

Chaplain guidelines on same-sex issues released

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DALLAS—Texas Baptist chaplains cannot perform same-sex marriages, but they otherwise are permitted to provide pastoral care “shaped by the Bible and Baptist tradition,” according to guidelines issued by the [Baptist General Convention of Texas chaplaincy relations office](#).

The office issued the guiding principles regarding same-sex issues to its endorsed chaplains in the wake of the military repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act.



Supervisors have asked many of Texas Baptists’ approximately 200 military chaplains for guidelines from their endorser regarding how they can minister to same-sex couples.

Chaplains must follow military regulations, but they also are bound to the guidelines set forth by their endorsing body, which the military has pledged not to infringe upon.

At the 2009 BGCT annual meeting, messengers adopted a resolution stating: “Texas Baptists affirm the biblical sexual ethic of celibacy in singleness, fidelity in marriage, and affirm the biblical image of marriage as

the union, before God, between a man and a woman.”

“Therefore, consistent with this resolution, Texas Baptist chaplains will always conduct themselves in a way that complies with our Texas Baptist belief that marriage is a life-long union between a man and a woman,” the guidelines read.

Biblical standards

“Our ministry practices must adhere to these biblical standards and historical principles irrespective of any civil law to the contrary. The Texas Baptists Office of Chaplaincy Relations expects full compliance by all of its endorsed chaplains.”

The guidelines prohibit Texas Baptist chaplains from officiating at same-sex marriages, but they encourage pastoral ministry to all personnel.

“Our approach to pastoral care in specialized settings is to perform the ministries we can or seek to provide someone else to do those ministries we cannot,” the statement continues.

“We expect our chaplains to be pastoral as servants of our Lord who loved unconditionally and sought to redeem all with whom he interacted. Jesus Christ is our model—redemptive, gracious and merciful.”

People struggling with sin

Chaplains serve in specialized settings, creating vast opportunities for ministry to people struggling with a variety of sins, said BGCT Chaplaincy Relations Director Bobby Smith. In ministering to each of them, chaplains will stand on the word of God as they care for individuals and address their sins, he added.

“Texas Baptist chaplains want to do a Jesus-type of ministry where we love people and address their sin in a caring manner,” he said. “We are Texas

Baptist ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are seeking to have an authentic, caring Christian ministry where we reflect the light, love and grace of God in Jesus Christ."

In August, the Southern Baptist Convention's [North American Mission Board](#) issued guidelines stating: "In harmony with Holy Scripture, NAMB-endorsed chaplains will not conduct or attend a wedding ceremony for any same-sex couple, bless such a union or perform counseling in support of such a union, assist or support paid contractors or volunteers leading same-sex relational events, nor offer any kind of relationship training or retreat, on or off a military installation, that would give the appearance of accepting the homosexual lifestyle or sexual wrongdoing."

With additional reporting by Managing Editor Ken Camp