

## Monthly Newsletter

# Spokane County Sheriff's Office Chaplaincy

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## Hope

All Noah can see is water. The evening sun sinks into it. The morning sun rises from it. The clouds are reflected in it. His boat is surrounded by it. Water.

He sent a raven on a scouting mission; it never returned. He sent a dove. It came back shivering and spent, having found no place to roost. Then, just this morning, he tried again. With a prayer he let it go and watched until the bird was no bigger than a speck on the window.

All day he waited for the dove's return.

Now the sun is setting, and the sky is darkening, and he has come to look one final time, but all he sees is water. Water to the north. Water to the south. Water to the east. Water to the west. Most of us can understand the feeling. You have stood where Noah stood. You've known your share of floods. Flooded by sorrow at the cemetery, stress at the office, anger at the limitations of your body or the inability of your spouse. You've seen the floodwater rise, and you've likely seen the sun set on your hopes as well. You've been on Noah's boat.

And you've needed what Noah needed; you've needed some hope. You're not asking for a helicopter rescue, but the sound of one might be nice.

Hope doesn't promise an instant solution but rather the possibility of an eventual one. Sometimes all we need is a little hope.

That's all Noah needed.

Here is how the Bible describes the moment: "When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf!" (Genesis 8:11).

An olive leaf. Noah would have been happy to have the bird but to have the leaf! This leaf was more than a leaf; this was a promise. The bird brought more than a piece of a tree; it brought hope. For isn't that what hope is? Hope is an olive leaf—evidence of dry land after a flood. Proof to the dreamer that dreaming is worth the risk.

Have you received your olive branch? Don't think your ark is too isolated. Don't think your flood is too wide. Your hope may be just on the horizon.

What do you suppose Noah did with this piece of hope? What do you think he did with the leaf? Did he throw it overboard and forget about it? Do you suppose he stuck it in his pocket and saved it for a scrapbook? Or do you think he let out a whoop and assembled the troops and passed it around like the Hope Treasure it was?

Certainly he celebrated. That's what you do with hope. What do you do with your olive leaves of hope? You pass them around. You don't stick them in your pocket. You give them to the ones you love. Love always hopes. "Love ... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7 NKJV).

By God's grace you have found your way to dry land. You are a flood survivor. You know what it's like to see the waters subside. And since you do, since you passed through a flood and lived to tell about it, you are qualified to give hope to someone else. May we all share a little hope today.

