

Chaplain Dave Bridgen Biography

Chaplain Dave Bridgen was born in Chicago, Illinois on June 1, 1945, and was a long-time resident of San José, CA. He passed away peacefully on December 31, 2017, after a valiant battle with Parkinson's Disease. He was diagnosed with this dreadful disease in 2010.

Chaplain Dave Bridgen joined the United States Army and served in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive, where he came into contact with Agent Orange. This was the source of his Parkinson's Disease.

After leaving the Army, Chaplain Dave Bridgen returned to Southern California where he met the love of his life, Betty Ruth Clingen. They were married on June 27, 1969 and had been married for over 48 years at the time of his passing. It was during that time that Chaplain Dave Bridgen's sensed God leading him into a life of ministry. He completed his Bachelor's degree in Christian Education at Biola University, and his Master's Degree in Christian Education at Talbot Seminary. Chaplain Dave Bridgen served as a pastor in several churches in Southern California, before coming to Hillside Evangelical Free Church, in San José. In 1981, while serving at Hillside Church, Chaplain Dave Bridgen was approached by members of the San José Police Chaplaincy with the idea of becoming the San José Police Chaplain. At first, Chaplain Dave Bridgen worked as a volunteer part-time Chaplain, while working part-time for the church. A few years later, Chaplain Dave became the full-time chaplain for the Department.

Chaplain Dave Bridgen quickly became a resource for other law enforcement agencies around the country who were attempting to establish chaplaincies for their departments. In addition, he served as the Chaplain for the San José Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and taught at the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Dave was instrumental in several major innovations in the San José Police Department. Among others, he was instrumental in the implementation of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program, the Family Academy for the spouses and significant others of our new officers, and the Community Chaplain program, where trained chaplains respond at all hours to major incidents to be a resource for families and officers in need. In 1999, Chaplain Dave Bridgen was selected as the International Police Chaplain of the Year! Chaplain Dave Bridgen was very involved in the life of the San José Police Department. He could often be seen on ride-alongs or just walking the halls, talking to people from the SJPD family

Not too long prior to Chaplain Dave Bridgen's death, he was having difficulty finding words and while at the VA Hospital, the nurse practitioner told him that she knew it was frustrating for him to not be able to express himself. But in a clear, strong voice, Chaplain Dave Bridgen told her, "I just want people to see God in my life every day."

He was a friend and a resource for the Police Department members, regardless of the time of day. Over the years, many from the San José Police Department's family have seen God in Chaplain Dave Bridgen's life. He was always a great example of a true servant. Until the time of his passing, Chaplain Dave Bridgen's "trademark question" for everyone was, "Is there anything I can do for you?"²

² <https://sjpdchaplaincy.org>