

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

JAN 30 1999

Building Our Future Together  
Occasional Thoughts: A Ministry of Hope

Dear Chaplain:

Over the next several months, in a series of letters to you, I plan to focus on various themes I proposed to you in my earlier letter entitled, "Building Our Future Together -- A Letter to the Chaplain Corps." I sincerely value the responses I have received from many of you already, and I deeply appreciate your expressed commitment to the course we have now set for ourselves for the coming years.

Also, I want you to know that I have conveyed many of these thoughts to your Ecclesiastical Endorser. I had the privilege to meet with every Endorser at the annual meeting of the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces. And, recently, I underscored our ministry vision in a personal letter to each Endorser. Further, I carried this message of hope to the new Secretary of the Navy and to the Chief of Naval Operations. They, too, are enthusiastic about our vision, and they have embraced this commitment to partner with us in the achievement of these noble objectives. My staff is working to ensure that all aspects of policy formulation, career development, and community management combine in order to conform to and support this vision.

Therefore I encourage you to tell and re-tell the story at your level that we envision a future in which the lives of men and women will be strengthened and their spirits will soar in this knowledge: there is a God who loves them and who ensures their worth and value! In the coming months, I will address, specifically, three key areas that are integral to our quest:

- Career Development
- Technology
- Spiritual Growth

However, in this letter, I want to speak about Hope. This is a heart-thing with me. But it is more than that. Hope is what binds us together and it is that aspect and product of our ministry linking us to those we serve. There may be many variances within a Chaplain Corps reflecting the participation of clergy from 200 different denominations. There are obvious challenges to our cooperative spirit implicit in those ecclesiastical distinctives. However, our ministries will remain viable and our Corps will remain solvent only on the basis of what we are for, not what we are against -- and only when we emphasize our common ground and purpose without degrading or ignoring the faith group uniqueness.

Yet, no institution or individual survives long by its negations. It is, therefore, not by accident that the first operant phrase of our traditional Chaplain Corps vision statement reads: "Energizing people with Hope." Hope is restored and maintained when we are competent staff officers. Hope becomes evident and prevalent when we exercise good judgment and integrity in our professional communications. Hope soars to lofty heights among those we serve when our ministries are relevant and reliable. Hope permeates the workplace when we honor our commitments, keep our word, and lead by example. Hope sustains the chaplain/RP/Laity team when we encourage one another in our attempts to achieve the difficult good.

I want you to know what I challenged my staff to do. Each one of them must make difficult decisions almost daily in support of the survivability and the viability of the Chaplain Corps. They must prioritize among many good alternatives. They must anticipate well and compete fiercely in our behalf in a climate of fiscal constraints and reduced infrastructure. They must deal with the consequences of their policy and program decisions and the decisions and actions of their predecessors. However, my invitation to them is to pray together on a regular basis, to share good ideas with one another, and to be collaborative team players.

There is no room for those whose work is done at the expense of another colleague. There is no message of Hope in activities that are self-serving, half-done or carelessly and thoughtlessly completed. Our ministry effect is never neutral. It is for good or ill.

I therefore challenge you to ask these questions of yourself, and to discuss with your religious ministry team the ways and means of bringing Hope into the lives of Sea Services men and women:

- Do your worship services -- music, prayers, homilies, liturgy, sacraments/ordinances -- and their frequency and availability, instill a sense of hope and refreshment?
- Are those who visit your offices greeted and dealt with in a manner and competency that conveys a message that "you are a person of value and worth?"
- Do your ministry programs send a message of inclusion?
- Have you created a culture of commitment to your command and its people?
- Do you willingly cooperate in ministry across command lines?
- Are you finding nurture for yourself through key ministry alliances, mentors, spiritual and professional growth in order to enable you to give effectively and reliably to others?

Also, I ask you to challenge me with ideas about how our Corps can minister to both Sea Services individuals and the institution. I believe in and I am committed to our unique ministry and special calling. I am aware, as you are, that our opportunities for a ministry of Hope are growing, evolving, and taking new shapes that were not imagined just a few short years ago.

You will soon learn of several new ways in which I want members of our Corps to communicate with and support one another. For example, the annual Major Claimant Staff Chaplains Workshop has been replaced by a more expansive Senior Leadership Conference to be held twice this fiscal year. Several other ad hoc advisory boards and process action teams were chartered to address specific concerns of mine in the areas of ethics, regionalization, and numerous professional development issues.

Also, the superb efforts of the Ethics Advisory Board, chaired by Captain Lou Iasiello, have resulted in the formulation of a magnificent segment on ethics training for all levels of instruction at the Naval Chaplains School. Their contributions are now being shared with our sister Service chaplaincies. Additionally, the Honorable Richard Danzig has written and spoken eloquently on the issue of "zero defects." His perspective was informed and bolstered by the insightful contributions of the Ethics Advisory Board.

The Deputy Chief of Chaplains, RADM Barry Black, is partnering with CAPT Doug O'Lauson and CAPT Leroy Gilbert to bring to bear their special expertise in several leadership training initiatives designed for our senior leadership. This is just the beginning and serves as one more illustration of marvelous alliances being formed to benefit, ultimately, all Navy chaplains and RPs.

The Deputy Chief of Chaplains for Total Force, RADM Pete Beckwith is carrying this message to both reserve and active duty communities. And, I have asked my Senior Enlisted Advisor, RPCM Rick Faulkner, to also travel extensively to incorporate these aspects of ministry appropriate to the RP community.

In time, you will witness and experience more and more benefits resulting from our formal and informal collaboration across command lines in pursuit of our common purpose. I want you to be a part of it! I want you to understand clearly and be emphatically committed to this vision.

We will continue to offer a relevant ministry of Hope. We will continue to be on the front lines delivering this ministry of Hope. We believe that the front lines of ministry are everywhere and all the time.

Be assured of my prayers for you. Also, I ask for your prayers as we embark on a journey together to instill Hope in the lives of Sea Services men and women.

Sincerely,

A. BYRON HOLDERBY, JR .  
Rear Admiral, CHC, U.S. Navy  
Chief of Chaplains