

*Serving With Christ's Love, Those
Who Serve*

March 2009

In His Service



“Bursting at the Seams”

It is now March 2009, and as we wrap up the month I realize that we are about to enter into our 2d quarter of the year. Since the 2d week of January the days have seemed to zip past at an incredible rate of speed. Our ministry case loads have increased dramatically this year from the same period in 2008 in requests for short term pastoral counseling and referrals, and assistance with locating care facilities and support outside the VA for severely injured veterans. Requests from clergy and churches have more than doubled for the training programs we offer. The requests for routine information, such as “my husband is coming home in a couple of weeks, is there anything I should know,” continue at a regular pace. However, we are now receiving requests for information from people that can influence the life of a veteran or his/her family member that go beyond the routine. A Christian senior-level law enforcement officer discussed his concerns about the veterans that he had seen recently and discussed his concerns with a pastor. That pastor then contacted our ministry and requested information on states that had created legal diversion programs for veterans having difficulties with the law after returning from the war. We were able to provide the pastor with that information, as well as information on how some of these programs were designed and implemented.

Requests serve as a way to measure the need for and the effectiveness of this ministry, since the majority of these requests come from either direct contact through our training programs and/or word of mouth. I am thankful that God has blessed us with the ability to provide His comforting Word and assistance to the veterans and family members that have sought our assistance.

Since planting this ministry in 2007, I have been the primary boots on the ground, and blessed to serve my internship as the one fulltime employee. Without the dedicated board members that have provided resources and the volunteers that have graciously given of their gifts and talents, this ministry would not exist. Today, through their work our ministry is now at a point where we need to call a full-time director, in order to meet the demand we are facing. I thank God for the financial support that we have received over the course of time. Only through the continuance of memberships, generous donations, and grants will we be able to continue to providing service to our veterans, their families, and the churches that provide care for them.

As you read this newsletter, I would ask that you prayerfully consider joining with us as we continue to provide Christian care and assistance of
“Serving With Christ’s Love, Those Who Serve”.

No More Band-Aids

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Training, and Equipping the Church

Wars are not fought by governments; they are fought by the men and women who bear arms on behalf of their governments. Today our nation is engaged in large scale combat operations. As the veteran warriors of past wars age and die off, they are being replaced by the new warrior veterans of today. The names and faces of our warriors will continue to change, but the issues faced by the veterans of all wars will remain the same.

For any church interested in missions and outreach ministries, I can think of no better ministry to embrace than one that focuses on our currently serving military members, veterans and their families. After all of the media spotlight on some of the issues that military members and their families are dealing with, the thought of a special outreach ministry to them may seem too difficult or overwhelming. Terms like IED, PTSD, TBI, and disturbing reports of increases in suicides, divorce, and domestic violence may confuse, scare, or otherwise influence churches to put their mission energies into other areas. However, this does a grave injustice to the very men and women that have voluntarily put their lives on the line to protect the country, and the citizens that live in it.



Can you identify the military veterans or family members of veterans in your congregation?

Q. How many military veterans are in your congregation?

Most of us don't really know all of the veterans that we routinely work, play or worship with, much less who their primary family members are. In 2007, the best estimate the VA could report was that from WWII on through today there were more than 23+ million living military veterans. That figure though did not include military veterans that are still serving

Q. How many family members of military veterans are in your congregation?

The men and women that serve as primary family members to our veterans include: spouses, parents, siblings, children, and others who carry the weight of care for the veteran. These primary family members are the most relied upon by our veterans, yet they are typically the least cared for by social service and government support agencies. There is no way to accurately estimate the numbers of family members that are serving as the primary support for our military veterans.

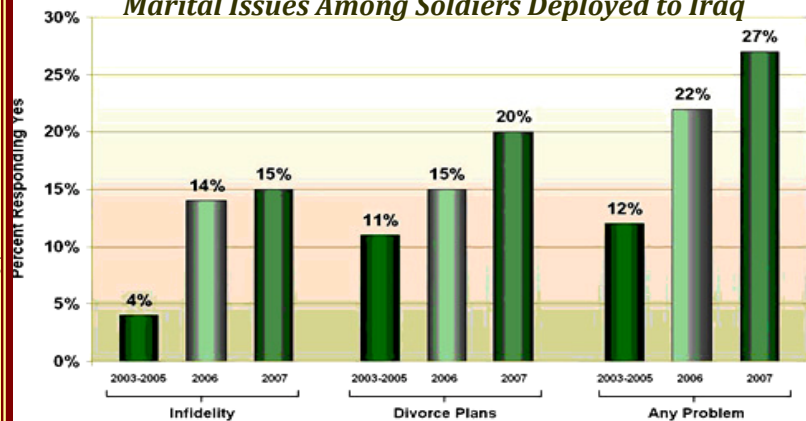
Q. How can my church reach out to the military veterans and family members in my community?

By prayerfully considering the needs of our veterans and their family members, and dedicating the resources necessary to actively provide a viable ministry of outreach.



How can we support our military veterans and their family members if we can't identify who they are?

Marital Issues Among Soldiers Deployed to Iraq



Military members deal with the same core issues that non-military parishioners deal with. Every church has people that have marriage problems, addictions, parenting issues, mental health disorders and just about every other human problem. The difference for military members, especially those who have served during war, is that their issues are often made worse specifically by the stresses, strains, of wartime service.

One of the missions of the LMVFM is to assist congregations in developing effective ministry outreach programs to veterans and their families. We do this by providing congregational awareness programs, as well as offering training programs for pastors, and ministry teams. These programs offer valuable information, skills training and insights into the unique aspects of military life, and common issues that military members and their family members face. Our programs are also offered to groups and organizations outside the church that provide care for veterans and their family members.

In a study by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, approximately half of the Guard members deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan returned home with mental health problems, a rate nearly one-third higher than their active-duty counterparts.

The LMVFM serves veterans, their families and the church by offering educational resources, training and assistance through the following programs:

TRAINING PROGRAMS



TRAINING

† Training and Workshops for churches and groups designed to educate caregivers in the unique aspects of providing care and outreach to veterans and their families.

RETREATS

- † Small group veterans reintegration retreats
- † Marriage Retreats
- † Caregiver Retreats
 - * Military Caregivers
 - * Church Workers

COUNSELING

INDIVIDUAL

† Individual assistance to veterans by providing them with short-term pastoral counseling and resource referrals.

† Assistance to family members of veterans by providing them with short-term pastoral counseling and educational materials.



COUPLES

The Mission of the LMVFM

1. Provide short-term pastoral counseling and needs evaluations for veterans and their families.
2. Provide training and educational resources for church ministries and other outside organizations concerned with the needs of military veterans and their families.
3. Assist veterans and family members in identifying available local community resources to provide for their long-term care needs which include: VA services, counseling, social service organizations, church resources, etc...
4. Serve as a congregational resource by equipping them in their ministry of outreach to veterans and their families in the church and local community.
5. Provide encouragement, and support for military families when their loved one is deployed.

Ministry Highlights January 2008-December 2008

- † Responded to more than 100 requests for assistance originating in twelve states (IN, IL, MN, MI, TN, TX, FL, OH, NC, AR, CA, WY), and one Canadian province.
- † Provided local short term counseling assistance to twenty-one veterans and or family members.
 - Met ministry objective by identifying and referring veterans receiving short term counseling services to appropriate long term Christian therapists.
- † Provided VA claims assistance to veterans in three states.
- † Provided retreats for military veterans/ family members.

Additional Resources

Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries, Inc.

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Find us on the Web: www.lmvfm.org



Resources for People working with Military Personnel and Their Families
<http://kspope.com/torvic/war.php>

Returning From The War Zone A Guide for Families of Military Members
(National Center for PTSD) National Center PTSD
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp>

Military OneSource: Counseling Assistance www.militaryonesource.com

Department of Veteran Affairs <http://www.va.gov/>

Deployment Health & Family Readiness Library
<http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil/home.jsp>



**Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries
is a Christian not-for-profit faith based ministry.**



**We are dedicated to serving and assisting all
military veterans and their families who need
service-related care and assistance,
regardless of their faith or religious affiliation.**

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