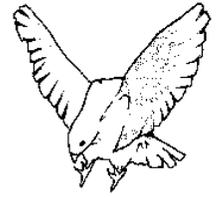


Community of Christ

Association for Ministry to Military Personnel



The Peacekeepers

Newsletter

March – June, 2017

Memorial Wall

by Ryan Pitt

“You hold precious lives in your hands. Be gentle and gracious with one another. A community is no stronger than the weakest within it. Even as the One you follow reached out to those who were rejected and marginalized, so must the community that bears his name.”

– Doctrine & Covenants 162 6c

It was a brisk, clear day in Washington, D.C. The autumn breeze whipped around the ivory monuments along the National Mall. Warm rays from the sun provided a refreshing sensation of tranquility and revival. I stood motionless as visitors gazed into the abyss of black granite. Some stared silently, lost in contemplative thought, while others shed painful tears of loss and sorrow. Strangers were united by the 58,272 names engraved in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

It would seem this is just another day in our nation’s capital. At least that is how it started, until I noticed an older man wearing torn jeans, a pea coat, and a ‘Navy Veteran’s cap; slowly separating from the crowds. He immediately fell to his knees and ran his callused fingers through the light gray letters in the stone. It did not take long for me to realize the casualty’s names were not only etched in the rock, but painfully carved into man’s heart. This man shared the names and stories of the past, yet stood timelessly before me.



Consumed by his presence, I approached him slowly until I was standing next to him, conjoining our reflection in the polished, black abyss.

“I can’t imagine what it was like.” The words escaped my mouth before I realized what happened.

Without breaking eye contact with our combined reflection, the man’s response became the catalyst to an incredible journey of discernment and thought, challenging me to this day.

“Try being there without your friends, family, or God and the only person you had is right here.”

As a newly ordained pastor and lifetime disciple of Jesus Christ, I was stunned; not by his statement, but by my inability to articulate a meaningful response. This was not a case of philosophical paralysis. It was deeper. This was a philosophical hemorrhage exposing the core fragility of my modern understandings of God and God’s relationship with creation. Yes, I learned Jesus loved me through multiple renditions of Sunday school theatrics and embarrassment. But, for some reason, that did not seem to be enough. All I could resort to was a mere ministry of physical presence.

The man stood up, saluted the stationary names, and left. Little did he know, our shared experience become more than a memory, it was the pivot point towards personal transformation. That day, I realized my theological pursuit would take me into congregational ministry and outreach, but also to military service members yearning for God’s peace & love.

This was the moment my heart not only broke, but swelled with a desire to explore new realms of discipleship and ministry. Even though the desire was present, I knew my theological training and ministerial experience were both limited. Consequently, my seminary journey and interest in military chaplaincy began. Additionally, when I saw the posting with The Peacekeepers, I knew I had to get involved. While the veteran in Washington and I parted ways as strangers, he sparked inner transformation.

Doctrine & Covenants 162 6c reminds us true discipleship is founded in *intentional* relationship with all of God's creation. This philosophy became a guiding principle in my daily life. Moreover, it encouraged personal and spiritual formation as we become beacons of Jesus Christ's peace. May your walk with Christ be rooted in intentional relationship, but also sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit, even in a simple trip to Washington.

TIM'S SERVICE - I Almost Didn't Notice It Myself.

by Tim "K9" Kunzweiler

Sheila and I were at the body shop this week, looking at repairs to the driver's side door of our car. Yep, it was the same car we'd just paid off in May... Mere days before, Sheila had heard a sickening metallic "whump" as she was exiting a walking path at a nearby Metro Park, and then spotted that a park employee had just backed out of a nearby space and scored a direct hit on that door with the rear bumper of a park vehicle. Nonetheless, we were "blessed" in that the damage was limited to the door and a respectable local body shop was able to get us right in.



Our examination of the repair by the body shop verified our faith in their quality. The finish on the replacement door was a perfect match for the rest of the car's paint and all the seams between body, door and fender were beautifully uniform. It looked like new.

I almost didn't notice it myself. The shop had kept, and reinstalled, "almost" all the original components. However, in looking at the door, it

eventually dawned on me that we had a new driver's side mirror. The old mirror hadn't actually been damaged in this accident, but, from a previous tussle with a garage door, it had been missing some of the plastic on the outside lower edge. The shop had spotted that damage and simply assumed it was a result of the park vehicle impact and had replaced the mirror.

Sheila and I are not sure how much this whole situation may cost us. The insurance settlement for this matter already promises to be a bit complex as Ohio has some laws that essentially limit "government" liability in matters like this. Nonetheless, as followers of Christ, we should seek to uphold the highest standard.

Knowing that the cost of the mirror replacement was not meant to be included in this accident claim, Sheila and I contacted our insurance company and let them know we felt we needed to pay for the mirror. The insurance company seemed both shocked—and appreciative—at our honesty. And, of course, they arranged for us to make a payment and provided instructions for coordinating with the body shop to ensure the paperwork was all straight.

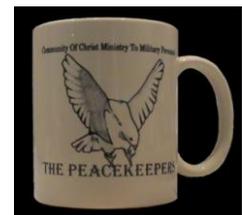
The folks at the body shop also seemed surprised at the steps we'd taken, resulting in an out-of-pocket expenditure of over \$200.

It strikes me sadly that our society seems amazed when someone simply goes the distance to try to live with integrity, and to treat others honestly and fairly. Even so, I'm reminded that we followers of Christ have been called to act this way: Colossians (ESV) 3:9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self^(d) with its practices¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Maybe if more of us just faithfully answered the Lord's call for how to live, people might be less amazed and more prone to join with us!

In Christ – Victory! May God bless all Peacekeepers.

Tim "K9" Kunzweiler



KID'S STUFF

by Mary Yocum



I have neglected my notebook for a few months. That's how I remember cute things my grandkids say and do, I jot down a couple of lines to remind me. Well, I just looked and the notebook is woefully empty.

I can tell you about their new dog, Jazzy. Nearly a year ago their shepherd mix died following surgery to remove a heating pad she ate. They have paid several visits to shelters, etc. with no luck. Beth had a couple of days off so they tried again. They found a chocolate Australian Shepherd, 35 lbs. and a year old. She has a sweet personality, is playful and loving. A perfect fit. Sorry no pictures yet.

Ian likes to don his Batman costume from last year and run around the house. Jazzy chases him so he calls her Joker. He's still getting used to the idea that if he runs she will chase – doggie nature.

We were driving in the car one day when I heard Ian saying what sounded like “pee, pee, pee.” My go to response was, “Do you need to potty?”

In a disgusted voice he replied, “NO! Not pee, birds say “peep, peep, peep.” Sorry! Sometimes I wonder what they think when I misunderstand them like that. Hey, I'm getting old and the ears never did work all that well.

How do you think God responds when we don't “hear” him? I know he seldom repeats himself. I had an experience when I was eight years old that demonstrates his patience though.

The World Church was focusing on our gifts back in 1959, what are your gifts, what are your talents, how do they differ?

So I had been praying to discern my gifts. My first and immediate response was a line from the Hymnal, “Take my voice and let me sing” My knee jerk response was that singing was too easy, just open your mouth and music pours out. For some reason I felt like I'd just said something incredibly stupid and God was taking deep breaths for patience, like my Mom often had to do.

Anyway, I kept praying, days, weeks, months – I must have another gift God, what is it? I was in my room, praying, and I heard a “still, small voice” but I couldn't quite “hear” Him. “Did you say sympathy?” He repeated what still sounded like sympathy to my ears. “That's what I said,” I mumbled.

Then I saw what looked like a finger of light write on the wall, EMPATHY. “What does that mean, what is empathy?” The word disappeared, and I felt like he said, “look it up.” Why was it that at times God sounded just like Mom?

I raced downstairs to ask my live in authority on all unknown topics – my mother. “Mom, what does empathy mean?”

Mom asked a question that made me feel a measure smarter, “Do you mean sympathy?”

“No,” I said, “E M P A T H Y,” I spelled out. I should have known what her response would be. “Look it up in the dictionary.” Mom and Grandmother must have taken the same mothering class or read the same book.

So after reading carefully the Webster definitions of both sympathy and empathy and all the references those entries directed me to, I went back to Mom with my take on what I had learned.

“Sympathy means you feel *for* someone. Empathy means you feel *with* someone. Is that right?”

Mom, as usual, paused for a moment of silent reflection, then said, “I couldn't have said it better myself.”

Okay, now I had a name for a gift – what in the world was I supposed to do with that? Sure, I could empathize with my kid sister – I always knew exactly how she was feeling. But didn't empathy require shared experiences? If someone stubbed their toe, I *knew* how that felt so empathy was immediate. I didn't know what it felt like to lose my mother or father. I could only imagine that – and I didn't want to feel that pain. I knew what it was like to be compared to the brother and sister who had died in a farm pond more than five years before I was born. Both Martha and I felt like cheap replacements for Gary Lee and Genie.

So I asked God, “Does this mean I have to suffer to be able to empathize? All people suffer,

but you will use your suffering to help other feel less lonely.”

“So this is something I can use in the future, but not now”?

You already use it, though you aren’t aware of it. Every time you see someone crying and put your arm around them, that’s empathy. When someone is happy and it makes you laugh with them, that’s empathy. When someone is sad and you sing them a song, that’s empathy. You’re a natural kid. Enjoy!

Ian always does something cute right after I finish my article. We went out for lunch and I took him to the restroom before eating. I raised the seat

for him and after he was finished I dropped the seat so I could go.

“You don’t pee standing up”? he asked.

“No, I’m a girl, we pee sitting down. So does your Mom, she’s a girl too.”

“You don’t have a winkie”?

“No, and neither does your Mom. Jazzy doesn’t have a winkie either.”

“No, but she has a tail.”

“I don’t have a tail, neither do you.”

“Course not, I’m not a dog – yet.” I wonder when he thinks he will become a dog ...

Calling for your updates and stories: Peacekeepers needs you to keep us updated with your newsletter delivery information and we highly desire information appropriate for the newsletter (stories, testimonies, updates to share with other members).

Available in an E-mail and a “snail mail” edition. Active-duty military members who join the association can receive either edition for free. Non-active-duty “sustaining” members receive either edition with a paid Association membership; those dues are **\$10.00/yr, due in April (multi-year discounts available)**. Archive newsletters are also available on our Web site: <http://www.cofchristpeacekeepers.org/>

Officers:

- President: Ryan Pitt, MHA rpitt@cofchrist.org
- Vice President: Curt Heaviland, Lt Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret) curtis_heaviland@yahoo.com
- Secretary: Jennifer Redfern, CWO5, U.S. Army (Ret) redfernj@comcast.net
- Treasurer: Russell Godfrey, E-4, U.S. Navy (Vet) russkathygodfrey@yahoo.com

Newsletter Support: Mary Yocum mary50nfine@comcast.net

Community of Christ Chaplain Endorser and Coordinator for Military Ministry: David Anderson danderson@cofchrist.org

