

In Celebration of the Anniversary of  
**THE UNITED STATES NAVY CHAPLAIN CORPS**

**28 November 1775**

**by Captain Jane F. Vieira, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy**

**I was born on November 28, 1775 by order of the Continental Congress. The blood lines of Christianity, Judaism and Islam run through my veins, for I serve to guarantee the First Amendment to the Constitution, the right to “free exercise of religion,” the freedom of belief.**

**Since the day I reported to the frigate USS BOSTON, I have been present at every battle since the Revolutionary War, for more than 225 years: at Tripoli, Normandy, Guam, Okinawa, Korea, Khe-sahn, Beirut, Panama, in the Persian Gulf ... and a score of other places, long forgotten by all, except those unto whom I ministered and comforted in the throes of war. I have anointed the injured, prayed for the dying and buried America’s dead.**

**I have served with Sailors, Marines, Coast Guard personnel and Merchant Marines. I have gone with them to sea and into the jungle, served beside them, and died with them. Wherever they go, I go and watch over them. In World War II I earned 46 purple hearts and my first Medal of Honor.**

**In my earliest days I taught Sailors and Marines how to read and write as well. Because education is so important to me, one of my number, Chaplain Robert Thompson, was instrumental in founding the United States Naval Academy now at Annapolis, and another, Chaplain George Jones, served as the first head of the academy’s English Department. From earliest days, I fought to improve living conditions aboard ship for the crew, established libraries, and worked to eliminate the use of grog onboard and flogging as a means of punishment.**

**In 1838 by a General Order, I was authorized to wear the naval uniform, and did so proudly in the Civil War and beyond. In 1917, I was officially established as a Chaplain Division in the Bureau of Navigation, and in 1981, as a major staff office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Throughout my history, everything I have done has centered on caring for and empowering God’s people - inspiring their faith and spiritual awareness, teaching them about character, values and caring for others, especially the disadvantaged. With all my strength, I work to make a difference in their lives by bringing them closer to each other and to their God.**

**I was conceived in a land where freedom, especially freedom of belief, is paramount, and God willing, in freedom will I worship for the rest of my days. May I always possess the integrity, the courage and the strength to keep myself unshackled, to remain the citadel of religious freedom, and the beacon of strength, hope and faith to all of God’s people. This is my goal, my hope, my prayer. I am the United States Navy Chaplain Corps!**

**\* Suggested background music: “O Beautiful for Spacious Skies” or “Eternal Father”**