

Appalachian Trail Chaplaincy Job Description for Circuit Hiker Chaplain

In order to better serve the people of the hiking community, Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church supports the Appalachian Trail Chaplains. The Appalachian Trail Chaplain builds trust with hikers by serving with them on the trail. Each year since 2013, the Appalachian Trail Thru-Hiker Chaplain has embarked on a hike of the nearly 2200-mile footpath that winds its way from Georgia to Maine with the sole purpose of listening, helping and showing God's love to those he or she meet along the way. In 2018, the ministry was extended to include the AT Circuit Hiker Chaplain, who is similar to a Spiritual Ridge Runner, providing this same support to hikers encountered on sections of the trail throughout the hiking season. The Chaplain will answer in his/her service to the ATC Board.

Expectations of a Circuit Hiker Chaplain

Prior to Hiking:

- The Chaplain will prepare physically, mentally and spiritually for the rigors of the A.T.
- The Chaplain will model Wesleyan Theology, which is a theology of Grace: showing Christ's love to everyone, or "Love in action".
- The Chaplain will review principles of "Recovery Ministries" through printed materials of AA, NA, and Al-Anon; attendance at a local meeting; review of meetings scheduled in the area of service.
- The Chaplain will review approaches to counseling in personal crisis and trauma.
- Each Chaplain should chose an area of focus for the ministry that matches the hiker chaplain's gifts and talents.
- The Chaplain is commissioned by the Holston Conference United Methodist Church.
- The Chaplain will participate in psychological evaluation and/or background check if requested.

During the Trail Ministry:

- The Chaplain should actively seek times and space for meaningful conversation. This may require modifications in hike plans.
- The Chaplain should support each individual's spirituality, allowing the hiker to set the pace and tone of the relationship.
- The Chaplain will work to build and strengthen relationships with church communities and other partners along the Trail.
- The Chaplain will work to build connection to other communities through regular postings to social media, blogs, and the AT Chaplaincy website. The chaplain will also assist with program promotion through speaking engagements.
- The Chaplain will attempt to attend the Holston Conference's Annual Conference and report on current status of this ministry.
- The Chaplain will form a covenant community (board members, friends, ministers, chaplains) for review of each outing to define learning opportunities and growth. A report of this will be forwarded to the ATC Board for review.

Expectations of the ATC Board:

- The Chaplaincy Board will assist with training and advising to the Circuit Hiker Chaplain in all aspects of the mission.
- A Board Member will be appointed to stay in close contact with the Chaplain throughout the program to provide encouragement and discernment as needed in the covenant community and otherwise.
- The Circuit Hiker Chaplain will be informed of (and included in, when available) events of the ministry such as Convocation, Annual Conference for Holston and other conferences bordering on the AT, AT Kickoff (first weekend in March), Thru-hiker Chaplain's start and finish dates, Flip-Flop Festival, Association of Long-Distance Hikers, Trail Days.

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