

A story of how one Chaplain's efforts changed his fellow Soldiers

EDITOR'S NOTE: Father Paul Madej (pronounced MED-ee) has an immense effect each day on the lives of his Soldiers. Read how he traveled great distances to spiritually tend to all the Soldiers in his unit, how he affected First Lieutenant Vincent Mucker and how he made inroads with the Muslim religious leaders in the area.

By CHAPLAIN (MAJOR) PAUL MADEJ
Special to Reveille (CS)

The first thing that was unique about serving in Iraq was the whole Muslim-Christian question.

The media had portrayed the whole war in the beginning as a possible religious war. Of course, the people of Iraq did not believe that and nor did we. Because the majority of our military is not Muslim, the first thing the Chaplains are responsible for is briefing everyone from the General down to the Private about what a Muslim is; what the Muslim holy days are; and what religious festivals were and why they were so important to the people of that region.

By understanding them, we could not only become a part of their lives, we could change some of the bad feelings.

For instance, right before the war started in Iraq, there was this famous Haj — a religious pilgrimage. In the past, as people would go on pilgrimage to the temple, they would be shot by Saddam's guards.

When we were there on the roads seeing it happen, we just became part of it.

We would clap at people and they would look at us like, 'Are you going to shoot us?' We were just very happy to celebrate the religious time in their lives.

It was the first thing I believe we did that won the hearts of the Iraqi people.

From there I met with the local head Imam

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

[the Muslim equivalent of a Pastor or Priest]. I said to him, "For me everything has to do with relationships and all I'm here to do today is to meet you and see what we can do, so that in the long run — long after I leave — we have a relationship built on faith."

From that day on, it was win-win; there were no attacks on our guys in that region, there was only support, more support from them, and more money came from us to rebuild their roads and bring them water.

So all of a sudden they were helping us understand them and they would meet with me, and the Imam would say, "Explain Christianity to us, we don't have a clue."

You certainly see that once you go to war, people may not turn to prayer, but they discover a spiritual side — something deeper inside of them that they have never discovered. The problem is, they don't know how to name it.

Before crossing into Iraq from Kuwait, several hundred Soldiers came to mass, expecting a blessing and some type of absolution prior to combat.

They spoke about their families and wished them well, "just in case."

I felt like a shepherd leading the flock with care, knowing that we walked by faith and not by sight.

Father Paul Madej served with Field Artillery Soldiers—including 1LT Vincent Mucker—in the 320th Field Artillery (101st Airborne Division) in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Expecting the unexpected can change people's lives

By 1st LT. VINCENT MUCKER
Special to Reveille (CS)

Going into combat is a very spiritual experience—even for those who don't understand their own faith, because all of a sudden they are faced with their own mortality. And Chaplain (Major) Paul Madej was very aware of that and really helped other Soldiers become aware of that, just because of the importance of the situation and the potential consequences of what we were doing over there.

Madej created study groups. He made resources available for people to investigate and look into their faith and what they believe.

He baptized someone into the Catholic Church on Easter. We actually had our Easter mass at the ruins of the city of Babylon, city of Hillah, last year. Part of that Catholic Easter mass was the baptism of our Soldiers. So that was a unique experience.

Right around Thanksgiving, we met in the town of Hatra.

We had a joint ceremony, or a

joint celebration of the end of Ramadan and the beginning of Christmas, in these ancient ruins from 4 or 500 B.C. (The ruins are in immaculate shape, incredible structures, incredible architecture so that was the venue for it.)

The Senior Imam of the town we were in and Madej said prayers together in celebration of the holy seasons we were celebrating.

The town leaders and some of the military leaders got together and really just hosted an event for American Forces and for the Iraqi people in the area to celebrate what it was we were celebrating—our different faiths.

Madej understood me as a person so well. He really helped me realize that sometimes things don't happen or turn out the way they are supposed to but that doesn't necessarily need to be a bad thing.

There can be opportunity in experiencing something you never expected to experience—good or bad—and that I think, that is what allows us to find that opportunity.

Asbury Church

"A United Methodist Community"

Asbury Playschool
601.582.4686
Tues-Wed-Thurs
8:30 a.m. - 12 Noon
Fall 2010
enrollment open Now!
Ages 18 months to pre-K

Asbury Church
601.545.3006
1331 Hwy 42, Petal, MS
www.asburypetal.com
Sunday Schedule
9:15 a.m. Small Groups (all ages)
10:40 a.m. Contemporary Worship



ABUNDANT LIFE

EVANGELISTIC CENTER

200 NORTH 40TH AVE. HATTIESBURG, MS
601-261-5282 ALEC-BILOXI.ORG

SERVICES:
SUNDAY WORSHIP-8:30AM
TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY-6:30PM

Radio Broadcast
Sunday: 91.7FM @ 11:30a-12n
Sunday: 93.1FM @ 8:15a-8:30a
Monday thru Friday: 93.1FM @ 5:05p-5:20p

Television Broadcast
Sunday: My XXV2 @ 9:30a-10a
Wednesday: WXXV Fox 25 @ 7:00a-7:30a



Overseer Jason L. Johnson
Senior Pastor



1115 Carterville Road • Petal
For more information or
directions to the Church call
601-545-1010
or visit us at www.cbcpetal.org

- SUNDAYS -
Bible Study Groups- 9:15 a.m.
Morning Worship- 10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship- 6:00 p.m.
Child Care is provided for newborns
through age 3 by our Preschool Ministry

- WEDNESDAYS -
Family Supper- 5:00 p.m.-6:10 p.m.

- CARTERVILLE CAFE -
(Christ and Faith Experienced) 6:15 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Adult Ministry (Spiritual Maturity Course offered for Adults)
Preschool/Children's Ministry
(Music, Missions, Discipleship)
Student Ministry (House of God)

Area Worship Opportunities

The following worship opportunities are available through Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.

ON POST
General Protestant
Sunday, 9 a.m., Greer Chapel
Sunday, 9 a.m., Greer Chapel
Sunday, 12:30 p.m., Greer Chapel
Sunday, 2 p.m., Greer Chapel

Catholic Mass
Saturday, 2 p.m., Greer Chapel
Sunday, 9 a.m., Greer Chapel
Sunday, 12:30 p.m., Greer Chapel
Sunday, 2 p.m., Greer Chapel
(Confessions 1:30 p.m.)

OFF POST
*Transportation provided for Jewish, Episcopal, Lutheran, Muslim services ONLY (due to time scheduling) Units are responsible for arranging transportation by calling 601-558-2622.
Church of God at Bellevue, Hwy. 589, Hattiesburg

Jesus Christ of LDS, 2215 Broadway Drive, Hattiesburg
Lutheran
Sunday, 8 a.m., St. John Lutheran Church, 2001 Hardy Street, 601-583-4898
Episcopal
Sunday, 8 a.m., Trinity Episcopal, 509 West Pine St., 601-544-5551

For Jewish, Latter-day Saints and Muslim services, please contact the Post Chaplain for assistance at 558-2378.

Jewish
Friday at Temple B'Nai Israel at 801 Mamie Street, 601-545-3871. Every Friday at 6 p.m.
Latter-day Saints
Sunday, 9 a.m., Latter-day Saints Meeting House, 1618 Broadway Dr., 601-268-2438/
Hall: 601-268-9706. Contact the Post Chaplain.

Muslim
Contact Post Chaplain The following worship opportunities are available through Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center. Greer Chapel, Bldg. 804, 601-558-2378