

CHAPLAINS' MANUAL

Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCCMP, also known as the PRCC)

Revised 1984, 1989, 2000, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023

PRCCMP Member Denominations:

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)

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Greenville SC 29607
arpc@arpsynod.org
www.arpchurch.org
(864) 232-8297

Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)

8626 Beekman Place, 26c
Alexandria, VA 22309
www.KAPC.org
(443) 520-5242

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

607 North Easton Road
Building E, Box P
Willow Grove PA 19090
www.opc.org
(215) 830-0900

Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

c/o Mission to North America
1700 North Brown Road, Suite 101
Lawrenceville, GA 30043-8143
www.PRCC.co
(678) 825-1200

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

7408 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15208
www.reformedpresbyterian.org
(412) 731-1177

PRCCMP Associate Member Denominations:

Korean Presbyterian Church in America - Kosin (KPCA)

Rev. Hyung Gwun Kim - Moderator
1345 S. Dayton Street, Denver, CO 80247
www.kosinusa.org
(303) 750-0696

United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

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CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I — NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel.

ARTICLE II — PURPOSES

“The Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel is a ministry of member denominations dedicated to obeying Christ’s Great Commission by providing men to serve as chaplains in military and civilian organizations. The Commission endorses and ecclesiastically supports ordained, qualified chaplains; approves chaplain candidates; and helps presbyteries and congregations in biblical ministry to military personnel and their families. - PRCCMP Mission Statement

The Commission is the chaplain endorsing agency of its member denominations (not an ecclesiastical commission in the technical sense). The Commission was created to assist in carrying out their ministries to members of the Armed Forces and other institutions. Since the primary structure of such ministries is through formal chaplaincies, the principal activity and concern of the Commission shall be with chaplains.

In carrying out its mission, the Commission functions in the following ways:

- A. Maintaining liaison with the appropriate contact point of each member denomination, and through their various presbyteries, to:
 - 1. Provide current information regarding criteria, policies and procedures for the appointment of ministers as chaplains.
 - 2. Provide a technical service to the presbyteries by recommending qualified candidates to the Chaplaincy.
- B. Maintaining cooperative relationships with the Armed Forces Chaplain Board and the leadership of military and other institutional chaplaincies by:
 - 1. Certifying to the proper agencies the ecclesiastical endorsements approvals granted by the member denominations through their various presbyteries.
 - 2. Serving as a representative body for problems referred by or concerning chaplains, both individually and collectively.
- C. Maintaining contact and liaison with individual chaplains serving in the Armed Forces and other institutions through regular reports, newsletters, written correspondence, and personal visits as authorized by the Commission.
- D. Establishing and maintaining methods of liaison with individual congregations of the member denominations to assist them in providing adequate ministry to their members while they are separated from the particular church during periods in the Armed Forces and other institutions.
- E. Keeping member denominations informed of significant developments, trends, issues and problems concerning chaplains and members of the Armed Forces and other institutions and to report annually on the activity of the Commission to each member denomination through the proper agencies.
- F. Assisting the presbyteries in the promotion of the ministry of the Chaplaincy to the member denominations and their particular churches.

ARTICLE III — MEMBERSHIP

The Commission is made up of the following member denominations:

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
2. Korean American Presbyterian Church
3. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
4. Presbyterian Church in America
5. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

Any member denomination may withdraw from the Commission by act of its General Assembly/Synod.

Any denomination seeking membership in the Commission shall:

1. Submit a letter of application for membership to the Commission no later than 1 January of the year in which it desires membership.
2. Be approved by vote of all current member denominations at their General Assembly/Synod.

Each member denomination or its responsible committee shall elect its representatives to serve as voting members of the Commission, with qualifications and terms to be set by the member denominations.

Each denomination shall be entitled to three Commission members for its first fifty thousand members or portion thereof. One Commission member may be added for each additional fifty thousand members or portion thereof.

The Commission may serve as the endorsing agency for applicants of associate member denominations that are in doctrinal agreement with the standards of the member denominations. The Commission will only entertain applications from denominations that are members of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) for associate membership in the PRCCMP. Formal applications from prospective associate member denominations will be handled on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to approval at the next meeting of the Commission.

ARTICLE IV — INCORPORATION

The Commission shall be incorporated under the corporation laws of the State of Colorado relating to non-profit, religious corporations.

ARTICLE V — RULES OF ORDER

The Commission shall regulate its own proceedings in accordance with its Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, By-Laws, and Roberts Rules of Order (current edition). Any portion of the By-Laws and their rules of order, except Article VII of the By-Laws, may be temporarily suspended by a two-thirds vote.

ARTICLE VI — FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Commission shall be financially supported primarily through contributions of member denominations and donations from interested individuals, churches and groups. Commission income shall be supplemented by the dues of endorsed chaplains.

- A. The financial support of the Commission shall be primarily the responsibility of the member denominations, for whom the Commission endorses and supports chaplains.
 - 1. Each denomination shall contribute a specific annual amount for each endorsed chaplain.
 - 2. In addition, the Commission shall be free to communicate with and to receive donations from individuals, churches or other organizations, both within and outside of the member denominations.
 - 3. Each denomination shall be responsible for all expenses incurred by its own representatives at any meetings of the Commission or its committees.
- B. Chaplains also have a responsibility to share in the cost of their endorsement and support. Chaplain dues, as distinct from denominational contributions, will be assessed and received as follows:
 - 1. Amounts of chaplain dues shall be reviewed by the Commission at least biennially.
 - 2. Every endorsed chaplain shall pay a designated amount of annual dues. Requests for waivers of dues shall be considered by the Commission when received in writing.
 - 3. A chaplain may request his church, presbytery, or denomination to pay some or all of his dues, or a presbytery or denomination may elect to contribute all or part of their chaplains' dues to the Commission.
 - 4. If a chaplain's dues remain unpaid, and a waiver request is not approved by the Commission, the Executive Director shall inform his denominational representatives on the Commission. The Chaplain's denomination will become responsible for the dues, and will deal with the chaplain through presbytery as it desires. Failure to pay dues by the chaplain or his supporting

church, etc. (see #3 above), or by the denomination to cover for the chaplain (as stated above in this section), may lead to the withdrawal of endorsement.

ARTICLE VII — STAFF

The Commission shall have as its chief operating officer an Executive Director, and may hire such other personnel as it may determine.

ARTICLE VIII — AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended only by written submission of proposed amendments to each member denomination and by subsequent approval of each denomination at their annual General Assembly/Synod. Proposed amendments shall be provided to members of the Commission with at least twenty days prior notice to the date of the meeting. If a constitutional quorum is present, a 3/4ths vote shall be required to submit a proposed amendment to member denomination's General Assembly/Synod for approval.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I — THE OFFICERS

The Commission shall have the following officers to be elected annually: chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary.

ARTICLE II — MEETINGS

The Commission shall meet twice each year at a time set by the Commission. One meeting will be in-person; the other may be via electronic means. The chairman may call special meetings (either in person or via electronic means) of the Commission by petition of at least one-third of the membership, representing at least two member denominations.

ARTICLE III — COMMITTEES

- A. The Commission may establish committees as required to facilitate the business of the Commission. The Chairman will be responsible for appointing members of these committees.
- B. The Commission may establish an Executive Committee to meet as required during the course of the year between the regular meetings, at the discretion of the Executive Director and with the concurrence of the Chairman of the Commission.
 - 1. The purpose of the Executive Committee will be to assist the Executive Director in making decisions usually reserved for the full Commission when such decisions need to be made between meetings.
 - 2. The Commission will review and affirm or amend actions of the Executive Committee at its next stated meeting. The authority to make or amend Commission policy remains solely with the full Commission.
 - 3. The Commission in consultation with the Executive Director will select Commission members able and willing to serve on the Executive Committee and meet as often as required in conducting the business of the Commission.
 - 4. The Executive Committee will include representation from a majority of the member denominations.
 - 5. Minutes will be recorded at each Executive Committee meeting and subsequently reviewed by the Commission at its next stated meeting.
 - 6. The Executive Director will notify the Executive Committee members when there is a need for them to meet in person or by electronic means.
 - 7. The Executive Director shall retain the authority to consult with some or all Commission members of a particular denomination in cases where he believes the personal privacy of a particular chaplain or military service member needs to be protected.

ARTICLE IV — FINANCIAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The financial policy and procedures shall be proposed by the Executive Director and approved by the Commission. The Mission to North America (MNA) Chaplain Coordinator provides administrative support to the Executive Director of the PRCCMP and ensures financial accountability. The fiscal year for the Commission shall be January 1 through December 31.

ARTICLE V — SELECTION, EMPLOYMENT AND TERMINATION OF STAFF

A. Staff:

1. Executive Director: Selected by the PRCCMP and approved by the PCA MNA Coordinator. Serves as the endorser for PRCC member and associate member denominations. (It is understood that the Executive Director is also the MNA Chaplain Coordinator for the PCA. The Coordinator for MNA oversees the MNA Chaplain Coordinator).
2. Associate Endorsers: Selected by the Executive Director and approved by MNA and the PRCCMP.
3. Associate Director - Administration for the PRCCMP: Selected by the Executive Director and approved by the PCA MNA Coordinator. (It is understood that this person also serves as the PCA MNA “Chaplain Ministries Administrative Assistant.”)

B. Terms of Service:

1. The Executive Director: shall be elected by the PRCCMP for a term of four years.
2. Associate Endorser(s): shall serve for a period of one year, or less, such service to be approved annually by the PRCCMP.
3. Associate Director/Administration for the PRCCMP: shall serve in an indefinite status as long as funds are available.

C. Termination of Service:

1. Executive Director: Should the Commission desire to terminate the Executive Director’s services without cause, or he desire to resign, at least ninety days’ notice shall be given unless waived by mutual agreement. In such a case, five members representing all five member denominations of the Commission and appointed by the Chairman will counsel with the Executive Director. It is understood that no action will take place without consultation and coordination with the Coordinator, Mission to North America (MNA). Should the Commission desire to terminate the Executive or Associate Director’s services WITH cause, the termination may be done at any time. The MNA/PRCC office as well as the employee, recognizes all MNA/PRCC employment is “at will” which means that just as the employee is free to end his or her employee relationship with MNA/PRCC at any time, MNA/PRCC may do likewise.
2. Associate Directors and Associate Endorsers: Can be terminated without cause with the same stipulations as for the Executive Director except with 30 days notice.

D. Additional staff: Other staff, as proposed by the Executive Director and approved by MNA and the PRCCMP, can be added. Details of funding for a new staff position would be coordinated with the denominational connection of the new staff person.

**ARTICLE VI — DUTIES OF THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The Executive Director shall function as the executive of the Commission and shall give supervision to all other personnel. He shall have responsibility and authority of the general direction and oversight of the total program of the Commission. He shall be responsive and accountable to the policies and actions of the Commission at all times.

ARTICLE VII — QUORUM

For either regular or special meetings of the Commission, a quorum shall consist of more than one-half of the Commissioners, with at least a majority of the member denominations present.

ARTICLE VIII — AMENDMENTS

The By-Laws of the Commission may be amended at any regular meeting of the Commission by a three-fourths vote of the voting representatives present, provided that written notice of such action shall have been sent out in connection with the notice of the meeting at least 10 days prior to the date of the meeting.

REQUIREMENTS AND DUTIES

I. PURPOSE AND DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION

- A. Serve as the liaison between the member denominations and the offices of the Chiefs of Military Chaplains, of the Chief of the Veterans Administration Chaplains, and of the other agencies or organizations to which our chaplains are assigned. (Commission Constitution Article II)
- B. Keep these offices appropriately informed as to the developments in, and growth of, our denominations, as well as any concerns we have regarding the free exercise of religion or any restrictions proposed thereof that may compromise the ordination vows of any of our chaplains. (Commission Constitution Article II)
- C. Keep member denominations informed concerning the Chaplaincy programs, and to encourage prayer support for chaplains. (Commission Constitution Article II)
- D. Assist with the recruitment of well-qualified individuals in order to meet various chaplain procurement goals, such as those established by the Department of Defense. (Commission Constitution Article II)
- E. Provide the official technical endorsement necessary for an applicant approved by his presbytery, providing he meets all of the necessary requirements of his denomination and of the Chaplaincy to which he is being endorsed. (Commission Constitution Article II)
- F. Encourage and assist our chaplains by every means possible, such as by maintaining contact, by serving as a liaison and representative body, by promoting the ministry of the Chaplaincy, etc. (Commission Constitution Article II)
- G. Establish and maintain methods of liaison with individual congregations of the member denominations to assist them in providing adequate ministry to their members while they are separated from the particular church during periods in the Armed Forces and other institutions. (Commission Constitution Article II)
- H. Meet at least twice per year and at other times when needed for the purpose of transacting the business of the Commission. (Commission By-Laws II)

II. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

- A. Members are elected by each denomination's General Assembly/Synod or by its authorized committee. (Commission Constitution III)
- B. Prospective members, when being nominated to serve on the Commission, shall be asked if they are in full support of the stated positions of the respective General Assemblies and Synod and the PRCCMP. If they cannot so affirm, they should not be nominated or stand for election.

- C. Associate Member denominations are approved only by the Commission and not by each Member denomination at their General Assembly/Synod; therefore they are not voting members of the PRCC.
 - 1. Because it is prudent and appropriate for Associate Member denominations to be informed about issues and concerns relating to chaplains and to be aware of the business of the Commission, delegates from these denominations have a standing invitation to attend any and all regularly scheduled meetings of the PRCC. Associate Member delegates may be granted the privilege of speaking to the business of the Commission by the Commission.
 - 2. Only full Members of the PRCC shall be invited to participate in called meetings. However, the Chairman has the authority to include a delegate from an Associate Member denomination should the issue deal specifically with that denomination or one of its chaplains.
- D. The Commission annually elects its own Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary. Its chief operating officer, the Executive Director, is also elected by the Commission every four years. (Commission By-Laws Articles I and V and Commission Constitution Article VII)

III. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Chairman: The Chairman shall:
 - 1. Preside at all Commission meetings and regularly communicate with the Executive Director between meetings. At his request, the Vice-Chairman shall preside.
 - 2. Appoint members to committees as necessary to facilitate the business of the Commission.
- B. Secretary: The Secretary shall keep the minutes of the Commission meetings, making them available to the members.
- C. Executive Director. The Director shall:
 - 1. administer the affairs of the Commission, with the assistance of the Commission members, in accordance with our Constitution and By-Laws.
 - 2. process all applications for endorsement, working as much as possible with the Commission members. He shall attempt to interview each applicant personally, and if this is not possible or feasible, he shall designate another person to conduct the interview, such as a member of the Commission or a chaplain (full-time, part-time, or retired) endorsed by the Commission. Upon full satisfactory completion of the application, and with the approval of the applicant's presbytery and the approval of the person conducting the personal interview or, if the interviewer's report is negative, the full Commission, the Executive Director shall prepare the official endorsement of the applicant.
 - 3. keep in touch with each endorsee by correspondence, telephone, and personal visits.
 - 4. keep accurate files and records of all chaplains holding Commission endorsement.
 - 5. prepare an annual report for the member denominations and shall provide information and news releases on Chaplaincy programs as desired by our churches, denominations, agencies, and publications.
 - 6. be the primary representative of the Commission, particularly in meetings of the endorsing agents in Washington or elsewhere, and in the offices of the Chiefs of Military Chaplains, or the Chief of the

Veterans Administration Chaplains, and of the other agencies or organizations to which our chaplains are assigned.

7. keep a record of all expenses of the Commission, and he shall provide an annual written report of these expenses.
8. recruit and supervise any Associate Endorser and/or Associate Director who assists in the task of keeping in contact with all endorsees.

IV. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR CHAPLAINCY ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT

A. The Applicant shall:

1. meet all the requirements of his presbytery for membership as a man under care, a licentiate, a candidate for ordination, or fully ordained member, and he must be in good standing.
2. have a minimum of two years of practical ministry experience or internship, or its equivalent, such as preaching, youth work, evangelism, teaching, missionary work, counseling, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), etc. This requirement may be waived in the case of endorsement for the military chaplaincy's program for seminarians, or in extraordinary circumstances if both the individual's presbytery and the Endorser approve.
3. give evidence that he is able to adjust to the Chaplaincy, and that he is able to work within the system without thinking that he is compromising his personal convictions.
4. give evidence that he is able to minister appropriately to military personnel and their families, to hospital patients and those attending or related to them, or to whatever constituency is served by the Chaplaincy to which he is seeking endorsement.
5. give evidence that he is able to submit to military authority or whatever lawful authority he is going to be serving under, and he must be willing to honor and abide by the requirements and guidelines of his denomination as far as chaplains are concerned.
6. meet all of the requirements of the Chaplaincy for which he is applying. In the case of military Chaplaincy, for example, this would include at least 120 hours of undergraduate credit, the M.Div. degree (a minimum of 72 semester hours of graduate seminary study) plus ordination. Non-military organizations may have different requirements. Department of Defense (DoD) minimum standards include at least 120 hours of undergraduate credit, a minimum of 72 semester hours of graduate seminary study plus ordination. It should be noted that member PRCCMP denominations may have higher educational standards than DoD. Non-military organizations may have different requirements.
7. submit to the Commission a completed application form, with references as requested.
8. submit a nonrefundable processing fee with all new endorsement requests to defray administrative costs.
9. understand that ecclesiastical endorsement or approval may be withdrawn by the Commission upon the request of the individual, the individual's presbytery, or for cause. In the case of withdrawal for cause, the appropriate denominational provisions for discipline shall have been followed.

V. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MILITARY CHAPLAIN CANDIDATE ECCLESIASTICAL APPROVAL

- A. The candidate applicant shall submit to the Executive Director a completed application packet with references as requested.
- B. The candidate shall:
 - 1. be a member of a church that is in a denomination which has membership in the PRCCMP, and ordinarily the candidate should be under care of a presbytery. The candidate, in any case, shall come under care of a presbytery within a year of approval. The presbytery must be of a denomination for which the PRCC endorses. The Executive Director can approve appropriate extensions of the one-year rule.
 - 2. give evidence that he is able to adjust to the Chaplaincy, and that he is able to work within the system without thinking that he is compromising his personal convictions. During his seminary training, the candidate shall give evidence that he is able to minister appropriately to military personnel and their families.
 - 3. give evidence that he is able to submit to military authority or whatever lawful authority which he is going to serve and must be willing to honor and abide by the requirements and guidelines of his denomination.
 - 4. make every effort to participate in the military training required and offered by the military service for which he is a candidate.
 - 5. maintain regular contact with his presbytery and attend presbytery meetings unless providentially hindered.
 - 6. keep the Executive Director of the Commission informed on such matters as change of seminary and family status. The candidate shall provide the Executive Director, the church and the presbytery under which the candidate is under care, with updated contact information.
 - 7. make a yearly report to the Executive Director and shall provide any other information relative to his ministry when requested by the Commission or his presbytery.
- C. Approval may be withdrawn by the Executive Director upon the request of the individual chaplain's church or presbytery, or for cause. In the case of withdrawal for cause, the appropriate denominational provisions for discipline shall have been followed.
- D. The candidate may expect of the Commission appropriate information, prayer, mentoring and counsel through its Executive Director, its individual members, or other chaplains endorsed by the Commission. Each candidate will be assigned an active duty, reserve components or retired PRCCMP chaplain as a mentor during his time in the candidate program.

VI. WHAT THE ENDORSEE/CANDIDATE MAY EXPECT FROM HIS DENOMINATION AND THE COMMISSION

- A. He may expect the official approval and endorsement of his denomination and the Commission as long as he meets the military or other requirements of his Chaplaincy, and as long as he remains a member in good standing of his presbytery.

- B. He may expect official representation with his chaplaincy's leadership, such as with the Chief of Chaplains of the service for which he is endorsed if he is a military chaplain.
- C. He may expect of the Commission appropriate information and counsel through its Executive Director, its individual members, or other chaplains endorsed by the Commission.
- D. He may expect the prayers and support particularly of his presbytery and denomination, and of local churches within his denomination.

VII. WHAT THE COMMISSION EXPECTS FROM THE ENDORSEE/CANDIDATE

- A. Maintain regular contact with his presbytery by providing copies of his required PRCC reports and through other forms of communication such as an email or letter to the Stated Clerk, or to the appropriate Committee Chairman of his Presbytery.
- B. Each Chaplain should make every effort to attend Presbytery meetings in person as they are able, even pursuing "orders" (if they are military) as the Command may allow. If unable to attend a meeting of Presbytery, he should follow the rules of his Presbytery in requesting an excused absence for each meeting.
- C. A Chaplain in good standing in a PRCC-related denomination will not be endorsed by any other endorsing agency.
- D. Notify the Executive Director and Presbytery:
 1. on change of assignment or duty station, change of status, change of address, promotion, etc.
 2. if significant difficulties with, or disciplinary action by, his command are encountered. The endorsee's denominational commissioners must be notified as well.
 3. if the endorsee or candidate changes or considers changing his theological position. It is a profound and necessary professional courtesy to notify the Endorser and Presbytery of potential or actual changes in one's vows.
- E. Provide regular reports:
 1. Active duty military and full-time civilian chaplains will submit three written ministry reports (with prayer requests) per year to the Commission and provide any other information relative to their ministry when requested by the Commission or their presbytery. Those triannual reports are due March 1, July 1, and November 1.
 2. Reserve Component Military Chaplains and Part-time or Volunteer Civilian Chaplains will submit at least an annual written ministry report (with prayer requests) to the Commission.

- F. Maintain a current copy, and general familiarity, with the PRCCMP "Chaplain's Manual" that consists of the Constitution, By-laws, Requirements and Duties, and policies guiding endorsee requirements and expectations.

VIII. PRCC MOBILIZATION AGREEMENT SUGGESTIONS

- A. Specify a reasonable time for the chaplain's absence. 90-180 days is a minimum.
- B. Make provisions for relationship between chaplain and church/employer should mobilization period exceed 180 days.
- C. Make provisions concerning the use of the manse (where provided) or disbursement of any housing allowance normally paid to the chaplain while absent on mobilization. Normally a chaplain will begin receiving the military benefit Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) within 30 days of mobilization. Church employer might reasonably expect chaplain whose family remains in a manse to pay a fair-market rental value to the church after 30 days. If the employer provides a housing allowance, said allowance may be adjusted or curtailed as soon as the first BAH payment is received. A reasonable period of time to allow a family to remain in the manse would be six months.
- D. Make provision regarding other benefits such as allowances, stipends, pension, medical plan costs, insurance, use of church/employer-owned car, etc. Federal law mandates that an employer pay vested accrued pension dues for up to five years from date of initial mobilization or extended active duty. Employers are provided by law with a period of time following release from active duty to make up these dues. Medical insurance dues may be continued by the employer on behalf of the chaplain's family and a recommended period is 30-90 days. While the chaplain and family members become eligible for military medicine - CHAMPUS and TRICARE - within 30 days of mobilization, it is reasonable in locales where there are limited military facilities, that the chaplain's family will wish to remain with their primary care provider under their church provided medical insurance carrier. (Federal law does not mandate that an employer continues medical insurance during a period of mobilization, only that the member is offered full restoration in the medical plan upon release from active duty.) These issues need to be addressed well in advance of mobilization with the reserve or National Guard chaplain's employer/session/congregation in order to arrive at a satisfactory decision that is acceptable to all parties concerned. This avoids misunderstanding or controversy during a chaplain's mobilization (recall).
- E. Consider how congregation will seek a pulpit supply and other ministerial coverage for emergencies. (This is most important for National Guard chaplains who may be activated for shorter periods of time during natural disasters, etc.)
- F. Contact presbytery for appointment of a temporary session moderator, if applicable.
- G. Include a signed Mobilization Agreement with Terms of Call for presbytery approval and acknowledgement. Make provisions for modification or termination of agreement as needed. Refer to church's constitution and/or Book of Order. Remember that federal law takes precedence over less generous provisions of a Mobilization Agreement. A copy of all signed and periodic updated Agreements must be sent to the current endorser of the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission.

SPECIFIC ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

Chaplains in the military Reserve Components (RC) may be expected to serve one weekend drill per month and two weeks of active duty for training (ADT) each year. The obligation can often be met on other than weekends, depending on the military unit, type of RC involvement and mission. The church/employer may agree to absorb the costs of pulpit-supply or substitute clergy during these normal periods.

Employers/Sessions/Congregations may negotiate with their clergy in **Terms of Call** to provide the extra two weeks as additional vacation with or without pay and may ask the chaplain to reimburse pay for a visiting preacher. Normally pension, medical, and housing benefits should be continued by the employer during these periods.

A **Mobilization Agreement** should address provisions during longer periods of absence. Church employers may wish to agree to an initial period of time during which they will continue the normal payment of pension and medical dues, however federal law only guarantees pension dues (not medical insurance dues) and does allow that the payment of dues be suspended during the mobilization period. These dues must be made up by the employer upon return of the chaplain to his civilian employment.

Ensure that the chaplain, the session, and the presbytery are in agreement on the provisions under which the chaplain and family will be provided for if the chaplain is deployed or mobilized.

Civilian chaplains and their employers (hospitals, nursing homes, prisons and other non-denominational employers) should become familiar with the provisions of the federal law: Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), specifically section 4312 on reemployment rights, and section 4318 regarding pension benefits. The law may be found on the web at www.esgr.org/userra.html. Normally a resignation does not preclude return rights provided by USERRA unless these are specifically waived in writing. NOTE: Clergy of denominational churches are NOT covered under USERRA.

Reserve and National Guard chaplains remain members of their presbyteries which have given approval to serve and to occasionally “labor outside the bounds.” Chaplains should keep their presbytery informed of active duty location and prospect for duration of deployment. A copy of the signed Mobilization Agreement should be sent to The Presbyterian and Reformed Commission (PRCC) in Atlanta, GA. The PRCC & the chaplain’s presbytery are to be notified whenever a chaplain is mobilized. Activated Reserve & National Guard chaplains are to report quarterly to their presbytery and the PRCC using a form provided by the PRCC.

(SAMPLE)

In the event of mobilization of any branch of Reserve or National Guard forces, the following agreement between _____ (pastor/clergy) and _____ (church/employer) will take effect for up to twelve months from the date of deployment.

1. The pastor will be immediately relieved of responsibilities to the congregation in order to report and prepare for military duty.
2. Determine the length of the deployment through the military department and the deployment orders.
3. The pastor and the congregation will prepare a service of blessing and sending forth for the pastor chaplain.
4. The church council will arrange for interim pastoral leadership and care during the pastor's absence.
5. The church will not consider itself vacant during the duration of this agreement.
6. Regarding the pastor's salary and benefits during the deployment, we agree to the following terms:
 - Salary – discontinued
 - Social Security allowance – discontinued
 - Auto allowance – discontinued
 - Educational allowance – discontinued
 - Denominational pension – continued
 - Health and hospitalization insurance – to be continued until active duty-provisions for family medical coverage begin.
7. Housing allowance (or use of the parsonage, including utilities) would be continued up to twelve months.
8. Provision should be made for the modification and/or termination of this agreement upon mutual consent of both parties.

Signature of Pastor

Date

Signature of Clerk of Session

Date

GRACE CHURCH (PCA) MOBILIZATION AGREEMENT

In the event of mobilization of any branch of Reserve or National Guard forces, the following agreement between Grace Church (PCA) and its Senior Pastor, Reverend Joe Blow, Chaplain (Captain) Air National Guard (ANG), will take effect. It is noted that the *Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act* (USERRA) does not apply to parish clergy. It does, however, provide valuable counsel and should serve as a resource document in matters related to deployment and return.

1. The pastor will be relieved of responsibilities to the congregation in order to prepare and report for military duty (The USERRA provides helpful guidelines in this matter). While some emergency cases may not permit, it will be considered reasonable that at least a 30 day notice be provided by the pastor to the church.
2. The length of the deployment will be determined through the military department and the deployment orders. Upon completion of the deployment, the pastor will return (and be permitted by the church to return) to work in a timely fashion (The USERRA provides helpful guidelines in this matter). If return from deployment is the result of a disqualifying discharge or other than honorable conditions, these terms are not binding on either party.
3. The pastor and the congregation will prepare a service of blessing and sending forth for the pastor chaplain. Similarly, a service of thanksgiving will be held upon his return.
4. The Session will arrange for interim pastoral leadership and care during the pastor's absence.
5. The church will not consider itself vacant (without a pastor) during the duration of this deployment.
6. Regarding the pastor's salary and benefits during the deployment, we agree to the following terms: All salary and allowances shall continue for a period of 30 days. Then,
 - Salary – Suspended
 - Continuing Education – Suspended
 - Annuity - Suspended
 - Health and hospitalization insurance – to be continued until active duty-provisions for family medical coverage begin.
 - Housing allowance – to be continued.
7. Modification and/or termination of this agreement upon mutual consent of both parties.
8. These items are meant to be a minimum guideline to support and maintain the pastoral relationship between Reverend Joe Blow and Grace Church (PCA). Implementation of these items requires trust, good faith, and close cooperation between the parties.

Signature of Pastor

Date

Signature of Clerk of Session

Date

IX. EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions to the guidelines set forth in this manual shall be made only with the approval of the Commission. Exceptions shall be considered either at the request of member denominations or at the initiative of the Commission itself. In either case, the Executive Director is to inform and normally secure the approval of each member denomination's mission's coordinator, Chaplaincy committee chairman, or other official who is charged with the leading responsibility for chaplaincy affairs.

X. SUMMARY

In view of our responsibility to God, the Church, and institutions including the government of the United States, the Commission cannot and must not look lightly upon a man holding the Commission's endorsement or approval as a matter of convenience and demonstrate little interest in the principles, practices and ministry of his denomination. The members of the Commission are obligated to maintain a constant vigil to see that mutual responsibilities indicated in this manual are being fulfilled in a manner that is pleasing to God.

POLICY AND GUIDANCE HANDBOOK

I. ECCLESIASTICAL BASIS OF LITURGICAL, SACRAMENTAL AND PASTORAL ACTS PERFORMED BY MILITARY CHAPLAINS

The Armed Forces of the United States do not generate religious ministry. They receive ministries from the churches and religious bodies of America in accordance with the religiously pluralistic pattern of American society. The United States Code, for example, provides in the case of the Navy and Marine Corps, that: “An officer of the Chaplain Corps may conduct public worship according to the manner and format of the church of which he is a member.” (10 U.S.C. 6031(a))

Inasmuch as all liturgical, sacramental, and pastoral acts are performed on the basis of ecclesiastical rather than military credentials, it follows that the ultimate responsibility for the substantive nature of chaplains’ religious ministry rests with their denominations.

The religious context of the Armed Forces, like that of American society at large, is one of religious pluralism, in which independent churches and religious bodies coexist in mutual respect. Because of the impracticality of providing clergy of every faith or denomination at every military command, the Armed Forces and the churches of America have evolved jointly a pattern of cooperative ministry. The principle of cooperative ministry places on every chaplain the obligations to: (a) make provision for meeting the religious needs of those in the command who are adherents of other churches or faith groups, and (b) cooperate with other chaplains and commands in meeting the religious needs of members of the chaplain’s own faith group.

Inasmuch as the denominations represented by the Commission are confessional bodies which seek to adhere to their standards at all points, each chaplain must be guided in his ministry not merely on an individual interpretation of Scripture, but by the theology and ecclesiology set forth in the Westminster Standards or, for the URCNA chaplains, the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort) and the denomination’s Book of Church Order.

II. POLICIES FOR ALL ENDORSED CHAPLAINS

- A. A chaplain shall have liberty in the full and free presentation of the whole counsel of God as contained in the Scriptures and summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms or, for the URCNA endorsed chaplains, the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort).
- B. No military or civilian higher authority may require* a PRCCMP chaplain to:
 - 1. Lead or participate in conducting worship services with non-Trinitarian chaplains.
 - 2. Conduct worship services with chaplains whose ordination requirements do not meet the ordination requirements of the PRCCMP chaplain’s particular denomination.
 - 3. Conduct worship services that are not consistent with the PRCCMP chaplain's convictions on the matter.
 - 4. Pray without invoking the name of Jesus, because the PRCCMP member denominations adhere to the Westminster Standards (Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms) or, for

the URCNA chaplains, the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort) as their statement of faith, and because these standards define prayer that is acceptable to God as necessarily being made in the name of the Son (WCF xxi.3). The PRCCMP upholds the constitutionally protected right of the PRCCMP-endorsed chaplains to pray in the name of Jesus, both in worship services and in other public ceremonies. This in no way prohibits a chaplain from working with ordained chaplains in other appropriate professional areas of ministry.

- C. Since the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are given to the church in particular, chaplains must exercise caution in their administration by verifying that:
 - 1. The sacraments are always administered in conjunction with the faithful preaching of the Word.
 - 2. An appropriate and clear "fencing of the table" is made each time the sacrament is administered.
- D. Marriage is a divine ordinance and therefore careful attention to the biblical principles, as they are defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith, or, for the URCNA chaplains, the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort)** must be followed by all our chaplains.

October 28, 1983 (Rev. December 2000, February 2007)

*The Commission debated whether to italicize the word "require" to clarify its purpose, which is to guide and protect chaplains as necessary rather than prescribe their ministry. The 103 presbyteries (as of 1999) that the Commission serves are the loci of theological oversight of the chaplains.

** Added in February 2008, when the PRCCMP began as the Endorsing Agency for the URCNA.

III. CODE OF ETHICS FOR PRCCMP-ENDORSED CHAPLAINS

Whereas Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church, has ordained His body to be His primary instrument through which He carries out His messianic, saving and sanctifying ministry to people,

A. Purpose

We, the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCCMP), representing the churches of our respective member denominations (the PCA, the OPC, and the RPCNA) are committed to endorsing only well-qualified chaplains for military, police, hospital, Veterans Administration, prison, industrial and other institutional chaplaincy ministries. Therefore, we are unequivocally committed to maintaining, by relying on God's sanctifying grace, only the highest standards of chaplain selection, oversight and endorsing accountabilities.

In seeking energetically to maintain a demonstrable and credible commitment to a realistic code of ethics, in support of the above stated purpose, we, the members of the Commission, subscribe to the following specific obligations, and further will require any chaplain we endorse to subscribe, confessing our conscious reliance on God's enabling grace to do so.

B. Obligations

- 1. To uphold carefully and ethically, without mental reservation, the biblical truths, doctrinal and confessional distinctives, policies and practices of our ordaining and endorsing denominations as represented through the PRCCMP.
- 2. To abide by all the requirements for ministry of the institution(s) seeking the ministry services of a PRCCMP-endorsed chaplain, unless one or more of those requirements is plainly in contradiction to the word of God

and the confessional standards of the chaplain's endorsing church. In that unlikely but possible eventuality, we commit to a wholehearted effort to resolve the difference(s) through the process of humble, respectful and biblical discussion.

3. To require our endorsed Chaplains to provide ministry to all those whom they are called to serve, which is in accord with biblical standards of kindness, confidentiality, humility, and ethical regard for those recipients.
4. To respect and uphold the ethical and constitutional right of other endorsers and their respective chaplains, to maintain and express their doctrinal distinctives and ecclesiological practices. At the same time we thereby do not agree or imply any willingness, overtly or covertly, to deny or otherwise suppress the free and appropriate expression of our own distinctives, of which offering prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is a case in point.
5. To encourage our own (and other non-PRCCMP endorsed chaplains) to provide the maximum of cooperative ministry without any covert or overt pressure on our own, or other chaplains, to compromise their conscience. At the same time, we are committed to respecting those distinctives, which make a cooperative ministry possible.
6. To seek actively the grace of God, in order to engage in all relevant aspects of endorsement, approval, and oversight of PRCCMP chaplains in their pastoral ministry, in accordance with recognized standards for a genuinely godly personal conduct in all matters public and private.

Adopted 22 February 2006

IV. FEES, DUES, CONTRIBUTIONS AND GIFTS

A. Fees

1. Applicants for Endorsement (Military or Paid Civilian Chaplains) pay a one-time fee of \$100 (this includes a fee for a required background check).
2. Applicants for Military Chaplain Candidate program pay an application fee of \$25.00. When applying to be endorsed as a chaplain, the applicant will pay an additional \$50.
3. Volunteer (unpaid) Chaplains pay a one-time \$25.00 Application Fee (This covers the cost of their required background check)

B. Dues

1. Military

a. Active Duty

Dues be assessed at about the rate of 1% of base pay as follows: (Note: The amounts below have been adjusted down to the next number divisible by 12 to facilitate automatic monthly payment plans.)

O-2	\$348 per year/\$29 per mo	O-5	\$792 per year/\$66 per mo
O-3	\$396 per year/\$33 per mo	O-6	\$996 per year/\$83 per mo
O-4	\$600 per year/\$50 per mo		

b. Reserve and National Guard

1. Dues be assessed at about the rate of 2% of base pay, rounded down, for Reserve and National Guard chaplains as follows:

O-2 and O-3	\$180 per year/\$15 per mo	O-5	\$288 per year/\$24 per mo
O-4	\$204 per year/\$17 per mo	O-6	\$348 per year/\$29 per mo

2. Activated and deployed Reserve Component Chaplains pay dues at the AD rate for the months they are activated or deployed.

2. Federal Government (VA/Bureau of Prisons)

GS-11, \$516 per year

GS-12, \$612 per year

GS-13, \$732 per year

GS-14, \$864 per year

GS-15, \$1,020 per year

3. Other Endorsed Civilian Chaplains will pay dues as follows:

Full-time \$360 per year / \$30 per mo

Part-time \$180 per year / \$15 per mo

Volunteer No Annual Dues Required

4. Previously endorsed PRCC chaplains, still in good standing with their denomination, serving as a PRCC volunteer chaplain, are not required to submit a new application or application fee or pay annual dues.

Gifts to the PRCCMP are appreciated.

C. Denomination Contributions:

Each PRCCMP denomination is required to pay an annual contribution for each endorsed chaplain. The amount of annual denominational contributions is based upon the number of chaplains by type on the PRCCMP roster as of 01 January of the year due and are payable by 01 December each year.

Amounts of denomination contributions by chaplain type:

Military = \$1,000

Federal Gov't (VA/BOP/FBI) = \$1,000

Board Certified Civilian Chaplains = \$1,000

Civilian Chaplains whose employer requires an endorsement = \$1,000

Civilian Chaplains whose employer does NOT require an endorsement:

Full Time = \$350

Part Time = \$200

Volunteer (unpaid) = \$100

D. Individual Chaplain Dues

An individual chaplain's dues are payable by November 30 of each year.

Exception: If a chaplain is on a monthly auto-pay plan that ensures his dues are paid in full by year end, he is exempt from the November 30 deadline, assuming his December payment will come in later in the month of December. If a chaplain pays his annual dues AFTER November 30, he will be assessed a \$100 late fee and be required to set up a monthly autopay plan. If such chaplain has not paid the annual dues by November 30 of the following year, absent extraordinary circumstances, his endorsement will be pulled.

E. Church Gifts

Funds sent by churches in the name of a particular chaplain, unless designated for his dues, are used for PRCCMP Chaplain Ministries. If a chaplain needs ministry resources, he is encouraged to request the PRCC Staff to advertise those needs to the Church, but he must not attempt to re-direct church gifts from the PRCC budget to his own ministry needs. If a chaplain has arranged for a church to specifically pay their dues, the PRCC Administrative Assistant must be notified by him of this arrangement in writing so that church's gift for that purpose can be processed correctly.

V. WOMEN IN COMBAT

In recent years, the major churches making up the membership of the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCCMP) have in their senior deliberative bodies (General Assemblies and Synod) passed resolutions concerning the use of women as military combatants in the Armed Forces of the United States. Since this was the first formal response of our churches to the evolving policy and practice of female integration into all areas of the U. S. military, the result has been discussion and dialogue in many circles with a commensurate number of questions and concerns as to the practical meaning of these resolutions for members of these respective church bodies.

To assist in applying the resolutions, the PRCCMP provided this response to encourage study of commissioned study papers from the committees of each church. The approved statements, grounds and committee study reports are in published synod and assembly minutes. This response of the PRCCMP may be made available to church members and interested individuals and may be used as an aid by pastors, elders, chaplains, church leaders and military members in counseling others on this subject.

It is our prayer that each church member and fellow follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word will consider the resolutions of General Assemblies and Synod with due seriousness, applying these principles to living out their calling as disciples of the Lord.

DECLARATIONS OF THE SYNOD/ASSEMBLIES

A. RPCNA 168th Synod, 1998

“Therefore, be it now resolved:

That, while recognizing the right and duty that women have to self-defense, which may involve physical violence (Judges 9:53), it is our conviction that Biblical teaching does not give warrant to employ women for military combat.

That, we direct all presbyteries and sessions, to instruct their congregations in this regard,

That we urge any of our female members who are considering or presently engaged in military service to take counsel of their Sessions as to the teaching of God's Word in the matter, and

That the Clerk of the Synod send a copy of this resolution to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and to our military chaplains, and

That the Moderator of the Synod be directed to assign a representative to present a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Senate, and the House of Representatives.”

B. OPC 68th General Assembly, 2001

“That the 68th GA declares that the use of women in military combat is both contrary to nature and inconsistent with the Word of God.

Grounds [also adopted by the GA]:

1. This is a ministerial declaration of what is revealed in Scripture, cf. 1 Corinthians 11:14; Report I, Sections III-IV. [See pp. 265-269 of the 68th GA minutes].
5. This provides the biblical counsel requested by the PRCCMP without making any further pronouncements that would, presumably, cause the church to ‘intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth’ in a matter that some would say is not yet an extraordinary case, cf. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 31.4.”

C. PCA 29th General Assembly, 2001

“That the Philadelphia Presbytery Overture, the PRCCMP letter, and the Report of the Bills and Overtures Committee be answered by this report.

That the PCA continue to recognize that the individual conscience, guided by the Word of God and responsive to the counsel of the Church, must decide concerning the propriety of voluntary service in the military.

That the PCA believes that military service is a just and godly calling; however, that it presents special and difficult moral challenges in light of the integration of women into the armed services.

That the women of the PCA be warned of the many difficulties and moral and physical dangers involved in serving in the military in secular America, due to their inherent greater vulnerability.

That individual believers as citizens be urged to exercise their godly influence to bring about authentic spiritual and moral reformation in the military services.

That the PCA chaplains be encouraged in their continued ministry to all male and female personnel in their spheres of ministry.

That pastors and sessions be informed of this report and be encouraged to instruct their people in the matters it presents.

That the NAPARC and NAE churches be informed of the PCA’s position on this matter.”

D. PCA 30th General Assembly, 2002

- “1. Acknowledging that the child in the womb is “a person covered by Divine protection” (*Statement on Abortion*, Sixth General Assembly); and that women of childbearing age often carry unborn children while remaining unaware of their child’s existence; and that principles of just war require the minimization of the loss of life—particularly innocent civilians; the PCA declares that any policy which intentionally places in harms way as military combatants women who are, or might be, carrying a child in their womb, is a violation of God’s Moral Law.
2. This Assembly declares it to be the biblical duty of man to defend woman and therefore condemns the use of women as military combatants, as well as any conscription of women into the Armed Services of the United States.
3. Therefore, be it resolved that the Thirtieth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America adopts the above as pastoral counsel for the good of the members, the officers, and especially the military chaplains of the Presbyterian Church in America.
4. Be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church in America supports the decision of any of its members to object to, as a matter of conscience, the conscription of women or the use of women as military combatants.”

E. PCA 31st General Assembly, 2003

“Nothing done by the previous Assembly compels any court of original jurisdiction to exercise discipline on issues pertaining to the report on the Ad-Interim Study Committee on Women in the Military.”

The following position statement was adopted by the General Synod: The Word of God gives no warrant expressed or implied that women are to be conscripted into military service or required to participate in military combat. Therefore, the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church opposes the registration of women for Selective Service and the assignment of women to combat duty or to duties which involve a significant risk of engaging in combat.

PRCCMP UNDERSTANDING OF THE FORCE OF SYNOD/ASSEMBLY DECLARATIONS

We believe that the actions of the General Assemblies/Synod, rightly understood, have significant weight for chaplains, ministers, ruling elders, military personnel and members of our churches. The weight of these ecclesiastical statements includes the duty to take them seriously, not to dismiss them casually as advice that can be ignored. Our purpose here is not to foster judicial actions, but to help understand and apply what the assemblies have approved.

As we do this, it is important to realize that none of the declarations has been formally adopted as part of the law and order of the church. Therefore, they are, in a sense, works in progress and the full force of the statements is yet to be determined. Nevertheless, actions are to be taken and counsel is to be given in accordance with the stated position of the church, insofar as one's individual conscience enables.¹

Regarding the matter of individual conscience, these words from A. A. Hodge's commentary on *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Banner of Truth reprint, 1992) are instructive. The following paragraphs are from that commentary on Chapter 31, sections II-IV: "... synods and councils, consisting of uninspired men, have no power to bind the conscience, and their authority cannot exclude the right, nor excuse the obligation, of private judgment. If their judgments are unwise, but not directly opposed to the will of God, the private member should submit for peace' sake. If their decisions are opposed plainly to the Word of God, the private member should disregard them and take the penalty."

Nothing herein summarized by the PRCCMP compels any court of original jurisdiction to exercise discipline on issues pertaining to Synod and General Assembly declarations cited above.

PRCCMP RESPONSES TO ISSUES RAISED ABOUT WOMEN IN COMBAT

1. We acknowledge that many troops have as their primary mission the support of the warfighters. They may kill or capture the enemy in instances of self-defense within the support train. They are positioned in harm's way, as are any military or civilian personnel close to the battlefield. However, the synod/assemblies' declarations clearly assert that God never intended a woman to be a military combatant. Further, we regard these assembly/synod actions to frame the biblical sense of military combatant to be anyone who is involved, accountably and plainly, in seeking the death of enemy personnel.

¹PCA members of the Commission, in consultation with recognized leaders of the PCA, understand the actions of the Assembly to be interpreted and applied while keeping in mind two common errors: The first error perceives an action of the General Assembly to be similar to a law of Congress or a decision of the Supreme Court. Both are improper analogies. Until the General Assembly acts so as to make a matter a part of our Standards, then that matter is not binding -- unless the matter is determined by a judicial decision or unless the determination is already within the powers of the GA as assigned in the constitution (such as determining the trustees of agencies). The second error perceives a non-constitutional statement of the GA as being superfluous and of no import. In actuality, the GA makes such statements to advise its members and churches of the mind of the larger church at that moment. While such action does not have the authority of law to bind conscience or future Assemblies, brothers in Christ are obligated to weigh with great deference this "pious advice" since they have vowed to seek the peace and purity of the church, and this cannot be done through simply ignoring the properly approved advice of brothers and fathers. Such advice (i.e., an "in this" statement) must be seriously considered as the consensus of the church (but not the mandate of the church) by conscientious brothers until the church changes its advice.

There are concerns for women in support roles, as in “remote” naval and aviation roles in the military, that must be considered individually and judiciously. Those concerns affect the spiritual life of the female military member or potential member as well as the male member who as commander or subordinate might be expected and required to abstain from acting on his sense of moral obligation to protect women. While these denominational declarations do not forbid women from participating in those remote or support roles, each should evaluate his own circumstances. Military positional requirements should be examined and evaluated in light of the Scriptures elevated by denominational study committees, as well as by the chaplain’s independent study. PRCCMP chaplains should assist men and women, as requested, in their making that evaluation.

2. These declarations provide authority for PRCCMP chaplains who counsel or advise other military members regarding the use of women in combat.
3. These declarations do not require a PRCCMP chaplain, who is biblically counseling a military member who has a problem of conscience with women in combat, to advise resignation. Neither do they require a chaplain who has a problem of conscience with women as military combatants to resign.
4. PRCCMP chaplains should counsel women who are or might be carrying a child in their womb and who intentionally place that child in harm’s way to repent and consider the implications of genuine repentance and forgiveness. Counseling should include the father of the baby and the person who knowingly orders that woman into harm’s way.
5. The military chaplain is not expected or obliged to preach or impose these biblically derived declarations presumptively upon individual service members. He should be prepared to teach principles from which this finding is derived and to explain and elaborate when particular pastoral guidance is sought by a uniformed service member. As well, the chaplain shall explain the particulars of such pastoral guidance to a uniformed service member’s senior in command when asked to do so by a member who is appealing for relief from duties that could compromise behavior by a man toward a woman.
6. With respect to questions of conscience and morals, as in any other difficult and complex ethical problem, it is the duty of any PRCCMP endorsed chaplain, humbly relying on God’s enabling grace, to seek to deal with all the aspects of such a situation in a manner consistent with his ordination vows, regardless of the inherent difficulty.
7. How are chaplains supposed to deal with (including providing counsel) commanders’ policies and institutional/state policies as compared to dealing with individual women vis-à-vis the Synod/Assembly actions?

Chaplains have a moral responsibility to be well and carefully informed of the policies and actions of their endorsing church as well as the policies of their parent command and service, and also the appropriate civilian authorities. From the perspective of the PRCCMP, we believe this includes diligent, thoughtful reading of the actions of the three church bodies on this issue, including the exegetical work. Furthermore, we believe that the obligation of each chaplain is to deal biblically with each counselee, as God will grant him the grace to do so.

For instance, we do not believe any PRCCMP endorsed chaplain is obligated to inform every female service member he meets of the position of his church on the subject of women as military combatants, any more than he is obligated to inform every service member he meets of his church’s stand on baptism, the Lord’s Supper, etc. On the other hand, if anyone asks for a biblical perspective on any of these subjects, we believe it is the duty of the chaplain to represent his endorsing denomination without fear or dissimulation.

To put it another way, it is the duty of a chaplain to do his own “heavy lifting” beforehand on issues such as women as military combatants, issues which may come up in many different settings. He must think it through

with humility, honesty and care, just as he would in explaining why our PRCCMP denominations do not ordain women. Thus, when asked about the issue of women as military combatants, he can kindly and with sensitivity give the questioner the basic biblical facts and citations to encourage his or her own “heavy lifting.”

8. The Commission was also asked: How should chaplains advise their command concerning these Synod/Assembly actions?

When asked, answer honestly. When reporting to the command, during the indoctrination period, inform the senior chaplain and/or C.O. if it appears that there may be an issue. If the issue is discussed in an up-front manner at the beginning of the relationship with the command, the probability of friction diminishes. Informing a command of our commitment to use the name of Jesus Christ in prayer is an analogous issue best addressed before having to force the issue in an actual occasion of public prayer.

9. In light of the Synod/Assembly adopted recommendations, some chaplains have asked what advice they are being “commanded” to give? The answer is “none.”
10. A group of chaplains addressed the following related questions to the PRCCMP: “We felt that the churches will be looking to the PRCCMP for guidance on this issue. How should they be counseling their members on this issue? Some form of statement would be very beneficial so that ministers can provide the Godly advice as stated in the resolutions. And, if it is the obligation of men to protect women, can the denominational statements be construed to imply that all our young men should enter the military to fulfill their obligation and our young women be counseled on the biblical roles that they can play in the military?”

We do not believe it is the place of the PRCCMP to instruct churches as to what respective synod/assemblies have said. However, we can provide to those who are interested the narrower application for which the PRCCMP is responsible. It is not the place of the PRCCMP to construe denominational statements with respect to these questions outside the responsibilities of the PRCCMP as set forth in the first sentence of Article II of its Constitution: “The Commission is an agent of its member denominations (not an ecclesiastical commission in the technical sense), created by them to assist in carrying out their ministries to members of the Armed Forces and other institutions.”

Note on exegesis: The exegetical grounds of the PCA and OPC statements address diverse issues of military combat, such as those raised in Judges 4:4-5:31. Deborah was not a woman in combat. Chaplains and other interested Christians are urged to make use of the careful exegetical work already done by the General Assembly committees that studied the issue. The RPCNA included Scripture references in its declaration. The PCA and OPC published in General Assembly minutes the full majority and minority reports of their study committees, including detailed exegesis.

Adopted 02 March 2004

VI. PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME

- A. Today, as never before in our nation's history, there are contentious issues related to the free exercise of religion and the protection of individual civil liberties that challenge United States military chaplains in the conduct of their ministry to members of the Armed Forces.

One high profile issue is the liberty to pray in Jesus' name, in public, non-sectarian settings, and without illegitimate pressures to refrain from doing so, both from within and without the uniformed services. The most common source of those unconstitutional pressures has been some senior chaplains and senior commanders who are fearful of offending others.

The secular settings in which these pressures are growing are settings of religious and cultural diversity commonly referred to as pluralism.

It should be noted that in the context of worship services, conducted in any military setting, the use of Jesus' name in prayers is seldom an issue.

B. Historical Background

Congress established the military chaplaincy to provide for ministry for uniformed Americans in the free exercise of their religion in environments where that exercise would otherwise be impossible or extremely difficult. It is no accident that the first amendment to our Constitution addresses the principle that the government may not establish any religion.

From the beginning of the military chaplaincy, it was understood that the chaplaincy services necessarily included chaplains endorsed by different ecclesiastical bodies. Further, the providential circumstances of remote and/or combat environments required chaplains to provide ministry to those from religious traditions and communities other than their own. It was understood that such ministry was to be offered graciously, respecting the right of recipients to believe differently than the chaplain himself.

Well before the War of Independence, the practice of offering public prayer in non-sectarian environments was a well-established practice. Prayer was commonly offered in local governmental meetings, school classrooms, civic memorial services, and even in Congress itself. For nearly two centuries, few saw this strong tradition of public prayer as a problem, so it was seldom addressed or challenged. In recent decades, that relatively benign situation has changed. Multiple lawsuits and court challenges became a major strategy for those who objected to public prayer at non-sectarian events.

C. Discussion

This development generated a growing debate and conflict when a chaplain was invited to offer public prayer, and did so "in the name of Jesus Christ." The reason this is so contentious is that many non-Christians, and even some churchgoers, rightly regard this phrase as implying that all religions which do not specifically highlight the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, are therefore, "wrong." In this, they are eminently correct, from the perspective of those who hold to the Bible as God's inspired Word, and as revealing salvation in Jesus Christ alone. Admittedly, that truth, however circumspectly avoided in direct statement by a discerning chaplain in the wording of his public prayer, in today's politically correct climate, is to invite attack, and, for chaplains, possibly cause damage to their careers.

Where the debate becomes murkier is in the widespread notion that chaplains, offering prayer at public events, should suppress the specific mention of Jesus' name and use generic nomenclature to refer to God. That the specific understanding and intent of a rabbi or imam who would so use their respective traditional names for their god is of no offense to those of anti-Christian bias is scarcely surprising, even though adherents of those faiths also believe theirs is the only true way to Heaven. In the name of "pluralism", chaplains are often pressured by supervisors to restrict the expression of their Christocentric focus and commitment.

Yet, from a constitutional perspective, no governmental entity has the legal authority to tell a chaplain offering prayer, in a public ceremony, what the content of his prayers will be. To do so violates the stringent restrictions on our government to establish a religion of any sort. Governmental attempts at any level to restrict the content of any chaplains' prayer constitute an effort to establish a generic religion, supposedly devoid of theological offense.

In sum, many Christians believe their entire faith and system of belief center in the person, and finished work, of Jesus Christ, of which one of many expressions is offering prayer in His name. Further, for some Christians, refraining from that obedience in such a circumstance constitutes betrayal of their Savior. Nevertheless, recognizing the diversity of an audience in a public setting, we counsel thoughtful language in the use of Jesus' name (e.g., "I pray in Jesus' name" versus "we pray ...") and prefacing public prayer with a statement such as: "I am a Christian Chaplain, and am praying in accordance with my Christian faith"). Thus, chaplains and their endorsing bodies, have a spiritual and constitutional duty, to insist that they not be censored for the use of the name of Jesus Christ in public prayer.

Adopted March 2006

VII. RELIGIOUS MINISTRY IN A CULTURE OF GENDER CONFUSION

Background: As a result of shifts in public opinion and consequent policy changes, Chaplains working in pluralistic ministry environments now face a wide range of issues surrounding human sexuality such as gender identity, transgenderism, and same-sex attraction and marriage. While these issues may appear new and unrelated, they are rooted in a broader misunderstanding of God's design of men and women in His image and the biblical understanding of the functions of human sexuality, singleness, and marriage. In order to engage the culture on these issues, Chaplains should preach, teach, and counsel about these issues within a holistic, biblical view of human sexuality as designed by God. This should be proactive, demonstrating our commitment to human flourishing as designed by God rather than reactive opposition to cultural change.

Doctrine: The PRCC does not permit its endorsed Chaplains to condone beliefs or behavior that the Bible, as the Word of God condemns, or beliefs and behavior that the confessions, canons, and catechisms of their respective PRCC member denominations also forbid. With reference to the military's stance on human sexuality to include gender identity, transgenderism, homosexuality, and same-sex attraction and marriage, all PRCC Chaplains are expected to remain faithful to the Word of God, doctrinal practices, pastoral ministry, and ordination vows of his endorsing denomination. The following broad biblical, theological commitments form the foundation of our understanding of these issues:

- All men and women are created in the image of God and are therefore to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- God created humanity with engendered souls (male and female) and complementary counterparts. While our gender is part of our identity, it is not our complete identity, especially for believers whose primary identity is in Christ.
- Marriage is an institution created by God for the benefit of men and women and the good order of society and is recognized as a covenantal union between one man and one woman. The State may regulate marriage or unions for its own purposes, but this does not change the Christian's understanding of God's basic intent for this institution.
- The Fall has twisted God's good gift of sexuality, resulting in distortions that often create tragic consequences and struggles for individuals and the culture. Any intimate, physical relationship outside the covenant of marriage, whether with the same or opposite gender, is a violation of God's will.
- The Gospel redeems fallen humanity in Christ restoring God's original intent for creation. We affirm the power of God through the redemptive work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive, renew and transform men and women engaged in sinful sexual behavior around their sexuality.

Pastoral Guidance: It is a PRCC chaplain's duty to identify as sin any sexual relationship that violates the Word of God. However, Chaplains are encouraged to provide spiritual counsel and guidance to the servicemember struggling with homosexuality, same-sex attraction, transgenderism or gender identity and to urge them to repent of this sin and follow Christ, as they would for any sin of a sexual nature. PRCC Chaplains are expected to minister in accordance with the whole counsel of God and therefore should preach, teach, and counsel the whole counsel of God on matters of human sexuality. They should endeavor to teach what is biblically affirmed about human sexuality from a biblical, theological framework.

Expectations and Restrictions: Therefore, The PRCC expects their Chaplains to make it clear at the outset in his initial interviews with his commander and subordinate supervisors where he stands in his ability and willingness

to conduct events where same sex couples are authorized to attend as a matter of religious accommodation. PRCC Chaplains should resist any requirement to violate their faith or conscience if they are requested or directed to perform services including, but not necessarily limited to the following:

- Performing marriage or union ceremonies for same-sex attracted or transgendered service members or provide counseling in supporting such ceremonies;
- Ceasing and desisting from addressing the errors of homosexual thinking or behavior as that subject comes up in the conduct of their preaching, teaching, and counseling ministry;
- Concealing his belief that transgenderism, homosexuality, and same-sex attraction and marriage are biblically wrong;
- Participating in any joint divine worship service with any chaplain who is a non-Trinitarian or does not accept the authority of God's Word in what they teach and believe, or conducting or sharing in the conduct of divine worship services with openly professed homosexual or transgendered chaplains;
- Planning, organizing, leading, assisting, directing, supervising or otherwise supporting same-sex specific marriage retreats or events if such involvement violates any of the other expectations and restrictions aforementioned in this paragraph. This does not preclude normal supervisory staff officer functions that facilitate the free exercise of religion for same-sex attracted or transgendered service members conducted by chaplains whose denominations support same-sex specific marriage retreats or events. Nor does this policy preclude Chaplains from ministering in worship, teaching, and counseling contexts where servicemembers engaged in sexual sin are found to be present as long as the Chaplain is not thereby required to affirm that behavior as biblically normal or acceptable.

The PRCC expects our Chaplains, while refusing to comply or compromise, to continue to accord full professional courtesy and respect to any superior in their chain of command or supervisor who orders or seeks to persuade them to perform any biblically impermissible services. Conflicts will be resolved at the lowest level possible.

The PRCC also expects our endorsed chaplains to seek God's strength and not to waver, even if unjustly accused of failing to support the command, or some aspect of the command's policies, such as equal opportunity programs if these policies violate conscience or denominational policies.

The PRCC expects our Chaplains to identify to their denomination and PRCCMP Director any personal matters of conscience surrounding ministry to homosexual, same-sex attracted or married, and transgendered servicemembers that goes beyond the guidance provided in this policy.

Finally, the PRCC encourages its Chaplains to promptly contact the PRCCMP Director or an Associate Director for such assistance and protection as we are able to provide if the Chaplain is challenged by a commander or senior member of his chain of command, his staff Chaplain supervisor(s), or any senior military leader to cease and desist from the Chaplain's refusal to perform the above prohibited services.

Revised February 2019

VIII. PRCCMP POLICY CONCERNING CHAPLAINS SERVING ON COURTS MARTIAL

BACKGROUND:

The debate as to whether or not ordained ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should serve as members of a court martial has been with us for generations, but some recent developments in the Armed Forces of the United States have brought this matter to the attention of the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel.

The United States Army itself has experienced confusion on this issue. Army Regulation 165-1, Religious Support, Army Chaplain Corps Activities, 4-3, e (2), states that a commanding officer cannot assign a Chaplain as “. . . a member of a court martial” However, the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces in *US v BARTLETT* -66 M.J.426 determined that the Secretary of the Army “impermissibly contravened the provisions of Article 25(d)(2), Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), 10 USC, section 825(d)(2) . . . by issuing a regulation that exempted from court-martial service officers of the . . . Chaplain Corps”

A Staff Judge Advocate (USMC) plainly stated, “Chaplains must be considered for service on courts-martial panels. Statute says ‘any commissioned officer’ can serve. Courts of Appeals for the Armed Forces said that a policy cannot be implemented that exempts certain categories of officers from consideration.”

The USAF policy on chaplains states, as of 21 December, 2007, “Chaplain Corps personnel may serve as jury members, as no Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) is exempted from service.” At the same time, “Chaplains may be excused for a number of reasons . . . “including . . . inner conflict during selection/ exclusion of court-martial members.”

In summation, an absolute exclusion for military chaplains from court-martial duty cannot be obtained by appealing to military regulations, particularly in light of the UCMJ which clearly opens the door for that assigned duty. Exemption must arise from another source altogether, namely an individual chaplain's conscience (scruple[s]) against such service, based on the ecclesiastical/doctrinal standards of his endorsing denomination/agency. Furthermore, we would do well to remember that a chaplain, accused of a violation of the UCMJ, could strongly desire the presence of one or more fellow chaplains on a court-martial jury.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

If a PRCCMP endorsed chaplain has a scruple against serving as a court-martial member, such an objection should be based - carefully - on Scripture, and the subordinate standards of PRCCMP member denominations, specifically the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms or the Three Forms of Unity (Canons of Dort, Heidelberg Catechism, and Belgic Confession).

The commission recommends that the following Scriptural points be borne in mind if a chaplain wishes to be exempted from service on a court-martial.

1. Moses, a great prophet of the Lord, and a type of Christ, also served in a judicial capacity, adjudicating disputes as the final judge in an appeals court system as recommended by his father-in-law, Jethro.
2. Christ Himself, our great High Priest and Redeemer, also serves in the capacity of the ultimate judge of men in the court of Heaven itself (John 5:22; Acts 10:42). Clearly, judicial service is not intrinsically evil.
3. Scripture reminds us that the redeemed shall judge the world, and angels (I Corinthians 6:1-3) which implies that it is neither sinful, nor unbiblical, for a godly believer to serve in a judicial capacity as such (cf. Romans 13:5-7).

Consequently, the PRCCMP recommends that if a chaplain appeals to a higher (military) authority for exemption from serving on a court-martial, he should do so on the basis of a conviction of conscience, which both Scripture and military regulations support (e.g., a chaplain cannot be forced to violate his conscience in performing his military duties). For instance, a chaplain could legitimately claim that serving on a particular court-martial board would place him in an irresolvable conflict of interest. The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 20.2 and Chapter 23 are helpful in seeking an exemption, if he believes that serving on a court-martial jury potentially could compromise his liberty to perform ministry consistent with his ordination vows.

These recommendations of the PRCCMP are NOT to be understood as prohibiting any chaplain from serving as a member of a court-martial when asked, if he cannot see any biblical principle being violated by his doing so.

Added February, 2013

IX. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

A. Background.

PRCCMP-endorsed chaplains serve in institutions promoting practices and policies regarding ethics and human identity, gender, and sexuality increasingly at odds with biblical standards. This trend corresponds to commonly perceived pressure on chaplains to affirm such unbiblical principles or suppress their own exercise of religious belief and practice. This policy section explains PRCCMP chaplains' responsibility as ministers of the Gospel, religious professionals, and advisors to be familiar with, and prepared to uphold, general ecclesial and legal religious liberty requirements and protections for themselves and communities they spiritually lead.

B. Foundational PRCCMP-Biblical Requirements.

Within bounds of denominational standards and the sole ultimate authority of Scripture, individual freedom to follow and apply biblical principles of faith and morals without a binding of conscience is a core principle of all PRCCMP-member denominations, and central to their systems of doctrine. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith states:

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also" (WCF, xx.2).²

The scope of this biblical standard and protection extends beyond chaplains to Christians generally, thus comprising an aspect of chaplains' ministry as expressed in the mission statement of the PRCCMP Constitution to provide "biblical ministry to military personnel and their families".³ The PRCCMP Commission fosters ministerial protection of freedom of conscience in these communities primarily through "principle activity and concern" with its PRCCMP chaplains.⁴ It is an express purpose and duty of the Commission to "encourage and assist our chaplains by every means possible... promoting the ministry of the Chaplaincy"⁵ through ongoing training and communication to its chaplains, and the

² The Belgic Confession to which URCNA chaplains are committed by vows similarly requires freedom of conscience in interpreting mandates of Scripture, stating at Article 32 "We also believe that although it is useful and good for those who govern the churches to establish and set up a certain order among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, they ought always to guard against deviating from what Christ, our only Master, has ordained for us. Therefore, we reject all human innovations and all laws imposed on us, in our worship of God, which bind and force our consciences in any way."

³ Art. II, PRCCMP Constitution.

⁴ Art. II, PRCCMP Constitution.

⁵ PRCCMP Chaplains' Manual, Requirements and Duties, para. I(F) (2021), *citing* Art. II, PRCCMP Constitution.

institutions chaplains serve, about denominational and legal standards of religious liberty. PRCCMP chaplains similarly fulfill ministerial and professional advisory responsibilities through continued familiarity with basic legal standards and local institutional religious liberty policies and practices. Such competency empowers chaplains to fulfill a PRCCMP "moral responsibility to be well and carefully informed of the... policies of their parent command and service, and also the appropriate civilian authorities."⁶ PRCCMP chaplains thereby balance ability to "work within the system without thinking that he is compromising his personal convictions"⁷ with corresponding ability to "submit to military authority or whatever lawful authority he is going to be serving under"⁸, as governed by strong Constitutional and legal protections often misunderstood by institutional leaders and staff.

This responsibility is also emphasized in multiple authoritative policies of all Armed Services and the Department of Defense. These policies at both the Service and Department level require all chaplains "assist commanders in discharging their responsibilities to provide free exercise of religion in the context of military service,"⁹ and to professionally advise more broadly on "religion, morals, ethics, and well-being and morale" not only to "individuals" but also for "Combatant Commands, commanding officers, and organizations."¹⁰ PRCCMP and its chaplains share a collective responsibility to help ensure congregations, denominations, and presbyteries are appropriately advised and educated about related relevant religious liberty issues, standards, and challenges.

C. General Constitutional and Legal Religious Liberty Protections.

1. *RFRA Law: A Stronger Protection than the First Amendment.*

The Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution are the most well-known religious liberty protections ("*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*"); however, they are not the actual controlling and relevant legal standard with which PRCCMP chaplains must be familiar. The large majority of PRCCMP-endorsed chaplains serving in federal institutions (e.g., branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs hospitals, federal prisons) or state prisons are protected by the more extensive protective provisions of the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA).¹¹

- RFRA requires more than just accommodation of formal religious worship such as prayers, services, and sacraments. It also requires exemptions and exceptions to broad religiously motivated conduct (or abstentions), even when the burden on an adherent results from a generally applicable government policy or rules that did not intend to burden religious practice.
- RFRA sets a strict standard for denying accommodation, stating the government "may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person is in furtherance of a **compelling governmental interest**; and is **the least restrictive means** of furthering that compelling governmental interest."
- RFRA requires a "substantial" burden, but this is a very low threshold that in effect merely requires "sincere" belief, since RFRA applies to "any exercise of religion, whether or not

⁶ PRCCMP Chaplains' Manual, PRCCMP Responses to Issues Raised About Women in Combat, para. 7 (2021).

⁷ PRCCMP Chaplains' Manual, Requirements and Duties, para. V(B)(2).

⁸ *Ibid.*, para. V(B)(3).

⁹ Dept. of Defense Instruction 1304.28, *The Appointment and Service of Military Chaplains*, 12 May 2021, Section 1.2a.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Section 3.1.

¹¹ 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb through 2000bb-4. In federal prisons, the same legal standard provided by RFRA is practically mirrored in the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000, 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc et seq., both laws requiring government accommodation of sincere expressions of religious belief except for when government articulates "compelling government interests" employing the "least restrictive means" as further described herein.

compelled by, or central to, a system of religious belief.”¹² If sincere, it generally does not matter whether the religious belief seems unimportant or unreasonable. As stated in a U.S. Supreme Court case applying the similar but less stringent First Amendment standard, “[R]eligious beliefs need not be acceptable, logical, consistent, or comprehensible to others in order to merit First Amendment protection.”¹³

- RFRA is generally interpreted to not only require accommodation, but to prohibit "discrimination" for receiving or requesting a burden, since such discrimination has been determined to constitute a "substantial burden" to exercise of religion under RFRA as substantially pressuring adherents to modify such observance or practice.¹⁴

2. Two Authoritative Sources Implementing RFRA: [Executive Order 1379, Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty (04 May 2017); and Attorney General Memorandum, “Federal Law Protections for Religious Liberty” (06 Oct 2017)].

Two federal issuances provide authoritative guidance¹⁵ regarding RFRA's stringent religious liberty protections. Executive Order 1379¹⁶ requires all Executive branch agencies (including DoD) “vigorously enforce Federal law’s robust protections for religious freedoms.” The helpfully explanatory, and easily accessible, Attorney General Memo¹⁷ of 06 Oct 17 explains in detail application of the First Amendment, RFRA and E.O. 1379. Significant principles of law emphasized in this AG Memo are relevantly useful for PRCCMP advisement, to include these quotes:

- a. *“The free exercise of religion includes the right to act or abstain from action in accordance with one’s religious beliefs.”* (AG Memo, p. 2).
- b. *“Government may not treat the same conduct as lawful when undertaken for secular reasons but unlawful when undertaken for religious reasons. For example, government may not attempt to target religious persons or conduct by allowing the distribution of political leaflets in a park but forbidding the distribution of religious leaflets in the same park.”* (AG Memo, p. 2).
- c. *“Government may not interfere with the autonomy of a religious organization. Together, the Free Exercise Clause and Establishment Clause also restrict governmental interference in intradenominational disputes about doctrine, discipline, or qualifications for ministry or membership.”* (AG Memo, p. 3). This guidance explains constitutional prohibitions on any government attempt to impose nondiscrimination policies (e.g., sexual orientation) upon chaplains or chaplaincy services regarding ecclesial functions and general expressions of religion. These constitutional and RFRA protections are not limited to specific denominational programs and services, but available also to broad religious communities (e.g., a collective multi-denominational Christian service such as "Traditional Protestant") to define for themselves desired religious beliefs and practices within their group. This prohibition on government interference applies also to staff and lay leaders, stating *“As a constitutional matter, religious organizations’ decisions are protected from governmental interference to the extent they relate to ecclesiastical or internal governance matters. Hosanna-Tabor, 565 U.S. at 180, 188-90. It is beyond dispute that “it would violate the First Amendment for courts to apply [employment discrimination] laws to compel the ordination of women by the Catholic Church or by an Orthodox Jewish seminary.” Id. at 188. The same is true for other employees who “minister to the faithful, “including those who are not themselves the head of the religious congregation and who are not engaged solely in religious functions. Id. at 188, 190, 194-95; see also Br. of Amicus Curiae the U.S Supp. Appellee, Spencer v. World Vision, Inc., No. 08-35532 (9th Cir. 2008) (noting that the First*

¹² 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc-5(7).

¹³ Thomas v. Review Bd. of Indiana, 450 U.S. 707, 714 (1981).

¹⁴ See Attorney General Memorandum "Federal Law Protections for Religious Liberty", discussed at paragraph C2 below.

¹⁵ These issuances remain authoritative as of 29 January 2022.

¹⁶ Available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-201700309/pdf/DCPD-201700309.pdf>, accessed 29 January 2022.

¹⁷ Available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1001886/download>, accessed 29 January 2022.

Amendment protects "the right to employ staff who share the religious organization's religious beliefs")." (AG Memo, pp. 12a-13a).

d. *"A governmental action substantially burdens an exercise of religion under RFRA if it bans an aspect of an adherent's religious observance or practice, compels an act inconsistent with that observance or practice, or substantially pressures the adherent to modify such observance or practice." (AG Memo, p. 4)*

e. *"Only those interests of the highest order can outweigh legitimate claims to the free exercise of religion, and such interests must be evaluated not in broad generalities but as applied to the particular adherent. Even if the federal government could show the necessary interest, it would also have to show that its chosen restriction on free exercise is the least restrictive means of achieving that interest. That analysis requires the government to show that it cannot accommodate the religious adherent while achieving its interest through a viable alternative, which may include, in certain circumstances, expenditure of additional funds, modification of existing exemptions, or creation of a new program." (AG Memo, p. 5).*

3. National Defense Authorization Act FY 2013, Section 533 (as amended by NDAA FY 2014, Section 532): "Protection of Rights of Conscience of Members of the Armed Forces and Chaplains of Such Members".

This law has two parts. First, it requires accommodation of all servicemembers' beliefs, not only for religion, but also for beliefs based on "conscience" and "moral principles... unless it could have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline." This standard for mere moral principles and conscience is a less protective legal standard than RFRA's "compelling government interest" and "least restrictive means" requirement, since it only requires adverse impact on military interests.

In the separate second part of this law a) prohibits requiring any chaplain to perform "any rite, ritual, or ceremony" contrary to the chaplain's conscience or "moral or religious beliefs", and b) prohibits discrimination or adverse action against chaplains based on their exercise of these legal protections. This law is in addition to the stringent RFRA protections for any exercise of religion by a chaplain and is a standard that applies without a chaplain needing to request an accommodation.

D. Substantive Examples of Application of Religious Liberty Standards.

1. Nonbiblical Gender and Race Theories. The PRCCMP reaffirms its policy on "Religious Ministry In A Culture Of Gender Confusion" (Section VII, Policy Guidance Manual, adopted 2019). PRCCMP chaplains increasingly express concerns regarding pressure to affirm, promote, or participate in training, instruction, or workplace policies and practices a) conflicting with their religious-biblical convictions regarding justice opposing discriminatory treatment based on race, and/or b) root theories of human identity fundamentally in sexual orientation or race rather than fundamental biblical concepts such as imago Dei, original sin, and available reconciliation in union with Christ. Institutions may appropriately require their personnel, to include chaplains, to merely receive and understand training and instruction about the institution's own policies, procedures, and theories regarding race and gender; requiring chaplains to personally affirm and actively promote such policies against their religious convictions and conscience violates both legal prohibitions and PRCCMP requirements of its chaplains. The PRCCMP fully supports chaplains' discerning discretionary judgments distinguishing and objecting to impermissible requirements to affirm, promote, or participate in advancement of unbiblical theories conflicting with biblical concepts of fundamental justice and identity. PRCCMP chaplains should seek informal and formal accommodation requests seeking mitigation from any such attempt to require chaplains' personal affirmation of perceived unbiblical policies. PRCCMP expects PRCC chaplains to promptly contact the PRCCMP Endorser or Associate Endorser when anticipating such accommodation requests will not be honored.

2. Vaccines and religious exemptions. The Bible places high value on protection of life and health. In that regard, PRCCMP generally encourages chaplains take vaccines, such as available COVID-19

vaccines, as a morally permissible procedure to help protect human life to mitigate a pandemic threat. On 24 August 2021, the Secretary of Defense directed mandatory vaccination of all service members against COVID-19. Many service members, to include some PRCCMP chaplains, requested religious accommodation. While the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines were tested using an abortion-derived cell line that is generally considered by some Christian ethicists to be a remote material cooperation with evil, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was developed, tested and produced with abortion-derived cell lines that are more problematic. In light of these ethical-religious concerns, many chaplains and the constituents they serve considered some or all of these vaccines to violate their conscience regarding application of biblical principles of protection of life. The PRCCMP stands firmly behind chaplains right to seek legal accommodation and exemption from taking a vaccine that would require them to violate their personal biblical convictions, as a requirement of our denominational standards regarding conscience. PRCCMP chaplains should prayerfully consider balanced biblical principles regarding protection of life to determine whether to take vaccines and other medical procedures, and how to best advise persons considering such religious accommodation requests. If vaccines or protective medical procedures are refused on religious grounds, PRCCMP chaplains must continue to act in charity for neighbors with respect for authorities by undertaking recommended means to mitigate spread of infectious diseases through appropriate wearing of face coverings, social distancing, undergoing routine testing, quarantining, and remaining open to receiving treatments not derived from, or tested with abortion-derived cell lines.

3. Medical protective measures/masks. Military and institutional authorities have recently enacted various protective health measures to mitigate spread of infection. These measures impact religious gatherings and ministerial functions, to include prohibiting attendance or limiting capacity for religious gathering, personal distance requirements, and mask requirements inhibiting interpersonal communication for religious functions such as preaching. PRCC chaplains are encouraged to support reasonable institutional efforts to protect public health and safety, but as religious advisors appropriately advise and engage institutional staff and authorities to help ensure policies and rules for religious services and gatherings (e.g. counseling, preaching, sacraments, attendance) are no more restrictive than all similar types of gatherings (educational, training, entertainment, commercial) in light of constitutional and RFRA legal requirements for "compelling government interest" and use of "least restrictive means" for religious exercise and expression. The PRCC fully supports chaplains' discretionary judgments about when and how to seek informal and formal accommodation requests seeking mitigation from such generally applicable restrictions.

Added to the PRCCMP Chaplains' Manual February, 2022