

Alton Police Chaplain responds to higher dispatcher, becomes first African American Chaplain to fill role

by Brittany Kohler, Content Manager
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Jason Harrison, 31, recently became the first African American Chaplain to be assigned to the [Alton Police Department](#) after swearing in during the City Hall Meeting, Feb. 26.

Interested in the profession, Harrison approached Alton Police Department's Chief of Poilice, Jason A. Simmons, about the idea of adding another chaplain to the Alton

Police Department. Chief Simmons agreed with his idea, knowing there was only one on staff, and spoke with Senior Chaplain Marc Lane about bringing him on the team. Not long after, Harrison went in for an interview, provided references and after some prayer, he was hired on as the first African American Chaplain of the Alton Police Department.

“The mission of the department chaplain is to provide a chaplain team that will strengthen the community and nurture and mend relationships through spiritual growth, that is biblically sound, while inclusive to all denominations,” stated Simmons, just before raising his right hand with Jason to swear him in under oath.

“I will be providing spiritual guidance and counseling to the police officers and others in the community,” said Harrison. “I will be more like a liaison, especially myself for minorities.”

Harrison is proud of his accomplishments and is looking forward to the road ahead.

“I just like to look at how far we’ve come,” said Harrison. “I am the first ever African American Police Chaplain of Alton and that’s just awesome.”

Chief Simmons says Jason fits the position perfectly.

Jason is an Alton native and for nearly 9 years now, he has served along side his father and mother, Pastors Gregory and Eddie Mae Harrison. Jason currently serves as a youth pastor at the Deliverance Temple Complex in Alton. Jason is also the head chef at [The Dragonfly Cafe](#) in the [Riverbender.com Communtiy Center](#).

“I am very excited about this new adventure and hope to do a good job,” said Harrison. “I vow not to make God ashamed and surely not the City of Alton.”

Some people may not realize that Police Officers endure many hardships and witness atrocious and difficult conditions on a daily basis that a normal person would never want to experience. These experiences can alter one’s state of mind. The police chaplain is there for them to talk to and get spiritual guidance, counseling and comfort in times of crisis.

“I had a different view of police officers coming in,” said Harrison. “But now that I am in their world, I get to see things from their side and some of the stuff they have to deal with.”

In the department, there are officers that experience things that nobody should ever have to experience, said Lane. They need the opportunity to work through those things.

“Law enforcement is constantly ‘jockeying’ for the number one position in three areas: divorce, suicide, and alcoholism,” said Senior Chaplain Marc Lane, who has been affiliated with the police department for many years. “It is because of what they deal with on a daily basis.”

When it comes to supporting the community, the opportunity there is to provide those same resources that are there for the department, for the community.

Not long ago, there was an armed robbery at a nearby Liberty Bank. Lane was immediately dispatched to the scene as a member of the department. Lane spent time with all the employees that were shaken up and helped them work through the traumatic experience they just encountered.



“Our duties are first to support the officers, their families and other employees of the department,” said Lane. “Second, we offer services to our community by supporting businesses, neighborhoods and families. And finally, we work as a liaison to bring all of those together.”

Training and experience is what is going to make the Chaplain Team successful. Lane and Harrison both will be traveling to Indiana for a three-day training seminar in March called International Conference of Police Chaplains.

Harrison says he is grateful to have a mentor like Senior Chaplain Lane, who has paved the way for Harrison to spring in and assist.

“He has always reminded me to stay focused,” said Harrison. “I could not ask for anyone better to lead me in the right direction with this position.”

“The advice I would give Jason as he steps up to the plate is the same advice I would give the officers,” said Lane. “If you are really wanting to see things happen the way they are suppose to happen...look up.”