



"Reflecting God's Love to Aging Humanity"



Veterans Care Ministry **~an introduction~**

A growing need exists for faith-based ministry to veterans and their families, particularly those veterans who have served in active combat. The Baptist Home is currently conducting research to determine the extent of this need among TBH residents and the general population. TBH is actively developing internal and external competencies and resources for engaging and leading ministry to aging veterans. TBH seeks to partner with our several residential campuses and with interested churches to provide a faith-based ministry-focused response to the needs of veterans and their families. This will require that TBH develop a collaborative and sustainable model of care which advocates and networks with churches, community service organizations, and health providers for maximizing effectiveness and offering veterans and their families a reliable matrix of support.

KEY INSIGHT

Moral injury is a specific category of injury that is growing in frequency among veterans of war in all generations. It can be thought of as a "tearing of the soul."

Moral injury results from having to make difficult moral choices under extreme conditions, experiencing morally anguishing events or duties, witnessing immoral acts, or behaving in ways that profoundly challenge moral conscience and identity and the values that support them. Moral injury is found in feelings of survivor guilt, grief, shame, remorse, anger, despair, mistrust, and betrayal by authorities. In its most severe forms, it can destroy moral identity and the will to live. The struggle of combat veterans to return to civilian life can be even more difficult than serving in war and last a lifetime.... While moral injury is an ancient wound of war that is documented in literature, in modern times, moral injury has remained largely unaddressed or inadequately addressed because it is confused with post-traumatic stress.

12 Step Moral Injury Meeting Book: Soul Repair Center, Brite Divinity School

This insight serves to highlight the unique concerns for those who choose to do ministry to veterans. It also highlights the need for a collaborative model of care centering on the community of resources available to veterans and their families. Of course, many veterans have not served in active combat, but nonetheless are deserving of a specific ministry of care that values and understands their military

service and the impact that service has had on their lives and families. Veterans may have served in one of the United States branches of the military or in the National Guard.

Struggling with the injuries of war may become especially apparent for aging veterans who struggle with the gaps in health care, family support, and social and spiritual validation. Moral injuries require a spiritual and relational model of care, particularly for those who are processing end-of-life resolution. Churches and religious professionals are in the best position to help veterans find resolution to these categories of spiritual wellbeing; *guilt, grief, shame, remorse, anger, despair, mistrust, and betrayal by authorities*.

The Baptist Home will implement Veterans Care Ministry focusing on those residents who have served in the military through the TBH offices of Campus Pastor. VCM will include orientation for TBH administrators and campus caregivers to enhance their understanding of a model of care specific to aging veterans and their families. VCM anticipates using campus celebrations on the occasions of patriotic holidays, birthdays, and other social gatherings to affirm and recognize those who have served in the military or National Guard. VCM will also include heightened awareness of the struggle for end-of-life reconciliation that may be present for veterans who were in combat. Perhaps, TBH Administrators and Campus Pastors will find creative and visible ways to acknowledge the veterans among us through storying, news articles, resource materials, designated places for meditation, prayer guides, etc.

The role of the church is crucial to the community of support available to veterans; those who have returned from war, those who were mobilized to hostile assignments, those who are now aging with declining health and wellness, and the families of those who have served. It is now understood that *moral injuries* require remedies that result in *soul repair*. For example, church ordinances of baptism and communion, liturgies, lectionaries, special seasons like Advent and Lent, times for prayer and meditation, opportunities for serving those in need, altar calls and confessionals, etc., provide persons seeking spiritual answers to guilt, shame, anger, etc. opportunities for healing, forgiveness, and restoration.

Some emerging ministry models are being developed by the US Department of Veterans Affairs and by the Missouri National Guard. These emphasize initiatives by chaplains, mental health professionals, and clergy to develop community-based collaboratives that mobilize outreach and resources for veterans and their families. Other initiatives are being developed for example by military service organizations, educational institutions, The American Red Cross, individual veterans, and charitable foundations.

A brief web search will result in multiple resources to better understand ministry to veterans of war.

<https://vimeo.com/59599538>

Helping Veterans Suffering Moral Injury After War - Webinar recorded on February 13, 2013

In this webinar, Dr. Brock and Chaplain Keizer will discuss the definition and causes of moral injury, how it differs from post-traumatic stress disorder and what is involved in the recovery process. They'll also share about the importance of congregations and communities in the process of soul repair.

<https://vimeo.com/149203315>

Strategies Addressing Moral Injury in Today's Military
US Army OneSource

<http://www.arktimes.com/arkansas/church-va-partner-to-help-rural-veterans/Content?oid=3156476>

Church, VA partner to help rural veterans
Tackle PTSD, other problems.

<https://vimeo.com/44127037>

The Partners in Care initiative was sanctioned by Maj. Gen. Stephen L. Danner, Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard, after being recognized by Gov. Jeremiah "Jay" Nixon as one of the best ways for our faith-based communities to help citizen-soldiers. It was adopted by Chaplain (COL) Gary Gilmore, head of the Missouri National Guard Chaplain Corps from a separate initiative piloted by Chaplain (COL) William Sean Lee in the Maryland National Guard.

**The Baptist Home
Veterans Care Ministry
Interest Survey**

Please help by responding to the following questions and feedback options based on the ideas and information presented in today's VCM introduction meeting. Thank you.

NAME _____ AGE _____

CONTACT (CHURCH) _____

(ADDRESS) _____

(PHONE & EMAIL) _____

Served in the military or National Guard? _____ YES _____ NO

Comments:

Describe any ways that your church ministers to veterans and their families.

Please indicate if you wish to have a follow up to this presentation to further discover how your church can participate in Veterans Care Ministry.

Support the ministry of The Baptist Home to aging veterans on our residential campus.

_____ YES _____ NO Comments:

Explore options for leading your church in Veterans Care Ministry among your members and in your community.

_____ YES _____ NO Comments:

Additional Comments: