2026

Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal

Leave no ornament behind!



Each year, November 1st marks the beginning of LMVFM's annual Christmas Ornament Adoption Appeal. Each gift received between **November 1-January 31** sponsors the adoption of a one-of-a-kind, handcrafted ornament which is named for the donor. Your ornament, which was made by a veteran or family member will be hung on our Christmas tree, photographed, and posted on our Facebook page, and website for you or someone you have honoured to see.

By sponsoring for adoption one of our ornaments, you are helping us to provide ***free*** Christ centered counselling and services, in the coming year to those who have sacrificed so much for the freedoms that we enjoy. There are over 300 ornaments, including a large number of *military themed ornaments* representing each branch of service waiting to be adopted in honour of your serving military member or veteran.

Adopt your ornament today with a gift of any amount to LMVFM. online at lmvfm.org or by mail to LMVFM Christmas Appeal, 3480 Stellhorn Rd., Fort Wayne, IN 46815.

Your Thrivent Choice Dollars help us help our veterans and their families.

Donating your Thrivent Choice Dollars is easy

Call 1-800-847-4836 and when prompted say "Thrivent Choice" which will connect you to a friendly Customer Care Agent and tell them that you would like to donate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to:

Lutheran Military Veterans & Families Ministries
3480 Stellhorn Rd.
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46815
260-755-2239

Online Donations help us help them!



Scan with your phone



It's easy and it won't cost you a dime!

You can help support our work with veterans and their families by registering your **Kroger Plus Card** and selecting "**Lutheran Military Veterans & Families Ministries**" to receive rewards.

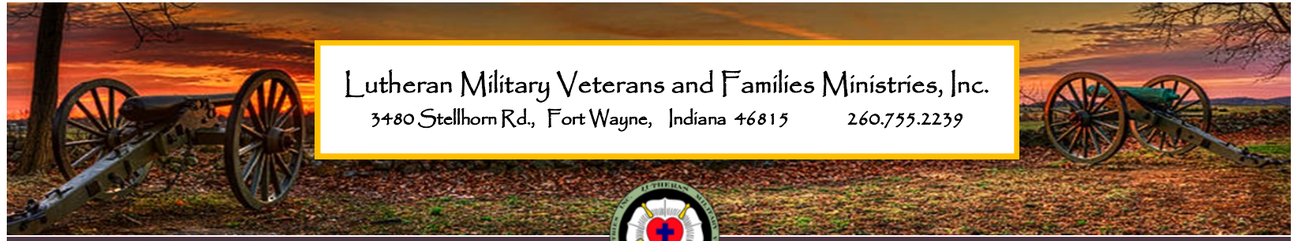
Enrolling your Kroger Card

- Enrolling your Kroger Card is easy by either calling: **1-866-221-4141**, and when prompted giving the number **YY371** for Lutheran Military Veterans & Families Ministries, or
- on-line at **www.krogercommunityrewards.com**

PayPal

LMVFM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit ministry. Your gifts are tax-deductible

Find us on Facebook



Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries, Inc.
3480 Stellhorn Rd., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46815 260.755.2239

Winter 2026

"And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose."
Romans 8:28

The Gift That Traveled Farther Than Anyone Expected

About five years ago, Robin, a mother of a veteran and friend of our ministry walked into our office with an envelope. Inside were ten $100 gift cards. Her request was simple and heartfelt:

"Please give these to veterans who really need it—so they can enjoy a good Thanksgiving or Christmas meal with their families."

She didn't want recognition, or any public acknowledgement. She simply wanted to bless veterans who were struggling, especially during a season when loneliness and financial strain can feel overwhelming.



At the time, our ministry had several veterans who fit exactly what she had in mind—but not ten. So I reached out to several pastors I knew across the country and asked if they had a veteran who could use a little help, a little hope, or simply a reminder that someone cared.

One of those gift cards went to a pastor I hadn't seen since mailing it to her five years before. Until this past week.

We were both attending a retreat when she came up to me and asked me if I remembered when I had sent her the gift card for a veteran. I said I did and she shared what had happened.

She told me about giving the gift card to a veteran who had been struggling deeply. Life had become heavy. Money was tight. His confidence was shaken. The holidays only magnified the weight he was carrying. When she handed him that gift card, she said he stared at it for a long moment—almost as if he wasn't sure it was real and whispered, "This means my family can have a real holiday meal." That one meal became a turning point. It wasn't just the food. It was the dignity. It was the reminder that he wasn't forgotten. It was the spark that helped him begin to reclaim hope.

Over the months that followed, he slowly began rebuilding his life. He reconnected with his church. He found steadier footing. He rediscovered a sense of purpose. A year later he walked into his pastor's office with an envelope of his own. Inside was a check for **$1,000**. He said, "Someone helped me when I needed it. I want to make sure you have something to help the next veteran who's struggling." Each year since, he has repaid the gift he was given with a check for $1000 to be used by the pastor to help other veterans.

A $100 gift card became a $1,000 blessing. A simple act of kindness became a lifeline. One woman's generosity helped a veteran turn his life around—and inspired him to help others do the same.

This is the quiet miracle of ministry. This is the ripple effect of compassion. This is what happens when people choose to care.

Sadly, just a year after she had presented me with the ten gift cards, "Martha" passed away. I wish I could tell her this story myself, but suspect she already knows. As we continue serving veterans and their families, stories like this remind us that no gift is ever too small, no act of kindness ever wasted. You never know when your generosity will be the turning point in someone's life.

Leslie

Home for the Holidays: A Veteran's Reflection on Coming Home

Mid October has a way of surprising you. One moment you're driving through Pennsylvania, focused on the miles ahead and the mission behind you. Then suddenly the hills erupt in color — reds, golds, and deep burnished orange — like an old friend stepping out from the shadows. That's what happened to me this year. One turn in the road and the landscape shifted, and with it, something in me shifted too.

It transported me back to another drive home, years ago, after my first deployment. I remember that homecoming with a strange clarity. At first it was only a trickle — a few scattered memories rising to the surface. But as the leaves thickened and the colors deepened, the trickle became a flood.



I remembered Thanksgiving that year. Surrounded by friends and family, laughter filling the room, familiar voices rising and falling like music I used to know by heart. And yet I felt utterly alone. It was as though I was standing on the outside looking in, watching life happen through a pane of glass. I was there, but not there.

I remember the way I spoke — the robotic responses, the practiced phrases. I remember the plastic smile I wore like a mask, hoping no one could see how hollow I felt behind it. Everything around me seemed unreal, dreamlike, as though I had stepped into someone else's life and was trying to play the part convincingly.

But the truth was unavoidable. It wasn't a dream. It wasn't unreal. They weren't the imposters. I was.

And as bad as my deployment had been, the realization that I no longer fit in among my family and friends made it far too easy to say yes when I was asked to deploy with another unit three weeks later. I didn't hesitate. In some ways, it felt like the only place I still belonged. The battlefield made sense. Home did not.

Unbeknownst to me then, that second deployment — equally as bad in its own ways as the first — would become the soil in which this ministry was planted. Nineteen years ago, in the middle of hardship, isolation, and the quiet ache of trying to find my way back to myself, God began shaping the mission that would one day become Lutheran Military Veterans & Families Ministries.

I couldn't see it at the time. All I knew then was that I felt more at home in a war zone than at a Thanksgiving table. But God was already working, already preparing, already turning pain into purpose. What felt like escape became calling. What felt like disconnection became compassion. What felt like being an outsider became the foundation for a ministry built to walk with others who feel the same.

That is the quiet reality many veterans carry into the holiday season. Homecoming is rarely simple. The world you left behind kept moving. The world you lived in overseas changed you. And when those two worlds collide — around a Thanksgiving table, under Christmas lights, in the familiar rhythms of family gatherings — it can feel disorienting, even painful.

For some, the holidays bring warmth and reconnection. For others, they stir memories, grief, or a sense of distance that is hard to explain. And for many, it is all of these at once.

As we enter this season, our ministry remembers those who carry that tension. Those who come home grateful, but changed. Those who love their families deeply, yet struggle to feel present. Those who smile through the ache because they don't want to burden anyone. Those who wonder why joy feels complicated.

If this is your story, you are not alone. You are not broken. You are not failing at being "home." You are navigating the long, human process of returning — body first, heart later. And we walk with you.

This fall, as the colors deepen and the holidays draw near, may you find moments of peace. May you feel seen. May you know that your story matters — the whole of it, not just the parts that fit neatly into celebration.

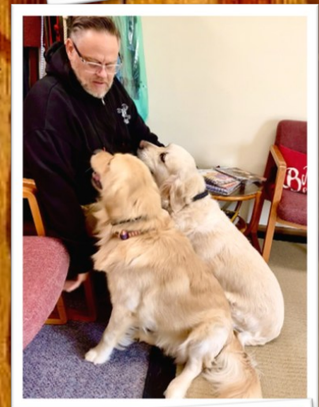
And may you discover, slowly and gently, that you are not an imposter. You are a survivor, a servant, a warrior, and a beloved child of God finding your way home in your own time.

Celebrating 19 Years of Ministry to Veterans, Contractors & their Families









"Let us not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions"

1 John 3:18













