

Serving God Today on Yesterday's Battlefields



OLD TIME RELIGION: Chaplain Alan Farley mingles with Civil War re-enactors (above) and brings a rousing sermon (below).

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On any given weekend throughout our nation, you can find thousands of Civil War enthusiasts drawn to any number of reenactments depicting engagements of the War Between the States. These reenactments range from small skirmishes, numbering a hundred soldiers or less, to large events such as The Battle of Antietam, which had more than 15,000 reenactors this past September.

Ensnconced amid the hundred and sometimes thousands of tents of Southern and Northern re-enactors, you will often find a large white canvas tent with a wooden cross atop it and the Christian flag waving proudly in front. The tent belongs to Chaplain Alan Farley and his family, who make up Re-enactors Missions for Jesus Christ (RMJC), the first ministry of its kind in today's Civil War national reenacting community. With his wife, Faith, and their children Katherine and Benjamin, Chaplain Farley ministers each year to tens of thousands of re-enactors and their families and the multiple thousands of spectators who attend the events.

On Sunday mornings, you can hear the familiar

peal of the chaplain's hand-rung bell and the echoing cry of "Church call! Church call!" This is a clarion call for all re-enactors — both believers and non-believers — to assemble in front of the RMJC's tent for an hour of hymns, prayer, and the chaplain's moving exhortations for the lost to come to Christ and for those who have backslidden to get right with the God. During each service there are those who do answer either the call to make a profession of faith or ask for prayer or counseling.

After becoming a Civil War re-enactor in 1979, Alan Farley spent several years attending various reenactments in the South, but it was not until 1984 when he felt the call to portray a chaplain and preach the saving Grace of God to those who were involved in these reenactments.

Farley realized that many of his fellow re-enactors were not Christians and were not being reached by the church because they were not at home. He also found out that there were many "closet" Christians, true believers who only needed some prodding to come forward and stand for the Lord.

After many years in prayer and an increasing involvement in this outreach work to the reenactments, in 1991 Farley quit his regular job to devote his life to his new faith-based missionary outreach.

In the last 18 years of ministry, the Lord has used the Farleys to pray with about 1,200 individuals to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

In addition to his ministry to re-enactors and their families, Chaplain Farley also has a unique tract ministry. In 1985, he came into possession of copies of several original Gospel tracts that had been handed out to soldier during the Civil War.

Since that time his ministry has been able to purchase some of these original tracts and has reprinted more than 90 different titles, distributing more than one million pages of these tracts. The reprints are glued or sewn together just like the originals so that they are classified as historical artifacts. Because of this, the reprinted tracts can be passed out to the public on National Park property and also on military

bases, places where modern religious tracts could not be distributed. Because most of these tracts deal with soldiers and war, many found their way into the hands of our soldiers during Desert Storm in 1990-1991.

In addition to the tracts, the ministry has also reprinted both a Union and a Confederate pocket-sized New Testament, just like the ones carried by soldier during the war. Recently, the publishing branch of RMJC has expanded with its reprinting of an 1864 book, *Christian Memorials of the War*. Added to this is the ministry's quarterly newspaper, *The Christian Banner*.

Whether portraying a Confederate chaplain or a delegate to the United States Christian Commission, Farley and his family travel approximately 40,000 miles each year and attend about 25 reenactments or living history encampments. Besides ministering to those at Civil War reenactments, Chaplain Farley preaches "Old Fashioned Sunday" services and "Patriotic Sunday" services in churches. He also preaches Christian School chapel services and teaches history classes on the faith of the Founding Fathers and Civil War leaders.

Readers interested in learning more about this unique Christian missionary outreach, may visit the ministry Web site: www.rmjc.org. Those interested in booking Chaplain Farley for special Sunday services, Christian school appearances or missions conferences, may contact him by phone (434-993-0550), by mail (P.O. Box 970, Concord, VA 24538), or by E-mail (rmjc@lynchburg.net).

