

Jim Driscoll-Chaplain D.Min. Interview Questions, March 29, 2020

1. What is your role with the D.Min. Military Chaplaincy cohort?

There are currently over 70 students enrolled in several cohorts of Wesley's Military Chaplaincy D.Min. programming. The most recent cohort began the first week of March 2020. The cohort that began in March 2019 returned to campus for class during the first week of March 2020 as well. A number of other students, at later stages in the program, are enrolled and engaged as they take classes online or write their D.Min. project/thesis.

In addition, Wesley currently has two cohorts of Army Chaplains involved in Chaplaincy D.Min. studies as they engage in Clinical Pastoral Education Residency at three Army Medical Centers across the country. The Army contracts with Wesley to provide D.Min. programming for these Army Chaplains as they train and specialize in pastoral care. This is a very unique partnership between Wesley and the Army, perhaps the only one of its kind in the country. These students were on campus in January (and would have returned in May if not for the pandemic. Their May classes have now gone online).

Wesley's Chaplaincy Doctor of Ministry program was the brainchild of Dr. Terry Bradfield, Wesley's former Vice President and a retired Army Chaplain. After retiring from the Vice Presidency, Terry continued on as Special Assistant to the President to develop and administer the Military Chaplaincy D. Min. program. Terry retired from these responsibilities in 2019 and I was selected to continue what he began.

As Special Assistant to the President, I am involved in all aspects of managing, supporting, and promoting Wesley's Military Chaplaincy Doctor of Ministry programming. I work closely with the Admissions Office to recruit students into the program. I work closely with the Development Office to raise money to underwrite the program. I work closely with the D.Min. Office to administer the program. Also an Adjunct Professor, I am the seminary's subject matter expert in military chaplaincy and, along with Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, co-teach the first course of the program which focuses on effective leadership as a military chaplain.

Our goal at Wesley is to offer the program tuition-free. This makes my role with the Development Office a key part of my responsibilities. I am regularly engaged in conversation with potential supporters who share a love for military chaplains. I hope to find persons who are willing to give generously so that chaplains can develop their gifts and graces for ministry and directly impact the men and women on the front lines in defense of our nation.

2. What are the strengths of the Wesley D.Min. program - Military Chaplaincy for active military chaplains, in your opinion?

The program is aimed at mid-career Military Chaplains, from all branches, reserve and active duty. This program gives these chaplains a unique opportunity to gain and sharpen ministry skills that they will utilize as they minister to military personnel and prepare to move into higher levels of responsibility. They gain exposure to effective leadership techniques, pastoral ministry skills, cross-cultural interaction, and ethical perspectives that will both enhance ministry in the present and enable them to advise and serve with senior military leadership. This is a practical degree that impacts military chaplains in their ministries here and now. These chaplains then directly impact the military personnel they support on the front lines of our national security.

3. Outline the programming and activities of the recent cohort residency, and the feedback from the students?

We offered two courses during the first week of March. David and I led the first-year students in a course in leadership. David gave a series of deep, rich, and practical leadership lectures drawing upon his many years of studying leadership and leading every day as seminary President. Each day, our class engaged with guest speakers who brought their wisdom from years of experience in the highest levels of military and government. White House officials, Generals from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Senior Enlisted Army Leaders, National Guard Officials, a Marine Corps University Dean, and the recently retired Surgeon General of the US Army were among the speakers who personally shared with the class. These guest speakers were truly a highlight of the week.

In addition, the second-year course, led by Dr. Clarke, studied cross cultural interactions and inter-religious engagement. They spent time in the classroom with Dr. Clarke and also visited several religious sites across Washington, DC.

4. Does the program foster community and strengthen military chaplains for their clearly challenging ministry here and overseas?

Fostering community is one of the strengths of the program. The chaplains come from a diversity of religious, military and cultural backgrounds. They engage with each other at a very deep level in the classroom setting. Their diversity, along with the diversity of the guest speakers, enriches their interactions and deepens their respect and understanding. The chaplains leave Wesley's program better equipped to minister to a very diverse population of military personnel and leaders. In addition, the program gives them deep personal and professional relationships that will accompany them throughout their lives. Many of the chaplains currently serve overseas (Germany, Korea, Japan,

Italy) and others are preparing to deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq. I believe our program prepares them to be more effective as they serve in all of these places.

5. What is the most memorable moment or comment from the cohort?

It is difficult to pinpoint one memorable moment for the class that David and I taught. (I cannot speak for Dr. Clark's class as I was not present with them in the classroom). While I believe that all of our guest speakers were very engaging, perhaps our Friday morning guests were most memorable. Our Friday guests were Major General (retired) Linda Singh and Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Pearlisa Wilson from the Maryland National Guard. MG Singh was the first African American woman to command a state National Guard. CSM Wilson was her right hand partner in leadership. The two of them, along with three other female senior leaders, were the first ever all-female team to lead a state's National Guard command. These two outstanding, strong, groundbreaking women leaders came to our group for a panel discussion with David. Their interaction, perspective, experience, and energy gave our group a truly unique insight into military leadership, gender issues in leadership, racial perspectives on leadership, and a glimpse into a future of strength in diversity. Their time with the group on Friday was a highlight that brought all of the week's discussions into focus and sent the group forward with hope and energy to continue to minister and serve and lead.

6. While I know you would recommend the military chaplaincy D.Min. program, but tell me why? If I was a young military chaplain (or not so young), what would you say? Is the program equally helpful for reserve chaplains as well as active duty chaplains?

I believe that any chaplain will benefit from Wesley's D.Min. program. The interactions, skills, and experiences will benefit both reserve chaplains as well as active duty. The reserve chaplains will not only have skills for chaplaincy, but can apply their learnings to whatever civilian settings they are also serving in. This program is an opportunity for personal growth, reflection, and interaction with diverse chaplains and leaders. Wesley is providing a laboratory for chaplains to develop new skills and a safe setting to share ideas and to think outside the box, going beyond what is their normal routine or comfort zone. Chaplains who are looking to grow as individuals, professionals, and chaplains will find that Wesley's D.Min. will push them to new levels of growth and skill.

7. Jim, I don't know your background, but I am guessing you are retired military? If not, tell me the gifts and graces you bring to the program.

I am a United Methodist Clergy member (Elder) in the Virginia Annual Conference and have served churches around Virginia for over 36 years. During that same time, I also served as a Chaplain with the Army National Guard and Army Reserves, attaining the

rank of Colonel. In 2014, the Army mobilized me onto active duty. I served full-time from August 2014 through November 2019, when I retired from the Army. During those years I served as the Deputy Command Chaplain of US Central Command (2014-15) and then at the Pentagon on the staff of the Army Chief of Chaplains (2015-2019). Upon retiring from the Army, my Bishop appointed me to the position I currently hold here at Wesley. I am a Wesley alumnus, holding both M.Div. and D.Min. degrees from Wesley. I come to the program with a depth of military experience, pastoral experience, and a deep love and loyalty to Wesley. I live in Chesapeake, Virginia with my wife, Katheryn, where I serve also as a Chaplain (part-time) with Chesapeake Regional Medical Center. We have two young adult children, Rebecca (husband Corey), an academic librarian in New Jersey, and Michael, a high school teacher with Fairfax County. In my spare time, I am pursuing a Master's Degree in Exercise Science and Wellness Coaching.