

Honorable Mayor Timothy Theaker  
City of Mansfield  
30 N. Diamond Street  
Mansfield, Ohio 44902

Cc: Mansfield Police Chief Keith Porch  
Mansfield City Law Director John Spon

August 1, 2022

## **Re: 76 Local clergy support retaining local police chaplaincy program**

Dear Mayor Theaker,

Thank you for your bold leadership in our community. It is our understanding the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) recently sent an unsolicited letter to Police Chief Keith Porch requesting the Mansfield Chaplaincy program be discontinued.(1) The letter written by Karen M. Heineman also stated "Police chaplaincies are unconstitutional."

The threatening letter apparently stemmed from a local newspaper story on Pastor Chad Hayes' recent appointment as police chaplain. (2) The FFRF asserts since Pastor Hayes is a clergyman, he is not qualified to serve law enforcement officers and their families. It appears the FFRF wants a government employer to discriminate against a job applicant/employee in the workplace because of his religion, thus violating the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As clergymen representing seventy-six (76) congregations across Richland County, we believe this is bad legal advice.

While the FFRF likes to think of itself as a legal authority on the First Amendment, one can observe this is often not the case in a court of law with its frivolous lawsuits against government institutions. (3-6) We question the motives of this organization which regularly exhibits hostility towards communities when religious institutions are making great strides in their local community like in Mansfield, Ohio. (7-11)

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the important secular roles chaplains play include: identifying resources to help officers manage stress or trauma, visiting officers when hurt in the line of duty or seriously ill, assisting officers in delivering death notifications to officer families, the public, and members of the department, representing the agency in memorial services and other religious and civic ceremonies, accompanying officers to serve as a supportive presence during community events and patrol shifts, and acting as a liaison with local faith-based organizations. (12)

**With law enforcement morale at an all-time low nationally, and with depression, divorce, and suicide plaguing the police profession, as clergymen from seventy-six (76) congregations across Richland County, we believe the City of Mansfield should retain its chaplaincy program in order to adequately support the social and emotional well-being of department personnel.** We are convinced this will be in the best interests of the city for retention and recruitment of police officers.

In closing, we are skeptical the Freedom from Religion Foundation is really concerned about the well-being of our nationally accredited police force considering FFRF's offices are in Madison, Wisconsin, which defunded their police department in 2021. (13) Their overbearing letter gives the appearance they are concerned about a political agenda more than our depleted local law enforcement which is nearly thirty officers short.

If what the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) purports is true, that chaplains are unconstitutional, there would be no chaplains in the country. Truth be told, police chaplain programs abound throughout the country, even in cities where the FFRF has sent letters questioning their constitutionality. Police chaplain programs that continue even after receiving frivolous FFRF letters include: Albuquerque, New Mexico, (14-15) La Crosse, Wisconsin, (16-17) Montgomery, Alabama, (18-19) Orlando, Florida, (20-21) Rochester, New York, (22-23) and Shreveport, Louisiana, (24-25) to name a few.

Further, many states have highway patrol departments with chaplains, including the internationally accredited Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP). Last year OSHP appointed Reverend Philip Hurlbert, a Church of the Nazarene pastor, as state chaplain. (26)

Mayor Theaker, we thank you for taking our words to heart. Retaining our chaplain services for our safety services is vital for the success of our community. You have publicly recognized the efforts of chaplains during Clergy Appreciation Month and recognize that chaplains are a part of our heritage and tradition. (27-29)

Sincerely,

The following lead clergymen represent seventy-six (76) local congregations throughout Richland County supporting the Mansfield police chaplain program:

<b>Reverend El Akuchie, Godsfield House of Prayer</b>	<b>Pastor Dave Rentzel, Ontario Abundant Life</b>
<b>Bishop Anthony Cooper, Shelby Life Church</b>	<b>Pastor Dan Zediker, Mansfield Mission Point Church</b>
<b>Pastor Dink Porter, Mansfield Open Bible Church</b>	<b>Pastor Aaron Rose, Madison Fusion Church</b>
<b>Pastor Floyd Allen, Philippian Community Church</b>	<b>Pastor Doug Tackett, Taylortown Community Church</b>
<b>Pastor Chad Berry, Lexington New Liberty Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor James Marshall, Ganges Community Church</b>
<b>Pastor Louis Blevins, Mansfield Latter Rain</b>	<b>Pastor Joseph Yerger, First Evangelical Presbyterian</b>
<b>Pastor Bobby Edwards, Jesus is Alive Holiness</b>	<b>Pastor Mark Meyer, Lexington GracePoint Sanctuary</b>
<b>Pastor Art Kennard, Maranatha Christian Center</b>	<b>Pastor Dean Jackson, McElroy Road Church of Christ</b>
<b>Elder Moe Hill, Grace Evangelical Free Church</b>	<b>Pastors Les &amp; Grace Farley, Lexington Irresistible Church</b>
<b>Pastor Joe Nichols, ARC Empowerment Ctr.</b>	<b>Pastor Hank Webb, Belmont Community Church</b>
<b>Pastor Paul Lintern, Southside Christian Church</b>	<b>Pastor Paul Lintern, Oakland Lutheran</b>
<b>Pastor Mike Wilson, Lincoln Heights Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor Matt Merendino, Clear Fork Alliance</b>
<b>Pastor Dan Baer, Mansfield Gospel Assembly</b>	<b>Pastor Mark Wireman, Shiloh Pentecostal Church</b>
<b>Pastor Jason Price, Mansfield Victory Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor Christopher Thomas, Diamond Hills Baptist</b>
<b>Pastor Dave Davenport, Ontario Faith Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor Steve Schag, Shelby Calvary Baptist</b>
<b>Pastor Bruce Philippi, Journey Life Center</b>	<b>Pastor Brad Gentile, Shelby First Baptist</b>
<b>Pastor James Hill, Mansfield Paradise Church</b>	<b>Pastor Eric Byrom, Mansfield Grace Fellowship</b>
<b>Pastor Ben Gregg, Plymouth Church of GOD</b>	<b>Rabbi William Hallbrook, Ontario Sar Shalom Center</b>
<b>Bishop Sylvester Ginn, Hesed Agape Fellowship</b>	<b>Pastor William Cole, Mansfield Recovery Church</b>
<b>Pastor Russ Smith, Shiloh Wesley Evangelical</b>	<b>Pastor Dallas Waggle, Lucas Four Square Church</b>
<b>Pastor LaMont Lindsay, Book of Life Church</b>	<b>Pastor Joe Smith, Ontario Westside Baptist</b>
<b>Pastor Matt O'Harra, Bellville First Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor Randy Raynes, Mansfield Fellowship Baptist</b>
<b>Pastor Clarence Sanderfer, New Life Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor Bryan Schatzinger, Mansfield Calvary Chapel</b>
<b>Pastor Stephen Conn, Bethel Freewill Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor Steve Burkhalter, Ontario Potter's House</b>
<b>Pastor Rich Hurles, Plymouth LifePoint Church</b>	<b>Pastor David Guild, Mansfield Four Square Gospel</b>
<b>Pastor Kevin Evans, Ganges Liberty Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor David Ferrell, Mansfield Holiness Chapel</b>
<b>Pastor Rick Wiseman, Promised Land Fellowship</b>	<b>Pastor Ferlie Yates, Hanna Road Church of GOD</b>
<b>Pastor Clyde Kerby, Hope &amp; Healing Ministries</b>	<b>Elder James DeWeese, Mansfield Providence Church</b>
<b>Pastor Clint Zeigler, Sovereign Christ Church</b>	<b>Pastor Taylor Howard, Apostolic Holiness Church</b>

(Clergy letter cont'd)

<b>Pastor Matt Pond, Shelby First Free Will Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor George Lewis, Shelby Temple of GOD</b>
<b>Pastor Robert O'Brian, Apostolic Faith Assembly</b>	<b>Pastor Terry Garrett, Lexington Fusion Church</b>
<b>Pastor Les Vnasdale, Cornerstone Grace Brethren</b>	<b>Pastor John Campos, Bowman Street Church of GOD</b>
<b>Pastor Steve Baldrige, Rome Community Church</b>	<b>Pastor Patrick Bailey, North Bend Church of Brethren</b>
<b>Pastor James Spencer, Mansfield People's Baptist</b>	<b>Pastor Robert Kurtz, Mansfield Temple Baptist</b>
<b>Pastor Ron Kosa, Living Word Church</b>	<b>Pastor Tim Houston, Mansfield Church of GOD</b>
<b>Pastor Glenn Phillips, Hillside Church of GOD</b>	<b>Elder Henry Bradley, Community Temple COGIC</b>
<b>Pastor Ron Smals, Woodville Grace Brethren</b>	<b>Pastor Russell Stanford, All Believers in Christ Church</b>

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**According to First Liberty Institute, police chaplains are constitutional. In *Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. at 784-85, 794 (1983), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Nebraska Legislature's hiring of a chaplain, who was chosen by the Legislative Council and paid out of public funds. Courts in other jurisdictions have likewise upheld the hiring of chaplains by a county hospital, prisons, and military establishments in order to provide counseling and guidance to individuals who request it. See *Carter v. Broadlawns Med Ctr.*, 857 F.2d 448, 457 (8th Cir. 1988); *Johnson-Bey v. Lane*, 863 F.2d 1308, 1312 (7th Cir. 1988); *Katcoff v. Marsh*, 755 F.2d 223, 237 (2d Cir. 1985).**