



A Cup of fresh Coffey: Meet George Washington's New Command Chaplain

MCSN Loni Lopez, GW Public Affairs

The U.S. Navy's forward-deployed aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) has a new command chaplain, Cmdr. Joseph L. Coffey from Philadelphia.

Coffey is replacing Cmdr. Daniel Mode who served on George Washington from 2012 to 2014.

"I'm very excited to take over the duties as command chaplain for George Washington and Commander, Task Force 70 (CTF-70)," said Coffey. "I hope to continue the outstanding work already being accomplished by our religious program specialists, chaplains and temporary assigned duty Sailors helping us."

Coffey was stationed aboard George Washington nearly ten years ago as the divisional officer for the Command Religious Ministries Department (CRMD).

"This is my second tour on George Washington," said Coffey. "I love being here with a whole new crew. Many of the Sailors aboard were younger than 10 years old when I was first stationed here. I know that should make me feel old, but I love their energy, dedication and enthusiasm. I'm very proud to be their shipmate on this mighty warship."

While serving aboard George Washington in 2004, he was bestowed the honor of being named Navy Chaplain of the Year by the Military Chaplain's Association.

Despite this award and countless experiences aboard the ship, he recalls one of his favorite memories during a steel beach picnic.

"We were on the flight deck and our strike group commander, Rear Adm. William McCarthy (Ret.) walked by a huge group of Sailors," said Coffey. "He was in his uniform when, quite spontaneously, he was doused with water by about 100 Super Soakers. All he could do fortunately was laugh, shake his head, and keep on walking."

Coffey was most recently stationed as a chaplain recruiter in St. Louis. He has also served two tours with Marines, at Combat Assault Battalion in Okinawa, Japan and



Marine Aircraft Group 39 in Camp Pendleton, Calif., and served as command chaplain at U.S. Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May, N.J.

"Many of the Sailors aboard were younger than 10 years old when I was first stationed here. I know that should make me feel old, but I love their energy."

Chaplain Coffey and his CRMD team provide extensive family readiness programs and lead community relations projects. They are also responsible for more than 50 religious programs a week in which the chaplains counsel hundreds of Sailors on a wide variety of issues.

"As a team, we provide religious ministry, facilitate for many different faith groups, and care for every Sailor on this ship and their families. I want the crew to think of the library and chapel as a place to rest and rejuvenate. They should feel free to pray, meditate or rest. Our doors are always open."

As command chaplain, Coffey now leads the nightly prayer underway, and considers this the highlight of his day.

"Being able to pray on behalf of more than 5,000 Sailors and civilians of all ranks and faith groups aboard is an honor. We [chaplains] pray for safety, for strength and for our families back home."

According to Coffey, he hopes to keep Sailors positive during these patrols and help Sailors adjust to the long working hours and separation from families and friends.

"I try to advise Sailors to keep things in perspective and look at the big picture," said Coffey. "When comparing our troubles to others, ours can seem pretty small and manageable. I tell Sailors that life and being in the Navy is a great adventure. Enjoy the ride. I tell them to be proud of themselves. Their families and our nation sure are."

George Washington and its embarked air wing, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, provide a combat-ready force that protects and defends the collective maritime interests of the U.S. and its allies and partners in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.