



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2 NAVY ANNEX
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775

IN REPLY REFER TO
CMC-REL
9 Sep 96

WHITE LETTER NO. 10-96

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officer
All Officers in Charge

Subj: RELIGIOUS PROGRAM MINISTRY OBJECTIVES

1. Command Religious Program. Our Chaplains and Religious Program specialists consistently make a positive impact on the quality of life throughout the Corps. Our Marine families depend upon Command Religious Programs to provide for their religious faith expression and to strengthen, encourage and model spiritual values in the military environment. Commanders can expect Chaplains to take the initiative in fostering and developing a moral climate which strengthens organizational readiness and personal spiritual growth.

2. Areas of Focus. Religious ministry should have a profound impact on our people, both morally and spiritually. All Marines, Sailors and families should have available to them ministry that is pertinent, hopeful and marked by quality. I expect all Command Religious Programs to ensure that the ministry that is provided is characterized by these minimum essential elements:

a. Emphasize the importance of moral and religious values to the total health of your commands. Chaplains should be utilized regularly in the all-hands training of Marines, particularly where they have special expertise such as: marriage preparation, communication skills, and ethical formation. Of particular significance should be each command's focus on Suicide Awareness, Core values and personal Excellence and the potential for abuse.

b. Reach out to Marines, Sailors and their families of all faiths and backgrounds. This includes encouraging maximum participation in religious programs, activities, services and ministries. Furthermore, commanders are responsible for providing logistical support ashore and afloat to effect the free exercise of religion.

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c. Foster a sense of "Community" that embraces not only families, but our single Marines and Sailors as well, and develop a network of support that exists to serve our people whether deployed or in garrison. This incorporates pastoral visitation, pastoral counseling, deployment ministry and constant "nurturing" of our people to give them a sense of being cared for.

d. Train and professionally develop our Chaplains and Religious Program Specialists. Ministry will only be as effective as the personnel who minister. Field skills must be reviewed and upgraded annually. Professional development training and coursework should be encouraged. Mentoring our subordinate personnel must be active and easily identified. Training must be ongoing, relevant, and applicable to the ministry rendered.

3. We as leaders must be constantly vigilant to address the needs of our Marines, Sailors and their families. Their well-being is paramount to the success of our mission. No matter where they serve, credible religious ministry must be available and active to provide strength and hope in what is increasingly becoming perceived as a weak and hopeless world. I encourage you to make your religious programs comprehensive, focused and available to all.



C. S. K.