



# RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

in the UNITED STATES NAVY

*Religious diversity in our Navy indicates clearly the Nation's commitment to its founding value of religious freedom.* —CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS REAR ADMIRAL MARK L. TIDD, CHC, 2011

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*The Navy's leadership values all aspects of diversity, including religious diversity, fostering an environment in which each individual prospers and contributes to the mission.*



For both officers and enlisted personnel, embracing the diversity within their ranks enhances individual performance, unit cohesion, and combat readiness. Likewise, the Navy Department respects the practice of religion among its Sailors and Marines, believing spiritual health is as critical to completing the mission as mental and physical fitness for duty. Navy chaplains,

◀ *Opposite page: Marines and Sailors attend religious services at a forward operating base in Afghanistan, December 2001.*

*Left: Rear Adm. Joseph David Stinson, Deputy Chief of Chaplains for Reserve Matters and Director of Religious Programs, Marine Forces Reserve, greets a patient at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany, April 2010.*



who represent nearly one hundred denominations and faith groups, tend to the spiritual, physical, and emotional welfare of service members, including those who declare no religious affiliation. Navy chaplains are available to all Sailors and Marines regardless of their faith, creed, or beliefs, strengthening the personal and professional lives of those in need.



The Navy accommodates people of faith in various ways. Its policy, which follows Department of Defense guidelines, calls for meeting as much as possible the requirements for religious observances, dietary needs, medical practices, and religious apparel. While accommodations and signs of respect for religious traditions are a part of service life, the requirements for maintaining military readiness and completing the Navy's operational missions remain the first priority.

Navy men and women are encouraged to share their faith without proselytizing. Jewish Sailors extend open invitations to Seder meals, for example. Audiences listen to Native American prayers during November observances honoring American Indian and Alaska

◀ *Left: A Jewish chaplain conducts services on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), November 2002. Chaplains of all faiths serve aboard ships around the world, bringing counseling and spiritual sustenance to Sailors at sea.*

*Above: A musical ensemble performs during a Protestant liturgy aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68), July 2009. Shipboard ministries host three different religious services in the ship's forecabin every Sunday.*

*Below: Crew members read from the Passover Haggadah (prayer book) during the Passover Seder meal on board USS Nimitz deployed to the Arabian Gulf, April 2003.*



## MARGARET G. KIBBEN

A graduate of Goucher College in Towson, Maryland, Rear Admiral Margaret Kibben holds master of divinity and doctorate of ministry degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, as well as a master's degree in national security and strategic studies from the Naval War College. This Warrington, Pennsylvania native entered active duty in the Navy in 1986 and has served with Sailors, Soldiers, and Marines around the world. In 1989 the Navy assigned her to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, making her the first female chaplain to serve there. As an individual augmentee, she completed a deployment as the Command Chaplain with the Combined Forces Afghanistan in 2006. She became the first female chaplain promoted to flag rank when she was named Deputy Chief of Chaplains and the 18th Chaplain of the Marine Corps on 9 July 2010.

*“The opportunity to serve Sailors and Marines has been one of the greatest gifts God has provided me.”*

◀ Rear Adm. Margaret G. Kibben, Deputy Chief of Chaplains and Chaplain of the Marine Corps, 2010.



Native heritage. And Sailors may incorporate religious culture (through music, scripture, poetry, or other reflections) in such celebrations as retirements, promotions, awards, and changes of command.

The service also allows leave for special holy days and pilgrimages. In 2008, for example, the Navy afforded a group of Muslim Sailors the opportunity to make the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca required at least once in a lifetime of all financially and physically capable believers. The Navy set up the travel arrangements in partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Lieutenant (j.g.) Rami H. Islam, the electrical officer aboard the aircraft carrier

◀ *Top:* Members of the Honor Guard aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) bow their heads in prayer during a burial at sea, February 2009.

*Center:* Chaplain Lt. Jason Gregory reads a Bible on the weather deck of the guided missile cruiser *USS Bunker Hill* (CG 52) operating with the U.S. Southern Command, March 2010.

*Bottom left:* Yeoman 3rd Class Douglas Pomeroy, assigned to the amphibious transport dock *USS Nashville* (LPD 13), bows in prayer at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, June 2008.

*Bottom right:* Cmdr. Dave Adams, commander of the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team, offers a prayer alongside his Afghan partners commemorating the first water distribution system in the province, December 2007.





## ABUHENA M. SAIFULISLAM

Lieutenant Commander Abuhena Saifulislam, a native of Bangladesh, immigrated to the United States in 1989 with a master's degree in commerce and the ability to speak several languages. He enlisted in the Navy as a payroll clerk in 1992 and became a naturalized citizen in 1995. Four years later he received his commission and became the second Muslim chaplain in the Navy and the first Muslim chaplain assigned to the Marine Corps. He served at Camp Pendleton, California; at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and at the Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, where he led the effort to establish the permanent Islamic prayer facility that opened in 2006. President George W. Bush invited him to lead the call to prayer at the White House for Ramadan in 2007.

*“Many of the world’s troubles today seem to be caused by cultural misunderstandings. The world is becoming so small. It is not a choice that we learn how to live together—it is a necessity.”*

◀ Lt. Cmdr. Abuhena M. Saifulislam, ChC, April 2010.



◀ Far left: William Balch, the first chaplain known to have received a commission in the U.S. Navy, served from 1799 to 1801. Painting by Clayton Braun, c. 1940.

Left: "Assembling the Fleet at Key West—Sunday Service on the Battleship Texas" by artist H. C. Christy, 1898.

USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), who went on the Hajj, noted, "American Muslims in uniform have fought side by side to defend the U.S. Constitution since the Civil War. The Navy's recognition of a faith practiced by a minority group makes that very group proud to be part of this institution. It's a true example of what America is all about—freedom and equality for all."

The Navy's interest in the spiritual well-being of its Sailors and Marines dates back to before the American Revolution. On 28 November 1775 the Continental Congress adopted naval regulations that directed ship captains to hold divine services twice a day and "a sermon preached on Sundays," marking the beginning of what is now the Navy Chaplain Corps. Although the Congress presumed a chaplain would lead the

services, it was often ship officers with collateral duties who shared inspiring words, read from scripture, led prayers, and conducted funerals. The Continental Navy's first chaplain was Reverend Benjamin Balch, a Congregational minister and the son of a minister. Balch, who had fought at Lexington, Massachusetts, completed tours on the frigates *Boston* and *Alliance*. His son William received the first commission as a chaplain after the Navy Department was established in 1798.

Secretary of the Navy Samuel Southard in 1823 initiated a policy requiring chaplains to be ordained ministers, but some commanding officers continued to appoint officers or their preferred clergymen to serve as chaplains. The Navy relied on current chaplains to train junior officers for the chaplaincy until the U.S. Naval





## BRENDA BRADLEY-DAVILA

Captain Brenda Bradley-Davila enlisted in the Navy Reserve as a hospital corpsman after answering “the call” to ministry. In 1990 she completed Chaplain School in Newport, Rhode Island, and received commission as a lieutenant (j.g.). With a bachelor of arts degree in special education and a master of divinity degree, she earned a doctorate in ministry from the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in 2005, and was selected to the Naval War College to study for a master’s degree in strategic studies. A Baptist chaplain and wife, Bradley-Davila completed tours ashore, afloat, and overseas, including deployments on board the aircraft carriers USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69), USS *George Washington* (CVN 73), and USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) in the Arabian Gulf; with the 3d Marine Logistics Group; and with the amphibious assault ship USS *Bataan* (LHD 5). Bradley-Davila describes her work as a “meet you where you are” ministry, and emphasizes the importance of being open-minded and making herself available.

*“Everyone comes with so much to offer, yet often they don’t see what’s inside them. . . . As a chaplain I need to help them fulfill their purpose in life.”*

◀ Capt. Brenda Bradley-Davila, ChC, 2010.



◀ Two Navy chaplains were awarded the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest combat decoration.

*Far left:* Lt. Cmdr. Joseph T. O'Callaghan gives last rites to a crewman wounded after a Japanese air attack set off fires and explosions aboard USS *Franklin* (CV 13) on 19 March 1945 during the invasion of Okinawa. Father O'Callaghan received the award for his heroic actions, which included leading damage control parties to prevent further explosions.

*Left:* Lt. Vincent R. Capodanno was killed in action on 4 September 1967 while ministering to wounded Marines during a battle against enemy forces in Quang Tin Province, Vietnam. Father Capodanno, who served as the chaplain to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division during the Vietnam War, was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for his heroism that day.

Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, opened in 1845. Chaplain George Jones, who helped establish the academy, became its first chaplain. Jones later served as the senior chaplain of Commodore Matthew C. Perry's 1852–1854 expedition to Japan.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, chaplains were primarily white Protestant males. The service began commissioning Roman Catholic priests in 1888 because of the growing number of Catholics serving in the Navy and Marine Corps. The 20th century gave way to a more organized and more diversified Chaplain Corps. The Navy created the Chaplains Division in the Bureau of Navigation on 5 November 1917 and appointed John B. Frazier, a Southern Methodist, as the first Chief of Chaplains. During Frazier's four-year

tenure, he standardized the administration, training, and supervision of chaplains and developed *The Navy Chaplain's Manual*. At the recommendation of Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas, the Navy commissioned Rabbi David Goldberg a lieutenant (j.g.) during World War I, making him the Navy's first Jewish chaplain. The Christian Science Board of Directors persuaded Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels to commission Richard Joseph Davis as the first chaplain to represent its denomination in early 1918.

World War II began a period of greater integration in the Navy Chaplain Corps. Lieutenant (j.g.) James R. Brown racially integrated the corps as the first African American in 1944, followed by Thomas D. Parham, the first African American promoted to the rank of captain.



## RONALD O'DELL

Lieutenant Ron O'Dell completed five years of enlisted service in the Marine Corps in 1997 and then worked as a South Carolina state counselor. While serving as a minister in a South Carolina church, he decided to go to seminary. A professor's description of life as a military chaplain and the opportunity to travel with his parishioners, to see and do what they experience, inspired him to earn a commission in the Navy Chaplain Corps. His early assignments included Naval Weapons Station Charleston, South Carolina, and Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California. He deployed with 1st Battalion, 5th Marines of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit to Kuwait in 2007. As the expeditionary chaplain with the same unit a year later in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, he ministered to 1,200 Marines and their families. His wife shares his ministry from their home in California, where she participates in the Family Readiness Team at Camp Pendleton.

*“There is nothing else I’d rather be doing . . . I feel like I’m contributing to something that will have a lasting effect.”*

◀ Lt. Ron O'Dell, ChC, organizes USO boxes at a forward operating base in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, September 2009.



The corps remained all-male until 1973 when Lieutenant Dianna F. Pohlman became the first female chaplain in the Navy and in the military, followed a year later by Lieutenant Vivian McFadden, the Navy's first female African American chaplain.

Since the 1990s the corps has grown even more diversified. The Navy selected Lieutenant (j.g.) Monje Malak Abd al-Muta Ali Noel Jr. as its first Muslim chaplain, or Imam, in 1996. Two years later Captain Barry C. Black, an African American, received a promotion to flag rank and was named Chief of Navy Chaplains. Lieutenant (j.g.)

Jeanette Gracie Shin, a Buddhist, and Lieutenant Cynthia Kane, a Unitarian Universalist, entered the Chaplain Corps in 2004 and 2005, respectively, as the first representatives in the Navy of their religions.

As of July 2010 there were 783 male and 53 female active duty and reserve chaplains in the Navy, serving throughout the maritime services and in every environment. As former Chief of Chaplains Rear Admiral Louis V. Iasiello, a Roman Catholic priest, noted in 2006, "The Chaplain Corps has been, and is now, sharing the dangers and discomforts with the troops in the fight, yet always providing spiritual and emotional support for those in need, comforting those in mourning, consoling the wounded and the dying, serving the spiritual needs of hundreds of thousands, and doing so in the most ecumenical way." Chaplains conduct services, rites, and ceremonies such as baptisms, the blessing of the fleet, and weddings; offer counseling; participate in community



◀ Left: Chaplain Capt. Thomas D. Parham delivers an address during the launching ceremony for the destroyer escort USS *Miller* (DE 1091) in Westwego, La., June 1972.

Above: Lt. j.g. Jeanette Gracie Shin, the first Buddhist chaplain in the Armed Forces, signs her oath of office in the Pentagon as Chief of Chaplains Rear Adm. Louis V. Iasiello, left, and Commander, Naval Reserve Force Vice Adm. John Cotton look on, July 2004.



## DANIELLA KOLODNY

Rabbi Daniella Kolodny was born in Jerusalem and raised in Columbia, Maryland. Before joining the Navy, she earned a master of arts degree in Jewish community service from the Hebrew Union College. While studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York, she completed an internship with the Chaplain Candidate Program, which gave her experience at the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Rabbi Irving Elson, a Navy chaplain and an alumnus of the JTS, urged Kolodny to consider joining the Navy. In 2004 Kolodny received her commission as one of just eight active duty rabbis in the Navy. Her duty stations included the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland; naval bases in Bahrain and Yokosuka, Japan; and the aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70). She was the first female rabbi at the U.S. Naval Academy. After leaving the Navy in 2009, she and her husband moved to England where she serves the Masorti Jewish communities.

*“It is very rewarding to be with people when they’re really hurting and try to bring God’s presence into that realm.”*

◀ Lt. Daniella Kolodny, ChC, 2005.



*Far left:* Lt. Vivian McFadden, the first female African American chaplain in the Navy, comforts a patient in a naval hospital in San Francisco, Calif., 1976.

*Left center:* Cmdr. Doyle W. Dunn, right, command chaplain for USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75), and Lt. Cory Cathcart, a Navy chaplain, baptize a Sailor in a munitions crate in the hangar bay of the carrier underway in the Arabian Gulf, March 2003.

*Right center:* Rear Adm. Barry C. Black, the first African American Chief of Navy Chaplains, speaks during his retirement ceremony at the Washington Navy Yard, D.C., August 2003. Chaplain Black, who received the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, continued to serve as the 62nd Chaplain of the U.S. Senate.

*Far right:* U.S. Navy chaplains, assigned to the 2d Battalion, 3d Marine Regiment and Regimental Combat Team 5, meet with a local religious leader in Haditha, Iraq, November 2006.

outreach programs; and advise leaders on issues concerning the impact of religion on operations. Religious program specialists assist chaplains by coordinating and facilitating religious programs and by providing physical security for the chaplains who, as noncombatants, do not carry weapons.

The Department of Defense takes seriously the training of its military and civilian leaders on all matters relating to equal opportunity—including religious opportunity. As part of the curriculum at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida, the Religious Studies section hosts a panel representing major world faith groups and small fast-growing faith groups as well as those who





adhere to no religious beliefs. The ultimate goal of this open forum is to promote among the students an understanding of the diversity and complexity of religion to help them make sound decisions on faith and practices in their commands.

In the 21st century the Navy's leadership remains strongly committed to diversity. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead declared that the Navy "must embrace the demographic changes of tomorrow and build a Navy that always reflects our country's makeup."

A person who is motivated and hardworking, and has the honor, courage, and commitment to serve, can achieve his or her dreams, regardless of gender, race, creed, color, or ethnic origin.

◀ *Left:* Religious Program Specialist 1st Class Brenda Dwiggins, assigned to the Iraqi Women's Engagement Team of the 1st Marine Logistics Group, greets an Iraqi boy in Anbar Province where she is helping local Iraqi women get medical attention for their families.

*Center:* Navy Chaplain Lt. Derrick Horne and Religious Program Specialist 1st Class Jennifer Snow, from the hospital ship USNS *Mercy* (T-AH 19), visit with a student at a primary school in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, during Pacific Partnership operations, June 2010.

*Right:* Cmdr. Dale C. White, a Navy chaplain with Regimental Combat Team 8, hands out toys donated by Americans to Iraqi children in Fallujah, Iraq, May 2005.

*Photo credits:* Capt. Brenda Bradley-Davila, Lance Cpl. Benjamin Harris, Naval History & Heritage Command, Navy.mil, Lt. Ronald O'Dell, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps.

*Front cover:* Command Chaplain Cmdr. Kenneth D. Counts conducts an Easter sunrise service aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) in the Arabian Gulf, March 2008.

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