

Community of Christ



The Peacekeepers

Association for Ministry to Military Personnel Newsletter **December, 2009**

TIM'S SERVICE

by Tim "K9" Kunzweiler, President

It's Veteran's Day 2009 as I write. As a courtesy of the Dayton Philharmonic, active duty and retired veterans were offered free tickets to a Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration concert in the city tonight. Sheila and I made the trip. The tone was set as the National Anthem led the evening's offerings. To my brothers and sisters in the U.S. military I offer these words: your country stands with you in supporting the cause of freedom. Thank you for your continuing service.

Do you know someone needing direction? Perhaps you are equipped to show the way.

I'm not sure this is a developing trend but "it's at least a coincidence" that I had another opportunity to help a motorist at a gas station recently (you may recall from last issue's article a story about my engaging a motorist with a flat tire).



In this case, I had stopped for gas alongside a highway quite some distance from Dayton. While the meter clicked off the gallons I stood beside the pumps, on the road side, and watched traffic roll by. Coming down the highway in the late afternoon sun I spotted one not-so-new car – which made a sudden turn toward the station and came to a halt beside me. Inside were a young man, his wife and two small boys. The fellow got out and stated he was unfamiliar with the area, had missed a turn and asked if I knew how to get to another town. I pulled out my road atlas and said we could look it up. Sure enough, he'd missed his mark by quite a bit by the time he spotted me and asked for directions. Fortunately, by going just a bit further down this road he'd soon hit an intersection for a highway that would get him vectored back toward his intended destination. He thanked me and headed back to his car – though I was not altogether sure he fully comprehended the route he needed to take. Then the thought occurred to me that



he needed something to help ensure he maintained the correct direction. I walked over to the car and handed him my road atlas. He looked surprised but happy (as did his wife). I waved to the kids and offered a "God Bless You" as they resumed their journey.

Many are the choices that face people on the path of life. Like on the roadways many routes can be found – though not all lead to the proper destinations. In life all of us have a final desired destination but it is clear (like in the example of our motorist) not everyone has been properly equipped to find the way. Scripture and the Spirit of our Lord can help guide us as we seek to find our way to the final destination – reunion with God. We, who have been taught the route, have we shared the map? It's a mission.

In Christ – Victory! May God bless all Peacekeepers.

Tim "K9" Kunzweiler, President.

Announcements and information

October is but a memory and soon we will be experiencing the seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas. In both these times I hope we take a few moments to think through the many people and things we may give thanks for. If you are away from home and family, know that the Peacekeepers hold you up in prayer and have the faith that our Lord will meet you in every need. May you be blessed by His Spirit and may your new year be filled with peace – through him and in our world!

Tim

The Community of Christ Association for Ministry to Military Personnel is dedicated to bringing ministry to Community of Christ members serving on active duty world-wide.

Curt's Column

Veteran's Day has come and gone. It seems to me that there has been more activity on the part of the civic leaders than there has been in previous years. The city of Independence on Tuesday, sponsored an assembly of veterans and those who wanted to attend the meeting. I was privileged to attend with a friend of mine. The colors were presented by a color guard of marines. They did an outstanding job, which of course is expected of the Marine Corps.

Our speaker for the evening was also from the Marine Corps. He presented some ideas and areas that gave us some food for thought for the future. All in all it was a couple of hours well spent and I count it an honor to attend.

The VFW unit to which I belong had our semi-annual poppy sale. I spent several hours in front of the Hy-Vee food store in our town. Almost everyone that came in the doors made some kind of a donation. However, to me, the best donation of all was the verbal "thanks for your service." I think that most of us that served count it a blessing to be able to serve in the armed forces of the United States. I still believe that I was one of the fortunate ones as I did not have to give my all as some did that are not with us today.



I firmly believe that the Lord gave us the opportunity to live in this wonderful land with the promise that so long as we worship Him and recognize Him as our creator we will have prosperity in the land. My personal belief is that our society is slowly eroding that situation. The founding fathers of this great nation gave thanks to God in every government document establishing our form of government. To see God taken out of schools, to see Christmas become a holiday season, to see prayer taken out of different assemblies causes me concern.

I thank God daily that I still have the right and privilege to worship Him as I please and do so I'm from the old school where God was the foremost in our society. Therefore, I for one will continue to press for recognition of God as our sovereign ruler and will follow His direction to the best of my ability. I love this country and am happy to be a part of it.

May God bless each one of you and keep you from harm's way.

Curt

Kid Stuff

by Mary Yocum

I know Halloween is past, but you should have seen Dominic dressed up in his Harry Potter costume! He was so cute! And he told everyone that Mom wasn't Harry Potter she was Hermione. When he knocked on our neighbor's door Barb looked at him and said, "Oh, it's Harry Potter"!



"No Barb," he replied taking off his wire rimmed glasses as though they had caused the confusion, "I'm really Dominic. I just look like Harry Potter for Trick or Treating."

Little ones are so literal – that's half the fun of being around them. Often we put on "costumes" and pretend to be something we're not. I think I've spent most of my life in costumes. First as a child forced to pretend that our family was "normal." No abuse going on in our house – no sir! Mom was in denial (though such terms were a couple of decades from being coined), Dad just followed mom, Light twin and I automatically repressed memories, Little Sis rebelled, and Dark twin took great joy in the suffering he caused. But the psychological community knew nothing about child abuse in the 1950's and 60's. They were still firmly rooted in Freud's "penile envy" theories.

When the flashbacks began in 1968 there was no one to talk to so, (thinking I was losing my mind), I decided not to go to a college my parents could ill afford, despite my scholarships. I saw no reason to start something when I was convinced I would be kicked out and sent to a loony bin. I pretended I didn't want an education, pretended I was more or less normal and tried to "look like everyone else."

In the 1970's the Viet Nam war and the Women's Movement combined to force Americans to face a few truths. Women began to tell their stories of painful abuse. Veterans came home with symptoms of trauma that had formerly been called "shell shock." ¹These brave vets soon helped us see that they needed more help than what was available to them. By 1980 the women and men had a new diagnosis, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. And yes, it was the same diagnosis for women surviving childhood sexual abuse as the returning vets from Viet Nam. In 1984 the first treatment program for

¹ See "Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror," by Judith Herman, M.D.

women survivors of abuse began in the Kansas City area. There may have been other cities that responded sooner, but I haven't heard of them.

I first began my own therapy for PTSD in 1990. My cousin's son was caught abusing her sister's daughter in the same way my own brother had abused me. There were too many parallels for me to continue to pretend. I spent most of the 90's dealing with my demons – finally ceasing the pretense and asking for help. One of the many questions my therapist asked was whether I felt God had abandoned me. Now that was an interesting question.

There was once – and only once, that I asked God why he didn't stop the abuse. It was the middle of the night and Dark twin had just returned to his own room. "Why"? I shouted at God. "Why can't you make him stop? Why don't you just put your hand down and stop him"?

I buried my face in my pillow and wept copious tears of frustration, anger, and pain. Then I heard a low sound. It sounded a little like a fly, only now so loud. And I thought I could see the air move in the moonlight. You know what I mean – like on a hot day when you can see the heat rise off the hot pavement. The air moved with this low hum. For some reason I thought of butterflies. I can't truly describe the sound a butterfly makes – but my mind pictured the flapping of butterfly wings. The next thing I became aware of was knowledge. Not a voice, not remembering a scripture, not anything like that. But I knew, (or sensed) that the same being that was flapping those gentle wings was trying to communicate with me. The thing I sensed or heard was agency – the right to make your own decisions – even if they are bad decisions. These creatures – for there were two of them – separated. The female stayed by my bed and the male went to the boys' room. Now, since I couldn't really see anything other than air movement you might wonder how I knew one was male and the other female. I can't answer that – I just knew.

More than five years before my birth my parents had lost two children who fell through the ice on a farm pond. The five year old boy and three year old girl had seemed like angels in my parents stories of them, and I suppose I just assumed that these beings were my brother and sister, come back as guardian angels. At any rate, my angel stroked my hair, hugged me and told me that she loved me and that God loved me. "Then why can't you or God make him stop"?

"Come with me," she said. She led me into the boys' room where the other pair of wings hovered over Dark twin's head. The angel I called Gary Lee buzzed Dark twin over and over again. The wings flapped

harder and harder, making more and more noise. Dark twin simply batted at the noise as if it were a pesky mosquito. "You see," she said, "We try to tell him he's wrong, that God is disappointed in him, that he should change. But still, the choice is his to make, not ours. The only thing that can make him stop is if he wants to. We can encourage, we can even chastise, but unless he hears and responds of his own will ... well, it's up to him."

I hung my head and returned to my room, to my lonely bed. "There's no hope then," I cried. I was positive that no one and nothing would ever make him want to change. I'd given up on him, felt hopeless – and was beginning to fear for my little sister as well. "But you're not alone," said my little friend. "God is always with you – no matter what."

I looked at her and said, "What good does that do if he can't change anything"? "You can change everything," came the reply. You have your own agency; you can decide to let God strengthen you."

I had to think about that a long time. But I began to sense that she wanted me to change my attitude about my situation. By leaning on God to give me strength to survive, I was in essence defying my abuser. He couldn't conquer my spirit or break my bond with God if I didn't let him. And that night I decided that I would draw closer to God with every tear, heartache, attack on my being, and word of despair he whispered in my ear. He told me I was "stupid, ugly, had no talent, was fat and no one could love me." I responded by asking myself, who's the source of this poison? Should I believe him? Who makes better grades, why does he have to ask me to proofread all his reports and essays? How can I be stupid then – he's five years older than me and I have to help him with his homework. Then I looked in the mirror, honest with myself I saw a teenage girl who was about ten pounds overweight, what Dad called "pleasingly plump." My facial features were even and ordinary – certainly no great beauty, but not "butt ugly" either. So I ignored those words as well. It was harder for me to judge my talent or lack of it. Both Dark twin and I sang in church – taking turns singing solos and sometimes singing duets. The congregation responded with the same words for both of us, "That was lovely. I love that song. We are so lucky to have you." I couldn't determine talent – it is too esoteric. So I decided to leave that until someone with the knowledge and talent could make that determination for us. When I took my solo to state contest in Columbia Missouri my senior year, I decided that we probably were pretty even on the talent score and that was good enough for me.

I can no longer differentiate the "pretend me" from the "real me." That's because I've spent too many decades trying to become what I want to be. I sing



because I can't imagine not singing – I write for the same reasons. I'm still plump and ordinary looking – I feel it's my gift to those who can manage their weight and are beautiful when they stand next to me. I recognize that some of those extra pounds are a disguise I put on to try to look less attractive to my abuser(s). I no longer need it, and am working on becoming healthier – not more beautiful. I can honestly say beauty or the lack of it is not important to me. The Mary that God loves lives on the inside of this shell – any beauty I can claim comes from the love I share for others, the love I have for God, and the love He has for me. This is the "beautiful woman" that my hero, Donald Leon Yocum, fell in love with in the spring of 1972 – can't think of anything better than that, can you?



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Officers:

President: Tim "K9" Kunzweiler, Major, USAF (Ret) cofchristpeacekeepers.president@earthlink.net
Vice President: Curt Heaviland, Lt Colonel, Army (Ret) armr77@sbcglobal.net
Secretary: Jennifer Redfern, CWO5, Army Jennifer.redfern@us.army.mil
Treasurer: Lehman Heaviland, SGT E5 Army (Discharged) CatOprr1@aol.com, alt KGHRN1@aol.com
Newsletter Support: Mary Yocum mary50nfine@comcast.net

