

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Henry Hopkins et al. to Abraham Lincoln [With Endorsement by Lincoln]<sup>1</sup>, July 3, 1863

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1 Surgeon General Hammond's reply to Lincoln's endorsement is tantamount to a rejection of the chaplains' request. Henry Hopkins, the first signer of this letter, was appointed a hospital chaplain in May, 1862 and he resigned from the service in May, 1864.

U. S. General Hospital

Alexandria, Va. July 3rd 1863.

Sir,

We, the Chaplains of the Hospitals in Alexandria, having learned that it is in contemplation to reduce the number of Chaplains to one in each Division; beg leave, most respectfully, to represent to your Excellency, the following facts, to show that such reduction cannot take place without serious injury to the religious interests of the sick and wounded Soldiers in the Hospitals; and will defeat your excellency's intention, in creating the Hospital Chaplaincy

1st, There are twenty one large Hospital buildings, a long distance apart, divided into three Divisions.

2nd. The present number, of Two Chaplains to each Division, gives about Three Hundred and fifty Patients, and over three to each Chaplain.

3rd. Even with the present number, each Chaplain is obliged to hold Three, and sometimes, four Services each Sunday.

This amount of labor, taken in connection with the burying the dead, visiting, talking and praying with, furnishing reading matter to, writing letters for, and doing numberless offices for the patients, take up every hour of our time. So that we have no time for Studying, and for writing Sermons.

If the number be reduced to One in each Division, the Soldiers will suffer for the want of Religious instruction, and other kind offices; for, to use the language of one of the Surgeons, "The Chaplains in that case will have time to do nothing more than bury the dead."

4th. Not only does the same necessity exists now, for the Continuance of the present number of Chaplains, that there was for your Excellency appointing them; but the approaching battles, and a fresh army, will create a still greater demand for the labor of Chaplains.

With this brief statement before you, we trust your excellency will see fit to order that no change be made in the Chaplaincy at Alexandria.

With Sentiments of the

Highest Esteem, and

Prayers for your Excellency's

welfare, we are,

Yours, for the

Sick and wounded Soldiers

Henry Hopkins

John A. Bowman<sup>2</sup>

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2 Bowman was appointed a hospital chaplain in May, 1862 and was mustered out of the service in August, 1865.

C. B. Thomas.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Chauncey B. Thomas was appointed a hospital chaplain in June, 1862 and was mustered out of the service in July, 1866.

Thomas G Carver<sup>4</sup>

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4 Carver was appointed a hospital chaplain in July, 1862 and was mustered out of the service in June, 1865.

Rodney Gage<sup>5</sup>

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5 Gage was appointed a hospital chaplain in August, 1862 and was mustered out of the service in June, 1865.

P. S.

Chaplain Olmstead is about to be transferred to another Hospl as he himself informs us.

[Endorsed by Lincoln:]

Submitted to the Surgeon General, with the request that he will report to me any contemplated action of his in the premises & his reasons.

A. Lincoln

July 3, 1863

[Endorsed by William A. Hammond:]

Respectfully returned to His Excellency the President.

The Small buildings in Alexandria used as hospitals include in all but about 1800 beds, and are divided into three hospitals, respectively under Surgeons Page, Spencer and Bentley.

For a long time these hospitals have been but half full and even if filled to the utmost capacity, I believe that the number of patients in each hospital, viz: 600, is no greater than that embraced commonly in a parochial charge, possessing besides the advantage of access in being confined within a limited space.

The law also authorizing a Chaplain to each permanent hospital, I have deemed it my duty in systematizing the details of Chaplains, to order to hospitals newly established and without Chaplains, certain supernumeraries not only in Alexandria, but throughout the country who otherwise would have been reported for muster out of the service.

I do not doubt that it would be personally more agreeable to the signers of this letter, both to remain where they are now and to have their legitimate duties lighthened by sharing them with others, but in making details from this Office, such details are considered less than the law in the case and the requirements of the service.

W. A. Hammond

Surgeon Genl.

S. G. O.

July 7.63.