

Your generous support keeps LMVFM going strong into our 13th year of "Serving, with Christ's love, those who serve"

2019 Christmas Ornament Adoption breaks new record!

Generous friends of LMVFM adopted 298 ornaments with gifts totalling \$81,037 during the 2019 Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal. This surpassed the \$80,000 goal for 2019 and was the highest amount given during any of LMVFM's annual Ornament Adoption Appeals. Many thanks to all our donors and ornament makers!

Upcoming opportunities to support LMVFM



- ◇ **April 15** — Tax Day "Dine to Donate" at Granite City Brewery, Fort Wayne IN (*Pending release from pandemic restrictions that limit their service to carry-out/delivery only.*)
- ◇ **Oct. 14** — 13th anniversary "Dine to Donate" at Granite City Brewery, Fort Wayne IN
- ◇ **Oct. 24** — 2nd Annual "Battle Rattle" 5K Run, location to be announced
- ◇ **Nov. 1-Jan. 31** — Annual Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal
- ◇ **Every month** — Designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to LMVFM
- ◇ **Daily** — Designate LMVFM as your organization with Kroger's' Supermarkets and Amazon Smile so they'll make a donation for all your eligible purchases.



Today, our gifts to LMVFM matter more than ever as we deal with two disasters:

- ◆ The Global COVID-19 Pandemic ; and
- ◆ The ongoing epidemic of US military suicides costing some 20-plus lives every day.

Giving to LMVFM has dropped dramatically since the COVID-19 Pandemic made its way out of China in early 2020, offsetting much of the gain generated by the year-end 2019 Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal. and the resulting economic downturn has affected us all.

In order to keep this ministry Christ-centered, LMVFM never accepts government aid. In other words, your gifts to LMVFM assure that no military veteran, contractor or family member will ever be turned aside from the free clinical and pastoral counselling and related care that they will not get anywhere else.

Please know that your regular, generous gifts to LMVFM are saving lives from spiritual and physical death, 24/7/365.

Donating your Thrivent Choice Dollars? Easy!

- There are two ways to Donating your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries.
1. Call 1-800-847-4836 and when prompted say "Thrivent Choice" which will connect you to a friendly Customer Care Agent and tell them that you would like to donate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to: Lutheran Military Veterans & Families Ministries.
 2. You can also donate your Choice Dollars by logging into your account at [Thrivent.com/Thrivent Choice](https://Thrivent.com/ThriventChoice) and direct your Choice Dollars to Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries.

Your in-kind donations of Gift Cards in any amount, unused postage, large and small business envelopes help LMVFM keep our programs and services free to those we serve.



AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible **AmazonSmile** purchases when you select **Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries** as the organization you want to support. Smile Amazon will remember your selection, and then make a donation from all of your *eligible purchases made at smile.amazon.com.*

Note: Purchases made at the regular Amazon.com site do not qualify. You must use SmileAmazon to have a donation made to: Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries.



March

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Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries, Inc.
3480 Stellhorn Rd., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46815 260.755.2239 www.lmvfm.org
"Serving with Christ's Love Those Who Serve"



2020

Who's on the front lines of military suicide prevention? YOU ARE!

The daily disaster of military suicide continues, with 20-plus lives lost every 24 hours. Like other slowly developing, long-term disasters, the record rates of suicide by active duty personnel, reservists and national guardsmen and women rarely shows up in news headlines or broadcasts. But one by one, 20 times a day, military next-of-kin find themselves in that horrific moment when a death notification detail knocks at their door.

Here at Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries, we know what it's like to comfort and counsel those who mourn their warrior's suicide. While we use terms like "a self-inflicted wound" and "took his/her own life," we know the reality. These lives were taken by the realities of military service that replay in all-too-graphic detail, overcoming the warrior's psyche and spirit.

Even more, LMVFM binds up those spiritual and moral wounds before they lead to suicide.

- ◆ **We sound the SOS** in articles like this, as well as in the news media (see page 2)and social media, and whenever we meet with veterans, church and community groups.
- ◆ **We offering free Christ-centered care and counselling** to every member of the military community who comes to our attention.
- ◆ **We equip front-line personnel** — clergy, mental health professionals, family caregivers and congregations — to recognize the warning signs before their veterans' unseen moral and spiritual wounds become too much to bear.



Chaplain Leslie Haines shares stories of lives changed through the ministry of LMVFM, during the March 2020 meeting of The Navy Club, Noblesville IN.

In 2020, LMVFM will step up our actions to put more partners on the front lines, to sharpen their focus on the needs of veterans, military contractors and their families, and to encourage development of local congregation-based ministries.

LMVFM's next "Binding The Wounds Of War" congregation training takes place May 15-16 2020 at Reformation Lutheran Church, Culpeper VA. In addition, we're working with congregations to schedule training in several other locations. It's never too early to schedule this valuable training in your congregation. Call 260-755-2239 today for details and available dates.

LMVFM's commitment knows no borders. Our allies, too, have young warriors who bear moral and spiritual wounds like those of preceding generations. LMVFM is laying the groundwork with congregations in Canada by introducing the ministry to congregational leaders and, with them, assessing both needs and opportunities for serving our Allies to the North.

God has been faithful in bringing LMVFM to this 13th year of service. God has used friends like you — congregations, denominations, organizations and businesses, and individuals — who generously contribute your time, talent and treasure to this ministry. Please know that our gratitude for you goes beyond words — giving renewed hope and commitment to our military community and the volunteers who love them.

In Christ's service,

Leslie

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P.4 — Your Support Is Vital — Ways to Give to LMVFM

From the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette

LMVFM Program helps minister to veterans’ pain

Editor’s note: LMVFM Chaplain Braasch’s article topped the Opinion page of the 28 February 2020 Fort Wayne (IN) Journal Gazette. Excerpts of the longer article appear here. and in a related article on page one.

"My heart ... my heart feels as though there is a black hole in the center of it, sucking in all positive emotions allowing them to never leave and me never truly feeling happiness." ("Vet's Words Show True Cost of War" -- Helen Ubinas, Tuesday 18 February 2020)

These words from a veteran's suicide note point to oft-unrecognized roots of military-related Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS): Moral and spiritual injury -- deep, lasting bruises on the warrior’s soul and psyche.

Whether or not Armed Forces personnel see combat or sustain physical injuries, military service can violate what they believe is right, true and honorable in the eyes of God and society. Attacking and killing the enemy, even for good reason, can deeply bruise the soul and psyche. So can following orders for actions that go against conscience. Betrayals by leadership, immoral or unjust behavior by superiors, and abuse by peers all can leave warriors with near-zero control and even less recourse. All of these can result in moral or spiritual injury-induced PTS.

Here’s the dilemma: Service members often prefer help from non-military clergy, civilian counselors or friends instead of military counselors, chaplains or related services. They fear that seeking help in the military system will make them vulnerable and could affect their careers. However, service members hesitate to seek help from non-military clergy or counselors because civilians often are clueless about military culture, circumstances and challenges faced by personnel, contractors and families.



Paws and Effects Update

LMVFM’s highly trained “Paws & Effects” Therapy Dogs continue to serve both at the counselling office and on-the-road with the training team.

At press time, Stanley Tucker, our English Lab (left,) was recovering from surgery to correct an inverted eyelid. He is expected to return to duty by the end of March, to aid and comfort to our counselling clients .

Patrick Dooly, our British Cream Retriever (right), is growing daily in his role in counselling sessions as well as a ‘regular’ with the LMVFM training team. He excels in working the crowds at training seminars, on Sunday mornings in congregations, and at large events.



That’s where Lutheran Military Veterans and Families comes into the picture.

Since 2007, LMVFM has given free counseling to military personnel, contractors and families throughout the United States. LMVFM also trains clergy, counselors and therapists, medical personnel and family caregivers to address needs of veterans with PTS. LMVFM's "Paws and Effects" emotional therapy dogs help clients talk about wounds have been buried too deep for words.

LMVFM clients come from all military branches. They’re served regardless of discharge status or religious preference. More than half have no connections to worshipping communities.

No LMVFM client has ever been charged for counseling services. LMVFM accepts no government support, relying instead on gifts from congregations, businesses and non-profits, individuals and fundraising events.

Our nation loses 20-some military personnel to suicide on any given day. As chaplain, I’ve tended those left behind.

My greatest regret? It took me too long to discover what I was missing in spiritual care, that black hole in the heart of morally, spiritually wounded veterans of all ages.

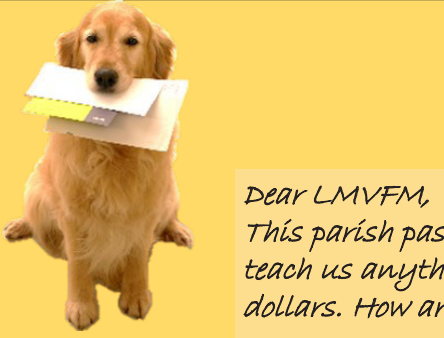
My greatest hope? That more churches, clergy and clinical professionals will learn about moral and spiritual injury and military service-related Post-Traumatic Stress affecting veterans of *all* war eras.



LMVFM’s 13th year: Strong Beginnings, Major Challenges!

Clockwise from upper left: On guard against contamination; consultation with clergy; caring for our vets; educating groups and leading by example.





MAIL CALL

Dear LMVFM,

This parish pastor is a bit overwhelmed by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Let's just say they didn't teach us anything about this in seminary! We support LMVFM with our prayers and mission dollars. How are you all doing as you minister and manage during this crisis? Rev. JHL

Dear Pastor,

Thanks for asking — and for supporting LMVFM. COVID-19’s attack put all of us on an unexpected war-time footing. Disease is the enemy, and Satan uses times like this to discourage us. Resisting the urge to panic during unexpected, life-interrupting events probably is something you learned about in seminary. In pastor-speak, it’s called “non-anxious presence.” That said, pandemics or other large-scale, mass-casualty events put all that “non-anxious presence” talk and training to the test.

LMVFM’s mission is “To serve, with Christ’s love, those who serve.” That means two things: First, Christ is at the centre of every aspect of this ministry. Second, out of love for our neighbour, we put our clients first — veterans, military contractors and their families — in all circumstances, not just this COVID-19 pandemic. That means taking practical steps to keep our doors open, maintaining a sanitized, welcoming environment, while making our free clinical and pastoral counselling available at whatever hours work for our veterans’ and families’ disrupted lives. Since nearly all LMVFM counselling clients struggle with some level of depression, we’re also conducting wellness check-ins by phone with current and past clients. Our staff and volunteers look out for each other, too.

Assess and respond. Keep the mission in mind. Remember your training. Make do with what you have. Buddy up. That’s daily reality for members of the military, emergency services and law enforcement, as it is here at LMVFM. That’s the new, pandemic norm for you and your pastor buddies as you share the Word and Sacraments, prayer and pastoral care while maintaining social distance, juggle circumstances that change at the speed and regularity of breaking news, all while maintaining that non-anxious, Christ-like presence.

I thank God for 33 years of military service plus the pastoral formation I received during seminary. What I learned in *both* vocations gets a workout everyday at LMVFM, especially these days. That’s how we’re doing. So, Pastor, pray Psalm 91, the Soldier’s Psalm with me. The Lord *IS* our refuge and fortress,. He doesn’t leave us to fight alone, in this or any other battle. Blessings, buddy!

Chaplain Leslie Haines