



# THE POST

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## The display of white ribbons communicates public support for the Cleary family

# Back Mountain community mourns great loss

By DAVE KONOPKI  
Post Editor

DALLAS – We're grieving. Although it's impossible for most of us to imagine the magnitude of the suffering his family is enduring, members of the Back Mountain community are mourning the recent death of First Lt. Michael Cleary.

The 1999 Dallas High School graduate was killed Dec. 20 during an ambush by insurgent forces near Samarra, Iraq. Cleary and his men were returning to their unit after successfully destroying a large cache of weapons in a bomb factory when a roadside bomb exploded near their

convoy.

The intelligent, popular, athletic 24-year-old was 10 days away from ending his tour of duty in Iraq and returning to the United States. Cleary was also two months away from marrying his longtime sweetheart Erin Kavanaugh.

A four-hour viewing was held Thursday at the Anderson Center on the campus of College Misericordia.

An outpouring of sympathy from community members, civic leaders and businesses has been extended to the Cleary family. Business signs along Route 309 have been changed and replaced with messages that honor Cleary,

And white ribbons – a sign of support to the Cleary family – have been placed on telephone poles, on lightpoles, and on front doors throughout the Back Mountain.

The support hasn't gone unnoticed, said Cleary's father Jack. "God bless this community," he said. "There are so many wonderful people. Mike is a product of this community. He's a product of all of us."

The support has taken many forms, said Cleary. Phone calls have been pouring in from across the nation. Neighbors have offered their houses to accommodate many visitors to the Cleary

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Members of the Cleary family support each other as the body of Michael arrives at Snowdon Funeral Home Tuesday afternoon.

TIMES LEADER STAFF PHOTO/DON CAREY

## A new church rector found

The Rev. M. Peter Harer will give his first sermon at the Prince of Peace Episcopal Church Sunday, Jan. 8

BY GENELLE HOBAN  
Post Correspondent

Having only a single church to tend to will be a nice change of pace for the Rev. M. Peter Harer, the new rector at the Prince of Peace Episcopal Church in Dallas.

Harer who will start his services Sunday, Jan. 8, has been taking care of two churches, one in Palmerton and the other in Lehigh, for close to nine years at the Episcopal Ministry of Unity.

"They are only seven miles apart," he said. "It was a lot of juggling to do."

Previous to his posts in Palmerton and Lehigh, Harer was a practicing attorney in Harrisburg.

"I got a degree from Dickinson Law School in Carlisle in 1992," the 55 year old said.

Harer, a native of Jersey Shore, Pa., said he has been to the Wilkes-Barre region many times, but was unfamiliar with the Dallas area.

"We wanted to be in a smaller town, and somewhere that was closer in proximity to our cabin," he said. "My wife and I have our retirement home in Jersey Shore. We call it our cabin, but it's bigger than that. It's in the country and is built on the farm that I grew up on."

Dave Dillon, chairman of the search committee, said the church began the hunt for a new rector in March.

### MORE INFO

To read some of the Rev. M. Peter Harer's past sermons log on to [http://www.episminu.org/sermons\\_on\\_line.htm](http://www.episminu.org/sermons_on_line.htm).

new approach to things. He has a sense of strong quiet leadership."

Harer and his wife have three grown children and a son, Samuel who will celebrate his 17th birthday soon.

"My son is very positive about the move," Harer said. "He likes to play soccer and he heard that Dallas has a good soccer team."

Harer will replace Vivian Bennett, the former priest in charge, who parishioners said



The Prince of Peace Episcopal Church in Dallas will welcome its new rector, M. Peter Harer, a native of Jersey Shore, Pa. Sunday, Jan. 8. Harer, 55, is pictured at a farewell party at his former parish community in Palmerton.

was more than an interim priest but less than a rector for more than three years.

"We were just very impressed with the friendliness of the people," Harer said. "We felt there was a lot of enthusiasm in the parish. We felt that it was a good match."

Harer, ordained a priest in 1981, will celebrate his 25th anniversary this year.

"I had a desire to help people and to serve the lord," the father of four and grandfather of seven said. "It's kind of a personal thing. I wasn't hit with lightning or anything. I just had sense of calling for my vocation."

The new rector and his family will temporarily reside at a parishioner's cottage in Harveys Lake until March because the rectory is currently being rented out.

"We kind of feel like gypsies," Harer said. "We hope to be moving into the cottage next week, but things are still kind of up in the air

with the movers and everything."

Harer, an avid lover of cooking, said he will give his first sermon on the Epiphany, the day celebrated as the occasion when three wise men came to the manger in Bethlehem.

"Together with the Prince of Peace parish I hope we can grow together and expand our ministries," Harer said. "I hope to help people find a spiritual home in the Prince of Peace Church."

Harer and his family along with their yellow Labrador retriever, Ollie, love to go camping in the summer in their pop-up camper.

In 2002 while on a three month sabbatical Harer and his family ventured their way to California and back.

"Now that I only have one church I hope that I can be more involved in community affairs," he said.



Pictured is the Prince of Peace Episcopal Church in Dallas where the Rev. M. Peter Harer is the new rector. Harer, ordained a priest in 1981, will celebrate his 25th anniversary this year.



Tim Crossin intercepts a pass by Syracuse's #13 Darryl Watkins.

TIMES LEADER STAFF PHOTO/AIMEE DILGER

## Kennedy sees bright future for Tim Crossin

As a freshman at Towson University Crossin's started all nine games this season

By DAVE KONOPKI  
Post Editor

WILKES-BARRE TWP. – Standing in the hallway outside the visitors' locker room at Wachovia Arena, Pat Kennedy looked more like Tim Crossin's big brother than his head coach.

With a hand resting on the shoulder of his freshman point guard, the Towson University coach flashed a broad smile.

Kennedy knows the shoulders of the Trucksville resident are going to carry much of the load for the Tigers during the next four years.

"Tim is working very hard to get better," said Kennedy during a press conference after Towson suffered an 82-56 loss against Syracuse University. "He's learning. On this level, you have to get better every year. Tim is going to have a great career at Towson."

Crossin was the first to admit he didn't play his best game against the Orange in the first Division I college basketball game played at the arena. The former Bishop O'Reilly standout finished the game with six points, three rebounds and three assists.

Crossin says an opportunity to play in front of a sellout crowd of 8,209 fans – coupled with the fact that he was facing his boyhood basketball idol Gerry McNamara – created more than a few butterflies in his stomach. Crossin and McNamara squared off four years ago when Bishop O'Reilly played Bishop Hannan for the District 2 Class 2A championship.

"I'm always a little nervous before games, but nothing like

that," said Crossin, who has started in all nine games for Towson this season. "The last time I was that nervous was the last time I played against Gerry. There was a big crowd and this is my hometown."

While Kennedy offered encouraging words to Crossin as he greeted basketball fans from the Wyoming Valley after the game, McNamara was bombarded by a horde of local media. The Syracuse senior politely answered question after question about playing a game in his backyard.

"It was a special night and I'm sure Tim feels the same way," he said. "Being able to play in front of your hometown and getting cheered like that is a great feeling. It's something most people never experience in their lifetime."

McNamara has become wildly popular during his four years at Syracuse. It began during his incredible freshman season, when he helped lead the Orange to the national championship. His status has continued to grow, with busloads of Scranton residents making the two-hour trip several times a year to watch him play at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse.

McNamara has gotten used to the legion of supporters who wear his No. 3 jersey and chant his name during the game. But in Crossin – who started wearing No. 3 five years ago because of his respect for McNamara – the former Hannan star admits he has a different kind of fan.

"I've heard and read things Tim has said about me during the years, and that was something new for me," said McNamara, who scored 20 points against Towson. "It's great having all of

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