A balm in Gilead

By Chaplain Sharon J. Reives

On this 10th anniversary of 9/11, we affirm our conviction that God cares for us. The Bible says that he is the God of all comfort… who comforts us in our troubles.

No matter how hard we try, words simply cannot express the horror, the shock, and the revulsion that we all feel over what took place in our nation on September 11, 2001.

It will go down in our history as a day to remember. The spirit of our nation will not be defeated by such twisted and diabolical schemes. How do we understand something like this?

Why does God allow evil, like this, to take place? Perhaps that is what you are asking now.

You may even be angry at God. I want to assure you that God understands these feelings that you may have.

We saw so much on our television and we heard on our radio… stories that bring tears to our eyes, and make us all feel a sense of anger.

But, I want you to know that God can be trusted even when life seems at its darkest. As difficult as it may be for us to see right now, this event can give a message of hope… hope for the present and hope for the future.

Yes, there is hope. There is hope for the present; because, I believe the stage has already been set for a new spirit in our country.

One of the things that we desperately need is a spiritual renewal in our nation. We need a spiritual revival in America. And God has told us in his word time after time that we are to repent of our sins and return to him. And he will bless us in a new way.

This event reminds us of the brevity and the uncertainty of life. We never know when we, too will be called into eternity.

I doubt if even one of those people who got on those planes or walked into the World Trade Center or the Pentagon on that Tuesday morning thought that it would be the last day of their lives.

I doubt if it even occurred to them. And that is why each of us needs to face our own spiritual need and commit ourselves to God and his will now.

Yes, our nation was attacked… buildings destroyed… lives lost. But, now we have a choice… whether to implode and disintegrate emotionally and spiritually as a people and a nation or whether we choose to become stronger through all of this struggle to re-build on a solid foundation. And I believe that we are in the process of starting to rebuild on that foundation. That foundation is our trust in God.

That's what this service is all about. And in that faith we have the strength to endure something as difficult and as horrendous as what we have experienced during that awful week.

My prayer today is that we will feel the loving arms of God wrapped around us and will know in our hearts that he will never leave or forsake us as we trust in him. We also ask God to give wisdom and courage and strength to our leaders. And we believe that God is victorious despite of the circumstances. For some of us, music that points to Jesus and the Gospel can bring refreshment. The words of the familiar spiritual says, "There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul."

In the Old Testament, the balm of Gilead is taken most directly from Jeremiah chapter 8 v. 22:

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wounds of my people?"

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted that our ancestors took Jeremiah's question mark (Is there no balm in Gilead?) and straighten it into an exclamation point. There is a balm in Gilead! The hymn indicates why we need it… to make the wounded whole, to heal the sin sick soul, and to fight discouragement in our lives. Anyone been wounded spiritually? Anyone sin sick?

Matthew 9:12 says, "The healthy have no need of a doctor." The word balm is defined as a soothing restorative agency made from small tropical evergreen tree.

So, where can we find that balm today? We find it in God's holy sanctuary… in his holy spirit… in his son, Jesus Christ.

James 5:14 says, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

So, I say on this 10th Anniversary of 9/11 that even when we may not feel like singing, we sing anyway!!! We praise God anyway! We serve him anyway!

The song says:

"Sometimes I feel discouraged…
and feel my work in vain…
and then the Holy Spirit
revives my soul again…"

Daniel while in the lion's den encouraged himself in the lord. The three Hebrew boys while in the fiery furnace encouraged themselves in the lord! We need, the unction of the Holy Spirit.

"If you cannot preach like Peter and if you can't pray like Paul… just tell the story of love of Jesus and say he died for all." There is a balm, so have faith in God. There is a balm. We are at war, and the enemy is us… the sin-sick souls!!! We must recognize the true enemy. We need spiritual weapons!!!

The very bottom line is that the lord wants us to be that balm in Gilead… to do his work.

And on this 9/11 anniversary, I say to you, there is a balm in Gilead! There is a healer. There is a comforter.

Cooking tips for kids

From CNRJ Fire Department

It's important that kids who like to cook know how to be safe in the kitchen. These tips can help you figure out what you're old enough to do on your own, and when it's time to ask a grown up for help. Before you get cooking, you need to get a grown up's permission. If you plan to use a recipe, look it over with a grown up first to decide what you can do on your own and what you need help with. And once you get started, never be afraid to ask for help. Even the best chefs rely on their assistants to help them out in the kitchen.

From mixing up cake batter to cutting shapes out of cookie dough, helping a grown up in the kitchen can be lots of fun. So if you're not old enough yet to cook on your own, don't worry; being the chef's helper is the most important job in a kitchen.

All kids are different, and a grown-up should always decide what is safe for you to do in the kitchen, but here are some guidelines that you can use.

Kids aged 3-5 can:

- Get ingredients out of the refrigerator and mix them together in a bowl.
- Pour liquids into a bowl.
- Wash fruits and vegetables under cold water.
- Use a cookie cutter to cut shapes out of cookie dough.

Kids aged 6-8 can:

- Open packages.
- Use a butter knife to spread frosting, cream cheese, peanut butter or soft cheese.
- Peel vegetables.
- Measure ingredients.
- Stir ingredients in a bowl.
- Set the table.

Kids aged 9-12 can:

- Begin to follow a recipe.
- Open cans.
- Use electrical kitchen appliances, such as a blender, electric mixer, microwave oven or toaster oven when a grownup is present.
- Use a grater to shred cheese and vegetables.
- Select oven temperature and turn stove burners on and off with a grown up present.
- Help plan the meal and make a salad.

Kids aged 14 and above can:

- Operate the stove or oven without a grown up present.
- Heat food up in the microwave without a grown up present.
- Drain cooked pasta into a colander.
- Take a tray of cookies out of the oven.