

THEOLOGY OF OTHERS—ALL OF THE ABOVE: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS  
ON ECUMENICAL / INTERFAITH MINISTRY IN MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

This paper will reflect on almost fourteen years of service in the military as a Protestant chaplain. From June 1984 to April 1987, I served as a reserve chaplain officer with the 112<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Group, PA Air National Guard, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. From April 1987 thru January 1998, I served as an active duty chaplain officer in the United States Air Force: first, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Wing at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana (April 1987 to August 1991); then, with the 601<sup>st</sup> Support Wing at Sembach Air Base, Germany (August 1991 to August 1994); and lastly, with the 28<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing at Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota (August 1994 to January 1998).<sup>1</sup> Prior to military service as a chaplain, I worked for about ten years with a *capella* Churches of Christ as Assistant Minister, Teaching Minister, and Senior Minister in various places—Bowling Green, Kentucky; Sunman, Indiana; Warrington, Pennsylvania; and Coraopolis, Pennsylvania (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1, *Manchester Times* Article, 12-7-88

Because I have not ministered in a formal capacity with any church since I separated from the Air Force, the models for Christian ministry that I am most familiar with, by existential or personal involvement, are the ecumenical/interfaith models for ministry that are used in the Air

Force chaplaincy. These models for ministry, due to the work of chaplains in the military setting, are broader, more inclusive, and quite different from models for ministry in most churches. To highlight this ecumenical/interfaith ministry, a ministry that by its nature engages the theology of others, or “all of the above,” I will develop five themes of ministry in a military or Air Force context from an experiential perspective based on personal recollections: (1) the dual nature of the chaplain as Christian minister as well as noncombatant military officer; (2) the practice of civil religion and ecumenical/interfaith religious services in the public military sphere; (3) the chaplain’s ministry of presence to all military personnel on the installation or post or at the deployed locale; (4) the chapel as neutral or all-inclusive religious or worship space; and (5) the chaplain’s role as counselor of military personnel from diverse religious traditions.<sup>3</sup> By way of applications and conclusions, biblical foundations for comprehensive ministry will be explored briefly as well as lessons to be learned for nonmilitary or civilian settings.

Definitions and foundations. The history of Christian ministers serving with military units in the United States goes back to colonial days.<sup>4</sup> As a formal, occupational vocation, the chaplain corps dates to July 29, 1775, the period of the Revolutionary War.<sup>5</sup> This began with the Army, extended to the Navy, and then evolved with creation of a separate Department of the Air Force in Fall 1947 under the National Security Act signed by President Harry S. Truman.<sup>6</sup> Currently, under general guidance of *Air Force Instruction (AFI) 1-1, Air Force Culture, Air Force Standards, 12 November 2014*, the qualifications, duties, and parameters for chaplains in the Air Force are set forth in *Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 52-1, Chaplain Corps, 19 December 2013*, and *Air Force Instruction 52, Chaplain [Series], Various Dates*.<sup>7</sup> Standards for chaplains of the Air Force and other military branches are defined under appropriate sections

of United States Code, Title 10, *Armed Forces*, enacted by Congress on 10 August 1956, as well as corresponding *Directives* issued by the Department of Defense.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 2, Chapel One, Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, Date Unknown

The word chaplain derives from the Middle English word *chapelein*, from the Medieval Latin *cappellanus* or *cappella*, and means: first “a clergyman in charge of a chapel,” second “a clergyman officially attached to a branch of the military, to an institution, or to a family or court,” and third “a person chosen to conduct religious exercises (as at a meeting of a club or society).”<sup>9</sup> By its very nature, the work of the military chaplain through his/her chapel (see Figure 2) is a ministry that is ecumenical and interfaith. The two concepts for ministry overlap but remain distinct in several ways. In short, “ecumenical” ministry seeks to promote common ground between the various Christian churches and thereby advance “worldwide Christian unity or cooperation,” whereas “interfaith” ministry involves adherents of distinct religious beliefs, that is, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and so forth.<sup>10</sup> For the military chaplain who works in a

pragmatic environment with emphasis on praxis more than theory, fine-line distinctions between the two may be moot points, as the various branches of military service emphasize and respect the ideals of disestablishment or “separation of church and state” and religious pluralism.<sup>11</sup> From a personal perspective, the call to Christian ministry in the Air Force offered opportunities to serve airmen and their families of many different Christian churches, of other religious beliefs, and of no religious affiliation or belief at all.<sup>12</sup>

Dual nature of the chaplain as Christian minister and noncombatant military officer. The chaplain officer foremost is a religious leader or cleric, and Christian chaplains belong first of all to their endorsing agency, body, or church. *AFPD 52-1, Sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.2* point out that “chaplains are qualified clergy, who are commissioned as Air Force officers in accordance with Title 10, United States Code, Section 8067(h)” and “chaplains must adhere to the requirements of their endorsing religious organizations.” Every chaplain in the military must have an endorsement from a governing religious agency. There is no exception to this.<sup>13</sup> And if his/her endorsement is withdrawn, the chaplain no longer can serve as a chaplain in the military. This makes the Christian chaplain primarily responsible to or subject to his/her church body and its governing laws.<sup>14</sup> Some might reason that this clearly illustrates the authority of the church over the state in the chaplaincy system, but the dual office of chaplains, as well as the type of work they do in the military environment, might offset such an assumption.

This is because the chaplain also functions by and under the authority of the Department of Defense as a noncombatant officer. While “chaplains must comply with the requirements of their endorsing religious organizations,” it is “mandatory” that the “ecclesiastical endorsement [come] from a religious organization recognized by the DOD Armed Forces Chaplains Board” (*AFI 52-102, Volume 1, Chaplain Professional Development, 19 August 2013, Section 5*). At a

minimum, chaplains must complete 72 semester or 108 quarter hours of graduate-level educational requirements.<sup>15</sup> After completing formal education, they “must have two years of full-time religious leadership experience.” For appointment, chaplains must be “compatible with the duties of a Religious Ministry Professional in their respective religious organization.” And they must “meet DOD and Air Force physical and medical standards and age requirements” (*AFI 52-102, Volume 1, Section 3*; see Figure 3). To maintain their military designation or specialty, chaplains must also complete, within 24 months of accession,

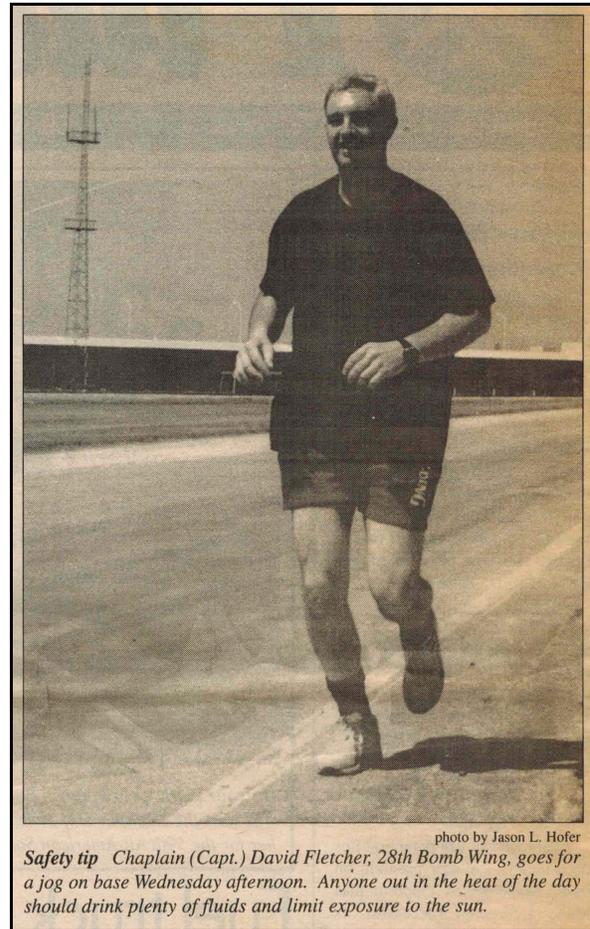


Figure 3, *Plainsman*, Ellsworth AFB, June 28, 1996

the Basic Chaplain Course and any necessary Professional Continuing Education (see *AFI 52-102, Volume 1, Section 4*).<sup>16</sup>

As military officers, chaplains have rank without command.<sup>17</sup> Chaplains do wield moral and religious authority but not command authority. Chaplains serve under and are responsible to “the senior installation chaplain, installation chaplain, or branch chief for Chaplain Corps ministries” (*AFI 52-101, Chaplain, Planning and Organizing, 10 May 2005, Section 2.1.1.5.2*). And chaplains serve under the installation commander and his/her staff as “the commander’s resource” to facilitate “the free exercise of religion” and to advise “regarding the impact of religion on military operations.” Further, chaplains advise the commander and his/her staff

concerning “moral and ethical decision making, and morale and personnel issues, [and] on religious dynamics within the operational area and sometimes may be tasked with certain liaison functions” (*AFPD 52-1*). Out of necessity, chaplains must function within the chain of command, but even so chaplains must not be called on to “perform duties incompatible with their faith group tenets, professional role, or noncombatant status” (*AFI 52-101, Section 2.1*).<sup>18</sup>

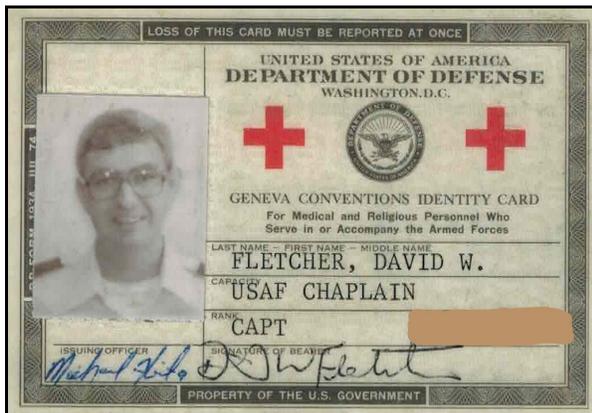


Figure 4, Geneva Conventions ID Card

Chaplains, like medical corps officers and personnel, function as noncombatants (see Figure 4) in the military environment. As such, chaplains are “to refrain from all activities that could create perceptions of combatant behavior or that compromise the protected status of other chaplains in the field.” Guided by the Geneva

Conventions and the Law of Armed Conflict, international humanitarian law proscribes use of chaplains in “any direct military capacity that jeopardizes noncombatant status.” For this reason, “chaplains will not act nor give the appearance of acting as informants, intelligence officers, or political agents. Chaplains will not take part in psychological operations or in manipulating civilian relationships for political or military motives. Chaplains do not bear or transport arms or ammunition. Chaplains will not engage in other traditional combatant activities” (*AFI 52-104, Chaplain Corps Readiness, 6 August 2015, Section 3.1.1*).<sup>19</sup> Commanders are not to coerce chaplains to function contrary to their status as noncombatants, and willful violation or noncompliance with noncombatant status by a chaplain officer might render him/her derelict of duty and subject to corrective or punitive action under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) for failure to meet standards. The Christian chaplain therefore occupies a unique

position in the military chain of command. He/She serves in a moral and spiritual office that supersedes that of his/her military office, one that is fraught with challenges and oftentimes tensions.<sup>20</sup>

Fittingly, in accordance with this dual role as Christian minister and noncombatant military officer, the chaplain office combines allegiance to both church and state.<sup>21</sup> And, also fittingly, military chaplains can be removed from office by either “church” (endorsing authority) and/or “state” (military command authority) for inappropriate conduct. *AFI 52-102, Volume 1, Section 7* enumerates a mix of rationales for which “the Chief of Chaplains or delegate will withdraw chaplain designation and classify the officer as an ‘unclassified officer’ (96U0),” some bearing on the failure to obtain the proper educational or professional credentials, some bearing on the chaplain’s relation with his/her endorsing authority, some bearing on the proper conduct of the chaplain as a military officer, and still others bearing on the unique role of the chaplain in the military environment, for example, noncombatant status, issues of privileged communication and/or confidentiality. The pertinent section of the *Air Force Instruction* lists the following:

- 7.1.1. Transfer from the Chaplain Corps.
- 7.1.2. Withdrawal of endorsement, DD Form 2088 (see DOD Directive 1332.31, *Administrative Separation of Chaplains Upon Loss of Professional Qualification*). Chaplains have 10 business days to seek new endorsement before they are reclassified.
- 7.1.3. Violates privileged communication/confidentiality.
- 7.1.4. Fails to satisfactorily complete COT (Commissioned Officer Training).
- 7.1.5. Fails to satisfactorily complete the BCC (Basic Chaplain Course) within 24 months of accession.
- 7.1.6. Violates or compromises the chaplain noncombatant status.
- 7.1.7. Convicted of a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). For ANG (Air National Guard), if serving on USC (United States Code) Title 10 orders, violates the UCMJ or State Militia Code.
- 7.1.8. Convicted of a violation of state or federal criminal statutes.
- 7.1.9. Chaplain candidates who fail to maintain good standing with their denominational or endorser authorities or are recommended for removal by the Chaplain Corps Ethics Advisory Committee shall have their chaplain / chaplain candidate designation removed.

Appointment to serve as an Air Force chaplain, therefore, comes from a reasoned and coordinated balance between church and state authorities. But the rationale to remove a chaplain from office can be initiated by either church or state for a just and reasonable cause. Military chaplains for the good of “all of the above” are responsible to both authorities and liable to any and all for misconduct. And rightly so, since chaplains have a higher calling in their ministry to God and to country.<sup>22</sup>

Practice of civil religion and ecumenical/interfaith religious services in the public military sphere. In his classic *Social Contract* (1762), Swiss-French political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau built on the work of earlier theorists (e.g., Thomas Hobbes and John Locke) and reasoned that “in surrendering individual freedom, people acquired a sense of moral and civic obligation, and that government must rest on the general will of the governed.” “Civil religion” therefore centered around the virtues needed by citizens “to properly serve the state” and, in this sense, included “quasi-religious attitudes, beliefs, rituals, and symbols that tie members of a political community together.”<sup>23</sup> The phrase may have been made popular by sociologist Robert Bellah in the 1960s. Bellah sensed an “exceptional” reverence by citizens in the United States for the Constitution, the Founding Fathers, and for national symbols (e.g., the flag) and national rituals (e.g., annual holidays), and he contended that such devotion produced “a blend of patriotism and generalized religious piety” that transcended the ideals of religious plurality and individual self-reliance. This was labeled “a sacred canopy” by sociologist Peter Berger, and later in the 1980s, Bellah, Berger, and others began to criticize what they felt to be “banal civil religion” and started to enunciate what they described as “public theology,” that is, “an interpretation of public life” that was “under God,” something they believed needed to be rethought and reformulated.<sup>24</sup>

More recently, George Marsden, an interpreter of religion's impact on life in the United States, suggests that, after the Revolutionary War, the United States became "the first modern nation systematically to shift public veneration of the government from veneration of persons to veneration of the nation and its principles." He compares the national "set of rituals and symbols" to those for traditional Christianity with the difference being "the nation itself as the object of worship." For example:

The flag (like the cross in Catholic churches) was a sacred object [see Figure 5]. Elaborate rules developed as to when and how it could be handled. Pledges to the flag arguably played the role of crossing oneself in a church. One pledged to a creed. The nation developed holidays (holy days) and its own brand of saints. George Washington, for instance, soon took on mythical qualities. National architecture and shrines provided centers for pilgrimages and worship. Some recently have even pointed out that three of the most popular shrines in Washington D.C.—those to Washington, Lincoln, and Kennedy—have designs that would be appropriate symbols for each of the three members of the Christian Trinity (the transcendent obelisk for the father, the personal presence of the martyred champion of national reconciliation and charity, and the eternal flame, for the spirit of service to country).<sup>25</sup>



Figure 5, Posting of Colors, Joint Task Force 160 HQ, Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Fall 1995

Marsden undoubtedly realizes the limits of such a comparison but notes, "The crucial practical test of a functional religion is ultimacy. Here the nation, the model of the modern nation states, qualifies. The United States, like all modern nations, demands

unswerving allegiance from its citizens. It is to the nation that one is expected to make the supreme sacrifice. So in American wars, national loyalty always has been demanded above

church loyalty.”<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, the military environment and its public sphere is where the chaplain is called on to support his/her country or the state and the tenets of its civil religion.

This begins with the chaplain’s Oath of Office in which he/she solemnly promises:

I, [name], having been appointed a [rank in which appointed] in the United States Air Force, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God. [*AFI 1-1, Section 1.4.2*].<sup>27</sup>

Once commissioned, the chaplain serves as part of a team designed to “support and strengthen the chain of command . . . and make it more efficient and effective.” This is accomplished by providing “professional advice or assistance” in the chaplain’s area of expertise, namely, “religious observances, pastoral care, and confidential counseling” as well as “advising leadership on spiritual, ethical, moral, morale, core values, and religious accommodation issues” (*AFI 1-1, Section 1.7.4*). Diversity in Air Force culture is “a military necessity” and enhances “Air Force capabilities and warfighting skills” (*AFI 1-1, Section 1.8*).<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is incumbent on leaders and especially chaplain officers to uphold strict standards for the “free exercise of religion and religious accommodation” while adhering to a “balance of free exercise of religion and [the] establishment clause [in the Constitution].” This means that:

Leaders at all levels must balance constitutional protections for their own free exercise of religion, including individual expressions of religious beliefs, and the constitutional prohibition against governmental establishment of religion. They must ensure their words and actions cannot reasonably be construed to be officially endorsing or disapproving of, or extending preferential treatment for any faith, belief, or absence of belief. [*AFI 1-1, Section 2.12*].

This can be accomplished, in a demonstrative way, by promoting American civil religion in the public military sphere on each installation and can be considered ministry to “all of the above.”<sup>29</sup>

The Chaplain Corps functions as an integral part of the command structure of the Air Force, that is, as one of command's staff agencies. In this capacity in their role as spiritual leaders and in the spirit of ministry to "all of the above," chaplain personnel "advise military leaders in all matters pertaining to religious conviction and expression, and the accommodation of practices arising from religious faith, ethical decision-making, and moral reasoning." This includes "advice regarding public prayer, memorials, [and] prayer at official functions and meetings" (*AFI 52-101, Section 5*). At base or wing commander's calls, which are mandatory and not optional, the chaplain occasionally will be called on to pray (for a variety of reasons). Also, a unit or squadron commander might invite the chaplain to his/her weekly staff meetings, attended by key people in the organization, for prayer, for input, or just to be visibly present.<sup>30</sup> And, chaplains routinely are asked to invoke the presence of the Divine at dedications, funerals, and memorials—special services (or liturgies) that publicly give meaning to shared values held deeply by Americans and members of the military.

Some civic holidays, such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Thanksgiving Day, are celebrated on the Air Base with a service (or ritual), and chaplains are asked to bless the occasion with proper supplications to the Almighty.<sup>31</sup> If the base has educational units, the chaplain is expected to say an invocation and a benediction at end-of-course graduation dinners (see Figure 6).<sup>32</sup> Ceremonies for awards and decorations, promotions and retirements, and special honors and

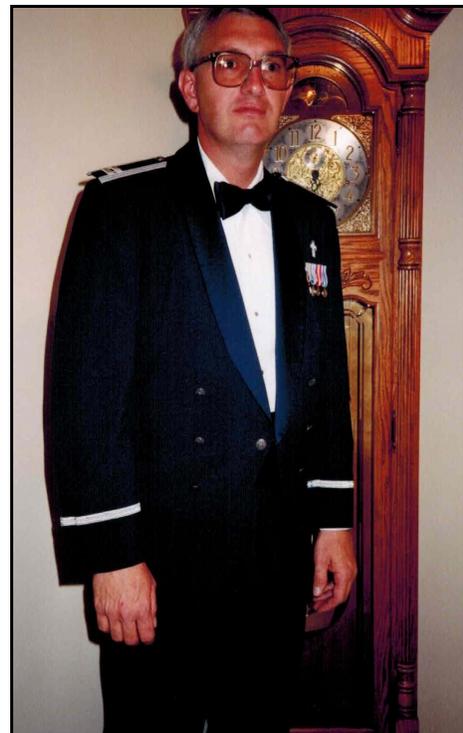


Figure 6, Mess Dress Uniform for Formal Dinner at Ellsworth AFB

recognitions call for the presence of the chaplain and, when requested, the exercise of formal, public prayer. And, at Christmas celebrations of organizations on the installation, a request always is made to have a chaplain present to pray before the meal.<sup>33</sup> Christmastime is first of all a season of deep religious meaning and observance, but in American culture it has become part of the country's civil religion—a “secular” holiday for buying and spending, getting and giving, and eating too much.<sup>34</sup>

Of special note in the “litany” of civil religious observances on the Air Base, and in civilian settings countrywide, is the National Prayer Breakfast. While this easily might be considered an interfaith activity, the Breakfast has evolved considerably since its inception in February 1956 as the Presidential Prayer Breakfast during the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Held in Washington, D.C., on the first Thursday in February, and echoed in towns and cities, on military installations, and in places of worship across the land, the Breakfast brings together civic leaders—in business, education, industry, the media, politics, science, and religion—for a time of prayer to acknowledge the nation and its government as, in Ike's phrase, “under God.” At the top level, the attendance of the Breakfast by the President casts the event as an important one for leaders from the United States and the world. Some have been invited to be keynote speaker for the event (e.g., Mother Theresa in 1995) and do appreciate its spiritual significance. Others plausibly attend the Breakfast out of political rather than spiritual motives. The Breakfast is promoted on formal invitations as an opportunity “to seek the Lord's guidance and strength . . . and to renew the dedication of our Nation and ourselves to God's purpose.” But sociologist D. Michael Lindsay, after he talked with several who had attended the Breakfast in 2006, concluded that it was “a veritable ‘who's who’ of the political and evangelical worlds” that attracted a lot of attendees who just wanted to “network” with other public leaders.<sup>35</sup>

On the Air Base, the Breakfast arguably could function in a similar fashion. The event normally falls to the chapel staff for planning, organization, and implementation. A chaplain project officer is designated; location, date, and time are set; formal invitations are sent out; and tickets to the Breakfast are sold. Barring any conflict with the Breakfast for “reasons beyond control” (a crisis or any unusual, unscheduled happening on the installation), several hundred would be present. Important civic leaders are invited (e.g., local, state, and federal officials), especially religious leaders from different faith groups. The base commander, his/her staff, unit commanders, senior enlisted personnel such as First Sergeants, and all chapel staff members are expected to attend, unless prevented by pressing military duties. And key people from the chapel family on the Air Base, military and civilian (e.g., retirees), are invited and attend. The service (or liturgy) for the Breakfast includes prayers for the nation and its political leaders, prayers for local and state governments, and prayers for world peace. There are readings of scripture, special music or singing of patriotic hymns, and a keynote address given by a distinguished guest speaker. Clerics, lay persons, and base personnel—usually a good selection of people across the broad religious spectrum—are asked to lead the service (or liturgy). And, of course, after the blessing of the meal, everyone enjoys eggs, bacon and sausage, biscuits and gravy, toast with jams and jellies, coffee, tea, fresh fruit and juices. So if those who attend the National Prayer Breakfast on the Air Base do not come for spiritual reasons, like many at the nation’s capital, they likely come for the tasty, inexpensive chow. In the military, they can do their politicking elsewhere and not so early in the morning.<sup>36</sup>

Other interfaith experiences were limited, at least when and where I served, since few Jews, Muslims, or adherents to other religions were stationed on the Air Bases. Jews, Muslims, and believers in other religions, who were assigned to the installations, normally practiced their

faith at a mosque, synagogue, or temple in the local community. On occasion, chaplains and their parishioners were invited off base to celebrations or festivities of other faiths for interfaith engagements that promoted understanding and tolerance among military personnel in the spirit of ministry to “all of the above.”<sup>37</sup> More commonplace, though, were ecumenical interactions of Christians with other Christians. But, in the 1990s, the Judeo-Christian model or the old paradigm of “Catholic, Protestant, and Jew” held sway (see Figure 7). The reality was a chapel program geared to Protestants of mostly “mainstream” denominations, Catholics of the Latin or Roman rite, and maybe a few if any Jews, with possible use of chapel facilities by one or more small, minority faith-groups, but not during prime time and maybe not even in prime space.

This older approach to Christian ministry in the Air Force resulted in few opportunities for ecumenical interactions of a liturgical nature, something I critiqued in 1994 when I returned to the United States after my tour of duty in Germany. I noted that “the Air Force chaplaincy perpetuates old paradigms for



Figure 7, Chapel Staff Meeting at Sembach AB, Germany, with Father Carlo Montecalvo Presiding

ministry that do not serve human needs in the context of a dynamic and changing Air Force environment. These paradigms, in my opinion, have become in many cases self-serving, or a goal in and of themselves.”<sup>38</sup> To put it bluntly, Roman Catholics and majority Protestant traditions “protected” their programs and religious rites. This produced division in the Christian community and perhaps promoted favoritism in terms of support for certain groups of the

Christian faith (e.g., Baptists, Methodists, Roman Catholics) by defining boundaries and structures for those groups. As a consequence, clearly defined boundaries and structures for ministry were not enjoyed equally by all chaplains.<sup>39</sup> So except for those expressions of civil religion outlined above, ecumenical experiences of Protestants with Catholics were few. This left the tasks of ecumenical work to the Protestant chaplains on the installations.

Protestant chaplains on the Air Base represent a plethora of religious traditions or, in a real sense, “all of the above” (i.e., other than Roman Catholic and non-Christian faiths). *AFI 52-102, Volume 1, Section 3.2.2* concerning worship states, “Chaplains will conduct services that are within the scope of their personal faith tenets and religious convictions.” But it further explains:

Chaplains will lead worship services that target a broad population possessing common beliefs and desiring a specific style of worship. The terms “liturgical,” “traditional,” “contemporary,” “gospel,” “praise,” “evangelical,” or “charismatic” are used to identify exclusively chaplain-led worship of a particular style designed to meet the needs inclusive of several denominations and/or a broad population. Chaplain leadership ensures attentiveness to needs and sensitivity to the diversity of those attending these worship services. Services must be advertised and promoted by style, character, and doctrinal content.

This guidance applies mostly to Protestant ministers and rarely to Roman Catholic priests (although some stylistic but never doctrinal variations do exist in the Latin mass).<sup>40</sup> The usual “lineup” of Protestant worship services for any given Sunday on the Air Base would be the early morning “liturgical” service, the mid-morning “contemporary” or “traditional” service, and the early-to-late afternoon “gospel” or praise service (see Figure 8). Variations could occur depending on the chaplain or chaplains presiding over the service. But this is the usual

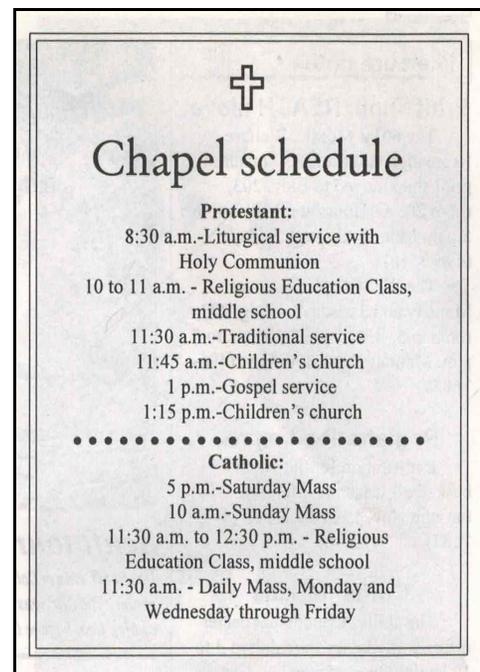


Figure 8, Chapel Schedule, Sembach AB, Germany

format that covers a lot of the Protestant traditions represented among personnel on the installation. If a military member does not feel comfortable with any of these options, he/she would get involved off base at a local church. Such would be the case with most Christians of my faith tradition, the *a capella* Churches of Christ.<sup>41</sup> One could reasonably contend, though, that the “all of the above” approach to Protestant worship on the Air Base every Sunday is an ecumenical experience.

But Protestants go beyond these general models for worship and, typically every quarter, celebrate a combined or ecumenical worship service. Protestants also enjoy the fellowship of



Figure 9, Living Last Supper, Maundy Thursday, Ellsworth AFB

other Protestants in special services for Holy Days,<sup>42</sup> for example, Ash Wednesday, the Season of Lent, Passion/Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday (see Figure 9),<sup>43</sup> Holy or Good Friday, Easter Sunday, the Day of Pentecost, All

Saints Day, the Sundays of Advent, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Not all of these are celebrated with combined services, but seasonal themes are emphasized by all Protestants, and parishioners from the various traditions are involved in special, non-Sunday liturgies.<sup>44</sup>

Religious education or Sunday School for Protestants is combined or ecumenical, and groups of the chapel are collectively labeled “Protestant.”<sup>45</sup> So there are the Protestant Men of

the Chapel (PMOC), the Protestant Women of the Chapel (PWOC), the Protestant Youth of the Chapel (PYOC), and so forth. The Protestant Parish Council functions as the equivalent of a church's board of directors (i.e., as planners and organizers of chapel programs with chaplain oversight and direction) with involvement from lay leaders across the Protestant spectrum. The Parish Council also serves as a "sounding board" for feedback from parishioners that often keeps chaplains and the chapel staff on track. Irrespective of different church doctrines, beliefs, and practices, Protestants work together amazingly well. Disputes among "all of the above" on the Protestant "side of the house," more often than not, come about not because of doctrinal or theological concerns, but because of petty differences of opinion, personalities, and/or wrangling over pet projects or programs.

One of the best ecumenical activities for Protestants in Air Force chapels is the humanitarian and evangelical outreach that comes from "designated offerings." The "Chapel Tithes and Offerings Fund" or CTOF (formerly called "Chaplain Funds") are the non-appropriated monies that are used to supplement appropriated monies to pay for a variety of chapel programs and activities.<sup>46</sup> As churches are in the habit of taking up a collection every Sunday, so it is in the military chapel. Monetary support for the chaplain service falls under the guidance of *AFI 52-105, Chaplain Corps Resourcing, 23 June 2015. Section 4.4* delineates the "authorized use of CTOF for Chaplain Corps programs" and includes, under the remarks about charitable gifts, designated offerings which are offerings received from Protestant services on a single Sunday collected "for non-profit or other charitable organizations."<sup>47</sup>

The Protestant chaplains, with input from the Parish Council and parishioners, plan beforehand who the recipients will be and on which Sundays the designated offerings will be collected. The offerings are announced prior to the Sunday of their collection, usually the

Sunday before or by providing a list of recipients at the beginning of the calendar or fiscal year. Designated offerings can be given to a single recipient or split among several recipients, but they cannot be given to individuals or families and are not to be split across multiple weeks. In my experience, these offerings occurred on the same Sunday of the month (i.e., first, second, third, or fourth), were the largest contributions from the Protestant congregations (especially if they felt good about the recipient), and were viewed as part of the chapel's Christian outreach, a combined or ecumenical effort or ministry to "all of the above" in the name of Jesus.

The chaplain's ministry of presence to all military personnel on the installation or post or at the deployed locale. In service to God and country, and by involvement in civil, interfaith, and ecumenical expressions of faith, chaplains operate "as visible reminders of the Holy" (*AFI 52-101, Section 2.1*). As part of their military uniform, chaplain officers are required to wear their "occupational badge" in addition to the appropriate rank insignia. This is a prayer wheel for

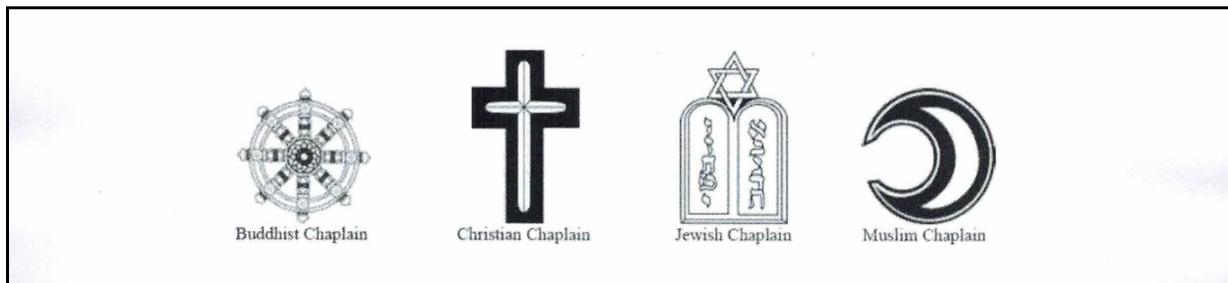


Figure 10, Chaplain Occupational Badges, *AFI 36-2903*, Page 174

Buddhist chaplains, a cross for Christian chaplains, torah scrolls for Jewish chaplains, and a crescent for Muslim chaplains (see Figure 10). The "chaplain badge is awarded to members of the Chaplains Corps" and "is worn in the highest position" above other badges and ribbons for awards and decorations (*AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel, 18 July 2011, Section 10.2*). This physical symbol on the uniform greatly assists personnel in

their recognition of the chaplain when he/she conducts a “ministry of presence” on the Air Base or at the deployed location.

As part of this ministry of presence, chaplains are assigned specific organizational units (squadrons, groups, or wings) on the Air Base for visitation and general pastoral care. Chaplains are expected to visit workplaces routinely and are held accountable through monthly reports that are submitted to the Senior Chaplain.<sup>48</sup> This ministry of presence parallels what civilian ministers do with visits to homes and hospitals, but it goes beyond that by making it mandatory for chaplains on the Air Base to minister to “all of the above” by visiting most places where human activity occurs on the installation. Reasonably-sized Air Bases are similar to small towns with residential areas,

venues for business and commerce, facilities for leisure and recreation, medical and other professional care centers, schools, restaurants, groceries, churches, and, of course, an airport (see



Figure 11, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota, Date Unknown

Figures 11, 12, and 13). And the complex array of “industrial” work centers, geared for specialized missions to “defend and protect” the country and situated on the Air Base to support the workers (and their dependents) who carry out this mission, would rival and exceed that found in most cities and towns across the United States.<sup>49</sup> This is what makes the chaplain’s ministry of

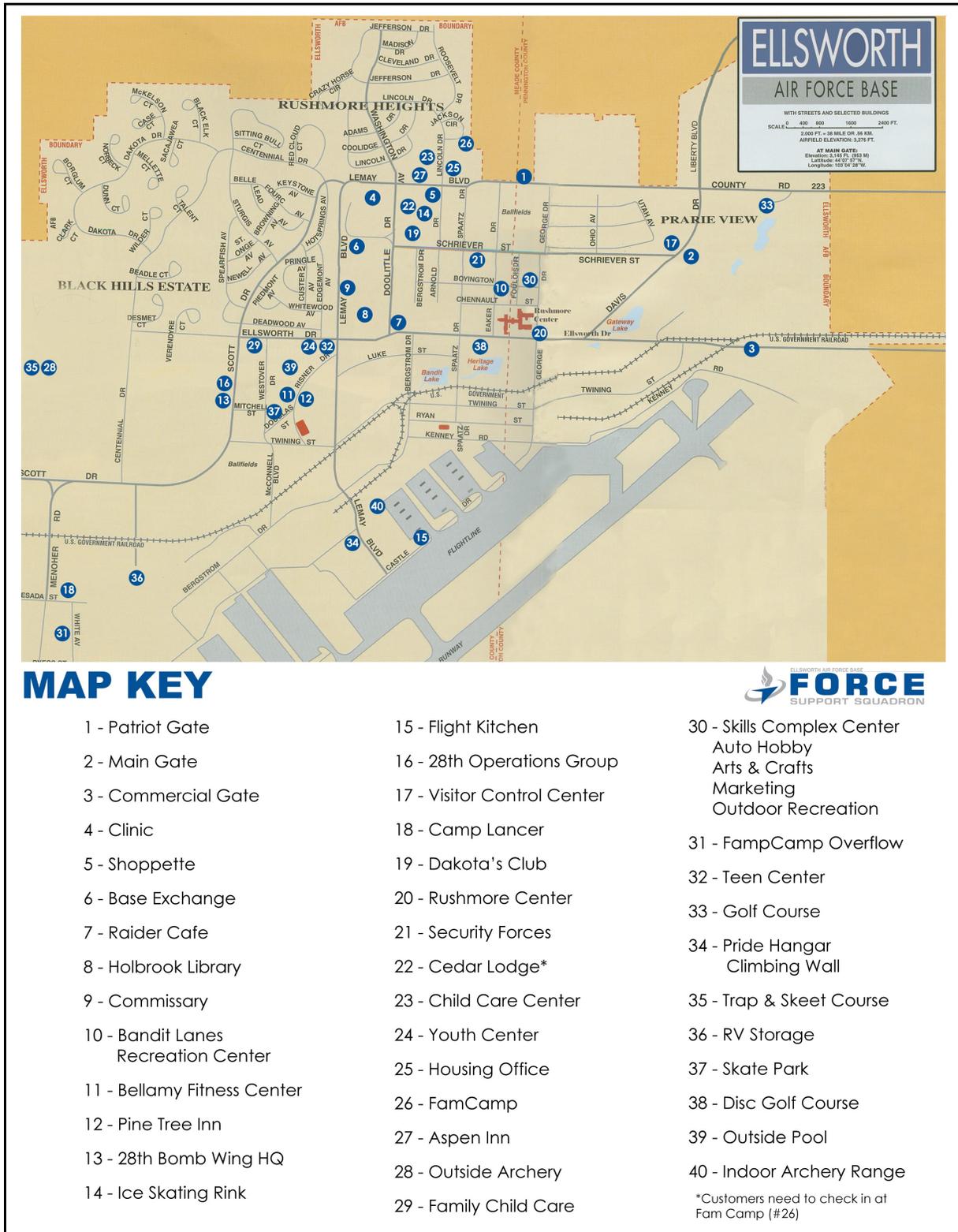


Figure 12, Map of Support Facilities, 28<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota

presence on the Air Base, what some have labeled “industrial ministry” or getting outside the walls of the chapel and going to where the people are conducting their daily activities, unlike anything comparable in the civilian sector. Truly, it is ministry to “all of the above.”<sup>50</sup>



Figure 13, B-1 Lancer, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota

A good example of this industrial ministry is the “flight line ministry.” Every Air Base has its airstrip or runway, hangars for the aircraft with a variety of offices and shops for maintenance, and the flight line or pavement around the hangars where aircraft can be parked and serviced. Both flight line and runway can be busy with personnel and activities when operations are ongoing, that is, aircraft are being launched and recovered, day and night. And the weather, especially if it is extreme, can make working on the flight line miserable for the personnel assigned to the aircraft. To ease the burden a bit, and to be visibly present with the troops, chaplains routinely visit the flight line, especially on very hot or very cold days or nights, and take workers cold water or juice or sodas, hot coffee or chocolate or soup, and snacks or homemade cookies (prepared by Catholic and Protestant Women of the Chapel). Religious literature is distributed to those who want something to read, but usually what flight line workers want most is a short break, a bit of pleasant conversation, and a hot or cold beverage to warm up or cool down. Chaplain visitation to flight line workers typifies ministry to “all of the above,” and often it opens doors for counseling or sharing good news.<sup>51</sup>



Figure 14, 609<sup>th</sup> Contingency Hospital, Zweibruecken, Germany, Winter 1991



Figure 15, Navy Chaplain Don Mosley, Camp Bulkeley Chapel, Joint Task Force 160, Guantanamo Bay NAS, Cuba, Fall 1995

Another important example of industrial ministry to “all of the above” in the Air Force is the Chaplain Corps Readiness Mission for Expeditionary Combat Support (ECS) Forces and for Joint Operations involving other Armed Forces of the United States (see Figures 14 and 15). *AFI 52-104, Chaplain Corps Readiness*, 6 August 2015, Section 1, states, “Chaplains, as non-combatants, and chaplain assistants, as combatants, serve as ECS force personnel. Chaplains and chaplain

assistants, as RSTs [Religious Support Teams, formerly Chaplain Readiness Teams], provide spiritual care, opportunities for the free exercise of religion, and advice to leadership.” RSTs are trained and equipped to provide Air Force Chaplain Corps ministries, in accordance with Joint Publication (JP) 1-05, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, in support of Combatant Commands

in Joint Operations. The Religious Support Team “is comprised of one Air Force Chaplain and one Chaplain Assistant at [both] home and deployed locations” that is “assigned and actively engaged in each squadron” to “provide warrior care that is supportive of all Airmen.” The Team is designed to minister to personnel of all faith groups through “religious support [with] rites, religious observances, religious education, unit engagement, and spiritual care” and to give “advice to leadership . . . concerning spiritual, ethical, moral, morale and religious accommodation matters affecting personnel, as well as religious issues in the operational area” (*AFI 52-101, Chaplain, Planning and Organizing, 5 December 2013, Section 3.2.5*).

The Chaplain Corps Readiness Mission includes a ministry of presence on the mobility processing line to all personnel, personal readiness for either individual and/or team deployment, and contingency ministry support for crises and emergencies. When activated, whether for military exercise scenarios or real world situations, the Air Base’s PERSCO (Personnel Support for Contingency Operations) Team assembles representatives of various support agencies for a mobility processing unit. These agencies, including the chaplain and chaplain assistant, form a mobility processing line with its stations. Military members who are tasked to deploy report to the mobility processing area with mobility bags, or duffle bags, filled with personal items and/or equipment specific to their duties. There they wait with other unit members in a holding area. In time, they proceed past each station of the mobility processing line to make sure they have all their personal affairs in order (e.g., personal data and eligibility to deploy, information for dependents or next of kin in case of injury, sickness or death, dental/medical records, financial matters, legal issues, and spiritual welfare), since the forward operating area, somewhere in the world, may be hostile and threatening.<sup>52</sup>

At the chaplain station, usually situated near the end of the mobility processing line and staffed by a chaplain and a chaplain assistant (previously called chapel manager), each deploying person's religious preference on their metal identification tags (see Figure 16) is checked for accuracy and cross-checked against a printed, or electronic, master personnel roster. The deploying person is asked if he/she wants to speak



Figure 16, Military ID Tags, *AFI 36-3103, Personnel, ID Tags, 18 May 2016*

to a chaplain, in confidence, about any matter. And the chaplain station has a variety of religious literature (e.g., scriptures, devotional booklets) and religious artifacts (e.g., crosses, prayer beads) that personnel can take with them.<sup>53</sup> If the military member wants to talk to a chaplain, he/she is taken to a private area or room for reasons of confidentiality.<sup>54</sup> After unit personnel have completed all stations of mobility processing, they go to another holding area where they wait and, in time, receive a series of briefings concerning the deployed location. Included in these briefings is one about the culture, religion, and values of the area of deployment by the chaplain who is staffing the mobility line. While working on mobility lines can be tedious and often boring, especially late at night or in early morning hours when few personnel might be processing, it does give the chaplain a one-on-one involvement with military members stationed on the Air Base.<sup>55</sup> This “industrial” ministry of presence goes beyond “chapel” or “sacerdotal” ministry and is to “all of the above” regardless of religious affiliation.

Chaplains themselves and their assistants also have to be ready in case they are tasked to deploy, so every chapel staff appoints both a chaplain officer and an enlisted assistant to plan for and to carry out the tasks involved in sending Religious Support Teams to the deployed location (see Figure 17).<sup>56</sup>

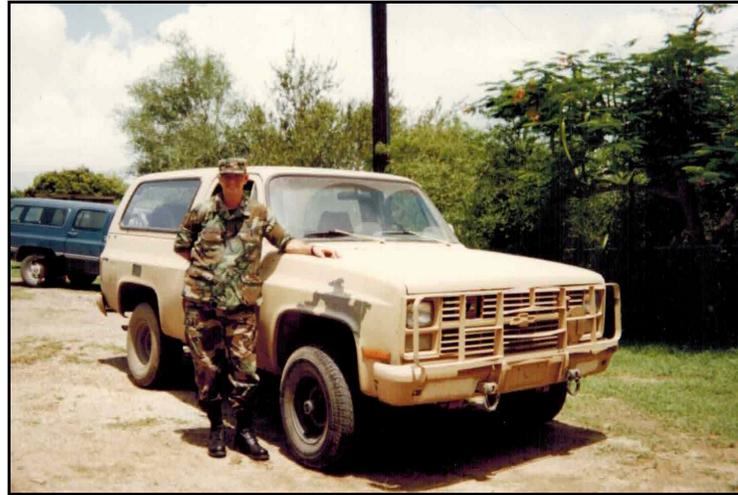


Figure 17, Tactical Vehicle, Air Force Forces HQ, Joint Task Force 160, Guantanamo Bay NAS, Fall 1995

Personal items for deployment as well as chaplain/chapel specific items must be kept ready in duffle bags and in mobility boxes. In addition, chaplains maintain portable field kits (the “Lightweight Chaplain Combat Kit,” see Figure 18), specialized for Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, or Protestant chaplains, to quickly set up a tabletop altar in order to conduct religious services in the field for deployed personnel. The idea behind mobility preparedness is to be ready to go at a moment’s notice and to have available both personal and professional gear. In this way, chaplains and the RST can maximize their ministry to all deployed personnel.<sup>57</sup>

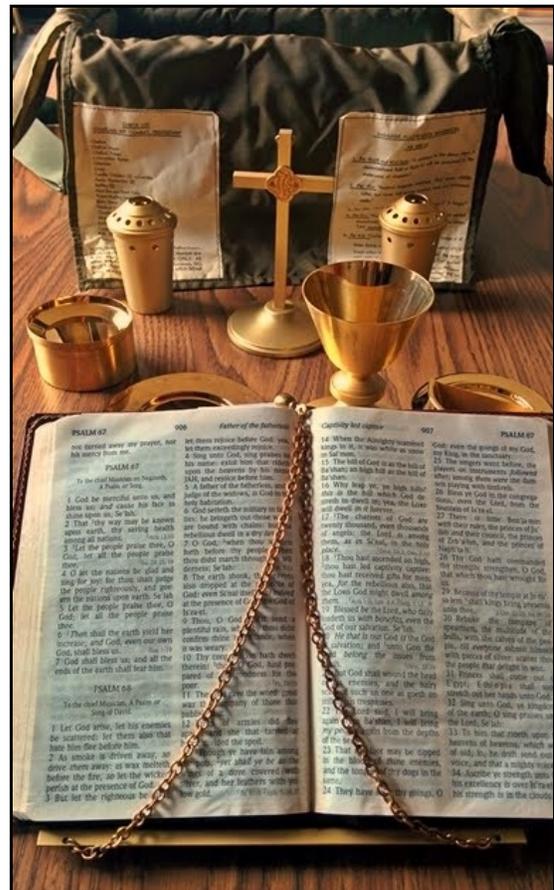


Figure 18, Chaplain Field Kit

Finally, Readiness

Ministry to “all of the above”  
employs chaplains and RSTs as  
first responders and as backup  
support links to needed resources  
in case of local crises or  
emergencies, for example, major  
accidents, natural and manmade  
disasters, evacuations, national  
emergencies including enemy



Figure 19, KC-10 Explosion and Fire, Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, 17 September 1987

attack with conventional or CBRNE<sup>58</sup> (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear explosives), various types of humanitarian help, mass casualty responses, workplace violence, and so forth (see Figure 19). Chaplains and their assistants particularly are needed when personnel are injured or wounded, subjected to different types of trauma, or killed.<sup>59</sup> The prime role of Chaplain Corps personnel during such incident responses is “to support authorized Department of Defense personnel” and “to provide spiritual care to victims” (*AFI 52-104, Section 3.5*). RSTs and the entire chapel staff work with base authorities, local community leaders, if necessary, and regional/national helping agencies to minister “to survivors, their dependents and to the dependents of casualties.” Chaplains, in their work to “all of the above,” expect in these circumstances to provide “crisis counseling to the emergency responders and advice to commanders on issues that may arise during subsequent investigation” (*AFI 52-104, Section 4.2*). Readiness Ministry for the chaplain is wide-open ministry to “all of the above” that can be very challenging, but this makes his/her work meaningful and worthwhile.

The chapel as neutral or all-inclusive religious or worship space. Whether deployed or at home, Chaplain Corps personnel “accommodate the religious needs of the . . . community” and “ensure the sanctity of sacred space within” chapel facilities. Since it is a “direct mission requirement” to make sure that “all airmen have opportunities to exercise their constitutional right to the free exercise of religion,” facilities and their appurtenances are funded through appropriated funds. Chapels on Air Bases (Figure 20) and in field environments are unique in that they remain “neutral” while not being used for religious purposes, that is, “distinctive faith group symbols are not permanently displayed in the chapel sanctuary, chancel, or nave.” And although “Chaplain Corp facilities may be used to support secular activities based on established operating instructions and facility availability, chapel sanctuary, chancel, nave, or denomination-specific rooms will be used solely to conduct religious activities” (*AFI 52-105, Chaplain Corps Resourcing, 23 June 2015, Section 3*).



Figure 20, Chapel, Sembach Air Base, Germany, 1992

In order to meet Chaplain Corps mission requirements, chaplain-led and/or chaplain-sponsored activities receive priority in chapel facilities. In the chapel, every chaplain is provided “a private office suitable for privileged communication that protects confidentiality.” A Blessed Sacrament Room or “sacred space dedicated specifically for [Roman] Catholic use” is maintained on each installation. And, “alcoholic beverages are not consumed or stored in Chaplain Corps facilities except those required for religious rites.” For non-religious activities, such as wedding receptions, military personnel and DOD cardholders, for their personal use, “may submit facility utilization requests” subject to approval by the Senior Chaplain and facility availability (*AFI 52-105, Section 3*).<sup>60</sup> Within the structure of these guidelines, the Chaplain Corps in the Air Force seeks to provide sacred space in its chapels for “all of the above.”

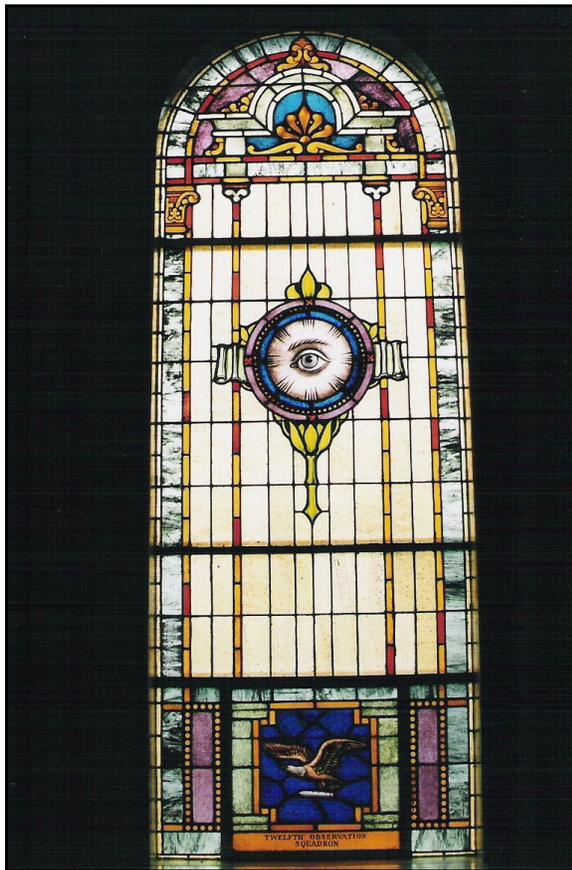


Figure 21, All-Seeing Eye Window, Chapel, Fort Knox, Kentucky, Spring 2004

While some of the language in the *Instruction* certainly belies a Christian bias, for example, “sanctuary,” “chancel,” “nave,” most Air Base chapels do a decent job of protecting the neutrality of the “sacred space.” Many chapels have niches in the wall at the front of the sanctuary with faith-specific items, such as a Christian cross, a Catholic crucifix, a Jewish menorah or torah scroll, an Islamic crescent moon, that either can be rotated and hidden or rotated and revealed during periods of worship. Holy books (the Bible, the Torah, the Quran), flags (Christian or Protestant flag), and religious

garments (head coverings, cloaks and robes, vestments) can be removed from the platform or podium and taken to the sacristy or storage area to keep the sanctuary neutral. Even permanent fixtures, like stained glass windows (see Figure 21), can be generic or neutral so as to preserve the neutrality of the chapel's sacred space, for "all of the above," and keep it free from partiality toward any particular religion.

And if an older facility has permanent features that are faith-specific, additional sacred space or spaces can be added in order to accommodate the evolving diversity of religious beliefs in the military family. For example, the premier chapel among chapels in the Air Force is the Air Force Academy Chapel in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Completed in 1963, the Academy Chapel features "three distinctive chapels under a separate roof" with "separate entrances for Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism" which, at that time, were "the nation's predominant faiths."<sup>61</sup> Since then, an All Faiths Room, to accommodate "the needs of smaller groups," has been added. It was renovated in the late 1990s and dedicated by Metropolitan Isaiah, of Denver's Greek Orthodox Church, in the Fall of 1999, who on that occasion celebrated an ecumenical vespers service in the Protestant Chapel.<sup>62</sup>

Periodically, conflicts over the chapel's sacred space do happen. Military personnel are human. Sensitivities can be threatened, and deep feelings and personal beliefs about one's sacred space can create tensions.<sup>63</sup> Chaplains themselves sometimes are culpable of this possessiveness and at fault. But mutual forbearance is a key to resolving such issues, and the *Air Force Instruction* is quite clear that the facility must be kept in a neutral status whenever it is not being used for religious services. This will insure that the sacred space of the Air Base chapel is open and available (i.e., non-offensive) to "all of the above," that is, to any and all who wish to use the facility for prayer and meditation.

The chaplain's role as counselor of military personnel from diverse religious traditions.

Finally, military chaplains provide ministry to many different people with diverse beliefs and religious traditions, to “all of the above,” through spiritual counseling. One of the “core

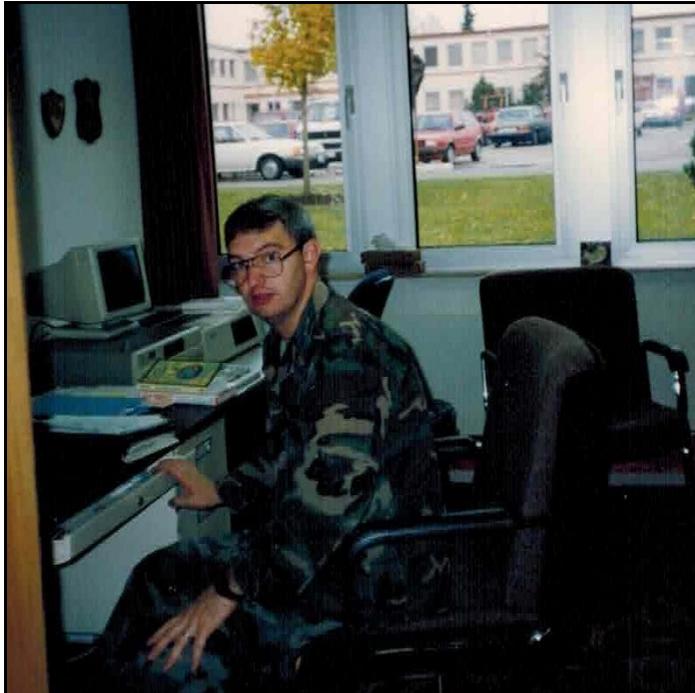


Figure 22, Desk Work at Sembach AB Chapel in Germany

capabilities” of members of the Chaplain Corps is “spiritual care” or “meeting the diverse spiritual needs of airmen and their families” (*AFPD 52-1, Section 2*). Although chaplains are not required to be trained as professional counselors, spiritual care for military personnel and their dependents includes being a listener, a helper, an adviser, and sometimes, if needed, an advocate for those who have personal or family problems.<sup>64</sup> Chaplains are provided

dedicated office space for this specific reason (*AFI 52-105, Section 3.3.7*; Figure 22), so that those who have suffered grief or loss, who have difficulties adjusting to the military way of life or its culture, who have committed a crime or offense, or who need spiritual guidance can “open up” and talk to a chaplain in confidence or in private.<sup>65</sup> This “privileged” or “protected” communication gives to those who confide in the chaplain a “safe area” of protection against criticism or punishment.

Concerning pastoral care and the right of military personnel to privileged or protected communication with the chaplain, *AFI 52-101, Section 4* states:

The privilege of total confidentiality in communications with a chaplain is an essential component of the chaplain's ministry. Privileged communication is protected communication. It is any communication given to a chaplain in trust by an individual, to include Enemy Prisoners of War (EPW), if such communication is made either as a formal act of religion or as a matter of conscience.

The "Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Services" affirms that all chaplains will hold in confidence any privileged communication received during the conduct of his/her ministry. The manual for Courts-Martial further affirms the absolute character of such privileged communication within the context of judicial proceedings and investigations.

This privilege of total confidentiality, or against disclosure, "belongs to the counselee" and even "extends beyond the death of the counselee and may not be waived by anyone." With the exception of "sacramental confession" that makes any release of privileged communication inapplicable, chaplains may not "disclose privileged communication revealed in the practices of his/her ministry without the individual counselee's informed, written consent" that is "signed, dated, and witnessed by a disinterested third party" (*AFI 52-101, Section 4*). The *Instruction*, in its strong advocacy for absolute nondisclosure of what might constitute privileged or protected communication, definitely reflects the theology of Roman Catholics who deeply believe in a sacred and inviolable sacrament of confession between priest and penitent. Protestants, depending on their own peculiar theology, may or may not be so inclined to uphold privileged communication as sacred and inviolable.<sup>66</sup> But, in any sense, chaplains on the Air Base do have this special protection that might encourage those who need to talk to come to the chapel rather than another helping or support agency (e.g., family advocacy, legal aid, mental health).

Types of counseling by chaplains include those which are common to most Christian ministries, for example, marriage and family (see Figure 23), stress and an assortment of personal problems, depression and suicide, substance abuse and addiction, issues involving civil and/or criminal law and the judicial system such as confinement or incarceration, death and grief, and matters about beliefs or of a religious nature.<sup>67</sup> Special to the counseling of military chaplains

would be matters pertinent to life as a military member or as a dependent of a military member. Examples would be war and killing, conscientious objection, humanitarian reassignment or humanitarian deferment of assignment, hardship or humanitarian discharge, resignation from the military (for



Figure 23, Wedding Best Man & Groom and Officiants, PA Air National Guard, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

officers), early return of dependents from overseas assignment, reinstatement to previous employment after activation and deployment (for reservists), military justice (the UCMJ or Uniform Code of Military Justice) and courts-martial, and accommodation of religious beliefs.<sup>68</sup> Presumably, chaplains as spiritual leaders are expected to talk to people about spiritual things. Concerning topics of a religious nature that the chaplain has in common with military personnel from his/her own religious tradition, to those people the chaplain can speak meaningfully with clarity as pastor or priest. But military chaplains in their counseling cover a wide range of topics, some that are spiritual or religious, but many that are non-spiritual or secular. In this capacity, as listener, helper, advisor, and advocate, the chaplain ministers to “all of the above” regardless of beliefs or affiliation.

Biblical foundations for comprehensive ministry to “all of the above” and lessons to be learned. Three of many New Testament passages that support ministry to “all of the above” in military and civilian settings are the “Great Commission” of Jesus to his eleven disciples in

Galilee after his resurrection and before his ascension to heaven (Matthew 28.16-20; Mark 16.15ff.; Luke 24.44ff.), the saying of Jesus against prohibiting anyone to work “powerful acts” in his name (Mark 9.38-41; Luke 9.49-50; cf. Matthew 10.42), and the message of Paul to notables and philosophers at the Areopagus in Athens, Greece (Acts 17.22ff).<sup>69</sup> The imperative of Jesus to his disciples, as he leaves his earthly incarnate state for his heavenly one, is for his followers collectively to engage “all nations” (Matthew and Luke; “every creature” in Mark) through discipling (a turning to the guidance of Father, Son, and Spirit), incorporation (an immersion into the name of Father, Son, and Spirit), and conforming (an instructing to heed and follow Father, Son, and Spirit). This involves going out to the people, interacting with them wherever they are, and telling them the good news of God. And the mission envisioned by Jesus is inclusive and nondiscriminatory, that is, to “all nations” and “every creature.” The “Shorter Ending of Mark” here is instructive, which says, “Afterward, through the work of his disciples, Jesus sent out, from the east to the west, the sacred and undying message of eternal salvation. Amen.”<sup>70</sup> The Lord works through his servants from east to west to reorder an upside down world with a holy and everlasting message of deliverance and rescue. This is what the Christian chaplain endeavors to do as a visible reminder of the holy and through a ministry of presence to “all of the above” on the Air Base and at deployed locations.

By deeds of kindness—“a cup of cold water to these little ones” (Matthew 10.42)—and by cooperative efforts—“whoever isn’t against you is for you” (Luke 9.50)—the disciples of Jesus bring honor to his name and certainly will be rewarded in those endeavors. The disciples were trying to stop one who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus, since he wasn’t in their “group of followers.” But Jesus told them to leave him alone, because “no one who does powerful acts in my name can quickly turn around and curse me” (Mark 9.38-39). As Craig

Keener notes, “Like individuals, different schools and sects often competed against each other. Sectarian attitudes were common in Judaism, as the Dead Sea Scrolls testify. Their zeal [e.g., of the disciples to criticize others] is misplaced (cf. Numbers 11.28).”<sup>71</sup> Jesus makes it plain that, in our labors for the kingdom of God, there is room for “all of the above,” and no one doing “powerful acts” in his name should be deterred (cf. 1 Corinthians 3). On the Air Base and at deployed locations, the Christian chaplain strives to open doors for sharing good news with deeds of kindness. He/She tries as best as possible to cooperate with others toward the common good and not to criticize or work against those who likewise are doing ministry for the Lord (cf. 2 Timothy 2.24). And the true servant of the Lord does not concern himself/herself with who gets credit for ministry that is accomplished among “all of the above” to the glory of God.



Figure 24, Acropolis, from the West, Athens, Greece, January 1983

Finally, the words of the Apostle Paul to those gathered at the Areopagus, near the Acropolis (see Figure 24), highlight the sure and absolute claims of the Creator Lord on his

cosmos and his creation. Paul affirms, “God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn’t far away from any of us. In God, we live, move, and exist” (Acts 17.27-28). In this all-encompassing outreach by God (e.g., “he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else,” verse 25) to change the hearts and lives of all the peoples on the earth, the “Lord of heaven and earth” welcomes the enlistment of his servants to further this mission.<sup>72</sup> To this end, the Christian chaplain understands and conducts ministry according to: (1) the need to present himself/herself as a living sacrifice and a visible reminder of the Holy Name of Jesus in a fallen and impoverished world; (2) the imperative of cooperation with others in the name of Jesus toward harmony and wholeness for God’s creatures and creation; (3) the need to take ministry in the name of Jesus to the masses through ministry of presence; (4) the importance of dynamic change and mobility (see Figure 25) for ministry in the name of Jesus; (5) the benefit of open, inviting, and nonthreatening space for ministry in the name of Jesus; and (6) the Godliness or God-like-ness of serving as advocate and helper in the name of Jesus for those who are hurting and struggling.

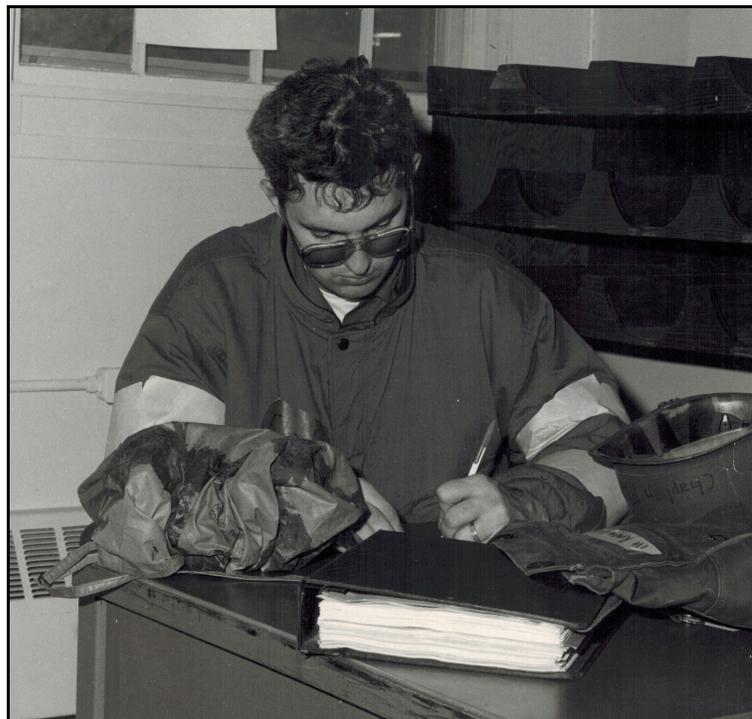


Figure 25, Chaplain, 1<sup>st</sup> LT, David W Fletcher, ORI, 112<sup>th</sup> TFG, PAANG, Phelps-Collins ANGB, Alpena, MI, October 1986

## ENDNOTES

1. NGB Form 22, Report of Separation and Record of Service, Air National Guard of Pennsylvania, David W Fletcher, 7 June 84 to 31 March 87; and DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, Regular Air Force, David W Fletcher, 1 April 87 to 31 January 98. Documents 1 and 2. In the Air Force, I technically served first as a reserve officer on extended active duty and then was commissioned as a regular officer of the Air Force.
2. I became interested in Air Force chaplaincy when Rhonda, my wife, and I attended an orientation to military chaplaincy at McGuire AFB in New Jersey in the early 1980s when we were working with the Valley Road Church of Christ in Warrington, Pennsylvania. The chaplains at McGuire AFB treated us to lunch, gave us a brief tour of the base and an overview of its mission, and talked to us about ministry to military personnel in the Air Force. I saw the chaplaincy as a neglected ministry among Churches of Christ, so this became for me a goal for future ministry. In the summer of 1983, we left the work in Warrington, and I returned to seminary full-time to finish the Master of Divinity program at Cincinnati Christian Seminary to qualify for military chaplaincy. After completing the M.Div. program in May 1984, I was called to minister with the Church of Christ in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania. About that time, Air National Guard units across the country were authorized to add a second chaplain officer, so I basically “walked into” the Protestant chaplain slot at the 112<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Group in Pittsburgh. They were glad to have me, and I was glad to be “on board.” This perhaps was an example of being in the right place at the right time, or better, the guiding hand and providence of a gracious Lord.
3. My personal recollections are based on memory and documents that I have kept through the years. Memory can be selective and inaccurate, and documents must be interpreted and placed in proper context. On the role of memory in connecting to the past, see Chapter 5, “How We Know The Past” in David Lowenthal’s *The Past Is A Foreign Country* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 185-259. For use of sources for historical knowledge, see Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
4. James E. Newell, “A Brief Account of Religion and the Revolutionary War Chaplaincy: Part 1,” 1995, *The Continental Line* (King of Prussia, PA: The Continental Line, Inc., 2010), at: [www.continentalline.org/articles/article.php?date=9504&article=950404](http://www.continentalline.org/articles/article.php?date=9504&article=950404) (accessed 12-17-17).
5. James E. Newell, “A Brief Account of Religion and the Revolutionary War Chaplaincy: Part 2,” 1996, *The Continental Line* (King of Prussia, PA: The Continental Line, Inc., 2010), at: [www.continentalline.org/articles/article.php?date=9601&article=960102](http://www.continentalline.org/articles/article.php?date=9601&article=960102) (accessed 12-17-17); Mitchell Lewis, “General Washington and Continental Congress Support for Chaplains,” 2017, at: [www.milewis.wordpress.com/2017/02/23/washington-continental-congress-chaplains/](http://www.milewis.wordpress.com/2017/02/23/washington-continental-congress-chaplains/) (accessed 12-17-17); and the entry for July 29, 1775, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1775-1789*, Vol. II, 1775, May 10-September 20, edited by Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), 220, at: [www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwjc.html](http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwjc.html) (accessed 12-17-17).

6. See “National Security Act of 1947,” Office of the Historian, United States Department of State (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2017), at: [www.history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act](http://www.history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act) (accessed 12-17-17); Charles A. Stevenson, “Underlying Assumptions of the National Security Act of 1947,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 48 (First Quarter 2008): 129-133, National Defense University Press, *Joint Force Quarterly* (JFQ) (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2018), at: [www.ndupress.ndu.edu/JFQ/](http://www.ndupress.ndu.edu/JFQ/) (accessed 12-17-17); and “Unification” by B. C. Mossman, in Chapter 24, “Peace Becomes Cold War, 1945-1950” *American Military History*, edited by Maurice Matloff (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1969), 531-533.

7. Air Force publications are from the Air Force E-publishing Web Site, Official United States Air Force Website (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, n.d.), at: [www.e-publishing.af.mil/](http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/) (accessed 12-17-17). Former guidance for chaplains fell under *Air Force Regulation 265 [Series]*, but obsolete Regulations are difficult to find. See George Caldwell, “U.S. Military Regulations at the Library of Congress,” 1990, Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room: Serial and Government Publications Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: The Library of Congress, 2010), at: [www.loc.gov/rr/news/milregs.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/milregs.html) (accessed 12-17-17).

8. For United States Code titles and links, see Office of the Law Revision Counsel, United States Code (Washington, DC: United States House of Representatives, 2017), at: [uscode.house.gov/download/download.shtml](http://uscode.house.gov/download/download.shtml) (accessed 12-17-17). For Directives of the Department of Defense, go to DoD Directives Division, Executive Services Directorate (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, Department of Defense, 2017), at: [www.esd.whs.mil/DD/](http://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/) (accessed 12-19-17).

9. Frederick C. Mish, ed., *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2012), 207.

10. *Ibid.*, 395, 652. Compare “Ecumenical Movement” and “Theology of Religions” in *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (third edition; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 528-529, 1604-1605.

11. *AFI 1-1, Air Force Culture, Air Force Standards, Section 1.8* emphasizes “diversity” as a “military necessity.” Provision for diversity in “Air Force Culture” that pertains to religious affiliation and belief is outlined in “Free Exercise of Religion and Religious Accommodation” and “Balance of Free Exercise of Religion and Establishment Clause” (*Sections 2.11 and 2.12*).

For documents about “separation of church and state” in America, see *The Separation of Church and State: Writings on a Fundamental Freedom by America’s Founders*, edited by Forrest Church (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004); and *The Founding Fathers and the Debate Over Religion in Revolutionary America: A History in Documents*, edited by Matthew L. Harris and Thomas S. Kidd (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012). For the issues, see James H. Hutson, *Church and State in America: The First Two Centuries*, Cambridge Essential Histories, series editor, Donald Critchlow (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and, from the Protestant perspective, Nicholas P. Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a compilation of views from outsiders, see *The Voluntary Church: American*

*Religious Life (1740-1865) Seen Through the Eyes of European Visitors*, edited by Milton B. Powell (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1967).

12. Chaplains in the Air Force were assigned and responsible for the general pastoral care of specific organizational units (squadrons, groups, or wings) on the Air Base. This put the chaplain in contact with people of many different beliefs. This was true especially of Protestant chaplains, since the nomenclature “Protestant” is defined broadly. Formally, I was designated a “Protestant Chaplain,” even though historically the *a capella* Churches of Christ have resisted that appellation. I found this broad interaction refreshing, as I was able to learn a lot about the beliefs of others. This I would not have been able to do had I restricted my ministry to those “of my own kind” religiously. For good historical summaries of Protestantism, see J. Gordon Melton, “Introduction: The Protestant Movement,” *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York, NY: Checkmark Books, 2008), xi - xix; Martin E. Marty, “Protestant Christianity in the World and in America,” *World Religions in America: An Introduction*, edited by Jacob Neusner (3<sup>rd</sup> edition; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 24-46.

The “open door policy” for ministry in the chaplaincy, both inclusive and nondiscriminatory, applied especially to counseling ministry, crisis ministry, hospital ministry, funerals, memorials, and public prayers. If a chaplain could not provide ministry of a certain sort or to certain persons due to his/her faith-group restrictions, then it would be the responsibility of the senior chaplain, as much as possible given the resources available and within Air Force guidelines, to provide appropriate ministry by seeking out another chaplain or even a civilian minister. Personally, I understood that the Air Force was paying my keep, even though I was endorsed by Churches of Christ for military chaplaincy. My priority was to minister broadly and inclusively, to “all of the above,” as much as possible without discrimination.

My introduction to and foundation for military ministry came from my assignment as a reservist with the 112<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Group of the PA Air National Guard in Pittsburgh. Reservists prepare for mobilization and warfare by drilling two days per month, usually a Saturday-Sunday weekend (hence, “weekend warrior”), and extended duty for two weeks every year. Reservists also have opportunities for temporary duty (TDY) or extended active duty (EADY) for training, emergency contingencies, and regular Air Force augmentation. Chaplain ministry in the PAANG was geared toward readiness to deploy and fight. We had two chaplains, one Protestant (myself) and Father Frank Mitolo, our Roman Catholic priest. We conducted a brief liturgy or worship service, perhaps twenty to thirty minutes, normally on the Sunday afternoon of our weekend drill. The rest of the time was spent in getting to know unit members, military-specific education, preparation for being ready to deploy, and training as if deployed and conducting wartime operations. We did not concern ourselves with trying to operate a “church” during weekend drills. That simply was not feasible, nor was it desired.

To my surprise, when I began active duty service at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, we had two big “churches” or chapels on the installation with active religious programs to which chaplains gave the majority of their time and efforts. Since most active duty Air Force chaplains, in my experience, disliked the work of readiness and deployment, they were happy to assign Chaplain Fletcher oversight of the chapel’s readiness and mobility tasks, and I eagerly accepted the challenge. This broadly based ministry, not geared toward any sacerdotal or ecclesiastical bias, served the entire military community, or “all of the above,” and was the foundation and guiding theme of my ministry in the military. I never conducted a “Church of Christ” worship service during my years in the military. I tried to “fit in” as best I could with whatever Protestant

worship was being offered. When deployed and able to conduct worship services as the guiding/leading chaplain, I conducted a simple liturgy or worship that would best meet the needs of the Protestant community at that deployed location. When possible, I would attend Churches of Christ in the local area [most notably in Bossier City (Louisiana), Rapid City (South Dakota), and while TDY at Guantanamo Bay Naval Air Station (Cuba)].

When I served at Sembach Air Base in Germany, I remember counseling a young Army soldier, a Muslim, who came from his Kaserne in the Kaiserslautern area on Fridays wearing his kufi (head cap) and jilbab (cloak or robe) to pray at our chapel. Other chaplains assigned to Sembach apparently did not want to spend their time on a person of the Islamic faith. As I recall, they told one of the CMPs (i.e., chapel management personnel, enlisted who functioned as assistants to chaplains) to send him to “Fletch” who would talk to him. The young soldier felt that his Army superiors and other members of his unit might be persecuting him for his religious beliefs and that they intentionally made it difficult for him to practice his faith. This is why he came to Sembach for prayers on the appointed day of religious observance—to take his religious practice out of “the chain of command.” I could have turned him away. I could have told him to seek out his unit’s Army chaplain on the Kaserne. But I could identify with him by being a member of a minority faith group. And, in the spirit of ministering to “all of the above,” I gladly talked with him on a weekly basis several times and learned a lot about the Islamic faith. Perhaps too I helped him become more comfortable with the conflicts, perceived and real, of being a person of the Islamic faith in our military. While the military tries to do its best to accommodate all personnel for religious reasons, sometimes operational necessities may take precedence over any personal religious accommodations (see *AFI 1-1, Section 2.11*).

13. I received four ecclesiastical endorsements (DD Form 2088) for service as a military chaplain—“Ecclesiastical Endorsement/Approval” for reserve duty in the National Guard (26 October 1983), “Ecclesiastical Endorsement” for a “Chaplain Reserve Officer Serving on Extended Active Duty” in the Air Force (18 August 1986), “Ecclesiastical Endorsement” for “Indefinite Reserve Status” in the Air Force (7 December 1989), and “Certificate of Ecclesiastical Endorsement” for “Regular Commissioned Officer” status in the Air Force (26 April 1993). Documents 3, 4, 5, and 6. The endorsing agency at the time was the Church of Christ Endorsing Agency, 4801 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, DC. Brother John W. Holton, one of the elders of the Sixteenth and Decatur Church, was the endorser. As a recipient of these endorsements, I was deemed to be and formally “a fully qualified member of the clergy of the Church of Christ.” Early in 1994, the endorsing agency for the *a capella* Churches of Christ was moved to the oversight of the elders of the Fairfax Church of Christ in Virginia. Document 7.

14. At Barksdale AFB, my first active duty assignment, I worked with Milton Tyler, a Southern Baptist minister who was the Senior Protestant Chaplain. Tyler often said that if he participated in a toast using alcoholic beverages at an Air Force dinner or social gathering (champagne was the usual choice), he would be in jeopardy of losing his ecclesiastical endorsement. That would be tantamount to social drinking, a taboo for Southern Baptist ministers who had to follow strict ethical guidelines. In my opinion, this was a pretext, but it does illustrate the tension between church and state that exists for military chaplains and the superseding authority of the church.

In retrospect, I wonder if Tyler used this to assign others the responsibility to attend various evening functions, something the chaplains did regularly for invocations and benedictions. Tyler was self-serving in many ways and difficult to work with, as were most Baptist chaplains. There

were exceptions for me personally, for example, Eddie Jaspers at Barksdale AFB, Reggie Cleveland at Sembach AB, and Harold Ray at Ellsworth AFB. But as a general rule, and other chaplains agreed, the Baptists seemed to be the most difficult.

When Chaplain Tyler would gather the Protestant chaplains for our weekly staff meeting, he would “beat around the bush,” waste time, and pry us with questions to get information that he would use to his own advantage. I grew tired of this ruse, since we were the ones out and about with the airmen in their workplaces while he sat behind his desk. Over time, I said less and less in our staff meetings and grew angry and annoyed with Tyler and his tactics. Father Edward McGinty, a Roman Catholic priest who was our Installation Staff Chaplain, sensed the tension and called me into his office one day. Father Ed had a crusty demeanor and even looked the part, but always he was honest, straightforward, and to the point. I liked that, and I respected Father Ed. He talked kindly with me. He told me to just do my job, which I was doing very well, and not to worry about Chaplain Tyler. He reassured me that he would take care of Chaplain Tyler. That set me at ease, and I appreciated Chaplain McGinty’s intervention, something beneficial in the give-and-take setting, the “all of the above” environment, of religious plurality in the military.

15. In the late 1980s, the standard was the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent with 90 semester or 135 quarter hours of graduate-level education.

16. Soon after I became a reserve officer with Pittsburgh’s Air National Guard, I attended two basic courses at Maxwell AFB in Montgomery, Alabama—five weeks at the Air Force Officer Orientation Course, and two weeks at the Air Force Chaplain Orientation Course.

17. When I started my military stint as a reserve chaplain officer in the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, I held the rank of First Lieutenant. On 1 April 1987 (i.e., April Fools Day), the first day I began extended active duty in the Air Force, I was promoted to Captain. The precise language—“rank without command”—may have been used in the older Regulations in reference to chaplains. I used to quip that chaplains were rank without command.

18. Another Baptist chaplain I encountered at Barksdale AFB was Robert (“Bob”) Jemerson, who was reassigned there to replace Father James Boyle as our Installation Staff Chaplain. Chaplain Jemerson had a lovely wife and son, but he was the epitome of meanness. He had a way of browbeating chapel staff members into doing what he wanted to see happen with the chapel programs. He always put on a “holier-than-thou” demeanor in public and with commanders on the base, but in closed session with just the chapel staff—watch out! A few months after his arrival, the morale of the chapel staff sank lower and lower. We tried to figure out why he was so harsh and unkind to his chapel “family” and reasoned that possibly he had lots of proverbial “skeletons in his closet.” But we were only guessing and really did not know why.

One day Chaplain Jemerson called me into his office and began to threaten me with a poor OPR (the annual Officer Performance Report), something that would be a career stopper. My OPR was due soon, but I do not remember why he threatened me. However, that was his way, so it did not matter why. But I would not be cowed. I told him forthrightly that he signed the OPR. I did not sign it. So it reflected more on him than on me. Anyway, I said, I was there to do ministry not to get promoted. And I intended to minister to the personnel on base, and to those who attended chapel services, to the best of my ability. It did not matter whether he wrote me a good OPR or not. I would do quality ministry regardless. I think Jemerson came to respect me

for the work that I did and for “standing up” to him in private. I asserted my spiritual authority with him, as well as the biblical principle to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4.15). This was a spiritual authority that could and should counter the military “chain of command” (in this case, Jemerson was a Colonel, and I was just a Captain).

While serving as a military chaplain, I tried my best to accommodate the religious needs of base and chapel personnel to the best of my ability. I understood that chaplains could not be called on to perform duties incompatible with the beliefs of their particular faith group or church. Generally, I did not make my church’s distinctions from general Protestant practices an issue, but on occasion I did invoke this guideline to protect my independence as a chaplain or maybe just to keep my sanity. Such was the case with Chaplain Jemerson who could be overbearing and unreasonable. On Christmas Eve 1990, Jemerson wanted all the Protestant chaplains to attend the early evening Protestant service, and he told us to wear our robes or vestments. In other words, he was ordering us to “dress the part” of clerics or pastors, something unreasonable and uncalled for. I told him pointedly that in the Churches of Christ we do not wear ecclesiastical garb, such as robes, for religious services. I did not have a problem, in principle, to wear a robe during worship, but I did have a problem with being ordered to wear a robe. That is where I drew the line and invoked the authority of my church and my church’s endorsement for military ministry. [Easily, I could have told Jemerson that I would not be attending the Christmas Eve service at all, since *a capella* Churches of Christ do not celebrate Christmas nor do they worship with musical instruments, but I did not draw the line that severely]. In response, Jemerson told me that if I did not wear a robe that I must wear my service dress uniform for the service. I told him that would be fine. So on that unusually warm Christmas Eve at Barksdale AFB’s Chapel One, in the altar area was Chaplain Fletcher in his service dress uniform and the other Protestant chaplains in their robes. I think that “ticked off” Jemerson, but I think it was important for me to act independently in that circumstance to protect the important principle of not forcing chaplains to act in ways or perform duties that violated their church’s beliefs. In certain cases, usually extreme ones (and working “with” Jemerson was most of the time extreme), ministry to “all of the above” had its limits.

Of course, the matters I have touched on above could be considered trivial (although the principle of adherence to ecclesiastical authority would be the important issue), unlike weightier matters facing evangelical chaplains in the military today. One such issue would be whether or not to perform a wedding for a same-sex couple. With recent changes in federal law and in military regulations concerning the rights of homosexuals, this has become for chaplains a real and serious concern. The bottom line is, though, that chaplains should not be coerced or forced to perform any wedding that violates the tenets of their faith group. I never had to face such an issue, since the policy in the 1980s and the 1990s concerning homosexuals in the military was the colloquial “don’t ask don’t tell” approach. As far as I know at the three installations where I served, we never received a request to marry a couple of the same sex. At that time, such was not even a possibility. But now it is, and chaplains have to wrestle with that.

When I served, we had lots of requests to perform weddings, since for military members the chapel and chaplain would be “free of charge.” We tried hard to put in place procedures, such as premarital counseling, use of the Prepare/Enrich inventories, and involvement of wedding coordinators, to avoid being used like a “justice of the peace” for marriage ceremonies. This helped, but some of the young airmen did their best to avoid these procedures and still wanted a chaplain to perform their wedding in the chapel, because it was their “right” as a member of the military. It was hard to “tow the line” sometimes and not get a complaint against us for refusing

to perform a wedding ceremony, so usually in such instances we acquiesced and performed the wedding. But these issues, for the Protestants, were mostly procedural and rarely theological in nature. I think, however, the Roman Catholic priests had it best, since as with their liturgy (e.g., only a Roman Catholic priest can preside over the Roman mass), so with Roman Catholic marriages. Only a Roman Catholic priest can marry a couple, and both man and woman must be Catholic or a catechumen. This simplified things for the priests. For the Protestants, it was not always so simple, and even more so today. But these are the challenges we face when we get out of our own religious boxes and strive to serve “all of the above” in the name of Jesus.

In retrospect, the only thing I did of a sacerdotal nature as a chaplain in the Air Force that I later questioned happened at Barksdale AFB. While on call for emergencies, I received a request to come to the base hospital late one night. A young couple, who were Roman Catholic, had lost their small infant who had been stillborn. They wanted a chaplain to baptize (i.e., christen or sprinkle) the child. I probably should have called one of the priests to come and assist, but I decided to honor their request. They might have been in the process of making arrangements for a funeral or memorial, and they didn’t need to wait for someone else to come to the hospital late that evening, but I don’t remember. I prayed with the couple, and I prayed for the child. I held him in my arms, I said a few words about children and their innocence, and I sprinkled water on the head of the baby in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Later on, Father Boyle, our Installation Staff Chaplain, told me that what I did was not necessary, even in Roman Catholic thinking, since the child already was deceased. But I wanted deeply to provide comfort for the couple, since they were struggling with the loss of their child, something I knew intimately because Rhonda and my firstborn, Nathan Daniel, had been stillborn. On the one hand, I still wonder if I did the right thing. On the other hand, there was no harm done to give the family comfort, because the child himself was pure and sinless.

19. See Geneva Conventions and Commentaries, International Committee of the Red Cross (Geneva, Switzerland: ICRC, n.d.), at: [www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions](http://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions) (accessed 1-1-18). See too Stefan Lunze, *The Protection of Religious Personnel in Armed Conflict*, Adnotationes in *Ius Canonicum* 32, edited by Elmar Guethoff and Karl-Heinz Seige (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2004).

20. The issue concerning the chaplain’s noncombatant status is an acute one. The Roman Catholic Church has been unwavering in its position concerning noncombatant status for its chaplains and considers any compromise or noncompliance with the noncombatant stance a serious offense. After the “Pastoral Letter on War and Peace by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops” (May 3, 1983) entitled “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response” [see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2018), at: [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/nuclear-weapons/](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/nuclear-weapons/) (accessed 1-6-18)], a pastoral that took a strong stance against use of and the buildup and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, many priests in the military had an aversion to being assigned responsibility for organizational units that had a primary nuclear mission. In the Air Force, this would be missile wings, munitions squadrons, and units that flew aircraft with a nuclear mission (the B-52 Stratofortress, the B-1 Lancer, the B-2 Spirit “Stealth”). It was a lively issue, at least among Roman Catholics and some Protestants, and much debated. But, give me a break here, as we often joked cynically, the mission of the Air Force is “to kill people and break things.” That was the bottom line, and any nuances on the “how” to get to the ultimate goal were simply

that—nuances or subtleties. But, cynicism aside, the issue of being a noncombatant in a combatant organization like the military has difficulties, contradictions, and impossibilities. In my view, without a strong statement from the endorsing body that details conduct, each chaplain must work out on a personal level his/her compliance with the noncombatant instruction. And chaplains must not be judgmental of other chaplains on this.

One matter is whether or not chaplains should be allowed to carry a weapon (i.e., handgun), like medical personnel who are also noncombatants, for defensive purposes. Nowadays, the Air Force guideline seems to be “cut and dried” with no grey area, since “chaplains do not bear or transport arms or ammunition” (*AFI 52-104, Section 3.11*). Such was not the case, I believe, in the older Regulations. Of course, the phrase “bear arms” could be construed or interpreted in different ways. But my approach to this issue was defined for me by Colonel Lawrence (“Larry”) Santorini, the commander of the 112<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Group of the PAANG. As reservists are wont to do training during weekend drills, and as weapons training (i.e., qualification on the M-16 rifle) is mandatory for all personnel, the question arose one weekend about whether or not the unit’s chaplains should go to the range and see if they could qualify. I do not remember who asked the question, or if the issue was put to us. But I do recall clearly that Colonel Santorini suggested to Father Mitolo and myself that, “When the unit goes to war, and we are overrun by the enemy, they (i.e., the godless Soviets) will come first for you, Chaplain. So it would be good for you to have some experience with a firearm to defend yourself.” I don’t remember if these were Colonel Santorini’s exact words, but it’s certainly the gist of his comments. So enough said; we went to the range to shoot.

And shoot we did, since both Father Mitolo and myself were awarded the “Expert Marksmanship Ribbon/Rifle” for scoring over ninety percent of hits on target. Father Mitolo scored a bit higher than I did, so after that Catholic members of the unit chided me, “Now we know whose side God is really on!” This was the approach of the ANG, at least our unit, to the issue of the chaplain and noncombatant status. But, in retrospect, I think the unit knew the incongruity, and maybe the negative implications of this approach, at least in an official sense. My “Expert Marksmanship Ribbon/Rifle” was not noted on my Report of Separation and Record of Service (NGB Form 22) from the unit. The award had to “catch up” with me at Barksdale AFB and is noted duly on my Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form 214). This slowdown could have been intentional or an oversight or simply the lag in time between achieving the award and its formal recognition. At any rate, I have formal documents for all my “decorations, medals, badges, citations and campaign ribbons awarded or authorized” except one—the “Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon/Rifle.”

Another situation, involving noncombatant status, that I had to deal with occurred after I returned to CONUS (Continental United States) from my three-year assignment in Germany. After my arrival at Ellsworth AFB in South Dakota in Summer 1994, I was told that I would be the “project officer” for ACC’s (Air Combat Command’s) “Combat Ministry Course” to be hosted by the chapel staff at Ellsworth the following year. When initially told this, I thought they said I would be project officer for the “Comeback Ministry Course,” something I never had heard of but thought it was like the “Homecoming” event we did at Barksdale AFB (that is, a Sunday program of Chaplain Tyler’s initiative during which we held a combined Protestant worship and a big potluck meal afterward with lots of games and fun stuff for kids and adults alike). Of course, I had to be corrected, since it was not “Comeback Ministry” but “Combat Ministry.”

The Combat Ministry Course was an ambitious attempt by Air Combat Command’s Chapel Staff to put its chaplains on a better readiness-for-wartime footing. It involved development and

implementation of combat scenarios on the local installation to train and test the ability of chapel teams—chaplain personnel and their assistants (CMPs)—to do “combat ministry” in a hostile environment. I had done this already many times over in the PAANG, at Barksdale AFB, and at Sembach AB simply by being involved and active during regular ORIs (Operational Readiness Inspections) of the gaining organization or one of its subordinate units. Colonel Santorini’s remarks on my last Officer Effectiveness Report (OER), for 7 June 1986 thru 31 March 1987, from the Pittsburgh ANG unit are appropriate here. He wrote, “During the unit’s last ORI, Chaplain Fletcher, rather than stay in a safe area, spent the full six days of the grueling exercise fully dressed out in chemical warfare gear on the field of play, talking and working with the people; this had a definite impact on the high state of morale maintained throughout the week.” So I knew how to do “combat ministry,” but I didn’t understand why it was necessary for chaplains, who were noncombatants, to be “planning, developing, organizing, and orchestrating combat scenarios” (from my “Statement Concerning Request for Voluntary Separation,” unpublished, undated, not submitted). Besides, from my perspective, the Course was lacking structure. I had three different course schedules in my files, and the Chapel Staff at ACC HQ had not given us definitive information about the Course. It seemed to be a local Course with diversity that depended on its location, but with the blessing of ACC’s Chapel Staff and their taking the credit. This made the prospect of being project officer for such a massive undertaking at Ellsworth AFB very distressing to me.

But our Senior Chaplain at Ellsworth, David Cornthwaite, who was a Christian Science minister, was not to be deterred. So we pressed on with the planning. Chaplain Cornthwaite was likeable and congenial. He had a great amount of energy, and he loved his work as a chaplain. He was a people person and always treated the chapel staff, the parishioners, and other base personnel with courtesy and respect. I never knew him to be angry or upset by anything; he took the bumps as well as the blessings in stride. He was a visionary and wanted to do great things for God, but, to his discredit, he was not the best planner or organizer. I think his vision was too great to be stifled by “unnecessary” details.

A good example of this was Cornthwaite’s taking the lead on getting the Christmas tree for Freedom Chapel one year. For \$10, the Black Hills National Forest Service allowed locals to cut down, within guidelines and restrictions, white spruce, ponderosa pine, or western juniper for Christmas trees. For the task, Chaplain Cornthwaite assembled a team of workers from the Protestant Men of the Chapel who returned from the Black Hills with an extremely large tree. It took eight to ten men, if I remember correctly, to carry the tree into the chapel. The bottom of the tree had to be cut off by several feet; it scraped and damaged the ends of the pews along the middle aisle when it was brought inside; and, when set, the top of the tree pressed against the ceiling of the chapel in the altar area. It took up maybe a third of the altar area, since it measured about twenty to twenty-five feet across at the bottom. And it measured possibly thirty to thirty-five feet high. It was a beautiful tree but much too large for the chapel. Chaplain Cornthwaite, though, always the visionary, did not concern himself with picky details like that.

So we pressed on with the planning for the “Combat Ministry Course” at Ellsworth. To educate me, since I was to be the project officer, he sent me TDY in November 1994 to Alamogordo, New Mexico, to Holloman AFB, to observe the Combat Ministry Course being conducted there. [At a later date, the Course scheduled for Ellsworth was scrapped. Our senior CMP, who was a key figure in the Course’s planning and execution, was having personal problems and, I believe, some disciplinary issues. Cornthwaite and the ACC Chapel Staff felt that, given the situation, we would have difficulty making the Course happen at Ellsworth. This

was fortunate, I felt, and a great relief to me, since I had misgivings about it, and the Course was “thrown in my lap” as soon as I arrived on station from overseas.]

How does this relate to the chaplaincy and noncombatant status? During my time as an “observer” of the ten-day Course at Holloman, which I felt to be rather boring not being a participant, a request was made for volunteers to be enemy aggressors in a night raid on one of the “good guy” camps. I don’t recall if I was asked to help out, because they were short on bodies, or whether I volunteered due to boredom. But I said, “Okay; I’ll be glad to help, since I’m not really doing anything else.” This meant that for the night raid I would dress the part with civilian clothes, bandana or scarf to hide my head and face, and would carry a weapon (the M-16 rifle), and would attack the camp with the rest of the aggressors. I do remember clearly that one of the CMPs from Command at the Holloman Course was Senior Master Sergeant Neil Ferguson. “Fergy” and I had served together at Barksdale in the late 1980s. He was good to work with, and we respected each other. And I had helped him and his wife, Renee, get through a couple of rough patches while at Barksdale. When I was dressed up and ready to go, weapon in hand, with the other “bad boys” of the night, I remember Neil saying to me, “Just don’t let Father McDonough [then, the Chief of Chaplains also observing the Course] catch you doing this.” I may have told him not to worry, since it’s just a game and not real. But for Roman Catholic chaplains, the issues were more black and white. A chaplain should not carry a weapon, period. And Ferguson knew this, as a senior command CMP and a Roman Catholic himself. But, we raided the camp, I was shot and fell dead to the ground appropriately, and thus ended the night raid. I don’t know if Chaplain McDonough was told that one of his chaplains was acting as an aggressor during the Course, but I believe that such participation was not, in intent or in actuality, a violation of my status as a noncombatant. I only was playing the part for training purposes, something allowable by the “spirit” of the strictures that prohibit chaplains from being combatants in warfare. However, I do understand that many, especially the Catholic priests, would disagree and vigorously so. That’s okay, since this is the spirit of ministry among “all of the above.”

21. I often thought, and perhaps voiced sarcastically, that chaplains were perfect examples of the principle of separation of church and state.

22. I know of only one chaplain who was removed from office due to misbehavior, and that was David Breeding, the Southern Baptist minister whom I replaced at Barksdale. He was the “Senior Protestant Chaplain” at the SAC (Strategic Air Command) base, so I didn’t fill his “slot” or his gained position. But I “replaced” him, because, right after I arrived, he and his family left for an assignment in Germany. Breeding seemed to be agitated and down on serving in the Air Force. He told me, “David, you should have stayed in the reserves and not come on active duty. You would be a lot better off there.” I quickly learned that he and Father McGinty were “on edge” with each other, as that relation had soured for various reasons. But Breeding left, Tyler came, and life at Barksdale went on. No one, not even the Lord’s servant, is indispensable in the military. There’s always a backup; there’s always redundancy!

As I understood from a reliable source, Chaplain Breeding had other problems, for example, personal issues that included difficulties in his marriage. While stationed in Germany, these problems apparently mushroomed, and he was reassigned earlier than normal back to CONUS. Soon after that, he was promoted from Major to Lieutenant Colonel, convicted for spouse abuse, subsequently courtmartialled, and sent to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas to spend some time in

prison. I didn't know Chaplain Breeding very well, and I don't know what happened to him, but I guess the stresses of the military took their toll on his personal life. The gaffe for us (i.e., me and my source) as we talked about this was that the best way to get promoted in the Air Force might be to engage in conduct "unbecoming" for an officer and a gentleman. Given the state of morals in the world today, I don't know if the situation would be any better. But the risks we take in ministering to "all of the above" involve getting stretched beyond the limit and sometimes stretched beyond our personal limit for sane and decent behavior. Each individual, whether a chaplain in the military or a civilian minister in the "real" world, has to decide for himself or herself if the risks are worth the effort.

23. See Mark A. Stevens, ed., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Encyclopedia* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2000), 350, 1395, 1503.

24. Martin E. Marty, "Protestantism," *The Oxford Companion to United States History*, edited by Paul S. Boyer (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 630.

25. George M. Marsden, *Religion and American Culture* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1990), 44. On the Trinity comparison, Marsden references Robert Bellah's "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (Winter 1967): 1-21.

26. *Ibid.*

27. I took this Oath of Office two times. The first time was on 7 June 1984 when I became a Reserve Officer (First Lieutenant) in the Pennsylvania Air National Guard at Pittsburgh. First Lieutenant Alan C. Bunting, Military Personnel Management Officer for the 112<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Group, administered the oath on that occasion. Document 8. The second time was at Sembach Air Base, Germany, on 22 June 1993, when, after serving six years as a Captain, I became a Regular Officer of the Air Force. Colonel Joseph D. Ferris, the Commander of the 601<sup>st</sup> Support Wing at Sembach, invited my family to his office on base where he administered the oath on that occasion. Document 9. This was one of the few times I remember Colonel Ferris being very friendly to me and my family. He did not attend chapel services, and usually when I spoke to him at base functions or dinners, he seemed to be preoccupied with other people. Some commanders, especially those who attended chapel services, really appreciated the work of the chaplains, and they would go out of their way to express that. But others seemed to tolerate the chaplains and were reserved in expressing any appreciation. It usually was easy to tell the difference, so under those commanders who did not seem to like chaplains (at least outwardly), you would just do your work, do it well, and engage the commanding officer only when absolutely necessary.

28. Compare *AFI 52-101, Section 6*, concerning "cultural diversity" that states, "The Chaplain Service values diversity. Diversity makes us stronger, innovative, vibrant and more effective. Leadership at all echelons will demonstrate and foster respect for all."

29. I am sure that some Air Force personnel, who were avowed agnostics or atheists, objected to expressions of civic religion at government expense, but I do not remember hearing about or personally confronting such resistance. If they were there on any of the bases I was stationed at, they did not participate and kept their objections to themselves.

30. Colonel Michael W. Bartlett, Commander of the 28<sup>th</sup> Support Group at Ellsworth AFB, was the best about inviting me to his staff meetings for opening prayer and even for comments and suggestions (i.e., input) to his key personnel. In fact, he expected me to be there, and he usually wanted a “backup” if for some reason I was unable to make the weekly meeting. Colonel Bartlett and his wife were devout Christians. They attended Protestant worship on base regularly and came to my Sunday School class every week. He was always kind and supportive of what the chaplains were doing on the Air Base, and he and his staff appreciated the work we did for the personnel under his command. Document 10.

31. See Document 11. Others could be added such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Armed Forces Day, and the Fourth of July or Independence Day.

32. The commandant of the Eighth Air Force NCO Leadership School at Barksdale AFB expected the school’s chaplain to say a few words of encouragement to students of each class at the opening ceremony and also be present for formalities at the end-of-course graduation dinner.

33. One year I wrote a special poem for the 28<sup>th</sup> Communications Squadron Christmas dinner at Ellsworth AFB and read this before saying the prayer prior to the evening meal. Document 12.

34. Another civil religious ceremony that might utilize the service of the chaplain would be the traditional lighting of the base Christmas tree.

35. See comments by Diane Winston, “National Prayer Breakfast: What Does Its History Reveal?” *The Conversation*, 2017 (Boston, MA: The Conversation US, Inc., 2010-2018), at: [www.theconversation.com/national-prayer-breakfast-what-does-its-history-reveal-71978](http://www.theconversation.com/national-prayer-breakfast-what-does-its-history-reveal-71978) (accessed 1-13-18).

36. I served as Project Officer for the National Prayer Breakfast two or three times. These were labor intensive events, and a lot had to be done for planning, protocol, and logistics. Because the top echelon of personnel on the base and from the local community would attend, everything had to be just right. Attention to details was a must. After the event, chapel staff members were glad it was over, especially if all went well. At Ellsworth AFB, we decided one year to have the event in late January rather than early February and made it a Prayer Luncheon which worked pretty well. Document 13.

37. In Rapid City, South Dakota (close to Ellsworth AFB), the Reform Judaism Synagogue of the Hills invited members of the chapel staff to their annual Passover Seder. This was a good learning experience, and I recall how difficult it was to eat “bitter herbs” (i.e., horseradish sauce) and my shedding of tears (i.e., because of the “heat”), a proper symbolic lesson for the occasion.

38. David W Fletcher, “Statement Concerning Request for Voluntary Separation [from the Air Force]” (unpublished, undated, not submitted).

39. I observed in my “Statement” that “as a result, minority faith chaplains who do not have clearly defined boundaries for the practice of their ministry are not free to develop what could be quite helpful ministries which utilize what is particular to their religious experience. In other words, the trend to standardize military faith groups according to traditional categories causes the

whole to suffer through a generalization of Christian expression which fails to draw from the beautifully rich and diverse traditions offered especially by minority faiths. Unfortunately, this trend discourages minority faith chaplains from developing ministries which could be of great value to military communities.” Ibid.

40. Father Roy Lee, a charismatic Roman Catholic priest, served at Ellsworth AFB while I was stationed there. His style of mass definitely differed from that of other priests of the Latin rite.

41. Since I really did not “fit in with” or “gravitate to” any of the broadly defined models for worship in the Air Force chapel, I usually told the Senior Protestant Chaplain that I would be okay with conducting the earlier, liturgical service, since it was the one that celebrated weekly communion. Of course, I could not lead or offer a true liturgical worship like a “high church” minister could, but by trying I learned a lot about the Christian calendar and liturgical worship. Document 14.

Colonel William M. Frasier III, who was the 28<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Commander at Ellsworth AFB, and his family attended the early Protestant “liturgical” service that I conducted during my last year or so there. The Frasier family were members of the Church of Christ, so Rhonda and I would see them on Sunday evenings when we visited the local church in Rapid City. It was good to have him in the chapel setting on a regular basis and to have his support, even though that was something he did not have to do.

42. *AFI 52-101, Section 3.2.1* on “Religious Holy Days” notes, “Chaplains perform or provide Holy Day observances and advise commanders, first sergeants, and other military and civilian leaders regarding these observances.”

43. No one volunteered to be “Jesus” for the Living Last Supper held on Maundy Thursday at Ellsworth AFB one year, so I was recruited for that part by some Protestant Men of the Chapel. Document 15.

44. Add to these a variety of celebrations for special days on the “secular” calendar such as New Years Eve (the Watchnight Service), Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and Halloween (the Hallelujah Party or Wee Harvest Festival). Document 16.

45. *AFI 52-101, Section 2.5* states, “Wing chaplains (or chaplains-in-charge), working with their staffs and advisory groups, establish and support organizations to enhance the Chaplain Service mission. These organizations are a part of the Chaplain Service program. They are not private organizations and do not require charters.” The Roman Catholics also had their chapel groups, their catechism or religious instruction, and their designated offerings, but these fell under the guidance of the Catholic priests and could hardly be called ecumenical, since personnel involved in these ministries were Roman Catholic.

46. Non-appropriated funds can come from several sources, but in the chapel they are mostly the freewill offerings from Protestant congregations on Sundays and other times when an offering may be collected. Appropriated funds come from command, that is, appropriated annually by Congress for each installation, and these monies support the “direct mission requirements” of the Air Force (see *AFI 52-105, Section 3*).

47. Although recipients of the chapel's designated offerings vary by base, the following are examples of recognized non-profit, charitable organizations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts of America, Campus Crusade for Christ, The Daily Bread, Family Support Center, Focus on the Family, The Gideons, Guideposts, Habitat for Humanity, Navigators, Operation Warmheart, The Salvation Army, Wycliffe Bible Translators, The Upper Room, World Vision.

48. The most recent reporting system for "Chaplain Corps functional activities and strategic priorities" such as "unit engagement, pastoral and crisis intervention counseling, and religious and spiritual accommodation" is the Air Force Chaplain Corps Activity Reporting System (AFCCARS). This, notes *AFI 52-101, Chaplain, Planning and Organizing, 5 December 2013, Section 8*, is "an individual responsibility and cannot be delegated or reassigned to anyone other than the member completing or sponsoring the activity."

49. For lists of operational and support organizations at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, go to the Barksdale Air Force Base, Official United States Air Force Website (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, n.d.), at: [www.barksdale.af.mil/About/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/320171/phone-directory-and-hours/](http://www.barksdale.af.mil/About/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/320171/phone-directory-and-hours/) (accessed 1-18-18).

50. On any given day, the chaplain can visit a variety of workplaces and see what is happening on the Air Base. In fact, he/she is expected to do so. Unlike most personnel who go to the same duty station day after day and see only what their section of the organization is doing, the chaplain gets a good feel for what makes the Air Base work by witnessing, up close and personal, a broad cross section of the base's activities and operations. I often have reflected on this by way of comparison with civilian ministry, and there is no comparison. In visiting all types of work centers as a chaplain officer, while it might have been asked why the chaplain decided to make a visit on a particular day (i.e., "what brings the chaplain to see us today?"), the appropriateness of the chaplain being visibly present in the work center never was questioned.

51. Barksdale AFB, part of Strategic Air Command (SAC) in the late 1980s, by far had the most activity on its flight line. With both conventional and nuclear missions spearheaded by its fleet of B-52 Stratofortress Bombers, prior to the end of the Cold War in 1991 the operations area included an "alert facility" with aircraft ready to deploy at a moment's notice. The pace of activity on the flight line could be brutal, especially during war exercises and support of real world contingencies. I spent many hours on the flight line and in the hangars, day and night in all kinds of weather, to talk with young airmen who worked on the planes, sergeants who managed them, and at times commanders who coordinated it all. They perhaps had the toughest jobs on the whole installation. I had the most fun on the flight line with Chaplain Eddie Jaspers. Eddie was a Baptist minister and was easygoing and jovial all the time. We complimented each other and enjoyed working together. I do remember, though, that the coldest I have ever felt in my life was at Barksdale AFB during winters on the flight line. With temperatures in the mid to upper thirties and humidity at one hundred percent, the cold, damp northwest Louisiana air could cut right through you and chill you to the bone. Conversely, the heat and humidity during summer months could be sweltering.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the heavily guarded alert facility was shut down. It was eerie to walk the north end of the flight line and see wide open gates, no aircraft, and no personnel. When in use, the alert facility had B-52s and KC-10s parked in its fenced-in area.

Crews ate and slept there to be available to launch aircraft at a moment's notice. And security police guarded the area. After it shut down, there was nothing, nobody, just empty facilities, an empty ramp, and open gates to the fenced in area.

Father Ed McGinty, and most of the wing's commanders, appreciated the work I did on the flight line. He noted on my OER (Officer Effectiveness Report), for the period 1 October 1987 thru 31 March 1988, "Indicative of [Chaplain Fletcher's] teamwork is the fact that he volunteers for the difficult jobs like the midnight shift on the mobility line, night visitation to the flight line, dining halls and dormitories. Late night duty calls, funeral services, a recent aircraft accident, and his involvement in counseling the victims and survivors of these calamities, attest to his caring and sensitive attitude."

The aircraft accident referred to by Father Ed was the explosion of a McDonnell Douglas KC-10 Extender, an aerial refueling tanker, on Barksdale's ramp while it was getting turnaround maintenance after a mission [John Andrew Prime, "Our History: Pride, Sadness with KC-10s at BAFB," March 19, 2015, Shreveport Times (Shreveport, LA: USA Today Network, 2018), at: [www.shreveporttimes.com/story/news/local/2015/03/19/history-pride-sadness-kc-bafb/25029693/](http://www.shreveporttimes.com/story/news/local/2015/03/19/history-pride-sadness-kc-bafb/25029693/) (accessed 1-18-18)]. It was Thursday, September 17, 1987, about 5:40 PM. As the duty day ran from 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM, most of the civilian and military personnel on the base had cleared out, but I, as usual, was still in my office at Chapel Two trying to wrap up a few more things before heading home. I remember hearing a distinct and loud "whump" sound from the flight line area and thinking "that doesn't sound right." When I looked out my office door toward the flight line, I saw a cloud of dark smoke rising above the trees. I happened to be the on-call or duty chaplain (i.e., for crises and emergencies) that week, so I called Father McGinty who did not answer. Then I called Chaplain Neil Brown, our United Methodist minister, who was the Strategic Hospital Chaplain. I indicated to him what I heard and saw, that I was going to the flight line, and suggested that he might want to go the hospital, just in case. As I made my way to the flight line, I heard one or two more "whumps" which were subsequent explosions.

My hunch was right, unfortunately so, as the tanker had exploded with 63,000 pounds of fuel still on board. An electrical malfunction, a loose wire, had ignited the fuel that destroyed the aircraft. Three airmen were on the plane when it ignited sending a ball of smoke down the fuselage. Two escaped, but one, Sergeant Joseph Burgio with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, suffocated from smoke inhalation and did not survive. As Prime notes in his article, "It could have been much worse. Just two hours before, the plane had arrived with seventeen people on board. The explosion destroyed the entire center section of the airplane, leaving only the tail intact and severing and dropping the cockpit to the ramp." On the side opposite the hangars along the flight line, the plane looked like a skeleton with its exterior metal plating completely burnt away. But through a quick response, chapel personnel were able to help out and be of assistance to those who put out the fires and any who had medical needs.

Document 17.

52. For guidance on current procedures for deployments in the Air Force, see *AFI 36-3802, Personnel Readiness Operations*, 23 February 2009. As policies and procedures constantly are evolving, mobility processes today are not the same as they were in the 1980s and 1990s. Back then it seemed that we never "played the [war]game" exactly like it happened when people were deployed. Unlike the Army's approach of packing up the entire battalion to deploy as a package, the Air Force would send out smaller "packages" or segments of a unit, or even a few individuals, to the deployed location. Chaplains rarely were sent out in teams or with the units

they drilled with on the Air Base. In a memo to my last Senior Chaplain at Ellsworth AFB, James (“Jim”) Patrick, a United Methodist minister, I voiced this critique based on my readiness experience and argued for a model more like that used by the Army. Document 18.

53. I tried to have our chapel mobility box stocked with lots of Bibles, New Testaments, and scripture portions published by the American or International Bible Society. Gideon Bibles and New Testaments were favorites of the troops as were “Guideposts” and the devotional booklets “Our Daily Bread” and “The Upper Room.” Catholic priests wanted the mobility box stocked with artifacts like crosses, prayer beads, and other aids for meditation, as they were popular too. *AFI 52-101, Section 4.4* notes that “Wing/Base/Installation chaplains, in consultation with their staffs, approve the display and distribution of religious literature to inform and educate the base population. Literature will not denigrate any religious group.”

54. During mobility exercises, internal or external (i.e., Inspector General team) monitors would have someone pretend to be a conscientious objector (CO) to test the chaplain’s evaluation and response to that. More often than not, the military member did not know what was necessary to be considered a legitimate CO, and we were able to counsel the member quickly and get him/her back to the mobility processing line so it would not bog down, which was never good. And, during mobility processing, whether for drill purposes or for real, it was not unusual for Roman Catholics to ask for a priest for confessionals. See *AFI 36-3204, Personnel, Procedures for Applying as A Conscientious Objector, 6 April 2017*; James F. Childress, “Conscientious Objection,” *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, edited by James F. Childress and John Macquarrie (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 118-120.

55. Although I did not enjoy working the 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM shift, which I often got, it did allow me to talk to a lot of people one-on-one and get to know them better, especially those who were manning their stations on the mobility processing line. But I hated struggling to stay awake at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning.

56. I was mobility officer at every base where I served. My work as a reservist in Pittsburgh prepared me well for “industrial ministry” and readiness/mobility issues. On my AF Form 3849, PME/AFIT/RTFB/Officer Worksheet (dated 25 September 1996), a “wish list” for input about future assignments, my Member’s Comments overviewed ten years of work as a specialist in readiness and deployment. Document 19. But after being selected “Superior Performer” in Ellsworth’s 1995 Quality Air Force Assessment and “Superior Performer” in the bomb wing’s 1996 Operational Readiness Inspection “for exceptional training of the chapel section in readiness and mobility,” I was not promoted to Major and had to separate from the Air Force. Jim Patrick, our Senior Chaplain at Ellsworth AFB during my last months as a chaplain, was thoughtful enough to submit paperwork for the Meritorious Service Medal. I was awarded the MSM on 28 January 1998 three days before my “career” ended. The citation to accompany the MSM noted my two “Superior Performer” achievements and highlighted efforts I made to push our chapel team to excel in the areas of readiness and combat ministry. Document 20. It read, “[Chaplain Fletcher’s] outstanding contributions resulted in Ellsworth being the only chapel section in Air Combat Command to receive an ‘Outstanding’ rating in all five areas inspected during the operational readiness inspection.” Later, I appealed for approval of a Special Selection Board hoping to get my “non-promotion” overturned but to no avail.

57. At Barksdale AFB, I deployed with personnel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Wing to Clinton Sherman Airpark, Oklahoma, for “Bull Rider” (28 July - 15 August 1988), to RAF Fairford, England, for “Mighty Warrior” (6 - 26 September 1989), and to Roswell International Airport Center, New Mexico, for “Mighty Force” (3 - 19 January 1990). During these exercises, the wing was testing the adequacy of War Readiness Spare Kits (WRSK) for ten to fourteen days of sorties flown by the B-52s from a forward deployed location. This was done in conjunction with the expected conversion of the heavy bombers to a conventional, rather than a nuclear, mission. In the late 1980s, signs of a Soviet collapse and end of Cold War nuclear parity increased month by month, so mission planners in the Air Force began to emphasize this shift in strategy.

Toward the end of my assignment at Barksdale AFB, I was sent to the 609<sup>th</sup> Contingency Hospital at Zweibruecken AB in Germany during Desert Shield/Storm (18 January - 12 March 1991). Twelve chaplains and seven chapel managers from fifteen SAC (Strategic Air Command) bases in CONUS were deployed to the hospital. Faith groups of chaplain personnel included American Baptist, Church of Christ, Independent Baptist, Latter Day Saint, Methodist, National Baptist, Pentecostal Holiness, Progressive Baptist, Roman Catholic, and Southern Baptist. The chapel staff came together well as a team for religious support of the 500-bed hospital. The hospital never fully activated, although at any given time there were about eighty Army soldiers being treated in the facility, mostly for minor injuries and for sickness. In early March 1991, fifteen casualties of the Dhahran SCUD missile attack on a barracks of reservists were brought to Germany for care and recovery and were seen by chaplains at the hospital. Overall, chaplains provided ministry of presence to medical staff, visits to patients on a daily basis, counseling to patients and staff as needed or as requested, free religious items and literature, daily morning devotionals, evening Bible studies, and Sabbath/Sunday worship services. Due to limited casualties, the chapel section of the hospital was overmanned, but all were thankful for the lack of critical, essential work.

I do remember talking to one young man who was serving in the Army. During mobility processing, all members were tested for HIV/AIDS. Because troops were deployed so quickly, command sections did not know the results of the test until they were in the Persian Gulf. Commanders did not show much sympathy to soldiers who had to be sent “to the rear” because of a positive test for HIV/AIDS. But embarrassment in front of fellow soldiers was the least of worries for someone so afflicted. When I got to the hospital room of this young man, a nurse, who had on a mask, handed me a mask to put on which I refused, since this would limit my ability to talk to him in a personal way. He had some of the classic symptoms of the disease, and he appreciated the visit. His main concern was how to tell his partner back in the United States that he had HIV/AIDS. I had no “strategy” or expertise to help him with this, but I listened and asked if he wanted to have prayer. Maybe just listening to him talk about the issue gave him some comfort.

Soon after I returned home from this deployment, I had orders for reassignment to Sembach AB in Germany, not far from Zweibruecken. My family and I arrived on station in August 1991, and I began site visits to various units attached to the 601<sup>st</sup> Support Wing at Sembach. After the end of the first Gulf War, Sembach phased out its flying operations in 1991 and 1992, but the base remained home to the largest support wing in USAFE (United States Air Force Europe), the 17<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters, and two NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) operations centers with a total of about 5,000 personnel assigned to the base, including dependents and civilian workers. There were also 34 geographically separated units (GSUs) under the 601<sup>st</sup> Support Wing. This meant that ministry of presence “in the field” was an absolute necessity.

In addition to chapel or home base duties (e.g., custodian of Protestant chaplain funds, adviser for Protestant religious education and the Protestant Youth of the Chapel, “pastor” for the Liturgical or Traditional worship service, chapel team leader for Total Quality Management, chapel representative for Department of Defense schools, the Health Care Advisory Council, and for base newcomer orientations), I served as primary chaplain to the 601<sup>st</sup> Maintenance Squadron, the 601<sup>st</sup> Support Wing Clinic, the 601<sup>st</sup> Operations Group, the 6914<sup>th</sup> Electronic Security Squadron, and, during my last year in Germany, the 50<sup>th</sup> Munitions Maintenance Squadron at Morbach and the 7502<sup>nd</sup> Munitions Support Squadron at Norvenich. Ministry to so many units made life hectic at times, since it was a challenge to balance work on base with the need to travel and visit the different sites.

I made visits monthly to units of the 601<sup>st</sup> Operations Group when they were in the field and conducting exercises to test mission capabilities. Tactical Control Squadrons (TCS) attached to the Group used mobile radar systems at forward deployed locations to provide overall air control that assisted pilots of aircraft in offensive missions against ground targets, defensive missions for air-to-air intercepts, and (when these ground measures were becoming more and more obsolete) interfacing with and augmenting the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft. Work for personnel in these squadrons was labor intensive when under the pressures of potential or actual threats, and the units hardly were staffed for adequate security or other types of support. Many unit members became multitaskers by necessity and did a great job in spite of difficulties.

I tried my best to get to each TCS on a monthly basis and give what support I could in the short time I spent on site. I visited the 601<sup>st</sup> TCS at Baumholder Kaserne and at Fort Opond in Hanau, the 603<sup>rd</sup> TCS at Baumholder Kaserne and in Bovbjerg, Denmark, and the 606<sup>th</sup> TCS at Von Goeben Kaserne in Stade and at Grena (Fornaes), Denmark. Each deployment involved war games in field conditions. Some were brutal experiences, for example, January 1992 at Stade just west of Hamburg, since it was bitterly cold. Others were very pleasant and enjoyable, for example, the two trips to Denmark. All in all, the presence of the chaplain, if but for a few days each time, was appreciated very much. Father Montecalvo commented in the rater’s remarks on my Company Grade Officer Performance Report (OPR), for 1 April 1991 thru 31 March 1992, “The 603<sup>rd</sup> [TCS] Commander said, ‘Chaplain Fletcher is the first chaplain I know who deploys with troops and that’s exceptional.’”

Toward the end of 1992, after the end of the Cold War and the successful conclusion of the first Gulf War, USAFE was in drawdown mode with a major reduction of bases and personnel across Europe, especially Germany. Units of the 601<sup>st</sup> Operations Group went away, but other units that were attached to bases scheduled for closing were reassigned, for support functions, to the 601<sup>st</sup> Support Wing at Sembach. From January 1993 to April 1994, I had responsibility for two of the eight munitions support squadrons that had been realigned. Near Morbach, about a forty minute drive from Sembach, was a conventional weapons storage area with its own bomb renovation facility, one of only four in the Air Force at that time. This facility was operated and maintained by the 50<sup>th</sup> MMS (T). On my first visit to Morbach, the unit commander, Lieutenant Colonel Sam Henson, gave me the safety briefing. He greeted me, briefly described their mission, and pointed out that conventional weapons were a lot more volatile than nuclear weapons. He added, “So, chaplain, if anything happens, such as a fire or an explosion, you see that gate there [i.e., the entrance for the containment area], point yourself in that direction and run like hell.” That was the most memorable safety briefing I ever received.

The other squadron, the 7502<sup>nd</sup> MUNSS, was located on a German Fliegerhorst about twenty-five miles west of Cologne at Norvenich. As part of NATO’s nuclear parity with the

Soviets, unit members maintained and kept close watch of the armaments under their care in WS3s (Weapons Security and Storage Systems) on the German Air Base. [For a brief overview of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, see Hans M. Kristensen, “United States Removes Nuclear Weapons from German Base, Documents Indicate,” July 2007, FAS: Federation of American Scientists (Washington, DC: FAS, 2018), at: [www.fas.org/blogs/security/2007/07/united\\_states\\_removes\\_nuclear/](http://www.fas.org/blogs/security/2007/07/united_states_removes_nuclear/) (accessed 1-23-18)]. To visit personnel on duty in the bunkers, I had to stop and be checked (i.e., okayed or searched) at three secure points. Any breach of this protocol would have set off alarms immediately. And these checkpoints were in addition to the one I had to come through to get on the German Air Base. Unit members generally were glad to see someone from “the outside world” but seemed preoccupied with work and not able to take much timeout for the chaplain. Because support facilities for visitors at Norvenich were limited, I usually would stay at a local Gasthaus in nearby Sindorf, a nice treat instead of the usual tent and cot arrangement. These visits to munitions squadrons were conducted on a monthly basis and came to an end when my family and I were reassigned to CONUS in Summer 1994.

At Ellsworth AFB in South Dakota, I stayed active with mobility work but mostly on the Air Base itself. The 44<sup>th</sup> Missile Wing, activated at Ellsworth in 1962, had been inactivated on 4 July 1994 just before we arrived the following month. The wing had responsibility to protect, maintain, and launch (if necessary) its LGM-30 Minuteman missiles, solid-fuel ICBMs or intercontinental ballistic missiles, that were housed in 150 silos spread out across the central part of the state to eastern Wyoming. Had the Missile Wing remained active, I would have visited 44<sup>th</sup> MW personnel at their alert and launch facilities. But because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and treaty obligations under START I, the 44<sup>th</sup> MW had completed its mission and was deactivated. With others from Ellsworth, I did get to witness destruction, or implosion, of the last missile silo attached to the 44<sup>th</sup> MW near Powell, Wyoming in early July 1995. [See Hrair H. Palyan, “Silent Sentinels: 44<sup>th</sup> Missile Wing,” Ellsworth Air Force Base, April 2012 (Washington, DC: Official USAF Website, 2018), at: [www.ellsworth.af.mil/News/Features/Display/Article/217595/silent-sentinels-44th-missile-wing/](http://www.ellsworth.af.mil/News/Features/Display/Article/217595/silent-sentinels-44th-missile-wing/) (accessed 1-23-18); also Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, South Dakota, National Park Service (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2018) at: [www.nps.gov/mimi/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/mimi/index.htm) (accessed 1-23-18)].

My longest deployment from Ellsworth AFB came when Chaplain Cornthwaite sent me to Guantanamo Bay Naval Air Station (NAS) in Cuba to support Operation Sea Signal and provide ministry of presence to our Air Force personnel there. I was attached to AFFOR HQ, JTF 160 (Air Force Forces Headquarters, Joint Task Force 160) and served as a liaison for chaplains who ministered to personnel of other forces. I was at Guantanamo Bay from August 21 to November 11 of 1995. Operation Sea Signal, August 1994 to February 1996, was a humanitarian response by the United States to assist 50,000 Cuban and Haitian refugees who sought political asylum in the United States. They were brought by boat and over land to Guantanamo Bay, cared for in camps on the installation, and most either repatriated (i.e., the Haitians) or allowed to enter the United States (i.e., the Cubans). The migrants were separated into different camps by nationality, gender, age, and marital status. They were housed in tents, given military and eventually chow-hall-type rations to eat, and supported with activities from different helping agencies.

Chaplains of all military branches were sent to support Operation Sea Signal or JTF 160. Most worked among the migrants in the camps, but all the Forces, that is, Air Force, Army, Marines, and Navy, sent chaplains to minister to troops as well. My job as the Air Force Forces (AFFOR) chaplain was to “coordinate all religious ministries for deployed U.S. Forces including worship, religious education, counseling, and spiritual renewal events” and to act as “liaison

between chaplains working with U.S. Forces and the JTF Chaplain and those chaplains working with migrants.” This tasking had evolved in its description over the course of Operation Sea Signal. Primarily, I functioned as a “rover” to visit and check on the welfare of Air Force personnel, I acted as “coordinator” for the Army, Marine, or Navy chaplains who were serving their people, and I worked as “liaison” between Forces chaplains and JTF chaplains who ministered to the migrants in the camps. This meant that I was on the go most of the time between Air Force billets and work stations, troop billets/camps (i.e., SS Britanis, Camp Bulkeley, Camp Phillips), the Guantanamo Bay chapels (i.e., “Christian Lighthouse,” McCalla Chapel, NAVBASE Chapel), as well as the AFFOR HQ staff, the chaplains assigned for ARFOR (Army Forces), MARFOR (Marine Forces), and NAVFOR (Navy Forces), and the chaplains assigned for JTF 160. To assist in this mobile ministry, the AFFOR Commander provided dedicated transportation until near the end of my deployment when retrograde of assets including vehicles made them less available. Ministry in the Joint Task Force environment—challenging, complex, and demanding—involved every facet of chaplain ministry in its administrative and sacerdotal functions. See my AF Form 77, Supplemental Evaluation Sheet, 8 November 1995, that accompanied the award of the Air Force Achievement Medal. Document 21.

Each deployment as a chaplain officer had its own special nuances and meanings, but in each and every one I had opportunities to minister to persons of many different faiths or to “all of the above.” And I have memories and stories that are unique to each deployed experience. In retrospect, while I conducted counseling, Bible studies, and worship services, ministry at deployed locations was mostly about being there for the troops in case of need. I also took it all in, processed the experiences, and on two occasions provided command sections with detailed after-action reports of my work and that of others in the field. Chaplain Lee Thompson, an Assemblies of God minister and Senior Chaplain at Sembach AB after Father Carlo Montecalvo, recognized my empiricist gift for crunching data for reports. He noted on my AF Form 707B, Company Grade Officer Performance Report, for 1 April 1993 thru 31 March 1994, “Chaplain Fletcher has demonstrated a remarkable gift for distilling vast amounts of data and making it understandable for anybody. His ability to produce comprehensive ‘Status of Chaplain Funds’ reports with clarity and simplicity reveal a superior grasp of complex details. He would be most perfectly suited to serve at the Chaplain’s Resource Board where the Chaplaincy can capitalize on his gifts. He is a hard worker who deserves every opportunity to move ahead.”

But the opportunity “to move ahead” was not to be. With decrease of military forces after the first Gulf War in the mid-1990s, many Air Force personnel were separated from the military as the Air Force downsized its numbers from a high of 608,199 in 1986 (the year before I entered the Air Force) to 360,590 in 1999 (the year after I separated from the Air Force). Numbers stabilized for a few years in the early 2000s but dropped lower to a little more than 330,000 by 2006. The Air Force currently has about 318,000 personnel on active duty. But the drop in Air Force numbers between 1986 and 2016 represents roughly a 45% reduction. David Coleman rightly states, “The Army, Navy, and Air Force had significant cuts in the numbers of personnel with the end of the Cold War, while the Marine Corps numbers have stayed relatively flat.” [“U.S. Military Personnel 1954-2014,” Research: History In Pieces (Charlottesville, VA: David G. Coleman, 2016), at: [www.historyinpieces.com/research/us-military-personnel-1954-2014](http://www.historyinpieces.com/research/us-military-personnel-1954-2014) (accessed 1-24-18)]. You could say cynically that my active duty military “career,” which began on April 1, 1987, was an April Fool’s joke, or that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But perhaps it would be better to say that events in my life, though unusual and unexpected, were being guided by a caring and loving Lord.

58. *Air Force Handbook 32-4014, Volume 4, 1 March 1998*, titled “USAF Ability to Survive and Operate Procedures in a Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) Environment,” was used for NBC training. See FAS: Federation of American Scientists (Washington, DC: FAS, 2018), at: <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/usa/doctrine/usaf/afh3204914v4.pdf> (accessed 1-26-18).

59. At the three bases I served at, I worked as part of a response team for aircraft accidents. On 17 September 1987 at Barksdale AFB, I responded immediately to the KC-10 explosion and fire on the flight line and remained there for most of the evening while crews worked to contain and extinguish the fire. Chaplain Brown responded to the base hospital to assist medical staff and be available for those injured (see Endnote 51 above for more details).

On Wednesday, 22 April 1992, a F-15C fighter jet assigned to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Squadron at Bitburg AB, Germany, crashed about fifteen miles southwest of Dinkelsbuehl in Bavaria. The pilot, First Lieutenant Kirk P. Shauger, from Midland, Texas, was killed instantly. Lieutenant Shauger and another F-15C pilot from Bitburg were involved in a training mission and trying to intercept four NATO aircraft when the crash occurred. [See “Texas Native Was Killed in F-15 Crash,” *The Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 24 April 1992, *European Stars and Stripes*, Newspaper Archives (1948-1999) (Wilmington, DE: NewspaperARCHIVE.com, 2018), at: [www.newspaperarchive.com/de/hesse/darmstadt/european-stars-and-stripes/](http://www.newspaperarchive.com/de/hesse/darmstadt/european-stars-and-stripes/) (accessed 1-18-18)]. The 601<sup>st</sup> Support Wing at Sembach AB was the gaining base for search and recovery operations in the area between Nuremberg and Stuttgart where the accident occurred. About forty people were sent from Sembach to the village of Rosenberg near the crash site, including the commander of the 601<sup>st</sup> Support Group, Colonel Wanda Wood, personnel from civil engineering, communications, services, supply, the base clinic, and the chapel. All three Protestant chaplains—Joe Johnson, Reggie Cleveland, and myself—were sent to the crash site as well as Sergeant Russell (“Russ”) Gawryns, one of our chapel managers.

Chaplain Johnson, our Senior Protestant Chaplain, went right after the crash to provide ministry to those conducting recovery operations. Chaplain Cleveland and I went a few days later, 28 and 29 April, to conduct a field memorial service for our people at the site where Lieutenant Shauger crashed. It was a wooded area on farmland, and most of the aircraft and debris had been cleared away from the small crater the plane had made on impact. But there remained fragments of metal and other debris that needed to be picked up. Chaplain Cleveland and I helped the recovery team with this for a few hours. This was good ministry of presence, and it never hurts to have as many eyes as possible when doing tedious recovery and cleanup work such as this. But what no one wants to find is a body part. In my search, under some evergreen limbs that had been cut away and piled up, I saw an object that reflected the light of the sun. When I pulled back the brush and reached down to pick up the object, I knew immediately what I had found. It was one of the Lieutenant’s “dog tags” bent in the shape of an “L” but intact with no damage and with his identifying information perfectly legible. I gave the ID tag to mortuary affairs personnel, as I knew this would be an important item for his family to have.

Near Alzada in southeast Montana near the Wyoming state line, a B-1 bomber out of Ellsworth AFB crashed in a remote field on Friday, 19 September 1997. All four crew members were killed including Colonel Anthony Beat, the 28<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Vice-Commander. The aircraft was on a routine mission to the Powder River Training Complex when the accident occurred. It was practicing low-altitude bombing runs when one wing apparently dipped too low, caught the ground, and flipped the plane. “It dug a trench that was between a quarter-mile and a

half-mile long,' said Dick Wesnick, editor of the *Billings Gazette*, who flew over the crash site four hours after the crash. 'There's nothing left but debris. It was destroyed,' he said. 'There was no evidence of a wing, a tail, a cockpit. I don't know if they removed anything before we got there. There was no large, identifiable piece of an aircraft.'" [Associated Press Release, "B-1 Crashes in Montana, Killing All 4 in Crew," 20 September 1997, Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Times, 2018), at: [www.articles.latimes.com/1997/sep/20/news/mn-34206](http://www.articles.latimes.com/1997/sep/20/news/mn-34206) (accessed 1-26-18)]. Later it was determined by Air Force officials that the cause of the crash was pilot error, but it was unclear who was manning the aircraft at that time. Both pilots were seasoned airmen each having nearly 5,000 hours of flying time. The investigation board also concluded "that the crew was performing 'an authorized and often practiced defensive maneuver' whereby a crew evades a threat by slowing down and sharply turning." ["B-1 Bomber Crash Blamed on Crew," CNN Interactive, 9 December 1997 (Atlanta, GA: Cable News Network, Inc., n.d.), at: [edition.cnn.com/US/9712/09/briefs.pm/bomber.crash.report/index.html](http://edition.cnn.com/US/9712/09/briefs.pm/bomber.crash.report/index.html) (accessed 1-26-18)].

Personnel were dispatched immediately from Ellsworth for recovery efforts at the crash site which was about 100 miles northwest. I went to the crash site a day later. It was a large open field mostly flat with a few swells in the terrain. Mortuary affairs personnel already had collected and removed what human remains had been identified. I helped walk the area with others to pick up any debris we found. Most items were small and unidentifiable. Looking across the open field, I remember seeing one or two engines of the plane that had not yet been removed from the site. No on-site memorial was conducted, since funeral services at the base chapel had been planned. However, workers at the crash site stood at attention in silence in two columns alongside the entrance to the controlled area and rendered salutes in honor of the lost crew when mortuary affairs left the crash site with what human remains had been found.

60. Air Base chapels stay busy with activities both during the week and on Sabbaths and Sundays. It would be interesting to compare use of sanctuary and other space in military chapels with that of civilian churches. See David W Fletcher, "Stewardship and the Meetinghouse," *Firm Foundation* (January 1981), at: [www.davidwfletcher.com/religion-files---doctrine-and-practice.php](http://www.davidwfletcher.com/religion-files---doctrine-and-practice.php) (accessed 1-29-18).

61. Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Religious Sites in America: A Dictionary* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2000), 13.

62. *Ibid.*, 15.

63. At Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, during Joint Task Force 160 (Summer 1995), an issue about display of Christian crosses in common areas, both inside and outside the Camp Bulkeley field chapel, was resolved by removing the religious symbols except during periods of Christian worship. Documents 22, 23, and 24.

64. Some chaplains had professional certification or licensure for counseling, but others did not. In the early 1980s, as part of my Master of Divinity program at Cincinnati Christian Seminary, I took three practical theology courses in counseling: Principles of Christian Counseling, Crisis Counseling, and Marriage and Family Counseling. While case studies never have been my forte, these classes served me well as a chaplain officer in the Air Force.

My initial approach to counseling in the military was based on the Rogerian style of probing through questioning, reflection by the client, and redirection by the counselor. This seemed to fit my inclinations as an eclectic empiricist. But this style of counseling took a lot of time. Because of other pressing duties, I began using a more direct and less reflective style of counseling similar to nouthetic counseling advocated by Jay Adams but usually without the strong biblical content. My goal was to speak with counselees one or two times, hopefully no more than six sessions total, address the issues or situation, and get them “back on their feet” psychologically as soon as possible. This worked better, especially for overall time management. And if a counselee had deeper psychological problems, I could always refer to a clinic off base, to mental health on base, or possibly to another chaplain.

The most difficult counselees, I thought, were those who had issues of substance abuse, that is, alcohol addiction. Alcohol addicts were the most evasive, the most difficult to “pin down,” and the most difficult to get to take personal responsibility for their problems. At Barksdale AFB, our resident expert for counselees or patients with substance abuse issues was Father Richard (“Dick”) Pusch, a Roman Catholic priest. Father Pusch originally was from Chicago, a traditional Catholic in many ways, and a former alcoholic himself. He, by personal experience, knew all the ins and outs, the evasions and denials, the subterfuge and tactics of those who lives were controlled by alcohol. He could keep them honest and help them toward personal responsibility. Father Pusch’s office was adjacent to mine at Chapel Two, and he gladly accepted referral of anyone who had a substance abuse issue.

65. Concerning death notifications, *AFI 52-101, Section 4.2* states, “Chaplains are members of the notification team. They provide pastoral care and support for both next-of-kin and death notification team members.” At all installations, chaplains were called on to address issues of death and dying, and to conduct funerals for retirees, active duty members, and sometimes for dependents.

66. I personally believed the notion of strict, unbreakable confidence in counseling might put the chaplain in jeopardy if something said during the counseling session indicated any threat of or actual occurrence of physical harm. I told counselees up front that what we talked about would be kept in strict confidence, unless I sensed we were going into an area of discussion that indicated such harm. At which point, I would stop the counseling session and tell the counselee that I might have to make others on the Air Base (i.e., helping agencies) privy to that information. Then, the counselee(s) could decide whether or not to continue. But this happened rarely if at all. See John Macquarrie, “Confession,” and Leroy Walters, “Confidentiality,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, 111-112.

67. To assist in this ministry of counseling, I developed two booklets that were made available to personnel at newcomers briefings: “Living With Stress” and “Marriage Guide and Planner.”

68. In my files, I have about sixty formal letters that were written on behalf of counselees to address specific issues. By far, the greatest number of these letters pertain to reassignment or discharge/separation from the military. But other issues (i.e., family and marriage, personal problems) always formed the basis for these requests.

69. I still think one of the best works on ministry is Michael Green's *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970). See especially his chapters (7, 8, 9, and 10) on the evangelists and evangelistic methods, motives, and strategy (pages 166ff.).

70. *Common English Bible: Gospel Parallels*, edited by Joel B. Green and W. Gil Shin (Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2012), 246. Scripture translations in this section are from the *Common English Bible* unless noted otherwise.

In his insightful but complex and engaging assessment of *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam* (New Edition; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), F. E. Peters concludes with this summary about the Christian faith that illustrates nicely the short ending of Mark: "By his dual nature as God and man and by his redemptive death and resurrection, Jesus sanctified matter and set in train the Christian system of sacraments that replicate the Messiah's own conciliation of the domains of the spiritual and of the material. In Judaism and Islam the only bridge thrown across the great abyss between the transcendent God and his creation is revelation itself, the Word, the Book. The anomaly of Christianity for both Muslim and Jew is that the Word became flesh, not in the sense that the Torah or the Quran was expressed in human speech, but in a more radical understanding that the Word became man. Jesus was his own Scripture" (page 171).

71. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Second Edition; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 152.

72. See the whole of the excellent work by Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

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