



# Sierra Law Enforcement Chaplaincy

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## ***Chaplain Of The Month, Chaplain Debra Warwick-Sabino***

I am an Episcopal priest, wife, a mother of five and grandmother of three. I first came to faith when I was 7 years old, sitting in a tree fort built in a forest behind my house in Michigan. I vividly remember knowing that God was there with me. Being in nature ever since has always been a place in which I encounter the Holy Spirit. I became an unofficial chaplain when I was part of a police/clergy/community leader team when I served a congregation in Fairfield, CA. The church I served was in the middle of a gang injunction area and violence in the church neighborhood was a common occurrence. The clergy, with police, used to gather for prayer together at the places in which murders had been committed. We met regularly as a team to look for ways to help the community. I also had my own violent occurrences while serving that congregation and the police were an invaluable support for me.



My goals as a chaplain are simple: to be the hands and heart of Christ as I minister to those in crisis and to offer support and pastoral care to law enforcement persons.

### ***Comments from the Executive Director, Tim Thompson***

There are many scenes to which I have been called that make their way to the front page of the local paper. It is hard enough for a family to wrestle with the grief, but it is that much more unbearable when the media puts it on the front page for all of one's friends and neighbors to read. I have noticed that grief is always more complicated when the incident is made known to the public. I received a call from the Sheriff's dispatcher to respond to the north part of the county regarding a woman who had been missing for weeks. Search and Rescue had recovered her body, and it was time to make the death notification to the next of kin. We have built such a good relationship with our sheriffs that we are part of their protocol when making such notifications. Our chaplain ministered to the father who had flown out from Arkansas to search for his daughter. He was devastated to be notified that she was deceased. Apparently, she had suffered from M.S. for years. The chaplain was allowed to give the father his daughter's belongings that would not be needed as evidence to rule out any "foul play." The father was given resources for grief support groups that could help him deal with this tragedy.

Just as we cleared that call, the Sheriff called again for a suicide of a man in his 70's. The man's widow was in a state of unbelief and shock even though her husband had threatened to kill himself many times. My chaplain ministered to this woman in her shock and validated her that it was perfectly normal to feel anger for what her husband had done. After praying with the wife, my chaplain also gave the woman materials on local suicide support groups.

### ***Please pray with us for...***

- The father whose daughter was lost in the woods and was found dead
- The wife and children whose husband/father was killed on the way home in a traffic fatality
- Our search for a new chaplain and staff member who will help us meet the increasing need
- An officer, hit by a drunk driver, who is now off duty with a broken hand and torn ligaments
- An officer (who is a believer) whose mother was taken to the hospital and suddenly died
- A deputy's step-mother who is terminally ill and his father as they face this huge challenge
- An officer off-duty who might need to have back surgery
- Chaplain Tim as he struggles with the doctors' diagnoses of gastric issues