CHAPTER V

PROJECT PHASE III: A RESOURCE FOR THE COMMUNITY

"If you do not afford them the means of religious service while at sea, the Sabbath is, to all intents and purposes, annihilated, and we do not allow the crews the free exercise of religion."[1]

The Congressional Record, 1853-54

The culmination of the project was a resource website that took the reflections from the community and the reviews of the chaplains and added them to a site that was created so that both laity and clergy alike might find information and community. Initially, it was thought that this might be a more interactive site for chaplains. However, after the experience of gathering reflections from the community and the reviews of the chaplains of those reflections, it was felt that what was needed was more in the line of a clearinghouse for information. This site provides examples of religious diversity, pluralism and general resource information. It is my hope that by utilizing this resource site, the Sea Service community might come to see for itself the faith needs of the community in its midst.

This site[2] has undergone numerous modifications since its inception. As a place where people of faith might find information, it is also for those who claim that all this faith-talk is not for them. It is a site that a chaplain might go to for information and also to be reminded that they are not in ministry to and with only one faith group. Indeed, as will be shown, the site serves as a reminder to the

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[1] This epigraph was taken from the Congressional Record of 1853-54 and is from a Senate committee debate on the constitutionality (and necessity) of having the Federal government provide chaplains for Naval vessels. The speaker quoted here offers a passionate defense of the practice noting that citizens who join the military, and the Navy in particular, are entitled to the same access and ability to practice (or not) their beliefs.

[2] http://www.seaservicefaith.com was launched on 15 June 2004.

community that the chaplains have obligations and responsibilities to be open and accessible to the needs of the entire community, not just the faith group of the chaplain or of the individual doing the web surfing. The site contains pages that offer a wealth of information about and for Navy chaplains. It provides numerous links to both websites and to printed material of interest to the faith community. After an introductory page (the home page) and a page describing the project itself, the next page is devoted to the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Military Chaplains.

This code was developed by the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF), a one-of-a-kind organization that brings together the official representatives of all the major faith communities in the United States. While not an official document, that is, it has no legal standing; it is the view of the organization entrusted by the Department of Defense to endorse the chaplains who enter the military services.[3] The Covenant begins with the premise that people have accepted the vocation of ministry as a divine call and have responded to the needs of the military community as an extension of that ministry. The Covenant offers chaplains the opportunity to affirm their faith. A careful reading of this covenant reveals that the prime impetus for this document is the Judeo-Christian tradition.[4] Mentions of obedience to the commandments and to a faithful adherence to the "Shemah" of Deuteronomy is clear indication that while the NCMAF is a umbrella organization, the umbrella is only recently big enough to include others under its shade.

The Code of Ethics contains thirteen clauses that ask chaplains to affirm that the principles of equality and diversity are understood, that chaplains will respect both those to whom ministry is offered and those colleagues with whom ministry is conducted. Clause three states: "I understand as a chaplain of the United States Armed Forces that I will function in a pluralistic environment with

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[3] This endorsing body is responsible for all military chaplains, not just those in the Sea Services.

[4] "Judeo-Christian" refers to those faith groups that consider themselves to be either Jewish or Christian and who have been linked by adherence or inclusion of a common source of scripture. Christians have traditionally referred to Jewish scriptures as the "Old Testament." While that that term is still quite common in many Christian communities, it is typically not used in academic circles.

chaplains of other religious bodies…"[5] There can be no other way to tell chaplains that they are not in Kansas anymore, i.e., the ministry setting in which chaplains find themselves is different from than that of the settings they left behind in the civilian community. To function in this setting, chaplains must come to grips with this notion of pluralism. Chaplains, before they enter the service, must attempt to define this term and see if their personal beliefs can reconcile themselves with the pluralism that is present in the military community. Chaplains who have problems working with chaplains from another Christian denomination may flinch at the prospect of working with chaplains from other faiths. Those who have problems with women in clergy roles will really have problems the first time they have to work with or for a female chaplain.

Clause four follows closely on the heels of clause three, when it offers, "I will seek to provide pastoral care and ministry to persons of religious bodies other than my own within my area of responsibility with the same investment of myself as I give to members of my own religious body."[6] Here, in stark terms, is the role chaplains have been too slow to embrace, to paraphrase the Golden Rule, chaplains are to care for others, as they care for their own. This clause also compels chaplains to respect the beliefs of others, to work collegially with chaplains of other religious bodies, and to offer religious services that draw upon commonalities of those present. If all the other clauses in the Code of Ethics were dispensed with and this alone remained, it would be enough if it were followed. It is when chaplains fail to respect each other that the community suffers, and it is when we fail to respect the community that we fail to fulfill our vows to God to care for the people called to be God's own.

Father Paul McKenna, a member of the Scarboro Mission Community near Toronto, Ontario, offers the result of his research into the world's faith communities with a poster that reflects the common language of the Golden Rule, as revealed in the sacred writings of thirteen of the world's

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[5] National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces' *Covenant and the Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces,* http://www.ncmaf.org/policies/codeofethics.htm (10 May 2005).

[6] Ibid.

major religions. These thirteen religions cover the majority of the world's faith groups, several of

whom will, no doubt, surprise Christians as to their existence, let alone the fact that they offer to their

adherents similar words and values that Jesus offered to his disciples. Intended by Father McKenna

as a unifying tool, he offers seminars in how to teach cooperation using the poster as a focal point.[7]

One would assume that a poster about the Golden Rule would be a welcomed tool by Christians

seeking to offer the presence of Christ to the world.

 As an example of how challenging is this idea of pluralism to some, at an overseas chapel, a

chaplain from a liturgical Christian church[8] objected to my using the poster on a chapel bulletin

board. His objection was that to offer other religions on an equal footing with Christianity was to

deny the exclusive claim of Jesus. He was unable to see that there was something we could share

with these other faiths and that, if nothing else, we could agree to respect these other traditions. The

tradition that he comes from holds that there is no other way to God except via Jesus, and it did no

one any good to draw attention to the value or credibility of other faiths when Christ was the Way, the

Truth, and the Life. He was not an American chaplain, and his tradition[9] does not have the

understanding that chaplains are here to help all people express their faith. While serving as a

visionary chaplain in his setting, he would not have made a good U.S. Navy chaplain. It is a sad

truth, but a truth nevertheless, that there are Navy chaplains who would share his beliefs. In settings

where clergy are called to serve a specific faith community, this would not be a problem, as the

clergyperson would be fulfilling his or her duty to that community. In a setting such as the United

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[7] The Scarboro Mission website, http://www.scarboromissions.com/ has a page devoted to the poster.

[8] The chaplain mentioned here is a Church of England clergyperson and serves the Royal Air Force community in this setting.

[9] The understanding of the use of chaplains in the British military differs in many respects, not least of which is the concept of facilitating the free exercise of religion for service members and their families from those groups not the same as the chaplain. The sign in front of the chapel at RAF St. Mawgan states plainly that the chapel is a Church of England chapel. This is completely opposite of the USAmerican notions of both free exercise of religion and the separation of church and state.

States Navy, where the chaplains are expected to facilitate the needs of people from other traditions (or no tradition), it becomes a significant barrier to effective ministry.

With the launch of the third phase website, it was no longer necessary to maintain the websites for Phase I and Phase II. The faith reflections that were gathered as a result of the Phase I site were added to the Phase III site to enable the stories of the community to remain in circulation and to encourage other members of the community, as well as chaplains, to continue to share the task of sharing what we believe and why. To remember that we are all pilgrims is to remember that we have all been somewhere and that we each have something to share. The reflections are worth reading again and again, if for no other reason than fellow pilgrims took the time to share their stories.

Two pages devoted to providing web links were the next pages in the Phase III site. With the overwhelming amount of material that is available on the web at any moment, it can seem a daunting task to surf the Internet with confidence that one will actually find anything of substance. A page devoted to faith group web links and other belief systems[10] was created to be a place where people could go for one-stop shopping for information from the official websites of over four hundred faith groups. This page was offered to illustrate the incredible range of beliefs and approaches to this faith business. The list began innocently enough with a listing of the faith groups associated with the current group of Navy chaplains.[11] The writers of the reflections showed how diverse is the community those Navy chaplains serve and that the community of faith actually includes many people who claim no particular faith.[12] In compiling this list, it quickly became apparent that there were still more communities that Navy chaplains would encounter in their work. The search of the

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[10] Faith Groups and Belief Systems are used interchangeably in this paper.

[11] As of August 2004, there were 82 such faith groups represented in the active duty Navy Chaplain Corps.

[12] This apparent contradiction is resolved by considering the mandate of the chaplain to facilitate the free exercise of religion that includes the right *not* to practice a religious belief. Chaplains are not in the Navy to solely respond to matters concerning religious issues or concerns. We exist in equal measure to respond to those people who would never come to us for religious reasons but who nevertheless consider us to be their chaplain.

web and other resources has revealed groups previously not included in the site. From the African

Methodist Episcopal Church to Zoroastrianism, the world of belief[13] is wide open for exploration.

The links to the faith groups is by no means an exhaustive list; however, with more than four hundred

groups, it is a good place to start.

The second page of web links was for those sites that chaplains and other members of the

community might find useful in their pilgrimage. The links represented the following broad

categories: devotionals, devotional support, sacred texts, support (groups) for the journey, other

places worth a visit, diversity sites, and resources for chaplains, preachers, and teachers. This list of

153 sites[14] can scarcely be said to have even scratched the surface of the resources that chaplains and

other members of the community might find useful. Some of the sites have been included at the

suggestion of visitors to the website, who either did not find what they were looking for or who

wanted to share in the expansion of the knowledge being made available to the community.

In January 2005, a page devoted to prayer was added to the site.[15] This page includes historical

prayers (from USAmerica), prayers used in Navy command functions, "official" Navy-Marine Corps

prayers, prayers from the Navy Chaplain Corps' *Occasional Ministries Handbook*, and an assortment

of favorite prayers from the community. The prayers found in the prayers for command functions are

intended to reflect the need for prayer that is inclusive and that recognizes the pluralistic nature of

prayer in the civic arena. It will be interesting to see who contributes prayers from their own

traditions and what those prayers say about the community of faith in the Sea Services.

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[13] Not all belief systems would choose to accept the label of a faith system. Some of the groups listed on this list of web links are not groups people go to in order to engage in religious practices, but they are definitely groups people choose in order to practice their beliefs.

[14] The links were accurate as of April 2005.

[15] Appendix D, Prayer Anthology, page 230.

A glossary[16] is included with descriptions of chaplain, civil religion, congregation, "cooperation without compromise," religious diversity, and pluralism among others terms. This page provides a starting place for discussion on some of the more misunderstood and sometimes more controversial terms used in conjunction with the Chaplain Corps.[17] It was hoped that the inclusion of the glossary would stimulate further research and discussion, perhaps even contact between the reader and myself. I make no claim that these terms are correctly defined, nor could I. What is hoped for, and the purpose for which they are included in the site, is that people who see them will engage them, and perhaps either the term or the reader will be changed as a result. The same can be said for the guest book that serves as the last page of the website. Not many visitors have registered their presence, although more than six hundred hits had been recorded on the home page. Why visitors are not commenting on what they have seen while visiting the site is unknown.

The inclusion of a bibliography[18] is part of the on-going effort to raise awareness in the chaplain community and in the community at large of the of the vast array of materials available to those who would seek to know more about diversity, pluralism, and related topics. Categories in this chapter included religious diversity, religious pluralism, civil religion, military chaplaincy and related issues, and U.S. law and Naval regulations/instructions. As part of the research into this subject, the written materials, as revealed in the books, articles, and web sites, began to quickly grow. It threatened to bog the project down in the amount of material available. Were it not for the realization that there was precious little that directly dealt with military chaplains, the list would have become unmanageable. As it is, the list of resources will be of assistance to anyone who is looking for ways

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[16] Glossary, page 250.

[17] The terms were chosen as a result of discussions that took place while I was assigned at Camp Lejeune, NC, between March 2001 and February 2004. At that time, the controversy regarding the lawsuits against the Chaplain Corps was heating up and every meeting of chaplains carried the potential for conflict, as chaplains on both sides of the suits would be in the same place at the same time. After listening to these conversations and reading the first few White Papers, the terms that I chose appeared to me to have the most to offer to the Corps and the community simply by virtue of the terms being actively engaged.

[18] Bibliography, page 254.

to understand the legality and ethical considerations of religious diversity and the nature of pluralism in Sea Services.

It is my hope that given enough exposure to the contents of this site, those who visit will be motivated by what they see and look deeper into the nature and expression of faith in the Sea Service community. And of course, I include Navy chaplains in this description. Nonetheless, it is not only possible, but it is also necessary for the community to be made aware that this topic is being talked about. If Navy chaplains want to have a seat at the table where these issues are discussed, they must understand what is being said, so as to offer the world a voice of reason and understanding. It must always be remembered by Navy chaplains that one of their roles is to be the moral and ethical advisor to the command, including those topics concerning faith and practice. Since Navy leaders are talking about this material and the community is aware of the discussions, it behooves the chaplain be able to lead the discussion or at least be able to take part in the discussion, before they get relegated to the heaps of other irrelevant disciplines.

The third phase of the project resulted in a website that has taken many hours of pain-staking effort to reach the humble status it has. Following its launch, the site was announced to the same audience that was asked to take part in the first two phases, namely, the men and woman of the Navy Chaplain Corps and the people who make up the Sea Services community. It is unclear, at this stage, if anyone will make use of the project and the site for the purposes for which they were intended. It is a certainty that it will prove useful to me, at any rate, for it will be a part of the ministry that I provide for many years to come.