

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Twenty Years Since 2004 DODI 1304.28

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Chaplain Meeker is a graduate of Bucknell University and holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Classics. She received her Masters of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School. She received Clinical Pastoral Education at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. She participated in two seasons at the Leon Levy Archaeological Expedition in Ashkelon, Israel. She is currently a doctoral student with Wesley Theological School.

Chaplain Meeker enlisted in the Army in 1986 and graduated basic as the Solider of the Cycle at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Four years later received a commission after graduating college on a ROTC scholarship.

Her previous assignments include Chaplain for The 45th Surgeon General of the U.S. Army and Command Chaplain for U.S. Army Medical Command, Washington, DC; Command Chaplain, Eighth Army, Republic of Korea; the Senior Chaplain Clinician of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and Command Chaplain for Regional Health Command Europe; 1st Armored Division Chaplain, Fort Bliss, Texas; Chaplain for CENTCOM Forward Jordan; Executive Officer, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Pentagon; Accessions Officer, Office of the Chief of Chaplains; Deputy Command Chaplain, Combined Joint Task Force 101, Afghanistan; Deputy Division Chaplain, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell; Deputy Chaplain U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis; Chief of Chaplain Recruiting and Accessions, Office of the Chief of Chaplains; Group Chaplain, 43d Area Support Group, Fort Carson and Kuwait; Deputy Group Chaplain, 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne), US Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Battalion Chaplain, 2-2 Aviation Battalion (Air Assault), 2d Infantry Division, Republic of Korea; and Battalion Chaplain, 307 Forward Support Battalion (Airborne), 82d Airborne Division, Fort Liberty, North Carolina.

Chaplain Meeker's military schools include Army War College Fellowship at the Institute of World Politics in Washington, DC; Command General and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Chaplain Captain Career Course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Pathfinder School and Officer Honor Graduate, Basic Airborne School at Fort Moore, Georgia; Advanced Airborne School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Combat Medical Ministry Course at AMEDD, and the Chaplains Officer Basic Course at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

Chaplain Meeker's awards and badges include the Legion of Merit (Three Oak Leaf Clusters), Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (Four Oak Leaf Clusters), Joint Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal (One Oak Leaf Cluster), Joint Service Achievement Medal (One Oak Leaf Cluster), Army Achievement Medal (Three Oak Leaf Clusters), Joint Unit Meritorious Award (Two Oak Leaf Clusters), Afghan Campaign Medal, National Defense Expeditionary Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon, Korean Defense Service Medal, Army Reserves Overseas Ribbon, NATO Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Master Parachutist Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Korean and German Parachutist Badges, German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge (Bronze), and Army Staff Badge. She is a Noble Patron of Armor and the Order of St. Martin of Tours. Received Distinguished Service recognition from the Four Chaplains Foundation in 2024. Inducted into the Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame in 2020. 2020 Rev. Dr. Gomes Honoree, Harvard Divinity School Alumna Award. Chaplain Meeker received the Distinguished Service Award from the Military Chaplains Association in 2004. Chaplain Meeker was recognized by Northwest High School as a Distinguished Graduate in 2002.

Chaplain Meeker enjoys serving Soldiers and their Families through worship, preaching, discipleship, outreach, and also enjoys competing in an occasional endurance event (5 Ironmans – Florida, Arizona, Louisville, New Zealand, Lake Placid).

Project lead to commemorate the exceptional military service and deep faith of Harriet Tubman, a force for freedom for the United States, the U.S. Army, and the world: DVIDS - Video - Harriet Tubman Commemoration Ceremony ([dvidshub.net](https://www.dvidshub.net)) and Army honors female combat pioneer, renowned abolitionist | Article | The United States Army. Co-authored with CH (LTC) Eric Dean an article pertaining to the free exercise of religion during the CV-19 global pandemic: Three in Tandem for Religious Support in the U.S. Army: Community, Culture, & Constitution – Chaplaincy Innovation Lab

"Staying the Course" a devotional booklet for combat veterans and their loved ones by Guideposts, November 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKSRwggoxoQ>

"War of Ideas, Battle for the Soul," published in the Washington Times July 2016: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jul/6/islamic-terror-recruiting-comes-down-to-a-war-of-b/>

Presented, "War of Ideas, Battle for the Soul," at the Brookings Institute: <https://www.brookings.edu/events/beyond-2016-security-challenges-and-opportunities-for-the-next-administration/>

"Our Sacred Honor," Papers (ncmaf.net). DC Panel discussed the issues in the paper: "Improving Civ-Mil Relations for a Stronger Military Chaplaincy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7ae6HObWiU>

Presented in Washington, DC on Panel Discussion "Women in Combat," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-2y_AC7siw

"Singleness and the Christian Warrior," included in the topical inserts of the American Bible Society's special edition, Warrior's Bible.

"Welcome Home: A Veteran's Day Sermon starter," https://www.resourceumc.org/-/media/umc-media/2021/11/05/00/11/vetsday_rescs_packet-rev-10-2021.ashx?la=en&hash=53E71971B5FA8DB8FA499BA0C97A846894C10068

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The Department of Defense (DoD), in 2004, published a revision of DoD Instruction (DODI) 1304.28, “The Appointment and Service of Chaplains.” There were two major revisions to the DODI, the qualifying graduation degree was lowered from a ninety-hour master’s degree to a seventy-two-hour degree and the need for the school to be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) was removed. Appointment criteria for military chaplains, twice in the past century, impacted quality of both chaplains, and also more broadly, theological education in the United States. In the 1900s, mass mobilization created a need for more military chaplains. Religious bodies along with the War Department established appointment criteria for chaplains. These criteria, in turn, helped shape the Master of Divinity degree and a theological education accreditation association. Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 1304.28, changed, in 2004, qualifying graduate education appointment standards without the collaboration of endorsers and theological schools. Changes to appointment standards significantly impacted quality chaplain accessions as well as theological education and formation. I contend that the Armed Forces receive the best possible religious ministry professionals when appointment criteria are developed in concert with endorsers and theological educators.

Standards Develop: Early Twentieth Century – 1990s

During the Civil War there were complaints to Congress about the lack of quality among chaplains.¹ President Lincoln’s assistant private secretary, William O. Stoddard recalled Lincoln saying “I do believe that our army chaplains, take them as a class, are the worst men we have in the service.”² After the Civil War there was a push to ensure clergy had the proper

“His Mysterious Ways,” Guideposts, December 1996

Authored, Youth Handbook, United Methodist Vacation Bible School materials, Cokesbury, 1995

Chaplain Meeker serves on the Board of MISN (Moral Injury to Servicewomen Network, Inc), a faith and research based community of praxis for military women recovering from moral injury. Chaplain Meeker serves as an “at large” Board member of Planting Roots, a ministry for and by Christian military women.

Chaplain Meeker is included in “Proudly She Served,” a series of portraits and narratives of military women

<https://www.proudlysheserved.com>. The book signing was June 13, 2023 in New York City:

https://www.heroesmediagroup.com/podcast/nurtured-and-affirmed-being-part-of-a-legacy-in-service-to-the-country/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=nurtured-and-affirmed-being-part-of-a-legacy-in-service-to-the-country;

“Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis, ut digne et competenter annuntiem Evangelium suum.”

1 Herman A. Norton, *Struggling for Recognition: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1791-1865, II* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977) 43-61, 83, 154, 157.

2 Michael Burlingame, editor, *William O. Stoddard, Inside the White House in War Times: Memoirs and Reports of Lincoln’s Secretary*, New York Citizen, Sketch 8 (2013), 178.

ecclesiastical credentials and moral character to serve as a chaplain. Civil War chaplain, Reverend Orville Nave, a biblical scholar and renowned author, recognized several areas in which chaplains could professionalize. Nave advocated for a higher standard of appointment. He also recommended the creation of an officer's branch for consolidated administration.³

The Secretaries of the Army and Navy, in 1915, asked the Federal Council of Churches for clergy to serve as chaplains.⁴ Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians had already formed commissions within their ecclesiastical organizations to select clergy for service in the military. The Federal Council of Churches established a War-Time Commission which included the National Catholic War Council and the Jewish Welfare Board:

As a temporary and emergency body, brought into existence to help in meeting the needs of a national crisis, it is free to deal with each situation which may arise in such ways as best to fulfill the purposes of its appointment...those who serve on its committees remain directly responsible to the bodies to which they belong, and it is distinctly understood that this primary responsibility is in no way compromised by their membership on the commission...[it aims] to render the largest service to the nation and to the world in this great and critical time.⁵

This War Time Commission marks one of the first meetings of its kind in the United States, bringing together these religious bodies for the purpose of supplying quality clergy to the Armed Services.

The Defense Act of 1920 authorized the Office of the Chief of Chaplains.⁶ The duties included "investigation into the qualifications of candidates for appointment as chaplain, and general coordination and supervision of the work of chaplains."⁷ Another authorization in 1918 established a school.⁸

By World War II, religious leaders and theological schools were considering standardizing by way of accreditation:

The Second World War, which required the standardization of everything from airplane parts to qualifications for the officer corps, would elevate all accredited institutions. This was

3 Orville Nave, "The Status of Army Chaplains" in Theophilus G. Steward, ed., *Active Service: or, Religious Work Among U.S. Soldiers* (New York: U.S. Army Aid Association, circa 1897), 42.

4 Earl F. Stover, *Up from Handymen, The United States Army Chaplaincy 1865-1920*, III. (Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Washington D.C., 1977), 206-210.

5 "Report of the General War-Time Commission," Presented to the Executive Committee of The Federal Council of Churches in America, Cincinnati (1917) p. 225.

6 National Defense Act 1920 (41 Stat. 759) June 4, 1920.

7 National Defense Act 1920 (41 Stat. 759) June 4, 1920, Ch 227, Sec 15.

8 Special Regulation No. 496 approved a plan for a school to train newly appointed chaplains in May 1918.

particularly true of the chaplains, where the military's task of finding officers qualified to serve as both ministers and leaders was complicated by the seemingly endless array of qualifications for ordination. Graduation from an accredited institution was an easy way to cut through the confusion and enable quick appointments.⁹

Following World War II, ATS was firmly in place, accrediting theological schools who maintained a prescribed set of academic standards.

The military's need for quality clergy during World War I acted as a catalyst for ecumenism and what would eventually become an accrediting association for theological study and training. 'The organization that became The American Association of Theological Schools (AATS), later The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), was born in the shadow of this crisis.'¹⁰

The Chaplain Corps of U.S. Armed Forces benefited from several decades of clergy with a standardized Master of Divinity serving soldiers and their families.¹¹ While law and medicine have state and federal standards to practice in their professional fields, there is no equivalent standard for clergy. For religious ministry professionals to serve as chaplains, DODI 1304.28 serves as the plumb line.

Standards Revised, 2000-2004

In 2000, the Army Chaplain Corps considered ways to diversify the religious representation of chaplains to support an increase of religions represented in the Army. In 2001, the Army Chaplain Corps also needed to increase the number of chaplains to support the war effort. Chaplain historian John W. Brinsfield writes, "Force structure gains allowed the Army to reach a high of 1,323 authorized positions for active duty chaplains, the most since the drawdown began in 1991 after Operation Desert Storm."¹² At the same time, the Armed Forces Chaplain Board recommended lowering the credit

⁹ Glenn T. Miller, "A Community of Conversation: A Retrospective of The Association of Theological Schools and Ninety Years of North American Theological Education" (Pittsburgh: ATS, 2008), 13.

¹⁰ Miller, "A Community of Conversation," 8.

¹¹ The Council for Higher Education for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) lists three other theological accreditation associations: Association of Biblical Higher Education. ABHE traces its lineage to 1862 and Moody Bible Institute (www.abhe.org). Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) was founded in 1979 and has 40 member schools which offer Master's degree programs (www.tracs.org). There is also the Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools (AATRS). Graduate theological schools encompass seminaries, schools of theology, bible schools, mission schools, and divinity schools. Each institution is different in its focus and mission. Some schools have a formalized, relatively lengthy and costly Master of Divinity degree program. Others train and equip as many students for ministry as quickly as possible at less expense awarding Master of Art degrees.

¹² John Brinsfield, *Courageous in Spirit, Compassionate in Service: The Gunbus Years* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 2003), 22.

hour requirement from ninety graduate credit hours to seventy-two hours to provide an educational path for religious groups, like Islam, which did not have formalized degree programs for their religious leaders in the U.S.¹³

In 2002, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) removed the requirement that chaplains earn their degree from an ATS accredited graduate school.¹⁴ The new degree requirement only stipulated that chaplains earn their degrees from a school accredited by regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, such as Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), which has no interest *per se* or specialized requirements for the training of clergy. The Department of Education does not require Federal regional accreditation and there is no specification for “in-residence” schooling so all graduate courses could be completed via distance education. The OSD also changed the degree requirement for chaplains from a three-year resident master’s degree to a seventy-two-hour master’s degree. Before 2002, the three-year theological master’s degree was a Master of Divinity, which included theology, doctrine, ecclesiastical history, scripture study, ministerial skills, internships/field practicums, ethics, biblical languages, and polity. The seventy-two-hour degree included recommendations for some courses of study to be included. Many of the unique requirements for a Master of Divinity which ATS maintained for nearly sixty years were lost when DoD shifted from ATS accreditation to regional federal accreditation.¹⁵

The following excerpts from the Code of Federal Regulations and the Department of Defense show the policy shifts. The Federal Register from December 5, 1988 lists education requirements as:

Have completed 3 resident years of graduate professional study in theology or related subjects (normally validated by the possession of a Master of Divinity degree, an equivalent degree, or 90 semester hours) that lead to ecclesiastical certification as a member of the clergy fully qualified to perform the ministering functions of a chaplain.¹⁶

Whereas the 1993 Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 1304.19 allowed either a government accreditation or accreditation by ATS:

¹³ Interview with Chaplain (Colonel, Ret) Terry Bradfield.

¹⁴ Assistant Secretary of Defense, “Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Department. Subject: Educational Requirements for Military Chaplain Applicants,” April 2, 2002 (Washington DC: Department of Defense).

¹⁵ To practice law and medicine in the US it must still be in-residence education.

¹⁶ “Accession of Chaplains for the Military Services: Educational Requirements,” Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary, 32 CFR Part 65 [DODD 1304.19] Found in 53 FR 48898, December 5, 1988, 442, <https://ia600500.us.archive.org/4/items/federalregister53ounit/federalregister53ounit.pdf>

Have completed 3 resident years of graduate professional study in theology or related subjects at an accredited graduate school (normally validated by the possession of a Master of Divinity degree or an equivalent degree) that leads to ecclesiastical certification as a member of the clergy fully qualified to perform the functions of a chaplain. That study shall be completed at an accredited graduate school listed in reference (f) “Accredited Institutions of Post Secondary Education,” current edition or (g) Directory, Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Bulletin, Part, current edition.¹⁷

The 2004 DODI 1304.28 removes the requirement for ATS accreditation and lowers credit hour requirements:

The RMP [Religious Ministry Professional] is educationally qualified for appointment as a chaplain. . . . A qualifying graduate degree program shall require no fewer than seventy-two semester hours (108 quarter hours) of graduate-level work. Related studies may include graduate courses in pastoral counseling, social work, religious administration, and similar disciplines when one-half of the earned credits include topics in general religion, world religions, the practice of religion, theology, religious philosophy, religious ethics, and/or foundational writings from the applicant’s religious tradition.¹⁸

Some religious bodies required a seventy-two-hour Master of Arts degree, which is typically a two-year degree program.¹⁹ This requirement also allowed applicants to submit a masters of less than seventy-two hours by adding other graduate credits to reach seventy-two hours. Further changes in the DODI 1304.28 published in 2014 reflected slight revisions to the language:

an educationally qualified applicant shall also possess a post-baccalaureate graduate degree in the field of theological or related studies from a qualifying educational institution. . . . Related studies may include graduate courses in [same as listed above from 2004].²⁰

17 “Appointment of Chaplains for the Military Service: Procedures Ecclesiastical Certification of Clergy,” Department of Defense Directive 1304.19 (Washington, D.C., September 18, 1993) Section E.1.a (3) (b).

18 “Guidance for the Appointment of Chaplains for the Military Departments” DODI 1304.28 (11 June 2004) Section 6.1.5.

19 Robert Nelson, Jr., “Chaplains,” Encyclopedia of Mormonism (BYU: Harold B. Lee Library Online, 1992) <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/EoM/id/4391/show/5588>. Mormon chaplains’ prerequisites “include the Melchizedek Priesthood, an honorable mission, temple marriage, and a masters degree in counseling.” Christian Science partners with Boston University School of Theology for a seventy-two hour master degree for military chaplaincy <http://www.albertbakerfund.org/what-we-fund/military-chaplain-program/>.

20 DODI 1304.28 revised March 20, 2014.

The 2004 language was broad enough to include social work. Ten years later, the 2014 DODI returned to the language “in the field of theological or related studies.” The new standards meant more RMPs could apply for the Chaplain Corps and meet war-time requirements. The new standards, however, did not immediately translate into increased religious diversity. They did contribute to a significant change in theological education.

Degrees Designed Around the DODI

A sizable theological school seized the initiative by designing a new Master of Divinity (MDiv) around the standards set by the 2004 DODI 1304.28. With no requirement for residency, the MDiv could be completed entirely online. With no three-year requirement, the seventy-two hour degree could be completed in two years or less. Academic practices not permitted under ATS standards could now be liberally applied. Schools began awarding graduate credits for life experience, and doctor of ministry credits for masters degrees, and accepted undergraduate credits as graduate credits. Schools began awarding graduate credits for military schools and experiences. One applicant for the Army Chaplain Corps presented a seventy-two hour masters of divinity which was completed in sixteen months, which included the three months the applicant was attending the Chaplain Basic Officer and Leader Course (CHBOLC) at what was then called the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School (USACHCS) at Fort Jackson, South Carolina now the United States Army Institute for Religious Leadership (USA-IRL). The school awarded the student nine credit hours for CHBOLC. The applicant presented a degree, minus the military school, that was sixty-three credit hours completed in a year. The educational experience of this applicant was by no means unique at the time and underscores the significant shift that had taken place in the wake of the 2002 OSD memorandum and 2004 DODI.

The large theological school soon had several hundred students enrolled. Other schools also designed similar graduate degrees and likewise attracted students: Regent, Columbia International, Ashland Theological School, Denver Seminary, Multnomah, Brigham Young University, Dallas Baptist, Grace College and Seminary, and Baptist Bible Seminary of Summit University. Religious groups such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and Buddhist Churches of America (BCA)—which before had no formalized graduate education programs in the U.S.—were now building degree programs based on the 2004 DODI 1304.28. For example, Hartford Seminary created a seventy-two hour program for students who were preparing for military chaplaincy.

The possibility of a shorter, online qualifying graduate degree for prospective military chaplains created opportunities for both students and schools. Other factors were in play for many mainline seminaries at the time, but the change created in the 2004 DODI 1304.28 was a significant factor in sweeping changes in theological education across the United States. Some students of

mainline denominations switched endorsers who adopted the new standard because they could go through the endorsement and accessions processes more quickly and cheaply. They did not need to leave jobs or move to a seminary campus. This accelerated declining enrollment and rising costs to several mainline seminaries that over time have adapted to online and hybrid education. In 2010, Dr. Daniel Aleshire, the ATS Executive Director at the time, said, “I think that we are on the cusp of a lot change. . . . In 20 years, the whole theological training landscape could be quite different.”²¹

Decline in Readiness 2008–2010

During Operation Enduring Freedom (2008–2010), senior commanders and chaplains began receiving reports of poor-quality chaplain support from the field of operations. There were reports of chaplains who were deployed who had never conducted a wedding ceremony or a funeral. Not that there are wedding ceremonies being officiated in combat; there is, however, plenty of marriage counseling which would assume the chaplain has conducted pre-marital and marital counseling under the close supervision and mentorship of their faith group prior to entering military service. There were reports of chaplains who were not sure how to conduct a memorial ceremony because they had never conducted a funeral before entering the military.²² Just as one would assume a fully qualified physician has completed his or her residency under the close supervision of qualified medical professionals, the same would be expected of a chaplain to conduct religious rites, rituals, and ceremonies.²³

Reversing the Decline 2010–Present

The Army Chaplain Corps identified the need for further training and development in areas of basic pastoral skills. CHBOLC curriculum was supplemented in counseling and preaching to help incoming religious ministry professionals. Chaplain Corps Professional Reinforcement Training (CPRT) was developed by the Training Directorate (at the then USACHCS) as a follow on to the Basic Course to augment ministerial skills, especially around counseling. Supervisory chaplains also stepped in to provide additional mentorship and training to overcome these gaps. In the short term, this improved the level of religious support to the troops and their families. However, in the long term, this approach would prove problematic

21 Elizabeth Dias, “Training Pastors, Rabbis, and Imams Together,” *Time* (August 22, 2010), <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2013841,00.html>.

22 USACHCS (now USA-IRL) teaches CHBOLC students on how to conduct a memorial ceremony. Having conducted funerals, prepares a chaplain to handle the emotional impact of having to lead a unit memorial ceremony for Soldiers Killed in Action or who died by other means.

23 Between 2008 and 2009, the Army appointed 309 chaplains for active duty in the Army. Nearly half (46%) were granted a waiver for professional work experience. Most applicants requesting a waiver were not experienced pastors but rather those who were using what would be considered a “practicum” or internship required for an ATS Master of Divinity as professional work experience. For example, some applicants listed service as a Chaplain Assistant or a practicum as a Chaplain Candidate. See Trends Analysis of Accessions FY2008-2009 (Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Directorate of Personnel, Accessions, December 2009).

for the DoD. The responsibility for educating, training, and developing religious ministry professionals belongs to the religious organization that endorses them. A religious ministry professional with a DoD endorsement is expected to perform basic pastoral functions. The responsibility of the Army Chaplain Corps is to provide the unique and additional skills, education, and supervision to become a professional military chaplain. RMPs who enter military service need to have a well-formed identity as a religious leader with skills and experience to then be further trained, developed, and certified as military chaplains.

The Army Chaplain Corps took steps between 2010 and 2011 to implement policy while revisions of DODI 1304.28 were staffed with the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Board (AFCB). The Army Chaplain Corps would not count credit hours awarded for CHBOLC toward the qualifying seventy-two hours graduate degree for the Chaplain Corps. The Army Chaplain Corps understood this to be an appropriate separation of church and state. CHOBLC acculturates RMPs into the Army and develops skills unique to the Army Chaplain Corps. In addition, the Army Chaplain Corps recommended several revisions to the DODI to the AFCB. It recommended specifying that the qualifying graduate degree must be in theological or religious studies and that half of the seventy-two-hour degree must include religious studies rather than “related” studies. The Army Chaplain Corps also recommended that undergraduate credits transferred as graduate credits should not count toward the seventy-two hours and neither should life experience credits, military evaluation credits, and credits for a Doctor of Ministry. The Army also required the master’s to be one degree and not a combination of degrees and/or graduate credits of seventy-two hours. And, finally, the Army Chaplain Corps implemented a policy requiring applicants to have conducted at least one wedding and one funeral.

In 2010, the Director of Personnel and the Accessions Officer from the Army Office of the Chief of Chaplains visited with officials at the largest evangelical Christian school in the world with 46,000 students.²⁴ In 2010, there were about 700 students enrolled in their military chaplaincy degree program. This school was one of the first and arguably the most influential theological school in the U.S. to design a Master of Divinity according to the 2004 DODI 1304.28. Since the school provided many chaplains for the Army with hundreds enrolled in their program, the Army Chaplain Corps shared concerns about the quality of incoming chaplains. The Army needed chaplains—fit in every way—for the rigors of combat and this school had young, smart, service-oriented students and alumni. As a result of the collaboration, the school increased their academic requirements for the

²⁴ Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Chaplains, Personnel Director and Accessions Officer visited with Liberty University in Lynchburg on March 11, 2010.

Master of Divinity and began a ninety-three-hour military chaplaincy degree program in the Fall of 2010. This school is also now accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and produces high-caliber chaplains for all branches of the military.

Conclusion

The Armed Forces receive the best possible religious ministry professionals when appointment criteria are developed in concert with endorsers and theological educators. Military chaplaincy is predicated on a unique and necessary civilian-military (civ-mil) relationship. This relationship was once described by Chaplain Charles W. Hedrick as a “dialectical ambiguity”:

That dialectic has always belonged to the basic character of the Army Chaplain Corps and it was clearly recognized by the Provincial Congress in the Revolutionary War who accepted chaplains for the Army only when they had received the ‘leave of their congregations.’ The Provincial Congress accepted the service of chaplains as a ‘loan’ from the churches.²⁵

When this civ-mil relationship is working well, the noble mission of supplying America’s best religious ministry professionals to care for the souls of its service members and families is best achieved. It is our sacred honor.

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²⁵ Charles W. Hedrick, “The Emergence of the Chaplaincy as A Professional Army Branch: A Survey and Summary of Selected Issues,” *Military Chaplains’ Review* (February 1990), 44.