

# *County-Wide Chaplaincy*

## *Thanks you!*

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Have you ever known someone who, no matter what difficulties they were experiencing, their life continued to display a peace that remained undisturbed by their circumstances? That's not to say they were never discouraged or disappointed, but the way they handled their situation reflected on internal tranquility, an emotional equilibrium that remained stable in the middle of the storm.

For over 30 years, my life has crossed paths with such a person, and each time, with amazement and admiration, I am again intrigued by his life. He challenges me—my perspective, my disposition, my outlook, my expectation, my motive...Seldom do I walk away from my encounter without an encouragement to grow in faith and hope. The amount of character he displays—regardless of circumstances—confronts my own selfish tendencies.

Life is filled with surprises, to which all of us would agree. If given the power, my guess is that one of us would choose only calm seas and smooth sailing. But throughout the life of this man, rejection, loss, accusations, turmoil, grief, trauma, political unrest, and uncertainty were his constant companions. Sound familiar?

"Great storms create great trees," and by my estimation, this man's great storms have forged him into a great man—solid in character and faith.

In today's world, national and personal climates provide ample storms—and frankly, my tendency is to tremble and shake in the wind. But my friend's life exemplifies another way. I've discovered two key elements that kept my friend anchored when life was overwhelming; elements that are available to each one of us: God and perspective.

God lives outside of my friend's "box." He knows his God and entrusts his life to God's keeping. His "self-talk" goes like this: "God is good. God loves me. God cares about me." Regardless of what he may see or feel, he reminds himself that God is bigger than his circumstances—than his storms. And he trusts that God is with him in the middle of each difficulty and will walk with him through it. God won't leave him alone—even when he may feel that way.

God is his peace in the turmoil.

God is his anchor in the storm.

God is his comfort in the pain.

God is his confidence in the uncertainty.

God is his rock when all around gives way.

God gives love and compassion when hate and anger are the norm.

And God is the one who brings perspective into the crazy equation called life, a perspective that holds the potential to situate us above our storms in peace, with our eyes on God.

*“You will keep him whose mind is stayed on You in perfect peace—because he trusts in You.”* Isaiah 26:3

“How Firm a Foundation,” written in 1787, could have been my friend’s life song. We all need assurances, and this song is rich in promises and perspective:

*“Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
Upheld by my righteous, upheld by my righteous,  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

*“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, thy dross to consume,  
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.*

*“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose  
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, I'll never, no never,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!”*

Thank you for listening as I remind myself of these truths. My hope is that what I’ve learned from the life of my friend—Joseph—will impact you with the truth of “as God was with Joseph” (Genesis 39:2). He also desires to be with me—and you.

May His presence bring you hope, and give you a new perspective in life—one that is rooted in the certainty of the love of God for you.

Chaplain Janet LaPore

You can read in detail about the life of my “friend” Joseph in the first book of the Bible (Genesis) in chapters 37 and 39-50.

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