

**AIR FORCE & SPACE FORCE**

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# **COMMANDER ORIENTATION TOOLKIT**

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Updated 11 March 2025

**HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**

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**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS  
PLANS & PROGRAMS DIVISION**



*Every Warfighter...Spiritually Fit and Ready!*

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# Chaplain Corps Vision

Every Warfighter...Spiritually Fit and Ready!

## Chaplain Corps Mission

To inspire the spirit of the warfighter through religious accommodation, spiritual fitness, and leadership advisement.



*“As our Airmen and Guardians deliver air and space power advantage to the Joint Force, the Chaplain Corps at home and abroad ensures that warfighters are spiritually fit and ready to thrive across the spectrum of military operations from competition before the fight, during the fight, after the fight, and beyond their time in uniform.”*

Trent C. Davis  
Chaplain, Major General, USAF  
21st Chief of Chaplains

## FOREWORD

This Commander Orientation Toolkit is essential for Commanders and Chaplain Corps personnel to enable mission success as they prepare to compete and win in a high-end fight. Focusing Chaplain Corps priorities on Airmen, Guardians, and family-focused ministry, we ensure that the Department of the Air Force (DAF) remains ready as the Chaplain Corps pursues its mission *to inspire the spirit of the Warfighter through religious accommodation, spiritual fitness, and leadership advisement* and vision of *Every Warfighter...Spiritually Fit and Ready!*

Chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen fully grasp the demands of military service and bring the skills and inspiration necessary to keep Airmen and Guardians ready to thrive at every level of military operation.

Finally, people are our most critical capital asset. The Force is fortified whenever a Chaplain or Religious Affairs Airman adeptly listens to a member's concerns. In every instance where a Chaplain Corps professional defends a member's religious liberties, they uphold our Nation's values and propel us forward with dignity and respect for all.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chaplain Corps Lines of Effort (LOE) - *Fortifying the Warfighter Spirit, Developing Chaplain Corps (HC) Leaders and Capabilities*, and *Generating Religious Support Team (RST) Readiness* - directly stem from the Department of Defense Priorities: Revive Warrior Ethos, Rebuild our Military, Restore Deterrence, *DAF Operational Imperatives*, and CSAF's *Orders*. The LOEs target Air & Space Force leaders at Headquarters Air & Space Force (AF/USSF), Major Commands (MAJCOMs), Field Commands (FLDCOMs), Direct Reporting Units (DRUs), and Wing, Delta, Group, and squadron levels, guiding all Chaplain Corps personnel. They also serve as a guide for all Chaplain Corps members. The LOEs provide centralized guidance at the strategic level in alignment with Air Force Doctrine Publication (AFDP) 1, which established *mission command as the philosophy for airpower's command and control (C2), centralized command, distributed control, and decentralized execution*.<sup>1</sup> HC Ready! provides a centralized and coordinated strategic framework for RSTs to follow. This will be realized through acts of decentralized execution at every level of the Total Force. RSTs are the main guardians of Airmen & Guardian's spiritual well-being. They promote spiritual fitness to help prepare for life's challenges, lead healthy lives, and accomplish their military mission.

## INTRODUCTION

The Chaplain Corps must fortify the warfighter spirit by leading in the spiritual domain. To address challenges to our national defense and ensure mission success, we must do our part to ensure the future force has the “*attributes required to compete, deter, and win in the high-end fight characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty.*”<sup>2</sup> As the Air Force & Space Force delivers air power advantage to the Joint Force, the Chaplain Corps at home and abroad ensures that tomorrow’s warfighters are spiritually fit and ready to thrive in future contested environments. Therefore, fortifying the spirit and ethos of our Airmen, Guardians, and families must remain our highest priority.

## CHAPLAIN CORPS LINES OF EFFORT



### LOE 1: FORTIFYING THE WARFIGHTER SPIRIT

*Ensuring Airmen, Guardians, and their families are spiritually prepared for personal and professional success.*

Fortifying the Warfighter spirit optimizes the tactical and operational readiness for the Total Force’s peacetime contingencies, crises, and warfighting. Therefore, the Chaplain Corps must ensure that warfighters are spiritually fit and ready to fly, fight, and win—ensuring Airpower Anytime, Anywhere.

#### CORE CAPABILITIES

1. Religious Accommodation
2. Spiritual Fitness
3. Leadership Advisement

#### OBJECTIVES

1. Religious Accommodation & Freedom
2. Spiritual Fitness (services & counseling, moral injury, suicide prevention/postvention, Strong Bonds, HOPE peer support, REFUEL App, integrated resilience)



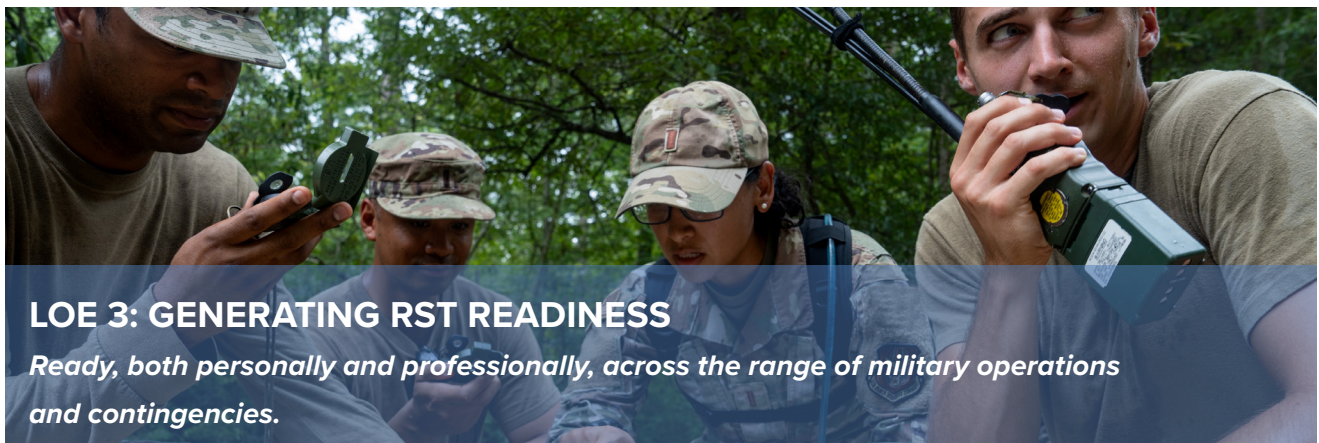
## LOE 2: DEVELOPING HC LEADERS & CAPABILITIES

*Pursuing and advising for excellence in leadership and unparalleled capabilities.*

By developing leaders and capabilities, we empower Chaplain Corps personnel and their families to thrive personally and professionally.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Building Healthy Teams
2. Onboarding & Offboarding
3. Deliberate Development
4. Professionalism



## LOE 3: GENERATING RST READINESS

*Ready, both personally and professionally, across the range of military operations and contingencies.*

Train muscle memory to generate elite RSTs who are practiced experts in their specific tasks to support large-scale mobilization of units of action and combat operations.

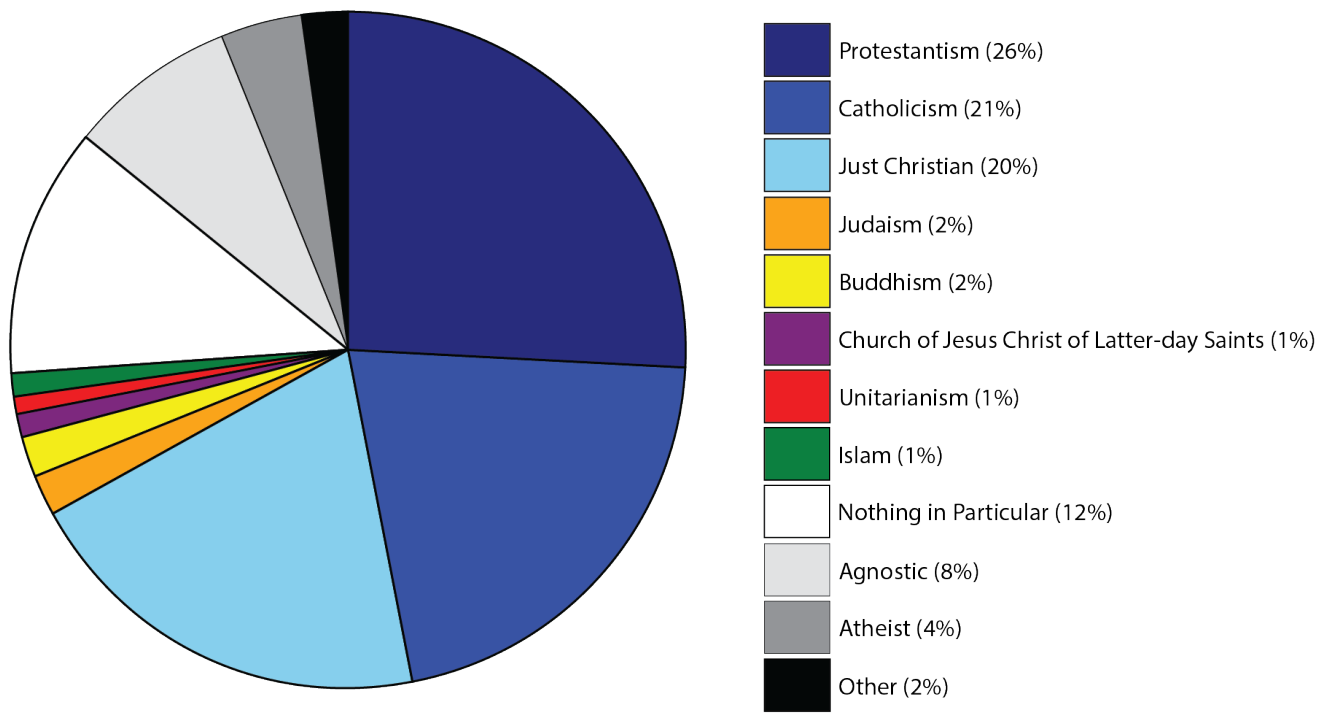
### OBJECTIVES

1. Policy Alignment and Revisions
2. HC Training at All Levels/All Service Components
3. HC Cares: Care Before, During, and After

## RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHICS

Religious demographics refers to statistical data relating to religious affiliation in a Wing, Delta, Group, and Squadron populations. This data can include the number of people who subscribe to a specific religion, age distribution within religious groups, levels of orthodoxy, and more.

The Chaplain Corps team can utilize their local unit “Alpha Roster” to generate Religious Demographic information. These demographics should be broken down for Commanders at the Wing, Delta, Group, Squadron to advise the Commander and their staff on religious demographics. Charts or graphs are a helpful tool to communicate data.



Self-identified religious affiliation in the United States (2023 *The Wall Street Journal-NORC* poll)

## COMMANDER'S INTENT

A Commander's intent outlines the mission, vision, goals, priorities, acceptable risks, and general guidance for the Wing, Delta, Group and Squadron. Commanders must provide clear intent regularly with their Wing, Delta, and Group Senior Religious Support Team (Sr RST). Providing clear intent with frequent vector checks will ensure sRST incorporate their Commander's intent and stay on target as they include it into all their ministry planning activities.

## ANNUAL MINISTRY PLAN (AMP)

The Wing, Delta or Group AMP is the sole document for effective and efficient employment of available resources. It is installation-based, Commander-driven and considers various funding sources (e.g., APF and CTOF), manpower, facilities, supplies, and equipment to carry out the wing or garrison or below wing or garrison-level mission. *AFI 52-101, 2.1* (Consult revised 52-101, 2.1 when released)

The planning process identifies, itemizes, contextualizes, and prioritizes the tactical-level deliverables and ministry requirements necessary to provide the best possible religious and spiritual care to Airmen and Guardians and their families. *AFI 52-101, 2.2* (Consult revised 52-101, 2.2 when released).

### AMP, HC READY! & COMMANDER'S INTENT

To incorporate the Commander's intent into all ministry planning employing HC Ready! sRST's should:

- Understand the Commander's objectives and HC Ready! priorities.
- Develop and execute an AMP that integrates the Commander's intent and HC Ready! priorities.
- Communicate how the AMP is aligned with the Commander's intent and implemented through HC Ready!
- Coordinate with MAJCOM Functional and receive AMP approval from local Commander.
- AFI References: 52-105, Chaplain Corps Resourcing (consult revised 52-105 when released).

## AFCCARS NEXT

The Air Force Chaplain Corps Activity Reporting System (AFCCARS) translates functional activities and strategic priorities into weighable and objective data. It tracks spiritual care and core activities. It assists in tactical, operational, and strategic trend analysis, risk assessment, execution planning, and manpower determination. See *AFI 52-101, 7.2.1*

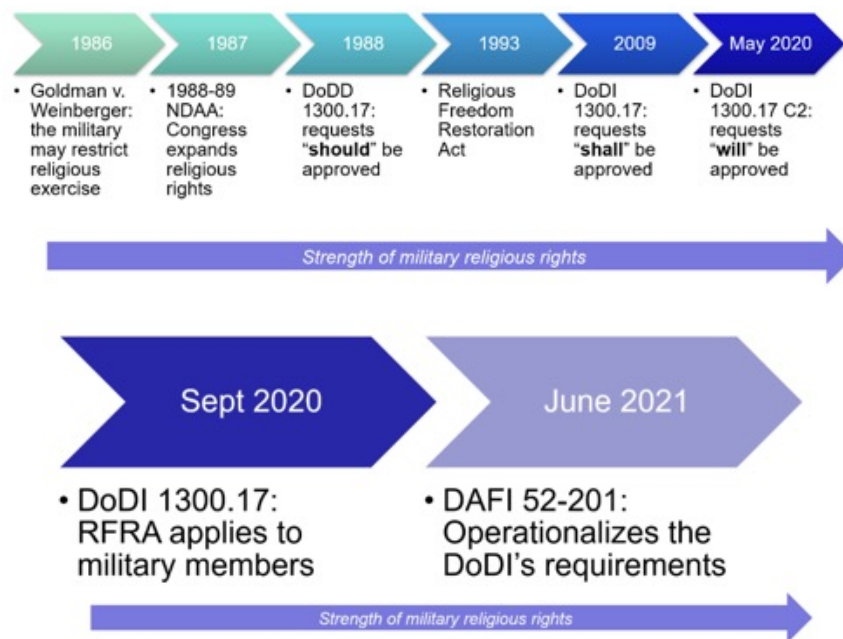
The sRST is empowered to use their local AFCCARS Data (wing, delta, group, squadron) in consultation with other integrated resilience caregivers to advise the Commander and their staff on counseling trends, morale issues, issues effecting readiness or impacting the unit's holistic health.

## RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Religious accommodation is one of the Chaplain Corps' three core capabilities. In accordance with 10 USC, § 8067 (h), chaplains provide religious worship, liturgies and rites, religious accommodation, pastoral care, unit engagement, counseling, and spiritual care. The Chaplain Corps assists all Airmen and Guardians in this capacity by "providing" or "providing for" their religious and spiritual needs. Furthermore, privileged communication is 100% confidential counseling afforded to members and their families by the Chaplain Corps.

### HOW WE GOT HERE

#### WHY THE RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION GUIDANCE FOR COMMANDERS HAS CHANGED.



Quick Reference:

1. Air Force Chaplain Corps, Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force, AFI 52-201
2. Religious Resolution Team (RRT) are a multidisciplinary team that advises commanders regarding resolution of religious liberty matters.<sup>3</sup>
3. The commander or any mandatory member of the RRT may convene the team for consultations.
4. The senior chaplain leads the RRT in providing recommendations to commanders on how to resolve religious matters.
5. Mandatory RRT membership: At the installation level, the commander (or designee), Senior Installation Chaplain (or equivalent), public affairs officer, and staff judge advocate. (T-2). For

issues involving medical exemptions for religious reasons, the team must include a medical provider. (T-2). The commander may add additional subject matter experts in accordance with the needs of the situation.

## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

**The Air Force Chaplain Corps Champions Religious Freedom as Airmen's first freedom.** Airmen do not forfeit their First Amendment right to religious free exercise when they commit to support and defend the Constitution. The right to practice one's religion or to observe no religion is fundamental.

The Department of Defense Instruction 1300.17, *Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services*, 22 Jan 14, states: *"The Military Departments will accommodate individual expressions of sincerely held beliefs unless there is an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline."* Furthermore, it is the DAF's, *"policy to place a high value on the rights of Airmen and Guardians to observe the tenets of their respective religions or to observe no religion at all. Through this policy, the DAF maintains an environment where members can realize their highest potential."*<sup>4</sup>

## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY TRAINING

Quick Reference:

1. The Department of Defense per DODI 1300.7 "requires" DoD Components to oversee the development and provision of education and training on the policies and procedures pertaining to the accommodation of religious practices of Service members."<sup>5</sup>
2. It is the *"Commander's responsibility to ensure all assigned members complete the Religious Freedom Training every three years. (T-1)."*<sup>6</sup>
3. AF/HC Religious Liberty Training Memo. (Public Law 116-283, William M. (Mac) Thornberry NDAA for FY 2021, Sec. 556).

Congress has mandated annual Religious Liberty Training. This training can be accessed on [MyLearning](#). This training replaces Free Exercise of Religion and Free Exercise of Religion for Supervisors.

## RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION EXAMPLES



Hijab



Yarmulke



Turban



Visible Markings



Tallit



Heathen/Asatru



Jewish



Muslim



Eastern Orthodox  
or Other Christians



Other (Sikh,  
Rastafarian, etc)



Christmas Tree  
Lighting



Bible on POW/  
MIA Table

Sample data set of 110 cases over 5 years from AF/A1. Note that besides readiness concerns, military “norms” have shifted back and forth on beards based on cultural norms, which again views beards as normative or even preferred.

Quick Reference:

1. Approval Authority: Per DAFI36-2903, Attachment 8, *Religious Accommodation and “Airman’s home station Wing Commanders or HAF, MAJCOM, NAF, FOA and DRU Directors (O-6/GS-15 and above) are the approval authority for only the following dress and appearance religious accommodation requests: 1) hijab; 2) beard; 3) indoor/outdoor head coverings; 4) turban or underturban/patka worn with unshorn beard and with unshorn hair. All other requests require AF/A1 decision.*<sup>13</sup>
2. Exceptions to Policy: *“Only AF/A1 may grant exception to policy of dress and personal appearance standards for religious accommodation not otherwise delegated to lower-level commanders in this instruction.”*<sup>14</sup>

## SPIRITUAL FITNESS

“An integrated approach to human flourishing.” - Ch, Maj Gen Trent Davis, 21st Chief of Chaplains

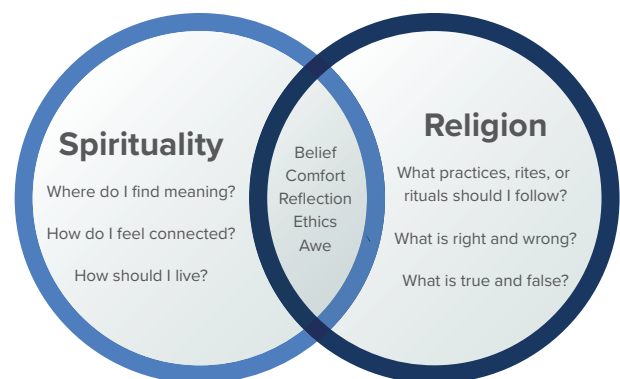
### SPIRITUAL FITNESS DEFINITIONS

- “The ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, or values needed to persevere and prevail in accomplishing missions.” (CJCSI 3405.01, 2011, A-2)
- “The ability to adhere to beliefs, virtues or values needed to develop a fulfilling life with quality of service.” (DAF 52-101 currently in coordination)

### SPIRIT, SPIRITUALITY, AND SPIRITUAL FITNESS

**Spirit:** The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs *Total Force Fitness (TFF)* framework noted the importance of supporting the warfighter’s *spirit*, highlighting that “a strong spirit promotes resiliency and enhances one’s ability to mitigate adverse responses to stress.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, human domain experts Sweeney, Hannah, and Snider note that *the spirit is an intrinsic human characteristic everyone is born with....an inborn spark that compels people to find meaning and is a driving force behind motivation.*<sup>8</sup> Chaplain Corps personnel specialize in fortifying the warrior’s heart and ubiquitous spirit integral to Total Force Fitness.

**Spirituality:** According to the Air Force Chaplain Corps, “spirituality is the means to find ultimate meaning and purpose in life.”<sup>9</sup> Spirituality emerges from the human longing to discover meaning and purpose in life. Chaplain Corps personnel are crucial in guiding and supporting others, encouraging healthy behaviors while helping members navigate life’s events. As time passes, Airmen & Guardians are supported along life’s journey to develop their unique spiritual practices through self-reflection and experimentation. These practices may involve religious or spiritual activities and coping mechanisms geared toward comprehending life’s significance and meaning. The spiritual stage helps individuals develop healthy practices that fulfill the drive toward finding *meaning*.<sup>10</sup> It also manifests in our wellness and impacts mental health, social interactions, and family relationships.<sup>11</sup>



**Spiritual Fitness:** As far back as 2011, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff identified the essential nature of spiritual fitness for the warfighter and defined it as “The ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, or values needed to persevere and prevail in accomplishing missions.” (CJCSI 3405.01, 2011, A-2). According to the Air Force Chaplain Corps, “*spiritual fitness is the ability to adhere to beliefs, virtues, or values needed to develop a fulfilling life with quality of service.*”<sup>12</sup> For some, this involves religious faith and practice; for others, religion is not a part of their spirituality. By incorporating a holistic spiritual fitness framework, the Department of Defense and Air Force Chaplain Corps operationalize spirituality to promote holistic health, resilience, and readiness for all Airmen, Guardians, and families. Like physical fitness, spiritual fitness must be nurtured, developed, and sustained by incorporating an intentional strategy to build strength and purpose. As spiritual development and religious ministry experts, the Chaplain Corps helps Airmen & Guardians increase their spiritual fitness by providing and recommending life-changing formation opportunities—on and off base.

## HOLISTIC SPIRITUAL FITNESS FRAMEWORK INTRODUCTION

Spiritual Fitness, as a component of Comprehensive Airman Fitness, significantly contributes to the Spectrum of Resilience for the Total Force. As the Total Force looks to optimize the holistic fitness of Airmen, Guardians, and families, the Chaplain Corps continues to lead in the spiritual domain. The following Holistic Spiritual Fitness concepts (CAF, Spectrum of Resilience, SF Components, and Spiritual Fitness Framework), provide RSTs a framework to empower them to creatively operationalize spiritual fitness across the Force.

Empirical evidence by Yale and Columbia Universities proves the universal, cognitive basis for spirituality and the criticality of regular practice of faith/spirituality in developing a thickened prefrontal cortex to counter chronic depression.



### 2018

- Yale Univ & Columbia Univ Cerebral Cortex journal
- brain-imaging studies (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging - fMRI)
- conducted in US, China, India & Brazil
- universal, cognitive basis for spirituality

### Left Inferior Parietal Lobule

- “*Neurobiological Home of Spirituality*”

### Prefrontal Cortex

- thickened through regular practice of faith/spirituality (vs. cortical thinning w/chronic depression)

## ACTIVE SPIRITUAL FITNESS LEADS TO:<sup>15</sup>

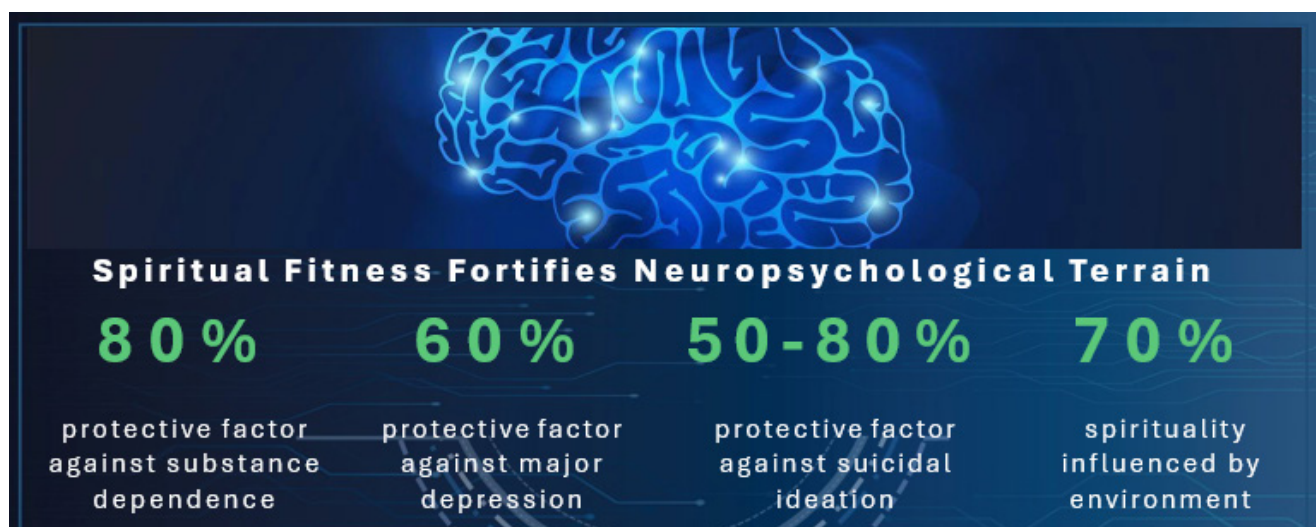
### More of This:

- Stronger parent-child relationships
- Educational aspirations & attainment
- Effective work habits
- Longevity & physical health
- Well-being & Happiness
- Higher recovery rates from addictions
- Self-control & self-esteem
- Stronger coping skills
- Charitable giving & volunteerism
- Community cohesion & social support

### Less of This:

- Fractured families
- Teen sexual activity
- Alcohol & drug abuse
- Suicide, suicidal ideation & depression
- Many infectious diseases
- Juvenile crime
- Violent crime
- Domestic violence

There is a physical and neuropsychological basis to the advantages provided by spiritual fitness. While the content of spirituality is metaphysical, the impact of spirituality manifests physically in the human brain. Recent research from Columbia and Yale Universities used MRIs to determine that spirituality and spiritual-focused behaviors result in activity in the left inferior parietal lobule (which integrates sensory input into higher-level meaning), and the prefrontal cortex (where judgment resides) (Cerebral Cortex Journal 2018). Given the importance of meaning in Airmen and Guardians finding the will to fight, sensory integration in sense-making, and the importance of judgment in combat decision-making, this research supports the correlation that spirituality fortifies key neuropsychological terrain for the operational environment.



## COMPREHENSIVE AIRMAN FITNESS (CAF)

### Resilience Domains and Tenants



*\*NOTE: a new definition of spiritual domain is currently in coordination*

## SPECTRUM OF RESILIENCE



## LESSONS FROM UKRAINE - SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR, FIGHT FOR, AND DIE FOR

In “after action” reviews with Ukrainian forces, the need for a strong Chaplaincy was a recurring refrain (CSAF Strategic Studies Group). In a conflict where mass casualty events were a normal occurrence, and few had not lost someone close in the course of fighting, the reality of the fight left the human soul to wonder. The diminished odds of survival forced Ukrainian warfighters to consider their ultimate reason for fighting, and if that reason was lacking, their combat effectiveness and unit cohesion dramatically suffered. Warriors needed something to live for, something to fight for, and

something to die for if they were to endure. In response to the growing demands placed on their warfighters, the Ukrainian Parliament officially established a military chaplaincy in 2023. Accordingly, the Ukrainian Chaplain Corps took on a character much like the D-Day chaplains, an essential element for warfighters. The future fight will likely be more like the Ukrainian experience than Balad or Bagram, and we should prepare accordingly.

## SPIRITUAL FITNESS COMPONENTS<sup>16</sup>

These components of spiritual fitness bridge the spiritual and the worldly, connecting core beliefs and values with the transcendent while guiding external behaviors like healthy relationships and ethical decision-making. These components help form a harmonious link between an individual's inner convictions and their interactions with the world, fostering a life of integrity and fulfillment.



## SPIRITUAL FITNESS DEVELOPMENT<sup>17</sup>

Spiritual fitness plays a pivotal role in our overall health and fitness, as it emanates from our inner core, offering profound purpose and meaning to our existence. It serves as a guiding light that diminishes anxiety, depression, and other emotional burdens by revealing how our struggles mold us into the individuals we are destined to become.

It is important to note that spiritual fitness need not be tied to any specific religion. While for some, religious beliefs and values are directly intertwined with their spiritual core, others find it in the connections to something greater than themselves. The true essence of spirituality lies in its ability to shape the foundation upon which our lives are built.



When we nurture our spiritual well-being, we gain a profound sense of direction, purpose, and fulfillment. Our struggles and challenges are no longer burdensome obstacles but transformative experiences that propel us towards growth and self-realization. By aligning ourselves with spiritual wellness, we unlock a deeper understanding of our journey, appreciating how every aspect of life contributes to the realization of our purpose.

Spiritual Fitness promotes positive spirituality that targets personal beliefs, values, and the connection to a higher power, which form one's core ethos. Simultaneously, it emphasizes behaviors fostering healthy relationships, ethical choices, interconnectedness, and positive engagement with the broader world. The Spiritual Core and 4 Spiritual Steps Framework are provided to assist RSTs, Airmen, Guardians, and their families to build and strengthen their spiritual core and holistic wellness.

## THE 4 SPIRITUAL STEPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR SPIRITUAL CORE



**Senior RSTs:** You and your trusted teams can work on (Spiritual Core, Purpose, People, Practices) any one or more of these that are most relevant. Try to develop clear objectives or ways your teams could operationalize these concepts.



## SPIRITUAL CORE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### PURPOSE

#### WHAT GIVES MY LIFE MEANING AND PURPOSE?

- Do I believe that my life has purpose?
- If no, why not? If yes, what is the purpose?
- What is my vision of the future?
- What is my hope for the future?
- What perceptions do I have about myself that give me inherent value?
- How do I answer the question, “Who am I?”

### PATH

#### WHAT IS MY SPIRITUAL PATH (FAITH-BELIEF-WORLDVIEW)?

- What does my worldview and associated beliefs say about who I am in relation to others?
- What mindset do I use to progress through life?
- What is this mindset based?
- What do I engage in that shapes this mindset?
- What am I reading to reinforce this mindset?

### PRACTICES

#### WHAT ARE MY MOST EFFECTIVE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES?

- What, if anything, has worked well? What has not worked?
- How do I typically respond when experiencing adversity?
- How can I improve my ability to cope with adversity?
- Over what do I have ability to exercise control?
- What can I do about adverse situations in my life I cannot control?
- How do I handle guilt and shame?

### PEOPLE

#### TO WHOM DO I FEEL MOST SPIRITUALLY CONNECTED?

- How am I reinforcing those connections?
- What connections cause significant distress?
- What are healthy ways I can disconnect from connections that cause significant stress?
- How can I mend damaged connections?
- Who, if anyone, do I need to forgive (to include myself)?
- What do I consider my spiritual community?

## HOW WE CARE IN OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

The following examples illustrate how RSTs care for warfighters and their family's religious and spiritual needs in complex and diverse operational environments.



**RSTs: Use these “How We Care” illustrations when speaking with Commanders, Airmen and Guardians.**



**Holistic Spiritual Fitness (HSF):** HSF is an integrated approach that incorporates religious and non-religious spiritually based practices (mindfulness, prayer, meditation, values exploration).



**Strong Teams:** RSTs can lead Emotional Intelligence (EQ) training events to build self-awareness, self-management, relationship management and social-awareness skills in individuals and teams. These events foster a healthy working environment and optimize teamwork and performance.



**Deployment Fitness:** Deployment represents a period of increased pressure and adaptation. Chaplain Corps personnel assist warfighters in strategizing to improve their performance and fortify their relationships. Spiritual strength fortifies the warfighter's readiness throughout the deployment lifecycle and enables them to find meaning in the experience.



**Religious Rites, Casualty Notification, and Memorials:** Chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen support the faith, beliefs, and values of members walking alongside them to support and sustain them throughout the many transitions and trials inherent to the profession of arms.



**Unit Engagement:** Religious Support Teams assigned and actively engaged in squadrons or squadron-like organizations conduct unit engagement. They advise leadership and provide spiritual care and resilience coaching sensitive to all members and their dependents' needs.



**Suicide Prevention & Postvention:** RSTs can educate members on ways to strengthen their purpose and connections in life to foster growth and community.



**Crisis Intervention/Faith-based Counseling:** Chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen are trained and equipped to provide intervention counseling to members and their authorized dependents in times of crises (Moral injury, SafeTALK, Post-Vention). Chaplains provide faith-based pastoral counseling to deliver solution-focused care.



**Strong Relationship:** Chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen offer a variety of on-demand relational support and enrichment opportunities for single and married members and their families.

## SPIRITUAL FITNESS INITIATIVES

**Moral Injury:** In “after action” reviews with Ukrainian forces, the need for a strong Chaplaincy was a recurring refrain (CSAF Strategic Studies Group). In a conflict where mass casualty events were a normal occurrence, and few had not lost someone close in the course of fighting, the reality of the fight left the human soul to wonder. The diminished odds of survival forced Ukrainian warfighter's to consider their ultimate purpose and reason for fighting, and if those were lacking, their combat effectiveness, morale, and unit cohesion dramatically suffered. Warriors needed something to live for, something to fight for, and something to die for if they were to endure.

Sir John Winthrop Hackett, noted “The function of the profession of arms is the ordered application of force in the resolution of a social or political problem.” The professionals in the profession of arms are experts in the management of violence. What happens when there is a struggle between the human will and the orders that must be followed or given?

There is the possibility of developing Moral Injury. Chaplain Corps personnel are being trained and equipped to support those who experience trauma and when necessary refer.

Moral Injury Definition: “The enduring consequences of perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, being the victim of, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations. It is a Soul Wound characterized by and resulting in feelings of guilt, shame, anger, and disgust within an individual.”

**HOPE:** HAF/HC established an innovative Peer-to-Peer Support Initiative called HOPE to mobilize, fight, and Fortify the Force across the Spectrum of Resilience.

Hope Specialists are volunteer leaders and embedded sensors for their units. They exist to grow as leaders and empower others to thrive by building connection, spiritual fitness, leadership, character formation, and resilience.

Every member receives standardized core training and current mission set training and meets volunteer requirements outlined in local HOPE Handbooks.

**Strong Bonds:** The Chaplain Corp’s first line of effort is Fortifying Warfighter Readiness which helps Airmen, Guardians, and their families be spiritually prepared for personal and professional success. Chaplain Corps members do this through religious accommodations and spiritual fitness programs such as Strong Bonds. Strong Bonds is a spiritual care program to enhance faith and equip religious and non-religious Airmen, Guardians, and their families.

#### Capability by Priority: Strong Bonds

Definition: Command-directed, chaplain-led program that strengthens spiritual readiness for Airmen, Guardians, of all ranks and their Families. One of the many Religious Support Team (RST) activities that supports the local Commanders Religious Support Plan through training that strengthens spiritual readiness and holistic wellness.

## **10 USC 1789 (PRE-2023); STRONG BONDS PROGRAM**

**Recipients:** Service Members and Immediate Family Members

**Authorized Support Services for chaplain-led events:** Transportation, food, lodging, childcare, supplies, fees, training materials, and associated activities.

**Scope:** Building and Maintaining Strong Family & Team Structure

## **10 USC 1789 (2023-PRESENT); STRONG BONDS PROGRAM**

**\*NDAA 2023 Expanded Scope:**

**Building and Maintaining Strong Family/Team Structure**

**Resiliency**

**\*Suicide Prevention**

**\*Holistic Wellness**

Strong Bonds supports the local commander's spiritual readiness support plan with training that:

- Builds and maintains strong family structure.
- Enhances resiliency.
- Supports suicide prevention.
- Enriches holistic wellness.

### Elements of Strong Bonds

- Executed via training events
- Menu of approved curricula
- Readiness Training & Certifications
- Half-day, 1-day and 3-day options

\*AFI 90-506 identifies Spiritual Fitness as one of the 4 domains of holistic wellness and integrated resilience. Strong Bonds is the Air Force and Space Force's primary program to meet spiritual fitness needs of Airmen, Guardians, and Families as identified by commanders.



Course Offerings: The Strong Bonds program contains a portfolio of courses, each with specific courses designed to strengthen leadership, family/team structures and relationships for singles, couples, and families.

- Active Choices for Happy Healthy Relationships
- AMLRS + The Mastery Series + Active Mindfulness for Strong Warriors, Active Choices by Active Relationships
- Active Romance for Lasting Love
- Crucial Conversations for Accountability, Mastering Dialogue
- Family Wellness: Survival Skills for Healthy Military Families
- Five Love Languages
- OXYGEN for Couples, OXYGEN for Parent/Teem, Tast of OXYGEN by Stronger Families
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People® Strong Bonds Suite 2.0 by Franklin Covey
- The Speed of Trust for Strong Bonds Suite by Franklin Covey
- Couple LINKS 9.0 Course: Our Home Runs 9.0 Course: PICK 9.0 Course: Ready & Resilient for the Fight; Spiritual Fitness Training
- Got Your Back v5 Course: PREP 8.0 v2 by Love Thinks, LLC
- Problematic Sexual Behavior Professional Certification (PSBP) by IITAP

**Project ReFuel Mobile App:** The Refuel App is an AI Holistic Human Performance App (mental, spiritual, social, physical) sponsored by the CSAF, AFRL, AETC, and Air University. The Chaplain Corps is contributing to its development to equip RSTs and users with spiritual fitness content, (mindfulness, prayer & mediation) and spiritual selfassessments to build, track and fortify holistic spiritual fitness and readiness. To learn more got to [www.projectrefuel.app](http://www.projectrefuel.app).

**Integrated Response Co-Location:** To improve ease of access for victims/survivors to support services, increase coordination and collaboration among co-located personnel, and enhance awareness of services provided to increase targeted and effective prevention activities. The DAF will provide a framework for co-location to formalize roles and responsibilities to support the implementation of the “*Operating Guidance for Co-Location Model and the Connect to Care Approach.*” The integration of Response services and Prevention efforts ensures Airmen/Guardians receive enhanced access to support, holistic care, and options for appropriate referrals through increased coordination and collaboration between and among personnel. (Reference updated DAFI90-6001\_DAFGM2023-01 upon release.)

## LEADERSHIP ADVISEMENT

Religious Support Teams advise Air & Space Force leaders at every level regarding religious issues, including respect for religious practices, ethical choices, moral leadership, character and matters of morale. Furthermore, they act as the chief consultants to leadership about the spiritual aspects of Comprehensive Airman Fitness, as outlined in AFI 90-5001, Integrated Resilience.<sup>18</sup> See quick reference for the most common areas RSTs provide advisement.

Quick Reference:<sup>19</sup>

1. Advisement related to the possible effects of religion at strategic, operational, and tactical levels.
2. Provide *insights* on the unit’s religious, ethical, morale, and moral well-being, as well as opportunities for expressing faith.
3. Consult on public prayer, memorials, prayer at official events and meetings, visits from religious endorsing entities, and interactions with civilian religious leaders and their communities.
4. Support and guide in addressing and facilitating requests for religious accommodation.
5. Provide details on the provision for religious observances and their potential implications for Airmen, Guardians, units, and mission.

## CONCLUSION

The Air Force Future Operating Concept (AFFOC) noted that “*Airmen must be able to prevail in six key “fights” as they apply airpower in defense of Allies, partners, and national interests.*”<sup>20</sup> The critical word the AFFOC uses consistently “fight” reminds us of the seriousness and importance of the soul care work we do in the profession of arms. The Chaplain Corp’s first line of effort is “Fortifying the Warfighter Spirit” which helps Airmen, Guardians, and their families be spiritually prepared for personal and professional success. Chaplain Corps members do this through *religious accommodations, spiritual fitness, and leadership advisement*. In the context of Reviving Warrior Ethos, Rebuilding our Military, and Restoring Deterrence, members of the Chaplain Corps assist Airmen, Guardians, and their families in adapting to ever-changing environments and unpredictable circumstances. This “Commander Orientation Toolkit” empowers Commanders and their RSTs to organize, train, and equip Chaplain Corps personnel at every echelon of leadership to achieve mission success and reach their highest potential. As the primary guardians of spiritual fitness, a component of CAF and Total Force Fitness the Chaplain Corps is part of a network of integrated resilience agencies that work together across the spectrum of resilience. As spiritual and religious ministry experts we must work together to become the compassionate and professional leaders the Air Force requires to ensure we are ready to accomplish our mission: *To inspire the spirit of the warfighter through religious accommodation, spiritual fitness, and leadership advisement.*

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Air Force Doctrine Publication 1, 10 March 2021
- 2 CSAF Action Orders: *Accelerate Change or Lose*, Updated Feb 2023
- 3 Air Force Chaplain Corps, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force*, AFI 52-201
- 4 Executive Summary, DODI 1300.7, Religious Liberty in the Military Services, <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/130017p.pdf>
- 5 Ibid. 6.
- 6 DAFI, 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force*.
- 7 Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2011). "Chairman's Total Force Fitness Framework." CJCSI 3405.01. Washington DC. A-2
- 8 Sweeney, P. J., Hannah, S. T., & Snider, D. M. "The Domain of the Human Spirit." In *Forging the Warriors Character*, edited by D. M. Snider and L. J. Matthews, 23-50. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007.
- 9 Air Force Chaplain Corps, Planning and Organizing, AFI 52-102 (see updated AFI once released)
- 10 Seligman, C. "Toward Healthy Spirituality: The Meaningful Connection Pathway Model." Academia. (2023). [https://www.academia.edu/105025618/Toward\\_Healthy\\_Spirituality\\_The\\_Meaningful\\_Connection\\_Pathway\\_Model](https://www.academia.edu/105025618/Toward_Healthy_Spirituality_The_Meaningful_Connection_Pathway_Model)
- 11 Total Force Fitness, *Spiritual Fitness*, www.health.mil. 2023
- 12 Air Force Chaplain Corps, *Planning and Organizing*, AFI 52-102 (see updated AFI upon release)
- 13 Department of the Air Force Instruction, AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of United States Air Force and Space Force Personnel*, 12 April 2022. A8. 1.2.
- 14 Ibid, A8.1.1.
- 15 Koenig, Harold G, Dana E. King, and Verna Benner Carson. Handbook of Religion and Health, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2012
- 16 Alexander DW, Abulhawa Z, and Kazman J, "The SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale: Measuring 'Vertical' and 'Horizontal' Spirituality in the Human Performance Domain" in Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling, 2020, 74(4):269–279.
- 17 Adapted from USASOC *Spiritual Performance Guide*. 2022 and Dr. Lisa Miller, Professor of Psychology, *The Importance of a Spiritual Core*, Spirituality Mind Body Institute, Teachers College, Columbia University. 2022. Spiritual Fitness Core: <https://vimeo.com/567031417>.

18 Air Force Chaplain Corps, *Planning & Organizing*, AFI 52-101

19 Air Force Chaplain Corps, *Planning & Organizing*, AFI 52-101

20 Air Force Future Operation Concept Executive Summary, 6 March 2023 [https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2023SAF/Air\\_Force\\_Future\\_Operating\\_Concept\\_EXSUM\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2023SAF/Air_Force_Future_Operating_Concept_EXSUM_FINAL.pdf)