

# COUNTY-WIDE CHAPLAINCY

"There to Help  
When it Hurts"



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Web Page -  
[911chaplain.org](http://911chaplain.org)

Dear Friends of Chaplaincy,

As I start this "end of the year" communication to you my friends and supporters, some strange noises are coming from the garage below my office. Last few weeks we noticed that our furnace was acting rather badly, so I called a heating/ AC man to check it out. He tried all kinds of cures, but it was too late; we need a new furnace and heat pump. This was bad news as we didn't need such an investment at this time of the year, but have no choice. Not a major catastrophe, but certainly an inconvenience. (We are so thankful for our wood stove, which has kept us warm.)

That first Christmas the shepherds out in their field were minding their own business and things were going along as planned, when an angel came to inconvenience them. First the bright light and then the appearance of angelic beings which announced that a Savior had been born in Bethlehem. Their reaction was that of FEAR. Pretty natural when something so unexpected invaded their comfortable world. The angel called this "Good News of Great Joy for All People!"

Our youngest son Kevin and his wife Sarah just announced that Evelyn and I are going to be grandparents again. (That will make 11) This good news brought us great joy, but there is a little consternation on the part of their 6 year old daughter - she might lose her spot as the youngest and only granddaughter here in Washington.

Our job as chaplains often involves bringing news of quite a different kind. This past month I have been involved with bringing bad news to parents whose children have died. One of these calls came just as I had fallen asleep. I got up, called dispatch to get details, and drove to the home of his mother. This middle age man had been crushed when his pickup, which had stalled on a hill, rolled back and pinned him against the guardrail. I was informed that the mother had just lost her second husband this past summer, so as I pulled up to the home I wondered what to say and how to help her.

It was midnight, and there were still lights on in the house, for which I was grateful. She came to the door with phone in her hand having punched in 911 in case I was an intruder. She



asked, "Who's there?" Obviously there was fear, since a midnight call is out of the ordinary. She looked through the side window and said, "Landis, is that you?" I had no idea who she was, but she let me in and I gave her the bad news. I soon learned that she was a grade school teacher where both our sons had been in her class. I stayed till a friend came to stay with her.

Another "bad news" notification involved a call from a detective in Phoenix, Arizona, who had been trying to inform the parents of a murder-suicide situation he was working with. This man had a real meth problem, according to his father, and became so paranoid that he trashed the house, believing that the government was spying on him. The father showed me pictures and a notebook documenting all that they had done to try to help their son, and now he had killed his girlfriend and himself. Just before I got to their home I got a call from a fire chief asking me to come to their station as they had just received some bad news that one of their veteran fire fighters had been killed in a motor vehicle accident. The Streissguth family name is synonymous with firefighting, as the father Dick was fire chief for many years, and his sons Steve and Rick followed in their father's footsteps. The men in the family, including their sister's husband, were heading to Montana to get an antique fire engine when the truck pulling a flatbed trailer went off the road, and Rick and his brother-in-law were killed. Dad and brother Steve were in a vehicle following and witnessed the tragedy. As the bad news came to the fire station, there was a sense of helplessness and frustration. As one firefighter put it, "We go to fix peoples' problems; but now it is us and ours."

I'm so grateful for the good news that is still worth sharing in our world that is so full of bad news. At this year end, I am also so thankful for you, my supporters, who make it possible for me to bring that good news to many, as we are "there to Help, when it Hurts!"

Have a Merry Christmas

Joyfully serving together with you,  
Chaplain *Landis Epp*



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