



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20380-0001

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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WHITE LETTER NO. 5-94

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

Subj: RELIGIOUS PROGRAM MINISTRY OBJECTIVES

1. Command Religious Program. Our Navy chaplains serving with Marines consistently make a positive impact upon the quality of life in the Fleet Marine Force, and at our bases, air stations, training, and logistic centers. Marines and sailors have learned to depend upon the Command Religious Program to provide for their religious faith expression and to strengthen, encourage and enhance spiritual values in the military environment. Commanders can expect chaplains to take the lead in creating an environment which strengthens organizational moral readiness and personal spiritual growth.

2. Areas of Focus. Religious ministry can and should have profound impact to strengthen Marines and their families morally and spiritually. It is essential that, in addition to the worshipping community, all members of commands should be the objects of outreach to facilitate and encourage their development and support in the following areas:

a. A perspective on life that is essentially hopeful. Many commentators on the youth of our day indicate that while young men and women desire to improve themselves, to succeed in life, they often labor under a sense of hopelessness. Moral discipline, the formation of healthy habits and a view of themselves as inherently valuable are all fruits of a religious perspective on life.

b. Understanding themselves as moral leaders; persons who embody a consistent morality, demand such from their peers and from the structures and framework in which they function as Marines. Honor, Courage, and Commitment, our core values, are normative and operative only as each of us assumes the responsibility to make it so.

c. An awareness that every individual faces personal crisis. Marines do not have to struggle alone when wrestling with the challenges of life. Chaplains and the religious community are able to provide counsel and support to mitigate difficult circumstances. Further, timely intervention can often prevent problems from assuming the proportions of a crisis.

d. A consciousness that they are part of a community that

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cares. Chapel communities, or the informal network persons of faith that exist in an operational environment, are eager to extend a welcome and provide a tangible source of fellowship and strength to those willing to participate.

3. Command Religious Elements. While there is not a standardized religious program for Marine units, the Commandant of the Marine Corps establishes guidelines and publishes orders which shape the basic structure for the chaplains' religious ministry. Therefore, I want to emphasize in the strongest way possible those command religious elements which directly impact upon, and address the critical human needs required to accomplish the mission of the Marine Corps during the 1990's. These are:

a. The importance of moral and religious values to the total health of your commands. Chaplains should be utilized routinely in the all hands training of Marines, especially in areas where they have special expertise, such as: Marriage preparation, communication skills, suicide prevention, core values and ethical formation, parenting skills and personal excellence.

b. Ensuring the opportunity for divine services and other appropriate religious practices. It is the responsibility of commanders to provide logistical support ashore and afloat to effect the free exercise of religion.

c. Encouraging maximum participation in religious program activities, services and ministries.

d. Facilitating the formation and health of communities based on shared faith and values as a means to enhance mutual support and quality of life.

e. Reviewing, inspecting and upgrading religious program facilities to ensure that they are adequate to meet the worship and educational needs of the command and incorporate the functional flexibility to accommodate all religious faith groups.

4. In addition to the above, pastoral visitation (brig, work spaces, hospital, etc.), pastoral counseling (including group sessions), deployment ministry, and other programs of religious chaplaincy should be continually emphasized.

5. We as Marine leaders must address all aspects of the well-being of our Marines, sailors, their families and the civilians who directly support them. I encourage you to make your religious programs comprehensive, directed and available to all.

  
C. E. MUNDY, JR.