



Chips

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"CHAPLAINS IN PUBLIC SAFETY"

"Serving those who serve . . ."

Life & Death

Chaplain Mark Evans
Clackamas County Sheriff's Office



I have dealt with death all my life - from family members and friends to complete strangers whom I come across because of my job as a Chaplain. A Chaplain usually does not get called out unless something tragic has happened. Suicides, SIDS, accidents, natural deaths: people deal with death in different ways. Some get hysterical. Some weep. Others try to be strong for their family members. But however they deal with it - death is an unwelcomed guest.

A long-time member of our church recently lost his wife. They had been married 62 years. Some might say it should be expected to lose a spouse in old age. But how do you prepare to live without someone you have lived with and loved for that long? You don't. Death is an unwelcomed guest. Even worse, death visited his door two times more and took two of his three daughters within weeks of his wife dying. One had been in bad health - the other had been caring for her mother. They died young and at different times. Neither was expected - neither was welcomed. I did a joint funeral for mom and one daughter in one service and shortly thereafter for the second daughter.

My neighbor who was a godly man with a wife and a 5 year old daughter died in his sleep a few months ago. My niece who was one week shy of her due date lost her soon to be firstborn son. How do we reconcile these deaths and the fact that we believe in a good God? The question always comes - Why? Why them? Why now? Why, God?

And here I am writing a note about death when God decided to spare my life. Not only did I come close to dying during a recent emergency surgery, but had I not been in the right place at the right time, I most likely would have died. My wife looked up the statistics for the type of injury I had and found that the mortality rate for those who discover it early is 75% and 90% for those who don't. I just happened to be going back to the hospital to take my wife to an appointment. So death passed over me that day.

I wish I had an answer for people when they ask me why their loved one died. I have a lot of theological answers but none of them satisfy a grieving loved one. So I stand by their side and grieve with them. The unwelcomed guest visited. All I can do is help them through the process of death and grief. I do my best to memorialize their lives when I do the funeral. Some people's lives are easy to memorialize because they have lived a good life. Others you have to search deep for anything good to talk about. One day we will all be greeted by the unwelcomed guest - death.

But why was I spared? I am no better than the next guy. People's prayers are not more powerful for me than the prayers that went up for others. It was just not my time. Psalm 139:16 says, "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." I have a purpose on this earth and it has not been completed. I do not know my last day, but God does. Psalm 90:12 says, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." We need to use each day we have been given to the best of our ability. Make this day count!

I want to thank each and every one of you who held me up in prayer during my recent hospital stay. Thank you also to those who sacrificed greatly to donate toward my medical bills. The Command Staff from the Sheriff's Office, the Clackamas County Peace Officer's Association Benevolence Foundation, the CCSO Reserve Unit, and numerous individuals donated funds to help my family. Even more amazing was that I received donations from some of my fellow chaplains - men and women who themselves rely on donations to make a living. I am truly blessed! I am doing very well now and am back to no restrictions working as a Chaplain, a Pastor, and a Reserve Deputy!

**"A chaplain is the person who gets to give others hope in the midst of the worst day of their life."
Chaplain Steve Brodehl**

Our Mission . . .

"Public Safety Chaplaincy shall coordinate the highest quality services to meet the unique spiritual and emotional needs of public safety personnel, their families, and the communities they serve."

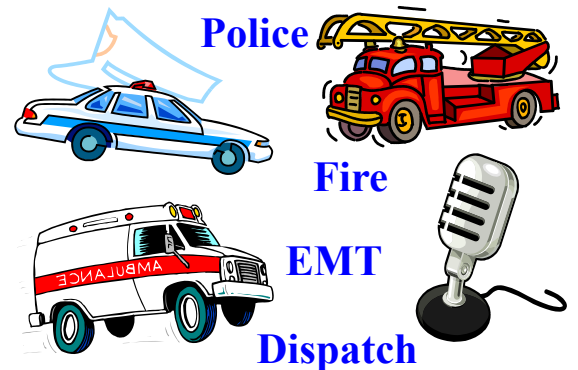
Areas of Service this summer . . .

- Suicides
- Death Notifications
- Pre-marital Counseling
- Weddings
- Funerals
- On Scene fatal accidents
- National Night Out
- West Side Compassion—served 270 people
- Teaching/Training Stress Management Classes
- Lay Offs of Public Safety Personnel
- Assist Officers with Welfare Check—
check on well-being of person
- Coordinated Washington County Fire Chaplains meeting
- Grief Counseling
- Meeting with Medical Teams International
- Drownings
- Hospital Visits
- Retreats for Law Enforcement Families

PSC Chaplains

- made 751 calls
- serving 1,421.5 hours,
- not including retreats,
- during July and August

Chaplain Carol Elms, Tillamook Co Sheriff's Office, is now a certified instructor with International Conference of Police Chaplains (ICPC) . She will be teaching basic (level one) chaplaincy classes. She is also certified as a Trainer for Children's Disaster Training. Congratulations, Carol !!!



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