

Covenant Chapel Statement
Concerning Women in the Military
November 28, 2007

1. The Source of our Convictions

Covenant Chapel Reformed Episcopal Church (CCREC), holding "the faith once delivered unto the saints," believes, along with all the true churches of Christ throughout the ages, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the sole rule of faith and practice, the alone perfect source by which we may know what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.

2. The Teaching of Holy Scripture Concerning Women in The Military

The Holy Scriptures specify, in the Book of Numbers Chapter 1, that Moses was to take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: Moses and Aaron were to number them by their armies.

This passage reflects the simple, and until recent times, virtually universally accepted principle, that warfare is the responsibility of qualified males. This general principle derives from the underlying principle that men are called upon to defend women, in particular their wives and daughters. The highest expression of this principle is found in the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself up for His bride, the Church, and Who now defends her and protects her throughout the ages. (See Letter of St. Paul To The Ephesians Chapter 2 Verse 25.)

From the moment of their respective creation in the Garden of Eden, in paradise before the introduction of sin, the Lord God differentiated the roles of male and female. The primary sphere of responsibility for the woman since the time of creation is the domestic sphere. This truth is reflected repeatedly throughout Holy Scripture, and is emphatically rehearsed in the documents of the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ which was written in a time and culture very much like the present, where Christ's church finds itself surrounded by a society that increasingly rejects the authoritative definition of human life given by the Creator and increasingly embraces ungodly and degenerate cultural patterns. (See e.g., The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians Chapter 5; The First Letter of St. Paul to Timothy at Chapter 2; and the Letter of St. Paul to Titus.) In particular, within the Western culture of the Twenty-First Century, sexual distinction is suffering a sustained attack, as it did also in the Roman Empire when St. Paul wrote: "God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the women and burned in their desire toward one another...." (See The Letter of St. Paul To The Romans Chapter 1.) The Eternal God, however, unlike the moral culture of men, is not subject to change. The teaching of Holy Scripture stands eternal, and the current generation's cultural effort to obliterate the Creator's definition

and differentiation of the roles of male and female amounts to a revolt against the Lord God as Creator, which all faithful churches of Christ must resist.

Warfare, a result of sin in the world, is a horror, yet an occasional reality for which every sovereign nation must be prepared. CCREC fully recognizes the responsibility of Christian men to take part in just wars on behalf of the nation of which God has providentially made them citizens. CCREC regards as an abomination, however, the forced inclusion of women among the ranks from which an army is to be mustered. Holy Scripture teaches, in Deuteronomy Chapter 22 Verse 5, that God abhors a woman camouflaging herself as a man, or vice versa. Indeed, the prohibition in that text, in the original language, is that a woman must not don the accoutrements of a mighty man, i.e. a warrior: the prohibition as applied today is not that women should not wear pants but flack jackets, helmets and assault rifles. The teaching of Holy Scripture that warfare is the responsibility of qualified males has at its center a design intended to protect women, whom the Holy Scripture denominates as the weaker sex. (See e.g. The First Letter of St. Peter Chapter 3 Verse 7.) God's holy law consistently reflects the principle, which all faithful churches of Christ must accordingly insist upon as axiomatic, that greater protection must be provided to the vulnerable. Men are called to defend their wives and daughters. The reverse, i.e. for men to call their wives and daughters to defend them, is sinful, and from the perspective of the Holy Scriptures, unmanly and shameful.

CCREC does not deny that there are extraordinary circumstances where women may properly engage in physical combat. Exceptions to the rule of male defense are recorded both in Scripture and Church history, but the absence of a man to take up this duty is a common aspect of such exceptions. For example, Turretin writes of "homicide (in) the defense of chastity.. .as the examples of brave virgins stand forth, who killed those attempting to violate their chastity, when they could in no other way escape." When a wife or mother is the last line of defense, she will do what is necessary to protect her home, children, and purity. Such actions by women, however, neither erase the duty of men to protect women, nor blur sexual distinctions or confer independence upon women from their fathers and husbands. This is the context for the accounts of the courageous wartime acts of Deborah and Jael in the Book of Judges Chapters 4 and 5. God had commanded a man, Barak, to lead other men to battle in defense of their nation; that man then asked a woman to come to battle with him; that woman reproved that man for his cowardice; and under God's authority, that woman also decreed that the man's cowardice would be punished by the glory of victory going to a woman. And it did – to a woman who even remained at home, interrupted in her tent in the pursuit of her domestic duties.

Thus even (and especially) here, Holy Scripture makes explicit what is implicit in the scores of scriptural passages dealing with military matters: warfare is the responsibility of qualified males.

CCREC has no objection to policies permitting women to engage in support and ancillary activities appropriate to their sex, outside combat. Such activities, however, must be done in a manner which protects their dignity as women and does not expose them to abuse or unwarranted risk of assault or injury, or else they fall under the condemnations stated

above. It is the responsibility of men, not women, to bear the dangers of combat and the risks of potential exposure to hostile forces inherent in military action.

3. Conclusion

CCREC proclaims on the basis of Holy Scripture that warfare is the responsibility of qualified males, and therefore condemns the use of women as military combatants, as well as any conscription of women into the armed services of the United States. CCREC offers this statement as pastoral counsel for the good of the clergy, including military chaplains, and the members of fellow churches. Accordingly, CCREC supports the decisions of its members and its clergy to object to, as a matter of conscience, the conscription of women into the military and to the use of women as military combatants.