



Sierra Law Enforcement Chaplaincy

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COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This month I want to break from our usual format as I write to you from my heart to your heart. It is hard for me to believe that it was forty-two years ago when I was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1975! At that time, I took as my verse for the beginning of my ministry from the Apostle Paul, as recorded in First Timothy 1:13ff:

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service (or ministry). Even though I was once a blasphemer and persecutor and violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of the Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

In our world today, there is a lot of discussion and emphasis on getting started, setting goals, and reaching objectives. However, I find there isn't a lot of discussion or material written for those who find themselves coming to the end of their career and ministry. I have never seen a graduate or seminary class on "finishing well." I remember fifty years ago when I was a teenager on my way to Vietnam, at my going away party, my Pastor Harvey Lifsey gave me a Scripture verse that said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your labor is not in vain." I also remember the Apostle Paul's words to the church in Galatia, "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." I can honestly say that the Lord has honored his Word in my life. I am thankful that the Lord has allowed me to continue to labor in his vineyard all this time, and I feel grateful that my labor has not been in vain. It has been my heart's desire to "finish well," and I have a real sense of accomplishment, having served as a chaplain in the military and in law enforcement for over thirty years. Over all these years it's been my goal to model to those I serve the grace of God in my life.

During my law enforcement ministry years, I have had many opportunities to ride with our K-9 officers. I remember one officer had a T-shirt that said, "If you can't run with the big dogs, stay on the porch." Well, I realize that I can no longer "run with the big dogs;" I can no longer meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual demands of being a police chaplain. So that is why we brought on Chaplain Steve Wright at the beginning of the year as the new Senior Chaplain. It has also been my desire that when my time has come to "hang it up," I would transition gracefully. I have seen many ministers, pastors, and chaplains who couldn't make that transition. We all have heard stories about the pastor who stayed in the church after he retired and made life miserable for the new guy. However, there are many transitions we see in the Bible that went well. I think of Moses, who passed the baton to Joshua, and Elijah, who passed his mantle to Elisha. It is time for me to pass my mantle on to Steve, and now he will be taking over the duties of Executive Director for the chaplaincy. It is my plan to continue to minister to people, and I will continue to serve the staff and patients at Marshall Medical Center as the hospital chaplain.



Likely there have been times in your life that you have continued to support your church when you brought on a new pastor. I would ask that you do the same with the chaplaincy as it will now be led by Chaplain Steve Wright. No one else in our area provides the vital ministry that the chaplaincy does. No one else will be out with that mother or father at 2:00 AM ministering to them during a suicide, auto fatality, drug overdose, or horrible accident. No one else will be with that officer at the hospital who has just been shot or run over by a drunk driver. As I pass on the reins of this vital ministry to Chaplain Steve, I implore you to continue to support the chaplaincy in the future as you have so faithfully supported me over almost three decades. We need to let Chaplain Steve and his team of volunteer chaplains know that we won't forget them and will stand behind them so they can continue to support those experiencing a crisis or a horrific loss, bringing them hope in the midst of pain and sorrow. Naturally, I would also appreciate your continued support so that I can continue to provide chaplain coverage and spiritual support at Marshall Hospital.



I thank my God every time I remember you. ... (Philippians 1:3-6, NIV) ,

Chaplain Tim Thompson