

***Celebrating Acts of Selfless
Service and Interfaith
Cooperation Across the
Nation and the World by
Recognizing Ordinary People
who do Extraordinary Things***



***The Chapel of
Four Chaplains***

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Unity without Uniformity





On January 23, 1943, the USAT DORCHESTER, an old coastal steamer quickly pressed into military service, left New York Harbor. The DORCHESTER, crewed by US Merchant Mariners and a US Navy Armed Guard, carried over 750 US Army and Army Air Corps personnel and civilian passengers enroute to a strategic base in Greenland. The ship was escorted by three US Coast Guard cutters: ESCANABA and COMANCHE patrolled the flanks; the third, TAMPA, was 3000 yards screening out front.

The weather was bitterly cold with gale force winds. Ice began building up on the decks, slowing the DORCHESTER to ten knots.

Meanwhile, ministering within the ship were four Army Chaplains, a rabbi, a priest, and two ministers. Their names were George L. Fox, Alexander D. Goode, Clark V. Poling, and John P. Washington. The Chaplains talked with and listened to the men - soothing apprehensions, offering encouragement, sharing jokes. By their concern and their camaraderie with the men and one another, they brought solace to the voyage.

On February 2, 1943, the TAMPA's sonar detected the presence of a submarine; the ship dropped back and swept the periphery of the convoy, but failed to find the submarine's position. That evening, the TAMPA returned to the patrol area up front, and the other two escort ships followed.

The captain ordered the men to sleep in their clothing, with lifejackets close at hand. They were only 150 miles from Greenland. With daylight, there would be air cover from the American base.

It was just after midnight on February 3, 1943 when an enemy U-Boat fired a torpedo toward the DORCHESTER's starboard quarter, inflicting a direct hit to the boiler room, exploding and cutting the electric supply. Many on board died instantly; some were trapped below deck. Others, jolted from their bunks, groped and stumbled their way to the decks of the stricken vessel. Taking on water rapidly, the ship began listing to starboard.

Chaos ensued, with overcrowded lifeboats capsizing; men searching for lifejackets; and with life rafts drifting away before anyone could reach them. Many clung to the rails, frozen with fear, unable to let go and plunge into the dark, freezing water below.

The testimony of survivors tells us that the sole order and the only fragment of hope in this chaos came from the Four Chaplains, who calmly guided men to their boat stations. They opened a storage locker and distributed lifejackets. Then they urged men, frozen with fear, over the side. Soon the supply of lifejackets was exhausted. Several survivors report watching in awe as the Four Chaplains either gave away or forced upon other young men their own lifejackets.

These four ordinary Army Chaplains, in an extraordinary act of self-sacrifice had given away their only means of saving themselves in order to save others. The Chaplains gathered together, and led the men around them in prayer and a hymn. They linked their arms together as the slant of the deck became severe. And just that way, with their arms linked in brotherhood and their heads bowed in prayer, they sank beneath the waves.



It was an heroic act. It was not the only heroic act aboard the DORCHESTER, but it was especially significant because of the identity of these four young chaplains: two Protestants, a Catholic, and a Jew. Their lifejackets were offered without discrimination or preference to any faith, color, or creed. "It was," said one survivor, "the finest thing I have ever seen, or hope to see, this side of heaven."

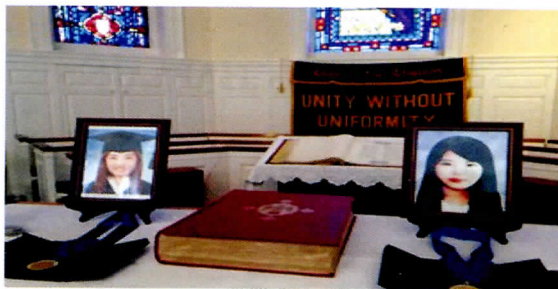
Of the 902 officers, crew, servicemen and civilian workers on board, 672 went to an unmarked, watery grave. Today, as it has these many years, the Chapel of Four Chaplains marks the memory of each of the 671 men and 1 woman with their names in bronze tablets on the walls of the Chapel. These bronze markers serve the memory of these brave men and woman, and carries the Four Chaplains' message of interfaith cooperation and selfless service to every part of the nation.

Among other acts of heroism was the remarkable rescue by the crews of the escort USCG cutters ESCANABA and COMANCHE of 230 DORCHESTER survivors. Serving on the COMANCHE as a cook was Charles W. David who volunteered to enter the water and bring several survivors to safety. In so doing, Charles David sacrificed his own life to resulting complications of exposure in the freezing water. Another one of many extraordinary acts of heroism that evening.



In the legacy of the Four Chaplains, the deceased and survivors of DORCHESTER, Charles W. David and, the rescue cutters ESCANABA and COMANCHE, The Chapel of Four Chaplains invites all people to participate in our varied programs that recognize selfless service, interfaith cooperation and community involvement. You can begin or increase the Chapel's visibility in your community or organization, simply by contacting the Chapel staff about one of our many programs.

**We are conveniently located at
the Philadelphia Navy Yard.**



What is the Chapel of Four Chaplains?

The Chapel of Four Chaplains (Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation) is a non-profit 501c3 organization established to encourage interfaith cooperation and selfless service among all people. The Chapel exists to further the cause of "Unity Without Uniformity", by recognizing the many diverse ordinary people in our community who are doing extraordinary things.

What inspired the founding of the Chapel?

The inspiration for the Chapel and its mission comes from the courageous sacrifice of the four Army Chaplains who were serving aboard the USAT DORCHESTER when it was hit by an enemy torpedo and sank in the North Atlantic on February 3, 1943.

How did the Chapel of Four Chaplains come into being?

Through the tireless efforts of the Reverend Daniel Poling, father of Chaplain Poling, and with help from S.S. Kresge, J.C. Penney, and countless organizations and individuals, the Chapel was dedicated on February 3, 1951, by President Harry S. Truman. In his dedication speech, the President said, "This interfaith shrine will stand through long generations to teach Americans that as men can die heroically as brothers so they should live together in mutual faith and good will."

President Harry S. Truman and Dr. Daniel A. Poling at the unveiling of the famous Nils Hogner mural at the dedication of the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia on February 3, 1951.



THE FOUR CHAPLAINS



George L. Fox, the oldest of the four, knew all about war. At a very young age, he enlisted in the Army in 1917 as a medical corps assistant. He won a Silver Star for rescuing a wounded soldier from a battlefield filled with poison gas, the Croix

de Guerre for outstanding bravery in an artillery barrage, and the Purple Heart for wounds. A resident of Vermont, he was a successful accountant and family man when he heard God's call to the ministry. Fox went back to school and later was ordained into the Methodist denomination. When war came, he once again enlisted, telling his wife, "I've got to go. I know from experience what our boys are about to face. They need me." Fox began active duty on August 8 1942, and served until that fateful morning of February 3, 1943.



Alexander D. Goode was both an outstanding athlete and scholar. Following in his father's footsteps, this young man known for his laughter and love of life, became a rabbi. While studying for his calling, he joined the National Guard

and kept up an active membership. The return of the body of the Unknown Soldier had a profound effect on Goode. He attended the ceremonies, choosing to walk the thirty miles rather than drive or take a bus, because he thought it showed more respect. Goode married his childhood sweetheart and was serving at a synagogue in York, Pennsylvania, when World War II broke out. He served on active duty from August 9, 1942 until February 3, 1943.



Clark V. Poling was the youngest of the Four Chaplains and the seventh generation in his family to be ordained in the Dutch Reformed Church. When war came, he was anxious to go, but not as a chaplain. "I'm not going to hide behind the church in some safe office

out of the firing line", he told his father. The elder Poling replied, "Don't you know that chaplains have the highest mortality rate of all? As a chaplain you'll have the best chance in the world to be killed. You just can't carry a gun to kill anyone yourself". So Clark Poling left his pastorate in Schenectady, New York, and enlisted as a chaplain. Just before he left for active duty, Clark asked his father to pray for him - "not for my safe return, that wouldn't be fair. Just pray that I shall do my duty ... never be a coward ... and have the strength, courage and understanding of men. Just pray that I shall be adequate." Poling began active duty on June 10, 1942, and served until February 3, 1943.



John P. Washington grew up poor, scrappy, and determined in the toughest section of Newark, New Jersey. One of nine children born to an immigrant family, he was blessed with a sunny disposition, a beautiful singing voice, and a love for music. He also loved a

good fight, and was leader of the South Twelfth Street gang when he was called to the priesthood. He played ball with the boys of the parish, organized sports teams and, when war came along, went with his "boys" into the Army. He began active duty on May 9, 1942. His wonderful voice, raised in song and prayer to comfort those around him, could be heard until his final moments on February 3, 1943.

What the Chapel Does

- * Recognizes and encourages voluntary selfless service rendered by individuals from all walks of life through the Legion of Honor Award Program. The service must be above and beyond that required by a professional or organizational position, and given to the community, nation, and humanity without regard to race, religion or creed.
- * Promotes Four Chaplains Memorial Services in communities across the nation throughout the year and especially on or near the anniversary of the sinking of the DORCHESTER (February 3), to raise awareness of the need for cooperation among all people who recognize selfless service in the legacy of the Four Chaplains.
- * Conducts Programs which help young people to develop values of selfless service and cooperation through the Annual Scholarship Competition: Essay, Art, Video, Photography and the Jr. Legion of Honor Award.
- * Tells the story of the Four Chaplains nationwide to veteran, fraternal, civic, educational and religious organizations.
- * Provides the Chapel Emergency Chaplain Corps. for spiritual guidance to victims, their families, and rescue personnel in traumatic events and disasters, through our organization of specially trained, interfaith chaplain volunteers.
- * Advises in the development and construction of public interfaith memorials and chapels throughout the nation. Provides information and visual materials about the proper use of the Four Chaplains Saga as a model.
- * Provides a Memorial Chapel to honor the Four Chaplains and other victims and survivors of the DORCHESTER. The Chapel is also available for weddings, ceremonies, memorials and business meetings.
- * PLEASE CONTACT US FOR RATES & AVAILABILITY.

