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Remembering 9/11 a Decade Later



Local Pastor Recalls Fateful Day

10 Years Later: Remembering 9/11

Local Pastor Overcomes His Own Post-9/11 Pain To Help Others

by Ashley Del Rio

Ryan Edlind still gets emotional, 10 years later.

"I saw it. I smelled it. I felt it," he said.

It has been a decade since the World Trade Center fell to terrorism, taking 2,753 victims with it. Though the material damage has long since been cleared away, families and friends of those who have been lost still live with pain that may never be fully remedied, including Edlind, pastor of Care Ministries at Cuyahoga Valley Church in Broadview Heights.

While the tragic collapse of the Twin Towers took place in Manhattan, the pain remains in the hearts of people the nation and world over – a result, in part, of both the city's overwhelming impact on the rest of the United States and of the countless relationships held by victims whose loved ones extended far beyond the urban island.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Edlind was completing his Masters of Social Work at New York University and interning at a local counseling center, the skyline of lower Manhattan visible from his window.

After 8:48 that Tuesday morning, Edlind looked through his window toward the towers, but the 110-story buildings had disappeared in a massive cloud of smoke. "I kept looking, hoping the towers would somehow magically appear," Edlind said. "It was surreal."

When the towers fell, Edlind canceled his appointments and headed home. While New York traffic is famously slow, on this day it was almost insurmountable with roads blocked by a flood of people walking away from ground zero. "As I walked toward our apartment, ashes fell onto my head," Edlind said. "The large number of people who were walking home appeared to be dazed. It was eerie, solemn, and the people mostly walked silently – like a funeral processional."



A memorial seen by Ryan Edlind grew by the side of a church near Ground Zero shortly after 9/11.

The initial shock of that day was not the end of tragic news for Edlind, who soon received a bittersweet phone call from his childhood best friend. Kyle, a New York City police officer, was alive and well, but his brother, Kenny, had not been so fortunate. "When he said his brother was gone, it hit like a ton of bricks. It was, and still is, hard to talk about." With no opportunity to say goodbye or view a body, Edlind faced difficulties with closure that thousands of other families experienced. But when the initial fear and anger over the events began to fade, Edlind realized he was uniquely equipped to help.

"As a counselor, social worker and pastor, I knew those events would forever change the city. I knew God could use those events to change me, the people I knew, and in the city I loved – but for good."

Though no one could have predicted the tragedy, Edlind felt that, throughout his education in counseling and ministry, God had been preparing him to help



those affected by 9/11.

In the years following the disaster, Edlind would counsel grieving people in a number of ways, first through his role at Elmhurst Hospital, and then as a counselor at Calvary Baptist Church in NYC. "Several people who survived the WTC came forward looking for help," Edlind said. "Their grief was complicated and ambiguous. Several were traumatized with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and even had a guilt for making it out alive." Among the tragic tales, Edlind's counseling experience entitled him to hear remarkable stories of heroism that, for matters of privacy, he keeps to himself.

Now a minister in Ohio, Edlind's backyard is divided between North Royalton and Broadview Heights, but he maintains a heart for those affected by 9/11, which is why he and his wife, Jennifer, organized a trip to the city Aug. 18 to 21 to remember that day and those who were lost.

In the future, Edlind is planning to incorporate the memories and lessons he acquired from 9/11 to offer continuing education credits for health care professionals. "I'd like to be a part of reconnecting the soul to the 'care' professions in Cleveland," he said. "I believe that is what helped so many people in New York. The tragedy of 9/11 could have happened to any city in America."



Ryan Edlind, who is originally from New York, is now at home in northeast Ohio with his wife, Jennifer, and their sons Liam, 6, (left) and Tyler, 4. Photos courtesy of Ryan Edlind

Turning tragedy into an opportunity for healing and learning, Edlind has used his painful experience to impact in the Cleveland and New York City areas alike. "Suffering changes peoples lives," he said. "Having good people around when we go through hard times can make all the difference." ∞

