

July 1997

FOREST SERVICE CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

ACROSS – Association of Christians Reaching Out in Service and Support

CHARTER

I. Preamble

Whereas the Founding Fathers of the United States clearly stated the importance and necessity of the Christian religion to a stable society and effective government:

--on October 9, 1789, **President George Washington** said: “True religion affords to government its surest support,” and

--on September 17, 1796, **President George Washington** stated: “. . .let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds. . .reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail, in exclusion of religious principle”; and

--on October 11, 1798, **President John Adams** said: “Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other”; and

--on June 20, 1785, **President James Madison** stated: “Religion [is] the basis and Foundation of Government”; and

on July 4, 1837, **President John Quincy Adams** rhetorically asked: “Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the Foundation of the Redeemer’s mission upon earth? That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity?”; and

And whereas other leaders in the history of the United States acknowledged the importance of Christianity in their personal lives and the life of this Nation:

-- on June 21, 1776, **John Adams** wrote: “Statesmen. . .may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand. . .”; and

--in 1820, **Thomas Jefferson**, author of the Declaration of Independence, in which God is acknowledged as the Creator of men and women and the Giver of freedoms and equality, wrote: “I hold the precepts of Jesus as delivered by Himself, to be the most pure, benevolent and sublime which have ever been preached to man. . . .”; and

--on March 9, 1790, Founding Father and signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution **Benjamin Franklin**, stated: “As to Jesus of Nazareth. . .I think His system of morals. . .as He left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see,” and

--**Patrick Henry**, who was largely responsible for the adoption of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and was a driving force behind the First Amendment regarding church and state, declared: “It cannot be emphasized too

strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!", and

--**President Abraham Lincoln** said, "I believe the Bible is the best gift that God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book," and

--**President Woodrow Wilson** said, "Let us seek forgiveness for any errors of act or purpose and pray for God's help and guidance on the way that lies ahead," and

--**President Calvin Coolidge** said, "The foundations of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country," and

--**President Harry S Truman** said, "The basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings we get from Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul. I don't think we emphasize that enough these days. If we don't have a proper fundamental moral background, we will finally end up with a . . . government which does not believe in rights for anybody but the State!", and

--**President John F. Kennedy** said, "Let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth, God's work must truly be our own," and

--**President Ronald Reagan** said, "Without God there is not virtue because there is no prompting of the conscience. . . without God there is a coarsening of society; without God democracy will not and cannot long endure. . . If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a Nation gone under," and

--**President George Bush** said, ". . . seeing before us the promise of a safer, more peaceful world – one marked by respect for the rule of law – let us offer all these entreaties in a spirit of faith, humility, and gratitude, seeking reconciliation with all people. In so doing, we recall the timeless prayer found in Scripture: Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory. . . for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. . . and Thou reignest over all. . . in Thine hand is power and might: and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious Name," and

--whereas the above quotes clearly demonstrate the inseparable link between Christianity and our government, and

--whereas in Christ Jesus we find equality of all people, male and female, regardless of race or ethnic origin, irrespective of age or disability, and

--whereas a Christian Association spans all other associations, bringing unity among many diverse people,

Therefore, we respectfully request the chartering and recognition of a Forest Service Christian Association, to be known as ACROSS, Association of Christians Reaching Out in Service and Support.

II. Citations

We cite the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, adopted June 15, 1790: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, **or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;**".

We cite the Civil Rights Acts, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, **religion**, age, or disability.

We cite the Religion Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, which requires a compelling governmental interest to burden a person's exercise of religion.

We also cite the Federal Personnel Manual, Supplement 990-2, Subchapter S11, which generally permits excused absence with pay for activities that are:

- related to the work of the agency,
- for the betterment of the employees, or
- in the best interest of the agency.

In addition, we cite the approval of Pathfinders, An Association of People with Disabilities in Government; the Forest Service Hispanic Employees Association; Asian-Pacific Islanders Association; African-American Strategy Group, and American Indian Council as further precedent for establishing the Forest Service Christian Association.

III. Name of the Association

The name of the Forest Service Christian Association shall be ACROSS, Association of Christians Reaching Out in Service and Support.

IV. Purposes

The purposes of the Forest Service Christian Association are:

1) to contribute to employee welfare and morale by supporting and strengthening one another in the practice of a living faith in Jesus Christ, devoted to serving our fellow employees and agency constituents (Hebrews chapter 10:verse 25, Matthew chapter 25:verses 35-36, Galatians chapter 6:verse 2);

2) to contribute to the best interests and betterment of our co-workers, the agency, and the public we serve by demonstrating Christian faith in the workplace through respect for people and the rights of others, exhibited through patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, unselfishness, courtesy, honesty, honoring others, forgiving as the Lord forgave us, and living in peace (Galatians chapter 5:verse 22, I Corinthians chapter 13:verses 4-5, Colossians chapter 3:verse 13, Romans chapter 12:verse 10b, Romans chapter 12:verse 16);

3) to unite Christians, and those who support the principles of the Christian religion, within the local workplace as well as those widely separated geographically (Romans chapter 12:verse 5, I Corinthians chapter 10:verse 17, Ephesians chapter 4:verse 13, Philippians chapter 1:verse 27);

4) to encourage one another in Jesus Christ and reveal His love to others that they might gain eternal life, joy, peace, and contentment by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (Mark chapter 16:verses 15-16);

5) to pray for our local and national leaders (I Thessalonians chapter 5:verse 17, I Timothy chapter 2:verses 1-2);

6) to interact with management to ensure that the Christian perspective is considered in the development and implementation of policy (Ephesians chapter 6:verses 10-17, I Corinthians chapter 15:verse 58, I Peter chapter 5:verses 8-9);

7) to support managers in making right and moral decisions on policy and other actions (Romans chapter 13:verse 1), and

8) to cooperate with the Servicewide Civil Rights Committee and local civil rights action groups to identify concerns and resolve civil rights-related issues (Romans chapter 12:verse 16).

V. Membership

Section 1. Three categories of membership in the Association shall be offered, as follows:

1) Member, which is defined as any permanent, temporary, or retired government employee who supports the Association's purposes and goals.

2) Associate Member, which is defined as any individual or family member who supports the Association's purposes and goals.

3) Partner, which is defined as a business, nonprofit organization, association, or other government entity that supports the Association's purposes and goals.

Section 2. Attendance and Voting.

1) All categories of members may participate in meetings, discussions and functions.

2) Members and Associate Members shall have voting status; Partners shall not have voting status.

3) Anyone may attend Association meetings. The Association is not attempting to promote specific denominations, nor do we aspire to separate ourselves from the rest of the work force.

Section 3. Dues.

No dues will be assessed.

Section 4. Removal of Members from Membership.

1) Any member of ACROSS may be removed from membership for “just cause” by majority vote of the ACROSS National Board of Directors.

2) “Just cause” shall include, but is not limited to, dereliction of duty, any illegal act, or any act that will bring discredit upon the ACROSS organization.

3) Any member of the ACROSS National Board of Directors or elected officer of ACROSS can bring removal charges against an ACROSS member. The ACROSS National Board of Directors shall vote on whether to hold a removal hearing. If a majority of the ACROSS National Board of Directors vote for a hearing, the hearing shall be held as a special meeting called by the National Board of Directors.

Section 5. Statement of Non-discrimination.

The Forest Service Christian Association does not discriminate in its membership based upon religion or creed.

VI. Organization

The Association will have a National Board of Directors consisting of five individuals, and a coordinator from each chapter (see below). The National Board of Directors will be elected by a simple majority vote of the membership. Nominations for Directors will be submitted to the National Board of Directors 30 to 60 days prior to elections and disseminated to the Association members 30 days prior to the election. Elections will be held within 60 days of Association approval and at two-year intervals thereafter, except that two of the Director positions will initially be established for one year. The initial election procedure will determine which two positions will be established for one year. The term of office shall be two (2) years. No office shall be held for more than two (2) consecutive terms. The terms shall be staggered, as described above, so the entire board is not exchanged at one time.

To be eligible for the National Board of Directors, each nominee must be a member of the Association and in good standing as defined herein (see Article V. Membership).

The duties of the Directors and the coordinators are to develop partnerships with management to assure sensitivity to the values of Christians, and to coordinate the dissemination of information to members.

VII. Chapters

One chapter of ACROSS is authorized for each Forest Service administrative unit. Each chapter will have a President, Vice President, and a Secretary, duly elected by a simple majority of the voters of the chapter. Elections and terms will be as described above.

VIII. Meetings

Section 1. Meetings will be held at the local (Chapter) level at the discretion of local members.

Section 2. The National Board of Directors shall hold annual meetings and designate the date and location of the meetings. National meetings will be scheduled for various geographic locations, and may feature prominent speakers both within and outside the government.

Section 3. The National Board of Directors may call special meetings as deemed appropriate.

IX. Finances, Books and Records

ACROSS records and financial statements shall be prepared in accordance with GAAP and subject to annual audit. This report will be forwarded to the Deputy Chief, Administration, for review and approval. This audit is set on a calendar-year basis.

X. Publications

Official publications shall include a directory of the Forest Service Christian Association and, as published in accordance with FSM 1630, an electronic newsletter.

XI. Facilities and Services

Members of the Association may post on employee bulletin boards notices of meetings and other activities. Meeting rooms may be reserved. Computer networks may be used for internal messages to provide information, distribute wellness bulletins, and otherwise fulfill the purposes of the Association.

XII. Civil Rights

The Forest Service Christian Association holds equal rights and equal standing in the workplace with all groups protected by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to wit, groups of race, ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, and disability.

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