



# Cowlitz Chaplaincy

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*A non-profit organization serving Emergency Service Responders  
and Citizens since 1983*

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## SUPPORT FROM OUR NEW SHERIFF

Let me introduce myself by saying, the ways of the Lord are amazing!

My name is Mark Nelson and I am the new Cowlitz County Sheriff. I am honored, and humbled to be serving the citizens of Cowlitz County in the same way that my father, Les Nelson, did. I work in the same office, sit at the same desk and drink the same coffee, which at times I think was actually made in 1974 when he was first elected.

As most of you know, I have been around law enforcement my whole life. In addition to having my father being one of the county's most respected lawmen, my brother followed in the same footsteps until he had spent over half his life committed to the citizens of Kelso where he recently retired as the Chief of Police.

When I think of all the things that have brought me here to the position that I am currently in, I cannot help but keep things in a "Kingdom" perspective. From my early beginnings in this business, some 32 years ago, I have seen the hand of God

move in some amazing ways: Staying my trigger finger on an armed, intoxicated man so as not to kill him in front of his children. In another incident, God caused multiple pellets of buckshot to miraculously miss me and others, even though fired from a short distance away, followed by the amazement of another officer's rifle bullet missing the suspect due to a broken rifle scope.

I have dealt with domestic violence victims, assault victims and suspects. I've spent weeks in court to see the conviction of murderers; and child assault suspects brought to justice. I've given death notifications, hugs, CPR and first aid. In all the years, all the investigations, all the trials and all the excitement, God has always been by my side.

Now, I see to other needs. I attend meetings, I am on the phone and I try to find ways to help those working the street to have it better than I did. I have seen more life, and death and suffering than most people, so they won't have to. But through it all I have seen other things. I have purposely looked for the good. I have intended to see

life. I have recognized God in unexpected places, and it has changed me.

One of the most precious ways that I have seen God move has been through the loving sacrifice of our chaplains. They are some of the most selfless men I have ever known. They not only come to bring offerings of peace to those who are in crisis, but they offer themselves, and their families, to all citizens throughout Cowlitz County. I love them for what they do; for they bring the Kingdom of God wherever they go.

I am honored to serve on their board and to love and support these men however I can as the Sheriff. It was my father's vision that started the Chaplaincy, and it is my intention to see it continue to be a light of the Lord wherever they may serve.

Sincerely in Him,

Sheriff Mark S. Nelson



## THANKSGIVING 2009

It is the 25<sup>th</sup> of November and I am at my daughter's table in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho preparing for our Thanksgiving celebration. It is cloudy and very cool and my mind is recapturing thoughts of many in our county whose year started out with great hopes and plans, and during the year 2009 those dreams were shattered by unplanned or welcomed crises. This holiday season will be encumbered with the absences of loved ones and memories of unbelievable pain.

During this year Larry Bennett, Finis Johnson, Steve White, and I have had the privilege to bring the presence of Our Lord in situations that seem so unfair and hopeless. We all thank you for your prayers and financial support. Your partnership is so vital for us to make a difference in the lives of those who are hurting.

## CHRISTMAS

I was reading in the Bible about that first Christmas. It was a time when the government was over-taxing its citizens and that caused much stress. I as I remember, it seems like Caesar was convinced that the government could care for the people better than they could care for themselves. It was a very cool time of the year and there was a young couple returning to their homeland of birth. They arrived late in the afternoon and the town was over crowded and the all lodgings were full. As I remember the story, our

Creator ,our heavenly Father, had a plan to care for his people. So that night in a little town called Bethlehem our Savior, Jesus, was born. The New International Version states it this way: Luke 1:32,33 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end."

As you continue to read the account of Jesus he certainly brought hope and life to this dying world. Today I believe we need a resurgence of God's intervention into our country and the lives of each of us. I know my family will be looking forward to giving honor and praise to the King of kings and the Lord of lords as we celebrate Christmas this year. We are focusing on the importance of the birth of Jesus in our lives this year as we celebrate His birth. I am convinced that our government does not have the answers or the mentality to fix society's problems. They have pushed Jesus so far to "the back of the bus" and they refuse to allow him to reign as King over His land. I do know this, if we will let Jesus rise his enemies will be scattered and we will return to victory.

Christmas, what a blessed time of the year! Family, mistletoe, turkey, presents, maybe some snow are symbols of Christmas. But most of all, acknowledging the Lord Jesus and His coming gives hope and peace on earth to all

men. May each of you enjoy the blessings that God freely gives to all who ask. Have a wonderful Christmas.

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From all of us at the Cowlitz Chaplaincy: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May God richly bless you all.

*Chaplain Lyle Prather*

**Remember, for your tax credits your donations to the Chaplaincy must be postmarked by the 31st of December. Thank you for your support and giving.**



## Just Some Thoughts...

Once again I'm looking back on a year filled with all sorts of experiences and emotions. It's impossible to not look back with some sadness and sorrow. Having "been there" in the darkest hours for so many these past 12 months takes a toll on all of us. One of the challenges for me in this ministry is the fact that I move from one crisis to the next and have little or no time to develop 'long-term' relationships with families. As pastor of a local church I ministered to the same family's week in and week out. That had its own set of challenges (as any pastor will tell you), but I got to really "know" the people I ministered with.

I am blessed to have great relationships with many of my officers, firefighters and their families (my "congregation" if you will), but it is different. For one thing there's no Christmas Cantata's or Christmas Plays or Christmas Bazaars (honestly, I don't miss those), but you get my drift. I was usually worn out by the end of all the Christmas church stuff, but still, it was a fun time. Carmen and I are part of a local congregation, but it's different when you're not the pastor and not preaching during this season. I don't know why it's taken me so long to face this, but I really do 'miss' all that stuff.

Instead I find myself gearing up for the traumatic events I'll be called into over the next few

weeks. Experience tells me there will be more suicides, domestic violence, alcohol-related incidents than I care to think about. I also know there will be many people who will grieve heavily this time of year because they've lost a loved one in 2009. My calls during November/December are always a little harder than the rest of the year. Already these past couple weeks I've dealt with an 8-month-old SID's death, a couple suicides and several overdoses.

Trying to bring some sense of hope and joy can be a real struggle during this season of the year. The Scriptures say *"There is a time and season for every activity under heaven, a time to be born and a time to die..."* But why now God?

Why during the Christmas holiday season? One of the 'tools' that's brought me such hope and peace in the past is a poem I discovered as a pastor a few years ago – *"My First Christmas In Heaven"*

For you who grieve a little harder over a loss during this season, I pray this poem helps you find strength and calm during this blessed time of year. I don't have all the answers, but I do have the promise of heaven one day, and that's good enough for me. This Christmas, may God grant us all His peace, His presence, His power. I wish you and your family the best in 2010. Please keep us chaplains in your prayers... Shalom!

*Chap Steve*

### My First Christmas in Heaven

I see the countless Christmas trees around the world below.  
With tiny lights like Heaven's stairs, reflecting on the snow.  
The sight is so spectacular, please wipe away the tear,  
For I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear  
But the sounds of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up here.  
I have no words to tell you, the joy their voices bring,  
For it is beyond description, to hear the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me, I see the pain inside your heart.  
But I am not so far away, We really aren't apart.  
So be happy for me, dear ones, You know I hold you dear.  
And be glad I'm spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.

I sent you each a special gift, from my heavenly home above,  
I sent you each a memory of my undying love.  
After all love is a gift more precious than pure gold.  
It was always most important in the storied Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other, as my Father said to do.  
For I can't count the blessing or love he has for each of you.  
So have a Merry Christmas and wipe away that tear.  
Remember, I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.