

Southern Baptist Endorsed Chaplains/Counselors in Ministry

Statement Regarding Ministry Expectations

March 15, 2011

In order to facilitate the participation of Southern Baptist endorsed chaplains in the diverse setting of chaplaincy and to foster the respect for various religious expressions the following is provided to senior leaders and Southern Baptist endorsed chaplains.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a cooperative group of local Baptist churches who have joined together for the purpose of "... eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the gospel, any law, usage, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding." (Charter of the Southern Baptist Convention, December 27, 1845).

Through the North American Mission Board (NAMB), an agency of the SBC, the Chaplaincy Team provides endorsement and pastoral care of chaplains and counselors in ministry who serve in a variety of using agencies such as the military, hospitals, prisons, and corporations. The work of endorsement is accomplished in cooperation with local Southern Baptist churches, associations and state conventions. (Endorsement Manual for Chaplains and Counselors in Ministry, adopted May 2001 by the Chaplains Commission, SBC).

General expectations of the Chaplains Commission, SBC, are that endorsed chaplains and counselors in ministry will minister to all persons, perform their chaplaincy ministry after the manner of a cooperating local church affiliated with the SBC, provide baptism and the Lord's Supper under the authority of a cooperating Southern Baptist church, and that they will conduct their ministry in an environment of diversity of religious beliefs and expressions through "cooperation without compromise." (Endorsement Manual for Chaplains and Counselors in Ministry, adopted May 2001 by the Chaplains Commission, SBC).

The Endorsement Manual further states under Personal Ethics:

Integrity—Chaplains and counselors in ministry are expected to live their personal and professional lives with the highest practice of integrity. Integrity is being who and what you claim to be—a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ serving as a chaplain/counselor. Chaplains/counselors in ministry are expected to be honest and genuine in all their words and actions. A chaplain's or counselor's personal character must be consistent with the spiritual leadership they have with people. Chaplains/counselors in ministry must remember that those to whom they minister and those they serve depend on the chaplain's/counselor's integrity to be of the highest quality.

The Baptist Faith and Message was first drafted in 1925 to help those not from Southern Baptist life understand the basic beliefs of Southern Baptists. The current Baptist Faith and Message was adopted in 2000. The Holy Bible is the divinely inspired Scripture which inform and guide persons and ministry of the SBC.

From this background the following expectations are provided to help guide in the utilization of Southern Baptist endorsed chaplains/counselors in ministry.

1. Expect that the chaplain/counselor will be ready to minister to all persons, regardless of their behavior choices, ethnicity, physical condition/presence, or religious preference. In providing this ministry the chaplain/counselor is not condoning/approving of behaviors the Holy Bible defines as sinful for example, drunkenness, fornication, homosexuality, or abortion. The chaplain/counselor's ministry will be to understand the person's spiritual need and either provide or refer the person to appropriate resources. A chaplain/counselor is not obligated to refer a

person to a resource that will cause the chaplain to serve as an enabler in the continuance of the sinful behavior. Counseling conversations must be informed and guided by the teachings of the Holy Bible.

2. When conducting worship services, Bible studies, or counseling type ministries, the chaplain/counselor will be guided by the Holy Bible and conduct such ministries according to Southern Baptist faith and practice.
3. When making “co-pastor” assignments, Southern Baptist chaplains should be assigned to co-pastor congregations with chaplains whose faith and practice is congruent with Southern Baptist faith and practice.
 - a. Assignment consideration can range from practical considerations (for instance, liturgical and free church worship styles do not mix well), to innate theological differences (between, for example, Christian Science and SBC chaplains), and fundamental moral issues (which would exist, for example, between an openly homosexual chaplain and a SBC chaplain). SBC endorsed chaplains should not be required to share the pulpit or engage in other specifically religious ministry functions with chaplains who are openly and unrepentantly engaged in immoral sexual behavior. This includes, but is not limited to, adultery, fornication, homosexual conduct, or use of pornographic materials.
 - b. For assistance with ministry assignments, the chaplain or supervisor may consult his/her supervisory chaplain or senior SBC chaplain in the area. The SBC endorsing office is also available for consultation.
4. General training which the chaplain/counselor may be requested/directed to conduct should include content which is congruent with the clear teachings of the Holy Bible or the Baptist Faith and Message. This includes, for example, marriage enrichment, character education, or life skills training.
 - a. Conducting training which endorses, for example, alcohol abuse, polygamy or other immoral forms of “marriage,” homosexuality, child abuse, or fornication, would be inappropriate for an SBC chaplain.
 - b. Chaplains/counselors should attend any training they are assigned to attend. The Chaplaincy Team, NAMB, does not see this attendance as affirming the content of the training.
5. Chaplains/counselors may choose to officiate at a marriage ceremony. An SBC endorsed chaplain/counselor should decide if the marriage meets the expectations of the Holy Bible. (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000; Manhattan Declaration, November 20, 2009). Do not expect a SBC chaplain/counselor to marry a couple that is cohabitating, in a homosexual partnership, or a habitually divorced person.

Questions or concerns about utilization of Southern Baptist endorsed chaplains/counselors should be referred to the Southern Baptist Endorser’s office at the North American Mission Board, 770-410-6367, or email: chaplain@namb.net.

Resources:

Endorsement Manual, http://www.namb.net/evangelism/cev/endorse_manual.asp/

The Southern Baptist Convention, www.sbc.org

Chaplaincy Evangelism Team, North American Mission Board, www.namb.net/chaplain

The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000, <http://sbc.org/bfm/default.asp>

The Manhattan Declaration, www.manhattandeclaration.org

The Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, www.cbmw.org