

County-Wide Chaplaincy

Thanks you!

September 2024

Lessons

Many years ago we had a child whom we were in the process of adopting. He died suddenly and unexpectedly in the night as he slept. That was an earth shattering event and the beginning of a season of learning many lessons. We had never gone through that type of grief, and it was not something we were prepared for. When I found him in his bed, I screamed, and then called 911. The fire department arrived quickly and asked if we would like them to call a chaplain. In my state of crisis, I said, "We don't need a chaplain, we have a pastor." What was only a few minutes later, someone said the chaplain is here. I looked up in amazement to see our dear friend, Chaplain Sam. They had not needed to call him; he had heard the call and knew it was our address and headed our way immediately. That day we learned just how much we did need a chaplain! Chaplain Sam walked us through everything, told us more people would be arriving, that we would be asked a lot of questions, how things would most likely play out, etc... I am assuming there are many families who feel the same way when one of our chaplains arrives on the scene of an unexpected crisis! They are truly ministers of grace and peace and wisdom.

I personally learned a lot of lessons in that season of grief. I learned that God's peace is real and that you can feel when people are praying for you. I learned that grief is sneaky and that it comes in waves and just when you think you are OK, you suddenly find you really are not. I learned in a very tangible way that our bodies are just a shell, and that when we leave them, there is nothing left but that shell. Heaven became such a real place to me! So real, that each time I look at the stained glass at the front of our church, I think of Mikey. You see, one of the quadrants of the stained glass portrays Jesus with children around Him. One of the children is reaching up to Jesus' face. Our little Mikey had some special medical needs and one of them was that his fingers were conjoined and we were waiting for that surgery. What that stained glass speaks to me is Mikey showing his healed hand to Jesus. Look! Look at my healthy, healed and functional fingers! Healed in heaven rather than through a painful surgery here on earth.

I also learned it is really nice when people bring food that you can have on hand, even though eating is the last thing on your mind. It really is OK to ask for help when you need it and that sometimes amidst all of these gracious gifts you wonder, but who is bringing the kleenex?? Yes, I cried a lot!

Lessons, so many lessons we learned in that season, and continue to learn as we journey through this life here on earth. One of those lessons is found in Psalms 46:1-3.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

Wow! This lesson proved itself true those many years ago in our crisis and it still holds true today in this confusing and unsettling world. God is our refuge and our strength!

Thank you for the support of this ministry and your continued prayers for our chaplains as they serve in these tumultuous times.

Jan Richards

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