

Navy Chief of Chaplains RADM Margaret Grun Kibben Remarks: "So What Matters?"

Good morning to all of you. You all look wonderful. It's nice to be here for yet another year. As many of you know, I've been in the Navy Chief of Chaplains in one capacity or another for nine and half years. One of the advantages to having been in the office for so long is to have had encounters with you over those last nine years as well; to have watched this particular meeting evolve has been a privilege. More than that, to have some relationships with you and know that we have a commitment to ensure the delivery of religious ministry to our people. You really do an awful lot for our folks and I hope you find this time worthwhile to hear from us, from my colleagues in the Army and Air Force so we can work together.

The Navy Chaplain Corps has enjoyed some incredible support from Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard leadership:

The new CNO ADM John Richardson, a submariner, has a depth of faith and commitment to the care of his Sailors and their families unequaled in my perspective from most Navy leadership, and it is a real privilege to serve alongside him. He gets it, if you will.

The new Marine Corps Commandant, General Robert Neller, another wonderful soul who has a real tenderness in his heart for caring for his Marines and the Sailors who serve with those Marines and their families.

Chaplain Brent Scott, my deputy, is the Chaplain of the Marine Corps and I would argue that job is the best job in the Navy. He's doing a great job in that role as part of the leadership team who serves General Neller.

The Commandant of the Coast Guard ADM Paul Zukunft, he has a depth of character, a personable guy. His chaplain, CAPT Greg Todd, has been invited to travel with him on numerous occasions, coming alongside him to see the Coast Guardsmen and the chaplains who serve therein quite frequently.

In the Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, reflected in his support is his quote for us for our 240th anniversary:

"For the last 240 years, our Navy chaplains have proven to be a steady, calming presence through even the most tumultuous times. Their counsel and care for our nation's Sailors and Marines not only inspires hope among the men and women who have volunteered to go into harm's way, but also directly enhances the resiliency of our force."

While these words may not have come directly from his pen, the fact that his staff can craft a message like that reflects his leadership and their commitment, as a secretariat, a commitment to us as a Chaplain Corps.

We also have unprecedented support from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Mr. Kurta, being first and foremost among them, and recognizing that we, not just as the Armed Forces

Chaplains Board, but as Navy chaplains have some input into policy decision making and to have that conversation, it is indeed unprecedented. Mr. Kurta, if I could thank you very directly today in front of all these endorsers. I think you all need to know that the representative we have in that office is not only chaplain-friendly, but he's also very committed to ensure that the delivery of religious ministry remains effective, well-informed and integrated into the secretariat.

One of the advantages we had this year was to create a positive relationship with Congress. We have made a point of connecting with many in Congress. We've had a particular relationship with Senator Lankford and Representative Forbes. And those two gentlemen, who are active members of the Prayer Caucus, they along with the Prayer Caucus supported us as we had our 240th anniversary celebration cake cutting on the hill. . . .The intent was to raise the awareness of chaplaincy and to have those two Congressmen as well as the Prayer Caucus supporting us in a wonderful evening of slideshows, comments and cake cutting and interchange. We had people coming through that room who had never met a Navy chaplain before but had a chaplain in their family or their families had been Marines families. . . .to be able to have that exchange. . . .it really was a collegial, wonderful opportunity.

While we were there, we showed a slideshow we're about to kick off here called: "Why I Serve." (Download the slideshow here: <http://www.navy.mil/local/crb/arc/docs/WhyIServePresentation.pptx>)

I'm not surprised, really, that we have the support that we do from our military leadership because you have sent us some men and women who are doing remarkable things. This was something Ms. Christianne Witten instigated where she invited chaplains from the fleet to write on a piece of paper their thoughts on why they serve.

The words, probably won't surprise you, and the creativity and initiative of our chaplains to be able to demonstrate that they really feel committed to the delivery of religious ministry and it's been very exciting. . . .You'll see some of your folks here.

This is a nice backdrop and this really is why I serve: to ensure your people can serve the men and women of our Sea Services.

We have tagline that we are, as Navy chaplains: "*Where it matters. When it matters. With what matters.*" It's an interesting tagline. I am particularly keen on and it started off with the previous CNO, ADM Greenert, who used to say that the Navy is where it matters, when it matters, and it hit me that what the Chaplain Corps is all about is not only to be there where it matters, when it matters, but to bring what matters to those who serve. And that really was our emphasis over the past year to remind us as a Corps that that is what we do.

If you've ever worked with me, one of the questions I like to ask is "so what?" We put a lot of initiative and energy into what we do but the question remains always: "So what?" So the question for FY16 is: "So what matters?" It's a pretty easy answer, frankly. It's why we do what we do. And it's important we continue to keep that question in front of us and more importantly is that we articulate the answer to this question. Individually, that is fairly easy. Because we are embedded in the command structure, demonstrates we are *where and when it matters*. . . .that we have created relationship from E-1 to O-10 and know that we're seeing them where they are. To be eating, breathing, sleeping and enduring the same challenges that our

people are eating, breathing, sleeping and enduring. That we are there with them, just by itself, matters. In that relationship, representing the transcendent, representing something that is so much deeper than many have eyes yet to see is really critical to who we are as military chaplains. That I don't think we need, among this group, to spend a whole lot of time outlining. You get, in that respect, "*what matters.*"

But it is important that we recognize in delivering "what matters" that we have the knowledge, skills, and abilities —really the capability—to bring "what matters." And we have the knowledge, skills and abilities, presence in a way no one else in the command structure does...Chaplains bring something unique that no one else does. In our provision of religious ministry, in facilitation, for those who wish to express their own faith traditions to caring for each and every individual within that command whether they are people of faith or not and to advise the command. We have to have the capability to do exactly that. My goal, as the Chief of Chaplains, is to continue to enhance the professional skills of the people you send us—their competencies—to look at each chaplain individually and help them to raise their knowledge, skills and abilities so that they can in fact continue to contribute at such a unique level.

I'd like to explore the notion that we, as a Chaplain Corps in aggregate, also have to enhance our capability to serve the institution at large. When the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard think of the Chaplain Corps, what is the capability that they associate with that identification? We need, as a Chaplain Corps, to continue to enhance our own professional skills, to raise the quotient of our professional expertise to ensure our impact across the institution. So in this last year, one of the things we've initiated is Communities of Interest. Many of your folks have been sent to funded grad school, advanced education, while they are still active-duty. It's a competitive process. They have a chance to compete amongst others who are also hoping to go to advanced education and then they spend a year going to a civilian institution, to a war college, to pastoral care and residency program for CPE at some of our hospitals...It's a great year for those individual chaplains.

As I grew up in the Chaplain Corps, I often wondered: "So what?" I had a great year at the war college; I learned a lot, the learning continuum was incredibly steep. And I learned a lot individually. Interestingly when I was assigned after that, I found myself doing the exact same kind of ministry I had done five years prior. So what if I'd gone to the war college? And as I thought about all of the money that the Navy had spent on our individual chaplains to have that kind of education, the question that came to mind was: So what? We have, within our Chaplain Corps, a brain trust that is heretofore untapped by virtue of this funded graduate education program that we call the advanced education program. And in addition to that, we have reserve chaplains that are professors at seminaries, who are professionals within the pastoral care field; your people are coming to us with advanced degrees beyond just the minimum, with skill sets that are so unique to the delivery of religious ministry. We have not, as a Chaplain Corps, done very well at tapping into these to the benefit of the entire institution. So in the strategic plan that was actually written five years ago, we had given hint to this, this idea of a community of interest.

In this last year, we identified four communities that align with the schools we're sending our folks to: ethics, pastoral care, religion and culture, and chaplaincy research.

The expectation is that when an individual chaplain goes through that education program, they will then serve on that community of interest as a collateral duty. Also, we put out a call to all those who had a specialty code or background in those fields and asked them to serve on these communities of interest so that within this structure we, as a Chaplain Corps, could benefit from this wealth of knowledge that exists across our community.

For instance, the CNO —and the previous CNO— have within this last fiscal year really put an emphasis on ethical leadership. You know, as well as I do, when the military talks about ethics, they are talking about whether or not it is right or wrong. Missing the point that right or wrong derives from a moral and ethical foundation, that there has to be some sort of measurement or well from which to draw to be able to make these moral and ethical decisions.

We all know that chaplains have a role to play in that moral decision matrix. So what could we as a Chaplain Corps speak into the institution on the topic of morals and ethics? Within our community of interest, we were able to look at what we can do as a Chaplain Corps to raise our professional quotient.

You are familiar with the fact that we have a professional development training conference every year. This community of interest had a capstone a year and some change ago and they wrote the PDTC for this year on moral and ethical leadership. They took the material that the Navy is putting out across the institution for all Sailors on this topic for day one based on what they understand moral and ethical leadership is about. For day two, they created a program that there is something about pastoral ethics we need to be aware of. It's not just about being a naval officer and understanding the Navy's expectations for us, but it's also about understanding who we are as clergy and what are some of the challenges to our own moral and ethical foundation, what are the fissures in our experience. How do we as a Corps, corporately, identify those fissures and pitfalls so we can address them within our own moral and ethical frameworks. Day 3 is designed so we can put all of that together, having explored with where the Navy is headed and our unique role as clergy.

It's about proactively, stepping into the conversation with a unified Chaplain Corps voice on things like: integrity, accountability, initiative, toughness.

Our Chaplain Corps voice can and should resonate in each of these areas.

It's always been clear to me -- especially now nine years into my time in the Chief's office: that it all starts with *you*. What we do today in our Chaplain Corps, the way we're trying to engage with leadership across the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, the voice that we're trying to speak into the institution starts with you. And I hope that the mantle of responsibility has just gotten a little bit heavier on your shoulders because what you give to us— the starting point from which your men and women come—either sets them up for success or failure.

I've really enjoyed the engagement we've had over this last year. We've had some wonderful dialog and in that dialog what I see is a commitment on our part as a Navy Chaplain Corps as well as the Armed Forces Chaplains Board with my colleagues in the Army and Air Force that

there is a need for unity of effort to ensure that that starting point sets them up to most effectively meet the religious needs of our Sailors, Coast Guardsmen and Marines and their families.

The conversations we've had over this last year, I hope, have underscored the importance of the high standard we have set to ensure that your men and women are well-prepared to bring "*what matters*," where and when they serve. Things like:

- a well-discerned sense of calling, not just something they are trying to figure out
- a strong academic background
- and experience in settings, both educational and pastoral, that test the book knowledge with face-to-face encounters
- a well-formed pastoral identity

You know that our Program Authorizations, our blue print by which the Navy recruiters recruit, reflect the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard's desire for individuals whose baseline is firm enough to ensure that our most junior chaplain is well-suited for the most effective delivery of religious ministry from Day One.

We have a second tour lieutenant serving at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling whose congregation includes the Chief of Chaplains from the Air Force, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, senior leadership across the National Capital Region. If he isn't prepared to step up, not just to the pulpit, but to the pastoral care needs of these individuals, then we've done those individuals a huge disservice.

I recognize it is a high-standard. And, if you know me, I am unwaveringly strident in upholding this standard. I'm unwavering but not insensitive. I realize this puts a burden on many faith groups inasmuch as your paths to ordination, certification, licensing, or otherwise setting apart are wide and varied.

And I'm truly grateful to each of you who have reached out to me and to our office to discuss what impact this has on your ability to provide your representatives.

I'm equally grateful to those of you who have taken it upon yourselves, as endorsers, to find ways to be innovative to meet the standard to ensure your faith group continues to give us your best and fully qualified.

In my travels, visiting with your men and women, your chaplains, I am continually inspired by their innovative approaches to ministry and their passion for caring for our people. It energizes me. You wonder where my energy comes from? It's from *your* people. I told you it all starts with *you*. So to have the chance to go out there and see what they're doing in caring for our people, what an experience that is. It's worth every minute spent in an airport terminal. I want you to realize that my goal is to remain transparent with you, to keep our channels of communication open and give you a sense of where you're people are serving and what they're facing and why the standard is so critical.

As we face the challenges to meet the religious and pastoral needs in today's environment, all the social changes that are going on, the daily life that our Sailors, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and families are experiencing...we have got to, together, with unity of effort, ensure that your people are well prepared and understand clearly what some of the challenges are.

Our collaboration is key in providing the very best in religious ministry "*Where it matters. When it matters. With what matters.*" And as we all know, *faith matters.*