

WAYS TO MINISTER TO VETERANS & MILITARY, & OR START A VETERAN / MILITARY MINISTRY AT A CHURCH

Where, how to begin?

Many churches would like to have a veteran or military ministry, but don't know how or where to begin. So, here are 12 practical ways churches can explore ways minister to veterans, military members & their families:

PRAY. Pray for veterans, service members and their families. Pray for God's guidance in this ministry.

LISTEN. Encourage emotionally and spiritually healthy parishioners to take time to listen to the military personnel in your community.

VETERAN & MILITARY CHURCH MEMBERS. Do you know who in your church is a veteran, or has a family member currently serving in the Armed Forces? Or who may be a Gold Star family? ***Are they recognized & honored?***

WELCOME. Is your church welcoming to veterans & military families? Does it say so on your church website?

GATHER & BUILD THE TEAM. Ask your church members who are veterans to get involved & serve those who have served. Of course, one does not have to be a veteran or in the military to be involved with veteran / military ministry! ***Invite, gather & involve!***

RECOGNIZE & HONOR. Find ways to recognize & honor your veteran & military family members. For example, what do you do for Veterans Day, Memorial Day and & other veteran & military holidays?

OUTREACH. Your church does not need to be near a large military installation to minister to veterans and service members. Veterans and service members who are not near a large base may feel isolated and need greater local community support. ***Reach out!***

RESOURCES in YOUR LOCAL AREA. Draw 10- to 15-mile circle around your church & locate all the military & veteran organizations. This includes:

- Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers / Clinics / Hospitals
- Military bases / installations
- National Guard & Reserve units
- Veteran Service Organizations
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
 - Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
 - American Legion
 - US VETS, etc.
- Nonprofits that help veterans with housing, food, military benefits, & other immediate needs.
- "Be Connected" is a nonprofit that offers a variety of assistance to veterans & military.
- Other denominations & religious organizations that also have a veteran / military ministry.
- ***Connect & reach out!***

NEEDS. Ministry is service & is based on needs. What are your community's military & veteran needs? For example, if your community has a lot of veterans in need of housing, then this is an area to explore a ministry of this type.

NETWORK. Network with the above military & veteran organizations. Get to know the them. Build a network of support! ***Offer your assistance!***

SERVE & SUPPORT. There are numerous ways to be of service to those who serve or have served!

- If your church is near a military base, offer to host special events (such as special dinners or welcoming Bible studies) that help service members and their families connect as quickly as possible.
- When a service member is deployed, send letters and care packages that let him or her know she is thought of and prayed for.
- Help the families of deployed service members with routine tasks: prepare meals, help with car maintenance, offer to do yard work or offer to tutor or mentor the kids.
- Encourage the church to see themselves as a family who are there to support military members and their families while the spouse is deployed. Advertise that your church is a safe place.
- Be there when a military unit returns from overseas & welcome them home.
- Referrals. Have a list of trusted, counselors & psychologists in your area who are professionally equipped to handle moral injury, suicide ideation or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Connect with the military chaplains in your area. Host them, and help them set up a military veteran and family network. Your church can then become a referral any time needs arise in the military community in your area.
- Many veteran service organizations (VFW, DAV, American Legion, etc.) are very active with assisting veterans in their local communities. Connect & offer support as needed.
- Fundraise to help a nonprofit that serves disabled veterans. For example, a nonprofit that trains service dogs for disabled veterans.
- The list goes on! Explore! Discern. Be creative.

Ministry is service & is based on needs! What are the needs of your community?

QUESTIONS?

We welcome the opportunity to visit your church in person to speak, explore, & discuss!

Email the Diocesan Veteran / Military Ministry Team & we will get right back with you!
 Email: vetmilministryazdiocese@gmail.com .