



THE ENCOURAGER



Let us
never
forget

MINISTERING TO ALL FIRST RESPONDERS
"Let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching."
Hebrews 10:25

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2012

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I had no idea what I was getting into when I was asked to help rebuild the St. Louis, Missouri Chapter of the FCF. How could I say no to a friend who loved the firefighters so much as he was laying in a hospital bed, breathing his last breaths? I actually met several members of the St. Louis Chapter in the hospital as former FCFI MO. Regional Director, Dennis Foshe, died. I met other members at his memorial service. Being around firefighters is nothing new for me though, I've been with the American Red Cross since 2003. Still, after Dennis' burial I sat and wondered, "Why me?" We all wonder that at some point in life.

When I was a child, I was extremely abused—mistreated to the point where that time in my life would make Stephen King another best seller since many would not believe my story. In fact, my brother just turned forty and he is recollecting some of the abuse he watched me go through. I honestly believe if I did not go through the abuse, I would not be the person I am today. Since this part of my life is long enough for a novel, I will just focus on when God changed my life.

When I was fourteen a friend's mother asked me to go with her daughter to a youth event at a local church in Florida. My friend was going the wrong direction in life and her mom thought she would go if I did, so I went. My friend and I went to a church filled with strangers. We watched a movie and ate pizza. On that night I was hugged for the very first time that I can recall in my life, a hug from someone that wanted nothing from me. I cannot explain it, but that youth pastor and a simple hug led me to Christ. For the first time in my life after all the physical and sexual abuse, I felt like maybe there's just something better planned for me.

I continued to heal and eventually met someone special, got married, had a wonderful child, then got divorced. Isn't that the American way? When our son, Daniel, turned five, he started getting very ill. Many hospital stays, trips two hours away for doctors, tests, and surgeries picked apart our marriage one day at a time. I saw a statistic once, seventy percent of marriages fail if there is a chronically ill child. Spending so much time with the other families in hospitals, it appeared to be true.

Unlike me, my son was raised with the knowledge of Christ. He never forgot who he was through all the physical battles with his body. At every single hospital stay in Florida,

MEET A MEMBER

Ann Christmas
Missouri Chapter



he led someone to Christ. It was amazing to watch this ill child focusing on the heart of a complete stranger. At one point I wondered if Daniel was sick just to be in the hospital on those particular days. One day he felt so lousy in the hospital, he stood up on the bed and yelled "satan be gone in Jesus name!" A nurse heard yelling and came in asking if things were okay. As a mom, that was the day I realized that just maybe I am raising my son right. (Side note; Daniel and I never capitalize the name satan, even though it is a proper name, he's not proper).

Back to the beginning, "Why me?" Well Christmas Day 2004, Daniel and I moved to

the St. Louis area to live with my father. Three hurricanes went through where we lived in Florida, my husband left us, and Daniel had his first colon surgery all within a few months. I was so exhausted and had little help. I can't answer why that all had to happen to us, but I can say I am now the happiest I have been in my entire life. Daniel, sixteen now, is growing up to be an amazing young man while learning how to live with his body's 'special features.'

I don't know why God picked me to help with the FCF. Why put the one woman scared of men in the position of running a ministry which is predominantly men? Maybe because God thought I needed a few more brothers? Or maybe I had too much serious in my life? It's simple; I think God wanted me laughing again possibly mixed with a little of being surrounded by men who save, not hurt. Whatever the case, I am extremely blessed!

One day at the Red Cross, I was training a new woman. She wanted to go to a fire scene so bad just to watch the firefighters work. She thought they were sexy, hot, etc. My quick response was, "So you into smelly, sweaty men covered in soot?" I couldn't resist HA! I found myself defending which I guess is a sign of healing in a weird and warped way. God knows what He's doing so it is always best to wait and listen, follow His plan for you, and keep moving forward even if satan tosses a flaming arrow at you from the sidelines. If we keep focusing on the arrows, we'll never see life without them. Many people don't know that I suffer with kidney disease. I don't share about it, talk about it, or let it run my life. Whenever it feels like something is stabbing me in the back, I'm reminded of Paul and the thorn in his side. I thank God for giving me working kidneys. Despite the fact I

Fellowship of Christian Firefighters
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have nephritis, my kidney function tests always return back normal. We are told in Proverbs 3 that if we trust in God with all our heart and acknowledge Him in everything we do, He will direct us. Sometimes it's hard trying to figure out if this path is God's or mine? Am I going in the right direction or my own direction? We can often find ourselves in the position of doing something godly but we are not where God wants us at that time. Once in a while we all stand back in amazement at what God does. Faith is such a small word, yet what a huge meaning behind it. I don't pray for healing in anything. I thank God for healing me. Scripture does not say by His wounds you will be healed. We are told we have been healed since Jesus took our infirmities. So I thank God because it was a promise, not a possibility.



Ann and Daniel



Missionary Musings

by Chief Gay Reynolds
Chaplain and FCFI Missionary

Tis The Season



Yes, it is still the season to rejoice over the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We should never leave that season! Shouldn't we always be thankful for His birth, for His life, and for His resurrection? Without Him, who are we?

I must be honest with you. I truly enjoy the period between Thanksgiving and Easter. I'm thankful for being born and living in this country where we can worship without fear; thankful for Christmas time, when we celebrate His birth, and for Easter when we celebrate His resurrection and ascension into heaven! Ya, it is my favorite time of year. How about you? Are those celebrations only three days, or are they a time period? And, shouldn't they really be a year long time of celebration?

As the New Year unfolds, let's look at His involvement in our lives. Let's remember that He directs our path. He controls our daily actions. On a call, who do we reflect? Are we the "get in, get it done, and get out" kind of first responder? Or are we that first responder that "gets 'er done," but with the Light of the Lord shining through us? Can the victims, patients, or bystanders see Him through you?

What a great opportunity we're given to reflect His love to everyone we come into contact with on every call. And yes, that includes your crew! It's up to us to take Christ to the fire service and to those we respond to. What a great time to share Him with others. So, let's not put Christmas up with the lights and decorations, but carry Christmas with us throughout the year. Let's be Christ's present (and presence) to our community—you know, where the recipient wants more of Christ. You know the old (and it must be old if I know it) saying: "If not now, when, if not you, who?"

Let's start 2012 off with a super great desire to bring Christ on all our calls, our trainings and our off time. Let's reflect Him in everything we say and do! Be "well pleased" in who we are because of who He is! Remember you are FCFI! You are a child of God and His ambassador.

Have a Blessed New Year!

In December Sue and I were blessed to make it to the Hawaii Fire Chief's Conference. Glenn T. de Laura, the Regional Fire Chief stationed at the Federal Fire Department Headquarters, and Gayland D. Enriques, the Regional Deputy Fire Chief (pictured below with me) have been asking FCFI to be represented for several years. This year we were able to work that conference into our schedule and we praise God we did. From moment we set foot on the Islands, the "Aloha Spirit" reigned supreme. There are many brothers and sisters in the Lord in the Islands so we doubly felt like family.

Chiefs and representatives from all the islands were there. We were able to hand out many *Answering The Call New Testaments, Encouragers*, devotionals, Psalm 91 books, and the books on prayer and praise. The training and speakers were superb complete with a state of the art triage and demonstration of putting out a plane fire (pictured below right) .

We seek your prayers that God's Word will spread throughout the islands.



For further information
& to RSVP
contact FCFI @
FCFIHQ@aol.com
or call
1-800-322-9848

YOU ARE INVITED
TO
THE FIFTH ANNUAL
APPRECIATION DINNER
APRIL 20, 2012 AT 6:30 P.M.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS TIME OF
FELLOWSHIP, WORSHIP, AND APPRECIATION
TO THOSE COMMITTED TO BRINGING
THE FCFI VISION TO THE FIRE SERVICE

OF KNOWING CHRIST AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION. (PHIL 3:10).



Guest Speaker: Kevin Coffey

Kevin Coffey served as a Chicago Firefighter for thirty years before retiring in 2009. For years he was the president of the Chicago Chapter of FCFI. Kevin and his wife, Lorraine, have six children and four grandchildren. Currently he is a high school teacher and serves as chaplain to the Illinois Firefighters Association.

The Least of These
Kevin Coffey; Retired, Engine 95

Greetings once again to each of you as you serve in your fire department. The following is a very familiar passage from the Gospel - I've tinkered with it just a bit to speak to our calling in the fire service:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was having a seizure and you responded quickly. I had an accident and I was trapped in my mangled car, injured and scared, and you calmed me down and cut me out. I was running with the wrong crowd and ended up with several bullet holes in me, and you stopped the bleeding and saved my life. I was lost and choking in my burning apartment building and you broke down the bolted door and found me and carried me out. A hazardous materials spill in my town threatened the school building where my children were, and you were trained and prepared to isolate and contain the leak. I was having a heart attack and you worked on me all the way to the emergency room — you just wouldn't give up!'"

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when were you having a seizure that we responded to? And Lord, when did we cut you out of your mangled car? And Lord, we know you bear some wounds, but we didn't know they were gunshot wounds? And when did we take you out of a burning building, Lord, or hook you up to a heart monitor or do CPR on you? And Lord, you had children in a school? I'm going to have to ask my pastor about that!'"

"Then the King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.'"

Mother Theresa said that in all the homeless, unwanted, and diseased she encountered on the streets of Calcutta, she saw Jesus "in his distressing disguise". You and I can also see Him — and serve Him — when we encounter "the least of these" in our service to our cities and communities every day. It is faith and compassion — gifts from God — that open the eyes of our hearts and elevates our training and our service to such a rich and spiritual level. Train tenaciously, serve whole-heartedly, believe deeply — you are doing for God, and with God, what you are doing every day for the "least of these".

You and I can also see Him—and serve Him—when we encounter "the least of these" in our service to our cities and communities every day.



Guest Speaker
Dan Clegg,
FCFI Regional Director

FAMILY CAMP JUNE 20-24, 2012 Black Mountain, NC

DON'T WASTE A MOMENT
FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT
JACK WHITE / 812-295-2838
djwhite@dishmail.net

Attendees have described Family Camp as a best kept secret of FCFI. But in reality it is know secret that this is a great time of fellowship and relaxation accompanied by messages from God's Word. This year, Dan Clegg will be giving the messages. For personal reasons, the Halls and Garcias are unable to join this conference and Dan has graciously stepped in.



Firefighter Man Camp

Designed to help firefighters connect with their sons and other firefighters in an atmosphere that encourages fathers and sons to draw closer to each other and closer to God, all while having an action packed weekend.

Friday March 30–Sunday April 1, 2012

Mercersburg, Pennsylvania on the 54 acre campus known as Camp Tohiglo.

If you're a firefighter, a son of a firefighter (of any age), a spouse of a female firefighter, or a friend of a firefighter; please join us. There will be archery, rifle, leather working and other crafts, games, Bible studies, music, and great food.

Firefighting isn't only a dangerous job, it can also be a stressful one that doesn't allow much time for family and building friendships. The goal of this retreat is to provide time for fellowship, time to study God's Word and time to enjoy good clean family fun. The cost is: Motel (\$85.00 per person) / Cabin (\$75.00 per person) / Target Shooting (\$25.00)

For additional information call Craig Duck: 410-647-0853

2012 Conference Schedule For International Office

† Fire Rescue East, Daytona Beach, FL; Jan 20-21

† Firehouse World, San Diego, CA; Feb 21-23

FDIC Indianapolis, IN; April 19-21 / International Board Meeting April 19 / Appreciation Dinner April 20

† Firehouse Expo, Baltimore, MD; July 17-21

† Fire Rescue International / IAFC, Denver; CO; July 31-August 4

† Firehouse Central / EMS Expo, New Orleans, LA; October 29-November 2

If you have state conference dates where you will represent FCFI
Please contact Sue at encouragerpdf@aol.com and we will include them in the schedule.

CHIEF ISSUES

Our Parents

Chief (Ret.) Lee Callahan



My wife and I recently hosted each of our moms for a holiday dinner. Both women have been blessed to reach the age of 85 years old and blessed with several children (especially my mom who was blessed by having me . . . I humbly note). I had to pick both of them up (they live ten minutes apart) and drive them

the approximately thirty-five minutes to our condo for dinner and later get them back to their homes. During the course of our time together, we heard about issues and concerns in their lives; the types of things that concern older people. We heard about aches and pains; recent doctor visit results; financial concerns and/or blessings; local, state, and national politics; recent developments in their respective churches; and updates of their friends and relatives (some we didn't even know). At times it was actually frustrating and hilarious at the same time as both women, with hearing loss issues, tried to have their say and neither could hear the other already talking. And we really got a kick out of the stories as one mom or another mom started to tell us one thing and before we knew it, the story road changed into a completely different story, with the point of the first story gone forever before too long. And we also sometimes felt frustration as we attempted to re-direct their story to the original path, only to fail to do so.

As I drove my mom home that day I reflected on what it meant to Candy and me to have our moms with us for the day. We were truly blessed. For although our elderly family members can be frustrating and test our patience at times, I was reminded that we were also the same to them when they were bringing us up as children. We told them of many of OUR daily trials including our oft-changing relationships with classmates, inability to make sports team cuts, lack of financial wherewithal, and of course, we may have had to come with excuses for poor grades too. All of which were the most important issues shaping our lives at the time (or so we thought). Throughout all of our trials as young people, our moms were patient (usually) and compassionate. The love they had/have for their children doesn't end when we become adults.

After I returned home that night, as I relaxed and sipped my evening Dunkin Donuts coffee (black, no sugar, thank you), I was reminded of how blessed Candy and I are to still have time to spend with our moms. I pray that our kids will feel the same about us if the Lord allows us to still be here when we are in our eighties. I was reminded of Exodus 20:12:

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.”

The fire service can easily absorb all our extra time, but God tells us to never be too busy to honor our parents. If you are still blessed with living parents, I trust that you give them all the love and honor that God desires of you.