



Braveheart Chaplain Ministry



June 2016

‘A friend loves at all
times, and a brother is
born for a difficult time.’
- Proverbs 17:17



THE THREE ESSENTIALS OF BRAVEHEART CHAPLAIN MINISTRY

The three core components of Braveheart Chaplain Ministry are:

- A fitting response to traumatic situations.
- Pastoring and equipping responders and their families.
- Leadership for our non-profit corporation.

First, a fitting response is necessary in emergencies. There are similarities and differences to every traumatic scenario; therefore, experience helps me address common issues while the distinctiveness of each call demands divine insight. The following questions flow from real situations this spring which required appropriate responses:

“What do you say to parents of a three-year-old who found and ingested a prescription drug in their home causing the child’s death?”

“How do you help a grandmother whose three-month-old granddaughter died unexpectedly and without explanation?”

“How do you console parents and encourage family members whose youngster has been taken advantage of?”

“What should be said to an emergency responder who feels the effect of years of exposure to trauma and continues to serve?”

“What type of encouragement does a person need whose spouse has quit on her family commitments?”

“What needs to be said and done for a mom and her three children after the kid’s grandmother is found dead in the bathroom?”

“How do you articulate words to a mom whose adult daughter has likely died of an overdose, and it did not surprise the family?”



While not all of these massive questions receive concise answers, they did receive a response from me. The primary response is to come alongside of those who are hurting and to engage in serious dialogue if needed or simply to listen. When fitting, another aspect is to remind them that such questions ultimately drive us to the realization that these big answers only come from the One who is above all things in His wisdom and understanding. He alone sees the bigger picture.

Additional crises which have occurred this spring in the lives of citizens and responders are too personal to share, but know that your support helps enable me to assist others with their pain, grief and questions.

Secondly, providing pastoral support and equipping responders and their families is a key portion of chaplain services.

Glacier National Park requested that I provide training for rangers and other employees before their heavy tourist season begins. I addressed dealing with stress, maintaining balance between life at work and at home as well as fatigue.

I appreciated the opportunity to help prepare them for living healthy lives now and before 2.5 million guests arrive this coming season. Because of the intensity of the summer, stress levels can elevate both at work and at home. The training was timely as a 26-year-old man drowned in the Park 8 days after my session with them. Follow up with the rangers is one means of checking in on their status after such a tragedy.

Dispatchers recently commented that they have already been experiencing summer call volume, which concerns them for the literal call numbers that the summer will likely bring. Maintaining a regular presence in the dispatch center allows me to be aware of the impact upon them created by the call volume, difficult calls, as well as to share with them the outcome of calls that they only knew a portion of.

Detention officers face unique stressors at work as they constantly deal with overcrowding in our facility and a multitude of other issues related to the jail population. I maintain a regular presence in their facility as a resource for them to talk through both their professional and personal issues.

One means of quickly multiplying pastoral support is by adding an additional chaplain. Randy Olson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Marion, makes the fourth chaplain serving in the Flathead County Sheriff's Office. Like all of the chaplains whom I serve alongside of, Randy provides a valuable presence on a part-time basis.

To prepare Randy for his new role, I conducted training for him which included:

- Purpose & role of chaplains.
- Ride along protocol including safety.
- Policies for traffic stops.
- Crime scene procedures.
- General scene guidelines.
- Understanding the coroner's role.
- Benevolence resources available.
- How to conduct a death notification.
- Relating to personnel & citizens of various faiths.
- Coping with one's own stress due to exposure on scenes.
- Familiarization with dispatch & detention center staff along with Sheriff's Office support staff.

Randy has been an encouragement as a friend and a meaningful addition to the corps of chaplains. He is quickly getting hands on experience by responding to calls on his own.

Thirdly, leadership for the non-profit corporation is essential in order for Braveheart to flourish as a ministry which is 100% funded through donations. Our Board of Directors is expanding from 5 to 10 members which provides additional vision, wisdom and hands-on help in planning and executing fundraisers. More members also give us greater insight for policy establishment and utilization.

The Board presently consists of:

- **Bob Thornton, ordained minister and social worker.**
- **Dick Sine, Emergency Medical Services director, Flathead County.**
- **Doug Overman, Captain, Kalispell Police Dept.**
- **Drew Buckner, Executive Director, Braveheart Chaplain Ministry.**
- **Dr. Pam Roberts, Director of Summit Fitness Wellness Program.**
- **Kipp Tkachyk, Detective, Flathead County Sheriff's Office.**
- **Kirk Pederson, Captain, Kalispell Fire Dept.**
- **Melissa Smith, former Kalispell Police officer; married to an officer.**
- **Ric Vander Ark, Senior Database Engineer, National Flood Services; father of a deputy.**
- **Russ Kinzer, retired school superintendent; father & father-in-law of firefighters/paramedics.**

We are actively establishing necessary policies for the Board of Directors as well as will soon be considering a summer fundraiser.

I am grateful to those who have served both since Braveheart's inception in 2010 along with those who have since joined or will become active members in June.

The workload is growing and the intensity of situations is increasing. Pray for God's provision of:

1. Wisdom.
2. Strength.
3. Compassion.
4. Funding.
5. Possibility of another full-time paid chaplain.

Fight the good fight - 2 Timothy 4:7,

Drew