



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO
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Dear Colleagues in ministry,

I trust you and your loved ones had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday. Our Nation has much to be thankful for--not the least of which is the magnificent Corps of chaplains who serve the men and women of the Sea Services. Please take a moment to say a prayer of gratitude for our superb CHC shipmates, and please ensure you convey that gratitude to the chaplains you supervise and mentor.

This past week I wrote the Ecclesiastical Endorsers to apprise them of events in Navy chaplaincy. Several Endorsers told me candidly there is a perception that it's easier to become a chaplain in other Service branches, that the Navy is "not hiring," and/or that low promotion percentages make a Navy career less feasible than in our sister Services. I addressed these questions.

It's important that you, as CHC leaders, know my responses and the context in which they were offered. In short, I wrote the Nation's Ecclesiastical Endorsers to announce the arrival of a new shift in Navy Chaplain Corps history--one that has been years in the making.

I began by recapping history that you know well: Following the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the American military was dramatically downsized and that development impacted the Navy heavily. This, not surprisingly, had immense implications for our Corps; in fact, the CHC decreased by twenty-five percent from 1989 to 1999.

Unfortunately, when the Berlin Wall fell, the CHC was manned at Reagan-era levels. The reduction by one-quarter of our chaplains in the span of a single decade, coupled with the fact chaplains have the highest retention in the Navy, created a community management nightmare.

Accordingly, the Navy undertook painful procedures to manage the CHC drawdown. Measures such as involuntary early retirements, involuntary releases from active duty, lowered selection opportunities, and lengthened time in grade were implemented. The Navy's goal was to avoid a massive CHC "Reduction in Force" that would have gutted our junior ranks while log-jamming senior echelons. That debacle was avoided but, as you are well aware, it was accomplished at a heavy price.

Thank God the drawdown is over. I will remember the decade of our numerical reduction as one of unusual challenges driven by the earth-shaking events of the Soviet collapse. With optimism I told the Endorsers that Navy chaplaincy is alive and well, and open for the Lord's work.

Additionally, I emphasized that we are indeed looking for chaplains called to our ministry. For chaplains already serving, opportunities for promotion continue to increase each year. By the time anyone entering active duty

today becomes eligible for promotion, CHC percentages will be at the maximum levels permitted by law. This is an incredibly positive development that portends the brightest of futures for CHC community management.

We will continue to offer initial three year Obligated Service Agreements (OSA's) as a way for chaplains to see if Navy ministry is for them, and for the Navy to ensure a chaplain is suited to the Service--but there will be no forced separations by percentage as year groups approach the end of their first three years (a marked change from the 1980s when year groups were reduced by as much as 40 percent at OSA). Also, CHC recruiting standards have been refined to ensure parity with our sister Services. I wanted to ensure the Endorsers were clear on our standards, and it's important for you to be clear as well:

Age:

Active duty: 39 (commissioned prior to 40th birthday)

- Applicants with prior service may request a waiver at a year-for-year rate up to age 47 (commissioned prior to 48th birthday).
- Exceptions to these standards will be considered on a case by case basis.

Inactive duty: 39 (commissioned prior to 40th birthday)

- Applicants with prior service may request a waiver at a year-for-year rate up to age 44 (commissioned prior to 45th birthday).
- Exceptions to these standards will be considered on a case by case basis.

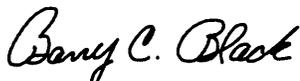
Chaplain Candidate: 37 (commissioned prior to 38th birthday)

- Applicants with prior service may request a waiver a year-for-year rate up to age 41 (commissioned prior to 42nd birthday).
- Exceptions to these standards will be considered on a case by case basis.

I pray this information will enable you to counsel and encourage those who may be considering ministry to Sea Services people. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our CHC Recruiter, Chaplain Gary Carr at 901-874-9216.

Colleagues, I want thank you for your faithful service. This is an exciting time to be a Navy chaplain. May God bless you, your family, and those you serve.

Fraternally,



BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, CHC, U.S. Navy
Chief of Chaplains