

EPC Chaplains Work and Care Committee Policy Statement: Chaplain Ministry to Same-Sex Couples and LGBTQ Individuals

EPC chaplains are called to work in various environments with people of dramatically diverse backgrounds, conditions, lifestyles, and beliefs. The nature of chaplaincy and its ministry means that chaplains may work directly with persons who might not normally be encountered in civilian congregation-based pastoral ministry. In every such case, the chaplain, as stated in the EPC *Book of Government* 9-5E, "... shall always have as his [her] primary duty the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ."

EPC chaplains minister, in both military and civilian settings, as part of God's Good News, God's moral law. This law, found explicitly in Scripture, and, according to Romans 1, seen and known by all people through the witness of Creation, applies both to believers and non-believers, as explained in our *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

EPC chaplains should be mindful of the universal application of God's law, both to believers and non-believers. In a day when even some churches proclaim that portions of the moral law do not apply, EPC chaplains should maintain a rigorous Scriptural basis, and faithful hermeneutic, as the measure of their ministry.

EPC chaplains may also refer to the EPC Position Paper on [Human Sexuality](#) by clicking on this link: [Human Sexuality Position Paper](#), for a full treatment of ministry guidance regarding the EPC's position on Human Sexuality. It recommends ministry emphases of 1) education, 2) friendship, 3) healing resources, and 4) prayerful intercession.

In providing their ministry, EPC chaplains shall always show great respect for the Image of God imprinted on every person. This shall include respect for human rights, asserted to the maximum extent morally and legally possible. However, should the claim of human and/or civil rights be applied in such ways to challenge, undermine, or censor the "first freedom" of religious rights—either of the chaplain, or those in the chaplain's care—then the chaplain must assert, above all, faithfulness to the fullness of God's Gospel. This faithfulness must be expressed wisely (Matthew 10:16), understanding the times (2 Peter 3:3), and if possible, without giving offense (Hebrews 12:14).

Under the guiding authority of their endorsing body, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and with the support of the EPC Chaplain Endorser and the EPC Chaplains Work and Care Committee:

1. No EPC chaplain will provide pre-marital/marital counseling, or officiate, participate in, or provide official witness to any event or ceremony which may reasonably be construed to condone, ratify, or promote marriages or equivalents to marriage between persons of the same sex.
2. No EPC chaplains will provide direct relationship counseling, nor conduct or facilitate couples retreats or similar types of events or gatherings, where same-sex couples would be participants. However, there may be some degree of concession to this policy in relationship to participating in events/gatherings if the chaplain can clearly express that

they do not condone such relationships nor give the impression of the same. Such exceptions must be approved by the Chaplain Endorser.

3. The Chaplains Work and Care Committee and Chaplain Endorser, under the authority of EPC policy and principles, affirm the following:
 - a. EPC chaplains receive authority from, and are guided by, the Scriptures as contained in the Holy Bible. Those Scriptures, under EPC understanding, affirm that marriage is designed by God to be between one man and one woman.
 - b. The EPC acknowledges that federal and state governments, along with various legal court actions, have redefined marriage to include same-sex couples. Our responsibility, however, is to hold to biblical standards of marriage, which again affirms that marriage is designed by God to be between one man and one woman.
 - c. The EPC affirms that evangelical Christians shall treat all people, including LGBTQ Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Coast Guardsmen and Marines, with dignity and respect, including those in relationships outside biblical norms, and have often come to their chaplains seeking ministerial support and guidance. EPC Chaplains have always treated each person as one whom Christ loves and for whom He died. EPC Chaplains will continue to provide this ministry with truth and grace but will never compromise their personal convictions nor the guiding principles and policy of their denomination.
 - d. Chaplain and military leadership within military institutions should understand that EPC chaplains will always provide cooperation without compromise and will be swift to affirm what they can do, not just their constraints. However, over and abiding is that they will always adhere to their own ordination vows, the requirements placed upon them by their denomination, and will never involve themselves in activities or ministry that goes against those requirements.

In summary, EPC chaplains shall:

1. Profess, teach, and live by Scriptural standards of moral law, depending on the work of the Holy Spirit to enact the Gospel's transformative power.
2. In accordance with best practices of chaplain ministry and with a maximum of respect and love for all persons regardless of their beliefs or conditions: provide religious ministry and support for those of our own faith; facilitate for all religious beliefs; care for all people in their organization including family members; and advise commanders and institutional leaders to ensure the free exercise of religion and religious liberty.
3. With wisdom and discretion, practice ministry of word and deed, in public and private, that brings the full counsel of God to bear, even in the face of expectations of cultural conformity.
4. Not legitimize contrary teaching.

In summary, EPC chaplains therefore shall not:

1. Co-lead worship in their official position, in partnership with any person endorsed by a faith group that officially advocates violation of God's moral law, as well as the stated positions of the EPC. (Public/civic ceremonies, and the normal staff work of religious ministry programs, present a different case, and may not be subject to this restriction).
2. Provide teaching, training, or counsel that advocates approval of, or reasonably appears to advocate approval of, or condones violations of God's moral law, or the stated positions of the EPC.

It is impossible to name every situation that may arise in the practice of a chaplain's ministry. In cases of question, conflict, or issues/situations an EPC chaplain may find to be contrary to EPC standards, chaplains should consult the EPC Endorser or, if unavailable, a CWCC member as soon as possible.

In closing, we reiterate that EPC chaplains shall be consistent in their witness and counsel. EPC chaplains will always be in keeping with EPC chaplain and ordination standards or will not compromise in any way that appears to condone behavior dipolar to those standards. EPC chaplains will continually seek to follow Christ's example, who always ministered "Truth in Love."