



# Cowlitz Chaplaincy

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

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## The Breakfast Fundraiser

Our fundraiser is over and we are so grateful for all of you who were so supportive. We were short of our projected



goal and we are suggesting our country's economy was partially to

blame. We will be looking at more creative ways to help shore up our donations for equipping our outreach abilities.

## Tragedy Brought Pain!!!

It was a Friday night and the evening was cool with a light rain typical for our Northwest Washington. It was the end of the week and a young husband and wife would be enjoying a time of pleasure together after the children were tucked in their beds for the night. The music broke the mundane sounds of rain outside and gave the evening a romantic air to the young couple's home.

The time slipped by and the hour was late and their young baby awoke and wanted an early morning snack. It was around two in the morning. After the young mother nursed her baby she settled down for sleep herself. It was around nine in the morning when the couple woke up to find, to their horror, that their

precious baby of five months was not breathing. Their night of pleasure turned into a day of unbelievable pain. Not only the two of them but, also the grandparents on both sides had their hearts torn by deep gashing emotional wounds that will take years to heal. I was called to the scene and saw the pain not only with the family but, also within the law and fire personnel as they had the task of investigating the event to determine the cause of this baby's demise.

## Weddings Are Fun

This past month I was asked to officiate a wedding for a young couple. These are the fun things that have a way of brightening my involvement in our community. The bride and groom felt the concern of the mother's that they needed a wedding rehearsal to help eliminate stress and mistakes that they might encounter at the wedding. The two children at the rehearsal were not behaving well at all and there was deep concern that they would be really disruptive at the wedding. I assured them that I felt the kids would be alright at



the wedding and we finished up the rehearsal. I went to the wedding secure in the knowledge that each person knew what to expect on that grand day. The day of the wedding all was going well; the music was at the proper moment, the attendants made their way to the front and they all look so nice. The father and bride started down the aisle and got to where they were supposed to be in front of me where I would ask the question, "Who gives this woman to married to this man"?

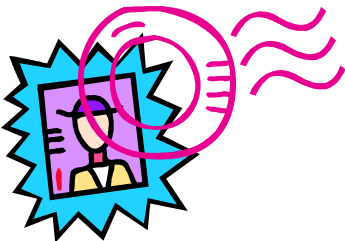
Around the corner came the ring bearer and flower girl. The bride went right past them! With redness of face she looked at me and with sheepish voice and said, "OOOPS!!! The two kids, not to be out shone, rushed past her and took their places with the rest of the party. The guests expressed their delight with much laughter. The wedding did go on and you know what? They will have some fond memories to talk about for years to come, "the day I forgot the ring bearer and flower girl." I'd milk that for a life-time if I was the groom.

"The most wasted day of all is that during which we have not laughed."

-[Sebastian R. N. Chamfort](#)

## Here We Go Again

*As you have noticed by now, our postage has gone up again. We look for ways where we can be as frugal as we can be, keep you informed on how we are doing, and maintain a relationship with all of you. I thought I would ask how many of you have e-mail access, where we could e-mail our newsletter to each of you. If this would work, could you please write a note to us with your e-mail address, so we could make a newsletter "news group" and we could keep you updated via e-mail? We are asking for your input so we can make a sound informed decision concerning this matter. Thank you....*



**PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS SO THAT WE CAN E-MAIL THE NEWSLETTER TO YOU. THIS WILL HELP US SO MUCH.**

**Thank you!**

## Can You Believe It's Summer?

*I smell a wisp of salt in the air from the sea, Laddie.*

*Hmmmm!*



I noticed that we are being blessed with warmer days and shorter nights. Somewhere I heard these are the signs of summer; a most welcome time of the year around here. Less rain! Our feet get a chance to dry out and we can restore our vitamin D that was depleted during the long rainy and cloudy days of winter and spring. Steve and I would like to encourage you to have fun this summer, however please be careful. Use common sense, drive carefully, swim safely in our waters and remember, no water on gas fires. Don't burn the steaks, and be nice to each other. Now that I gave you my fatherly summer talk, go have fun!

Summer is a challenging time for us also because there are just so many dollars to go around. May I ask you to please remember us in your prayers and financial support during the months ahead. These days warm summer days are times when we experience a heightened number of calls because someone forgot to be careful, or during the heat of the days people have tendency to let their tempers heat up also. Many times days that should

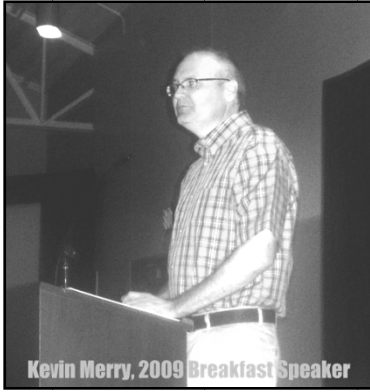
bring fun and laughter bring stress and crisis to which we are called.

## 15 Minute Program

May 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> we finished the 15 minute Alcohol Awareness Program that we are involved in with the high schools of the County. This year Toutle, Castle Rock, Kelso, and Woodland were the participating schools. All four schools had exceptionally polite and respectful young people. It was an absolute delight to be with them for 27 straight hours.

Many of these young people are graduating seniors and will be going out into the world to work or attend college. We pray God's very best for each and every one of these young adults as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

## Just Some Thoughts...



I want you to hear from someone other than me this month. Kevin Merry was the first Longview PD officer I rode with when I began my journey as Police

Chaplain. Over the years we became close friends and shared both joys and sorrows together. In late 2007, multiple sclerosis forced him out of police work. A few months ago Kevin looked back over his 14-year police career wondering. The result -- an article he entitled **“Touched by His Hand”**. Here is some of Kevin’s story...

It happened, the highlight of my 14-year police career and it occurred yesterday just before noon. This in itself is an unusual thing to say as I have been “medically retired” from the department for over a year now. No, I didn’t misspeak. Without a doubt, yesterday’s event was the culmination. The high water mark of all those nights and days of humping the worst of patrol calls... traffic violations, vagrancy, disorderly conduct, DUI, assault, crimes against children, arson, robbery, suicide, murder. It exacts too great a price on the humans that serve as Officers. I know it did me.

Just the night before... at one point during my evening’s reflection I had the troubling thought that in the end, my life showed no contribution to the greater good. I allowed myself to believe all was lost, hopeless, and I felt this was especially true of the time I spent in my police career. I was soon proved wrong. “It” happened the next day.

I have no doubt that “it” was something God wanted to happen to me when I needed it the most. I usually go to lunch at 11:30am but on this day, I waited until just before noon to go with my good friend Padre`, the Police Chaplain. When he arrived I found my secretary had gone to lunch and my operations supervisor had gone downstairs to coordinate some transportation issues. Basically the upper floor where I worked was vacated. Volunteering to drive, Padre` led the way going down and waiting for me at the base of the stairs. I’m a bit pokey these days with my balance, cane and all.

As I began my descent, I saw standing beside Padre` and waiting to come up, an older woman. She appeared to be around 80-years-old. I didn’t know it at the time but she was about to bless me and touch my soul in a fashion in which I haven’t felt for years. I only briefly, but politely, greeted her. Just before I got to the exit door His quiet hand gave me a gentle poke... I stopped and asked the woman who she wanted to see.

She turned, smiled and replied, *“Kevin Merry.”* It is not unusual for people to ask for the Transit Manager (me) by name so I figured she must really be upset about some transportation issue. *“Well, you found him. I’m Kevin.”* Again the woman smiled this time saying, *“I thought so. I’ll never forget your face. I’d recognize you anywhere. You are my hero.”* Hero? When was the last time anyone ever called me that? She continued, *“Do you remember coming to my house on Tree Top? It was eight years ago and it was my husband...”*

As her voice trailed off I was flooded with the memory of that call... The events of that day touched my heart and apparently the memories have lived there all along. I recalled the woman’s husband was terminally ill and he was very close to the end. Something; pain, frustration, confusion, delusions, had sent him into an uncontrollable rage. Neither his wife, the ambulance crew, nor the firemen, could gain control of him. So, they did what everyone did when faced with an uncontrollable situation. They called the cops. And “they” sent this skinny guy to “fix” the situation.

Eight years later at the foot of some stairs in an ugly old shop building the woman said to me, *“You were so good. The way you treated me and my husband. You were an Angel.”* Me? I was so humbled, speechless, and moved to tears. I looked to Padre`. In his face I could see that he believed he was witnessing the Hand of God in action. I turned back to the tiny little creature that had just validated my earthly existence. I said to her, *“Now that I don’t have a big gun and a pokey police badge, could I give you a hug?”* As I embraced the woman I felt closer to heaven than I had in a long time.

*“Thank you,”* the woman whispered. I can tell you that meant more to me than any and all my military medals (Kevin is a retired US Army Lt. Col.) and police commendations. This encounter has been a priceless gift and has provided an invaluable lesson in awareness and the Grace of God. I cried that night but not for what I had lost. I cried with joy for what I had been given by this tiny woman; this tiny woman who simply never forgot.

I will NEVER forget that day with Kevin – NEVER! Not only was he ‘validated’ that day, but so was I. If I ever doubt my calling as a Chaplain I simply remember that day and thank God for folks like you who make it possible for me to *“be there”* when one of our emergency responders needs a touch from God. **THANKS!!!** Shalom! *Chap Steve*

