

Captain Stephen M. Coates
United States Navy
Division Director for Operations
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVY CHAPLAINS

Chaplain Coates was born in Springfield, IL. He graduated from Greenville College, with a Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science in 1985. He served the National Park Service as an historical interpreter at Bent's Old Fort and Fort Laramie National Historic Sites. He then served as a legislative analyst in the Illinois Senate. In 1989, he began twelve successive years of full-time civilian pastoral ministry, serving churches in Michigan and Illinois. He earned his Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary and is ordained with the Free Methodist Church, maintaining membership in the Gateway Conference.



In 1999, Chaplain Coates was commissioned an Ensign as a Chaplain Candidate Program Officer and served three OJT's: MCRD Parris Island, SUBASE NEW LONDON, and 2nd MARDIV. He superseded into the Chaplain Corps as an active duty officer in August 2002. Following the Basic Course at Chaplain School in Newport, Rhode Island, Chaplain Coates served at MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, JAPAN from September 2002 to October 2005. While assigned to Station, he deployed with MAG 12 in support of Operation Cope Tiger. In November 2005 he reported as Command Chaplain to USS MOBILE BAY (CG-53), deploying with the ABRAHAM LINCOLN CARRIER STRIKE GROUP from March through August 2006. In October 2006, he reported to OPERATIONAL MINISTRY CENTER SAN DIEGO and served DESTROYER SQUADRON SEVEN and USS CLEVELAND (LPD 7). In April 2007, Chaplain Coates was nominated to serve an Individual Augmentation in Iraq. He deployed in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, serving JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCES from June 2007 through January 2008. Chaplain Coates reported to NAS SIGONELLA, SICILY in March 2008 and served as the Assistant Command Chaplain through November 2010. In December 2010, he reported to 2D MARINE DIVISION but immediately fleeted up to serve as Deputy Force Chaplain for II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (FORWARD), deploying in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM from March 2011 through March 2012. He then served as Deputy Division Chaplain for 2D MARINE DIVISION through June 2013. In July 2013, he reported to HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS RELIGION as Assistant Deputy Chaplain of the Marine Corps; Head, Plans, Policy and Operations (PP&O). In March 2016, he reported as Command Chaplain aboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN with additional duty as the CARRIER STRIKE GROUP Chaplain. In April 2018, he began serving as Deputy Director of Training and Professional Naval Chaplain Advanced Leadership Course Instructor at the NAVAL CHAPLAINCY SCHOOL AND CENTER. In February 2021, he reported as Force Chaplain, MARINE FORCES RESERVE/MARINE FORCES SOUTH. He currently serves as the Division Director for Operations in the Office of the Navy Chief of Chaplains.

His personal awards include The Legion of Merit, The Meritorious Service Medal (with 2 Gold Stars), The Joint Services Commendation Medal, The Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (with 4 Gold Stars) and The Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (with Gold Star).

Chaplain Coates is married to the former Laura McDaniel of Dearborn, Michigan. They have three grown children: Taryn (and Brian) Jones, Kendra (and Justin) Sovine, and Carson Coates.