



Beyond the Horizon: Navy Chaplain Olic Wilkins

by tremendous baggage. “I knew from experience,” said Wilkins, “that faith in God could serve as a compass guiding them to ultimate fulfillment—granting them direction in a chaotic world and credence to that which is beyond human comprehension. I prayed that God would grant me the opportunity to lead them to a baggage-free walk of faith.”

In November of 2002, Wilkins was deployed for seven months to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in support of “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” Many people aboard his ship developed a strong consciousness of their own sinfulness. “Our shipboard Bible studies, prayer meetings and services grew to capacity,” said Wilkins, “often with standing room only on Sunday morning.” A religious fervor permeated the ship. People expressed genuine concerns about their eternal destinies. “Day after day and night after night

many shipmates would earnestly come before God and cry out for redress of their grievances,” said Wilkins.

Wilkins’ ministry audience is exceedingly diverse. “Sometimes we get so caught up in political and philosophical divisions,” said Wilkins, “that we forget not only the humanity of those with whom we disagree, but that we might actually learn something from them if we take the time to listen.”

Wilkins is now the command chaplain at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Va., with the rank of captain. His ministry philosophy is based on the golden rule and his goal as chaplain is “to courageously model servant leadership, creating a team atmosphere which infuses hope, empowers people and transforms lives.” He hopes to model spiritual faithfulness, integrity and loyalty. ■

As a thirteen-year-old boy on his father’s fishing boat, Olic Wilkins (M.Div. 2004) would often gaze across the water toward the horizon and wonder what lay beyond. When he had the opportunity as a young adult, he joined the U.S. Navy.

As an enlisted man, Wilkins witnessed men and women drudging through a mundane existence—weighed down

A Shepherd to the Sick and Lost: Hospital Chaplain Larry Cooper

For 18 years, Larry Cooper (D. Min. 2004) has been a chaplain for CoxHealth Systems in Springfield, Mo. He is also an adjunct faculty member at AGTS and serves on the board of the Southwest Missouri Critical Incident Response Team.

As a chaplain, Larry provides pastoral care to the patients and staff in the CoxHealth hospitals and trauma centers in Springfield and the surrounding area. He coordinates pastoral care volunteers and is a designated requestor for organ and tissue donations. He also helps to

train first responders who deal with victims’ stress.

In describing his ministry to *Rapport*, Larry said, “I view myself as a pastor at heart. Learning from the mistakes of the shepherd described in Ezekiel 34, a pastor needs to provide an intentional ministry where the weak are strengthened, sick are healed, injured are bound and strays are brought back to the fold. The opportunity to minister to patients, families and staff and celebrate with them God’s involvement in their lives presents itself at times



of greatest need. Hospital chaplaincy allows me to fulfill the call of God to reach people.” ■