

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. The Circuit Hiker position, which is similar to a Spiritual Ridge Runner, focuses on hiking and serving in the 429-mile Holston Conference section of the Appalachian Trail - Newfound Gap (northbound AT mile 208) to Pearisburg, VA (northbound AT mile 637). This section includes the towns of Hot Springs, NC; Erwin and Roan Mountain, TN; and Damascus, Bland, and Pearisburg, VA. Those interested in this position should provide a proposed hiking-plan for parts or all of this section (including proposed dates for the hike) along with a completed application. Priority will be given to those applicants who plan to hike parts or all of the Holston Conference section between April 30 and September 30, 2025. The Circuit Hiker 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 choose 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.

Revised **April 2024**