

# Believe in Redemption

Deputy Chief [Thomas Lemmer](#) (Ret'd)



In this life there is suffering and evil is real. We live in a world that struggles with peace. Our communities have peace officers, police officers, because of this reality. Yet, more than any other reason, those who pursue a policing career seek to help others. And, given that children

are among the world's most vulnerable, their safety is deeply held within the policing mission. At their best, our police officers protect the innocent, and they seek to bring peace. They can also help guide those who have wandered from peace back toward the path. At Christmastime, we remember a child and the path to redemption He provides.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11 (ESV)

## A Lesson on Men's Courses

Within A Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens wrote of three ghostly spirits. They visit and instruct Ebenezer Scrooge on how his choices in life have had impact far beyond his own life. It is to the "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come," that Scrooge remarks, "I fear you more than any other specter I have seen." Scrooge knows that the future can be fearsome. This is particularly so when our past choices have not been good ones.

Scrooge, upon being confronted with the consequences of his own actions, makes a desperate plea. In doing so, he draws out the tale's core lesson: "Men's courses will

foreshadow certain ends to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me." In that moment, Scrooge is reaching for an opportunity to take an altered course as a pathway to redemption. In performing their duties, our police officers have the opportunity to change minds and touch hearts. Even with those who have strayed from the path of peace.

## A Chicago Redemption Story

Chicago has a lengthy history of gang violence. One that predates the infamous Al Capone, and continues to plague far too many of the city's neighborhoods. As I have previously written, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) formed its first dedicated gang unit in 1967. Since that time, the department has often expanded and reorganized its resources focused on countering the city's gangs. For several years, I was actively involved in those efforts.

In 1994, I was a CPD gang tactical officer. In that year alone, I had thousands of contacts with gang members on Chicago's southside, and I participated in many arrests. One involved a 14-year-old gang member, who I arrested moments after he discharged a handgun at several members of a rival gang. Fortunately, in that incident his shots missed everyone.

## When Courses are Diverted

On a snowy night eleven years later, I was reminded of that arrest when I ordered a pizza delivered to my home. A 25-year-old delivery driver came to my door. It was then I discovered that I only had a \$50 bill, which was much more than the cost of the pizza. Awkwardly, I began to explain this to the driver. With the larger bill, the driver was not able to make change. To my surprise, he began to tell me how he had tried to call. This really confused me, as I had only then realized I did not have any smaller bills.

How did he know? As he continued speaking, I realized he was not talking about the pizza or the payment. He spoke about how he had tried to call me at my old unit years earlier. He was talking about that arrest in 1994, and he remembered me clearly. When I had arrested him that night, I spoke to him. I expressed concern about his choices and their potential consequences. He explained that our conversation that night stuck with him. It made a real difference in his life, and he subsequently left his gang. He was now married and raising a child of his own.

That talk was one of hundreds for me, but for him, it was the one that made a difference. He thanked me for helping to guide him back to the

path of peace. That pizza delivery is one I remember very well. Dinner was special that night. There was a deepened appreciation about the reality of men's courses. What a blessing to have been able to play even a small part in someone's move toward redemption.

## Embracing Redemption

How we live our lives points each of us to certain ends. When we have the opportunity to help someone on their path to redemption, we should do so. Such is true to the policing mission, and far beyond. The power of redemption is real. It is a continuing blessing that comes from above.



## From our Vault

Articles from [past Peacemakers](#) make for a great second read. And for many of you - the first read. They are timeless. We opened the vault for this issue, and hope you will be blessed again by this contribution.

<https://fcpcanada.com/uploads/peacemakers/24MayPeacemaker.pdf>



May, 2024

**FCPO - CANADA**  
**The Peacemaker**

