
Ministry Policy for EPC Chaplains
Dealing with Persons Who Practice Homosexual Behavior
And Claim Homosexual Identity

EPC chaplains are called to work in diverse environments with people of dramatically diverse backgrounds, conditions, lifestyles, and beliefs. The nature of chaplaincy and its ministry means that chaplains may work directly with persons who might not normally be encountered in civilian congregation-based pastoral ministry. In every such case, the chaplain, as stated in *Book of Government* 10-3.E, "... shall always have as his primary duty the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ."

EPC chaplains minister, as part of God's Good News, God's moral law. This law, found explicitly in Scripture, and, according to Romans 1, seen and known by all people through the witness of Creation, applies both to believers and non-believers, as explained in our *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

- 19-5 The moral law, however, does pertain to everyone, saved and unsaved, forever, not just with respect to its content but also in relationship to the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel Christ does not in any way remove this obligation, but rather strengthens it.
- 19.6 Although true believers are not justified or condemned by the law as a covenant of works, the law is nevertheless very useful to them and to others. As a rule of life, it informs them of God's will and of their obligation to obey it. It also reveals to them the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives, so that, examining themselves from its point of view, they may become more convinced of the presence of sin in them, more humiliated on account of that sin, and hate sin the more. Thus they gain a better awareness of their need for Christ and for the perfection of his obedience. The prohibitions against sin in the law are also useful in restraining believers from pursuing the desires of their old nature, and the punishments for disobedience in the law show them what their sins deserve and what afflictions they may expect for them in this life, even though they have been freed from the curse threatened in the law...
- 19.7 None of these uses of the law is contrary to the grace of the gospel. They rather beautifully comply with it, because the Spirit of Christ subdues and enables the will of man to do voluntarily and cheerfully what the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.

EPC chaplains should be mindful of the universal application of God's law, both to believers and non-believers. In a day when even some churches proclaim that portions of the moral law do not apply, EPC chaplains should maintain a rigorous Scriptural basis, and faithful hermeneutic, as the measure of their ministry.

EPC chaplains should therefore hold forth in their ministry, public and private, the full grace of God's Gospel that includes all of the law's definitions, practices, and purposes. In the case of homosexual behavior and claimed identity, the following standards apply:

Westminster Larger Catechism

Q. 138. What does the seventh commandment require?

A. The seventh commandment requires us to be sexually pure in body, mind, inclinations, words, and actions, and to maintain that purity in ourselves and others. We are to monitor what we look at as well as what we experience with our other senses; and we are to live temperately, keeping pure company and dressing modestly. Those who cannot control their sexual desires should marry, loving and living together with their spouses. We should also work hard at whatever we are called to do, avoiding all opportunities for indecency, and resisting any temptation to say, think, or do anything indecent or obscene.

Q. 139. What particular sins does the seventh commandment forbid?

A. In addition to failing to do what is required, the seventh commandment forbids: adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural desires; all impure imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and inclinations; all corrupt and nasty talk or listening to such, lewd looks, shameless or frivolous behavior, and immodest dress; prohibiting lawful marriages and allowing unlawful ones; condoning, tolerating, or organizing prostitution and visiting prostitutes; restrictive vows of celibacy, unnecessary delays in marrying, having more than one wife or husband at the same time; unjust divorce or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, and keeping impure company; obscene or pornographic songs, books, pictures, dancing, or theatrical presentations; and all other encouragement to or indulgence in impure activities by us or others.

Book of Discipline 1-10 Definition of “Immorality”

Immorality is conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct, including but not limited to bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping, hatred, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality. ...

EPC chaplains may also refer to the EPC Position Paper on Homosexuality¹ for a more full treatment of ministry guidance regarding this issue. It recommends ministry emphases of 1) education, 2) friendship, 3) healing resources, and 4) prayerful intercession.

EPC chaplains should therefore minister in the spirit of the statement sent by the EPC to the Armed Forces Chaplains Board in 2010:

The position of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) is stated in its *Position Paper on Homosexuality*, that "Homosexual practice is a distortion of the image of God as it is still reflected in fallen man, and a perversion of the sexual relationship as God intended it to be." May we respectfully state for the record that we stand opposed to all forms of hate speech and practice; that we affirm the human dignity and rights of all Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) persons; that we personally respect the personhood of, and appreciate the contributions of, GLBT persons in society; and that we appreciate our personal relationships with such persons, many of whom receive our ministry.

¹ <http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/position-papers/homosexuality>

In providing their ministry, EPC chaplains shall always show great respect for the Image of God imprinted on every person. This respect shall include respect for human rights, asserted to the maximum extent morally and legally possible. However, should the claim of human and/or civil rights be applied in such ways to challenge, undermine, or censor the “first freedom” of religious rights—either of the chaplain, or those in the chaplain’s care—then the chaplain must assert, above all, faithfulness to the fullness of God’s Gospel. This faithfulness must be expressed wisely (Matthew 10:16), understanding the times (2 Peter 3:3), and if possible, without giving offense (Hebrews 12:14).

In summary, EPC chaplains shall:

- 1) Profess, teach, and live by Scriptural standards of moral law, depending on the work of the Holy Spirit to enact the Gospel’s transformative power.
- 2) In accordance with best practices of chaplain ministry and with a maximum of respect and love for all persons regardless of their beliefs or conditions: provide religious ministry and support for those of our own faith; facilitate for all religious beliefs; care for all people in their organization with their family and friends; and advise commanders and institutional leaders to ensure the free exercise of religion.
- 3) Not legitimize contrary teaching. EPC chaplains therefore shall not:
 - a) Co-lead worship (as defined in the EPC *Book of Worship*, 2-1²) in their official position, in partnership with any person endorsed by a faith group that officially advocates violation of God’s moral law. (Public/civic ceremonies, and the normal staff work of religious ministry programs, present a different case, not subject to this restriction.)
 - b) Provide teaching, training, or counsel that advocates approval of, or reasonably appears to advocate approval of, or condones violations of God’s moral law.
- 4) Practice ministry of word and deed, in public and private, that brings the full counsel of God to bear, insofar as is possible and practicable with given people and situations, providing prophetic proclamation in the face of expectations of cultural conformity.
- 5) In cases of question or conflict, consult the EPC endorser early in a given process.

²*Book of Worship* §2-1: The acceptable way of worshiping God is established by God Himself. Proper worship is defined and outlined in God’s revealed will and is to be followed in giving glory to Him. True and proper worship therefore finds its prescription in Holy Scripture. Only God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are to receive such worship. Such worship shall include the reverent and attentive reading of the Scriptures, the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word, and singing of psalms and hymns, the proper administration and right receiving of the sacraments, and prayer with thanksgiving. Such public worship of God shall also include times of solemn prayer and fasting, as well as special days of praise and thanksgiving. All worship should at all times and in all places be performed in a holy and religious manner. The public worship of God is not to be carelessly or willfully neglected or forsaken.

It is impossible to name every situation that may arise in the practice of a chaplain's ministry. EPC chaplains in every case should strive to fulfill their call as stated in *Book of Government* 10-2:

Those who fill this office should, according to the Scripture, have certain qualifications. They should be sound in the faith and have an aptitude for teaching. Their lives should reflect holiness and discipline which brings honor to Christ and which causes them to be well thought of by those outside the Church. They should have wisdom and discretion . . .

As this pure ministry of Word and Sacrament is exercised incarnationally by chaplains, we count on God to bless such efforts with great spiritual fruitfulness!

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