

Religious Ministry Support
REFERENCE / AUTHORITYSOURCE DOCUMENT
Information Sheet

Document Designation: MARINE CORPS MANUAL
Number: para. 2816
TITLE: CHAPLAINS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
Date: 18 Aug 95
Purpose: Sets basic parameters for religious
ministry support within the Marine Corps.
Source(s): Marine Corps Manual
Original Document Form: .pdf file

2816 CHAPLAINS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

1. Religious Program. The religious program is an official and integral part of the operation of an installation or unit within the Marine Corps. Responsibility for this program rests with each commander. This responsibility not only ensures that there will be divine services as prescribed by U.S. Navy Regulations but also includes the responsibility of providing logistic support for religious programs and for the chaplains assigned.

2. Observance of Sunday

a. Except by reason of necessity, or in the interest of the welfare and morale of the command, the performance of work by Marines shall not be required on Sunday. Marines whose religious faith requires them to observe some day other than Sunday as their Sabbath are entitled to respect for their religious convictions. To the extent that military conditions permit, personnel who celebrate the Sabbath on a day other than Sunday shall be given every possible consideration to be excused from duty on that day due to their strong beliefs regarding the Sabbath. Persons so excused may be required to perform duty on Sunday.

b. Divine services shall be conducted on Sunday if possible. When there is no chaplain attached to the command, the commander shall engage the services of any military chaplain who may be available. If no chaplain is available, the commander shall, when practicable, arrange for the services of a civilian clergyman. Commanders may appoint lay leaders to conduct divine services or to supplement the ministry of assigned chaplains.

c. Marines shall be encouraged to attend religious services, but it should be understood that attendance is voluntary.

3. Chaplains

a. Officers of the Chaplain Corps are assigned to duty with the Marine Corps by the Chief of Naval Personnel. Chaplains of various denominations are assigned to major Marine commands to provide the broadest religious ministry possible to all personnel and to their dependents. Denominational background, special training, and particular skills shall be carefully considered in the assignment and utilization of chaplains. Subordinate commanders will share the services of chaplains assigned to their unit as required in order to provide the maximum religious ministry for all personnel and dependents of the major command.

b. The senior chaplain at Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, shall be designated The Chaplain, United States Marine Corps.

c. The senior officer of the Chaplain Corps assigned to a Marine Corps command shall be designated the Command Chaplain and serve as the Special Staff Officer/Assistant Chief of Staff for Religious Ministry to advise the commander on moral and religious matters, and of the religious customs and institutions which members of the command should respect during visits to foreign countries. The Command Chaplain provides supervision for chaplains assigned to the command in matters relating to the professional performance of their duties.

d. Chaplains are assigned to Marine Corps commands as clergy of their individual religious faiths. They are expected to continue their ministry and religious stewardship in the spirit and tenets of the

religious body in which they are ordained. Each chaplain is required to conduct public worship and other religious rites and ceremonies according to the regulations, manner and forms of the religious body of which the chaplain is a member.

e. Chaplains are noncombatants under international law. They shall bear no arms and shall perform no duties relating to combat except those prescribed for chaplains.

f. Chaplains, at their request, shall be issued temporary duty orders at no expense to the Government for periods not to exceed 15 days each calendar year for the purpose of attending religious conference and retreats.

4. Chapel Funds. Commanders are authorized to establish chapel funds in accordance with current directives of the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

5. Religious Program Specialists. Qualified Marines are eligible to apply for conversion to the Religious Program Specialist Rating. If selected, they shall be discharged from the Marine Corps and enlisted in the Navy, for a period of not less than 2 years, or the remainder of their enlistment, whichever is greater, without loss of rank, time in grade, or other benefits.