

Leave no ornament behind!

## 2023 LMVFM Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal



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"



Christmas 2023

Each year, November 1st marks the beginning of LMVFM's annual **Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal**. When you make a gift, of any amount to LMVFM between **November 1 and January 31** an ornament, made by a veteran or family member will be hung on LMVFM's Christmas tree. Your ornament will then be photographed, where it can be seen by you and or those you wish to honor on LMVFM's Facebook page and website.

LMVFM has *never* accepted or received any government funding or resources. Our ability to provide all of our counselling, care and programs, *without cost* to veterans and their families is through the support of individuals, churches, groups and people like you who value the freedoms we as Americans enjoy, made possible by the sacrifices made by our military members, and their families.



This year, please help us, help those who have served, to reach our goal of raising \$100,000 by adopting your ornament with your gift of any size to LMVFM. Your donation can be made online at [lmvfm.org](http://lmvfm.org) or by mail to: **LMVFM Christmas Appeal, 3480 Stellhorn Rd., Fort Wayne, IN 46815.**

*Blessings from Team LMVFM*

### Real Life Isn't a 'Hallmark' Movie

(and this isn't your standard Christmas article.)

Paws & Effects team member, Stanley-Tucker doesn't know it yet, but in two days and just a week before Christmas, he will have surgery to repair the ACL of his right rear knee. His days of wrestling with his brother Dooly and playing fetch in the back yard with mom will be replaced with a lot of down time, and painful rehab over the next three months.

We, his human team, know what's coming, and are not



looking forward to the days ahead. I am thankful that Stanley isn't burdened with that knowledge. Sometimes having the foreknowledge of what's coming is a lot worse than just finding out when it does happen. However, as his caregiver, knowing what's ahead is necessary to prepare for the coming days.

Information is a bit like sausage. A lot of folks like sausage, but few of them want to know the intimate details about how it's made. I am reminded of the time when a good friend proudly called to tell me that her son had just signed up for the Army. As she rattled on about all the things he'd be doing and what his job would be, I could hear in her voice a mixture of excitement, and fear-fear of the unknown. I also recall having a deep sense of dread and sorrow, because like the making of sausage, there are many things about making soldiers that the uninitiated might not fully appreciate.

Her son, one of the nicest kids I'd known, certainly had the qualities you'd want to see among our Nation's finest. He was fit, mature for his age, and a natural born leader. So why the sense of dread? Perhaps it had something to do with knowing just how right George Orwell was when he said:

**Civilized men sleep soundly because  
ROUGH MEN STAND READY  
To do violence on their behalf** - George Orwell

As my friend talked, memories of war time events played over and over in my head. Suddenly I heard her ask "so what do you think?". I knew she was asking for more than a cheerful "that's great" from me. What she really needed to hear was reassurance that her son, her little boy would be okay, and that's what she got. Why? Because it would have been cruel to burden her with things she couldn't change.

I can't know all that her son will experience, much less how those experiences, for better or worse, will change him, because they will. What I and our team at LMVFM can do is to *stand ready to serve him and all of those who have put their lives on the line in order that we and their families can all sleep soundly.*

As for Stanley-Tucker, he doesn't have to carry the burden of knowing, what we, his human team, know of the painful journey ahead. However, for the remainder of today and tomorrow, he will play as we prepare the way. Blessings to you all,

*Leslie*



### Thrivent Members Make a Donation at no cost to you!

Each year, Thrivent distributes a portion of its funding to non-profit organizations selected by its member. Eligible Thrivent members have an opportunity to direct their "Choice Dollars" to LMVFM at no direct cost to them! This is a easy yet important step, as LMVFM receives a significant amount of its annual donations from these Choice Dollars.

### Don't let them Expire!

You must direct your Choice Dollars each and every year or they expire, even if you have donated in the past. To donate your Choice Dollars please visit [Thrivent.com](http://Thrivent.com), or call them at: **1-800-847-4836.**

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

Gift Cards (especially gas and general merchandise) of any amount, **Unused stamps, Small/Large Business Envelopes**

**LMVFM is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Your gifts are tax-deductible.**

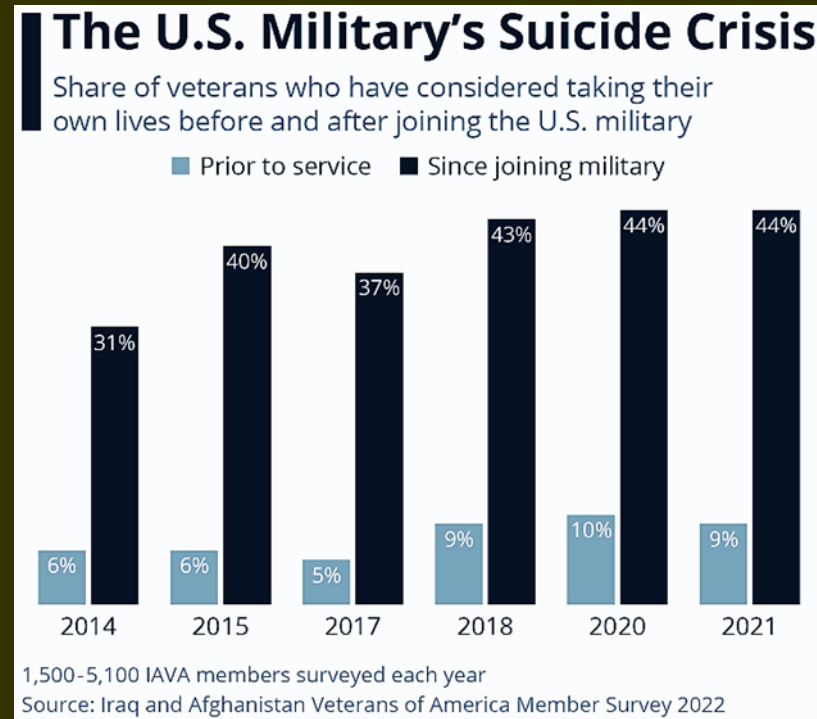




## Taking it to the church

The well-being of our veterans is the primary mission of LMVFM. Unfortunately, the 2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Report, released in November, confirms what many of us working with veterans and their family members have suspected. More veterans are dying by their own hand today than in past years.

- Since 2001, veteran suicide rate has increased by 38% year over year.
- Veterans are 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide than nonveteran adults.



- Veterans who live in rural settings are 20% more likely to die by suicide than urban-based veterans owing to factors such as greater access to lethal means, reduced access to good health care, geographic isolation, and loneliness
- The Defense Suicide Prevention Office revealed that over the first six months of 2023 suicides of active-duty service members increased 9%.

There are a number of factors that can lead a person into taking their own life. Reasons often cited include high exposure to trauma, stress and burnout, isolation and loneliness, easy access to and familiarity with guns, financial problems, substance abuse and difficulties reintegrating into civilian life. Among these reasons we believe that the very heart of suicides among veterans is the feeling of loneliness-the loss of connection to people who cared about the veteran. Who then is better suited than Christians and the church to embrace and care for the veterans within their communities? LMVFM wants to help churches in their outreach ministry to veterans. Our training seminars are designed to not only educate members about the challenges of military service, but also find ways to minister to veterans and their families.



If your congregation would like to learn more about the unique challenges of military service and how to help those who have served we would love to put you on our 2024 schedule. To schedule a seminar please call us at: **260.755.2239**, or shoot us an email at [lmvfmooffice@gmail.com](mailto:lmvfmooffice@gmail.com)

## When Opportunity Calls...

Sometimes, ministry opportunities pop up unexpectedly. Just days before a scheduled visit to a church in Salisbury, NC we received a call from the Outback Team Building organization who offered us 12 care packages to be given to service-members or veterans. The gift bags were canvas military style bags that would be filled by teams from Steel Dynamics, Inc. during a team building exercise. Of course we gladly accepted the invitation.

The only issue was making the best use of the care packages, and getting them to the right people. It was definitely a matter of God's timing. As it so happened a friend who pastors a church in Salisbury, NC had called me a couple of weeks earlier, days after the attack by Hamas on Israel. In response to the attack three of the pastor's parishioners had been deployed. That left us with nine care packages to figure out. In short order another pastor called to tell me that he had nine service members deploying. The pastor was happy to tell us that they could use these gift bags filled with items any deployed person would enjoy! All that was left to do was get them delivered to the two churches which was accomplished a couple of days later on our final trip of the year.



## 2023 is "Done and Dusted" 2024 is Upon Us



**See you soon!**