

How churches can help service members and their families

From John Morris —“The Soul of War” and “Beyond the Yellow Ribbon”

Make yourself a ‘military-friendly’ church.

1. Reach out to military families.
2. Reach out to the deployed soldier.
3. When the soldier comes home, welcome them home.
4. Support beyond the yellow ribbon.
5. Listen, support, absolve and don’t condemn.
6. Be alert for signs of distress.

From Kathy Gilbert in UMNS article, “Chaplains offer ideas, resources for churches”
During its first meeting, task force members suggested ways that local churches can care for soldiers, including to:

- Adopt a soldier or an entire military unit
- Provide a safe place in the church for military families to meet together
- Be good listeners and invite returning service members to share their experiences without talking about the politics of war
- Hold special worship services for military personnel when they deploy, return and on occasions such as Veterans Day and Memorial Day
- Learn about what chaplains do during wartime
- Advocate for returning soldiers to have access to health care, living wage and housing, and for other needs to be addressed
- Support the families of deployed soldiers

From Cynthia Astle in *UM NeXus*: What United Methodist churches can do now for American troops

- "Adopt" someone in military service from your community
- Provide a safe space.
- Let them talk.
- Learn the vital roles that chaplains play as peacemakers amid conflict.
- Be a vigorous advocate for resources that protect troops and for veterans' benefits.

Additional materials developed by the Army Chief of Chaplains to assist civilian clergy who are working with service members and their families can be found at <http://bit.ly/2efvGS9>.