

Southern Baptist assumes high position with U.S. Air Force

WASHINGTON (BP) – Chaplain Col. Randall E. “Randy” Kitchens of the U.S. Air Force received confirmation from the U.S. Senate July 30 to become the U.S. Air Force’s 27th deputy chief of chaplains.

“I was in shock and awe,” Kitchens said. “I was humbled and honored.”

Since July 2017, Kitchens has served as the command chaplain for the Air Force Global Strike Command at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, one of 16 assignments in a chaplaincy career that dates to April 1987.

As deputy chief of chaplains, Kitchens will assist the Air Force’s chief of chaplains to generate guidance on issues related to the religious and moral wellbeing of Air Force personnel and their dependents, as well as provide direction for roughly 2,000 Air Force chaplains and religious affairs Airmen.

In his role, Kitchens will also be a part of the Armed Forces Chaplain board that advises the U.S. secretary of defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on matters related to religious, ethical, and quality of life issues.

The confirmation entails promotion to the rank of brigadier general.

Kitchens succeeds Brig. Gen. Ronald M. Harvell – also a Southern Baptist – who was named to the faculty and staff of Charleston Southern University in Charleston, S.C., where he will serve as the university’s first director of the Dewey Center for Chaplaincy.

“Chaplain Kitchens’ Senate confirmation for promotion to brigadier general and selection as the US Air Force’s 27th Deputy Chief of Chaplains is truly historic,” said Doug Carver, executive director of chaplaincy for Southern Baptists’ North American Mission Board and retired former chief of chaplains for the U.S. Army.

“This is the first time in the Air Force chaplaincy’s 52-year history that Southern Baptist chaplains have been chosen in succession to fill this strategic ministry position,” said Carver, the first Southern Baptist to serve as the Army’s chief of chaplains.

“It is also indicative of the exceptionally gifted chaplains who represent Southern Baptists in taking the hope of the Gospel to the members of the Armed Services.”

Kitchens was born and raised in Macon, Ga., the son of a bivocational pastor. He made a profession of faith as a young boy and followed in believer’s baptism.

“At a young age, I knew that God had a calling on my life,” Kitchens said. He finished his undergraduate work at Mercer University in Macon, Ga., majoring in Christianity and minoring in physical education as well as music and voice.

He is also a graduate of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.