

**SUBJECT: Chaplain Corps' Official Use of Social Media to Advise and Provide Religious/Spiritual Content**

**1. Purpose.** Chaplain Corps (CHC) use of social media has recently increased exponentially to satisfy global religious and spiritual needs. This also results in increased public scrutiny of the content and manner of CHC social media messaging. This paper informs CHC personnel about the proper official use of command social media platforms to communicate different types of religious/spiritual content, as prescribed by DOD and DA policies, including, U.S. Army COVID-19 Social Media Guidance (Encl 1).

**2. Broad-based "Spiritual" and Resiliency Messages.** The CCH and CHC are charged with distinct "spiritual" roles and responsibilities for both religious and non-religious personnel.<sup>1</sup> Army policy defines the "spiritual" dimension as "*The development of the personal qualities needed to sustain a person in times of stress, hardship, and tragedy. These qualities come from religious, philosophical, or human values and form the basis for character, disposition, decision making, and integrity.*"<sup>2</sup> CHC personnel therefore commonly address "spiritual" fitness and resiliency issues on Army command-wide social media sites designed for broad audiences. This category of messaging should be generally communicated in a manner appropriate for both religious and non-religious personnel. All CHC personnel should be sensitive to social media distinctions between a) speaking as a religious leader to particular religious communities, as opposed to b) speaking to broader audience issues such as resiliency, spiritual fitness, suicide prevention, and domestic abuse.

**3. Promotion/Advertising of CH Corps Programs and Services.** When military community programs and services are promoted and advertised on Army organizational social media sites, official Army CHC religious programs and services should also be included at such sites. This can include information about religious service times and locations available to Soldier and Families, or links to virtual CH Corps religious programs and services such as sermons or religious education videos. While Army command and organizational social media sites typically provide information about CHC programs and services available to Soldiers and Families, actual distinct religious messages typically are maintained on CHC-specific media platforms and social media sites.<sup>3</sup>

**4. Spiritually Distinct Religious Messages.** "The Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses are both foundational to the Army's approach to religious support."<sup>4</sup> The CHC has latitude to use diverse means of social media to broadcast religious services, messages, and educational materials. This social media use meets needs and preferences of diverse

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<sup>1</sup> AR 165-1, paragraphs 1-5, 3-2, 3-3, 4-1, 9-9, and 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> AR 600-63, *Army Health Promotion* (14 April 2015), Glossary. This cited definition closely tracks descriptions/definitions of the "spiritual" based on evidence-based health profession concepts in AR 350-53, *Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness* (19 June 2014), para. 2-5; CJCSI 3405.01, Chairman's Total Force Fitness Framework (1 September 2011), p. A-E-1; and HQDA OPORD – Enduring Personal Readiness and Resilience (01 December 2016), Para. 3.B.2.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to AR 360-1 for additional information related to social media use.

<sup>4</sup> ATP 1-05.04, paragraph 1-17.

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military communities, and is resourced and managed without bias against, or favoritism for, particular religious viewpoints. Senior command and garrison chaplains ensure proper supervision of Chaplain Corps initiatives, services, and communications through chaplain policies and under the direction of the commander's policies and guidance. This supervision carefully respects distinctive religious beliefs and practices of faith groups and individuals, to include chaplains' endorser mandates. Supervisory chaplains should ensure religious social media messages provided by CHC personnel are communicated according to high standards of professionalism and respect toward hearers in tone and manner. Distinct religious messages typically are maintained on CHC-specific media platforms and social media sites.

**5. Coordination.** Supervisory CHC personnel are encouraged to coordinate with commands at echelon to develop local policies regarding CH Corps use of social media platforms consistent with DOD and DA policy, and the principles outlined in this paper. This coordination should typically include local public affairs officers and/or servicing legal offices. Supervisory chaplains may also directly contact Office of the Chief of Chaplains for further advisement and coordination (ATTN: Policy and Government Affairs Division, [usarmy.pentagon.hqda-occh.mbx.chaplain-corps-operations@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.pentagon.hqda-occh.mbx.chaplain-corps-operations@mail.mil) ).

Chaplain (COL) Steve W. Prost / 703-614-5500 [steve.w.prost.mil@mail.mil](mailto:steve.w.prost.mil@mail.mil)  
Approved by: Chaplain (COL) James Palmer, Jr. / [james.palmer2.mil@mail.mil](mailto:james.palmer2.mil@mail.mil)