



NORTH AMERICAN
MISSION BOARD

4200 North Point Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30022
namb.net

August 29, 2013

RE: Southern Baptist Endorsed Chaplains/Counselors in Ministry Guidelines in Response to the June 26, 2013, Supreme Court Ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

To Whom It May Concern:

In light of the June 26, 2013, Supreme Court of the United States ruling that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which states "the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife" is unconstitutional, and the resultant Department of Defense policy changes to extend benefits to same-sex domestic partners as spouses, the following guidelines clarify the ministry expectations for all military and VA chaplains endorsed by the Southern Baptist Convention:

Doctrine

All religious ministry and pastoral care conducted by military chaplains endorsed by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention will fully reflect the doctrine and practices of Southern Baptists as set forth in Holy Scripture, the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) 2000 and *The Southern Baptist Endorsement Manual for Chaplains and Counselors in Ministry*. All ministries regarding human sexuality will reflect the historic, natural and biblical view of marriage as God's lifelong gift of "the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime." (Article XVIII, BFM)

Pastoral Care

Southern Baptists believe that "all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography" (Article XV, BFM) are condemned by Holy Scripture as sin. Such practices violate God's biblical standards for sexual purity and are equally destructive to healthy marital relations and Christian social order. Responsible pastoral care will seek to offer repentance and forgiveness, help and healing, and restoration through the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ's sacrificial gift of love on the cross.

Restrictions

In harmony with Holy Scripture, NAMB endorsed chaplains will not conduct or attend a wedding ceremony for any same sex couple, bless such a union or perform counseling in support of such a union, assist or support paid contractors or volunteers leading same-sex relational events, nor offer any kind of relationship training or retreat, on or off of a military installation, that would give the appearance of accepting the homosexual lifestyle or sexual wrongdoing. This biblical prohibition remains in effect irrespective of any civil law authorizing same sex marriage or benefits to the contrary. Chaplains in violation of these restrictions will be subject to removal of their endorsement in accordance with *The Southern Baptist Endorsement Manual for Chaplains and Counselors in Ministry*, Chapter 4, Endorsement Policies and Guidelines.

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Southern Baptist chaplains are free to lead or participate in a worship service conducted on any military installation or location designated for worship. This excludes conducting a service jointly with a chaplain, contractor or volunteer who personally practices or affirms a homosexual lifestyle or such conduct.

Pluralism

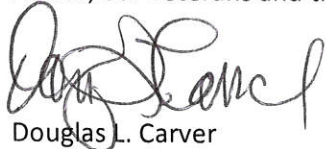
All military chaplains without exception are endorsed to ensure the free exercise of religion for all service members according to DOD 1304.28, par. 6.1.2 while serving in the pluralistic environment of the military. Every chaplain remains protected under DOD policy and applicable federal law to preach, teach and counsel in accordance with the tenets of their denominational faith group and their own religious conscience.

Therefore, endorsed Southern Baptist military chaplains will:

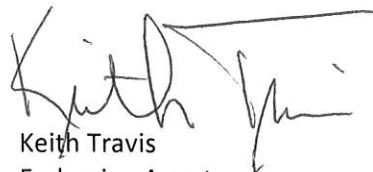
- a) Provide sound, biblical pastoral care for all service members and their families.
- b) Conduct religious support and pastoral care in accordance with the BFM 2000, the SBC/NAMB Chaplain Endorsement Manual and the guidelines contained in this document.
- c) Treat all service members regardless of rank or behavior, with Christ-centered dignity, honor and respect while assisting the institutional leadership in its religious mission requirements and responsibilities as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

If you need to discuss these guidelines and expectations further, or if you experience undue prejudice or irreparable harm as a result of following these expectations, please contact us immediately at the North American Mission Board, phone number 770-410-6367.

God bless you for all you do to minister the love of Jesus Christ to the members of the Armed Forces, our veterans and their families.



Douglas L. Carver
Executive Director of Chaplaincy Services
North American Mission Board
Southern Baptist Convention



Keith Travis
Endorsing Agent
North American Mission Board
Southern Baptist Convention