



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
EVANGELICAL CHAPLAIN ENDORSERS (ICECE)**
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December 3, 2012

Dear Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs of Chaplains,

We are thankful for your leadership and look forward to seeing you in January at the Armed Forces Chaplains Board (AFCB) annual endorsers' meeting.

ICECE respectfully submits this letter to alert you to specific questions that will be raised at the AFCB meeting concerning the issue of pluralism.

The Endorsing Agencies represented by ICECE are very concerned about the future of pluralism in the three Armed Service Chaplain Corps and particularly in the U.S. Army Chaplaincy. We therefore respectfully request the AFCB to address this issue at the conference in January. Is pluralism still the official policy, and will it continue to be the policy in all three branches?

This question is prompted by former Deputy Commandant of the US Army Chaplain School, Chaplain (COL) Barbara Sherer's U.S. Army War College Strategy Research project, Chaplaincy at a Crossroads: Fundamentalist Chaplains in a Pluralistic Army. We believe it is a clear frontal assault on Pluralism and Freedom of Religion within the Army Chaplaincy. Her description and definition of a Fundamentalist as "one who believes the Bible is the inerrant authority on faith and life, salvation is achieved only through faith in Jesus the Christ, and he or she has a personal responsibility to share this belief with non-Christians," could describe not just fundamentalists, but almost all Evangelical Christian Chaplains.

ICECE and its members take great exception to the thrust of the article and the caricature of evangelical Bible believers. The article implies there are significant problems in the Army because evangelical chaplains believe the Bible is the word of God and our conduct and counseling should conform to its standard. The experience of ICECE members has been that the problem of chaplains trying to force their beliefs on other chaplains and military personnel have come from "liberal" chaplains who resent, and in some cases have attacked, evangelical chaplains because they believe in representing historic Christian beliefs, the same beliefs and doctrines practiced by the churches they were commissioned as chaplains to represent.

The underlying message of her article appears to be evangelicals should either sacrifice their beliefs on the altar of ecumenism, embracing beliefs which their faith groups and the doctrines of historic Christianity reject as immoral and anti-Christian, or leave the service. This theme is difficult to understand or comprehend when the facts are placed in the context that (1) evangelical and Pentecostal services, whose chaplains represent CH Sherer's caricature, are usually the most well attended and (2) the military personnel and dependants who share those "fundamental" beliefs form the heart of many thriving military chapels.

We recognize CH Sherer has a First Amendment right to express her views, but are seriously concerned how a person whose views are so antithetical to what we have understood is the meaning of pluralism could be placed in positions of responsibility, teaching, influencing and nurturing current and future Army Chaplains while serving as Deputy Commandant at the U.S. Army Chaplain School. We are puzzled why CH Sherer felt safe to

"And his feet shall stand that day upon the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. . . and the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one." Zech. 14:4,7

express her clearly prejudicial viewpoint as part of the prestigious institutional educational system, the U.S. Army War College; despite its clear implication evangelicals should not be welcome in the chaplaincy. That position is contrary to the free exercise, free speech and non-establishment guarantees of our Constitution. Her article is inconsistent with and contrary to the concept of “pluralism” which has been the standard operating procedure and paradigm of the Chaplaincies since at least the last sixty years, if not earlier.

Pluralism is acknowledging there are differences in our religious views, respecting the rights of individuals to hold differing views, and celebrating our differences as a healthy manifestation of commitment to religious liberty. Nothing in her article acknowledges, appreciates or values the work done by many evangelicals.

We understand that CH Sherer has moved to West Point; we are also aware there may be interest in having a first female General Officer Chaplain in the U.S. Army. We are therefore very concerned about the future policy of Pluralism in all three Service Chaplain Corps.

Again, the reason for this letter is to bring to your attention the fact that questions about this significant issue will arise at the January AFCB meeting in the hope the AFCB will be prepared to proactively address this critical issue.

Respectively Submitted,

James F. Poe
ICECE Chairman