



# IHS



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ANNIVERSARY  
ISSUE

## LUTHERAN MILITARY VETERANS AND FAMILIES MINISTRIES

2010

By God's grace, and through the gifts He has provided, Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries marks its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of service on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

In the past few months, as the LMVFM was approaching its third year of ministry outreach to military veterans and their family members, we began the process of conducting our first strategic review of our ministry operations in order to prepare a new strategic plan for the upcoming years. A strategic review allows an organization to assess where they are at in relationship to their mission and is the first step towards creating a strategic plan. It's a bit like a dental exam, you may or may not like the final report, but at least you know whether or not you've got a problem that needs some attention as well as look at the available options.

The LMVFM has a pretty simple two-fold mission to *provide, without charge, direct urgent care* to veterans and their family members, through a range of programs and services. The second area of our mission focuses on providing *training and resource assistance* to clergy, congregations, mental healthcare providers, social service agencies, and individuals within the communities who work with our military veterans and their families. We view this educational focus as an integral component of our ministry outreach as we equip care providers with the tools and resources they need to effectively work and minister to veterans and their families. With this in mind we have developed quality training seminars while keeping the costs to a bare minimum. Additionally, we provide at least one scholarship seat in each training seminar to students studying for vocations or careers in church work or in human/health care professions.

The results of our now completed strategic review have confirmed that there has been a shift in the types of requests for assistance we've been receiving over the past year from veterans and their family members. Today, the need to train care providers within the church, as well as mental health and social service providers has never been greater. While the LMVFM continues its mission of providing short term direct care to our veterans and their family members, it is done with the goal of placing clients with the appropriate long term care providers. However, there remains a shortage of care providers who are trained and equipped for the unique challenges of providing care to our military veterans and their family members. It is for this reason that we are adjusting our sights and placing greater emphasis on educating our current and future care providers.

On 8 October, 2010 we will conduct the second seminar in our basic training seminars. We are encouraged by the response we have received from the clergy and future clergy members who have signed up for this seminar. As we begin our third year as a ministry, and look forward and beyond, we know that the needs of our veterans and their families are only going to increase. We ask God to continue to bless us as we serve these men and women, as well as our mission to train and equip the church and those who also provide care to our veterans and their families.

*"Serving with Christ's love, those who serve"*



*Please join with us at 10:00 am on Saturday 23 October, 2010  
at our Vance Ave, location as we celebrate our third year!*



## The Breaking of Rule Number One

While there are slight variations to this, **Rule Number One**: “Don’t let anyone get inside your perimeter” roughly translates into not letting anyone get close enough to hurt you at the emotional or physical level. During my life since 9/11, I have joined the long ranks of veterans who have seen too much death, and experienced the gut wrenching pains that accompany the loss of those we have felt great love for. Like many them, having felt the depth of pain which accompanies great loss I had vowed never to again allow myself to grow close again, much less (with one exception) attend another funeral. Yet, somehow in 2008, I allowed myself to break rule number one which then led me to break my vow to not attend any more funerals.

At a young age of 99+ years, Sister Callista Ley, was until her passing late September, a volunteer and the chief proof reader for the LMVFM. The day in 2008 when she volunteered to be our proof reader had come on the heels of a question that was in reality more of a statement as she handed back the copy of the newsletter I had given her earlier, “You don’t mind a few corrections do you”? she said as she began pointing out each of the marks she had made. I must have looked pretty much out of my depth as I looked at the heavily marked copy she had handed me when she said with that twinkle in her eye, “If you want, next time I wouldn’t mind taking a look at those before you get them printed” and thus began her time as our beloved and most senior volunteer.

My relationship with Sr. Callista went well beyond her proof-reading work, and had begun when I began going to Victory Noll (retreat center and Mother house/place of retirement for the Sisters of the OLVM) for monthly spiritual retreats. From the beginning, we had hit it off. She was a stalwart soldier of Christ, for whom the qualities of duty, honor, courage, and commitment never faltered. Our theological “debates” regularly took place during meals and often concluded with her telling me “when You’re a Catholic you’ll understand” and me countering with “You’re going to make a mighty fine Lutheran one day” as each of us attempted to get in the last word. We talked about much more than theology though, and from these discussions pearls of wisdom flowed from her to me as our friendship grew. One day I announced to Sr. Callista that I had adopted her as my “Grandsister”. It so took her by surprise that her head sort of jerked, but then just as quickly came this twinkle in her eyes, as her lips formed a smile. Our friendship would grow throughout the years up till the end.

On a Friday, five days before her death, I got the news that Callista had started on the last leg of her final journey home. Just as I would not leave a soldier behind I could do no less that walk with her until she had made it home. She was a tower of strength, and her faith never faltered during the last days and hours with us. We had some great visits and talked about a lot of things. Callista who hated war, loved our soldiers and their families. Her concern was greatest for the children of those who fought. She asked how our ministry was doing and I mentioned we were still looking for more volunteers. I asked her why she volunteered to be our proof reader. She said, “You should always try to do something to help others. Even if your body can’t do anything, you can always pray-I can do both”. One of the biggest fears soldiers have going into battle is that they will fail to show courage. Callista need not have worried that she would fail to show courage, in the face of death. She showed nothing less than courage. God has blessed the LMVFM through His daughter our Sister, Callista as well as the volunteers and many supporters who continue to labor as well as lift us up in prayers in our ministry’s outreach efforts to our veterans and their families. We are thankful to Him for all of the blessings He continues to provide, especially the Callista’s in our life.



By: **Leslie Haines, Executive Director**

### FOCUS ON OUR VOLUNTEERS



Hi, my name is Judy Schmidt and I am the administrative assistant/volunteer coordinator for the LMVFM. Before volunteering here, I have held many positions involving various challenges and levels of responsibility from the highly detailed and impersonal areas of forms and records to the opposite end of the deeply personal realm of human care working with clients, and medical personnel. Though having the wide range of experiences and interactions in my working life, somewhere inside of me, I knew there had to be something more. Later, as I struggled with an illness, a friend guided me into volunteer work. As I focused on the needs of others it helped me to get things off my mind and I ended up feeling much better about myself. After returning to work, my positive volunteer experience was never far from my mind. A few years ago I was laid off and volunteered to teach crafts to seniors in the community. Unfortunately, this proved to be a bit less fulfilling than I had hoped for as many of my older students struggled with memory loss, and illnesses, that affected their ability to attend regularly. After some time, I sensed that I had done about as much as I could in this area, and was also feeling drawn more to become more active at the Lutheran church I had been attending and would eventually join. In following my instincts, and through my belief that God would lead me in the right direction I continue to be blessed in ways I would have never imagined.

In May on I went on a tour of Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries (LMVFM) with our church’s senior group where the Director, discussed what the LMVFM was doing for military veterans and their families. I was so impressed with what the LMVFM was trying to accomplish that when she asked for help I knew deep inside that this was and is where I was most needed, and immediately volunteered to make sure the ministry had the help they needed. I’ve been here 4 months now and still feel this is where I need to be until when and if I am led in another direction. Becoming a volunteer has helped me find a piece that I had been missing all my life, which is the peace that comes from serving others.