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

Weekly Newsgram - October 25th, 2017

When Is a Prayer not a Prayer?

In Barker v. Conroy, (D DC, Oct. 11, 2017), the D.C. federal district court rejected challenges to rules of the U.S. House of Representatives which do not allow an atheist to deliver a secular invocation as a guest chaplain. U.S. District Judge Rosemary Collyer, a George W. Bush appointee, said Wednesday (Oct 11) the House chaplain's refusal to invite an avowed atheist to deliver the morning prayer, "in the guise of a non-religious public exhortation," also adheres to the Equal Protection Clause.



The dispute with Congress over the issue dates back to February 2015, when Rep. Mark Pocan, a Wisconsin Democrat, invited Dan Barker to deliver the invocation as a Congressional guest.

House Chaplain Patrick Conroy's office told Barker that all guest chaplains must be "ordained by a recognized body in the faith in which he/she practices" and must present a copy of their ordination certificate as proof. He also advised that the invocation must address a "higher power."

Barker, a former minister, was ordained in 1975, but announced he was an atheist 10 years later. However he retained his ordination as a means to officiate at weddings. Barker submitted his ordination certificate to Conroy's office, and said in regard to addressing a higher power, he believes there is no higher power than "we, the people of these United States."

The matter remained unresolved until January 2016, when Conroy informed Barker he was denying his request to give the invocation because he had publicly announced his atheism.

Barker, who is co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, challenged the denial by bringing suit against Conroy. The court rejected Barker's Establishment Clause, Equal Protection Clause and RFRA claims, saying in part:

Despite Mr. Barker's repeated attempts to characterize his claims as not challenging the constitutionality of legislative prayer, the reality is that his request to open the House with a secular invocation, which resulted in the denial of his request to serve as a guest chaplain, was a challenge to the ability of Congress to open with a prayer...

The court also rejected a claim that the policy violates the constitutional prohibition on religious tests for any "office or public trust under the United States," concluding that the position of guest chaplain is not an office or position of public trust.

Lyman Smith
Executive Director

to read more - [Religion Clause: Court House News](#)

MCA Reveals National Award Winners

At the 92nd Annual Meeting of the Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America in Newport News, the recipients of three national awards were revealed on Tuesday evening, the 24th of October.



National Citizenship Award - Dr. Pablo Diaz Vice President for Outreach Ministries

Guideposts. From the citation, Dr. Diaz is truly an "Emissary for Goodness" to our Armed Forces. For the past ten years, in partnership first with Chaplain G.T. Gunhus, then Chaplain Chuck Howell, and now with Chaplain Ken Sampson, Dr. Diaz has travelled six-to eight times a year to Armed Forces Posts, Camps and Stations. These trips are specifically geared to encourage the far flung Religious Support community, build up our Armed Forces, and bring--without charge--publications offering inspiration and hope.

David E. White Leadership Award - given by the Military Officers Association of America - Chaplain Kenneth M. Ruppar - From the Citation - Chaplain Ruppar currently serves as the Secretary of the MCA and is also active in his local MOAA chapter. He regularly participates with the MOAA chapter in reaching out to governmental units and leaders and in expanding the service offered by MOAA in his local area. He also leads change seminars on request in his community and volunteers in a variety of settings as he extend his compassion and support to those in need.

William G. Dando Volunteer Service Award - Chaplain Daniel G. DeBlock - from the citation, Chaplain DeBlock volunteers by assisting other ministers as they seek to adjust to differing assignments and changing congregational needs. His graduate work in pastoral leadership has proven invaluable to many pastors and other leaders as they confront their own needs to alter leadership styles to better care for the congregations they have been called to serve. Chaplain DeBlock supports chaplain organizations by designing web pages and Facebook sites and assists organizations in achieving their goals and accomplishing their missions as they continue to.

**Beirut Marine Corps Barracks
Bombing
October 23, 1983**

Thirty-four years ago this past Monday, two truck bombs struck separate buildings housing U.S. Marines and French forces, members of the Multinational Force in Lebanon, and killed 299 American & French servicemen. 220 U.S. Marines & 18 Sailors were among the casualties. This was the deadliest day in Marine Corps history since Iwo Jima.

The tragedy was commemorated earlier this week as Vice President Mike Pence joined retired Navy Chaplain Arnold Resnicoff and other dignitaries in Washington D.C. to remember the lives of those taken and the impact this tragedy had on families, friends, and many others.

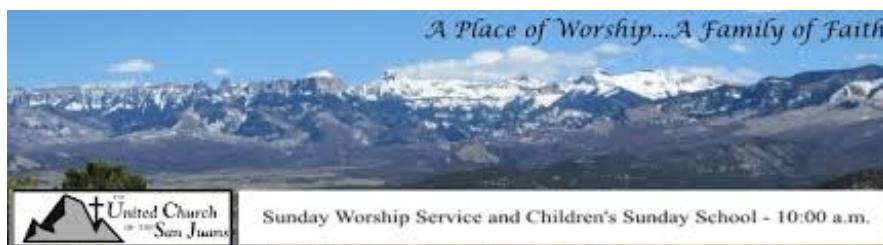
To view the prayer offered by Chaplain Resnicoff at the commemoration go [here](#).

To view the Vice President's remarks go [here](#).



Many may remember the story of chaplains responding to the tragedy as recounted by many in the days and years that followed. To read an account as shared by President Ronald Reagan shortly after the attack, go [here](#). Video [here](#)

The tragedy of Beirut not only took the lives of many innocents and devastated the families who had dear ones ripped from their love, it also caused the nation to re-consider how forces are deployed and protected while seeking to bring peace,. We give thanks for the ministry provided by all the chaplains during that time of tragedy and the continuing impact of that ministry today.



Pastor Wanted

The United Church of the San Juans (UCSJ), in Ridgway, CO.; an outdoor community situated in the beautiful San Juan Mountains in South West Colorado; is a Christian multi-denominational, ecumenical church that is affiliated with the ELCA, PC(USA), UCC & UMC.

We are seeking a full time ordained pastor from one of these 4 denominations. Our church was founded in 2003 and has experienced steady growth. Lay members lead many of our ministry and operational programs including mission & outreach, care ministry, congregational life, education and administration. Our congregation is debt-free with regard to the church building and the land, and the adjoining land for future expansion as well.

Please visit our website www.ucsjridgway.org and [UCSJ on Facebook](#) for our full pastor search document and for additional information about our church and community. We are open to all ordained experienced pastors, including those nearing retirement or who are recently retired Military Chaplains. Send your RMP, PIF, PSII, personal history or resume to: ucsjsearch@gmail.com

Unique and Limited Opportunity

Methodist and Presbyterian Ministers Only

You are invited on a trip of a lifetime to the Holy Land - for \$500.00 single occupancy total cost!

Christians United For Israel has been funded for our annual CUFI Pastors/Leaders Israel Trip - for \$500.00 per person. We will meet Palestinian/Arabs, Muslim/Israeli citizens, Jewish leaders and IDF soldiers as we, "...run where Jesus walked!" and you will only miss one Sunday from your

pulpit.

Attached you will find our rough itinerary that is still being completed with some new exciting additions. Also attached is your registration form and information as to where to send everything needed to reserve your seat!

We will leave on Monday, February 5, 2018 at (from JFK) and land back in the US very early morning, February 13, 2018.

From one of our members who participated in a previous trip -

"What I found most valuable was to see the context, and experience the biases (from both sides) so that I could ask more informed questions and arrive at more realistic expectations."

[Itinerary](#)

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If you missed the October 18th edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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AND THOSE THEY SERVE: military members, veterans, and their families at home and around the world

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