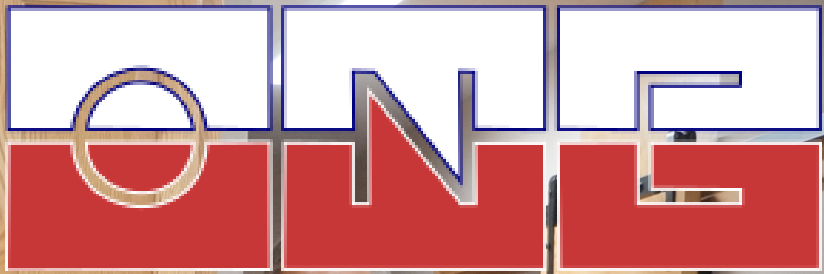


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A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
September 2021

People Helping People!





ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to one@ourecma.com.

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On the Cover:

Linda Mills, executive director of First Call for Help of Ellis County, cuts the ribbon at the First Step Housing Project at 607 E. 13th on Aug. 24. Story on Pages 10-11 . (Photo by Linn Ann Huntington)

Editor's Note:

Our theme this month is "People Helping People." Sept. 11 marks the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. We asked our writers to reflect on the lessons of faith and resilience that they remember from this tragic event. Many of them remember how people came together in an effort to help others. That theme is also reflected in our article about the ribbon cutting at the First Step Housing Project in Hays. This \$250,000 project, the first of its kind in Ellis County, is designed to help alleviate homelessness in the area.

New Yorkers Share Lessons Learned on 9/11: 'People Just Wanted to Help'

Compiled by: Cheryl Glassman

St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church

1 Corinthians 16:13, *"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong."*

9-11-01. I think of the many New York City friends I have made since my daughter's move there 14 years ago. I asked her to contact some of them who lived in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001. Their thoughts and words of resilience and faith are what follow.

Evan: It started as a day

that didn't seem real or possible. I awoke late, turned on the TV, and saw what I thought was a preview of a movie on "Regis and Kathy Lee." I glanced at the TV and thought, "What stupid movie is this?" Then I started hearing . . . "The towers have been attacked."

At the same time, both my phones were ringing off the hook, and I had messages on my answering machine: "Where are you?" Above 59th Street, we had phone service. I then

started to worry, calling friends and family. As it started to sink in, and I was hearing, "We are under attack," I started to gather a few things--passport, cash and a quick change of clothes in case I had to flee.

Many that I knew who worked in the Mall in the Towers all got out safely, but it was days before we had that information. As the day progressed, there was a unity and strength that came over the city. People ran to blood banks to donate. But the blood banks didn't need the

New Yorkers Share Lessons Learned on 9/11 (Continued)

blood. These weren't those types of casualties.

There was an announcement that they needed clothing for the workers--socks, underwear, sweatshirts. They were working around the clock to dig what they could, and it got chilly at night. So clothing supplies it was. You weren't allowed to go below 14th Street, so they arranged for pickups around the city. People just wanted to help.

There was a calmness the second day. The disaster wasn't over; bodies were still missing, but New York City was going to pull through this. People were genuinely nicer to each other. We didn't know if this was an isolated attack, or if there would be more to come. The constant sound of helicopters was unnerving, but we New Yorkers helped each other. It was a very sad time and a very enlightening time as we saw that when in need, we really are there for each other. It is a "never forget" day . . . NEVER!

Brian: When the towers fell, I was sitting at my desk high above the city street in midtown's Worldwide Plaza.

The world was in chaos all around me as I sat oblivious to the devastation while on a conference call. Family members, in a panic, were unable to reach me.

Shortly after, I was asked to evacuate the building and somehow made my way home in Brooklyn, still in shock. The towers I was once able to see from my living room window, now nothing but a cloud of smoke.

Oddly enough, I wasn't afraid. One thing I do know is that getting through it is hard to do alone. But despite these lessons, I almost feel unworthy of claiming them. The degree to which I suffered loss is minuscule compared to that of those who ran through the ashes to find safety that day, and even worse, those who lost their loved ones. Those who survived those moments and found a way to persist and hopefully thrive--they are the ones with true resilience.

Kevin: I remember the city that never sleeps coming to a screeching halt. It was like a world of make-believe. We were sucker punched in the stomach and had all the air

knocked out of us.

Our first responders were amazing. Still woozy, the city quickly pulled itself together. We did what we had to do. With tears in our eyes, the strong helped the weak. Every year on 9/11, while the names of the deceased are read on television, I cry. This city is amazing. The Memorial is amazing--several beautiful buildings and two square fountains with water cascading down. It's beautiful. 9/11. A date I will never forget!

Tara: What 9/11 taught me about faith and resilience is that as long as you're here, anything is possible. Anything can be overcome. Anything can be endured and help us grow. Any dream can come true. Anything can be built back. The privilege of seeing another day is something we forget all too easily. Every moment is an absolute gift, and we should use it to the fullest.



Cheryl Glassman is the Minister of Music at St. Nicolas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

Holy Ground: Where There Is Sin, We Can Sow Holiness

Reverend Shay Craig

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Videos of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 no longer fill me with the rage and terror that I felt in those moments, or in the immediate years that followed. Like many Americans, I sought justice, recompense and revenge in those early days.

But my mind has changed in the intervening years. My heart is at rest now, because of an experience that reframed the legacy of that moment for me, forever.

In the spring of 2018, I went to the 9/11 Memorial in Shanksville, Pa., where United Airlines Flight 93 crashed into the countryside. Flight 93 was one of the four flights hijacked by terrorists on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. It was the only flight that did not reach its intended target. When passengers and crew on the plane learned about the attack on the World Trade Center, they

mounted an assault on the hijackers, which resulted in the plane's crash landing in rural Pennsylvania and taking the lives of everyone on board.

When you go to the memorial, there is a large tower, the "Tower of Voices," which contains 40 wind chimes--one for each passenger and crew member who died. Inside the memorial we can hear the recorded last words from the victims to their families. They are messages left as voice mails, and they are heart breaking.

We can listen to the contents of the "black box" that recorded what transpired in the last moments before the plane crashed. And there are also memorabilia, things that belonged to the victims, remains of the plane, etc. The final panel is a display of photos of the victims--not their passport photos, but photos of them in their lives, with their kids, water skiing, being human beings.

There are no words to

describe how this memorial alters the souls of its visitors. I encourage you to go there and see it.

On the occasion of my visit, I was wearing my clergy collar because I had been to a funeral. The only other people in the building were a large family--grandparents, parents and six children who were all too young to remember the day.

As we rounded the back of the exhibit, we stood in silence looking at those photos, and the mother of the family asked if we could pray. I explained that it was a National Monument, and that while I would pray with them, if we were asked to stop, we would have to do so.

We held hands and sang a bit of "Amazing Grace." I offered a prayer and asked each person to read a name off the list of the victims of the crash, going around the circle until we had read them all.

"Even the hijackers?" one of the children asked.

Holy Ground (Continued)

"Yes," I said, "God asks us to pray even for people who hurt us."

"I don't want to," he responded.

"Then just stay silent, and the next person will read that name,"

When the time came to read the names, the person whose job it was to read the hijacker's name read it as faithfully as any other name on the list.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Afterward, we walked out to the crash site. At the time of my visit, the memorial was almost, but not quite, finished. It had rained the night before, and water had pooled in the gouge in the land where the plane had augured in. The pool of rainwater formed a slanted and uneven cross on the ground.

The child who had not wanted to read the hijacker's name asked if this was holy ground. I said I thought it was. When he asked why, his mother responded (and I remember her words, I believe, verbatim):

"Jesus gave His life to save the whole world. He only got one life and He gave it up willingly for us. The people who fought back against the hijackers here gave their lives so the hijackers could not hurt anyone else. Anywhere that a holy act like that happens is holy ground."

And, to my astonishment, every one of those children and their parents took off their shoes. Just as in Exodus 3:5, "God said, "Do not approach any closer! Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

The earth that had been gouged by anger and fear and tragedy on Sept. 11 had become Holy Ground. Where there was fear in the hearts of the passengers, there is a peace so present that it inspires prayer. Where there was hatred in the hearts of the people on the plane, there is admiration and love for the heroes of that flight.

Violence is in the world, and we can't seem to get rid of it. But we can respond to it with love. Sin is present, but in its wake we can sow holiness. On that day, some people sought to leave a scar on the United States. But in fact, with God's help, we have just made a little more Holy Ground instead.



The Rev. Shay Craig is Vicar of St. Andrew's and St. Michael's Episcopal Churches in Hays.

THE FIRST QUESTION WHICH THE PRIEST AND THE LEVITE ASKED WAS: "IF I STOP TO HELP THIS MAN, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME?" BUT THE GOOD SAMARITAN REVERSED THE QUESTION: "IF I DO NOT STOP TO HELP THIS MAN, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIM?" - MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Memories of 9/11/01: I Know Where I Was

Becky Rogowski

First Presbyterian Church

Twenty years. A milestone anniversary of a tragic day in American history.

Even if it weren't a milestone, I would still be able to tell you exactly how long it's been. I was pregnant with my second daughter at the time. For the most part, "the Class of 2020"-- you know, the ones who lost their senior year and their graduation to the COVID-19 pandemic - are also the babies who arrived just after the tragedy.

I will never forget the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. I was living in Manhattan, Kan. My then-husband was a soldier stationed at Fort Riley. My oldest daughter was in the second grade. Our plans included dropping Samantha off at school and then going to my doctor's appointment for our first ultrasound of the new baby.

We had the radio playing in the background, as we typically did, but my husband and I were also discussing something. Samantha suddenly and shockingly said to us, "A plane just flew into a building?"

I told her she must have misheard something because

planes don't fly into buildings. This gave enough break in the conversation to realize it was a breaking news report. We assured her that something must have gone terribly wrong and to say a prayer for those involved. A kiss goodbye, and she was off for a typical fun day of second grade.

By the time we were a few blocks from the school, listening intently to the radio, we heard that a second plane had hit the other half of the World Trade Center. I remember pulling the car over, and my husband saying that something was horribly wrong and that our lives were about to change. Little did I know. I had married into the military life just months before - the world was at peace, deployments were rare (and short--and safe).

We sat and listened to the events unfold in the hour leading up to my appointment. I remember I couldn't stop shaking. I was so scared because of how uncertain and unknown things were. I didn't know what was going on, but I knew it was bad.

Manhattan is an incredibly diverse town, and when we got to the doctor's office I remember the looks of fear

and uncertainty on all the faces we saw. I remember a Muslim family who was sitting near us, and she caught my eye and mouthed, "I'm sorry."

The only thing I could come up with at that point was, "Me too." I wanted to hug this stranger even though I'm not a "hugger." I wanted to engage in conversation with all of the people in the room, even though I'm not a typically outgoing person. I wanted someone to reassure me that things were still normal and that everything was going to be OK. Deep down, I knew it wasn't. Here I was, about to bring another child into the world, and what was happening to this world? I was sure I didn't know.

The hours leading up to lunchtime found us watching it all unfold on TV. We were fixed to it. I was hoping that my second grader was oblivious to the events and enjoying her day at school. Just after lunch, my husband received a call (on his day off) to "report immediately to base" and to "expect delays at the security check." Security check usually just meant showing them your government ID and passing through the gate. My husband indicated he "knew" what was

Memories of 9/11/01 (Continued)

about to happen. But, to some degree, he was uncertain. He went to work, and I left for my job as a home-based infant/toddler teacher in rural Riley County. I was hopeful that spending the day with the sweet families I served would bring some normalcy back to my day.

I was wrong.

I vividly remember that families just wanted to talk and continue watching coverage. Many of the families also had military ties, and all military personnel had been called to base. ALL. Completely unheard of.

I remember the difficulty in traveling the rural Riley County roads that day. The base had shut down access to everything but just the main gate, and the traffic jams were insane. Everyone was so uncertain. Things were beyond "not normal," but the thing that struck me was everyone's kindness and how united everyone suddenly became.

We suddenly all had one thing in common--we were Americans, and we were certainly proud of it. We were united under God, as well, and nobody was afraid to admit it. People were flying their flags.

Patriotic music was being played like it was the 4th of July.

I wasn't able to get to my daughter's school by dismissal time because of the traffic. I was not 10-15 minutes late. This was along the lines of being two hours late. I remember calling the school and how badly I felt about the situation. I just wanted to reunite with her after such a horrible day.

The secretary informed me the school was on lockdown and that most all of the parents were struggling to arrive. The teachers were all planning to stay until all the students were reunited safely with their families. The children were playing games and had little idea what things were going on outside their school walls. The secretary told me I would have to park two blocks from the school and be checked by police before being allowed to walk the rest of the way to the school building. I was shaken to the core that they feared for these schools being so close to a major military base. I wanted to get my daughter and to return home to our "normal." It was a happy reunion. Her innocent focus was on how close it was to dinnertime, where was

"daddy," and "did you see the baby today?"

We flew our flags. We sang patriotic songs. And that night we sat in the church pews with our church family in the midst of great uncertainty. Prayers were shared for the soldiers and their families. The sense of impending doom was so real. It didn't take long before we experienced our first deployment. Our church family was so supportive and wrapped their arms of love around us. Manhattan and Fort Riley were also incredibly supportive.

Everything about life as we had known it changed in the blink of an eye. We had taken our rights and freedoms for granted. We were not as safe as we had been led to believe. I had to accept that the world I grew up in was not the world I would continue to bring my girls up in.

This was a tough reality to accept, but it was ours. I will never forget that September day "when the world stopped turning." I don't want to forget. It's too important to forget as just a tragic memory.



Becky Rogowski is the Generations in Faith Together Coordinator at Hays First Presbyterian Church.

We Have Responded So Differently to 9/11 and COVID

Brandon Nimz
Unite Ministry

In some ways, the happenings on Sept. 11, 2001, affected many in the United States in the same fashion that COVID did during its first few months here. Something large that left us uncertain and with many questions caused us to stop the daily rhythm and refocus. Some people quickly reached out to those they loved. Others empathized with those suffering and sought to help. Still others analyzed and tried desperately to understand all of the information surrounding the event, while others reacted in anger.

One of the most striking differences in the U.S. immediately after Sept. 11 was that many people commented on feeling united with one another. The presence of an obvious "other" left us focusing on ourselves as an "us." Political parties, culture wars, and other things that could divide paled and dropped out of focus as things that unified

us came into focus. Some of these unifying factors included important Christian virtues—compassion and care for those suffering, a desire for answers (knowledge and truth), and a desire to protect others and prevent such ills from happening again.

Other things that drew us together may have been more worldly or nationalistic in nature. Nonetheless, regardless of the cause, an underlying focus on unity and collective action was definitely present immediately following Sept. 11 (quite unlike what occurred after the first bouts of COVID). This idea of unity on an even broader scale—with all other humans, both friends and enemies—is something that we as believers are still called to live under today. In fact, in this era in the United States when polarization and tribalism are celebrated, the call of Romans 12 to "be not conformed to the patterns of this world" is increasingly

important and challenging to execute.

When it comes to a Biblical call to look at all people as an "us"—regardless of political beliefs, moral perspectives, and general worldview—we first see the idea that we are to love all others immediately in the New Testament. Jesus said the greatest commands were to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

When asked about who our neighbor was, Jesus told a story of someone from an ostracized group who reached out across cultural, racial, and social boundaries to help a stranger. Not only this, but Jesus directly tells us to love even our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

Beyond telling us to act this way, Jesus also frequently demonstrated reaching across boundaries to love and care for the person in front

We Have Responded Differently to 9/11 and COVID (Continued)

of Him. He touched untouchable lepers, He taught and spoke with women and men alike, He interacted with races and ethnicities that the Jews of the day considered inferior, and He was accused of hanging out with drunks and sinners because He did interact with them regularly despite that being socially unacceptable.

The Bible is clear that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and that this "all" includes "us." It is also clear that Jesus came and died to save "us." The whole New Testament abounds with this idea of "us" and of love

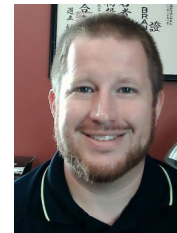
crossing over sin and other boundaries that separate. Yet how well do we as followers of Christ model this love and unity?

When the United States was attacked on Sept. 11, a largely secular and worldly nation managed to cross political and social divides to come together and do things in a relatively united fashion, and this occurrence was noted by the world.

Are we as Christians, who are commanded to love across divides, currently crossing social and political boundaries to care for those whom we actively disagree with? Is our love to all notable and visible enough that it stands

out and causes others to see our unity in Christ?

Keeping in mind that Jesus crossed so many barriers to love even those who crucified Him and who would never believe in Him or agree with Him, I pray that in my life and in the lives of believers that Christ helps us to "give up our lives to gain true life." I pray that the Holy Spirit continues to refine us as we "become more and more like Christ, who is the Head of His body, the Church."



Brandon Nimz is the leader of Unite Ministry in Hays.

“WHAT DOES LOVE LOOK LIKE? IT HAS THE HANDS TO HELP OTHERS. IT HAS THE FEET TO HASTEN TO THE POOR AND NEEDY. IT HAS EYES TO SEE MISERY AND WANT. IT HAS THE EARS TO HEAR THE SIGHS AND SORROWS OF MEN. THAT IS WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE.” - AUGUSTINE

“IF YOU CAN DREAM IT, THEN YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT. YOU WILL GET ALL YOU WANT IN LIFE IF YOU HELP ENOUGH OTHER PEOPLE GET WHAT THEY WANT.” - ZIG ZIGLAR



A Step Toward Easing Homelessness in Ellis County

Linn Ann Huntington
ONE Magazine Editor

A dream six years in the making was realized on Aug. 24 when First Call for Help of Ellis County, 607 E. 13th, officially opened and dedicated its First Step Housing Project.

The project is “for people who are struggling with housing stability,” said Linda Mills, executive director of First Call. “Maybe they’re living in their car, or a friend has just evicted them, and they come to us for help.” Ellis County has no type of emergency homeless shelter.

The facility can accommodate up to eight individuals, who may stay for up to six months.

About 40 people--First Call Board members, staff, and members of various groups who donated money for the \$250,000 project--attended the event.

Sarah Wasinger, president of the Hays Chamber of Commerce, was the mistress of ceremonies. The Rev. Chris Prater, incoming vice president of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA), offered the blessing. Prater is the pastor at First Baptist



The Rev. Chris Prater, incoming vice president of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance, is shown with Linda Mills at the ribbon cutting for the First Step Housing Project on Aug. 24. Prater, pastor at First Baptist Church in Hays, delivered the blessing at the event. Mills is First Call’s executive director.

Church in Hays.

ECMA donated \$25,000 to the project, which helped First Call purchase the building where the housing project is located. The front part of the building contains staff offices and a lobby. The back half contains the transitional housing units.

There are four bedrooms, each with a private handicapped-accessible bathroom. There is also a common kitchen and laundry area. Residents will have a separate secure entrance to the building, with security cameras in place, Mills said. Staff will be on-call 24/7.

First Call is currently taking applications for the first residents. They must be residents of Ellis County, must pass drug and alcohol screening, must have no felony convictions for violent crimes, and must be “committed to striving for stability in future housing,” Mills said. All residents will be expected to hold jobs and to complete an online “financial literacy” course provided by the FDIC.

If the residents do not have jobs when they move into the facility, they must be committed to working with counselors to obtain employment, Mills said. Plus,

A Step Toward Easing Homelessness in Ellis County (Continued)

they will be required to set up a savings account.

In addition, residents will work with First Call's staff to supplement what they are learning in the FDIC course-- things such as setting up a budget, creating a checking account, learning how to read a lease, working with landlords, "pretty basic stuff," Mills said, but things many people do not know how to do.

She said that First Call is working with other agencies, such as the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, and Harvest America, to obtain referrals for individuals in need of housing. Interested individuals may call (785) 623-2800 for information.

Mills said the only people the facility cannot accommodate are single men with no children. This is due to mandates from the insurance company regarding liability issues, she said.

Both Wasinger and Mills pointed out that homelessness in Ellis County does not look like the homeless situation in other places.

Mills said, "In Ellis County a lot of families are doubling up

with other families. The school district keeps a list of children who are deemed at risk."

Some of these children may be sleeping on the floor in an over-crowded home housing several families.

In addition to the ECMA, other donors contributing \$5,000 and more include the Schmidt Foundation, Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Union Pacific Foundation, Ellis County Cares Fund, United Methodist Foundation, Heartland Community Foundation, the Ellis County Bar Association, and two anonymous donors.

Mills emphasized that it was the "countless individual

donors who contributed between \$5 and \$5,000" that helped First Call achieve its \$250,000 goal.

The organization is still accepting monetary donations and new products to help outfit the transitional housing units. Individuals may go to the website at www.firstcallelliscounty.org and click on the "Needs List" button to see what is still needed, or they may mail checks to the above address with "First Ste Housing Project" on the memo line.

(Photos by Linn Ann Huntington)



Prior to the day of the ribbon cutting, Gilda Allen, 17, a volunteer at First Call for Help of Ellis County, and Linda Mills, the agency's executive director, make up bunk beds in the new First Step Housing Project.