



California Council of Churches **IMPACT**

4044 Pasadena Avenue
Sacramento CA 95821
(916) 488-7300
Fax: (916) 488-7310
www.churchimpact.org

May 3, 2018

Col. Brett Sylvia, Chief of Staff 101st Airborne Division (Assault)-Deployed
Col. Mark Faria, Chief of Staff 101st Airborne Division (Assault)-Rear

The Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser
Executive Director

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of Public Policy

Kendra Lewis
Director of Development

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African Methodist
Episcopal Church

•
African Methodist Episcopal
Zion Church

•
American Baptist Churches

•
Armenian Church of America

•
Christian Methodist
Episcopal Church

•
Churches of the Brethren

•
Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

•
Community of Christ

•
The Episcopal Church

•
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

•
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

•
Greek Orthodox Church

•
Independent Catholic
Churches International

•
Metropolitan Community Church

•
Moravian Church in America

•
National Baptist Convention

•
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

•
Reformed Church in America

•
Swedenborgian Church

•
United Church of Christ

•
United Methodist Church

•
Church Women United

•
Orthodox Clergy Council

Dear Colonels Sylvia and Faria:

California Council of Churches IMPACT represents 1.5 million members within 5500 congregations of the Protestant Christian communities of faith. We have members nationwide as well as in California, and for us religious liberty for all people, no exceptions, is a paramount faith principle.

We take our stance from Christ's open-hearted embrace of the Samaritan woman, from Paul's teaching (**Romans 2: 14-15**) that God's law is universal. We equally adhere to the Constitutional principles of the First Amendment that all people must be free to worship as they choose and that no one can be forbidden to do so. Many who built this wonderful nation first came because they were oppressed in the free exercise of their faith. Now we're doing it to them again?

As long-time supporters of Mikey Weinstein and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, we are quite appalled at the sudden and unexplained dismissal of volunteer Jewish lay leader, Jeanette Mize who has guided and nurtured Jewish troops based at Ft. Campbell since 1999. The chaplains who dismissed her gave her no cause, said they owed her no explanation. With no synagogue within 50 miles, her removal left a great hole in the faith life of many American USAF personnel.

As a former USAF wife, once based at Arnold AFS in Tullahoma, TN, I know the distances and travel difficulties of the area well. Depriving Jewish people from reasonable access to their community of faith practice is the antithesis of why they serve: upholding the Constitution and our cherished rights including the right to worship. It cannot make sense if those risking their lives for us have no access to those rights themselves. Removing Ms. Mize cannot stand. It is unacceptable to all of us, Christians and Jews alike.

Americans cherish their "Judeo-Christian" legacy. Americans cherish their unfettered religious freedom. That two chaplains took it upon themselves to thwart these basic principles is shocking and without a shred of justification. We ask you to pursue the investigation of their actions and to reinstate Ms. Mize immediately.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of Public Policy