

**MCC is Proud to Announce:**  
**Our FIRST MCC-Ordained U.S. Military Chaplain**



MCC congratulates Chaplain (Captain) Tania Guzman on her place in history as **the first openly MCC-ordained clergy serving on active duty in the United States military**. Tania completed the U.S. Army Chaplain Basic Officer Course at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina in March 2020. Through a unique partnership between MCC and endorsing organization The Coalition of Spirit-filled Churches, led by Chaplain Dave Plummer, Tania began serving as a Battalion Chaplain at Ft. Hood, Texas in May.

Chaplain Tania's calling began when she first realized as a young person that she was attracted to the order and structure of military life. Later she also realized that her sense of gratitude as an immigrant to the U.S. played a part in leading her to where she is now. Today her calling is being realized through her new ministry: bringing theologically progressive spiritual support and a deep respect for all walks of faith to those who are serving in uniform.

Living out this passion isn't easy in today's Army, where the Chaplain Corps is largely represented by very conservative Christian traditions. Most chaplains are classified as "restricted" by their denominations; this means that as soon as the chaplain hears that someone is LGBTQ or curious, they cannot perform pastoral duties and must

be sure to provide another chaplain for the service-member. Out of the seven chaplains in her brigade, she is the only one who can perform marriages for same-gender couples who are a part of the roughly 4,000 brigade personnel. While the Army does not allow proselytizing by chaplains, many see the military as their "mission field" anyway. There are far fewer chaplains who understand that their role is not to convert, but to meet

soldiers wherever they are spiritually, and respectfully partner with them on their journey of faith.

Tania is one of those few. She reports, "I want to make sure that I am that chaplain there for that soldier, especially those who identify as LGBTQ, who have probably already gone through so much to bring themselves to see a chaplain. I want them to have a safe place to exercise their beliefs, whatever they are, to be themselves without fear and to have a supportive space to grow spiritually in the way that is true for them."

While Tania is very grateful for the sincere support she feels from her Brigade Chaplain and several other chaplains with whom she works, she has discovered that serving as a U.S. Army chaplain can be a lonely ministry. Tania recently found herself at a gathering of about 100 other Army chaplains, and she realized she was one of only a few who were not "restricted." She often feels alone and wants to change this. Someday she hopes to serve as a chaplain recruiter so she can be a part of bringing more religious diversity to the Army chaplaincy. She would love to see more progressive Christians (especially from MCC!), Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims all serving as chaplains together. She is also very excited about being a part of the new, ongoing LGBTQ-affirming chapel service at Ft. Hood that her Division Chaplain has supported.

Given the current extremely conservative state of the U.S. Armed Forces Chaplain Corps, Tania feels very strongly that there is a huge and urgent need for more MCC-ordained clergy to serve as U.S. military chaplains, either in the Reserves, National Guard or on active duty. In spite of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" being overturned, the military is still a challenging environment for those who identify as LGBTQ. Many do not feel safe being open about who they are, and there is a great need for more chaplains to provide the message and ministry of God's unconditional love in all branches of the U.S. military.

Despite the challenges, Chaplain Tania is committed to following her calling. As someone who has always identified as a peace and social justice activist, she sometimes struggles between the personal and the political. It is her calling, however, that continues to tell her she is in the right place. "I know I am supposed to be here because there are soldiers who really need chaplains like me, and like others ordained by MCC. That one soldier who comes to me and finds support for who they are and where they are on their spiritual journey – that makes everything worth it."

MCC Moderator, Rev Elder Cecilia Eggleston, praises this noteworthy event in the life and history of the MCC community. "Congratulations to Chaplain Guzman on serving in this groundbreaking role. I know that there are so many in MCC who have served in the armed forces for their country. Here is an opportunity to bring such service and vocation together to create a safe space for soldiers on active duty. Many in the US military need to be assured of God's love no matter who you are or who you love. This is a deep calling. Well done Chaplain Guzman."

Chaplain Tania Guzman believes she cannot say this strongly enough: *we need more MCC chaplains in the U.S. military!* There are literally thousands of people serving in uniform who need the kind of unconditional acceptance, spiritual support and love that MCC offers. Might God be calling you to serve in this way?

U.S. military chaplains have to meet requirements related to age, physical fitness, education, ordination and ministry experience in order to qualify. If you feel that God may be calling you to serve as a military chaplain, please contact Rev. Dr. Lea Brown at [revlbrown@yahoo.com](mailto:revlbrown@yahoo.com) for more information about our partnership with the Coalition of Spirit-filled Churches and about how you can take your next steps.

In the meantime, please pray for Rev. Tania, for her amazing and challenging ministry and for God to provide many more who can serve as MCC-ordained military chaplains.

*Chaplain Tania Guzman was born in the Dominican Republic and came to the U.S. in 1989 at age 12. She earned her Master of Divinity degree at the Florida Center for Theological Studies and her Doctor of Ministry degree at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA. She was ordained by MCC in 2007 and has since served Church of the Trinity MCC in Sarasota, Sunshine Cathedral MCC in Ft. Lauderdale, Holy Covenant MCC in Brookfield IL and at Advocate Health Care and Suncrest Hospice in Illinois. She entered the U.S. Army as a Captain. Article written by Rev. Dr. Lea Brown.*