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**137th ANNUAL SESSION  
OF THE  
NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION USA, INC.**

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Cincinnati, Ohio**



**Office of the Ecclesiastical Endorser  
2017 Annual Report**

**Dr. Nevalon Mitchell, Jr.**



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## **Office of the Ecclesiastical Endorser 2017 Annual Report**

All praise and honor to God, our Heavenly Father, for the marvelous things He has done!

To our illustrious and visionary President, the Reverend Dr. Jerry Young, Vice President at Large Dr. Harry Blake, all Vice Presidents, General Secretary Dr. Calvin McKinney, Auxiliary Presidents, State Presidents, and Delegates to this 137th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

This is my first Annual Ecclesiastical Endorser Report. I thank President Jerry Young for appointing me to this position. I also want to thank my wife, Mrs. Wessylne Kaye Mitchell, who has assisted me, as the Assistant Endorser, in making sure that every chaplain's packet and application receives the quality care and attention it deserves. I also thank my very dear friend and brother, Reverend Dr. William R. Boone for accepting my invitation to become the Executive Administrative Officer.

Let me begin by saying that this time in our Nation's history calls for strong and courageous spiritual leaders. I believe that we have that in the chaplains and bi-vocational pastors that are endorsed by our Convention.

### **2017 Accomplishments**

This has been a very fruitful and productive year for the Endorsers Office.

- ✚ We began the year by attending The Annual Endorsers Conference in January, followed by a one- day meeting with the Chiefs of Chaplains. Both encounters were not only helpful, but they were also instrumental insofar as networking and meeting the national chaplaincy leadership.



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- ✚ We prepared our first Annual Comprehensive Budget. The annual budget lists four Endorser visits this upcoming year to include two trips to the Chaplains School in Columbia, South Carolina.
  - ✚ We have endorsed 102 new chaplains thus far in 2017. We currently endorse 135 Army Chaplains, 50 U.S. Navy Chaplains, 61 U.S. Air Force Chaplains, and 38 chaplains with the Department of Veteran Affairs Hospital System. We have 52 chaplains who serve in private hospitals, correctional institutions, police departments, and fire departments around the Nation. We continue to seek additional qualified ministers from our Convention to serve as chaplains.
  - ✚ We established a web site “Servant Leaders” at [servantleaders.org](http://servantleaders.org), for our chaplains. This site provides information on current events and issues that are relevant to all chaplains. Servant Leaders will be available September 5, 2017, and provide a link to the Convention website.
  - ✚ The Convention website, [nationalbaptist.com](http://nationalbaptist.com), includes the qualifications for an Ecclesiastical Endorsement and addresses fees, good standing, and the support provided by the Endorser’s Office.
  - ✚ The Convention website also includes a Facebook page to provide updated information on the Chaplain’s ministry.
  - ✚ The Convention website includes a Survey where our chaplains can indicate what they want and need for training purposes, and support.
  - ✚ We have established a database that includes demographic, status, contact information, and ministry specialty. This database will be used to contact chaplains that have been inactive and provide an opportunity for them to reactivate their association with our Convention.
  - ✚ Pastoral visit with one of our chaplains whose son died in New Orleans, LA.
  - ✚ Numerous telephonic pastoral visits with chaplains who were experiencing a variety of difficulties and successes.



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- ✚ Our annual Congress was one of the best Chaplain Professional Development Institutes that we have had. Our theme for this year was “Mental Health and the Stigma on the Black Church”. We had 89 chaplains, bi-vocational pastors and spouses in attendance. We had an additional 15 chaplains who were not able to attend due to mission requirements and demands worldwide.
  - ✚ Dr. Wilson from the Dean’s Office assisted us in honoring our first Bi-Vocational Pastors / Chaplains Awards. The awards were given to three men who provided outstanding service to the military, academic community, Convention and most recently to veterans. Our first recipients were:
    - Reverend Dr. Calvin Cage
    - Reverend Dr. Floyd Lacey
    - Reverend Dr. William R. Boone

### **What is a Chaplain?**

I am often asked about the duties and responsibilities of a chaplain. Many members of the Convention are not sure of what a Chaplain does or what the differences are between a pastor and a chaplain. So what is a chaplain and why would anyone want to become a chaplain?

The history of the United States Army Chaplaincy began with an act of the Continental Congress on 29 July 1775, based upon the recommendation of General George Washington. Chaplains are ordained clergy, men and women of God, who represent their particular denomination. The chaplains’ spiritual authority is to teach and preach, to conduct religious services, to perform ecclesiastical rites and to administer the sacraments and ordinances of their faith and church tradition which are consequently their guidelines. The ministry of the chaplain is to provide for the religious and moral needs of the men and women and their family members in their command or organization.



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Chaplains in the military are special staff officers to the Commander on matters of religion, morals, and morale as they are affected by religion. Chaplains are pastors to everyone in that Command.

The work of the chaplain is not confined to the chapel. Chaplains go wherever their soldiers, airmen, marines and sailors are. Chaplains can be found in a tent in the middle of the desert, on the deck of an aircraft carrier or on board a nuclear submarine 30 thousand feet beneath the surface of the ocean or sea. Chaplains can be found in barracks on post, on a fire fighting line, in the VA hospital on an intensive care unit, conducting prayer service or bible study in the local police or fire department or even in the halls of the Pentagon. You might say chaplains are there wherever and whenever needed.

The chaplains of the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospital System provide exceptional clinical, spiritual, and psychological care for over 21.7 million veterans, their families, and staff. The Veterans Affairs mission and motto says, "To Care for Him Who Shall Have Borne the Battle and His Widow and Orphan". Our Convention chaplains perform this mission and motto in an exceptional manner.

Our Convention has provided the Army and Veterans Affairs with three very senior chaplain leaders. Chaplain Matthew Zimmerman, endorsed by our Convention, was appointed as the 18<sup>th</sup> Chief of Chaplains by President George Bush on April 13, 1989, after serving as the first African American Deputy Chief of Chaplains. He also served as the Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Chaplains. The current Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Chaplains, Chaplain Mike McCoy, is also endorsed by the Convention. Additionally, we also thank God for Chaplain (Col.) Barth Edison who is currently serving in Europe as the United States Europe Command USEUCOM Chaplain. He is responsible for over 330 chaplains, chaplain's assistants and 600,000 military personnel and family members.



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We currently have many of our very own chaplains in every branch of the military and the Department of Veterans Affairs who are serving at the highest levels with distinction. Many of our female chaplains are making tremendous strides as clinicians, therapists and spiritual leaders in their own rights. We thank and praise God for each of our chaplains for the work they are doing in the military, in the academy, in the community and in the Church.

### **What does a chaplain do differently than pastors?**

In other non-military organizations and institutions the chaplain is the lone authorized representative for God and from his or her denomination to offer spiritual guidance and insight in a variety of situations and settings.

The broad overall mission of the Military Chaplain is to “Nurture the Living, Care for the Wounded and Honor the Dead”. On one hand local pastors provide funeral services for the families of the deceased, chaplains go out to wherever the military member is and walk along side of them as they also provide pastoral care and emotional support for the family members.

The primary difference between a pastor and a chaplain is found in where they work. For example, a pastor of a church or synagogue is called Pastor or Rabbi or an Imam, and as a spiritual leader their entire focus is on their congregation; but the chaplain may be of any faith and can and do serve as the chaplain to all of those people if they are members of his or her command or organization.

Pastors often visit members of their congregation at home, in the hospital or a nursing home while their focus is on their pastoral duties for their congregation. Chaplains perform their duties beyond the traditional church walls as their scope and thrust in ministry is much broader and comprehensive in nature.



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Chaplains have the:

- ✦ Ability to envision new creative, innovative designs of ministry for himself/herself and others in a pluralistic environment.
- ✦ Capacity for objective reasoning as their scope is enlarged to encompass the masses of people and their spiritual needs.
- ✦ Propensity for task orientation.
- ✦ Capability for decision making on many levels unlike many pastors.
- ✦ Willingness to assume risk that includes the ministry to several different religions and faith groups as their target audience.
- ✦ Proficiency in military writing as a special officer.
- ✦ Aptitude for managerial and administrative responsibilities at the highest levels.
- ✦ Adeptness in confrontation, negotiation and evaluation skills on several personal and professional levels.
- ✦ Personal disposition which includes characteristics of patience, cooperativeness, sensitivity, tenacity, maturity of judgement, integrity, loyalty, a sense of humor, self-affirmation, and a willingness to serve and enable others to serve in a military environment and the ability to serve as a spiritual leader.

### **What are the differences between a pastor and a chaplain?**

Chaplains are pastors, teachers, counselors, therapists, clinicians, staff officers and administrators whose specialized skills are valued, treasured and appreciated by those in need. In times of trouble and sorrow the Chaplains are often the very first responders for leadership to those who have experienced devastating life-changing events. Pastors for the most part are viewed as religious leaders because they deal with church doctrine, rites, religious beliefs and topics that are germane to specific church matters.



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Chaplains, on the other hand, are viewed as spiritual leaders who respect the religious rights and beliefs of everyone. This does not mean that they agree with them, they respect their God given rights to believe or not to believe or follow a specific religion or no religion at all. Chaplains do not focus on religious morality, rather Chaplains deal with the question of ethical behavior as it relates to religion and life. Chaplains are often called upon to counsel people on forgiveness as being in the person's best interests rather than because of religious reasons. Pastors are called upon to deal with a crisis or some type of trauma that a church member has experienced.

Many chaplains are trained clinicians as traumatologists, and other specialty fields such as hospice, palliative care, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse and understand the protocols of and for each one. Other distinctions include:

- ✚ A Chaplain's ministry is community based that addresses the pluralistic and religious needs of a large and varied institution or organization. A Pastor's ministry deals with in-reach and internal local, spiritual matters and is church based.
- ✚ The Chaplain is ecumenically focused across all faith traditions and works to create a safe space for everyone and assist them in telling their personal story to allow various forms of healing to take place. A Pastor's ministry deals with a denominationally focused set of values and works to guide their flock in the same spiritual direction.
- ✚ A Pastor's Qualifications for Pastoral Leadership and Spiritual foundation are highlighted in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. But the Biblical reference for Chaplains Ministry is the same as that of the Pastor, however, it goes a step further in (Matthew 25:35-36) when Jesus said "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me". Also in Matthew 28: 19-20 Jesus says "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of The Son and of The Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you".
- ✚ A Chaplain however, goes out to where the people are, determined to establish a person's wellness with a holistic mind, body and spirit agenda. A Pastor's Ministry deals primarily with people coming to them in the church.





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- ✚ Chaplains' ministries are performed through specialized training beyond that obtained in Seminary. The differences are seen in the local church versus the extensions of ministries offered in institutions whose primary purposes are education, international security, peacemaking, incarceration, hospitalization, or profit. A Pastor serves God in the Church through ministries of witness and service.
  - ✚ Military Chaplains' ministry is rooted in the eternal Words of Jesus in (Luke 4:18) when Jesus said "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the good news to the poor, He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind and to proclaim the year of The Lord's favor". That task is accomplished by ministering to the emotional and spiritual needs of service members in war as well as in peace. Chaplains help this nation to understand that Freedom is not Free, as evidenced by this poem.

**Freedom is not Free**  
**By Kelly Strong**

I watched the flag pass by one day  
It fluttered in the breeze  
A young Marine saluted it, and then  
He stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform  
So young, so tall, so proud  
With hair cut square and eyes alert  
He'd stand out in any crowd.

I thought how many men like him  
Had fallen through the years  
How many died on foreign soil?  
How many mothers' tears?

I heard the sound of taps one night  
When everything was still  
I listened to the bugler play  
And felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times  
That taps had meant Amen  
When a flag had draped a coffin  
Of a brother or of a friend



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I thought of all the children,  
Of the mothers and the wives  
Of fathers, sons, and husbands  
With interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard  
At the bottom of the sea  
Of unmarked graves in Arlington  
No freedom is not Free.

So every time you see a Chaplain or Veteran, just remember that the uniform he or she is wearing is a stark reminder to you and to the world that he or she is indeed a Soldier, Airman, Sailor or Marine on two fronts; first, in service to the Lord, and second, as a military veteran.

Chaplains strive to make themselves available and present 24/7 to offer guidance, education, and spiritual direction especially when men and women are faced with unbearable life changing issues and struggles. A Chaplain's words and actions provide a place where those in need or crisis can find comfort in and draw strength to go on to face the challenges of the hour. The Chaplain has an established track record of being likened to that of the Old Testament prophets whose primary functions were to serve as God's mouthpiece, representatives or ambassadors by communicating God's Word to His people.

Chaplains provide words for those persons whose voices have been stolen by the most horrific incidents and traumatic life changing events that life can throw at a person. Chaplains help the person or family to be able to eventually say, "The Lord will make a way somehow." A Chaplain helps the person whose plight has been devastated and ravaged by the vicissitudes of life to lift up their heads and look to the hills from whence comes all of their help. Chaplains take a dogged and determined, never flinching position like that of the Old Testament Prophet Elijah, when he was confronted with unmistakable and mind bending dilemmas, to stand strong in the Power of the Lord.



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In closing let me say that your chaplains who are serving in a variety of settings are doing you proud, and at the end of the day chaplains who serve in the military are just common soldiers who served their God and their country with distinction.

### **He (She) Was Just a Common Soldier By Lawrence Vaincourt**

He was getting old and paunchy  
And his hair was falling fast  
As he sat around the Legion  
Telling stories of the past.

Of a war that he had fought in  
And the deeds that he had done  
In his exploits with his buddies,  
They were heroes, every one.  
And tho sometimes to his neighbors  
His tales became a joke,  
But all his Legion buddies listened  
For they knew whereof he spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no longer  
For old Bill passed away  
And this world's a little poorer  
For a soldier died today.

He will not be mourned by many,  
Just his children and his wife,  
For he lived an ordinary  
And quite uneventful life.

Held a job and raised a family  
Quietly going his own way.  
And the world won't note his passing  
Though a soldier died today.



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When politicians leave this earth,  
Their bodies lie in state,  
While thousands note their passing  
And proclaim that they were great.

Papers tell their whole life stories,  
From the time that they were young  
But the passing of a soldier  
Goes unnoticed and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution  
To the welfare of our land  
A guy who breaks his promises  
And cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow who  
In times of war and strife  
Goes off to serve his country  
And then offers up his life?

A politician's stipend at the end of the day  
And the style in which he lives  
Are sometimes disproportionate  
To the service that he gives.

While the ordinary soldier  
Who offered up his all  
Is paid off with a medal  
And perhaps a pension small.

It's easy to forget them  
For it was so long ago  
That the old Bills of our Country  
Went to battle, but we know

It was not the politicians,  
With their compromise and ploys  
Who won for us the freedom  
That our Country now enjoys



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Should you find yourself in danger  
With your enemies at hand,  
Would you want a politician  
With his ever shifting stand?

Or would you prefer a soldier  
Who has sworn to defend  
His home, his kin and country  
And would fight to the end?

Yes he was just a common soldier  
And his ranks are growing thin,  
But his presence should remind us  
That we may need his like again.

For when countries are in conflict  
Then we find the soldiers part  
Is to clear up all the troubles  
That the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor  
While he's here to hear his praise  
Then at least let's give him homage  
At the ending of his days.

And perhaps just perhaps a simple headline  
In a paper that would say,  
Our country is in mourning  
For a soldier died today.

Yours because of Calvary,

Reverend Dr. Nevalon Mitchell, Jr.  
Ecclesiastical Endorser

