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

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Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Historical reflection is an important and instructive practice. It enables an organization to rejoice in successes and learn from the past. It can also result in better goal setting and planning for the future. In 2004 we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Religious Program Specialist (RP) rating. Indeed, the rich history of those who serve alongside us in this primary support role for our ministry goes back beyond 1979 when the RP rating officially began. The challenges of implementing, defining, growing, and sustaining the RP rating is worthy of record and study.

After several years of planning and preparation, we have begun the fascinating, but complex task of organizing the immense amount of data collected over the years for the Religious Program Specialist (RP) rating history. This RP History Project will include the precursors to today's RPs, such as the chaplain's aide of 1879 and the "W" Specialists serving in WWII. It will chronicle the struggle for establishment of the rating and the many milestones that followed. It will also record the accomplishments that have marked the rating's proud history of service to Sea Services personnel.

Some of you may have information, documents, names of retired shipmates who were involved in making this history, or personal experiences that you can furnish. The RP History Project team needs your assistance, your contributions, and your knowledge. Materials may be sent to the Chaplain Resource Branch (CRB), which is coordinating the project. The CRB point of contact is Mr. Bill Taylor, Chaplain Corps Archivist (archive@crb.chaplain.navy.mil).

I ask that you lend your support and prayers to this project as we prepare to celebrate the achievements of a group of people who have been essential to the success of our Sea Services ministry. Thank you and God bless you.

Barry C. Black

BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, CHC, U.S. Navy
Chief of Chaplains