

"TURNING THOSE IN CRISIS TOWARD CHRIST"

Emergency Chaplains



January 3, 2023

Dear Ministry Partner,

Enclosed you will find one of our 2023 stick-on calendars. I had planned on sending this to you with your December newsletter, but our printer sent us the wrong calendars. Needless to say, the re-printing got caught up in paper shortages, Covid short staffing....and then Christmas. Even with all those obstacles, the calendar that is enclosed is still guaranteed to be 100% accurate for the next 11+ months of service for you! Thank you for being a partner in our mission to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to our first responders and to citizens in crisis.

I am forgoing the normal format of our newsletter this month because of something I witnessed last night on Monday Night Football. Because of flex scheduling, the NFL was able to put the battle between the Buffalo Bills and the Cincinnati Bengals in the prime Monday night spot to draw a maximum number of viewers. The stage was set for this formidable battle at a shot for the coveted first round bye in the upcoming playoffs.

In the middle of the first quarter, Buffalo's Damar Hamlin made a tackle, jumped to his feet, and suddenly fell backwards, clearly unconscious. I could tell by the posturing of those responding to Damar's aid, that he was probably in cardiac arrest. Then the cameras showed the concern on the faces in the crowd as players started to gather...and cry...and kneel...and pray. Yes, this was far more serious than the "wind" being knocked out of Damar or even a concussion. He was obviously in cardiac arrest.

This morning, Dave Kistler noted in a Facebook post:

"Thankfully, quick responding sports physicians were able to perform aggressive CPR and evidently get Hamlin's heart beating after a reported cardiac arrest.

Photos have flooded Facebook, including pics of stunned and weeping players and coaches. But none deserves more attention than the one of players from both teams KNEELING in unified and energetic prayer as the ambulance carried Damar Hamlin from the field.

Over the course of the last 11 hours, the requests for prayer from fans, players, coaches, and even media sports broadcasters and pundits have absolutely flooded social and mainstream media.

My dad used to say, "There's no atheists in foxholes." Evidently, there are no atheists amid a stunningly frightening incident like the world witnessed last night in Cincinnati.

[Tonight, the world witnessed proof of] the glaringly obvious fact that human being's first and correct response in tragedy is to turn to God.

That response occurred last night on a global stage, and NO ONE could stop it! No Freedom from Religion Foundation staffer complained, no "separation of church and state" advocate protested. NO ONE wanted to!

The seriousness of the event demanded nothing less than earnest, aggressive, and united prayer - prayer to a God who cares and loves, and prayer that has been answered, as Damar Hamlin is alive with reported normal vitals, though in VERY serious condition.

Human beings everywhere, especially God-deniers, would do well to recognize that there is a God-shaped void in all of us - a void that no amount of athleticism (and I'm ALL for health and exercise), money, fame, pleasure, or notoriety can fill!!!

Damar Hamlin has done something amazingly consequential by becoming a successful NFL player, who reportedly has a heart for serving his community. But he has done something even more impactful as a result of last night's globally watched incident.

He has illustrated the fact that man DESPERATELY NEEDS the comfort of God found ONLY in the God of all comfort - Jesus Christ! Mankind needs a relationship with Jesus for life here on earth, but certainly for eternity!"

Last year, in Durham County alone, our Crisis Response Chaplains stood side-by-side with grieving people on resuscitation scenes and death scenes almost 500 times. Most of the scenes we attended were very private compared to what happened in front over 60,000 people in Paycor Stadium or the 15,000,000 viewers on ESPN. A sportswriter was posting live updates on Twitter from the stadium and used the words 'shaken', 'frightening', 'terrifying', and 'scary'.

Every day, our chaplains stand and pray with people on scene who are going through the same emotions. Most of the time their emotions are much more intense than anyone on the field or those watching experienced on Monday night...because the situation involves someone they love.

I'm writing all of this to simply say...this is why we are working diligently to multiply the number of public safety chaplains who are well-trained to provide care during times of crisis. I believe that God showed us on Monday night what a great need there is for His followers to be ready to provide His comfort during times of crisis. Being present with the comfort of Christ during crisis often leads to opportunities to share hope that can only be experienced in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In Romans 2:4, the Apostle Paul writes that *'God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance'*. I can't think of any greater example of God's kindness than sending one of His children to stand with someone who is hurting. Jesus has used me many times to be His kindness. I have encountered many divine appointments through the years.

But I get even more excited when I think back about how God's kindness has allowed me to enter into conversations and relationships where I could share the gospel and see a lost sinner led to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ!

Join me in praying for Damar Hamlin to make a full recovery but more importantly join me in praying that many souls will be turned toward faith in Jesus because of the kindness shown by His children to those who are shaken, frightened, terrified, and scared in times of crisis.

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field. (Matthew 9:37-38)

Serving Jesus Together,



Ralph Thompson
Executive Director