



**PRESBYTERIAN & REFORMED
JOINT COMMISSION ON
CHAPLAINS & MILITARY PERSONNEL**



CHAPLAIN TESTIMONIES

The following are some recent reports/testimonies of how the Lord is using chaplain ministries to advance His kingdom. We are VERY grateful for your support. Your prayers empower these ministries.

Thank you,

Douglas E. Lee

MNA Chaplain Ministries Coordinator, PCA

PRJC Executive Director and Endorser

It was my turn for pre-operative visits at the VA hospital. I visited several patients, veterans with different health needs, seeking to ease their nervousness, offer prayer or simply encourage. It was a normal morning and I had seen about six or eight veterans when I entered the preparation room of this World War II (WWII) veteran.

I began my visit with my normal greeting, “Hi, I’m Chaplain Jeff Weir and I’m here to see how you’re doing this morning.”

“Morning Chaplain,” was the strong and cheerful reply, “I’m doing fine . . .” He went on to describe the procedure he was about to have and stated he was not worried. We talked for a bit, and then the conversation turned to his experience in WWII. I had listened to many interesting stories and tales from the veterans who served in many wars in many places. His was just as interesting and important.

This veteran was a young soldier stationed in the Philippines just before the outbreak of WWII. He was present in many battles in early 1942 and was taken prisoner. He was eventually placed on a ship and sent to Japan where he served as a laborer in a port city. He told me his captors threatened his life 14 times and he was on the receiving end of US Army Air Corps and Navy bombing raids. I could not imagine what he had been through.

He said these things matter of factly as the hospital staff prepared him for surgery. I asked him a few questions about his experience and reflected with him about what he said. As we talked he said, “Chaplain, you know how I made it through all that? God got me through it.”

“God got me through it,” . . . I think I said something profound like, “Wow.”

This was but one encounter with hundreds of veterans and their families during my year as a Chaplain resident at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Dallas. Each encounter, each experience with the veterans taught me their military experience was a significant event in their lives. They may have been cold war draftees who served their two years, a Sergeant disabled in combat, a retired nurse anesthetist or a ship’s captain. They may have been at the VA for surgery, in the recovery program, or in rehabilitation of some sort. They were from all socio-economic backgrounds and served in all the wars from WWII to the present. Uniformly they were marked by their experience, mostly for good and apart from some friendly inter-service rivalry they demonstrated camaraderie with one another seldom seen in other settings. They are a band of brothers and sisters to whom faith is important, but not uniform, and it was an honor to listen to each story, to encourage as they healed or to comfort in mourning and grief.

~Submitted by Jeffery R. Weir, a Civilian Chaplain serving in a VA residency program, and pastor who has served PCA churches and as a Navy Chaplain

Thank you, Lisa, for the Girl Scout cookies! Thank the scouts of Troop 523! As you know, I have the snack boxes at the staging area where the convoys depart. When they opened the tuff box a few days ago, there must have been 100 boxes of Girl Scout cookies. The Soldiers went crazy. The convoys can last up to 48 hours. I went on one. It was 25 hours straight. Another was almost 48 hours with about 6 hours sleep at a nearby base. So, snacks in the MRAPs (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicles (shown to the right) are appreciated. While much safer than a gun truck, MRAPs are very uncomfortable. The seats in the rear are tiny. With all of our battle rattle, it is miserable. I went on the 25-hour convoy the other week, and the A/C broke ten minutes at the outset. It felt like a sauna at 120 degrees. The fly count was even higher. A vehicle ahead hit an IED (Improvised Explosive Device). A mirror fell off, but nothing more. We kept rolling. On another convoy, a 48 hour one, we found an EFP (Explosively Forced Projectile). It was real but did not explode. EFPs are much more dangerous because they will eat through metal. EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) came out and blew it up. On that convoy, a youngster let off a pin flare inside the vehicle. Talk about celebrating the



4th of July early! The Soldiers are appreciative of the ministry of presence with their chaplain going out on missions with them.

We have experienced no attacks here at the Kalsu Forward Operating Base (FOB) in a long time. We are happy considering when we deployed we were told it would be every other night. Hopefully we're getting to days of peace over here and more focus on infrastructure and military/police strengthening. I am still scheduled for redeployment January 2009. Soldiers stop by my office all the time for a hygiene item, snack, phone card, greeting card, socks or whatever. Thank you, again, for the care package. And thanks for your thoughts and prayers. We appreciate such positive love. It boosts our morale. I let the soldiers know every day about such support when I'm giving prayers before convoys or when they visit my office. Now, back to my work... Thank the girls for me! We appreciate all of you! Love and peace!

~Submitted by CH (CPT) Shannon K. Philio, USA, FOB Kalsu, Iraq

I continue to serve as the 104th Division (IT) Chaplain, Vancouver Barracks, Vancouver WA and three months on Active Duty serving as the Warrior Forge Chaplain for Leadership Development Assessment Course (LDAC). This is the National ROTC Advanced Course. 5,177 cadets from all over the US reported for their last training before becoming officers in the Army. 3/4 of all officers come through this training; most of the rest come from West Point.

We had 126 worship services with over 6,000 cadets and cadre attending. We had over 4,000 opportunities to contact Soldiers with over 73,000 attending. We had 1,290 counseling sessions, with most being informal with the cadets and cadre. A number of cadets prayed to receive Jesus and many re-dedicated their lives to Christ. There were 20 chaplains and chaplain candidates involved with this ministry to 15 regiments consisting of 400 cadets and 50 cadres each (except the middle three regiments had around 300 cadets to cut down on the peak time of cadets all at Warrior Forge. Each regiment came three days apart.). Next year we will have 12 regiments with 6,000 cadets attending with 1,000 cadets hitting the ground every four days consisting of two regiments with 500 cadets each.

Pray that the doors will open if I am to go active duty, or to continue doing extended time in the reserve system as a chaplain, being useful to the Lord in this vital, timely ministry.

~Submitted by PRJC Army Reserve Chaplain (COL) John E. Johnston

The 173rd ABCT Rear Detachment I have served for several years dissolved as of September. I gradually transitioned into USAG-Vicenza Garrison support work. It was a very intense fifteen months for me. I performed Memorial Ceremonies for 43 Fallen Sky Soldiers, led four retreats and in addition planned two more. My long-term campaign for "Clean Talk" succeeded in reducing the amount of profanity uttered during command staff meetings and probably civilized the Brigade to a certain small degree.

Personally, my wife and I were grateful in late August to receive a favorable report on a biopsy she endured, but other health problems (hyperparathyroidism) continued to loom. Please join us in asking the Lord to direct us as we transition into Reserve retirement. We seek employment since we still need full-time income to support us. Thanks much for your partnership!

~Submitted by CH (LTC) Stevan Horning, USAG-Vicenza, Italy

There is fruitful ministry happening both in our training before coming overseas and while we are in combat. This is my last deployment with this battalion, so I'm praying that God will really use the relationships that have been built here to help advance the cause of Christ. Before this deployment we conducted a Bible Study Seminar to encourage and equip soldiers to intentionally get into God's Word during their deployment. Many churches helped facilitate this seminar and it is encouraging to see the guys follow through.

Please pray for my family and all of our families while we are separated during the holidays. Pray also for God's leading as we consider our next assignment. Pray that this last deployment amongst these men will be filled with safety, operational success and spiritual fruit.

~Submitted by now-deployed PRJC Army Chaplain (CPT) Mark Winton

I am finishing my first deployment as an active duty Navy chaplain with an infantry Marine battalion and it has been a rich and blessed ministry from God! I was able to lead worship services in the base chapel, Bible studies in far away Marine outposts, and learn a lot about the Iraqi people, Islam and Muslim culture. I saw Marines transformed by the Gospel and hungry for more. I also saw brokenness, grief and sadness. However, through it all, the Lord carried me through and I and other Christians were able to be a light to the Gentiles! Praise God! I would not be able to have this kind of an impact in any other ministry. I clearly saw the power of the Gospel at work and I will never forget! Pray that God will continue His work in us as we approach a time of rest and holidays and that He will guide me on choosing my next tour assignment.

Thank you for your prayers, your emails, and for your gifts to the Iraqi children,
Cristiano

**~Submitted by PRJC Chaplain LT Cristiano DeSousa,
shown here handing out soccer balls to Iraqi boys.**



A report from a recently deployed Chaplain in Iraq:

I've made it to Nineveh (modern Mosul). It's taken a while, but it's good to be here, and I've learned a lot along the way. I'm on the American base called Marez right now, getting some more administrative things taken care of before moving out to the Iraqi base called al-Kindi where I'll be ministering to teams of soldiers who are embedded with Iraqi Army units. They are at the leading edge of the battle here for freedom and democracy. There is a lot of progress being made, but not without a price. Right now I'm just trying to meet as many key people as I can and learn as much as I can as quickly as I can, intent on becoming a person who God can use in this place. Thank you for your prayers.



Chaplain Bruce Sidebotham

A Report from a Chaplain who has been deployed to Iraq for several months:

I am located about 15 miles south of Baghdad. My soldiers are on the dangerous roads of Iraq, hauling and retrieving supplies from base to base. Before each convoy, I give words of encouragement and appreciation, a prayer, and then let the soldiers reach into my snack boxes to pull out treats of love from home. I always let the soldiers know that America back home loves and appreciates them. Thank you for sending the Girl Scout cookies. You can rest assured that they will be placed into hands of brave men and women in uniform working hard to preserve and advance freedom. Thanks to your church for sending these gifts.



CH (CPT) Shannon K. Philio

A Report from a Chaplain about to come home from Iraq:

This email is going to be the last one that I email to you from FOB Kalsu, Iraq. The first part of next week I will be having my computer wiped, packed in my CONEX, and all my office supplies will begin the long trip home, being shipped by boat. Things are coming to a close for the 2-3BTB here in Iraq. Chaplain Hearn and I are no longer preaching, and today we got to simply participate in worship with our soldiers, which was a nice change.

My weekly Bible study continues to roll along. We just finished the book of Galatians and we are going to begin studying the book of James this coming Tuesday. We will have to double-up on chapters, but we will get it done before my departure. I'm going to spend my remaining deployment time just being available to my soldiers. Presently, there are a lot of marriages going down the tubes, and frankly, I anticipate having to do a lot of counseling when I return to the States. To me it is very sad that long deployments harm so many marriages. It is really taking a toll on me, seeing some good folks having to endure not only the pain of being in combat, but also having to go through the pain of returning to the States to nothing but broken relationships. They have served their country and now when they return they honestly don't know the status of their marriages or where



Chaplain William Oliver, preaching in Iraq

they are going to live. Finally, I want to say “thanks” to all of you. Thank you for sending my soldiers and me wonderful supplies during this deployment. Thank you for the encouraging emails that you have sent to me. And most importantly, thank you for your prayers. It has been wonderful to know that my Battalion has had hundreds of people praying for us back in the States.

A Homecoming from an Iraq Deployment!

(Written by returning Chaplain Robert Burn's wife, Melissa Burns):

Below are some pictures of Robert's Homecoming from Iraq. The first is of us posing after the initial picture. The second picture is the first one of us when we first flew into Robert's arms! We stood waiting and when the seven buses pulled in and he got off the bus, he saw us right away (which, fortunately, Priscilla's outfit helped him to notice us!!!) and he came straight to us. The last picture is of our house decorated for Rob, I added more yellow bows later. It has been a happy day for us! It was an absolute mob scene when 300+ Marines got off those buses; there were parents, wives dressed in hoochie-mama dresses and kids EVERYWHERE!!! Praise God Robert is home!

Love, *Melissa*



Chaplain Robert Burns, wife Melissa, and daughter Priscilla



*I will turn the darkness before them into light,
the rough places into level ground.*

Isaiah 42: 16b.

Here are several pictures of our Military Chaplains:



Air Force Chaplain Mike Curtis ministering to airmen on the flight line.



Marine Chaplain Rob Callison "commuting" to work in Iraq



Army Rangers raising a cross for an Easter sunrise service led by PCA Chaplain Mark Winton



Commissioning Service for our brand new Navy Chaplain, Jason Gregory