

THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE ARMY

A Special Publication of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps



Dedication by

Chief of Chaplains

Chaplain (Major General) Thomas L. Solhjem



I am deeply grateful to have spent a long career as a member of our United States Army Chaplain Corps “Caring for the Soul of the Army,” and caring for the individual souls of our Army’s Soldiers, Family members, and Civilians. Their steadfast dedication, tireless hard work, and selfless sacrifice on behalf of our Nation are both commendable and costly. Each of these individuals deserves the best support that our Nation can offer them. In this spirit of gratitude and care, I dedicate *The Free Exercise of Religion and Spirituality: A Special Publication of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps*.

This publication addresses a perennial but always evolving need in our Army. This statement from FM 7-22 *Holistic Health and Fitness* highlights the role our Corps plays in facilitating the Commander’s responsibilities around building Army Spiritual Readiness and some of the tensions that come with the free exercise of religion in this context: “The Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment act as guideposts for developing spiritual readiness.” This publication facilitates a better understanding of how the Chaplain Corps and our Army leaders can support and sustain the delicate balance necessary to build Army Spiritual Readiness and to provide for the free exercise of religion, while avoiding undue governmental authority, force, or influence to mandate or unduly promote any particular form of religion, religious belief, or practice. Our Army’s Soldiers, Family members, and Civilians deserve all of the above from us, and nothing less.

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Sign of Strength: Command, Faith, and Personal Example in Today's Army

by General Michael X. Garrett,
Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces Command

“So help me, God.”

I recited these words—the final words of our oath of office—the day I was commissioned as an Officer in the United States Army. I have repeated them with each subsequent promotion throughout my 38-year career. And for the hundreds, if not thousands, of Soldiers whom I have had the honor to commission, enlist, re-enlist, and promote, “So help me, God,” has also been the final plea of their own oaths as they embark on their military journeys.

Without a shred of doubt, I believe that God has, indeed, helped me. He has blessed me with a strong and healthy family; with brave, hard-working teams of warriors; and with opportunities to serve and lead within the organizations that fight and win this great Nation's wars.

And in these roles—particularly those bearing the weight and responsibility of command—God has helped me find clarity and comfort in the challenges I have faced, and the decisions I have made.

Command is an incredible privilege, however, it is an occasionally (and inevitably) isolating experience. On such occasions, prayer helps me speak to God in special ways, especially when I may not have been able to share my thoughts, burdens, and concerns with another person. In this turn to prayer, I find renewed strength and wisdom for what lies ahead.

By exercising my personal faith, I have experienced that all things seem just a bit easier. My life works better for me when I am led by God, which means to me that I am earnestly representing to others what I myself have been taught. In this way I remain consistent to the values I have been exposed to throughout my life of faith.

Our “Army Leadership and the Profession” doctrine does not speak about faith and religion. However, it does say a lot about the importance a leader's presence, and how we must demonstrate self-confidence,

composure, resilience, and humility.¹ Another leader's interpretations of this doctrine may differ, and rightfully so, but in my own experience, my “presence” is directly correlated with the strength of my relationship with God. Experience has also shown me that many of our Soldiers, Army Civilian professionals, and Family members are at their best when they embrace their own faith.

If you are a Commander at any echelon in the U.S. Army, your leadership and your relationship with God sets the example for the presence and balance your people emulate as they persevere through life's challenges.

Leadership and Spirituality

Spirituality is a personal and complicated subject, but that does not mean spiritual conversations of faith should be considered forbidden or controversial in your organization.

Although the Army defines the “Spiritual Dimension” as one of its Five Dimensions of Personal Readiness,² I have observed Commanders who are hesitant to promote this pillar of well-being. Why this hesitancy?

I believe there are leaders who avoid conversations about religion, and in particular avoid sharing their own experiences. Perhaps they focus on potentially negative outcomes, such as complaints of offense by those who do not share their beliefs. Commanders understandably do not want to be

perceived as using their position of authority to proselytize to others.

The reasons for this type of risk aversion are not lost on me; religion is rightfully protected by the Army's equal opportunity program, and freedom of religion is the very first guarantee in the U.S. Constitution. Commanders are conditioned to look at their environment through the lens of risk, and some may decide the risk of violating these principles—and in turn, their Soldiers' trust—is not worth taking.

However, I want you to know that by using the traits that helped you become a Commander (such as your ability to listen with empathy, and communicate with respect), you can easily navigate potential risks without eliminating the “Spiritual Dimension” from your conversations.

I will illustrate my point with a physical fitness analogy, as I am prone to do. Although I am a fitness nut, my personal preference is not to run marathons, power-lift extreme weights, or follow an especially restrictive diet. However, I have learned healthy, interesting, and useful lessons from friends and teammates who practice these lifestyles. Some of their stretches, form adjustments, and recipes have found a place in my own routines. While other practices may not resonate with me personally, they nonetheless make for stimulating conversations and experiences.

Conversations about spirituality hold the same potential. Those with a strong connection to faith have the powerful opportunity to reveal techniques and practices that may help their teammates build resilience. Leaders may, likewise, help build bonds through shared experiences when they show a healthy interest in the spiritual lives of those around them. And this can happen in the same way we show healthy interests in one another's families, hometowns, hobbies, goals, and passions.

I encourage Commanders to build a climate where such conversations are welcome. I want, however, you as a Commander to emphasize—perhaps explicitly—that the Commander's religion is not the command's religion. Spiritual discussions within your teams should serve to spark and create inclusion and inspiration, as opposed to exclusion and condemnation. Your Chaplain is not only well-prepared to coach you through leading these types of conversations; they are also well-positioned to receive, transmit, and translate candid feedback from your Soldiers.

Resurgence of Faith

While the Pew Research Center reports that Americans' religious affiliation is declining,³ I have anecdotally observed a resurgence of faith inside the U.S. Army, or at the very least that Soldiers demonstrate increased ease with expressing their own individual beliefs. This trend I am seeing encourages me, because I find there is a basic human

connection between one's faith and the life-and-death business of warfighting. Through almost four decades of commissioned service, I have witnessed the transition from battalion and brigade leaders of the late 1980s and '90s who avoided discussing religion with their formations, to today's Army where I see leaders who are willing to share their personal experiences with faith.

Whether this transition is attributable to the past 20 years of combat deployments, or other cultural and even generational factors, the collective impact reflects the "People First" Army we are committed to building and sustaining. The only way to put "People" first in our formations, is by prioritizing that which is inherently personal.

What I believe this means for today's company, battalion, and brigade Commanders who get more frequent touchpoints with the same groups of Soldiers than I do at the four-star level, is that you operate in a spiritually permissive environment. Your Soldiers are likely comfortable with, if not actively open to, the positive ways that religion can impact their lives. Even your Soldiers who are among the three-in-ten U.S. adults who consider themselves religiously unaffiliated⁴ have something to gain from the moral code, sense of community, and prospects for hope and optimism that are present in most major religions.

The Power of Your Personal Example

When I was preparing to become a battalion Commander, I received the wise advice to carefully consider which unit member I would first meet with after assuming command. All eyes are on the new Commander, and it made sense to me that my first meeting would send a message about my focus and priorities.

My first meeting was with my Chaplain because I wanted to show, not simply tell, the unit that my relationship with God is an important pillar in my leadership philosophy; and that I valued the Chaplain's unique role to and access within the battalion.

I am convinced that personal example is the only effective way to lead others, especially in our Army where young men and women deserve to see leaders willing to sweat and bleed at their side. One of the many ways I have strived to lead by personal example is through modeling the benefits of prayer and spiritual fitness, so that others could feel comfortable expressing their own personal faith.

Through my career, I have sought opportunities to grow in my personal faith, and to send Soldiers an encouraging, welcoming message about the importance of religion in their own lives. As Commander of U.S. Army Central, I even made the effort to attend mass in the Middle East's major cities any time I found myself spending

the weekend in a permissive partner nation. By dedicating some of my time to praise, confession, and reflection, it was my hope that the Soldiers I visited felt equally empowered to take time for their own spiritual health—and specifically for religious expression, if they felt called to do so.

Beyond merely meeting with your Chaplain, I encourage you as Commanders to make them your partner in formulating the spiritual example you will set. Their experience and judgment will inform the opportunities you take to practice and discuss faith. Perhaps more importantly, your Chaplain will bolster the personal peace and perspective you gain from these opportunities.

As I wrote in this article's opening, command inevitably involves isolating moments. In such time, where will you turn? Some choose to labor excessively long days or find fleeting satisfaction in recreational outlets, while still others may turn to unhealthy vices that destroy careers, relationships, and unit culture.

Even in our loneliest or most stressful times, a leader's responsibility is to model healthy behavior across all domains. When we show grace—the kind of grace I receive when I am right with God—during challenging times, we lead Soldiers to know it is possible (and expected) for them to do the same. In this context, the power of your personal example depends on the alignment between how you are seen practicing spiritual fitness, and how that spiritual

fitness helps you walk a positive, respectful life.

When I was selected to become a four-star general in the Army, General Joseph Votel, a leader I deeply respect and at the time my boss at U.S. Central Command, reminded me to “use my rank for good.” By this he meant I should seek opportunities to be a “happy general,” to give Soldiers and teammates positive interactions and memories, and to actively seek chances to help people attain opportunities they are bold enough to pursue.

I encourage this article's readers—and any leader in our Army—to use their rank for good, and, even more importantly, to use their faith for good. You are in a unique, once-in-a-lifetime position to make a lasting impact on the people who will fight and win the Nation's wars, and go on to lead Soldiers and communities of their own.

I pray you choose to make spiritual fitness a part of your personal leadership example. With candor, humility, and presence, you will find there is very little risk—and a great deal of reward—in acknowledging faith's powerful connection with our profession of arms.

So help me, God.

NOTES

1 Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, ADP 6-22 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2019), Table 3-1, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-0.pdf.

2 Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness*, Army Regulation 350-53 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2014), 2-5, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/r350_53.pdf.

3 Gregory A. Smith, "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated," Pew Research Center, December 14, 2021, <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

4 *Ibid.*

A Leader's Guide to Lawfully Addressing Religion and Spirituality

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Introduction

The First Amendment right for an individual to freely practice the religion of their own choosing is a hallmark of the American psyche.¹ This hallmark sits uneasily alongside the demand that Service members sometimes must subjugate their personal right to exercise certain religious practices for the good of the service.² Federal law places a high burden on the Department of Defense (DoD) to justify any limitation on the religious freedom of Service members,³ and prohibits certain government action with regard to practicing religion.⁴ At the same time, Commanders are charged,

through the assistance of Chaplains and leaders at all echelons, with ensuring the spiritual fitness of their formations.⁵ Balancing this directive while ensuring that leaders do not impinge upon their Soldiers' individual rights is a tricky dynamic, but it can be navigated successfully. This article summarizes the legal underpinnings of religious freedom, the processes, and the test by which religious freedom is limited, and concludes with suggestions of the best practices for addressing religious freedom in the military. Its purpose is to ensure that Commanders and leaders have the information they need to address spirituality and religion with their Soldiers in ways that do not violate the Constitution, Federal law, or DoD and Army policy. This article does not replace the advice of a Commander's staff, but serves as a starting point should a leader be faced with a question about this difficult area and does not have immediate access to a Chaplain or judge advocate.

Part I of this article provides the background of the First Amendment, including specific discussions of the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses. Part II summarizes the DoD and Army policies and procedures applicable to religious practices in the military. Part III provides practical guidance for leaders in the field who deal with requests for religious accommodation, who provide religious services to Soldiers, or who want to know more about how to address spirituality with their formations.

Part I: Background

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, passed in 1787 as part of the Bill of Rights, states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."⁶ The First Amendment contains two complementary rights regarding religion⁷: the right to free exercise of religion (the Free Exercise Clause)⁸ and the prohibition of government actions that favor one religion over another (the Establishment Clause).⁹

The Free Exercise Clause is not absolute despite being woven into the fabric of American society. In fact, it is particularly limited for military Service members.¹⁰ The right of Commanders to infringe upon certain rights of Soldiers for the good of the service is, in fact, deeply rooted in case law.¹¹ The seminal case, *Parker v. Levy*, summarizes the rationale for this:

While the members of the military are not excluded from the protection granted by the First Amendment, the different character of the military community and of the military mission requires a different application of those protections. The fundamental necessity for obedience, and the consequent necessity for imposition of discipline, may render within the military that which would be constitutionally impermissible outside it.¹²

This precedent, established in 1974, remained virtually unchallenged until the mid-1990s with the passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA),¹³ which clearly defines the limits of the government's ability to subjugate Soldiers' religious freedom. Pursuant to RFRA, Commanders may only substantially burden a person's religious exercise if it furthers a compelling government interest and is the least restrictive means of furthering that interest.¹⁴ A Commander "substantially burden[s]" a Service member's religious practice if their action either prevents participation in conduct motivated by a sincerely held belief or places substantial pressure on a Service member to engage in conduct contradictory to a sincerely held belief.¹⁵

The authority of a Commander to infringe on a Service member's religious freedom is not absolute. In certain instances it is quite limited.¹⁶ The Establishment Clause is one such limit; its language and subsequent case law specifically limit government action with regard to religion.¹⁷ While recent Supreme Court decisions leave new ambiguity to be sorted by the lower courts, what remains clear is that public speech by public officials is limited by the Establishment Clause.¹⁸ As public officials, Commanders must take care to ensure speech with regard to religion is not coercive.¹⁹

The courts have identified specific examples of permissible government action with regard to religion.²⁰

According to *United States v. Marsh*, the Establishment Clause cannot be applied in a vacuum; presumably practices that were in use at the time of the passage of the First Amendment are considered acceptable.²¹ The use of religious invocation or prayer to mark the beginning of an important event or ceremony is one such practice.²² Subsequent case law upheld *Marsh*.²³ This case law further articulates that prayer during the ceremonial portion of a government meeting is permissible because it does not "exact financial support of the church, compel religious observance, or control religious doctrine."²⁴

The court in *Katcoff v. Marsh* settled all previous concerns about the intersection of the Free Exercise Clause, Establishment Clause, and the War Powers Clause of the Constitution,²⁵ and their applicability to the U.S. Army and its Chaplain Corps.²⁶ Indeed, the court squarely addressed whether the existence of the Chaplain Corps violated the Free Exercise or Establishment Clauses.²⁷ The court applied this test to the issue: "whether the chaplaincy program is relevant and reasonably necessary for the Army's conduct of our national defense."²⁸ The court held that because the "purpose and effect of the program is to make religion, religious education, counseling and religious facilities available to military personnel" the military chaplaincy is "vital to our Army's functioning," and therefore, reasonably necessary for our national defense.²⁹

Understanding these foundational principles, including the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses, and RFRA, is necessary to an analysis of their implementation by the DoD and U.S. Army. The applicable policies are firmly rooted in the preceding principles.³⁰ Less clear, and infinitely more difficult to address, is how Commanders can support religion and spirituality without running afoul of the First Amendment. We do know, however, that they must address it.³¹

Part II: Department of Defense and Army Policy on Addressing Religion

The concept that Commanders must care for all aspects of a Service member's fitness is longstanding. However, it was recently encapsulated in a framework known as Total Force Fitness.³² Total Force Fitness consists of nine domains and is a "methodology for understanding, assessing, and maintaining Service members' well-being and sustaining their ability to carry out missions."³³ Spiritual fitness, one domain, is the "ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, or values needed to persevere and prevail in accomplishing missions."³⁴

Spirituality and religion are related but different and are thus treated differently under DoD and Army policy. Commanders must carefully balance attention to spiritual fitness with respect for their subordinates' religious

preference.³⁵ DoD and Army policy on religious liberty and spirituality in general is fully informed by the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment and RFRA.³⁶ According to DoD policy:

"Service members have the right to observe the tenets of their religion or to observe no religion at all;"³⁷

"DoD Components will accommodate individual expressions of sincerely held beliefs which do not have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, good orders and discipline, or health and safety;"³⁸

"A strong spirit promotes resiliency and enhances one's ability to mitigate adverse responses to stress. Promoting spiritual fitness is a vital component of a [Total Force Fitness] program."³⁹

Likewise, Army policy nests firmly in DoD policy, RFRA, and the First Amendment.⁴⁰ In addition to Soldiers' rights to practice their respective religions or observe no religion at all, Army policy states that it protects the "civil liberties of its personnel to the greatest extent possible, consistent with its military requirements."⁴¹

The Army aims to achieve this balance through its combined approach to religious accommodation and spiritual fitness.⁴² The Army's guidance to Commanders on how to address spirituality is contained in Field Manual (FM) 7-22, *Holistic Health and*

Fitness (H2F).⁴³ FM 7-22, published in 2020, established the Army's system to address five domains of Soldier readiness: physical, mental, sleep, nutrition, and spiritual.⁴⁴ The H2F program defines spirituality as a "sense of connection that gives meaning and purpose to a person's life."⁴⁵ Spirituality is "unique to each individual" and "applies to all people, whether religious and nonreligious . . . and forms the basis of their character."⁴⁶

Part III: Situation-Specific Guidance

FM 7-22 acknowledges the diverse and individualistic sources of spiritual and religious practice, thereby providing Commanders with the ideas, resources, and personnel necessary to address spiritual readiness without impacting the right to religious freedom.⁴⁷ With this guidance, Commanders should not shy away from addressing spirituality or religion, but work energetically to provide their Soldiers a wide variety of options for building their spiritual readiness. In general, if the Commander can articulate how their initiative or event achieves the H2F goal of "build[ing] physical lethality and mental toughness to win quickly and return home healthy," without violating the DoD and Army policies on the exercise of religion and the requirement for religious accommodation, such initiatives will pass legal muster.⁴⁸ To illustrate how to accomplish the daunting task of addressing spirituality without indicating preference for one religion

over another, this article provides a description of resources available to Commanders as well as practical examples.

A. EVALUATING RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

When it comes to providing religious accommodations, Chaplains are an essential resource in helping to determine the religious nature of the request and the sincerity of the religious belief.⁴⁹ Chaplains need to be confident in their role as a principal advisor to the Commander in the religious accommodation process.⁵⁰ Chaplains are tasked to formally interview Soldiers requesting religious accommodation to determine the religious nature of the request and the religious sincerity of the requestor.⁵¹

Determining whether an accommodation request is religious in nature is not as straightforward as it might initially seem. To evaluate whether an accommodation request is truly religious, Chaplains may consider using the following three-prong test to evaluate such requests:⁵² first, whether the religious belief addresses "fundamental and ultimate questions of life;" second, whether the belief system is "comprehensive in nature;" and third, whether the belief system has formally established external visible signs.⁵³ Alternatively, in evaluating whether the request is religious leaders may ask whether the Soldier's "moral, ethical, or religious beliefs about what is right and wrong" is "held with strength of traditional religious convictions."⁵⁴ Finally,

a Soldier's adherence to a "merely personal moral code," is not sufficient to meet the threshold for religious accommodation.⁵⁵

Take as an example a Soldier who requests relaxed grooming standards due to their adherence to the Asatru faith.⁵⁶ In determining whether Asatru is considered a religion, a Chaplain should conduct research to determine whether the Asatru religion answers questions such as what happens to a person after death or what is the purpose of life. A Chaplain also should explore whether the Asatru religion addresses a person's complete identity and how they are to live. Finally, the Chaplain should explore what formal and external signs the religion incorporates into the belief structure. In this example, the Asatru religion addresses the deep and ultimate questions of life; it has a holistic set of teachings for how a person is to live; and, finally, it has formal and external signs that appear to be established by the belief system.⁵⁷

Determining the sincerity of the Soldier's religious belief will invariably be the most probing and consequential part of the interview process. To determine the sincerity of religious belief, the Chaplain should explore three elements. The first element is the motivation of the religious request.⁵⁸ Is the Soldier making this request simply because they want to grow a beard? Or is the motivation fueled by a genuine religious fervor to grow a beard as a means to grow in their spirituality? The second element

to explore is the consistency of how the individual lives out their religious convictions. Perhaps a Soldier wants separate rations due to certain off-limits or forbidden foods being served in a dining facility.⁵⁹ However, outside of wanting to adhere to certain dietary restrictions, the Soldier does not actively participate in religious observances or adhere to other religious teachings. This may not necessarily mean that the Soldier is not sincere in their request, but it may be a sign that the sincerity is not religious in nature. The final element in determining religious sincerity is to explore if the request is from a religious conviction or, conversely, if it arises from a strongly held moral objection that is not religious in nature.⁶⁰ Often moral and ethical beliefs are based on a religious belief system.⁶¹ However, there are moral objections that may be grounded on a political or scientific viewpoint. Chaplains need to be sensitive to this dynamic and be aware that there can be a difference between a moral objection and a religious conviction.

With the implementation of FM 7-22, Commanders and Unit Ministry Teams (UMT) have a renewed responsibility to help improve the spiritual readiness of the Force.⁶² In granting religious accommodations, a Commander does not endorse one religion over another.⁶³ Instead, by granting a religious accommodation request, the Commander helps to support the free exercise of religion, which, in turn, helps to grow and improve the overall health and fitness of their Soldiers.⁶⁴

B. RELIGIOUS DISPLAYS AND PRAYER

As previously discussed, Commanders must be careful to avoid religious coercion.⁶⁵ However, as long as Commanders take care to conduct activities in a manner that “that is consistent with accepted historical practice” in the military and is not coercive, holiday displays and even prayer can be part of the Commander’s plan to address support spiritual readiness.⁶⁶ For example, the month of December is generally a time when many Soldiers celebrate important religious holidays such as Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanza. While Commanders should avoid events that only highlight a particular religious remembrance, an event or display that celebrates multiple religions is acceptable.⁶⁷ Common displays or events that are likely acceptable include a Christmas tree lighting ceremony and the display of multiple holiday images, such as a Santa Claus house, reindeer pulling Santa’s sleigh, a nativity scene, a menorah, and a “Season’s Greetings” sign, in the dining facility.⁶⁸ Likewise, prayers offered by a Chaplain during formal, solemn military ceremonies such as a change-of-command, retirement, graduation, or dining-in where prayer or invocation is “deeply embedded” in our military history are likely acceptable.⁶⁹ On the other hand, a prayer led by the Commander at the start of every meeting is likely a violation of the *Establishment clause* because the speech is official, conducted during a mandatory meeting,

and may appear coercive.⁷⁰ A quick review from the command judge advocate can ensure Commanders and their staff stay within legal bounds when planning such events or displays.

C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL READINESS

The publication of FM 7-22, provides Commanders with a host of resources available to address the spiritual readiness of their Soldiers.⁷¹ While the guidance acknowledges that spirituality is highly individualized, it highlights many options Commanders can implement to address this component of readiness while also avoiding the preference of one religion over another.⁷² Such activities could include a day of service, providing time for meditation, providing time and space for individual religious education or prayer, conducting relationship building events such as Strong Bonds, or hosting leader professional development on a certain religion.⁷³ In planning these activities, Commanders are not alone.⁷⁴ They can and should rely on numerous individuals and entities inside and outside of their organizations for assistance and expertise such as the Chaplain and UMT, the Garrison Chaplain’s office, the legal office, the Equal Opportunity Advisor or Office, and the Army Fit website, to name a few.⁷⁵

Conclusion

While at first less experienced Commanders may feel hesitant to address very personal and weighty

issues like religion and spirituality with their formations, it is their duty. As they become more comfortable with this important aspect of their mission, Commanders and leaders should feel empowered to share their own spirituality and proudly exercise their religious beliefs appropriately. Knowing they have the staff, information, and resources to assist them in effectively addressing this important aspect of readiness should ease their concern.

NOTES

- 1 Jan Neuharth, First Amendment Day is an Important Reminder of the Rights We Enjoy—and Must Protect, USA Today (Sept. 23, 2021, 10:00AM), <http://usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/09/23/first-amendment-rights-must-protect/8377984002/>.
- 2 Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. 145, 164 (1878).
- 3 Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-141, 107 Stat. 1488.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 U.S. Dep't of Army, Field Manual 7-22, Holistic Health and Fitness (1 Oct. 2020) (C1, 8 Oct. 2020) [hereinafter FM 7-22].
- 6 U.S. Const. amend. I.
- 7 Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist., No. 21-418, 2022 U.S. LEXIS 3218, at *7 (June 27, 2022) (citing Everson v. Board of Ed. of Ewing, 330 U.S. 1, 15 (1947)).
- 8 Cantwell v. *State of Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296, 303 (1940).
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Parker v. Levy, 417 U.S. 733, 758 (1974).
- 12 *Ibid.* at 759.
- 13 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000bb to -4.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 See Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971); Lynch v. Donnelly, 465 U.S. 668 (1984); County of Allegheny v. ACLU, 492 U.S. 573 (1989); Lee v. Weisman, 505 U.S. 577 (1992); Town of Greece v. Galloway, 572 U.S. 565 (2014); Am. Legion v. Am. Humanist Ass'n, 139 S. Ct. 2067 (2019); Zelman v. Simmons-Harris, 536 U.S. 639 (2002); Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist., No. 21-418, 2022 U.S. LEXIS 3218, at *40 (June 27, 2022).
- 17 See Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist., No. 21-418, 2022 U.S. LEXIS 3218, at *40 (June 27, 2022).
- 18 See *Ibid.*
- 19 See *Ibid.*
- 20 Marsh v. Chambers, 463 U.S. 783, 790 (1983).
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Town of Greece v. Galloway, 572 U.S. 565, 566–67 (2014).
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*

- 25 U.S. Const. art. I, § 8.
- 26 *Katcoff v. Marsh*, 755 F.2d 223, 235 (1984).
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 U.S. Dep't of Def., Instr. 1300.17, Religious Liberty in the Military Services para. 1.2 (1 Sept. 2020) [hereinafter DoDI 1300.17]; U.S. Dep't of Army, Reg. 600-20, Army Command Policy para. 5-6a (24 July 2020) [hereinafter AR 600-20].
- 31 See FM 7-22, *supra* note 5.
- 32 See *generally* Joint Chiefs of Staff, Instr. 3405.01, Chairman's Total Force Fitness Framework (1 Sept. 2011) [hereinafter CJCSI 3405.01].
- 33 *Ibid.* at encl. A, para. 2.
- 34 *Ibid.* at encl. A, para. 3e.
- 35 U.S. Dep't of Army, Reg. 600-63, Army Health Promotion paras. 1-32, 6-2 (14 May 2015) [hereinafter AR 600-63].
- 36 DoDI 1300.17, *supra* note 28, at 4.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 CJCSI 3405.01, *supra* note 30, at encl. a, app. e, para. 5.
- 40 AR 600-20, *supra* note 28.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 See *Ibid.*; see also FM 7-22, *supra* note 5; see also U.S. Dep't of Army, Techs. Pub. 1-05.04, Religious Support and Internal Advisement (23 Mar. 2017) [hereinafter ATP 1-05.04].
- 43 See *generally* FM 7-22, *supra* note 5.
- 44 FM 7-22, *supra* note 5.
- 45 *Ibid.* para. 10-2.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Ibid.* paras. 10-10 to -27.
- 48 *Ibid.* at ix.
- 49 See *generally* AR 600-20, *supra* note 28, at app. P; see also FM 7-22, *supra* note 5, para. 10-9.
- 50 See *generally* AR 600-20, *supra* note 28, at app. P.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 *Africa v. Pennsylvania*, 662 F.2d 1025, 1032 (3d Cir. 1981) (citing *Malnak v. Yogi*, 592 F.2d 197, 205 (3d Cir. 1979)).
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 U.S. v. *Ward*, 989 F.2d 1015 (9th Cir. 1992) (citing *Welsh v. U.S.*, 398 U.S. 333, 340 (1970)).
- 55 *Africa*, 662 F.2d at 1034.
- 56 See *generally* Sergeant First Class Erick Studenicka, *Number of Religious Accommodations, Including Beards, Likely to Grow in Nevada Guard Ranks*, Def. Visual Info. Distrib. Serv. (Dec. 19, 2019), <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/356626/number-religious-accommodations-including-beards-likely-grow-nevada-guard-ranks>.
- 57 See *Ibid.*
- 58 See *generally* Bryant et al., *supra* note 50.
- 59 See *generally* ATP 1-05.04, *supra* note 40, app. A-5.
- 60 *Ibid.* app. A-1.
- 61 See *generally* FM 7-22, *supra* note 5, para. 10-10.
- 62 See *generally* *Ibid.*
- 63 *Ibid.* para. 10-5.
- 64 *Ibid.*
- 65 *Ibid.* para. 10-6.
- 66 See *Kennedy*, *supra* note 16 at *40 (June 27, 2022).
- 67 *Ibid.*
- 68 See *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 685 (1984); see also *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*, 492 U.S. 573, 591 (1989).
- 69 See *Marsh*, *supra* note 19, at 786.
- 70 See *Warnock v. Archer*, 380 F.3d 1076, 1081 (8th Cir. 2004); See also *Kennedy* at *41.
- 71 See FM 7-22, *supra* note 5, paras. 10-9, 10-30 to -37.
- 72 See *Ibid.*
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 *Ibid.*
- 75 See *Ibid.* paras. 10-10 to -27.

Commanders and Free Exercise of Religion – A Chaplain's Perspective

by Chaplain (Colonel) Rajmund Kopec
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Introduction

Freedom is the heartbeat of the United States of America. Protecting freedom was the overarching purpose of the Declaration of Independence (August 2, 1776), the U.S. Constitution (March 4, 1789), and the Bill of Rights (December 15, 1791). The First Amendment alone guarantees freedom of speech, press, religion, and the rights to peaceable assembly and to petition the government. Protecting these freedoms is the crux of U.S. military service. Though Soldiers accept some limitations on personal freedoms to fulfill their obligations, they do

not forfeit their right to the free exercise of religion. Rather, Commanders at every echelon are charged with guaranteeing this right to their Soldiers.

Guaranteeing the free exercise of religion serves several important functions. Religion provides important continuity between the civilian population and the military. According to a 2019 report by the Congressional Research Center, approximately 73.3% of active duty military personnel identify with a religious denomination.¹ This religious identification provides entry-level military personnel with familiarity, comfort, stability, and direction as they transition into the unique culture of the military.

Soldiers, furthermore, must accept greater risk and distress by the very nature of their profession. The experiences of facing death, being isolated from family and established support systems, and witnessing the horrors of war move many Soldiers to reevaluate the religion, faith, or philosophical concepts that guide their lives. Providing religious support as Soldiers grapple with the deep existential questions that arise during conflict significantly contributes to a Soldier's morale and will to fight. "[T]he Continental Congress established the chaplaincy as an integral part of the Army of the United States"² on July 29, 1775 to assist Commanders to meet the religious needs of their Soldiers. The War Department expanded this assistance on December 28, 1909 by

authorizing an enlisted Soldier's position of Religious Affairs Specialist.

What follows in rest of this article is a U.S. Army Senior Chaplain's perspective on the legal obligations and challenges Commanders face in ensuring the free exercise of religion for their Soldiers. The article focuses on the relevant Joint and U.S. Army doctrine, examines common obstacles, and shares some best practices with an emphasis on Chaplain Corps responsibilities and capabilities around internal advisement. The information is relevant to all echelons from a battalion to an Army Command. The article focuses on Chaplains but also applies to the role of Religious Affairs Specialists.

The U.S. Army and Joint Doctrine

The regulatory guidance on internal advisement helps Commanders balance the inherent tension between the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses. To this end, it is crucial for Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists to know and understand Joint and Army doctrine that are the guides and authorities for the Commander in carrying out their responsibility of providing religious support.

Army Regulation 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*, provides a summary of the historical, constitutional, and legal basis for the Chaplain Corps and points out the challenge of "striking a balance between the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses" of the

Constitution.³ Of particular note, the regulation states that providing for the free exercise of religion for Soldiers and dependents is a Commander's responsibility, "Commanders provide for the free exercise of religion through assigned chaplains, Religious Affairs Specialists, and other religious support personnel."⁴ The Chaplain Corps assists the Commander in this effort by providing religious support and advising Commanders on the impact of religion, "As a professional military religious leader, the chaplain must have the capability to perform or provide religious support that accommodates the Soldier's right to the free exercise of religion, and support resilience efforts to sustain Soldiers, Family Members, and authorized Civilians. As the professional military religious staff advisor, the chaplain advises the Commander and staff on morals, morale, ethical issues, and the impact of religion on all aspects of military operations."⁵

Field Manual 1-05, *Religious Support*, notes the important distinction between internal and external advisement. The FM corrects an imbalance in religious advisement created by twenty years of counterinsurgency operations that focused primarily on external advisement to assess the impact of religion on military operations in the context of indigenous populations. Internal advisement, which Army Techniques Publication 1-05.04 defines "as a required religious support capability that advises on religion,

morals, and morale within units, and ethical decision making of the command,"⁶ is the advisement capacity for which Chaplains are best suited.

Joint Guide 1-05, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations* articulates the same principles as FM 1-05 even though it uses slightly different terminology. "Religious affairs are the commander's responsibility. Religious affairs consist of the combination of RS [religious support] and religious advisement."⁷ It repeats the emphasis on advisement, which it defines as "the practice of informing the commander on the impact of religion on joint operations to include, but not be limited to, worship, rituals, protected places, customs, and practices of US military personnel, international forces, and the indigenous population, as well as the potential impact of military operations on the religious and humanitarian issues in the OA [operational area]."⁸

Obstacles

COMMON LANGUAGE

Clarifying terms is the first step. There is vagueness and disagreement around the terms "religion" and "spirituality." Most interlocutors enter the conversation with strongly held preconceived notions about the meaning of these words and how they should be used. Terminology, for this reason, poses a challenge to effective internal advisement. Some Soldiers describe themselves as spiritual

but not religious, while some see themselves as religious and spiritual, while still others self-describe as religious but not spiritual. This task is further complicated by those who dislike the Army's definitions of the terms religion and spirituality. Nevertheless, working with the Army's definitions is a critical first step in discussing religious support in the Army.

Army Regulation 600-20, *Army Command Policy* defines religion as "a personal set or institutionalized system of attitudes, moral or ethical beliefs and practices held with the strength of traditional views, characterized by ardor and faith, and generally evidenced through specific observances."⁹ The first two words of this definition, "a personal set," reflect a broadened understanding of traditional definitions of religion to include a variety of belief systems as the basis for religious practice. Historically religion was understood as a formalized community expression of shared beliefs and practices. The military definition now extends the concept of religion from a community expression to an individual expression. Under this rubric we now have religious communities that consist of one member. This significantly changes the landscape of religious support, internal advisement, and the free exercise of religion.

The ambiguity of the updated definition of religion is playing out in the COVID-19 religious accommodation exemption for immunization process. Historically, Chaplains conducted religious

accommodation interviews to determine if a particular practice or conviction was part of the expressed belief system, "The chaplain must provide a memorandum that summarizes the interview and addresses the religious basis and sincerity of the Soldier's request."¹⁰ The updated definition now reduces the Chaplain to making a subjective judgment on the "sincerity" of the personal belief. Nevertheless, this is how the Army has defined religion.

The Army's definition of spirituality is even more expansive than that of religion. Army Regulation 350-53 concludes that "an individual's spirituality draws upon personal, philosophical, psychological, and/or religious teachings or beliefs, and forms the basis of their character."¹¹ Field Manual 7-22 states that "Spirituality is often described as a sense of connection that gives meaning and purpose to a person's life. It is unique to each individual. The spiritual dimension applies to all people, whether religious or non-religious."¹² The FM defines the spiritual (not spirituality) as "concerned with an individual's core religious, philosophical, or human values that form that individual's sense of identity, purpose, motivation, character, and integrity. These elements enable one to build inner strength, make meaning of experiences, behave ethically, persevere through challenges, and be resilient when faced with adversity."¹³ These definitions buttress what is now

the fourth domain of Army readiness, Spirituality. The definition of spirituality is broad enough to refer to the universal human need and longing for meaning that undergird human experience of the transcendent.

This expansive definition of spirituality challenges more narrowly defined conceptions of the idea. For example, the traditional Catholic conception of spirituality is “the ways in which people, beyond the ordinary practices of the faith, have sought to live their Christian lives more intensely... the sort of religious attention that goes beyond the ordinary observances of practicing Catholics in the sacramental life of the church.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, the broad description relies on more than twenty years of scientific observations and research examining the correlation between religiosity, spirituality, and psychology. Drawing on this body of research a prominent scholar defines spirituality as “an inner sense of relationship to a higher power that is loving and guiding. The word we give to this higher power might be God, nature, spirit, the universe, the creator, or other words that represent a divine presence. But the important point is that spirituality encompasses our relationship and dialogue with this higher presence.”¹⁵ This definition and the accumulated research of a diverse group of social science disciplines provide the foundation for Army doctrine, policy, and efforts such as the Spiritual Readiness Initiative.

NAVIGATING THE MILITARY ENVIRONMENT:

Another source of religious support friction are the differences between civilian and military religious communities. What is appropriate and legal in a civilian parish is not necessarily so in a military religious community operating in a base chapel. The most common misunderstandings are related to handling and spending chapel tithes and offerings funds, chapel ornamentation, naming chapels, or volunteers satisfying Title 10 requirements. Commanders and Chaplains must not assume that what is fruitful and legal in the civilian sector is so in the military.

To this end, Chaplains must have a fundamental knowledge of the laws and regulations that guide chapel-based programs to advise their commands. To their pastoral skills they must add the staff skills necessary to successfully navigate the military environment. In other words, Chaplains must possess a professional identity that recognizes divine calling in clerical and staff officer functions.

Best Practices

BUILDING TRUST WITH COMMANDERS

At the beginning of each new assignment the Chaplain has the opportunity to establish a relationship of trust with the Commander. The Chaplain who exhibits professional knowledge, skills, behavior, and a genuine concern for each member of the command enriches the relationship

by building trust. According to *Merriam-Webster* trust is “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something or dependence on something future or contingent.”¹⁶ Not surprisingly, according to the *Harvard Business Review*, trust is an outcome of three elements: positive relationships, good judgment/expertise, and consistency.¹⁷ All this research aligns with Colonel (Retired) Patrick J. Sweeney’s conclusions that competence, character, and caring are the fundamental factors of trust.¹⁸ Armed with this understanding, every Chaplain should set out to enrich their relationship with their Commander in a manner that fosters the necessary cooperation for providing religious support.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMANDER

Chaplains at every echelon are frequently welcomed with the sincere and endearing charge, “Chaplain, just take care of my Soldiers.” Though the Commander’s intent is constant, the expectations vary significantly about how this should transpire. Some Commanders have had bad experiences with Chaplains so have very low expectations, while others are happy with their “senior pastor.”

Effective Chaplains learn to meet their Commanders where they are. These Chaplains are cognizant of the wide range of religious backgrounds and experiences a Commander may possess. Chaplains cheerfully learn their Commander’s preferences, temperament, previous experiences with

Chaplains, and how they like to receive information. The Chaplain who develops an understanding of their Commander will have the most opportunities for effective internal advisement.

UNIT, AREA, AND DISTINCTIVE RELIGIOUS GROUP COVERAGE

It is natural for Commanders to prioritize the religious support of their own Soldiers. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon Chaplains to ensure their Commanders understand the importance of area coverage, the means by which Commanders share religious support assets to ensure that even minority faith groups receive Chaplain support. No single Chaplain can meet the totality of religious need in the command. Even though every Chaplain is part of an endorsing body that “supports the pluralistic requirements of the Army without relinquishing their respective religious demands,”¹⁹ all Chaplains have ministerial restrictions. To protect the individual Chaplain’s own right to free exercise of religion, each Chaplain must advise Commanders on pastoral limitations established by their Endorser while simultaneously explaining how the religious support gaps can be filled by leveraging area and distinctive religious group concepts. Army doctrine provides the justification for this leverage “chaplains are responsible for the unit, area, and distinctive religious group religious support. Operational orders will document recurring coverage responsibilities of chaplain duties beyond their assigned unit. Priority of support is

normally to the unit, then the area, and then distinctive religious groups.”²⁰

Advising Commanders on this aspect of the Army’s doctrine requires proper framing and context. First, area coverage, if properly planned and executed, benefits the unit. In a field environment, it reduces risk and saves time on travel where separated by distance. Second, area coverage and distinctive religious group coverage are an expression of Army teamwork, ensuring that low density faith groups are afforded religious support. By “sharing” a Rabbi, an Imam, or a Catholic Priest, the Commander helps fellow Commanders to fulfill their legal obligation for the free exercise of religion of every member of the command.

TRANSLATING RELIGIOUS PRACTICES INTO THE ARMY’S LANGUAGE

Every good anthropologist knows that the key to effective communication is learning the host culture’s language. The Army is no different. The more fluent the Chaplain is in translating religious support into operational language, the more effective the message and support. To provide effective internal advisement, Chaplains translate religious support into the Army’s language, to include the use of data and data interpretation.

In recognition of the Army’s appetite for data and the historic Chaplain aversion for detailed reporting, the Chaplain Corps has embarked upon an ambitious effort to establish an integrated reporting management system known as OS56.

This reporting system will help the Army, the Chaplain Corps, and the individual Chaplain track trends, measure effectiveness, and tailor care for Soldiers and Families.

The Army expects its officers to be able to interpret data. What does a spike in suicidal ideation counseling in a brigade mean? Should the Commander be concerned that their unit is at higher suicide risk and increase prevention efforts? Or does it mean that current prevention methods are working, and Soldiers are comfortable with asking for help? Though all interpretation efforts should be approached with the humility that complexity and limited knowledge dictate, Chaplains must develop the skills to interpret the data and recommend courses of action.

Chaplains should be open in their desire to cultivate in-person interactions with Commanders as a critical component of effective communication. However, this desire must be tempered with the recognition that face-to-face interactions are constrained by time and mission. Recognizing the severe time constraints under which Commanders work, Chaplains must learn to use established communication processes and instruments. The Army provides a wide range of tools and formats to communicate the religious support effort to include the Commander Master Religious Support Plan, the operational order process, staff update briefings (learn to think past the “the thought of the day”), information papers, executive

summaries, concept of operations briefs, decision briefings, etc. Effective communication by the Chaplain is incumbent upon effective use of these instruments for internal advisement.

FIELD MANUAL 7-22, HOLISTIC HEALTH AND FITNESS

The Publication of the Field Manual 7-22 formalizes the space in which Commanders and Chaplains interact. It establishes authoritative doctrine on spirituality as one of the five holistic health and fitness domains: physical, nutritional, mental, spiritual, and sleep readiness.²¹ It also provides practical information to leaders on how to ensure the spiritual readiness of their respective units and stresses the supporting role of the Chaplain Corps.

Second, the manual opens natural avenues for Commanders and Chaplains to engage Soldiers on issues of religion and spirituality. It reverses the ongoing cultural trend that relegates spiritual and/or religious discussions to the private sphere by reintroducing this discussion to a public forum, which restores important public space for the free exercise of religion. For some time now, Commanders have been reluctant to discuss religion or spirituality in a public setting. Establishing the spiritual domain as a part of Army doctrine reopens the public space for discussions of religiosity and spirituality. In addition, the doctrine provides language that can de-conflict otherwise emotionally-laden and contentious topics around spirituality.

SPIRITUAL READINESS INITIATIVE

The Army's Spiritual Readiness Initiative equips Commanders and Chaplains with the empirical and conceptual understanding to aggressively promote spiritual readiness. The Spiritual Readiness Initiative was conceived in collaboration between the Chaplain Corps and research scientists at some of the United States' most prestigious universities. This research aims to empirically assess the value of spirituality in the human domain. The fruit of this effort, a powerful and undisputable correlation between a strong spiritual core and human flourishing, equips Chaplains and Commanders with the evidence to unabashedly advocate for the spiritual domain. The Spiritual Readiness Initiative begins with installation-level training. The Chief of Chaplains and his team present the science of spirituality findings to command teams, ministry teams, Behavioral Health professionals, Army Community Services providers, and Military Family Life and Army Substance Abuse Program counselors. In addition, ministry teams are trained on three skills: spiritual assessment, spiritual readiness development, and spiritual readiness deep dive. Command and ministry teams utilize this information to review, readjust, and/or introduce new programs according to the needs of the local command/community.

The Spiritual Readiness Initiative is not another canned and scripted mandatory training effort. Rather, it is

a door opening event, as it were, that invites previously excluded parties into an ongoing conversation that aims to improve units and chapel-based programs. It also awakens Soldiers and Families to a subject that has been seriously neglected. The Spiritual Readiness Initiative helps Chaplains to collaborate with the full range of Army care providers, as well as Commanders and Soldiers, to tailor ministry support efforts, eliminating ineffective programs and establishing new efforts to enhance the spiritual core of individuals and communities. Strengthening the Soldier's spiritual core begins in in-processing and continues with ongoing evaluation and encouragement throughout a Soldier's career.

Conclusion

Every cultural sea faces shifting currents of change. The United States and its Army are no exceptions. This article captures some of those particular changes around the Chaplain Corps and Army culture. It also demonstrates the enduring commitment of the United States to protecting the rights of its Soldiers to the free exercise of religion, and emphasizes the special role played by Commanders, Chaplains, and Religious Affairs Specialists in guaranteeing that right. By outlining common obstacles and new opportunities to effective religious support rediscovers of an old reality: the enduring benefit of a strong spiritual life.


PRO DEO ET PATRIA!


NOTES


- 1 *Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity in the Armed Services: Background and Issues for Congress*, (Washington, DC: US Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, June 5, 2019), 46.
- 2 U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*, Army Regulation 165-1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, June 23, 2015), 1.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.* 5.
- 5 *Ibid.* 6.
- 6 U.S. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and Internal Advisement*, Army Techniques Publication 1-05.04 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, March 23, 2017), 1-6.
- 7 U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, Joint Guide 1-05 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 1, 2018), II-1.
- 8 *Ibid.* II-2.
- 9 U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Command Policy*, Army Regulation 600-20 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, July 24, 2020), 211.
- 10 *Ibid.* 185.
- 11 U.S. Department of the Army, *Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness*, Army Regulation 350-53 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, June 19, 2014), 8.
- 12 U.S. Department of the Army, *Holistic Health and Fitness*, Field Manual 7-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, October 8, 2020), 1-10.
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- 14 Lawrence S. Cunningham, "Catholic Spirituality," *Commonweal*, (February 24, 2006), <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/catholic-spirituality>.
- 15 Miller, Lisa. "The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving." New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2015, 25.
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- 19 U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*, Army Regulation 165-1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, June 23, 2015), 7.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 U.S. Department of the Army, *Holistic Health and Fitness*, Field Manual 7-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, October 8, 2020), 1-2.




Questions for Reflection and Engagement

-  **What risks do you see that might be associated with proactively supporting Soldier development in the Spiritual Domain? How might this risk be mitigated?**

-  **What benefits to the formation do you see to practicing Free Exercise within it?**

-  **What surprised you most in what you read? What made you curious to learn more?**

-  **What opportunities for religious accommodation exist in your formation? Are there groups that might help you increase readiness and H2F in your organization and organizational climate?**

Thinking about *Esprit de Corps*, are there ways that your religious support program, Command Master Religious Plan, and Unit Ministry Team can help you increase team members' understanding of their jobs, better understand why their job is important, and affirm that no team member will be left behind?

What are the real risks to mission, persons and organization around religious accommodation? Are there ways that your team is risk adverse? In what ways can you underwrite intentional and responsible risk, to build spiritual resiliency in your team?

What Army Learning (training, education, self-learning) materials or programs does your organization need to create a better organizational understanding of religious accommodation and the value of religious free exercise and spiritual activities?

What kinds of messages came to you in this publication that might help you create an environment that invites healthy spiritual/religious practices for the purpose of setting conditions for increased *Esprit de Corps*, increased readiness among team members and increased mission success?

“This is a unique and very much needed, as well as timely compilation. The Army Chaplains Corps has provided a moral compass and a spiritual foundation to the United States Army since 1775. This work highlights the critical importance of leaders and commanders—who have always held responsibility for maintaining morale, cohesion, and healthy culture in every military unit—in enabling and ensuring the free practice of religion by our Nation’s military guardians. A must read for those who seek to understand how this is done and why America’s military is so different from others around the world.”

– **Vincent K. Brooks,**
General, U.S. Army (Retired)

“Spirituality and religion are key components that permeate our culture and society, and yet it is often the case that leaders do not know how to discuss it within their formations, or what the limits of those discussions are. This special publication of our Chaplain Corps steps into this gap by providing a glimpse into the minds of some of our top Army Senior Leaders, legal experts, and Chaplains to show how this topic can best be addressed by Army leaders at all echelons. Expression of faith is one of the vital freedoms that our country’s founding documents protect, and many have fought to preserve. As such, being able to wisely navigate this topic is vital for the leaders of our Army as we head into the future. This should be essential reading for any and all leaders and Soldiers who are concerned with preserving and discussing our fundamental freedom of faith.”

– **Chaplain (Major General) Thomas L. Solhjem,**
25th Army Chief of Chaplains



U.S. ARMY

