

Community of Christ



The Peacekeepers

Association for Ministry to Military Newsletter

April, 2005

Curt's Column



April is here. I don't know about you out there in the hinterland but to me it seems like the time is just flying by. I was told as a youngster that the older I got the faster time would go. Maybe it's like the adage that says "time flies when you're having fun."

I can very well imagine that those of you that are away from the ZI and families find that the time passes very slowly. It passes especially slowly when you can see the end of the operations in weeks or maybe a month away. The return home seems like it will never get there.

I can remember being on board my ship in Korea after the cessation of hostilities in WWII in Korea. While we were there the orders came down for those with a specified number of points to return home. I was one of those who didn't have near enough points to return so I was to remain on the ship. As the men were taken off the ship and transported home it seemed like we would never get on our way. The trip back to Hawaii took forever, or so it seemed. I can remember pulling up to a dock and being welcomed by a military band, but the best thing about the whole exercise was when they passed five gallons of milk down into the engine room for us to drink. I had not tasted fresh milk in over a year. I can only imagine what is taking place in Iraq.

We live in a tremendous time. Events are happening more rapidly than we can imagine. With the resignation of President Grant McMurray we could have been thrown into a tizzy. Our leadership in the Community of Christ has kept us on a level keel. It is also a tribute to the membership for supporting those who are to listen to God and make the decisions.

Joyce and I have been privileged to know Steve Veazey personally. We were in the St Louis area when he came as a Seventy to the East Central States Region. I can remember meeting him at a reception in a veranda behind the Stake office. While our paths crossed only on occasion we were reminded of his efforts while we were there.

We need to be supportive of the First Presidency and those who are in the position of leadership in the days ahead. For all of us it is a time of great opportunity. Those of you that are serving actively have a wide open field ahead of you. Not only can you make an impression on those serving with you but also the people that you rub shoulders with in your daily activities. We know that the media picks up on the tragedies that take place daily but very seldom do we hear of the good things that you all do. Our prayers and best wishes are with you each day whether we have the chance to speak out or just hold you in our Hearts.

Our concern is for your safe return to the ZI and your families.

Letters:

Hi everyone, just wanted to say Hi, and let everyone know that I am doing good. We arrived in Kuwait the end of December and in Iraq the middle of January, with all of our personnel, without any injuries or loss of equipment. We had a fairly smooth transition which was made easier that the unit had over 60% veterans from the first time they were in country. We being a Medevac [unit] have dispersed amongst the western part of Iraq, covering over 1/3 of the country. So far my unit has been blessed in that we have not had any real combat related injuries. We



**The Community of Christ Association for Ministry to Military Personnel
is dedicated to bringing ministry to military members on active duty throughout the world.**

are staying busy though, transporting our fallen/injured comrades.

Well, I know this was short, but need to get back to work ...

Your Brother and servant in Christ,
SSG Vernon Rasmusson

Hi There,

I was looking at the church website today and found your page. I'm a member (Priest) living in Herat, Afghanistan where I work for the Catholic Relief Services as an agricultural programs manager. I'd really like to know if there are church members in the military in Herat or Kabul. I'd be very happy to visit them and meet them. I would love to meet service members in Kandahar, but am not allowed to travel there at this point. I'm the only church member I know in Afghanistan. It would be fun to have someone nearby. Please let me know if there's anyone out here.

Sincerely,
Melody McNeil

Steve:



I want to thank you for the support the Community of Christ gives to the soldiers here in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am stationed at Camp Echo, Central South Iraq and spend most of my days traveling as a Platoon Sergeant in convoys all over the central part of Iraq. I can always use the support that comes from people who are co-strugglers in the pursuit of peace. The outreach that you and the Saints provide to those who are under an enormous amount of stress, fighting an Enemy that they now cannot see, is priceless.

Lots of soldiers get support in the form of a care box, which is great, but usually has cookies and candy in it, which is bad for this 44 year old Sergeant First Class, who's job it is to stay fit to fight and ensure his soldiers do the same. It is indeed the thought that counts, and the love that is shared toward the thousands of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan is felt in the little kindnesses reflected in the form of a box of surprises. Soldiers appreciate the thoughtfulness enough to send in appreciation of what they do over here, for not just the United States, but the World as a Whole.

Quite possibly one of the greatest gifts the Community of Christ can offer is "The Herald." The *Herald* is one of the greatest mediums of outreach, and most overlooked. It is a slice of home brought to the war torn soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan, who may not know of the love of God.

I used to be the Executive Minister for Far West Stake back in 88-92. I loved the church due to the fact that the people were free thinkers! "The church did not put God in a bottle and put a lid on it." My theology has swung with the pendulum, and is finding rest in the middle, in struggling to find meaning and purpose in life. My thoughts are often drawn to the loving friends, some of whom are now with us only in spirit. Friend and hero alike, the late Kim Loving who was a high priest at Saint Joseph Missouri, he assisted me with the entry into the military upon unemployment at Far West Stake. I would like to think that I am a better person due to the endeavors of the Saints in the Community of Christ.

Your letter regarding support, was ever so touching and a living testimony of the love of God reaching out to those at war in the biblical land of Iraq. I want to take this time, even as I prepare to roll out to Baghdad on yet another mission that will be filled with IED's, VBED and mortar rounds. On behalf of the Sons and Daughters in the enlisted military, thanks for your acts of good that you so readily extend to us daily.

May God continue to bless this Church and its ministry is my hope and to that end what I fight for.
Sergeant First Class Miller Scott R.
United States Army

The Marine

This is a poem being sent from a Marine to his Dad. For those who take the time to read it, you'll see a letter from him to his Dad at the bottom--plus a heartfelt prayer. It makes you truly thankful for not only the Marines, but ALL of our troops.

We all came together,
Both young and old.
To fight for our freedom,
To stand and be bold.

In the midst of all evil,
We stand our ground,
And we protect our country
From all terror around.

Peace and not war,
Is what some people say.
But I'll give my life,
So you can live the American way.

I give you the right
To talk of your peace.
To stand in your groups,
and protest in our streets.



But still I fight on,
I don't bitch, I don't whine.
I'm just one of the people
Who is doing your time.

I'm harder than nails,
Stronger than any machine.
I'm the immortal soldier,
I'm a US MARINE!

So stand in my shoes,
And leave from your home.
Fight for the people who hate you,
With the protests they've shown.

Fight for the stranger,
Fight for the young.
So they all may have,
The greatest freedom you've won.

Fight for the sick,
Fight for the poor.
Fight for the cripple,
Who lives next door.

But when your time comes,
Do what I've done.
For if you stand up for freedom,
You'll stand when the fight's done.



By: Corporal Aaron M. Gilbert
US Marine
USS SAIPAN, PERSIAN GULF

Hey Dad

Do me a favor and label this "The Marine" and send it to everybody on your email list. Even leave this letter in it. I want this rolling all over the U.S. I want every home reading it, every eye seeing it, and every heart to feel it. So can you please send this for me? I would but my email time isn't that long and I don't have much time anyway.

You know what, Dad? I wondered what it would be like to truly understand what JFK said in his inaugural speech. "When the time comes to lay down my life for my country, I do not cower from this responsibility. I welcome it.

Well, now I know. And I do. Dad, I welcome the opportunity to do what I do. Even though I have left behind a beautiful wife, and I will miss the birth of our first born child, I would do it 70 times over to fight for the place that God has made for my home.

I love you all and I miss you very much. I wish I could be there when Sandi has our baby, but tell her that I love her, and Lord willing, I will be coming home soon. Give Mom a great big hug from me and give one to yourself too.

Live the Story

One of our church members in China asked a question several years ago that continues to echo in my mind. Her question was: "How do you live Christianity?"

The predominant religions in Asia have rituals and symbols which are easily identifiable. Some establish altars in the doorways of their homes, others visit temples to make offerings, and still others engage in ritualized prayer each day. What do Christians do to live their story? That's a question all of us should be asking on a daily basis. For most of us, I suspect, the failure to live Christianity to the fullest is related primarily to a lack of commitment and self-discipline. That question becomes more complex in China where Community of Christ, like thousands of other Christian churches, operates underground due to governmental restrictions.

During a recent visit to China, our newest member there proudly shared pictures of her baptism which occurred in a bathtub with fresh red and white flowers floating on the water. Only a few trusted individuals witnessed her baptism since membership is carefully guarded. She has accepted a level of risk because of her commitment.

I'm inspired by the earnestness with which our members in China attempt to live out their Christianity in spite of the restrictions. Perhaps in doing so they have answered their own question: Christianity, after all, is not a destination, but rather a journey that is lived daily by imperfect people trying to share love and hope in an imperfect world.

Sherri Kirkpatrick
Vice president for Institutional Advancement
Graceland University

God's Promise Is for You

As children we loved to elicit promises from our friends and parents. Promises were something almost sacred, and we often sealed them with the "promisor" and the "promise" hooking fingers together in ritualistic fashion.

As adults, we are reluctant to make promises—especially to our children—because we know there are so many things that can happen to prevent us from fulfilling our promise. So we say, "I will if I can." In some countries, where life is especially un-

certain, people rarely say, "I will." Instead they say, "I probably will."

In the Bible we read stories about how God (the parent of us all) made promises. We especially remember God making a promise to a childless old man and his wife that his descendants would be numbered as the dust of the earth or the stars of the sky, and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. This was so absurd that the couple laughed. But God kept his promise to Abraham and Sarah, and today people from many nations and religions look to them as their spiritual ancestors.



God's promises to us are many and are for every one of us who will lay claim to them. God's promises are more than a mere hooking of little fingers together. He covenants with us and promises his steadfast love. This means God has promised to be with us to guide and bless us always. And this is no small thing! Share the news.

Darlene Caswell
Independence Missouri

Wait Just a Minute

With my busy schedule I don't get much time for recreational reading – mostly it's text books etc. But I find I need time to quench my soul, feed my spirit and sometimes just read a good trashy novel. Without these times I start to feel like a dried out leaf.

So I've jammed in a couple of prime-time reading rules – if I'm eating alone I'm "allowed" to read while I eat. I cram an hour in at lunch time, sometimes at dinner too.

I just started "The Simple Faith of Mister Rogers" by Amy Hollingsworth. It's okay, go ahead and laugh. Most people see Mister Rogers as a rather dull, simple character who bores even children.

But in his own way Mister Rogers taught us all an abundance of lessons on how to handle emotions, be kind to one another, and slow down. That was one of his most important messages – "take time to do it right."

I remember thinking I must have been adopted. My family was filled with people who ran like racehorses or worked like Clydesdales. I saw myself as a small Shetland pony, I couldn't find that burst of speed out the gate that my cousins had, and I hadn't the physical strength of my Mom or Aunts. But give me a job I knew how to do and I'd walk around that track all day long. I even tried to convince Grandmother that knowing the art of being lazy was quite an accomplishment. Somehow the woman who worked three careers spanning eighty years (yes, that's 80), couldn't quite conceive of a world in which being lazy was an art form.

Nevertheless, I knew something she didn't. I knew how to slow down and enjoy life. I don't have a need to keep my hands busy every moment. I like to stop and smell the flowers. I watch the sky to catch shapes in the clouds.

My prayer for you is to see God around you, to catch a glimpse of His wonder even in war. I know that won't be easy – but try anyway. Take a second to enjoy the sunrise, watch the faces of the little children, try to find something good and positive to focus on each day – no matter how short that moment, revel in it.

Mary Yocum



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 members receive either edition with a paid membership, **\$10.00, due in April**. The newsletter is also available on our Web site: <http://www.cofchristpeacekeepers.org/>

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