



CHAPLAIN AND FATHER INSPIRE MARINE TO PURSUE MINISTRY

While deployed as a Marine in Iraq in 2005, Nathan Huffman received a visit from a chaplain that would change his life.

“He came to me and he asked me how I was doing,” Huffman said. “[I gave him the] ‘I’m fine’ typical Marine response. But he knew I wasn’t.”

When the chaplain pushed for a real answer, Huffman said he hadn’t received communion in over a month due to combat readiness. So the chaplain brought out his communion kit and offered him the sacrament before Huffman started his nightly patrol.

“After receiving communion, I felt at peace with dying,” Huffman said. “It wasn’t because I was so brave; it was because I was confident in Christ.”

After returning from deployment, Huffman was a police officer in Richmond, Va., for several years before he and his wife began talking seriously about seminary and chaplaincy. The son of a retired ELCA pastor, Huffman was very involved in church growing up and was an active

member of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Richmond.

Because others had helped him, Huffman said he felt called to help military personnel and veterans who were suffering. “My faith had been a large part of that,” he said.

In 2012, Huffman began his studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (Pa.), receiving generous support from his home congregation, Epiphany. As part of his journey to ordination, he applied to and was accepted in the chaplain candidate program.

Before candidates can enter a full-time specialized ministry like chaplaincy, they must have three years of pastoral experience. Huffman is currently associate pastor of St. Michael Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach, Va., where roughly half of the parishioners are former or current members of the military.

Huffman hopes his ministry can bring light to those facing challenges today. “No one needs a light in bright places, but in dark times everyone longs for light,” he said.

Your Mission Support dollars are used by the ELCA churchwide organization to support the ministry of chaplains across this church and to support the ELCA’s seven seminaries that train them.

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