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NAVY CHAPLAINS: COOPERATION AND CONFLICT
IN A PLURALISTIC SETTING

By

John Allen Carter

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Institution

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ABSTRACT

The Navy Chaplain Corps is an extraordinary religious community with no singular, unifying statement of faith. It consists of clergy from a wide array of different religious backgrounds who bring distinctive values, goals, and religious precepts into this pluralistic military institution. Usually chaplains cooperate and work in harmony, but not always without difficulty. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the challenges chaplains face as they work with others from differing faith groups in this religiously diverse yet secular military institution.

The study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with seven senior active duty Navy chaplain corps leaders serving in the Pacific Northwest. Three research questions guided the study: (1) What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest issues with religious pluralism in the military environment? (2) What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest issues with ecumenical cooperation in this environment? (3) How have these experiences with pluralism and ecumenical cooperation in this context affected the practice of military ministry?

The research found six broad categories of issues related to religious pluralism: the First Amendment, common ground, this amazing ministry opportunity, undeniable pressure to conform, religious accommodation, and necessary boldness. Concerning

ecumenical cooperation, the research uncovered helpful insight on some of the grounds for ecumenical cooperation, types of competition and conflict, along with the sources and consequences of that conflict in the chaplain corps. With respect to the impact of these issues on ministry practice, the research exposed how chaplains themselves have been transformed, how their relationships have been affected, and how their preaching, teaching, counseling and public prayers have been influenced as a result of the religiously *diverse environment*.

The study concluded with takeaways for chaplains, prospective chaplains and non-chaplain supporters of military ministry. Whereas chaplains must learn to contextualize their ministries to the institutional environment, prospective chaplains must prepare themselves to function in this plural setting. And non-chaplain supporters must be cognizant of the unique pressures and constraints that military chaplains have.

*“And let us with caution indulge the supposition,
that morality can be maintained without religion.
Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined
education on minds of peculiar structure,
reason and experience both forbid us to expect that
national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”*

Washington’s Farewell Address,
Writings of George Washington, 35:229

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- To Him who sits on the Throne and to the Lamb (Rev 5:13): without you it's all for naught.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACLU: American Civil Liberties Union
CAPT: Captain (O-6)
CDR: Commander (O-5)
CHC: Chaplain Corps
CRP: Command Religious Program
DADT: “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy
DOD: Department of Defense
DODD: Department of Defense Directive
DODI: Department of Defense Instruction
DON: Department of the Navy
FITREP: Fitness report, a Navy performance evaluation
LCDR: Lieutenant Commander (O-4)
MCO: Marine Corps Order
MCWP: Marine Corps Warfighting Publication
MCRP: Marine Corps Reference Publication
NAVPERSCOMINST: Naval Personnel Command Instruction
NCMAF: National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces
NWP: Naval Warfare Publication
OPNAV: Chief of Naval Operations
PNC: Professional Naval Chaplaincy
PRJCCMP: Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
RADM: Rear Admiral (O-8)
RMP: Religious Ministry Professional
RMT: Religious Ministry Team
RO: Religious Organization
RP: Religious Program Specialist
SECNAV: Secretary of the Navy
SECNAVINST: Secretary of the Navy Instruction
UCMJ: Uniform Code of Military Justice
USCG: United States Coast Guard
USMC: United States Marine Corps
USN: United States Navy

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. Navy chaplains and Religious Program Specialists (RPs) accompany Marines and Sailors to assist commanders in providing for the right of free exercise of religion to all personnel.¹

This statement summarizes the “raison d’etre” for the United States Navy Chaplain Corps. The focus of ministry in the United States Sea Services is to guarantee the fundamental right of our Sailors and Marines to freely practice their religion. Service in the armed forces can, and often does, require personal sacrifices unparalleled in the civilian world. However, the United States does not require its military personnel to sacrifice their first amendment rights when they volunteer to serve.

Circumstances may force them to endure lengthy separations from home, to subject themselves to military discipline, to physical hardship, and even to personal danger. Military service may even require them to give up other rights that civilians enjoy,² but the freedom to worship according to one’s own conscience is sacrosanct. This nation was

¹ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *MCWP 6-12*, 1-1.

² The Uniform Code of Military Justice establishes policies and procedures for the military justice system. This code is far more restrictive than civilian law with respect to allowable speech, behavior and even sexual activity. US Congress, *Uniform Code of Military Justice*, art. 80-134.

founded on the principle of religious liberty³, and service in our armed forces does not require one to check his or her right to free expression of religion at the door⁴. Therefore, if military service is going to send young men and women away from home, then this nation has an obligation to respect their religious rights and accommodate them as much as possible.

Sailors and Marines often labor under circumstances that prevent them from receiving religious ministry from their preferred civilian provider. So, it is important for the Navy to send religious ministry professionals into the military environment to meet those needs. The Department of the Navy makes a good faith effort to accommodate the religious needs of its personnel through the Navy Chaplain Corps.

Navy chaplains are professionally qualified clergy of recognized faith groups that have endorsed these men and women to provide religious support to the Department of the Navy. Their ministry serves to promote the spiritual, religious, ethical, moral, corporate, and personal well-being of Marines, Sailors, family members, and other authorized persons appropriate to their rights and needs.⁵

This is specialized ministry, unlike the ministry of a typical parish minister. Therefore, it leads to extraordinary challenges unlike the trials faced by a typical civilian spiritual leader.

³ The Constitution of the United States, 1st Amendment

⁴ Office of the Secretary, *DODI 1300.17* "The U.S. Constitution proscribes Congress from enacting any law prohibiting the free exercise of religion. The Department of Defense places a high value on the rights of members of the Military Services to observe the tenets of their respective religions. It is DoD policy that requests for accommodation of religious practices should be approved by commanders when accommodation will not have an adverse impact on mission accomplishment, military readiness, unit cohesion, standards, or discipline."

⁵ *MCWP 6-12*, 1-1.

Civilian ministers typically do not minister regularly side by side with other clergy from radically different backgrounds. Military chaplains do, and this can complicate the delivery of religious ministry in marked ways. Chaplains conduct ministry in settings that are radically different from the local parish. In addition, the delivery of ministry can change in subtle ways. Since they labor in an institutional environment, chaplains must be sensitive to the pluralistic and secular surroundings in which they find themselves. There is usually less preaching, more counseling, and many nonreligious collateral duties. The congregants differ from what one might expect in a civilian parish, with singles and young families as the majority. The order and discipline of naval chaplaincy also differs. In many respects, the institution measures success differently than the church. These differences between military and civilian ministry make the challenges faced by military chaplains unique.

In the next few pages, ministry in the Navy Chaplain Corps will be contrasted with the civilian pastorate. This will help the reader to understand the challenges that chaplains face when dealing with pluralism and ecumenical cooperation.

First, consider the chaplains themselves. An extraordinarily diverse group of men and women endorsed by over two hundred different religious bodies⁶ make up the modern chaplain corps. This includes Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox priests, along with

⁶ CAPT Jack Lea, CHC, USN, "Professional Naval Chaplaincy."

protestant ministers of almost every stripe. The corps consists of rabbis and imams, too, with a few other religious leaders who do not fit any of these generalizations. In fact, the differences in belief and practices are intense. Yet these religious leaders are all called to a sacred mission of bringing hope, a sense of the divine, and pastoral ministry to the personnel of the sea services and their families. As Rear Admiral Tidd, the current Chief of Navy Chaplains, notes in a recent letter to the Corps:

We strengthen individual and family resiliency and readiness by taking care of our people in combat, afloat, and ashore so that they are able to carry out their mission. Everything we do supports this. This is why we exist. We challenge them to be better at what they do every day. Above all else, we bring hope.⁷

As professional military officers, chaplains work together under the instruction, discipline and guidance of the naval service. They ensure that the Navy provides for the religious needs and rights of Sailors and Marines to worship freely. This brings chaplains together in partnership in ways that are unparalleled outside the military community. At any major installation, it is typical to see Protestants and Roman Catholics working harmoniously together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Similarly, evangelicals and mainline Protestants might be found working side by side with chaplains who represent nontraditional or heterodox religious organizations. It is not unusual for the Navy to assign

⁷ RADM Mark L. Tidd, CHC, USN, "Chief of Chaplains' Guidance for 2011."

chaplains from denominations with exclusively male clergy to staffs with female chaplains on board. With the repeal of the Department of Defense's (DOD) long-standing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy,⁸ it is just a matter of time before homosexual clergy join the Chaplain Corps. This will further complicate relations among chaplains. The theological differences among Navy chaplains are indeed profound. Yet despite the strong theological differences, chaplains typically find a way to work together harmoniously for the sake of the greater good.

Of course, large differences in belief make for equally large differences in practice. This is something that civilian clergy don't face on a similar scale. In a Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, or Pentecostal church, there is a common Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, or Pentecostal worldview which informs ministry practice. Denominations are homogeneous, and that makes them distinct. They share theological common ground and standards of practice, and this harmony serves as the glue in their ecclesiastical community. However, Navy chaplains do not share a common theology, and they don't share a common way of delivering religious ministry. Even areas where chaplains might agree to some extent on theology, they often differ in practice. So the chaplain corps reflects the same diversity of

⁸ On 22 December, 2010, President Obama signed S. 4023 into law. The bill is known as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010". Full implementation is expected by December, 2011 in accordance with the recommendations contained in the *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"*, Department of Defense, 30 November, 2010.

religious practice found in the civilian world. Some chaplains characterize themselves as “liturgical” or “traditional” in ministry. This contrasts with others who would describe themselves as “non-liturgical” or “contemporary” in how they conduct divine worship. These differences carry over across a wide spectrum of ministry. They impact how chaplains conduct counseling and preach sermons. They control whether chaplains can lead “joint services” together. They decide how prayers are offered, and how evangelism is conducted.

For purposes of comparison, one might consider the medical profession. In the medical community, there is uniformity in medical practice. When medical school graduates are commissioned as officers and begin to serve the military community, there is a certain consistency to the way they conduct their practice. Medicine is a hard science with standard procedures for how to set a broken arm or treat an illness, for example. It does not matter which doctor sees the patient or where. Nor does it matter whether if they provide the care inside or outside the military. Medicine is governed by scientific inquiry which leads to efficient standardization. There is no such uniformity of practice among Navy chaplains. Each chaplain represents one of two hundred different religious organizations who all have different rules which constrain those they endorse for military ministry. This

accounts for the often extreme differences in how chaplains go about their work in the Navy.

Another complicating factor is the chaplain's military rank. Chaplains work together, not only as peers and colleagues in ministry, but also as superiors and subordinates in a military hierarchy. In the Navy and Marine Corps, it is customary for senior officers to mentor, counsel, and guide their subordinates.⁹ This is how junior personnel grow in their understanding of military leadership. The superior officer supports and encourages growth and development in the junior personnel. The senior officer also enforces regulations and penalizes subordinates for noncompliance when necessary. This system puts ordained ministers in charge of supervising and mentoring chaplains from different faith groups. A Methodist commander, for example, could be responsible for the ministry of a lieutenant rabbi! Or a Roman Catholic captain could be in charge of a team of junior evangelicals. Thus, military rank alters how chaplains relate to one another. While they may be peers in ministry, they must always be aware of their superior and subordinate roles in the military institution.

Next, consider the setting for this ministry. While pastoral ministry is usually conducted in a particular local church, military chaplaincy sends the minister all over the

⁹ In 2009, the Naval Personnel Command formalized what has been informal standard practice throughout the Navy with its Navy Personnel Command Mentoring Program instruction: *NAVPERSCOMINST 5300.1*

world. The Navy embeds chaplains in military units. Chaplains go where their units go and do what their units do. If the command is home, then the chaplain is home with them.

When they deploy, then the chaplain is likewise separated from family and experiences the same hardships. The chaplain shares the same quarters, eats the same food, and endures the same trials. The chaplain is not an “outsider” who merely visits the troops to minister to them, but is rather an integral part of the unit. The location might be a military base anywhere in the world or on a ship at sea. Some chaplains serve with battalions in combat zones or at training commands back home. Still others serve with the Coast Guard or at military hospitals. Some work with aviation communities based at sea or on shore, while others run ministry retreat centers.

Truly, Navy chaplaincy can take the minister just about anywhere in the world in any number of different surroundings. There are many chaplaincy assignments, and no two are the same. Consider also that military chaplains don’t merely see their people one or two days a week. They usually live and work with them every day. They share the same quarters, often occupying the same barracks, eating at the same dining facilities, and using the same showers on the same ship. This creates a different dynamic for their ministry.

How would a typical pastor’s ministry be different if that pastor were to live with the congregation throughout the year? Obviously, the environmental context for this ministry

is different from that experienced by civilian pastors. In the end, ministry under remarkably varied conditions is typical in military chaplaincy.

While the geographical context of military ministry can vary enormously, the emphasis in this ministry is also distinctive. Usually local churches focus on the Sunday morning worship service. The centerpiece of the ministry is usually the ministry of the word of God from the pulpit. When a chaplain is assigned to a military chapel, that ministry can be very similar. But, most often, ministry from a pulpit is not the focus of the chaplain's work. Many chaplains do not have the opportunity to preach in formal worship services conducted in church buildings. Counseling and discipleship usually offer the best opportunities for chaplains to minister. It happens individually as the chaplain exercises what the Chaplain Corps calls a "ministry of presence"¹⁰ in the unit. Of course, when deployed, chaplains provide religious services in the field or aboard ship. But often they do not get the chance to conduct formal services with regularity.

Dissimilarity with the parish also involves the people to whom the chaplain ministers. In local churches, the minister usually confronts the same audience week after week. But chaplains move around often. Many assignments last only a few short months.

¹⁰ In the Navy Chaplain Corps this is often referred to as 'Deckplate ministry.' This refers to the chaplain getting out of his office and spending time with the men 'on the deckplates,' that is, in their workspaces. By doing so the chaplain is able to build relationships and reach personnel who would ordinarily never visit the chaplain's office. Extraordinary ministry opportunities arise when chaplains get out and engage with the Sailors and their work in a meaningful way. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *NWP 1-05*, 4.1.3

The longest assignments rarely last more than thirty-six months. In addition, the personnel themselves are in a constant state of flux because of the constant turnover in the military ranks. With ratios of seven hundred sailors or more per chaplain being very common, chaplains rarely get to establish long-term relationships with their people.

In addition, most of those to whom they minister are between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine¹¹. While officers and senior enlisted leaders are usually older, the vast majority are young men in a critical, formative stage of their lives. While most civilian pastors will minister to a broad demographic, from small children to the elderly, military chaplains focus most their ministry on this narrow age group. Also, the local church pastor usually has a good idea of the religious inclinations of the people in his pews. It is likely that a Presbyterian church is largely filled with Presbyterians! However, the military has no such consistency. The chaplain interacts daily with people from every religious background. Protestant, Catholic, religious, nonreligious, Christian, and non-Christian alike, the chaplain ministers to a cross-section of society as diverse as the nation itself.

Military ministry is managed differently too. While local churches usually break down into Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational forms of government, military chaplaincy marches to a different drumbeat. All activity in the Commander's area of

¹¹ Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Population Representation in the Military Services* (Washington: Department of Defense, 2008).

responsibility, religious and nonreligious alike, is subject to his authority.¹² Commanding officers have the final say over everything that happens, and their instructions carry the weight of law. As a principal staff officer, the chaplain oversees all religious activity in the unit and is accountable to the command.¹³ Technically, this can, and often does, put a declared non-Christian in charge of Christian religious ministry. Usually the chaplain can perform his work without interference from higher echelons, but ultimately commanding officers are in charge of everything, including all religious ministry that occurs on their watch.¹⁴

As odd as it may seem, this arrangement is not entirely negative. Since the Navy has authority over the ministry, it also is responsible to provide for it, and guarantees a generous salary and benefits package to every chaplain. In fact, as commissioned officers, military chaplains are among the highest paid ministry professionals¹⁵. They do not rely on tithes and offerings to fund their ministry. They are given liberal budgets, full resources, and all

¹² *US Navy Regulations*, chap. 8.

¹³ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *MCRP 6-12C*, 2-1. "Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1730.6D, Command Religious Programs in the Marine Corps, states 'Commanders are responsible for establishing and maintaining a Command Religious Program (CRP) which supports the free exercise of religion as set forth in Secretary of the Navy Instruction (SECNAVINST) 1730.7B, *Religious Ministry Support within the Department of the Navy (DON)*'... The chaplain is a subordinate player in the CRP. The principal agent is the commander."

¹⁴ *US Navy Regulations*, chap. 8.

¹⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Employment and Wages* (Washington: Department of Labor, 2009). This report shows a \$46960.00 mean salary for clergy. Since chaplains are paid according to their rank as commissioned officers, even the most junior chaplains receive pay and benefits packages far in excess of this figure.

supplies. The Navy also grants whatever support equipment or personnel that are necessary, entrusting the chaplains with some of the finest facilities available. So the management of military chaplaincy is a dual-edged sword. On one hand, chaplains work in a secular institution that can dictate what they do. On the other hand, chaplains have the privilege of serving the men and women who serve their country in the armed forces. To that end, they are generously equipped.

As noted above, another distinction between military chaplaincy and church ministry involves the military's commitment to its warfighting mission. The church is, by definition, a religious organization, unlike the military, which is a secular institution committed to a secular mission. The Navy puts chaplains in charge of religious ministry merely to meet the needs of religious personnel serving in its ranks. This idea is rooted in the first amendment to the Constitution. Every American has the right to practice their religion, and they need not give up that right when they choose to serve their country in the armed forces. Since military service often requires personnel to be away from the normal means of religious care and observance, the Navy has an obligation to make a good faith effort to provide for those religious needs. This puts the Navy in the religion business, even though that is not the navy's primary purpose. The Navy and Marine Corps exist to fight their nation's battles at sea; they are committed to the systematic application of

violence to further the nation's policy. In many respects, religion is an afterthought. While Christian individuals often lead Navy and Marine Corps commands, the institution itself is secular. The Navy involves itself in activities like religious ministry, retailing, recreation, and any number of other similar nonmilitary businesses merely to meet the needs of its war fighters and their families. However, the primary mission is warfare. These other items are secondary and even tertiary concerns. The military is first and foremost a secular establishment.

But the navy is also pluralistic. Since the military is not a religious institution, it reflects the morals and worldviews of its constituents. Religiously speaking, the United States is widely diverse, and the armed forces reflect that diversity. Therefore, unlike civilian counterparts, military chaplains need to deal regularly with the issue of pluralism. When leading ceremonies or speaking for the command at public events, chaplains must take care not to unnecessarily offend or upset people with religiously insensitive or exclusive speech. As former Chief of Navy Chaplains, RADM Louis Iasiello remarks,

Tolerance and mutual respect guide Navy policy, doctrine and practice... recognition that religious ministry in the military takes place in a pluralistic setting is a prerequisite for service as a Navy chaplain. To be considered for appointment to military chaplaincy, religious ministry professionals must be "willing to function in a pluralistic environment..." and follow the orders given by those appointed over them (DODI 1304.28: 6.1.3 and 6.4.2)... In settings other than Divine Services, chaplains are encouraged to respect the

diversity of the community as they facilitate the free exercise of religion guaranteed by the Constitution and military policy (DODD 1304.19).¹⁶

This expectation of sensitivity toward other religious views is something the civilian pastor hardly ever has to deal with, but it is a common issue in this pluralistic context.¹⁷

Without a doubt, chaplains are in the military to provide religious ministry. This is their first and primary duty. But, unlike regular parish ministers, they are also present to ensure that the first amendment rights of all personnel are respected. This means that besides providing ministry for their own religion, chaplains accommodate others and facilitate ministry that they cannot themselves provide. For a Protestant chaplain, that may mean appointing Roman Catholic or Jewish lay leaders. It can also mean ensuring that a Muslim or Buddhist Sailor has access to religious materials and is accommodated suitably.¹⁸ This does not mean that the chaplain endorses multiple religions; it is a matter of respecting our fellow American's right to worship according to their own conscience. The armed forces tasks chaplains with guarding religious liberty in the military.

One should also note that it does not matter whether a Sailor or Marine is spiritual.

Chaplains are charged with providing pastoral care for everybody, religious and

¹⁶ RADM Louis Iasiello, CHC, USN, "Chief of Navy Chaplains Official Statement on Public Prayer in the Navy."

¹⁷ Lawsuits abound over the Navy's long tradition of including things like prayer and other religious references in Command events. Invocations, blessings, benedictions, Scripture readings, or even the presence of a chaplain in the first place have continually drawn the ire of anti-religion groups.

¹⁸ Office of the Secretary, *SECNAVINST 1730.7D*, 6.

nonreligious alike.¹⁹ This may involve ministries such as hospital and brig visitation, grief or crisis counseling, and other tasks. Again, this gets chaplains involved with their communities to a degree that most other ministers do not experience.

Unlike their civilian peers, military chaplains cannot focus exclusively on their religious duties. Besides being ordained religious specialists accountable to their religious ministry endorsing agent, chaplains are also naval officers under the operational authority of military commanders as well as the administrative authority of their chaplain superiors.

Unfortunately, these military commissions bring with them another set of baggage. The split-persona of the Navy chaplain is obvious right on the collar. One side has a religious insignia pin, and the other has military rank. As officers, chaplains have special assignments and collateral duties, and often these duties have nothing to do with religion. Because the command usually views a chaplain as a “people person,” the chaplain is commonly the first choice for any task having to do with people.²⁰ Then again, these collateral and tertiary duties often have nothing to do with ministry or with people too.

Chaplains may serve as advisers to the command on issues of morality and ethics.

While that sometimes includes personal advisement with commanders behind closed doors,

¹⁹ “Chaplains care for all Service members, including those who claim no religious faith.” *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰ People-focused duties include things like community relations, family readiness, volunteer coordination and other such tasks. Other, non-social, duties can include administration, special event coordination and even things like damage control or integrated training team membership.

it often takes the form of being the command trainer for a whole host of moral and ethical issues. This includes topics like core values education, character development seminars, ethics classes, drunk driving briefs, suicide prevention training, and many other similar events. Unfortunately, these extra duties can sometimes crowd out the chaplain's religious duties.

In the end, the Navy measures success in military ministry differently than the church measures success in the pastorate. *Of course, it measures failure differently too.* Often, people think a chaplain is a success when he advances to the next rank. But is that necessarily true? Advancement in rank is certainly one sign that a chaplain is well received by the institution. However, promotion does not necessarily mark success in ministry according to biblical criteria.²¹ Similarly, personnel often think of a chaplain as a failure when he marginalizes himself and does not command the respect of the men or wield influence with the command. Of course, respect and influence are desirable in a minister, but the scriptures define failure differently than the institution²².

The preceding paragraphs explore ways in which military ministry is a very different enterprise than the typical pastorate. It is important to grasp these fundamental differences because they impact how one understands success in chaplaincy. Chaplains are not pastors.

²¹ Biblical success can be measured by one's obedience to the revealed will of God as well as Christlikeness. Deut 4:40; Eph 4:13-15

²² 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 9:27; Revelation 2:1-7; 12-3:6; 3:14-22

Their ministerial identities are more akin to missionary–evangelists. This is cross–cultural missions indeed, and chaplains are counter–cultural figures. They labor under sometimes hostile conditions in a secular, pluralistic, and institutional environment. The military is not a Christian place, and the chaplain interacts with mostly non–Christians most of the time.

This background information serves to acquaint the reader with the unique context for this research.

Problem and Purpose Statements

While chaplains come from many different backgrounds, ultimately they all enter the Sea Services for the same reason. They want to serve God and country by applying their ministerial gifts in support of our nation’s military personnel. The Navy Chaplain Corps is a religious community with no singular, unifying statement of faith. Each chaplain brings distinctive values, goals, and ministerial identity into this pluralistic and secular institution. The work often involves great hardship. It is a high–pressure environment, yet somehow these several hundred clergy from widely diverse theological and philosophical backgrounds pull together for the greater good of the military community. Usually chaplains cooperate and work in harmony, but not always without difficulty. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the challenges chaplains face as they work with others from differing faith groups in this religiously diverse, secular institution.

Research Questions

This study will explore how military chaplains navigate the unique challenges of ecumenical cooperation in a pluralistic and secular military institution. To this end, the following research questions will guide the study:

1. What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest issues with the pluralism in the military environment?
2. What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest issues with ecumenical cooperation in this environment?
3. How have these experiences with pluralism and ecumenical cooperation in this context affected the practice of military ministry?

Significance of the Study

This research topic is essential because a better understanding of the challenges of pluralism and ecumenical cooperation in the military will better enable chaplains to avoid unnecessary conflict. While disagreement on any number of issues is unavoidable given the context of this military ministry, there is still a great deal that chaplains share in common. They have all volunteered to serve in the institution to glorify God and minister to people. They all want to do good and serve our nation by helping our men and women in uniform.

This common ground can serve to bridge areas of disagreement and get chaplains to pull together in service to all.

This cooperation itself can serve several positive ends. First, it brings glory to God.²³ Chaplains usually enjoy a high profile in their unit. They are public figures. When the rank and file see their religious leaders working together out of mutual respect and consideration despite their different theological orientations, their responses cannot but help bring glory to God²⁴. On the other hand, chaplains in open, public conflict invite ridicule and scorn on the name of the Lord²⁵.

Second, chaplains working harmoniously together also display openness and approachability. When personnel see the chaplain reaching out across religious lines in Christian charity, they are more likely to avail themselves of that chaplain's ministry, despite having a different faith background themselves. If they know the chaplain receives all and kindly reaches out in cooperation with others, then that furthers the chaplain's ministry. Ministry is not focused exclusively on personnel from the chaplain's own faith group, but is extended to all. The result is a chaplain who can reach more personnel.

²³ Psalm 133

²⁴ Matthew 5:16

²⁵ Scandalous sin by Christian leaders gives occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. 2 Samuel 12:14.

Third, it is critical to understand that the large majority of those in the military services are not practicing Christians. When chaplains cooperate harmoniously, they bring credit on themselves. To the non-religious, chaplains in conflict with one another display nothing attractive about their religious ideas and worldviews. However, as chaplains work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect, they are more likely to have a positive influence on the non-religious. When personnel see the chaplain as an approachable person with warm integrity, they are more likely to open themselves to a message of love and grace. Thus, a better understanding of the challenges to ecumenical cooperation in the pluralistic institution is essential if chaplains are to lessen unnecessary conflict for the greater good.

Definition of Terms

Brig – A military prison on board a navy ship or installation.

Cherished Pluralism – The idea that religious, ethnic and cultural diversity is fundamentally good and should be sought and advanced.

Collateral & Tertiary Duties – Additional duties tasked to the chaplain above and beyond religious responsibilities. Examples include: suicide prevention training, public affairs officer, damage control, marriage enhancement, civilian liaison, and family support activities.

Commanding Officer – The senior officer in charge of a military unit and absolutely responsible for all personnel, equipment, facilities, and activity within that command.

Commissioning – The appointment of a person by the President of the United States as a military officer.

Department of the Navy – Armed services division including not only the Navy but also the Marine Corps. Navy chaplains serve both branches of the Department of the Navy as well as the Coast Guard.

Deckplate Ministry – a.k.a. “Ministry of Presence.” The chaplain’s intentional actions to visit the personnel in their workspaces. By getting out of office spaces, spending time with service members, and doing what they do, chaplains make themselves readily accessible and leverage effectiveness.

Denominations – Distinct religious bodies that fall under the same broad religion. These bodies are separated by doctrine and religious authority. Examples of Christian denominations would be Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, and the Presbyterian Church in America. Similar divisions are found in Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist and other faiths.

Deployment – The temporary transfer of a military unit with support infrastructure from its home base of operations to anywhere in the world to fulfill mission tasking.

Echelon – A level in the military hierarchy of command. For example, Marine Aircraft

Group's immediate higher echelon would be the Marine Aircraft Wing. Its lower echelon would be an aviation squadron.

Ecumenical Cooperation – The cooperation of religious ministry professionals from different faith backgrounds working together or side by side without conflict. In the Navy, it usually includes sharing the same facilities, budget, equipment, or programming.

Empirical Pluralism – Recognition that the Navy consists of personnel from a multiplicity of religious backgrounds. Therefore, the Navy takes a neutral stance toward them all. None is favored, and all are considered equally legitimate. The concern is for peaceful coexistence between the various religions.

Endorsing Agent – An official representative of a religious organization recognized by the Armed Forces Chaplains Board. Endorsing agents have the authority to approve candidates for military chaplaincy to the Armed Forces Chaplains Board for further recommendation to the Secretary of Defense and eventual appointment by the President of the United States as commissioned officers in the Army, Navy, or Air Force Chaplain Corps.

First Amendment Rights – In this context, the right guaranteed by the Constitution to the free exercise of religion and the freedom from state establishment of religion. Also includes the right to free speech, a free press, freedom to assemble and to petition for governmental redress of grievances.

Joint Service: A divine service led by two or more chaplains working in cooperation with one another.

Military Environment – A general description of any setting under the jurisdiction of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. This includes military installations, combat zones, other deployment areas, and ships at sea.

Ministry Accommodation or Facilitation – The duty of a chaplain to ensure that religious activity is permitted and provided for within reason and mission constraints. If a chaplain cannot personally provide requested ministry, that chaplain can still ensure free exercise of religion by appointing lay leaders or making other suitable arrangements to ensure that the religious rights of the personnel are respected and upheld.

Navy Chaplain Corps – Ordained clergy serving as commissioned officers in the United States Navy. Chaplains represent a wide range of religious organizations and provide religious ministry and pastoral care to Department of the Navy and Coast Guard personnel as well as their families.

Philosophical Pluralism –The idea that certainty with respect to objective truth is doubtful and locates most if not all meaning in the interpreter, not in the text or object interpreted. Any ideological or religious claim that asserts superiority over other claims is necessarily wrong.

Pluralism – See Empirical, Cherished and Philosophical Pluralism.

Religious Ministry Professionals – Navy chaplains and also to contracted civilian clergy and command-appointed lay leaders.

Religious Organization – A body from any religion. Where “denomination” is specific to a particular religion, “religious organization” can refer to any group across the religious spectrum.

Religious Program Specialist – An occupational rating for enlisted Sailors who aid chaplains in performing their duties.

Sea Services – An all-encompassing term to include the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and merchant marine communities.

Secular – The non-religious nature of the Navy’s mission.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF SELECTED STUDIES

The previous chapter of this dissertation presented a short contrast of Navy chaplaincy with traditional parish ministry in order to help the reader understand the nature of this research. Navy chaplaincy presents unique challenges and questions. For instance, how does a Navy chaplain navigate the unique challenges of ministry in this religiously diverse environment? How do Christian chaplains stay faithful to their callings to serve Christ in the sea services? Unfortunately, little has been written that speaks specifically to how Reformed or evangelical chaplains deal with the specific challenges of ministry in this pluralistic military institution, but an inquiry of those sources that are available for navy chaplains will be profitable. Some of the most relevant literature is found in the many official policies, orders, and instructions that the United States Department of the Navy has issued to standardize professional naval chaplaincy. In addition to scholarly books, journal articles, and guidance from denominational endorsing agents, a review of relevant biblical texts can also clarify how chaplains should tackle these thorny issues. This literature review will first tackle the issue of religious diversity in our nation: what it is, and where it came

from. Then attention will shift to military ministry and how religious pluralism affects it. Specific problems and challenges in this kind of ministry then need to be addressed, such as philosophical pluralism, the question of ecumenical cooperation, and postmodernism in the ranks. Finally, the scripture itself needs to be considered, in order to round out this review from a Christian perspective.

Religious Pluralism: Defined

First, consider the issue of religious pluralism. What follows is not a theological critique of religious pluralism in our country. Nor is this any sort of analysis that seeks to outline the proper Christian response to such pluralism. Rather, this short section is intended to define what religious pluralism looks like in the military institution and to show how it is an apt description of the ministry context in the Sea Services. Like it or not, if Navy chaplains are going to have a voice in the institution, they must learn to function in a religiously pluralistic environment. As Department of Defense Instruction 1304.28 requires,

To be considered for appointment to serve as a chaplain, an RMP shall receive an endorsement from a qualified religious organization verifying... the RMP is willing to function in a pluralistic environment, as defined in this Instruction,²⁶...and is willing to support directly and indirectly the free exercise of religion by all members of the Military Services, their family

²⁶ Office of the Secretary, *DODI 1304.28*, E2.1.8

members, and other persons authorized to be served by the military chaplaincies.²⁷

Thus, every military chaplain must come to terms with religious pluralism. It is acknowledged by official policy, and it is certainly a complicating factor in the delivery of religious ministry in this context.

Before one can reflect on the correct approach to ministry in a pluralistic institution, the term itself needs clarification. Chris Beneke defines “pluralistic” by putting it in its historical context. While the early American colonies merely tolerated minority religious groups and allowed them to worship in peace, a shift soon occurred. During the colonial period, American society moved from a position of religious tolerance towards religious pluralism, and this stance shaped the nation’s public attitude toward religion ever since.

As gradually as colonial governments adopted the legal practice of toleration, they suddenly abandoned it between 1760s and the 1780s for something that is usually called “religious liberty.”... The new state governments either could not or would not maintain the discriminatory policies that continued to characterize European societies... Eighteenth century America experienced a rhetorical or ideological transformation – a shift in discourse – that moved it well beyond the language of toleration and toward a much more egalitarian mode of addressing religious differences.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid, 6-1.

²⁸ Beneke, *Beyond Toleration*, 6.

Egalitarianism is an apt description of the Department of the Navy's policy on religion today. The institution is officially neutral toward religion in general, and its policy is to allow, without prejudice, a wide variety of religious expression. All religious traditions are acknowledged and respected, with none preferred. As Navy Warfare Publication 1-05 clarifies,

By law, chaplains facilitate the free exercise of religion for personnel without discrimination. In a pluralistic and religiously diverse environment, lesser-known faith groups and their accompanying practices will be encountered. This requires thorough research to ensure any request for accommodation meets the standards of DOD and Navy policy, Navy regulations, and standards of good order and discipline... Religious discrimination is unlawful and violates Navy policy and regulations.²⁹

The Navy's interest in this statement is to ensure that every Sailor's First Amendment right to freely exercise his or her faith is acknowledged and accommodated. It does not matter whether that Sailor belongs to a mainstream religious organization. Note the specific guidance about accommodation for "lesser-known faith groups and their accompanying practices."³⁰ Every form of religious expression is to be respected within the broad margins of "Navy regulations, and standards of good order and discipline."³¹

The rationale for this policy is due to the manner in which the courts have interpreted the establishment clause in the First Amendment to the Constitution. With

²⁹ Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *NWP 1-05*, chap. 1.2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

respect to freedom of religion, the First Amendment reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”³² This text is commonly divided into two separate clauses known as the “establishment clause” and the “free exercise clause.”³³ After a long history of controversy, conflict, and adjudication, the Supreme Court has determined that, “...the establishment of religion refers to the endorsement of either a single religion or religion generally... [thus] the government should be neutral in matters of religion, preferring neither one religion over another nor religion over irreligion.”³⁴ It is clear in this case that the overriding concern of the judicial system is to protect against religious discrimination.³⁵ The courts have accomplished this by implementing Thomas Jefferson’s famous “wall of separation” between church and state.³⁶

The government is to avoid unnecessary involvement in religion and to remain neutral

³² *The Constitution of the United States*.

³³ Lynn, Stern, and Thomas, *The Right to Religious Liberty*, 67.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 2. Writing for the majority in the famous *Everson v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case, Justice Hugo Black clarified the court’s understanding of the issue: “The ‘establishment of religion’ clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect “a wall of separation between Church and State.”

³⁵ However David Barton argues that this strict separation is a relatively recent phenomenon and out-of-sync with historical precedent and the original intent of the Founding Fathers. Barton, *Original Intent*, 243.

³⁶ In 1802, President Jefferson coined the phrase in a letter to the Baptists of Danbury, Connecticut after they had appealed to him about being taxed in support of their state’s established Congregational Church. Peter Irons discusses the significance of the phrase and its origin. Irons, *God on Trial*, 23.

among the many and various faiths, denominations, sects, and religions. Thus, the establishment clause prohibits anything that hints of government sanction of religion.

Despite the Constitution's prohibition of government endorsement of any particular religion, the First Amendment also delineates another abiding interest of the state with respect to religion. The law states that the nation is nonetheless to guarantee the "free exercise" of religion. Much of the conflict and controversy surrounding the implementation of the First Amendment is related to these two seemingly competing priorities. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the purpose of the "free exercise clause" is to guarantee religious liberty. In their book *The Right to Religious Liberty: The Basic ACLU Guide to Religious Rights*, Barry Lynn, Marc D. Stern, and Oliver S. Thomas argue, "The Free Exercise Clause seeks to accomplish this by forbidding Congress from passing laws prohibiting the free exercise of religion. The clause protects the rights of individuals and groups insofar as possible to practice their religion free from governmental interference."³⁷

Religious liberty in the United States is at stake here. While the establishment clause prohibits the government from advancing religion, the free exercise clause keeps the government from enacting restrictions against private religious practice. The people have a

³⁷ Lynn, Stern, and Thomas, *The Right to Religious Liberty*, 67.

right to practice their faith without governmental intrusion.³⁸ This clause serves as the legal justification for military chaplaincy. Since members of the military enjoy a First Amendment right to freely practice their religion, the government has an obligation to ensure that those rights are respected. Military chaplains are charged with the duty to see that the military accommodates religious practices as much as possible within the boundaries of mission constraints, good order, and discipline. Once again, the ACLU explains,

There is little question that the United States government can provide chaplains for military personnel, both overseas and at home. Similarly, public funding for chaplains in prisons has been repeatedly deemed constitutional. Although often criticized, the theory is that persons who are in government institutions, voluntarily or involuntarily, are entitled to access to religious worship and counseling, and that this interest overrides any Establishment Clause problem.³⁹

Since Americans have a constitutional right to freely practice their religion, the goal of governmental policy is to keep the state from interfering in religious affairs in order to preserve religious liberty. This is the reason why the military environment is so religiously pluralistic. While the government is officially neutral toward all forms of religion, its policies must accommodate all forms of religious expression for the sake of liberty. That

³⁸ That right of freedom from governmental interference extends to faith and non-faith alike. Barton, *Original Intent*, 243.

³⁹ Lynn, Stern, and Thomas, *The Right to Religious Liberty*, 60.

accommodation results in religious pluralism because the vast body of military service members represents a spectrum of religious practice as diverse as the nation itself.

Religious Pluralism: Origins

Of course, this kind of pluralistic atmosphere is not unique to the military. In this case, what is true of the military is also true of the nation as a whole. As Frank Lambert records in *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, religious faith and practice across America has been radically diverse ever since the demise of the old colonial-era, state-sponsored churches in the late eighteenth century.⁴⁰ Since that time, for the sake of religious liberty, citizens have been free to associate with any religion that they choose, without government interference.⁴¹ In his noteworthy book, *God on Trial*, Peter Irons analyzes the history of religious pluralism and conflict in America. He identifies Thomas Jefferson and James Madison as two of the most important figures who led the early fight to disestablish religion in the newly founded United States. He notes,

Madison opposed the taxation of his fellow Virginians to support the established Anglican Church. In 1785, two years before the Constitutional Convention, Madison had drafted and submitted a “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments” to the Virginia legislature... In light of current debates over the “original intent” of the men who framed the Constitution and Bill of Rights, Madison’s words in his

⁴⁰ Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 233.

⁴¹ However, due to circumstances unique to the military, naval service forces people of different faiths to interact with each other in ways that they would not otherwise in the civilian world. At each command there is a single Command Religious Program that is tasked with accommodating for the religious needs of all. So service members of all faiths have an interest in that program and its limited resources.

“Remonstrance” deserve quotation. “It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties,” he began. “Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects?”... Madison had no quarrel with religion in general, but he fiercely opposed its establishment. “During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial,” he wrote. “What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution.”⁴²

Irons highlights Madison’s strongly held opinion that any form of governmental entanglement with religion ultimately poses a threat to religious liberty. Thomas Jefferson concurred with this point of view⁴³ and argued with equal passion against the establishment of religion in the early republic.⁴⁴ Together, Madison and Jefferson proved extremely influential in the course of the debate over the place that religion should occupy in the new republic. Not only did they argue against the establishment of a preferred denomination in the nation, but they even opposed the preference of Christianity in general. When a petition to the Virginia legislature from the presbytery of Hanover County called for complete separation between church and state, Jefferson was quick to advocate the cause:

They argued that any establishment, including that of a single sect – would amount to surrendering liberty of conscience to the state. They explained, “There is no argument in favor of establishing the Christian religion but what may be pleaded, with equal propriety, for establishing the tenets of

⁴² Irons, *God on Trial*, 9., see also Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 209.

⁴³ Ibid, 244, 268.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 228.

Mohammed by those who believe the Alcoran; or if this be not true, it is at least impossible for the magistrate to adjudge the right of preference among the various sects that profess the Christian faith, without erecting a chair of infallibility, which would lead us back to the Church of Rome.” The message was clear: religion is a matter of conscience between God and individuals, and the state should have no role whatever in religious affairs.⁴⁵

James Madison, commonly known today as the “Father of the Constitution,”⁴⁶ argued along the same lines. Irons discusses Madison’s argument,

“The same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions,” Madison reasoned, “may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians” or, for that matter, any other religion. He concluded by restating that religion according to the dictates of one’s conscience is “the gift of nature,” and not of government. Therefore, governments have no authority over the free exercise of religion.⁴⁷

While both Madison and Jefferson professed the Christian faith,⁴⁸ they were convinced that the best way for true religion to flourish was to get the government out of the way completely. In the open marketplace of religious ideas, they were persuaded that the truth would ultimately prevail. Lambert records:

Thomas Jefferson replied that establishment was not necessary for religion to flourish... he added, the absence of state regulation [in Pennsylvania] did not result in the triumph of religious enthusiasm or other dangerous

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 241.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 232. For this reason Madison was in strident opposition to legislative and military chaplaincies as well. Ibid, 270-271.

⁴⁸ Barton, *Original Intent*, 144, 207. While both men claimed Christianity, their profession of faith was often criticized as false or at least regarded as somewhat dubious. Jefferson actually came under withering scrutiny in the Presidential campaign of 1800 when his political opponents openly questioned the authenticity of his profession of faith due to his position on religious liberty. Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 265.

fanatical expressions. “Religion is well supported; of various kinds, indeed, but all good enough; all sufficient to preserve peace and order; or if a sect arises, whose tenets would subvert morals, good sense has fair play, and reasons and laughs it out of doors, without suffering the state to be troubled with it.” What Jefferson described was a free marketplace of religion that was self-regulating, as multiple, competing sects checked each other.⁴⁹

After the American Revolutionary War, when a bill was introduced to provide state funding in support of teachers of religion, Jefferson once again took the lead in opposition.

Lambert explains,

Jefferson opposed the bill and argued that Virginia should adopt religious competition as the best way to check religious extremism... he worried about the time to come. He feared the rise of future religious enthusiasts who might find allies in politicians eager to win popular support... James Madison agreed with Jefferson that the bill represented a “dangerous abuse of power”...⁵⁰

Positions like this caused many to question the sincerity and depth of the Christian commitment held by both Madison and Jefferson.⁵¹ Their doubters reasoned that if they were truly Christians, then surely they would consider it a good thing to use the power of the government to advance the Christian faith. But Jefferson and Madison were focused on a goal that was larger than mere religious liberty. They wanted to establish a state that

⁴⁹ Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 227. “Jefferson had often voiced his belief that religious discussions belonged in a free marketplace of ideas. By that concept he meant a forum where persuasion, not coercion, was the means of gaining converts to one’s viewpoint. With numerous sects competing for the hearts and minds of individuals, America was perfectly suited for free choice in religious matters, provided the state did not interfere. In the clash of ideas, Jefferson believed, truth would prevail...”
Ibid., 274.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 230-231.

⁵¹ Ibid., 276.

would also guarantee civil liberties. Most of their opponents, including Calvinist minister and signer of the Declaration of Independence, John Witherspoon, came to see that greater goal and agreed. Lambert records,

As a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, John Witherspoon expressed views that James Madison would echo a dozen years later at the Constitutional Convention... Witherspoon, who, though a Calvinist, understood that the issue before the Congress was that of civil liberty. Furthermore, he knew that civil liberty and religious liberty were connected. "There is not a single instance in history," he noted, "in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire." Witherspoon and his fellow delegates believed that they, and not Parliament, were the proper guardians of American liberties, civil and religious.⁵²

Thus, in order to defend true liberty, the Founding Founders settled on an intentionally secular form of government. On one hand, the Constitution would uphold the right of its citizens to worship according to the dictates of their own consciences. Yet, on the other hand, the state would itself remain neutral toward any and all religious faith and practice. Ironically, Christians made up a great majority of the citizens of the new country, but they chose a purely secular form of government. This truth is emphasized by Article 11 of the 1797 Treaty with Tripoli. There, in an attempt to put to rest Moslem suspicions that the United States would unfairly interpret the terms of the treaty due to anti-Moslem,

⁵² Ibid., 244.

Christian influence, the treaty unequivocally declares that the United States is not a Christian country.

As the government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded upon the Christian religion, – as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen, – and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.⁵³

To the careful student of the Constitution, it is not surprising that this treaty identifies the United States as a non-Christian state. The Constitution was deliberately and carefully designed to establish a secular form of government. This does not mean that the Founding Fathers believed that America was a non-Christian nation. To the contrary, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence that demonstrates the exact opposite.⁵⁴ However, the Founders distinguished something that people often overlook. While Christians were a large majority in America, this Christian nation would be governed by a secular state. Lambert explains,

Under the Constitution, church and state were separate. But the Founders differentiated between the state and the nation. The former was the political

⁵³ Hunter Miller, ed., “The Barbary Treaties: Tripoli 1796,” in *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), Article 11. While there is some dispute over the translation of this article from the original Arabic, it was this translation that was read aloud in the Senate and unanimously ratified. See also Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 239.

⁵⁴ The entire thrust of David Barton’s work in *Original Intent* is to analyze and explore the deep roots that Christianity has in America.

power that bound the people together, and the latter was their cultural unity, including their common beliefs, aspirations, and principles. By no means did the separation of church and state mean that Americans were not a religious people. Nor did it preclude the possibility that the nation was already or could become a Christian nation; that would be determined by the voluntary decisions of men and women in a free religious market, not by government coercion.⁵⁵

Thus, it was through the tireless lobbying and impassioned rhetoric of men like James Madison and Thomas Jefferson⁵⁶ that religious liberty as we have come to know it was established in America. With the adoption of the Bill of Rights, the government was forbidden to meddle in religious affairs. The people were also guaranteed freedom to practice their faith according to the dictates of their own consciences. Thus, the famous “wall of separation” between church and state came into being.⁵⁷

For all practical purposes, the most important aspect of this “separation doctrine,” is how the courts have understood and applied it. Since the Constitution gives the courts the responsibility to interpret the law, they have the final say over how this separation principle functions. The Supreme Court handed down an important decision in this area following the 1947 case, *Everson v. Board of Education*. Justice Hugo Black, writing for the

⁵⁵ Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 241.

⁵⁶ From Madison’s “Memorial and Remonstrance” to Jefferson’s “Bill for Religious Liberty”, both men were at the forefront of the early fight for a secular Federal government. Irons, *God on Trial*, 23.

⁵⁷ Lambert argues that while the actual phrase “wall of separation between church and state” was first used by Jefferson in his letter to the Danbury Baptists in 1802, it was a commonly accepted sentiment among the Founding Fathers. Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 284.

majority, summarized the Court's understanding of the issue. Currently, this is the definitive "establishment" case, which dictates how the law is applied. As Justice Black explains,

The "establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect "a wall of separation between Church and State."⁵⁸

With this statement, Justice Black carefully defines the Supreme Court's understanding of the establishment clause. The state is strictly secular. It has no business meddling in the affairs of religion whatsoever. Until a future court rescinds or further clarifies this ruling, this is the law of the land.

This short section outlined how our nation ended up with its current secular state.

While religion has indeed played an important role in the founding and history of the

⁵⁸ Quoted in Lynn, Stern, and Thomas, *The Right to Religious Liberty*, 2. While this standard is still the law of the land, it has been questioned in recent years, most notably by Chief Justice Rhenquist in *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985). "Nothing in the Establishment Clause requires government to be strictly neutral between religion and irreligion, nor does that Clause prohibit Congress or the States from pursuing legitimate secular ends through non-discriminatory sectarian means." quoted in Lambert, 6.

country, it was by careful and deliberate choice that the Founding Fathers established a strictly secular state. America is a nation defined by religious liberty: a religious liberty that is protected by law from state interference.

Religious Pluralism: Military Ministry

Because of the Constitutional mandate that the government not choose a preferred religion, Christianity is not the preferred religion in the Navy. Far from being the official religion, Christianity is merely one voice among many. Of course, there is a great history of Christian influence in the United States, and many of American Naval leaders profess the Christian faith, but military policy keeps the Department of the Navy officially neutral toward Christianity. Other faith groups enjoy equal rights to worship, access to resources, and opportunities to contribute to the community. This is why recent guidance from the Chief of Navy Chaplains included these words:

Participants in PNC [Professional Naval Chaplaincy] are entrusted with the duty of creating a climate where every individual's contribution is valued, and with fostering an environment that respects the individual's worth as a human being in accordance with Department of the Navy Diversity Policy⁵⁹...Members of the DoD and PNC community represent a plurality of backgrounds and beliefs. PNC recognizes and values the pluralism inherent in the DoD and PNC community and seeks to accommodate the religious beliefs of all to the fullest possible extent.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Office of the Secretary, "Navy Diversity Policy" (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2011).

⁶⁰ Office of the Chief of Navy Chaplains, "Professional Standards for PNC" (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2011).

This statement comes directly from the head of the Navy Chaplain Corps and is directed toward all chaplains, both those serving on active duty and reservists. The intent is to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect and religious tolerance among all personnel. To the extent that a particular religion or belief system is important to the individual, it is respected as a constitutionally protected right and valued as such.

In a similar manner, the service chiefs for the Marine Corps and Coast Guard have issued comparable orders to the Navy chaplains who serve with those services. In their orders, they emphasize the same sort of principles that support religious pluralism in their services. For example, Marine Corps Order 1730.6D provides direction from the Commandant of the Marine Corps on how religious ministry is to be facilitated for in the USMC:

Commanders are responsible for establishing and maintaining a Command Religious Program (CRP) which supports the free exercise of religion as set forth in reference (a)⁶¹... Whenever possible, accommodating individual religious beliefs and practices is encouraged. However, the impact of accommodation must not adversely affect military readiness, individual or unit readiness, unit cohesion, health, safety, or good order and discipline.⁶²

⁶¹ Office of the Secretary, *SECNAVINST 1730.7D: Religious Ministry Within the Department of the Navy* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2008).

⁶² Commandant, United States Marine Corps, *MCO 1730.6D: Command Religious Programs in the Marine Corps* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 1997), 4b.

Here, the Commandant affirms the USMC's commitment to uphold the free exercise clause of the Constitution within limited constraints. The goal is not to establish religion, but to accommodate the free exercise of individual religious beliefs and practices. He goes on to establish the fact that chaplains should provide opportunities for Marines to express and nurture their faith.⁶³ But in a section on base access for non-federal entities who intend to assist chaplains in fulfilling these accommodation tasks, the Commandant takes a firm stand against religious discrimination in any form. He writes,

There are, however, certain private religious organizations which some parishioners find helpful, enriching and supportive. Within certain limits, such organizations may be allowed base access under the cognizance of the CRP... [however] The Marine Corps may not explicitly or implicitly provide official endorsement or preferential treatment to any non-federal entity... Organizations which are prejudicial to health, readiness, or good order and discipline (for example; groups which explicitly or implicitly denigrate the race, ethnic origins, or religious practices of others or groups which advocate destructive actions) should not be admitted to bases.⁶⁴

So then, while religious practices are to be accommodated as much as possible, this religious liberty is not absolute. Marines are encouraged to practice their faith as long as that expression does not denigrate others. This demonstrates that the Marine Corps has an abiding interest in guaranteeing religious liberty for all while also guarding against religious discrimination of any kind.

⁶³ Ibid., para. 5a.

⁶⁴ Ibid., para. 5b(5).

Since Navy chaplains also serve the Coast Guard, that service has issued specific guidance with respect to religious pluralism. In most respects, the instructions outlined by the Commandant of the Coast Guard in Commandant Instruction M1730.4B echo those of the Marine Corps, with one notable exception. A very specific example of religious accommodation in the pluralistic environment is offered in the order. There, the Commandant speaks specifically to Sabbath observance in the Coast Guard. As expected, his guidance emphasizes respect for those who observe a Sabbath on a day other than Sunday. He writes,

The Sabbath shall normally be observed on Sunday and only necessary work or that which is in the interest of welfare and morale should be required on that day. The religious beliefs of those members which require them to observe some day other than Sunday as their Sabbath are entitled to respect, and shall be reasonably accommodated consistent with the needs of the Service. To the extent that military conditions permit, personnel who celebrate the Sabbath on a day other than Sunday will be afforded the opportunity to observe the requirements of their religious principles and should normally be excused from duty on that day to the same extent that other personnel are excused on Sunday.⁶⁵

These comments show how religious accommodation works in the pluralistic, military environment. The beliefs of minority religious groups are treated seriously and with respect. The reason for this is because the state is officially neutral toward all religion in order that it may guarantee the rights of all citizens to freely exercise their faith.

⁶⁵ Commandant, United States Coast Guard, *M1730.4B: Religious Ministries Within the Coast Guard* (Washington DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2012), 4b, 5a.

In all of the military guidelines and policies reviewed for this study, nowhere is this principle spelled out more clearly than in the Code of Ethics for Navy Chaplains. Because chaplains minister in a pluralistic environment very different from that of the local church, they often face dilemmas that are unique to military chaplaincy. The Code of Ethics helps chaplains think through how to be faithful to one's calling while respecting others who have very sincerely held contrary beliefs. While this code is not an actual military order, nor does it take the form of official Navy policy, it does represent the thinking of the Chaplain Corps leadership. It helps chaplains to process these difficult issues as they struggle with what it means to minister in this environment. The code, which is strongly recommended to chaplains, clarifies the Chief of Navy Chaplain's intent:

3. I understand, as a Navy chaplain, I must function in a pluralistic environment with chaplains and delegated representatives of other religious bodies to provide for ministry to all military personnel and their families entrusted to my care.

4. I will provide for pastoral care and ministry to persons of religious bodies other than my own as together we seek to provide the most complete ministry possible to our people. I will respect the beliefs and traditions of my colleagues and those to whom I minister.⁶⁶

These clauses underscore two critical principles. First, there is a simple recognition of the military's pluralistic religious environment. Right or wrong, there is no judgment on the merits of such a religious setting. The Code simply acknowledges the reality that the

⁶⁶ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-12: Religious Ministry in the United States Marine Corps* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2001), 1-7.

military institution is religiously diverse. Any ministry to be conducted in that sphere must recognize this pluralism. Second, there is the promise of respect for faith traditions other than the chaplain's own. Respect for another religious tradition does not imply agreement or endorsement in any way. It simply acknowledges the sincerely held beliefs of others and admits their constitutional right to believe and practice according to their own consciences.

In a similar manner, the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces elaborates on this theme in its own *Covenant and the Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces*.⁶⁷ This interfaith organization consists of official representatives from across the total spectrum of faith communities in the country. It serves as a liaison between the Department of Defense and particular religious organizations. It also fosters dialogue between the many religious bodies and the DOD, and is involved in the endorsement of candidates for chaplaincy in all branches of the military. The NCMAF Code of Ethics covers the same ground as the Navy Chaplain Code, with a few more helpful clauses on ministry in the pluralistic institution. For example,

I understand as a chaplain in the Armed Forces that I must function in a pluralistic environment...I will seek to provide pastoral care and ministry to persons of religious bodies other than my own within my area of responsibility with the same investment of myself as I give to members of my own religious body. I will respect the beliefs and traditions of my colleagues and those to whom I minister. When conducting services of

⁶⁷ National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, "Covenant and the Code of Ethics," <http://www.ncmaf.org/policies/codeofethics.htm> (accessed Sept 3, 2011)

worship that include persons of other than my religious body, I will draw upon those beliefs, principles, and practices that we have in common... I will respect all persons of other religious faiths.⁶⁸

Once again, the same themes arise. There is the straightforward recognition of the pluralistic environment, as well as the promise to respect religious traditions other than one's own. It is clear that NCMAF's concern in the publication of this code of ethics is to prevent unnecessary religious strife and division in the services. The organization's members hope that as chaplains adhere to these principles, mutual respect, toleration, and professional courtesy will prevail in the chaplaincy.

While a Marine Corps order comes directly from the Commandant, who sets policy across the USMC, a Marine Corps Warfighting Publication provides detail on the rationale for the order and more specifics on how to implement it. *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-12, Religious Ministry in the United States Marine Corps*, speaks directly to the challenges of religious diversity in the institution. This publication helpfully provides extensive guidance on why and how MCO 1730.6D can be executed in accord with the related SECNAV and DOD instructions.⁶⁹ With respect to religious diversity, the publication notes,

Chaplains minister in the sea services to fulfill the spirit of the First Amendment to the US Constitution – to avoid the establishment of religion

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ MCWP 6-12.

and to protect the free exercise of religious expression... Chaplains facilitate the needs of all faith groups, as well as providing for the needs of their own.⁷⁰

The implication here is that chaplains may not focus their ministry solely on the members of their own faith groups. Chaplains exist to meet the religious needs of all, providing where they can and accommodating where they cannot. This is clarified in a list of guiding principles for ministry in the USMC:

Marine Corps CRPs should continually be evaluated to ensure that they are implemented in accordance with the following guiding principles... Promote the spiritual well-being of Sailors, Marines, and their families, in accordance with the first amendment, by respecting and accommodating their diverse religious requirements... Model and teach that every person should be treated with human dignity: Value, understand, and respect differences in gender, culture, race, ethnicity, and religion... Chaplains will – Facilitate religious ministry for members of other faith groups.⁷¹

As previously stated, the overriding concern of USMC policy is to provide equal treatment for members of all religions. The intent of these guidelines is to prevent discrimination based on religion. Chaplains are to minister where they can and facilitate the ministry that they cannot provide. However, this facilitation task can be difficult. As ordained ministers, chaplains are seminary-trained to provide for the religious needs of those in their own faith group. They are not trained to meet the needs of others. They are truly subject matter experts on their own religious faith, but they cannot be experts on all

⁷⁰ Ibid., para. 3-1.

⁷¹ Ibid., para. 3-3, 3-8.

religions. Nor can they provide religious ministry for faith groups other than their own for several reasons, including that other religious communities may not permit someone else to conduct their religious rites. So, the chaplain's task is to facilitate other religious ministry.

This is also referred to as the accommodation of other religious needs.⁷² Under a section entitled "Religious Accommodation: Facilitation and Provision," MCWP 6-12 defines what is meant by this task under the circumstances,

Accommodation of individual and collective religious ministry requirements includes, but is not limited to, scheduling, coordinating, budgeting, and contracting... Prepare a written plan for accommodation of religious practices and holy day observances. Account for scheduling, procurement of gear, consumable supplies, outside chaplain/clergy/minister support, and related support activities... Provide and promote an environment of understanding and respect for the variety of individual and group religious expressions.⁷³

This helps to clarify what is involved in "facilitating" or "accommodating" other faith groups. The chaplain guarantees the First Amendment right of all Marines to freely exercise their faith through a variety of support activities. The chaplain accommodates the needs of other faith groups by planning and scheduling their services, obtaining necessary materials, and arranging for alternate chaplains, whether they are contract-clergy or lay led services.

⁷² Because military service can often interfere with the free exercise of religion, the Navy has an obligation to accommodate the religious needs of its personnel as much as possible. "Accommodation of religion is the practice of drafting government policy in a manner that allows persons to exercise their religion as freely as possible... accommodation may be required when government has placed a substantial burden on religious exercise..." Lynn, Stern, and Thomas, *The Right to Religious Liberty*, 73.

⁷³ MCWP 6-12, para 5-1.

The desired end state is an environment of mutual respect and understanding among Marines of different faith backgrounds.

Chaplains can foster this atmosphere of toleration and respect by using their own behavior to set good examples. With their high profile positions in the command, chaplains are often called upon for ceremonial duties which include public prayer. Carefully chosen words can reflect a respectful consideration of the fact that not all of the hearers in a public ceremony share the chaplain's religious persuasion. To this end, MCWP 6-12 offers guidance for chaplains on prayers offered in public ceremonies. Again, the overriding concern is that the chaplain recognize the public ceremony as taking place in a multi-faith setting and pray accordingly.

Navy chaplains who serve in Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard commands are trained to distinguish between divine services and other command functions at which they may be invited to offer prayer. The United States encompasses a diversity of faiths and beliefs, as do the naval sea service communities...Chaplains are encouraged to respect the diversity of the community as they facilitate the free exercise of religious rights protected by the Constitution and military policy...Chaplains may opt not to participate in command functions containing religious elements with no adverse consequences.⁷⁴

Here, an important distinction is made between "divine services" and "other command functions," where prayer may be offered. These other command events include change of

⁷⁴ Ibid, para 5-6.

command ceremonies, federal holiday observances, retirement ceremonies, memorial services, and any number of other similar civic or military observances. The intent behind the policy is for the chaplain to be mindful of the audience and “respect the diversity of the community.” Nowhere is it mandated that prayer cannot be in the name of Jesus, but the chaplain is expected to be considerate of others who do not share the same religious convictions. For those chaplains who may have scruples about praying in such a setting, the guidance includes a conscience clause of sorts, with the guarantee that there will be no reprisals against a chaplain who opts not to participate.

In addition to MCWP 6-12, the Marine Corps also published a secondary guide as an aid to its field grade commanders. Marine Corps Reference Publication 6-12C, *The Commander’s Handbook for Religious Ministry*, is intended to assist commanding officers in understanding the relevant policies concerning religious accommodation. It also gives numerous examples and suggestions on how to handle tricky situations. With respect to religious accommodation, it advises the commander to pay special attention to those Marines with special religious accommodation needs:

For most bases, stations, and commands within the Marine Corps, accommodating traditional religions in the United States, i.e., Christianity both Catholic and Protestant, and Judaism, has not been an issue... The chaplain should be aware of Marines who require special religious

accommodation. When the chaplain addresses Marines at the command's new join brief, he should ask those with special needs to visit or call him.⁷⁵

Once again, a major concern of the service is to protect the rights of the religious minority groups. They have just as much right to practice their faith as the more traditional religions. In fact, precisely because they adhere to an uncommon faith, it is the prerogative of the chaplain to seek them out to ensure that their rights are respected. Otherwise, it might be easy for those Marines to silently suffer discrimination for fear of speaking up with an out-of-the-ordinary religious accommodation request.

After highlighting dietary and immunization concerns as the most common accommodation issues that arise from non-traditional faiths, the handbook goes on to answer frequently asked questions. Of note is its discussion of the difference between civilian ministers and military chaplains. Where civilian ministers take care of their own faith's adherents, chaplains have a dual role. On one hand, they do take care of members of their own religious group, but, unlike their civilian counterparts, they must also facilitate the free exercise of religion for everyone.

Civilian ministers mainly take care of their own. They pastor and teach people who are usually in tune with their theology and world-view. Chaplains serve as staff officers to the command. However, they typically [are] only "pastor" to a small group within the command, to use the

⁷⁵ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Marine Corps Reference Publication 6-12C: The Commander's Handbook for Religious Ministry Support* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2004).

understanding of the pastoral relationship as it is experienced in civilian ministry. Usually these two roles don't come into conflict, but they can.⁷⁶

The handbook gives a real life example of how these two roles did indeed come into direct conflict in a particular command. The concern here is for the commander to appreciate the dual nature of the chaplaincy ministry. As an ordained minister, the chaplain serves to provide religious ministry to all who will receive it. But as a staff officer, the chaplain serves to accommodate religious ministry for the rest, who prefer either another religious ministry provider or none at all.

Another helpful section explains what the free exercise of religion means for Marines under USMC policy. As noted above, MCO 1730.6D emphasizes that commanders are to grant requests for religious ministry accommodation as long as those requests do not adversely impact readiness or mission accomplishment. Here, the *Commander's Handbook* explains that the free exercise of religion means that, "Marines can practice their religious beliefs without interference...Common sense is the key factor. In the DOD, any religion that prescribes practices outside the limits of the UCMJ (drug use, etc.) is prohibited."⁷⁷ Unless there is a compelling reason, commanders are normally to grant requests for religious ministry accommodation. Chaplains play a critical role in this area and serve to protect the rights of all to the free exercise of religion.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 5-3.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 5-5.

As the Chief of the Navy's Chaplain Corps, Rear Admiral Mark Tidd is the Navy's highest ranking chaplain. As such, he has an obligation to provide direction and guidance to all chaplains with respect to the Navy's policy on religious accommodation in this pluralistic setting. The cornerstone of his efforts to provide such leadership is the annual Professional Development Training Conference for all chaplains and enlisted religious program specialists. In 2011, that conference addressed a set of guiding principles meant to underscore the intent of the Navy's policies on religious pluralism. Those principles clarify the Admiral's desired end state: a corps of committed clergy characterized by mutual respect and toleration. Those guiding principles read, in part:

The Chaplain Corps' Guiding Principles complement the Navy Ethos and identify the distinguishing character, culture, and beliefs of the Chaplain Corps. These Principles communicate the values that hold the Chaplain Corps together as an institution and serve as a point of reference for chaplains throughout their careers... We respect the dignity of those we serve. We seek to understand cultural and religious values that differ from our own. We believe the right to exercise our faith is best protected when we protect the rights of all to worship or not worship as they choose...⁷⁸

The idea here is that disrespect for the First Amendment rights of one's fellow citizens offends their dignity. They have a right under the Constitution to the free exercise of their religious beliefs, regardless of what others might think about the merits of their faith. One person's religious rights are not more valuable than anyone else's. Therefore, chaplains exist

⁷⁸ Office of the Chief of Navy Chaplains, "PNC Professional Expectations," in *Professional Naval Chaplaincy* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2011), 31.

in the institution to protect the religious freedoms of all. The Chief of Chaplains elaborates, “Respect: As a chaplain or RP, when sharing my own religious convictions, I will fully honor and support the right of others to maintain and to determine their own religious convictions. I will not attempt to convert another to my faith without explicit permission.”⁷⁹ The major concern in this guidance is to emphasize the importance of respecting the religious rights of others, even if their religious beliefs are in sharp conflict with one’s own.⁸⁰

At issue in this debate are constitutional rights. This is not about truth. As a military institution, the Navy has no interest in religious truth claims. It is simply bound to obey the law. In an environment that is made up of people from every religious persuasion, mutual respect and consideration is essential. That’s why the recently issued “Professional Standards” for Navy chaplains includes clauses like this:

Mutual Respect: All persons operating under the auspices of PNC will recognize the practitioners of other faiths as equals under the law. It is the policy of the CHC to train each of its chaplains and RPs to respectfully accommodate authorized users.

Respect for Diversity: Participants in PNC are entrusted with the duty of creating a climate where every individual’s contribution is valued, and with

⁷⁹ Ibid, 32.

⁸⁰ Kevin Hasson writes persuasively about how genuine religious liberty is the only way to preserve the peace between religious zealots who would impose their distinctive brand of religion on the public, and militant secularists who would banish religion from the public square completely. Kevin Seamus Hasson, *The Right to Be Wrong: Ending the Culture War over Religion in America* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2005).

fostering an environment that respects the individual's worth as a human being *in accordance with Department of the Navy Diversity Policy...*⁸¹

If the military is going to allow any kind of religious observance at all, it is necessary to foster this kind of atmosphere. To fail to do so would mean running the risk of violating the establishment clause in the first amendment.⁸² Since the DOD is officially neutral toward all religion, it is in the department's best interest to acknowledge the religious diversity in its ranks and to ensure that the religious ministry professionals serving in the chaplain corps are sensitive to that diversity.

Clearly, this ministry context is radically different from that encountered by the local civilian minister. To function in the military institution, chaplains may not focus exclusively on those of their own religious persuasion. They are called to serve all as either a provider or facilitator of religious ministry. Failure to understand and appreciate these separate responsibilities leads to institutional ineffectiveness. Because this is such a critical issue, the Navy's "Professional Standards for PNC" recapitulates for emphasis the same policy defined in the related instructions:

Understanding of the pluralistic nature of the environment:... PNC recognizes and values the pluralism inherent in the DOD and PNC community and seeks to accommodate the religious beliefs of all to the

⁸¹ Office of the Chief of Navy Chaplains, "Professional Standards for PNC," in *Professional Naval Chaplaincy* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2011), 63.

⁸² Steven R. Obert, "Public Prayer in the Navy: Does It Run Afoul of the Establishment Clause?" *Naval Law Review* (2006): 25.

fullest possible extent. . . chaplains are free to participate or not participate in Divine Services and/or faith-specific ministries with persons from other ROs. . . While it may be permissible for persons to share their religious faith, outside Divine or Religious Services persons under the cognizance of PNC shall ask permission of those with whom they wish to share their faith and respect the wishes of those they ask. Respecting the religious values of others, persons operating as part of PNC shall not proselytize those who request not to be proselytized as such action raises legal concerns and is counterproductive to service in a pluralistic environment. Failure to respect such a request may result in disciplinary action.⁸³

So it is the Navy's intent for its chaplains to be there for the benefit of all. They are not merely to serve their own religious constituents. Note the specific guidance above. They are to "accommodate the religious beliefs of all," "ask permission" before overtly sharing their faith, "respect the wishes" of their hearers, and certainly avoid any hint of unwelcome proselytism. Thus, for better or worse, religious pluralism characterizes military ministry. The sea services consist of personnel from across the religious spectrum. In accordance with legal constraints, military policy is designed to protect religious liberty by ensuring the rights of all to freely exercise their faith. Religious minorities are of particular concern. Therefore, it is critical that chaplains understand how religious diversity and related military policy impacts the delivery of ministry in this context.

⁸³ "Professional Standards for PNC," 63.

Religious Pluralism: Problems In Ministry

The religious pluralism faced by military chaplains is not a new challenge. Christian leaders have struggled with it before. In his book *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Lesslie Newbigin describes how the new covenant church was born and thrived in just such a context during the first century and beyond:

The world into which the first Christians carried the gospel was a religiously plural world and – as the letters of Paul show – in that world of many lords and many gods, Christians had to work out what it means that in fact Jesus alone is Lord. The first three centuries of church history were a time of intense life-and-death struggle against the seductive power of syncretism. But if the issue of religious pluralism is not entirely new, it certainly meets our generation in a new way. We must meet it in the terms of our own time.⁸⁴

This speaks directly to the focus of this study – that lessons could be learned from Navy chaplains meeting the challenge of religious pluralism “in the terms of our own time.”⁸⁵ So one needs to consider the religiously diverse context before thinking about specifics of ministry in the armed forces. Because this ministry is not conducted in a Christian (or even religious) sphere, wise chaplains need to assess and contextualize their ministries in order to respect boundaries and develop realistic expectations about their role in the institution. Religious diversity is the rule in military ministry, and this poses some important questions.

⁸⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 157.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

How does that diversity make a difference with respect to the delivery of religious ministry by evangelical chaplains? What are the unique challenges that this pluralism presents to chaplains who desire to remain faithful to confessional Christianity? How does this diversity complicate matters? D.A. Carson, a professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, speaks to the problem of religious pluralism in his perceptive book, *The Gagging of God*. In this work, he explains that the challenge of religious pluralism is not something unique to the military. The religious diversity in the Navy is merely representative of the postmodern state of the nation's culture.⁸⁶

Philosophical Pluralism

Rather than focusing exclusively on religious pluralism, Carson discusses religious pluralism as a subset of a larger category he calls "philosophical pluralism."⁸⁷ He identifies three broad categories of pluralism and carefully distinguishes each. His categories of pluralism are the following: empirical, cherished, and philosophical. He elaborates,

I have distinguished empirical pluralism, cherished pluralism, and philosophical pluralism. The first is merely a useful label for referring to the growing diversity in most Western countries... The second category is cherished pluralism: the empirical reality is highly praised in many quarters as a fundamentally good thing... The third category, philosophical pluralism, is at bottom an epistemological stance: it buys into a basket of theories about understanding and interpretation that doubts whether objective truth is

⁸⁶ D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

accessible, and locates most if not all meaning in the interpreter, not in the text or object interpreted.⁸⁸

The Navy is pluralistic in all three of these categories. First, it is ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse. Second, this broad diversity is considered an asset and a source of strength.⁸⁹ Third, given the secular orientation of the institution, religious truth claims are marginalized or trivialized.⁹⁰ Frankly, the Navy just is not interested in them.

Carson sees religious pluralism as falling under his third category: philosophical pluralism,⁹¹ and he directs most of his energy toward answering the challenges of this category. According to Carson, philosophical pluralism covers a wide variety of current viewpoints in support of one idea. He states,

...namely, that any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is necessarily wrong. The only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism. No religion has the right to pronounce itself right or true, and the others false, or even (in the majority view) relatively inferior.⁹²

This is a fitting description of Navy policy. It is deemed necessary to maintain good order and discipline. The last thing the service needs is religious turmoil in the ranks. Therefore, chaplains and other religious personnel are encouraged to positively express their faith, but

⁸⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁹ "Navy Diversity Policy."

⁹⁰ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 37.

⁹¹ Ibid., 19.

⁹² Ibid.

they are forbidden from doing so in a public manner that maligns any other faith group.⁹³

The net effect is to institutionalize a policy that Carson identifies as “radical religious pluralism.”⁹⁴

Ecumenical Cooperation

Another difficult challenge faced by evangelical chaplains is the institutional expectation that chaplains will work together harmoniously. Instead of arguing with each other, chaplains from fundamentally oppositional faith groups are required to cooperate. Even though particular chaplains may hold contradictory theological convictions, Navy policy mandates that they pull together for the greater overall good. Yet, this raises the question of how religious professionals from such radically different backgrounds and competing theologies are supposed to work together. Chaplains must find an answer to this question because ecumenical cooperation is not optional – the Navy requires it. For example, the official standards for Professional Naval Chaplaincy begin with an article on cooperation:

All persons operating under the auspices of PNC will work together cooperatively. Chaplains and RPs especially will work with other chaplains,

⁹³ “Professional Standards for PNC”, 63–64.

⁹⁴ “Radical religious pluralism... holds that no religion can advance any legitimate claim to superiority over any other religion. Wherever any religion (save the religion of pluralism) in any detail holds itself right or superior, and therefore holds that others are correspondingly wrong or inferior, it is necessarily mistaken.” Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 26.

RPs, helping professionals, and command representatives to meet the faith and non-faith group needs of authorized users.⁹⁵

Further, “All persons operating under the auspices of PNC will recognize the practitioners of other faiths as equals under the law. It is the policy of the CHC to train each of its chaplains and RPs to respectfully accommodate authorized users.”⁹⁶

However, such mandates can be naïve. Is cooperation even possible under all circumstances? Simply mandating such cooperation is inadequate. Requirements like this assume that the institution can simply issue a decree and achieve its desired end state. This betrays a fundamental ignorance on the part of the military regarding the specific theological constraints with which its chaplains struggle. How much cooperation is necessary? Where does a chaplain draw the line between what is and what is not acceptable? Naturally, harmony and cooperation sound desirable and even reasonable on the surface. However, thorny issues quickly arise when theory becomes practice. Of course, the relevant instructions include clauses that preclude chaplains from doing anything that violates their consciences.⁹⁷ But the overall command intent is clear: the Navy wants its chaplains to cooperate and pull together as much as possible.

⁹⁵ “Professional Standards for PNC”, 63.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Chief of Naval Operations, *OPNAV 1730.1D: Religious Ministry in the Navy* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 2003), 9.

The Chief of Naval Operations has stated, “Religious Ministry Accommodation Task... [chaplains will] participate in cooperative ministry with all RMTs to provide for the religious needs of all authorized personnel in a defined geographical area.”⁹⁸ Here, the intent is clear. Unfortunately, this task is sometimes easier said than done. While it is easy to speak of cooperation in general terms, it is more difficult to address specific issues that set one chaplain against another. Since chaplains come from a myriad of different theological persuasions, one should expect that they would strongly disagree about some of the most basic principles of religion. Chaplains often set aside certain difficulties for the sake of delivering pastoral care to those under their charge. However, those differences remain and often serve to fuel underlying conflict.

This clash can be quite pronounced in intra-faith disputes. Chaplains from different religions often cooperate better than chaplains from the same broad tradition who represent opposing sides of a certain theological divide. Usually a Christian chaplain is ambivalent about the various nuances of a Rabbi’s theology. The two chaplains fully understand that they represent entirely different faiths, so doctrinal disagreements are irrelevant. However, this is not true for chaplains who represent the same broad tradition in conflicting denominations. For instance, a female evangelical chaplain may feel uncomfortable or even

⁹⁸ Ibid., 6.

threatened by a chaplain from another evangelical denomination which holds the ordination of females to be unbiblical. It might be with great passion and heartfelt conviction that a female chaplain would affirm the following statement from Christians for Biblical Equality:

In the church, public recognition is to be given to both women and men who exercise ministries of service and leadership. In so doing, the church will model the unity and harmony that should characterize the community of believers. In a world fractured by discrimination and segregation, the church will dissociate itself from worldly or pagan devices designed to make women feel inferior for being female. It will help prevent their departure from the church or their rejection of the Christian faith.⁹⁹

However, it may be with equal conviction and genuine sincerity that a fellow male evangelical chaplain might interpret the relevant scripture texts differently and affirm a competing statement from the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood:

In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15)... In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.¹⁰⁰

Imagine what could happen if these two chaplains were assigned to the same unit and expected to cooperate harmoniously in Christian ministry. Such an arrangement could

⁹⁹ Bilezikian et al., "Men, Women and Biblical Equality," Christians for Biblical Equality, 1989.

¹⁰⁰ "Danvers Statement," Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1987.

be awkward. Could they conduct services together? Could they even tolerate each other when one chaplain believes the other's ordination vows to be invalid? Disagreements like this are not uncommon in military ministry. This is just one small example of the type of conflict between chaplains at issue in this research. Despite the incredible diversity represented in its ranks, the Navy Chaplain Corps has found a way to get its chaplains to pull together and overcome their differences for the sake of ministry.

The Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission for Chaplains and Military

Personnel is the endorsing agent for military chaplains from seven different denominations.¹⁰¹ Given this religiously diverse setting, the PRJCCMP advises the ministers under its jurisdiction,

No military or civilian higher authority may require a PRJCCMP chaplain to:

- a. Lead or participate in conducting worship services with non-Trinitarian chaplains.
- b. Conduct worship services with chaplains whose ordination requirements do not meet the ordination requirements of the PRJCCMP chaplain's particular denomination.
- c. Conduct worship services that are not consistent with the PRJCCMP chaplain's convictions on the matter.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Those denominations include: The Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), The Korean Presbyterian Church in America-Koshin (KPCA), United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP).

¹⁰² Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel, *Chaplains' Manual*, 13.

This guidance gives the PRJCCMP chaplain a necessary “conscience clause” to invoke if put in a potentially compromising situation. However, it also gives those chaplains significant latitude to deal with issues according to their own discretion. Ecumenical cooperation among military chaplains is certainly ideal, but it can be hard to achieve when the messy details of ministry in a pluralistic institution surface.

Given the reality of ministry in this radically diverse environment, the PRJCCMP directs its chaplains with these words:

[PRJCCMP Chaplains are obligated:] To respect and uphold the ethical and constitutional right of other endorsers and their respective chaplains, to maintain and express their doctrinal distinctives and ecclesiological practices. . . . To encourage our own (and other non-PRJC endorsed chaplains) to provide the maximum of cooperative ministry without any covert or overt pressure on our own, or other chaplains, to compromise their conscience.¹⁰³

This statement displays a humble recognition by the commission that while its chaplains are to faithfully represent their Presbyterian beliefs, they also need to be tactful and considerate. Failure in this respect can generate the kind of conflict that discredits chaplains in the eyes of the military community and makes fruitful ministry impossible. In a pluralistic environment such as this, it is necessary to respect the religious views of one’s fellow Americans, who also enjoy freedom of religious expression.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 15.

Postmodernism

Carson outlines further challenges created by religious pluralism. Although Founding Fathers like James Madison and Thomas Jefferson once hoped that in the open marketplace of ideas, the truth would prevail, Carson believes that in today's radically pluralistic setting, the truth is instead repressed. He argues,

Instead of a rich diversity of claims arguing it out in the marketplace (i.e. empirical pluralism), in what Neuhaus calls "the naked public square," and instead of this diversity being cherished as the best way to ensure freedom and to pursue truth (cherished pluralism), the pressures from philosophical pluralism tend to squash any strong opinion that makes exclusive truth claims – all, that is, except the dogmatic opinion that all dogmatic opinions are to be ruled out...¹⁰⁴

This fitting description of postmodernism aptly depicts what happens in the Sea Services. Because of the secular nature of the institution, the Navy has no interest in transcendent truth claims. Inasmuch as debate over such truth claims will tend toward conflict, chaplains and other religious personnel are advised to keep their thoughts about exclusive truth claims to themselves. Proselytizing is prohibited.¹⁰⁵

This antipathy toward exclusive truth claims demonstrates how the Navy conforms with popular postmodern sentiment. In a multicultural, multiethnic, interfaith community, Carson's philosophic pluralism is commonly accepted as the norm. What is true for one, is

¹⁰⁴ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 33.

¹⁰⁵ "Professional Standards for PNC," 63.

not necessarily true for all. All is personal preference. No single religious conviction is more valuable than another. In fact, to claim exclusive truth is to offend the polite sensibilities of the larger community. Along the same lines, Newbigin elaborates on this postmodern outlook:

We now know, if we are not willfully blind and deaf, that we live in a religiously plural world in which the other great world religions show at least as much spiritual vitality as does Christianity... an aggressive claim on the part of one of the world's religions to have the truth for all can only be regarded as treason against the human race. Even if it is granted that this exclusive claim has been the claim of the Church through nineteen centuries, we must face the fact that it is not now tenable... so now the Church... must recognize that God's grace is at work with indiscriminating generosity among all peoples and in all the great religious traditions, and therefore abandon the claim to be the sole possessor of the truth. This view is now so widely shared that it has become in effect the contemporary orthodoxy. Pluralism is the reigning assumption, and if one declines to accept it, as I do, one must give reasons.¹⁰⁶

Of course, chaplains are free to believe all sorts of exclusive truth claims, but they must be careful about broadcasting their opinions in public. In a chaplain-led divine service where Sailors and Marines voluntarily attend, religious speech is protected. There, chaplains lead worship according to the dictates of their religious organization.¹⁰⁷ But in other contexts,

¹⁰⁶ Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 156.

¹⁰⁷ Title 10, United States Code, Section 6031. "An officer in the Chaplain Corps may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a member. The commanders of vessels and naval activities to which chaplains are attached shall cause divine service to be performed on Sunday, whenever the weather and other circumstances allow it to be done; and it is earnestly recommended to all officers, seamen, and others in the naval service diligently to attend at every performance of the worship of Almighty God."

chaplains are expected to be sensitive to the religious diversity in the ranks and speak accordingly.¹⁰⁸

Francis Schaeffer also discusses the challenges of postmodernism and religious pluralism in his book, *A Christian Manifesto*. Referring to empirical pluralism and religious liberty, Schaeffer observes,

Along with the decline of the Judeo-Christian consensus we have come to a new definition and connotation of "pluralism." Until recently it meant that the Christianity flowing from the Reformation is not now as dominant in the country and in society as it was in the early days of the nation... Thus as we stand for religious freedom today, we need to realize that this must include a general religious freedom from the control of the state for all religion. It will not mean just freedom for those who are Christians. It is then up to Christians to show that Christianity is the Truth of total reality in the open marketplace of freedom.¹⁰⁹

But he goes on to address contemporary postmodern sentiments, and he expressly identifies postmodernism as a challenge for contemporary Christian witness:

This greater mixture in the United States, however, is now used as an excuse for the new meaning and connotation of pluralism. It now is used to mean that all types of situations are spread out before us, and that it really is up to each individual to grab one or the other on the way past, according to the whim of personal preference. What you take is only a matter of personal choice, with one choice as valid as another. Pluralism has come to mean that everything is acceptable. This new concept of pluralism suddenly is everywhere. There is no right or wrong; it is just a matter of your personal preference.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ "Professional Standards for PNC," 63.

¹⁰⁹ Schaeffer, *Christian Manifesto*, 46.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

As long as religious rights are being respected, the Navy has no interest in the religious beliefs of its constituents. Christianity or Hinduism, atheism or paganism, the Navy does not care, because it is not in the truth business. With respect to religion, the Navy simply wants to ensure that the Constitutional rights of its personnel are respected while ensuring that mission readiness is not undermined.

Biblical/Theological Considerations

As difficult as this religiously diverse environment is for military ministry, it is imperative to realize that the Bible speaks to these challenges and sheds light on how Christians should engage pluralistic societies. Of course, this idea of faithful believers being one voice among many in society is hardly foreign to scripture. In the book of Daniel, the prophet navigates a situation fairly similar to that of the typical military chaplain.

Daniel

First, consider how Daniel sought merely to serve the one true God.¹¹¹ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was his God, and he displayed no allegiance whatsoever to the gods of the Babylonian pantheon. But, very much like a chaplain, he was also a Babylonian government official working under an unbelieving civil authority.¹¹² He faithfully served a

¹¹¹ Daniel 2:20-23; 2:47; 6:10

¹¹² Daniel 1:18-20; 6:2

number of pagan kings who did not recognize the God of Israel as the only true God. In addition, rather than being a god-fearing society, the Babylonian public itself was spiritually and morally depraved. As a whole, the people largely turned against the one true God¹¹³ and engaged in idolatry, sorcery, and every form of corruption. This is yet another fitting parallel with the moral condition of the unbelieving majority in the American military services.

Yet Daniel, along with Noah and Job, is lauded in scripture as a model of wisdom and righteousness.¹¹⁴ All three of these men remained faithful to God in the midst of ungodly societies. Daniel diligently and faithfully served a series of pagan kings, including Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. He labored within that pagan system, on behalf of pagan authority, yet he never allowed that depraved environment to corrupt his faith in God. While he submitted to his pagan name, Belteshazzar, the chief God of the Babylonian pantheon¹¹⁵, he never compromised his commitment to the God of Israel. He had wisdom to know when to cooperate with the divinely appointed authority, and when to draw the line against compromise. When ordered to partake of the king's food, he refused, lest he

¹¹³ While the faith of Daniel and his friends is tolerated in the kingdom, the Babylonians themselves are committed to magic, astrology, idolatry and the Babylonian pantheon. Daniel 1:20; 2:2; 3:1-7; 5:4,7; 6:7

¹¹⁴ Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3; Matthew 24:15-16

¹¹⁵ Daniel 1:7. "To make them forget the God of their fathers, the guide of their youth, they give them names that savour of the Chaldean idolatry... Thus, though they would not force them from the religion of their fathers to that of their conquerors, yet they did what they could by fair means insensibly to wean them from the former and instill the latter into them." Matthew Henry, ed. 1991. Commentary on the Whole Bible. Vol 4. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 799.

defile himself¹¹⁶. Faithful to his prophetic calling, he always spoke the truth. Unlike his pagan rivals, he had the boldness to tell the king what he did not want to hear¹¹⁷. In the end, even his enemies were forced to admit his blamelessness¹¹⁸. It took nothing less than a clever trap to get him sentenced to death in the lion's jaws for praying to the Lord. Yet even when faced with such a cruel execution, "he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously."¹¹⁹ That is a picture of boldness in the face of fierce opposition in a hostile culture. Even though he served in a pagan government, Daniel remained faithful to the Lord. Through that faithfulness, he brought glory to God. He was called to serve that nation as a government official, and his faithfulness to the Lord and to his high-profile calling functioned as a light in that immoral society. His witness even caused both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius to admit the greatness of Daniel's God¹²⁰. Through all this, Daniel serves as an example of one who remained faithful to God even as a government official serving in the midst of a religiously

¹¹⁶ While the text does not give a specific reason why the king's food would defile, Matthew Henry suggests, "Sometimes such meat would be set before them as was expressly forbidden by their law, as swine's flesh; or they were afraid lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or blessed in the name of an idol." *Ibid*, 800. In any case, to consume such food would have been a violation of Daniel's conscience.

¹¹⁷ Daniel 2:10-12; 4:19, 25; 5:17-28

¹¹⁸ Daniel 6:5

¹¹⁹ Daniel 6:10

¹²⁰ Daniel 3:26-29; 4:34-37; 6:25-28

diverse, unbelieving society. Through his devotion to God, he prospered and brought great credit to himself and to the name of the Lord.

Mars Hill

Perhaps nowhere in all of the scripture is the word of God so directly engaged with religious pluralism as in the episode of the Apostle Paul on Mars Hill. In this episode, Paul shows how to faithfully witness for Christ in a religiously diverse context. The book of Acts records, “While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.”¹²¹ When Paul encountered the Athenian society, he did not close his eyes to the plight of the thousands of lost souls all around him. He faced the mass idolatry, false religions, and spiritual corruption of the city, and he determined to do something about it. Leaving the relative safety of his like-minded brothers and sisters in the church, he went out into that religiously diverse society in order to reach the lost with the gospel. In this situation, the parallels with the experience of military chaplains are evident. Chaplains are simply clergy who see the desperate need for the gospel within the military community and are determined to do something about it. Following Paul’s example, they take the ministry

¹²¹ Acts 17:16-17

of the gospel outside the bounds of the church in order to reach the broader community with God's word.

Observe his method: Paul found a point of contact with his intended audience, and then used it as a launching point for his gospel message. As scripture records,

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To an Unknown God. Now what you worship as something unknown, I am going to proclaim to you."¹²²

As the book of Acts records, Paul first went to Mars Hill, the place where philosophers debated and important issues of the day were discussed. Then he identified a way to connect with his hearers using terms that they could understand. Military chaplains take the same general approach. They go to places of need by ministering outside of the boundaries of the traditional church. Then they connect with their target demographic by finding and building on some common ground. Chaplains immerse themselves in military culture. They wear military clothing, speak military language, and function under military constraints, all in order to minister effectively to military personnel and their families. As Paul explains,

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the

¹²² Acts 17:22-23

Jews... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.¹²³

Once Paul bridged that social and cultural gap, he engaged his audience directly with the gospel.¹²⁴ At every opportunity, faithful military chaplains do the same.

Specific Challenges

Challenge One: Philosophic Pluralism

This discussion has highlighted a few specific challenges to ministry in this religiously diverse setting. It is important to note a few scriptures that speak directly to those issues. With respect to Carson's philosophic pluralism, the Bible flatly contradicts the idea that there are various paths to divine truth. As Peter and John assert before the religious rulers in Acts 4, "This [Jesus Christ] is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."¹²⁵ Of course, where philosophic and religious pluralism are the norm, such bold propositions seem not only untenable, but actually offensive. Any claim to exclusive possession of the truth can only be construed as narrow-minded or insulting.¹²⁶ Yet, this is precisely the

¹²³ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

¹²⁴ Acts 17:24-31

¹²⁵ Acts 4:12; Psalm 118:22

¹²⁶ Newbiggin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 156.

message of scripture. Jesus Christ is not merely great; he is unique, and he represents the only hope of mankind. As Paul clarifies, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”¹²⁷ As scripture states, God, the Father of Jesus Christ, is alone the one true God, and redemption through his son is the only hope for peace with God.¹²⁸ Thus, when compared with the overwhelming emphasis of the New Testament, philosophic pluralism clearly defies scripture.

Challenge Two: Ecumenical Cooperation

Another challenge identified by this literature review was the issue of ecumenical cooperation among chaplains of differing faith groups in this pluralistic environment. On one hand, scripture has much to say about unity and harmony among Christians, leaders and non-leaders alike. When chaplains profess the same allegiance to Jesus Christ, they should be eager to display their oneness and unity in him. As the Psalmist exclaims, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”¹²⁹ The

¹²⁷ 1 Timothy 2:5-6

¹²⁸ Referring to this exclusive view, Carson notes, “This position teaches that the central claims of biblically faithful Christianity are true. Correspondingly, where the teachings of other religions conflict with these claims, they must necessarily be false. This stance brings with it certain views of who Jesus is, what the Bible is, and how salvation is achieved. Normally it is also held that salvation cannot be attained through the structures or claims of other religions. It does not hold that every other religion is wrong in every respect. Nor does it claim that all who claim to be Christians are saved, or right in every respect. It does insist that where other religions are contradicted by the gracious self-disclosure of Christ, they must necessarily be wrong. Until the modern period, this was virtually the unanimous view of Christians.” Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 27.

¹²⁹ Psalm 133:1

writer of Hebrews also exhorts Christians to “let brotherly love continue...¹³⁰” Along the same lines, the Apostle Paul urges believers to “love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.¹³¹” He advises elsewhere to “do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.¹³²” Given these apostolic charges, one would think that cooperation between Christian chaplains would be a foregone conclusion. But things are not always that simple.

While unity and harmony are good things, chaplains must take care not to compromise essential elements of the Christian faith in the course of that cooperation. In 1 Corinthians, Paul warns the church to flee from idolatry and all forms of false worship,

Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and the table of demons.¹³³

Here, the focus is on worship. If one participates in false worship, then one partakes of that “altar.” The result is fellowship with demons. Paul urges his Corinthian disciples to stay away from false worship, as it is idolatry¹³⁴ Likewise, if ecumenical cooperation with

¹³⁰ Hebrews 13:1

¹³¹ Romans 12:10

¹³² Philippians 2:3

¹³³ 1 Corinthians 10:18-21

¹³⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:14

another military chaplain results in participation in false worship, then it would be better to break fellowship than to partake in idolatry.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul warns the church against undue familiarity with unbelievers. This also has ramifications on ecumenical cooperation in the Chaplain corps. As Paul admonishes,

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?... Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord...¹³⁵

In this case, the focus is not on false worship but on false believers. Merely professing the Christian faith is inadequate. If it becomes evident through delinquencies in life or in doctrine that a chaplain's profession of faith in Christ is false, then Paul's exhortation in these verses would prohibit ecumenical cooperation. That fellow chaplain should then be treated like any other non-believer. Certainly, the faithful chaplain should be warm, open, and caring, treating the fellow chaplain just like any other lost individual. But fidelity to scripture would disallow any form of joint ministry. Clearly, ecumenical cooperation among Christian chaplains is a grand goal; however biblical constraints make it more tentative and less certain.

¹³⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:14-17

Challenge Three: Postmodernism

Finally, the challenge of postmodernism must be addressed. As previously mentioned, the essence of postmodernism is the notion that there is no objective truth, but merely interpretation.¹³⁶ What is true for one is merely that person's interpretation of the truth, and not necessarily true for all. Absolute terms are avoided because there is no objective way to distinguish between orthodoxy and heresy.¹³⁷ All is subjective and relative¹³⁸.

But, of course, such notions flatly contradict the Christian scriptures. To demonstrate, in his great high priestly prayer, Jesus identifies the truth as everything which comes from the mouth of God, declaring, "Thy Word is truth."¹³⁹ The psalmist also finds ultimate truth in the word of God, stating, "The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever."¹⁴⁰ Paul notes how the testimony of the apostles is also God's word, and therefore the truth, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you

¹³⁶ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 57.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹³⁸ One response to the Global War on Terror has been to view all religious absolutism as intrinsically dangerous and despotic. D.A. Carson goes to great lengths discussing this phenomenon in his excellent treatise on contemporary attitudes toward exclusive truth claims. D.A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012).

¹³⁹ John 17:17

¹⁴⁰ Psalm 119:160

believers.¹⁴¹” Elsewhere, Paul argues that because this testimony is the word of God, it is truthful and can be relied upon for sound instruction, “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”¹⁴² Likewise, Peter urges his readers to recognize the Scriptures as the word of God, “Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴³” In sum, absolute truth is found in the word of God and in Jesus Christ, who is the conduit of “grace and truth.”¹⁴⁴

This belief in the truthfulness of God’s word roots the faithful evangelical chaplain’s worldview in a truth that is objective and absolute, quite contrary to the relativism that defines postmodern thought. Unlike the typical postmodernist, evangelical chaplains recognize the word of God as exclusive truth. In addition, they acknowledge that this truth is not mystical, but rather something that can be grasped. God is in the business of revealing his word and making his truth known. In the end, this reality defines military ministry: chaplains take the objective truth of God’s word into the institution in order to make it known.

¹⁴¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:13

¹⁴² 2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁴³ 2 Peter 1:20-23

¹⁴⁴ John 1:17

It is clear that the issues in this research cut to the heart of what it means for Christians to function as “salt and light¹⁴⁵” in the world. Military chaplains serve in a ministry environment that is radically dissimilar to that encountered by their colleagues in the local church. The Scriptures speak to many of these specific challenges that chaplains face when they endeavor to serve in a secular, postmodern and pluralistic institution. Thankfully, the Bible provides the examples of Daniel and Paul. The record of their faithfulness in the face of similar circumstances is helpful and demonstrates the difference that a commitment to ministry service can make in a religiously diverse setting. Along the same lines, the Scriptures speak directly to some of the specific challenges that chaplains are likely to encounter in this context. With a grasp of the relevant biblical texts, chaplains can be well prepared to cooperate ecumenically in the midst of this religiously diverse, postmodern military environment.

This chapter identified some of the challenges that religious pluralism poses for chaplains in the Navy and Marine Corps. This pluralism is intrinsic to the religious liberty that characterizes our nation. It is not a new issue, but goes back to the earliest part of our country’s history. Over the years our nation’s leaders have struggled with the ramifications of such robust religious liberty and our military services continue to struggle with it to this

¹⁴⁵ Matthew 5:13-16

day. It presents a number of challenges for the faithful chaplain, but nothing that wisdom, mutual respect and the guidance of Holy Scripture cannot help us overcome.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Despite their profound differences, Navy chaplains have the same objectives. They are called to serve the spiritual and pastoral needs of military personnel and their families. While they come from an extraordinary cross section of various religious backgrounds, chaplains usually find ways to work closely together in support of their common goals in ministry. This study focused on how military ministry and ecumenical cooperation in the *chaplain corps is affected by the unique challenges of service in this religiously pluralistic institution*. Toward this end, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest issues with the pluralism in the military environment?
2. What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest issues with ecumenical cooperation in this environment?
3. How have these experiences with pluralism and ecumenical cooperation in this context affected the practice of military ministry?

This chapter will describe exactly how the research was conducted. It will detail the design of the study, and why these particular research participants were selected. It will also cover how the data was collected and analyzed, discuss the project's limitations as well as disclose the researcher's own biases toward the subject matter.

Design of the Study

Because this study focused on how Navy chaplains understand and interpret the challenges of working together in a pluralistic environment, the researcher decided to adopt a qualitative, descriptive ethnographic methodology, reporting the findings in narrative form. This qualitative, vice quantitative, approach means that the emphasis was not on how much or how many, but rather on the meanings Navy chaplains assign to their own experiences in the service. While qualitative research may be more nuanced and less objective than the standard quantitative inquiry, it was most fitting given this subject matter. About this type of research, Denzin and Lincoln observe that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”¹⁴⁶ This is precisely what the researcher has attempted to do in this study.

¹⁴⁶ N.K. Denzin, and Y.S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 3.

In her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Sharon Merriam identifies four primary characteristics of the qualitative approach: “The focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive.”¹⁴⁷ This study followed such a pattern. The emphasis was on uncovering the meaning that Navy chaplains assign to working together as religious providers and pastoral caregivers in the military institution. The researcher collected and analyzed data received in a series of semi-structured interviews. Rather than testing a theory from the “top down,” the researcher attempted to focus on specific experiences and interview data to build understanding from the “bottom up.” The final product of this study is a dissertation that paints a vivid picture of ecumenical cooperation in a pluralistic institution and how the ministry practitioners in that context interpret their own experiences.

Participant Sample Selection

The primary tool for data collection during this research was semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sampling¹⁴⁸ of senior Navy chaplain corps leaders. The researcher intended to target chaplains most likely in a position to provide valuable insight on the proposed research questions. Toward this end, seven participants that met the

¹⁴⁷ Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 77.

following criteria were selected. First, they all had a military rank of Lieutenant Commander¹⁴⁹ or greater. This ensured that the chaplain participants had at least ten years of experience across a wide range of duty assignments in both the Navy and Marine Corps. A greater breadth of experience lends itself to a wider range of ministry contexts from which to draw ministry lessons related to the proposed research questions. Second, all interviewees were on active duty at the time of the interviews. This limited participation to chaplains who were engaging daily with the issues raised in the proposed research. Retired chaplains and reservists also have valuable insight to share, but their perspectives may differ from that of a chaplain presently on active duty who has to deal with these issues every day. Finally, the participants were selected from a variety of denominational backgrounds. The researcher sought to understand the experience of many chaplains from different backgrounds. Their commonality lies in the military setting and chaplain corps as an organization, not necessarily in their religious denomination. This ensured that a variety of competing voices would be heard from different religious perspectives.

Chaplain participants were interviewed from a number of different Navy and Coast Guard commands throughout the northwestern United States. Since this region was a fleet concentration area, it provided numerous military installations from which to draw

¹⁴⁹ In the US military, this rank is limited to the Navy and Coast Guard. It is commonly called O-4 and is equivalent to Major in the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps.

chaplains. The close geographical proximity of the interview subjects was also important because the researcher conducted all interviews in person. Specific chaplains who fit the research criteria were easy to identify because Navy Region Northwest distributes a social roster of active duty Navy chaplains in the area. Therefore, the researcher had immediate access and contact information for every chaplain in the northwest region who fit the desired profile.

Data Collection and Analysis

Eight interviews were conducted in person over the course of three weeks. This necessitated a small amount of travel in order for the researcher and the chaplains to meet at mutually convenient locations and times. Flexibility with respect to these appointments was important because of the demanding nature of chaplain ministry, changing command schedules, and potential emergencies.

The interviews focused on exploring the participants' understanding of the research questions. For this reason, those questions were somewhat open-ended. The intent was to encourage the chaplain participants to freely discuss the pressing issues addressed in the research questions. This "semi-structured"¹⁵⁰ interview approach allowed for flexibly worded questions and follow-up probes. As Merriam describes,

¹⁵⁰ Merriam, 90.

The largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.¹⁵¹

So the semi-structured approach helped the researcher to guide the interview along, and it allowed greater flexibility to explore the meaning that the participants assign to their experiences.

The researcher used the following questions in each of the interviews. These queries formed the basis for the discussion, as well as a springboard for follow-up questions and further probes.

1. What guidance did you receive from your denomination about ministering in this kind of environment?
2. What are the disadvantages to ministry in a pluralistic institution?
Advantages?
3. How has this pluralistic environment affected your delivery of ministry?
4. How is your ministry different than if you were ministering in your home denomination?
5. Have you had any problems with respect to cooperating with or working

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

- with a fellow chaplain? What were the circumstances? What was that like?
6. Under what *circumstances can you, or can you not, do a “joint service”* with another chaplain?
 7. At what point does ecumenical cooperation turn into compromise of your faith convictions? Where do you draw that line?
 8. Are there unwritten rules on how chaplains are to work together?
 9. Describe a good cooperative relationship between two chaplains from opposing theological sides.
 10. What training did you receive for dealing with ministerial conflict?
 11. Do you have any formal guidance from your denomination on how and under what *circumstances you can cooperate ecumenically with another minister?*
 12. Is there a safe place to address issues in dispute without fear of retribution?
 13. Does ecumenical cooperation affect chaplain corps ranking, FITREPs or promotion?

The researcher took careful notes on anything of significance that arose in the discussion, such as important themes or non-verbal cues. In addition, the discussions were recorded with a pocket-sized, digital voice recorder. This ensured that the discussion was

captured in its entirety for transcription and analysis at a later time. This written record served as the bulk of the research data to be analyzed.

Interview data was carefully coded and analyzed throughout the data collection process utilizing a *constant comparative method*.¹⁵² This allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the interview transcripts, looking for parallels and divergences of thought among the respondents. Again, Merriam explains,

Basically, the constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall object of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data.¹⁵³

This method enabled each interview to inform the next as better questions arose or new answers brought a different perspective to the research questions. The focus was on understanding how chaplains grapple with the task of ministering alongside other religious ministry professionals in a pluralistic institution. Ultimately, the goal was to improve the *practice of professional naval chaplaincy*. As Merriam points out, “Applied research is undertaken to improve the quality of practice of a particular discipline. Applied researchers...hope their work will be used by administrators and policymakers to improve

¹⁵² Merriam, 30.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

the way things are done.”¹⁵⁴ This research design was intended to lead to the discovery of best practices in keeping with the objective of applied research.

Limitations of the Study

Even though the chaplain participants in this research represented several different theological perspectives and religious backgrounds, together they embodied just a tiny fraction of the diversity found in the Navy Chaplain Corps. This purposeful sampling of senior leaders provided a great deal of stimulating information on the topic at hand, but these eight can hardly be expected to speak for the entire Chaplain Corps. There very well may be some important insight that was missed because a certain theological tradition or minority religion chaplain was not represented in the sample. So the conclusions of this research depend on a limited literature review and on the input received from a small number of senior chaplains currently serving in the northwestern United States. As previously discussed, these constraints were necessary for logistical and practical reasons as well as for limited time and resources.

While it might have been profitable to include a female in the discussion, there was no such senior female chaplain available in region at the time of the research project. This is not surprising, since female chaplains make up only a small minority of the chaplain corps.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 4.

Similarly, all chaplain participants identified themselves as Christians. Of course, the chaplain corps includes *non-Christian chaplains*, but their numbers are not great, and there were none in the region during the time of the study.

Also, this research focused on the feedback received from senior chaplain corps leaders who were still on active duty. Without a doubt, junior chaplains, retirees, and reservists have valuable insight on the subject matter as well. However, this research did not include those groups in order to limit the scope of the study. Additionally, the focus was only on ecumenical cooperation as chaplains experience it in the pluralistic environment of the Sea Services. While there may be many other controversial issues worthy of significant research in the Navy Chaplain Corps, the emphasis here was on cooperation among the *chaplains as they work together in this religiously diverse institution*.

Moreover, it is important to note that the spotlight was exclusively on the Department of the Navy.¹⁵⁵ Many of these same issues likely have parallels in the Army and Air Force chaplaincies, but the implications of these findings for chaplains in those other services may be limited.

¹⁵⁵ This includes the Coast Guard since Navy chaplains serve there even though the USCG falls under the Department of Homeland Security.

Researcher Position

As noted above, this study was conducted with the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Therefore, it is appropriate to include some brief comments on the researcher's background, biases, and motivations. The researcher is a Navy chaplain on active duty, currently serving as the Command Chaplain at a naval station in the region being studied. If this research were conducted by someone else, the researcher would fit the proposed interviewee criteria. This accounts for the researcher's interest in the subject matter and motivation to seek a greater understanding of the topic.

As a career Navy chaplain, the researcher's analysis of the data received cannot help but be colored by his own experiences with the subject, both good and bad. Also, the researcher's theological convictions constrain him to some degree. He is a reformed Christian, ordained by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and endorsed for military ministry by the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission for Chaplains and Military Personnel. These commitments require him to interpret his experiences through the lens of a biblical life and worldview.

In the end, the researcher tends toward what Merriam calls a "positivist" epistemological perspective. "A positivist orientation assumes that reality exists 'out there'

and it is observable, stable and measurable.”¹⁵⁶ This is how the researcher tends to interpret the world. He focuses on objective and external truth as he understands it. This can impact the researcher’s analysis in areas where there is no clear or objective measure of fact. For instance, one of the proposed interview questions asks, “At what point does ecumenical cooperation turn into compromise of your faith convictions? Where do you draw that line?” This question assumes that such a line exists! However, an awareness of the researcher’s biases has enabled him to set them aside in order to treat the interviewees with fairness and record their observations accurately for the sake of research.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

During the course of this study, the researcher sought to discover how United States Navy chaplains navigate the difficulties of religious diversity in the military institution. While they all have the same goal of serving God and country by ministering to naval personnel, the Navy chaplains are not a homogenous group. As a whole, the Navy chaplain corps is made up of men and women from theological traditions as diverse as the nation itself. They share no common religious creed. They each have religious values characteristic of their home denomination. They serve in a strictly secular, military institution that seeks to treat all religions equally and fairly. Yet despite the unique hardships and circumstances of military life, Navy chaplains have a history of coming together for the sake of ministry to military personnel. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the challenges that chaplains face as they work with others from differing faith groups in this radically diverse, secular institution. Accordingly, the three research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest issues with religious pluralism in

the military environment?

2. What do Navy chaplains consider the greatest challenges with respect to

ecumenical cooperation in this environment?

3. How have these experiences with pluralism and ecumenical cooperation in this

context affected the practice of ministry?

In order to shed light on these research objectives, several senior Navy chaplains were interviewed. These chaplain leaders all have substantial military ministry experience and are currently serving on active duty within the bounds of Navy Region Northwest.

Introduction to the Research Participants

The paragraphs below briefly describe the research participants. For the sake of anonymity, the interviewees' names have been changed. More extensive biographical information related to their chaplaincy experience is detailed in Appendix B. A thorough review of the extensive military and ministry experience of these subjects will highlight their expertise on the research topics. Each holds a military rank of Lieutenant Commander or greater. Each is a career Navy chaplain with at least twelve years of military experience across a wide spectrum of diverse Navy and Marine Corps assignments. In addition, each is still serving on active duty, guaranteeing the fact that these are not abstract concepts to

them. These are chaplains who constantly face the issues addressed in the research on a regular basis.

CDR Clark is the Command Chaplain on a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier. He is an Assemblies of God chaplain and has been in the military in various capacities since 1982. He serves a capital ship that is the centerpiece of a strike group ready to project naval power worldwide. As the most senior chaplain in the Carrier Strike Group, he supervises several chaplains and numerous religious program specialists throughout the battle group. Previous assignments include 8th Marines, Carrier Air Wing 17, Marine Aircraft Group 12 and Destroyer Squadron 9.

LCDR Rick is a Destroyer squadron Command Chaplain. He is responsible for all religious ministry aboard three Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigates and four Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. Ordained as a Southern Baptist, he has been on active duty in both the Navy and Air Force for twelve years and has served in a number of chaplain assignments including Naval Air Facility Atsugi and Marine Corps Combat Logistics Regiment 15.

CDR Larry is a Coast Guard District Chaplain. A Navy chaplain serving the USCG, he covers all religious ministry for an extensive multi-state territory. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy and the Master's Seminary, he pastored a Baptist church for three years before accepting his first chaplain assignment as Command Chaplain for

Destroyer Squadron 31 at Pearl Harbor. A veteran of multiple combat deployments to Iraq with the Marine Corps' First Force Service Support Group, Chaplain Larry has extensive experience as both a line officer and a staff chaplain.

LCDR Matt is the Command Chaplain at a Naval hospital. A recognized expert in pastoral care, he completed his Pastoral Care Residency and Clinical Pastoral Education at Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego. A Navy chaplain since 1999, he is ordained in the United Methodist Church. Some of his previous assignments include Battalion Chaplain for Third Battalion, Fifth Marines at Camp Pendleton, Command Chaplain for USS Bataan (LHD 5), and Military Sealift Command, Atlantic.

CDR Henry, a former Army chaplain, is now the Command Chaplain at a major Naval installation in the region. Duties there include supervision of all religious ministries on base and pastoring the Navy chapel. In addition to his M.Div from Andrews University, he has a Th.M from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkley. A published specialist in the area of traumatic stress, he is also distinguished by a 1440 subspecialty code designating him as an expert in pastoral counseling. As a Seventh Day Adventist chaplain, his previous assignments include Multi-National Corps, Iraq, 1st Marine Air Wing, the USS San Jacinto (CG 56).

CAPT Paul is the most senior Navy chaplain in the region. As such, he oversees all religious ministry that occurs at every installation in the area, as well as for every chaplain on shore duty in the region. A veteran liturgical protestant clergyman of thirty six years, he has been on active duty since 1984. Some highlights of his career include service in two of the most senior, forward deployed, operational chaplain billets overseas: Third Marine Expeditionary Force, and Seventh Fleet.

CDR Owen is the senior chaplain of a submarine base and responsible for religious ministry support for eleven ballistic missile submarines. As a Presbyterian Church in America minister, he supervises several chaplains, religious program specialists and countless lay leaders. He holds degrees from Covenant College and Westminster Theological Seminary. He has been on active duty since 1996 and has been on several deployments with both the Navy and Marine Corps. Previous assignments include a Naval Hospital, USS Hue City (CG 66), Third Force Service Support Group, a Carrier Air Wing, and a Coast Guard District.

This group of research participants includes some of the most experienced and knowledgeable chaplains in Navy Region Northwest. Their years of service range from a low of twelve years in the case of Chaplain Rick, to a high of over thirty years for Chaplain Paul. Each chaplain has received numerous personal awards, and they all have various

amounts of advanced graduate training beyond the Master of Divinity degree. This is a credible group of seasoned veterans of military ministry well suited to address the questions proposed in this research.

Issues with Religious Pluralism

The first research question focused on issues related to the extensive religious diversity in the Navy. With each chaplain representing a particular faith tradition and yet called to serve all personnel, there are bound to be challenges due to the extensive religious pluralism present in the institution. While the research participants discussed numerous matters related to this radical diversity, consensus coalesced around six broad categories: the First Amendment, common ground, this amazing ministry opportunity, undeniable pressure to conform, religious accommodation, and necessary boldness. These six categories will be discussed below.

First Amendment Framework

In the course of the interviews, five of the seven participants referenced the First Amendment to the Constitution in one way or another. The free exercise and non-establishment clauses of the First Amendment figured prominently in these chaplains' understanding of their place and role in the institution. It became clear that these chaplains saw the First Amendment as central to what they do. Chaplain Henry elaborated on this

when he spoke of the nation's attitude toward religion. He emphasized that the government is officially neutral. Because of the non-establishment clause in the First Amendment, the nation simply allows and provides for a myriad of competing religious viewpoints. In his mind, this is all in God's plan, and very much like what God does. The same God who sent his son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the world, also permits error to exist. Henry comments, "God doesn't block error. He does not turn our eyes away from Pagan temples. All these things exist by God's permission...God causes the same rain to fall on the just and the unjust." Accordingly, truth and error exist side by side. But God ensures that his light shines even in the darkest place. Henry goes on, "God always makes sure his light is shining so that those who are truly searching for it are not left with just [the error] around them." This is how he views his role as a *chaplain in the midst of the great religious diversity* all around him. While the nation tolerates all sorts of religious expression, both good and bad, God's hand is at work through it all, and he has not left himself without a witness.

Chaplain Paul spoke along similar lines when he emphasized how the government's neutrality with respect to religion provides all chaplains with an equal opportunity to promote their faith. He asserts,

In the military setting, every chaplain has an equal opportunity to promote what they believe is true...so when I'm talking to people, I should have the

freedom, and actually it is my duty, to be the best liturgical evangelical clergyman that I can possibly be. And a Southern Baptist is owned by his denomination and should be the best Southern Baptist chaplain that he can be. And I, as liturgical evangelical clergy in the military, cannot hinder the Southern Baptist chaplain from trying to promote his Southern Baptist theology. Likewise, he cannot hinder me from trying to promote my theology.

The point that Chaplain Paul makes here is that because of the nation's deep commitment to religious neutrality, the government has no stake in religious controversies. All religions are treated evenhandedly, and this neutrality is guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Similarly, Chaplain Owen pointed out how this religious neutrality prevents the chaplain's religious activity from being regulated. As a supervisory chaplain, he is responsible for overseeing the ministries of chaplains junior to him at the submarine base.

He insists that because of the non-establishment clause, he does not manage the content of his subordinates' ministries. He merely holds them accountable to do their job. In his own words,

I don't care what their background is or what they do. I just want to see that they're taking care of Sailors. That's our mission together, and I'm doing everything in my power to hold them accountable to make that happen... They can preach or do whatever they're ordained by their denomination to do. I'm not here to tell them what to do in that area.

So then, as a supervisor, Chaplain Owen will see to it that his subordinates are actively engaged in religious ministry and pastoral care, but because of the Constitution, he refuses

to interfere with the specific content of that ministry. He simply wants to ensure that his chaplains are productive in their callings to military ministry.

Perhaps Chaplain Larry put his finger on the issue most succinctly. In discussing the importance of religious neutrality on the part of the nation, he emphasized how important it is for chaplains to get this right. He argued,

I take very seriously the fact that I'm part of an institution bound by the Constitution. This institution says that chaplains are to support the free exercise of religion, and that's vitally important. If we insist on establishing just one faith tradition, then the whole idea of religious liberty just falls apart. If we tell somebody, for example, that they can't worship their way, then it won't be very long before somebody else comes along and tells us that we can't worship in our way...so it's very important that we take seriously our call to uphold the Constitution.

Religious liberty itself is at stake here. That is what the First Amendment preserves. So this radical religious pluralism in the Navy is a sign that religious liberty exists and is thriving.

Without both religious clauses in the First Amendment, religious liberty is threatened.

Either it is endangered by a state sponsored religion, or the free exercise of religion itself can be in jeopardy.

Finding Common Ground with Others

Another observation about religious pluralism that came up during the course of the interviews was that of finding religious common ground with others. The chaplains explained that it is important to quickly find areas that they have in common with others.

It does not matter whether it is in chaplain to chaplain relationships or chaplain to Sailor relationships. That common ground serves as a starting point for ministry, and relationships build from there. Since chaplains most often work with people from dissimilar backgrounds, all but one of the interviewees emphasized the importance of finding out what they share in common with others and building on that.

Chaplain Paul was the only one who did not stress the importance of focusing on common ground. As a liturgical evangelical chaplain, his denomination is the most exclusive of the several represented by the research participants. In contrast with the others, Chaplain Paul emphasized the importance of maintaining theological distinctives and actually highlighting them in order to distinguish his ministry from that of other chaplains. He said, "God has called me to be a clergyman, and part of that is to be the holder of the *didache* for my denomination which is the teachings. So I don't want to convey to others who may or may not be watching me that I compromise that *didache*." As he described how he would preach in a mixed setting, he made a point that he would specifically not emphasize common ground. He continued,

...if another chaplain invited me to come and be a part of their ministry and preach, then I would say, "Well, the sermon topic is going to be on infant baptism. Do you have a problem with that?" or "My sermon is going to be on the Sacrament of the Altar and the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. Do you have a problem with that?"

His point is that fidelity to the constraints of his denomination requires him to avoid any kind of identification with other groups that might be theologically compromised according to his denomination's standards. In order to do that, he insists on accentuating his theological distinctives and specifically avoiding what he has in common with other chaplains.

However, Chaplain Paul's position is an outlier in the findings. All six other chaplains took a dramatically different view. Chaplain Clark noted that ministry in a pluralistic institution requires focusing on the majors of the Christian faith and not getting "bogged down in the minutia of a certain doctrine." In fact, he spoke about denominational distinctives falling aside as chaplains "stick with what's important," namely, *the essentials of the faith*. Chaplain Matt concurred with this view in his warning against becoming "very narrow, very rigid, and very concerned with theological distinctions." He noted how the pluralistic environment challenges chaplains to reassess what they are willing to fight over and why. When they focus on what they share in common with one another, chaplains "discover that they are more alike than different. They have different methodologies, but the core things are the focus...they're here to minister to hurting people." Chaplain Owen spoke along the same lines. It makes a difference, he said, "when your goals and mission are the same. We are all here to take care of Sailors." With a

common purpose and a common understanding of the basic essentials of the faith, chaplains reach out together to people in need regardless of the theological details that may divide them.

In addition, three of the chaplains surveyed discussed how people tend to label each other based upon denomination, and how often those labels prove inaccurate. Chaplain Henry explains,

We tend to label others... We live in an "us" versus "them" sort of world. The fact of the matter is that what we think is important to others and the way they are truly wired is usually not the same.... There are so many misconceptions. But we work with people from all different denominations. We get to know them because we share common uniforms and jobs, and we get to know them because we are with them. And we find out that there's not really that much that truly divides us. Just the little stuff that's not huge. I can't say that for Missouri Synod Lutherans. Maybe they think that there is still a lot that divides us, but in general there just isn't.

Chaplain Henry's sentiment was echoed by all of the other participants except Chaplain Paul. It is clear that they focus on those elements of the Christian faith that unite chaplains, rather than those that divide them. With a shared sense of duty to God and their fellow Sailors, chaplains find that which they have in common with others and use that as the basis for ministry.

Great Opportunity for Ministry

The research participants also overwhelmingly regarded the religious diversity in the Navy to be an incredible opportunity to advance the gospel. Whereas most civilian clergy spend the large majority of their time with people from their own faith tradition, chaplains are just the opposite. Only a small amount of time is spent with persons of the same religious background. By a wide margin, chaplains spend most of their time reaching across religious divides and interacting with people unfamiliar, or even hostile, to the chaplain's own faith tradition.

Chaplain Paul pointed out how he made an effort to get out into the community when he was in the civilian pastorate in order to "mix it up with people who were not coming to my particular church. Now in the Navy, I don't have to worry about that because they're all here. They come to work everyday. I don't have to necessarily go out. They are coming to me." By being embedded in the military unit, the chaplains are at the center of an extremely diverse crowd that they can reach with the gospel.

Not only is this crowd diverse, but very often they lack even a rudimentary understanding of the Christian faith. This means that the chaplain must explain the most basic Christian doctrines in order to bring the truth of scripture to bear on an issue. This

too, is an incredible opportunity to reach Sailors with the essential message of the Christian faith. As Chaplain Rick put it,

When we counsel, a lot of foundational work has to be done...I'll tell people that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that nobody comes to the Father except through him. The thing is that not everyone believes that or has even heard of that! So a lot of times I have to go back to the basics and teach them that the God who created them wants to have a relationship with them... and once that doctrinal foundation is laid, I can bring the truth of God to the problem that this person is dealing with and show them how God is working in their life through these different things.

This focus on the essential message of the Christian faith is necessary because a common understanding of God and his purposes in the world is not shared in a pluralistic setting. As Chaplain Rick continued, "In the local parish, the counseling and services we provide often come from a mutual understanding of our religious background. The difference in the military is that we can't take that commonality for granted." This makes military ministry an exciting opportunity. Chaplains have a chance to bring their faith to people from every conceivable religious background. It is an incredible opportunity for chaplains to reach outside of their own faith tradition to people who have yet to hear the chaplain's message. That's why Chaplain Rick goes on to declare, "I feel like I have more opportunity to share my faith in the military than in the civilian pastorate."

Along the same lines, Chaplain Paul expressed how privileged he felt to be able to take advantage of this incredible opportunity to further the cause of Christ in a setting fully

funded by the American taxpayer. As an example, he described an Easter sunrise service that left a huge impression on him as a young lieutenant. At the Marine Corps Air Station in Tustin, California, he helped put on a scrambled egg breakfast and cooperative sunrise service with other chaplains. The event was a huge success. Several hundred people packed the stands in front of one of the hangars while a simple message of Christ's love and victory over death was proclaimed. In his own words, what moved him so profoundly was the fact that "Uncle Sam paid for this, and there were probably quite a few people who heard that message and became Christians because of it. That in itself just boggles my mind." So often people think that because of the separation of church and state, the government cannot get involved in religious affairs. However the military chaplain corps is a unique exception. In this case, the government provides a built-in audience, including all the support infrastructure, and fully funds the ministry. According to Chaplain Paul, this is an irresistible opportunity for ministry that would be tragic to miss.

On another note, Chaplain Henry of the Seventh Day Adventist church readily admitted that his faith tradition was "extremely small" when compared to the rest of the protestant denominations. From that perspective, he made an interesting observation about the unique opportunity presented by religious diversity in the institution. It gives smaller denominations, like his, equal standing with larger faith traditions. He reasoned,

The religious pluralism in this setting gives people a chance to listen and see who we really are. If the chaplaincy were dominated by merely say the Roman Catholics or high church protestants, then smaller denominations would have a hard time breaking in. They would be shut out on the outside.

His point is that, as an Adventist, he has just as much opportunity as a chaplain from a much larger denomination. So military chaplaincy presents an opportunity for his smaller faith tradition to be heard by the broader public. He continued,

There are a lot of times that I find that people just don't know what Seventh Day Adventists believe. Well, they might have a crazy aunt somewhere that was one, but they don't really know much about it. Or if they know about it, they've just heard some extremes. So working in this environment gives me an opportunity, because of my rank and as a chaplain, to get my foot in the door with them...It gives people a chance to listen and see who we really are.

Of course, this tremendous opportunity could be perceived as a negative if Navy policy gives unorthodox religious views equal footing with more mainstream traditions, and indeed it does. But, in the midst of the cacophony of various religious viewpoints in the institution, it is undoubtedly clear that there is great opportunity for ministry.

Pressure to Conform

The interviews also revealed that religious pluralism in the Navy resulted in both subtle and not-so-subtle pressure on chaplains for conformity. Chaplain Clark highlighted this issue when he objected to chaplains being lumped together. According to him, the

attitude among many is that since he is not a Roman Catholic priest or a Jewish Rabbi, then he must be a general protestant. To use his words, "I get lumped together with every other Tom, Dick, and Harry." While he is indeed a protestant, he identifies specifically with his Assemblies of God denomination and resents what he feels is institutional pressure to minimize theological issues that distinguish him from his fellow protestant chaplains. As he declares, ministry in this context "forces you to change and strips your belief system of things that separate you [from other chaplains]." While he readily admits that focusing on the things chaplains share in common is a good thing, he strongly dislikes being a Pentecostal and yet "being stripped of my Pentecostalism and forced to be a generic, evangelical chaplain." According to Clark, this pressure to conform to a generic mold is very real and has serious implications on career, retention, and advancement. It is a form of "forced compromise."

In order to bolster his claim, Chaplain Clark gave a real life example of this pressure to conform. He told a story of a junior chaplain whose sermons were too exclusive for the tastes of his supervisory chaplain. That supervisor threatened his subordinate with a notation of "serious problems" with respect to teamwork on the next performance evaluation. Evidently, there were some theological disagreements between the two chaplains, but the point remains the same. That subordinate felt intense pressure to

minimize his theological distinctives for the sake of broad conformity. Chaplain Clark asserted that resistance to this pressure would negatively impact a chaplain's career. Such a chaplain "would not be allowed to advance," because "he would not be seen as a team player."

Similarly, Chaplain Owen told a story of a chaplain who suffered just this kind of discrimination. Because of his theological constraints, he was unable to perform certain ministry tasks that his chaplain superiors required of him. As a result, his career was damaged, and the case ended up in court with the chaplain suing the Navy for redress of wrongs against him. Chaplain Owen relates,

I remember when I was in Japan. We had a Stars and Stripes article on the lawsuits...there was this chaplain suing the Navy because he didn't get promoted. I just thought that he was a whiner. I thought, "Come on man! Suck it up! You didn't get promoted. A lot of guys don't get promoted. Don't create a lawsuit about it!" But then I read the article and my eyes were opened...he couldn't do a certain service that his superiors wanted him to do because his faith group wouldn't allow him. Then they marked him down in the ranking and gave him poor scores on his FITREP for teamwork. How in the world can those chaplains ask him to do something he can't even do? And then mark him down because he can't do it?

In this case, the pressure to conform was substantial and overt, but the idea of meeting in the middle for the sake of "teamwork" can be challenging for those with specific religious scruples. This goes along with Chaplain Matt's observation that the Navy expects chaplains to "teach people how to work together with others who are radically different." Chaplains

are expected to model camaraderie and team spirit, and a big part of that is not emphasizing our differences, but rather focusing on our common values and objectives. In sum, Chaplain Matt explains, “The Navy expects us to be professional.”

So chaplains are torn between the Navy’s expectation of cooperation and conformity, and their pledge to uphold their own doctrinal and denominational exclusivity.

Along these lines, Chaplain Owen admits,

I think there’s a danger in this ministry. It’s a danger of having your faith watered down. If you ask the average Sailor out there, “What do chaplains believe?” or “What can chaplains do?” You’ll find that the perception is that chaplains can do anything. For example, they’ll think that protestants can perform last rites, etc. They really don’t know that I’m ordained by a certain denomination and that I can only do those things allowed. Most Sailors don’t have a clue...in their mind, it’s all just bland. We’re all generic chaplains. They really don’t have any idea about our constraints.

Chaplain Owen is deeply concerned about being branded with the “general protestant” label. Because that tag is so broad, it can mean practically anything. It is especially disconcerting to him when a chaplain with unorthodox belief or practice is known as a “general protestant.” The implication is that other chaplains with the same label share the idiosyncrasy when they do not. “There will be some guy who believes something totally bizarre, and then others will think that other protestant chaplains are that way too.” So this pressure to conform to some kind of broad standard is problematic in the eyes of many

chaplains. As Chaplain Owen puts it, “That ‘General Protestant’ mentality is a very big negative.”

Although Chaplain Paul admits that such pressure can be present in the institution, he believes that such conformity is not required. Chaplains can maintain their theological exclusivity without repercussions or compromise. Like the others, he too objects to this idea of conforming to some kind of generic chaplain standard. While most Sailors are ignorant of the various constraints placed on chaplains, he allows that the Navy itself tends to minimize those constraints. Of course, the chaplain corps would not deny that chaplains must abide by the constraints of their respective denominations. But Chaplain Paul thinks that there is indeed a subtle pressure to minimize exclusivity and accentuate commonality. However, according to him, when a chaplain succumbs to that pressure, he loses his theological distinctiveness and necessarily compromises his faith. Chaplain Paul remarks,

While we don’t publically criticize other chaplains or faith groups when we disagree with them theologically, that doesn’t mean that we compromise what we believe...God has not only called me to the chaplain corps, but he has called me to uphold my denominational distinctives as well.

There is a very real fear of compromising the faith. This is not something that chaplains take lightly. While the Navy wants them to conform to what Chaplain Paul calls the “mushy middle” as much as possible, he emphasizes the fact that chaplains are not required to do so.

However, this pressure to conform does not affect all chaplains equally. Three of the seven respondents noted how theologically conservative chaplains tend to have a harder time with it than theological liberals. Since chaplains are required to abide by different constraints, it follows that those subject to stricter denominational controls would be affected the most. Chaplain Henry spoke to this most directly when he said that this institutional pressure “is probably easiest for pastors that would be considered fairly liberal.” Even though he does not consider himself theologically liberal, his denomination does not burden him with a lot of restrictions. He is left to his own discretion regarding when, where, and how much he will conform to others. He readily admits that this latitude makes life easier for him than for some of his more theologically conservative colleagues.

Accommodation of Other Faiths

One issue that stood out dramatically in the interviews was the challenge that the chaplains’ facilitation task presents. All seven of the chaplain respondents addressed the accommodation of faiths other than their own as a serious issue. While chaplains enter the corps from a specific faith tradition, they do not merely serve adherents of their own religion. They are present to serve all. With respect to religious ministry that they cannot personally provide, chaplains are to ensure that religious rights are respected. That involves accommodating diverse forms of religious expression: even forms that chaplains themselves

may find objectionable. This is a ministry task that civilian clergy do not undertake, but it is a primary duty of military chaplains. They need to guard the free exercise of religion in the ranks.

In discussing the cognitive dissonance that this facilitation duty can cause, Chaplain Henry put the issue in perspective. In his mind, he is not called to try to stamp out all forms of false religion. God will deal with false religions in his way and at his time. Instead, Chaplain Henry believes that he is called to positively present the message of Jesus Christ when and where God provides the opportunity. This attitude is in harmony with the pattern that Chaplain Henry sees in the New Testament. When the Apostle Paul entered into a city, he positively presented the Gospel. He did not try to tear down or attack the false religions all around him. In addition, God himself permits false religion of all stripes to exist. While he could wipe them all out, he permits them to coexist side-by-side with his church. Chaplain Henry continues,

We provide the same sort of view on false religions that God does...In his providence, he permits false teaching to exist. So why should I, as a chaplain, be required to stamp out false teaching, when God himself doesn't do that? Should I try and frustrate other religions and promote only my own? Should I use my position to squash other religious viewpoints?

These are, of course, rhetorical questions. His answer is an emphatic "No!" Chaplains are not only present in the institution to practice their own religious ministry, but also to

ensure that religious ministry other than their own is available to those who desire it, regardless of what the chaplain thinks are the merits of that other religious ministry.

Without a doubt, this is a challenging issue that causes some to question their calling to military ministry. Chaplain Owen described this kind of soul searching when, as a prospective chaplain, he first realized the scope of this religious facilitation task, among other military ministry challenges. He described his fears about Navy chaplaincy before he joined. He was deeply concerned about being required to compromise his faith, and he spoke of having second thoughts about having to “water down” his faith. At first glance, the opportunity simply did not sound appealing to him. It was not until he spent time thinking through the issue that he came to have peace about the fact that he would not have to compromise his own faith in the chaplain corps. He simply had to protect the rights of others not to compromise their faith. Frankly, it is a matter of the Golden Rule, and, as mentioned above, this understanding is rooted in a deep appreciation for the religious liberty guaranteed by the Constitution.

Chaplain Matt had a similar response to the challenge presented by this accommodation task. Quite frankly, he thinks that chaplains will have a hard time in this environment if they couple a very zealous personality with an attitude that considers their own faith tradition as the archetypical expression of authentic religion. As he put it, “If a

chaplain thinks that his call to ministry is to change the world and make everybody his own denomination, then he's going to have a very difficult time here." To him, chaplains exist to serve all, and a big part of that is respecting the many and varied religious persuasions of the Sailors under their care. When chaplains focus on their own faith group exclusively and do not take this facilitation task seriously, they are part of the problem and not the solution.

He reasons,

If you have a chaplain that will only do services for his own faith group, then I don't understand why he's in the chaplain corps. I understand he wants to serve his own community; I get that. But if that is all he's interested in, then he should have stayed in his local church. If chaplains do not realize that there is a much larger community out there that they are called to serve, then I think they ought to explore a different road.

So accommodation of faiths other than one's own is critical in the chaplain corps.

No single chaplain can be all things to all people. Therefore, if a chaplain will serve all, then that chaplain needs to take seriously the charge to facilitate ministry for other faith groups. That does not mean providing religious ministry for those other groups. But it does mean ensuring access, appointing lay leaders, supervising chaplains, publicizing other divine services, providing necessary equipment or supplies, and simply respecting the right of Sailors to worship as they so choose. Essentially, this is the Golden Rule in action. As the most experienced chaplain in the area, Chaplain Paul spoke to this issue when he described his job as a senior supervisor. "I'm supposed to lobby for the bodies to fill the chaplain

billets we have in the region. I also provide the cash resourcing for all the chaplain programs, and we don't even have another liturgical evangelical chaplain in the region!"

So, as a senior supervisor, the majority of his work is not in support of his own theological tradition, but it is in support of other chaplains' non-liturgical ministries. This work is done, as he put it, simply out of respect for the religious rights of others.

Yet this accommodation task is also performed because it is not optional; the Navy requires it. As Chaplain Paul put it, "We have to support one another." Chaplain Rick concurs. About facilitating for others, he declares, "It's important to understand, first and foremost, that this is Navy policy...I am required to facilitate for others. That does not mean that I perform divine services for them, but I am to see to it that they are guaranteed the free exercise of religion. That's why the chaplain corps exists." So this is no mere collateral or tertiary duty. Chaplains ensure that the practice of religious ministry is not obstructed, even when that religious ministry is not the chaplain's own.

Chaplain Rick feels strongly about this duty. When asked if this accommodation, or lack thereof, should affect a chaplain's career, he answered with an emphatic affirmative. In his opinion, chaplains who neglect this aspect of their job should have it noted in their performance evaluations, and it should affect their advancement. He argued,

The reason is this: if I've only come into the military in order to provide for those in my particular religion, then I'm not doing what the Navy needs me

to do. I need to have a wider perspective than that. We're called to provide for our own, facilitate for others, and care for all. If I'm only focused on one of those three, then I'm not doing what I signed up for and what I said I was going to do.

Chaplain Rick related a personal experience he had with a chaplain who neglected his accommodation task. Not only was access to religious ministry hindered to some degree, but that chaplain reaped no small amount of resentment from his colleagues who had to pick up the slack.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this accommodation issue related to the perception of compromise on the part of those who are unfamiliar with military ministry. Four of the seven chaplains spoke directly about the perception by others that chaplains necessarily compromise their Christian faith when they uphold the First Amendment rights of others. Chaplain Clark draws a distinct line between what he believes and promotes as an Assembly of God minister, and what he's responsible for as the Command Chaplain on an aircraft carrier. While he is responsible for all ministry on the ship, that in no way means that he personally endorses everything that happens under the auspices of the Command Religious Program. This is a distinction that some critics fail to appreciate.

Chaplain Henry concurred with that opinion when he described the intense criticism that he received from devout Christians when he put out information about the meeting of a non-Christian religious group. The group was led by a lay leader appointed by

the Command. While Chaplain Henry strongly disagreed with this group's religious tenets, he treated them like any other lay-led group in the Command Religious Program.

Chaplain Henry's critics attacked him for compromising his Christian faith by including the group's information in his regular publicity to all hands. This kind of treatment is extremely distressing to chaplains. As Chaplain Henry put it, "Some Christians descended on me because they thought I was compromising. And that's difficult..." What made it worse was that in religious terms, Chaplain Henry identified with his critics. He too is a devout Christian, but because they did not understand his requirement to accommodate other faiths, they could not appreciate what he was doing in defense of religious liberty.

Necessary Boldness

Another major issue that came up as a challenge presented by religious pluralism in the Navy had to do with chaplains themselves. There is a particular mindset that is necessary in order to thrive in military chaplain ministry. Chaplains need to have a certain boldness about themselves and their ministries. They need to realize that this radically diverse environment will not nurture their personal faith, but rather challenge it. So clergy need to be secure in their own ministerial identity before commissioning into the chaplain corps. They need to know who they are and what their calling is before plunging into an institution that does not share their faith or values. Chaplains need to be clear about why

they are in the Navy, what they intend to do, and how they intend to do it. To enter otherwise is naïve and can set a chaplain up for disillusionment and failure.

Chaplain Clark exhibited this confidence in his calling when he described his attitude toward critics and others who do not understand or support military ministry. About criticism he has received, he admits, “I don’t care. I really don’t. I know what I’m responsible for. I know my heart. I know what God has called me to do. I’m not trying to impress anybody...I’m not concerned about what this ministry looks like to the critics.” Apparently, Chaplain Clark has thought through very clearly who he is and why he is in the Navy. This allows him to boldly face his critics. This kind of confidence is necessary because chaplains often face intense criticism from all sides. If chaplains are too concerned with satisfying critics, they will never get anything done. As Chaplain Larry explained, “We need to have integrity: beliefs and practices that are important to us that we don’t compromise, because if we try to be all things to all people, we very quickly become nothing to anyone.” So chaplains need to think through very clearly who they are and why they are in military ministry. When they are crystal clear on that, it will give them boldness to face the challenges presented by the diversity all around them.

That boldness is also necessary when chaplains find themselves confronted with what would be called “heresy” in their home churches. Chaplain Matt spoke of his attitude toward the false teaching he encounters in chaplaincy. His comments demonstrated how he had thought through what his reaction should be toward those who subscribed to what his church would call false teaching. He gave an example:

I was a battalion chaplain, and we had an Osprey crash, and nineteen Marines died. At the memorial service there was an Imam who prayed because we had Muslims on board. We also had a Rabbi come and do part of the service, and I participated as well. I didn't have any problems with that. Of course, I don't subscribe to all the beliefs that a Jewish person has or a Muslim has...what they believe doesn't reflect on me personally. It's not about me.

Chaplain Matt points out that the beliefs that others hold are not relevant to him. His concern is to remain faithful to the ministry to which God has called him, regardless of what the people around him teach or advocate. This takes boldness. Chaplain Paul put it this way, “I can almost overlook a whole lot of potential heresy if people are getting the gospel.” His point was that the opportunity to reach unreached people with the message of Christ was so compelling that he could endure some heterodoxy for the sake of being present amid the diversity. This is the mindset of someone who is secure in his faith and does not feel threatened by the unorthodox beliefs that others hold. When asked his opinion of those who object to the chaplain's facilitation task, Chaplain Paul expressed a

desire to turn the tables on the hypothetical critic. “Why are you self-conscious about what other people believe? Why does their faith feel threatening to you?”

Along these lines, Chaplain Rick spoke of how the background or denomination of one chaplain could feel threatening to another. For instance, a chaplain might be anxious around another chaplain whose denomination considers that chaplain’s faith tradition to be heretical. Once again, this requires boldness on the part of chaplains who are secure in their ministerial identities. Chaplain Paul summarized, “Religious pluralism is not a negative on my ministry because I have confidence in what I believe.” That kind of strong conviction makes chaplains effective amid religious diversity.

Chaplain Rick also spoke of Christian chaplains who are present in the corps for less than pure motives. He quoted the Apostle in Philippians 1:15–18, “Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love...the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely...What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.¹⁵⁷” Certainly the Lord knows who is present in military ministry with false motives, but in Chaplain Rick’s mind, that is not any of his business. He is satisfied as long as he is able fulfill his calling.

¹⁵⁷ Philippians 1:15-18

In a similar way, Chaplain Larry spoke about the necessity for inner conviction and boldness in military ministry. To him, nothing can replace the inner strength that comes from a deep assurance that God has called him to this ministry. “Here’s where the challenge is for me,” he says, “In God’s sovereignty, he has called us to institutional ministry. And none of us wants to compromise, because we realize we’re going to stand before the Lord and give account for our ministries.” This core conviction that chaplains are called by God and accountable to him gives them the confidence they need to be successful.

When chaplains are not sure of themselves and lack that strong conviction, they can feel threatened by the religious diversity in the military. With so many competing voices all around them, chaplains without a strong sense of identity are tempted to retreat into an “us versus them” mentality. Chaplain Matt elaborates,

This pluralism throws a large variety of ideas and concepts your way, and your theology and personal faith can become much more rich as a result of hearing those different perspectives...but if you’re not comfortable with that, you can become very narrow and very rigid. So this environment really challenges you to come to grips with what you believe and why you believe it.

He warns against a certain “circle wagons” mentality that pits the chaplain’s own narrow theological orthodoxy against everyone else. His point is that chaplains who are confident in themselves and secure in their ministerial identity do not need a confrontational approach to every other religious viewpoint. Those other perspectives do not intimidate

them, but rather challenge them to understand more clearly why they hold their own theological positions.

Finally, Chaplain Rick noted how a great deal of boldness can be acquired when chaplains simply acknowledge the hand of God at work in the institution.

I really don't have a problem with the religious diversity here because I believe in the sovereignty of God. I believe that God has brought me to this place and to this ministry for his glory. My desire is not necessarily to win everybody over to my belief system. My desire is simply to honor God and provide the example of Jesus to Sailors, knowing that God can work in their lives through my demeanor, my choice of words, my cordiality, and through my encouragement. God gives me opportunities to build relationships with them so that when and if there does come a time where they are more interested in finding out what makes me tick, then I will grab that opportunity.

He discussed the challenge of religious diversity by contextualizing the issue. When chaplains realize that God is at work and in control, that helps them begin to make sense of the myriad of competing religious viewpoints and doctrines they encounter. This kind of confidence in God's providence helps chaplains come to grips with who they are and what their unique role is in this diverse institution.

The discussion above focused on issues related to the extensive religious diversity in the Navy. Since each chaplain represents a distinct faith tradition, there are bound to be challenges due to the extensive religious pluralism present in the institution. While the research participants discussed numerous matters related to this radical diversity, consensus

coalesced around six broad categories: the First Amendment, common ground, this amazing ministry opportunity, undeniable pressure to conform, religious accommodation, and necessary boldness. These were the topics that came to the forefront with respect to religious pluralism in the Navy.

Issues with Ecumenical Cooperation

The second research question explored issues related to ecumenical cooperation between chaplains in the Navy. Since each chaplain is ordained by and represents any one of hundreds of different faith groups, there are bound to be challenges due to the extensive array of religious traditions embodied in the Navy Chaplain Corps. Outside of the military, many of these religious professionals would have little to say to one another since they labor in different religious organizations with different creeds, priorities and agendas. Yet, in the military, this extremely diverse cross-section of professional clergy are called to work side-by-side for the sake of ministry to Sea Service personnel and their families. This section will discuss the research participants' responses to queries about cooperation, competition, and conflict in the chaplain corps.

Grounds For Cooperation

While it is evident that chaplains do cooperate with one another in the Navy and Marine Corps, sometimes the reason for this cooperation is not apparent. In the course of

the interviews, the respondents discussed why they made the effort to cooperate with one another in military ministry. Their answers break down into three broad categories: agreement on essential doctrine, similar objectives in ministry, and professional courtesy under the auspices of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Agreement on Essential Doctrine

First, four of the seven chaplains spoke of a willingness to cooperate with one another in ministry on the basis of agreement on the broadest essentials of religious doctrine. While the particular denominations that they represent may differ, the vast majority of chaplains profess the Christian faith. Chaplain Henry called attention to the harmony between chaplains on the basis of a shared object of faith. When chaplains purport to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, it makes cooperation easier. They come to realize, he says, that “what divides us are the minor things.” As long as the broad contours of our faith are the same, chaplains are apt to set aside some of the smaller issues and come together for God’s sake. Chaplain Clark shared the same outlook,

So we’re willing to take all the little, petty differences that we have and set them aside and come together and encourage one another to trust one another and work with one another. Because we’ve been given this sacred trust, we have to work together and be a team and be collegial and be friends. If we don’t, we’re just going to end up shooting ourselves in the foot.

Without minimizing the importance of some of the lesser priorities in ministry, Chaplain Clark's point is well taken. The sacred trust that he mentions here is that calling by God to be a blessing to the men and women of the Sea Services, along with the tremendous opportunity of reaching them with the gospel. Theological uniformity is not required, but as long as chaplains are in agreement on the barest essentials of religion, that is sufficient for cooperative relationship.

When pressed for details on exactly what makes up these barest essentials of religion, answers coalesced around critical doctrines of the Christian faith. Chaplain Larry identified a belief in the Bible as the word of God, salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the divinity of Christ. To him, these truths represent the Christian faith in its broadest form and are necessary for a realistic profession of Christianity. Similarly, Chaplain Clark stressed an orthodox view of the person of Christ, "I would say the big thing for me would be the divinity of Christ. That's major for me. In my opinion, that's the dividing line between Christianity and non-Christianity. Those who do not believe in the divinity of Christ do not fall into the Christian category in my mind." In a parallel way, Chaplain Rick also identified a couple of areas of doctrine that were crucial in his mind. He emphasized a memorial view of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, along with an

orthodox doctrine of scripture as the dividing line, for him, between chaplains of like-faith and unlike-faith.

But Chaplain Henry insisted that mere profession of similar faith was not enough. It had to be a credible profession. In other words, an examination of one's lifestyle reveals whether a chaplain's profession of faith is genuine. To him, if a chaplain's life was morally compromised, that would nullify any supposed profession of faith. In that case, he would consider the chaplain a non-Christian, regardless of the faith that chaplain formally professed. He gave an example of how he could not do any kind of joint ministry with a chaplain who was living in open, scandalous, unrepentant, sexual immorality. To do that would be deceitful because, in a way, that would send a message to people that these two chaplains were in harmony when, in fact, they were not. So chaplains do cooperate on the basis of a broadly defined common faith, but that faith must be professed credibly with a lifestyle that supports that profession.

Similar Objectives in Ministry

Secondly, the interviewees also spoke of a basis for cooperation residing in the fact that they all have similar goals. Regardless of whether two chaplains share a common faith, they both desire to be a blessing to those they are called to serve. In this respect, even chaplains from unlike faith traditions willingly cooperate with one another for the sake of

the greater good. When asked about the challenge of supervising chaplains from very different religious traditions than his own, Chaplain Owen highlighted the shared mission as the basis for ministry cooperation. In his words,

Our mission is exactly the same. We are here to take care of Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen. When it comes to chaplains from other religions, I supervise them...I expect them to be on the boats, out there, riding, taking care of our Sailors. They're counseling, they're doing their job...I don't care what their faith background is, we're going to cooperate on the ministry tasks. Now as far as the content of that ministry goes...I hate to say it's irrelevant, but exactly how they take care of Sailors is up to them and God. I can't make them compromise what they believe. That's not what I'm here for. I'm here to lead them to do what they need to do to take care of Sailors. That's our mission together and I'm doing everything in my power to keep my chaplains accountable to make that happen.

Chaplain Owen draws a contrast between ministry content and ministry tasks. Even when chaplains are not in complete agreement on the theological content of their ministries, they can cooperate on the basis of a shared purpose. They complete the same types of ministry tasks for the sake of that common mission: to take care of Sailors.

Speaking of the chaplain who makes an issue of his theological distinctives,

Chaplain Larry questioned the motives of chaplains who put their theological agendas ahead of the common mission of serving military personnel. "Who are you trying to serve? Are you trying to make a point? Are you just trying to get your own needs met? Or are you trying to meet the needs of others? If you're trying to minister to others, you're doing the wrong thing." In these words, Chaplain Larry suggests that, when in doubt, chaplains

should defer to their colleagues in ministry. Instead of stressing theological distinctives, chaplains should focus on their shared goals and find a way to cooperate on that basis. Both Chaplains Rick and Clark echoed similar ideas. To them, it is a matter of putting people and the mission ahead of personal theological agendas.

Professional Courtesy

Thirdly, Navy chaplains find a way to cooperate with each other in ministry for the sake of professional courtesy. Such cooperation is simply a matter of mutual respect and consideration. It is also a matter of good order and discipline under the auspices of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. As Chaplain Paul reminded, “We are required to support one another.” The last thing that the Navy needs is a corps of chaplains creating conflict and obstructing one another over religious controversies that have no place in the Sea Services.

While the military governs chaplain behavior in a professional manner, it does not interfere with a chaplain’s religious convictions. Chaplains are free to believe whatever religious tenets that they choose, but how they behave and interact with fellow officers is something the government can rightly manage. Chaplain Henry made this point about how military rank affects chaplain relationships. He gave an example of chaplain conflict that he managed as a supervisor. When two chaplains were at theological odds, he ensured

that their dispute was handled even-handedly and cordially. He intervened as an officer senior to both sides in the dispute, and the issue was settled quickly and without acrimony.

Regardless of official military policy, chaplains also cooperate with one another out of a deep appreciation for each other. They realize that they cannot be all things to all people, and that their colleagues in military ministry have different gifts and talents than they have. Chaplain Henry spoke of this aspect of cooperation when he confessed, "I have not had problems relating to other chaplains because I deeply respect what they believe and want to know more about it." This profound sense of esteem for what colleagues in ministry hold sacred enables chaplains to defer to one another for the sake of unity and common purpose.

This sense of admiration also causes chaplains to view their peers as assets rather than competitors. As Chaplain Larry put it, "If I can't help in a ministry situation, that's where my colleagues become so important. Because if I have good relationships with other chaplains of all stripes, then they are assets to me to care for my people." He described a situation where he received a request for infant baptism. Since his tradition forbids that practice, he was able to refer that Sailor to another chaplain who could better accommodate that particular religious request. He continued,

The same goes for a Roman Catholic priest who has an evangelical Sailor come to him and requests counseling but expresses a desire for a chaplain

who is more like himself. I would hope that priest would call me and say “I’ve got somebody here that needs to talk to you. I think you’re a better fit for him.” I’d be there in a heartbeat.

These chaplains realize that their fellow chaplains, even those from other faith traditions, are pastoral care professionals and can serve as a great resource in ministry.

So chaplains do, in fact, make a conscious effort to cooperate with one another in the course of military ministry. While the grounds of that cooperation may not be immediately evident, the research participants made it clear. Their feedback broke down into three broad categories: agreement on essential doctrine, similar objectives in ministry, and professional courtesy under the auspices of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. These are the reasons why chaplains from different theological backgrounds make honest efforts to pull together for the sake of those they are called to serve.

Types Of Competition And Conflict

The research participants were asked to comment on the circumstances in which chaplains find themselves at odds with one another. While every one of the respondents spoke at length about competition and conflict in the chaplain corps, their remarks coalesced around three general categories: competition for promotion, theological conflict, and struggles for power and position.

Competition for Promotion

With respect to competition for promotion, Chaplain Matt pointed out that Navy chaplains are not merely religious professionals but also Naval officers. As such, they are subject to the same competitive impulses that all other military personnel experience. Rank can get in the way of ministry. As officers, the Navy expects chaplains to be competitive with one another, and this competition can affect relationships. As Chaplain Matt observed,

The fact that we labor in an institution makes the chaplaincy somewhat more complicated. There are rules and things that get in the way...and the competitive nature of chaplains can get heightened in the sense that the Navy can only have a certain number of people that get to hold certain positions in the chaplain corps.

Here, he puts his finger on the fact that chaplains of equal rank compete against one another for promotion. With higher rank comes greater ministry responsibility, greater authority, greater salary, and greater prestige. On the one hand, he notes how this competition can be beneficial as talented chaplains rise in the ranks and are able to apply their gifts on a greater scale.

However, Chaplain Matt also indicated that competition in the chaplain corps is not always healthy because it can bring out traits unbecoming of a minister of the gospel. He continued, "In some cases, if you don't promote, you go home, and because of that chaplains sometimes lose their focus on ministry and become more focused on being

competitive in the institution.” He is expressing concern for the small number of chaplains that he feels have lost their way as ministers of the gospel and are fixated on advancement in rank. Certainly, competition for ranking and promotion between chaplains in the same competitive category can be a source of contention.

Interestingly, he noted that this competition is not something unique to military ministry, but has certain parallels in the civilian parish. As he expressed,

The same thing can happen in the local community. The pastor realizes “Hey, my paycheck is dependent on the number of people I put in the pews,” and if the church down the road is getting more people in the pews than I am, then I become concerned about that, and now I’ve entered into a compare and contrast mode. I’ve become competitive and I’ve lost my focus on what it is I’m doing and why. I think the key to success is to get rid of that competitive spirit.

It is important to note that Chaplain Matt did not condemn competition for promotion itself. To him, this competition could be a good thing as long as chaplains avoid a “competitive spirit” and remain “professional.” But it remains a potential source of conflict.

Theological Conflict

Chaplains also find themselves at odds with one another due to theological conflict. Unfortunately, cooperation in ministry is not always possible due to serious differences in religious doctrine. In these cases, the chaplains are likely to carry out ministries that are independent of one another. While there is a certain degree of mutual respect and

professionalism that characterizes these relationships, the differing chaplains will not be found conducting any type of combined or joint ministry.

Chaplain Clark described one such situation in which he found himself during his time as a junior lieutenant. He was responsible for preaching a Navy chapel and was approached by a chaplain who was senior to him who offered to preach. Chaplain Clark described this as a very uncomfortable situation for him because he certainly wanted to pay all due respect to his superior, but “I had theological concerns with this individual...I was very reluctant to give my pulpit to him.” What made the circumstance even more awkward was the fact that Chaplain Clark had allowed other chaplains to preach for him on occasion, but in this particular chaplain’s case, Chaplain Clark did not feel right in giving him the pulpit. Fortunately, the two chaplains were able to work out the conflict amicably, and Chaplain Clark did not have to violate his conscience by giving his pulpit over to someone about whom he had misgivings. Unfortunately, he admits, chaplains can not presume that these kinds of situations will always be handled so cordially.

Of all the chaplains interviewed, Chaplain Paul represents the denomination with the most restrictive policy on ecumenical cooperation. But he chooses not to focus on what he cannot do with other chaplains, and to emphasize what he can. He comments, “I’m not going to speak ill of my professional colleagues. In fact, I will speak very highly of them,

and I will seek to work with them whenever and wherever I am...but there's a tension there because I need to keep the theological part separate, as I should." While he readily admits that his doctrinal commitments keep him from some types of cooperative ministry with other chaplains, he emphasizes that he keeps his religious ministry separate from other chaplains for the sake of his church's doctrine, not because he is trying to be uncooperative.

From a different perspective, Chaplain Larry expressed concern about being misunderstood if he participated in cooperative ministry with a chaplain about whom he had theological qualms. He explained,

I have a problem with giving the appearance of agreement. For instance, I don't think I would be comfortable sharing a service with a Latter Day Saint. In fact, I don't think I would be able to do anything together with them. I think to share the platform with someone like that would confuse the congregation about what I believe and where I'm coming from theologically. And Latter Day Saints have some theological commitments that are just really different than mine.

He is concerned that people might get the wrong idea about what he believes because of his cooperation in ministry with a chaplain that believes something radically different.

Chaplain Larry expressed no hint of animosity or resentment toward those who disagreed with his theology, but he insisted that he be allowed to keep his ministry entirely separate from those without a commitment to what he considered to be the broad essentials of the Christian faith.

Struggles for Power and Position

The third broad category of conflict identified in the interviews related to struggles for power and position in chaplain ministry. Over the course of the interviews, each of the seven chaplains shared stories of chaplains at odds with one another over petty rivalries and power struggles in the institution. It is critical to note that none of the respondents characterized the entire chaplain corps as plagued with this kind of enmity or discord. However, over the course of their careers, each had experienced one or more episodes of less than ideal behavior on the part of chaplains in contention with one another.

Chaplain Matt voiced his surprise when, as a new chaplain, he witnessed some of these petty rivalries and power struggles. “Wow,” he exclaimed, “I didn’t realize how cutthroat these chaplains can be!” In the story that followed, he described a situation where there was competition between two chaplains for key chapel space at a prime Sunday morning hour. While the conflict fell short of open hostility, he described it as “passive-aggressive.” “Sometimes,” he said, “you have to elbow for space.” In that case, for right or wrong, the denominational bias of the Command Chaplain was instrumental in settling the dispute, and the chaplain of a larger denomination prevailed over a chaplain of a smaller one.

A similar story was recounted by Chaplain Clark. He related a time when he witnessed a senior chaplain displaying apathy toward the faith tradition of one of his subordinates. In that case, the superior minimized, obstructed, and dismissed proposed ministry programs that were important to the junior chaplain. This was the superior's way of "flexing his muscles," and "throwing his weight around." Chaplain Clark also recounted how a disagreement on chapel management between himself and his chaplain supervisor almost caused him to resign his commission. He felt so strongly that a senior chaplain was being cold and indifferent toward chapel volunteers that he seriously considered walking away from the chaplaincy altogether. He recalled another time when a superior chaplain tried to pressure a subordinate into changing the content of his preaching because the superior found the subject of that preaching to be distasteful. As a chaplain supervisor, he used all the tools at his disposal, including threats of poor performance evaluations and intimidation, in order to impose his will on the subordinate. Chaplain Clark illustrated,

So the chaplain's worship service had gone over the allotted time by two minutes. He was giving an altar call and right in the middle of that altar call the supervising chaplain came in and said, "Ok, you're done. The service is over. You're done." So that chaplain had to wrap things up and at the next staff meeting, in front of the RPs, the other chaplains, and everybody else there, this command chaplain stood up and blasted the junior guy and said if he ever went late on a service again he would give him a "two" on his FITREP for Teamwork.

This is an example of a superior threatening a subordinate with a career-jeopardizing score on a performance evaluation. *Chaplain Clark saw this as nothing more than a power play* by a supervisor bent on dominating a subordinate whose ministry he did not like. As regretful as these stories are, they simply highlight the fact that power struggles can exist in the chaplain corps. While not common, they are a potential hazard in military ministry.

In the section above, the interviewees detailed the ways in which chaplains sometimes find themselves at odds with one another. While their remarks covered a broad spectrum of issues related to competition and conflict, their thoughts came together around three general categories: competition for promotion, theological conflict, and struggles for power and position. These are the types of discord most commonly found in the chaplain corps.

Sources Of Conflict

Given the fact that sometimes there is a degree of conflict between military chaplains, the interviewees were asked to comment about the root of that conflict. Why does conflict exist, and what can be specifically identified as the cause? Once again, in spite of the several lengthy discussions about the issue, the answers given by the research participants came together around four broad categories: pride and careerism, personality or

leadership styles, theological differences, and simple ignorance. These sources of conflict will be discussed next.

Pride and Careerism

First, consider the case of selfish pride and careerism. Once again, Chaplain Matt was helpful with his observation that sometimes conflict stems from chaplains who are in the corps for the wrong reason. When chaplains focus on career advancement instead of ministry to people, then problems are bound to surface. He complained, “When I first came into the chaplain corps, I operated with this kind of altruistic, idealistic mentality that says ‘I’m not here to advance my career, I’m here to do ministry,’ ...but I found that not everyone is operating the same way, and I didn’t appreciate it.” He described working with a fellow chaplain who, in his opinion, was selfish and put his career ahead of people.

Chaplain Matt concluded,

The reason this is an issue is because many chaplains are simply not on the same page as to their meaning and purpose for being a chaplain in the first place. It’s almost as if some guys have figured out that this is the only way for them to become an officer in the Navy. As if it’s an easier route, because they have nothing to do with the spiritual or religious side of chaplaincy...I have a hard time operating in an environment where chaplains have lost focus on ministry and are more focused on themselves and career development.

Chaplain Matt’s heart for ministry and people is evident, but it is also clear that he is frustrated by those chaplains who are too focused on what he feels are the wrong things.

Chaplain Clark used even more forceful language to describe chaplains whose selfish pride causes conflict and obstructs ministry. As an example, he referenced a very well-known former chaplain who was removed from the chaplain corps in disgrace, and who ended up suing the military for discrimination. To Chaplain Clark, that episode was an example of someone whose selfish pride caused a great deal of contention and brought disrepute upon the entire chaplain corps. In his own words,

And then there are those guys...who come into the Navy with their own personal vendettas and their own personal causes. They come in at the expense of everyone else who wears the uniform, with this devil-may-care and who-cares-about-anyone-else attitude...It just bothers me to no end that this crusader came in with his own selfish agenda at the expense of everyone else. This might call for a return to the Old Testament practice of public stoning of false prophets!

In this case, Chaplain Clark complains not about career advancement so much as the pursuit of a narrow, selfish agenda. But the root is the same. What both Chaplains Matt and Clark dislike is selfish pride on the part of chaplains who put themselves before others.

When chaplains are assigned to work closely together, selfish motivations are more apt to come to the forefront. And when that happens, they can find themselves in conflict.

Personality and Leadership Styles

Chaplains are also likely to end up in conflict when there is a clash of personality or leadership styles. Chaplain Henry spoke about the inevitability of conflict in this respect. As

long as chaplains have different faith groups, different personalities, different emphases in ministry, different management philosophies, and different gifts, then conflict will exist to some degree. To Chaplain Henry, this conflict is not often serious, but it is something of which to be aware. He remarks, "The issue can really come to the forefront during transition when one chaplain succeeds another at a chapel...that's where you can see the contrasting styles so dramatically." He described one such situation in his career, where he had to tread very carefully in order to keep the peace. He had replaced a chaplain who was very dissimilar to him, and in the process, he inherited a subordinate chaplain who was already entrenched in the chapel's ministry. In that case, he did not want to impose himself on the chapel in any way that might either reflect poorly on his predecessor or disrupt what his subordinate chaplain was already doing.

He insisted that much of the conflict between chaplains that is attributed to theological disagreements is not really due to religious arguments at all. In his opinion, those disputes are most often personality clashes. Again, in his words,

Most often the conflicts aren't about pluralism. Usually they're more about personal stuff. So a problem exists between chaplains that they blame on having to accommodate pluralism, but that's not what's really going on. It's a personality conflict...so I have not had major problems with other chaplains because I truly respect what they believe, and I like to inquire about it and attend their services and such. I also understand that it's usually personality and semantics that divide us.

While being realistic about the fact that conflict does occur, Chaplain Henry tended to minimize the other root causes and dismiss the vast majority of conflict as personality or style issues.

On the same subject, Chaplain Clark discussed how upsetting it can be to face controversy as a result of contrasting ministry styles. He described the distress he and many others felt when a new command chaplain took over the chapel where he served in a junior role. There, a new senior chaplain with different priorities in ministry entered the scene and simply undid significant ministry initiatives that his predecessor had created. Chaplain Clark explained,

I was told by the command chaplain to continue down this path, making these decisions for months. There were planning committees and things were going on. Then there was a change of position. That command chaplain left and a new one took his place. So I presented this model to the new command chaplain and the new guy said, "There is no way. This is not going to happen." Well we had been planning this event for months, and it shocked me. I mean, nine months of planning had been going on, and every step of the way thus far, it had been approved by everybody, including the commanding officer. Then boom! It was all gone.

In this case, Chaplain Clark was convinced that there was a theological objection to the event on the part of the superior in addition to the differing management style. But the

point remains the same: clashes over personality and ministry style can be a significant source of conflict in the chaplain corps.

It should be apparent that not every chaplain sees the same value in different ministry programs. Some supervisors are more aggressive, while others are more passive. Some chaplains have a mild personality, whereas others can be overbearing. These personality traits can cause friction between chaplains. Chaplain Henry noted how the mood changed in his religious ministries office when the news was announced that a particular chaplain was coming to be the next supervisor. Speaking of that chaplain, Henry noted,

Did you know that he is one of the chaplains that a lot of people refuse to work with? They can't stand him. When he came to our office, a couple of our office staff just about imploded. He has a way about him which makes you feel like he just hates you, but he doesn't! It's just like...that's him. Of course, he's always talking about the superiority of his denomination, but I figure, that's just who he is.

Having worked with that chaplain, Henry insisted that he was really a nice guy but that his personality tended to grate on those around him and led to conflict. Clearly, conflict in the chaplain corps can sometimes be attributed to personality issues and management styles.

Theological Differences

Of course, theology can be the source of conflict too. Chaplain Clark spoke with passion about the injustice of a senior chaplain discriminating against a junior colleague on

the basis of a dislike of that chaplain's theology. He told a story about working in a chapel where he saw just this sort of intolerance. While chaplains are free to preach according to their various faith traditions, that does not make them immune to pressure to change the content of their teaching and preaching. In this case, a superior cautioned a subordinate not to preach against a particular sin because the superior did not believe that such behavior was indeed sinful. While the supervisor could not forbid the preaching outright, the message was received loud and clear. There would be repercussions if the issue was mentioned from the pulpit again. The net effect was that the junior chaplain was muzzled due to the theological objection of his superior.

Chaplain Larry reported a similar experience when he preached a Navy chapel. He was confronted by a senior chaplain from a very different denomination who took exception to his preaching in the Sunday morning early service and advised him to change his message because "not everyone believes what you believe about that passage." Chaplain Larry continued,

I still remember the text. It was 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. It's about Christ and rebirth in him. Now this senior chaplain confronted me afterward and said he wasn't comfortable with that sermon. In his words, I was being too dogmatic about what the scripture says about it. I was scheduled to preach the same sermon in the later service too. And so, after we talked, I did the second service but had to qualify the message by giving a disclaimer that the message would be preached from the perspective of my particular denomination...He was fine with that.

Here, Chaplain Larry describes two chaplains in conflict about an appropriate message in the Navy chapel. While the superior did not forbid the preaching he found objectionable, he did insist that the preacher qualify the message by mentioning that he was preaching from a specific theological perspective.

Chaplain Rick agreed that contrary theology can be at the root of some chaplain conflict. He added constructive insight when he summarized the situation this way, "Some chaplains feel threatened by the theological commitments of their colleagues." His point here is that outside of the military, certain denominations are in conflict and consider the other "the enemy." Since chaplains represent a wide array of denominations, they can bring that "us versus them" mentality into the chaplain corps. Chaplain Henry added that this interdenominational rivalry can find its most heated expression between organizations with the same or similar background.

This problem usually happens when two chaplains come from very similar denominational backgrounds, like Roman Catholic and Episcopal... When I was in Puerto Rico, I had a couple of Baptist chaplains, and one of them offered communion with a single cup and wore vestments. The other Baptist thought that wasn't right and ended up putting the first guy on report to his denomination. So here I had these guys reporting each other, and they're working in the same office.

Chaplain Henry's point is that when chaplains have dissimilar backgrounds, they often do not care about various theological nuances. They already know that they represent entirely

different traditions. But when chaplains represent the same broad tradition, for instance from different sides of a liberal/conservative divide, that is when relationships can get acrimonious.

While Chaplain Paul admitted that theological differences can cause some chaplain conflict, he protested with exasperation that such conflict is entirely unnecessary. To him, when chaplains are secure in their own faith, they have no need to feel threatened by any unorthodox belief around them. He adds,

When chaplains attack one another over theology, it sounds to me like they are not sure of themselves. Because if you are passively aggressive, trying to attack someone else, then you don't seem very confident in your own theology. If you're threatened by someone else's faith and you're trying to undermine them, that tells me that you lack self-confidence. You're insecure in your own faith. Because if you're confident in your own faith, then you don't need to denigrate someone else publically.

Chaplains should understand that they're going to be surrounded with colleagues in military ministry who hold very different theological commitments. Chaplain Paul makes the point that when chaplains are thoroughly grounded in their own faith, then that kind of diversity will pose no threat, and conflict is needless. Unfortunately, differences in theology abound in the chaplain corps and, under certain circumstances, can set chaplains at odds with one another.

Ignorance

A final source of conflict was mentioned by only one of the chaplains interviewed. Chaplain Owen discussed conflict between chaplains that occurs simply due to ignorance. When chaplains are not aware of the many and varied nuances and constraints to which their colleagues' must adhere, then it can result in misunderstanding and conflict. In his own words,

When my first tour began, I ran into some trouble, and I was scared to death that I was going to get hammered. We had one female chaplain at the base chapel in Jacksonville, and she was it. Everyone else had left. So she had the whole burden of the base chapel on her shoulders alone for something like four months. Now there were a couple of us chaplains over at the hospital. So we all had a meeting, and the proposal was for us hospital chaplains get over to the chapel and do some joint services with her. And I was very uncomfortable to say the least. I was thinking, "Come on people, don't you know? I'm PCA. I can't do a joint service with a female chaplain. Don't you know that?" She was a Lieutenant Commander, and I'm a brand new Lieutenant Junior Grade... Anyway she asked for a joint communion service with me, and I was stunned that she even asked.

In this case, Chaplain Owen was confronted with well-meaning superiors who were oblivious to the fact that they were asking him to violate his denomination's policy. He related how he got his endorsing agent involved just in case there were any negative consequences due to his stand against conducting a joint communion service. He went on to very tactfully extricate himself from that tricky situation, while seeking to cooperate

with his chaplain colleagues as much as possible. For this reason, he concluded, chaplains need to investigate the faith traditions of their colleagues. When in doubt, they need to ask upfront, "Does this go against your convictions?" By being proactive and learning about the constraints of their colleagues, chaplains can prevent misunderstanding and conflict.

The preceding pages detail the origins of conflict in the chaplain corps. Since a degree of conflict does sometimes exist between chaplains, the research sought to discover the source of that discord. Once again, in spite of the several lengthy discussions about the issue, the research participants gave answers that united around four broad categories: pride and careerism, personality or leadership styles, theological differences, and simple ignorance. In general terms, these are the causes of conflict and disunity in the chaplain corps.

Consequences Of Conflict

Since chaplains do find themselves at odds from time to time for the sake of any of the reasons previously discussed, it stands to reason that there must be some consequences of that conflict. When queried about the ramifications of conflict among chaplains, the research participants noted three areas of significant concern: negative impacts on their ministries, on their careers, and on the Chaplain Corps itself.

Negative Ministry Impact

First, consider the effect on ministry. When chaplains are preoccupied with various forms of conflict and competition, they are bound to neglect more important priorities in ministry. Chaplain Matt spoke at length about this danger to authentic ministry. In his mind, it is essential to keep service to Sailors and their families at the forefront of one's priorities. Chaplains need to remind themselves of their callings and recall why they exist in the institution in the first place. When they find themselves in conflict, all too often the accompanying drama serves to distract from ministry. As he put it, chaplains are liable to "lose focus on ministry as they direct all their attention to the conflict." Chaplain Larry mentioned the same risk. As he discussed the predicament presented by conflict between chaplains, he challenged a hypothetical chaplain with these words, "Why are you here? Who are you here for? Is it about you, and getting your own needs met? Or is it about ministry?" Clearly his concern is for the quality of ministry. He recognizes that conflict has a negative effect on that quality. Therefore, chaplains need to minimize conflict as much as possible. Ministry to people is what is at stake.

Negative Career Impact

Conflict also has a negative impact on military careers. When chaplains are at odds, the Command often perceives that noncooperation as a lack of teamwork. Chaplain Matt noted the irony, “The institution expects us to teach people how to work together with people who are radically different. We’re part of creating that team spirit...and then we are in conflict ourselves!” Teamwork is an enormous issue in the Navy. In fact, “Teamwork” is a primary category on officer performance evaluations. All naval officers are graded on a scale with respect to their cooperation with others. When chaplains fail to work together, that lack of cooperation can be annotated in their permanent record with serious repercussions on their careers.

Chaplain Clark affirmed that such negative scores on chaplain performance evaluations are entirely warranted. If a chaplain cannot get along with fellow chaplains, then what does that indicate about his ability and suitability as an officer? As he elaborated,

If I can't play with other chaplains, then I'm not a team player. Now what does that say about the other parts of my job? Will I work with the Supply Officer? If I'm not willing to work with somebody because of a personality issue or something, then that reflects not just on my ministry, but on my other service as well. If I can't get along with other chaplains, then how can I be expected to get along with other officers that I might disagree with personally?

His point is clear. Just like every other officer in the Navy, chaplains must take seriously their responsibility to cooperate and work together. When conflict arises, it needs to be handled professionally. Failure to do this indicates a serious flaw that should rightly be noted in a chaplain's record.

When discussing the case of a chaplain that found himself constantly embroiled in bitter controversy, Chaplain Henry related how he pulled this junior chaplain aside and cautioned him privately with these words, "I told him straight up, 'You're either going to make the Chaplain Corps look very, very bad, or you're going to have a very short career...,' and what happened? Both! It only took a few years" In this case, a chaplain cut short his own career by engaging in constant controversy and conflict. This kind of behavior can harm even the most promising Navy careers.

Negative Chaplain Corps Impact

Unfortunately, conflict between chaplains does not merely reflect on the parties involved. It can also bring disrepute on the Chaplain Corps itself. When chaplains disgrace themselves, they can inadvertently discredit and undermine the ministries of their colleagues in the Navy. Chaplain Clark lamented this and strongly objected to being identified with other chaplains who had dishonored themselves through selfish behavior. He complained that such identification often takes place simply because chaplains wear the

same uniform. He acknowledged, "People think that a guy [who misbehaves] represents the chaplain corps when he really doesn't. They come into the chaplaincy with their own personal agendas and to broaden their own personal gain, and they do it at my expense."

Here Chaplain Clark complains how another chaplain not only dishonored himself through his selfish behavior, but he tarnished the reputation of the entire chaplain corps in the process. When pressed on how the offending chaplain's behavior was "at my expense," Chaplain Clark made it clear that scandalous behavior by one chaplain reflects negatively on all.

The second research question addressed issues related to ecumenical cooperation between chaplains in the Navy. Since each chaplain represents any one of hundreds of different faith groups, there are bound to be challenges due to the extensive array of religious traditions embodied in the Navy Chaplain Corps. Outside of the military, many of these religious professionals would hardly interact with one another at all since they labor in different ecclesiastical circles. Yet, in the military, this extremely diverse cross-section of professional clergy are called to work side-by-side for the sake of ministry to Sea Service personnel and their families. In the section above the research participants' responded to queries about cooperation, competition, and conflict in the chaplain corps. Their discussion provided helpful insight on some of the grounds for ecumenical cooperation, types of

competition and conflict, along with the sources and consequences of that conflict in the chaplain corps.

Affect on Ministry Practice

Thus far, this chapter has focused on how the interviews uncovered issues in Navy chaplaincy related to religious pluralism and ecumenical cooperation. In this section, the attention shifts to how these issues have impacted the actual delivery of ministry by chaplains in the Navy. The intent of this section is to discover how the items discussed above have caused chaplains to change their ministries in both subtle and overt ways in order to accommodate the unique circumstances of ministry in the Navy. The discussion below seeks to reveal how chaplains themselves have been transformed, how their relationships have been affected, and how their preaching, teaching, counseling and public prayers have been influenced.

On Chaplains

Without a doubt, chaplains themselves are profoundly impacted by the religiously diverse environment in which they serve. In the course of the interviews, the respondents identified three ways that the institution influences them personally: they focus more on the essentials of the faith, their ministries are improved, and they are careful to distinguish parish ministry from military ministry.

Focus On Essentials

First, a common theme among the research participants was that they need to focus on the essentials of the faith, more so than they would in the civilian pastorate. Since the Navy is made up of personnel with widely divergent religious backgrounds, there is little room for sectarian ministry. Thus, chaplains tend to provide religious ministry in a fairly generic manner, knowing that their personnel have a wide array of various religious identities. As Chaplain Clark put it,

This setting forces chaplains to stick with the primary concerns of their belief system – not to get bogged down in the minutia of doctrine, but to stick with what’s important. In a sense, it takes our theological distinctions and wipes them away...It’s pretty much forced compromise. It forces you to come to terms with what’s really important. Why are you here? Are you really here just so you can be an Adventist? Or are you here to share the love of God with those who need to know that there’s a God who loves them? What’s really important here? What are you going to hang your hat on?

Chaplain Clark not only states that the environment pressures him to stick to the essentials of Christian ministry, but he actually describes this as “forced compromise.” Since he realizes that most of the Sailors he is called to serve don’t share his Pentecostal tradition, he deliberately changes the content of his ministry in order to reach people where they are and meet their expectations. He went on to share how he would pastor a Navy chapel, describing how that ministry would look substantially different than a typical Pentecostal

pastorate. He would step away from his preferred ministry style because “The people who attend the chapel might be used to something else.” In the Navy, he would most likely be assigned to what he calls a “General Protestant” service, and when that happens, he says, “I stick to the primary concerns that protestants have.”

Chaplain Rick shared this attitude and also chimed in on the importance of not straying far from the basics of the Christian faith. In his case, this is guidance that he has received from his denominational endorsing agent for military ministry. He maintains, “We are to focus on the major things that we have in common with one another...and we’re gracious in regards to working with others from different backgrounds.” The intent is to avoid doctrinal extremes that might alienate others. Certainly, as a faithful Baptist, Chaplain Rick holds to a number of Baptist-specific doctrines, but that is not the emphasis of his ministry. He endeavors to keep his ministry broad and nonspecific for the sake of outreach and ministry.

Chaplain Larry indicated that this environment sometimes causes chaplains to completely rethink who has “the truth.” Ministering in this context often challenges assumptions and makes chaplains step back and consider a perspective that is broader than their own tradition. As he said,

We are forced to be broader in our understanding of the truth and who has the truth. At least broader than we would be as local church pastors...When

you're a pastor you go to a seminary that has specific theological commitments, and you're trained in a certain way. Then you go to a church, and there is a doctrinal statement, and the people generally all have the same beliefs. But one of the things that challenged me as a chaplain is how I've met some very godly men and women here, people who walk with God. I very much respect them, and they come from theological backgrounds that are very different than mine.

Chaplain Larry admits that ministry in the chaplain corps requires a focus on a general ministry of religious basics. While he could minister in a sectarian way, he is more tentative now than he was before. Because of the genuine piety and example of some of his chaplain peers, he is less certain of any single denomination's claim to exclusive truth.

On the other hand, Chaplain Paul's responses to this line of questioning presented an alternative view. Instead of being forced into what he termed the "mushy middle," he insisted that his ministry in the chaplain corps was just as distinctive as it would be in the civilian parish. In his mind, to change his ministry due to the environment would essentially amount to compromise. When asked if he was tempted to "water down" his faith he argued, "Absolutely not! In fact, some of my best preaching takes place over at the brig...and I don't even know what these guys' faith background is, but then again, they attend regularly. So that makes them liturgical evangelicals in my book." His point was that when people attend his services regularly, he considers them adherents of his own faith tradition. It does not matter how they might identify themselves. If they attend his service

more than three times, they are liturgical evangelicals and will get a service specifically tailored for such. Indeed, Chaplain Paul's ministry is very specific to his faith tradition, but it is important to note that his responses were not representative of the rest of the interviewees. All six other chaplains spoke of the importance of laying aside theological distinctives for the sake of relating to the large majority who do not share their religious traditions.

Ministry Is Improved

Without exception, all seven of the research participants affirmed that service in this extremely diverse institution improved their ministries. This is the second way that the chaplains felt they had been personally impacted by this institutional ministry context. While all spoke at length about how privileged they feel to be a part of the chaplain corps, two main benefits came to the surface. On one hand, the chaplains believed that as a result of the diversity in the Navy, they had learned how to relate better with others outside of their own tradition. On the other hand, they felt that their own personal faith was enriched by meaningful interaction with people from different religious backgrounds.

Better Empathy with Others

Chaplain Rick described the improvement in his own ministry practice by highlighting how military ministry made him sensitive to the biases and backgrounds

of others. Because of his extensive experience in dealing with people from all sorts of religious traditions, he feels he is now better able to interact with others, both religious and nonreligious alike. As he put it,

It makes my job exciting because I honestly don't know who the next person is going to be to walk into my office. This ministry gives me the opportunity to speak to so many different people that I've become very comfortable in sharing the gospel and talking about my relationship with God, because I do it so frequently now! I guess you could say this ministry makes us more efficient in communicating with non-Christians.

He makes the point that because military chaplaincy puts him into this kind of interreligious dialogue daily, he has become very adept at relating to people with different backgrounds and sharing the gospel. In his mind, this is a tremendous positive. He confesses that he would not have that kind of opportunity if he were a typical Baptist pastor.

Along the same lines, Chaplain Owen mentioned how enlightening it was to build friendships and engage in meaningful relationships with people who have religious backgrounds different than his own. He spoke of it as educational because he gets to learn the real motivations, priorities, and methods of different denominations. He remarks,

I tell you, some of my best friends are Navy chaplains, and they're not in my denomination! And I love that. I think it makes me a better minister in many ways too because it opens me up to see where other people are coming from, and how they process, and how they work and minister. Sometimes it's the same, but sometimes it's very different than what I do.

Once again, the idea was that chaplains learn and improve their ministries through deep relationships with others of dissimilar religious traditions. A minister who serves in a homogeneous context will naturally be shaped differently than one who serves in this kind of heterogeneous context. The deep and lasting interaction with others who are very different is bound to make a difference.

Personal Faith Enriched

Not only is ministry improved by sharpening the chaplain's interaction with others, but several of the chaplains also believed that their own personal faith was enriched. For example, because of their deep and abiding interaction with people from other faith traditions, Chaplains Henry and Clark spoke of benefits to their own understanding of the Christian faith. Chaplain Henry admits, "I've learned so much by being here. Things that I've added to my faith. Things that, while maybe not explicitly a part of my Adventist tradition, they aren't contrary to it either...I've benefited tremendously." He went on to identify his own approach to preaching as having been changed due to the influence of his chaplain peers. To illustrate, he noted that before he came into the chaplain corps, the lectionary was a tool that he knew nothing about. But it is something he now finds useful, and he has since incorporated it into his preaching ministry.

Chaplain Clark also emphasized how his own personal faith had been deepened and challenged by meaningful interaction with his chaplain peers. This is something he finds extremely valuable. He reports,

When I was in chaplain school, I managed to get into many deep theological discussions with almost everybody about things we have in common. These are things that bonded us together in wonderful ways. It brought out true collegiality, and it amazed me. You know, it didn't really dawn on me until I left that I never argued once about any of it -- our theological distinctions, I mean. Now, I'm one hundred percent Pentecostal, but I'm not going to hang my hat on that...so being a chaplain has made me better at what I believe.

It is interesting to note how these seminary graduates in chaplain school challenged one another with respect to Christian doctrine, and yet did it in such a collegial manner. This left an indelible impression on a new Pentecostal chaplain that caused him to appreciate even more the various Christian traditions of his colleagues.

Chaplain Rick mentioned that meaningful interaction with non-Baptists challenged some of his assumptions about Christian ministry and doctrine. While he confessed no radical break with his Southern Baptist tradition, he did acknowledge that he was open to other theological viewpoints when those positions could be defended from scripture. To him, this is what it means to take the authority of scripture seriously.

The thing I liked about the Southern Baptist convention is that when they have been shown from scripture how a policy of theirs has been in error, they have been open to rethinking the issue. In some cases, the convention

has actually changed its opinion or stance on a theological belief because it was pointed out to them by scripture that they were in error... It's just a matter of staying in line with the Bible.

He affirmed how he takes the same attitude toward the myriad of various challenges to his Baptist faith that he encounters in the chaplain corps. He is open to critique when it is based on scripture. While he insists that his essential doctrinal views have remained unchanged, he admitted that he has been challenged from time to time. Those challenges ultimately served to enhance his understanding of scripture and bring him closer to God.

In a similar way, Chaplain Larry expressed how his appreciation of his own faith tradition increased in this context. As much as ministry in this diverse institution taught him to appreciate others and to function in a religiously pluralistic setting, he confessed that many chaplains experience a deepened admiration for their own denominations and religious customs. After ministering so often in a diverse context, he mentioned how when chaplains go "home" to a church of their own denomination, it can be a welcome relief. This feeling can be something similar to a cross cultural missionary returning home on furlough; it feels great to be home.

Distinguishing Parish From Military Ministry

When discussing very narrow attitudes about which church is biblical and who has the "truth," Chaplain Larry warned against chaplains with a very exclusive mindset. Those

who consider their own denomination to be the quintessential expression of authentic Christianity can cause more harm than good. As he asserts, “I would hope that people coming in would have enough appreciation for the difference between church ministry and institutional ministry not to come in with that kind of perspective.” In this statement, he suggests that such attitudes may be permissible in parish ministry, but they are totally unacceptable in a pluralistic institution. Even more revealing, he drew a sharp contrast between the two types of ministry. They are not the same, and ministers need to be aware, and appreciate, the differences between the two. Norms in the local church are not necessarily norms in military ministry, and vice-versa.

In discussing his view of institutional ministry, Chaplain Henry outlined a major difference between what he does as a chaplain and what he would be doing as an Adventist pastor. Using the language of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3, he described his chaplain ministry as that of planting and watering seeds, knowing full well that God will call others to reap the harvest. In his own words,

I’m here for those that are on the path and searching. I know I won’t be doing the reaping, but God is calling me to sow seeds by my words and actions... Those seeds will someday lead people to the point where they will turn to God... I trust that later on this Sailor will come to that poignant moment when he turns from his paganism, for example, and finally makes peace with the Christian faith that his family tried to force on him and that he’s been rejecting. Maybe someday he’ll remember that there was this Navy chaplain who listened to him and didn’t judge him.

It is important to notice that Chaplain Henry does not view his ministry as a harvesting ministry as much as a sowing ministry. With the tremendous turnover and constant movement in the ranks, opportunities to disciple and develop long term relationships are scarce. So he sees chaplaincy as a transient ministry, very different from that of the local church.

Chaplain Henry also commented on another unique aspect of military ministry that distinguishes it from the local church. Military chaplains serve to relieve suffering due to the shock, pain, and distress of war. He observed, “We’re also called to relieve the suffering of those going through that traumatic thing we call war. Just being able to be there through the crisis and be able to be a healing balm and ease suffering.” While local churches often participate in disaster relief projects, what chaplains do is different. They are present in the crisis and operate from inside the institution. This is a critical difference.

As military officers, chaplains also have a number of constraints put on them by the Navy. These requirements have no parallel in the local church and can lead to misunderstanding. While local church pastors merely provide religious ministry, chaplains need to facilitate for others and ensure that the First Amendment rights of all are upheld. This can make chaplains the target of fierce criticism from those who either do not understand or simply do not appreciate this distinction. To illustrate this difference,

Chaplain Henry spoke of how he came under intense criticism by fellow Christians when he upheld the religious rights of a non-Christian group to practice their faith. As he described it, the Christians “descended on me because they thought I was compromising.” He went on to relate that he certainly did not endorse the tenets of this non-Christian organization, but was merely trying to uphold their rights under the Constitution. Because his critics did not understand the difference between ordinary Christian ministry in the local church and his duties as a military chaplain to protect the religious rights of all, he came under withering criticism. This distinction is something of which chaplains are keenly aware. However, many in the local church are oblivious to these issues.

Without a doubt the religious pluralism in the Navy has a significant impact on chaplains themselves. In the course of the interviews, the respondents identified three ways that the institution influences them personally: they focus more on the essentials of the faith, their ministries are improved, and they are careful to distinguish parish ministry from military ministry. The diverse environment in which they serve undoubtedly shapes not only their own sense of what is important in ministry, but also how they see themselves fitting into their roles as chaplains.

On Ministry Cooperation

The Navy's religiously diverse environment also influences how chaplains work together in ministry. It affects their relationships with one another and with the Sailors they are called to serve. In this respect, the interviewees revealed how they avoid criticism of one another, how they are required to work together, and how they value each other's ministries. These aspects of ecumenical cooperation will be discussed below.

Criticism Avoided

Chaplains must be careful to positively advance their faith without disparaging faith traditions other than their own. Of course, some will object that it is impossible to positively affirm a proposition without also necessarily denying that which is contrary. However, just because a chaplain may reject opposing religious doctrine does not mean that such denunciation must be verbalized. Chaplains must avoid ridicule, scorn, or open contempt of other religions. This is a settled matter of Navy policy. Along these lines, Chaplain Paul argued,

The Navy calls us to be professional in our calling to military ministry. So we don't publicly criticize other chaplains or faith groups when we disagree with them theologically. Nor do we criticize other denominations or religions publicly because of the earthly bosses we are working for. Remember, we're working with Uncle Sam here...But that does not mean that we compromise our own faith. We just don't play the blame game.

With these words, Chaplain Paul, as the most senior chaplain in the region, affirms not only Navy policy, but long-standing custom in the chaplain corps. Chaplains are to avoid denouncing other religious groups. This does not change the fact that chaplains do indeed have their own strongly held opinions of other ministers and groups. But they are simply to keep their criticisms to themselves and positively advance their own theological agenda without publicly condemning others.

Chaplain Owen related this principle to the concept of teamwork. When chaplains are perceived as being too exclusive, that can have serious negative repercussions on their careers. As important as “teamwork” is to the Navy, these same chaplains can come across as not interested in working with others. Chaplain Owen then told a story about a chaplain who was indeed considered too exclusive, explaining how that perception by the chaplain’s superiors shortened an otherwise promising career.

However, this does not mean that chaplains must implicitly endorse the beliefs and practices of others. Chaplain Larry offered an alternative. Instead of focusing on what they cannot do, he suggested that chaplains reframe the issue in order to highlight what they can do. He gave a personal example of how he navigated one such episode in his own ministry. When an Episcopal commanding officer approached him and asked for baptism for his infant, Chaplain Larry could have condemned infant baptism as unbiblical according to his

Baptist faith. Instead, he offered a positive alternative that did not require him to *compromise his convictions*. As he put it,

I approached it by saying “I don’t do infant baptisms, but let’s find a way to meet your needs.” And I went on to describe to him an infant dedication service. Afterward, the CO admitted that wasn’t quite what he had in mind, but that it sounded fine. And so we did the service, and the whole family was there. I had a little gift for each of them and related it to their role in bringing up their son. And the whole service really focused on the commitments that they all were making in helping to bring up this child. *And it was a really neat service.*

In this case, Chaplain Larry avoided criticizing a practice that he considered unbiblical, and instead offered an alternative that didn’t require him to violate his conscience. He went on to admit that if his proposed alternative service proved unacceptable to the CO, he would have made an appropriate referral to another chaplain who could more readily accommodate the request.

Chaplain Owen’s remarks on this subject were similar. He too related how he responded when confronted with a practice that he considered contrary to scripture. When his superiors suggested he lead a joint communion service with a female chaplain, he tactfully sidestepped the issue of women’s ordination without condemning his chaplain associate. Instead of attacking the ordination of women as unbiblical, he offered what he considered to be a better alternative. He offered to relieve the other chaplains of their chapel duty responsibilities and took that extra duty upon himself. He added,

This is how I handled it: I said, “You know, why don’t you just take that service off? Don’t worry about it. Go ahead and sleep in that day. I’ll take the whole service...” I didn’t say “I can’t do a service with you.” I didn’t even bring up the conflict. I just said, “I’ll take this Sunday, this Sunday, and this Sunday. Don’t worry about those. You can take the other ones.” And they said it sounded good. And it was no problem!

This is a perfect example of chaplains deliberately avoiding criticism of one another. This episode had the potential to offend and turn into conflict, but because of a chaplain’s tactful consideration of others and intentional avoidance of criticism, peace prevailed.

Collaboration Required

Not only do chaplains avoid criticizing one another, but five of the seven respondents reported that they are actually compelled to work together. To them, facilitating for others is a big part of what it means to be a chaplain. Since the large majority of Sailors and Marines that chaplains serve come from religious backgrounds different from their own, chaplains must learn to work with their peers from other faith groups. Chaplains cannot provide a solution for every religious request. Therefore, networking and referral among chaplains are a necessity. Chaplain Rick put it succinctly, “We need to be gracious when working with other chaplains for the sake of meeting the religious needs of all.”

Since Chaplain Rick realizes that not all of his Sailors appreciate his Baptist persuasion, he humbly admits that the services of other chaplains are necessary if he is going to accommodate the many and varied requests for ministry that come to him.

However, this collaboration is not cover for theological compromise. Chaplain Owen spoke directly to this concern when he described his attitude toward supervising and working with chaplains from other denominations. While he does cooperate with them to the fullest extent possible, he insisted that this does not mean he necessarily gives approval to the content of their ministries. He contended, “We work together to take care of Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen. And I’m just holding my chaplains accountable to do their job...I’m here to lead them and to help them do what they need to do to take care of our Sailors.” He agreed that they worked together on ministry tasks, but distinguished those outward tasks from the actual content of ministry. To him, collaboration on these tasks did not necessarily imply endorsement of one another’s doctrine. He continued, “We take care of Sailors together, but exactly how we do that might be different.” He underscored how a great deal of what chaplains of all faiths do is universal. They all visit Sailors, they all counsel, and they all lead fellowship activities. He emphasized the common ministry tasks instead of a common religious doctrine. He continued, “It doesn’t really matter what their faith background is. Chaplains can visit and can counsel anybody, no matter what their background is, so I try to stay on what we have in common and stick to our common goals.” To Chaplain Owen, this is an important distinction. Cooperating on ministry tasks did not necessarily mean agreement on religious doctrine. Instead,

collaboration with other chaplains is sign of a professional working relationship in institutional ministry.

Chaplain Paul also shared some helpful insight on this issue. He readily admitted that the mandate to collaborate with chaplains from other denominations caused some degree of cognitive dissonance in himself and the fellow chaplains from his denomination. However, he also talked about how he intends to work with any and all of his chaplain colleagues whenever and wherever he can. While he seeks to be accommodating, he is careful to avoid anything that conflicts or even appears to conflict with his deeply held liturgical evangelical convictions. In his words,

Each chaplain has to make a personal decision of what it is that he can collaborate on with his professional peers and what he can not do because of his faith. And that's going to be a whole lot different for every chaplain. Some chaplains may already have some broad guidelines that are outlined for them by their denomination. My church issues guidelines like that, and they specifically spell out for our chaplains what we can and cannot do.

Chaplain Paul spoke highly of having formal policy issued by his denomination with guidance on what is permissible for their chaplains. Such policy serves to standardize their ministry in the chaplain corps and also helps these chaplains to make decisions on how to cooperate with chaplains from other denominations.

In a similar manner, Chaplain Larry also referred to the benefit of having such formal denominational direction. When in doubt, such guidance serves to clarify

controversial issues and lends the chaplain credibility when the inevitable criticism comes.

If a chaplain cannot cooperate in any way with a colleague due to serious theological

conflict, it is helpful to have formal written policy from the denomination or endorsing

agent in order to take the matter out of the chaplain's hands. As Chaplain Larry noted,

“Sometimes this kind of policy is helpful in order to clear up an issue...So it's not a matter

of opinion: this is where we stand as a church. This is where our denominational leadership

stands on the issue.” It is important to remember that chaplains are not merely generic

clergy. They represent specific religious organizations that have the authority to direct how

they want their chaplains to represent them. Hence, denominational constraints are a

priority. But, in general, chaplains are required to find a way to graciously cooperate with

one another in ministry as much as is possible.

Other Ministry Valued

The religiously diverse environment in the Navy also compels chaplains not to view

each other as adversaries but instead to consider fellow chaplains as important resources for

accommodating religious needs. This involves a humble recognition that a chaplain's own

religious tradition is not a panacea; many Sailors will appreciate ministry from a religious

orientation that the chaplain does not embody. This causes chaplains to hold their peers in

high esteem because each one represents a religious tradition that is valued to some degree

by a portion of the Navy population. Chaplain Rick commented on this facet of military ministry when he said,

A big benefit of working in this environment is that it gives me a chance to hear religious perspectives that are much different than my own. And that makes me much more efficient at ministering to those who come to see me from that particular religious tradition in the future...networking with chaplains from different denominations also gives me contacts so that when I'm counseling somebody and my background isn't what that person wants or needs, then I can say, "Hey, I know this other chaplain and he has a background similar to yours, why don't we get you two together?"

So Chaplain Rick considers his relationships with other chaplains as vitally important in order to fulfill his own ministry. When necessary and appropriate, he takes advantage of the services of other chaplains in order to meet the religious needs of his Sailors.

Chaplain Clark also discussed relationships with his fellow chaplains and emphasized how he sought to rotate different chaplains through various high profile ministry opportunities on the aircraft carrier. The reasoning behind this was not only to share the burden, but also to project a more diversified image to the crew. If he were to do all the major ministry tasks himself, his Religious Ministry Team would not reach as many Sailors as they could reach together. Since each chaplain can minister most effectively to a different demographic, he considered it best to maximize the Religious Ministry Team's usefulness by keeping each chaplain engaged with the crew most efficiently. Speaking of employing even those chaplains that he disagreed with theologically, he admitted, "Working together

is easy... I will rotate them through evening prayer. I will rotate them through duty chaplain. I will rotate them through common functions.” He is willing to do this because he values what his fellow chaplains bring to the Navy. While they might represent a religious tradition quite different than his own, he recognizes that they serve a portion of the crew that he does not. For example, the Roman Catholic priest can provide requested ministry on behalf of a substantial number of the crew who desire Roman Catholic divine services. This is simply ministry that he, as an Assemblies of God chaplain, cannot provide. This is a picture of a professional working relationship built on mutual respect. As he put it, “We have incredibly diverse backgrounds, yet we find a way to make it work. That’s the US Navy right there.” Of course, such cooperation does not always go smoothly, but more often than not, chaplains are able to come together in a cooperative working relationship because they deeply value each other’s ministries.

Certainly the Navy’s religiously diverse environment has an impact on how chaplains work together in ministry. On this subject, the interviewees revealed how they avoid criticism of one another, how they are required to work together, and how they value each other’s ministries. These are the ways that this religious diversity influences their relationships with each other and with the those they care called to serve.

On Preaching, Teaching, And Formal Worship Services

How does this religiously pluralistic environment impact the ministry of the word?

Chaplains often lead things like Bible study groups and chapel worship services where they preach and teach according to their respective traditions. This section will discuss what the research uncovered with respect to how chaplains' preaching and teaching ministries are affected by religious diversity in this military context. In short, the interviewees identified two major areas of concern: polemics and joint services.

No Polemics

Since chaplains are called to work in such a religiously diverse context, they need to be careful not to inflame religious tensions by appearing to attack theological traditions with which they are at odds. This is a matter of being tactful and considerate of others, as well as acknowledging the religious diversity in their audiences. None of the research participants indicated any institutional interference with their teaching ministry that pressures them to avoid theological controversy. But it was also agreed by all that such teaching and preaching ministry needs to advance the chaplain's theological views in a positive way rather than by deliberately contrasting with and attacking other traditions. Chaplain Larry expressed this point most poignantly, "When I preach, I preach differently than I would in my home church. Don't get me wrong, I still preach the truths of scripture,

but I will not be polemical in that preaching.” In other words, his preaching is different with respect to style and delivery.

Despite this avoidance of polemics, Chaplain Larry insists that the actual content of his ministry is the same. He went on to give an example of how if he was in his home church, he would not hesitate to denounce the teaching of the popular Christian author Rob Bell. Even though he is convinced that the teaching in Rob Bell’s bestselling book *Love Wins* is unorthodox, Chaplain Larry pointed out how, in a Navy chapel, he would positively preach on God’s attributes rather than criticizing the teaching of a popular Christian teacher. This is due to the radical diversity among members of his intended audience in the Navy. Unlike his home church, he cannot assume a common doctrinal bias and worldview among his hearers. Attacking others and denouncing opposing traditions is likely to lead to misunderstanding and cause more problems that it solves. It is interesting to note that while Chaplain Larry was the most blunt of the participants about his reluctance to engage in polemics, he immediately equivocated and admitted that “In preaching, you have to draw lines... and a part of the shepherd’s responsibility is to warn the flock.” So he wants to remain faithful to scripture, but he looks for ways to do that without having to go on the offensive against teaching that some of his fellow chaplains may hold sacrosanct.

Chaplain Henry agreed with the essence of Chaplain Larry's thoughts on the matter. He pointed out how attitudes in the local church are often "narrow and territorial." This sharply contrasts with the mission of Navy chaplains to provide ministry for some but to facilitate and serve all. As he put it,

Recently I went to an Adventist pastors' conference, and when I saw these pastors and listened to their conversations it really struck me...It's like we live in a bubble where we know and deal with just people from our own faith, and everybody else is on the outside. It's almost like Jews and gentiles...There's all this talk about our own beliefs and our own little denominational revivals. We're pointing out the errors in other religions, and most of our criticism is about stuff that our opponents don't really believe anyway. And it's like we're living in this "us versus them" world.

His point was that this kind of territorial attitude may work fine in the local church, but it has no place in the military chaplaincy. Instead of attacking those with whom they disagree, chaplains need to preach the truth as they understand it in a constructive and encouraging way. Pointing fingers at others and denigrating other traditions is off limits. Of course, the affirmation of doctrine without corresponding denial of its opposite is illogical. The difference between these chaplains and local church ministers is that the chaplains are deliberately and self-consciously avoiding the act of verbalizing their opposition. They need to avoid inflammatory language for the sake of peace and harmony.

Chaplains Henry, Paul, and Owen all said the same thing as Chaplain Larry, but in a different way. Where Chaplain Larry emphasized the discontinuity between his preaching

at home and in the Navy, these other chaplains emphasized the continuity. They all insisted that there was absolutely no difference between their sermons at home and those they preached in the Navy. In this respect, they were referring to the actual content of their services as opposed to subtle differences in style and delivery. Chaplain Owen explained, “There’s really not that much difference in the way I preach and conduct services here...I would do the exact same service in a PCA church that I lead here. Maybe there might be a little change with respect to music.” Similarly, Chaplain Henry commented, “I’ve preached the exact same sermon at an Adventist church on Saturday and then the Navy chapel on Sunday without changing anything. My preaching isn’t any different.” When asked if he changes his sermons at all in order to accommodate his Navy audience, Chaplain Paul replied with an emphatic “Absolutely not!” In these cases, the chaplains would agree with Chaplain Larry that the substance of their preaching and teaching is the same as in their local church. But with respect to style and emphasis, they will make their cases in positive ways while avoiding the temptation to contrast and critique opposing views. This is a limitation that parish clergy do not experience.

Joint Services Are Problematic

While each interviewee expressed an eagerness to work with his colleagues in military ministry, they also acknowledged that conducting divine services together can

sometimes be a problem. For the purposes of this research, a “joint service” is where two or more chaplains share responsibility for different elements in the same worship service. For instance, one chaplain preaches while the other serves the Lord’s Supper. Chaplains do conduct this kind of joint ministry from time to time, but all seven respondents mentioned that it can be challenging under certain conditions. Chaplain Henry summarized the issue when he noted that not all chaplains have the same limitations with respect to cooperating with others. Some faith traditions tend to be more exclusive and restrictive, while others have more latitude and are flexible. As he described it, “I think that doing services together in this pluralistic environment is probably easier for those chaplains that we would consider fairly liberal.” His point is that conservative religious groups tend to put more restrictions on their chaplains. On the other hand, those that he called “liberals” are often left to their own discretion as to the circumstances where they will conduct services with others.

Speaking as one who represents a more conservative and restrictive tradition, Chaplain Paul explained why his church disapproved of its chaplains conducting joint services with others. To them, such cooperation is disingenuous and sends a wrong message to the people. He argued, “My church’s guidelines specifically say that we are not to participate in ‘unionism’ with others that we are not in fellowship with.” When pressed to detail further how he defined “unionism,” he continued, “It means to share the mantle of

ministry with others from different denominations or religions. When we do that, it's just confusing to the people in the pews. It's like an implicit endorsement of what the other leader believes, and we just can't do that." He followed up this point by describing a joint prayer service that was held right after the September 11, 2001 tragedy in New York. At that service a fellow minister from his denomination participated, and "he got hammered for it." Apparently, there were several ministers from different Christian denominations participating, along with an Imam who also prayed. This sharing of a service was entirely unacceptable to his ecclesiastical authorities, and all forms of joint ministry services like this are to be avoided. To them, it is a matter of preserving the integrity of the ministry.

Chaplain Owen also related how he tries to avoid participating in joint services as much as possible. From his perspective, chaplains never really know what they are getting into when they do that. He remarked,

I try not to do a lot of joint services...It makes me think of this weird joint service that we had on the aircraft carrier back when I was with the Wing. You know, I don't even think we prayed. It was so watered down, it really bothered me. They called it an "interfaith" service. It was the weirdest service I'd ever been to...It was an Easter service, but somehow they tried to make it so multi-faith that you didn't even have to be a Christian to participate. I think they read a few things. Maybe there was a prayer...but anyway they had all these different faiths and didn't want to offend anybody. I didn't participate in the service, but I attended. I was kind of curious...I've seen a few interesting services like that, and I've been to some other chaplains' services on base, and sometimes it just leaves me scratching my head, like "What just happened?"

This story supported Chaplain Owen's point that he avoids conducting joint services because he does not always have confidence in his colleagues' ministries. Certainly he gave an extreme example here, but his point remained the same: joint services with other chaplains can lead to problems, and he does not want to be identified with what he views as the theological deficiencies of some of his peers.

Chaplain Paul went on to talk about areas where he was nonnegotiable. While he endeavors to cooperate as much as possible with his fellow chaplains, the formal worship service is where he must draw the line. With respect to the ministry of the word and sacrament, he emphasized,

If I'm in a worship setting, I need to be in charge. I have to have control over the setting. I have to know the people who are coming forward to receive communion. I have to minister to them in a spiritual and pastoral way, so their soul is not damaged, and I need to ensure that they do not receive something contradictory or questionable. So, for example, consider a worship setting with a Southern Baptist where communion was going to be served; I would not be in that situation.

He asserted that he could not take a portion of another chaplain's service, nor could he invite a minister outside of fellowship with his church to minister in his own service. When he ministers, he needs to be in control of the service, the preaching, and most importantly, the sacrament.

While this sounds extremely restrictive, he admits that he does, on occasion, preach for other chaplains. But when that happens, he takes charge of the entire service. In this case, it is not truly a “joint service.” He is merely providing a *liturgical evangelical service* in a non-liturgical evangelical pulpit. In that scenario, he also insisted that he would preach on a very theologically distinctive subject. He continued,

If someone invited me to come and preach for them, then I would say “Well, the sermon topic is going to be on infant baptism. Do you have a problem with that? My sermon is going to be on the Sacrament of the Altar and the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament. Do you have a problem with that?” I would preach on the proper distinction between law and gospel, or some other distinctive topic like the bondage of the will.

The intent behind being so theologically distinctive is to avoid any confusion that may arise when chaplains cooperate in ministry. Therefore, chaplains on the conservative end of the spectrum, like Paul and Owen, tend to keep their distance. On the other hand, as Chaplain Henry observed, chaplains on the more liberal side of the spectrum have fewer constraints. When asked directly about any restrictions or caveats that he has with respect to conducting joint services with his colleagues, Chaplain Matt answered, “None...I don’t really have any.” As a result, he has the freedom to use his own discretion about when and where he will conduct joint ministry with his colleagues.

Since sharp theological disagreement is bound to divide chaplains on occasion, Chaplain Larry proposed a solution. Instead of having chaplains share worship services and conduct joint ministry, a better alternative is to simply offer a larger number of more theologically distinctive divine services. He gave an example of a Latter Day Saint chaplain sharing the non-liturgical protestant service with an evangelical chaplain. He illustrated,

What's the point of that? If our purpose is truly to meet the needs of people, then that's the wrong thing to do. A better solution is to just say "Let's have two non-liturgical protestant services." It's about truth in advertising. Just go ahead and have one evangelical service, and then have an LDS service right after it.

In this case, instead of having chaplains with noticeably different theologies sharing the same service, Chaplain Larry suggests splitting the service into two so that each chaplain can minister more distinctively and without compromise. Chaplain Owen stressed the same thing. Instead of focusing on the disagreement, he framed the issue in a positive way.

Speaking to a hypothetical universalist chaplain, he said,

We need a universalist service, because that's who you are. You're distinct. You're a Unitarian Universalist, and we're going to be upfront and honest with who you are and whoever is going to come and hear you preach. The same goes with LDS...you are distinct and unique in the Christian world, and I want to be upfront and honor those distinctions.

Like Chaplain Larry, this is Chaplain Owen's way of avoiding conflict over joint services between chaplains who do not share the same religious tradition – simply have each

chaplain conduct more theologically distinct divine services. This solution can help chaplains overcome some of the problems that arise when they try to conduct ministry jointly.

So then, since chaplains often lead things like worship services and other Bible studies where they preach and teach according to their respective traditions, what is the effect of this religious diversity on the ministry of the Word? In this section the research revealed how chaplains' preaching and teaching ministries are affected by religious diversity in this military context: polemics are avoided and joint services are can be complicated.

On Pastoral Counseling

The next aspect of Navy chaplain ministry explored by the research was how ministry in such a pluralistic environment impacted the chaplains' pastoral counseling. Unlike ministry in the local church, Navy chaplains usually counsel Sailors with dissimilar religious backgrounds. In this regard, the research participants discussed two ways that their counseling ministries are influenced. First, they are much more cautious than they would be in the local church. Second, they strictly avoid proselytizing. These factors will be discussed below.

A Cautious Approach

All seven of the interviewees expressed gratitude for the tremendous privilege of counseling and advising such a radically diverse group of people in the Navy and Marine Corps. They unanimously believed that ministry in the military carried with it an exceptional opportunity to reach people with the gospel. While describing his counseling ministry, Chaplain Owen emphasized what he considered to be an incredible potential to minister to and disciple Sailors. As he explained it,

This ministry is very different. Especially the counseling and one-on-one ministry like that. The opportunities are vast. It's just a huge difference when compared to the local church. In my first week as a Navy chaplain, I did more counseling than I did in two years in the parish...and Sailors instinctively trust their chaplain. They know that I'm their chaplain; I'm here to help, and there's an immediate trust there. I really enjoy that.

At this juncture, Chaplain Owen mentioned a certain familiarity that Sailors have with their chaplains. They know that chaplains are an important resource to help them through all kinds of difficulty. Because chaplains wear the same uniform and are members of the same command, they are part of the team and are accepted as such.

But that goodwill has its limits. While Sailors know the chaplain is a helper, they do not necessarily know or share the chaplain's religious convictions. This is where chaplains must tread carefully. Insensitivity at this point can alienate counselees and shut down any chance of speaking into their lives. Chaplain Larry discussed this hazard when he spoke of

his approach to counseling Sailors with different religious backgrounds. “When I’m interacting with others, I have to be more on my guard in terms of how I express my convictions. I just have to be careful. We might look at that as a drawback, but actually, I think it makes me better at relating to people.” At this point in the interview, Chaplain Larry confessed that he cannot just assume that people share his convictions and Christian worldview. So he deliberately seeks to be aware of people’s biases and religious presuppositions so that he can better relate to them where they are.

Chaplain Larry also insisted that it is important for chaplains to be very candid about their own religious positions, so that counselees can understand the chaplain’s background. He went on, “In one on one counseling, I will be very upfront. Because, again, I take very seriously the fact that we’re not supposed to proselytize. There are certain lines you just don’t cross.” So from the very beginning, Chaplain Larry wants his counselees to understand his point of view. This can prevent misunderstanding later. He also claimed that due to his superior theological training, he had a far better grasp of religion than the vast majority of Sailors. He could use that knowledge to undermine the religious tenets of most counselees who came to him from different faith groups. But, in his mind, to do that would be a gross violation of trust. So to maintain his integrity, he is honest about his background and then does what he can to help each Sailor in need.

Along the same lines, Chaplain Henry discussed the need to go beyond mere initial rapport with a Sailor and build a relationship that enables the chaplain to speak meaningfully about the issues at hand. This involves earning the right to be heard. As he explained, “The way to overcome some of the obstacles in our counseling is by listening and building that relationship.” He went on to describe a counseling encounter he had with a Buddhist sailor who came to him for spiritual advice. He confessed that at first he felt at a loss to reach this person because there was little “common ground” on which to build. But he made the effort to actively listen to this Sailor and built a friendship over the course of several sessions. Chaplain Henry described how this resulted in “some real payoffs,” noting that there was a huge “positive side to it.” That Sailor referred a number of others to him for counseling. While Chaplain Henry did not indicate whether that Sailor was converted to the Christian faith, he did emphasize that he planted seeds of the gospel in his heart. According to Chaplain Henry, the only way he was able to speak into that life in a meaningful way was because he sought to come across as understanding and non-judgmental. He made it a point to listen earnestly to concerns and not merely to assert his religious propositions. This episode highlights how military chaplains must take a cautious approach toward their pastoral counseling. Since they know their counselees usually do not

share their religious convictions, they must make an extra effort to cultivate the credibility necessary to speak significantly into people's lives.

Proselytizing Avoided

When counselees indicate that they are committed to a particular religious system, that preference must be respected. In cases like this, chaplains need to avoid any form of coercion to get the person to abandon their beliefs in favor of the chaplain's religious persuasion. Five of the seven chaplains interviewed spoke passionately about the need to avoid proselytizing. Of course, chaplains have their own strongly held belief systems, but they are not to use their position to intimidate or pressure others to adopt their religious views. While it is perfectly acceptable for a chaplain to be open and honest about his own biases, actively seeking to convert someone who is already committed to another belief system is improper.

Chaplain Henry defined the issue this way,

Proselytism is when an individual comes to me, reveals their religious identity, and asks for help within that context, and then I tell them that what they believe is wrong and try to change them to what I believe. That's proselytism, and it crosses the line. That's not why we're here and that's not what we stand for.

Behind this sentiment is the belief that proselytism is a betrayal or violation of trust. Most Sailors already know that chaplains are religious ministry professionals. They understand

that chaplains have particular religious views. However, Sailors also know that regardless of their particular religious persuasion, chaplains are a helpful resource for all. So there is a certain degree of trust that people put in their chaplains when they come for guidance or advice. But if the chaplain takes that encounter merely as an opportunity to convert somebody who is committed to a rival religious system, then that displays a gross disregard for what the counselee believes and values.

This is why Chaplain Rick suggested that the best approach is simply to ask permission before sharing religious viewpoints that challenge a counselee's faith. To him, it is a matter of respect and plain courtesy. "This is how I handle it," he said, "I just tell them, now here's my religion. This is what my denomination holds to be true. Now I'm not here to proselytize anyone, but please understand, my counsel and wisdom is going to be from this perspective. Is that ok?" If the counselee agrees, then Chaplain Rick is pleased to advise them from his Baptist perspective. But if they disagree, then he is happy to refer them to another chaplain or civilian religious ministry provider who can counsel them from a perspective closer to their own. In either case, he believes that this approach maintains respect for the person's prior religious commitments without unduly compelling them to switch to the chaplain's religion. He elaborated further,

I really don't have a problem with this approach because I believe in the sovereignty of God. I believe that God has brought me and this person to

this particular situation for his glory. My desire is not necessarily to win this person over to my belief system. My desire is to honor God and provide an example of the love of Jesus, knowing that God can work in this person's life through this counseling relationship so that when and if there does come a time where they are interested in learning more about what makes me different, then I'll jump on that opportunity.

Chaplain Rick admits that very often people come to chaplains precisely because they are open to hearing from a religious perspective, even when those views are at odds with what they currently believe. But he refuses to challenge their religious presuppositions until invited to do so.

Chaplain Larry echoed these same ideas when he described how he counseled those from faith traditions different than his own. For him, it is important to value what others hold sacred and to honor their constitutional rights. He explained, "It's a matter of respect. Because, as a chaplain, you must have respect for the Sailor's faith background when he comes to you...As far as I'm concerned, I'm there to do what Jesus did. He met people where they were at and sought to move them closer to God." In no way does this indicate that chaplains are to hide their religious views or avoid sharing the gospel. Instead, the goal is to try to "meet people where they are at," and to await the invitation and opportune moment to suggest an alternative.

Chaplain Clark felt so strongly about avoiding proselytism that he went so far to call it an "unwritten rule." To illustrate, he gave a specific example,

I don't baptize babies. Now if someone comes to me and they want their baby baptized, I'm not going to spend twenty minutes trying to talk them out of it. That's an unwritten rule. I'm just not going to do that. Instead, I'm going to refer them to somebody who does. It's an unwritten rule.

This is a good example of respecting the religious views of others. If the prospective couple wanted to know more about what Chaplain Clark believed about baptism, then he would be most happy to share his Believer's Baptism perspective. But until they expressed that interest, he would refuse to unduly influence them to adopt his religious presuppositions.

In cases where the counselees desire guidance from their own religious tradition, chaplains need to be prepared to refer. Certainly chaplains are prepared to offer counsel and pastoral care for all, regardless of religious background. But referral to either civilian clergy or other chaplains is fairly common. Chaplain Larry spoke of how he deliberately offered referral when people of different religious backgrounds came to him for counsel. He explained, "When a Roman Catholic comes to me, and he's hurting, I'm prepared to handle that situation myself, but I offer referral to a priest anyway. It's a matter of truth in advertising. I'm not a priest, but I can find a priest for you if you like...Most often when someone is in crisis, they don't really care." Here Chaplain Larry demonstrates how chaplains should make every effort to minister to people where they are, but for the sake of integrity, chaplains should be prepared to refer when appropriate.

So then, in what way does this institutional pluralism affect the chaplain's pastoral counseling ministry? In answer to this question, the research participants discussed two ways that their counseling ministries are influenced. First, they are much more cautious than they would be in the local church. Second, they strictly avoid proselytizing. Because their ministries are most often to those in the institution who do not share their specific faith tradition, chaplains are careful to provide faithful pastoral counsel while respecting that religious diversity.

On Public Prayers

The final aspect of Navy chaplain ministry investigated in the study concerned how a pluralistic institutional environment affected chaplains' public prayers. Since a large majority of those serving in the Sea Services are not religiously committed, the researcher inquired into what chaplains did or did not do to accommodate religious diversity among their audiences. Concerning this subject, the interviewees distinguished two items of interest. First, they spoke about how important it is to consider the type of public event in question, since different types of events can have vastly different types of audiences. Second, there is often a great deal of misunderstanding with respect to chaplains' right to pray according to the dictates of their consciences. These concerns will be addressed below.

Identify The Setting

With respect to the setting, the most important issue is whether or not attendance at the event is mandatory. The Navy has a large number of ceremonies and traditional events where prayer by a chaplain is customarily offered. In a divine service, for instance, attendance is strictly voluntary, and the participants know that the meeting is religious in nature. In that kind of setting, the chaplains are free to use religious language that is as exclusive as the occasion requires. Persons who object to that religious language are under no compulsion to be present.

However, the Sea Services hold a lot of events and ceremonies where attendance is not voluntary. These events include things like change of command ceremonies and other civic observances. Often chaplains are invited to make remarks and to open or close such events with prayer. In these kinds of settings, it is very important for chaplains to be sensitive to the religious diversity in the audience and to keep their remarks appropriate. Chaplain Owen spoke about this distinction as he discussed how he navigated this tricky issue. He noted the difference between divine services and other types of ceremonies, explaining how he prayed accordingly:

When it comes to public ceremonies, I'll usually pray in "Your Almighty and Sovereign Name" because for all I know, most of the people there are pagan!...but when I'm in a worship service I use much more specific

language...I guess in my mind when I pray in “Your Holy Almighty and Sovereign Name,” I know who I’m praying to.

He went on to admit that the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which he subscribes, knows of no such distinction between types of events. But he insisted that regardless of how he might adjust his language to fit the occasion, he always prays distinctively Christian prayers. As a Presbyterian chaplain, he has no other choice. As he put it: “I can’t pray generic prayers, because I’m not a generic chaplain!” He spoke of the importance of being tactful in a public setting, knowing that a large number of those in attendance might disagree with or take offense at a ham-fisted approach that implies that everyone outside of the chaplain’s religious tradition is in error. While he cannot compromise his own tenets of faith, neither does he find it necessary to offend everyone else.

Chaplain Larry also addressed this issue of balancing sensitivity toward others in the institution with an unwillingness to compromise his own faith. He spoke of it in terms of a “tension” that should never be resolved.

None of us want to compromise. I know I’m going to stand before the Lord and give an account of my ministry...but there’s that tension between the left and right side of our collars. The left side is my denominational commitment – in other words, my faith. But the right side of my collar says I’m a part of this institution, and I need to abide by its rules. I think if we ever resolve that tension between the two sides, we’ve lost. If we lean too far to the left, we’re ministering far too narrowly. But if we lean too far to the right, then we’ve sold out our spiritual commitment and become too much a part of the institution.

Chaplain Larry identifies something with which all chaplains struggle: the desire on one hand to remain faithful to their callings to public ministry, yet on the other hand, the need to respect the dissenting views of many who might object to that public ministry.

The interviewees discussed different ways that they managed this difficulty. In Chaplain Owen's experience, he deliberately chose to use more ambiguous language when in a public setting in order to avoid speech that might be considered *inflammatory*. From a different perspective, Chaplain Henry described how he went out of his way to preempt his potential critics by ensuring that religious traditions other than his own were given ample opportunity to represent their viewpoints in public. Because his treatment of other religions is perceived by most as fair, he said he was less likely to be criticized when his speech is considered by some to be too exclusive. Chaplain Owen also pointed out the fact that some ceremonies belong to an individual. In those cases, the owner of the ceremony decides if prayer is offered and what religious tradition is represented. An example of this kind of prayer is an invocation and benediction at a retirement ceremony. In this case, the ceremony honors the retiree. It is their service, and it should be conducted according to their wishes.

Praying In Jesus' Name

Closely related to this is the issue of praying in Jesus' name. As Chaplain Clark noted, prayer in the name of Jesus can be perceived by some as very exclusive. As a result, the public often assumes that chaplains are forbidden from invoking the name of Jesus Christ in their prayers. This stems from the fact that there is incredible religious diversity in the ranks. Chaplains are truly present to serve all. Yet, Chaplain Clark argues, it does not follow that chaplains must therefore sterilize the content of their public prayers in order to accommodate those who might object. Chaplains are religious ministry professionals who represent very specific faith traditions. Even though religiously specific language is bound to invite criticism, chaplains must remain faithful to their religious distinctives even in their public ministries. This fact is lost on many, to the chagrin of chaplains like Clark, who exclaimed,

It drives me crazy! I don't know how many times I'll go into a church, and I'll get questions like, "Is it true, you can't pray in Jesus' name?" I get comments like this in my own Assemblies of God churches too! And every time my answer is "Yes I can! I'm pray in Jesus' name all the time! No one can stop me from praying in Jesus' name. No one, ever! Period!"...It's my constitutional right. And there's never been any Navy order to the contrary.

Chaplain Clark expressed great consternation at what he perceived to be gross ignorance on the part of the public. Not only did he consider this rumor to be untrue, but he found it insulting. The idea that the government would try to neuter his prayers or order him to

deny his faith was troubling enough. But even more disturbing was the fact that many people believe, *not only that this is true, but that he would go along with such an order.* In short, Chaplain Clark lamented what he considers to be a great deal of misinformation and misunderstanding surrounding this issue.

While addressing the same mistaken beliefs about public prayer, Chaplain Paul identified a certain former chaplain who made headlines by accusing the Navy of prohibiting him from praying according to his faith. Chaplain Paul pointed to the tireless efforts of that individual as helping to embed this false notion in the public consciousness. He complained, “[That chaplain] contended that the chaplain corps forbade its chaplains from praying in the name of Jesus. That was false. Patently false.” Chaplain Paul emphasized along with Chaplain Clark that Navy chaplains have every right to pray according to the dictates of their consciences, regardless of the setting. He went on, “Sometimes you hear some of the alarmist language out there and people saying that we can’t pray in the name of Jesus and all that stuff. But it’s not really true. Of course we can pray in the name of Jesus.” Essentially, chaplains are never called upon by the Navy to violate their religious tenets or conscience. If chaplains must pray in a certain manner, then that is a constraint laid upon them by their religious organizations. They are never ordered to disobey their ecclesiastical authority.

However, Chaplain Clark identified what he considered to be a right way and a wrong way to pray in public. As he put it, “There’s a smart way of doing it... and then there’s the [chaplain who sued the Navy’s] way.” By this statement, he meant that there are tactful ways to pray exclusively Christian prayers in public. Likewise, there are ill-mannered ways to express religious distinctives. He gave a tongue-in-cheek example of a Christian prayer that was insensitive toward others and bound to invite criticism. Speaking of the evening prayer aboard ship over the 1MC, “God I pray that you forgive every person who didn’t attend chapel today. Forgive them Lord, even though they were too lazy to get out of their rack. And help them to realize that there is no life without you...” In other words, any prayer that implies that all those who disagree with the chaplain are in religious error would not be appropriate for public prayer. Just because a statement is true does not mean that it should be verbalized in public. The chaplain may consider it to be true, but it may be unkind. If so, then it is not appropriate. When chaplains pray in a manner that is obviously exclusive and condescending, they tend to come across as arrogant. This ruins the effectiveness of their ministries and causes more harm than good.

On the contrary, Chaplain Clark insisted that there was a considerate way of praying distinctively Christian prayers in public. While such prayers might not conclude with the phrase, “in the name of Jesus. Amen,” they are nonetheless distinctive Christian

prayers. As he explained, “Praying in the name of Jesus doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re in the face of everyone who disagrees with you...I don’t always specifically name Jesus Christ individually, but I can guarantee that all my prayers are definitely Christian prayers.” He elaborated on how chaplains can pray faithful Christian prayers without using language that is bound to alienate the non-Christian and non-religious persons in the audience. The intent is to avoid coming across as conceited about how “I’m going to heaven, and you’re going to hell.” But regardless of how he might carefully word his prayers, Chaplain Clark was adamant that Christian chaplains pray distinctively Christian prayers.

Along the same lines, Chaplain Henry considered it self-evident that Christian chaplains must pray specifically Christian prayers. “I’m a Christian chaplain,” he said. “For me not to pray according to my own tradition would be weird. People would think I was strange.” The same is true for non-Christian chaplains. Jewish chaplains should be expected to pray Jewish prayers. It should be no surprise when a Moslem chaplain prays an Islamic prayer. So, to Chaplain Henry, the issue seems puzzling when Christian chaplains are perceived as too exclusive when they pray Christian prayers. However, as Chaplain Clark noted, the issue is not religiously exclusive language itself, but tact and consideration of others.

Public prayer can be a tricky issue that chaplains need to think through carefully. To fail at this point and come across as rude and divisive could invite some unpleasant consequences, such as the elimination of chaplain participation in public ceremonies altogether. Chaplain Owen mentioned that possibility when he spoke of a Commander who insisted on reviewing his prayer before allowing it to be broadcast at an upcoming ceremony.

It was a Change of Command ceremony up in Juneau, and the CO said that he wanted to see me. When I met with him he told me that he wanted to know what I was going to be praying about during the ceremony. He was very concerned. So I sat down with him and told him I was a Christian. I showed him the prayer and told him, "This is what I'm going to pray. Is that good enough for you?" He looked at it and said, "Yeah, it's fine." For a moment there, I was scared.

Of course, the Commander could not edit Chaplain Owen's prayer, nor could he force him to say anything objectionable. But he could disinvite the chaplain from participating in the ceremony if he deemed the chaplain's remarks to be inappropriate for the occasion. It is important to realize that chaplain participation in a great many civic observances and ceremonies is merely honorary. There is no requirement compelling chaplain participation at all. If chaplains cannot find a way to tactfully participate in such blended settings, then they could easily find themselves marginalized and excluded entirely. So chaplains have

every right to pray in public as they wish, and the Command has every right to include them at its discretion.

In this section, the attention focused on how issues related to religious pluralism and ecumenical cooperation have impacted the actual delivery of ministry by chaplains in the Navy. The intent of this third section was to discover how the issues discussed in the first two sections have caused chaplains to modify their ministries in both subtle and overt ways in order to accommodate the unique circumstances of ministry in the Navy. The discussion above exposed how chaplains themselves have been transformed, how their relationships have been affected, and how their preaching, teaching, counseling and public prayers have been influenced as a result of the religiously diverse environment.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to discover how United States Navy chaplains navigate the difficulties of religious diversity in the military institution. Over the course of several interviews with senior chaplain corps leaders, more than 150 pages of data were transcribed, analyzed, and organized around the three research questions. Since the chaplain corps is made up of religious ministry professionals from across a wide spectrum of religious traditions, it stands to reason that they would address the challenge of religious pluralism in different ways. Of course, they all have the same goal of serving God and country by

ministering to naval personnel, but each brings unique insight and perspective on how to remain faithful to their religious commitments while serving in such an extremely diverse military community. It is critical to note that they are staff officers in a strictly secular, military institution that seeks to treat all religions equally and fairly. Yet despite the unique hardships and circumstances of military life, Navy chaplains have a history of coming together for the sake of ministry to military personnel. Therefore, the goal of this chapter was to understand the challenges that chaplains face as they work with others from differing faith groups in this radically diverse, secular institution.

With respect to religious pluralism, the research participants identified six important items of note: First, an understanding of the First Amendment is critical. Second, ministry must be build on common ground. Third, this is an amazing ministry opportunity. Fourth, *there is undeniable pressure to conform*. Fifth, the necessity for religious accommodation must be understood, and finally, there is a certain boldness that is required in order to flourish in this environment. These were the topics that came to the forefront with respect to religious pluralism in the Navy.

With respect to ecumenical cooperation, the research participants discussed a broad array of issues that arise when an extremely diverse cross-section of professional clergy are called to work side-by-side. They noted how, despite their differences, chaplains do, have

a number of grounds for cooperation in ministry. Yet competition between chaplains and even conflict are a reality too. When disagreements do arise, it is important to identify the reasons for, and distinguish the various types of, conflict: some are relatively benign, yet others are unfortunately a discredit to the chaplains themselves.

With respect to the impact of this pluralistic environment on the actual delivery of ministry by chaplains, the research participants revealed how they modified their ministries *in both subtle and overt ways in order to accommodate the unique circumstances they find themselves in*. They showed how they were personally affected, how their relationships were impacted, and how their teaching, counseling and prayer ministries were influenced.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

United States Navy Chaplains endeavor to serve God and country by providing religious ministry support to the military personnel of our nation's sea services. While these several hundred ministry professionals come from a wide variety of religious backgrounds, they all strive to employ their gifts and to bless those they are called to serve. However, the Navy Chaplain Corps is a religious community with no singular, unifying statement of faith. Chaplains represent distinct religious organizations and bring particular values, goals, and religious identities with them into this religiously pluralistic and secular institution. They often face significant adversity in their ministries as they deploy with military units and share the same burdens as the rest of the troops. Most often, in spite of the difficulties, the members of this varied group of clergy find ways to pull together and work with one another for the sake of the greater good of the military community. However, despite the best efforts of the group, conflict and discord sometimes occur. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the challenges Navy chaplains face as they work with others from differing faith groups in this religiously diverse, secular military institution.

SUMMARY OF STUDY

This study examined how military chaplains manage the unique challenges of religious diversity and ecumenical cooperation in a secular military institution. To this end, the following research questions guided the study:

4. What do Navy chaplains consider to be the greatest issues with religious pluralism in the military environment?
5. What do Navy chaplains consider to be the greatest issues with ecumenical cooperation in this environment?
6. How have these experiences with pluralism and ecumenical cooperation in this context affected the practice of military ministry?

A review of the relevant literature coupled with an analysis of a number of interviews with senior chaplain corps leaders revealed that religious pluralism presented a considerable challenge in several respects. First, an understanding of the chaplain's role in the institution must be shaped by an appreciation for the first amendment to the Constitution. Chaplains can rightly understand their unique duty in this setting only in the context of the right to the free exercise of religion, which is guaranteed to all. Second, chaplains tend to emphasize the basic elements of religion. Theological and denominational peculiarities have little place in such a religiously diverse setting. Third, military ministry

presents an amazing opportunity for clergy to reach a widely diverse population with their messages. Chaplains overwhelmingly minister to people from outside their own faith traditions. Fourth, there is undeniable pressure on chaplains to downplay their religious distinctives and conform to a generic mold. While that pressure is not the product of any official policy, it is nonetheless present in subtle ways. Fifth, chaplains are not merely ministry providers in their own traditions. They are also required to accommodate other religious ministry for those who do not share their own faith. This is a critical duty – chaplains have to guarantee the first amendment rights of all to worship according to their own consciences. Finally, military ministry requires a degree of necessary boldness in the face of the strict secularism of the institution on the one hand, and the myriad of competing religious claims among the personnel on the other. Chaplains do indeed minister in an environment rife with competing truth claims, and this can present some distinct challenges.

Concerning ecumenical cooperation among chaplains, the interviews demonstrated how such cooperation presented challenges in several respects. Of course, as the participants made clear, chaplains make every effort to cooperate as much as possible, and that cooperation is often based on a general agreement with respect to the most basic tenets of religion. With a large majority professing some form of the Christian faith, usually

chaplains find themselves in agreement on what they would consider to be essential doctrine, even if they might differ on the particulars. Regardless of denomination, chaplains also seek to cooperate with one another because they share similar goals. They are present in order to provide ministry and to bless personnel in need. In addition, they find a way to pull together out of a deep sense of mutual respect for one another. While they may not be in fellowship with one another out in the civilian world, they are colleagues in the chaplain corps. There is a certain degree of mutual respect and professional courtesy evident among chaplains. For these reasons, chaplains work together as much as possible in ministry.

Yet there are a number of things that set chaplains at odds with one another. The researcher noted in the interviews three primary types of *competition and conflict among* chaplains. First, they are required by institutional rules to compete against one another for promotion and advancement. This is not something unique to the chaplain corps; it is part of the role of every staff officer. All military personnel compete against their peers for upward progression in the military hierarchy, and chaplains are no exception. Second, chaplains sometimes have reservations about working closely in ministry with each other because of sharp theological disagreement. In these cases, chaplains tend to keep their ministries markedly separate. Third, similar to the dynamics of any large organization, there can be competition among chaplains for limited resources, access, influence, or position.

This can result in power struggles between chaplains striving to assert their will. Certainly, any large organization can experience conflict in the ranks. The chaplain corps is no different.

What causes this conflict among chaplains? The study revealed a number of sources. First, there is the issue of selfish pride. It would be naïve to assume that, as clergy, chaplains are therefore immune to the sin of pride. As imperfect individuals, chaplains can get caught up in egotistic ambition. When careers are put before ministry, conflict often erupts as chaplains impose their will on one another. Second, conflict sometimes arises due to simple personality clashes or differences in leadership styles. This kind of conflict cannot be avoided without humility and grace on the part of all involved. The third source of conflict is theological. Without a doubt, chaplains hold deep religious convictions, and sometimes those sincerely held beliefs can bring chaplains into opposition with one another. A final source of conflict is ignorance. When chaplains are ignorant of the religious constraints of their peers, they can sometimes *unintentionally offend* others. Therefore, despite good intentions, ecumenical cooperation among chaplains is not something that can be taken for granted.

With respect to the impact of this diverse setting on military ministry practice, the research uncovered the following consequences. First, the chaplains confessed that they

were themselves deeply affected. Their ministries were not as denominational as they would have been out in the civilian world, and they focused more intently on the essentials of their faith. Their ministry amid such radical religious pluralism tended to sharpen their own faith and to help them relate to others who do not share their beliefs. They also had to clearly define their roles and carefully distinguish manners and methods between military and civilian ministry. Second, this setting had a significant impact on these chaplains' relationships and cooperation with one another. They deliberately avoid criticism of one another and actively seek to collaborate with each other as much as possible.

They also learned to deeply appreciate the ministries and contributions of their chaplain peers. They realize that each chaplain has unique strengths and gifts that can complement their own ministries. Concerning preaching and divine services, polemics are avoided. The chaplains are deliberate about positively presenting their own faith while steering clear of openly attacking other religious views. In addition, joint worship services are troublesome. When chaplains from different denominations share a chancel, it can lead to awkwardness. Pastoral counseling is also affected. Because of their religious diversity, chaplains cannot assume a common religious orientation with their counselees. This creates some delicate counseling situations, where chaplains are careful not to push their own religious convictions on others, awaiting an opportunity to tactfully share their faith. Public

prayer is also impacted. Since attendance is required at many of the ceremonies where chaplains are invited to pray, they are sensitive to the diversity of their audiences at any given event. While they pray according to the requirements of their religious organizations, chaplains are tactful and considerate of those who do not share their religious convictions.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section, I will reference representative samples of the interview data, along with apt selections from the literature, to draw conclusions from the research findings. Following these conclusions, I will make recommendations of best practices for active duty chaplains, prospective chaplains, and other concerned Christians in the light of the research.

Religious Pluralism

First Amendment Framework

The study revealed six significant items that need to be noted with respect to religious diversity in military ministry. They are discussed below in no particular order.

First, Navy chaplaincy must be understood in the context of the first amendment's establishment and free exercise clauses. This is the chaplain corps' "raison d'être."¹⁵⁸

Without the free exercise clause, there would be no reason for a secular, military institution to provide for religious ministries at all. Precisely because our nation cherishes the value of

¹⁵⁸ *MCWP 6-12*, 1-1.

religious freedom, it makes every effort to accommodate free religious expression. Service members have the constitutional right to practice the religion of their choice. While operational constraints may frustrate some observances of religion, the Navy has an obligation to make a good faith effort to ensure that the Sailors' religious rights are not violated. This is where the Navy Chaplain Corps comes into the picture. So it is important to understand the constitutional basis for military ministry. Chaplain Henry emphasized this fact when he stressed the neutrality of the government with respect to religion. Although the government commissions chaplains, it does not endorse any particular religion or get involved in religious affairs. Because of the establishment clause in the Constitution, our nation simply allows and provides for a myriad of competing religious viewpoints. This is in keeping with the decision of the Supreme Court, rendered in 1947, in *Everson v. Board of Education*. In that case, Justice Hugo Black summarized the Court's interpretation of the issue:

The "establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state

nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect "a wall of separation between Church and State."¹⁵⁹

So then, a careful observance of the first amendment is critical to understanding the nature of the chaplain corps. By establishing such a corps, the government is in no way sanctioning any particular religion. It is merely accommodating the free exercise of religion by the troops. Failure to understand this distinction can lead some to object to the existence of a chaplain corps, since one might confuse such a corps with the establishment of religion, which is clearly prohibited.

Accommodation of Other Faiths

While chaplains represent particular religious organizations, they remain commissioned Naval officers. Of course, they provide religious ministry for those of their own faith traditions, but they are also required to accommodate other forms of religious expression in addition to their own. This is the second important issue related to religious diversity. This is no mere collateral or tertiary duty. As far as the Department of the Navy is concerned, this is a primary duty for chaplains. As the Marine Corps Warfare Publication 6-12 puts plainly:

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Lynn, Stern, and Thomas, *The Right to Religious Liberty*, 2.

Chaplains minister in the sea services to fulfill the spirit of the First Amendment to the US Constitution – to avoid the establishment of religion and to protect the free exercise of religious expression... Chaplains facilitate the needs of all faith groups, as well as providing for the needs of their own.¹⁶⁰

This duty speaks directly to the need for a chaplain corps in the first place. The first amendment protects the religious rights of not only the few who share the chaplain's religious beliefs, but it protects the religious rights of all. Therefore, chaplains are responsible for ensuring that the rights of all are respected, even if that means accommodating religious expression that the chaplain finds personally distasteful. As Chaplain Rick commented, "It's important to understand, first and foremost, that this is Navy policy...I am required to facilitate for others. That does not mean that I perform divine services for them, but I am to see to it that they are guaranteed the free exercise of religion. That's why the chaplain corps exists." This simply means that chaplains protect servicemembers' constitutional rights. This facilitation task does not imply endorsement of competing truth claims, nor any degree of theological agreement. Rather, it is a matter of respect for the religious rights of fellow Americans. If someone's conscience precludes them from taking action to protect the constitutional rights of a fellow citizen, then that person should not be in the chaplain corps. This accommodation task is challenging and easily misunderstood. As Chaplain Henry lamented, it has also caused chaplains no small amount

¹⁶⁰ MCWP 6-12.

of distress when they have been accused by some of compromising their faith when providing religious accommodation to others. Yet this is a crucial task to understand, and the chaplain corps itself could not exist without it. Unless chaplains ensure that all religions are treated equally, the government would not be able to avoid the accusation of establishment of religion.

Common Ground

The third important issue related to ministry in this diverse setting is the need for chaplains to establish rapport with others by finding and emphasizing what they have in common. Of course, each chaplain represents a distinct religious tradition, but by emphasizing those things that they have in common with others, chaplains are able to build relationships that can lead to fruitful ministry.

In the course of the interviews, most of the chaplains asserted the importance of focusing on the basics of their faith: the doctrinal essentials that most Christians share. This enables personnel to look beyond the chaplain's denominational label and receive ministry from someone who might come from a different religious background than their own. That is why Chaplain Clark urged chaplains to "stick with what's important" and warned against getting "bogged down in the minutia of a certain doctrine." Similarly, Chaplain Matt cautioned against becoming "very narrow, very rigid, and very concerned with

theological distinctions.” These things tend to divide people, and chaplains who focus on them can find their intended audiences closed to their message before they have had a *chance to be fully heard*.

Only Chaplain Paul stressed the importance of maintaining sharp theological distinctives in military ministry, and in fact, highlighting them in order to distinguish his ministry from that of other chaplains. His chief concern was doctrinal compromise. He did not want to give even the appearance of any break with his religious tradition.

Both sides have a valid point. By stressing the exclusivity of his religious tradition, Chaplain Paul risks estranging himself from those who do not share his liturgical evangelical convictions. However, by emphasizing merely the essentials of the Christian faith, the other chaplains can also risk appearing to compromise their own religious traditions. For instance, if charismatic chaplains were to minimize their belief in, and practice of, the charismatic gifts, could they not be suspected of disloyalty to their own religious tradition? It is likely that they could.

Acts 17 helps to clarify the issue. When the Apostle Paul stood on Mars Hill and engaged that diverse crowd, he immediately found something that he had in common with his audience and then used that item to launch into a very exclusive message. The scripture records:

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To an Unknown God. Now what you worship as something unknown, I am going to proclaim to you.”¹⁶¹

Here Paul found some *common ground* and used that to build rapport with his audience, but then he went on to preach a very particular message about Jesus Christ. Chaplains would be wise to do likewise. It is crucial at the beginning of a ministry relationship to emphasize those elements of religion that we have in common with others. But once rapport is established, chaplains should not hesitate to minister in a theologically distinctive manner.

Great Opportunity for the Gospel

Without a doubt, service in the Navy chaplain corps represents an amazing opportunity to minister to an incredibly diverse cross-section of American society. In what other setting does the government open its doors wide and invite clergy to provide substantial religious ministry to its personnel? This is why Chaplain Paul marveled at the opportunity, saying, “it just boggles my mind.” First, it is a chance for chaplains to minister *outside the bounds of their denominations and reach people unfamiliar with their religious traditions*. This, in itself, is a great reason for clergy to explore the possibilities. Second, it is

¹⁶¹ Acts 17:22-23

a chance to be a valued resource for all military personnel. It is ministry with a built-in audience. As Chaplain Paul put it, “I don’t have to necessarily go out. They are coming to me.” Third, it is a chance to disciple others and to strengthen those who are immature in their faith. To this end, Chaplain Rick described a lot of “foundational work,” with the result that he gets to “bring the truth of God to the problem that this person is dealing with and show them how God is working in their life...” Fourth, the ministry is entirely funded by the government. After describing a successful ministry initiative, Chaplain Paul boasted, “Uncle Sam paid for this!” In short, with such an immense opportunity to reach out with the gospel, it would be tragic not to take advantage of the invitation to participate.

But ministry in the military also means that the chaplain is but one voice among many in the vast religious marketplace of ideas. Since the government has no particular interest in advancing the chaplain’s preferred religion, other religions with competing truth claims are also welcome. This is the essence of religious liberty. As long as constitutional rights are being respected, the government has no further interest. Francis Schaeffer’s words in *A Christian Manifesto* ring prophetic,

Thus as we stand for religious freedom today, we need to realize that this must include a general religious freedom from the control of the state for all religion. It will not mean just freedom for those who are Christians. It is

then up to Christians to show that Christianity is the Truth of total reality in the open marketplace of freedom.¹⁶²

This is what military chaplains have an opportunity to do. The invitation stands for religious professionals to enter the ranks of the chaplain corps and add their voice to the public religious discussion. Under these circumstances, military ministry provides an irresistible opportunity to advance the Gospel.

Pressure to Conform

However, precisely because all religions are equally free to broadcast their views, exclusive truth claims can be problematic in this postmodern and pluralistic institution. While, logically speaking, to assert proposition A might necessarily mean denying proposition B, to refute B publically can incite antagonism because B is as equally protected as A. In addition, the Navy has no opinion on either proposition. Therefore, chaplains are under pressure to downplay their religious distinctives and conform to a generic mold. Because exclusive religions are also protected, such pressure cannot be the result of any official policy, yet several of the chaplains interviewed admitted that such pressure exists in subtle ways. Chaplain Owen mentioned recurring temptation to “water down” his faith, and Chaplain Clark complained about being “stripped” of his theological identity into what he termed a form of “forced compromise.”

¹⁶² Schaeffer, *Christian Manifesto*, 46.

Yet, none of this is surprising. This is to be expected from a truly pluralistic institution. As D.A. Carson described it,

Instead of this diversity being cherished as the best way to ensure freedom and to pursue truth, the pressures from philosophical pluralism tend to squash any strong opinion that makes exclusive truth claims – all, that is, except the dogmatic opinion that all dogmatic opinions are to be ruled out.¹⁶³

While the chaplain's exclusive truth claims may be meaningful on a personal level, those truth claims carry no transcendent authority in the military context. Competing truth claims have equal validity. Hence, any religion that asserts its superiority over another is frowned upon by the pluralistic community. Frankly, such religious expression comes across as uncouth.

Along these same lines, Leslie Newbigin rightly describes ministry in such a pluralistic setting,

So now [the minister] must recognize that God's grace is at work with indiscriminating generosity among all peoples and in all the great religious traditions, and therefore abandon the claim to be the sole possessor of the truth. This view is now so widely shared that it has become in effect the contemporary orthodoxy. Pluralism is the reigning assumption.¹⁶⁴

This attitude is the reigning assumption of the military community. It stands to reason, therefore, that a chaplain from an exclusive faith tradition should not be surprised at the

¹⁶³ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 33.

¹⁶⁴ Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 156.

subtle and even not-so-subtle pressure in the institution to play down religious distinctives. Such chaplains should enter the military with their eyes wide open, fully prepared for the inevitable criticism.

However, just because some chaplains represent exclusive traditions does not necessarily mean that they must offend. Chaplains should be known for their tact, grace, and humility. While they might not be able to dodge all criticism, they can at least rest assured that the disapproval they receive is due to their message and not their manner. Chaplains should never deliberately offend. Their courtesy and mannerisms should be impeccable. But neither should they compromise their religious convictions, despite the regular opportunities to do so.

Necessary Boldness

The final issue related to religious pluralism that the research uncovered had to do with the chaplain's own inner resolve. Ministry in this setting requires a certain degree of necessary boldness in order to be effective. Surrounded by such a large number of competing truth claims and worldviews, chaplains must be well grounded in their own religious identities and faith traditions. They will be challenged, and the temptation to question their own biases and religious presuppositions is unavoidable. Additionally, as officers in a religiously indifferent institution, Navy chaplains are far removed from the

support of like-minded crowds in the local church. They are instead called to serve multitudes of people who have religious views that are different and even hostile to the chaplain's own.

This requires the inner fortitude displayed by Chaplain Clark, who refused to allow contrary views and inevitable criticism to shake his confidence in his calling. As he put it, "I know my heart, I know what God has called me to do. I'm not trying to impress anybody...I'm not concerned about what this ministry looks like to the critics." Chaplain Matt also spoke to this issue when he admitted how religious pluralism in the Navy challenged his own faith but ultimately made him stronger. He shared, "This environment really challenges you to come to grips with what you believe and why you believe it." Similarly, Chaplain Paul emphasized how, after nearly thirty years, his military ministry was successful precisely because he is sure about his religious convictions. He explained, "Religious pluralism is not a negative on my ministry because I have confidence in what I believe." This solid grounding in one's own faith and ministerial identity can make the difference between success and failure in Navy chaplaincy.

Chaplains who are secure in their faith and callings can thrive in a pluralistic environment that might seem threatening or even hostile to civilian clergy. Along these lines, Leslie Newbiggin pointed out that radical religious pluralism is no new challenge to

the church. While it can certainly be a test, the gospel can thrive under this kind of pressure. As Newbigin explains,

The world into which the first Christians carried the gospel was a religiously plural world and – as the letters of Paul show – in that world of many lords and many gods, Christians had to work out what it means that in fact Jesus alone is Lord. The first three centuries of church history were a time of intense life-and-death struggle against the seductive power of syncretism. But if the issue of religious pluralism is not entirely new, it certainly meets our generation in a new way. We must meet it in the terms of our own time.¹⁶⁵

So for chaplains who are not secure in their faith or religious calling, ministry in this context can present extremely difficult challenges. Chaplains engage regularly with those whom their traditions would describe as adherents of false religions or heresy. They also collaborate in ministry with chaplain colleagues from different traditions who are trained in theology to an equal or even greater degree than themselves. This requires boldness and a secure ministerial identity in order to be successful. Without such, chaplains could start to question their calling to this ministry or even begin to have doubts about their personal faith.

¹⁶⁵ Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 157.

Ecumenical Cooperation

Grounds for Cooperation

Since all chaplains strive to serve God and country through ministry to the military community, they already have a great deal in common. Certainly, a corps of chaplains that works together harmoniously is the ideal. The alternative would be to have approximately 850 individual chaplains isolated from each other, with each conducting ministry independently, or even worse, in open conflict with one another. Given the nature of the institution, that would be unthinkable. Of course, cooperation and partnership is the goal, but it is not always easily realized. Chaplains represent distinct religious traditions, and they have plenty of reasons for disagreement with respect to ministry methods, messages, and emphases. However, despite their differences, chaplains still have plenty of areas in which they can agree. Cooperative ministry partnerships can be built on these areas of agreement.

These common areas of agreement include solidarity on what comprises the essentials of the faith, parallel objectives in ministry, and accord on the importance of mutual respect and professional courtesy among chaplains. Of course, agreement in a theological sense can only be attained on a most superficial level between chaplains from significantly different denominations. Even among the chaplains interviewed for this study, answers varied widely about what exactly constituted the essentials of the Christian faith.

Yet the consensus was that chaplains need to focus on those things they share in common and emphasize unity. Chaplain Clark described the differences between evangelical chaplains as “*little, petty differences*” that need to be set aside for the sake of effective ministry. Likewise, Chaplain Henry described most theological divisions as “*minor things*” that were ultimately distractions from the things that really matter. When it comes to grounds for ministry cooperation, agreement on the barest essentials of religious doctrine is sufficient for chaplains to set aside denominational labels and labor together for the common good.

Even chaplains from significantly different religious backgrounds have a powerful motivation to pull together because they are trying to accomplish the same thing. Military personnel with a multitude of both religious and non-religious needs come to chaplains for ministry support and care. Regardless of denomination, chaplains of all stripes seek to bless, encourage, care for, and strengthen every person they are called to serve. This sense of shared purpose is the foundation for a great deal of ministry partnership in the chaplain corps. As Chaplain Owen emphasized when asked about working with chaplains from different religions, “I don’t care what their faith background is, we’re going to cooperate on the ministry tasks...that’s our mission together.” Regardless of agreement or disagreement on religious doctrine, chaplains employ teamwork in military ministry.

They also defer to one another out of a sense of mutual respect and for the sake of professional courtesy. This sense of professionalism and respect is deeply ingrained in the culture of the chaplain corps. That is why the Chief of Navy Chaplains did not establish new policy as much as humbly acknowledge long standing practice when he recently described professional naval chaplaincy with these words, “Mutual Respect: All persons operating under the auspices of PNC will recognize the practitioners of other faiths as equals under the law...Participants in PNC are entrusted with the duty of creating a climate where every individual’s contribution is valued.”¹⁶⁶ This is as it should be. With such great religious diversity, not only in the ranks, but in the chaplain corps itself, such an ethos is the only way to convince such disparate religious professionals to work constructively side-by-side. Every chaplain interviewed spoke of the importance of cordial, cooperative relationships with colleagues. Consequently, they all expressed a strong desire to work cooperatively with their chaplain peers within the constraints of their religious organization. Given the factors discussed above, they have good grounds to do so.

Types of Competition and Conflict

Despite good intentions, there are still plenty of things that can disrupt harmonious relationships between chaplains. Because they are not merely religious ministry providers

¹⁶⁶ “Professional Standards for PNC”, 63.

but also military officers, chaplains of the same rank directly compete against one another for advancement. This can interfere with ministry cooperation and set chaplains against each other in both obvious and subtle ways. This ministry relationship dynamic is unparalleled in the local church. Rank in the military hierarchy directly correlates to how much authority and responsibility officers have. It also determines the degree of honor they receive, as well as the size of their paychecks and retirement packages. It even impacts things like the neighborhood in which they are entitled to live, the benefits they can enjoy, or if they can remain on active duty altogether. Military rank does have its privileges, and Navy chaplains are subject to a promotion system that puts them in direct competition with each other. As Chaplain Matt observed, chaplains are expected to be competitive just like officers in any other military community, but it is critical for them to maintain their professionalism at all times. Unlike non-religious officers, Christian chaplains believe in a God who governs all the affairs of their lives by his hand of providence. It is incumbent upon them therefore to apply themselves to their callings to the best of their ability and, in faith, leave the promotion issue to providence.

At other times, chaplains refuse to work together due to matters of conscience.

When theological constraints forbid participation in joint ministry, chaplains are obliged to keep their ministries separate. Even then, mutual respect and professional courtesy prevail

in spite of those theological disagreements. Because of the wide array of religious traditions represented in the chaplain corps, chaplains have a variety of scruples that limit cooperation in ministry with chaplains from other denominations. There is nothing wrong with this; it comes with having a corps made up of such diverse clergy. Even the most exclusive religious traditions have a right to worship, ministry, and representation in the chaplain corps. According to the Chief of Chaplains' guidance in his "Professional Standards for PNC,"

PNC recognizes and values the pluralism inherent in the DOD and PNC community and seeks to accommodate the religious beliefs of all to the fullest possible extent...chaplains are free to participate or not participate in Divine Services and/or faith-specific ministries with persons from other RO's.¹⁶⁷

This policy simply recognizes the fact that some chaplains will be prohibited by conscience from cooperating with others from time to time. In cases like this, non-cooperation should not cast chaplains in a negative light, since they are merely maintaining their fidelity to the religious organization they represent.

Unfortunately, conflict can also arise between chaplains for less-than-noble reasons. While not common, petty rivalries and power struggles can erupt between chaplains from time to time. As a flawed association of religious ministry professionals, the chaplain corps is

¹⁶⁷ "Professional Standards for PNC", 63.

subject to the same types of hazards that plague other large organizations. As chaplains compete for limited resources, premium chapel space, and access to or influence with the Command, they can slide into sinful patterns that fall far short of their honorable calling. Of course, there is no excuse for abusive behavior, lax morals, or illegal activity. These things are a matter of integrity. Thankfully, none of the research participants indicated that power struggles and petty rivalries were a widespread problem in the chaplain corps. Yet they can happen on occasion.

Sources of Conflict

In the discussion above, the types of conflict were divided into three broad categories. The first was professional competition. This is a fact of life in the Navy, and there is nothing wrong with it as long as it remains strictly professional. Chaplains can engage in healthy competition for promotion without that competition degenerating into something ugly. The second type of conflict was theological in nature. When chaplains are prohibited by their consciences from cooperation with another chaplain, they cannot be faulted. However, when it comes to power struggles and petty rivalries, there is plenty of blame to go around. As those who are to exemplify teamwork, camaraderie, and all the best in religion, these types of conflicts are beneath the dignity of the chaplain's office. It is the result of sinful behavior such as selfish ambition, the pride of life, careerism, and any

number of other vices that arise when chaplains put their own interests ahead of ministry service.

Yet sometimes conflict can happen as a result of something as simple as a contrasting leadership style. Chaplain Henry offered periods of transition in a chapel as a likely time for this type of conflict to occur. As long as the leadership style of new chaplains is not offensive or abusive in any way, it cannot be considered sinful, even if it causes some difficulty in the short term, as all involved settle into their new roles. In addition, personality clashes can be, but are not necessarily, sinful. A lot depends on the particular circumstances. Of course, the friction caused by abrasive personalities could make cooperation difficult at times. Certainly some of the conflict between chaplains has its root in personality differences that are not necessarily sinful.

Five of the seven chaplains interviewed had witnessed conflict over theology at some point in their careers. This conflict is not merely one chaplain abstaining from joint ministry due to theological constraints. It refers to animosity, antagonism, or passive-aggressive behavior toward other chaplains due to disagreement with their theology. Similar to their comments about power struggles and petty rivalries, the interviewees did not consider this to be widespread in the chaplain corps. It happens infrequently, but it does happen, and it runs contrary to the ethos of the chaplain corps. All chaplains understand

that ministry in the Navy includes working side-by-side with others who hold religious convictions contrary to their own. As the Code of Ethics affirms,

*I understand, as a Navy chaplain, I must function in a pluralistic environment with chaplains and delegated representatives of other religious bodies to provide ministry to all military personnel and their families entrusted to my care...I will respect the beliefs and traditions of my colleagues and those to whom I minister.*¹⁶⁸

So chaplains are required to respect the sincerely held beliefs and religious traditions of others even when those beliefs run contrary to the chaplain's own faith. To persecute another or to be passive-aggressive toward them because of their religion runs flatly contrary to the clear intent of the Navy for its chaplains. Chaplain Paul suggested that when chaplains engage in this kind of conflict, it merely reflects their own religious insecurities, and serves no useful purpose. Chaplains who are confident in their own faith realize that respect for another religious tradition does not mean agreement or endorsement of it. That makes conflict of this nature pointless.

Affect on Ministry Practice

On Chaplains

The next item under consideration is how this diverse environment affects the delivery of ministry in the Sea Services. As might be expected, it does impact ministry in several key ways. First, it affects the chaplains themselves deeply. They perceive the nature

¹⁶⁸ *MCWP 6-12, 1-7.*

of their ministries differently than their civilian colleagues in the pastorate do. Because of the transient nature of the work, deep ministry relationships are rare. They do not have the same opportunities that pastors have to build long-term relationships. If the chaplain is not rotating soon, the Sailor or Marine is. So chaplains have fewer chances to form deep bonds with personnel and cultivate that long-term disciple/mentor relationship. In addition, most often ministry relationships are cultivated with people who come from faith traditions unlike the chaplain's own. So chaplains are forced to focus on the essentials of the faith more than civilian ministers. This is truly evangelistic work, which is different than the pastorate. As Chaplain Clark put it, ministry in the military forces chaplains to "stick with the primary concerns" of the faith. The window of opportunity to influence a Sailor or Marine is often too short to get much further than the basics.

While this might appear to be a negative, the overwhelming consensus of the research participants was that their ministries were enhanced because of this unique environment. Because they interact daily in meaningful ways with people from across the religious spectrum, they are more adept at listening and relating to others, both religious and non-religious alike. As Chaplain Rick noted, the setting has sharpened his interaction with those outside his faith. He shared, "I've become very comfortable in sharing the gospel and talking about my relationship with God, because I do it so frequently now! I

guess you could say this ministry makes us more efficient in communicating with non-Christians.” Chaplain Owen made the same observation, “I think it makes me a better *minister in many ways too because it opens me up to see where other people are coming from, and how they process, and how they work and minister.*” Clearly, working in such a diverse environment has its advantages in ministry. Chaplains tend to keep doctrinal essentials at the forefront and become more proficient at reaching out to others.

However, a critical area of concern is the careful distinction of civilian ministry from military chaplaincy. There are sharp differences between ministry in a local church setting and military ministry. Besides the fact that chaplains work in the field and deploy with their military units, their duties are different from civilian clergy too. Chaplains are not merely church officers, but they are also military officers. That brings with it additional duties that are foreign to ministry in the local church. Chief among these is the necessity to facilitate religious ministry for faith groups other than the chaplain’s own. This is a matter of defending the constitutional rights of other citizens to worship as they choose. And this is no mere collateral or tertiary duty; it is a primary obligation. As MCWP 6-12 directs,

Chaplains facilitate the needs of all faith groups, as well as providing for the needs of their own...[this] includes but is not limited to, scheduling, coordinating, budgeting, and contracting...procurement of gear, consumable supplies, outside chaplain/clergy/minister support, and related

support activities...Provide and promote an environment of understanding and respect for the variety of individual and group religious expressions.¹⁶⁹

This is extremely important, and every chaplain must come to grips with its necessity. If chaplains are going to be present in the institution to provide ministry for their own, they must defend the rights of all. Failure to do so is failure as a military chaplain. Not every civilian minister is going to feel comfortable accomplishing this task. As Chaplain Owen confessed, it is something that caused him to pause and think before he agreed to serve. As stated before, the execution of this task in no way implies agreement or endorsement of rival truth claims. It is merely a matter of First Amendment rights, and chaplains are at the forefront in defending those rights for all. This is one of many crucial differences between military and civilian ministry, and chaplains need to give careful thought to those differences in order to rightly understand their role in the institution.

On Ministry Relationships & Cooperation

This environment also has a profound impact on how chaplains relate to one another and cooperate in ministry. To a large extent, chaplains find a way to lay aside their *religious differences and come together in partnership for the greater good*. Collaborative ministry relationships that would most likely not occur outside the military happen with regularity in the chaplain corps. How many protestant ministers have Roman Catholic

¹⁶⁹ *MCWP 6-12*, para 5-1.

priests on their staff out in the civilian world? These kinds of arrangements are practically unheard of outside of institutional ministry. It is important to note that the military environment forces diverse chaplains into partnership, and this teamwork is characteristic of professional naval chaplaincy.

Chaplains are also deliberate about avoiding open criticism of one another's religion. This is a settled matter of Navy policy. The intent is to positively advocate for their own faith while steering clear of tearing down anybody else's. This is a fine line that the Navy forces its chaplains to walk. Like all clergy, chaplains hold strong religious convictions. Some of those convictions include passionate disagreement on core areas of religious doctrine. Yet those differences must be set aside if cooperative ministry relationships are going to be established. This does not mean compromise of the chaplain's personal faith in the least. It simply means that those disagreements are not verbalized, and that ministerial relationships marked by professional courtesy are the norm. As Chaplain Paul explained, "The Navy calls us to be professional in our calling to military ministry. So we don't publically criticize other chaplains or faith groups when we disagree with them theologically. Nor do we criticize other denominations or religions publically..." As far as the institution is concerned, to denounce another religious group publically is prejudicial to good order and discipline and can be grounds for discipline. As the Commandant of the

Marine Corps declares in MCO 1730.6D, language which “explicitly or implicitly denigrates the race, ethnic origins, or religious practices of others” is subject to reprimand.¹⁷⁰ While chaplains are certainly free to positively advocate for their faith, they must do so without denigrating others.

However, this is rarely an issue. Far from disparaging their colleagues, the research participants overwhelmingly emphasized a deep appreciation for each other. While they may not agree on the particulars of religion, they recognize that their fellow chaplains can be valuable resources to help them in their own ministries. Chaplain Rick readily admitted that he could not always effectively minister to every Sailor. In those cases, he can refer those personnel to his colleagues, who might be better able to meet a particular need. Likewise, Chaplain Clark recognized that his peers had *ministry gifts that he lacked* and talents that he could appreciate despite their denominational differences. Cooperative relationships with other chaplains serve as a ministry multiplying tool, enabling chaplains to leverage their efforts and get more done. The gifts that one chaplain lacks are often exhibited by another. And when they learn to refer and collaborate in ministry, chaplains are better able to meet the needs of the diverse population they are called to serve.

¹⁷⁰ MCO 1730.6D., 5b(5)

On Preaching, Teaching, & Divine Services

The pluralistic military environment also affects how chaplains conduct worship services and teach. *Of course, the last thing chaplains want to do is compromise their religious convictions. However, what was noted above about deliberately avoiding criticism on a personal level also applies to how chaplains preach and teach during formal worship services. For the most part, they try to positively articulate their tenets of faith without resorting to deliberate contrast and denunciation of other views. At first, this may seem to be merely semantic. To affirm a proposition may necessarily include the denial of its opposite. But while that is true, to verbalize such denunciation in such a public way may not be gracious in this setting, nor is it respectful, and it is rarely necessary. Ministry in a pluralistic setting requires tact and courtesy, even with respect to religious traditions with which the chaplain strongly disagrees.*

This is why the PRJCCMP directs its Presbyterian and Reformed chaplains “to respect and uphold the ethical and constitutional right of other endorsers and their respective chaplains, to maintain and express their doctrinal distinctives and ecclesiological practices.¹⁷¹” Here, the endorsing agent simply recognizes that respect for the rights of other religious groups in no way constitutes compromise of its own faith commitments. Of

¹⁷¹ Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel, *Chaplains' Manual*, 15.

course, this does not mean that chaplains are prohibited from denouncing what they consider to be false doctrine. They certainly have the discretion to do so, however the consensus among the research participants was that respect and courtesy, rather than scathing polemic, should mark religious dialogue in the Sea Services. After all, it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

Additionally, problems can arise when chaplains conduct divine services together. Because chaplains represent such a vast array of religious organizations, the constraints that they have are not uniform. Sometimes, such joint ministry can work well. When it is possible, it should be pursued so the chaplains can display that teamwork and unity that is so important to the military community. However, shared ministry cannot be taken for granted. Some, like Chaplain Paul, are under considerable restrictions regarding what they can and cannot do in ministry with other chaplains. Others, like Chaplain Matt, have much more latitude. So then, while chaplains desire to cooperate with one another as much as possible, each situation must be evaluated according to its own particular circumstances. For example, while some churches may prohibit their chaplains from conducting worship with any who are not in fellowship with their specific church, the PRJCCMP merely restricts its chaplains from conducting worship services with non-Trinitarian chaplains and others who do not have comparable ordination requirements. These are just two of the 194

different religious organizations that endorse chaplains for military ministry. Each can place its own set of restrictions on the chaplains under its authority. So cooperative ministry is the ideal, but it is not always possible. When it is impossible, divine services should be multiplied in order to accommodate the particular religious traditions the chaplains represent. In any case, mutual respect and professional courtesy should prevail.

On Pastoral Counseling

Unlike in the local church, when people come to a Navy chaplain for counseling, they may not know the chaplain's religious affiliation. So there is a disconnect there that chaplains must keep in mind. Most often, the counselee comes to the chaplain from either a non-religious background or from a religious tradition unlike the chaplain's own. So chaplains tend to take a cautious approach toward their pastoral counseling, knowing that they cannot assume that they share a common world and life view with their counsees. A tactless remark or misunderstood comment can easily ruin a budding counseling relationship. That is why it is so important for chaplains to develop the skill of active listening. As they empathize with Sailors in distress, they build the rapport and credibility necessary to speak into their lives in meaningful ways. This is why Chaplain Larry emphasized his caution in the early stages of a counseling session. "When I'm interacting with others, I have to be more on my guard in terms of how I express my convictions. I

just have to be careful.” The intent is to keep the focus on counselees and their concerns, rather than turning each session into a proselytizing encounter. Chaplains must earn the right to be heard.

In another sense, it is also important for chaplains to be upfront and honest about their own religious presuppositions. Counselees have a right to be informed of the religious perspective of their counselor. Chaplain Larry also underscored the importance of being *upfront and honest about religious biases*. Counselees should decide for themselves whether or not they are open to advice from a practitioner of the chaplain’s particular faith. When that invitation is extended, chaplains should feel free to provide specific religious counsel as appropriate. *However, if the counselee indicates a preference for secular counseling or counseling from a different religious provider, then those wishes should be respected and an appropriate referral made.* The key is to avoid proselytizing in accordance with Navy policy:

While it may be permissible for persons to share their religious faith, outside Divine or Religious Services, persons under the cognizance of PNC shall ask permission of those with whom they wish to share their faith and respect the wishes of those they ask. Respecting the religious values of others, persons operating as part of PNC shall not proselytize those who request not to be proselytized...¹⁷²

¹⁷² “Professional Standards for PNC,” 63.

While chaplains often identify their ministries as missionary and evangelistic in nature, institutional rules affect how they represent their faith during pastoral counseling. Respect for the faith commitments of others and careful discretion in offering religious advice are the normal procedure.

On Public Prayer

Chaplains have an honorary role in many of the ceremonies and customs that mark the naval community. As a result, chaplains are often asked to offer public prayer.

Retirement ceremonies, civil events, national anniversaries, prayers at sea, commissionings, and change of command ceremonies are just a few of the types of events where public prayer by the chaplain is often invited. In each case, chaplains must be sensitive to the nature of the event and pray accordingly. As MCWP 6-12 explains,

Navy chaplains who serve in Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard commands are trained to distinguish between divine services and other command functions at which they may be invited to offer prayer.... Chaplains are encouraged to respect the diversity of the community as they facilitate the free exercise of religious rights protected by the Constitution and military policy.¹⁷³

When conducting divine services, chaplains know that their audience understands the event is religious in nature, and they are present voluntarily. So, in worship services, chaplains are free to minister and pray without regard for other opinions. In these cases,

¹⁷³ MCWP 6-12, para 5-6.

they are providing religious ministry according to a very specific faith tradition. However, in many of these other public events, attendance by military personnel is not optional. Nonreligious persons and those with religious commitments different than that of the chaplain are required to attend. In cases like this, chaplains must be sensitive to the religious diversity in the ranks. If public prayer cannot be offered in a respectful and gracious way, then the chaplain should decline the invitation to participate.

But this begs the question of whether it is even possible to pray in a distinctively Christian manner without being offensive in a pluralistic setting? Clearly, the answer is “yes.” It was the unanimous consensus of the research participants that faithful Christian prayer in public does not necessarily have to be offensive. This is where the confusion over prayer in Jesus’ name occurs. Many people mistakenly think that military chaplains cannot pray in the name of Jesus in public. The assumption is that prayer in Jesus’ name is necessarily offensive. Hence, such prayer is forbidden. This is not so. As Chaplain Clark declared, it is deeply troubling to chaplains when they are perceived by some as compromising the faith by failing to invoke the name of Jesus. Likewise, Chaplain Paul reiterated the fact that there has never been any military order that has prohibited chaplains from praying according to the dictates of their consciences. But, as Chaplains Clark and Owen both observed, there are faithful Christian prayers that are perceived as gracious and

respectful in a pluralistic setting, and then there are prayers that seem arrogant and rude to the non-Christian public. Chaplains should prefer the former and avoid the latter. But in any case, Christian chaplains must remain committed to distinctively Christian prayer; to pray otherwise is sacrilege.

This is why the PRJCCMP protects its chaplains from pressure to compromise with explicit policy on public prayer:

No military or civilian higher authority may require a PRJC chaplain to... pray without invoking the name of Jesus, because the PRJC member denominations adhere to the Westminster Standards as their statement of faith, and because these standards define prayer that is acceptable to God as necessarily being made in the name of the Son (WCF xxi.3). The PRJC upholds the constitutionally protected right of the PRJC-endorsed chaplains to pray in the name of Jesus, both in worship services and in other public ceremonies.¹⁷⁴

This means that Christian chaplains should pray Christian prayers. Of course, Christian prayer is acceptable to God only through the mediation of Christ alone. But the issue is this: what does respectful Christian prayer look like in a public setting? Those that are convinced that all prayer must conclude with the phrase, “in the name of Jesus, Amen” or some variant, might be disappointed to learn that Jesus himself did not teach his disciples to end their prayers that way. Faithful Christian prayer encompasses much more. It is a humble approach to God with reverence and true faith, petitioning him for things

¹⁷⁴ Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel, *Chaplains' Manual*, 13.

agreeable to his will for our redeemer's sake. This kind of prayer can certainly be offered in a pluralistic setting in a gracious way that is unlikely to draw the ire of critics. Of course, not all disapproval can be avoided, but chaplains should not offend simply to make a point. Most often, respectful public prayer is respectfully received, even if those who hear it do not always agree. But ill-mannered prayer almost always discredits the chaplain.

Recommendations For Practice

Unlike basic academic research, applied research studies, such as this dissertation, are undertaken with the goal of improving the quality of practice of a particular discipline.¹⁷⁵ Thus, this study would not be complete without a short section detailing specific and practical proposals for improving military ministry. In the paragraphs below, *I will make specific suggestions for chaplains, for prospective chaplains, and for the non-chaplain supporters of military ministry.*

For Chaplains

Contextualize the Ministry

First, chaplains need to contextualize their ministries to the military setting. As this research has demonstrated, ministry in the Sea Services involves numerous constraints and conditions. The unique setting has an impact on how ministry is delivered by chaplains and

¹⁷⁵ Merriam, 3.

received by the personnel. Thus, chaplains need to be savvy to the institutional rules that bind them, as well as to the deep rooted traditions and customs that the Navy holds dear. Religious pluralism is normal, and chaplains must understand the prevailing attitudes in the institution toward that diversity.

As staff officers, chaplains are expected to abide by institutional rules with respect to career advancement and promotion. This involves competing against each other in ways that are completely foreign to the local church. As believers in sovereign providence, chaplains should simply give their best effort in this ministry and leave the advancement up to God. Of course, they should not do anything that would deliberately impair their careers. They should abide by the rules and do their utmost to stay competitive. They should take care of their records and strive for advancement as the Navy expects of them. It is certainly possible to take care of one's career without falling into the "careerism" that was discussed by the research participants. By simply doing their best and leaving the advancement up to God, chaplains can focus on service and avoid the selfish ambition that can wreck an otherwise fruitful ministry.

Chaplains also need to grasp the vital importance of the First Amendment to the Constitution and how it affects what they do. Frankly, the Navy is not interested in advancing religion of any type. Its primary concern is the protection of constitutional

rights, particularly the rights of religious minorities who can be easily overlooked or subjected to discrimination. Chaplains exist in order to protect those rights among military personnel and their families. In every respect, the Navy is strictly neutral towards religion. Christianity, while dominant in the ranks, is not the favored religion. This means that even religions to which the chaplain personally objects need to be respected and accommodated. This is a matter of treating all religions evenhandedly and avoiding the charge of establishment of religion. As staff officers, chaplains need to be aware of this responsibility, and they need to take it seriously. They should also anticipate criticism from well-meaning Christians and others who do not appreciate the scope of the chaplain's responsibilities with respect to religious rights.

In addition, chaplains need to take care with respect to their speech in public. As high profile officials in the military, they must realize that they are under intense scrutiny at all times. Language that can be perceived as provocative, discriminatory, or prejudicial has no place in a chaplain's ministry. Chaplains should positively represent their faith tradition rather than criticizing and ridiculing other traditions. So they need to be careful about appearing to disparage others in public. Of course, contrasting religious propositions can be tactfully discussed in the context of a class on religion or a worship service. But even there, the emphasis should be on positively explaining religious tenets instead of condemning

opposing views. Military ministry is hardly the appropriate forum for polemics.

Additionally, chaplains need to take care with respect to proselytizing. Of course, chaplains are expected to share their faith in the course of their duties. Nothing prevents them from evangelizing and witnessing to others about the gospel. However, consideration and respect for others is the rule. If chaplains have not been invited to share their faith, then it is inappropriate to force the issue. In the course of their ministries, chaplains must always be on the lookout for those opportunities to bring the gospel to people. But to interject religion when and where it is not welcome crosses the line and can be grounds for disciplinary action.

Model Cooperation and Team Spirit

Second, Chaplains should exemplify ministry teamwork and a cooperative spirit. They should be known for working well together and ought not to focus their efforts merely upon their own adherents. They are called to care, not just for their own, but for all, and cooperative ministry relationships serve that end. They should recognize in each other tremendous resources for ministry and pastoral care. Each chaplain possesses spiritual gifts and natural abilities that others may not share. Positive ministry relationships leverage those talents for the greater good of all. While chaplains each have their own set of scruples with respect to ecumenical cooperation, instead of highlighting differences, chaplains

should emphasize those things they have in common. In non-essential areas, they should be quick to set aside disagreements for the sake of the greater good. In sum, an atmosphere of professional courtesy and mutual respect should prevail.

While harmonious cooperation is the goal, this desire does not trump theological concerns. Evangelical chaplains need to take care not to conduct any joint ministry if such efforts result in participation in false worship or with false believers. So if other chaplains or lay leaders prove themselves delinquent in life or in essential doctrine, evangelical chaplains must follow their consciences. But regardless of the circumstances, professional courtesy is required.

Additionally, chaplains must be aware of the limitations that their peers have with respect to ministry cooperation. Some have a great deal of latitude and personal discretion, but others do not. When one chaplain is required to work closely with another, these constraints should be made clear at the beginning of the relationship. This can prevent misunderstanding and conflict later. At the very least, when a chaplain is required to limit cooperation with another, that restriction should be respected. Often chaplains do not have a choice, because fidelity to their religious organization's tenets is at stake.

Manage Conflict Judiciously

Thirdly, chaplains need to take care how they handle conflict as it arises. Of course, some degree of conflict is inevitable. Such is the nature of ministering in a large, diverse institution. However, it is important to distinguish among the different types of conflict. When problems occur due to a mere personality clash, that type of conflict should be humbly set aside. Instead, chaplains should defer to each other and bear with one another's weaknesses. When the conflict is over leadership style, the subordinate should defer to the superior. But when the conflict is a petty rivalry or power struggle, all of those involved need to realize that such quarrels are beneath the dignity of the ministerial office.

Endorsing agents are valuable resources for chaplains in conflict. They are typically senior members of the chaplain's faith tradition and often have extensive military experience themselves. Chaplains should never hesitate to take advantage of their counsel and objectivity. Written policy from an endorsing agent is extremely helpful in clarifying exactly what a chaplain can and cannot do under given circumstances. This can alleviate pressure on chaplains who feel they have to justify their response to a particular situation. Since chaplains represent specific religious organizations, written policy is very helpful when dealing with sensitive matters.

When conflict arises over worship services, it is important to clarify which chaplain is ultimately responsible for which divine service. This avoids potential conflict when two chaplains try to share the responsibility for a single worship service. Often, when two chaplains have competing visions for the same worship service, the solution is simply to offer more distinctive services. For example, instead of one “general Protestant” service, two separate Lutheran and Pentecostal services are better. In this way, the two chaplains are free to minister in a manner more faithful to their religious organizations instead of both trying to compromise.

When conflict does erupt, chaplains need to harbor no illusions of the severe negative consequences that can result. The quality of ministry can suffer as the focus shifts away from providing services to personnel and instead turns toward the dispute. When the Command realizes what is occurring, it has a number of tools at its disposal to rectify the situation. Those options involve things like counseling, non-judicial punishment, and the kind of negative performance evaluations that can shorten careers. In any case, conflict between chaplains damages the reputations of all and casts the entire chaplain corps in a bad light.

For Prospective Chaplains

Prepare to function in a pluralistic environment

For those who are not yet chaplains, but who are considering a call to military ministry, there are a number of items that should be considered. First, they must be willing to minister in a non-Christian setting characterized by religious diversity. Before considering the specific challenges, prospective chaplains must reflect on the nature of this calling and decide if they are willing to function in this type of environment. The physical hardships can be substantial, the stress of military life can take a toll on families, and the pluralistic nature of the community can make ministry difficult. Special thought must be given to the accommodation task. Prospective chaplains should carefully think through the implications of this commitment.

The Navy invites clergy to enter the chaplain corps with the expectation that they will respect religious traditions other than their own. They are not to focus merely upon adherents of their own faith groups; chaplains are present to serve all. In fact, if they are not willing to serve all, they will likely be seen as a problem in the community instead of a blessing. Service to all means that chaplains provide pastoral care to everybody. It also means that they are required to facilitate religious ministry, not only for other Christian denominations, but for other religions altogether, including religious traditions that are

outside of the mainstream. They have a duty to make certain that the religious beliefs of all are treated seriously and with respect. Is the prospective chaplain willing to ensure that the religious rights of fellow Americans are upheld and respected? If not, then that minister should not enter the chaplain corps.

So there is a dual nature to chaplaincy, and it is evident right on the uniform collar. On one hand, chaplains are religious ministry providers who minister according to their faith traditions. But on the other hand, they are staff officers tasked with numerous collateral duties in support of Navy policy. Prospective chaplains should anticipate criticism from a number of those in the civilian world who do not fully appreciate these collateral duties, specifically the accommodation task. Some consider it a form of compromise and will choose to criticize and distance themselves from chaplains. Prospective chaplains should be aware of these sentiments and think through the commitment before coming into the chaplain corps.

They should also see this profound diversity in the military community as something positive instead of something negative. The amazing pluralism in the military community provides fantastic opportunities to share the gospel message and biblical worldview with those who are the least familiar with it. If one prefers to minister to a more homogeneous group, there are plenty of opportunities to do so in the local church. In this

setting, chaplains should be perceived as supportive, caring, and friendly toward all. They should be prepared to work frequently with people from radically different faith groups. Of course, when the opportunity presents itself, they should also be ready to share the gospel both individually and in groups. However, care must be taken in evangelization.

Prospective chaplains need to understand the rules with respect to proselytism. Outside of a religious meeting, chaplains should ask permission before sharing their faith and respect people's wishes. In a counseling situation, chaplains should be upfront about their theological biases and make certain that their religious guidance is welcome before proceeding. Chaplains are influential counselors and mentors. Without integrity, they could easily manipulate and violate the trust of personnel who are committed to rival denominations or religions, but this would be an abuse of the office. This is why chaplains need to tread carefully and respect the religious backgrounds of others. As they build relationships and develop trust with their counselees, they will have ample opportunities to show them a better way.

Prospective chaplains should also be aware of the need for caution during public prayer. Sloppy speech can easily be misread and interpreted as something spiteful or mean spirited when no such offense was meant. Of course, Christian chaplains must pray distinctively Christian prayers. However, there are ways of praying faithful prayers in public

that are more and less gracious. Prospective chaplains must realize that often they will be praying in public before audiences who do not share their faith. In cases like this, they have a tremendous opportunity to represent the Lord before the world in a very refined and respectful way. Or they can give the enemies of God an occasion to blaspheme because of the chaplain's impertinence. Discretion and wisdom are the hallmarks of public prayer in the military. In the end, the ministry of Daniel serves as a model. While military chaplains do their utmost to remain devout and loyal to God, they faithfully labor in the service of a government and public with no such allegiance.

Understand the Chaplain's role

Prospective chaplains also need to understand the Navy's expectations and their role in the institution. Military chaplaincy is a far cry from ministry in the local parish.

Prospective chaplains need to appreciate the profound differences between the two. While civilian clergy may be accountable to a plurality of elders, a bishop, or other ecclesiastical officials, military ministers are accountable to the Command. Military commanders own the ceremonies in which the chaplains participate. They provide the facilities, equipment, funding, and authorization to conduct religious activities on military installations.

Ultimately, it is the commanding officer, not the chaplain, who is accountable for all religious ministry in the Command. Thus, chaplains are responsible, not only to their

ecclesiastical superiors, but also to senior military line officers. Many of these commanders are not religious individuals. Their sole concern is to ensure that the law is upheld. Beyond that, they have no further interest in religious ministry. This is why chaplains need to *carefully distinguish between their religious duties as ministry providers and their secular duties as military staff officers*. They are members of an institution and must abide by those institutional rules. While the content of religious ministry may be the same, prospective chaplains must understand that *institutional constraints can affect the execution, style, and delivery of that ministry*.

Prospective chaplains also need to be prepared to engage in a meaningful way with people from across the religious spectrum. They will interact regularly with personnel on religious matters. Some will be indifferent, some will be hostile, and others will be highly enthusiastic about religion. Chaplains will also regularly encounter theological viewpoints that they have been trained to identify as heresy. Prospective chaplains need to be prepared to answer that heterodoxy without being disrespectful. They should practice empathy and build relationships, and in so doing earn the right to be heard. As they develop that critical credibility with others, they are better able to speak into people's lives in a meaningful way. The Navy Chaplain's Code of Ethics serves as a helpful resource for managing tenuous situations like this. Prospective chaplains should also be aware that high turnover in the

ranks limits opportunities to develop deep ministry relationships with disciples. The goal is simply service. Regardless of the particular circumstances, whether time is long or short, effective chaplains seek simply to serve.

It is also important to realize that military ministry is hardly a reaping ministry. It is primarily one of sowing and watering. Chaplains help hurting people and work to relieve suffering during the tragedy of war. Prospective chaplains should see themselves more as missionary-evangelists instead of pastors. Their ministries are itinerant, cross-cultural, and evangelistic in nature. While some chaplains do indeed pastor Navy chapels, their tenure in those pulpits is short, and they usually return to operational ministry quickly.

Prepare to work closely with other ministry professionals

Ministry in the military brings clergy into close working relationships with other religious professionals who often have equal or greater theological training and experience than their own. Consequently, prospective chaplains should be ready to be challenged with respect to their theological presuppositions. As a rule, chaplains are respectful toward one another, yet it is common for chaplains to engage in friendly discussions about areas of doctrine where they disagree. These moments are usually very enlightening. As chaplains come to appreciate various theological perspectives, *often their own understanding of the faith is deepened and enriched*. It causes them to be sharper with respect to their own

doctrine and makes them better able to interact with people from opposing traditions. However, it is essential that prospective chaplains be *firmly rooted in their own religious tradition* before coming into the chaplain corps. Unless chaplains are secure in their own ministerial identity, they could potentially find themselves disillusioned with their own tradition. As soon as they begin to interact meaningfully with other religious viewpoints, insecure chaplains might feel threatened by opposing viewpoints. Some might become disaffected with their own church when their colleagues begin to point out its deficiencies. It is better if chaplains come into military ministry well grounded in their own faith tradition.

It is also important to note how vital it is to set aside small theological disagreements for the sake of service and pastoral care. *Regardless of theological differences, all chaplains* are called to serve the military community. Therefore, prospective chaplains should be prepared to work with others as much as possible without violating their consciences. Yet some chaplains are going to be more exclusive than others. This is simply a fact, and it is not their fault. They are bound by a different set of scruples. Chaplains need to be patient and understanding with each other when it comes to restrictions on ecumenical cooperation. The formal worship service, especially the communion service, is an area most

likely to encounter limitations on joint ministry. Prospective chaplains need to be aware of this possibility as they get ready to enter the corps.

For Other Concerned Christians

When it comes to the non-chaplain supporters of military ministry, there are fewer recommendations. The bulk of this research has focused on how chaplains can improve their ministry practice. However, there are a few things about this ministry that non-chaplains should keep in mind. First, this is ministry in a non-Christian setting. It truly is missionary and evangelistic work. The government itself is strictly neutral with respect to religion. While Christianity broadly speaking is the largest religious group in the military, it is not the favored religion. In fact, the state is particularly interested in protecting the constitutional rights of religious minorities. Second, while there are a few small parallels with ministry in the local church, institutional ministry is a different challenge altogether. Chaplains deal with military requirements and legal constraints that civilian clergy do not have to consider. Finally, military chaplaincy must be understood in the light of the First Amendment to the Constitution. Without the First Amendment, there would be no justification for military chaplaincy as we know it today. Since the government has no opinion about the merits of religious truth claims, it treats all religions equally. This means that chaplains are obligated to accommodate even religious expression to which they

personally might object. Chaplains make this distinction, but some well-meaning critics do not. It is distressing to chaplains when they protect religious rights and are in turn criticized by people in the church who do not understand the chaplain's mandate.

Recommendations For Further Research

This study focused on how the pluralistic military setting affected the ministries of active duty chaplains. It is likely that reserve chaplains would have a different perspective on some of the research topics. Unlike active duty chaplains, reservists pastor civilian churches full time, and they serve in the military on a sporadic basis. This makes reservists an interesting hybrid with a unique point of view. Conducting similar research with reservists could yield some fruitful conclusions.

Another approach that could be profitable would be to analyze some of the more controversial issues that the chaplain corps is currently facing. With new rules on the acceptance of openly homosexual servicemembers, chaplains are once again in the spotlight. How could these rules potentially infringe on religious liberty? With new regulations on females serving in direct combat roles traditionally reserved for men, the role of chaplains as moral and ethical advisors to the Command might be worthy of further investigation. This research also discussed briefly the institutional prohibition of

proselytism. A closer look at how to evangelize without breaking those rules might be helpful.

Finally, the influence that chaplains have is worth a closer look. This study merely addressed the work that chaplains do and how it is affected by their environment. It did not speak to the actual effectiveness of chaplain ministries. A careful study of the influence that chaplains have and their effectiveness in the institution could prove insightful.

Final Words

Navy chaplaincy can be an extraordinarily difficult and demanding form of ministry. Yet precisely because it is so challenging, it can also be extremely rewarding. The religious diversity in the ranks is enormous, and the institutional rules are burdensome, but the opportunity to serve and make a difference in the life of a Sailor or Marine is incomparable. It is my prayer that those involved in military ministry, along with their supporters in the church, might benefit from this study on the impact of religious diversity in the chaplaincy. May the Lord grant his grace to every chaplain who faithfully serves God and country with honor, courage, and commitment.

APPENDIX A

The Covenant and The Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces¹⁷⁶

The Covenant

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

The Code of Ethics

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

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

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

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

¹⁷⁶ Adopted by the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, January 2011

religious body I will draw upon those beliefs, principles, and practices that we have in common.

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

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

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

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

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

I will hold in confidence all privileged and confidential communication.

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

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

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

Code of Ethics for Navy Chaplains¹⁷⁷

1. I will hold in trust the traditions and practices of my religious body.
2. I will carefully adhere to the directions conveyed to me by my endorsing body for maintenance of my endorsement.
3. I understand, as a Navy chaplain, I must function in a pluralistic environment with chaplains and delegated representatives of other religious bodies to provide for ministry to all military personnel and their families entrusted to my care.
4. I will provide for pastoral care and ministry to persons of religious bodies other than my own as together we seek to provide the most complete ministry possible to our people. I will respect the beliefs and traditions of my colleagues and those to whom I minister.
5. I will, if in a supervisory position, respect the practices and beliefs of each person I supervise. I will, to the fullest extent permissible by law and regulations, exercise care not to require of them any service or practice that would be in violation of the faith and practices of their particular religious body.
6. I will hold in confidence any privileged communication received by me during the conduct of my ministry. I will not disclose confidential communications in private or public.
7. I will model personal integrity and core values

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Religious Ministry in the United States Marine Corps*, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-12., 1-6.

APPENDIX B

Military bios for the research participants. Names and personal identifying information have been changed in order to preserve anonymity. In no particular order:

**Chaplain “Larry”
Commander, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy**

Chaplain (CDR) Larry is a native of Annapolis, Maryland. After attending the Naval Academy Preparatory School in Newport, Rhode Island (1978) he entered the United States Naval Academy where he graduated in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Oceanography.

Upon commissioning, Chaplain Larry was assigned to USS PREBLE (DDG-46) as Navigation Officer and Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer (1984-1986). Qualifying as a Surface Warfare Officer he deployed to the 6th Fleet AOR as part of the USS AMERICA (CV-66) Battle Group. While onboard PREBLE Chaplain Larry was selected to attend the Surface Warfare Department Head course in Newport, RI. Following his tour aboard USS PREBLE, Chaplain Larry was assigned to the Naval Sea Combat Systems Engineering Station in Norfolk, Virginia as the Anti-Air Warfare Program Officer and Direct Fleet Support Coordinator (1987-1989). Following a lateral transfer to the Oceanography community in 1989, Chaplain Larry was ordered to the Anti-Submarine Warfare Operations Center in Rota, Spain (1989-1991). Assigned as the Command Oceanographer and a staff watch officer, he completed six detachments to Naval Support Activity, Souda Bay, Crete participating in surface surveillance operations in support of United Nations sanctions against Iraq in the days leading up to and throughout the First Gulf War.

During a follow-on tour as a student at the U.S. Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, Chaplain Larry transferred to the Naval Reserve (1992) in order to attend seminary in preparation for active service as a chaplain. Chaplain Larry entered the Master’s Seminary in Sun Valley, California in 1992 and graduated *with honors* in 1996. Following three years in

the civilian pastorate, Chaplain Larry returned to active duty as the Squadron Chaplain for Commander, Destroyer Squadron 31 in Pearl Harbor (1999-2002). During this tour he completed a Persian Gulf deployment (2000) as part of USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN-72) Battle Group. Chaplain Larry was next assigned to First Force Service Support Group, Camp Pendleton (2002-2004) as a battalion chaplain completing two combat deployments to Iraq (OEF/ OIF-I and OIF-II). Following this tour of duty, he was assigned to Naval Base Coronado in San Diego where he served as Deputy Command Chaplain and Acting Command Chaplain (2004-2007). Chaplain Larry was then assigned to USS EMORY S. LAND (AS-39) as Command Chaplain (2007-2009) as the ship changed homeports from Naval Support Activity La Maddalena, to Bremerton, Washington to complete an extended overhaul. In July 2009, Chaplain Larry reported to the staff of a Coast Guard District where he currently serves as the District Chaplain.

Chaplain Larry's personal awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (5 awards) and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (2 awards).

Chaplain "Owen"
Commander, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy

Chaplain Owen went to Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, TN where he received his Bachelor's degree in 1987. He then went to Westminster Theological Seminary in California and received a Master of Divinity degree in 1990. He is a Presbyterian Church in America chaplain and is endorsed by the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission for Chaplains and Military Personnel.

Chaplain Owen entered the Navy in 1996 and proceeded to the Navy's Chaplain School in Newport, RI. He reported to his first duty station at the Naval Hospital Jacksonville, FL. He was involved in the sprint team and provided critical incident stress management for JTF Haiti and the deadly tornados in central Florida. Then, in 1999, he went to the USS Hue City (CG 66) in Mayport, FL.

After sea duty he went to serve with the USMC in Okinawa, Japan. He served with the 3rd FSSG in the 9th Engineer Battalion. He deployed with the combat engineers to Operation Enduring Freedom, the Philippines, and Mongolia. After his tour in Japan, Chaplain Owen came home in 2005 and served as Command Chaplain for Carrier Air Wing 2 at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, WA. He went on to deploy to the western Pacific in 2006 on the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

Following his tour in Whidbey Island he reported to the Coast Guard as the District 17 chaplain in Juneau, Alaska in 2007. Chaplain Owen is currently the Command Chaplain at a Naval Submarine Support Center in the Pacific Northwest.

Chaplain "Clark"
Commander, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy

Civilian Education: The Ohio State University, BA, Criminology, June 1987.
 Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity, Dec 1994.

Military Education:

US Army Basic Training, Fort Sill Oklahoma, 1982
 US Army NCO Academy for E-5 1985
 US Army Chaplain Officer Basic School 1993
 US Naval Chaplain School Basic Course 1999
 US Naval War College JPME Phase I 2007

Previous Billets/Deployments:

US Army National Guard from 1982 to 1999 (10 years enlisted, up to E-6 then 7 years as a Chaplain Candidate or Chaplain)

Commander US Naval Activities, London, England. Dec 1999 – Jan 2003

Billet: Staff Chaplain (Chapel Ministry)

Deployments: Partnership for Peace delegation to Bulgaria in 2001

2ND Marine Division, Camp Lejeune, NC Feb 2003–Aug 2005

Billet: Battalion Chaplain for 1ST BN 8TH Marines

Deployments: BLT 1/8 with 26TH MEU deployed as LF6F ISO Operation Iraqi Freedom and Joint Task Force Liberia from Mar 2003–Oct 2003. 1/8 later went back ISO Operation Iraqi Freedom from Jun 2004–Jan 2005 with this deployment culminating in Operation Phantom Fury, the liberation of Fallujah.

Commander Carrier Air Wing 17, NAS Oceana, VA Aug 2005–Sep 2007

Billet: CAG Chaplain

Deployments: Partnership of the Americas Apr 2006–May 2006; CQs and other underways.

1ST Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Aircraft Group 12, MCAS Iwakuni, Japan Sep 2007–
Sep 2010

Billet: Group Chaplain

Deployments: Air Warrior 08 & 09; Cobra Gold 08, 09 & 10; Cope Tiger 08 & 09; Foal
Eagle 08 & 10; Northern Edge 09; Pitch Black 08; Ryukyu Warrior 09; Southern Frontier
08; Sumo Tiger 08; Talon Vision 09; Wolmi Do Fury 07, 08 & 09.

Destroyer Squadron 9, Naval Station Everett, WA; Sep 2010–July 2011.

Billet: Squadron Chaplain

Deployments: RIMPAC Deployment to C7F and C5F AORs, Supporting OEF.

Personal Decorations:

Meritorious Service Medal; Navy Commendation Medal with 3 Gold Stars, Army
Commendation Medal; Navy Achievement Medal; Army Achievement Medal with 1
OLC; Combat Action Ribbon; and other unit and campaign decorations. Chaplain Clark
also possesses the FMFQO Pin.

Current Billet: Command Chaplain on a Nimitz Class Aircraft Carrier with additional
duty as the Carrier Strike Group Chaplain

Chaplain "Rick"
Lieutenant Commander, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy

Chaplain Rick received a Bachelors degree in Religious Education from Fresno Pacific College, Fresno, California in 1987 and a Masters of Divinity degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California in 1991.

In June 2001, he was commissioned as a Chaplain, 1st Lieutenant in the United States Air Force Reserve. He then underwent Commissioned Officer Training and the Basic Chaplain Course at Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama.

In August 2001 he was assigned to Los Angeles Air Force Base as staff chaplain. Chaplain Rick was then selected for training at the Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center, Monterey, California, in October 2002. In October 2004 Chaplain Rick was promoted to CAPT, USAF.

In December 2004, Chaplain Rick requested an inter-service transfer and was commissioned as a LT in the United States Navy. In January 2005 he was assigned to MEFREL 119, NMCRC Long Beach, California. In November 2005 Chaplain Rick transferred to MEFREL 220, NMCRC Alameda, California.

From there he was assigned to NAF Atsugi, Japan, beginning in January 2006. There he served as Admin Officer, Division Officer, and eventually Command Chaplain for the Command Religious Ministries Program.

In February 2009 Chaplain Rick reported for duty to 1st Marine Logistics Group, Camp Pendleton, California. There he was assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion 7. In September 2009 LT Roberts reported to Combat Logistics Regiment 17 for duty as Regimental Chaplain. He later was assigned collateral responsibilities as Regimental Chaplain for Combat Logistics Regiment 15, supervising three chaplains, three religious program specialists, and one chaplain's assistant.

In September 2010, Chaplain Rick was promoted to LCDR, 1ST Marine Logistics Group, Combat Logistics Regiment 15/17. In June 2011, Chaplain Rick reported to Commander

Destroyer Squadron Nine, Naval Station Everett, Washington, for duty as Supervisory Chaplain.

His awards include the Navy Commendation Medal with gold star (2nd Award), Navy Achievement Medal with gold star (2nd Award), Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation with bronze star (2nd Award), National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Service Medal with bronze star and EGA, Global War on Terror Service Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service with two bronze star, Expert Rifle Medal, Expert Pistol Medal, Fleet Marine Force Pin, and Air Force Training Ribbon.

Chaplain "Henry"
Commander, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy

Current Assignment: Command Chaplain at a Naval Air Station in the Pacific Northwest.

Faith Tradition: Seventh-day Adventist (SDA), Licensed Minister 30 August 1985, Ordained 30 September 1990

Education:

Pacific Union College, B.A. 1985

Andrews University, Theological Seminary, M.Div. 1988

Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, M.Th. 2007

Navy Chaplain Supervisory Course, 2007

Marine Corps Command and Staff, (With Distinction) 2009

Civilian Assignments:

Seventh-day Adventist Churches served: Lodi, CA 1985-1986,

Rohnert Park-Santa Rosa, CA 1988-1990,

Alturas and Cedarville, CA 1990-1992,

Fort Bragg, CA 1992-1999.

Methodist Church: Interim Pastor: Evergreen United Methodist Church, CA 1998-1999

Military Assignments: Army

Engineer officer: 579th Engineer Battalion, (Combat) '90

Engineer officer to Command Chaplain: 132nd Engineer Battalion, (Combat) '91-98

Command Chaplain: 250th Military Intelligence Battalion, (Tactical Exploitation) San Rafael, CA '98-'99

Military Assignments: Navy

Command Chaplain: USS San Jacinto, (CG-56) Norfolk, VA 2000-2002

Staff Chaplain: Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico '02-'04

Command Chaplain, Special Operation Command (SOC, NSWU-4, 7th SF Group,

SOAR)

Marine Corps Security Group Chaplain, Vieques Island Range

Command Chaplain: Naval Station Everett, Washington '04-'05

Joint Operations Chaplain: Multi-National Corps, Iraq, Baghdad (IA) '05-'06

Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, '06-'07

Group Chaplain: Marine Wing Support Group 17, Okinawa, Japan '07-08

Deputy Wing Chaplain: 1st Marine Air Wing, Okinawa, Japan '08-'10

Additional Qualifier Designations (AQD):

Naval/Marine Corps Parachutist

Fleet Marine Force Officer

1440 specialty code: Pastoral Counseling

Publications:

The Spiritual Side of Traumatic Stress Normalization: Christian Spirituality and Social Neuroscience Considerations for Clinicians and Chaplains – Waldport Press: 2008

Personal Awards:

Joint Services Commendation Medal

Navy Commendation Medal

Army Commendation Medal

Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (3rd award)

Chaplain "Matt"
Lieutenant Commander, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy

Chaplain Matt is currently the Command Chaplain at a Naval Hospital. Previously he was a student in the Naval Chaplaincy Pastoral Care Residency program at Balboa Naval Hospital San Diego.

As a Reserve Chaplain, Chaplain Matt has served as the Command Chaplain for Naval Air Facility, Misawa Japan, interim Marine Force Reserve Deputy Chaplain and assistant to the Pacific Fleet Command Chaplain. He also served as the 5th Battalion 14th Marine Regiment Chaplain, a *Marine Reserve artillery unit located in Seal Beach, California*. Chaplain Matt served this Battalion for two years.

Chaplain Matt entered active duty in June 1999 attending the Naval Chaplain School in Newport Rhode Island. Upon completion of Chaplain School Chaplain Matt accepted orders to 1st Marine Division Camp Pendleton. While with Division, Chaplain Matt served as the Battalion Chaplain for 3rd Battalion 5th Marines and then deployed with 1st Battalion 5th Marines. Following the events of September 11, 2001, Chaplain Matt became the Quick Reaction Force Chaplain for 2nd Battalion 4th Marines.

Chaplain Matt's next tour of duty was to serve aboard the USS Bataan (LHD 5) as the Command Chaplain. He served aboard the Bataan from 2002–2004. While aboard the Bataan, he deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Following duty aboard the USS Bataan, Chaplain Matt became the Command Chaplain for Military Sealift Command, Atlantic and COMSEALOGLANT. He served in this capacity from 2004–2005.

Chaplain Matt's personal decorations include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (2), the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal and the Air Force Good Conduct Medal.

Chaplain "Paul"
Captain, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy

Chaplain Paul has served as the most senior supervisory chaplain in the area since October 2009. He has also served in both of the most senior forward deployed operational Naval Chaplain Corps billets overseas - III MEF and his last assignment with US 7th Fleet - from October 2007 to September 2009.

Chaplain Paul is a Fellow of the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, the first chaplain of any military service to attend that organization's Executive Course 02-2.

Chaplain Paul graduated from Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington in 1972 and Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois in 1976, earning a Master of Divinity degree. After serving at Calvary Lutheran Church, Sunnyside, Washington from 1976-1984, he attended the Basic Chaplains Course, Newport, Rhode Island and was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the United States Navy Chaplain Corps in April 1984. His initial assignment was Group Chaplain, Marine Air Group 13 in El Toro, California, with additional duty to the rapid response element Marine Air Group 70, February 1985-June 1987.

Subsequent assignments included Naval Training Center, San Diego, June 1987-July 1989; Command Chaplain, USS STERETT (CG 31), Subic Bay, The Republic of the Philippines, July 1989 - August 1991; Command Chaplain, United States Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station, Dededo, Guam, August 1991-July 1993; and District Chaplain, USCG 14th District, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 1994-September 1997. He served as the Senior Protestant Chaplain at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, November 1997-February 1998. Prior to his duty as Branch Head for the Chaplain Resource Board, Office of the Chief of Chaplains in Norfolk, Virginia, November 2002-February 2005, he served as Deputy Force Chaplain, Marine Forces Pacific, Camp Smith, Hawaii, February 1998-October 2002.

Selected for graduate level training, he attended the 10 month Advanced Chaplains Course at Newport, Rhode Island and completed his second Masters degree in Human Resource

Management at Salve Regina University, August 1993–May 1994. Chaplain Paul also attended the U.S. Navy's 6-week Chaplain Supervisory Course at NETC, Newport, Rhode Island in the fall of 1997.

His decorations include the Legion of Merit; Meritorious Service Medal (with 2 gold stars); Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (with 2 gold stars); Coast Guard Commendation Medal; Navy Achievement Medal; Navy Expeditionary Medal; Philippines Presidential Unit Citation; the Coast Guard Commandant's Meritorious Team Award; and the Department of Transportation Gold Medal Citation. He was promoted to the grade of Captain in April, 2002.

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