

## Let's Go Deeper...

Wednesday, July 27, 2016

Dr. Scott Pierce sent me an e-mail last week with a question:

*What do you tell young kids that are afraid about all the things going on both here and abroad? Vivian was very scared the other night after the Nice incident and I tried my best to discuss this with her. I am sure other kids in our congregation are concerned, too.*

Scott and Debbie have two daughters, Vivian (10) and Audra (8).

In responding to Scott's question, I wasted no time in going straight to the top. I wondered what Mr. Rogers would advise.

Fred Rogers graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 1963 and was ordained a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Never sensing a call to preach, he instead was fascinated by the potential of the then-new medium of television, especially for its capacity to do good in the world. With a heart for teaching children, Mr. Rogers took his ministry to the airwaves. The rest, as they say, is history.



Though Fred Rogers died in 2003 at the age of 75, The Fred Rogers Company has maintained a helpful web site on which Mr. Rogers' wise perspectives on child development and parenting have been carefully stewarded and are readily available.

I was delighted to find a section titled "Special Challenges" on which "Tragic Events" was one of the topics for which Fred Rogers offers his wisdom.

Read the full page at:

<http://www.fredrogers.org/parents/special-challenges/tragic-events.php>

A thumbnail outline of his recommendations includes:

- Do your best to keep the television off, or at least limit how much your child sees of any news event.
- Try to keep yourself calm. Your presence can help your child feel more secure.
- Give your child extra comfort and physical affection, like hugs or snuggling up together with a favorite book. Physical comfort goes a long way towards providing inner security. That closeness can nourish you, too.
- Try to keep regular routines as normal as possible. Children and adults count on their familiar pattern of everyday life.
- Plan something that you and your child enjoy doing together, like taking a walk, going on a picnic, having some quiet time, or doing something silly. It can help to

know there are simple things in life that can help us feel better, in good times and in bad.

- Even if children don't mention what they've seen or heard in the news, it can help to ask what they think has happened. If parents don't bring up the subject, children can be left with their misinterpretations. You may be really surprised at how much your child has heard from others.
- Focus attention on the helpers, like the police, firemen, doctors, nurses, paramedics, and volunteers. It's reassuring to know there are many caring people who are doing all they can to help others in this world.
- Let your child know if you're making a donation, going to a town meeting, writing a letter or e-mail of support, or taking some other action. It can help children to know that adults take many different active roles and that we don't give in to helplessness in times of worldwide crisis.

Mr. Shirey will add two more things to Mr. Rogers' list:

- Remind your children of the resources of our faith. During Sunday school this summer, the children have learned the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm ("I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me") and the Lord's Prayer ("Deliver us from evil"). Talk with them about Jesus' reassuring words to his disciples in John 14 ("Let not your hearts be troubled; neither let them be afraid") and Matthew 28 ("Lo, I am with you always"). Tell them how *your* faith provides you "a refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble" (Ps 46).
- Know that I am steadfastly committed to making Central Christian Church, its facilities, ministries, and people a *sanctuary* for *all* God's children. A safe place. A reassuring place. A place where, when your children are there, they will know they are loved and cared for. I pledge to be for them someone in whom they can sense a Christ-centered strength, trustworthiness, and a sincere concern for their well-being.

In Fred Rogers' words:

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." To this day, especially in times of "disaster," I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world."

I pledge that I will always strive to be one of those" helpers" for the children who call Central their church home.

In Christ,

Pastor  
David

