

1 The Rev. John A. Weatherly's Responses to the Committee for the Election of the Suffragan
2 Bishop of Federal Ministries.

3 Question 1 "Prepare an Essay of no more than 900 words which could be offered to Episcopal
4 Life or The Living Church as an editorial in May 2010. This essay should inform readers about
5 the importance of federal chaplains, your expectations of the chaplains you endorse, and your
6 vision for the Bishop Suffragan's role among Chaplains and as a member of the House of
7 Bishops"

8 The presence of chaplains in our federal institutions have been significant since the founding of
9 this nation. They serve in various capacities as religious leaders, and have been present in some
10 of our most chaotic events. One such day was May 4th, 1970, when soldiers of the Ohio National
11 Guard were ordered to the campus of Kent State University by the governor. Student
12 demonstrations had broken out on campus in response to President Nixon's escalation of the war
13 in Vietnam to Cambodia and Laos. The 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment arrived at Kent State
14 directly from duty at a violent truckers strike in Cleveland. The Guardsmen were tired and on
15 edge. They were armed with tear gas, bayonets and M1s. The students were angry and armed
16 with stones. To a perceived threat and unclear leadership, the soldiers were ordered to push back
17 the students. A few minutes later, to some half-heard command, 67 shots were fired in less than
18 13 seconds from the soldiers' rifles. Four students were killed in the volley, nine wounded, with
19 one permanently paralyzed. (Special 4 May 1970 Collection at Kent State University, where
20 recordings from many of the participants are maintained)

21 With the Ohio Army National Guard that day was Ch. (MAJ) John W. Simons, the regimental
22 chaplain, and rector of St. Philip the Apostle Episcopal Church in Cleveland. Chaplain Simons
23 was behind the troops when they fired on the students. He ran to a soldier who had fallen, hit by
24 a rock, then to a group of soldiers. Catching sight of the general in charge, he challenged his
25 actions, then continued his ministering. Later he would go to the hospital to check on the
26 wounded.

27 On May 10, back at his home parish, Chaplain Simons took to the pulpit and with obvious deep
28 emotions, stated, "The tragic events at Kent State were made tragic by the escalation of events
29 that led up to that volley. To the radicals on the left who want to turn this tragedy to their own
30 use, and reactionaries on the right who want to do away with the Bill of Rights to save the flag.
31 A pox on both houses." Later, Ch. Simons was involved in charges against the command at Kent
32 State that day, would become the State chaplain for Ohio, and eventually retired from the Army
33 and parish.

34 Uniquely as citizens of this nation we are guaranteed the right to religious expression as well as
35 to assemble. In the competing identities of vocation, law, right and Baptism, the federally
36 employed chaplain is constantly reframing his or her call to ministry. The challenge may be as
37 demanding as a military chaplain confronted with the actions taken by misguided or morally
38 inept command or a confused and wounded soldier in need of assurance. If you are truly faithful
39 in any vocation, and particularly the ordained ministry, conflict is part of the call. The more so as
40 one is deeply engaged wherever human endeavor occurs.

41 As Episcopal clergy, we live before our God and Savior within a set of ordination promises and
42 the sacraments. The expectations of our Priesthood is that we prepare people for salvation and
43 eternal life. For the federal chaplain, there are also requirements of a position founded on
44 Constitutional rights and federal policies. It is this nation that employs the federal chaplain and
45 they work within the requirements of the institutions that employ them. They are more likely to
46 work with colleagues of denominations and faiths far different from their own. Federal chaplains
47 also routinely find themselves in harm's way, where chaos often reigns and the enemy is unclear.
48 They are also more likely to pray with those who believe they are without hope, or without
49 consequence, than the typical Episcopal parish Priest. The Bishop of Federal Ministries should
50 know those places, be able to sustain their brother or sister in their faith, and offer the support
51 they need to minister effectively in their vocation.

52 As one who has primarily served in parish ministry while also an Army chaplain twice deployed
53 overseas, I know how important my home parish has been in giving me strength in the
54 challenges of my ministry. I am also aware that there are many to whom I am accountable for my
55 practices and behavior. The majority of federal chaplains do not have an Episcopal congregation
56 which is a part of their ongoing formation. Therefore, I see the importance of the Bishop of
57 Federal Ministries in several critical areas. Because many federal chaplains come from other
58 denominations, to make sure that chaplains who enter the ordained ministry of the Episcopal
59 Church are as qualified and prepared as those who enter through an Episcopal seminary. Second,
60 it is a part of the job that they remain connected to the church that endorses them, and third, that
61 they have a Pastor that will be present when needed.

62 With the many issues we face as Episcopalians today, it is important that we all remain in
63 conversation with one another, and especially with those who make church policy or canon. The
64 Bishop Suffragan for Federal Ministries is a bridge with chaplains, many of whom are strongly
65 independent, to the Episcopal Church and to those federal institutions that employ Episcopal
66 chaplains. It will be a challenging, demanding position with the need for broad experience and
67 confidence in one's Priestly identity and leadership.

68 Question 2. "In the context of your vision as articulated in the preceding essay, how will you
69 support chaplains who find themselves at odds with colleagues and or superiors in their endorsed
70 ministry settings? In your response, please consider topics like pastoral care, advocacy, family
71 support and relationships, and counseling in terms of emotional and spiritual well-being as well
72 as professional advice and guidance, and illustrate with at least one example from your
73 professional experience".

74 Besides being the Rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia, I am also the
75 Joint Force Headquarters Chaplain for the state of Virginia. As a chaplain, I work directly for our
76 Adjutant General, who is selected by the governor of Virginia. Previous to this position, I was
77 the senior Army chaplain in the Virginia Army National Guard. I am the only Episcopal
78 chaplain, as well as the only "Liturgical Protestant" chaplain in the state of Virginia. There are
79 17 chaplains between the Air and Army National Guard in Virginia, 14 candidates, or
80 seminarians, and 12 Chaplain Assistants. Among my several jobs is to be the senior advisor to
81 our Joint Force Headquarters for all religious support in the Virginia Guard, whether it is in a
82 civil or military setting. In that capacity, I am also often called upon as the senior chaplain to talk

83 with commanders who may have issues with their chaplains. Many of our chaplains are full time
84 Pastors who have Sunday responsibilities. Several times a year a chaplain will call me who has
85 been asked to report to their unit for drill on Sunday, when they are also required to be at their
86 church. A commander may have made some comment that this chaplain's annual evaluation is in
87 serious jeopardy by his or her inability to be at Sunday drill. In a similar context, Guard and
88 Reserve chaplains are concerned that they are being passed over for church positions when they
89 tell pulpit committees that they are Reserve chaplains. One of our evangelical chaplains came
90 back from Iraq and was told by his pulpit committee that if he stayed in the Guard, they could
91 not support his ministry with them any further. He resigned his chaplaincy.

92 On behalf of our chaplains I have called commanders and asked them to work with the
93 competing requirements that chaplains face. I have reminded commanders, though most are well
94 aware of this, that our "part-time" chaplains, will often drop everything when soldiers or officers
95 call them for assistance. Chaplains don't work just one weekend a month, or two weeks in the
96 summer, but are always on call, as they are also with their parish or church responsibilities.
97 Today most of our chaplains and assistants have been deployed at least once to a combat zone.
98 In their absence I keep in touch with their families, their units and the families of their deployed
99 soldiers. I have made next of kin notifications when a soldier has been killed. I routinely visit our
100 wounded at Walter Reed, and have been to Dover Air Base to receive the fallen. I believe the
101 Suffragan Bishop's responsibilities are similar to the expectations for a senior leader in the
102 Chaplain Corps, where as you are promoted, so you become responsible for the mentoring of
103 those who move into your departed position. You provide comfort to the family of your
104 chaplains when they are apart, and you watch and guide them in their challenges, their
105 frustrations and their successes.

106 As an Episcopalian, we are connected to a broader denomination, rather than to group of
107 independent congregations. There is for us, a community of faith from which one can draw
108 guidance, direction, and collegiality. When I was deployed, I had the office of the Suffragan
109 Bishop to support me, who made sure that my pension payment were made. I had my home
110 Diocese of Virginia, whose Bishops, staff and members prayed for me daily, by name, for the
111 entire 16 months I was deployed to Iraq. One diocesan staff person told me when I got home,
112 that she was so happy she could stop praying for me, so that she could pray for someone else. I
113 was grateful, and I completely understood what she meant.

114 A Bishop in the apostolic succession personifies the church to the community they have been
115 elected to serve, as he or she personifies the community to the church. A Bishop must be a
116 leader, a shepherd and have a vision of their ministry in keeping with the Gospel. That shepherd
117 must also be willing to become the living reality of that Gospel, to identify sin, and promote
118 healing and forgiveness. Finally, the Bishop's support, counsel and care must be readily present
119 and available to their charges.

120 I believe that I have been an effective Priest, teacher, and pastor throughout my years of
121 ministry. I have depended upon and continue to encourage for others, a community steeped in
122 prayer that regularly celebrates the sacraments and reaches out to one another. I pray especially
123 that I have made known the deep and abiding joy that comes from serving our Lord.