, compliance with service hours, and to track our ministry successes.
4. Collegiality (Maverick Doesn't Live Here)
  - a. All volunteers, including chaplains, are expected to maintain collegiality with one another, with inmates, and with any staff member or volunteer within the facilities we serve.
  - b. If you have a problem with someone or feel something is wrong, you are expected to contact the CEO immediately. TJM will confront any issues that might arise.
  - c. If you sense an emergency situation in which another person is being harmed, physically or emotionally, request to see a supervisor and contact the CEO.
  - d. Chaplains neither have the responsibility nor the right to engage a hostile situation. Doing so will result in immediate revocation of visitor privileges and may even be punishable by court of law.

#### *Contact with Inmates*

1. Never bring anything into a facility for an inmate or take anything out of a facility from an inmate.
  - a. Bibles and literature must pass security protocol including a K9 unit to sniff for drugs
  - b. Bibles and literature may be donated to TJM, but must be new and cannot be designated for a specified inmate
2. If an inmate is returning to the kitchen for work after your meeting, he cannot have any personal possessions.
  - a. Do not give any literature or Bibles to an inmate returning to the kitchen.
3. Physical touch must be limited. A chaplain should never hug an inmate, but a handshake may be appropriate.
  - a. Never engage in a handshake that may be misconstrued for gang involvement.
  - b. If an inmate initiates a hug, politely end the hug as quickly as possible (this includes "side hugs").
4. Do not give out your phone number, address, etc.
5. Don't ask what an inmate is in for. It is not our business and it could risk our ministry to the inmate.
6. Financial relationships without documentation (through your congregation and Social Services, not personal) is strictly prohibited.
7. Do not promise anything you cannot deliver. Keep your word and follow through.
8. Dress appropriately:
  - a. No spaghetti strap shirts, cleavage, or immodest attire;
  - b. No skirts that are deemed revealing;
  - c. No tee shirts or tattered shirts with holes;
  - d. No shorts or pants with rips and/or tears;
  - e. No jeans
  - f. No clothing that can be misconstrued with gang identification
9. Never do anything for an inmate that he or she can possibly do for his or herself (be careful how you help):



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- a. Never place a call to anyone for an inmate. Inmates can call collect or have money placed on their account in order to do this. You will never know the background of the call with certainty and could be a part of the inmate committing a felony in some circumstances.
- b. The “do not call” list includes: attorneys, public defenders, spouses, other family members, friends, or social workers.
- c. In other words, never are you permitted to call someone on the inmate’s behalf.

#### ***External Communications***

Transforming Jail Ministries reserves the right to manage the our ministry’s reputation and branding. While exceptions may be granted by the CEO in special cases, all volunteers are strictly prohibited from engaging with media in their capacity as chaplains, worship team member, or any other position.

Media relations and external communications are managed solely by the Director and CEO. At times you may be requested to speak with the media by a member of the media as you leave one of the facilities we serve. We cannot restrict your free speech to engage as an individual, nor will we attempt to do so, but we do prohibit you from engaging with media in your capacity as a volunteer or as a representative of TJM without the expressed consent of the CEO. Failure to comply with this may result in having your access revoked as an approved visitor under the TJM umbrella.

#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

By participating as a chaplain, you agree to the above rules, regulations, and expectations. We understand it is a lot to take in, but we serve in facilities where security is a priority. Anything a volunteer does that puts the security of the facility, or people within it, at risk cannot be tolerated. Should you have any questions about the aforementioned policies, please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff.

*Your below signature is recognition of receiving and agreeing to the AJC Personal Conduct and Guidelines.*

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*Chaplain Signature*

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*Date*

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*First Name*

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*Last Name*