

The best way to describe my ministry as Chaplain for the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office is that I often serve like a cooling chamber for a nuclear reactor. My ministry is mainly one of presence. An officer must always be concerned with keeping the peace while endeavoring to ascertain what is causing the difficulty. When people realize that I'm a pastor and not an officer they often calm down. (Not always as I have been assaulted on rare occasions.)

Sheriff Keith Lovin has tasked me to primarily serve as a safe listening ear to his officers and personnel. The law enforcement officer's pastor in private life, although trained in ministry, is not necessarily aware of the particular problems and dangers faced by officers. Law Enforcement personnel are also not allowed to freely share any details of specific cases with anyone outside of their department. I have received specialized training in the different aspects of law enforcement in how to best respond to my officers. They have learned to trust me and not look on me as a stranger. The officers have accepted me into their close knit family.

I spend Fridays at the department riding along on first and second shifts. Each week I ride with different officers for an entire shift. In this way I am able to spend quality time with each officer. I also have been trained to assist the officers on their calls, primarily serving as another eye and ear in order to assist. I am often present during moments of crisis and I'm able to focus more time on the emotional needs of the individuals involved, which frees the officer to do his job more efficiently.

The sheriff has also asked me to assist the department with making death notifications to families in our community. I also make death notifications to inmates incarcerated in our detention facility, which also houses low risk federal inmates. I am available to provide individual counseling to inmates as well. I also deploy with the S.W.A.T. team (special weapons and tactics squad) to provide assistance during these high risk missions. I am called out to most major incidents that occur in the county, such as homicides, traffic fatalities, airplane crashes, hostage situations, etc...

This ministry has provided me with the opportunity to be a witness for Christ with our officers and with the community. I am very grateful for the support of the elders and the congregation for allowing me the time to minister to this wonderful group of public servants. This ministry has widened my understanding of the harsh reality of evil and at the same time has challenged me to be compassionate and loving as Christ commands. **Matthew 9:12-13 (NIV)** ¹² *Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* I have found great joy in serving as a chaplain for twelve years having experienced much laughter as well as tears.