

Chaplain Alexander Goode (1911–1943)
GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THE HIGHEST DUTY

STUDENT AND TEACHER RESOURCES

Created by the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington
Lillian & Albert Small Jewish Museum

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Classroom resources developed for JHSGW by Erin McCormally, Education Specialist,
with assistance from Nathalie Lavine, Curatorial Associate, and Sharon Barry.

Designed by Addison Hall. Poster designed by Jeanne Krohn.



Dear Friends:

Enclosed are educational resources to help incorporate Jewish American Heritage Month into your curriculum. We've created these teacher and student resources (appropriate for 7th–12th graders) to accompany our poster on Chaplain Alexander D. Goode and the Four Chaplains.

This year's feature on Chaplain Goode launches the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington's poster series, *Local Stories*. Each May, we will release teaching posters and resources to heighten awareness of Jewish American history, culture, and heritage. Next year's poster will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the United State's recognition of the State of Israel in 1948. I hope you will find these resources useful for years to come.

Enclosed is information on the Four Chaplains, Chaplain Goode, and Jewish American Heritage Month. Also included are discussion questions to use with your class, a two-page activity analyzing a commemorative stamp, and a list of additional resources.

More information on our educational programs, walking tours, and field trips can be found on our website, www.jhsgw.org.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance, or if you would like additional copies of the poster and resources. I can be reached by phone at (202) 789-0900 or by email at info@jhsgw.org.

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1876 Historic Synagogue Site:

A project of Save America's Treasures
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The Four Chaplains and the *Dorchester*



January 23, 1943: Four Army chaplains boarded the U.S. Army Transport ship *Dorchester*—an overcrowded, 18-year-old ship carrying more than 900 soldiers and civilian workers to a new command base in southwestern Greenland. The four chaplains were Chaplain Alexander Goode (a Jewish rabbi), Chaplain George Fox (a Methodist minister), Chaplain Clark Poling (a Dutch Reformed minister), and Chaplain John P. Washington (a Roman Catholic priest, also called Father).

While onboard the *Dorchester*, the four chaplains became friends—united by their military service, dedicated to their fellow soldiers and their respective faiths. They shared similar motivations for enlisting in the army. Three of the four chaplains enlisted after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. The fourth, Chaplain Fox, was a military hero in World War I. After Chaplain Goode graduated from Army Chaplain School, he was assigned to an American Army base but asked to be shipped overseas with troops in combat. Washington also requested to be stationed overseas in a combat area.

At a time when more Americans focused on what separated them than on what united them, the four chaplains embraced interfaith relationships and worked together to boost morale among the troops through humor, song, and prayer. Each chaplain opened his religious services to men of all faiths on the *Dorchester*. Some soldiers attended all four services each week.

On February 3, 1943, just miles off the Greenland coast, a German U-boat torpedoed the ship. In the ensuing pandemonium, the four chaplains calmly directed their fellow soldiers to lifeboats. When dozens of men were left without life jackets, the four chaplains gave up theirs and joined arms at the ship's railing—praying and singing hymns to men on lifeboats and in the water.

The ship sank 27 minutes later, taking the chaplains with it. All four drowned and were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart. A three-cent stamp issued in 1948 memorialized the chaplains. In 1961, a new medal—the Chaplain's Medal for Heroism—was specially created for Goode and the other chaplains and awarded to surviving family members. The chaplains are also commemorated in a stained-glass window at the National Cathedral and at the chapel in the Pentagon. An interfaith chapel at Valley Forge is dedicated to them.



Special Medal for Heroism presented posthumously to the Four Chaplains.

Image courtesy of TheHistoryPlace.com



A three-cent stamp issued in 1948 memorialized the chaplains.

Chaplain Alexander D. Goode

Chaplain Alexander Goode (1911–1943)

Gave His Life for the Highest Duty



Chaplain Alexander Goode was born in Brooklyn in 1911 and grew up in Washington, D.C., where he graduated from Eastern High School. Rabbi Goode served Washington Hebrew Congregation during the summers while studying for his rabbinic ordination at Hebrew Union College. Following in the footsteps of his father, Rabbi Hyman Goodekowitz, Goode was ordained in 1937. He served first at a synagogue in York, Pennsylvania, and soon became known in the Reform Jewish community for his writings on important issues of the times. As early as 1933, Rabbi Goode was concerned about Hitler's rise to power and the impending consequences for German Jews.

In 1941, Goode tried to join the Navy and become a chaplain but was told he was not needed. He was accepted by the Army after the attack on Pearl Harbor and completed Army Chaplains School. He was assigned to an airbase in North Carolina but soon transferred to a combat area at his request.

On January 23, 1943, at age 32, Chaplain Goode boarded the Army Transport ship *Dorchester*—an overcrowded 18-year-old ship carrying more than 900 soldiers and civilian workers to a new command base in southwestern Greenland. On February 3, 1943, just miles off the Greenland coast, a German U-boat torpedoed the ship. In the ensuing pandemonium Chaplain Goode, Chaplain George Fox (a Methodist minister), Chaplain Clark Poling (a Dutch Reformed minister), and Chaplain John P. Washington (a Roman Catholic priest, also called Father) calmly directed their fellow soldiers to lifeboats. When dozens of men were left without life jackets, Chaplain Goode and the other chaplains gave up theirs, and the four joined arms at the ship's railing—praying and singing hymns to men on lifeboats and in the water.

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Rabbi Alexander Goode.

Jewish American Heritage Month



President George W. Bush has proclaimed May to be Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM). As President Bush stated: “The Jewish people have enriched our culture and contributed to a more compassionate and hopeful America.”

U.S. Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL) sees this month as an opportunity for educators to heighten awareness of American Jewish history, culture, and heritage. Many Americans have a limited understanding of the Jewish people and their cultural and historical roles in our nation’s development.

JAHM programs will help expand cultural understanding and help combat stereotypes and anti-Semitism, which are on the rise in our country. According to FBI Hate Crime Statistics from the past five years, the majority of religiously motivated hate crimes in America are anti-Jewish. Since 2002, religiously motivated hate crimes against Jews have been almost six times greater than those against any other religious group.

President Bush stated that “Jewish American Heritage Month is also an opportunity to remember and thank the many Jewish Americans who defend our ideals as members of the United States Armed Forces. These courageous men and women risk their lives to protect their fellow citizens and to advance the cause of freedom. By helping bring the promise of liberty to millions around the world, they lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.” With this in mind, the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington selected the story of Chaplain Alexander Goode to launch our annual poster series (with accompanying teacher resources): *Local Stories*.

The full text of the President’s proclamation is available at the Jewish American Heritage Month website: www.jewishheritage.us.

Below: Official proclamation of Jewish American Heritage Month.



Background on Chaplains



Chaplains are members of the clergy (i.e., formal religious leaders) who are not affiliated with a particular congregation, church, synagogue, or mosque. They often serve military units and private chapels like those in hospitals, ships, colleges, and boarding schools.

In the American military, chaplains provide spiritual support and guidance for troops. They also conduct religious services for troops overseas and on military bases. Chaplains are identified by religious symbols on their uniforms: Christian chaplains wear a cross; Jewish chaplains wear tablets of the 10 Commandments with a Star of David on top; and Muslim chaplains wear a crescent.

Before the Civil War, the law stated that chaplains had to be Christian. During the Civil War, the Jewish community protested this injustice. In 1862, after hearing from members of the Jewish community, President Abraham Lincoln asked Congress to pass a new law opening the chaplaincy to other religions. Since World War I, rabbis have been recruited and trained for military service. Many served in combat areas during World War II—conducting Shabbat services, leading Passover seders, and officiating at other Jewish holidays.

Today, Jewish chaplains serve in many places around the world, including in Iraq. In the Washington, D.C. area, Jewish chaplains serve at Bolling Air Force Base, Fort Meyer Military Community, Bethesda Naval Hospital, and Walter Reed Army Medical Center, among other locations.

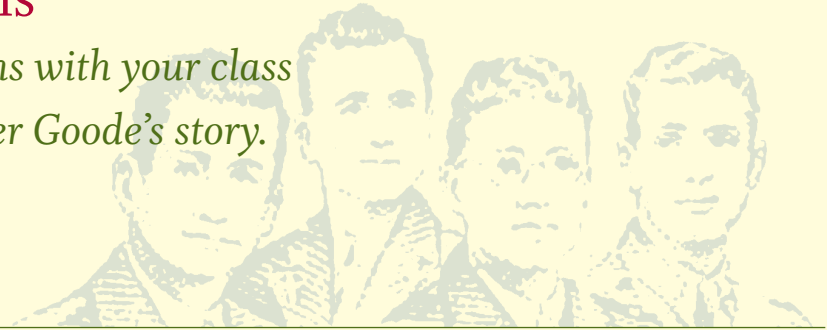


A Jewish chaplain leads religious services for soldiers during World War II.

JHSGW Collection. Gift of Rabbi Tzvi and Esther Porath.

Discussion Questions

Use these discussion questions with your class after sharing Rabbi Alexander Goode's story.



1. The four chaplains became known as “the immortal chaplains,” and their sacrifice is universally regarded as heroic. What makes them immortal?

2. What is your definition of a hero?

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (2nd edition) defines *hero* as:

- A person of distinguished valor or fortitude.
- A central personage taking an admirable part in any remarkable action or event; hence, a person regarded as a model.

How do those definitions relate to the four chaplains?

What is the difference between a hero and a celebrity?

Can you think of modern-day heroes who demonstrate the qualities listed above?

Do you know anyone personally who qualifies as a hero? What makes him or her a hero?

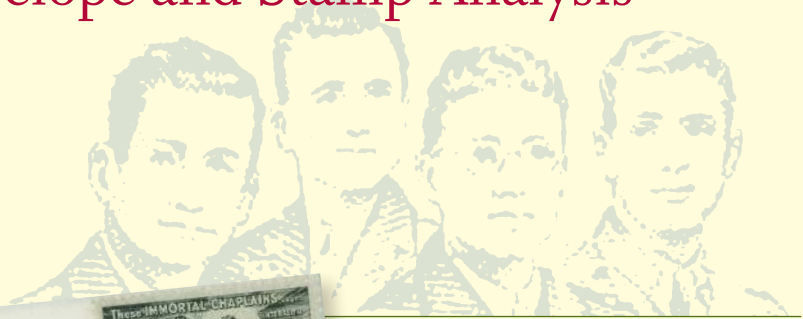
Some recent heroes in the news include Liviu Lebrescu, a Holocaust survivor and aeronautical engineering professor, who was killed during the Virginia Tech shootings on April 16, 2007. Lebrescu blocked the doorway with his body, allowing his students to flee. Marine Cpl. Jason Dunham, died in Iraq in 2005 when he used his Kevlar helmet to absorb the impact of a live hand grenade, thus saving the lives of three fellow marines.

3. In 1943, it was unusual for men of three different faiths—Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant—to become friends. In a time where Americans focused more on what separated them than on what they had in common, the four chaplains became friends by focusing on their shared experiences and religious devotion.

Are Americans different now than they were in 1943? Do we still tend to focus on our differences? Or do we have a better appreciation for our similarities? Consider both general relationships and interfaith relations. Provide some specific examples from your own experience.

4. In addition to their friendship, the four chaplains shared a knowledge of all faiths and compassion for all the soldiers on board the *Dorchester*. They ate dinner together and even organized a variety show to help raise morale on the ship. Think about how unusual this was in 1943. How do you think that openness affected men on board the *Dorchester*?

Commemorative Envelope and Stamp Analysis



- ◀ Rev. George Fox (Protestant, Methodist)
- Rabbi Alexander Goode (Jewish)
- Rev. Clark Poling (Protestant, Dutch Reformed)
- Father John Washington (Roman Catholic)

A “First Day Cover” is a special envelope postmarked with the date a stamp is first available. The envelopes features artwork about the stamp’s theme and are collected by stamp enthusiasts.

In the top left corner of the First Day of Issue envelope are two symbols. What are they? What does each represent?

Below the image of the book with portraits of the four chaplains is a banner that says “Unity in Brotherhood: Three Faiths, One God.” What makes the four chaplains a brotherhood? How are they united despite their differing faiths?

The commemorative stamp in the right-hand corner was issued in 1948 to celebrate the heroism of the four chaplains. Is this an effective way to honor heroes? What are some other ways that we remember heroes?

What does the stamp say?
What do the two main phrases mean to you?



What does the stamp show? Describe what's happening in the image and what each detail means to you.

Additional Resources

Check out these sources to learn more about
Chaplain Goode and the Four Chaplains.

“A Higher Duty,” by Barry M. Sax

[www.reformjudaismmag.net/03fall/highduty.shtml]

This article originally appeared in the Fall 2003 issue of *Reform Judaism*. The full text is available online and provides a great overview of Goode, life on the *Dorchester*, and the German attack.

“Rabbi Alexander Goode: Chaplain/Hero of World War II,” by Seymour “Sy” Brody

[www.fau.edu/library/br099.htm]

This chapter on Rabbi Goode was originally featured in Sy Brody’s book, *Jewish Heroes and Heroines in America: A Judaica Collection Exhibit*. It is now featured in an online exhibit of the Florida Atlantic University Libraries.

The Immortal Chaplains Foundation

[www.immortalchaplains.org]

The Immortal Chaplains Foundation was developed in 1997 by David Fox, nephew of Chaplain George Fox, and Rosalie Goode Fried, the daughter of Chaplain Alexander Goode (died, 1999). It shares the story of the four chaplains and the *Dorchester*. Each year, on February 3, the foundation presents a Prize for Humanity honoring those who “risked all to protect others of a different faith or ethnic origin.”

Image of the U.S. Army Transport Ship *Dorchester*

[www.purplehearts.net/ssdorchesterpic.jpg]

The Four Chaplains: Sacrifice At Sea

Documentary produced for the Hallmark Channel by Faith & Values Media, 2004.

This 50-minute documentary includes interviews with *Dorchester* survivors, current Army chaplains, and family members of the four chaplains. More information about the documentary can be found online at www.thefourchaplains.com.

***No Greater Glory: The Four Immortal Chaplains and the Sinking of the *Dorchester* in World War II*, by Dan Kurzman**

New York: Random House, 2004.

Washington Post Articles about the Four Chaplains

Available through online archives such as ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

“4 Chaplains to Be Honored by Hero Stamp.” *The Washington Post* 22 May 1948: 12.

Folliard, Edward T, “Heroic Chaplains Called Examples of Kind of Faith World Needs Now.” *The Washington Post* 4 February 1951: M1.

“Kin of Hero Chaplains Get Medals.” *The Washington Post* 19 January 1961: B8.

***Dorchester* Survivor Interviews**

[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLWtfVsYrA0>]

Or search YouTube.com for “Immortal Chaplains.”

Contact Us

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