

THE PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL FOR CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL

4125 NEBRASKA AVENUE, NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016 • TEL. (202) 244-4177

KOREAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ABROAD

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)



CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

EDWARD T. BROGAN - DIRECTOR

DONALD R. WILSON - ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

DATE: 24 September 2013

TO: Chaplains Endorsed by the PCCMP

SUBJ: Guidance on Chaplain Care for Same-Sex couples

Chaplains,

The Department of Defense recently issued a long list of benefits for same-sex married couples after parts of the Defense of Marriage Act were invalidated by the US Supreme Court. Some of those "benefits" may be given by chaplains. The ones immediately in view are the performance of weddings, leadership in worship, counseling, and inclusion in couples' retreats.

Our Presbyterian Churches (PCUSA, CPC, CPCA, and KPCA) have similar positions saying that marriage is exclusively between a man and a woman and that our clergy or teaching elders are not currently permitted to perform any same-sex wedding. Also, our chaplains and clergy are never required to perform any wedding; they must conclude that the marriage is appropriate, carefully considered, and legal before agreeing to perform a wedding. Before performing a wedding, appropriate pre-marital counseling is also required.

The treatment of same-sex couples in worship and religious education is also a consideration. Our denominations have welcomed all to participation in worship. Our denominations struggle with appropriate roles for same-sex couples in congregational leadership; some presbyteries clearly forbid such leadership while others allow it. The reasonable conclusion for our chaplains is that you look to their presbytery, the Reformed tradition, the Bible and the Creeds. Then be guided by your conscience. We will stand in your support when they take any consistent position. You will never be required to perform ministry functions beyond your conscience; provide other resources to meet the need instead.

We trust that you would treat any counselee with respect and compassion. However if a same-sex couple comes to you looking for support of their relationship, you may choose to refer them to other chaplains or resources if your theology and conscience cannot affirm their relationship. In counseling, we often make referrals to someone with the right competence to serve the counselee. That may be the same for leading Couples Retreats. If you believe you are outside of your competence to serve same sex couples, then you should refer and have someone else perform the retreat.

Marriage retreats like Strong Bonds (Army), Marriage Care (Air Force), and CREDO (Navy) are wonderful for building marriages and are rooted in Christian tradition. Our chaplains have embraced these positive ministries to support the marriage between a man and a woman. However, while these are largely religious programs, they are also the Commander's programs. The command wishes to serve all military families well and fairly. PCUSA chaplains may perform such retreats with same-sex married couples if their theology and consciences permit. We, your endorsing agency, will back you where your conscience leads you and your presbytery speaks to you. If you are theologically comfortable with leading a retreat including same sex couples, we will support you.

A MINISTRY TO THOSE WHO SERVE OUR NATION

WEBPAGE - [www.pccmp.org](http://www.pccmp.org)

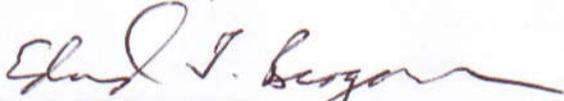
FAX - (202) 237-0983

EMAIL - [Chaplains@pccmp.org](mailto:Chaplains@pccmp.org)

However if you personally say that such retreat leadership is beyond your theology and conscience, then we will back you in referring that retreat to another chaplain.

For many of you this is not your greatest issue. For those still deployed, our prayers are with you daily. For those worried about support from their presbytery, know that support across our denominations remains very strong for those in military service and chaplaincy! We will help with your presbytery when an issue calls for it. The PCCMP is glad to be your endorser. We do thank God for your service in long and often difficult weeks. Know that we support you through every change in the military, your denomination, and your life.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward T. Brogan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Edward T. Brogan, Director  
Presbyterian Council for Chaplains