

December 23, 2023

Merry Christmas from
New Orleans!

Ministry:

I have taken leave on three different occasions during the past month. Sheesh! The first leave period was work-related, allowing Trina and me to attend the Military Chaplain Retreat at the



Billy Graham Training Center near Asheville, NC. We were fed physically and spiritually, enjoyed good fellowship and worship, and were encouraged and refreshed. Trina enjoyed reconnecting with her college roommate Lisa Davis, whose husband Trent is an Air Force chaplain (see picture). The other two brief leave periods were for personal/family reasons which will be mentioned below. So, when I was actually at work, what did I do? I taught ASIST (suicide intervention training), visited units, participated in the Sector New Orleans holiday party, and volunteered with other Coasties for Wreaths Across America. As military chaplains, it is important to align our efforts with the priorities of the Commanders and higher ranking officers over us. Since the USCG Atlantic Area Admiral has prioritized suicide prevention, I have been teaching the two-day ASIST class once or twice a month. I enjoy doing so, though it requires a fair amount of administrative work in addition to the two long days of training.

Family:

Thanks to Facebook, many of you already know our BIG news: Martin is engaged! His fiancée, Faith Potts, is from North Carolina and works as an American Sign Language



interpreter for students at a public school in Augusta, KS. We look forward to welcoming her into our family, though they have not yet decided on a date and location for the wedding. As noted in my last newsletter, my nephew Chester returned to JourneyPure, the alcohol and drug rehab center in Panama City, FL. The second of my leave periods this month was taken in order for us to drive over for the family weekend event just before Chester was discharged. He wisely decided not to return to the St. Pete area due to the temptations he would face there. Instead, he is living in a sober house in Panama City and working for a construction company there. We are so proud of him for his commitment to sobriety and the good choices he is making! Finally, I took a few days off this week to celebrate Christmas with Trina's family and attend a cousin's wedding. Thankfully Katie was able to come over from Corpus Christi, so we enjoyed spending these few days with her as well.

Prayer requests:

1. Join us in thanking God for those who ministered to the military chaplains and spouses by showing rich hospitality, leading worship, and proclaiming God's Word at the retreat at the Billy Graham Training Center.
2. I continue to preach at FPC Picayune once a month as I am able. Please pray that God would give their search for a new pastor and provide the right man for them at the right time.
3. Pray for Service Members and their families throughout the holiday season, as some experience isolation, grief, financial stress or family tension.
4. Please continue to pray for Chester, that God would give him a steadfast commitment to sobriety and a desire for to know and serve him more fully.
5. Pray for Martin and Faith as they plan for their wedding and their future together.

The righteous and devout Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Lord... my eyes have seen your salvation" (Luke 2:30). This confirmed what the angel had already told Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Soli Deo Gloria,
Matt Schilling