



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF EVANGELICAL
CHAPLAIN ENDORSERS (ICECE)
209 Pine Knoll Drive, Suite B, Greenville, SC 29609
Phone 864-268-8707

26 August 2013

Major General Howard D. Stendahl
Chief of Chaplains of the United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Chaplain Stendahl,

The Army has directed Chaplain Corps-wide discussion centered on the complex changes that have occurred since the Ban was lifted and DOMA was declared unconstitutional. See attached Army Chaplain (Colonel) Kenneth Stice's 20 August 2013 email: "Subject: CCH Directs Chaplain Corps discussions on current complex environment." In addition, we recently received a similar document from US Air Force Chaplain (Brigadier General) Bobby V. Page, a Memorandum dated 21 August 2013. The International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers (ICECE) expects the Air Force to initiate similar discussions and provides this input to help shape them.

ICECE represents approximately 200 chaplains stationed in all of the Military Services. In any of the discussions that might be generated in response to the new "Complex Environment" you can expect the Chaplains represented by ICECE to respectfully and firmly adhere to the following guidelines.

ICECE's members changed their governing documents following the repeal of the statutory ban on homosexuality to reflect their religious belief, founded on Scripture and the clear and unambiguous teaching of orthodox Christianity for almost 2000 years, that marriage is the union of one man (born a man) with one woman (born a woman). Those documents, *e.g.* organizational bylaws, constitutions and policy statements, also require their chaplains to avoid participation in or support of any other ceremony or ritual by any other name that is not in accord with the Biblical principles identified by their endorsing agencies.

It is important to put that in the context of our chaplains' role and mission as representatives of our respective faith groups. ICECE member chaplains recognize that their mission as faith group representatives to the military is to provide compassionate Biblical ministry for **all** military personnel, their dependents and other authorized persons. But as representatives of churches that adhere to consistent Biblical standards, they have authority only to act in spiritual/religious matters in ways and actions in accord with their sending churches' doctrines and teachings.

This compels ICECE chaplains to provide "relationship counseling" to all who seek such counseling that is in accord with our member churches' religious doctrines and teaching. That counseling must be based on biblical truth, a truth that clearly defines sin as a violation of the truth of God's authority defining what is right and wrong.

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Gal. 6:14

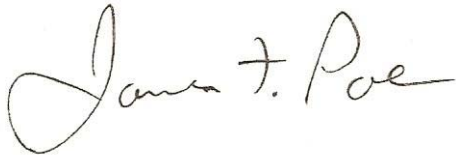
In the context of same-sex relationships, this requires a compassionate but truthful explanation that God has only one standard for marriage, and any other relationship outside of that which Scripture approves is sin (including premarital sex and adultery), and requires repentance in order to maintain a relationship with God on terms that He alone has established and honors.

Our chaplains are precluded from conducting Marriage Enrichment Retreats with same-sex couples because of their requirement, flowing from their endorsing agencies foundational documents and principles, to adhere to the Biblical definition of marriage and the Biblical principles upon which history, research and experience show effective relationships must depend.

To put the issue in simple terms, Scripture says “we reap what we sow.” If a “couple” starts off in rebellion against God’s revelation of his nature in whose image they are made, they are sowing rebellion against the very principles upon which the marriage relationship is built. Scripture makes it very clear that we have the responsibility to speak truth, not lies, and the Scripture defines that truth. That same responsibility to speak truth also requires chaplains to speak to the eternal consequences of sin, as well as its physical and relationship consequences that are evident when we closely examine the effects of sin in society and in our lives. Our chaplains cannot participate in that which is against their conscience as formed by the Bible, and which we know leads to destructive behaviors.

It is not compassion or respect to ignore the truth of Scripture or the consequences of sin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Poe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

James F. Poe
CAPT, CHC, USN, Ret.
ICECE Chairman