
7-27-2021

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 27, 2021

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Same Orders, Different Uniform: Pastor Joins Air National Guard as Chaplain

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Capt. Seth Johnson, a 1996 graduate of Cedarville University, recently entered a new phase of ministry, transitioning from a church pulpit to serving as a chaplain in the Connecticut Air National Guard.

Johnson, who graduated with a [pre-seminary degree](#), made the transition to military life after 20 years of pastoral service. Johnson serves at Bradley Air National Guard Base in Enfield, Connecticut, with his brother-in-law, Col. Sean Brennan, and his son, Airman First Class Lucas Johnson, a member of a C-130 transport plane flight crew. Another of Johnson's sons, Sgt. Corbin Johnson, serves as a combat medic in the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Brennan had encouraged Johnson to consider ministry opportunities in the National Guard for a number of years, saying the experience would develop his leadership and ministry skills. And, he would be providing a valuable service to the military.

"With two sons in the military and my brother-in-law and a host of others that we have been involved with, even going all the way back to Cedarville, we saw a great need for ministry and chaplains serving airmen and soldiers," Johnson said.

Based on his academic and ministry experience, Johnson was commissioned directly as a captain. As part of this commission, he will attend officer training school, which covers classroom and leadership content, and according to Johnson, "a significant physical component."

Though officer training is still ahead, Johnson's pastoral experience has been its own spiritual basic training, and then some.

"The chaplain's office has a distinct role in the military, and I think there is a good need for people who have been seasoned through ministry; nothing really surprises me," Johnson said.

"Chaplains are a pressure relief valve for airmen and command to discuss life and military issues in complete confidentiality," he explained. "Our role is to engage our assigned units as much as possible and build a relationship of trust with the men and women who serve. We also facilitate weekend events for singles, couples, and families that have workshops to strengthen relationships and guide issues related to growth in life."

Johnson also said that Cedarville prepared him well for both the pastorate and chaplaincy. He initially studied in Cedarville's nursing program before transferring to the [Bible department](#). While there, he was

greatly encouraged by former professors Dr. Richard Blumenstock, Dr. David Drullinger and Dr. David Warren, as well as [Dr. Chris Miller](#) and [Dr. Daniel Estes](#), who still teach at the school.

He also benefited from Cedarville's Christ-centered environment, specifically thanking Jeff Beste, director of strategic relations, for being a "godly and good representative of Christ and encouraging students." When Johnson attended Cedarville, Beste was the resident director for Rogers, Marshall, Carr and Palmer Halls.

Cedarville's proximity to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base would also prove influential. As a college student, he served one-and-a-half years as a youth pastor in Beaver Creek, just 25 minutes from campus. Many military families attended the church, including a family that hosted him during the summer and for meals throughout the academic year.

"I learned living with their family the intricacies of military life and how there were difficulties and joys in it," Johnson said.

Johnson has already been encouraged by his interactions with those on his base.

Even when speaking with those who hold different beliefs about God, he's been able to share what he believes and why.

"It's kind of bearing the fruit of the instructions of Scripture, where it says be ready in season and out of season, always ready to give an answer of the hope that is within you."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community; rigorous academic programs, including the [Master of Divinity](#), [Advanced Master of Divinity](#) and [Accelerated Bachelor of Arts and Master of Divinity](#) programs; strong graduation and retention rates; accredited professional and health science offerings; and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

Written By Bryson Durst