

Veterans Day – A Time to Remember and Support



Veterans Day is a time that we remember and honor all persons who have served in the U.S. military...past and present. We can make a difference in the lives of millions of people if we not only remember, but also reach out to support the troops returning from combat service.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has become a major mental health issue as our veterans return from serving in the war. [The Rand Corporation](#) released a study estimating that one in five U.S. service members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan suffers from major depression or combat stress.

We are seeing an increase in combat stress, addiction, domestic violence and suicide. Too often the ethic is to be silent about combat related mental health problems. Only half of those with mental health problems seek treatment.

This is slowly changing as the military is encouraging veterans with combat stress symptoms to seek help. When treated early, the symptoms can be treated and need not lead to lifelong problems. Regardless of our political views about the war, clergy and faith communities can be part of the support team for returning veterans and their families.

How Faith Communities Can Support Veterans and Their Families

- Publically acknowledge members of the congregation who have served or are serving in the military through prayers, listing names in the service bulletin and posting photos of those currently serving.
- Send letters care packages and other tokens of support to persons who are deployed.
- Support families dealing with the transition of persons leaving for service and returning from service. Faith communities can reach out through phone calls, providing meals, providing child care and, most importantly, providing a listening ear.
- Know the signs of distress and reach out when an individual or family is struggling. Children are especially sensitive to signs of stress in the home.
- Provide non-judgmental pastoral care and opportunities for veterans to share their story and talk about how their combat experience has affected their faith.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PTSD

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

www.ptsd.va.org

NAMI's Veterans Resource Center

www.nami.org/veterans

International Conference of War Veterans Ministers

www.warveteranministers.org/ptsd.htm