

**Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr.  
Chaplain (Col) US Army, retired  
6875 Dale Hollow Drive SE  
Caledonia, Michigan 49316-7815**

28 January 2013

Brigadier General Scottie D. Carpenter  
Department of the Army  
Headquarters, 311<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)  
Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan

Re: Chaplain (1Lt) Christopher J. Antal

Dear General Carpenter:

This letter is written in support of Chaplain (1Lt) Christopher J. Antal and in response to the Memorandum of Reprimand dated 22 January 2013.

I am a member of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a bi-national church with congregations in both the United States and Canada. I served 40 years in the United States Army: 2 years enlisted; 4 years in the reserves; and 34 years as an active duty Chaplain. I will attach my Biography to this email, so you have an understanding of my service to our country.

I am deeply concerned that you, and the lawyers who are advising you, do not seem aware of the Constitutional issues involved in this case and in your decision. I am certain that you have passed this decision by the Army Chief of Chaplains and, hopefully, through the Department of Defense General Council. I do not know what advice they gave you, but if this reprimand is a result of that advice it has resulted in a decision that threatens the very fabric and rationale for the Military Chaplaincy.

You do not address in your Memorandum for Chaplain (1LT) Christopher J. Antal all the facts of the case, as I have been informed of them and understand them in the larger context of his ministry.

First, I understand that this message was delivered in a worship service designed especially for his faith group, yet open to all who voluntarily went to that worship service. Not referencing this worship service context, leads me to believe that you approve of and recognize the sanctity of the worship service. And the necessity for the command not to interfere with the proclamation the Word as interpreted by the faith group of the chaplain proclaiming his faith group's message. You have a statement from Reverend Doctor Paul Rasor that clearly states that Chaplain Antal's prayer "violates no tenet of the Unitarian Universalism faith." I will take your not mentioning this fact as a sign that you agree that no commander has the authority or legal right to censure or dictate what a chaplain can say in a worship service. In part that means that 1Lt Antal's prayer was a religious prayer first, and foremost, and not a political prayer.

Even if you regard the content of the prayer as political, then you are denying the right of the religious community to speak to the moral content of the governments decisions concerning these wars by chaplains who represent that community. The religious community's speech is both political and prophetic! As a Chaplain, I represent my faith community and not the policy of the government. I agree

to minister in a pluralistic, multi-faith military. I, also, agree to speak prophetically and politically about the wars being fought by the soldiers under my ministry. During Vietnam, several Army chaplains spoke out publically against that war in uniform from pulpits both military and civilian. I helped soldiers from the Just War Tradition write their appeal for conscientious objection to that particular war. When I served on the Department of Defense staff, I spoke against the Department of Defense Directive that only protects pacifists and not selective conscientious objection. I have heard Roman Catholic priests explain, in public fora and in uniform, how they could serve when their Bishops publically and formally stated that the Iraq war was immoral.

If you are in disagreement with many religious institutions, denominations and clergy who have publically declared similar objections and concerns about our nation's involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, that is your personal prerogative, but not your professional duty to enforce and judge chaplains from these traditions by your personal standards. Both your role as commander and mine as chaplain have been clearly defined. If you and your lawyers are not aware of these public statements, I urge you to research and read them.

There is one aspect of this case that I urge you to take very seriously. That aspect centers on the question, "What online public blog did 1LT Antal post his prayer and picture?" My understanding is that he posted it on the blog of the church that called him to the chaplaincy. I also researched and discussed with his denominational endorser this faith community. I am told that the church is a virtual church and that public blog is its primary mode of public worship and sharing community concerns. If that is true, 1LT Antal's sharing of his prayer was in the context of religious worship and communication. In a real sense all public worship is a political statement, in which our government acknowledges our political right to worship in a public way. If his communication was in violation of any policy, that policy may need to change or be re-interpreted in an age of virtual communications. I have sent prayers similar in tone and content to my denomination's printed publications that have been read by serving military members of my tradition and have not been accused of or held in violation of the regulations cited. I wonder if there is not some prejudice on this Chaplain because of his faith group. This case demands that the Department of Defense review its Directives to accommodate for the realities of virtual religious groups and get its head out of the past.

General Carpenter, you have an opportunity to stand above religious partisanship and American Civil Religion ("American Imperialism") and celebrate the multi-faith reality of and support for respect and acceptance of our religious diversity even as it critiques United States political and military policy.

In Service of God and Country (in that order)

Signed electronically

////Original Signed////

Chaplain (Col) Herman Keizer Jr.  
US Army retired.

**Chaplain Herman Keizer, Jr.**  
**Colonel, United States Army (Retired)**

Chaplain (Colonel) Herman Keizer, Jr. was born May 21, 1938 in Chicago, Illinois. He is the oldest of seven children. He has been a minister in the Christian Reformed Church in North America since his ordination in 1968. Chaplain Keizer was drafted and served from 1962-1964 as a Chaplain Assistant at Fort Belvoir, VA. Chaplain Keizer has a BA degree from Calvin College; a BD from Calvin Theological Seminary; a MST (Masters of Sacred Theology) from New York Theological Seminary and a MA in Education from New York Teachers College. He is a member of *Kappa Delta Pi*, an Honors Society in Education.

Commissioned as a Chaplain in 1968, his assignments include: service as Assistant Brigade Chaplain Fort Gordon, Georgia; service in Vietnam with the First Infantry Division, and the Fourth Infantry Division (He was wounded twice –in a rocket attack on a fire-base in Cambodia and in a 159 foot fall in a helicopter accident on An Khe); as Advisor to the Commanding General on Drug And Alcohol in Wurzburg, GE; as Officer in Charge of the Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Training Center; Bremerhaven, GE; as faculty member at the Chaplain Center and School; as Personnel Staff Officer (Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel ); Installation Command Chaplain, Fort Shafter, HI; as Division Chaplain, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, HI; as Deputy Director of the Chaplaincy Service Support Agency, Washington, D.C.; as Executive Director, Armed Forces Chaplains Board, Department of Defense; and as Command Chaplain, United States European Command, Stuttgart, GE.

In 1998, Chaplain (Colonel) Herman Keizer, Jr. reached mandatory retirement age having completed 30 years of service as a Colonel. He was retired and was recalled by the Secretary of the Army) to serve as Military Assistant for Leadership and Human Relations to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. In July 2000, his recall was extended by the Secretary of Defense and he became the Military Advisor to the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom at the Department of State. He served in that position until retirement from the military in 2002. He then served as the Director of Chaplaincy Ministries for the Christian Reformed Church in North America until he retired in 2009.

Chaplain Keizer's awards and decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal (1OLC); the Legion of Merit (4 OLC); the Soldier's Medal; the Bronze Star Medal (5OLC) and V Device; the Purple Heart; Meritorious Service Medal (3OLC); the Air Medal (3); the Army Commendation Medal (1OLC); the Army Achievement Medal (1OLC); and the Good Conduct Medal. (Each Oak Leaf Cluster counts for an additional award of the medal, so add the 1<sup>st</sup> award to the OLC to get the total number of awards.) He also received the Superior Honor Award from the Department of State.

In May, 2000, Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan named Chaplain Keizer a Distinguished Alumni and presented the Award at the College Graduation Ceremony. In May 2003, Calvin Theological Seminary named Chaplain Keizer a Distinguished Alumni and presented the award at the Seminary Graduation Ceremony. On April 11, 2010, the Association of Professional Chaplains awarded him their Distinguished Service Award, the first Military Chaplain and the first Chaplain Endorser to receive the award. In April of 2012, Chaplain Keizer was awarded the David C. White Leadership award by the Military Officer's Association of America and the Distinguished Leadership award from the Military Chaplains Association.

Since retirement, Chaplain Keizer has work on a project with others to produce a Power Point presentation in PTSD stressing both the physical, neurological and psychological aspects of this Disorder.) Served on several Boards: the Heartside Ministry Board; the Grand Rapids Area Committee on Ecumenism (GRACE) Board; the Restorative Justice Board; the Healing of Children of Conflict committee (children injured by American soldiers in the current conflicts); and for the Micah Center advocacy committee. He is the President of the Army Retired Chaplains Association. He served as the Guest Host of the **Truth Commission on Conscience**

**in War** which recommended Selective Conscientious Objection legislation to the Congress and that urges the study of Moral Injury after War. (Report of commission is online). He briefed the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness three times on Just War Tradition and the need to change the CO policy in the United States Military. He assisted in the establishment of a Non-for-profit group on the East Coast to assist veterans of the current wars. He served on a committee for the National Association of Evangelicals on the issues concerning Nuclear War. His most recent activity is Co-director of the Soul Repair Center at the Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth Texas which received a \$650,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment Fund to conduct Research and Training on Moral Injury after War to assist veterans from our most current conflicts.

Chaplain Keizer's military experience provided opportunities to serve in some unique and challenging assignments that provided experience and education across a wide spectrum of organizations and disciplines.

He is married to Ardis Louise (Groeneveld) Keizer. They have two grown sons Bryan and Randall.