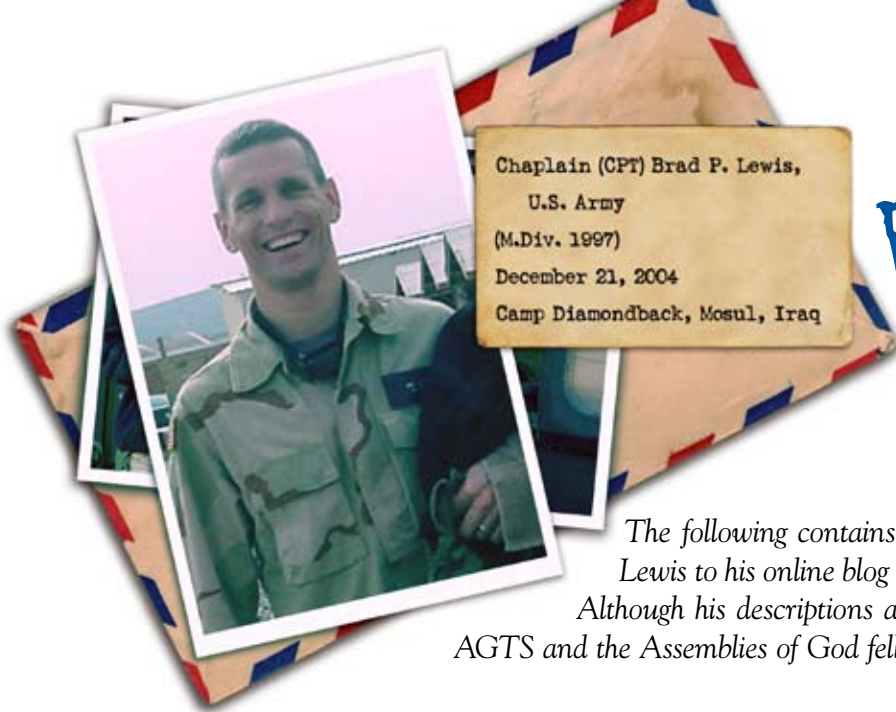




# Letters from the Front

AGTS military chaplains  
write home about life  
in Iraq and Afghanistan



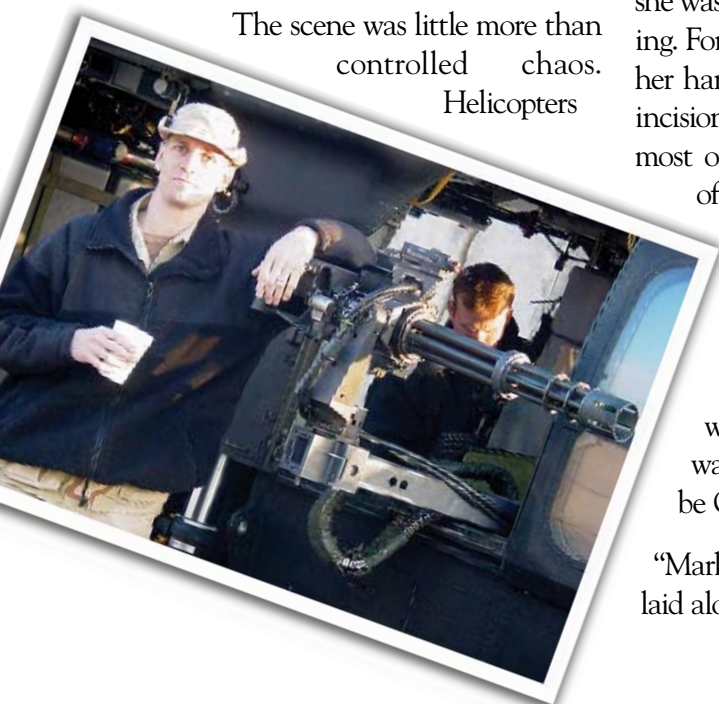
# Where the Rubber Meets the Road

*The following contains excerpts of an entry posted by Chaplain Brad Lewis to his online blog "Training for Eternity" (chaplain.blogspot.com). Although his descriptions are graphic, his story illustrates the reasons why AGTS and the Assemblies of God fellowship support U.S. military chaplains.*

Tuesday, December 21, 2004

The first report said a mortar had just hit a nearby chow hall during the middle of lunch. Ten were dead and approximately 50 wounded. They were being transported to the Combat Surgical Hospital (CSH) down the street. It was a mass casualty event and it's where the rubber meets the road in military ministry. I woke my assistant, and we rushed to the hospital. I didn't expect what I saw.

The scene was little more than controlled chaos.  
Helicopters



were landing, people shouting, wounded screaming and bodies were everywhere. As the staff began to triage the dead and wounded, I offered my assistance. I would be hard pressed to write about every person I had the opportunity to pray with today, but I will relate a few instances.

A piece of shrapnel had hit "Ilena" in her chest causing a sucking chest wound. The doctors said her left lung was filling with blood and she was having a hard time breathing. For the next 20 minutes I held her hand while a doctor made an incision in her left side, inserted most of his hand and some kind of medical instrument and then a tube to alleviate the pressure the pooling blood caused. It was the most medieval-looking procedure I had ever witnessed. In the end, Ilena was taken to ICU and she will be OK.

"Mark" was put on a stretcher and laid along a wall. A small monitor

on his hand would tell the nurses when he was dead. Even a cursory glance said it was inevitable. Mark had a head wound that left brain matter caked in his ear and all over the stretcher on which he was lying. I knelt next to Mark and placed a hand on his chest. His heart was barely beating. As I put my face close to his ear to pray with him, I thought, *He's practically dead. So why stay? He probably can't hear anything!* Nevertheless, I couldn't risk it. I prayed the sinners prayer. Few things in this life will make one feel more helpless.

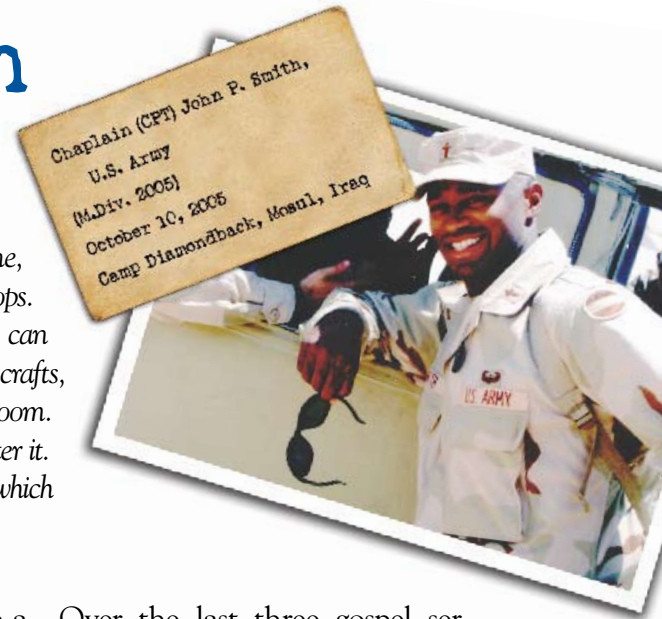
Outside, the number of body bags had grown considerably. I saw a fellow chaplain who obviously was in need of care himself. I put my arm around him and asked how he was doing. He just shook his head so I pulled him in close and prayed for his strength, endurance, a thick skin and a soft heart.



*continued on page 19*

# Operation Transformation

Chaplain John Smith has been assigned three assistants, instead of the usual one, because of the large number of programs he has initiated in support of the troops. His ministry team developed Iraq's first spiritual fitness center where soldiers can call home, access email, browse a lending library, try their hand at arts and crafts, or enjoy a surround sound movie. All of this is designed around a prayer room. Several high-ranking officials have expressed interest in patterning a facility after it. John would eventually like to bring in helping professionals to teach classes which target soldiers' finances, marriages, addictions, etc.



Saturday, October 10, 2005

Dear Veronica,

It is 2 a.m. I just finished counseling a soldier and I have to do two services tomorrow. I wish this were an unusual night, but I pull a considerable amount of late nights counseling.

Just to give you an idea of where I am stationed, imagine the land where Jonah lived. I am literally right around the corner from the Tigris River. I am also not far from where Noah lived and built the ark. I am also minutes from where the dining facility bombing happened last year. Although there has been rebuilding, you can tell troops never forget. I have talked with countless soldiers and civilians who lost close friends and colleagues that day.

A few times a week, we go on convoys to visit soldiers on different bases. A soldier's life is at risk every time he or she leaves the base, which they do

daily. They are shocked to see a chaplain who is willing to risk his life when he doesn't have to. As a result, a number of soldiers have come to accept Christ.

In the past two months the Protestant service has grown from 18 to over 50 people per Sunday, and the gospel service has grown from 50 to a multi-cultural group of 165. We were packed into the 200-seat chapel last Sunday and it was hot. People are even starting to travel from other camps. The folks at the movie theater have offered their facility that can seat 400. I anticipate outgrowing it within the next few months.

I really can't begin to explain what is happening here. People are running to the altars at the end of the service. Some are being filled with the Holy Spirit. We call it "Operation Transformation." Every week, soldiers and civilians are coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus in both services.

Over the last three gospel services we have seen Mormons, Catholics and professing pagans attend regularly. Many of them come to our weekly Bible study. After one of our recent Bible studies, one of the Catholic brothers asked me about a personal relationship with Christ. He wanted to know "how to feel the way you feel in service." He said he was "tired of going to church week after week, but never experiencing a touch from God." He said, "After three weeks of attending the service" he was "ready for all God has to offer."

Another brother and I began praying with him that he would receive a powerful touch from God. After 10 minutes, you could literally see the hair



*continued on page 19*



# All the Way!

*Camp Salerno, the largest base in Afghanistan outside of Kabul, is located minutes from the mountainous Pakistani border and houses over 1000 parachuters, support infantry and engineers. This fortified helicopter base keeps a vigilant watch for terrorist activity. It is named for the beachhead onto which the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment dropped September 14, 1943, the first large-scale invasion of the European mainland in World War II.*

Friday, August 19, 2005

AGTS Community,

I thank God for you and hope all is well among you. Becky and I were able to be together last month. We celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary and had a great time with the kids, spending a lot of time at the pool. Sarah turned two while I was home. It was a much-needed get away.

I watch the Afghan moon wax and wane each month and can't believe the fourth full moon has come since we arrived. The weather is still hot here, even at 7,000 feet. It will grow cooler

soon and the winter snows might cause this particular Forward Operating Base to be inaccessible. The days pass as quickly as each mission comes and goes.

The paratroopers seem bigger than their circumstances. Daily, they overcome the rugged terrain of eastern Afghanistan as well as the rigors of combat. Last week, we had to say good-bye to a fellow paratrooper—a Medic—as we held a memorial ceremony for his company. His buddies spoke of his jovial spirit, ability to lighten the mood, leadership potential and care for others. They spoke of him as a brother.

In the memorial message I highlighted biblical examples of brotherhood—specifically, the loyalty and brotherly love between David and Jonathan. I see this kind of loyalty demonstrated among these brothers-in-arms. The unit seems to be rebounding well. I believe their unity enables them to overcome their circumstances.

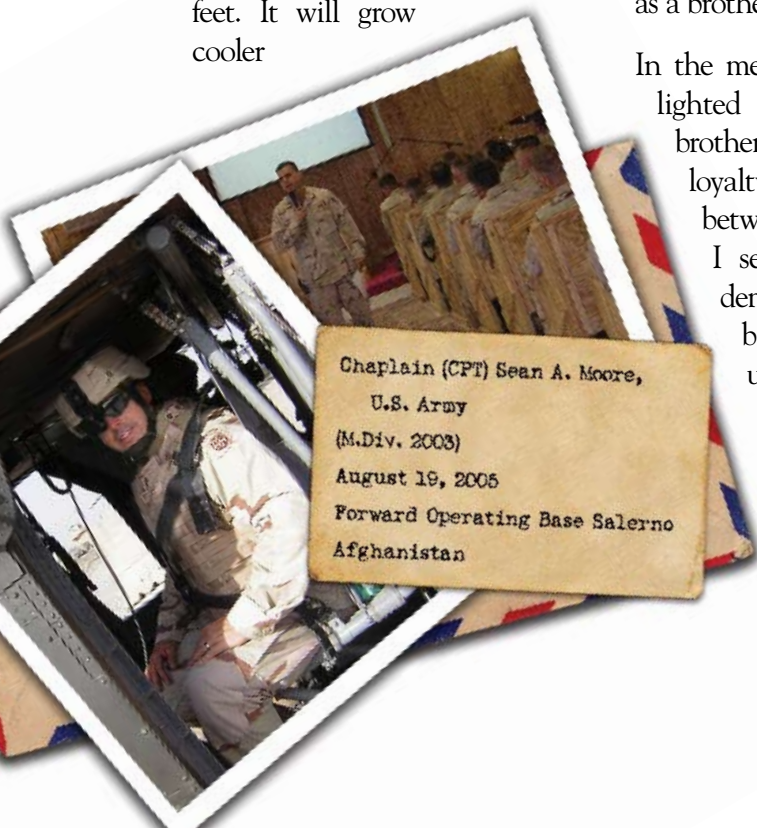
Before deployment, I heard a chaplain lieutenant colonel relate a Scripture God had used to encourage him while enduring the hardships of ranger school. He pointed out that the passage contains a phrase applicable to the airborne community, "All the Way!" God reminded the people of Israel of his continued presence, even in the wilderness: "The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, *all the way* you went until you reached this place" (Deuteronomy 1:30,31).

These words comfort my heart as well. At times, it is tough to believe him, but we continue to cultivate faith.

We know that we can trust God to carry us "all the way."

I love you all and cannot wait to see you again. Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

**ALL THE WAY!**  
CH (CPT) Sean A. Moore



*Where the Rubber Meets the Road continued from page 16*

Any attack with casualties will naturally concentrate a large number of caregivers in one location. The first mortar round hit about 100 to 200 meters away. Everyone started shouting to get the wounded inside. The next mortar hit closer. I stood at the door shoving as many people inside as I could. Just as I headed inside, the last round hit directly on top of the solid concrete hospital. I couldn't have been more than 10 to 15 meters from the point of impact and, brother, did I feel the shock. I rushed inside to find doctors and nurses draped over patients, others on the floor or under something.

After a few tense moments, the business of patching bodies and

healing minds continued in earnest. An officer asked me to pray for another patient who had just been moved to the "expectant" list. When I finished, I looked up at the nurse who had been tending him. She was struggling to maintain her composure. I asked, "Are you OK?" and she broke down. I put my arm around her. She said, "I was fine until you asked!" Then she explained that this was her third patient to die that day.

As I walked away at the end of the day I saw a soldier standing among the rows of black body bags. He wanted to see his friend one more time. We slowly and respectfully unzipped the bag to reveal the face of a young private first class. His

friend stared for a few seconds then turned away and began to cry.

I'm where God wants me and wouldn't change that for anything, even if it means death. After all, "to die is gain."

*According to the Washington Post, of the 22 people killed in the December 21 attack, 14 were U.S. military personnel, four were U.S. civilians, three were Iraqi Security Forces and one was unidentified. It is now believed that 69 people were wounded, 44 of whom were U.S. military personnel. The original explosion was likely the result of a suicide bombing.*

*Operation Transformation continued from page 17*

standing on his arms. He began to shake uncontrollably as tears of joy rolled down his face. He tried to speak, but only sounds were coming from his mouth. Eventually he said, "I haven't cried in over five years and I'm not sure I'm supposed to feel this way." He said he was feeling "electricity" going through his body. He asked me what it was and I showed him Acts 2. Immediately, he began uttering words that no one else in the room could understand. He now attends every service, Bible study and choir rehearsal.

There are testimonies of healing also. One brother came to

my office after service and said he had been suffering with a shoulder pain for two days. We talked for about an hour, and then I asked him if he was tired of the pain. After I prayed, he said that his pain was gone. He testified to God's healing power during the next service.

Well my love, it's very late and I have a battalion run in a few hours. Words can't express how much I miss you and Brianna. I look forward to holding you two in my arms very soon. Tell Brianna how proud her daddy is about her starting piano lessons and I can't wait to hear her play. Give her a big hug and kiss

for me tonight when you tuck her into bed. Please send everyone back home my love and tell them I said "whoa" and thank you for all the encouraging cards, emails and prayers.

With all my love,  
John

*On October 21-23, John held revival services in which over 500 people attended.*

