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The Voice for Chaplaincy - Chartered by Congress - Serving Since 1925

Weekly Newsgram - December 27th, 2017

may 2018 be a year of blessing and peace for all

A Poster Child for Chaplaincy Chaplain Herman Keizer, Jr. 1938-2017

The term "Poster Child" was first used in 1938. It has come to be defined as "a person having a public image identified with a cause." Perhaps it is no coincidence that one of the great Poster Children for Chaplaincy, Herman Keizer, Jr., was born to this world that same year. Herm was taken home this past week (see below). During his time with us, Herm in many ways epitomized the essence of professional military chaplaincy and showed us how, as chaplains, we serve for life.



Herm's accomplishments during his service are far too numerous to detail here but reflecting on his service and his voiced concerns may help us prepare for our own ministries as we enter the new year.

Herm served in the Army for 40 years, 2 enlisted, 4 reserve, and 34 as an active component chaplain. On his initial retirement in 1998, he was immediately recalled to serve as the Advisor to the Ambassador at Large of International Religious Freedom at the State Department. In addition to his Defense Superior Service Medal, Herm was awarded four Legions of Merit, six Bronze Stars, and the Purple Heart. He served as the [National Chaplain for the Military Order of the Purple Heart](#).

Upon retirement from the Army, Herm became the endorsing agent for the Christian Reformed Church and, in this capacity, served as the Chair of the Executive Committee

of the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces. Herm was also a Life Member of the Military Chaplains Association, a Board member of the United States Army Chaplains Corps Regimental Association, and a recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Professional Chaplains, the first military chaplain endorser to be recognized in this way.

Some of Herm's continuing concerns regarding military personnel and their service to our nation included:

Moral Injury - co-founder of the [Soul Repair Center](#) at Brite Divinity School - see the [power point](#) Moral Injury and Soul Repair for more references.

The Church's role in reducing Veteran suicides - see "[What the church can do about suicide in the U.S. military](#)," August 2, 2012

Selective Conscientious Objection in the age of an all-volunteer military - Herm served as the guest host for the Truth Commission on Conscience in War - see [article](#). Also, a [letter](#) written by Herm supporting a chaplain's role in speaking to moral ambiguity.

As we finish this month in which there are many celebrations of faith's proclamation of peace and hope for our lives, here are words from Herm regarding the role of the faith community in supporting military members and their families as they seek to reconcile lived experiences over against the proclamations of joy and peace. Though specifically Christian, the underlying principles apply to all faith communities addressing the moral dilemmas of our lives.

The call to the churches is to be sensitive to military persons and their families. In our worship we should take very serious our moments of confession and hearing the Word of God that speaks forgiveness. The coming of Christ, the King of Peace, may sound very strange to a believing young person who tried to love his enemy in a war that is very morally ambiguous. It should be a challenge to every person who plans worship and proclaims the joy of Christmas, that for some returning from the war, they only want the idealized memories of their pre-war experience: family get-togethers; mistletoe; chestnuts on an open fire; turkey with trimmings; decorated homes and trees; and memories of past joys. But what they really need is the ability to know that there is a God and a community ready to listen to their pain that only can be groaned or dreamed of nightmarishly. For most soldiers who carry the moral wounds of war, absolution is an intensely private matter, because we have devalued public confession and pronouncement of forgiveness.

I ask your sensitivity to those coming home for Christmas from the horror of Iraq. Love them with non-judgmental warmth and positive regard for them as image-bearers of God. Allow them to realize you are willing to wait with empathy for them until such a time as they will allow you into their struggle for forgiveness and absolution. Give them time to again find joy in their hearts.

Thanks Herm, for being our poster child in all the right ways.

Lyman Smith
Executive Director



In Memoriam

Herman Keizer, Jr.

Chaplain (COL) United States Army, Retired
Christian Reformed Church
MCA Life Member
Born 1938
Deceased December 22, 2017
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Thomas J. McInnes

Chaplain (COL) United States Army, Retired
American Baptist Church
MCA Life Member
Born 1927
Deceased Dec 16, 2017
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Francis X. Brett

Chaplain (LtCol), United States Army, Retired
Roman Catholic Church
MCA Member
Born 1931
Deceased December 18, 2017
Rome, Georgia

James "Jim" Germer

Chaplain Assistant, United States Army
Director of Christian Education, Fort Riley
Born 1952
Deceased December 21, 2017
Gardner, Kansas

Montreal chaplains provide port in a storm for ship crews

Excerpts from an article on another area of chaplaincy. This ministry is an outreach of the Christian Reformed Church (Herm Keizer's denomination) and is another example of chaplaincy serving all.

from the article

Wearing a reflective safety vest and a bright pink hard hat jammed over a Port of Montreal toque, she looks more like a dock worker than a chaplain.

But in the port terminals and aboard container ships like the 300-metre-long Matilde, she's a familiar face.

DePooter, 38, is one of two chaplains for the Ministry to Seafarers, an outreach mission of the Christian Reformed Church that operates out of Montreal's port.

All year round, she and fellow chaplain David Rozeboom visit each of the 50 to 80 ships that arrive in Montreal each month, providing both practical and spiritual support to their crews, most of whom come from low-income communities in India, the Philippines or Eastern Europe.

DePooter says ship workers live a challenging life that requires them to be away from home for six to nine months at a time while contending with bad weather, workplace danger and loneliness.

She says the ministry's goal is to support a group of people who are often forgotten or negatively stereotyped.

"They're away from their homes and their families for months at a time, and often lonely and isolated," she says in an interview.

"To be able to provide a listening ear, somebody different they can talk to, a place where they are recognized as people, as not a forgotten entity ... it's very important."

DePooter says that while seafarers are used to missing birthdays, anniversaries and holidays, some still find it especially hard to be away at Christmas.

Others don't mind and many, of course, aren't Christians at all.

"We're here for everybody," she says.



Michelle DePooter in conversation at the Mariner's House, Montreal

Year End Giving

[Military Chaplains Association](#)



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