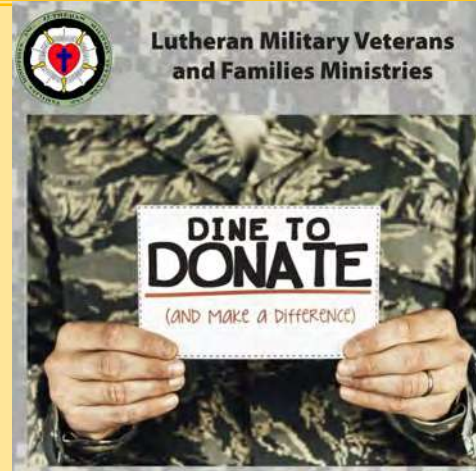


As the Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal finishes in the final days of January, we have raised over \$67,000 for the ministry of LMVFM. We send a huge **THANK YOU** to all of our donors near and far to help us continue sharing the love of Christ to those who are struggling with their battle wounds.

As we look forward to the opportunities available in 2021, we look forward to our next Dine to Donate event on March 17, 2021 at Granite City Food & Brewery in Fort Wayne, IN.



Why your help matters

LMVFM provides veterans, contractors and their family members with *free* counseling services and assessments, help with VA claims, assistance locating and connecting with other types of resource support.

- ◆ LMVFM does not solicit or accept any government funding or resources.
- ◆ All LMVFM programs and services are free to our clients.
- ◆ LMVFM has never turned a veteran, contractor or family member away for any reason.

We need your help



Hurricanes, floods, fires and pandemics are the Disasters that usually grab headlines. But the Disasters that LMVFM fights every day rarely get any notice such as:

- ◆ 22 military-related suicides a day.
- ◆ 22 sets of families and friends left behind.

Day by day, without headlines or fanfare, Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries' counselling staff provides free Christ-centered care and programs to veterans, military contractors and their families who are at grave risk of suicide or other destructive behaviour.

Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries accepts no government funds. We rely solely on gifts of supporters like you to keep our services free to all veterans, military contractors and family members.

You can Help us help them by Donating your Thrivent Choice Dollars to:

Lutheran Military Veterans & Families Ministries
3480 Stellhorn Rd
Fort Wayne, IN 46815
260.755.2239 WWW.LMVFM.Org@Gmail.com



Your Donations of these items help us to keep our programs and services free to those we serve.

Gift Cards of any amount, unused postage, large and small business envelopes.



AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases.

On your next visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) simply 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.



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"



Winter

2021

From a year best described as "Annus Horribilis", or horrible year, 2020 was a year I'd rather not experienced. I'm pretty sure that most of you share those feelings. Last January had you asked me what I thought 2020 would bring, I can promise you I would have been well off the mark. As far as the ministry was concerned, our 2020 calendar was filling up nicely with mission trips across the country, and into Canada. The ornament appeal was going well and I was sure that we would reach our goal (which we did). Most importantly the majority of our veterans and their family members were doing well. And then came the impact from the release of a deadly virus from a lab in China, that effectively changed life as we knew it, especially from a ministry perspective.

We know the bad consequences that resulted from Covid, but did anything good come from it? As Lutherans we are "encouraged" to put the best construction on things, which is often easier said than done. So, putting the best construction on what happened last year what were some of the good things that resulted from the pandemic? Here are some of the most important things we learned that we count as positives that our ministry discovered.

1. We found out who among us could be counted on. The ones who would stand beside us in ministry.
2. Throughout the shelter-in-place period, we learned new ways to continue our care continuum. We learned how to Zoom, and how to connect with our veterans and their families via YouTube and other programs.
3. We personally experienced the frustrations and pain felt by families who were unable to be with their loved ones as they were forbidden to visit them in the hospital or care facilities. And we experienced the pain and grief felt when we lost one of our own-not to covid-but to cancer knowing that routine screenings and care had been halted for most of the year.

So, with our new found knowledge, what does LMVFM's 2021 year look like? First off, just as 2020 failed to shut us down, LMVFM will continue to keep our doors open to our veterans, contractors and their family members. When I think about our team members and ministry partners who never failed to rise to the challenges, or wavier in their support which allowed us to keep our doors open and ministering I am reminded of the poem by Rudyard Kipling "If".

As we learned how quickly our visits to congregations and groups could be cancelled, we've continued making improvements in our communications through internet based programs and resources. We have already begun putting our veterans spouses bible studies on-line (call 260-755-2239 for information).

Funerals are tough enough without social distancing mandates but they've been far worse since the covid restrictions were put in place. The days and weeks leading up to the death of our ministry team member Chaplain Braasch, and the time between her death and then funeral took place provided us with a greater understanding of what family members and friends have to deal with when we are isolated from a loved one in care, or dying. The lessons we have each learned at a personal level, are helping us better minister to those in our care.

Just before the start of 2021, I heard a question that I'll ask here: "If you only had today, what you thanked God for yesterday, what would you have today?" LMVFM has faced many challenges over the past 13 years, some which threatened to shut us down. Through it all, God has been steadfast in His protections. We give thanks to God each and every day for this ministry and the mission of caring for our veterans, contractors and their family members that He has called us to do. We also thank you for your support that allows us to "Serve with Christ's love, those who *Leslie* serve"

Serving with Christ's love, those who serve

by our civilian military contractors when they return home from war. These men and women carry the same injuries and wounds of war that our military members experience. However, unlike military members, these contractors do not receive medical or mental health care from the military or the VA.

	Total Military	Total Contractors
Afghanistan Only	4,500	22,562
Iraq/Syria Only	3,000	4,826
Other Locations	8,100	16,421
AOR Total	15,000	43,809

In 2011, LMVFM began providing, without cost, the same care and counselling services to our nations military contractors. After the tumultuous 2020 year, we have also opened our doors to Law Enforcement and other first responders as they continue protecting our communities

Watch for a detailed report on military suicide in the next issue of the LMVFM Newsletter.

Please pray for the LMVFM team, as we continue to bind the wounds of war of those who have put their lives on the line and their family members for our nation.

Post-traumatic Stress (PTS) and Suicide go hand-in-hand as a threat to the well-being of our warriors.

Military suicides have continued to climb more than a decade after the rate more than doubled. A few years ago, as with so many long-term crises, military experts began calling the high rates of suicide the "new normal." Since then the once readily-accessible monthly military suicide figures are now only released three months after each quarter, so the October-December figures will not be made available until April and even then they are usually late.

The lack of timely reporting of military suicides only serves to keep the American public, whose sons and daughters are at the greatest risk, in the dark

At LMVFM, we say: It is unacceptable to accept the high rates of military suicides as the "new normal" when there are ways to effectively reduce those numbers.

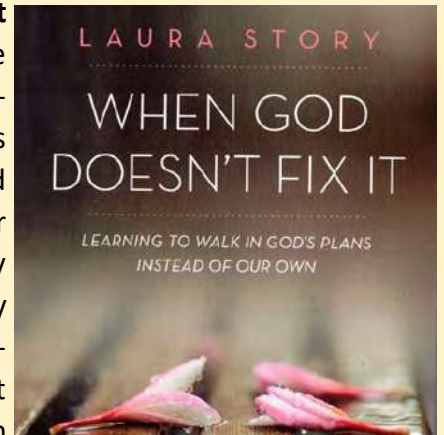
We do more than tell you the sobering truth about climbing military suicide rates. We combat it daily with direct counselling support services to vets and by training professionals, pastors and congregations who care for them.

During the first three quarters of 2020, military suicide rose 30% over and above the same period in 2019.

While law makers have been putting more attention on addressing mental health issues suicides among our military, little if any attention has been paid to the same issues faced

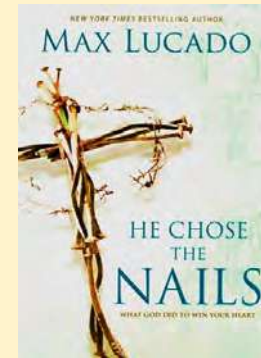
HOME FRONT HEROES BIBLE STUDY

We have just begun our next bible study focusing on "When God Doesn't Fix It" by singer/songwriter Laura Story. This has been a great study to continue to grow in our spiritual walk with each other as well as together through our respective storms on this side of heaven. We have been looking at Abram and his wife Sari (found in Genesis 11 & 12) trusted in God very much. But we also find that when they began to think God wasn't going to keep his promises or answer their prayers, they decided to take matters into their own hands. Each time they did God gently reminded them "He is in control of the situation". How many times in our lives do we tend to take control of situations just like Abram and Sari? We often times find that we need God to help us out of the jam or to redirect our steps, *according to His will*. We will continue to look into the "Why" question in the coming weeks as we work through the conclusion of this Bible Study.



Our next 6-week study will begin on Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 5:30 pm,

"He Chose the Nails" by Max Lucado. As we enter the Lenten Season please join us in taking a closer look at the reason and for the purpose of the cross. Although it is a solemn time of the church year, it is a great time to take look closer that the precious gifts God gives to each of us! This event is open to men and women, military or non-military. Please contact our office if you would like to participate via virtual.



ON THE ROAD AGAIN



We are counting down the last two weeks until our next mission trip to a congregation out of state. Having scheduled, rescheduled, re-scheduled and one more time rescheduled this visit I'm not quite holding my breath, but am still looking over my shoulder a bit. Having had all but a handful of our mission trips cancelled due to covid in 2020, we are encouraged by the number of rebookings and new mission requests that are filling in our 2021 schedule.

Our last major travel mission trip, one that wasn't cancelled was in late November, took us to a

congregation in the small rural community of Skanee, MI.. What with fears over covid, some folks questioned whether making a long road trip, to a small rural congregation in late November was prudent. So why not wait until better days. It's because the places you find many of our most at risk veterans are in small isolated rural areas. And as we would learn the Skanee community had recently lost two veterans, one male and one female to suicide. This is exactly why we go where called, regardless of the size of a congregation, or location.



LMVFM presentations and seminars at congregations and groups, and presence at mission events across the nation afford us the opportunity to raise awareness of the unique challenges and issues involved with military service. Many of those attending are either family members, or friends of someone serving, as well as veterans. These events also provide us the opportunity to hear their questions and concerns about things they have observed in their veteran and have led to many of the referrals we receive.

If your congregation would like to learn more about the unique challenges of military service and how to help those who serve we would love to put you on our 2021 schedule. To schedule a seminar please call us at: **260.755.2239**, or shoot us an email at lmvfmooffice@gmail.com

MAIL CALL



*Patrick Dooly,
What is your favorite part of the day?*

My favorite part of the day is when we have visitors come to our office. No matter if it is a new soldier needing help, our staff or volunteer coming to work, a veteran trying to get their VA paperwork "translated" or even our mailman I greet them all with lots of hugs!