



Sacred Well Congregation

An International Wiccan Church and Fellowship

PO Box 58, Converse, Texas 78109

www.sacredwell.org



6 August 2006

CH (MG) David Hicks
Office of the Chief of Chaplains

Arlington, VA 22202

Dear General Hicks:

It is with great regret that I must notify you of the unethical, unprofessional and discriminatory conduct of at least two of your senior officers. This conduct involved a betrayal of trust and lack of personal integrity that led directly to the immediate withdrawal of endorsement of a dedicated and distinguished battalion chaplain serving in Iraq. This conduct caused grave damage to this chaplain's ability to serve those under his pastoral care, and deprived a Battalion Commander and his troops of the services of a chaplain that they respected and held in high regard. Outlined below are the salient points of this incident.

- In the spring of this year, CH (CPT) Donald M. Larsen contacted our Congregation to discuss the possibility of changing his endorsement. We had lengthy discussions by email and telephone. We explained to CH Larsen that we were not yet an endorser of military chaplains, but had a pending application. We needed only to be able to present a viable candidate for appointment without waiver.
- 6 July 2006. The Congregation received a formal request from CH Larsen stating that he wished to be considered as our candidate for the AFCB certification process and immediately thereafter to change his endorser to the Sacred Well Congregation. CH (CAPT) Jonathan Frusti had just replaced CH (COL) Richard Hum as the Executive Director of the AFCB, and I advised CH Larsen that I would give CH Frusti a couple of weeks to settle in, then I would contact him and begin the process. CH Larsen stated that he would prefer to finish his deployment prior to the official change-over of endorsers because he did not want to cause any disruption in his service to his battalion. I reminded CH Larsen that we would have to get through the AFCB process before we could consider a change of endorsement as that would be a necessary precursor to any personnel action. He consented to go forward with AFCB process but requested utmost discretion as he was concerned how his current endorser might react should he learn that a change was being considered—especially a change to the Sacred Well Congregation.
- 13 July 2006. I made telephonic contact with CH Frusti and discussed our pending EEA packet. I did not disclose CH Larsen's name, but asked if a serving chaplain would satisfy the requirement for a "viable candidate without waiver."

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Hera and Arghuicha
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Ch Frusti stated candidly that he was too new to the job to answer that with certainty, but that he would find an answer for us. I advised that the precedent had been set by another endorsing body a few years ago, and that if the answer was contrary to the precedent, then that would raise some concerns. I also asked CH Frusti to review our packet from an organizational perspective as I was under the impression that CH Hum had already brought it before the PAG board and determined the only thing we were missing was the “viable candidate” requirement.

- 31 July 2006. I made telephonic contact with CH Frusti to follow up on our conversation of 13 July. CH Frusti informed me that the PAG Board would meet on 21 August and the full AFCB a week later. He stated that he would need a letter of good standing from the Army regarding our applicant, and that he would need a letter from our applicant with some very specific verbiage. I assured CH Frusti that we would have all the information to him that he required prior to 21 August.
- 31 July 2006. I made telephonic contact with CH (LTC) J. Luke Pittman, OCCH. CH Pittman had just replaced CH Mike Durham, whom I had worked with on past occasions. I discussed the situation with CH Pittman, including the concerns for the discreet handling of the matter. CH Pittman was very professional and helpful and said that he would look into what the next steps in the process should be. I followed the conversation with an email to CH Pittman reviewing what we had discussed telephonically and providing full identifying data on CH Larsen, to include his SSAN and DOR.
- 31 July 2006. Received a follow-up email from CH (LTC) Bryan Walker, OCCH Personnel Actions officer. The brief but courteous message simply stated that he would need a memo from CH Larsen “identifying his intent to change endorsing agents.” I followed up with a telephone call to CH Walker, and we discussed the matter in greater detail, and again, I requested discretion in handling the matter. CH Walker advised me that he would need the MRF over CH Larsen’s signature, but that it could be a scanned or faxed copy. I advised him that I would be in contact with CH Larsen and would request the MFR, and thanked him for his assistance.
- 31 July 2006. Received a signed MFR from CH Larsen formally requesting a change of endorsers to the Sacred Well Congregation.
- 1 August 2006. Forward the MFR as an attachment to an email to CH Walker. I followed up with a telephone call. I advised CH Walker of the email and again stressed the need for discretion. CH Walker informed me that he was unable to locate a copy of CH Larsen’s 2088, and that under Title 10, without a copy of the 2088 on file, he could not issue the letter of good standing to the AFCB. He stated that he would have to contact the current endorser, the Chaplaincy of Full Gospel Churches (CFGC) to obtain another copy of the 2088. We discussed in some detail our concerns, primarily because the CFGC is not a member of NCMAF and therefore are not bound by that organizations Covenant of Ethics regarding requests by chaplains for change of endorsers. I stated summarily that I fully believed that if the CFGC learned that CH Larsen was even talking to us, they would immediately withdraw his endorsement and again pleaded for discretion.

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- 1 August 2006. Received an email from CH Walker thanking me for my quick response regarding the MFR and reiterating that he could not find a copy of CH Larsen's DD2088 and therefore would have to contact the CFGC. I followed up with another email thanking CH Walker for his timely attention to the matter and again requesting discretion when contacting the CFGC.
- 2 August 2006. Received a email from CH Larsen attaching a brief and terse email from his endorser, Rev Ammerman of the CFGC. The attachment informed CH Larsen that his office had received a "strange phone call from someone in the Chief's Office" stating that someone with the same name as CH Larsen was seeking to change endorsers to "those Wiccans." Rev Ammerman stated that the caller from the Chief's Office did not have the SSAN, so therefore he needed to know if it was really him. Rev Ammerman stated "I don't believe it's you."
- 2 August 2006. Sent an email to CH Walker attaching the email that CH Larsen had received from Rev. Ammerman. I expressed my great disappointment and reiterated my concerns for what action the CFGC might take against CH Larsen, whose only sin was engaging in a dialogue with the Sacred Well Congregation. I requested a review of the telephone logs to determine who the "someone" was that had contacted the CFGC, the extent of the disclosure made concerning CH Larsen, and the extent of the disclosures made concerning the Sacred Well Congregation.
- 2 August 2006. Received an email from CH Walker stating that it was his boss, CH (COL) Richard Pace who had made contact with the CFGC, and that CH Pace did not have CH Larsen's SSAN for positive identification. Further, he did not know the extent of the discussion concerning the Sacred Well Congregation. I followed up with a telephone call to CH Walker and had a lengthy but courteous discussion. I stated frankly to CH Walker that my initial correspondence to CH Pittman had contained that information, and when that correspondence passed to him for action, it was intact and contained all identifying data including the SSAN. CH Walker stated that he must have "overlooked" that in the message. He then stated that it was common knowledge that CH Larsen had been talking to the Wiccans because they had received an inquiry from the PAO the previous week regarding the matter. I pointed out to CH Walker that I found that rather incredulous since only five officers in our Congregation and CH Larsen himself were even aware of the discussions. The first information the OCCH should have had on the matter was my forwarding of CH Larsen's MFR on 1 August. I asked what would happen if CFGC pulled CH Larsen's endorsement. CH Walker stated that then he would no longer be able to issue a letter of good standing the AFCB stating that CH Larsen was a chaplain in good standing because Title 10 required a current DD2088 to be on file in order to do that. I reminded CH Walker that Title 10 required a current DD2088 to be on file for all chaplains, and his inability to find the 2088 on file was the ostensible reason that he had to contact the CFGC to obtain another one. Had the DD2088 been on file as required by Title 10, then there would have been no reason to contact the current endorser, the letter of good standing would have been issued, and our process would have gone quietly on in the AFCB. CH Walker remained courteous, but markedly unsympathetic and unapologetic and obviously under the impression that he had done nothing improper by making the disclosure to the CFGC.

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- 4 August 2006. Received by cc a very professional and courteous message from CH Larsen to his current endorser acknowledging the fact that he was considering requesting a change of endorsers, and requesting that the CFGC hold (as is customary practice in such cases) his endorsement until the completion of his current mission. His greatest concern was for the well being of his unit and his troops and he did not want to cause any disruption.
- 4 August 2006. Received an email from CH Larsen advising that he had just been called to his commander's office, advised that his endorsement had been withdrawn and ordered to immediately cease and desist all religious functions as a chaplain until further determination could be made by the OCCH. CH Larsen's commander was very upset over the developments and stated that he would do everything he could to retain him. CH Larsen was never notified directly of this action by the CFGC, and such action is extremely irregular. Additionally, the deputy theater chaplain was very surprised by the swiftness of these events transpiring.

Sir, this is only the most recent event in what appears by a preponderance of evidence to be obstructionism and religious discrimination issuing from the OCCH dating back to the time CH (COL) Hugh Dukes was assigned to that office. These matters will now be revisited.

Of immediate concern, however, is the matter at hand regarding CH Larsen. We respectfully request a redress of the handling of this by Chaplains Walker and Pace. I also respectfully request your support for the approval of the Sacred Well Congregation as an endorser of military chaplains when our packet comes before the AFCB.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very Respectfully,



Rev. Dr. David L. Oringderff
Executive Agent, International Council of Clerics
Sacred Well Congregation

Email: [REDACTED]
Telephone: [REDACTED]

CC:
ACLU, AZ
ACLU, TX
Office of Senator John McCain
Church of God Cleveland, Tennessee (ATTN; Rev. Jerry E. McNabb)

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