



Episcopal Diocese of West Texas Military Ministry Toolkit



This toolkit is designed to support Military Ministry in the Diocese of West Texas. We offer special thanks to the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego's Evangelism Committee for the use of their original Military Ministry Toolkit as a model for this work. For assistance, please contact Leslie Mixson, Development Assistant at the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas (210-824-5387) or a member of the Diocese's Military Ministry Committee (Reverend Karen Brandon, 915-494-5508 or Chaplain Susan Douglas, 210-823-7020).

Introduction

What is this about?

Military Ministry's purpose is to serve those who have borne the battle and acted in our name. There is a strong commitment within the Episcopal Church to support and care for active duty military members, veterans, and the families of both groups. At the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Resolution number 2009-CO51 was passed, entitled "Support, Care and Fellowship for Veterans." The final text read as follows:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention encourage its clergy, members, congregations and agencies to:

1. Educate themselves about the health-care and economic needs of our nation's military personnel and veterans who have been wounded, physically or emotionally, in the current wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, or in other wars, past or future.
2. Call on our nation's Department of Veteran Affairs Medical System and the U.S. Government to continue to give the best possible care to our veterans, and to shorten the time required for our soldiers to receive approval for medical care and other benefits, which they have earned through their military service.
3. Take direct action to improve the lives of wounded soldiers in their communities and, when asked, to advocate on their behalf with government agencies.
4. Seek to build caring pastoral relationships with wounded soldiers in their families, congregations, communities or local hospitals.
5. Encourage the establishment of an Episcopal Veterans Fellowship for each diocese.
6. Encourage local congregations to establish an annual healing service for wounded military personnel, veterans and others.

Citation: General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009 (New York: General Convention, 2009), pp. 535-536.

Active duty military members, veterans, and the families of both groups experience unique circumstances due to the nature of their service. Situations such as being away from family for extended periods of time, overseas or out-of-state duty assignments, frequent moves, limited employment opportunities for spouses and many other things may create added stress for service members and their families. Additionally, many active duty service members and veterans develop mental, physical and spiritual illnesses connected with their service. This is particularly true for those who were in combat and/or served in war zones. In addition to physical injuries, many return with post-traumatic stress syndromes that also have the potential to impair them for life. War is a blatant source of evil because it forces combatants to normalize abnormal behavior to survive its demands.

For the returning service person, the inability to reconcile the things s/he saw and experienced and his or her battlefield actions with the spiritual, religious, moral and ethical beliefs ingrained in them during their upbringing, deeply wounds the soul and causes loss of self. The terrible consequences of these types of wounds may include depression, homelessness, suicide, and lifelong alienation from God, self, and others. The outcomes caused by the adoption of self-medicating practices (i.e. alcohol, drugs, other addictions, thrill seeking activities) exacerbate rather than alleviate the pain and suffering. These behaviors have the potential to destroy the military member/veteran and impact spouses, children,

parents, siblings and significant others in complicated and often destructive ways.

“It is not enough to be committed to leaving no Soldier behind dead or alive on the battlefield. A different war is waged upon return home. Along with the recognition that “War is hell.” comes the understanding that no one goes to hell and comes back unscathed. On a societal level, the psychological, emotional and spiritual effects of war are present in some respect for all persons touched by war, just as much as those who suffer from medically diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder. For each and every one of us, this represents a communal responsibility for justice and healing. And we cannot rest assured that we have brought our Soldiers home, until they are home spiritually, psychologically and emotionally.”

Stephen Muse “Fit for Life, Fit for War.” INFANTRY, March-April 2005

Why the Church?

The Church is most suited to help this nation’s warriors and their families heal from the physical, spiritual, moral, and psychological wounds that every war brings. As Christians, we understand evil, hell, suffering, and, most importantly, the power of Christ’s redeeming love to overcome deep seated feelings of fear, guilt, and shame. We are in the business of reconciliation and are especially expert in creating the loving, understanding, and safe environment needed to start wounded souls on the road to recovery. A 2008 Baylor University study shows that “...clergy - not psychologists or other mental health experts - are the most common source of help sought in times of psychological distress....” The urgent need is not to be an expert in psychology or physiology, but rather a caring and loving ambassador of Christ who is a servant to those who have suffered debilitating wounds during their service to the nation. The question then is are we fulfilling our mission to “Be the hands of the Good Shepherd in the military mission field, to return the lost to the flock, to be the light of Christ that helps show returned warriors the true way home?”

Why us?

At the 112th Diocesan Convention in February 2016, our Bishop Coadjutor, the Rt. Rev. David Reed, announced that the Diocese of West Texas would explore the opportunities for a firm establishment and growth of a Veterans’ Ministry. “We’re privileged to serve those who have served so sacrificially on our behalf. But the needs are complex – not only for combat veterans, but for active duty personnel stationed among us and families left behind and waiting.”

Texas contains the second largest concentration of active duty and U.S. Armed Forces veterans in the nation. Of the 30 plus military installations in Texas, 10 are located within the boundaries of our Diocese (see Part Five for a complete list) with Del Rio, Corpus Christi, Kingsville and San Antonio having the biggest concentration of military members and veterans in the area. However, all of our communities are very likely to include veterans, men and women who served their country, however briefly, who came home to Texas. Veterans are drawn to the area for its weather, second career opportunities, and easy access to a large number of Veterans Affairs (VA) and military-run healthcare and shopping facilities. There are also eight VA Hospitals in Texas, 56 community-based outreach centers, 20 Vet Centers and 10 national/state cemeteries. This population forms the nucleus of a dynamic and fruitful mission field in Texas composed of active duty personnel, veterans to include retirees, their

spouses and children, and extended family such as parents and siblings.

The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas recognizes the unique and specific needs of the military communities and veterans that are currently part of our congregations. We also recognize the outreach opportunity sitting on our doorstep. In recognition of this and in faithful obedience to baptismal covenant vows and the great commandment, the diocese intends to increase our outreach efforts in the military mission field. This toolkit seeks to assist in achieving this goal in four ways.

First, it serves to connect parishes with resources that can help their existing active military and veteran parishioners and their families.

Second, it offers suggestions on things parishes can do to be more specifically military/veteran friendly, welcoming them into the Episcopal Church in ways that resonate most with their lived experience.

Third, it serves to inform our congregations about this exciting and highly diverse mission field. The hope is that information can be the impetus to increasing outreach activity in the field as parishioners learn more about military and veteran issues.

Fourth, the toolkit provides the means for easy entry into the military mission field. This is accomplished using valid congregational ministry programs and related resources that address a variety of service member and/or veteran needs.

The following paragraphs provide information to include the guidance and resources needed to easily improve or start a military ministry. For assistance, please contact Leslie Mixson, Development Assistant at the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas (210-824-5387) or a member of the Diocese's Military Ministry Committee (Reverend Karen Brandon, 915-494-5508 or Chaplain Susan Douglas, 210-823-7020).

How big and wide is the need?

Based on data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, United States Census Bureau, the Texas Workforce Investment Council, The Burnt Orange Report and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, we know that 1.6 million Texans are veterans. 177,000 of them are women. 660,000 of them are aged 65 and older. Over 300,000 Texas veterans receive disability compensation connected to their service. The median age of a Texas veteran is 60 years old. The prevalence of disabilities is greater among veterans in Texas than in the nonveteran population.

There are generational differences between veterans that served in WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Cold War, the first Gulf War and the Gulf War II era (Iraq and Afghanistan). The worldviews of each of these veteran groups vary, as do their needs. The largest number of Texas veterans served during Vietnam.

There are roughly 62,000 homeless veterans on any given night – over 5,000 of whom live in Texas. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, “In January 2010 four states – California, Florida, New York, and Texas – accounted for 50 percent of all homeless veterans across the country.” Women are the fastest growing segment of this population.

Additionally, according to The Burnt Orange Report, “in Texas, 72 percent of extremely low-income veterans pay more than half of their income towards rent. This puts Texas in the bottom quartile of states in terms of access to affordable housing for its low-income veterans. The problem is even worse for veterans who have served post-9/11. Almost all (9 out of 10) of the extremely low-income veterans in this group are severely cost burdened.”

Generally, the unemployment rate for Texas veterans is lower than the state’s average; however, age variations exist. The unemployment rate for Gulf War II era Texas veterans was 13.5 percent in 2011 compared to the state average of approximately eight percent.

Due to major advances in Medical Science in concert with improvements in casualty treatment procedures, survival rates for the seriously wounded (physical and mental) are at an all-time high. For this reason, the veteran component also includes a growing number of severely disabled individuals who require long-term rehabilitation and care. Included in this group are individuals under treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and, most importantly, wounds of the soul previously discussed.

Many of our newest veterans are women who are suffering from the same combat deployment induced stresses, strains, and ills being suffered by their brothers in arms. However, some women veterans also sadly suffer from issues related to sexual violence experienced during their service. Military Sexual Trauma (MST) includes assault, coercion and unwanted attention. A 2008 Rand Report indicated the rate was 16-23% of the military population, mostly enlisted personnel under 25 years old (DOD 2010 Annual Report). MST is the greatest predictor of PTSD for women; while combat is the greatest predictor for men. 80% of victims never report the assault.

Furthermore, according to data gathered by the Military Chaplains Association:

- Multiple deployments, which are common, cause stress and family attachment issues.
- Deployed troops often suffer depression, adjustment disorder and alcohol abuse.
- Insomnia has risen from 7.2 per 10,000 to 135.8 per 10,000.
- In 2009, military children and teens sought outpatient mental health care 2 million times, a 20% increase from ‘08 and double from the start of the Iraq war (‘03).
- Suicide is rising and exceeds the civilian suicide rate.
 - Army and Marines have higher suicide rates than Navy and Air Force
 - More are occurring Stateside; many go unreported for insurance reasons and are post-discharge
 - Female suicide rate triples when deployed, though still lower than male rate
 - On average, 18 veteran suicides occur out of 30 attempts per day
 - On average there has been one active duty suicide per day
 - Women try more with less success than men
- Alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic abuse, violent crime rates are rising:
 - Illicit drug use in the military was 5% in 2005, but now nonmedical use of prescription drugs is the most common form of drug abuse. SPICE is becoming very common.
 - Home is no longer a safe place to live. Many now carry weapons when not on military installations at home.
 - Many returning troops experience undifferentiated anger and a short fuse.
 - There is a statistically verifiable increase in domestic violence and child abuse among military families. Child abuse increases as the stressors increase in the

- life of the non-deployed spouse.
- A primary therapeutic issue is the soldier's inability to re-connect emotionally with spouse and children (exacerbated by anger and lack of patience).

As briefly described, the large numbers of men and women who comprise the local active duty and veteran communities in our midst mean we already sit side by side with them each Sunday. They also provide a mission field that is growing, dynamic, in constant flux, and ripe with challenge. The need is great and a call to serve in any capacity should be prayerfully considered.

Prayers for Mission and our Armed Forces

Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
The Book of Common Prayer, page 816

Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
The Book of Common Prayer, page 823

How do we get started?

Getting started is easy. First and foremost, you need to identify the active duty military/retirees and veterans in your congregation. You may do this simply by asking during services and in your bulletin/newsletter for them to identify themselves to the Rector or Church Secretary/Administrator. You may conduct a survey to gather this information. You may also want to identify those congregants who have a husband, wife or parent in the military who is not a member of the church as they may have needs associated with their loved one's service. If you ask visitors to fill out a contact card, consider adding a question about whether they are active military, a veteran or a military family member.

Next, consider holding a coffee hour(s) and inviting all those you've identified above to discuss the special needs of those who are serving or have served in the Armed Forces. This will give you some insight into the specific needs of this group in your congregation.

Finally, review the following military ministry program ideas and resources and select the program or resource that appeals to you. Ministry programs are presented in Parts One and Two. Part Three provides guidance for those parishes wishing to be designated by the Military Chaplains Association as a Veteran Friendly Congregation (VCF) within their community. Part Four provides resources for ministry or referral and volunteer opportunities. Finally, Part Five contains a list of military installations in Texas. Please be sure to check the Diocese of West Texas website for on-line links and information too.

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Part One – Congregation Programs

Introduction

This section contains information on programs you can implement as part of the overall Military Ministry Program in your congregation. You may include as many of the programs as you want in your ministry effort, in addition to those you are already doing or are planning to do. We request that you consider implementing at least one program. This will demonstrate that the church leadership has made a commitment to our active duty military and veteran parishioners and their families. It also signals commitment towards the establishment of a Military Ministry effort. This action also serves to promote support and participation within the congregation for this ministry.

It may be repetitive, but it is an important point to repeat: each congregation can customize the Military Ministry to fit the profile of their location and members. It is not even necessary to call it a ministry. What is important is that there is activity that visibly supports military members and their families.

Prior to starting any military ministry, the first and most important task is creating a list of those military members, past and present, who wish to be identified as having served. It is helpful to have their name, final rank, branch of service, address, names of family members, and relationship to the congregation. This list will be useful when implementing selected programs. Additionally, it allows for identification of active duty and veterans who are members of the congregation and may be interested in supporting this ministry.

Program 1: Spiritual Support and Care – Prayer List

Goals: One of the most important things the congregation can do for active military members and veterans, as well as their families, is to pray for them each day. If you have a service bulletin or include special prayers during the worship day services, please include a section that lists members of the congregation or their family who are deployed, particularly those serving overseas or in a combat zone. This will help build awareness in the congregation and demonstrate that the church cares about its military members and intends to provide them spiritual support while they are away. This affirms the congregation's compassion for service members and their interest in supporting and sustaining any military personnel and their families who might attend or visit the congregation.

Coordinator(s): (Parish names, phone numbers, emails of those responsible for the program)

Estimated annual budget: \$0 to \$50. Some costs might occur if you decide to send letters to those deployed or display the prayer list where it can be seen by visitors and members of the congregation.

Execution steps:

1) An example of a prayer listing in the Worship bulletin is provided at the end of this section. The prayer list helps the church track names and pertinent information of those deployed and also those that have returned. Some examples of these lists are at the end of this section.

2) If the congregation has a regular group like Daughters of the King that offers weekly and daily prayers for the needs and support of others, include these lists for their use.

3) Consider sending a note or email to the military personnel indicating that they are on the prayer list until they return to their normal duty station.

4) Include an announcement in the weekly or monthly bulletin.

The following pages offer examples of bulletin and newsletter inserts that may be useful models in creating announcements for your church.

Worship Bulletin/Newsletter Article - Example

This announcement goes in your worship bulletin and/or church newsletter letting the congregation know that a military personnel prayer ministry is available.

Pastoral Care News

Military Personnel Prayer Ministry

Our prayer ministry is expanding to include our deployed military personnel (you may choose to just include those who are serving in harm's way). If you have listed someone on the prayer list who is currently deployed and/or is serving in harm's way, please email or phone the church office with the name and military address of the person. We will send that person a special card to let them know they are in our prayers. Additionally, that person will be listed in a section of the prayer list devoted to those associated with the military.

Additional bulletin content may include:

- a description of the card that will be sent
- the words and the prayer that will be put on the card
- who will be responsible for sending the cards in case someone wishes to contact them
- the name and number of the person at the church office who should receive the information

We suggest running this announcement once a month.

Prayer List Example

This is one example of what a prayer list that includes military personnel might look like. The key point of showing this is that the military is singled out as a separate group thereby increasing awareness in the congregation of their existence and distinct issues.

Daughters of the King pray daily for those listed as part of their commitment to service & prayer.

Members of our Parish Family

[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]
[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]

For Those Who Have Died
† [name], friend/family of [name]

For our Military Personnel

[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]
[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]

Expectant Parents of our Parish Family

[name]~ due (month) 20__
[name]~ due (month) 20__

[name]~ due (month) 20__
[name]~ due (month) 20__

Family Members of our Parish Family

[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]
[name]	[name]	[name]	[name].

Friends of our Parish Family

[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]
[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]

Long Term Prayer Concerns

[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]
[name]	[name]	[name]	[name]

Deployed Military Prayer List Example

Military Deployed in Harm's Way

1. [Name] – Parishioner, USAF. In Afghanistan as of July, 2016.
2. [Name] – Parishioner, USMC. In Africa as of June, 2016. Wife of Frank and mother of Cindy and Robert.
3. [Name] – USN. In Afghanistan through August 2017. Brother of [name].
4. [Name] – USA. Friend of [name], Stationed in Germany; deployed to Iraq July, 2016.
5. [Name] – USA. [Name's] son, Location classified.
6. [Name] – USAF. [Name's] granddaughter; no location provided.
7. [Name] – Submitted by [name] family.
8. [Name] – Submitted by [name]. Husband of colleague deployed to Iraq in March 2016.

Returned Home Prayer List Example

It is important to acknowledge when military personnel on your prayer list return home.

In Thanksgiving for Military Personnel Who Have Returned Home

1. [Name] – Parishioner. Home 6/1/16.
2. [Name] – [Name's] grandson home from Iraq 6/15/16.
3. [Name] – [Name's] wife home from Afghanistan 7/8/16.
4. [Name] – Name's son back in USA. Requested to transfer him to prayers for healing on 8/2/16.
5. [Name] – Dear friend of [name] family. Returned from South Sudan, 9/2/16.

Military Prayer List Example

Military Prayer List – 2016

All Saint's Episcopal Church

Thank you for continuing to pray for our military and their families.

Deployment	Name	Church Connection
Afghanistan - Home	1LT [name], US Army	Parents - [name] Grandparents – [name]
In Iraq	MAJ [name], US Army	Aunt & Uncle - [name]
Location classified	Lt Col [name], US Air Force	Sister - [name]
At sea	Sgt [name], US Marine Corps	Parents - [name]
In Saudi Arabia	SSgt [name], US Air Force	Husband - [name]
At sea	Chief Petty Officer [name], US Navy	Member
In London	Petty Officer 1 ST Class [name], USN Reserves	Brother - [name] Uncle to [name]
In the Middle East	Capt [name]- US Air Force Special Forces	Wife - [name] Children – [name]
In South Korea	Capt [name], US Army	Grandparents - [name]
In Germany	PV2 [name], US Army	Parents-in-law - [name]

Deceased

Cpl [name], USMC
1/02/16

Aunt – [name]
Cousin – [name]
Mother – [name]

Contact: Please call [Name], xxx-xxx-xxxx, for any changes or updates.

Program 2: Recognition of Congregation Veterans

Goal: Provide public recognition to the members of the congregation that are veterans of military service or the widows/widowers of veterans.

Coordinator(s): [names, phone numbers, emails of those responsible for the program]

Estimated annual budget: \$0. A church can do this at no cost. However, if a more involved ceremony is chosen there may be some minor costs involved.

Execution steps:

- 1) Key holidays on which to consider doing this are Memorial Day, July 4th Weekend, and Veterans Day. Consider one, all or as many as you wish.
- 2) A first step is having a list of the names of people in the congregation that are veterans or the widows/widowers of veterans. Advertise in the bulletin or newsletter that this recognition event will occur. Consider sending a letter to the veterans or widows/widowers letting them know personally of the event.
- 3) The basic idea is that at some point during the worship service veterans and the widows/widowers of veterans in the audience are recognized for their service to the nation.
- 4) This may be done by asking them to stand in place, or come up to the front. At that point, the audience can be asked to give a round of applause.
- 5) The congregation leader may decide to read out the names.
- 6) The congregation leader may also wish to offer a prayer, say some special words, or do a reading from the Book of Common Prayer.

This can be a very powerful and emotional event for some, so keep that in mind and be prepared for this possibility.

[Name of congregation contact person] will maintain a list of members within the congregation who have volunteered to help.

Program 3: Dedicating an Existing Program or Activity to Honor Service Members

Goal: By dedicating an existing program, activity or planned event and advertising the dedication to the congregation, the following objectives are achieved:

- 1) The congregation is reminded of the service of our Armed Forces to the nation and that the congregation has members who are serving, have served or who have family that are serving or have served.
- 2) Fosters a sense of being a member of and being accepted by the church for those in the congregation who are active duty members or veterans or their family members.

3) Welcomes and offers a sense of belonging to those service members and their families who are considering joining the congregation.

Coordinator(s): [names, phone numbers, emails of those responsible for the program]

Estimated annual budget: \$0 (as this is meant to merely 'piggyback' on an already existing funded event.)

Execution steps:

- 1) Look for existing activities or events that are already funded but not specifically dedicated to a particular congregational ministry. This effort is not meant to displace any existing ministries.
- 2) Examples might be coffee time before and after church services, or a week-day evening pot-luck dinner that is held to promote fellowship in the congregation or to help support week-day education programs.
- 3) The idea is to designate one of those weekly sessions "in honor of those serving our country (or those who have served)" or "those in our congregation who are currently deployed" or some other dedication that recognizes military service. Don't forget that the family members of active duty military and veterans also pay a price for service to our country and deserve our appreciation.
- 4) If the program chosen is one that allows for education, presentations, or interaction among the participants, and if there are enough military members/families and veterans/families in the congregation, you may hold an evening program that is specifically tailored to their needs and interest.
- 5) It is very important to advertise the chosen programs or sessions in the service bulletin or in the newsletter to promote the three program goals previously discussed.

Program 4: Assistance and Practical Help to Congregation Members

Goal: Provide material and physical assistance to the stateside families of those military members who are currently deployed. This program can go far in developing an ongoing awareness of the needs of the military, can greatly expand the atmosphere of acceptance within the congregation, and sends the message that your congregation cares about helping military families.

Coordinator(s): [names, phone numbers, emails of those responsible for the program]

Estimated annual budget: \$500. This is very dependent on what is done and the cost of the materials required; this can be a much larger dollar figure if extensive work is done, so be careful; be prepared to do some fundraising work.

Execution steps:

- 1) Use the list of congregation members who are currently serving or who have identified themselves as returning veterans, as well as the monthly lists of those deployed/returned

mentioned earlier in this document.

2) This list is maintained by the Parish Administrator, Church Secretary and/or Program Administrator [name, phone, email]

3) Contact the individuals or their spouse to ask how they are doing. Ask them if there is anything they need. Specifically ask spouses if they are managing the practical aspects of life while their spouse is deployed, i.e. keeping home repairs done, getting children to medical appointments, etc. Ask too about isolation and morale since spouses may not have any family in the area and can be quite alone when their military spouse is deployed.

4) With the individual's permission, offer to find someone in the congregation that can help them. This may mean introducing an isolated military wife to women in the congregation who are willing to spend time with her and/or check in with her periodically by phone. It may mean sending a few people over to repair a fence. It could mean asking a retired member of the congregation to attend a child's baseball games while their parent is deployed.

5) The expectations are that the congregation will play a direct support role where our volunteers suitably meet the needs identified. Rectors and the program leader must also be able to refer individuals to resources outside the congregation if needs beyond the scope of the congregation are identified.

6) With the recipient's permission, communicate, when appropriate, to the congregation through flyers, welcome packages, day of worship announcements (once a month), and short newsletter articles about the projects performed to help military families. It is appropriate to communicate about doing home repairs, for example, or paying for a child's baseball camp. It may be less appropriate to advertise paying someone's electric bills. Be sensitive in what you choose to communicate and always ask the individuals involved.

Program 5: Assistance and Practical Help for those outside the Parish

Goal: Provide material and physical assistance to stateside military family members who are not members of the congregation but do have active duty military members currently deployed. This program can go far in developing an ongoing awareness of the needs of the military, can greatly expand the atmosphere of acceptance within the congregation, and sends the message that your congregation cares about helping military families.

Coordinator(s): [names, phone numbers, emails of those responsible for the program]

Estimated annual budget: >\$500. This is very dependent on what is done and the cost of the materials required; this can be a much larger dollar figure if extensive work is done, so be careful; be prepared to do some fundraising work.

Execution steps:

Make contact with an established national organization like Operation Homefront, which has many local sites near major military installations. They often need assistance with projects to help families while the military member is deployed. Their web site is:

www.operationhomefront.net/socal/

1355 Central Parkway S, Ste. 100
San Antonio, TX 78232
Phone: (210) 659-7756
Emergency Assistance: (877) 264-3968

You may also wish to check Operation Military Pride's website for ideas. Their website is: www.operationmilitarypride.org/. Although not a well-designed site, it has a lot of good ideas if you read through the posts. For example, they explain why helping military working dogs will also help their military handlers (www.supportmilitaryworkingdogs.org).

- 1) [Name of congregation contact person] will maintain contact with the Executive Director and sign up for their newsletter on their website. This will keep the congregation contact appraised of helpful project needs that can be satisfied with volunteers from the congregation.
- 2) [Name of congregation contact person] will maintain a list of members within the congregation who have volunteered to help. These volunteers can come from men's and women's groups as well as individuals in the congregation.
- 3) Project examples include building ramps for wheelchair-bound service people, helping with home moves, arranging for or providing emergency childcare needs, providing various types of assistance due to unforeseen medical requirements, etc.
- 4) Familiarize yourself with the content on the Operation Homefront or Operation Military Pride website so that you can direct people to the website for blogs, volunteering, opportunities for donations, etc. as appropriate.
- 5) Once a project need is identified, the congregation contact will contact those on the pre-arranged list to confirm their availability to help.

Communications should include monthly announcements in the Worship bulletin and bulletin board flyers describing the program. As projects are completed, they should be described in the newsletter and made known to the congregation to achieve the goals stated above.

Program 6: Care Packages to Deployed Service Members

Goal: Collect and ship items suitable for use by those who are deployed. This will vary depending on the deployment location. A congregation may choose to send packages only to individual military members who belong to their congregation or are connected to the church through a member of the congregation. Alternately, packages can be sent to deployed units. These units may be connected to a congregation or to the congregation's local area. Either way, this activity helps deployed military members know that the people back home have their needs in mind. It also helps the congregation feel connected to the military members. This is a wonderful activity for youth groups and Sunday School groups to undertake.

Coordinators(s): [names, phone numbers, emails of those responsible for the program]

Estimated annual budget: \$200 to \$500 (depends on number of packages made and shipped and the number of displays created to advertise the collection).

Execution steps:

- 1) Identify a visible location in the Church where a large well-marked collection box or container (2ft by 2ft or larger) can be placed.
- 2) Wrap or decorate the container with bright colors (red, white, and blue are suggested), or a Stars and Stripes covering, to draw attention to the collection point for the items. Additionally, make a poster advertising the collection and post it near the box.
- 3) Identify the person to whom or unit to which the package(s) will be sent, including their location.
- 4) Create a leaflet or brochure describing the items that are best suited for sending. See example at the end of this section.
- 5) If appropriate, a small write up and picture could be included in the worship bulletin and also on the poster near the collection box. If you do not have a person or unit associated with a congregation member, or relative:
 - a) Contact the nearest National Guard Armory or Reserve unit and ask their assistance in locating a deployed service member or unit from your community.
 - b) Contact the Chaplain's Office at the nearest military installation to ask them to suggest an individual or deployed unit.
- 6) Provide an update to the congregation from the person or unit receiving the articles for as long as packages are being sent. The updates can appear near the collection box, in the worship bulletin, newsletters, and/or in an area frequented by the congregation members.
- 7) The collection box should be checked frequently so as not to let it overflow. Once sufficient quantities are collected, they should be packaged and dispatched to the identified military member or unit. There is a mailing cost associated with this step that should be acknowledged before beginning this program.
- 8) By working with a local Guard or Reserve unit, they may ship the package at no cost.

For military members who are deployed stateside or deployed overseas, but not in the field or in a combat zone (for example, Korea, Germany, England), packages may include pre-paid telephone cards, homemade cookies, recent magazines or newspapers from your area, holiday-related items like handmade Valentine's from the children's Sunday School class, etc.

The suggested list of items to be packaged and sent to service members in Afghanistan or Iraq includes:

- 1.Black or Green Wool Socks
- 2.Pre-paid telephone cards
- 3.Blank Computer CD's
- 4.Stationary Items, e.g. envelopes, paper (pens not needed as they are already issued)
- 5.Stamps
- 6.Moist (Baby) Wipes
- 7.Toothbrushes
- 8.Crest Pro-Health Toothpaste – best for use in non-fluoride environments
- 9.Dental floss
- 10.Listerine Purple Mouthwash with fluoride
- 11.Deodorant
- 12.Shaving cream
- 13.Hand cream
- 14.Q-Tips
- 15.Feminine hygiene items

- 16.Acne face wash
- 17.AA battery-powered electric razors – **no disposable razors**
- 18.Sunscreen/aftershave hybrid lotions
- 19.Eye drops/nasal saline
- 20.Vitamins
- 21.Crystal Lite – individual packets
- 22.Shoe Inserts (Gel or other durable types as low-end foam will not last)
- 23.DVD Movies (comedy or action)
- 24.Hard Candy
- 25.Paperback Books/General Interest Magazines
- 26.Gum
- 27.MP3s that are all one genre (New Country; Top20/Pop; Rap; R&B)

Some final suggestions:

- The size of the collection box should err on the large side; we suggest at least a 24” cube. Such boxes are available at Lowe’s, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, etc.
- The box should have the leaflets mentioned earlier placed in a “pocket” attached to the box so that people interested in supporting this program can take it home and use it as an easy reminder of what items they can bring back and deposit in the box.
- A poster, like those used in many school projects and easily found in a supermarket, should accompany the box placement.
- The poster should briefly describe the program’s purpose, include the list of donation items, the name of the person or unit that will get the items and how they are connected to the congregation and a picture of the person, unit or deployment location, if available.

Sunday announcement: A Worship bulletin announcement should be included pointing out the existence of the box, its purpose and meaning. Run the announcement at least once a month while packages are being sent.

Newsletter article: If the congregation has a newsletter, include a short article announcing the program, its purpose, and information on the unit that will receive the goods. We suggest running the article each year around Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Veterans Day if you continue this program annually.

Care Package Leaflet Example

Please take one:

Collection of items to send to deployed military members

PURPOSE: Support [name of service member in the congregation] or [name of service member] who is the (describe their relationship with a member of the congregation, i.e. son of John and Mary Smith) or those deployed in the same unit as [name of service member in the congregation or who has some relationship with a member of the congregation or your local area].

The following list of suggested items will be packaged and sent to service members in Captain John Smith's Army unit in Iraq. Periodic updates from the unit will be given in the [locally used named] newsletter:

1. Black or Green Wool Socks
2. Pre-aid telephone cards
3. Blank Computer CD's
4. Stationary Items, e.g. envelopes, paper (Pens not needed as they are already issued)
5. Stamps
6. Moist (Baby) Wipes
7. Toothbrushes
8. Crest Pro-Health Toothpaste – best for use in non-fluoride environments
9. Dental floss
10. Listerine Purple Mouthwash with fluoride
11. Deodorant
12. Shaving cream
13. Hand cream
14. Q-Tips
15. Feminine hygiene items
16. Acne face wash
17. AA battery-powered electric razors – **no disposable razors**
18. Sunscreen/aftershave hybrid lotions
19. Eye drops/nasal saline
20. Vitamins
21. Crystal Lite – individual packets
22. Shoe Inserts (Gel or other durable types as low-end foam will not last)
23. DVD Movies (comedy or action)
24. Hard Candy
25. Paperback Books/General Interest Magazines
26. Gum
27. MP3s that are all one Genre (New Country; Top20/Pop; Rap; R&B)

If you know of anyone who is serving from the congregation, or related to someone from the congregation, or from the local community, please make this known to [name of program leader, phone #, or email@xxx.com] so we can identify the appropriate contacts to receive the packages. Finally the most important thing we can do for the troops is pray for them each day. You are encouraged to include a note addressed to Dear Service Member saying that you are praying for them.

Program 7: Haven for Hope – On Site Ministry in San Antonio

Haven for Hope is a place of hope and new beginnings for people in Bexar County experiencing homelessness. It is made up of two major programs: the Courtyard and the Transformational Campus. Both are on the Haven for Hope property and require a visit to the Intake Department to get started. The Courtyard is a low-barrier safe sleeping program that offers shelter and basic needs. The Transformational Campus is a center that offers services and shelter with an emphasis toward addressing the root causes of homelessness. Churches can partner with Haven for Hope in several ways, either through campus-related volunteer opportunities or as a spiritual volunteer through the Spiritual Services department. Examples of useful activities that a church could undertake are:

- Providing an evening prayer in the Courtyard for a safe night for those seeking shelter
- Leading a short prayer service in the Courtyard or Campus chapels
- Offering a Bible study or other spiritual gathering
- Praying with individuals
- Being a listening ear for those in the Courtyard or on Campus
- Bearing witness to the stories of those who seek help from Haven for Hope

Please see the website for further details. You may contact Spiritual Services to speak with the Reverend Ann Helmke (210.220.2116 or ann.helmke@havenforhope.org) or Sr. Julie Hickey (210.212.2920 or julie.hickey@havenforhope.org) with questions.

Program 8: Haven for Hope – Haven Plus Congregational Ministry

“Haven Plus teams are volunteers from local congregations who surround Haven for Hope residents and alumni with affirming supportive relationships. This can make all the difference to those in the process of finding “home” and rebuilding their lives.” The team provides friendship, encouragement, moral support, a listening ear and a sense of belonging to individuals and families as they move back into the community and restart their independent living.

For further details contact Spiritual Services to speak with Keith Wideman at keith.wideman@havenforhope.org or 210 220 2120.

Program 9: Open Table

“Open Table is a collaboration of faith communities, government, business, and non-profits working together through a shared community model to help an individual living in poverty transition back to an independent life in the community. Table members, together with the individual or family being helped, establish goals and accountability, develop an overall plan and implement it.” (Jon Katov, founder of Open Table, January 18, 2016).

The organization is national, but works locally. Each Table is composed of a group of volunteers that make a year-long commitment to act—through relationship—as a team of life specialists, encouragers, and advocates, to help an individual or family make the changes necessary to overcome poverty and other obstacles that negatively impact life. Although not

all participants in the program are veterans, some are and you can let the organizers know you are a veteran friendly congregation.

Catherine Lillibridge (catherinelillibridge@theopentable.org) is the point of contact within the Diocese of West Texas, working to expand our participation in this transformational community ministry. See the video at <http://www.theopentable.org/resources/> and article at <http://www.dwtx.org/departments/communications/dwtx-blog/st-davids-sa-part-of-open-table-commitment> to learn how St. David's, San Antonio, has built a strong relationship with a local man in partnership with Open Table.

Program 10: Quality of Life Foundation (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

Quality of Life Foundation strives to make positive differences in peoples' lives today that will continue far into the future. By focusing on initiatives that improve the quality of life of those who have been struck by misfortune, and teaching them skills for rebuilding in spite of those life struggles, the Foundation will have indeed provided a life-long benefit to those they serve.

In March 2010, the Quality of Life Foundation launched the Wounded Veteran Family Care Program to support families who provide a substantial amount of care giving to a wounded, injured or ill veteran. Client families include veterans with combat and non-combat-related traumatic brain injuries; PTSD, stroke; spinal cord injuries; multiple amputations; and other poly-trauma injuries. The Quality of Life Foundation focuses on the whole family because often times, care giving responsibilities, coupled with financial strain, result in family members forgoing their own quality of life needs. Things like recreation, respite, home modifications, house and lawn care, and personal care (haircuts, medical and dental appointments, etc.) take a low priority due to income and time constraints. They address quality of life needs through local and national resources, or through the outright purchase of goods/services.

The Wounded Warrior Family Care Report published on their website is also a valuable resource for parishes supporting a wounded warrior and their family.

The website is: <http://qolfoundation.org/get-involved/>

Part Two – Other Congregation Programs

Introduction

This section of the toolkit lists other ideas that have merit. In general, they require more resources, organization and time to plan and implement. They may also have a higher cost associated with them. However, they can add great value in building relationships and ministering to active duty military members, veterans, and their families.

Activity Suggestions:

1. Sponsor a gathering once a month for Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve military families in your community to gather for a social, meal, coffee, etc. This:
 - a. Provides time to “network” and get to know each other

- b. Is children-friendly
 - c. May include a meal, movie, speaker, or program
 - d. Emphasizes a predictable meeting time to establish relationships
 - e. Fosters and encourages these military families to become a support group for each other
2. Provide childcare times where spouses of deployed military might drop off children and have some free time to regroup and refresh or times when reuniting couples might enjoy an evening out
 3. Offer special children's programs or playgroups or tutors for school subjects.
 4. Advertise and host a Bible Study small group for military families.
 5. Advertise and host courses on strengthening marriages for military families.
 6. Deliver some meals to provide encouragement for a family whose loved one is deployed or who has recently returned from deployment. Or provide meals to a family that is new to the community or neighborhood.
 7. Offer to assist a family whose loved one is deployed or who has suffered significant medical issues with chores in the yard or around the house.
 8. Offer to sit with an injured or recovering service member so the family care-giver can run errands or have a bit of time away. Respite care for these families is a BIG need.
 9. Be there to coordinate a temporary home for pets if a family must leave suddenly to go to the bedside of a wounded or injured family member.
 10. Invite the chaplain of a nearby unit (Active duty, Guard or Reserve) to come and speak to your congregation about ministering to service personnel and offer support to that unit.
 11. If you have an Episcopal School associated with your church, have the children send Valentine's Day, Easter or other holiday cards to military hospitals or deployed military members and/or units.
 12. Partner with the local American Legion to conduct "Welcome Home" ceremonies.
 13. Host a special concert to raise awareness of veterans or wounded/injured military service personnel issues. Take a special offering to support one of the organizations that work in support of this population.
 14. Find out who our Episcopal military chaplains are and where they serve. Adopt one and see what support is needed. There is an Episcopal Federal Chaplaincies organization on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Episcopal-Federal-Chaplaincies-313519758716/> or you can contact the Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Services and Federal Ministries through the national Episcopal church. The website is: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/federal-ministries>

15. Celebrate birthdays of the family members of the deployed and include these families in other holiday celebrations during the year as special guests.
16. Assign a congregation member to be a congregation liaison to spouses of deployed service members. This liaison could connect with the spouses regularly and communicate needs to the congregation.
17. Adopt a Fisher House at the military installation closest to you. These homes are located at major military and VA medical centers nationwide, close to the medical center or hospital they serve. The Fisher House Foundation ensures that there is never a lodging fee for active military and veterans seeking medical treatment. Since inception, the program has saved military and veteran families an estimated \$320 million in out of pocket costs for lodging and transportation. More information can be found at: <https://www.fisherhouse.org/>
18. Fisher House Foundation also operates the Hero Miles program, using donated frequent flyer miles to bring family members to the bedside of injured service members as well as the Hotels for Heroes program using donated hotel points to allow family members to stay at hotels near medical centers without charge. The Foundation also manages a grant program that supports other military charities and scholarship funds for military children, spouses and children of fallen and disabled veterans. See <https://www.fisherhouse.org/> for further details.
19. If you are not located close to an installation, contact the nearest Veteran's Administration hospital or satellite clinic to establish a partnership or contact the local Red Cross or USO to find a suitable organization to support. There are also a number of veterans' nursing homes in Texas, which can always use support and volunteers.
20. Make use of congregation counseling resources:
 - a. Equip counselors to work with those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
 - b. Make congregation counseling services readily available and affordable to family members of military personnel.
21. Books for Soldiers (<http://booksforsoldiers.com>): Collect and ship books to deployed military members. Many military members have free time on their hands, especially when traveling or in the evenings, and books can be a good way to keep our service members' minds engaged and entertained during their off-duty time. This also lets our service members know that people back home have their needs in mind and can help those in the congregation feel connected to military members, especially those overseas. Please see this charity's website for complete details.

Part Three – Veteran Friendly Congregation Recognition by the Military Chaplains Association

The Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America (MCA), <http://mca-usa.org> is a professional support and Veterans Service Organization. They are dedicated to the religious freedom and spiritual welfare of our Armed Services members, Veterans, their families, and their survivors. Founded in 1925 and chartered in 1950 by the 81st Congress, MCA is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service with non-profit, tax exempt 501(c)(3) status.

The MCA offers programs that may be of interest to your church family. They are based on the premise that "... congregation-based Military Ministry Programs are a step toward supporting active military and veterans of the current and past conflicts. These programs are fundamental to the success of the CareForTheTroops effort as they represent the primary participation vehicle for Congregations. It is a very key way for spreading the word and connecting with military family members in need on a local level."

The set of programs is intended to address the entire extended family associated with the person that is or has been in the military. The programs available and outlined on the MCA website are designed to:

- Help congregation members maintain an awareness of the existence and needs of those sacrificing their time and effort to support our country.
- Create an environment of acceptance within the congregation for any extended family member who worships or visits the congregation; acceptance of their needs (physical, material and spiritual), and a willingness to join in their struggles, whatever they might be.

"NOTE: The way the Ministry Programs are proposed, no faith has to act in any way like another faith ... no congregation has to act or have a Ministry like any other congregation ... it is completely customize-able to each congregation's desire to act ... but being part of a larger network helps build the network and allows us to share information among the active congregation that can help others learn what others are doing."

Your congregation may wish to become designated as a "Veteran Friendly Congregation." Two churches in the Diocese of West Texas have already done so: Christ Church and St. Paul's, both in San Antonio. It is easy to do and has two purposes.

"The Veteran Friendly Congregation Program's purpose is twofold. First, to provide a visible sign to those that visit the congregation that this congregation has demonstrated through their intentional actions that they are sympathetic to the needs of veterans and their families. Second, provide acknowledgement to the congregation and their leaders for their sincere and earnest efforts to support veterans and their families."

You may become a Veteran Friendly Congregation by adopting one or more Military Ministry Programs, which may be one included in this toolkit or one of your own devising. You must agree to advertise them twice a month and renew your commitment annually. There are forms, PowerPoint presentations you can use to discuss this project with your congregation and more information on the MCA website at: <http://mca-usa.org/veteran-friendly->

[congregations/programs/](#)

Your congregation may also wish to become a Lead Congregation and take responsibility for expanding the MCA programs in your geographical area. More information on this is also available on the MCA website.

Part 4 – Resources for Ministry, Referrals and Volunteer Opportunities

This resource list is grouped into broad headings. Within each heading, a brief description and verified contact information is provided for each resource listed. Additionally, each resource is annotated to indicate whether it refers to ministry opportunities or referral services for active duty members and/or veterans. Every effort was made to ensure the information was valid at the time this document was published.

Multiple Resources

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/>

The Episcopal Church has a strong commitment to justice and support for our nation's veterans. The national church's website often has articles, events and blogs about veterans and recommendations for recognizing the veterans in our midst. If you visit the website and do a search for 'veteran' you will find a wealth of material.

<http://www.va.gov/>

The **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs** website offers a wide range of information on veterans issues and resources. There are also forms and instructions on how to apply for benefits. You can learn about veteran health issues, homelessness, family issues and much more. Volunteer opportunities can be found at: <http://www.volunteer.va.gov/>

www.amvets.org

Tracing its roots to 1948, **American Veterans (AMVETS)** provides help and support to veterans and their families. The helping hand that AMVETS extends takes many forms. They have a network of trained national service officers (NSOs) accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs provide sound advice and prompt action on compensation claims at no charge to the veteran. They also offer scholarships to deserving high school seniors, ROTC students and veterans pursuing higher education.

www.legion.org

The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization with local chapters across the country. The Operation Comfort Warriors program supports recovering wounded warriors and their families, providing them with "comfort items" and the kind of support that makes a hospital feel a little bit more like home. The Legion also raises millions of dollars in donations at the local, state and national levels to help veterans and their families during times of need and to provide college scholarship opportunities.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil> (resources)

Military OneSource is a free service provided by the Department of Defense (DoD) to active duty, Guard and Reserve service members, and their families with comprehensive information on every aspect of military life including deployment, reunion, relationships, grief, spouse

employment and education, parenting and child care, and much more. Military OneSource has policy and programmatic information, helpful resources, products, and articles and tips on numerous topics related to military life. Services are available 24 hours a day by telephone and online. In addition to the website, Military OneSource offers call center and online support for consultations on any number of issues such as spouse education and career opportunities, issues specific to families with a member with special needs, and financial support and resources. A great feature of the website is that you can type in the name of the installation nearest to you to see what services they offer.

<http://soldiersangels.org/> (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

Soldiers' Angels has many programs to support military families, deployed service members, wounded service members and veterans. Programs are broken into categories based on the population they serve. Most of the programs are provided by the support of Angels who dedicate their time, money and talents, to the organization. Below is a list of the various programs and teams. Go to the website to read more about the program, how it works and how you can get involved.

- **Veteran Support**
 - The Soldiers' Angels Veteran Affairs Medical Center Support program assists patients at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and supports Stand Downs.
- **Deployed Support**
 - Letter Writing Team provides individualized support throughout a soldier's deployment
 - Ladies of Liberty Team provides extra TLC for deployed women
 - Deployed Adoptions Team provides individualized support throughout deployment
 - Angel Bakers Team provides homemade treats for the deployed
 - Chaplain Support Team helps chaplains support the troops
 - Special Operations Forces Team provides support to Special Operations and Special Forces service members and units
- **Wounded Support**
 - Soldiers' Angels, Landstuhl, Germany supports medevac'd wounded/ill and medical staff at the military hospital
 - Valor-IT provides adaptive laptops for the severely wounded or injured
- **Family Support**
 - Living Legends Team comforts the loved ones left behind when a warrior falls on the battlefield.
 - Operation Top Knot Team provides handmade gifts and virtual baby showers
 - Women of Valor Team provides support to female caregivers of Post 9-11 wounded, ill and injured service members
 - Adopt-A-Family Team provides support to meet a family's holiday needs
- **Other Support**
 - Sewing and Crafting Team provides handmade blankets, scarves and pillowcases
 - Cards Plus Team provides extra TLC for soldiers and families

Texas State Resources

Texas loves and supports its veterans. There is a wealth of programs to help veterans receive the federal or state benefits to which they are entitled. If you visit the Texas government website at www.tx.gov and search for veteran, you will find a great deal of information, some of which is included below. Please see the Texas government website for the most current information.

http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/hhsc_projects/abj/resources.shtml

The **Texas Health and Human Services Commission** provide the following Active Duty/Veterans' Services, and links to other resources, which can be accessed through their website above. There is a wealth of information on this website, not all of which is listed here.

- **2-1-1** provides information about state and local human services resources, including food, housing, utility assistance, counseling and other services.
- **American Veterans with Brain Injuries:** AVBI.org provides a web based peer support network, is an information resource and provides on request a medical alert dog tag and a tri-fold credit-card sized brain injury identity card in a small carrying case to American Veterans who have suffered brain injuries.
- **Department of State Health Services (DSHS) veteran peer-to-peer support program:** In order to assist veterans in recognizing that the problems they are experiencing post-deployment are often very amenable to treatment, DSHS is creating a peer-to-peer program that involves veterans facilitating groups of their peers in a model that was created in Texas and has been supported by the Texas Veteran's Commission.
- **Texas Veterans Mobile App** gives Texas veterans quick access to the Veterans Crisis Line, the Hotline for Women Veterans, the Military Veteran Peer Network, and the Texas Veterans Portal. The app, which can be downloaded from both Google Play and the App Store, works on most iPhones and Android mobile phones.
- **Texas Online: Texas Veterans Portal** provides information from federal and state agencies in a comprehensive collection of links about veteran's benefit information. The website contains information to assist you and your family in buying a home or land, receiving education benefits, finding a job, finding health care resources and more.
- **TexVet: Partners Across Texas** is the collaborative effort of federal, state and local organizations, that focuses on bringing our military members and those that care about them a wealth of resources. The resources identified through TexVet are meant for anyone who is serving or has served in any branch of the military, as well as the others who care about a service member.
- **Brain Injury Association of Texas** develops programs for public awareness and education, supports research and rehabilitation programs, and provides family guidance.
- **Department of Veterans Affairs** provides a list and links to VA administration, medical centers, outpatient clinics and vet centers in Texas

- **America's Heroes at Work** is a U.S. Department of Labor project that addresses the employment challenges of returning service members living with brain injury or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- **Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center** serves active duty military, their dependents and veterans with traumatic brain injury through state-of-the-art medical care, innovative clinical research initiatives and educational programs.
- **Texas A&M Veteran Scholarships** are offered for incoming freshmen.
- **Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services** administers programs that ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to live independent and productive lives.
- **Texas Workforce Commission: Texas Veterans Leadership Program**
Texas Veterans Leadership Program is a Texas Workforce Commission resource and referral network that connects returning veterans with the resources and tools they need to lead productive lives.
- **Links to other resources found on the HHSC website:**
 - Air Force-Wounded Warrior
 - Center of Excellence for Medical Multimedia (CEMM)
 - Defense Centers of Excellence in Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury
 - Department of Labor
 - Deployment Health Clinical Center
 - DisabilityInfo.Gov
 - Disabled American Veterans
 - Medline Plus: Veterans
 - National Resource Directory-Texas
 - Transition Assistance Program
 - Marines-Wounded Warrior Regiment
 - Military Treatment Facility Locator
 - Texas Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program
 - Army Post-Deployment Health Reassessment Program
 - Safe Harbor Program-Navy
 - Tricare (South)
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars
 - Warrior Gateway
- **Links to resources for children on the HHSC website:**
 - Department of Veterans Affairs
 - Military Child Education Coalition
 - Sesame Workshop
 - Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
 - Zero to Three

Veterans Service Office (by county)

The Veterans Service Office (VSO) located in each Texas county is an advocate agency established to assist veterans, their dependents and survivors obtain earned benefits from the

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The VSO also collaborates with local, state and federal government agencies, nationally chartered Veterans service organizations and non-profit agencies to assist clients in obtaining needed specialized services. Visit or contact your local county offices for more details.

<http://www.glo.texas.gov/vlb/>

Texans Veterans Land Board: Since the days of the Republic, Texas has always supported her Veterans in return for their military service. In the early days, it was in the form of land given by the state for military service in the Texas Revolution. In 1946, this tradition was formally recognized with the creation of the Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB) to administer benefits exclusively for Texas Veterans. Since then, more than 200,000 VLB loans have been funded for Texas Veterans.

<http://www.tvc.texas.gov/>

The **Texas Veterans Commission** offers four program areas:

- **Claims Representation and Counseling** serves veterans, their dependents and survivors, in all matters pertaining to veterans' disability benefits and rights. It is the designated agency of the state of Texas to represent the State and its veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
- **Veterans Employment Services** offers employment services to Texas veterans and helps employers find qualified veteran job applicants. The goal of these services is to match veteran job seekers with the best employment opportunities available.
- **Veterans Education Program** approves all programs for Chapter 30, 33, 35, 1606, and 1607 federal educational benefits. Through an approval process, the Texas Veterans Commission ensures that institutions and employers are in compliance with federal guidelines and are qualified to provide the type of training offered.
- **Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance** is a program that makes grants available to eligible charitable organizations, local government agencies, and Veterans Service Organizations that provide direct services to Texas veterans and their families.

<http://veterans.portal.texas.gov/en/Pages/default.aspx>

The **Texas Veterans Portal** is a resource for veterans, their families, and their survivors. We have compiled helpful information from many government agencies here so you can find the assistance, services, and benefits you need. For immediate assistance, call 2-1-1 or 1-800-252-VETS (8387) or contact us.

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/driverlicense/vetservices.htm>

The **Texas Department of Public Safety** offers the following veteran services:

- Free Texas vehicle license plates and lifetime registration for active duty members and veterans who have received certain decorations. See the DPS website for the full list of approved medals
- Fee exemption for disabled veterans: a Texas driver license or ID card may be provided free-of-charge to a veteran of the United States Armed Forces if the veteran:
 - Was honorably discharged
 - Has a service-related disability of at least 60 percent
 - Receives compensation from the United States because of the disability
 - Is not subject to sex offender registration requirements

NOTE: The driver license fee exemption does not apply to commercial driver licenses.

- Veteran Designation for Driver Licenses and Identification cards: DPS offers a VETERAN designation printed on the face of driver licenses and identification cards for qualifying veterans. See the DPS website for more details.

<https://www.texaswideopenforveterans.com/twc-wofv/>

Texas Wide Open for Veterans: Texas values veterans. Your training, your skills, your experiences... Texas was built by people just like you, and our businesses and industries want what you have to offer. Explore our site, and see the resources available to veterans. Watch the video, and hear why civilian life in Texas is good for veterans. And when you're ready, learn about job opportunities in the state. If you have specific questions or needs, contact us and we'll be happy to help.

Spiritual Support

<http://episcopalveteransfellowship.org/>

The Episcopal Veterans Fellowship of the Diocese of Texas, headquartered in Austin, Texas, offers prayer, hospitality, and reconciliation to veterans and those who love them. The EVF holds bi-weekly Tuesday night meetings at St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, as well as meetings at Grace Episcopal Church in Georgetown, St. Richard's Episcopal Church in Round Rock, Christ Episcopal Church in Cedar Park, and St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Killeen. Visit the website for contact information and further details.

<http://episcopalveteransfellowship.org/what-is-the-evf/the-hospitallers/>

The Hospitallers of St. Martin is a new monastic Christian Community, as defined by Canon Law, in the Episcopal tradition that focuses on prayer, hospitality, and reconciliation for veterans, their families and all those who have been affected by war. Members continue to live, work and worship in their own communities, while following a Rule of Life specific to the Hospitallers. Please see the website for further information and contact details.

Employment and Housing

www.esgr.mil (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

ESGR, a Department of Defense agency, was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment. Volunteers, hailing from small business and industry, government, education and prior military service bring a vast wealth of experience to assist in serving employers, service members and their families.

www.havenforhope.org (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

Haven for Hope is a place of hope and new beginnings for people in Bexar County experiencing homelessness. It is made up of two major programs: the Courtyard and the Transformational Campus. Both are on the Haven for Hope property and require a visit to the Intake Department to get started. The Courtyard is a low-barrier safe sleeping program that offers shelter and basic needs. The Transformational Campus is a center that offers services and shelter with an emphasis toward addressing the root causes of homelessness.

Family, Children, Military Spouses

www.operationhomefront.net (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

Through generous, widespread public support and a collaborative team of exceptional staff and volunteers, this organization is the provider of choice for emergency financial and other assistance to the families of our service members and wounded warriors. Where there is a need for which they do not provide, they will partner with others for the benefit of our military families. In San Antonio, they can be reached as follows:

1355 Central Parkway S, Ste. 100
San Antonio, TX 78232
Phone: (210) 659-7756
Emergency Assistance: (877) 264-3968

www.militarychildrenscollaborativegroup.com (*resources*)

The Military Children's Collaborative Group organization provides essential home front support for our military children and their care-giving families during training or deployment. They are composed of governmental agencies, school administrations, teachers, faith based organizations, nonprofits, and child/family advocates. Their website offers good resources for those supporting military families, such as the booklet "*Ten Things Military Teens Want You to Know.*"

<http://www.militaryfamily.org/> (*resources*)

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) is the voice of military families because, for 46 years, they have proven that they stand behind service members, their spouses, and their children. The Association is the "go to" source for Administration Officials, Members of Congress, and key decision makers when they want to understand the issues facing our families. They know NMFA has "boots on the ground" with military families and understand better than anyone that "military families serve, too." This website has resources and information to help the military families in your congregations.

www.militaryfamily.org (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

When you hear "Operation Purple camp" you should think: Kids Serve Too! The National Military Family Association's Operation Purple camps are a time for having fun, making friends, and reminding military kids that they are the Nation's youngest heroes. The mission of the Operation Purple program is to empower military children and their families to develop and maintain healthy and connected relationships, in spite of the current military environment. The program is joint or "purple"— and open to children and families of active duty, National Guard or Reserve service members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service and NOAA.

http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Resources_OIF_Families_090319.pdf (*resources*)

Compiled by Michelle D. Sherman, Ph.D. (Revised March 2009), the Resources for Global War on Terrorism: Military Families provides a useful guide to publications, websites, videos and other tools that may help families, or those wishing to support them, deal with the issues resulting from military service, particularly post-deployment challenges.

Emotional Health, PTSD and Suicide Prevention

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

By calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, and then

pressing 1 to reach the **Veterans Crisis Line**, you'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor at a crisis center in your area, anytime 24/7. This website offer resources on suicide prevention, including a toolkit, a downloadable app to help an individual stay safe, a chat feature for homeless veterans, self-assessments, specific veteran resources and videos and much more.

www.vetcenter.va.gov (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

The Veterans Administration provides community-based Vet Centers in every state. There are multiple centers located within the Diocese of West Texas. Please see the VA website for a full list of centers at: <http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?dnum=ALL&STATE=TX>

These centers offer readjustment counseling and a wide range of psychosocial services off to eligible veterans and their families to help them make a successful transition from military to civilian life. They include:

- Individual and group counseling for veterans and their families
- Family counseling for military related issues
- Bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Outreach and education including PDHRA, community events, etc.
- Substance abuse assessment and referral
- Employment assessment & referral
- VBA benefits explanation and referral
- Screening & referral for medical issues including TBI, depression, etc.

Wounded Military Personnel

<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/> (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

The Wounded Warrior Project's goal is to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service member's in our nation's history. They seek:

- To raise awareness and enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members.
- To help injured service members aid and assist each other.
- To provide unique, direct programs and services to meet the needs of injured service members.

The Diocese of West Texas supports this organization by allowing them the use of the Mustang Island Conference Center for veteran retreats, praying for retreat participants and providing letters of encouragement to retreat participants.

www.dav.org (*offers volunteer opportunities and resources*)

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a non-profit 501(c)(4) charity dedicated to building better lives for America's disabled veterans and their families. They offer a range of services, including help with filing benefit claims. The DAV's Voluntary Services Program operates a comprehensive network of volunteers who provide veterans free rides to and from VA medical facilities and improve care and morale for sick and disabled veterans. The website provides a search function to help you find a DAV office near you.

<http://www.wtc.army.mil/index.html> (*resources*)

The Army's Warrior Transition Command offers multiple services for wounded soldiers and

their families. Their information on a wide range of topics such as anger management, spiritual assessment, PTSD, etc. are helpful to parishes who want to better understand the issues facing military men and women transitioning to civilian life.

<http://americanheroquilts.com/> (offers volunteer opportunities and resources)

American Hero Quilts provides recognition and appreciation to wounded service men and women (and their families) who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Some local groups include veterans of other wars as well. Each quilt is a metaphoric hug and a way to express our nation's gratitude for their service to our country. Quilts are primarily sent to Madigan Hospital at Joint Base Lewis McCord, other Warrior Transition Centers in the US, and directly to bases in Afghanistan. There are many ways in which an individual, club, church, neighborhood or business can help with this project. See the website for further information.

Veteran and Active Duty Military Social Support

www.uso.org (offers volunteer opportunities and resources)

The USO's mission is to lift the spirits of America's troops and their families. A nonprofit, congressionally chartered, private organization, the USO relies on the generosity of individuals, organizations and corporations to support its activities. The USO is not part of the U.S. government, but is recognized by the Department of Defense, Congress and President of the United States, who serves as Honorary Chairman of the USO. The USO provides programs and services at more than 180 locations worldwide. Whether they're deployed to a war zone or stationed overseas, service members are only a request or a visit away from receiving a range of USO services. And when they can't physically visit one of our remote locations, we can come to them in the form of USO2GO or even Mobile USO. In addition to a number of programs that can be viewed on the USO website, most major airports include a USO lounge where military members and their families can rest while awaiting flights.

Part Five – Military Installations in Texas

For detailed information on the major military installations in Texas, refer to the Texas Almanac (<http://texasalmanac.com/topics/government/major-military-installations>). Useful information may also be found at www.militarybases.com.

The list below contains the major active military installations in Texas.

1. Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base, Houston, Texas
2. Joint Base San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas (joint service installation)
 - a. Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas
 - b. Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas
 - c. Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas
 - d. Camp Bullis, San Antonio, Texas
 - e. Camp Stanley Storage Activity, San Antonio, Texas
 - f. Martindale Army Air Field, San Antonio, Texas (Texas Army National Guard)
3. Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, Texas
4. Goodfellow Air Force Base, San Angelo, Texas (joint service installation)
5. Laughlin Air Force Base, Del Rio, Texas
6. Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, Texas
7. Fort Hood, Killeen, Texas
8. Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas

9. Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas
10. Naval Air Station Kingsville, Kingsville, Texas
11. Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth (formerly Carswell AFB), Fort Worth, Texas
12. Grand Prairie Armed Forces Reserve Complex, Grand Prairie, Texas
13. Hensley Field, Grand Prairie, Texas
14. Camp Bowie Army Base in Brownwood, TX (Texas Army National Guard)
15. Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas (Texas State Guard/Texas Military Forces)
16. Camp Swift, Bastrop, Texas
17. Red River Army Depot, Bowie County, Texas
18. Coast Guard Air Station Houston, Houston, Texas
19. Coast Guard Station Aransas, Port Aransas, Texas
20. Coast Guard Station Freeport, Surfside Beach, Texas
21. USCGC Galveston Island (WPB-1349), Galveston, Texas
22. Coast Guard Station Port O'Connor, Port O'Connor, Texas
23. Coast Guard Station Sabine Pass, Port Arthur, Texas
24. Coast Guard Station Saluria, Matagorda Island, Texas
25. Coast Guard Station San Luis Pass, Galveston, Texas
26. Coast Guard Station South Padre Island, South Padre Island, Texas
27. Coast Guard Station Velasco, Velasco, Texas