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FAITH UNDER FIRE

Ex-chaplain now honorary 'Kentucky Colonel'

Booted Navy officer launches 50-state tour of praying 'in Jesus' name'

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A chaplain who was dismissed from the U.S. Navy when he refused to following orders to make his prayers "nonsectarian" and remove the name of Jesus from them now has been commissioned by the governor of Kentucky as an honorary "Kentucky Colonel."

Just one week after his dismissal from the Navy was completed, Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt also prayed "in Jesus' name" on the floor of the Kentucky Legislature, where the state house then passed a unanimous resolution to honor Navy chaplains who pray in Jesus' name.

He prayed:

Our Father in heaven, I come to you through my Lord Jesus Christ, and I ask that you be our only God today.

Test the reins of our hearts, to see if there is any sin, any idol, or anything we'll not give up for you.



A moment of prayer in the Kentucky Legislature

Remove from us every false thing we delight in, and everything we rely upon, so we may delight in and rely upon you alone as our only God.

Show us all our hidden faults, so we can immediately forsake them. Fill us with your spirit of holiness instead.

Show us the way of the Cross, and the path of suffering, that we may embrace selfless sacrifice, instead of selfish pleasure. Remove from us any lust for power or position, and help us pass Your agenda instead.

Have mercy, and reveal yourself to us, so we'll love God and neighbor with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Father in heaven, come rule our hearts fully with your love. Now and every day, be our only God.

We pray to you, Almighty God, and I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Then Kentucky Gov. Ernie Fletcher awarded Chaplain Klingenschmitt an honorary commission as "Kentucky Colonel" for courage in the face of adversity, the highest honor bestowed by the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

(Story continues below)

Klingenschmitt told WND that he plans now to embark on a 50-state tour, to pray "in Jesus' name" at each state Legislature, and is seeking church and legislative sponsors for his work.

The Kentucky resolution specifically honored "Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt for service to God, country, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky."

Lawmakers there noted that "Navy regulations adopted on November 28, 1775, reflect the Navy's deep concern for the souls of sailors to know Jesus through the preaching of the Gospel state, 'The commanders of the ships of the thirteen United Colonies are to take care that divine service be performed twice a day on board and a sermon preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent...'"

They also marked the words of President Woodrow Wilson, whose letter to sailors during World War I express the same concern. "The Bible is the word of life. I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves – read not little snatches here and there, but long passages that will really be the road to the heart of it..."

"WHEREAS, Navy chaplains are permitted by federal law to pray in Jesus' name according to 10 U.S.C. sec. 6031, which states, 'An officer in the Chaplain Corps may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a member...'"

"WHEREAS, more Christians have been martyred in the last 100 years than have been martyred in all the previous 1,900 years combined..."

"Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky: The House of Representatives does hereby applaud the United States Navy Chaplain Corps and Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt for service to God, country, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky."

Klingenschmitt earlier told WND he would continue his lawsuit against the Navy, fighting to be reinstated. Klingenschmitt said the battle was worth it, and he would do it all over again. "We did change national policy. We rescinded the policy that I was punished for," he said.

His dismissal came after a Washington appeals court dissolved a stay preventing that action. That stay had been obtained by a law firm representing him in his civil rights action against the Navy. He earlier had been scheduled to be removed from the Navy in January, but a lawsuit filed by [the Rutherford Institute](#) alleges he was within his rights to pray as he did.



Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt

"The Constitution is clear about the fact that the government is prohibited from establishing a religion," said John W. Whitehead, president of the Rutherford Institute. "Furthermore, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees that all citizens have a fundamental right to freely exercise their religious beliefs, and that includes military service people."

The civil rights complaint stems from a 1998 memo issued by the Navy Chief of Chaplains that discouraged them from invoking the name of Jesus in their prayers. "This instruction was later embodied in an instruction from the secretary of the Navy, which provided that religious elements for a command function, absent extraordinary circumstances, should be non-sectarian in nature," the lawsuit said.

"Chaplain Klingenschmitt resisted these directives on the basis of a federal statute providing that chaplains may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a member," the firm said.

However, Klingenschmitt says that because he objected to the ban on the name of Jesus, the Department of the Navy gave him adverse fitness reports, reprimands and then brought him

up on a court martial – in violation of his constitutional rights.

And that, the Rutherford Institute charges, is an attempt by the Navy to assemble a "civic religion."

"There's a unitarian system of religion that's aimed at Christians," Whitehead told WND. "It boils down to that. We're seeing it all across the country, with council prayers, kids wanting to mention Jesus. What's going on here is it's generally a move in our government and military to set up a civic religion."

The Navy convicted him of failing to follow a lawful order because his superior didn't want him praying "in Jesus' name" and court-martialed him for that. But when Congress got word of his \$3,000 fine for his prayer, members ordered the Navy to remove the limitation and allow chaplains to pray as their "conscience dictates."

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