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RECONNECTING WITH GOD AND FAITH AFTER THE COMBAT BOOTS COME OFF:
Ministering to National Guard Chaplains after their return home from
Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANG	Air National Guard
ARNG	Army National Guard
CH	Chaplain
CPE	Clinical Pastoral Education
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
JWB	Jewish Welfare Board
LT	Lieutenant
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MANG	Massachusetts National Guard
MAANG	Massachusetts Air National Guard
MAARNG	Massachusetts Army National Guard
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NGB	National Guard Bureau
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RST	Religious Support Team
UMT	Unit Ministry Team
VBIED	Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device

The Sage Hillel from the First Century CE said:

*If I am not for myself, who is for me? If I care only for myself,
what am I? If not now, when?*

(Ethics of the Fathers 1:14)

Chapter I: Introduction

This Demonstration Project will attempt to create a supportive peer-to-peer ministry within an Army National Guard Chaplaincy Program for chaplains who have returned home after deploying with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The project idea originates from my own experience and struggles returning home from a tour of duty in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. After my thirty days of terminal leave, I immediately returned to my full-time ministry as a congregational rabbi in a suburban congregation. I was away from the congregation for over a year and have found the transition back to civilian ministry and family life difficult. Issues of faith, ministerial duties, sense of religious purpose, and reintegration back into family life have all been called into question. If I, as a seasoned rabbi and chaplain, have struggled with this transition, it's possible that other chaplains who have returned from deployments are facing similar challenges.

Chaplains are members of the clergy serving in a variety of ministerial roles outside of congregation and parish ministry. They are most notably found in hospital settings, but also provide ministry on college and university campuses, in law enforcement agencies, in the prison system, and within the armed forces. A discussion of the chaplain's distinct role within the military is necessary to better understand the issues presented in this Demonstration Project.

The Chaplain Corps

For centuries, religious leaders have accompanied soldiers into battle, bringing a spiritual dimension to the military conquest. Israelite priests blew the *shofar* as they

circled around the ancient city of Jericho, helping to bring the walls down (Joshua 6:4-5). Roman armies were accompanied into battle by pagan priests. Christian priests marched alongside Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. Even the word “chaplain” comes from the Latin for cloak, *cappa*, referring to a distinct piece of clothing worn by a priest accompanying an army (The Museum of the United States Army Website, 2012).

In 1775, the Continental Congress authorized members of the clergy to be part of a regiment of the Continental Army. These chaplains, as they were called, were considered officers with the grade of captain, even though they did not have any fighting responsibilities. Various state milita also had clergy as part of their companies (The Museum of the United States Army Website, 2012). At the famous Battle of Lexington and Concord, several ministers served and fought alongside the Minutemen against the British Regular Army (J. Hollister, personal communication, April, 2005).

As the United States military developed and grew, other service branches added chaplains to their professional ranks. In addition to its own chaplains, the Navy also provides chaplains to the Marines and Coast Guard. The Air Force, once called the Army Air Corps in World War Two, now has its own chaplain branch. The Army Chaplain Corps is the largest of the three chaplain service branches. Chaplains in all the branches serve as the religious and spiritual leaders to service members and act as advisors and confidants to the commanders of units, ships, and squadrons on matters of morale and moral welfare. They also provide pastoral counseling as they are known to safeguard confidentiality. Service members are more likely to turn to the chaplain well before seeking out a mental health professional for counseling. “What’s said to the chaplain, stays with the chaplain,” is known throughout the military ranks (Frederich, et

al., 2011). Trower (1985) notes that counseling may well be the military chaplain's "chief ministerial function."

Most chaplains in the military are associated with the active service branches, which means that their military ministry is full time. All branches of service also have a reserve component that supplements the Active Duty, especially in times of war. The branch of reserve service with the most robust component is the Army. Whether the chaplain is Active Duty or reserve component, his or her salary is based on rank and years of service, just like any other officer.

Chaplains have the unique position of being noncombatants, meaning they do not carry weapons, and are actually forbidden to do so. As they fall under the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), chaplains are not permitted to engage in offensive hostilities of any kind (Schaick, 2009). They are protected in combat by an enlisted or noncommissioned officer (NCO) who also serves as as their administrative and ministerial assistant. Together the chaplain and chaplain assistant form a ministry team that is often referred to as a Religious Support Team, though in the Army system they are called a UMT-Unit Ministry Team.

Within Army Chaplaincy, the chaplain is considered special staff to his or her commander and has no command responsibilities within the unit. Although chaplains have a rank, they are only referred to as "chaplain" so that any soldier of any rank feels comfortable coming to them for religious, spiritual, or pastoral counseling and ministry.

The Army Chaplain's Charge

The totality of what an Army chaplain does can be summarized by the motto of the US Army Chaplain Corps: “Pro Deo et Patria—For God and Country.” The motto reflects a chaplain’s selfless commitment to serve the Divine and the Nation as a sacred calling. “Nurturing the living, caring for the wounded, and honoring the dead” are the sacred tasks of all Army chaplains. The chaplain “nurtures the living” with ministerial services, such as invocations, benedictions, moral welfare briefings, and religious services. The chaplain, in “caring for the wounded,” is the “go-to person” for pastoral care and counseling (Trower, 1993). The same applies after a deployment when the chaplain continues to minister to his or her soldiers along with their civilian ministry responsibilities or secular employment. At the most difficult times, the chaplain “honors the dead” by accompanying Casualty Notification Officers for death notifications, officiating at military funerals, or presiding over memorial services and ceremonies. Honoring the dead is probably the most sacred task the chaplain does in his or her role as chaplain (Wright, 2012).

Chaplaincy Within the Army National Guard

The US Army has three separate components or branches: Active Duty, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard. The Army Reserve directly supports the Active Component and is based on a regional model, similar to FEMA regions. It mostly consists of Combat Service Support units, such as medical units or training brigades. Since the Army Reserve falls directly under the United States Active Army, the President of the United States serves as its Commander-in-Chief.

Army National Guard units, on the other hand, have a dual role; they serve both the state and federal governments. While the Guard originally focused on protecting local communities, it eventually grew into a force that supplements the Active Duty Army when help is needed anywhere in the world. The biggest difference between the Guard and other branches is that while Guard units are combat-trained and can be deployed overseas, they are just as likely to serve in their home communities in support of state emergencies or disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina or Superstorm Sandy (About the National Guard, 2012). In its state-bound capacity, the National Guard answers to the Governor and not the President.

Men and women who serve in the Guard are commonly known as “Citizen-Soldiers.” They are civilians, most of the time, working for civilian employers but also serve as soldiers one weekend a month during “drills.” Just as the Active Army and Army Reserve have chaplains serving in their ranks, so too, does the Army National Guard have clergy serving in the role of chaplain.

For the vast majority of time, the chaplain serves stateside in a noncombat situation. Chaplains will occasionally go on maneuvers with the unit during extensive training, traveling into the field and living amongst the soldiers but, for the most part, the work is peaceful. The smallest unit, called a battalion, to which chaplains are assigned has approximately 300-500 soldiers. As chaplains go up in rank, their responsibilities increase and their units become larger.

Military Guard chaplains usually fulfill the same amount of drill time as regular soldiers, but often go beyond the typical “weekend warrior” responsibilities, by assisting in death notifications, delivering invocations or benedictions, responding to emergency

calls for counseling, and giving deployment or reunion briefings as required by the state senior chaplain. This, of course, is all in addition to their civilian clergy responsibilities.

When chaplains are called up to serve with their deploying unit, either stateside or, more often, overseas, they leave their civilian employment and families and enter into an active army military service. They take off their suits and ties or Roman collars and don a combat uniform. When the deployment is over, the combat uniform comes off and the civilian clergy “uniform” is put back on. The chaplain is expected to return in full health and spirit to care for the soldiers and their families as well as for their congregation or parish. Furthermore, chaplains are expected to be as fully committed to their theological and pastoral principals after the deployment as before they left. The chaplains and their ministry are supposed to remain just as spiritually strong as before the deployment.

The Need for this Demonstration Project

The question that arises then is, who looks after the chaplains after they return from a deployment? Chaplains are regarded as the experts in dealing with all spiritual, emotional, ethical, and mental issues. They are supposed to have their “acts together,” with no doubt or uncertainty about how to confront the challenges of life. Furthermore, when chaplains return from a deployment to their civilian settings and religious communities, they are immediately expected to engage full force. If chaplains are married or have children, they can have an additional layer of stress on top of their ministerial duties. When does the chaplain process what transpired religiously and spiritually during the deployment and reintegration, and where does a National Guard

chaplain turn to deal with personal, spiritual, and ritual issues of reintegration? Only chaplains who initiate their own individual therapy might address their personal needs. And, even so, the therapy would most likely be with a civilian counselor, not someone who understands military culture, has experienced a deployment, or been in a war zone.

Having recently returned from a deployment, I found myself struggling with day-to-day routines that came easily before being mobilized. While in Afghanistan, I knew my mission every day; I cared for my unit's soldiers and supervised the religious and spiritual life of approximately 10,000 US Service Members in the Kabul Base Cluster. Back home, I felt quickly torn in many directions. From family, synagogue, army, to friends, community, and spiritual life, I was constantly struggling with which one to put first. I even started "missing being over there!"

Going to services at home is an easy five-minute walk up the street. Leading religious services outside my base meant leaving the protective blast walls and gates of Camp Phoenix and traveling onto the streets of Kabul to another base. I couldn't just drive there, but needed to plan the route, clear it with our operations and intelligence sections, have at least two up-armored and fully armed military vehicles, and at least two armed soldiers in my vehicle to protect me, in order to leave the gate. This was known as "going outside the wire" and into the "belly of the beast," referring to the life and death dangers of being exposed to threats of attack by the enemy. The roads I was traveling on had experienced numerous IEDs or shootings at military vehicles. I was scared at times, but also thrilled to be serving "Congregation B'nai Kabul." They had gone two years without a Jewish chaplain and greatly appreciated my presence.

Once home, I was finding I had to jump through hoops just to move a service time for Sabbath prayer during the summer months. I found myself struggling with feelings of missing the deployment and wishing I were back there for the “fullness” of the work. My family and congregation could not and would not understand or even want to hear my feelings. I felt that only other previously deployed chaplains could understand. Just as ordinary soldiers returning from a deployment need help to cope with their struggles, process their emotions, and reintegrate successfully back into civilian life, so too do chaplains require support after they return from a deployment.

The Goal of the Demonstration Project

The goal of this Demonstration Project is to create a safe, confidential space for National Guard chaplains who have recently returned home from deployments to discuss, share, and support each other through possible and probable challenges of reintegration in a peer-to-peer setting. In forming a support group, chaplains can give and receive ministry alongside fellow chaplains who have also experienced deployment and reintegration challenges. An ultimate goal would be to demonstrate the value of forming similar support groups in other National Guard states where chaplains have returned home from combat zone deployments.

Chapter II: Theological and Clinical Principles

In this chapter I will outline four theological and two clinical principles pertaining to my Demonstration Project.

Theological Principles

The guiding theological tenet for a military chaplain, “Ministry of Presence,” speaks to the essence of what a deployed chaplain does:

Deliver humanitarian aid to an Iraqi family. Counsel a soldier who survived when others fell. Pray with the injured or dying. Lead worship in everything from a world-famous chapel to a nondescript meeting room or tent. Make certain that soldiers of another faith can freely exercise their beliefs. The duties of a military chaplain are diverse. But regardless of their specific duty or setting, theirs is a Ministry of Presence (Forbes, 2008).

The chaplain’s religious ministry is denomination specific; a Christian chaplain can baptize a soldier or lead Mass, while a Jewish chaplain can perform a Bar Mitzvah or lead a Passover Seder. “Ministry of Presence,” on the other hand, is a ministry to all.

In coming up with a theological understanding of Ministry of Presence,” Jane Stokes (as cited in Peyton, 2009, p. 7) offers a Christian definition. Ministry of Presence, she suggests, encompasses many different facets, including: “a psychosocial expectation in response to positional power and authority (and) an etymological understanding of the servant coming alongside the patient....” In other words, not only does the chaplain see him or herself as representing the Divine, the “patient” also views the chaplain as a servant of God.

Rabbi Dayle A. Friedman (Kindle location 197) discusses a Jewish equivalent that she calls, *Livui Ruchanit* or Spiritual Accompanying. Most of her use relates to Jewish

Pastoral Care, where the chaplain/clergy/rabbi represents God's presence. Just as God performs acts of loving kindness—appearing before Abraham when he is recovering from his late-age circumcision (Genesis 18:1) or burying Moses (Deuteronomy 34:6)—so too, is the charge for chaplains to perform acts of loving-kindness. Friedman comments that: “It is a relationship in which the helper meets the one in need on an egalitarian footing, not through a hierarchical power connection. (Kindle Location 279-280)” The Army motto of *Nurture the living, care for the sick, and honor the dead* fits nicely into this view of a chaplain's Ministry of Presence.

For this Demonstration Project, I will see if ministry will happen between chaplain participants in a peer-to-peer support group, without a formal “one-way” directional care. Each participant comes with his or her own perspective of Ministry of Presence based on his or her own faith and tradition. Since chaplains are the ones who bring Ministry of Presence to those seeking or needing God's presence, will they open themselves up to receive Ministry of Presence from other chaplains? Can the group create its own sense of Ministry of Presence?

Another theological principle that can be applied to a peer-to-peer post deployment chaplain support group is Theological or Spiritual Autobiography. Rabbi Eugene Borowitz (personal conversation, April, 1997) taught how a person's theology can be shaped by his or her personal experiences. There is little written on this topic, however, one of its best proponents is Frederick Buechner (1991) wrote:

All theology...is at its heart autobiography...what a theologian is doing essentially is examining as honestly as he can the rough-and-tumble of his own experience with all its ups and downs, its mysteries and loose ends, and expressing in logical and abstract terms the truths about human life and about God that he believes he has found implicit there" (p. 1).

The Jesuit brother, Charles J. Jackson (2012) commented that meaningful experiences could shape and mold a person's spiritual life to how they see and relate to the world around them. He notes that spiritual autobiographies "allows the writer to communicate who she or he is as a person and what is important in her or his life."

How I approach a situation is based on how I understand, and reflect upon previous life experiences both positive and negative. When I am providing pastoral care, I may not verbally reference my own life experiences, but how I listen to someone and what I say to comfort and console them, is shaped by my own experiences and my internal reckoning of how I perceive God. Spiritual Autobiography can then be a powerful tool for a peer-to-peer chaplain support group. Having chaplains share their deployment experiences and how their lives and ministries have been impacted can help them reengage with their spiritual and personal lives and, in turn, help others do the same.

A third theological principle pertinent to this project is using scripture to influence, guide, and inspire. Rabbi Sheldon Marder in his article, *God is in the Text: Using Sacred Text and Teaching in Jewish Pastoral Care*, quotes Moshe Halbertal comments about how scripture can reflect one's own experiences, challenges, or struggles in life (Friedman, 2011, Kindle location 4286). Halbertal states: "The text itself becomes a locus of religious experience ... the very reading of the text becomes a religious drama in and of itself. God is present in the sacred text and studying it is thus tantamount to meeting God; it is a moment of great religious intimacy."

My own scriptural model for a Chaplain's theological journey is the story of the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22), in Hebrew referred to as the *Akedah* or binding of Isaac. This story represents my own journey as a Citizen Soldier chaplain leaving my family

and congregation, going on a deployment, and most powerfully and surprisingly, struggling to reintegrate back into civilian life after my return home.

As a background to the *Akedah* the patriarch Abraham, forefather of monotheism, has accomplished great feats, reaching the pinnacle of professional, spiritual, political, and military success. Even in old age, he becomes a father to Isaac, his son from his wife Sarah. Suddenly, in Genesis 22:1-19, God puts Abraham to the true test of faith (Sarna, 1989, p.150) and asks that he sacrifice Isaac to God:

Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." ²And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you." ³So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. ⁵Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you."

⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together. ⁷Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" ⁸And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together.

⁹They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son.

This part of the story is understood as a demonstration of Abraham's faith in God.

Where he had once argued with God over the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis, 18:16), here Abraham is silent, faithfully obeying God's will.

He almost completes the task before an angel of the Lord calls out to stop Abraham from killing Isaac:

¹¹Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: “Abraham! Abraham!” And he answered, “Here I am.” ¹²And he said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me.” ¹³When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴And Abraham named that site *Adonai-yireh*, whence the present saying, “On the mount of the LORD there is vision.”

God, acknowledging Abraham’s faithfulness, bestows upon him a final blessing:

¹⁵The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, “By Myself I swear, the LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, ¹⁷I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. ¹⁸All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command.”

In connecting this text to a chaplain’s experiences, an interesting comparison can be made between Abraham’s descent from the mountain and a chaplain’s return from a deployment. Abraham hears the voice of God on top of the mountain for the last time; it is the final Divine encounter he will experience. No more conversations, revelations, or experiences ever occur between Abraham and God. After such an emotionally and spiritually charged moment as the *Akedah*, God is silent for the rest of Abraham’s life. Furthermore, Abraham comes off the mountain, seemingly alone:

¹⁹Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba....

There is a modern rabbinic homiletic play on Genesis Chapter 22 where the greatest test was not going up the mountain to sacrifice Isaac, but “coming down off the mountain (H. Kushner, personal communication, August 10, 2012). The assumption is that with great faith, Abraham charges forward and offers up his son. When he passes the

test and God praises his action, Abraham leaves the site and heads home. The homiletic question is what was Abraham thinking heading off the mountain?" Abraham had the faith to go up the mountain; did he still have it coming off the mountain? How does he deal with the silence from God afterwards? There is a sense of spiritual loneliness, though the text is silent on it, leaving gaping spiritual holes.

Barbara Brown Taylor writes in her work *When God is Silent* (1998), about God's silence and Abraham's loneliness that pursued in her work,

"Never in the history of the world, I think, had there been such a silence. No one said a word. Not Abraham. Not Isaac. Not God. . . . He had passed the test, but Abraham never talked to God again. In the years that were left to him, he spoke about God often enough, but he never again spoke to God, and God respected the silence. Their conversation was over. Abraham's reward for obeying God's voice was never to have to hear it again. (Kindle Locations 415-419)."

Projecting forward to today, can Guard chaplains come off the deployment mountaintop, just as Abraham did, and keep their faith intact? Do chaplains remain stuck on the downside of the deployment mountain, not knowing how to move forward? Do chaplains still hear the "voice of God" after they return home? Barbara Brown Taylor again notes that, "Maybe those of us who are haunted by God's silence are blocked in some way, stopped up so that we cannot hear what we are supposed to hear. Maybe we do need professional help, but it seems entirely possible to me that what we are sensing is true. For reasons beyond our understanding, the sovereign God is not so talkative anymore. (Kindle Locations 186-187).

The Citizen-Soldier chaplain can be the modern-day Abraham called to active duty. The chaplain leaves the comforts of civilian life—family, home, congregation or parish—and heads out to a distant and potentially deadly land. The experience of a deployment is demanding, challenging and incredibly rewarding. It can fulfill desires of

greater military service to “God and Country.” The moment on the mountaintop is powerful and lasting, but not infinite. The deployment will end and the chaplain like Abraham will return home to family and civilian employment.

Much commentary has been written about Abraham going up the mountain and the actual mountaintop experience. There is little, if any, commentary that deals with his descent and homecoming (Sarna, 1989). Similarly, there has been little written about National Guard chaplains’ experiences postdeployment. This motif of going down the mountain and possibly getting stuck on the descent, can directly apply to the theological challenges facing a chaplain post deployment and is the genesis for this Demonstration Project.

A final theological principle of this demonstration project is the spiritual loneliness that a National Guard chaplain might encounter after the spiritual high that the deployment provided. Spiritual loneliness can be defined as:

The stage at which a soul begins to sense that there is more to life than the mundane experiences of the superficial level of his engagement in the world. The soul is beginning to feel a weariness of spirit in an endless cycle of dissatisfaction (Murch, 2008).

For chaplains, spiritual loneliness can be quite real. Following deployments, chaplains return as changed individuals to the civilian world they left behind. They inspire others to have a connection to or relationship with God; but they can’t always feel it themselves. Reading the scripture, where once full of revelation on how to live, can after deployment seem empty to preach to others or for self-reflection. Spiritual loneliness can be directly feeling the Divine’s silence in a chaplain’s life on the downside of the mountain.

Clinical Principles

Drilling National Guard Chaplains encounter a multitude of counseling situations, both related and nonrelated to military situations. Just as soldiers may seek out clergy during their civilian lives, they take the opportunity to speak with chaplains over drill weekends. This is especially true if the soldier does not belong to a church or synagogue or is not even “religious at all.” Most common issues brought to a chaplain range from work struggles, promotion woes and performance reviews, to marital issues, family dynamics, and parental aging and illness.

When a unit has recently returned home from deployment, new clinical issues almost always arise that can present themselves to a chaplain months after the unit has fully demobilized. Since most units are on terminal leave up two to three months after the official return, the soldier-chaplain encounter won’t happen until at least three months after returning home.

The most common issues facing redeployed soldiers are Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD, post-combat fatigue, strained marital relations or dysfunctional family dynamics, and even suicidal ideation. Karen Besterman-Dahan (2012) noted that these issues are exacerbated post deployment and are even worse for soldiers with multiple deployments. Chaplains are the front line defense to address these problems that soldiers encounter post deployment. Handling these issues can consume a great deal of the chaplains’ drill weekend and can even spill over to their personal, civilian time.

Probably the number one issue for which soldiers seek out a chaplain is PTSD. A prominent source on PTSD, the DSM-IV (1994) defines the condition as:

The development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stress or involving direct personal experience of an

event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to the physical integrity of another person (p.424).

According to the DSM-IV, combat is a common trigger for PTSD that the experience of combat can “be experienced” well after the initial incident or event actually occurs, usually when one is back home. Schiraldi (2000) notes that PTSD is “a normal response to an abnormal event because the conditions are completely understandable and predictable (p. 4). Many military and Veterans resources list the chaplain as a vital resource in dealing with PTSD.

What is most challenging and seldom addressed clinically is that chaplains are not immune to the same factors affecting the very soldiers for whom they care. Even though chaplains provide mental health care for soldiers, they may very well be experiencing their own PTSD or other types of deployment stress. Besterman-Dahan (2012) sought to “understand the impact of combat stress and deployment on the well being and reintegration of military chaplains in order to preserve the care of these caregivers” (p. 11).

One recent autobiography about a military chaplain’s struggle with PTSD is Roger Benimoff’s Faith Under Fire, (2010). Benimoff details personally and quite profoundly, both with the excitement of ministering to soldiers during OIF, but also the devastating PTSD he experienced from his second deployment: “I hoped that as a military chaplain, I could work in a war zone and in a small way try to mitigate the tool that war takes on people (p.97).” He relates a conversation in which he confided to a senior chaplain:

I guess I am mad at myself because I felt that with my knowledge, position, and experience—I shouldn’t be having these problems....I also know that I’m extremely stressed by the reintegration programs. I know

that I discount my struggles and that plays into me taking too much on (p. 143).

With the constant counseling load during civilian life and military drills, the chaplain can also be prone to Compassion Fatigue. Compassion Fatigue is described as a physical, emotional and spiritual fatigue or exhaustion that takes over a person and causes a decline in his or her ability to experience joy and care for others. The chaplain may counsel others for Compassion Fatigue but can also face the same realities without a support system to fall back on (Hayes, 2009). Besterman-Dahan's work in the field has documented that these issues are especially difficult for chaplains postdeployment because they struggle knowing where to turn with their own issues and concerns. As a result, chaplains often cope with issues such as Compassion Fatigue and PTSD alone.

In 2009, the Army Chief of Chaplains issued in The Army Chaplaincy Strategic Plan 2009-2014 a goal of improving the spiritual resiliency of chaplains postdeployment. They also recognized that Post-Traumatic Stress and other emotional factors greatly affect the Chaplain Corps (Army Chief of Chaplains , 2009, p.4). They sought to respond to these challenges by encouraging Active Duty Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants and their spouses to attend weekend retreats and seminars on reintegration issues and coping skills post deployment. Although the retreats were open to National Guard Chaplains and spouses, neither NGB nor State Guards set aside funding to send Guard chaplains (Williams, 2012). Without designated funding, it is nearly impossible for a chaplain to travel to the conference, since the cost would be prohibitive.

Two additional clinical principles to note that can be important factors in creating a peer-to-peer chaplaincy support group are issues of transference within the group and individual physical, moral, or spiritual injury during a chaplain's deployment time.

Transference, according to Yalom (1995, p.44) "is a specific form of interpersonal perceptual distortion. ... Working through the transference—that is, the distortion in the relationship to the therapist—now becomes only one of a series of distortions to be examined through the process." Yalom notes that in individual or group settings, that the therapist can be seen as a parent, teacher, or other authority figure. In a military chaplain setting, the rank of members and supervisory roles in professional settings can be a perceptual distortion to affect group cohesion and potential openness of members.

In regard to possible physical, moral, or spiritual injury during a deployment, it is important to note if distinct personal struggles in these areas arise during group meetings. For example, if the group is a mixed gender group, would issues of sexual abuse surface, or if chaplains were struggling with the overall moral issues of killing or the violence within war would chaplains bring these issues up for discussion?

Finally, there is no literature or established theological or clinical principles to address the issues National Guard chaplains may be coping with postdeployment. This Demonstration Project will seek to explore a peer-to-peer ministry in the form of a support group model, utilizing the theological and clinical principles outlined here to help Citizen-Soldier chaplains move off the postdeployment mountain. This ministry project is the first known model of its kind creating a template for future spiritual care and resiliency.

Chapter III: Methodologies

The goal of this Demonstration Project is to establish a peer-to-peer support group of National Guard Chaplains who deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, or Kuwait as part of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom since 2007. As discussed earlier, there has been no formal attempt to minister to National Guard Chaplains post-deployment. There is also no model for how to conduct ministry to such a group.

It is the project's intent to focus only on National Guard chaplains, precisely because Guard chaplains live and work in both a civilian world and military world. Although every state or Commonwealth has an Air Guard component with its own chaplaincy program, only Massachusetts Army National Guard Chaplains will be solicited in order to keep the group as homogeneous as possible. Everyone in the group will then be familiar with any lingo, acronyms, and military structures that might arise during sessions, thus fostering the potential for a greater sense of group bonding. Someone from a different chaplain component might not be on the same pastoral "combat field."

As a pilot study, I will ascertain the actual need for the support group and recruit participants by reaching out to individuals who fit the specific criteria of Massachusetts Army National Guard Chaplains who have deployed since 2007. I will explain the goals of the support group and assess the interest of the chaplains. I will briefly share my personal struggles with returning home from my deployment and see if they have experienced similar issues and would benefit from participating in such a group. I will also describe the group's protocols, including issues of confidentiality as well as my own involvement in the group as a full participant rather than as a facilitator or leader.

I will provide participating chaplains with a release statement, along with a signed covenant between each participant and myself as the State Chaplain, which will be signed at the first meeting (see Appendices B & C). In the Demonstration Project, all names and general biographical data of participants, save myself, will be changed to further protect anonymity. The participants will be briefed that what they say will be used in the Demonstration Project write-up, but that nothing they say or don't say will be used for or against them for military career advancement or evaluation. The only caveat that would be if a chaplain discusses behavior that is deemed a physical threat to one's self, someone else or against National Security.

All meetings will be held at my home to ensure a private and welcoming atmosphere. I will also instruct participants to attend in civilian attire, rather than uniforms. Army service uniforms display rank on shoulder epaulets or on the front of combat uniforms. Civilian clothing will enable us to talk openly. My greatest concern is that the other participants will be in the habit of calling me "sir" or "Chaplain Bazer" instead of "Larry," thus creating a barrier from opening up fully and not seeing me as an equal within the group. Nametags will be worn for the first session to further encourage everyone to call one other by their first names again, removing any rank superior-subordinate status, and making everyone in the group equal.

To this end, my sole "official role" in the group will be to serve as an administrative facilitator, keeping records, coordinating dates, preparing snacks, asking someone to give an invocation and benediction at the appropriate times, assigning someone to bring a reading or passage to the next session, and noting and keeping the time of each session. Aside from these administrative responsibilities, the group will be

leaderless. Everyone will be equal in bringing their issues and struggles to the group without judgment from others.

The numbers of sessions for the support group will be determined by how many participants agree to participate. This will enable each chaplain to feel that they have the opportunity to bring whatever issues or concerns to the table. I plan to model the first session by sharing my post-deployment challenges along with the Genesis text that represents my struggles with faith and spiritual connectiveness. I hope that the other chaplains will then bring and use their own texts as vehicles for sharing struggles or concerns. Finally, the presentation of scriptural readings or spiritual passages will serve as the starting point of each session's discussion.

Depending on how the sessions flow, I hope to raise issues I am struggling with that I believe the other participants would get intrinsically, whereas other friends, congregants, or family members could not or would not understand the intensity of the questions or concerns. For example, I've felt since being home that I've wanted to share distinct aspects of the deployment, but hold back out of fear they might think I've been negatively changed or damaged by the deployment, or that "I'm just showing off." I believe by sharing experiences like this one with my peers, I would gain the relief or validation I am seeking. So, too, I would hope others might share their similar issues or concerns.

At the second-to-last session, I plan to conduct a quick verbal check-in to see whether participants are finding the sessions meaningful. This check-in will help guide the final session to a meaningful conclusion.

At the last session, during administrative time, an anonymous questionnaire will distribute. This will be completed at home and mailed back to me as a way to find out if overall goals for the group were met or if there was anything they felt they couldn't bring up in the group sessions (see Appendices D & E). I will then meet after the last session with each participant to personally discuss their reflections on the support group and to help shape future possibilities for this study in the larger National Guard world.

To determine if the goals of the peer-to-peer Chaplain Support Group are met and if ministry has occurred, I plan to summarize what happens during each session, including all relevant discussions and exchanges between chaplains. I will record body language, distinct displays of emotions or note silences from chaplains. I will also note when chaplains speak more personally and spiritually than at other times. Because there will be no set agenda beyond each session's opening prayer and scriptural reading, what is said in this unstructured time will be important information to determine if ministry is achieved. The above information will be compared to what each chaplain said during our one-on-one sessions along with the responses from the final anonymous questionnaires.

In addition to noting what was said during the formal sessions, one-on-one meetings, and anonymous questionnaires, I also look for encounters and interactions between participants outside of the sessions. For example, will there be interactions between participants either before or after a formal session? Will the chaplains leave for home right after a session finishes? These interactions can help me establish if true bonding between individuals is taking place, which would also indicate the important need for peer-to-peer Chaplain Support Group's postdeployment.

Chapter Four: Results

This section presents the significant outcomes from the peer-to-peer chaplain support group sessions. It was apparent from what individuals shared in the support group, the one-on-one interviews, and the anonymous questionnaire that the goals of the project were clearly met. I also found that some elements of the support group took on greater importance than I had anticipated.

The Project's intent was to minister to Massachusetts Army National Guard chaplains who have recently returned from deployments through OEF or OIF. Within this group, seven chaplains out of a total of eight were eligible to participate. All seven eligible chaplains expressed the need for a safe and confidential space to share their struggles of reintegration into family, work, and community. One noted it was "about time that a group like this was established; it can help me to sort through my deployment." Another shared, "I've been struggling with issues of faith, too, and I'm not sure what to do with these feelings." Another agreed that the group was a good idea, but that she had already explored the challenges of postdeployment with her endorsing agency and with fellow veteran chaplains within her denomination. She also noted that she felt too far removed from her deployment. The remaining six chaplains agreed to participate, but only five actually attended the group when the first session began on June 26, 2012. The chaplain, who did not show up informed me that he was on Active Duty training with his battalion and could not leave to participate. The support group met a total of five times during the summer of 2012, corresponding to the number of chaplains ultimately in the group.

The five chaplains who formed the group were:

1. Zeek, a 41-year-old Hispanic male, and 19-year veteran. He is an American Baptist and holds a Master of Arts in Urban Ministry. In civilian life, he is a high school English teacher. He was with a support battalion and deployed with them to Iraq. Zeek has been divorced for over a year. His wife left him right after he returned from his deployment. He has three children. He stated his outset goals for the group were to find a place to decompress and a safe space to share.
2. Chad, a 39-year-old Caucasian female, and thirteen13-year veteran. She is from the Disciples of Christ and holds a Master of Divinity degree. She's the chaplain for a brigade, but deployed with an aviation battalion that was based in Kuwait from 2009 to 2010. In civilian life, she is a hospice chaplain. She has been married ten years and has two children, but is in the process of a difficult divorce. She stated her goals for the group were to seek a peer group, knowledge, and self-grace.
3. Amos, a 29-year-old African-American male, and veteran for three years. He holds a Master of Divinity degree and is endorsed by the Lutheran Church. Amos recently switched denominations from a Pentecostal group. He is an Admissions Associate for the seminary he graduated from, and also serves part-time at a local congregation. He has been in the National Guard for two years, and his first deployment from 2011 to 2012 was with an artillery battalion to Afghanistan. Amos has been married for two years and left on deployment shortly after being married. His goals for the group were to find closure and clarification of feelings.

4. Eli, a 36-year-old Asian male, and a 14-year veteran. He was endorsed by a Conservative Congregationalist denomination and holds a Master of Divinity degree. He is presently on active orders with the MAARNG conducting the Strong Bonds program. He deployed to OIF from 2009 to 2010 with an engineer battalion. He is remarried two years and deployed right after his second marriage. He has two children, ages 2, and one month. His goal was to seek a place of openness and understanding of what “we chaplains go through” post deployment.
5. Larry, the author of this study, a 49-year-old white male, and 23-year veteran. I am a full-time congregational rabbi and endorsed by the JWB-Jewish Chaplains Counsel for my military service. I have been married for 18 years and have two teenage children. This was my first deployment. I was the chaplain for a large brigade and served as the Kabul Base Cluster Command Chaplain from August 2011 to January 2012. My goals were to see if the group could provide a safe place to express feelings I was unable to share with my family and congregation, as well as to reconnect with God and my faith.

All five sessions were held at my home, during times when my family was not present. From the blind questionnaires and post session interviews, all four other chaplains remarked that having the sessions at my home definitely enhanced the openness of the group and people’s willing to share. There was no “religious turfs to deal with” or “feelings of army” if we had met at an armory. Having the sessions at my home also ensured privacy and confidentiality, which was noted by three of the chaplains as an important factor.

Expected outcomes

The peer-to-peer chaplain support group sessions created a feeling of a “Band of Brothers” between members of the group. This was noted by the follow-up comments that group members made to one another. For example, after Eli shared his scriptural passage and personal reflection, Amos remarked, “Yes, yes, I feel the same way.” Or when Chad shared her frustrations with her divorce proceedings, Zeek said directly to her, “I know what you going through; I’ve been there, and it does hurt.”

All of the chaplains were able to share stories about their deployments that they said they could not share with people from their civilian lives. For example, I shared the story of receiving a Combat Action Badge and the emotional turmoil of being “shot at.” I asked if others also experienced “combat situations” and two other chaplains responded by relating stories of when they faced rocket attacks in Iraq. Eli even shared an amusing tale of sitting on a bench eating a meal while some rockets came over the fence from the enemy. The air raid sirens went off and Eli went diving under the bench. Two female soldiers kept eating their meals on the bench and laughed at him as a “newbie” on base who didn’t know not to worry about that level of rocket attack. As the story was being told, Zeek added sound effects, mimicking the anti-missile “Phalanx” system going off defending the base from the incoming rockets. Eli knew what Zeek was doing. The others may not have experienced that sensation during their deployments, but we all knew what was transpiring with Eli’s story and Zeek’s sound effects. We could all laugh and support Eli.

I also noted that after the first session ended, the four other chaplains lingered for over ten minutes outside my house. I perceived they were bonding, which was later

confirmed to me by Amos who arrived early for the second session and told me they had been comforting Chad, who had a hard day at work. The bonding we experienced as a group was also confirmed by all of the chaplains during the one-to-one interviews and in the anonymous questionnaires. Even I, the state chaplain, was perceived by the others to be an equal part of the group.

All of the chaplains reflected on our bonding as a group during our fifth and final session. During these final sharing moments, Chad stated, “We walked the walk,” and truly understood the issues and emotions faced postdeployment. Chad told us she could not get the same level of support from her CPE training group. Even though she felt close to them, “we were different.” During our one-on-one sessions, Chad also noted that our group could share and understand the “open, raw emotions” she was feeling.

To model the use of scripture, I read from Genesis, Chapter 22, the Sacrifice of Isaac, at our first session (Appendix F). I found that the other chaplains greatly appreciated my forthrightness, honesty, and vulnerability in describing how I saw myself as Abraham coming down from the mountain, struggling to reconnect to God’s presence. Zeek remarked that he greatly appreciated my honesty and humility in sharing my struggles with them. He went on to share his own struggles of being “stuck on the mountain.” He referenced the Abraham and Isaac relationship as applying to his own life. He opened up about how when he came home and got off the bus, his wife was not waiting for him. The next day, she slapped him with a restraining order for her and the children, claiming fear of PTSD. It was extremely painful for Zeek who shared he was still feeling “stuck on a mountain.” He also noted that his prayer life and relationship with God was “distant at best.”

For the second session, Eli offered to bring the scriptural reading. He modeled his presentation after mine, by first reading the text to the group and then explaining how it related to his life and the struggles it represented. Each chaplain then brought his or her own scripture and explained how it related directly to his or her life. Eli brought Luke 24:13-35 (Appendix G). Amos shared during the third session the Serenity prayer (Appendix H); Zeek brought to the fourth session the reading from Mark 5:21-43 (Appendix I); and for the last session, Chad began with a “close your eyes and think” direction to the group and then read a “traveler’s prayer” that she found very meaningful during her deployment and especially afterwards (Appendix J). I noted over the four sessions following my presentation, that each text was deeply personal to the presenter and elicited positive reactions by the other group members.

One such positive response was seen in the way Chad seemed to open up much more in response to Amos’s Serenity prayer than she had during the first two sessions. She spoke about how difficult her pending divorce was becoming. She said her “ex” was making things very challenging with the financial and custody issues and that she “wanted to kill him” for it. Meanwhile, she had also lost a number of patients she was visiting as part of her hospice work. She told us: “I just wanted to go inside and not deal with anyone,” but after hearing Amos’s understanding of the Serenity prayer, she said she could identify with the verse and “accept the things I cannot change.” She talked about getting a divorce, handling the pressures of the hospice work, military career, and “almost not caring.” She expressed to the group that she found “hope” in what Amos shared.

Similarly, Zeek’s passage from the Gospel of Mark resonated profoundly with all of us, most notably with the Christian chaplains. It seemed to me that Zeek read the

passage with a passion that he had not exhibited in the prior three sessions. He presented to us four “E’s” that he personally derived from the text: Empathic—referring to Jesus and our group. Exhausted—the woman from bleeding for so long and our own feelings of “compassion fatigue.” Endures—Jesus endures through all and so do we. Empowered—God’s touch empowered the Woman as we empower soldiers when we “Nurture the Living, Care for the Wounded or Ill, and Honor the Dead.” The three other Christian chaplains expressed how much they liked what Zeek shared and how they personally related to the four “E’s” themselves. Zeek’s reference to compassion fatigue also shifted our overall conversation along that path.

In regard to issues of prayer, Eli, Zeek, Amos, and I all struggled. Eli used his Luke 24:13-15 text to show us his struggle between “absolute faith” and his “changing relationship with God.” He noted how although God always remains a constant in his life, he felt his relationship with God was different pre- and post-deployment. He described himself as feeling “lost” and wanting the same relationship he had with God before the deployment. Amos totally agreed with Eli, sharing how he used to love reading missals and “The Daily Bread,” but now struggles to read and find comfort in them. He even mentioned that his wife questioned him on his prayer life. Eli told us that he wasn’t reading his daily devotionals like he used too and missed it. His preaching themes also seemed forced and lacked the same passion as before. This then led to a discussion of connection to prayer and “going through the motions” of leading prayer for our congregational worship. I shared how I used to pray “three times a day” before and during deployment, but post deployment, would barely get two times in and really didn’t

care. Zeek, Chad and Amos all agreed with Eli that it was good to see others having the same struggle they were having.

During the third session, when Amos brought the Serenity prayer as his scripture contribution, he noted that it was what kept him strong during his deployment. He would look at it daily and meditate upon it but since his deployment, up until the session he presented, he hadn't connected to it.

In my opinion, the fourth and fifth sessions brought a change in how some of the chaplains were expressing their prayer connections. The most noticeable was Zeek, who seemed to deliver his scriptural text with a stronger voice and connection. There was a passion and clarity to his message. He remarked that he felt "lighter of spirit" since coming to the group. Even preparing for the reading was easier because he was "not just going through the motions" as he felt he had been doing at his part-time pulpit. Zeek also told the group that even though it was difficult to work out childcare as our evening sessions conflicted with his time with the children, now, being a part of the group, he realized the value in coming and participating with us each time.

Chad presented her scriptural or spiritual reflection at the beginning of the fifth session. She first had us close our eyes while she read the second to last verse of Psalm 27. Then she read the Traveler's Prayer, which she noted was actually taken from the Hebrew prayer she learned during her seminary years. She took it with her when she headed off to her deployment in Kuwait, and it gave her strength and hope throughout. She described herself on a journey, learning along the way to be open to all and not judgemental.

Chad told us how meaningful the prayer continues to be to her, especially in light

of the recent challenges with her ex-husband: “He is writing his own journey, and that’s OK in God’s eyes.” I heard her say how her faith was widening from her deployment experience and from her fundamental seminary training. I understood this to be very positive for her.

After all five group sessions, Eli shared with me during our one-on-one session that he was reconnecting to his personal prayer life. He told me he was again preaching with conviction and meaning, something he had been unable to do after his deployment and before our group began.

In each of the one-on-one sessions, I asked the chaplains if they experienced any changes in their family connectedness as a result of the support group sessions. All expressed a stronger sense of centeredness and reconnection with family members, particularly the three married chaplains. Amos said that his wife noticed how much more open and relaxed he seemed around the house. Some of his friends also expressed similar views. Amos’s wife was especially pleased that he was back to reading the “Daily Bread” missives. Eli told me during our one-on-one meeting that his wife also felt good that he was returning to his personal prayer life with more meaning. Zeek, in our one-on-one, was especially positive about the impact that being in the group had on his relationships with friends and family. He said that his close friends were glad he was participating in such a group. He noted that, “people don’t really know what coming home from a deployment is like because they haven’t ‘walked the walk.’” He also really liked how the other chaplains didn’t ask him if “he ever shot anybody over there!” He was tired of this question, but that is what a lot of people continue to ask him.

Unexpected Outcomes

My intention in opening each session with a scriptural or spiritual text was to have it serve as the starting point of each session's discussion and enable participants to share their struggles or concerns. Each chaplain brought a scriptural or spiritual reading when it was his or her turn to present in the group discussed earlier in this chapter. What wasn't expected was how powerful each presentation would be and what a crucial role the text would play in shaping each session. Each text distinctly defined the discussion that followed. Much more than just providing a "jumping-off point," the texts allowed all participant to fully share their struggle post deployment and for the other members to give pastoral feedback, comfort, or share personal reflections. The texts also helped members identify with one another and the feelings being expressed.

For example, after Amos shared the Serenity prayer and explained why it was important to him, Chad immediately agreed, and said how much the text now meant to her as well. She then proceeded to open up about her challenging divorce and difficult week at work. Listening to Chad talk about her divorce prompted Zeek to validate her struggles, as he too had experienced similar challenges with his divorce.

Another unexpected result was the importance of presenting my scriptural text first. My personal reflection modeled how the other members would present their own personal texts and challenges. The other chaplains saw that I was "candid and transparent" about my struggles, something Zeek and Amos each pointed out to me during our one-on-one sessions. Zeek was then able to open up about his struggles coming home from his deployment, commenting, "If Larry can do that, be real and raw, so can I."

A third unexpected result that came out of the support group was the importance of trust. Since the other chaplains were lower ranking than me, they could have been hesitant to open up to their senior officer and rater. However, both in the one-on-one interviews and the anonymous questionnaires, the other participants all noted that my being a senior officer was not a cause for concern. One anonymous member evaluated me as follows: “his professionalism as well as his ability to participate and be transparent actually acted more as a catalyst than as a challenge toward openness.” Another remarked that he originally had doubts whether I could really participate, only to discover that “the State Chaplain was just like us. He was human, he was hurt, and he questioned if he was good anymore because of his feelings.... He is the reason we all were able to begin healing again.”

In Chapter Two, psychological and theological issues such as PTSD, Compassion Fatigue, spiritual loneliness, and doubts about the validity of prayer that were discussed all surfaced by various chaplains during the sessions. Many of these issues were mentioned in passing remarks. The surprise was that the chaplains felt comfortable expressing these issues without the expectation of having them “solved” by other chaplains. For example, when Chad arrived for the first session, she noted that she was a bit frantic getting to my house from the Boston area. She said she was caught in traffic and at one point wasn’t sure which exit to take, when her “PTSD kicked in.” Amos said he knew exactly what she was feeling with the traffic: “I get the same feeling sometimes when I’m out in traffic and I feel like I’m back driving around Kabul.”

At another session, Zeek told us he was back at his unit “doing the chaplain thing,” but he had “no energy to really listen to soldiers’ problems.... Even at the

Teacher's Room at the High School, I don't want to hear the other teachers complain to me about trivial issues. I guess they call that 'compassion fatigue. I'm supposed to follow the Chaplain motto of nurture the living, care for the wounded, honor the dead, but I just can't do it."

I witnessed the others respond to these chaplains' remarks with nods or affirmations, but no one offered advice or suggestions. All we did, in my opinion, was validate their emotions. Amos noted in his group reflection during the last session that he valued the group because he was not here to "fix anyone" or minister to them in a chaplain—recipient relationship. It was completely a "peer-to-peer" relationship; "we were there for each other, equally."

During our wrap-up section of the final session, we all shared what we gained from the five sessions. I again went first, speaking about my frustrations with my congregation, tired of hearing them ask me: "Are you back yet?" I also said to the group that this place was where I was able to start hearing God's voice again through the fellowship with them, my colleagues. Eli found that he was able to get his prayer life back on line and feel God's presence. Zeek found a lightness again and the ability to preach the Word of God with passion and confidence. It was the first time since returning home and losing his wife to a divorce that he was able to open up his heart and soul. Things "were real" for him. Amos shared that the time together was sacred, holy time where everyone bonded in brotherhood and sisterhood. Most notably, he did not feel that he had to fix us with responses, as he felt he "had to do" as a chaplain, nor did he even have to "fix himself." The sessions were "just sharing time." Chad thanked me for having the group, allowing her to share with chaplains that "get" her love of being in the

military, something her fellow hospice and CPE chaplains don't fully understand. Chad also said that she now has a greater respect for me and my role and my heart.

Chapter V: Discussion

To my knowledge, this is the first peer-to-peer chaplain support group aimed to provide ministry for Army National Guard chaplains following deployments with OIF or OEF. Besterman-Dahan, et al. (2012) noted their work was the first of its kind to examine quantitatively the impact of wars of the last decade on the mental health and coping skills of Army Guard chaplains. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury reported how peer support groups can be a valuable tool in helping postdeployment soldiers overcome various issues, such as PTSD, reintegration to home or work, or general wellbeing (Money, et al, 2011). Their study only concerned the Active Duty component and concluded that working groups could best explore these avenues better. There was no mention of chaplain peer groups within their report. The little research involving chaplains mostly focused on the Active Duty component and, like Besterman-Dahan's work, the studies were exclusively research-based, using one-on-one interviews and anonymous questionnaires. The research sought only to identify problems facing chaplains, rather than address what chaplains need to reintegrate successfully into their families and communities.

Peer-to-Peer Support Group:

Although our group was diverse in gender, social class, ethnicity, race, religion, and military rank, we all shared the common experience of being Army National Guard chaplains who left our civilian lives, put on combat uniforms, went off to serve in a war zone, and then returned home. Our shared experience of war and deployment from a unique chaplaincy perspective enabled our diverse group to succeed. Yalom addresses

this phenomenon in his seminal work, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (1995), explaining that “therapy groups invariably contain individuals who are at different points along a coping-collapse continuum,” however, because these individuals often share similar problems, they “have improved as a result of the group therapy” (p.5).

Our diversity never limited or negatively affected our ability to share and discuss many post-deployment challenges. Issues raised included: spiritual loneliness or emptiness, trouble with personal prayer or ministering to others, difficulties reconnecting with family or friends, feeling unable to share full stories from our deployments, and clergy-congregational frustrations. On the other hand, no issues of moral dilemmas concerning the violence of war or combat or sexual tensions from deployment or at present surfaced during our sessions. That does not mean chaplains may be wrestling with these issues, they were not present during any of our discussions.

My initial concerns about my seniority in rank and my role as chaplain supervisor to the other members were unfounded. I asked to be called by my first name, and only on a few occasions did someone slip and call me “sir.” Members seemed comfortable opening up about personal struggles, without concern that something they said or did not say could negatively influence our military relationship. By witnessing my vulnerability, they could be vulnerable as well. Thus, the issue of transference seemingly was not present during the sessions.

In addition, because there was no facilitator for our group, we were essentially leaderless. We were therefore able to minister to and learn from one another without an official leader who could seem removed or separate from the group. Work conducted on peer support groups for cancer or HIV patients have showed similar findings (OHTN,

2010). The peer-to-peer setting is vital then in establishing future National Guard chaplain support Groups.

I also feel that bringing chaplains together, regardless of rank, position, or background, is more beneficial than solely conducting one-to-one meetings, which could feel more like a therapist-client relationship. Sherman, et al. (2004) confirm that a therapeutic group experience can provide a sense of universalism or shared experience, and an opportunity to learn from others facing similar challenges. Finally, peer support and modeling also may contribute to new coping resources and self-efficacy, perhaps more effectively than is possible in individual therapy (OHTN, 2010).

Safe Haven:

The support group was able to provide ministry because we met in a non-military environment. Meeting in my home rather than a house of worship or military setting, where we were all in civilian attire, provided a safe, private, non-threatening environment for us to share. Visible rank could have influenced or more likely inhibited discussion, as one anonymous chaplain noted, “showing up in civilian clothing . . . helped people feel confident that what was said in the room, stayed in the room.”

Band of Brothers (and a Sister):

The term “Band of Brothers ” was used by Zeek to describe our peer-to-peer chaplain group during his reflection at our last session: “This was just what I needed for me and my soul! I could honestly share my struggles, because our “fearless leader, Larry did, as did all of you. I felt we became a “Band of Brothers and a Sister! You can’t get

that anywhere else.” For Zeek and the rest of us, our similar experiences in a war zone and, more importantly, our similar struggles with reintegration back into civilian life helped us form this bond.

Becoming a “Band of Brothers and a Sister” was the ministry we gave to one another. As one chaplain commented, “we are all going through some questioning about our view of God and how our religious outlooks and practices have changed since the deployment. It was great to hear about it from chaplains who have been there and who are also struggling.”

The Power of Scripture:

The use of scriptural text, which I modeled for the group with Genesis, Chapter 22, helped define the peer-to-peer chaplain sessions. What was unexpected was the powerful role scripture would play in shaping our discussions. Not only did our conversations grow out of these readings, the texts served as a barometer for observing the emotional and spiritual shifts we experienced over the course of the sessions. Validating the importance of scriptural and spiritual readings within pastoral care, Anne Brener, explains how, “Prayer is conversation. It uncovers the authentic inner conversation of the self and places it in dialogue with the timeless, universal conversation of the infinite (Friedman, 2011, Kindle location 3011).”

Our scriptural or spiritual texts appeared to me to help promote a sense of spiritual and/or emotional healing. In both the individual meetings and anonymous questionnaires, each participant noted the power of scripture in shaping conversations and promoting connectivity. A notable example was how Chad identified with Amos’s

Serenity prayer through the lens of her failing marriage and pending divorce. This led to Zeek supporting Chad with his comment, “been there, too.” It was from that moment that I noticed an opening up in Chad’s ability to share with the group that continued through the last session. The use of scriptural or spiritual text then became one way that “ministry” was provided to all the participants.

The Rejuvenation of Prayer and Spiritual Life:

During the first two group sessions, a number of participants expressed how they were struggling with personal or communal prayer life and connectivity to the Divine. Amos, Zeek, Eli and I all shared our difficulties praying regularly post-deployment as well as our struggles to find an inner spiritual connection to God. We all connected to the scriptural passage I shared from Genesis chapter 22, where Abraham comes off the mountain, leaving behind his personal relationship with God. God becomes silent, just as God seems silent or absent in our prayer lives.

In the text he presented from Luke 24:13-35, Eli shared his spiritual struggling before and after his deployment. He talked about seeing his relationship with God weaker after he was home from deployment while seeing Jesus’s faith in the scripture remaining constant. He stated he was feeling spiritually distant from God and thus struggled to pray with sincerity as he always could before his deployment. Zeek and I felt comfortable expressing how we also had trouble praying. I was able to share that while I see myself as a role model to my congregation, I often lack the energy for personal prayer, or feel that I’m just going through the motions. Zeek agreed with Eli’s position and even referenced God’s silence at the end of the Abraham text. So in our

communal lament over our struggles with prayer life, we comforted each other without judgment.

During the one-to-one meetings, many group members shared that they experienced a renewed feeling of personal prayer life or spiritual connectivity to God after going through the five peer-to-peer sessions. Eli expressed how he now was able to pray on a personal level and deliver homilies with a much greater sense of conviction, that he was “feeling back on line” and “spiritually renewed again.” Zeek also said he was able to “feel faith and preach about faith” with a greater sense of the divine. I found that after the peer-to-peer sessions my own prayer life was restored and it became easier finding the time to pray as I used to before my deployment. I also found a renewed energy coming forth from my sermons and pray in leading my congregation. And when it came time for the High Holy Days, I felt “alive” again; I was feeling God’s presence again in my life.

Personal Growth:

One goal that was assessed through the individual interviews and blind questionnaires was whether participants felt they grew spiritually and/or emotionally over the course of the support group sessions. All participants responded affirmatively, with one remarking, “the group at first kept me afloat, prevented me from drowning. I guess you can say it kept the spark dimly lit. Towards the end it began to relight the spark.” While one-to-one counseling might have achieved similarly positive results, this same member addressed the role of the group’s “presence” in contributing to his spiritual strengthening and personal growth: “I really do believe the members were my peers and

they have something to offer to keep me going.... I hope I also gave my colleagues strength and a sense of renewal.

Ministry of Presence over Therapy:

Amos's comments about not being in the group to "fix anyone" or to minister as in a therapeutic counseling relationship was very telling to the importance and success of what the group was about and what it was not. We were all able to validate one other's post-deployment journeys. Each member ministered to one other without advising or counseling anyone. So when a participant mentioned PTSD or Compassion Fatigue, the other members did not feel they needed to engage the chaplain therapeutically. Also, because none of the discussions seemed to reflect issues of gender and our group was a mixed group, it could be there was some issues or even sexual trauma that was not shared. This can be a factor for future groups and participants must be sensitive to such matters. What was readily apparent is that the group was there to listen, validate, affirm, but not "fix." By only exhibiting ministry of presence to each other, I believe that all members were able to find renewal of spirit and spirituality.

Moving off the Mountain:

The goal of this Demonstration Project was to create a peer-based, leaderless support group for National Guard Chaplains—Citizen Soldiers—postdeployment that would address issues and struggles with reintegration. In a sense, the ultimate goal was to help chaplains, including myself, "move off the mountain" with a greater sense of

spiritual fulfillment than before the group began. Based on the comments and questionnaires of what transpired during and after the group met, “wholeness” and “reconnectiveness” to God, family, work, and self-awareness were achieved. This project can now be used as a ministry tool to help other National Guard Chaplains in other states reintegrate post deployment back into their Citizen Soldier roles.

The key to establishing a successful peer-to-peer group is to: 1) have no discussion leader or facilitator; 2) frame each session with a scriptural or spiritual text presented by a chaplain participant; and 3) gather in a non-military, non-religious setting, preferably in someone’s home or homes, and not wear uniforms or have symbols of rank. Although my Demonstration Project showed that there was no apparent issues of having a senior officer in the same group as junior ranking chaplains, it can be suggested that in future replicated peer to peer groups that the facilitator or group leader be from a Guard state or region not connected to the participating chaplains home state. This can allow for the greatest level of openness and sharing. The issues of transference must be considered for any future run project. Finally, just as Abraham came off the mountain and went on to live out his life with fulfillment, chaplain participants can also move off the mountain and “see” that God is still present in their lives. By bringing together National Guard chaplains in a peer-to-peer group setting to review and reflect on individual and collective post-deployment experiences, ministry can happen.

“Moving off the Mountain:” A Personal Conclusion:

This Demonstration Project grew out of my own struggles reintegrating back into home and synagogue life after my six-month deployment to Afghanistan. Upon returning

home and resuming my civilian synagogue responsibilities, I found myself spiritually apathetic. Where I used to hear and feel God's presence daily through prayer, civilian ministry, or even family relations, not only could I not feel God's presence, I didn't care. Meanwhile, I was expected to jump right back into my rabbi and chaplain roles, needing to be there everyone else.

I was finding that I had emotions welling up inside with no place to release them, at least not with people who would understand what I was experiencing. I wanted to share my story of receiving a Combat Action Badge and how it felt to be shot at without feeling like I was bragging. I also found that I missed being over there but couldn't admit that to the people close to me. I loved my work over there, loved the challenge, and loved the ministry of caring for people who respected my position and spiritual identity. Back home at the synagogue, I was dealing with seemingly trivial matters and lots of politics, very different from the real issues of life and death I faced every day during my deployment.

So I yearned to share my struggles and learn from others who understood where I was, not just emotionally, but spiritually. I found through this peer-to-peer support group, the ministry I needed to heal. I experienced comfort. I was considered a fellow chaplain, not a superior officer. I felt renewed as a result of the peer-to-peer support.

These past High Holy Days were spiritually fulfilling for me and I felt reconnected with my congregation. I even gave a sermon about Faith and Doubt based on Abraham moving off the mountaintop from Genesis chapter 22. While I did not refer to the deployment, or support group, my second day Rosh Hashanah sermon was directly influenced by both experiences. Finally, I also started feeling better about my

place within my own family, an extremely positive and important step for me. The group was the blessing I needed to move off the deployment mountain and finally return home. I was feeling God's presence again.

I close with what I shared as our support group's closing prayer at the end of the final session: "*HaKadosh, Barchu*-Holy One, Blessed be You; through this group, my fellow colleagues—my friends, I heard Your voice again; I see and feel Your Presence, and I can now come down from the mountain. Thank you, O Lord."

Glossary of Military Terms

Battalion: A battalion is the smallest Army element that a chaplain would be assigned. Usually numbering between 300 to 600 soldiers, the battalion is commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel. Battalions are made up of smaller units called companies, squadrons, batteries, or teams depending on the type of battalion, e.g., infantry, aviation, artillery, transportation, or tanks. The chaplain, usually a First Lieutenant or Captain, provides for the spiritual and moral welfare of the battalion. This is usually the chaplain's first assignment in the military.

Branch: Branch can have two different meanings. It can refer to a military branch of service as in "Army," "Navy," "Air Force," or "Marines." Branch can also to the occupational specialty of a military service member. Infantry is a branch of ground or vehicle fighting soldiers. Helicopter pilots are part of the Aviation branch; Soldiers in tanks are in the Armor branch; Medical Doctors are in Medical; and lawyers are in JAG, Judge Advocate General. Clergy are branched specialized for the Chaplain Corps.

Brigade: A brigade is the next level up from a battalion. Usually two to five battalions make up a brigade. These units, which are under the command of Colonels, are sometimes called Regiments or Task Forces. While a brigade can have consist of all the same type of battalion units, but they are usually made up of different specialty battalions that work together to conduct a mission. For example, a "Maneuver Enhancement Brigade" is comprised of Engineer Battalions, Military Police Battalions, and Chemical Battalions. They may also have smaller units of transportation or logistics attached to them. Brigades have a chaplain as part of their command structure. This is the first supervisory level position for a chaplain, as a brigade chaplain will supervise junior chaplains in battalions. The typical rank of a brigade chaplain is Major, however some larger brigade-type units will have a Lieutenant Colonel as their chaplain.

Camp Phoenix: This is the American base in Kabul, Afghanistan, that has responsibility for all American bases in the Kabul Capital area. Camp Phoenix has over 2500 personnel, mostly American service members from all branches, along with many international Coalition Forces and civilian contractors. Task Force Yankee, the unit to which I was assigned during my deployment, was headquartered on Camp Phoenix.

Casualty Notification Officer (CNO): A Casualty Notification Officer is an officer or NCO that is tasked with the sacred and solemn duty to notify a family that their service member has been killed in action or died by other causes, such as suicide or a non-combat related accident). By DA regulation, a chaplain must accompany a CNO when making a death notification.

Combat Action Badge: This award, presented to soldiers who engage in or receive direct or indirect fire, is awarded to all non-infantry soldiers. It is rare that chaplains

would receive one, because it involves being in some direct line of combat. It is an award badge that is worn on both the service dress uniform and combat uniform.

Combat Awards: Combat awards are medals, ribbons, or badges presented to a soldier for various situations based on heroism, valor, and service. For example, someone who is injured in a war zone during a combat mission would receive a Purple Heart. An infantry soldier who performs heroically in a combat situation could receive a Bronze Star for valor. Everyone serving in connection with OEF receives an Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and those serving in connection to OIF receive the Iraqi Campaign Medal.

Combat Units: These are distinct units that are directly involved with combat operations or missions. Infantry, Artillery, Armor, and Special Forces are all examples of combat units.

Combat Support Units: These are units that directly support Combat units. For example, Military Police units are task with protection of a base along. They would also be tasked with the detaining and guarding of prisoners. Military Intelligence and Signal Corp are other examples of combat support units.

Combat Service Support Units: These are units that support the general operations of a military operation. Logistics units that transport and supply the force, Medical and other health care units, the Adjutant General Corps, JAG, and the Chaplain Corps are all examples of Combat Service Support units that combat or combat support units could not function without.

Combatants/Noncombatants: Combatants are service members directly involved in a war or combat situation. They are armed and can use a weapon. They are “fair targets” during a military conflict. Noncombatants are unarmed and are forbidden to carry weapons. Civilians are considered noncombatants, unless they pick u a weapon and become a combatant. Chaplains are always considered noncombatants.

Commander-in-Chief: The Commander-in-Chief is the head of the armed forces. For the Active Duty and Reserve Forces, the Commander-in-Chief is the President of the United States. For the National Guard, the Governor of each state or Commonwealth is the Commander-in-Chief during domestic operations, such as natural disasters or local emergencies. If a National Guard unit moves from its Title 32 status to Title 10 Federal status, then they answer to the President of the United States. All National Guard units that are deployed to OEF or OIF are under Title 10 Federal status.

Deployment: The status when a military unit leaves a home base and “deploys” or moves to a combat zone is known as a deployment.

Drill: This is the time that a National Guard soldier or airman performs his or her military service. It is typically one weekend per month and an additional two weeks per year for longer training purposes. National Guard chaplains have additional drill responsibilities due to the special duties they perform.

Enlisted: An enlisted soldier is someone who signs up to be in the military or is drafted during a time of war (such as WWII and Vietnam). Enlisted soldiers have no command responsibilities and range in rank in the Army from Private to Specialist or Corporal.

FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency. The National Guard works closely with FEMA during State or Federal emergencies in rescuing, protecting, and restoring communities hit by disasters.

Force Multiplier: In military terms, this is a factor or element that contributes to making a unit stronger or more effective in its mission. Chaplains are, therefore, a force multiplier because the commander knows that his or her unit can function more efficiently because the chaplain is taking care of the spiritual emotional needs of the troops. In practical terms for combat, the troops will perform their mission or operations better as a result.

IED/VBIED: Improvised Explosive Device/Vehicle-Born Improvised Explosive device. IEDs are bombs that are planted in a road or path and detonate remotely or by trip wire. VBIED are bombs delivered in cars or trucks, aimed to explode next to a military vehicle or a foot patrol, or are driven into a base or pedestrian area.

Kabul Base Cluster (KBC): This term refers to all the US Army and Military supported bases and camps within the Capital Region of Kabul, Afghanistan. The Kabul Base Cluster is made up of approximately eight to ten bases under the direct support of the US Army. My official chaplain role was the Kabul Base Cluster Command Chaplain. I oversaw the religious and spiritual welfare of over 10,000 US service members and civilians within the KBC. I also supervised or served as liaison for all the US chaplains within the KBC.

Massachusetts Army National Guard (MAARNG): This is the Army Guard component of the Massachusetts National Guard. The other component is the Air Guard (ANG). Together, the ARNG and ARG make up the Massachusetts National Guard (MANG)

Militia: Originally Colonial era New England citizens who formed armed units to protect towns or villiages before the American Revolutionary War. The MAARNG started as a militia in Salem, MA in 1636. The MAARNG refers to itself as “The Nation’s First” National Guard. I am the first and only Jewish Chaplain in the history of the MANG since 1636!

Military Vehicle: This is a vehicle that is especially equipped to transport service members. It usually has platforms for weapons systems. The HUMVEE is an example.

Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO): NCOs are officers who do not have a commission to perform a specific task in the military. They take an oath to follow all orders. NCOs lead the soldiers under them. They answer to the command of the officer within their units. In the Army, they are the sergeants of the force. Chaplain assistants who are NCOs directly supervise the enlisted chaplain assistants below their rank.

Officer: Officers receive a commission to serve in a specific military field. The “commission” gives them the right to command and perform. So, an Armor officer might lead a small unit of tanks into a battle situation. Almost all officers receive their commission by either attending a military service academy or completing a curriculum of military academic subjects. At the end of the school or program, they receive a commission into a particular service branch. West Point commissions Army officers, while Annapolis commissions officers for the US Navy or Marine Corps. Officers can also be commissioned by attending Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on a civilian college or university campus. They are then commissioned into the Reserve Forces. Chaplains, Doctors, Nurses, Dentists, and Lawyers are direct commission officers, meaning they do not go through pre-training and trial period-boot camp-to become officers. They enter directly with an officer rank. The ranks for officers range from a Second Lieutenant (LT), all the way up to General. Chaplains are directly commissioned as 1st LT or Captain, depending on years of civilian clergy experience. Seminarians still in theological seminaries can enter into the Chaplain Corps to see if they are interested in being a military chaplain in either the Active Duty or Reserve Component. I entered the Chaplain Corps as a Chaplain Candidate with the rank of 2nd LT. I am presently a Lieutenant Colonel.

OEF-Operation Enduring Freedom: The United States military operation in Afghanistan that began shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and downed United Flight 93. The United States formed a coalition of nations to aide in destroying al Qaeda terrorist operation. The war then progressed into both a counter-insurgency operation against the Taliban and Nation Building.

OIF-Operation Iraqi Freedom: The United States military operation in Iraq and surrounding Middle Eastern Countries. This conflict began in 2003 with the invasion of Iraq by US-led coalition Forces and ended with the official withdrawal of combat operations in 2011.

Phalanx Anti-missile weapon's system: The Phalanx is a defensive weapon that fires when incoming mortars or rockets are launched against bases. They fire in quick, rapid fashion to intercept the incoming attack missiles.

Rank: Rank is the level or grade that military personnel carry. The higher the rank, the more authority the individual has. Enlisted ranks are the lowest, NCOs, next, and then officers. The highest level that a chaplain can realistically obtain is full colonel, represented by an eagle insignia.

Reintegration: Reintegration is the term used when soldiers reenter their non-deployment status. For National Guardsmen, this means reentering civilian life and work.

Special Staff: The staff that assists or advises the commander of a battalion or higher-level military organization. A chaplain is part of a commander's special staff.

Terminal Leave: The time period when a redeployed soldier is home from their deployment through the time they officially come off of Active Duty orders. During terminal leave, the soldier is still receiving pay and allowances from the military, akin to vacation leave. It takes place after the deployment is over because, officially, there are no vacation days or days off while on deployment.

Title 10 & Title 32 Status: Title 10 of the United State Code outlines and governs the US Military under the command of the Department of Defense. The Active Component and Army, Air, Navy, and Marine Reserves are all under Title 10 status. National Guard units are only under Title 10 when they are federalized. Title 32 of the United States Code governs the National Guard of each state, Commonwealth, or US Territory (e.g., American Samoa, Guam). The states have control of the Guard to use for state operations or emergencies.

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A:** E-mail Welcome Letter to Chaplain Participants
- APPENDIX B:** Release Statement for Participants
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- APPENDIX F:** Larry's Scriptural Reading—Genesis 22:1-19
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- APPENDIX H:** Amos's Spiritual Reading—The Serenity Prayer
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Appendix A

E-mail Welcome Letter to Chaplain Participants

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you for your interest in participating in the Chaplain's Post-Deployment Support Group that I am organizing as a part of a Doctor of Ministry Demonstration Project. I am conducting this work through the auspices of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City.

In the group, it is my goal to explore our return to civilian ministry and life after our various deployments to Iraq, Kuwait, or Afghanistan. Our group will only be open to Massachusetts National Guard Chaplains that have deployed to these Area of Operations. The intent is that we chaplains are there for everyone else in their spiritual, mental, or emotional care, but who takes care or really listens to us. It will be a sacred place where we can share our struggles with faith, religious practice, family, and congregation or parish life. Everything said in these sessions will be considered both sacred and confidential.

Along with the confidentiality of the sessions, nothing said will be held against any chaplain. We will be calling each other by first names and will be in civilian clothing. No rank or proper military greetings will be exchanged. Furthermore, I will be giving each of you a signed covenant that as a military senior officer and supervisor, I will not use anything said for any military personnel action, such as OERs, promotion issues, assignment considerations, etc. I will also be sending a form noting that the Massachusetts National Guard, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in NY, NY, each other or myself will not be held liable for any actions for or against a person. Furthermore, that anything said will be used solely for the write-up and completion of my Doctor of Ministry Demonstration Project or professional articles that might be written. All names of participants will be changed.

I am also thinking of recording the sessions so that I can review what transpired during each session. I will be a participant in the group, too, not just the facilitator. I will have a separate release for you in giving me permission to record the sessions. If used, all recordings will be destroyed after the project is completed.

Our first session will be **Tuesday, June 26th starting at 7 PM** and run for approximately one and half hours. It will be held at my home in Framingham, 19 Spring Lane, gray house on left coming up from Water Street.

Please let me know if you cannot make this session. I am planning on approximately four more sessions once a week through July. At the first meeting we will set the rest of the dates together.

I will be sending you out some forms prior to our first session to fill out. Some of which will be biographical information for my project. They will be under a separate email.

Again, thank you for your interest and participation. I pray it will be greatly beneficial to you as clergy and as a child of the Divine. Please don't hesitate to call or email any questions or concerns.

I look forward to seeing you on the 26th.

Blessings,

Larry Bazer

larry@thebazers.org

508-989-9078 cell/508-877-6544 home

APPENDIX B

Release Form for Participants in Rabbi Laurence Bazer’s Doctor of Ministry
Demonstration Project 2012

I _____ understand and agree that I will not hold Rabbi Laurence Bazer, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Massachusetts National Guard, the National Guard of the United States, United States Army or any other government agency, or other participants within the organized group of Rabbi Bazer liable or at fault as a direct or indirect participation there in.

I understand that what is said with the group at each session and the totality of the group experience is confidential. Anything used by Rabbi Bazer will be for the sake of the Demonstration project and all identities of participants will be changed.

Furthermore, I understand that Rabbi Bazer will not use anything said by me or any other participant either for or against in his role as the Army State Chaplain of the Joint Forces Chaplaincy of the MA National Guard. The only caveat will be if a participant discusses behavior that is a threat to him/herself or someone else the ability for full confidentiality might not be fully held.

I understand and sign this of my own free will.

Name_____

APPENDIX C

Covenant between Chaplain (LTC) Laurence Bazer, the Joint Forces State Chaplain of the Massachusetts National Guard and

I Chaplain (LTC) Laurence Bazer, the Joint Forces State Chaplain of the Massachusetts National Guard pledge to not be influenced in my role as the State Chaplain with anything said or done by _____ during the support group sessions held by Rabbi Bazer as part of his Demonstration Project for his Doctor of Ministry degree. Nothing will be used either for or against any action, promotion, Officer Evaluation Report (OER), unit assignment, or deployment status as a result of what was said or not said during the sessions.

This project is a completely separate and distinct project of mine as a part of my Doctor of Ministry Degree.

Chaplain (LTC) Laurence Bazer
Joint Forces State Chaplain of the MANG.

Date

APPENDIX D

Cover Letter for Anonymous Final Intake Questionnaire

Dear _____,

I first and foremost want to thank you for participating in our Chaplain's Ministry Post-Deployment Support Group. Your personal involvement and participation has been a tremendous asset to the group and project.

As part of the Demonstration Project, I wanted to ask you a few specific questions to you that are important for me to know and hear. I wanted you to feel you can response without any feeling that you couldn't be totally honest.

Please take the time to fill out the questions. You can retype them and send them into me. I would prefer typed because then I couldn't not figure out who said what and why, plus it is easier to read. I want the responses to be totally anonymous. Once you are finished, please place them into the previously addressed envelopes and mail them to me. If possible, I would love to have your responses by August 15, 2012.

Again, thank you for your participation.

Blessings,

Larry Bazer

APPENDIX E

Anonymous Final Intake Questionnaire

1. Did you feel you achieved some/part/most/all of what you believed you hoped for being in the support?
2. Was there anything you felt you wanted to share but couldn't? Why?
3. Was it challenging having the State Chaplain in the group with you?
4. Was the difference in rank an issue in what you shared or not shared?
5. Were there topics of faith, readjustment, ministry, work issues that you wished the group engaged in?
6. Was the opening scriptural reading helpful?
7. What new areas of discussion would you want to explore?
8. Was it helpful that the sessions were not recorded?
9. Would you want the group to continue? If yes, how so, (frequency, being leaderless again, etc.).
10. Did the sessions make a difference in your life? Spiritual/prayer life? What didn't help?

Anything else you want to share with me about our sessions?

Thank you for your time.
Larry

APPENDIX F

Larry's Scriptural Reading

Genesis, Chapter 22:1-19

Jewish Publication Society. (1985). *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Genesis 22:1–19). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

22Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, “Abraham,” and he answered, “Here I am.”²And He said, “Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.”³So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him.⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar.⁵Then Abraham said to his servants, “You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you.”

⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together.⁷Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he answered, “Yes, my son.” And he said, “Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”⁸And Abraham said, “God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them walked on together.

⁹They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son.¹¹Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: “Abraham! Abraham!” And he answered, “Here I am.”¹²And he said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me.”¹³When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son.¹⁴And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, “On the mount of the LORD there is vision.”

¹⁵The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,¹⁶and said, “By Myself I swear, the LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one,¹⁷I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes.¹⁸All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command.”

¹⁹Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba; and Abraham stayed in Beer-sheba.

APPENDIX G

Eli's Scriptural Reading

LUKE 24:13-35

New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. 1995 (Lk 24:13–35). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

The Road to Emmaus

- 13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.
- 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.
- 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and *began* traveling with them.
- 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.
- 17 And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad.
- 18 One of *them*, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?”
- 19 And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,
- 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.
- 21 “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.
- 22 “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning,
- 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.
- 24 “Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”
- 25 And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!
- 26 “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”
- 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
- 28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther.
- 29 But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is *getting* toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them.
- 30 When He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them.
- 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their

sight.

- 32 They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”
- 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them,
- 34 saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”
- 35 They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

APPENDIX H

Amos's Spiritual Reading

The Serenity Prayer

From <http://www.beliefnet.com/Prayers/Protestant/Addiction/Serenity-Prayer.aspx>

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; ^[SEP]courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. ^[SEP]

APPENDIX I

Zeek's Scriptural Reading

MARK 5:21-43

The New King James Version. 1982 (Mk 5:21–34). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²¹ Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. ²² And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet ²³ and begged Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.” ²⁴ So *Jesus* went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

²⁵ Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, ²⁶ and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came behind *Him* in the crowd and touched His garment. ²⁸ For she said, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.”

²⁹ Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of the affliction. ³⁰ And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My clothes?”

³¹ But His disciples said to Him, “You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ ”

³² And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. ³³ But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. ³⁴ And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”

APPENDIX J

Chad's Spiritual Reading

Translation of Traveler's Prayer from unknown Jewish source.

May it be Your will, G-d, Our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that You should lead us in peace and direct our steps in peace, and guide us in peace, and support us in peace, and cause us to reach our destination in life, joy, and peace and return us in peace. Save us from every enemy and ambush, from robbers and wild beasts on the trip, and from all kinds of punishments that rage and come into the world. May You confer blessing upon the work of our hands and grant me grace, kindness and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us, and bestow upon us abundant kindness and hearken to the voice of our prayer, for You hear the prayers of all. Blessed are You G-d, who hearkens to prayer.

Psalm 27:13

I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

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