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IT'S NOT ABOUT US

Chaplain Herbie Kuhn recently spoke to my former Ontario colleagues about someone greater than us, who strategically places us as Police Chaplains. He is speaking as a Christian but recognizing that we have several faiths represented in the CPCA, let me further expand on Herbie's thoughts.

Something I learned a long time ago, is that my brilliance won't give me favour with the police services I volunteer at. I believe that the one who is "greater" than you and me, is the one who opens and closes doors. You may choose to disagree with that point of view but stay with me for a few more minutes. There is a term we use in Christian circles, called humility. I facilitated training for a former communist country's police force in 2004, where the presenter was a recently retired Deputy Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police in the UK. His audience was mostly former KGB officers who were now the senior officers in this country.

Everything was going well until he suggested that police officers need to be humble. The uproar that ensued was quite amusing, but I quickly went up front to the translators and asked why there was such a negative reaction. In their native language, the word humility

translated into the word “doormat”. I finally got them to translate by explaining it was the opposite of pride. It helped a little.

I tell that story because sometimes we as chaplains might think that a title is the most important thing to those who we are serving and maybe even to the church community we are part of. In reality, police are looking at who we are as people. Can I trust them; are they honest; are they too religious; do they listen?

Let me give you an example from my life as a police chaplain of how God strategically placed me at the right place after a tragedy. Most of you will remember the Yonge Street van attack where 11 people were killed in April of 2018. It was nowhere close to our station, but I went to our Inspector and asked if there was anything I could do for our officers. He immediately said no but then sent an email to the Unit Commander where officers were involved in the aftermath. I was told to head up to that station and over the course of the next 5 hours, I participated in three debriefs. As I waited, I was told to go sit at the Unit Commanders desk per his instructions since he was busy dealing with the previous day's events.

I should mention that I had never met my new Inspector and the UC did not know me at all. Now this is where you might think I am contradicting myself but hang in there in case you think I am bragging. You see, no other TPS Chaplain had ever been asked to be involved in a debrief to the best of my knowledge...more bragging? These officers who I and the TPS head psychologist would be talking and listening to, saw some terrible things the day before. We would hear their stories and help where we could but listening was the main thing at that moment.

All I did was make myself available: God did the rest. One day I will tell the stories I heard but not right now. I had been strategically placed at my station and then someone else took over. Some might call it coincidence or some other explanation that takes the focus off that greater someone.

Herein lies another issue many of us face and if I can say so, complain about, including me: why are chaplains not called upon during a crisis or at pretty well any time an officer might need someone to talk to? Why is it always a psychologist or other mental health professional? Perhaps it is because we don't make ourselves available.

If you are not a Christian, I hope you are not offended by my words, but my guess is that most of you have that "someone greater" in your lives. It keeps us humble when we see things like this transpire, sometimes in spite of us.

We have close to 400 police chaplains in Canada and if we could view our roles as those strategically placed by someone greater than us, perhaps we would be more alert to the opportunities presented to us. Not because we deserve it or because we have the title, but rather because someone needs the help of someone greater.

Blessings,

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