

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pathways to the Military Chaplaincy:

Strategic Planning Consultation, Boston University, April 8-9, 2016

Stated Aim of the Consultation

The purpose of the consultation is to assist left-of-center and progressive seminaries in preparing military chaplains for the 21st century. This task is guided by a commitment to an expanded chaplaincy that reflects more inclusive and progressive perspectives. Such a chaplaincy would better reflect the actual face of religion in the United States, better represent our democracy, and better serve the diverse needs of the men and women making up today's military services. The initiative also takes seriously the ongoing work of examining the complex relationships between faith, just society, and the use of force.

Recruitment

Six months prior to the consultation, we sent out letters to seminary presidents and key faculty contacts in theological schools to participate and to send representatives to the consultation. Most of the persons identified were in the areas of pastoral theology and pastoral care. The Pathways event was announced in a well-attended session at the Society for Pastoral Theology, held in June 2015. We also reached out to endorsers and to organizations who are potential stakeholders in this work. We then reached out to the Chief of Chaplains, informing them of the consultation and asking them to send representatives. Email and paper invitations were sent to prospective participants, beginning in October 2015.

Participants

We aimed to have 30-40 persons in attendance, and the numbers exceeded this. The conference was very well attended, with over sixty participants. We had over 16 theological schools participating, with representation from faculty, staff, students, and administrators. There were also several Protestant denominational leaders present. Approximately half of the attendees were military chaplains, both retired and active duty. Several military chaplains-in-training were also present.

The consultation was two days, and it combined informational sessions with working groups. There was also a lecture by Gene Fidell on Friday evening, which was open to the public.

Format and Focus

The consultation featured a mix of presentations and discussions. Conversations circled around three major areas of concern regarding the present state of military chaplains:

- 1) Religious pluralism. The presence of Muslim religious leaders at the consultation was very important, and this group could provide vital support to them, given our current political climate.
- 2) LGBT care.
- 3) Veteran care/moral injury.

In those conversations, there was an emphasis on both advocacy and education. How does the important work of the Forum continue and extend into plans to educate chaplains for present and future challenges.

Key Learnings

- Communication with the Chief of Chaplains early on is very important.
- The “left-of-center” language is not helpful going forward. Defining the initiative does not need this.
- Schools are doing various things, but development of cross-school initiatives would be effective.
- Future leadership must extend beyond seminary faculty to include seminary administrators, especially those related to Admissions and Contextual/Field Education. It is also essential to have leaders in the Chaplaincy Corps.
- The Forum has focused on advocacy, but Pathways may represent continued advocacy *and* education. may have a slightly different focus in the future.
- Funding will be important to any next-steps.

Pathways Leadership

- No clear academic leadership emerged during the consultation. Larry Graham and Shelly Rambo will not continue as directors, and there was some hope that faculty leaders would emerge during the consultation. While this did not happen, one of the strengths of the consultation was the presence of key staff/administrators from the various theological schools who might be able to provide leadership. This might be good, given that we are thinking about how schools might interface and provide vocational leadership to students. Recruiting Admissions Directors from the various schools would be strategic, given that they have budgets and incentive (recruiting students). Might these persons provide a different kind of leadership that might be better sustained on an institutional level? The previous leaders that were identified were full-time faculty members.

Concrete Recommendations:

- Develop a leadership team. Identify seminary leaders and military leaders from the list of participants.
- Schedule an initial meeting of past Pathways leaders and prospective leaders to share the vision of how Pathways might move forward.
- Identify seminary administrators who attended the consultations and have follow-up phone conversations with each.

Educational Initiatives

- Individual schools have various initiatives, and Iliff is clearly a forerunner in developing programs. However, many of the other schools have one or two interested faculty/staff but are not putting military ministry as a top priority. Is there a way of connecting faculty across the schools in such a way that they could share expertise and resources?
- One recurring idea was the development of webinars and online courses that cross schools and could be available to theological students and chaplains already serving in the military.
- There was a lot of networking and information-sharing taking place at the consultation, and many expressed the desire to have a central website for information sharing. Seminaries could link to this website.
 - o Cross-listing of courses
 - o Best practices resources
 - o Updated lists of recruiters, chaplaincy initiatives
- While discussions circled around what is curricularly available to chaplains in training, concerns were also raised about mentoring and support for present chaplains and chaplains

in training. Are there ways of connecting chaplains to each other? Could this group provide ongoing support for chaplains who are committed to diversity initiatives within the military?

Concrete Recommendations:

- Form a working group that would work on an Association of Theological Schools consortium.
- Contact student leaders at the consultation and brainstorm ways of connecting them across schools via the development of social media.

Military-Seminary Partnerships

- Without people in the military on board with the initiatives, they will not succeed. Changing the culture of the military chaplaincy can only be achieved by developing relationships with military personnel. Working with COC/DOD - Collaboration with the Chief of Chaplains/DOD and other chaplaincy organizations (NCMAF in particular)
- Besides courses, there was conversation about how theological schools might welcome military issues onto campus and invite speakers who might better educate students and faculty about military ministry. Perhaps there could be a list of speakers (from this group) who might be willing to visit campuses in an effort to raise awareness.
- Endorsers are instrumental to military-seminary partnerships. We have endorsers within Pathways who are leaders in NCMAF, and they could guide seminary leaders in these partnerships.

Concrete Recommendations

- Pathways leadership team should develop a “best practices” list with endorsers to send to participant schools focused on ways to strengthen military chaplaincy presence on each of the campuses. How to introduce military ministry to faculty, staff, and students.
- Seminary educators could offer guidance to the Chaplaincy Corps in two key areas that align with DOD initiatives: 1) developing an ethics statement to guide chaplains in their work; 2) developing resources around LGBT issues

Funding

- One of the key concerns, for both theological schools and the chaplaincy, is decreased funding/resources. Both are feeling financially pressed.
- To move forward, funding is needed to carry out any major initiatives. The Association of Theological Schools was identified as a major organization that might support theological initiatives related to military ministry. The Lily Endowment was also mentioned as a prospective funder.

Concrete Recommendations:

- A couple of the Pathways participants agreed to contact ATS and the Lily Endowment.
- Re-approach the Wabash Center to see why our initial proposal for funding was not accepted.
- Seek advice from the Soul Repair Center at Brite to explore potential points of connection/funding sources.

Research and Publications

- In preparation for the consultation, we compiled a short list of reading for participants. This was the beginning of a working bibliography, organized around the concerns presented in

Pathways. We hope to expand this bibliography, which could be distributed more widely and provide a good starting point for academic and military settings.

- **Links to Pre-Consultation Readings**

Required Reading

[Waggoner, Ed. Pathways to Military Chaplaincy Brite Report.](#)

[Fenner, Bruce. The Challenge Facing Chaplaincy Today: Relevance.](#)

[Waggoner, Ed, Taking Religion Seriously in the US Military.](#)

[Rambo, Shelly, Theologizing War in the 21st Century](#)

Recommended Reading

[Curd, Mike. Relevance of Clinical Chaplaincy in Dollars and Cents.](#)

[Graham, Larry. Teaching on War](#)

- Carrie Doehring and Nancy Ramsay have agreed to edit a collection of journal articles on military ministry for a dedicated issue of *Pastoral Psychology*. They are soliciting several Pathways participants to write the articles. They are hoping that the articles can serve as course readings, and the collection could function as an edited textbook.

Immediate Recommendation

- We recommend that the Forum sponsor a Pathways Steering Committee of four people (two seminary, two military) to share information and see what can happen next about 1) leadership development, military-seminary partnerships in conceiving the chaplaincy, 2) education and training, 3) research, and 4) funding.

Prepared by Shelly Rambo, co-convenor of the consultation.