

National Police Week Visit Washington DC and Virginia, USA May 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> 2016



At the conclusion of National Police Week and the Conference for the Concerns of Police Survivors I'm pictured next to the Memorial Star that was the focus for the 35<sup>th</sup> National Peace Officers Memorial Service on Capital Hill when over 140 Law Enforcement officers who died on duty were remembered. A red carnation for each one of them making up the star and evocative of the badge of honour that they had worn and the bravery of the lives they had lived.

The incredibly moving moment when family, friends and colleagues, who were there in their thousands, stepped forward to remember their loved ones, their colleagues, and place each flower was reminder to us all of the need to create holy places for such memorials and this place, in the shadow of the US Capital building where the USA's laws are made, it was so fitting to remember those who lost their lives up holding those laws!



The 35<sup>th</sup> National Peace Officers Memorial Service

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

US Capital Building Grounds.

'Never let them walk alone'

Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police

It's something to reflect on that the British version of this memorial service is usually held in either a secular or a sacred space that doesn't feel as pertinent to the focus for remembrance. That may also be a cultural difference that also needs to be taken into account. As money is raised for a new permanent memorial which will replace the current modest one at the National Arboretum, I wonder if enough reflection has been done about how this will provide such a focus for the future and if it will become the 'sacred space' that it needs to be for those who will come to remember.

I'd personally hope that the current rotation of the National Police Memorial Service around the four capital cities, alongside the new permanent memorial will ensure that a right respect and honouring of Police Officers who have given their lives in the service of the United Kingdom will be maintained

and developed to meet the needs of the families involved, but also of the Police family as it's often affectionately called. It may be that there is scope here for further theological reflection on how this is truthfully understood by those involved and what it means to those involved to be part of the Police Family.



The National Memorial at Judiciary Mall where the names of thousands of officers are written.

A candle-lit vigil takes place here in National Police Week.

It was good for me to be able to meet many family members and colleagues affected by the death of an officer at the conference for the Concerns of Police Survivors. Bringing together people from all over the USA and beyond to share about how things were going since the profound loss they had suffered. An amazing program of what were called 'retreats' were also offered throughout the year and in all different locations in the USA to give time and space for wives, husbands, children, grand children, parents, former spouses and colleagues to share their thoughts and feelings with qualified counsellors and with those who had experienced such loss many years ago. The people who I spoke with, all ages, affirmed the value of such experiences and the friendships which had been fostered by such.

I'm aware that in the UK we also have a 'COPS' organisation seeking to give similar support to families in our context. It will be useful to follow this up now I have learnt more about what is on offer in the USA and to see how Police Chaplains might be able to offer support to those so tragically affected by such losses. I will need to follow this up with our National body and with 'COPS' in the UK. I would recommend highly attending this conference for anyone who wants to find out more about how the extraordinary efforts of a few people initially has led to the establishment of a multi million dollar charity that is helping, giving fresh hope and the opportunity for 'Metanoia' in the lives of so many who understandably can be in such a dark and depressive state!

The need to be with, to walk alongside, to be present with these people and to continue to be Chaplains to those in the Police Service was beautifully illustrated by a poem used in the Memorial Service;

*'Their uniform is often blue, but they come in brown and green and suntan too. Never let them walk alone.*

*Their badge may be a shield, it may also be a star, silver or gold but seen from afar. Never let them walk alone.*

*A thankless job they willingly do to provide protection for me and you, they do it. Never let them walk alone.*

*Hated by many, but loved by few, only they know best the job they must do, they do it. Never let them walk alone.*

*An arbitrator, negotiator and enforcer of the law. Doctor, Lawyer, keeper of the peace. Never let them walk alone.*

*When they're off to work each day and you at home silently pray, "Lord, be with them as they go on their way." Never let them walk alone.*

*And when their time has to pass and when the Father calls them home, there's a bigger job that must be done. Never let them walk alone.'*

There is so much to be thankful for in the love and care expressed through National Police Week and the simply amazing compassionate people, a few of whom I had the privilege the meet. Thank God for them all.

But the last part of my journey took me to be with the Fairfax County Police Chaplains and I do want to say a special thank you to Chaplain Mike Shochet, a Jewish Cantor and Lead Chaplain to Fairfax County Police, who was tremendously hospitable and certainly went the extra mile for my visit.

Mike is pictured below alongside fellow Chaplain Revd Jeri Fields as we visited the Mount Vernon Station where she is Chaplain ( near to the home of George Washington). They are pictured next to the memorial of an officer who died in the line of duty, 2nd Lt. Frank Stecco.



It's good to see that we share something in common in that these memorials are also kept locally as well as there being national ones also.

It's a very important principle that even with the age of PFI built Police Stations we should not lose sight of. The annual remembrance locally and nationally is very important indeed and the memorial events in the UK in September, historically linked around the feast of St Michael and All Angels, Heavens Police Officers and this year nationally being held at St Paul's, Cathedral are important occasions to care for the survivors, but also to celebrate the sacrifice made by those we will remember.



Picture left is of the Jewish Memorial Service held on the morning of the National Memorial Service at the actual National Memorial in Judiciary Mall, Washington DC. A reminder that there is a need to respect the need for these memorial services to be appropriate to different faiths and none! The Shofar is a uniquely Jewish sound. It was a time of alarm and alert to the new month in the bible, but the Jewish organization holding the service, Shomrim, uses it to make a statement that this is a uniquely Jewish service. They say "It's our way of blowing taps, but in a Jewish way." (Like the Last Post). Shomeir is guardian in Hebrew. Shomrim, which is the plural of Shomeir, is the name of the Jewish law enforcement organization. A good way of describing a Police Officer theologically speaking!

These are some of the Fairfax County Police Chaplains who I had the joy of meeting at a the Emergency Operations Centre that served Police (county and state), Fire, Ambulance and Highways.



It was very helpful to hear about the different contexts in which chaplaincy is offered and the various backgrounds people came from. Although mostly Christian, also Jewish and associated Muslim Chaplains also are serving together.

Fairfax County Police Chaplaincy Team and the Introduction to the role.

Each Chaplain is assigned to a particular police district area:

District 1: Chaplain James Hepler, Roman Catholic, Chaplain Shawn Perkins, Christian (Non Denominational)

District 2: Rev Jeri Fields, Presbyterian

District 3: Cantor Michael Shochet, Jewish, Coordinator of Program

District 5: Rev Douglas P Jones, Lutheran

District 6: Rev Phillip Bishop, Baptist, Rev Dr Carroll A Baltimore, Baptist, Rev Ronald Gripshover, Jr, Roman Catho

District 7: Rev David Pratt Methodist

District 8: Rev Howard Ike Hendershot, Baptist Non Denominational

Major Joe Hill is the Commander of the Incident Support Services, to which the Chaplain's report.

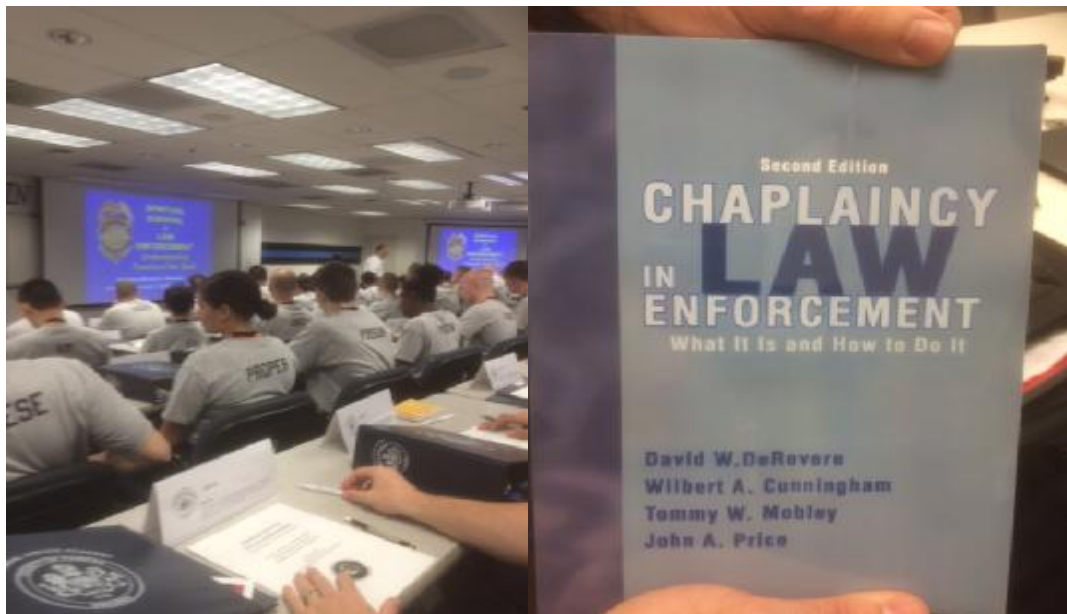
### **INTRODUCTION AND BASIS FOR POLICE CHAPLAINCY IN FAIRFAX COUNTY**

The job of a law enforcement officer is uniquely "spiritual" (note: not "religious"). As a calling, police officers face good and evil on a daily basis. The police officer chooses to do "good" in the image of holiness, by being an exemplar of Godly virtues of kindness, justice, truth, peace and mercy. The police officer uses his humanity to thwart those who choose to do evil; protects the good from the evil; and serves as a role model of goodness. These are spiritual traits to which one finds in the core of his or her inner souls. Yet this very "humanity" is the reason that law enforcement officers are vulnerable to undue stress.

"Spiritual Health" as cited in Spiritual Survival for Law Enforcement by Rabbi Cary Friedman (Compass Books c 2005), a consultant to the Behavioral Sciences Unit of the FBI, differs from "emotional health" in that it involves "acting and looking at oneself from the vantage point of higher, absolute values...Spiritual health describes how a person responds to, behaves...and makes decisions." "Thus, while emotional health is primarily concerned with a person's internal sense of wholeness, spiritual health is concerned with how a person interacts with an external value system." Spirituality inspires and motivates a person to respond in a certain way and may provide a "reservoir of energy and inspiration that keeps them healthy in the field."

The role of the Chaplain is to support this spirituality --- in other words, the well-being of the police officer whose spirit longs to make the world a better place. This is what makes the Chaplain unique in the three-prong approach (Mental Health Professionals, Peer Support Members, Chaplains) of a critical incident support team.

With this important foundation in mind with Lead Chaplain Mike Shochet, I was also able to attend the Police Training School where Seventy recruits were beginning their training for law enforcement.



One of the first inputs they have to their training is from the Chaplaincy and you may just make out the title in the photograph; 'Spiritual Survival in Law Enforcement'.

Goals of the class are to review law enforcement stress that affects officers physically, emotionally and behaviourally. To understand how stress may lead to spiritual dysfunction. To provide tips and strategies to stay spiritually fortified. Chaplain Mike with a good mixture of personal and professional experience helped the recruits to understand the strains and stresses of being a Police Officer, something he knew about having served himself as a Baltimore Police Officer and having seen a close colleague, a friend shot in front of him. Although thankfully it was not a fatal shooting it led him to re-evaluate his life and led him to ministry as an Ordained Cantor and then back into the Police Service as a Chaplain. It was good to see how the Chaplaincy input is valued and affirmed and it also ensures a good introduction to every recruit of the spiritual support Chaplains can offer during and after their careers in law enforcement.

It's also the case that towards the end of training a Chaplain will also come back and deliver one of the final sessions before the recruits hit the beat and that is ' Making a Death Notification'.

I was very impressed that Chaplaincy is embedded in such an important way within Police Culture and this is something that needs to be worked at and developed over years of walking alongside the officers. Of course we also need to understand and respect that there will distinctive differences in approach that may not be appropriate in a UK context. In the USA many Police Chaplains are uniformed and look like Police Officers, although not armed of course! They are given access to police vehicles when on duty and can be asked to attend incidents when felt necessary by a Police Officer, to offer emotional support to citizens or police officers in trauma. In reflecting myself on these cultural differences I'm personally confident that in the UK, although aware of different practices here, generally speaking I'm content that we are not asked to wear uniforms and there is a more obvious critical distance between Chaplaincy and the Police Organisations we serve; in the Police Force but not of it so to speak!

We should continue to work hard to build that trust that recognises and respects a Chaplaincy team and what we can offer to the Police Service, whilst understanding the critical distance that is needed and necessary.



The Police Chaplaincy is recognised as being part of the team of organisations that deal with Emergency planning.

I was able to visit the dedicated Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) where the Police Chaplaincy Co-ordinator sits equally alongside others involved in major emergency operations and is used to help network with faith and community groups to assist when there is an urgent need.

This can be due to crime, serious accidents, incidents and weather problems.

Of course we shouldn't ever forget the seriousness and importance of Police Chaplaincy but also to have some fun along the way.

It was good to share food and have some enjoyable moments with folk along the way.

Smoked Salmon and Bagels after the Jewish Memorial service, a box lunch with the Fairfax Police Chaplains, an indoor picnic with the folk at the conference for the Concerns of Police Survivors and although discretion was the better part of valour for me personally, when offered the chance to be involved in a cops and robbers car chase round the police training skid pan, it was fun to watch some of my family bumped and spun around, thankfully with crash helmets on.

Who said being part of the Police Family can't be fun also! I was also smiling that I didn't get in the car, Thanks be to God!!!



I'm grateful to the National Association of Chaplains to the Police, Bishop James Langstaff and Rochester Diocese for their support in making this trip and opportunity for learning possible.

I'm grateful to Fairfax County Police Department, the Chaplains and especially Cantor Mike for their help in making my trip productive and for being so hospitable in every visit and aspect of my time with them.

To the Concerns of Police Survivors Charity that allowed me to be a delegate to the conference and to meet so many families and police colleagues affected by the loss of loved ones and fellow police officers.

The experiences I shared will make me a better Police Chaplain I hope and pray. It certainly has helped me to better understand those involved with the Police Service and most importantly the Police staff who we serve as Chaplains. It's a privilege to walk alongside with them and I commit myself to continue to do so for as long as health and God allow.

It's a wonderful honour and privilege to walk alongside those who we are Chaplains to and God give us all strength and courage to continue to do so wherever it may be.

Peace and Good

Revd Gary Colville,

Lead Chaplain to Kent Police