

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue launches new Chaplain Program and hires new chaplain

Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano announced that the Fire & Rescue department is launching a new Chaplain Program and Pastor Josh Harrison has been appointed as the department's fire chaplain.

"The Chaplain program is a long overdue addition for us and we are very fortunate to have Josh and his family as a part of our fire family now," Chief Stefano said. "We look forward to the leadership and support Josh will share with us and the community."

Harrison, formerly the teaching pastor at Rock Harbor Church, was first introduced to the community at the opening of Fire Station No. 1 last year and he was immediately called upon thereafter to help provide support following the passing of Fire Capt. Mike Kreza.

The department's Chaplain program is another important step forward to actively support the mental health and wellness of the firefighters. The program will be managed by Fire Capt. Kevin Reddy, who was instrumental in developing the program and bringing it to life, and supported by a core team of Costa Mesa firefighters.

The new Chaplain program follows the introduction of the Firefighter Peer Assistance Program which was initiated in 2017, with Fire Engineer Mike Ruhl leading that program for the department. CMF&R has also participated in an annual fitness and wellness program through the regional fire academy (Santa Ana College), and will continue to increase efforts to better address cancer prevention and awareness for all fire service professionals.

Pastor Harrison lives in Costa Mesa with his wife, Heather, and their three kids, Buzè, Marta, and Elijah. They have lived in Costa Mesa for the better part of the last 25 years.

Harrison moved to Costa Mesa from northwest Montana in 1995 to attend Vanguard University and never left. He graduated from Vanguard with a bachelor's degree in English literature in May of 1999, and he and Heather (whom he met at Vanguard) were married a month later.

After graduating, Harrison began working at Vanguard as an IT Technician and stayed working in the IT department at the university for the next eight years. During that time, he went to graduate school at Vanguard to work toward a master's degree in Biblical Studies, emphasizing Biblical languages. Also, during this time, he began working more directly with students, leading them on short-term service trips to Mexico and East Africa. In 2006, he and his wife moved to England, where Harrison studied at Oxford University and graduated with a master's degree in Jewish studies.

After a year overseas, they moved back to Costa Mesa and shortly after returning adopted their daughters from Ethiopia. Upon returning to the area, Harrison got another job at Vanguard University, this time as the Mission Director, recruiting, equipping, training, and pastoring students through short-term service teams sent both locally and globally.

During this time, he worked with a variety of charitable organizations across our community, many of which are based in Costa Mesa. After four years of serving in this capacity, Harrison left Vanguard University and began working at Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, where he served as the teaching pastor throughout most of last year.

Throughout his tenure at Rock Harbor, he was involved in the local community in a variety of ways: pastoring community

members, praying at Costa Mesa City Council meetings, working with charitable organizations in the City, and now preparing for his next pastoral role.

The Harrisons and their kids love the city of Costa Mesa and spend the vast majority of their time here. Heather Harrison serves as the Middle School Principal at Mariners Christian School.