

EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

Historian, David McCullough gave a speech to Dartmouth College in 1999 titled, “What’s Essential is Invisible.” His overarching point, which he sought to make clear to the students, was anyone who desires the office of the President, must be a human who values truth above all else. Although times change, he observed, leaders who had high esteem for honesty were equipped to lead the nation in their era. He noted that JFK had John Adam’s words inscribed on a marble mantel in the White House: “I pray Heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this house, and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but Honest and Wise men ever rule under this roof.” I wonder if it might be good to inscribe these words over the door of our hearts? The “essential” of honesty is never “invisible” for hearts of truth will manifest lives of integrity.



We Salute our Active Chaplains

Eight VBTS graduates have been endorsed by The Associated Gospel Churches (AGC) agency to be Chaplains in either the Armed Forces or a Correctional Facility. These brothers and their families serve as “pastors in uniform” to reach men and women with the gospel of Jesus Christ in these restricted access institutions. We take this opportunity to thank these men and others seeking to minister Christ to our military and in our prisons, along with their gracious wives and children: Paul Broadwater (Contractor), Brett Moody (Prison), E4 Charles Shannon (Air National Guard), MAJ. Kevin Brosius (Army), CAPT. Matthew Campbell (AF), LT. Justin Ellsworth (Navy), LT. Izaak Toliver (Navy), and 1st LT. Joseph Feaster (Navy).

The Chaplain and Restricted Access Missions

Capt. Steven Brown (USN Ret.), President of The Associated Gospel Churches

No matter how hostile and restrictive our world becomes, the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36–40) and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20) remain the primary mandates of every believer. We are commanded to love God and our neighbor as we do ourselves. So, the Church must go into all the world baptizing and teaching in loving obedience to Christ, making disciples everywhere—no exceptions!

Yet, our opportunities to disciple all people seem to be shrinking. For example, the number of Restricted Access Nations (RAN) in our world is steadily increasing. Therefore, we may ask: “How do we go everywhere when ‘everywhere’ seems to be diminishing? This problem has birthed the concept: *Restricted Access Mission*. In response to this, and in obedience to Christ, our VBTS graduates are creatively and quietly serving Christ in Restricted Access Nations. Let’s pray that the Lord of the harvest will continue to send forth more of our graduates into these restricted countries (Matt. 9:37–38).

While the need for more laborers in restricted nations is great, we must not forget that in our own country there are over twenty-five million people in Restricted Access Institutions (RAI). These restricted institutions include the Armed Forces, Federal and State Prisons, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Civil Air Patrol, Hospitals, and Public Safety. One significant strategy to gain missional access into these restricted institutions is encouraging churches to send qualified Chaplains (“pastors in uniform”) into these places of need.

A Chaplain serves much like Daniel and his Hebrew colleagues served in Babylon (Daniel 1—6). While a Chaplain can serve as a Military Base Chapel Pastor (in much the same way he would pastor a local church), the institution in which he serves is not a local church. The Chaplain must creatively navigate through multiple competing priorities – both religious and secular – as he serves Christ within the restricted institution. He must ever be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. By God’s grace, this is being accomplished for His glory by our VBTS graduates!

One VBTS graduate is fruitfully serving as a Correctional Facility Chaplain. Those whom the world has discarded and largely forgotten, our Lord Jesus remembers! This graduate is discipling those who would otherwise never be reached for Christ in a restricted institution. What an incredible display of God’s grace!

At least seven VBTS graduates currently labor for Christ as Military Chaplains, Chaplain Candidates, or as Military Contractors. The Lord has opened the door for them to serve in some of the most amazing mission fields which are also within the parameters of Restricted Access Institutions.

Four of the seven Chaplains are serving in our Military Special Operations Forces (Navy Seals, Army Rangers, and Air Force Special Operations Command). These Chaplains serve alongside our nation’s most elite fighting forces. While the Chaplain is not a combatant, each one is crucially involved in an intense spiritual battle for the souls of those they are called to serve. One of the seven earned his “jump wings” and parachutes out of planes with his troops for the purpose of building relationships with the men he serves.

Whether serving in a Chapel with a battalion of soldiers deployed in harm’s way, aboard a Navy ship underway at sea, preaching to cadets, flying with an aircrew aboard an Air Force C-17, Marine Osprey or Coast Guard C-130, military Chaplains have the unique opportunity to flesh out the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as missionaries within the restricted institution of our Armed Forces. Though their ministry is protected by federal law, it is not without challenges, but their Lord who called them, also goes with them!

Some may wonder: Is such a risk to life and family worth it? Consider over the course of the last twenty years our government spent more than two trillion dollars in Afghanistan. What did we accomplish that was of lasting value? In truth, only one thing—the planting of the Gospel seed “sown” by Chaplains in a Restricted Access Institution (our troops) deployed to a Restricted Access Nation (Afghanistan). This was done in loving obedience to the Great Commandment and Great Commission, which will not return void nor ever be lost. Truly, God is at work regardless of man’s opposition. Will you please pray with me for more to go and minister in a restricted access environment?