

Pennsylvania Fire Chaplain: an occasional Newsletter

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IN THIS ISSUE

**Testimony from a
new fire chaplain**

**Upcoming
training**

**An invitation to
write for the
newsletter**

**PA Fire Chaplains
on Facebook**

A Final Word

It has been a while since this newsletter appeared. With this issue, two changes are being made: its frequency and appearance. Rather than try to publish it four times a year, I will publish it as the spirit moves me (as my grandmother used to say when I when dinner would be ready). I hope the new appearance is easier for me to work with and for you to read.

This issue features a testimony from a friend of mine and a relatively new fire chaplain describing how he became chaplain for his department and a bit of advice for other new chaplains.

I've been serving in the official capacity at the West Grove Fire Company as chaplain for just over a year. It really wasn't something I had set out to do. For that matter, since I am not a pastor nor elder at my church I was pretty sure that I could not hold that position. Seems I was wrong about that one.

We lost a much-beloved member of our department to cancer a while back. At the funeral my chief approached me and asked me about considering becoming a chaplain for our station which did not have one at the time. I was considered because I had been active with the Fellowship of Christian Firefighters. I was (and remain) very active running calls and had become friends with a lot of the membership so people knew me well enough. I balked initially but he offered to have his pastor become a company member and sort of "co-chaplain" it with me. I said that I might be interested in doing that and then heard nothing else about it for a few months.

I was reading the company meeting minutes at home because I work nights and cannot attend most meetings. It was there that I read with some surprise that I'd been voted in as company chaplain. So I called the chief and asked him when I could meet his pastor and start figuring out how to handle this. He informed me that his pastor had been transferred but I'd be "Just fine" on my own.

Thankfully, through the FCFI, I had met and become friends with a couple of experienced chaplains/pastors, namely Rich Lindberg and Jerry Schwartz. These two gentlemen (and a few others from Delco) really helped me out a lot and are still serving as my mentors.

My advice to new chaplains? Find the experienced guys, make friends and follow their advice! I have taken the Essentials Chaplaincy course and several others. While they are helpful, it always seems to come back to learning from the ones who've already been there and to learn from doing.

God bless,
Rob Kloss
Firefighter/Chaplain
West Grove Fire Company

Training Opportunities

[Federation of Fire Chaplains 2015 Conference](#) in sunny Florida. The dates are October 18-22, 2015. The pre-conference training classes are worth attending.

[Pennsylvania Society of Chaplains](#) near Carlisle, Pennsylvania from October 11-13, 2015. The theme this year is "Self-care for Chaplains."

November 19, 2015 is the Delaware County Suicide Prevention Task Force's annual conference.

Share Your Story

Every chaplain has a story about how they became a chaplain, about the challenges of being a fire department chaplain, about how God has used them. We can all profit from these stories by being encouraged, by learning, by realizing that we are not alone. Consider this an invitation to write for this newsletter so you don't have to read only what I think is important. Tell us about training you've had or training you know about. Share whatever you think will be good for other chaplains.

We're on Facebook

You can find the Pennsylvania Fire Chaplains on Facebook. I share on that site posts that I think are relevant to chaplains including posts about suicide among emergency services personnel, PTSD and anything else that seems appropriate. If you have not done so, like the page and join the conversation.

A Final Word

Being a fire department chaplain is a great privilege. It is a privilege to stand by people in crisis, to pray with them, to reassure them that they are not alone. As the Rev. Donald J. Mahoney, Catholic chaplain with the Boston Fire Department has said, "I call this a ministry; it's more than just a job," he said later. "It's an easy job to love because of the people."

Do not be discouraged in this ministry. Trust God. Your strength is in him.

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