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The Voice for Chaplaincy - Chartered by Congress - Serving Since 1925

Weekly Newsgram - December 20th, 2017

***Happy Hanukkah as the festival concludes
Merry Christmas as the celebration approaches***

VA Chaplains Play A Key Role in Providing Spiritual and Comprehensive Care



A couple participating in the VA's warrior to Soul Mate program

Excerpts from the article in Defense Media Network by [Charles Dervarics](#)

For veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, the transition back to life in their communities is often a struggle. While some face physical challenges, others deal with emotional scars from combat as evidenced by the increased reporting of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared with past conflicts. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responding with a multi-layered approach - one that often views the role of chaplains as a key element in a comprehensive team effort.

"Whether they function as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist representatives, chaplains care for the whole person," said chaplain Michael McCoy, director of the National Chaplain Center (NCC) of VA. "The chaplain is there to provide spiritual care in any way they can."

In VA medical centers, chaplains typically serve as part of a patient care team as they make regular rounds to meet with individuals and participate in patient-care conferences alongside nurses and social workers. In other settings, they may provide one-on-one

counseling - even by video conference - to serve veterans where they live. In addition, they increasingly work with community clergy to learn about key symptoms of PTSD or depression, focusing on issues from substance abuse to suicide prevention.

"Even though I'm a rabbi, I'm there to take care of a human being, regardless of religion," said Lowell Kronick, associate director for chaplaincy education at the NCC. "It's one human being taking care of another human being. We are there to work with all patients."

More than 800 spiritual leaders are part of the VA's chaplain service, and they work in VA medical centers and outpatient clinics. Most VA centers have multiple staff, including clinical chaplains and a lead chaplain, McCoy said. Often assigned to a certain floor or wing, chaplains typically participate in medical rounds - getting to know patients - and attend patient care conferences. At these conferences, chaplains are part of a team that includes a care manager and social worker, where they discuss individual patients and how best to serve them.

Chaplains typically also do a spiritual assessment of a VA patient. "A patient may not be religious but may require the use of a chaplain," McCoy said, and one key ingredient is that chaplains emphasize spiritual care but not necessarily religion. "A chaplain does not force religion on anyone," he noted. But chaplains also will conduct services in their religion at a VA chapel, with service times varied during the week.

To lead this effort, the VA relies on the NCC in Hampton, Virginia. Led by McCoy, the center works to empower VA chaplains and sets policies and procedures for the spiritual and pastoral care of veterans. The center also:

- Advises on all levels of chaplain staffing and management throughout the VA;
- Provides comprehensive orientation and training for chaplains;
- Manages award and recognition events, including twice-a-year ceremonies to recognize outstanding chaplains; and
- Helps integrate spiritual care into the "whole-person care" philosophy of the Veterans Health Administration.

"We represent as many religions as we have veterans," McCoy said. "Chaplains are a secret weapon in the VA because they can reach across all aspects of our veteran population."

To read more and learn how the role of the VA chaplain is changing go to
[VA Chaplains](#)

Lyman Smith
Executive Director



In Memoriam

Peter F. Brudzynski

CAPT, CHC, USN, Retired
Roman Catholic Church
Born September, 1926
Deceased December 9, 2017
Venice, Florida



Chaplains Honored at Memorial Dedication Ceremony

By [Staff Sgt. Melissa Parrish](#)
December 14, 2017

Chaplains from the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines past and present, were honored at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific during the Chaplains Memorial Dedication on Dec. 13, 2017, Honolulu.

Naturally, the dedication began with a prayer.

After two years of phone calls and piles of paperwork, Chaplain, Col. Richard "Dick" Stenbakken, United States Army (RET), Co-Chairman of the Chaplain Memorial Committee for the national Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, made this memorial a reality. Stenbakken donned a WWII captain's uniform to the dedication.

Stenbakken said that the placement of this memorial is to honor every Chaplain across the Pacific from all branches of the military and multiple faiths, past and present.

"It is essential that we remember what chaplains have done in the past, what chaplains are doing now and that we look into the future," Stenbakken said. "Chaplaincy is the core and the heart of the values in any military branch. This memorial is also a reminder to the community that the chaplains were there and are there for their family members that have served. I hope this will be an ongoing reminder of commitment for Chaplains. Their service has to be rock solid and grounded just like this memorial. He spent two years making this happen and a reality."

In honor of Chaplains fallen, Rabbi Irving A. Elson, Capt., U.S Navy (RET) and Director of the Jewish Welfare Board Jewish Chaplains Council read the famous eulogy delivered by Rabbi

Roland B Gittelsohn. The eulogy was given for those who died at Iwo Jima and was read into the US Congressional record in 1945.

"Here lie men who loved America because their ancestor's generations ago helped in her founding. And other men who loved her with equal passion because they themselves or their own fathers escaped from oppression to her blessed shores. Here lie officers and men, black and white, rich men and poor, together. Here are Protestants, Catholics, and Jews together. Here no man prefers another because of his faith or despises him because of his color. Here there are no quotas of how many from each group are admitted or allowed. Among these men there is no discrimination. No prejudices. No hatred. Theirs is the highest and purest democracy," read by Elson.

In honor of the mission of the Chaplains, Maj. Gen. Paul Hurley, the Chief of chaplains of the US Army, was a guest speaker and reminded everyone of the importance of remembering the legacy of those that came before them in order to prepare for the mission ahead.

"This memorial is important," Hurley said. "It is important to have a marker to remind us of what we are here for. As Chaplains, we are here to take care of the souls and spirits of Soldiers and their families. This memorial is for all Chaplains. This is for everyone. This is a reminder of our past and how important it is to what we are doing now."

For more on Dick Stenbakken and his unique ministry - BibleFaces.com

Spiritual Care in Changing Times: Initial Glimpses from Theological Education

An article on Huffington Post by Wendy Cage, Professor of Sociology , Brandeis University and Beth Stroud, Research Fellow at ACPE

from the article

As American religion continues to change - today only half of U.S. adults attend religious services once a month or more - we wonder how chaplains and their work are changing, and if their professional education is meeting their needs. Growing numbers of people, especially under the age of 30, are not affiliated with a religious tradition. By 2050, the Pew Research Center predicts, more than a quarter of the U.S. population will not be affiliated with any formal religious group.

The need for chaplains and their services might decrease as a result of these changes or it could increase. Just because people do not attend religious services does not mean they are without existential questions or spiritual needs, especially when disaster strikes. It does mean, however, that in times of spiritual crisis, they are unlikely to have an established relationship with a member of the clergy to whom they can turn for help. Whether there actually are atheists in foxholes is an open question, but whether people are atheists, unaffiliated, or devout adherents of a religious tradition, chaplains are the theologically educated professionals in the foxholes with them - on military operations, in hospital emergency rooms, in prisons, or in the midst of natural or man-made disasters.

Theological schools are responding to these changing religious demographics. While total enrollment has been declining steadily since the early 2000s in Christian graduate theological schools in the U.S. and Canada that are accredited through the Association of Theological Schools (a subset of theological schools for which historical data are readily available), we find chaplaincy programs proliferating.

Of the 319 schools in the United States and Canada that offer graduate theological degrees (including Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, and interreligious institutions), we identified 81 that offer at least one specialized chaplaincy program, or about a quarter of the schools. These programs range from professional master's degrees in chaplaincy or pastoral care, to Master of Divinity or equivalent degrees

with a concentration in chaplaincy, to doctoral degrees, as well as non-credit courses for part-time and volunteer chaplains. Most of these programs are relatively new: the oldest such program, based on what we know to date, was established in 1998.

We recognize continued changes in theological education that include growth in the number and range of chaplaincy programs taking place in theological settings. It is chaplains, an interviewee told us last year, that bring "peripheral vision" - reminding people of the big picture in the context of personal challenges and institutional dilemmas. Perhaps they are bringing that to theological education as well.

National Security Strategy

Earlier this week the current administration issued the National Security Strategy (NSS) 2017. The announcement and the document became a newsworthy event and resulted in headlines as diverse as "Trump unveils national security strategy - 'America is going to win'" (Fox News) to "Trump's National Security Strategy is a Farce" (New York Times).

As chaplains providing ministry in federal institutions it does us well to be informed on such instruments as the NSS and the impact it has on our nation and potentially our ministry.

The NSS is a product of the Goldwater-Nichols act.

SEC. 603. ANNUAL REPORT ON NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY . . . Sec. 104. (a)(1) The President shall transmit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the national security strategy of the United States . . . (2) The national security strategy report for any year shall be transmitted on the date on which the President submits to Congress the budget for the next fiscal year under section 1105 of Title 31, United States Code. (b) Each national security strategy report shall set forth the national security strategy of the United States and shall include a comprehensive description and discussion.

Attached is a paper prepared in 1995 discussing the impact and role the NSS has played since its formulation. Also linked are the NSS 2015 and NSS 2017. Reading source documents can be very helpful in informing us of substance as we engage in our called ministries and advise those we serve as advisers to command. Have a good read.

[The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision](#)

[National Security Strategy 2017](#)

[National Security Strategy 2015](#)

Colonel Samuel Stocks Memorial Scholarship Fund

The MCA is pleased to announce a scholarship will be awarded in the coming year to a deserving candidate for the military chaplaincy in memory of [Samuel Stocks](#). Sam was the husband of MCA President Karen Stocks and a great friend of the MCA. He passed away suddenly on Thanksgiving. (see the November 29th Newsgram).



Colonel Stocks will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery on February 28 2018 at 3:00 PM. Graveside service only.

Donations may be sent to MCA via our website or by mail. Please mark them in memory of Sam Stocks.

magazine and otherwise [connect to resources](#).

If you missed the December 13th edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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