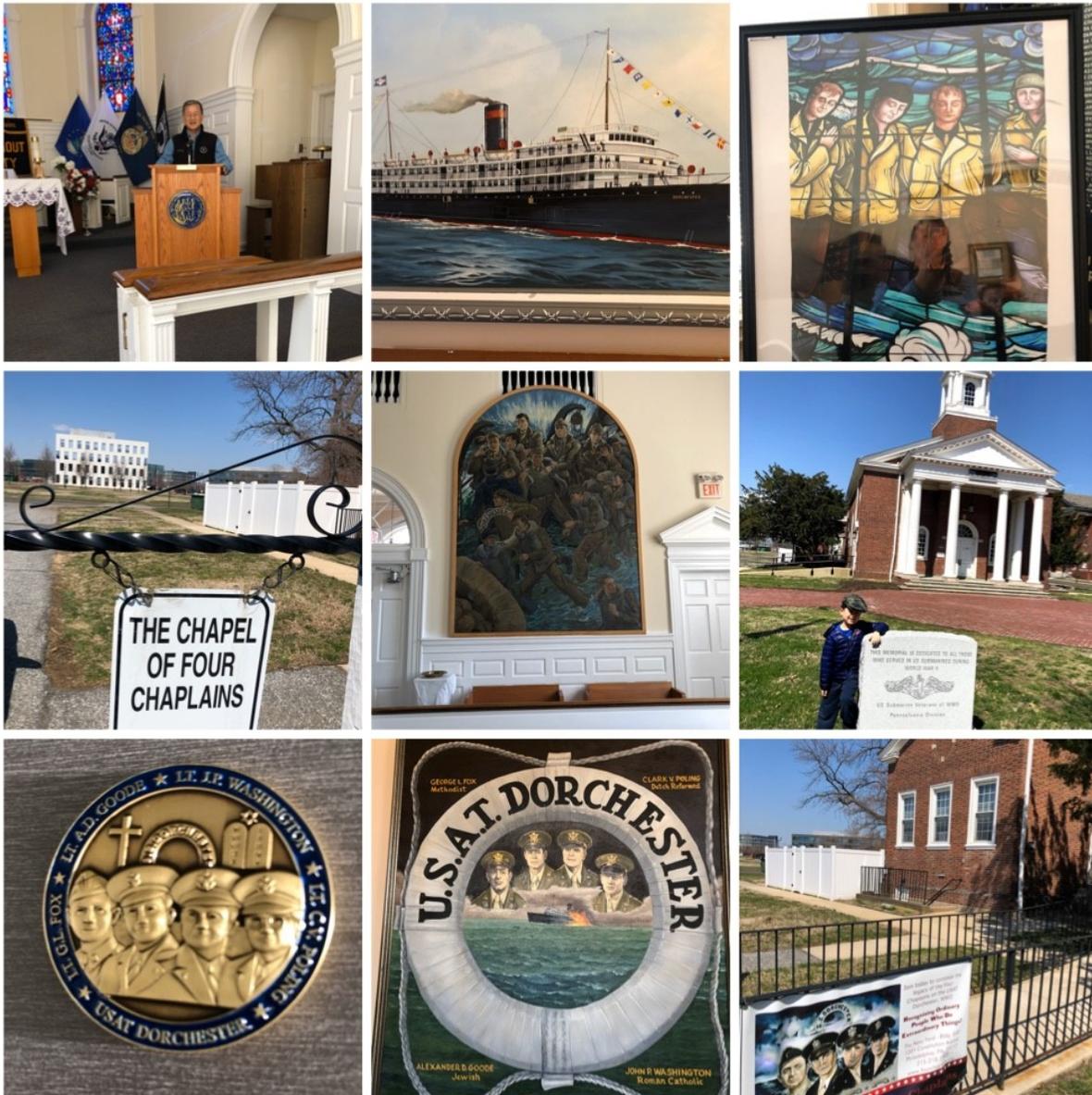


The Sacrificial Valor of the Four Chaplains

By Chaplain Paul Kim

National Chaplain

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” – John 15:13



Shortly after midnight on February 3, 1943, the SS *Dorchester* carrying 902 servicemen, merchants, and civilians was struck by a torpedo fired from the German submarine U-223. Only 230 survived. Out of the 672 who lost their lives that day, four were Army chaplains. In the moment of chaos and panic, many testified to their calming presence, distributing lifejackets and when they ran out, giving up their own. Some eyewitnesses recounted seeing the four in their final minutes, arms linked in prayer. For their act

of sacrificial valor, they posthumously received the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart in 1944. A one-time Special Medal for Heroism was awarded by President Eisenhower in 1961.

As a chaplain, it has been my honor and privilege in bringing these stories of faith and sacrifice to the public's attention. Lt. George L. Fox, a Methodist minister, Lt. Alexander D. Goode, a rabbi, Lt. John P. Washington, a Catholic priest, and Lt. Clark P. Poling, a Reformed pastor all willingly laid down their lives in order to save others. We can say their self-sacrifice was not incidental; it was part of their ministerial DNA. They were merely reflecting the very character of the God they served. In April 2019 I took my 9-year old grandson who lives in Philadelphia to the Chapel of The Four Chaplains at the Naval Shipyard. It is appropriately in the "City of Brotherly Love," as they demonstrated the highest expression of human love. Their sacrificial valor is a chilling rebuke to our times where self-preservation and self-absorption reigns. As we remember their legacy of faith and service to others, let's continue to pray for our nation and serve in love. And may we never forget for a moment the enduring motto: "Freedom is not Free."