

1. *What is the most gratifying aspect of your job as faith group endorser?*  
Seeing good clergy selected to become good, solid chaplains -- and watching them develop as such.
  
2. *What are some of the greatest challenges of the job on daily basis?*
  - A. A profound lack of understanding and professionalism in the military chaplaincy.
    - 1) **SCOTUS-Determined Purpose.** Back in 1983, when I attended the Army's Chaplain Officer Basic Course, we were lectured by CH (COL) Israel Drazin, USAR, Esquire, who had recently argued before the Supreme Court for the continued existence for the Armed Services chaplaincies. His takeaway and exhortation to us was that the Court had determined that the overwhelming PRIMARY purpose of the chaplaincies was to "Perform or Provide for the Free Exercise of Religion" of service-members and their families who were often in locations in the USA without access to houses of worship of their choosing or they were deployed or on ships where access to worship/religious services is severely restricted. All other functions of chaplains and chaplaincy were nice-to-have distant secondary and tertiary roles. Now as we are about to enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium, we seem to have forgotten this.
    - 2) **The Military Occupation of Chaplaincy is Not Yet a Profession.**  
Despite the fact that the Navy Chaplains Corps declares itself the "Professional Navy Chaplaincy," it is not. Nor are the Navy's sister Corps, the Army and Air Force. The Society for Human Resource Management has determined that an occupation *becomes a profession* when it is able to establish a Code of Ethics to apply to all members of the profession, and a clearly-stated Scope of Practice as to what members of the profession are expected to do and refrain from. Again, there is no Code of Ethics and no such Scope of Practice functioning in the three Corps. Additionally, at some point in the Chaplain Corps' evolution there need to be clearly defined competencies at the various rank structures, along with criteria for advanced practice. The Chaplain Corps are nowhere near these stages of development..
    - 3) **Lack of an Agreement on the Understanding and Practice of Pluralism.**  
I am often amazed when I speak with some chaplains and other endorser when it comes to the most basic subject of pluralism. Almost all chaplains will say that they are "committed to serving in a pluralistic context." By that, what some of them really mean is that they are willing to serve in a non-church setting and reach-out to folks unlike themselves in order to evangelize and proselytize. Few military chaplains say these days that they are committed to PRACTICE pluralism, namely to treat others' and their religions and deeply-held convictions, as sacred as their own. This is what The Coalition of Spirit-filled Churches requires applicants to commit to and to sign before being considered for endorsement:

“I understand that, if commissioned or appointed as a chaplain, I will be working with chaplains of other denominations and faith groups, sometimes differing widely with my own views, beliefs, practices, and sexual orientation. While I will not be asked to compromise my own conscience and beliefs, it is essential, by the very nature of chaplaincy, that I consider their ordination and ministry as valid as my own in the U. S. military and/or civilian institutions. I understand that an attitude of superiority or adversarial acts and non-cooperation towards pastoral caregivers and adherents of other faiths, practices, race, gender, or sexual orientation will not be tolerated and is grounds for the immediate withdrawal of my endorsement credential. I have read and I agree to abide by the CSC's Statements of "Faith," "Authorization," and "Record." Further, I realize that I must be willing to hold "General Protestant" worship services as well as those services specifically exercising all my own particular beliefs and practices.”

[We have had profound problems recently when our applicants are interviewed by senior chaplains (under other endorsements) who are clearly not committed to practicing pluralism. Our applicants have been negatively assessed because they are females seeking to be chaplains. Our applicants have been negatively assessed because they are willing to serve LGBT people in worship services, private pastoral counseling, and retreats. In one recent case, a chaplain with another group LOST his endorsement merely because he was willing to allow a woman chaplain to serve with him in the chapel services that he led. (We were, fortunately, able to pick him up and salvage his career!)

I would love to see the three Chaplain Corps take these differing perspectives on pluralism seriously enough to implement the following two basic questions in their new applicant interviews:

“1. If selected, can you practice pluralism to the level where you would be willing and able to be supervised by a married lesbian senior chaplain? 2. If selected, do you commit to supervising subordinate chaplains without bias or any attempt to thwart their careers?” Any “no” or non-answer answers are grounds for non-selection. Period. They may be great religious ministry professionals in their own congregations, but they are not military chaplaincy material. When it comes to diversity and pluralism, I appreciate the words of Air Force Lt General Silveria: <https://www.justdial.com/JdSocial/news/1575206167655000> .]

So dealing with senior chaplains who seemingly do not follow the rules when it comes to pluralism and chaplaincy is a great daily challenge for me. Also senior

chaplains who know about the impairment of their colleagues, yet who look the other way, is also a major problem. I would add that my colleague endorsers are also a part of the problem when they do not honor real pluralism to which they commit annually in their report to the Armed Forces Chaplains Board.

B. Financial commitments from our endorsees.

A good number of our endorsees financially contribute to the welfare of this endorsing agency. And a number of our chaplains have special situations at home and in their lives where they have special needs or profoundly ill family members whom they are supporting and all sorts of unusual issues and unique needs. But a number of our chaplains “simply” do not grasp the importance of their endorsement and the need to support us so that we can bring quality and credible endorsement and resources to them. They look at endorsement services as something they should offer an occasional tip or token offering. And some do not see the need to support their endorsing body at all, despite their written commitment to do so in the application that they signed. Unlike major denominations, we do not receive donations regularly from congregations or denominational headquarters. This obviously puts a profound strain on us as we have to come-up with resources or cease to exist.

3. *How do you see military chaplaincy and the role of the endorser changing in the future?*

My hope is that the military chaplaincy will rise-up to its purposes of performing and providing for the Free Exercise of Religion for all service-members. Instead of focusing their attention on the nice-to-have-but-optional roles in chaplaincy, I hope they get back to their primary function. They need to focus themselves with recruiting, accessing, and retaining chaplains who can serve all service-members without “restriction.” At this time in history, I understand that the military chaplaincy is over 85% Evangelical and “restricted” in their ministry. Additionally, the military chaplaincy is approximately 94% male according to DACOWITS (see <https://spirit-filled.org/images/readme/chart.png>). There are major installations in the US and OCONUS and large Navy carrier groups which do not have a single chaplain who is able to perform/provide pastoral care to LGBT service personnel. I see this as unsustainable. It is just a matter of time before the courts or DoD make some very dramatic changes to the Chaplain Corps. Sadly, at this time, I do not see the Chiefs of Chaplains Offices taking this deficiency very seriously. I think the DoD offered them a strong hint in March of 2017 which is being ignored (see <https://spirit-filled.org/documents/Faith-and-Belief-Codes-for-Reporting-Personnel-Data-of-Service-Members.pdf>). It is basically “business as usual.” If the Chiefs’ Offices were serious, they would be able to offer statistics on the demographics of the Armed Services with respect to service-members’ religious identifications and needs for unrestricted pastoral care as well as on chaplains’ religious identification for the ability to meet distinct religious needs and to offer pastoral care to LBGT folks. In the last 60

days, I have emailed all three Chiefs of Chaplains Offices and they report that none are collecting this data. Hence, there is no perceived need to authentically perform or provide for all, despite this command signal.

Regarding endorser roles, endorsers mostly see themselves as advocating for their chaplains and championing their denomination's "right" to produce chaplains. I don't see this changing in the near future. I see my fellow Evangelicals endorsers seeking to send as many of their clergy as possible to be "government-paid missionaries to the military mission field" (their words). I would love to see endorsers grasp the fact that the military chapel is NOT the church [unless it is indeed a denominationally-distinct service], and that the chapel cannot be run like one. And then I would love to see endorsers convey that to their chaplains.

4. *What does your vision of the future of military chaplaincy look like?*

Frankly, I fear for the military chaplaincy as it is right now. I highly suspect that the day is coming when an outside agency will determine that the three Chaplain Corps are not doing a very good job of fulfilling their primary task. If we are lucky, they will merely move that function of administration over to another agency like Human Resources Command -- which subsequently will restructure and employ chaplains per the actual religious and pastoral care needs of the services. If not, I think that there is a chance that the Corps will be entirely replaced by endorsed contractors for distinct faith-family groups [much as they do now with Roman Catholic contract priests]. Resiliency counselor contractors are already embedded with troops and airmen and on ships for service-members who are deployed. Heck, if they can deploy civilian retailer (base exchanges) personnel around the globe, it is certainly possible to do the same with religious care providers. The chaplaincies seem to think that they are insulated from this. I am not clear why.

5. *Two-part question:*

A. *What do you appreciate about the training you provide your endorsed chaplains and how might a book help you to accomplish your training mission?*

That is a good question. Since we are not a denomination, we expect that when chaplains come to us that they are already theologically educated with a qualifying degree, and that they have experienced spiritual discernment and formation with their church (which often is small and has limited resources for such) or with their seminary (which we would expect to be much better resourced). We also communicate with our federal chaplains through emails, a monthly email newsletter, two website blogs, offering phone consultation, and a free subscription to *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*. Additionally, we attend all of the major chaplaincy organizations' annual meetings to include APC, ACPE, CPSP, and the MCA. During these meetings we have break-out sessions with our chaplains for fellowship, networking, and one-on-one private consultations. We also have periodic regional meetings for the same.

Additionally, we attempt to meet with our chaplains during their basic and advance courses and attend their graduations, if possible.

- B. What topic would you like to see included in a new book on military chaplaincy that might help a seminary better prepare new applicants for military ministry?*  
A discussion on pluralism – what it is and isn't. What should be included in a military Code of Ethics for Chaplains. How the chaplaincy differs from congregational ministry. How the chaplaincy is a distinct calling and is certainly not suited for everyone. How a chaplain needs to be a critical thinker and/or develop critical thinking skills.