

Newsletter Staff

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L to R: Brian Jacobs, Chaplains Susan Strong, Bob Williams, Kelly Egan, Danelle Jacobs at Food For Thought in Forestville

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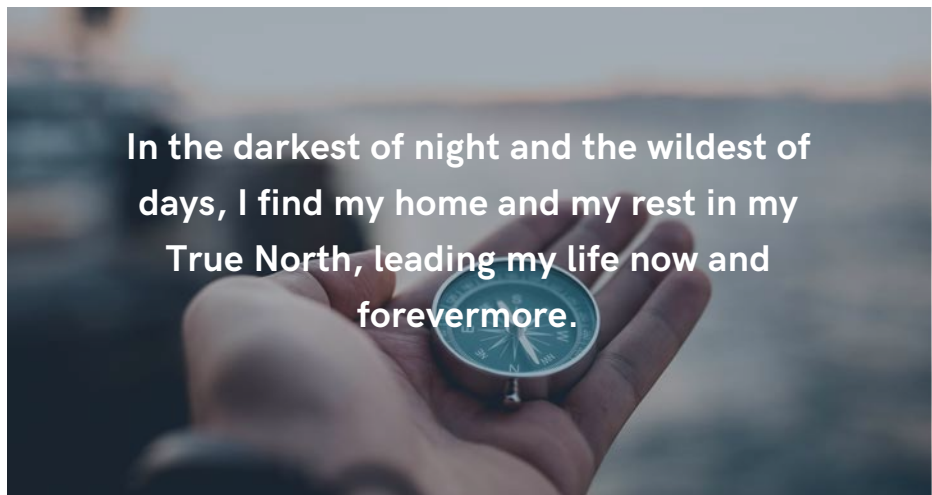
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FEATURE: LECS chaplains come from many different walks of life, professions and experiences. *What feeds our souls?* Chaplains Richard Kagel and Kate Sheridan share their stories.



FEATURE: We get asked this a lot: What is SPIRITUALITY and how does it factor in our work and in our lives?

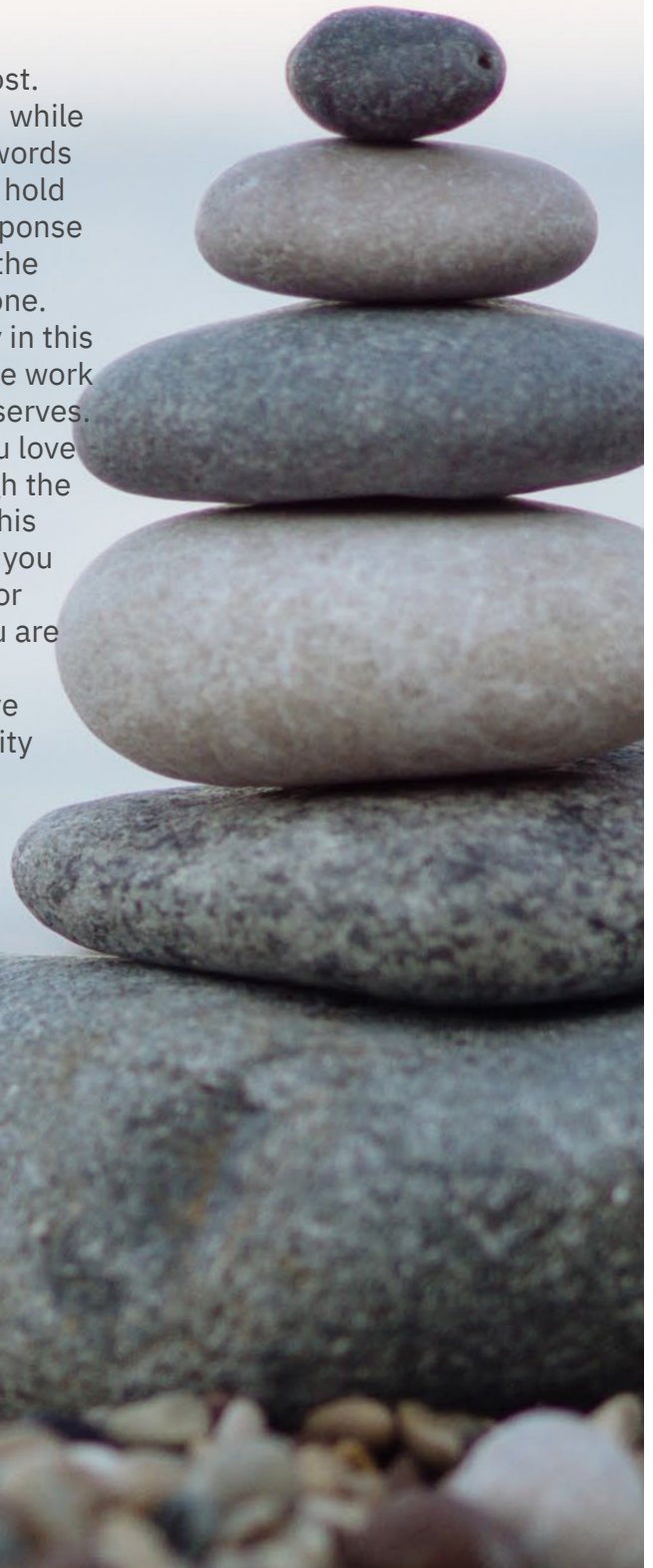


In the darkest of night and the wildest of days, I find my home and my rest in my True North, leading my life now and forevermore.

Trauma Walk

Executive Director, Rita Constantini

Throughout our lives we have all loved and lost. For some of us love has outweighed the loss, while for others the loss has been painful beyond words or comprehension. Maybe that's why we can hold space and witness the intense emotional response that occurs during traumatic events such as the unexpected loss of a child, partner or loved one. Serving law enforcement and our community in this way is meaningful, rewarding and at times the work can drain our own emotional and spiritual reserves. The intention of this newsletter is to offer you love and support as you navigate your way through the impact of being of service. To acknowledge this work comes at a cost and to remind you that you do not need to carry the stories in a harmful or disruptive way. So, in the moments when you are in your own personal struggle or if you find it difficult to shake off the pain of what you have witnessed, consider turning to your community of Chaplains for comfort, love, friendship and support.



RICHARD KAGEL: MY AFRICAN MISSION

The West African nation of Guinea-Bissau is the size of Maryland, has a population of more than 2,000,000, a life expectancy of 48, and is one of the poorest nations in the world. Only one in five children lives to age 5.

What, then, would compel **Chaplain Richard Kagel** to make fourteen trips to Guinea-Bissau since 2009?



Chaplain Richard Kagel, Academy XX, serves in many ways: he holds a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry, has served as co-owner of a testing laboratory in Santa Rosa for 30 years, and has been a LECS chaplain for 5 years. Richard attends Healdsburg Community Church where he serves as an elder, as chair of Missions Committee and as a Stephen Ministry Leader. Oh, and Richard grows Zinfandel wine grapes and raises geese with his wife Carla in the Dry Creek Valley of Sonoma County.

Richard first learned about Guinea-Bissau’s struggles with political instability and extreme poverty from his long-time colleague and friend Armindo, who is a native of the tiny nation. Civil war, government and military corruption, the remnants of colonization and revolution and tropical diseases—cholera, primarily—have left his country with many large challenges to face.

One fateful night fifteen years ago, Richard suddenly realized his mission. He recalls, “God gave me a completely clear message . . . that I go to Guinea-Bissau. That’s it. I wasn’t a world traveler, I was a chemist with no experience in anything like this. But there I was, planning to go.”

During his first trip, accompanied by Armindo, Richard saw the extent of poverty and disease but he was also deeply moved by the warmth and hospitality of the people. When he returned from that trip, he could not get the images of sick and dying people—especially the children—out of his mind.

One of the things Richard does in his lab in Santa Rosa is test drinking water quality. Knowing that unsafe drinking water is a major cause of cholera and other diseases, he returned to Guinea-Bissau armed with e-coli testing supplies and found that every sample he tested showed dangerous levels of e-coli bacteria to be present, and in many samples the levels were extreme.



Having studied about water filtration systems Richard learned about a simple ceramic water filter that could be manufactured in primitive places: the disinfecting “point-of-use” Silver-Impregnated Ceramic Water Filter, a highly effective and extremely inexpensive solution to all of these water-borne diseases. It has been extensively studied by universities including MIT, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford and by international organizations such as USAID and UNICEF. In each study it has been proven to be highly effective at eliminating bacteria and parasites in contaminated water and significantly reducing the incidence of water-borne diseases in areas where it has been implemented. *(For more information on the Silver-Impregnated Ceramic Water Filter you can go to: Pottersforpeace.com.)*

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The filter looks like a large clay flowerpot; however, the clay is made porous by incorporating a “burnout” material such as fine saw dust or rice hulls during its fabrication, and then lined with colloidal silver.



The filter element fits into a 5 gallon plastic or ceramic receiving vessel that is fitted with a spigot from which the purified water is taken. This filter system has been described as “a ceramic weapon of mass bacterial destruction.”

Rather than organizing a campaign to raise money and donate these filters, Richard contacted Potters for Peace, an NGO (non-governmental organization), and discussed with them the idea of building a filter factory in Guinea-Bissau. Richard’s goal was to encourage the local people to participate fully in the project, for it to be theirs, not his, based upon strategies he learned from the book *When Helping Hurts*.*

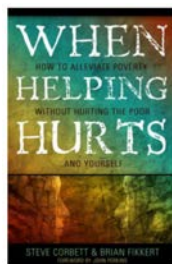
The factory in Safim, Guinea-Bissau is now up and running. As of today, the factory has produced more than 5,000 filters. These filters cost \$1 to make, last at least five years, and are 99.9% effective in removing bacteria and e-coli!

Richard recently returned from his 14th trip. Looking back, he says that although times have been hard, sad, and at times discouraging, he is grateful for the friends he has made and he just shakes his head and thanks God for faith, for sending him to Africa. He says, "It’s true that God can use anyone to do amazing things and that is because when God picks the wrong person to do it, he gives them all the help they need."

Richard: “I wanted this [project] to be sustainable, and I wanted the workers to be proud of what they had accomplished, to become artisans of the clay. Firing a large, wood fired kiln is a science and an art. Making a filter that removes 99.9 percent of all bacteria and produces a gallon of safe drinking water an hour is not trivial. The thought of them accomplishing this made me excited for my new friends and for where God might lead us.”



**When Helping Hurts* provides proven strategies for effective poverty alleviation, catalyzing the idea that sustainable change comes not from the outside in, but from the inside out.



In advance of publication, Richard wrote this Postscript:

When I come back from one of these trips people come to me and ask, with good intentions and a big smile on their faces, Good trip?

There are many tears shed each trip, especially after coming home. All that I have, so little they have, the tiny contribution I've been able, with God's help, to offer, how much more we all could be doing. It can be overwhelming.

Over 14,000 children died yesterday in our world from preventable causes, most due to unsafe water to drink. Another 14,000 today, and every day. I get to see it, see what it looks like, each trip. Then I come home. Good trip?

It's like a really big and really long call out. Then I go home. I think our fellow chaplains can understand, which means a lot to me. Just like our call outs, there's so little we can offer and there's not much to smile about, then we go home. I wonder if that aspect of this work comes through from this article? I'm not sure how it can. I prefer to hide in the shadows of this work. I hate it when people "admire" my efforts. Good trip? - yea, good trip!

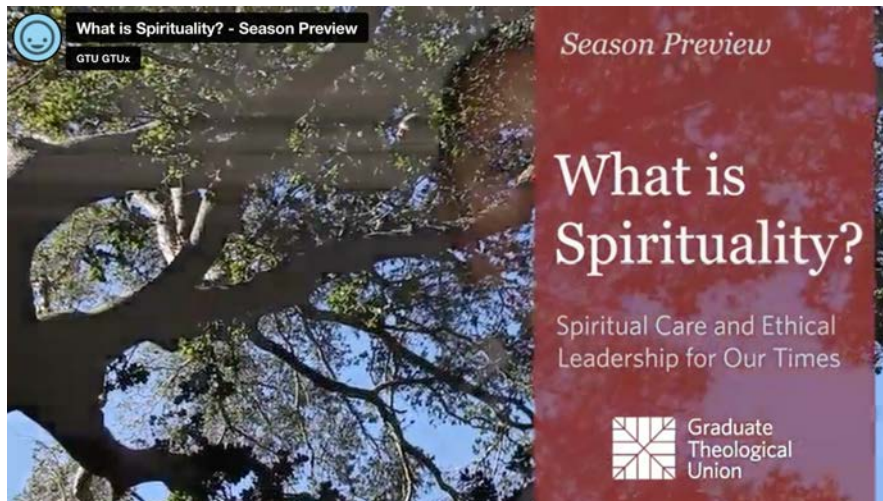
SPIRITUALITY

As I was describing what I do as a non-denominational LECS chaplain to a new friend the other day, she asked me the inevitable questions: *What does non-denominational mean? Are you religious or spiritual? What's the difference between religion and spirituality?*

No doubt you have been asked the same questions many times. A glib or rote reply to this just doesn't feel right... because there are probably as many unique opinions about what spirituality is as there are people thinking about it. This is not one-size-fits-all.

In these video clips you'll hear snippets of what community members and faculty of the Graduate Theological Union* share about their own views on spirituality. Their responses may surprise you! Take some time after you view this video. Let their answers provoke your own questions. Coming right down to it, **What does spirituality mean to you? How do you apply it in your work as a chaplain?**

We would love to learn your personal interpretation and expression of this very important aspect of chaplaincy work. Send me an email or text message with your reply by May 1st so we can synthesize them for the next issue of *Being There*— inese@sonic.net | 415.450.0592



<https://discovergtux.gtu.edu/library/what-is-spirituality-175068/389680/path/step/153781301/>

- *With a focus on interreligious and interdisciplinary perspectives, GTU faculty and students engage the world's great religions and wisdom traditions in contemporary contexts.*

KATE'S CROSS-COUNTRY BIKE ADVENTURE

I had a chance to talk to **Chaplain Kate Sheridan**, Academy XXII, shortly before she left on, as she put it, “a ridiculously long bike ride” from San Diego to Saint Augustine, Florida over a 8-week period, March 6 to May 2, 2024, a distance of over 2400 miles. (Ed.)



Kate says: I’m riding my new Ebike, in the company of 30 other women, staying in hotels, with a “SAG” (support and gear) wagon to carry our luggage (or us). I’ll be posting on Instagram as frickatepix.

I ask: **Why this trip? Kate:** Good question! The short answer? Because I can. I’m retired, can afford it, and at sixty-six I’m still young enough to pull it off. A slightly longer answer? Because I love travelling in the sometimes foreign country that is our own. I like getting out of my comfort zone, mingling with people whose lives and viewpoints and experiences and yes, opinions are vastly different from my own. I like discovering that they are more like me than not. I like experiencing the kindness of strangers, their curiosity and eagerness to connect, and I like reciprocating those qualities. It’s much like chaplaincy in that way.

But the deeper reason why I love long bike trips? It’s the zone. Problems seem to solve themselves with that first pedal stroke. The world is very simple at ten miles an hour. There’s sky and sagebrush, or forest and meadows, hills to climb up and whiz down. I shift my gears and glance in my mirror, but mostly I just pedal, pedal, pedal, the rhythm hypnotizing me into a blissful trance in which I am simultaneously at one with the world and cease to exist.

You must listen to podcasts, or maybe music? Kate: I get that a lot. The question implies boredom, but I have an infinite capacity for self-entertainment. Mostly, I sing. Loudly. Lately it’s stuff from the Threshold Choir, simple a capella lullabies meant to be sung to the dying, in three-part harmony. My favorite is like a prayer: “In the morning, thank you. In the evening, thank you. In the middle of the day, thank you. In the deep, dark night thank you, thank you.” When I’m not singing or praying, I ponder. On a trip across Wisconsin, why were there no cows? I ate cheese curds, picnicked at cheese factories, passed the corporate headquarters for Land O’ Lakes. But nary a bovine did I spy. I cogitated on this for weeks before I found a farmer I could ask. “Too many diseases in the pasture,” she told me. “They’re healthier confined.” (Poor cows!)



But isn’t cycling dangerous? Kate: Yes. But so is “being there” in some of the situations we encounter as chaplains. The rewards outweigh the risks, which we minimize by paying attention to our surroundings, listening to our gut, and taking precautions. Biking is the same. In thirty-five years, I’ve been hit only once. At a four-way stop sign, after waiting my turn, I made eye contact with the driver of the next car. She nodded, waved me through, and then drove right into me as I entered the intersection. She was devastated, my bike was totaled, and I learned two very important lessons: assume I’m invisible, and avoid stopping in traffic (if I had been moving, I could have escaped). Now I am hyper aware of my surroundings when I ride, checking my rearview mirror constantly. The most dangerous situation is when cars passing me

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face oncoming traffic. Instead of swinging wide to give me space, they come uncomfortably close, wanting to avoid a head-on collision with the semi barreling down on them. I'm always ready to bail for the bushes in those instances. Other riders I know have been assaulted with water bottles, run off the road, spit at and threatened. I've been lucky, but I confess I also make a point of not looking like a typical, wrath-provoking cyclist. I run upright instead of hunched over the handlebars, and I favor oversize flapping shirts over form-fitting jerseys. I often have a basket or a pannier on my bike, and I'm excessively polite, making sure I don't block right-turning traffic at intersections, signaling my turns with outstretched arms, waving thank you as I coast carefully through those treacherous intersections. It's part calculated risk reduction, but also, I get it. I'm a driver, too. I get annoyed, too, by cyclists riding two abreast, darting through intersections against the light, or cutting off pedestrians (me!) on the Joe Rodota. I'm doubly peeved because the rude riders make it more dangerous for all us bikers. My thirty-four-pound Ebike is no match for a two-ton diesel pickup.

About that Ebike. From past bike trips, I know my limit is somewhere around 70 miles and 3,000 feet of climbing a day. Sadly, as much as I love riding my bike, I'm shockingly slow and weak (just ask my husband). On this upcoming trip, about a third of the days exceed 70 miles. There's one day that's 119 miles, another where we'll be climbing 7000 feet. With my regular bike there'd be days - too many! - I'd be in the SAG wagon. Just the name - SAG - made my spirits sink. But as one who's taken inordinate pride in her ability to push herself to her limits (on our last trip I pedaled through a sprained knee, an injured Achilles, food poisoning and the flu), the decision to get an Ebike was tortuous. It was a head-on collision between my pride and, well, my pride (Ebike or SAG wagon?)

I finally settled on a "pedal assist" model lightweight enough to be ridden like a regular bike. When I use the battery, it's like invoking a super power, enabling me to pedal up hills I'd have walked up before. I love this bike. Suddenly I can be as fast and strong as I've always felt I was (but was not).

I mentioned my new bike to a hard-core biking acquaintance. "Oh, you got one of those cheater bikes?" she sneered.

I've got 3,000 miles to come up with a good retort.

Follow Kate's bike adventure on Instagram [frickatepix](#).



Southern Tier San Diego, CA to St. Augustine, FL 7 Map Set	GPX Data Overview Buy Mobile App
1. San Diego, CA to Tempe, AZ	Detail
2. Tempe, AZ to El Paso, TX	Detail
3. El Paso, TX to Del Rio, TX	Detail
4. Del Rio, TX to Navasota, TX	Detail
5. Navasota, TX to New Orleans, LA	Detail
6. New Orleans, LA to DeFuniak Springs, FL	Detail
7. DeFuniak Springs, FL to St. Augustine, FL	Detail

[Adventure Cycling Org.](#)

CHAPS
VOLUNTEER
TO HELP THE
HUNGRY

Food For Thought

healing with food+love

On March 7 a team of LECS chaplains, organized by Chaplain Meghan Murphy, met up at the Food for Thought headquarters in Forestville to glean and pack food for people living with serious medical conditions and at risk of food insecurity.



"It's been interesting to me that the Chaplains' response to participate in these last two acts of service (Redwood Food Bank and Food for Thought) has been higher than the interest in a social gathering. I think it shows the hearts of this group of people. The bonus is that these kinds of activities accomplish two objectives --- a time of social connection with fellow Chaplains and an opportunity to help our community.

My husband, Bill Bridges joined us [photo, below]. He would have been uncomfortable in coming to a purely social gathering but it was an easy "yes" to go and help with food.

We were divided into two groups -- those who were "shoppers" and those who packaged staples into easily distributed sizes. There may have been more going on that I missed because I was socializing!

The shoppers had a grocery list obtained from the food recipient and they then filled that grocery order from the little grocery store you see in the picture. Other volunteers then deliver the food on designated days. The packagers took staples like beans and rice from large bags and put them into smaller bags that would ultimately end up in the food recipient's grocery order. It was a fun time!"

-- Susan Strong



L to R: Chaplains Gary Passarino, Susan Keehn, JoAnne Bressick, Meghan Murphy



Bill Bridges



L to R: Chaplains Angela Perkins, JoAnne Bressick, Meghan Murphy

"I was amazed at what they are doing. I remember when they got started in the 80's and their focus was on AIDS patients — at that time a population that was underserved but greatly in need. They are now reaching other folks and doing so with compassion and efficiency. I shopped for Thomas, and I hope he liked my selections. Would do this again in a heartbeat. Thank you, Meghan!"

-- Gary Passarino

A Blue Wives Message, by Chaplain Angela Perkins

Together forever and yet
Strangely apart,
A life I try to understand,
Yet I'm still in the dark.
My partner in life deals with
All kinds of crime,
From car crashes to domestics
Happening in one shift's time.

Protecting the streets,
Regular shifts turned into long,
It's a job I know well,
Yet know nothing at all.
Countless holidays and birthdays
He can't help but miss,
I often hear the question:
"Does he even exist?"

I work at my desk,
Safe within my four walls,
Never knowing if my world
Could be shattered by a call.
"He's been shot," He's been wounded,"
He's forever changed from what he sees,
Dear Lord, keep him safe,
PLEASE bring him home to me.

This man that I love,
With a passion to serve,
Is hated by many,
A hatred he endures.
A community who applauded
When he saved them from flames,
But will turn on their heels,
Walking quickly away,
When the media cries and tells them
to doubt,
To go with the crowds,
To chant and shout.

So to those with their phones out,
Recording only half of the news,
The KEYBOARD WARRIORS who
love to post
From only their view,
Are you even aware of the hurt that
you cause?
To drag my officer's name in the dirt,
For your applause?
Shame on you for the drama
And destruction you cause!

To the cowards who refuse
To get the whole story
To the press that just love to tell
Lies for their glory,
YOU are the first ones
To call on the Blue,
When you're scared and afraid
And need comfort too.

To the ones lurking in the shadows,
The evil ones that disrupt peace,
Know there is one that still believes
In guarding his sheep.

There is a woman who stands behind
Her man in Blue.
Who will fight fiercely to protect him
From all the fake news.
Who worries when she hears
One siren or more.
Knowing the dangers and hoping
Dispatch is hearing "code four."



Travis & Angela Perkins

Before you assume,
Please, before you doubt,
Remove others' opinions
And just look around.
Watch an officer give a child comfort
Who has witnessed their parent's death
Or catch a collapsing new mother
Whose infant has taken their last breath.
These heroes rush in
When most would run out,
Their lives on the line
When increasing tensions mount.

At the end of the day,
And at the end of his life,
He can look back and remember,
It came at a price.
But worth it to know,
And I'm sure he will say,
He is proud of his work,
To keep his loved ones safe.

A Blessing for Family and Friends

*Merciful and compassionate God, you have told us,
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
Now comfort (this family) in (their) loss and sorrow.*

*(Their) hearts are heavy and overflow with
unanswered questions.*

Be (their) refuge and strength.

Lift (them) into the peace and light of your hand.

*Bless (them) and keep (them);
make your face shine upon (them)
and be gracious unto (them).*

*Lift up your countenance, look upon (them),
and grant them peace.*

~ Matthew 5:4; Numbers 6:24-26

Contributed by Chaplain Gary Passarino

Gary writes: What motivated me [to write this prayer template] was the realization that our prayers are almost always directed—understandably—for the deceased, and I wanted something for those left behind. I found a few, but some were very formal or too generic. So I started with a Beatitude, used a portion of a prayer by the Jesuits, and then concluded with Aaron's blessing. I tried to keep it nondenominational. I've used it once. I don't know if it helped, but I hope that it provided some comfort to the family and friends who were present. As for advice for my fellow chaps: Your instinct will tell you when to use it. Feel free to modify it to your own sensibilities and particular situation.

“A Chaplain is a Lighthouse for People in Distress”

In this video clip, Dr. Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, GTU faculty and relief chaplain at Stanford Hospital and clinics, discusses "Spirituality x Care," which focuses on the ways in which interreligious chaplains connect with the people they serve, no matter their background or beliefs.

<https://discovergtux.gtu.edu/library/spirituality-x-care-176083/>



What's in Your Go-Bag?

HOW TO BUILD A PTSD Grounding Kit

A PTSD grounding kit is a toolbox of physical resources you can keep on hand to help someone who is experiencing a trauma response. Within the kit are objects that bring comfort, things that distract, and things that can help ground mindfully into the safety of the present. By using this list to create a small box or tub of resources, you can make sure that your home, classroom, or workspace is a safer place for trauma survivors.

- Squishy toys to hold & squeeze
- Books, music, & safe distractions
- Blank journal(s) for processing
- Supplies for gentle yoga and mindful movement
- Expressive art supplies
- Snacks (crunchy + sour can be extra grounding)
- Soft, cuddly stuffed things
- Objects interesting to hold and look at
- Cards & notes with kind messages to open & read
- A soft, fuzzy blanket
- Puzzle or calming problem-solving game
- Pictures (of outdoors, pets, or safe people)

read more at lindsaybraman.com/ptsd-kit

lindsaybraman.com

I came across this creative and adaptable PTSD GROUNDING KIT, developed by Psychologist Lindsay Braman, MA, LMHCA. This is one of many, in her words “*mental health visual bytes*,” based upon concepts from reference, research, and experience, that she designs into easy-to-understand graphics. Since my own graduate work focused on *visual rhetorics*, Lindsay’s therapeutic art resonates with me, and I have used some of her graphics in previous issues of the newsletter. You can find more about her work at <https://lindsaybraman.com>.

Every chaplain puts together his or her own version of a go-bag during Academy training. I admit I have three: my first bag, in a burst of trainee exuberance, was more of a go-suitcase with enough stuff to support a village. I’ve since learned to pare down what I take along on call-outs to the essentials of the moment. We never really know what all may be needed during a call or who in our care needs it, so I keep the extras and bulky stuff in the trunk of my car.

There’s some good food for thought in this list. You may have all, some, or none of the items suggested by Lindsay. As for me, there are a couple of things on the list that are going into my bag.



Chaplains’ Recertification Training

The intention behind Chaplain Recertification is that we all remain current in our understanding of our process, that we may renew our reasons for doing this work and to create the opportunity for connection between one another. Throughout the year in our bi-monthly training sessions we will ask you to explore new ideas and consider a different approach to deepen our understanding of trauma and grief response in ourselves and others. ~ Rita Constantini



break your limits
and outgrow yourself

During our February meeting Chaplain Kara Jacobs led the training with a lesson on using the basic principles of Improv:

Part I: Basic Principles of Improv and how we can apply them to chaplaincy work.

- Let go of your agenda
- Be present in your body
- Know your "want"
- Be alert to offers (in an improv context)
- Accept offers
- Co-create the scene
- Embrace mistakes
- "Everything that happens is a gift to be taken."

Part II: Large group circle games

- Variations on "telephone"
- Building a proverb one word at a time
- Matching a character
- Purpose: Tune into your partner(s); build group cohesion; have fun; get out of habitual thinking patterns

What’s the difference between *Role-Play* and *Improv*?

Role-play is a training tool in simulations, with the emphasis on “role”: Participants are given an assigned part, a preset scenario and a preferred outcome. Improv is based more on the “play” aspect: Participants create scenes based on loose, open-ended scenarios or even a single prompt. Both Role-play and Improv require that participants pay full attention and respond to each other’s cues on the spot.

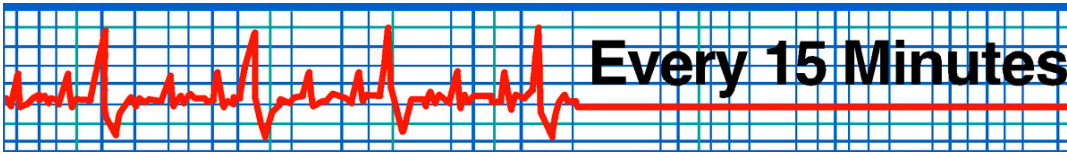
Role-play training allows the important rote actions to become habitual so that in a crisis moment we can respond consciously to in-the-moment shifts. We chaplains are well-versed in role-playing during Academy and Scenario Village training. Improv, on the other hand, is like a ping-pong game, which demands we be entirely in the moment, so our brains can engage fully with our creative-*playful*-side. Improv can be silly and fun, and because participants are encouraged to simply “be themselves,” it fosters team trust & support.



So how is Improv, a “play” activity, helpful in building resilience and reducing burnout? Each of us has a personal preferred play style (physical, social, solitary, creative, etc) but, as psychologist Lindsay Braman writes, “When we understand the importance of our leisure pursuits, it’s easier to give them a place of priority in our lives... We can develop resilience to burnout through more satisfying work, through flow, and through knowing how to rest and recharge in satisfying ways.”

Charades, anyone?

COMMUNITY EVENTS

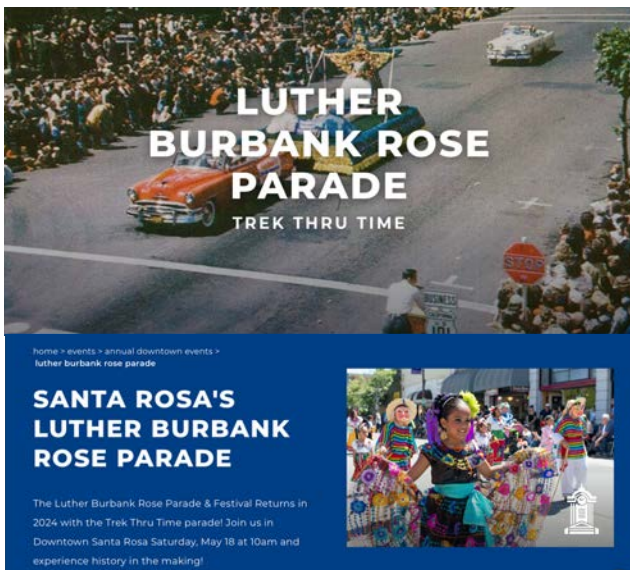


April 16-17, 2024 Windsor High School

From the California Highway Patrol: The Every 15 Minutes program is a two-day program focusing on high school juniors and seniors, which challenges them to think about drinking, driving, personal safety, the responsibility of making mature decisions and the impact their decisions have on family, friends, their community, and many others.

The program brings together a broad coalition of interested local agencies with the goal of reducing alcohol-related incidents among youth. The partnering of the California Highway Patrol, local law enforcement, local hospitals, emergency medical responders, schools, businesses, and service clubs validates the importance of working together to ensure a healthy community.

Lynnette Casey is heading up the LECS chaplain team who will be participating in the event.

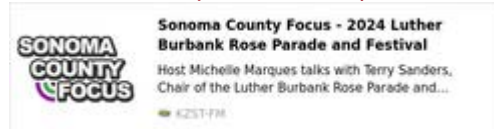


May 18, 2024

Practice your wave: Chaplains will be part of the Rose Parade this year! Inese Heinzl is coordinating the chaplain team. Details coming soon!

LECS Board member Terry Sanders is Chair of the Luther Burbank Rose Parade and Festival Organizing Committee. Listen to his interview on Sonoma County Focus KZST-FM.

<https://www.kzst.com/episode/sonoma-county-focus-2024-luther-burbank-rose-parade-and-festival/>



The FUZZ is ON!!

The 12th annual “funnest bike ride“ in Sonoma County is coming August 31, 2024

Tour de Fuzz is the major source of funding for LECS. All chaplains are encouraged to take part in this, our most important community event. Volunteering opportunities will be posted soon. tourdefuzz.org



LECS Board of Directors Welcomes New Member **Erika Wong**



Director Erika Wong brings over 15 years of expertise in payroll and human resources to the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy board, with a specialization in financial management and policy development. Her adeptness in Microsoft Office and her commitment to organizational excellence have been instrumental in streamlining operations and enhancing productivity. Erika's dedication to community service is evident through her volunteer work, where she applies her administrative skills to support nonprofit organizations. Her background offers a unique blend of fiscal responsibility and strategic planning, enriching the board's diversity of skills and perspectives. For years, Erika has served as an incident commander at Tour de Fuzz, the organizations' primary funding source. Erika's passion for public service and her professional acumen make her an invaluable asset to the Chaplaincy's mission.

Happy Trails to Brenda Hoff

Chaplain Brenda Hoff (Academy XVIII) has served beautifully for these past seven years. Brenda returned to service after leaving to care and support her wife as she faced serious health issues. I personally asked her to come back because our volunteer numbers had declined and we were struggling to cover the shifts, but beyond that I was really hoping she would return because I knew she would be a positive force, a steady and reliable Chaplain who is strong, caring, capable and poised under pressure. She and Leslie returned at the same time for the same reasons, and that action, when paired together, uplifted all of us right when we needed it. I am grateful for all her years of service. While she feels like it is time to step away from this work Brenda will always be one of us and I will always hold her in the highest regard and with the utmost respect. Thank you Brenda, for everything you give and everything you are. ~ Rita

"What a journey and contribution, Brenda! Your service at some of the organization's pivotal moments rejuvenated the volunteer team with unwavering commitment and optimism. Undoubtedly, your impact leaves a lasting legacy, embodying the heart of our Chaplain community."

Thank you, Brenda, for your invaluable contribution and enduring spirit. A thousand hugs for your years of honorable service to Sonoma County."

*Much love and best wishes for the future,
~ Shaun Ralston & the LECS Board*



*May the road rise to
meet you,
May the wind be always
at your back,
May the rain fall softly
on your fields,
and may God hold you
in the palm of his hand.*



~ Irish Blessing

PARTING THOUGHTS

I came across these interesting observations by Singer | Songwriter | Poet Carrie Newcomer about her frequent travels around the country for performances and speaking gigs. It made me think how spot-on these tidbits of wisdom can be before or after a call-out. -Ed.

- 1. You can always trust a Starbucks bathroom.*
- 2. Life is always going to throw you a lot of unexpected curves, but eventually, you do get to the place that you most need to go.*
- 3. I can go ahead and assume there are good hearted people everywhere and that just when I'm at my most weary they will surprise and inspire me.*