

EVANGELICAL ^{IN} MINISTRY

WINTER 2009

rigorous
minds.

passionate
hearts.

Christ-centered
actions.


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EVANGELICAL IN MINISTRY

You may not realize it, but chaplains are everywhere. They are men and women called of God to minister the good news of Jesus Christ at times and places that are beyond our reach. Chaplains are on the scene when a family loses their house in a fire. A chaplain provides comfort when a police officer has just told a father that his son died in an accident. Chaplains offer a listening ear in nursing homes, small group studies at VA hospitals and the Lord's Supper on the battlefield. Chaplains are on duty in the ER, and they provide much needed support throughout a hospital stay. The often quiet ministry of a chaplain leads to lives transformed by Christ.

Evangelical counts it a privilege to prepare chaplains for effective ministry in a broken and complex world. As you read this edition of Evangelical IM, join me in giving thanks for chaplains, and pray with me that God will call the men and women of his choosing to this vital ministry. 

In Christ,
Mike Sigman
President

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Lee Greenfield giving communion
at the Tigris River.

A Call To Serve

By Dr. Pat Horst
Dean of Students
Assistant Professor
of Pastoral Ministry

The call to serve Christ through the chaplaincy is clear in the lives of several students who are presently studying at Evangelical. I recently asked three Evangelical students about their experiences within chaplaincy ministry.

Two students, Tim Steel and Tyler Parry, have felt the call to serve Christ and humanity as chaplains within the armed services. Another student, Missy Deibler, serves as chaplain as she ministers to patients and their families within a local hospital.

Through a series of events, Tyler Parry became increasingly aware of the shortage of chaplains to serve the needs of soldiers and their families. As he began pastoral ministry within the local church, Tyler observed the great stress that military personnel undergo as well as the incredibly intense needs of their families. A highly significant incident was the death and funeral of a close friend who was killed in Iraq. As Tyler observed the deep distress of his friend's family, his unit, and the community, Tyler realized that God could use him to minister to those great needs. Tyler has chosen to serve within the Army National Guard, allowing him to minister to soldiers who live in his area, the community and

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the whole Army family. Tyler feels that Evangelical has provided him solid theological grounding and methodology as well as skills in preaching and counseling. Tyler also shared, “Evangelical has helped to foster my spiritual growth. The stress and strain of the chaplaincy requires a great deal of resiliency and moral courage. Evangelical has helped to instill that. The community that I have

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found at Evangelical, and the relationships that I have built are also of tremendous value personally. I am sure that they will be with me as I face the challenge of ministering to young soldiers.”

Tim Steel learned about the chaplaincy through his dad who was a chaplain in the Navy for 24 years, retiring as a Captain. Also a former Evangelical student, Lee Greenfield, became a mentor to Tim. Lee played the biggest role in getting him interested in the Army instead of the Navy. Tim reflected, “I look up to these two guys in particular and hope I will be as successful serving American troops and their families as my dad was and Lee is doing right now in Iraq.” Tim participated in basic training for the Army chaplaincy this past summer.


He plans to attend Airborne School in January and February of 2009. Part of Airborne School is a two-week practicum with a chaplain at Fort Benning, GA. Tim could be deployed to a chaplaincy site as early as Spring 2009. Tim added the following reflections, “I think I have grown up a lot at Evangelical. I have really learned to listen to God’s call in my life. I had no idea I would be an Army Chaplain if you would have told me two and a half years ago when I started here. God placed all of the right people in front of me who have challenged me emotionally, mentally,

“Someone once told me, God does not call the qualified, but qualifies those he calls.”

theologically and spiritually to help mold me into what I have become. Obviously, it is my desire to continue challenging myself in these areas as I begin serving God and country.”

Missy Deibler has just begun her studies at Evangelical. She has, however, been actively involved in hospital chaplaincy for the past four years. Missy’s great enthusiasm for praying with patients and their families is evident. God began to instill a desire within Missy to

become involved in chaplaincy as the result of a life-threatening illness that her husband experienced. Missy’s husband recovered from the illness, and Missy’s own life was transformed through the experience. Now a volunteer in the Spiritual Care Department at Heart of Lancaster, Missy shares that chaplaincy offers exciting possibilities to be a witness of God’s love to new people every day. Missy considers it a privilege to be in the sacred presence of God while individuals are facing imminent death. Through her studies at Evangelical, Missy stated, “I hope to develop a deeper understanding of my relationship with God so that I can be the aroma of Christ.” She also hopes to stir up the gifts that are within her. Missy also shared the following insights, “Someone once told me, God does not call the qualified, but qualifies those he calls. This gives me the confidence to take the next step.” One of those steps for Missy has been to begin her studies at Evangelical.

It has been a delight to get to know these students and to hear their earnest call to serve Christ through varied chaplaincy settings. May God bless them as they continue to respond to his call and serve our Lord as he leads them forward. 



Missy Deibler with a patient at Heart of Lancaster.



The War on Two Fronts

By Lisa Bartlett
Staff Writer

Lee Greenfield and another soldier on duty.

In the midst of war, Lee Greenfield strives to put Christ first in all he does. On the home front, Juliana Leshar leans on the Holy Spirit to fight her daily battles.

The two Evangelical alumni are serving soldiers, veterans and their families as chaplains – one in the Army, the other at a hospital.

An Army Chaplain with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Hood, Texas, Greenfield's ministry for the past year has been based in northern Iraq, where he serves 1,800 soldiers in an area the size of Maryland. In a combat zone he balances preaching, running the base's small chapel, holding field services all over northern Iraq, conducting memorial ceremonies, and performing grief and life issues counseling and marriage counseling.

It's a balance he learned while attending Evangelical, where he took classes, worked a full-time midnight shift job, participated in ministry at his local church on the weekends, attended National Guard drills, got married and had three children.

"I had to learn to juggle many things at one time and push myself to succeed in difficult circumstances, all with a sense of aiming towards excellence," Greenfield, 2007 M. Div., says. "This fully describes the unique challenges and attitude an army chaplain faces and needs to have in order to succeed in this environment. My ministry as an army chaplain really is the product of what the professors and dear Christians at Evangelical have poured into me."

"Evangelical Theological Seminary has taught me to daily put Christ first in all I do," he continues. "In a place and ministry such as this, where the line and moment between life and death is so thin, how can I afford to disregard a person's soul and not give the reason for the hope that I live by and need to show every day?"

As the lead staff chaplain at the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison, WI since July 2006, Leshar's battles come against hopelessness and despair. She often counsels young veterans returning from war with career-ending injuries, sharing trials from her own life, meeting them in a common place of brokenness and offering them hope.

"Life still has value and meaning," Leshar, 2000 M. Div., says of her encouragement to these veterans. "They have a story to tell, an experience to share, and a great deal of value they can give."

In her daily work as a chaplain, Leshar also battles unbelief. An atheist organization headquartered in Madison, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, has targeted the VA and its chaplains, claiming taxpayer support of chaplains is unlawful. Because she is on the "front lines" of that battle, and for her work in creating a curriculum and support group for newly returning veterans and their families, Leshar received the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Chaplaincy from James Peake, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, in Washington, D.C. in July 2008.

"I give credit to the power of the Holy Spirit," Leshar says. "God has given me the confidence of the Holy Spirit. I will not be intimidated by this group. I am covered by the blood of Christ. Through the challenges in my life, what do I have to fear?"

Leshar says the prayer and support she's received throughout her life have also held her up.

"Meeting strong Christian pillars at Evangelical and the E.C. Church, I can stand in confidence and not be foolish, but not be intimidated by an atheist organization," she says.



Juliana Leshar receiving award from Dr. James Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Chaplain Keith Ethridge, National Director of Chaplains for the Department of Veterans Affairs, is on the right.

Chaplaincy Reflections



“Military chaplains are God’s ambassadors, representing His kingdom in a sometimes violent environment. They often bring a divine perspective to catastrophic occurrences, assisting people in dealing with life and death issues when human wisdom fails. They help people in uniform catch a glimpse of God’s approach to living, while serving as a patriotic role model to civilians. They shine as the stars in the darkness.”

*Barry C. Black, Ph.D., D.Min., D.D.
62nd Chaplain of the United States Senate
Rear Admiral (Ret.), U.S. Navy*

“The work of first responder chaplains varies greatly from institutional chaplains such as hospital or nursing homes. Often we are so focused on our mission of service to officers that when our work is completed, we simply return to our regular ministries without telling the story of our work.

As a team, both chaplain and officer make an important difference in the lives of persons touched by tragedy. When the chaplain is working in the police world, each is “chaplain” for everyone, not the religious leader of a particular tradition serving a particular congregation or service agency.

Chaplains come at any hour, in all kinds of weather. Mostly, they listen. But they also comfort people who are shaking with fear. Chaplains also understand the difficulties of public bureaucracies, assisting with the “red tape” moments of life for officers and public alike. They spend many hours riding as active passengers with officers on patrol duty. While chaplains do not carry weapons in most states, many departments require their chaplains to qualify on the weapons their department uses.

As the threat of terrorism and natural disasters increases in the future, the role of chaplains will become increasingly important. For that reason, it’s important that our seminaries adequately prepare graduates for this important area of ministry.”

*Jan R. Fryer
Senior Pastor of First Evangelical Congregational Church, Palmyra, PA
Chaplain, North Londonderry Township Police Department*

“My experience at Evangelical was a pinnacle event in life! While the first six years of ministry following graduation from Evangelical were spent in congregational ministry, the past 12 years have been spent in a calling to long-term care chaplaincy at Lebanon Valley Brethren Home, Palmyra, PA.

The Master of Divinity degree program at Evangelical solidly prepared me for just such a ministry. The courses of Pastoral Care at that time were led by Ray Seilhamer, then president of the seminary. His love for Christ and the Church helped to build a natural bridge from classroom theory to practical ministry. Servant leadership was a key component to both the teaching of staff and character qualities of staff. My life and calling in ministry have been enriched by the ministry tools and relationships that I discovered while at Evangelical. The friendships that were made at Evangelical have been a constant support through the years. Both staff and fellow students are people with a passion to minister the love of Christ in an attitude of servant leadership.”

*Norman D. Yeater
Chaplain, Lebanon Valley Brethren Home*




Chaplain Yeater and a resident of the Lebanon Valley Brethren Home



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