

Static displays and signs of dynamic life

By Chaplain (Capt.) Mike Newton
437 AW Chapel

Can you believe it? It's the Christmas season again. It seems like only yesterday we were deploying to places like Ramstein, Tirana, Skopje or some other region in Kosovo.

Back then, the flight line at Charleston looked like a ghost town, complete with tumble weed! That's because a number of our jets were enroute to the afore mentioned destinations and all points in between in support of Operation Allied Force.

We always seem to be helping somewhere on the other side of the world. Perhaps the Air Force Recruiting Service could take a snap shot of Team Charleston members standing next to a C-17 and put that next to the AF's new slogan -"United States Air Force, World Ready."

I remember last Christmas season when some of my immediate family came to visit. I took them to see the C-17 and C-141 on static display at the Nose dock. Their eyes got like saucers as they approached. Meanwhile, I was extolling the virtues of the "Air Force's premier airlifter," the C-17 Globemaster III.

"It can go anywhere, with anything, at any time," I said. Pointing to the aircraft I continued, "You're looking at the jewel in the Air Force's crown." As we walked through the plane, I described all that both airframes had done and how they stand as a monument to world peace.

Just like the C-17 and C-141 on static display, Christmas and the Jewish festival, Chanukkah, stand as a monument to the great things God has done for the world. When you look at the Christ child in a manger scene or the

menorah you can have confidence the Almighty loves us.

Take time during this season to reflect on the monuments God has placed in your life to remind you of the divine dynamic nature. Perhaps the best place to start is with the symbols of Christmas or Hanukkah.

Take the well-known manger scene. For Christians, it is the celebration of an epic movement by God in the life of humanity. God came to be one of us in order to draw us in love. In Christian thought, it was God's plan for Christ to take on the human form from a baby in a manger to a man dying on a cross, so God could identify with our sorrows and reconcile with us.

For Jews, Hanukkah, which is the festival of rededication, holds a similarly profound symbol in the menorah. The menorah stands as symbol of God's miraculous provision for a chosen people during a time of persecution under the Greeks.

During the festival of rededication, oil was needed for the menorah in the Temple, which was supposed to burn throughout the night every night. There was only enough oil to burn for one day, yet miraculously, it burned for eight days, the time needed to prepare a fresh supply of oil for the menorah.

So, as you enjoy this season, take note of the monuments God has given to remind us of the greatest gift-God's love. A great way to do this is attend worship. Go to your house of worship and personalize the experience. You will find that rewarding and grow closer to the Almighty.

If the 437th Airlift Wing Chaplain Service and help you in this journey, please contact us at 963-2536.

Holiday season suicide awareness

By Gen. Charles "Tony" Robertson
AMC commander/USTRANSCOM commander

The holiday season is rapidly approaching. While this is normally a time for family and friends, it's also a time when those who are separated from loved ones feel the most alone.

Therefore, it's crucial during this stressful time of year that we take time to focus on our people. Make a point to listen to your people; find out how they are *really* doing.

In the last four years, the number of suicides has *dramatically* decreased. There were no suicides during the 1998 holiday season. I would like to think this is because we are taking care of our own and making every effort to stay involved.

Continue to encourage "buddy care" among the troops. Look for the key risk factors for suicides-problems with relationships, finances, legal difficulties or substance abuse are reasons for feelings of hopelessness. Remember to also stay alert after the holidays, when the bills come due in January.

There have been three suicides in AMC this year—let's hold the line here. I urge you to stress Suicide Awareness Programs at your base so we can repeat 1998's holiday season trend of no suicides.