



# COWLITZ CHAPLAINCY

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## STRESS

STRESS, we all have it to some extent by just living in the world today. There is good stress and bad stress. The good stress is known as *eustress*. It is short-term and the effects do not linger. It motivates you to meet a goal such as studying to pass a test, paying your bills on time, or completing a task at work, just to name a few. It can move you in a positive way and help you to achieve the desired outcome. Everyone needs some good stress to keep you alive and functioning at your best.

What is on my heart today is the bad stress, called *distress*, or *negative stress*, that may result in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD. This kind of stress can occur when a person has been exposed to trauma, whether ongoing or a singular event. It is typically seen in first responders and military personnel. It can also be seen in the civilian population. As Chaplains we witness the damage that accumulative negative stress can do to oneself, family and co-workers. Too many times the emergency personnel are the first to respond in a crisis, but the last to seek help for themselves. In the first responder culture, it may be perceived as a sign of weakness, or the inability to do one's job. Thankfully, that culture is slowly changing.

In 2016 Ron Clark, a retired Connecticut State Trooper who runs "Badge of Life," estimated that around 216,000 police officers have suffered from PTSD symptoms or some other emotional stress. He also stated that more than 1,400 officers have taken their own lives in the past decade. He is quoted as saying, "we could fill a stadium with retired officers that probably have PTSD".

According to a 2015 article in the Journal of Emergency Medical Services (JEMS), which surveyed more than 4,000 first responders, found that 6.6% had attempted suicide. This is more than ten times the reported rate in the general population. According to Fire Fighter Behavioral Health Alliance, families, friends, and co-

workers reported 132 suicides nationwide in 2016. It is suspected that many more went unreported.

However, there is hope. Every day we learn more about PTSD and how to treat it. This does not in any way cover everything on the subject, but here are just a **few** symptoms to look for if you have experienced significant trauma, or are close to someone who has: hyper-vigilance (always on guard), withdrawing from people, nightmares or flashbacks of the incident, or self-medication to avoid feelings.

Self-care is more important than ever. Some other positive steps may be to talk with your family or close friends, find a counselor certified in trauma-related conditions, or contact one of our Chaplains, who are trained to help in all these areas.

The following is a list of things you might do to stay healthy: daily physical exercise, take time away from work, find a hobby you enjoy, eat healthy and try to get plenty of sleep. Remember PTSD is no respecter of persons. One of the best defenses is to talk, talk, and talk.

It is a privilege to serve you. Chaplain Flip



## Chaplains Activity

The spring and early summer continues to be very busy for emergency services in Cowlitz County. The Chaplains are very busy as well. We were called out 38 times in May and June to assist in crisis events.

The Chaplains faithfully checked in with their law enforcement and fire departments, spending 251 hours checking in on first responders and spending roughly 90 hours riding along with their shifts. We also conducted 10 funerals during May and June.

During the month of May we take time to remember all the law enforcement heroes who gave their lives in the line of duty. The week of May 15 is National Law Enforcement Memorial week. There is a big gathering in Washington D.C., but we also have several activities in our county. The Chaplains attend the County Commissioners' meeting, and each of the city council meetings in May to encourage our elected officials to do all they can to support those who put their lives on the line every day to protect us. Sheriff Nelson also holds a candlelight vigil during that week to remember all the officers and canine officers who have died in the line of duty.

This year Cowlitz County had its second officer to die in the line of duty. Chief Randy Gibson of the Kalama Police department died on January 10. On May 5 Chaplain Tom went with Dawn Gibson, Officer Jeff Skeie, and Kalama city officials to Olympia, as Chief Gibson's name was placed on the Washington State Law Enforcement Memorial Wall. The name of Kelso Police Officer Francis P. Konen who died on March 27, 1948 is also on the wall.



In June the Chaplains attended the swearing in ceremony of James Kelly as the new Woodland Police Chief. Kalama also hired Ralph Herrera of Kissimee, Florida to be their new Police Chief. Chief Herrera was scheduled to begin his duties on July 10. Also, we congratulate Kalama Police clerk Krystall Collins who married Paul Marriott on June 17.



James Kelly



Ralph Herrera

## Cowlitz Chaplaincy

servicing **LAW ENFORCEMENT-FIRE-RESCUE** since 1983

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On June 25 the Castle Rock Police Department had an awards banquet. Congratulations to all the officers of this small, but awesome, department.

On June 29 nine new reserve officers and deputies were sworn in by Sheriff Nelson. These reserve officers will volunteer their time to support and assist our full time sworn officers/deputies.

## Chaplain Training

In May Chaplains Caliatra and Francisco completed the individual Critical Incident Stress Management training, and in June Chaplain Francisco completed the group Critical Incident Stress Management training.

On June 26-28 the Chaplains were part of an active shooter training with Kelso Police and Cowlitz Fire Districts 2 and 5. This training was held at Butler Acres Elementary School, and it incorporated the use of bringing EMS personnel into "warm zones" under the guard of law enforcement. Over years of responding to active shooter incidents we have learned the quicker we can get EMS personnel to the wounded, even if the situation is not fully controlled, will save lives.

## Fundraising

Our next fundraising event is our annual golf classic. It will be held again at Three Rivers Golf Course in Kelso on September 9. We will provide breakfast and lunch with an 8:30 shotgun start. You can get all the details about sponsorships and teams on our website [www.cowlitzchaplaincy.org](http://www.cowlitzchaplaincy.org)

We also want to remind you of our 16 minute promotional video. You can find it on our website, and on YouTube. Look for [Cowlitz Chaplaincy Promotional Video](#). This video is a great tool for you to introduce others to the mission of the Chaplaincy and encourage them to match you in your financial support. Perhaps you have a Bible study group, or small group you belong to at your church, or you belong to a service organization or other civic group. This video is a great way to explain our mission to the county.

"Supporting those who support our communities' first responders"