

CARING FOR SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL
GUARD AND RESERVES THROUGH THE DEPLOYMENT PROCESS:
A PASTORAL GUIDE.

by

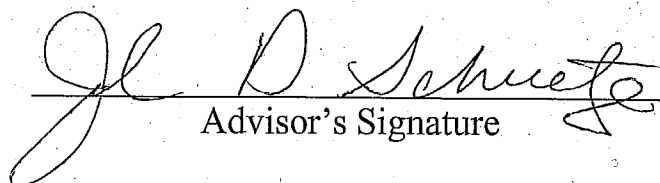
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A Senior Thesis Submitted to
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Master of Divinity degree

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Abstract: Nearly 2 million servicemembers have deployed since September 11, 2001. Servicemembers have unique experiences and unique needs. A number of common struggles have been noted among those who have served in combat zones. Wisconsin Synod Military Services has established a strong ministry among those serving on active duty, but often those who serve in the National Guard and Reserves can fall through the cracks. Local pastors need to be ready to serve those who serve. They will be the primary spiritual shepherd for those who return from combat and should look for ways to serve them as best as they can. This paper will help equip pastors with the information they will need to understand to improve their ministry to servicemembers in reserve units.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
A Personal Perspective	2
A Great Need	4
The Challenge for Reserve Components	9
The Challenge for Wisconsin Lutheran Synod Pastors	11
Discussion on the Research	13
Survey Observations	14
What Role can the Local Pastor Have	16
Further Research	24
Concluding Remarks	25
Bibliography	26
Appendix I. (Soldier's Creed)	27
Appendix II. (Survey and Results)	28
Appendix III. (Suggestions for Pastors Ministering to the Military)	29

¹ O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
 or discipline me in your wrath.
² Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint;
 O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony.
³ My soul is in anguish.
 How long, O LORD, how long?

⁴ Turn, O LORD, and deliver me;
 save me because of your unfailing love.
⁵ No one remembers you when he is dead.
 Who praises you from the grave^[1]?

⁶ I am worn out from groaning;
 all night long I flood my bed with weeping
 and drench my couch with tears.
⁷ My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
 they fail because of all my foes.

⁸ Away from me, all you who do evil,
 for the LORD has heard my weeping.
⁹ The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;
 the LORD accepts my prayer.
¹⁰ All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed;
 they will turn back in sudden disgrace.

Psalm 6

These are the words of one of God's mightiest warriors, the man after the Lord's own heart, King David. Although David had many victories, these are not words of rejoicing over victory. These are words of a warrior who has had his fill of battle. These words are filled with sorrow and agony. On his knees David cries out to the Lord his God for mercy. He finds his strength to continue his battles in the mercy and grace of the Lord.

This prayer could be heard from the mouth and the heart of many warriors. War is a brutal trial of body, mind and spirit. For this reason, many have made world peace as an ideological goal; only fools hope for and actively seek war. But a Christian knows that world peace is an unrealistic expectation. Jesus tells his followers, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come" (Mt 24:6). Since the people on earth cannot anticipate true and lasting peace, they must be prepared for frequent war. In America, every generation has been compelled to stand up and fight a war to defend the freedoms upon which the union stands. Christians, too, have seen that

war comes, whether wanted or not, and they have answered the call of their government to fight in faraway lands.

Since September 11, 2001, more than 1.8 million United States servicemen and women have served in the combat zones of Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan, and half have been from the National Guard or Reserves.¹ The ten years have taken their toll on the United States as a whole, but most of all on servicemen and their families. Even as the current wars are winding down, the effects of the war can be long lasting and the church needs to build on the ministry lessons it has learned through these hard years.

A Personal Perspective

Because of his own experiences, the author's concerns are personal. In 2005, less than two months after marriage, I was deployed with the Minnesota National Guard. My unit spent six months at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, preparing for combat in Iraq. During our pre-marriage counseling, one of the memories which stands out in my mind was the response of the pastor as he processed our reasons for changing the wedding date and what that would mean for us as a couple. He simply said, "That is so sad." We knew what he meant. The idea of a young couple being separated so quickly after becoming one flesh was going to be a challenge and a hardship. He pointed out that it was a shame that the "one year rule" (Dt 24:5) could not apply for us also. He was right; we would be challenged as a couple over and over again over the next three years, but his words also showed a little of the disconnect that pastors can have to problems that are common among those who serve in our nation's military.

Military life is all about duty. A soldier gets his job done. It is about routines, even when nothing seems routine. Over time it became harder and harder for my wife and I to carry on extended conversations. We spoke often over the phone. Even while I was in Iraq, we spoke to each other three to seven times a week, but conversations were hard to keep going. Most of my life seemed routine and I had little to say. Some things I could not say, either for security reasons or in an attempt to shield her from worrying as much as I could. It was hard to hear about what she was doing and how different our lives were. Little by little, we grew apart.

¹ Khaylis et al., "Posttraumatic Stress, Family Adjustment, and Treatment Preferences Among National Guard Soldiers Deployed to OEF/OIF," 126.

While I was training in Mississippi, other Wisconsin and Evangelical Lutheran Synod members and I were blessed to be served by a caring pastor from Mobile, Alabama once a month. He drove two hours to conduct worship, preach and administer the sacraments to a small group in a little army chapel. I was usually able to attend. Army policy states that they will not prevent soldiers from practicing their religion, but I was unwilling to leave training for a religious service. I always attended if we had that time already free.

As newlyweds, my wife and I did not transfer our church membership from our parental congregations, even though she did not attend there regularly and I was away. In the time before I deployed we attended one church regularly. The pastor knew about our situation when I left, but no pastor ever checked to see how my wife was doing. Both my wife and I felt forgotten by our churches. The attitude we perceived was one that assumed all was well, because we attended and never said otherwise.

The Ladies Guild in my parents' church sent care packages every month throughout the deployment. In it were *Meditations*, treats and a church newsletter. Although these were appreciated, I would often seek something a little more personal. During my time in Iraq, I was never comfortable going to the services of the Lutheran chaplain on post. He was a kind man and some of the other WELS soldiers attended regularly, but it would have gone against my conscience. I fed myself spiritually with my *One Year Bible* and *Meditations*. When my duty schedule permitted, I also enjoyed a small group Bible study. It was refreshing to have that hour to spend with fellow believers around the Word, even if for only an hour a week.

Morality in the barracks is an interesting thing. If most Christians heard the conversations and saw the activities which are common among servicemembers, they would call them amoral, but that would be an unfair characterization. Each soldier has his or her own version of morality. Coarse talk, crude jokes, and gallows humor are commonplace. When they talk about life back home, many of the stories involve drunkenness and sexual conquests. Pornography was widely used. In this type of environment, the Christian has a hard choice to make. He can preach to the "heathens" and try his hardest to avoid anything which is immoral. Or he can make his own boundaries for morality and try his best to fit in with the military culture. Some who choose the former have a special gift for getting along with people and are able to build strong friendships in spite of the differences in morality, but others find themselves alienated from most of the people around them. I chose the latter. I made lines which I would

not cross and tried to get along. When conversations or activities made me uncomfortable, I would walk away and most of my friends respected that. At the same time being so much a part of that world left emotional and spiritual calluses which took a long time to heal. I was open with my faith, but rarely took the extra step of presenting the law and gospel in a more confrontational way. I value the friends I have from my military service, but I also carry the burden of knowing that many of them are not on the path of salvation. Eighteen months after we returned from Iraq, one of my friends took his own life. Although I did have some spiritual conversations with him, I will always wish I had been bolder with the gospel, and I carry his memory with me always. As I have matured in the faith, I find I have less in common with those friends, but I hope that the Lord will grant me more opportunities to share his love with them.

The greatest challenge of the deployment cycle and my whole life was coming home. My wife and I moved into an apartment in Mankato for my final year at Martin Luther College. She worked while I studied. I had high expectations for what our life would be like now that we were finally back together, but it was not at all what I expected. We struggled with intimacy. We both felt we were living with strangers. She wished she could spend more time with the friends she had made while I was gone, and I was more comfortable drinking with my military friends than spending every evening with her. I felt she should be more appreciative of what I had done. I had served my country. I had helped her get her degree. I had paid the bills. But she resented how long I had been gone and felt that she no longer really knew the man to whom she was married. Within two months of my returning I began to worry that our marriage would collapse, but neither of us knew what to do about it. For a time, our wedding vow was the only thing keeping us together.

We joined the local church, attended regularly and got involved in different aspects of the ministry there. Slowly, through the power of the Word, we began to reconnect. We began to find joy in being with each other again. I stopped using alcohol as an escape. We started to talk to one another and actually listen. Her bitterness faded and I grew in my understanding of what it meant to love her. We are stronger for our experience, but I will never forget how close I thought I was to losing my wife. Looking back, we needed help, but were too proud to ask for it. These experiences have helped shape my view on this topic. My heart goes out to those who are struggling with many of the same things my family struggled with. Through this research, I confirmed what should be always kept in mind when we deal with such a diverse group of

people. No servicemember has a typical experience, but deployment will change them. The role of the pastor is to help them cope with these changes and help them maintain and strengthen their faith.

A Great Need

Servicemembers spend six to ten weeks in basic combat training and then another six weeks to twelve months or more learning a military occupation. Once assigned to a unit, the training continues. Skills are honed and built upon so that all military personnel are prepared to deploy to combat zones or installations around the world. Duty is one of the key Army values, but it is really a part of every serviceman's life. Those in the military "stand ready to deploy, engage and destroy the enemies of the United States in close combat."²

At the same time there is little training for soldiers to learn how to manage their personal lives or their spiritual lives. Military families receive little or even no training for how they can prepare for that time when one member of that family is called to deploy and is separated by great distances. The whole process of having one member of the family torn away will always be one of stress and turmoil. Pincus, House, Christenson, and Adler (2004) categorize the stages of deployment this way: Pre-deployment is the time from when the deployment is first commanded until the unit leaves. Deployment is the time the serviceman leaves though the first month. Sustainment is from after the first month until the penultimate month. Re-deployment is the last month before the return. Post-deployment is the entire time of adjustment following a deployment.³ For the purposes of this paper, this is the model that will be used.

Military families have been hard hit in the last ten years. "Given the high stress levels endured among military families after years of multiple combat tours and lengthy deployments, it is no surprise that divorces among enlisted soldiers and marines reached a 16-year high in 2008."⁴ CPT Gomulka (2010) points to three reasons why military marriages are failing at such a high rate: the young age of married servicemen and women, finances, and long deployments.⁵ The separation itself is often enough to create great amounts of stress. Financial decisions which

² Soldier's Creed (cf. Appendix I)

³ Pincus et al., "U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective."

⁴ Gomulka, "Saving Military Families," 111.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

might have taken a few minutes face to face are drawn out as one spouse waits for the other to contact him or her. Distance amplifies all problems that arise in the home.⁶

The loneliness of separation goes beyond the missing of a loved one; it is an empty hole in the heart. This hole will affect the spouse at home on a number of levels, physical, emotional and spiritual.⁷ The homebound spouse must learn to cope with these feelings, but many react in very different ways. The ability to cope with those stressors will affect the family from top to bottom. The relationship between the servicemember and the left behind spouse faces extreme pressure.

Anger is a common side effect of deployment. Even pre-deployment can be a cause of marital strife. The stress of the inevitable departure and the seemingly mundane tasks servicemembers are required to participate in before leaving can easily lead to arguments. Unresolved, these arguments can fester and cloud future conversations.⁸ An unresolved argument is a terrible thing to carry over into the deployment stage since it could be days or even weeks until deployed servicemember has the opportunity to make real substantive contact with their families back home. Some spouses have been known to grow angry at the abandonment. “Spouses may consider themselves to be the true heroes (watching the house, children, paying bills, etc.) while soldiers cared only for themselves.”⁹ Even when things are going well, anger can arise from other places. Some can feel guilty for enjoying family events and activities while the other spouse is away and has to miss them. Paap (1991) points to this phenomenon, “For example, the guilt and self-blame that people felt inside may be projected outward onto others in the form of anger, such as anger against the service member (for choosing to be in the military), against world leaders (for deciding to engage in war), and against God (for allowing all of this to happen). Family members can also feel guilty for celebrating the good and beautiful gifts of life while the service member is absent.”¹⁰

Children of all ages feel the effects of a parent’s deployment. For each age group these effects will manifest themselves in different ways, depending on age and maturity. “It is reasonable to assume that a sudden negative change in a child's behavior or mood is a predictable

⁶ Harris, *Counseling the Serviceman and His Family: Successful Pastoral Counseling Series*, 38.

⁷ Paap, *Caring for Military Families Facing Separation, War, and Homecoming*, 39.

⁸ Princus et al., “U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective,” 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰ Paap, *Caring for Military Families Facing Separation, War, and Homecoming*, 85.

response to the stress of having a deployed parent.”¹¹ Over forty percent of children who have parents in active duty are five years old or younger.¹² When faced with the stress of deployment and multiple deployments, these children often show behavioral issues. They can have trouble bonding with the deployed parent, who may have been deployed for half their life or more. One of the soldiers with whom this author deployed missed his daughter’s first three birthdays, which took its toll on both him and her. The coping skills of the parent who stays with the children makes all the difference in how the child reacts, since young children especially tend to take their cues from the environment around them.

If the “non-deploying” parent is coping well, they will tend to do well. The converse is also true. If the primary caregiver is not coping well, then toddlers may become sullen, tearful, throw tantrums or develop sleep disturbance. They will usually respond to increased attention, hugs and holding hands. The “non-deploying” parent may also benefit from sharing their day-to-day experiences with other parents facing similar challenges. In particular, it is important for the primary caregiver to balance the demands for caring for children alone with their own needs for time for self.¹³

Yet it will often be hard to meet that balance between self and children. Many spouses are not really prepared to be single parents, and their feelings of inadequacy can increase their frustration with the children. “Deployment of a service member can lead to increased parenting stress and, in some cases, compromise parents’ ability to appropriately care for their children. Gibbs, Martin, Küpper, and Johnson (2007) found that the overall rate of child maltreatment by army wives during their husbands’ deployments was more than three times the rate of child maltreatment by wives while their husbands were not deployed.”¹⁴

Older children have their own ways of dealing with the stress of a parent being absent. When they act out, this increases the stress for the parent at home, which can greatly affect how that child will react to new challenges as they arise. For older children, it is important to answer their questions in a clear but simple manner, so that their imaginations do not fill in the blanks of what they have not been told.¹⁵

¹¹ Princus et al., “U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective,” 1.

¹² Barker and Berry, “Developmental Issues Impacting Military Families With Young Children During Single and Multiple Deployments..,” 1033.

¹³ Princus et al., “U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective,” 1.

¹⁴ Savitsky, “Civilian Social Work,” 330.

¹⁵ Princus et al., “U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective.”

Homecoming should be one of the happiest times for a couple separated by military deployment, yet many couples simply find new struggles when they are reunited.^{16 17} Some of these challenges are only natural given what the marriage has just endured. Homecoming comes with high expectations on both partners. Everyone wants a smooth transition, yet they might have very different expectations and when those expectations are not met or things are just challenging, stress and anxiety increase.¹⁸ Paap (1991) summarized a facet of this challenge well:

People are changing and growing constantly. When all members of a family are together, they adjust to these changes through daily communication and interaction. The lengthy absence of a family member interrupts this daily process that helps families change and grow together. Suddenly all the little daily changes add up. Some of the changes result from the normal maturational processes, while others result from the families need to respond to the crisis of deployment and war.¹⁹

Those powerful emotions, feelings of abandonment or sense of being unappreciated, can come boiling over during this difficult time of readjustment.²⁰ After the short time of elation, reality can be harsh. New schedules and routines need to be developed. And the couple needs to adjust to sharing their lives with another person again.

To these struggles are added the struggles that many servicemembers face when they return and try to adjust to society as a whole. Suddenly the purpose of their lives for the past six to twenty-four months is gone, a big adjustment.

An estimated 25% to 56% of combat veterans who use VA services reported “some” to “extreme” difficulty in social functioning, productivity, community involvement, and self-care domains. At least one-third reported divorce, dangerous driving, increased substance use, and increased anger control problems since deployment. Almost all (96%) expressed interest in services to help readjust to civilian life.²¹

¹⁶ Harris, *Counseling the Serviceman and His Family: Successful Pastoral Counseling Series*, 123.

¹⁷ Princus et al., “U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective,” 2.

¹⁸ Paap, *Caring for Military Families Facing Separation, War, and Homecoming*, 93.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁰ Princus et al., “U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective,” 2.

²¹ Sayer et al., “Reintegration Problems and Treatment Interests Among Iraq and Afghanistan Combat Veterans Receiving VA Medical Care,” 589.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been shown to affect all relationships surrounding the person who suffers from it.²² This paper will not focus on the challenges which come from those with PTSD except that where veterans are concerned those helping them need to be aware of PTSD and its effects.

Post-deployment can be a dangerous time for servicemembers, as they struggle to cope with their feelings and find their place in society. Many find negative outputs for their frustrations. Alcohol abuse is a part of the military culture as it is in the American culture as a whole; however, many feel the pressure from within the military to drink like a man.²³ When the emotional struggles that follow deployment are included in the triggers, drinking can easily become the socially acceptable way to relieve the stress of life.²⁴ An article from the *Journal of Rehabilitation and Recovery* emphasizes the traps many can fall into during the short time following deployment:

Numerous reintegration problems have been reported among veterans from the gulf war and more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, including marital difficulties, financial difficulties, problems with alcohol or substance abuse, medical problems, behavioral problems such as depression or anxiety, homelessness, and motor vehicle accidents. Readjustment to community living is likely to be especially challenging for servicemembers who are injured, as readjustment may be complicated by the co-occurrence of physical injuries and postwar adjustment difficulties such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, substance abuse, and severe mental illness.²⁵

This will serve as the overview of the difficulties faced by veterans of all branches of the military. The next two sections will outline briefly the special challenges that are faced by those who serve as part of a Reserve or National Guard component and the challenges the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod faces as it tries to serve this at risk group within its midst.

The Challenge for Reserve Components

The book and mini-series, “Band of Brothers,” follows one company of airborne soldiers as they face battle after battle in World War II. The power of this story is that no matter what happened, the men of Easy Company could handle it together. They shared a comradery that is

²² Khaylis et al., “Posttraumatic Stress, Family Adjustment, and Treatment Preferences Among National Guard Soldiers Deployed to OEF/OIF,” 127.

²³ Harris, *Counseling the Serviceman and His Family: Successful Pastoral Counseling Series*, 73.

²⁴ Heinatz, *Civilian Clergy Get War Trauma Lesson*.

²⁵ Resnik, Gray, and Borgia, “Measurement of Community Reintegration in Sample of Severely Wounded Servicemembers..,” 89–90.

rarely found between groups of people who come from such diverse backgrounds. They knew that they could depend on those around them. They cared deeply for each other, even if they did not always like each other. In many ways being a part of a deployed military unit is like being a part of a large family. On Veteran's Day 2011 the author put his feelings this way, "My closest friends are those men I served with. We saw each other at our best and worst. And yet we always knew and still know that we are there for each other." It is this closeness that gives military units their strength.

When an active duty unit returns from deployment, its members return together. Even as those servicemembers return, they are never really separated from their second family long. After they use the leave which accumulates during deployment, they get back to work. Their work is the military. After every deployment there are those who retire, transfer, or have met the terms of their contract and leave the military altogether; however, for the most part the unit and the families which are connected to that unit remain together. They can offer support to each other. They can keep their eyes on each other. The transition from life overseas to life on post is made a little easier by the resources the United States military installations have to offer. Unit officers, noncommissioned officers, chaplains, family readiness groups, and educators are all equipped to identify those who are at risk. They know the warning signs for trouble, and access to help is readily available

This is not true for those who serve in the reserve units. When those servicemembers turn home, they have changed, but the society they find themselves in has probably changed very little. While those on active duty know that after leave is over they will be reunited with the friends they served with, those in the reserves may be separated by great distances.^{26 27} While active duty servicemembers will be under the oversight of trained commanders and surrounded by other servicemembers who know what the risks are, reservists will only see those people once a month (not nearly enough time to truly know what is going on in their lives.) While active duty servicemembers have easy access to facilities to treat post deployment issues, reservists likely will have to travel to find access and may feel that this is not worth the time or energy.²⁸

The families of these servicemembers also have a tougher road to recovery; the increased stress they feel while servicemembers are on deployment can have lasting effects on children.

²⁶ Daniel K. Akaka, "Care for Veterans in Rural Areas."

²⁷ Heinatz, *Civilian Clergy Get War Trauma Lesson*.

²⁸ Daniel K. Akaka, "Care for Veterans in Rural Areas."

Children and families of deployed reservists often experience a sense of social isolation. This isolation stems from the inability of peers and others in their environment to understand their reality because reserve units often come from a variety of areas. Unlike active duty units in which children commonly live in a military community, children of reservists often experience a sense of aloneness from deployment in a community with no military affiliation.²⁹

Oftentimes servicemembers and their families' isolation comes not only because very few people in the community around them are undergoing the same type of ordeal, but also because people react and treat them differently because they are uncomfortable talking about what is going on in their lives. Those who do not understand might try to empathize, but often it feels more like pity. Concern can be viewed as nosiness or as if they are a fascinating anomaly.

The Challenge for Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Pastors

Servicemembers in the Wisconsin Synod are not immune from these challenges, and in many cases, the WELS position on the chaplaincy can increase these difficulties and hinder pastors' ministry to servicemembers. It is fairly well known that the WELS does not have military chaplains, yet whenever serving the Armed Forces is discussed it is useful to review the Synod's biblical reasons for this unique position. In the author's time in service, questions about what he is studying inevitably led to a question about becoming a chaplain. This is not surprising, since chaplains are well-respected, well-compensated, and have more freedom in the military than almost any other position. Most soldiers cannot fathom why anyone with theological training would not want to be a chaplain. The concepts of fellowship, the divine call, and even the Lutheran teaching of the two kingdoms are not common topics of discussion. And to those outside the WELS this position seems odd at best. "Most American religious bodies appear to be satisfied that the military chaplaincy as it exists today is about the best solution as possible...It would seem that, by trial and error, a method of promoting good morals and morale, desired by the government, and affording opportunity to inculcate and practice religion, desired by the churches, has been arrived at that is generally satisfactory."³⁰

However, the Wisconsin Synod based its controversial position on military chaplaincy on the clear principles of scripture. The first reason for this position is that the government has no basis to call and assign pastors to a field of ministry. This responsibility God has given to the

²⁹ Harrison and Vannest, "Educators Supporting Families in Times of Crisis," 30.

³⁰ Krug, "Ministering to Members in the Armed Forces," 2.

church.^{31 32} The second reason is similar to the first, the chaplaincy stands in conflict with the concept of *separation of church and state*.^{33 34} The position of the Wisconsin Synod is that the nonestablishment clause of the United States Constitution is not clearly carried out by the office of the chaplaincy and that the Lutheran teaching of the two kingdoms is confused when a minister of the gospel is hired and paid by the government.³⁵ The final reason for this decision is the one most people focus in on, the principle of fellowship. Although chaplains have the freedom to conduct services at their discretion, at the same time, they must be prepared to offer worship to all other denominations and even other world religions.³⁶ With the increased pull of ecumenicism and the vast variety of teachings by many of the major church bodies, this principle is becoming harder and harder to keep. Servicemembers and even their pastors could easily be drawn into uncomfortable situations when it comes to fellowship.³⁷ It is important to stand on the truth, even when that truth becomes unpopular. “Confessionalism will sometimes mean that we must forgo opportunities to preach the gospel so that we insure we will still have a gospel to proclaim.”³⁸

Yet the WELS application of its scriptural principles should not be confused with a lack of concern for the military. Since WWII, when it became clear that the WELS would have to adjust its ministry to the armed forces, the synod has held the position that “every religious body should, at its own expense, take care of its own adherents when in the military, as it does when they are at home; and every soldier should be permitted to select his own spiritual adviser.”³⁹ To this end, the synod has military contact pastors who faithfully serve those who are stationed on the various military installations in the United States. There is also a WELS national civilian chaplain, called by the synod, to oversee the contact pastors and even serve the spiritual needs of servicemembers in WELS fellowship in combat zones.

The unfortunate consequence of how the military has set up the chaplaincy is that WELS servicemembers will not have a confessional Lutheran spiritual advisor when they deploy. It

³¹ Ibid., 6.

³² Braun, “The Military Chaplaincy in the New Century,” 2.

³³ Krug, “Ministering to Members in the Armed Forces,” 6.

³⁴ Braun, “The Military Chaplaincy in the New Century,” 5.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Paap, *Caring for Military Families Facing Separation, War, and Homecoming*, 75.

³⁸ Braun, “The Military Chaplaincy in the New Century,” 7.

³⁹ Krug, “Ministering to Members in the Armed Forces,” 2.

also means that the extra training which chaplains receive to help with the special needs of servicemen and women and their families is not given to WELS pastors. When WELS servicemembers return home, they may feel that their pastors have a hard time relating to them and their experiences. This adds to the challenges which pastors will have to overcome to minister to the servicemembers in their care. They will have to make an extra effort to show they care and stick to God's Word for their authority. The lack of embedded chaplains also requires greater effort on the part of those connected with the servicemember to keep them in contact with God's Word and his or her church. As the research into WELS servicemembers will show, most lament that they do not have a spiritual advisor who shares their faith working with them throughout the deployment process.

Discussion on the Research

Researching topics relating to the military, both psychological and spiritual is a challenge. The best sources with accurate information about the Armed Forces usually come from the Department of Defense. While that information is useful, the military has a *means to an end* kind of attitude about the topics of family stress, spiritual health, mental health, and reintegration. Both the military and most other faith groups assume that these concerns can all be met by a military chaplain. The fields of medicine and psychology are interested in the increased number of soldiers reporting combat stress and have done good work in those fields, but if they bring up the spiritual aspect of the servicemember, it is always in vague terms of "spirituality," which has become a meaningless catch phrase.^{40 41} Even Paap, whose main audience is pastors and other faith-based caregivers, is more likely to refer to faith as a generic thing that can be felt in different ways but has a proven benefit.⁴²

The question arises following this research is how Wisconsin Synod servicemembers are affected by these challenges, and what role pastors and their personal faith life have in helping them cope with such challenges. Original empirical research also proved to be a great challenge. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has 125 military contact pastors. As of 2006, the synod has called a national civilian chaplain, who oversees the other contact pastors and ministers to servicemembers as they need it, even in combat zones. These pastors have the best

⁴⁰ DePalo, "The Role of Hope and Spirituality on the Road to Recovery."

⁴¹ Wright, "Softening Suffering Through Spiritual Care Practices."

⁴² Paap, *Caring for Military Families Facing Separation, War, and Homecoming*, 22.

access to the servicemembers, especially active duty military, since portion of their ministry is dedicated to serving those who are stationed in the military installations near their congregations.

The challenge comes from the barriers placed between the researcher and the target audience. Contact between servicemembers and non-military personnel, especially national civilian chaplain, is monitored by the Department of Defense, so even a simple survey with baseline questions could not be fully distributed. However, with the assistance of a few military contact pastors, the survey was able to be distributed to a smaller group of current and former WELS servicemembers with limited response.⁴³

Of the surveys which were distributed, ten were returned, and only three of these respondents were from the main focus group for this paper, National Guard and Reserve components. This was due to the obstacles in distribution. Another challenge came from the fact that those in the reserve components drop out of contact after they leave active duty service. To reach these individuals and hear about their experiences would take a much more involved process, reaching out to individual congregations who have had members deploy with the military, which is unrealistic with the scope and timeframe of this project.

Another avenue the researcher fruitlessly pursued was interviewing those outside the synod who are in the position of helping the servicemembers and families affected by deployment. Attempts were made to contact the family readiness coordinator at numerous deployed units, but military units on deployment are cautious talking to those outside the unit. Servicemembers and especially their spouses are not eager to share such personal information with a person who is not a part of their group, which, although disappointing, is perfectly understandable. Attempts were also made to contact a Veterans Affairs psychiatrist, but after numerous messages, no response for the prospect of an interview was received. The professionals at the VA have large case loads full of complicated needs, so the staff probably could not make time for anything which would not help their services directly.

For additional perspective on this topic the Wisconsin Synod National Civilian Chaplain was willing to share his thoughts about what has been done and what more could be done for WELS servicemembers. Correspondence was done over the phone and through email. His insights and concerns will be reflected in later sections.

⁴³ See Appendix

Survey Observations

The small group sample size does not give a great foundation for making conclusive remarks on WELS servicemembers as a group. But they did offer insight into the wide range of experiences which they had. These responses, though few, were consistent with the author's expectations and experience. They served to show a variety of experiences and concerns that face them. And each respondent made great effort to represent his or her situation clearly and accurately. All respondents had experiences with one or more deployments to a combat zone. Most of the respondents had children; two were divorced. Only one single soldier responded. A few general observations can be drawn from this small sample. All respondents expressed a desire or a need for more spiritual care. Those who have been in the service for a longer period of time noted the increased activity from WELS Military Services and expressed their appreciation for the devotions and other encouraging emails, which have been added in recent years. Most respondents also noted that they were in somewhat regular contact with their own pastor in the United States. The respondents who were in contact with a military contact pastor seemed to have better communication with their churches than those who were in a reserve unit or had not connected with the church before deployment.

Of the married respondents, only one expressed his feeling that his transition into family life was relatively easy. He noted how blessed he was to have his wife and child to help keep him grounded. The other married respondents disclosed problems to varying degrees. Most noted that communication is a challenge after deployment, for both servicemember and spouse. One said his relationship with his wife had "lot of resentment and frustration built up [which] was released with fighting." Even the strongest relationships face problems; a certain amount of fear comes from returning home to a different life.

The biggest challenges I faced after the other deployments was mainly with my family, more specifically my wife. Getting back into the routine and understanding how to come home and fit into the family life after the "homecoming" part is over is definitely a mountain of a challenge...So the challenge with that is being able to come home after this one, hopefully my last one, and learn the communication it takes to try and learn what my wife is going through as well as her understanding my battles. (Survey Response)

Spouses will not always see the concern servicemembers have for them while they are deployed. The feelings of abandonment can be very real as they cope with everyday problems with one spouse absent. These things weigh on the servicemembers conscience and spouses may not want

to even bring them up because he or she is afraid of adding stress to an already stressful situation. One explained the depth of his feelings this way, “I did get pretty depressed that I was not able to be there for my wife whenever she was having trouble.” Two of the servicemembers looked back on past deployments as one of the key factors which led to divorce. One expressed his desire that more could have been done by his church to give support to his wife and family, because they are not trained or prepared to deal with the separation.

One of the benefits of even the limited responses was the voice it gave to the struggles of some servicemembers. Given the sample size, no conclusions can be drawn from these testimonials, but they illustrate the pain which some endure during and after their service. They also show how important the pastor’s task will be to minister to these souls. Two responses stood out among the rest. They showed the need for spiritual help and guidance, but also the necessity of the pastor being proactive to reconnect the servicemember back to the church and the Word. The pastoral heart goes out to someone who struggles like this servicewoman:

I am a single mom who is divorced. I feel like I don't belong in church. In the Lord's eyes I am a horrible person, but with my military life style this is the norm. You learn to be tough and not need people in your life or want to rely on others and because of that I don't have a relationship that's proper in God's eyes. (Survey Response)

Another expressed her distance from society. She stated that even leaving her apartment on days she did not have to work was a struggle for her. She saw going to church as more of a burden than something worth her energy.

Many of the responses showed the positive side of being connected to the Word. The enthusiasm for the Military Services devotions and the personal contact of their pastors was stated numerous times. Servicemembers are looking for ways to stay connected to God’s Word, other Christians, and their pastors back home. One soldier put it best: “Faith is one of the things that makes deployments bearable.” Some feel comfortable attending chaplains’ services, but some do not. They make their own judgments on what will help them to grow in faith and sustain them through the challenging times. Almost universally, they long for contact with those who share a common confession with them.

What Role can Pastors Play?

When asked, Pastor Paul Ziemer, the WELS National Civilian Chaplain said, “Military Services is extremely concerned about the welfare of Guard and Reserve troops and their

families. We are striving to find ways to address their needs.” Because of the nature of reserve units, many of the things military contact pastors do cannot be duplicated in other congregations where many servicemembers are present. He states, “Clearly, troops returning to a congregation served by a MCP with a sizable military percentage have an advantage over the Guard or Reserve person returning to a congregation where he or she might be the only military person in it.”

These questions need to be answered. Who is serving those who have deployed with the National Guard and Reserves? How can the local pastor make a difference in their lives? What can this ministry look like?

The first and easiest thing pastors can do when they learn that a member has been activated to serve on deployment is to encourage him or someone close to him, a parent or friend, to register at <http://www.wels.net/node/34607> . Pastor Ziemer notes, “If we do not know of the person (he/she is not registered with us) we can offer nothing specifically.” He mentioned repeatedly in conversation that without registering it is as if that servicemember is invisible. Much thought and care is put into ministering to those who serve overseas, but that access must be granted. This simple step puts them in contact with the WELS Chaplain and will give them the opportunity to receive sermons, *Meditations*, and devotions written with servicemembers in mind. These materials will never replace the specifically applied Word, but they will go a long way in helping a servicemember continue to grow his or her spiritual life.

However, for long term care, the local pastor will be the continuing point of contact for a reservist who returns from combat. The local pastor needs to be aware of this and be proactive in maintaining this contact, even if it may be uncomfortable at times. Military services is ready and willing to help prepare him for this task. Pastor Ziemer expressed it this way:

If the person is “at home” the local pastor and congregation hold the official responsibility for ministry. However, Military Services recognizes that often the local pastor and congregation are not well-positioned to provide specific ministry on military-related issues because of a lack of experience, or because the military person does not share critical information.

The greatest challenge to this ministry will be maintaining the relationship, but when a pastor makes the effort to keep in contact with a servicemember throughout the deployment process, it may open doors later when the servicemember needs help. Once the deployment process begins, the pastor can think of ways to be proactive in serving the servicemember and

the family. If they are deploying from a nearby home station, he could consider attending the send off. These ceremonies are generally well publicized and well done. Observing the ceremony will help build his knowledge of how the unit system works and will generally give some information about what they can expect in the months ahead. The unit chaplain will be there and the pastor could benefit from sharing some contact information. But the greatest benefit to attending ceremonies like this one is that it shows that he cares for this soldier and his family, even if he does not get much time to speak with them. He may not wish to intrude on the family at this emotionally charged time, but it will help him gain perspective on the whole situation.

Once the servicemember has deployed, the pastor must try to stay in contact. If his parents or spouse and children are members of the same church, the pastor will likely inquire about the servicemember. Unless an issue is brought up in that setting he might assume all is well. But if that is as far as the pastor takes things, how will the servicemember know he cares? Personal contact is the only way for him to show his concern. Often churches include servicemembers in their ministry to their college students. Many pastors delegate this task to a church organization, such as the ladies aid. This is good because it means that the contact from the church will be consistent. They often send monthly packages, newsletters, and a form letter expressing concern. Speaking from experience, these packages are greatly appreciated, but they cannot replace the personal care and concern of the servicemember's pastor. Harris (1970) points to this from his own experiences:

It is important that the local church follow him through the mails--not as a patronizing gesture replete with purple passages, but as an honest expression of continuing concern. The concern must be real...It is not enough to set up an administrative procedure that will see that form letters are sent on the way to those members who are in the service. The concern must be genuine and it must be personal.⁴⁴

A letter or email should be sent on a regular basis. The letter does not have to be eloquent or long, but it must be personal, a reminder to him that the pastor is not only thinking of him, but also praying for him. Include a passage from his weekly studies that can offer the comfort of the gospel, which servicemembers rarely hear. With the rise of technology there is no need to put off contacting the servicemember whenever the pastor thinks of him. A quick email with a Bible passage and a prayer will let him know that he is cared for and will feed his soul. The pastor

⁴⁴ Harris, *Counseling the Serviceman and His Family: Successful Pastoral Counseling Series*, 108.

cannot always expect a response. Servicemembers read everything they get from back home, but that does not always mean they will take the time to respond.

Here it is fitting to pause and warn against false empathy. This can easily sound like sympathy which will not be of assistance to the servicemember or his family. Harris recalls his friend receiving a letter during WWII where the pastor said, “I wish that I could be there, and you could be here...” The soldier responded in kind.⁴⁵ Certainly the pastor will attempt to understand and feel with the servicemember, but he must be careful because the experience of deployment is outside of what he can understand without experiencing it for himself. The same is true of speaking to the family. Sometimes less is more.

While the servicemember is deployed the family may need extra attention; however, before and after a church service will probably not be good indicators of this. People are always tempted to put on a strong face in public; this is especially true within a congregation. The pastor will probably need to take the initiative and ask for the opportunity to speak with the family to check and see how they are coping. The feeling of isolation from the rest of the world is very real. Few are or have experienced what they are going through. Who can a spouse or parent turn to without being pitied or judged?

Facebook has become a place where military spouses can connect with one another and discuss their problems. They feel more comfortable with this since these are people who have and are going through the same things. Although there is value in these groups to allow the spouse to pour out his or her heart to sympathetic ears, the healing power of the gospel is rarely present. Being a single parent is difficult, but it can be even harder for those who are also undergoing the personal stress of worrying for a loved one. When behavioral issues arise is it possible for their pastor, or Christian teacher, to be the one to whom they turn? Consider this scenario which played itself out on Facebook:

I could really use some suggestions... Lance's favorite saying is “I hate you mommy. You are dumb and stupid. I wish you weren't here” How am I suppose to handle that. Keep in mind he is 5. I don't know what to do... his mouth has gotten really bad lately. And he has been hitting alot. He is NOT like this normally. I know he's probably got a little bit of anger right now with his dad being gone so long but HELP ME!!!! Thanks!

The conversation continued for some time, but it was mostly commiseration as other moms told the story of how their children were acting up. The only helpful thing said was that counselors

⁴⁵ Ibid.

were available from the Family Readiness Group. For a pastor to help those struggling like this, he will need to make himself available. He will also need to talk with the family privately to ask about life during deployment.

So that the family might benefit the most from these conversations, the pastor needs to know what questions to ask. Communication is one of the most important factors in a healthy marriage. How well are they communicating with each other? The spouse back home may feel that the servicemember does not want to talk or is growing distant, but that is often not the case. Military life can be mundane. Even “exciting” jobs become routine and servicemembers often do not know what to say. He sees things that would interest people as being commonplace or boring.⁴⁶ At the same time, everyday problems from life at home might seem insignificant to someone serving in a warzone, making it seem like he is disinterested. As a result couples grow apart.

Children are some of the most vulnerable victims of deployment. They have a hard time understanding anything about world politics. No one else around them has to deal with the same issues at them. Not only is one parent gone, but the other has such an increase in stress that it is not surprising that difficulties arise in behavior.⁴⁷ If the children are attending a Christian day school, it would be wise if teachers were educated on the difficulties they will face. They would also benefit from the most recent research on how the educator can help them through these challenges.⁴⁸

Homecoming is an emotionally charged time. The constant stress and worry that comes with being absent from a part of the family will finally be over, but it would be foolish to assume that things will return to as they were before the deployment (although many veterans and spouses feel like they should.) The journey from theater to freedom is often a long one. Before a reservist is released from active duty there is a pile of paperwork and exams to be done, and they will receive standardized PowerPoints on the dangers of alcohol, reckless driving, available resources, and the struggles of reintegration. By the time the welcome home ceremony arrives, the family can hardly wait to be reunited. The pastor must use his better judgment whether or

⁴⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁷ Princus et al., “U.S. Army HOOAH 4 HEALTH Deployment Guide - The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective”; Harrison and Vannest, “Educators Supporting Families in Times of Crisis.”

⁴⁸ Harrison and Vannest, “Educators Supporting Families in Times of Crisis,” 17.

not he should attend this ceremony to show his support. When in doubt he can choose to go and show his support without even expecting to speak with his members while he is there.

When the servicemember returns home the pastor may have to initiate contact. As with the family while the servicemember was deployed, this ought to be more than just before or after a church service. After the initial joy of reunion wears off, new stressors will likely set in, but the servicemember and his spouse may be too proud to ask for help. They may be able to work it out without help; however, soon after the servicemember's return it may be wise to set up a counseling session with both partners. Then the pastor can ask them as a couple to evaluate their relationship with each other and with God. Being proactive in asking if he can help could be very important. This was highlighted in the words of one of the respondents as she struggled:

[I] thought about suicide daily for months. Thought about calling or talking to the pastor, but when it's day again, I always felt too embarrassed to ask for help. I think with direct prodding from a pastor or if a pastor would have set up a meeting, I probably would have opened up. I know it's my responsibility to ask for help, but I couldn't. (Survey Response)

No one wants to leave behind a person who is hurting. Because of the seriousness of the problems that can arise from a servicemember's failure to reintegrate smoothly, it would be wise for the local pastor to view a returning combat veteran as someone who is at risk. Not every servicemember will struggle in the same ways or severity, but those who do not have any serious problems are not likely to be upset by a pastor's concern. Those who need the help will benefit from the confidential care of a pastor.

One of the greatest obstacles which pastors perceive in serving servicemembers is knowing what to say or not to say. Their experiences are so far outside of the pastor's experience that he is afraid to say the wrong thing. What the pastor needs to remember when this fear takes hold is that he has the powerful Word of God to serve souls. He is never the one who brings healing, God is. He is engaged in spiritual battle along with every Christian. He has what the servicemember needs to fight his or her battles too.

There are a few things which those who have not experienced military life need to be cautious about. This is especially true for those trying to build a relationship of trust around God's Word. The pastor does not need to know anything about what the servicemember did or saw while he or she was deployed to help. People are fascinated by veterans' experiences, but often their curiosity can dehumanize the servicemember. Does it initially matter to the pastor

exactly what the servicemember saw and did on deployment? He needs to separate his curiosity from his care for the person's soul. Not all combat veterans see combat and within the military there is a stigma on those who may have never ventured outside of the confines of a secure base. If the servicemember struggles with the loss of friends, the guilt which can follow the taking of life, or with the mistakes he or she thinks were made over the deployment, let the servicemember bring those feelings up in his or her own time. Instead of focusing on what he or she experienced, focus on how things are now. Ask about alcohol use. Ask about a married couple's communication. Ask about anger and how he or she is adjusting to civilian life. Ask about nightmares and flashbacks and if there are signs of combat stress. The pastor may want to gently suggest that he or she see the professionals at the VA. There is no shame in a pastor realizing that some of a servicemember's problems may be beyond his experience to help, so he needs to refer if there are signs of PTSD or other major reintegration problems.

Continuing Improvement in the WELS

The National Chaplain and military contact pastors are constantly looking for ways they can improve their ministry to servicemembers. They have an advantage since they are involved with the military and military families on a regular basis. The WELS civilian chaplain program is in its infant stages as it seeks to offer better training to those who are serving servicemembers. This is a good step in supporting all WELS servicemembers. The interest in the program has been encouraging, but it is only a start to what the synod as a whole can do to educate its pastors in ministry to the military.

Predicting and preparing pastors for every situation they will face in the parish is impossible, but the synod's educational program is foundational to handling the difficult situations of the ministry. New pastors graduate from the seminary grounded in the Scriptures and ready to apply them to real lives. Two classes are currently required in pastoral theology and counseling, one in the middler year, the other senior year. Time and practicality necessarily limit the scope of these classes; experience is the only thing that can really teach a pastor how to handle many situations. However, it may be useful to designate time in one of these two classes to address the difficulties facing servicemembers. The unique challenges to them and their families deserve attention in these classes if only to raise awareness about them. With the high deployment rate in the Midwest and around the country this ministry will not be limited just to

those who are near a military base. The class should focus on the challenges which they face and a brief discussion on how to best serve this group. One or two class periods are all this author would suggest because of the curriculum constraints and the limited scope of this topic. It may be beneficial for this class to include a guest speaker, either a well spoken veteran or one of the military contact pastors to give a practical perspective on this ministry.

With this good work being done, Pastor Ziemer recognizes that there is still room for improvement and expansion of the services which Military Services is able to offer. One of the challenges he faces is getting the word out for this ministry. The Organization of WELS Seniors (OWLS) has been one of the biggest supporters of Military Services, due in part to the large percentage of veterans in this age group. The OWLS are committed especially in supporting the European Civilian Chaplain program and has donated generously to help support that important ministry to the military. But for many other organizations Military Services is still not well known. Part of Pastor Ziemer's ministry is spent educating others about what the WELS is doing for servicemembers and what can be done to support this work. He is eager and willing to share the story of this ministry with pastors, teachers and lay leaders so that it may continue to grow and flourish.

One aspect of his ministry, which may be little known but encouraging to many, is the high percentage of non-WELS servicemembers who seek the spiritual help of military services. Servicemembers are constantly feeling the dissonance between witnessing about their Lord and maintaining their working relationships with fellow servicemembers. One survey respondent said he felt "a lot of guilt as a Christian as we are supposed to witness to bring people to the Lord." This pressure is felt by many. Pastor Ziemer noted that nearly 90% of those whom he serves are non-WELS, who were referred by a WELS servicemember. The devotions and counseling, outside of military channels, are a nonaggressive way for servicemembers to share their faith and can help build bridges which may connect them to local pastors down the road. This is a mission field that needs to be taken seriously and encouraged. More could be done to let congregations around the WELS know about this special opportunity for witnessing.

The final suggestion for what the synod could do to help out servicemembers is more complex. Technology has opened new doors. Facebook allows friends and family to "talk" with each other in just a few seconds of time. Skype allows people across the country or even across the globe to see and hear each other in real time. Servicemembers have noted the blessing of this

face-to-face time. Recently, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service has started counseling over secure video conference on the internet. The ways in which people are able to connect with each other increase every day.

The synod should look into taking advantage of this increased connectivity to help serve servicemembers. One of the servicemembers who is still struggling in her readjustment and her faith life mentioned how nice it would be for her if there was “[s]ome sort of network to connect with other WELS and ELS to talk about shared experiences or even meet up for Bible study if you happen to be in the same area.” This is not unrealistic. The author has seen how Facebook can be utilized for military spouses, separated by distance, to come together for mutual encouragement. While anyone can start a Facebook group, a group of this type would need to be carefully monitored. Rules on what can be said or disclosed must be followed. As with all things having to do with the military, operational security is important. However, a number of benefits could come from this simple step. Feelings can be shared with those who would understand and would share the same faith. Longer notes of encouragement can be posted and commented on. Prayers can be requested. Events can be organized so that those who are able could meet face-to-face and share in the encouragement which comes from Christian fellowship. Currently Facebook (and other social networking sites) are free. Is there a mature Christian servicemember who would be willing to take on this challenge? Is it possible for a military contact pastor to establish such a group?

Further Research

Caution is necessary in drawing too many conclusions about WELS servicemembers from the current data. More dedicated research could be done to give a better picture of this group as a whole. One area of research that seems to remain untouched, is the relationship between faith and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Is there data to show that those who are grounded in faith or receive faith based counseling are less likely to suffer from PTSD? Are they able to recover more quickly or more completely?

Another broad area of research is connected to what was said above. Social media keeps expanding. Does social media actually help or hinder relationships? Are there ways in which it can be put to more effective use? Is it feasible for this to be a way for servicemembers to

connect with one another for encouragement? How would social media need to be monitored to ensure the safety and confidentiality of those who use it?

Finally, it would be useful for those who minister to servicemembers to know more about those who are from the WELS. Specific data on WELS servicemembers does not exist, but it would be helpful know a number of things: Are WELS servicemembers more at risk for divorce, substance abuse, and suicide than those WELS members who have not served, as has been shown about servicemembers as a whole? How many servicemembers and veterans are currently members of WELS churches? How are the experiences of WELS active duty servicemembers different from reserve servicemembers? What have individual congregations done to serve servicemembers in their area, and what worked well and what has not? The answers to these questions would help guide future efforts to minister to this group.

Concluding Remarks

With each passing year, researchers are getting a better view of how modern combat veterans can be served best. And this paper has just scratched the surface of what the Wisconsin Synod could do to help the service members from its fellowship. The hope of the author is that this paper may spark discussion and raise awareness about this easily overlooked group.

As under shepherds, God has entrusted great responsibilities to pastors. A love for God's flock will always be at the center of their care for all their members, and especially for servicemembers who are a part of their particular flocks. The challenges and risks that veterans face are many and severe, but the Lutheran pastor has a tool which can overcome all things, a tool which too many overlook. Through God's Word he can offer true peace and comfort. They have the power of the Lord who says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28).

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Appendix I.

I am an American Soldier.

I am a warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.

<http://www.army.mil/values/soldiers.html>

Appendix II.

Servicemember Survey:

1. What is your military component?
2. What is your marital status?
 - a. Do you have children?
3. How often do you have contact with your friends and family back home?
 - a. By phone?
 - b. By Internet/Facebook?
 - c. By Letter?
4. How many deployments have you been a participated in?
 - a. If this is not your first deployment, what were some of the challenges you faced after your last deployment? (e.g. Family, Employment, Alcohol)
5. What are the biggest challenges to your faith while deployed?
6. What are you currently doing to maintain a relationship with your Lord?
 - a. What would help you to grow in your faith while you are deployed?
7. How much contact have you had with your church while deployed?
 - a. Have you had any contact from your pastor?
8. Please feel free to add any questions or concerns you may have that are not included in this survey.

Raw Data Results

Marital Status

Single: 1 Married: 7 Divorced: 2

Children

Zero: 3 One: 2 Three or more: 2

Deployments

One: 1

Two: 3

Three or more: 6

Appendix III.

Pastoral Suggestion Sheet for Serving the Military:

- I. Pre-deployment
 - a. Pray: Throughout the deployment process remember both the servicemember and his or her family in prayer. Pray for them publicly on important days (Anniversaries, birthdays, Veteran's Day, day of deployment and day of return.)
 - b. Meet with the Family: Express support, offer churches continued support.
 - c. Encourage Registration with Military services: This will put servicemember in contact with the National Civilian Chaplain and his ministry.
 - d. Attend going away ceremony: Meet the unit. Show support.
- II. During Deployment
 - a. Meet with family: More than a quick conversation before or after worship. Find out if they have any needs with which the church can help. When children are involved, ask how they are coping with absence of the other parent.
 - b. Maintain contact with servicemember: A letter or even an email will help the pastor show that he is thinking of the servicemember during the deployment. Focus on God's Word and how it offers strength in difficult times. Realize that there are many things which will be challenging his or her faith during deployment. Remind the servicemember of the prayers Christians are saying for his or her safety. Do not expect response. Send regularly.
- III. Post-Deployment
 - a. Attend welcome home ceremony: This is another opportunity to show support for the family. Servicemembers will be eager to return to their homes with their families so do not intrude on this personal time. Time will be taken during the welcome home ceremony to reflect on the time served and remember those who did not return. This will help give the pastor a perspective on what the servicemember experienced.

- b. Thank God for the safe return in worship
- c. Meet with Family: After thirty but within ninety days set a time to meet with the servicemember and his or her family. Allow time for them to become reacquainted, but do not wait too long so that the pastor can offer help when it is needed.
 - i. Do not ask about the servicemember's experiences: They matter, but unless he or she wants to talk about them, it can shut down conversation. Avoid questions like, "What was it like over there?" and "Did you see much combat?"
 - ii. Focus on readjustment: The pastor ought to familiarize himself with the signs of PTSD and be ready to ask about them. Ask the tough questions about substance usage. Ask about the marriage relationship and offer counseling if they would like it.
- d. Be Patient
- e. Remember most of all: No two servicemembers have the same experiences; some will have very few struggles, but others will have many struggles. Do not force anything. Simply offer the help and demonstrate how the church cares.
- f. God's Word is the pastor's only authority: The pastor does not need combat experience to minister to servicemembers; he has the Living Word.