

Grace Churches International  
mPact Churches  
Military Chaplain Guidelines

*September 2013*

## **INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines provide background and information to Grace Churches International (GCI) Chaplains and to those considering Military Chaplain ministry through GCI endorsement. The focus is on military chaplaincy. As additional chaplain opportunities become available these guidelines will be expanded or separate guidelines will be developed.

Military Chaplains are considered as missionaries whenever they are serving in military or related ministries. Chaplains are and should be instruments in nourishing those who are members of the Body of Christ and contributing to God's kingdom on earth.

These guidelines are an official publication of GCI and can be shared by GCI chaplains with their supervisors to convey any limitations or constraints regarding ministry in the military setting. The office of primary responsibility is the GCI Endorsing Agent.

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## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>I. Background of GCI .....</b>                                      | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>A. Brief History.....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>B. Theology.....</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>II. The Need for Chaplains .....</b>                                | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>A. The Rationale for Military Chaplains .....</b>                   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>B. Government Requirements for Military Chaplains .....</b>         | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>C. GCI Requirements for Military Chaplains.....</b>                 | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>III. The Call to be a Chaplain .....</b>                            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>A. General Call to Ministry (Identity, Call, Role, Image) .....</b> | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>B. Specific Call to Chaplaincy (Missionary Calling) .....</b>       | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>C. Types of Chaplain Ministry .....</b>                             | <b>7</b>  |
| 1. Military Chaplain Candidate Program .....                           | 7         |
| 2. Military Reserve Chaplaincy .....                                   | 7         |
| 3. Military Active Duty Chaplaincy.....                                | 7         |
| <b>D. Preparation for Chaplaincy Ministry .....</b>                    | <b>8</b>  |
| 1. Education.....  | 8         |
| 2. Experience .....  | 8         |
| 3. Endorsement/Approval .....  | 8         |
| <b>E. Commissioning Service.....</b>                                   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>F. Ministry Life Cycle .....</b>                                    | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>IV. Relationships .....</b>   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>A. God.....</b>   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>B. Family.....</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>C. Local Church.....</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>D. GCI .....</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>E. Military Personnel.....</b>                                      | <b>10</b> |
| <b>F. Commanders.....</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>G. Family Members .....</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>H. Chaplain Technical Chain .....</b>                               | <b>11</b> |
| <b>I. Other GCI Chaplains .....</b>                                    | <b>11</b> |
| <b>V. Guidelines for Chaplains .....</b>                               | <b>12</b> |
| <b>A. General Guidelines .....</b>                                     | <b>12</b> |
| 1. Ethical Standards .....   | 12        |
| 2. Spiritual Disciplines.....  | 12        |
| 3. Non-Combatant Status .....  | 12        |
| 4. Public Prayer.....  | 12        |
| 5. Perform and Provide Issues.....                                     | 13        |
| 6. Working with non-Christian Faiths and Lifestyles .....              | 13        |
| 7. Career Progression and Assignments .....                            | 13        |
| <b>B. Unit Ministry .....</b>  | <b>14</b> |
| 1. Special Staff Officer .....   | 14        |
| 2. Deployment Ministry.....  | 14        |
| 3. Memorial Ceremonies .....   | 14        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 4. Memorial Services .....   | 15        |
| 5. Military Funerals.....  | 15        |
| 6. Counseling .....  | 15        |
| 7. Unit Programs.....  | 15        |
| <b>C. Installation Ministry .....</b>  | <b>16</b> |
| 1. Chapel Ministry.....  | 16        |
| 2. Altar Calls.....  | 16        |
| 3. Baptisms .....  | 16        |
| 4. Lord's Supper.....  | 17        |
| 5. Spirit Filled Ministry.....   | 17        |
| 6. Weddings.....   | 17        |
| 7. Religious Education/Discipleship.....   | 17        |
| <b>D. Working with Other Chaplains .....</b>   | <b>18</b> |
| 1. Collegiality With Other Chaplains (Sharing of Pulpit) .....                         | 18        |
| 2. Working With Female Chaplains .....   | 18        |
| 3. Technical Supervision of Chaplains.....   | 18        |
| <b>E. GCI Expectations .....</b>   | <b>18</b> |
| 1. Financial Considerations.....   | 18        |
| 2. Endorser Training Conferences .....   | 19        |
| 3. Reporting and Communication.....  | 19        |
| 4. Visits from Endorser .....  | 19        |
| 5. Adopt a Chaplain Program.....   | 19        |
| <b>Appendices.....</b>   | <b>21</b> |
| <b>A. The Covenant and the Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces .....</b>  | <b>21</b> |
| <b>B. Semi-Annual Report .....</b>   | <b>23</b> |
| <b>C. Guidelines for Congregations with Reserve Chaplains .....</b>                    | <b>25</b> |
| <b>D. GCI Chaplain Ministry Post Repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy".....</b> | <b>30</b> |
| <b>E. GCI Chaplain Ministry Post Repeal of the "Defense of Marriage Act".....</b>      | <b>32</b> |

## **I. Background of Grace Churches International**

### **A. Brief History**

Grace Churches International (GCI) became a recognized endorser in 2007. At that time GCI was also the name for an association of like-minded churches headquartered in Fayetteville, NC. On January 1, 2012 the association of churches changed their name to mPact Churches. The GCI name is therefore now only the military endorsing agency, currently still associated with mPact Churches. In effect, mPact Churches does business as GCI for military endorsement purposes. GCI continues to have an ongoing commitment to our current chaplains of all services and is open to receiving inquires regarding establishing a relationship with those who are interested in an endorsement from GCI. The future is bright. GCI firmly believes that there are many like-minded individuals who can best identify with GCI for military endorsement. GCI also continues to pray about our identity in representing like-minded churches and associations.

### **B. Theology**

GCI embraces both Reformed Theology and the current expression of charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. At its core, GCI has a strong commitment to Biblical Theology and to expanding God's Kingdom on earth. Our worship style is contemporary. Our approach is to pursue God's leadership through His plans and purposes, seeking to disciple those He has called. The Great Commission continues to be our "marching orders" here on earth. We seek to fulfill the greatest commandments to love God and to love our neighbors. GCI embraces the great theological movements of faith found in the Orthodox Protestant traditions and specifically the Reformed movement. GCI also embraces the more recent great movements of the Holy Spirit with current day expressions of all the Holy Spirit gifts found in the New Testament. We truly are "Charismatic Calvinists."

## **II. The Need for Chaplains**

### **A. The Rationale for Military Chaplains**

The chaplain's constituency is a military community, ever changing in its composition, but established by the nation for its common defense. That community is comprised of men and women for whom Christ died. While many in that community may be Christian, a great number of them are not; the GCI chaplain is called to be a missionary among them. The principal reason for having chaplains in the Armed Forces is to ensure the free exercise of religion, provide for the spiritual needs of service personnel and their families, and proclaim the Gospel.

The Armed Services train for war with lethal weapons of destruction. Training is arduous, often dangerous, and occasionally even fatal. Sometimes our nation sends its young men and women to war or in harm's way. Even when there is no declared war, deadly disasters may occur requiring the services of chaplains. The GCI chaplain will find that ministry of the Word, the Holy Spirit, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are especially welcomed in these unique military settings. In the end, GCI chaplains have nothing to bring these communities except Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Gospel can never be forced upon members of the Armed Forces; thus providing the Good News in the military setting requires sensitivity to particular circumstances. For example, different approaches are necessary depending on if the individual volunteers to hear a chaplain or of if the individual is mandated to hear the chaplain. Still, the chaplaincy is a vital part of the church's mission. It allows GCI chaplains to provide the finest possible ministry to military personnel, reaching out to all service members and their families

with an evangelical Christian ministry.

Few conditions are more common to the modern military than constant mobility. In the military, our youth are taken away from all they grew up with; parents, family, church, neighborhood. While they have “struck out on their own,” they are not alone. It is the purpose of each service to forge its members into cohesive teams that will represent our national interests and, when necessary, fight effectively to win the nation’s wars. Military men and women usually remain isolated from their roots as they develop new relationships within new communities. The military community temporarily replaces the former civilian community. All service members will belong to a war-fighting team, a military unit. When not deployed with their unit, service members live on or near a military installation. Families of service members likewise belong to that military installation. The full diversity of the American people characterizes all such military units and installations. It is the privilege of GCI chaplains to minister in this unique environment.

## **B. Government Requirements for Military Chaplains**

A chaplain serves both as a member of the Armed Forces, under the authority of the state, and as a pastor under the authority of the church body to which he belongs. Military chaplains serve in a pluralistic environment reflecting the composition of our nation. Clergy willing to work in this environment, particularly those with a missionary heart and a willingness to sacrifice themselves for others, will always be needed by the Armed Forces to provide pastoral care, spiritual leadership, and religious support for the military community. The specific number of chaplains required in the Armed Forces is reflected in recruitment goals that change from time to time according to need. This should not deter any qualified pastor from considering and applying for service in the military chaplaincy.

The religious professional going into the Armed Forces chaplaincy must meet the basic requirements of the Department of Defense, which includes an ecclesiastical endorsement. Department of Defense (DOD) Form 2088 certifies that the person is a professionally qualified member of their particular faith group from a fully qualified Religious Organization as defined in DOD instruction 1304.28, dated 11 June 2004. According to this instruction, all chaplains must be willing to function in a pluralistic environment, support the free exercise of religion by all members of the Military Services and have at least 2 years of religious leadership experience.

Military chaplains must be educationally qualified for appointment as a chaplain. This includes a baccalaureate degree of not less than 120 semester (180 quarter) hours and a post-baccalaureate graduate degree in theological or related studies of no less than 72 semester (108 quarter) hours. Both degrees must be from qualified educational institutions as listed in the current edition of the American Council on Education (ACE). The chaplain must also meet the particular requirements of the three services as they determine their own special needs. These include having a favorable National Agency Check for security, meeting physical standards, and falling within the age criteria. There are chaplain recruiters for each of the three services that have additional information regarding current requirements.

## **C. GCI Requirements for Military Chaplains**

In addition to the DOD and service requirements to become a chaplain, GCI requires that those who desire to be considered for military chaplaincy fill out an appropriate application for endorsement. The appropriate applications are found on the mPact Churches website: [www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains](http://www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains). The application identifies educational background, spiritual development, ministry experience, as well as dealing with any issues that could be a concern morally.

GCI is committed to representing the local church. As such, there should be a commitment to a

recognized local church affiliated with GCI/mPact Churches. If no such relationship exists, then the GCI endorsing agent will be glad to introduce the prospective chaplain to several options for church affiliation. It is important to recognize that an endorsement implies that the endorsed chaplain represents a particular faith group. As such, churches affiliated with GCI/mPact Churches are involved in the selection process and a church recommendation and a recognized ordination to the ministry is required as part of each application. Additional letters of recommendation are also required. There is an expectation that GCI chaplains come out of church ministry and will eventually return to church ministry.

After the applications are complete, an interview either in person or through the use of visual electronic media will be conducted. If the candidate is married, their spouse will also be required to be interviewed. As part of GCI's theological position, only male applicants are considered for the military chaplaincy. GCI recognizes that military chaplains will function as senior pastors of military congregations. Since the theological position of GCI is that only males can serve as senior pastors, this principle is applied to military chaplains as well.

### **III. The Call to be a Chaplain**

#### **A. General Call to Ministry (Identity, Call, Role, Image)**

Individuals considering the military chaplain ministry should first understand their own sense of calling as a minister. At the heart of this understanding is your own identity before God. Your identity is the essence of your being and should address the fact that God Himself owns you. Understanding this identity provides the foundation for handling crises and circumstances of life even in the midst of pain, disappointment and suffering. Only after this identity is firmly established can an individual then consider a primary path of life. Those who are called to full-time ministry as their primary path can experience multiple expressions of ministry during their lifetimes. The important thing to understand is that God directs ministers for His plans and purposes in an ever-changing way. These roles can change, but the call to ministry remains primary, resting on the foundation of our identity. Our image is established over time based on the various roles that we have fulfilled before God.

#### **B. Specific Call to Chaplaincy (Missionary Calling)**

After an individual understands a general call to ministry, a specific calling to military chaplaincy can occur. The call to chaplaincy is a missionary calling. As such, individuals must understand the consequences of such a calling. It requires the embracing of a different culture, a military one. It requires sacrifices for spouses and children, most often requiring family members to experience the military culture right alongside the chaplain. This means that the religious upbringing of children can be experienced outside of what many chaplains may have experienced themselves and may have desired for their children. The missionary calling requires trusting in the sovereignty of God to such an extent that even in the midst of multiple moves and less than desirable circumstances the chaplain and his family continue to model Godly values for the military community. Ministry in the military is full of sacrifices and should be embraced as a jointly supported calling by both husband and wife. Children should be raised and challenged as well to embrace this calling, recognizing the sacrifice and the commitment required by each family member.

The vocation of the chaplaincy is first and last an extension of the call to the pastoral office in a setting other than a local congregation. The GCI minister now serves as chaplain to members of a unique institution, i.e., one of the Armed Forces. Wherever a duty assignment takes a GCI chaplain, he is a GCI missionary; he ministers in this missionary environment by the same authority of Christ as when he was

serving in a church environment. At ordination the GCI minister pledges his voluntary allegiance to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. Throughout his tenure as a chaplain, his ministry remains bound to the same vow and commitment. No matter how geographically distant the chaplain, the local church body continues to supervise, support, and counsel him. The GCI Endorsing Agent also provides direct ministry to support and counsel the chaplain and his family who are now serving in difficult and challenging environments.

## **C. Types of Chaplain Ministry**

### **1. Military Chaplain Candidate Program**

The Army, Air Force, and Navy have programs whereby seminary students can be commissioned as junior officers, attend the basic chaplain course of the appropriate service, and receive some on-the-job training at an Armed Forces installation. To enter the program, the candidate must have been accepted at an approved seminary. Chaplain Candidates are “approved” but are not “endorsed.” The purpose of the chaplain candidate program is to explore the real possibility of becoming a Military Chaplain. You will find the GCI Application, with submission instructions, for obtaining approval as a GCI Chaplain Candidate on the mPact Churches website: [www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains](http://www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains). This approval is part of the package that is submitted by potential Chaplain Candidates to boards conducted by each of the Services (Army, Navy and Air Force). The GCI Endorsing Agent may visit Chaplain Candidates at seminaries to encourage and to periodically give a briefing on the program and coordinate Chaplain Candidate orientation activities. Seminaries are responsible for ensuring that Chaplain Candidate applicants are academically qualified. The GCI Endorsing Agent is responsible to provide guidance regarding chaplaincy careers. The Services provide periodic training opportunities depending on Reserve or National Guard status and branch of service. During seminary studies, if a GCI affiliated church is not available then a local church of similar theology can be substituted. Questions regarding this can be discussed with the GCI Endorsing Agent. Even during this process, there should be a relationship between the GCI Chaplain Candidate and a GCI affiliated Church. Please see the GCI Adopt a Chaplain program in these guidelines for additional information.

### **2. Military Reserve Chaplaincy**

Service in the Reserve Components, either Federal Reserves or National Guard (associated with each of the States), as a Chaplain requires an endorsement. You will find the GCI Application, with submission instructions, for obtaining approval as a GCI Reserve Chaplain the mPact Churches website: [www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains](http://www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains). In light of the fact that our nation’s reserve forces regularly contribute in a full-time capacity, GCI has similar requirements for both reservists and active duty Chaplains. Reservists have a special call to serve GCI congregations or other legitimate ministries while at the same time serving military units in the reserve system. The vast majority of these chaplains serve congregations. When ministering in the chaplaincy, they become extensions of their congregation's outreach. They are missionaries to those who wear or have worn our nation's uniform. There must be a good relationship between the chaplain and his congregation as it pertains to his ministry in the chaplaincy. To foster this relationship, the GCI Endorsing Agent has established *Guidelines for Congregations with Reserve Chaplains* found at Appendix C. The intent of the guidelines is to establish procedures so that the pastor's responsibility to his congregation will not be inhibited or deterred while serving as a chaplain.

### **3. Military Active Duty Chaplaincy**

Serving as a Military Active Duty Chaplain is an honor with much responsibility. The GCI Application, with submission instructions, for obtaining approval as a GCI Chaplain serving on active duty, can be

found on the mPact Churches website: [www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains](http://www.mpactchurches.org/chaplains). While serving, it is critical that GCI Chaplains maintain their relationship with GCI affiliated churches. Most installations will not have a GCI affiliated church available locally; therefore, it is critical that a relationship continues with a “home” GCI affiliated church. All of the previous comments in these guidelines are generally geared toward active duty chaplaincy. This section is therefore intentionally short.

## **D. Preparation for Chaplaincy Ministry**

### **1. Education**

As was shared in the section on government requirements to become a chaplain, both a baccalaureate degree and a graduate seminary degree are required. There are many quality seminaries that can prepare a person for full-time ministry. Based on what was shared in the section on the general call to ministry, it is important to pursue an education that provides a foundation for ministry in many settings. The GCI Endorsing Agent is available should additional information be requested. One important note: while the use of distance education has proliferated, individuals are encouraged to consider the value of on-campus educational experiences. The ministry, to include the chaplaincy, is relational at its core. It is therefore important to actually experience both the joys and the challenges of working with faculty members in face-to-face mentoring.

### **2. Experience**

There is no substitute for actual ministry experience. Preaching is not a skill that can be developed in a virtual setting. The same goes for counseling skills, conducting funerals, conducting weddings, and all of the other practical skills required of a minister. Functioning as a chaplain in a military setting requires all the ministry skills required in the civilian world. For those who feel a calling to the chaplaincy, the best preparation is actually doing ministry. GCI requires two years of paid ministry experience. The government requires that this experience occur after the graduate degree has been earned. There can be exceptions to this requirement; however, the GCI Endorsing Agent must ensure that the potential candidate has the ministry skills to represent Jesus Christ and GCI in a professional and mature way.

### **3. Endorsement/Approval**

“Ecclesiastical Endorsement” is an official statement of the church body indicating the ordained minister is on the clergy roster and in good standing in the church and has been especially chosen to represent that church body in a military ministry. “Ecclesiastical Approval” is an official statement of the church body indicating that the person is a bona fide seminarian and candidate for ordination who is authorized by the church body to participate in a military chaplain candidacy program while at the seminary. An ecclesiastical endorsement is needed for an initial appointment as a chaplain and at other stages during his service. For the Armed Forces, separate endorsements are required to enter the Reserve components or for going on extended active duty (EAD). An endorsement also is needed for selection for continuing on active duty on an indefinite basis. The endorsement assures that the individual is an ordained clergyman who has a formal relationship with a GCI affiliated church and conveys that the individual is qualified morally, intellectually, emotionally, and doctrinally to represent GCI to the military. The initial endorsement is signed only after a personal interview and the members of the GCI Endorsement Board have approved the application. The endorsement is periodically reviewed. Acceptance of the endorsement obligates the chaplain to represent GCI with integrity and to meet other requirements, such as submitting reports and attending meetings sponsored by the GCI Endorsing Agent. The GCI Endorsing Agent may withdraw the endorsement for cause in exceptional cases.

Submitted applications are confidential. Applicants will be notified whether or not they have been

approved. An applicant who is not endorsed is free to re-submit an application after one year. Applicants should know that the GCI Endorsement Board normally approves those who are effective pastors and have found the local church ministry highly rewarding. GCI chaplains must be able to work cooperatively with clergy of other faith groups, respecting the integrity of their positions without compromising GCI's theological position. They must be spiritually mature, prudent leaders who can work effectively in an arena sometimes hostile to Christianity (Matthew 10:16). Chaplains must provide proper pastoral care to those for whom they are responsible. When the applicant receives his endorsement, he will be given instructions on how to follow through with the appropriate military service, which will lead to his appointment. The GCI Endorsing Agent signs ecclesiastical endorsements. If a military applicant does not complete his government processing, including acceptance of the commission and taking the Oath of Office within one year from the date of the ecclesiastical endorsement, the endorsement will be withdrawn 60 days after written notice has been sent from the GCI Endorsing Agent.

When a military service approves a pastor for active duty, the notification normally will come to the GCI Endorsing Agent. He in turn will notify the applicant, who will consider the message as a prelude to a formal call. At this point the applicant is free to decline. If he responds positively, the applicable military service will issue orders. When the formal call is issued, the local GCI affiliated church is notified. Once orders are issued, the new chaplain reports for active duty as specified.

### **E. Commissioning Service**

The GCI affiliated church that has sponsored the newly appointed chaplain will generally conduct a commissioning service to recognize the missionary calling and the significant milestone of becoming a Military Chaplain. This service also reinforces the relationship between the chaplain and his sponsoring GCI affiliated church. The GCI Endorsing Agent will generally be a part of this service as the newly appointed chaplain prepares for service.

### **F. Ministry Life Cycle**

As has been previously shared, the "normal" pattern for chaplains is that they will come out of local church ministry and eventually return to local church ministry. It is also understood that local church ministry can include supportive ministries such as evangelism, prophetic ministry, theological education, and others. As a chaplain prepares to depart the service through voluntary separation or through retirement, the GCI Endorsing Agent and the sponsoring GCI affiliated church should be consulted regarding possibilities for continuing service in expanding God's Kingdom on earth.

## **IV. Relationships**

### **A. God**

God is first. God is at the core of our identity as Christians and as ministers. Every day the spiritual disciplines of reading and studying God's word, of prayer, of spiritual gifts, of worship, of discipleship and of professional reading should be engaged. Without going to the well of God's intimacy chaplains will not be able to respond to the needs of others. Regular sabbaticals and times of reflection are needed. Chaplains are unique in the military and should model a proper balance of the spiritual, the mental, the emotional and the physical. Without the spiritual foundation found in an intimate personal relationship with God, a chaplain's life is subject to moral and physical corruption.

## **B. Family**

Serving God and the military does not absolve a chaplain of the responsibilities to care for their family. Marriage was the first institution ordained by God and a strong marriage is not guaranteed simply because an individual has made a commitment to God. Marriage requires an attitude of self-sacrifice in order to focus on the needs of another. Parenting requires similar commitments. Because of the potential periods of separation required by a military life-style, family relationships are critical. Generally, with very few exceptions, GCI chaplains should always move to new locations as a family, with the expectation that God will provide for needs, to include friendships and support, at new locations even as God has provided in other locations.

## **C. Local Church**

The importance of GCI affiliated churches has already been addressed. GCI Chaplains will have an ongoing relationship with a GCI affiliated church. When a chaplain is serving at an installation, it is expected that the GCI chaplain will be directly involved in ministry at the military installation. The place to receive ongoing religious education and worship are found on the military installation. There may be times when installation ministry is challenging. As required, the GCI Endorsing Agent should be involved to insure that GCI Chaplains are properly involved in meaningful ministry at their assigned installation. Local churches can certainly be attended as well when the opportunity arises. The principle to understand, however, is that GCI chaplains should minister at their installations and involve their families at every opportunity. Truly, a missionary approach is needed to commit to the military culture.

## **D. GCI**

The GCI Endorsing Agent is the primary individual who interacts on a regular basis with GCI Chaplains. The GCI Endorsing Board, consisting of other individuals appointed to serve in that capacity, supports the GCI Endorsing Agent.

## **E. Military Personnel**

The vast majority of the people whom the chaplain serves are enlisted personnel. The military chaplain is a pastor to them, a pastor in uniform. The uniform is a necessary ingredient of his ministry. He must be able to identify with the people he serves. In identifying with them, he, like Paul, should strive to be “all things to all men, that (he) might . . . save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). There are times when he participates in physical training with them, deploys with them, and comes under the same enemy fire. As the GCI Chaplain identifies with military personnel, he should never lose his sense of ministry.

## **F. Commanders**

The military chaplain is also a pastor to his fellow officers. Most officers can be given command. Command is the authority that an individual in the military service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. The chaplain does not exercise command. Technically, neither is he responsible for the religious and moral welfare of those in the command. In the U.S. Armed Forces, this responsibility belongs to the commanding officer. The commander, however, discharges this responsibility through the chaplain as a member of his/her staff. Authority is delegated to the chaplain to make decisions in specific areas. His primary responsibility is to plan and carry out the religious program. The commander also will expect the chaplain to be an individual of convictions, theologically and otherwise -- giving his honest input in a forthright, logical, and tactful manner. Much of the chaplain's relationship with his commander is in his capacity as a staff officer. As a staff officer, especially a senior one, the chaplain also may be involved in supporting and directing ministries of many

other chaplains. As long as a GCI chaplain is not directed to do anything contrary to the Holy Scriptures, he is expected to follow orders/guidance from those who have legitimate authority.

## **G. Family Members**

There are some assignments in the military where a chaplain's ministry will be at a chapel that has comprehensive programs for all members of the family. Even chaplains in troop units or on a ship have family ministries. Counseling military personnel and spouses, as well as corresponding with family members, demands a considerable portion of a chaplain's time. Military chaplains have many opportunities to minister to family members whose loved ones have debilitating diseases, injuries, or who have died.

## **H. Chaplain Technical Chain**

GCI chaplains are committed to having effective working relationships with chaplains of other faiths in the military. The military has regulations that prohibit chaplains from being forced to do anything contrary to the tenets of their faith. This includes being required to join in religious services with chaplains of other faiths or giving communion to those who do not embrace Biblical Christianity. Chaplains are responsible to their commanders to either directly perform the religious support of personnel within the command or to facilitate the provision for the worship needs they are unable to meet. To do this, it is necessary that a GCI chaplain build a good working relationship with chaplains of other faiths. The chaplaincy has a time-honored and unofficial slogan, "Cooperation without Compromise."

Theological differences are accepted in the chaplaincy, but arrogance and uncooperativeness are unacceptable. The commanding officer and his/her staff chaplain need team players; the GCI chaplain will want to earn a place on that team by being loyal, creative, supportive, productive, enthusiastic, and willing to perform assigned tasks as professionally as possible. If demands are made that run contrary to GCI's theological position, an open discussion will often solve the problem. If the issue cannot be resolved locally, the chaplain should contact the GCI Endorsing Agent for guidance.

GCI is one of nearly 250 denominations or faith groups currently serving military personnel. At larger units or installations, senior chaplains offer many religious expressions as part of a command's religious program. Mutual respect among chaplains and a willingness to cooperate, without compromising their own convictions, enable such a diverse program to work. GCI chaplains cooperate and coordinate appropriately with other chaplains as part of what is their normal ministry environment.

## **I. Other GCI Chaplains**

GCI Chaplains are small in number. Often they will serve as the only GCI Chaplain at an installation. As such, when the opportunity presents itself to fellowship with other GCI Chaplains it should be embraced with regular commitments for fellowship, accountability, and support. The annual GCI Endorsing Agent sponsored training is an event to cultivate these relationships as well. Every effort should be made to attend this annual training.

## V. Guidelines for Chaplains

### A. General Guidelines

#### 1. Ethical Standards

GCI supports the “Covenant and Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces.” A copy of this document is found at Appendix A. GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates will read, understand and support this document as part of serving as a professional minister in the military. The GCI Endorsing Agent is available to discuss interpretations of this document should there be any concerns regarding implementation within the military context.

#### 2. Spiritual Disciplines

GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates will exhibit a lifestyle of spirituality, focusing on their personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates will have a daily quiet time with God, reading and studying Scripture, praying, practicing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, worshiping, and reading professionally. These activities should flow from the abundance of what God has already done, but should also draw the individual Chaplain and Chaplain Candidate into an ever deepening relationship with God. GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates will contribute to Installation Worship, Religious Education, and Small Group opportunities. GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates should model what “right” looks like in balancing unit ministry with installation ministry.

#### 3. Non-Combatant Status

The current policy for all three branches of service is that Chaplains are not combatants and will not carry weapons, even in a training environment. The only known exception to this policy is for those attending certain Special Operations training, but never in a real world environment. GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates will model this policy, trusting in the sovereignty of God for their protection to face danger with a peace and confidence rooted in their personal relationship with God. The focus for GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates should be on ministry to others. In the very unlikely event that it is required, GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates are allowed to defend themselves. This point is worth repeating: this is very unlikely to happen and the focus should be on ministry to others. If any GCI Chaplain or Chaplain Candidate is faced with compromising this policy, they should immediately contact the GCI Endorsing Agent for assistance and support.

#### 4. Public Prayer

According to the United States Constitution, there will be no law (or regulation) that prohibits the free exercise of religion or that establishes religion. Public prayer is an area that is misunderstood and inappropriately exercised by many. GCI Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates will be expected, as a part of their military duties to offer prayers in public settings. Examples of these prayers are prayers offered at changes of command, promotions ceremonies, memorial ceremonies, and retirement ceremonies. Other examples include prayers before going into combat, prayers before airborne operations, and before other training events. Public prayers are not the same as leading in worship where individuals voluntarily participate. The prayers offered in public should be sensitive to the audience. They should be preceded by an invitation to prayer, such as, “I invite you to join me as I pray.” The reason for the invitation is that you cannot presume to pray for all who are present. The only person that you can represent with assurance is yourself, which leads to the second principle. The second principle is that public prayers should be offered in the first person singular. In other words, they are “I” prayers, not “we” prayers. For many ministers this is a challenge. Therefore, until the GCI Chaplain or Chaplain Candidate is able to

naturally embrace this change from “we” to “I” they should consider writing out their prayers. The third principle is to keep the prayers short. The chaplain is generally not the guest speaker. The prayer is not the place to sermonize or preach. Individuals have the opportunity to voluntarily come to listen to sermons at other places. Finally, the closing of a prayer should reflect and come from the heart of the person praying. Jesus’ name can be used. A closing could be, “it is in the name of Jesus that I pray. Amen.”

## **5. Perform and Provide Issues**

All chaplains, including GCI Chaplains, need to understand the difference between performing ministry and providing ministry. Performing ministry is what the individual Chaplain can perform that is consistent with the tenants of the faith group represented. In other words, GCI Chaplains can perform the functions usually associated with performing ministry in a civilian setting. When faced with the need to support individuals that desire religious support outside of GCI theological practices, the GCI Chaplain will do everything possible, within the confines of military good order and discipline, to support the requests of the individual. A guiding principle is found in properly understanding pluralism in the United States. Pluralism is not finding a lowest common denominator religion. It basically understands that we respect people’s rights to believe, even when we may not agree with the belief itself. GCI Chaplains can therefore assist Wiccans in their desire to meet without embracing Wiccan beliefs. GCI Chaplains can find Roman Catholic priests to administer Mass, without embracing Catholic doctrine. This principle is critical for GCI Chaplains to understand. There is no fear of what others may believe. In the United States they have a right to believe things as long as no laws are broken. GCI Chaplains can support these individuals, who from our perspective are wrong, and yet we can love them with the love of Jesus Christ without compromise.

## **6. Working with non-Christian Faiths and Lifestyles**

The military allows non-Christian faiths and lifestyles, to include the gay and lesbian lifestyle. These faiths and lifestyles are not consistent with GCI theological positions. Still, these individuals are our neighbors. As such, we are called to love them as ourselves and to serve them by providing religious support through others. The United States Constitution gives freedom of speech to all citizens including Military Chaplains and Service Members to express opinions regarding faiths and behaviors that are not consistent with God’s Word. Having stated this, the primary characteristic for GCI Chaplains should be one of love while adhering to God’s standards. This means that when it comes to the performance of ministry GCI Chaplains will not compromise with GCI theology. They will, however, provide any requested religious support through others that is consistent with good order and discipline. In the execution of religious support missions GCI Chaplains represent their faith group. Therefore the conduct of worship services and religious rites such as weddings, baptisms, and communion will not be conducted for those who embrace non-Christian faiths or lifestyles. GCI Chaplains can have relationships with those who embrace non-Christian faiths or lifestyles, trusting in the sovereignty of God to call many to Biblical faith. GCI Chaplains have no fear of these alternate faiths or lifestyles. They know they are owned by God and simply trust that God Himself will bring about His plans and purposes. See Appendix D for additional guidelines for ministry in the post “DADT” military.

## **7. Career Progression and Assignments**

GCI Chaplains should embrace first and foremost a service to God as His tool to be used in any manner that He sees fit. The military can provide the opportunity for chaplains to become very interested in the right career path in order to achieve promotions or to manage assignments in a manner that meet personal goals or objectives. GCI Chaplains should embrace a basic willingness to “go anywhere, do anything, at anytime.” This basic attitude toward service in the military could be considered risky. Still, GCI

Chaplains are not their own. They are first and foremost God's tools to be used where He deems appropriate. Therefore, some may make promotion. Some may not. Some may make the military a career. Some may not have that opportunity. Some could become strategic spiritual leaders in the military. Most will not. GCI Chaplains can and should express their passions, their openness to serve in particular geographic locations or with particular military units. Sharing this information is rooted on the previous statement regarding willingness to "go anywhere, do anything, at anytime." The foundation remains. GCI Chaplains are not their own. God owns them.

## **B. Unit Ministry**

### **1. Special Staff Officer**

Military Chaplains are in a unique category in the military. For most military units chaplains are considered to be Special Staff Officers, often on the personal staff of the unit commander. In this capacity, chaplains not only provide religious support to military members and their families, they also provide advice and function as a staff officer for their commanders. They are the experts on religion on the staff. They certainly are responsible for planning for and executing the religious support mission for the commander. Commanders are also unique and can vary greatly in their own approach toward their religious support mission for which they are ultimately responsible. Chaplains need to be flexible regarding the unique relationship they have with their commander. Chaplains can also be called on to provide advice on ethics, morals, morale, religions and perhaps other related matters. Chaplains should generally not function outside of their religious area. If a chaplain is asked to execute questionable missions, the chaplain's supervisory chaplain should be consulted and if necessary consult the GCI Endorsing Agent. Every action taken by a GCI Chaplain should reflect positively upon GCI.

### **2. Deployment Ministry**

Chaplains from all branches of service regularly deploy. Deployment ministry requires proper preparation in many areas. Just like any other member of the military, the chaplain's family should be prepared in every area possible. The most serious issues for military members downrange are when family members have unmet needs back home. This also applies to chaplain families. Therefore every effort should be made to address the spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial needs of the family. Chaplains should also be prepared with their ministry skills. For example, preaching skills will most likely be used downrange. Having stated this, a combat environment is not the place to learn how to preach. It should be a skill that is understood, if not thoroughly mastered, prior to deployment. Therefore, chaplains need to build up an experience base. This applies not only to preaching but also to counseling, ministering with casualties and other ministry areas. Going through training opportunities and addressing potential scenarios prior to deployment can help chaplains to experience immediate productivity in their downrange ministries.

### **3. Memorial Ceremonies**

A memorial ceremony is an activity recognizing a deceased member or members of a particular organization, ship, war, etc. Normally a memorial ceremony includes music, an invocation, appropriate Scripture reading, reading of the Service record, obituary and/or remarks (often from the commanding officer), prayer, a silent tribute, and taps. GCI Chaplains may conduct memorial ceremonies at a chapel, graveside or elsewhere, for deceased service members (active duty or retired). It is important to understand that this is a ceremony and not a religious service. The chaplain's presence represents the government, not the church, and carries no implication of fellowship. All prayers offered at any ceremony should follow the previous guidance given on public prayers.

#### 4. Memorial Services

While the memorial ceremony is a patriotic event with the solemnity of remembering the fallen comrade(s) and has religious implications (*i.e.*, thanking God for the service of the deceased), the memorial service is a *religious* service guided by the rites of the chaplain's denomination. Attendance at a memorial service is voluntary. The chaplain has a responsibility to advise the commander on whether the memorial activity should be a ceremony or a service. One way of understanding the difference is that memorial services are religious services and can simply be a funeral service without the presence of a body. Both memorial ceremonies and memorial services are primarily focused on the needs of the military unit.

#### 5. Military Funerals

A military funeral is a worship service at which the remains of the deceased are present and the customs of the Armed Services observed. When possible, GCI Chaplains should conduct such a service in accordance with both the desires of the deceased family while incorporating appropriate needs of the military as well. Still, the family will have priority. The chaplain may have the commander or his representative read the service record and/or obituary. A chaplain should thoroughly coordinate the details of any military ceremony/service or funeral with the appropriate military personnel who can give expert advice pertaining to the customs of the services that should be followed.

#### 6. Counseling

Military Chaplains regularly provide counseling to service members and their family members. GCI Chaplains will provide this counseling from a biblical perspective. Ultimately, the source for healing for people in need is Jesus Christ. Counseling requires flexibility and sensitivity. Listening skills are paramount. Offering those who are being counseled spiritual truth is generally appropriate; however, many times the way the truth is shared is extremely important. GCI Chaplains should combine listening with the appropriate sharing of biblical truth. Since counseling is such an ongoing part of what chaplains do, it is a primary critical skill for being a chaplain. GCI Chaplains should invest in foundational biblical educational opportunities through seminaries as well as ongoing professional development through books and other resources. Prayer can also be incorporated into most counseling sessions. Generally, simply asking individuals if prayer can be offered results in a very positive experience. Finally, GCI Chaplains will not counsel females while alone. Safeguards will be established in all these cases. Doors should be left open with others present in the same building. Windows can be used if available. Again, in all cases, the GCI Chaplain will take measures to protect their own reputations and safeguard the counseled female as well.

#### 7. Unit Programs

GCI Chaplains are unique in their God given personalities and ministry strengths. These should be taken into account when unit religious programs are developed. Many times new chaplains, in a desire to be successful, establish programs that do not suit their own strengths and passions. The thing to remember is that God has placed the individual GCI Chaplain in the unique unit that they are assigned to and should build a religious support program that uniquely matches the strengths of the GCI Chaplain with the unique needs found in the unit. Of course the unit commander can also direct specific types of ministry that they desire. In these cases the GCI Chaplain should be the professional and provide a quality religious support experience even if the program is outside of their personal comfort zone. There are other programs, such as marriage enrichment experiences, that most military chaplains provide. GCI Chaplains should seek opportunities to learn from others as they prepare to lead events with the goal of improving marriage relationships in the military setting. In these cases, a principle to remember is that

GCI Chaplains continue to represent GCI even in these settings. It is therefore expected that GCI Chaplains lead such events with a Christian and biblical standard.

## **C. Installation Ministry**

### **1. Chapel Ministry**

The ministry of chaplains is a spiritual ministry, with major emphasis upon the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Biblical rites and practices, and on personal contact and counseling. GCI Chaplains will embrace the pastoral identity, seeking to improve pastoral skills over their lifetime of service to the Lord. Worship should never be secondary. It is at the core of who we are and how we perform spiritual leadership. There can be no greater compliment than for service members, family members and even commanders to refer to GCI Chaplains as “pastor.” When it comes to chapel ministry, GCI Chaplains will find a wide variety of possible scenarios to participate in. Some of these possible scenarios will be comfortable while some may not be comfortable. Still, in all circumstances, the GCI Chaplain will attempt to provide a quality and excellent worship experience being mindful of the attendees while never compromising God’s standards.

Most military installations provide “General Christian” or “Collective Protestant” worship opportunities to their personnel. These services vary greatly in style and liturgy depending on the senior chaplain in charge of the service and on the traditions of particular worship services and congregations. In their role as “Missionaries to the Military,” GCI Chaplains should seek out every opportunity to preach the Gospel within their Command and at installation services. This includes leading or serving on the staffs of General Protestant worship services whenever possible. In the complex and diverse world they are called to serve, GCI Chaplains will design services and sermons that are worshipful and edifying for this broader audience, faithfully proclaiming the Bible in relevant and meaningful ways.

GCI Chaplains are expected to represent GCI Theology and practices. They will not participate in any event that would compromise Biblical truth. In facing difficult cases, a GCI Chaplain should seek counsel from senior GCI Chaplains, from their GCI affiliated church or from the GCI Endorsing Agent.

### **2. Altar Calls**

While many worship services in the military do not have times for decision, GCI Chaplains should feel free and even be encouraged to provide these opportunities as part of the normal worship experience. Worship services are voluntary. As such, those who attend choose to be there and choose to listen to the chaplain who is leading the service. Altar calls, or times of decision, provide an opportunity for those in attendance to respond to God’s call through making Jesus Christ Lord of their lives, recommitting their lives to Jesus, seeking prayer for guidance or for healing. This part of the service should be planned as every other part, in order to treat each individual with dignity and respect as they seek to follow God.

### **3. Baptisms**

GCI Chaplains will baptize by immersion whenever possible, emphasizing the symbolic nature of baptism through the identification of the one baptized with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Baptism is the initiation rite of the church. GCI does not require that only ordained clergy baptize. As such, GCI Chaplains can provide the opportunity for others to be involved in baptisms. In order to document the Christian Baptism, an appropriate certificate should be provided to each individual that could later be shared with local churches should they require such a document. Each baptized individual should be encouraged to embrace the full expression of Christian life and be afforded opportunities for discipleship and service.

#### **4. Lord's Supper**

GCI Chaplains are to administer the Lord's Supper in accordance with the Scriptures and in accordance with the practices of the GCI affiliated church the chaplain is associated with. The individual GCI Chaplain will decide whom to admit for the service. Usually GCI Chaplains will administer the elements of the Lord's Service to all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and who desire to receive the elements.

#### **5. Spirit Filled Ministry**

GCI embraces the full expression of Holy Spirit gifts. Having stated this, GCI also recognizes that not all expressions of Christianity in the military setting have this same belief. As such, GCI Chaplains will practice ministry led by the Holy Spirit without condemnation to others. Spirit filled ministry is a beautiful expression of God's love for us and the source of power in our Christian ministry.

#### **6. Weddings**

GCI believes that term "marriage" has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. GCI believes that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. GCI believes that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. GCI believes that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's gender, or disagreement with one's biological gender, is sinful and offensive to God. GCI Chaplains will abide by and agree with these standards and will conduct themselves accordingly. Having stated these standards, GCI also believes that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with scripture nor the doctrines of the church. See Appendix E for additional guidelines written after the U S Supreme Court repealed part of the Federal Defense of Marriage Act.

A marriage ceremony is not necessarily a religious service. Civil officials can conduct weddings. When a GCI Chaplain officiates, weddings become a worship service in which the couple asks God's blessings on the union and provides the chaplain an opportunity for Christian witness. GCI Chaplains are authorized to solemnize the marriage of any couple that would be eligible in a GCI affiliated church. Similarly, GCI Chaplains are expected to conduct an active pre-marital instruction program prior to the marriage ceremony. GCI Chaplains will want to counsel with the couple and be assured that there is no Scriptural or other impediment to the marriage before agreeing to solemnize the marriage at a worship service. If there is a problem and it remains unresolved, Armed Services regulations support the chaplain's right to refuse to conduct the service. GCI Chaplains are further cautioned to check the local legal requirements of the state, country, etc., in which the ceremony is to be performed. In many cases, clergy need to be registered with the local authorities prior to the signing of marriage documents. In some countries, only the civil ceremony and not the religious rite is recognized as establishing a legal marriage.

#### **7. Religious Education/Discipleship**

A significant part of the ministry of the chaplain involves Bible classes, Christian doctrine instruction for both youth and adults, pre-marriage courses, family life activities, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, etc. The military services often make these and other religious educational activities available on the installation. GCI Chaplains should commit to the entire religious support program wherever they are for themselves and their families. Religious education goes hand-in-hand with the Great Commission

regarding discipleship. As such it is at the core of our responsibilities for providing religious programs to our units and congregants.

## **D. Working with Other Chaplains**

### **1. Collegiality With Other Chaplains (Sharing of Pulpit)**

GCI Chaplains have the honor and privilege to work in ministry settings with a diverse expression of Biblical Christianity in the military setting. The conduct of worship services is a specific and unique opportunity to work with other chaplains from these faith groups. There are two different levels of collegiality that GCI Chaplains should recognize as they perform ministry and provide ministry. The first level of collegiality is that of conducting and leading in worship services. This level of collegiality requires Biblical like-mindedness. Therefore, GCI Chaplains will only lead and conduct worship services with chaplains who embrace historically orthodox Christianity. While GCI Chaplains embrace the Bible as their sole source of authority, certain historical church creeds, such as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed, can be useful in determining if a GCI Chaplain can serve with a chaplain from another faith tradition. The other level of collegiality is one of working with all chaplains as professional caregivers and clergy from their own traditions. This level of collegiality recognizes the differences of faith beliefs that chaplains have. GCI Chaplains will regularly require the assistance of other chaplains in order to best provide for the religious support of their unit. GCI Chaplains can and should have strong relationships with these other faith traditions in order to accomplish the religious support mission.

### **2. Working With Female Chaplains**

GCI does not endorse female chaplains. There are many endorsers, from historically orthodox Christian backgrounds who do. While GCI recommends GCI Chaplains work with female chaplains in worship services, it is up to the individual GCI Chaplain to determine this issue. The GCI Chaplain should make this decision based on their own convictions and should then share the decision with the GCI Endorsing Agent. The GCI Endorsing Agent will support each individual GCI Chaplain regarding this decision. GCI Chaplains should contact the GCI Endorser for assistance as required.

### **3. Technical Supervision of Chaplains**

In most cases, GCI Chaplains will have a chaplain from a higher headquarters that serves as their technical supervisor. GCI Chaplains also serve as part of the installation chaplain team, with the installation chaplain providing technical supervision. There are also instances of serving on a chapel staff with a senior chaplain providing technical supervision. In all these cases, GCI Chaplains should clearly communicate any ministry constraints found in these guidelines. How this information is communicated is important. GCI Chaplains should be seen as doing everything possible that they can do while meeting the requirements of the GCI Endorsing Agent. In the event that GCI Chaplains are providing technical supervision, they should accomplish this mission with care and compassion for the chaplains they supervise and should seek to understand the constraints that any particular faith group may have. Military chaplains should model how to get along with others.

## **E. GCI Expectations**

### **1. Financial Considerations**

The mission of the GCI Endorsing Agent is primarily supported through the voluntary support from GCI Chaplains. The support received determines if the GCI Endorser serves on a part-time or full-time capacity. There are administrative requirements established by military services as well as requirements

established by GCI to support GCI Chaplains. The most important mission of the GCI Endorsing Agent is to provide pastoral care for the GCI Chaplain and their family. This requires travel and other expenses to accomplish this mission. GCI Chaplains should contribute directly from their military salary part of their tithe and offering to support the GCI Endorsing Agent. While there is no mandatory percentage, many GCI Chaplains have chosen to give 40% of their tithe in a monthly contribution to the GCI Endorsing Agent. Some GCI chaplains contribute more. All contributions are tax deductible.

## **2. Endorser Training Conferences**

The GCI Endorsing Agent provides annual opportunities for GCI Chaplain Professional Development Training Seminars. These seminars provide opportunities for personal ministry, for collegiality and for professional development. GCI Chaplains will make every attempt to attend. Because this is part of serving as a professional clergyman, it is appropriate to request unit TDY funds to attend. The GCI Endorsing Agent will provide letters regarding this requirement to all chaplains prior to the scheduled event that can serve as justification for TDY requests. The GCI Endorsing Agent should be notified if mission requirements preclude attendance.

## **3. Reporting and Communication**

GCI requires a semi-annual report. A copy of this report, with submission instructions, is found at Appendix B. GCI Chaplains have some of the most challenging and unique ministries in the Christian world. These ministries should be publicized throughout all GCI affiliated churches. Chaplains are encouraged to submit articles and photographs illustrating their ministry to the GCI Endorsing Agent. Additionally, confidential prayer requests and issues should be shared in order to provide the GCI Endorsing Agent the opportunity to provide pastoral support during critical and challenging circumstances.

## **4. Visits from Endorser**

The GCI Endorsing Board requires the GCI Endorsing Agent to visit active-duty GCI Chaplains. Ideally, active duty chaplains can expect a visit during a given tour at an installation. The purpose of the visit is to affirm the ministry of the chaplain, give pastoral support as it is needed, and to demonstrate GCI's affirmation of the government's legitimate role in protecting and preserving our freedoms. Normally the GCI Endorsing Agent will strive to see the supervisory chaplain and appropriate commanding officers. When the visit is confirmed, the person being visited should determine if a briefing is advisable, who should be seen for courtesy calls, orientation, etc., and the itinerary. Any necessary logistical arrangements should also be made. Overseas, endorsing agents travel under official DOD recognition as GS-16 equivalents and normally receive protocol treatment. It is always prudent to notify the senior supervisory chaplain and the installation/ship commanding officer of the endorsing agent's visit. Reserve component chaplains will also be visited as schedules permit. Reserve component chaplains are encouraged to explore the possibility of a visit during Active Duty for Training periods. Often the GCI Endorsing Agent is invited to attend service-sponsored chaplain conferences and if he is able to attend will meet with the GCI chaplains who are present.

## **5. Adopt a Chaplain Program**

As has been previously shared in these guidelines, GCI places much emphasis on GCI Chaplains having a relationship with a GCI affiliated church. If a clergyman seeking GCI endorsement does not have a current relationship with a GCI Affiliated Church they will need to apply through the GCI Endorser for the "Adopt a Chaplain" program. The GCI Endorsing Agent will provide the individual with potential churches who have expressed a desire to serve in this capacity. It is incumbent on the individual to make

contact and establish the relationship. After the relationship has been established the GCI affiliated church can provide the required recommendation on the individual who is seeking endorsement or approval.

## Appendices

### A. The Covenant and the Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces

#### The Covenant

Having accepted God's Call to Minister to people who serve in the Armed Forces of our country, I covenant to serve God and these people with God's help: to deepen my obedience to the Commandments, to love the Lord our God with all my heart, souls, mind, and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. In affirmation of this commitment I will abide by the Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces and I will faithfully support its purposes and ideals. As further affirmation of my commitment, I covenant with my colleagues in ministry that we will hold one another accountable for fulfillment of all public actions set forth in our Code of Ethics.

#### The Code of Ethics

I will hold in trust the traditions and practices of my religious body.

I will carefully adhere to whatever direction may be conveyed to me by my endorsing body for maintenance of my endorsement.

I understand as a chaplain in the Armed Forces that I must function in a pluralistic environment with chaplains of other religious bodies to provide for ministry to all military personnel and their families entrusted to my care.

I will seek to provide pastoral care and ministry to persons of religious bodies other than my own within my area of responsibility with the same investment of myself as I give to members of my own religious body. I will work collegially with chaplains of religious bodies other than my own as together we seek to provide as full a ministry as possible to our people. I will respect the beliefs and traditions of my colleagues and those to whom I minister. When conducting services of worship that include persons of other than my religious body I will draw upon those beliefs, principles, and practices that we have in common.

I will, if a supervisory position, respect the practices and beliefs of each chaplain I supervise, and exercise care not to require of them any service or practice that would be in violation of the faith practices of their particular religious body.

I will seek to support all colleagues in ministry by building constructive relationships wherever I serve, both with the staff where I work and with colleagues throughout the military environment.

I will maintain a disciplined ministry in such ways as keeping hours of prayer and devotion, endeavoring to maintain wholesome family relationships, and regularly engaging in educational and recreational activities for professional and personal development. I will seek to maintain good health habits.

I will recognize that my obligation is to provide ministry to all members of the Military Services, their families, and other authorized personnel. When on Active Duty, I will only accept added responsibility in civilian work or ministry if it does not interfere with the overall effectiveness of my primary military ministry.

I will defend my colleagues against unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion or national origin.

I will hold in confidence all privileged and confidential communication.

I will respect all persons of other religious faiths. I will respond to any expressed need for spiritual guidance and pastoral care to those who seek my counsel.

I will show personal love for God in my life and ministry, as I maintain the discipline and promote the integrity of the profession to which I have been called.

I recognize the special power afforded me by my ministerial office. I will never use that power in ways that violate the personhood of another human being, religiously, emotionally or sexually. I will use my pastoral office only for that which is best for the persons under my ministry.

Adopted by the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces January 2011

**B. Semi-Annual Report**

**SEMIANNUAL REPORT FOR GCI CHAPLAINS**

**Reporting Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **RANK/GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAILING ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **OFFICE PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CELL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **HOME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPOUSE NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_, **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPOUSE EMAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ANNIVERSARY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCAL CHURCH HOME:** \_\_\_\_\_

Are you in contact with your home church?  Yes  No

Who do you consider to be your pastor? \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information for your pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

**BRANCH/SERVICE AREA:** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATUS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CURRENT DUTY STATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT/ORGANIZATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPERVISORY CHAPLAIN NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**COMMANDER'S NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**DUTY ASSIGNMENT** (title; brief *description of responsibilities*):

**PRAISE REPORTS:**

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

**SIGNIFICANT EVENTS TO REPORT FROM THE PAST 6 MONTHS:**

**GOALS FOR MINISTRY IN THE COMING YEAR:**

**DESCRIBE BRIEFLY YOUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE. WHAT IS GOD SPEAKING TO YOU ABOUT YOUR WIFE, YOUR FAMILY, AND YOUR MINISTRY?**

**SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR ENDORSER:**

**Do you expect to move in the next year?  Yes  No**

**If yes, when & where do you expect to move?**

## C. Guidelines for Congregations with Reserve Chaplains

GCI encourages GCI Affiliated Churches whose pastor (also includes pastoral staff) are members of the military Reserve to facilitate their participation in and fulfillment of the requirements placed upon them as members of our nation's military forces. GCI views the ministry to the Armed Forces as a direct response to the Great Commission of our Lord (Matthew 28:18-20) and an extension of our congregation's mission outreach. This ministry is directed not only to members of GCI affiliated churches and other Christians, but also to those who are uncharted. Ministry to the military is one of the ways the church is able to reach them. Such participation by congregation and pastor in the Reserve chaplaincy is also a tangible contribution of Christian citizenship that facilitates the exercise of the freedom of religious expression within the military.

The Reserve service of our pastors and staffs also results in concrete benefits to the individual church. Pastors selected for the chaplaincy are recognized by the church-at-large as having strong spiritual and ministerial gifts. In addition, these ministers are trained and developed by the military, beyond what can be done at the seminary, in leadership, planning, organization, and administrative skills. These skills are of great value at local and national levels for equipping the church to maximize her response to ministry opportunities, as well as crisis and disaster situations. Congregations served by a Reserve component chaplain also derive direct benefits from his service through cyclical pastoral revitalization, continued advanced training, and professional development, and the exchange of ideas with other clergy, which often results in new insights and/or programs for the home church.

This ministry does, however, require a significant obligation from the chaplain, his family, and the church in the face of mobilization readiness. Military Reserve components exist to augment active duty forces on very short notice in the event of a national emergency. This obligation and the need for stability within the church demand that both the congregation and the pastor plan together to reap the benefits of an expanded ministry and prepare in advance to meet its potential obligations in an orderly fashion.

The military Reserves were created by Congress to augment active duty forces on very short notice in the event of a national emergency. This need is met through mobilization readiness. In order to perform the specialized ministry of the chaplaincy, the military trains and equips the chaplain. He in turn agrees to keep himself ready for mobilization "call up" on short notice and to serve our nation's Armed Forces, in combat if necessary. As a "mobilization asset," at a time designated as an emergency by proper governmental authority, the Reserve component chaplain is legally required and conscience-bound to report for active duty.

Such "readiness" itself has direct benefits for the local church. As the pastor gains in leadership, planning, organizational, and administrative skills, Reserve participation requires that he maintain good physical conditioning and a mind set ready to respond to unusual or emergency situations. As the pastor's time in military service grows, it is to be expected that his increasing vision, abilities, and experience will make very positive contributions to the church's ministry and structure.

The military training of Reserve component chaplains is conducted through a combination of schooling and inactive duty and active duty training assignments that proceed through the years in a cyclical, fairly predictable order. The predictability of these duties and assignments allows for advanced planning. These regular absences provide for ministry opportunities within the pastoral staff and the congregation. Due to its many benefits and specific obligations, the Reserve Component chaplain in consultation with his congregational leadership, is required to prepare a document of understanding, that is, a mobilization (MOB) agreement, that details the arrangements under which the pastor participates in the military Reserve chaplaincy. A sample "Reserve Chaplaincy Agreement and Contingency Planning Document" is outlined in Section VII below. It should be the pastor's responsibility to guide the development of this

plan and see to its annual review.

Participation in the Reserve chaplaincy necessitates regular communications with and reporting as required to the GCI Endorsing Agent and the military service involved.

A Pastor in the Reserve component chaplaincy, like active duty chaplains, has been especially selected by GCI as having the pastoral skills and abilities to serve in the unique military environment. Because the pastor/chaplain can only serve in the military with the endorsement of GCI, chaplains (active, Guard, or Reserve) at all times serve as representatives and missionaries of the church when in uniform. The pastor/chaplain has been especially trained by the military and has agreed to serve Armed Forces personnel in combat as needed. The pastor/chaplain must attend a variety of regularly scheduled training periods each year as well as periodic schools and conferences of longer duration. The guidelines that follow will attempt to address each of these requirements:

I. Basic Schooling.

A. Following endorsement by GCI and joining the Reserve component of choice, the pastor attends a basic chaplain school. Schools range in length from eight to twelve weeks, are often attended in segments, with class dates offered throughout the year. Sometimes this school can be completed in subsequent summers. The pastor should explore the options offered and in advance reach an agreement with the church as to the most desirable option available.

B. Federal law prohibits requiring a Reservist to use vacation time for the performance of mandated Reserve military duty. The congregation and pastor should agree in advance as to whether he will be granted a leave of absence without pay for the schooling period, during which time the congregation would pay for interim pastoral services, or whether he will be granted leave with pay, which would necessitate the pastor paying for interim coverage.

II. Inactive Duty Training.

A. The regular time commitment is two days per month for “drill.” Depending upon unit, assignment, and location, these days are usually performed together on one weekend. Exact arrangements vary widely depending on military branch, regional regulations, and unit structures. Some commands of the Reserves have regulations that allow the pastor of a Christian congregation to perform drill on a day other than Sunday.

B. Inactive duty training is often at a nearby Armed Forces facility, but can also be located at distances requiring travel time. Location is usually decided by the exact “billet,” job, or position that the chaplain holds at a given time. The pastor should exercise care and negotiate advance agreements with his congregation related to travel time and drill days.

C. If the pastor holds a pay billet and is away for drill on a Sunday, it is generally expected that he will pay for the required pulpit coverage at his congregation. Advance agreement in detail on this matter is very important.

D. The ministry and needs of the congregation are to remain top priority in the life and planning of the drilling Reserve component chaplain/pastor.

III. Active Duty for Training.

A. Active duty for training is a commitment of fourteen to seventeen days per year, performed

within the fiscal year which runs from October 1 to the following September 30. Duty assignments and dates vary greatly with the needs of the service, but are usually published in advance and available throughout the year. The pastor is expected to do advance planning and coordination to minimize any negative impact of annual active duty upon the parish schedule.

B. Since federal law prohibits requiring a Reservist to use vacation time for the performance of mandated Reserve military duty, the church and pastor should agree in advance as to whether he will be granted a leave of absence without pay for the active duty period, during which time the congregation would pay for interim pastoral services, or whether he will be granted leave with pay, which would necessitate the pastor paying for interim coverage. Financial determinations are usually based on the particular circumstances of the pastor and congregation.

C. The pastor should make advanced detailed arrangements for coverage of routine church responsibilities as well as emergency pastoral and contingency needs during active duty. It is strongly recommended that the arrangements be written and distributed to all concerned.

IV. Additional days for military schooling, other temporary active duty, etc.

A. Whether the temporary active duty orders are “voluntary” or not, there are periods of time, including military schools, conferences, etc., when the pastor/chaplain will be expected to be on orders from the military. Taking such opportunities and the subsequent time away from the church should be arranged by mutual agreement.

B. When the salary is continued it is recommended that the pastor/chaplain make remuneration for pulpit supply and/or emergency pastoral coverage, for periods other than annual training (AT).

C. If the pastor/chaplain elects to use earned vacation for such training, the substitute pastor should be paid by the congregation. Advance arrangements should be made for pastoral coverage and, again, it is strongly recommended that the arrangements be written and distributed to all concerned.

V. Mobilization - Nine (9) months or less. The following actions are recommended:

A. The calling entity should grant a leave of absence for the expected period of time contained in the call-up orders (it might be wise to have such a resolution in place in order to avoid the necessity of a special meeting; a provision that the Board of Elders or some other body be notified immediately should be part of that resolution).

B. The congregation can make arrangements for an interim pastor to assist the congregation during the period of the pastor's absence. The interim pastor can then perform pastoral duties such as hospital calls, shut-in visits, evangelism contacts, weddings, etc., so that ministry to and with the people of God may continue.

C. The salary and any allowances of the pastor/chaplain should cease at the time of reporting for active duty, and the interim pastor's remuneration should begin.

D. While on leave of absence, the pastor/chaplain's housing allotment should continue until the military housing allowance is activated (normally about 30 days). If the pastor/chaplain and family live in a parsonage the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), less the cost of family paid utilities, should be offered to the calling entity as rent for use of the parsonage.

VI. Mobilization - More than nine (9) months. At “call up,” when mobilization is begun, the duration of the emergency is usually uncertain and the emotional climate extremely volatile. It is, therefore, most important that a well thought out and carefully constructed contingency plan of action to be taken by both the pastor and congregation be in place. A sample outline is provided in Section VII below. It is strongly recommended that this document be reviewed and updated annually. As a minimum the following areas of concern should be addressed:

A. Actions by the Pastor.

1. He should immediately notify the GCI Endorsing Agent and the church leaders. As time permits he should assist in making these arrangements.
2. He should review the “Reserve Chaplaincy Agreement and Contingency Planning Document” (MOB Agreement) with the church leadership and also reprise the Circuit Counselor and District representative on its contents and agreements.
3. If there is a parsonage, the military housing allowance, less the cost of family paid utilities, should be paid monthly to the congregation as rent for the quarters.
4. He should make time to spend with his family, complete last minute personal arrangements (major needs should already be met in pre-mobilization preparedness planning), and maintain close contact with congregational leaders as circumstances develop.
5. During mobilization he should stay in contact with the congregation's leadership as well as the GCI Chaplain Endorser, to share information as the situation clarifies.
6. Should active duty extend beyond nine months, it is recommended that he and the GCI Chaplain Endorser review his call to the local congregation. If there is likelihood that the chaplaincy will be his full time ministry for an extended period of time, a peaceful release may be indicated. Such action provides the congregation the freedom to make more permanent arrangements to meet its pastoral care needs.

B. Actions by the Congregation's Leadership.

1. Review the “Reserve Chaplaincy Agreement and Contingency Planning Document” with the pastor and establish contact with the GCI Endorsing Agent.
2. Provide assistance and support to the pastor and his family as needed.
3. Through the appropriate board or committee, direct the completion of arrangements to cover the pastoral needs of the church during this period of mobilization.
4. If there is a parsonage, the pastor's family should remain in it until a new pastor is called. When military housing allowance is paid, that amount, less the cost of family paid utilities, should be received monthly by the church as rent.

VII. Reserve Chaplaincy Agreement and Contingency Planning Document. While the actual format may vary widely, at a minimum, the following areas should be specifically addressed:

- A. Origin and Review Record. Date the document was created; name of the approving board and date; date of last review.

- B. Title. A clear statement that this is the document of (name of) church's contingency planning for pastoral ministry in the event of Pastor's (name) mobilization as a military chaplain.
- C. Purpose. A summary statement that Pastor (name) is a member of the (service branch) Ready Reserve. As such, he must be prepared for recall to active duty in the event of war or national emergency. This document reflects previously agreed upon actions and contingency plans to be followed in the event of mobilization for the continuation of the pastoral ministry here and for the provision of assistance to the pastor's family.
- D. Implementation. In the event of mobilization, the following actions will be undertaken as identified in the MOB agreement by the Pastor, the congregation and its leadership.
1. Important information list. The information that the pastor desires the church leadership to know so they are equipped to render assistance to his family, *e.g.*, location of safety deposit box, military documents, will, family phone numbers and important points of contact, emergency notification procedures, other helpful family information, etc.
- E. Location of Document. A statement that indicates where copies of the Mobilization Plan are to be filed (list all places, files, persons, and offices that hold copies).

The pastor/chaplain and calling entity should put in writing their agreement pertaining to their responsibilities to each other as they relate to the Reserve component ministry. Copies should be given to the GCI Endorsing Agent for inclusion in the chaplain's record.

## **D. GCI Chaplain Ministry Post Repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy**

17 March 2011

Memorandum for Record

Dear GCI Endorsed Chaplains and Candidates:

As we all know the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in the military is upon us and teaching material is already being distributed to clarify how this will be implemented. We also know that many of the implications of this repeal have yet to be understood as far as your freedom as chaplains to proclaim God’s truth and the freedom of Service members to live according to their moral standards.

As your endorser I have spent many hours listening to speakers, visiting with attorneys, reading material from all sides of the issue, listening to your input and being sensitive to your concerns. We have been advised to give you guidance as to the teachings and standards of GCI as your endorsing agent.

The clear understanding of the leadership of GCI is that the practice of homosexuality is inconsistent with God’s Word and is harmful to one’s well being. We know this is only one sexual sin that pervades our society today. A recent statement by the National Association of Evangelicals states the case clearly: “There are other sinful perversions of our sexuality that keep us from being all that God created us to be. The reality is that we are to pursue sexual purity, upholding fidelity in marriage and upholding chastity outside of marriage (see Hebrews 13:4; I Corinthians 6). Extramarital sex is always irresponsible. This is all the more reason to keep ourselves far from pornographic images, demeaning language, sexual fantasies, lust or mental dehumanization of others. If we have stumbled, we need to seek healing and restoration in our Redeemer as we set out again on the path to purity.”

Sexual purity is something that all of us are to pursue. It is in humility, not moral superiority, that we speak clearly to the issue of homosexuality as well as any other impure and harmful behavior. We base our convictions on Scripture. Specifically, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and many other passages throughout the Bible identify homosexual behavior as sinful.

Based on our Biblical convictions and considering the impact of the DOD policy change related to homosexuals serving openly in the military, I offer these specific guidelines as your endorser:

1. You will not marry a couple of the same sex or bless such a union no matter what the laws of a State may be. If you give counsel to a couple seeking such union, you should tell them up front that you would be counseling from a Biblical perspective.
2. You should refrain from sharing the pulpit with chaplains whose lifestyle is inconsistent with Biblical moral values. This could lead to confusion within the congregation.
3. We expect you to preach and teach the whole counsel of God. You should not alter or modify your

forms of prayer, worship, preaching, or Bible studies based on the government's interpretation of morality. Be faithful to your calling, assuming your free speech and free exercise of religion is protected.

4. During counseling, you are still a chaplain and not a social worker. Your counseling should continue to be based on a sound Biblical foundation and you should make those you counsel aware of this from the beginning.
5. You will neither teach a class nor be a leader in one that infers or directly states that homosexuality is morally equal to heterosexuality.
6. You will not participate in a marriage retreat that endorses homosexual couples as equivalent to Biblical marriage, the union of one man to one woman (one genetically born male and one genetically born female).
7. If you find that you cannot care for a Service member based on his/her beliefs, as always, you should refer him/her to another person who can care for them.

I recognize that at this point we do not know all the implications of the repeal and so it is impossible to give specific guidance on every issue. I trust your wisdom and maturity to make good decisions consistent with Biblical understanding and of Holy Spirit leading. If you find that your free exercise of speech and/or religion is being violated, or if you believe that you are being placed in a morally untenable position, please contact me immediately.

Our overall desire is that you continue to treat all those you serve with dignity and respect whatever their moral beliefs might be and that you help your commanders create and maintain a climate that is consistent with the values of your individual Services. You continue to be a chaplain to remind those you serve of the Presence of God and of His interest for all persons to know Him. Touch lives for the Kingdom and let those you serve know that they are people of worth, no matter what their beliefs might be.

I encourage you to not yield to fear about your career or future. Trust that God has you where He wants you to be. Serve God, your command structure, and all who come into your path. Be an agent of love, reconciliation, compassion, and Good News. Bring hope to those who desperately need it.

Finally, be sure to keep yourselves full of the Holy Spirit. Do not neglect your spiritual life. Know that you are in our prayers.

May God continue to anoint you to serve in the power of His grace.

Ron

CH (COL) Ron Crews, USAR Retired

Endorsing Agent

## E. GCI Chaplain Ministry Post Repeal of the “Defense of Marriage Act”

5 September 2013

### MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

RE: Grace Churches International Endorsed Chaplains Guidelines in Response to the 26 June 2013 Supreme Court Ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

To Whom It May Concern:

In response to the 26 June 2013 Supreme Court ruling that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which states “the word ‘marriage’ means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word ‘spouse’ refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife” is unconstitutional, and the resultant Department of Defense policy changes to extend benefits to same-sex domestic partners as spouses, the following guidelines clarify the longstanding ministry expectations for all chaplains endorsed by Grace Churches International:

- 1) All ministries regarding human sexuality will reflect the historic, natural and Biblical view of marriage as the uniting of one man and one woman in a covenantal relationship for life.
- 2) Scripture condemns as sin all forms of sexual immorality including adultery, pornography, bestiality, and homosexuality. Such practices violate Biblical standards for sexual purity and are destructive to healthy marital relations and Christian order and discipline. We will provide pastoral care that provides opportunities for repentance and forgiveness, help and healing, and restoration through the mercy and grace of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His demonstration of love for sinners by His death on the cross.
- 3) As we have always done and in striving to be in harmony with Scripture, Grace Churches International endorsed chaplains will not conduct or attend a wedding ceremony for any same-sex couple, bless a union or perform counseling in support of such a union, assist or support paid contractors or volunteers leading same-sex relational events, nor offer any kind of relationship training or retreat, on or off of a military installation, that would give the appearance of accepting the homosexual lifestyle or other sexual wrong doing. This Biblical prohibition remains in effect irrespective of any civil law authorizing same-sex marriage or benefits to the contrary.
- 4) As part of a chaplain's responsibility to provide when we cannot perform, GCI chaplains can refer Service Members to others who can perform same sex ceremonies or unions. The prohibition from attending such ceremonies/unions still applies.
- 5) Grace Churches International chaplains will lead or participate in worship services conducted on military installations or other locations designated for worship. However, Grace Churches International chaplains will not conduct services jointly with a chaplain, contractor or volunteer who personally practices or affirms a sinful lifestyle in contradiction to Scripture including but not limited to affirming a homosexual lifestyle or such other conduct forbidden by Scripture.
- 6) All military chaplains are endorsed to ensure the free exercise of religion for all military personnel according to DoD 1304.28, par. 6.1.2. You remain protected under DoD policy and applicable federal law to preach, teach and counsel in accordance with the tenants of your faith and conscience. Therefore, as a Grace Churches International endorsed chaplain you will:

- a. Provide sound Biblical pastoral care for all service members and their families.
- b. Conduct religious support and pastoral care in accordance to the guidelines contained in this document.
- c. Treat all service members regardless of rank or behavior with Christ-centered dignity, honor and respect while assisting the institutional leadership in its religious mission requirements and responsibilities as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional guidance for your specific ministries or if you experience undue prejudice or harm as a result of following these guidelines.

Know that you remain in our prayers. I believe God has anointed you to serve at such a time as this. May the Lord richly bless you for all you do for our men and women in uniform and their families.

Ronald A. Crews  
CH (COL) USAR Retired  
Endorsing Agent