

The Four Chaplains



Feb. 3 will mark the 71st anniversary of the sinking of the United States Army Transport Dorchester and the legendary acts of selflessness of four Army chaplains who were aboard. *Four Chaplains Day*, as Congress has declared the date, honors the four chaplains who went down with their ship, as they gave their life jackets to other passengers.

On Feb. 3, 1943, the United States Army Transport Dorchester – a converted luxury liner – was crossing the North Atlantic, transporting more than 900 troops to an American base in Greenland. Aboard the ship were four chaplains of different faiths: Reverend George Fox (Methodist), Jewish Rabbi Alexander Goode, Reverend Clark Poling (Dutch Reformed) and Father John Washington (Roman Catholic).

Around 12:55 a.m., a German U-boat fired a torpedo that struck Dorchester's starboard side, below the water line and near the engine room. The explosion instantly killed 100 men and knocked out power and radio communication with Dorchester's three escort ships. Within 20 minutes, the transport sank and more than 670 men died.

As soldiers rushed to lifeboats, the four chaplains spread out, comforting the wounded and directing others to safety. One survivor, Private William Bednar, later said, "I could hear men crying, pleading, and praying. I could also hear the chaplains' preaching courage. Their voices were the only thing that kept me going."

Another survivor, John Ladd, watched the chaplains' distribute life jackets, and when they ran out, they removed theirs and gave them to four young men. "It was the finest thing I have seen, or hope to see, this side of heaven," he recalled.

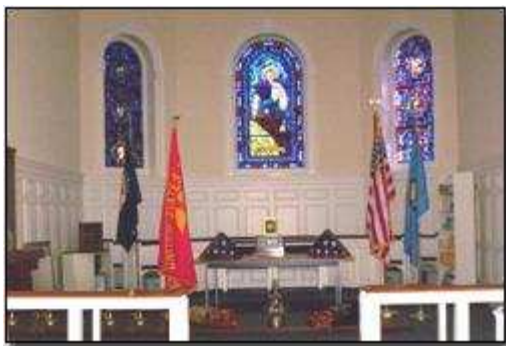
As Dorchester sank, the chaplains were seen linked arm in arm, praying.

In a world where differences have all too often created conflict and separated brothers, the Four Chaplains found a special kind of unity, and in that unity they found strength. Despite the differences, they became "brothers" for they had one unseen characteristic in common that overshadowed everything else. They were brothers because: **They All Four Shared the same Heavenly Father!**

Fox, Goode, Poling and Washington were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart, and in 1948, Congress declared Feb. 3 to be Four Chaplains Day. The four chaplains were also honored with a U.S. postage stamp that year.

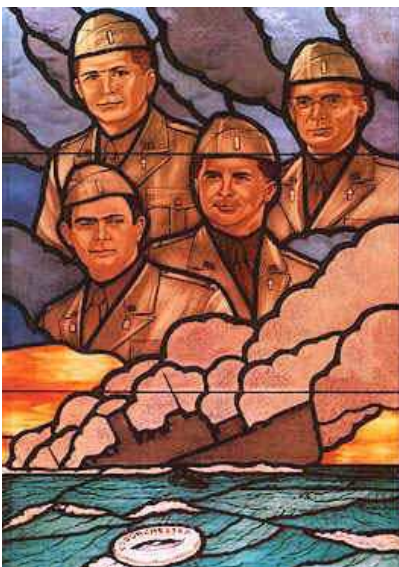


Because of the Medal of Honor's strict requirements of heroism under fire, Congress authorized a one-time Chaplain's Medal for Heroism on July 14, 1960. The award was presented to the chaplains' next of kin Jan. 18, 1961.



On Feb. 3, 1951, President Truman dedicated a chapel in the chaplains' honor at Grace Baptist Church in Philadelphia. When the building was sold, the chapel fell into disrepair, and the foundation overseeing the chapel moved it to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in 2001. The chapel was repaired in 2004 and given the name Chapel of the Four Chaplains.

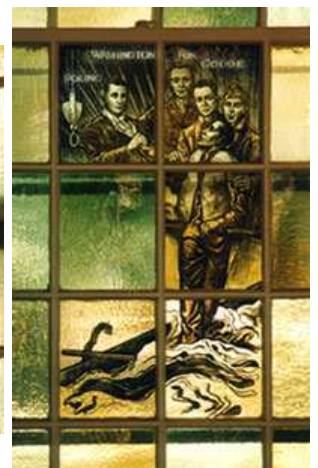
Friends of the Chapel of Four Chaplains (The Four Chaplains) is a non-profit organization that advocates for cultural harmony and religious tolerance. It is comprised of community leaders, friends and corporate contributors. The organization promotes annual memorial services in communities across The U.S. on or near the February anniversary of the sinking of the U.S.A.T. Dorchester to raise awareness of the four chaplains who gave not only their life jackets, but "their lives that others may live."



Stained glass windows from the U.S. Pentagon, Washington, DC.



Stained glass window from the Chapel at Fort Snelling, Minnesota



Stained glass windows from the Chapel at West Point



Four Chaplains Memorial,
Ann Arbor, Michigan



These **IMMORTAL CHAPLAINS**...
Catholic, Protestant, Jewish

UNITED
STATES
POSTAGE

3¢



Interfaith
in action

Died to Save **MEN OF ALL FAITHS**