DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
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Dear Colleagues:

Jogging on the Naval Station in Norfolk, Virginia, just before sunrise last week, I thought how unreal this new war sometimes seems. An aircraft carrier sat serenely at the pier, and sailors still rested in their bunks. A gentle breeze blew as a squirrel scurried across my path. All seemed right with the world. The day before, I had met with Norfolk chaplains and RPs for a Question and Answer session. I reflected later that our discussion made the war on terrorism seem like a very distant thing. I guess it can be easy to forget the immediate reality of this different kind of warfare.

But we must not forget the reality of this new war—for several reasons: First, our world leaders need our prayers. Grappling with complex issues, they need more than human wisdom. Our prayers make a difference. Second, our colleagues in harm's way deserve our support. Many are working long hours under dangerous conditions. The least we can do is demonstrate what I call a "Uriah spirit." Uriah, one of King David's military leaders, so identified with his comrades facing the enemy that he refused to go home to his wife while they remained in the peril (2 Samuel 11:11). Third, we must prepare for the possibility of tragedies greater than we have yet seen. September 11th may not be the worst day of this conflict. Have we learned the lessons that will help us deliver ministry more effectively in the face of the unthinkable?

Effectiveness requires not dropping our guard—not sliding back into the comfort of complacency. Our leaders, our families, and our God expect us to be ready. My Executive Assistant, Chaplain Alan Keiran, sent out an Email to our senior leadership several weeks ago that I hope you have seen by now, reminding all of us to use the time available to us to make practical preparations for crisis response.

Readiness involves personal attention. It may well entail asking ourselves some sober questions: What kind of physical condition am I in? If I should be thrust into combat tomorrow, how would my fitness level help or hinder me? How well have I

taken care of my family affairs? Would my loved ones be prepared to carry on—and then move on—if something happened to me? Moreover, am *I* prepared to move on, to "transition" from time into eternity?

We are blessed with the opportunity to make an impact that will outlast time. In fact, many of the spiritual seeds we sow in time's soil may not bring a harvest until eternity. As we prepare people to answer life's most significant question, "Am I ready to meet my God?" we need to be confident we can answer it in the affirmative ourselves. Let us labor to that end with faithfulness and hope in these uncertain days.

Fraternally Yours,

Barry Black

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