

# Ministering to the Military: A Guide for Churches



An Introduction to the Bridges to Healing Ministry  
Including How to Provide Spiritual Care for Combat Trauma



**MILITARY**  
**MINISTRY.**

Dear Friends in Christ,

**Jesus deeply loved and respected military people and their families.** He commended the Roman Centurion for his great faith, saying “I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.” (NASB) The Apostle Paul had similar high regard for military people, and participated in world-changing ministry while chained to his Roman guards. We also highlight the military as a strategic “sending” organization, key influencers of society, moral standard bearers, selfless servants of their nation, and guardians of religious freedoms.



**Our Armed Forces represent the nation’s exoderm:** they are bruised and bleed, sometimes making the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf. The wounds of war take many forms, including the spiritual and emotional impact of combat trauma, most notably Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We are seeing that PTSD best heals from the inside out, and that local churches are God-ordained institutions that can reach across the breadth of our land as **“Bridges to Healing”** for hundreds of thousands of our wounded warriors past and present.

Given these factors, today’s military people and their families greatly need affirmation, love, encouragement, opportunities for service, and the **warm, accepting community that the church uniquely offers.** Often this happens automatically, but many times the church does not extend compassion because they are simply not sensitized to these unique needs of military personnel, or they are somewhat intimidated by them, particularly by returning warriors who have seen so much and sacrificed so much for our nation.

**Our prayer is that:**

- Churches across our land will **show a heart of compassion** to our nation’s military.
- Your church will become a “Bridge to Healing” for the military in your community.
- You will form an **intentional, relevant ministry to the military** as part of your overall missions program and your compassionate outreach to the culture around you.
- Such an intentional ministry to the military will be a **tremendous blessing to your church**, as you honor and support those dear ones that serve you at home and abroad.

Please accept our great respect for your ongoing ministry within the body of Christ. You no doubt are reaching out in so many ways. **You no doubt already possess many essential ingredients for ministry to the military.** May God bless our troops and families through your continuing efforts.

Your Partners in the Gospel,

The Leaders and Staff of Military Ministry  
A Division of Campus Crusade for Christ International

[www.militaryministry.org](http://www.militaryministry.org)  
1-800-444-6006



### A Church Made the Difference

*"From the moment I stepped into Times Square Church, God was beginning to do exactly what I had asked of Him, "Prove it to me that anyone cares!" Ultimately I was asking God to prove to me that He does exist and that I was destined to something more than the hell I was in. That day began an incredible transformation unlike anything I could have ever imagined or created on my own. I could never anticipate how God could show me so much. On Sunday I gave my whole life back to God."*

**Andrea Westfall, Former Army National Guard Flight Medic  
Operation Iraqi Freedom**

## The Military in Our Midst

Many church members, if asked *“Are there military members in your church?”* would reply, *“No.”* They answer that way because most think in terms of full time active duty personnel. Veterans who have served in past wars, Guardsmen and Reservists who are serving now, and those who have completed whole careers of military service simply don’t show up on the church radar. Every church in America is touched in some way by someone that is serving or has served in the military. There may be members of your community, even your congregation who are themselves suffering from the unhealed wounds of war, past and present, or have family members who do. There may be members of your congregation whose marriages or families are in crisis due to the frequency and duration of military deployment and its aftermath. There may be dependent families attending your church that are uncertain how to navigate the maze of available resources that can deeply minister to their unique needs.

At this time in our nation’s history, there are tens of thousands of military members and families around our country who need our help, who need the healing power and support of the local church. However, the transient lifestyle of our active duty military personnel and the *“invisibility”* of Guard and Reserve *“citizen soldiers”* make it difficult to recognize that these congregants have specific practical and spiritual needs your church can meet.

So how do you identify the military in your midst? Just as with other groups that your church ministers to, you must seek them out in your own congregation and in the communities around you. Sometimes it simply requires asking within your own congregation, drawing them out of the woodwork by affirming their service and sacrifices, urging them to tell their stories as a blessing to them and to others. Yet often, it requires a more ardent and intentional outreach by church members to the community around you. This frequently includes teaming with community and business leaders, civic organizations, schools, helping agencies, local Veteran’s Affairs Hospitals or Centers, Veteran’s organizations, and military leaders and chaplains (if God has placed you near a military installation).

Most of the time it is simply a matter of seeking and asking, and you shall find these dear military people and their families in your midst. As you find them, you will no doubt wrap arms of love, compassion, and understanding around their many needs. In the words of Jesus, ***“Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.”*** Matthew 25:40 (NASB)





## What do people in the military need most from your church?

Most military members and their families do not wish to be thought of or treated any differently than other people. And, like others, they bring to your church a wide variety of gifts, experiences, and stories of God's faithfulness in their lives. However, the special circumstances of military life can severely test their faith and spiritual strength. The challenges of reassignments, lengthy separations from loved ones, deployments in harm's way, dangerous and traumatic experiences, and financial issues may lead to a special need for the fellowship, love, mentoring, and caring that Christians can bring. And when church members work together in a ministry to military members and families, God can turn these challenges into increased avenues of faith for all.

**"When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword." Exodus 17:12-13 (NIV)**

Ministry to the military fosters a strong, purposeful sense of community through the creation of a welcoming, affirming and caring environment. In that context, your church ministry to the military can provide spiritual solutions for the stresses of military life, including relief and hope for those suffering the destructive effects of combat trauma, especially Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).



## Some Needs of the Military and Their Families

### Relationships

(community/connection)  
With Christ  
With others

### Care and support

(practical help)  
Before deployments  
During deployments  
After deployments  
After separation from service

### Pastoral care

Grief and loss counseling  
Healing for combat trauma  
Marriage counseling  
Overcoming addictions

### Education

Marriage enrichment  
Parenting  
Finances  
Navigating available services



## What Does Combat Trauma/PTSD Look Like?

**“Whenever Robert Reiter is asked when he left Viet Nam, he answers, ‘Last night. It will be that way till my soul leaves this old body’. When the survivor cannot leave war’s expectations, values, and losses behind, it becomes the eternal present. This frozen war consciousness is the condition we call post-traumatic stress disorder.” Dr. Edward Tick**

“Combat Trauma” describes a spectrum of behavior observed in those who have been exposed to a traumatic combat-related event which involves actual or threatened death or serious bodily injury to self or others. This event may cause a range of reactions involving intense fear, panic, helplessness or horror. It is manifested in physical, behavioral, cognitive, emotional and spiritual symptoms, which, if untreated, can last a lifetime.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a common reaction to an abnormal event. Although it has been called “the signature injury” of Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom, it is estimated there are over 400,000 Vietnam War veterans who still suffer from PTSD – undiagnosed and untreated. Consider that for every combat trauma/PTSD sufferer from these and past wars, another 10 people are emotionally and spiritually wounded by the secondary trauma created by the sufferer’s behavior.

## The Spectrum of Combat Trauma



The condition called Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) can cause symptoms like PTSD does. TBI, a physical wound to the brain, usually caused by the effects of a concussion, is prevalent in our current returning warriors and it can be serious. The church’s unique work of caring and counseling is most relevant to the spiritual and emotional impacts of Combat Trauma/PTSD versus the physical injuries to the brain characteristic of TBI. Medical tests to determine if TBI is present are often warranted.

## Visible PTSD Symptoms

### Physical

- Vacant stare
- Flashbacks
- Excessive sweating
- Rapid heart rate/breathing
- Nightmares
- Violent outbursts
- Chills
- Frequent hyper-arousal
- Unexplained fatigue
- Vomiting

### Emotional

- Detached shock
- Anger
- Depression
- Panic
- Helplessness
- Despair/Hopelessness

### Cognitive

- Confusion in thinking
- Struggle with trouble making decisions
- Memory dysfunction
- Alertness (high/low)
- Re-experience trauma

### Behavioral

- Eating changes
- Withdrawal
- Poor hygiene
- Diminished interests
- Sleeping (too much/little)
- Various addictions

## Effects of Secondary Trauma

PTSD does not stop with the military member. Without treatment, PTSD sufferers' problems escalate and lead to secondary trauma issues for themselves and their families. Their symptoms and the responses to them impact all of their personal relationships. If untreated, a traumatic event will affect the whole individual and can fracture relationships with spouses, children, grandchildren, other family members, friends, co-workers, and even supervisors. These broken relationships can result in separation, divorce, and job loss.

Equally tragic, the sufferer's relationship with God may be damaged. And although the PTSD sufferer does not suffer alone, they will often believe that they must deal with their pain alone. Even people of faith can suffer guilt, remorse, and anger at God about the event and become unable to pray or receive peace. They may isolate themselves from their family and friends as well as their faith community. When soldiers don't or can't tell their stories the trauma never goes away. Neither do the symptoms. Their lives are not what God promises. Their families never truly know them. They cannot receive forgiveness.

**"The thief comes in the night only in order to steal, kill and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness." John 10.10 GNT**

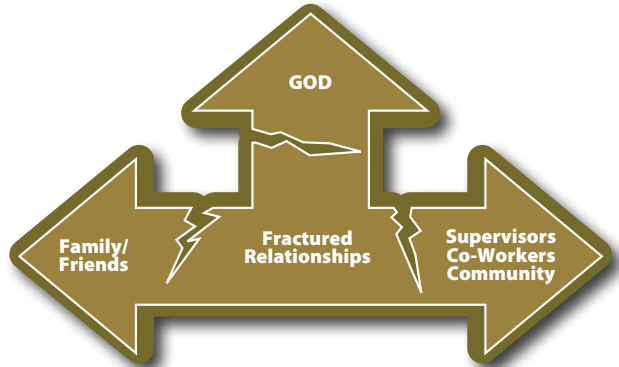
# Why Should Your Church Be Involved?

*“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal 6:2 (NIV)*

The effect of combat trauma on the soldier and his or her family is a deep wound of the soul. It is a wound which no amount of pharmacology, behavioral therapy, psychological counseling or other human intervention can truly heal apart from the divine intervention of the Lord.

## Spiritual Symptoms of Combat Trauma

- Feeling abandoned by God
- Finding it hard to pray
- Doubts about core beliefs
- No yearning for righteousness
- Anger towards God
- No spirit of thankfulness
- Feelings of alienation from church, Christian friends
- Loss of faith and hope



A wounded soul requires intervention in an environment that churches can best provide. Churches are all about community and relationships. They provide compassion, acceptance and understanding for fostering a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. They recognize God is the Healer. Using prayer as a foundational strategy, churches can pray for returning warriors and their families, and help them pray for themselves and others. Pastors and lay pastoral counselors can dialogue with the combat trauma sufferer and encourage contact with professionally trained trauma counselors and medical professionals when necessary.



## A Church’s Healing Environment

**Community:** Resident compassion corps

**Relationships:** Unconditional acceptance, understanding

**Recognition:** God is the healer

**Strategy:** Prayer is the foundation

**Service to others:** Fulfilling the Law of Christ

**Obedience to Christ:** Fulfilling the Great Commission





## How Can Your Church Get Started?

Ministry to the military, their families and combat trauma sufferers cannot be done in a vacuum. It requires relationships and context. Here is a simple roadmap for how you might develop those relationships and context (Adapted from, "Basic Strategy" by Joe Steinitz.) As with all ministry journeys, this one begins and continues with your prayer team.

### **Discern Existing Strengths and the Local Context**

- What are your church's strengths?
- What are your available resources? (ie. spiritual gifts, people, finances and/or facilities)
- Identify the needs of the military in your church.

### **Establish a Team**

- Identify and commission leaders who have a passion for ministering to the military.
- Develop a cadre of volunteers.

### **Discover Best Practices**

- See what other churches, para-churches, and professionals are doing locally and regionally.
- Resources listed on pages 12–13 are a good starting place.  
*Also for a complete list of resources, check out [resources.militaryministry.org](http://resources.militaryministry.org).*

### **Design Your Impact: Be creative**

- Prayerfully adopt a clear vision statement and mission goals.
- Identify target projects.
- Get the congregation involved.
- Develop community, para-church and professional partners.

### **Do It!**

- Contact Military Ministry for more information or assistance.
- Request a Bridges to Healing Seminar for your church (see page 16).

## Selected Resources for Military Ministries

### Books

- The Combat Trauma Healing Manual*, Chris Adsit (Military Ministry Press, 2007).
- When War Comes Home*, Chris and Rahnella Adsit & Marshelle Carter Waddell (Military Ministry Press, 2008).
- Spiritual Fitness Handbook* (Military Ministry Press, 2010).
- Angel of Death: True Story of a Vietnam Vet's War Experience and his Battle to Overcome PTSD, the "Cancer of the Soul,"* John Blehm, Sr. and Karen Blehm (2008).
- Defending the Military Family*, Jim and Bea Fishback (FamilyLife, 2006).
- Defending the Military Marriage*, Jim and Bea Fishback (FamilyLife, 2006).
- Faith in the Fog of War*, Chris Plekenpol (2006).
- Heroes at Home*, Ellie Kay (2008).
- Hope for the Home Front*, Marshelle Carter Waddell (2006).
- Making Your Marriage Deployment Ready*, Keith and Sharon Morgan & Mike and Linda Montgomery (FamilyLife, 2008).
- Ministering to the Military in our Midst*. Download this free resource guide at [www.vbmb.org/globalmissions/military.htm](http://www.vbmb.org/globalmissions/military.htm). Provides hundreds of ideas, tools, websites, and organizations you will find helpful in your military ministry.
- Two Wars*, Nate Self (2008).
- Wounded Soldier, Healing Warrior*, Allen Clark with a foreword by Ross Perot (2007).

### Articles

"Coping with Traumatic Memory," Diane Mandt Langberg, in *Marriage and Family: A Christian Journal*, June 4, 2002, p. 447.

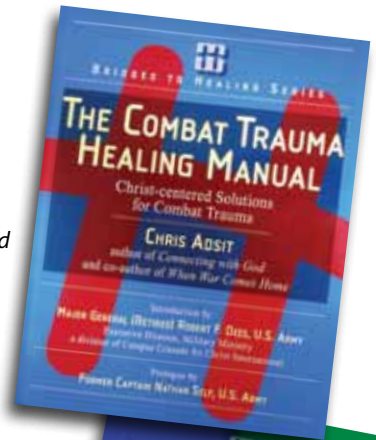
### Videos

*Bridges to Healing*. View at [www.ptsdhealing.org](http://www.ptsdhealing.org).

*Spirituality Inspiring Hope in Healing*. View at [www1.va.gov/chaplain](http://www1.va.gov/chaplain).

### Training

*Care and Counsel for Combat Trauma* — A 30-hour video training series designed to educate church pastors and ministry leaders to effectively care for the military in their midst by offering Christ's love and power for healing restoration.



To order call 1-800-444-6006 or visit [resources.militaryministry.org](http://resources.militaryministry.org)



## Websites

### **Church and Para-Church Practices in Ministry to the Military**

[www.militaryministry.org](http://www.militaryministry.org) Military Ministry, A Division of Campus Crusade for Christ, provides resources to support the military marriage, family, and chaplains.

[www.militarymissionsnetwork.com](http://www.militarymissionsnetwork.com) This site offers helpful information for churches that want to start a ministry to the military.

[www.gatewaybaptist.com](http://www.gatewaybaptist.com) Military Ministry and Missions of Gateway. We encourage a church-wide mindset of warmth and welcome to military families.

[www.ministrytomilitary.org](http://www.ministrytomilitary.org) Ministry to Military is a ministry reaching out to young people joining the military, Hebron Baptist Church.

[www.mttm.org](http://www.mttm.org) The Ministry to the Military is an outreach program of the Church of God of Cleveland, TN. Our Mission is to enable armed forces personnel and their family members to effectively live a Christian life.

[www.wcchapel.org/ministries/care/military](http://www.wcchapel.org/ministries/care/military) The vision of the Chapel Ministry to Our Military is to affirm and support our military congregants and their families and to attract military members and their families in greater numbers to the body of Christ.

To order call 1-800-444-6006 or visit [resources.militaryministry.org](http://resources.militaryministry.org)

## Selected Resources for Military Ministries

### *Resources for Helping Wounded Warriors and their Families*

[www.volunteer.va.gov](http://www.volunteer.va.gov) The department of Veterans Affairs Volunteer Service (VAS), volunteers assist patients by augmenting staff with end of life care programs, foster care, community-based volunteer programs, hospital wards, nursing homes, and outreach centers. The VAS website offers many ways to join the effort.

[www.ansoldier.com](http://www.ansoldier.com) Those wanting to send support to a soldier in harm's way, this website provides information on what to send, who to send it to and how to send it.

[www.sentinelsoffreedom.org](http://www.sentinelsoffreedom.org) Sentinels of Freedom gives injured veterans the gift of time — helping them readjust to civilian life and their new physical challenges while finding life paths that best suit their abilities, interests and needs.

[www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org) The Wounded Warrior Project serves wounded, active duty serviceman and their families as the soldiers are rehabilitated and adjust to civilian life.

### *Combat Trauma*

[www.PTSDHealing.org](http://www.PTSDHealing.org) Highlights spiritual solutions to combat trauma.

[www.CombatFaith.com](http://www.CombatFaith.com) A website and ministry dedicated to educate, train, arm and equip individuals to utilize principles from the teachings of Jesus to be healed from PTSD.

[www.iraqwarveterans.org/ptsd.htm](http://www.iraqwarveterans.org/ptsd.htm) Lists support groups for veterans and families for PTSD. Also links to articles on subject.

[www.ncptsd.va.gov](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov) The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Department of Veterans Affairs, addresses the needs of veterans with military-related PTSD.

[www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov) A grassroots website with great background resources from someone who's been there.





**Bridges to Healing Ministry**  
Victory over combat trauma  
through Christ-centered solutions for troops and families

The Bridges to Healing ministry strategy from Campus Crusade Military Ministry is for churches that want to become bridges between God's healing power and our military, including spiritual care for combat trauma. The strategy is to intentionally employ existing ministries to extend the love and hope of Christ to the military and their families in your midst.

Becoming a bridge to healing involves practical steps to build sensitive and caring relationships with military members and their families and then reaching out to them in ways relevant to their special needs.



## Becoming a Bridges to Healing Church

Military Ministry offers training, resources and support to help churches minister to the military in your midst, including spiritual care for combat trauma.



### **Bridges to Healing Seminars**

**Bridges to Healing Seminar** – Informs, inspires and challenges church and community leaders to mobilize their organizations on behalf of the military. Assists in creation of a ministry plan that reflects their unique capabilities to engage and assist the military and their families, and those suffering combat trauma including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

**When War Comes Home Seminar** – Informs, equips, encourages and inspires wives of combat veterans struggling with the hidden wounds of war, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Interactive discussions focusing on overarching practical Biblical principles and the shared experiences of other military wives.

**Making Your Marriage Deployment Ready Seminar** – Prepares couples for the unique stresses and issues of deployment. Provides couples with tools to sustain oneness during separation.

**Military Marriage Seminar** – Informs, challenges and equips couples to live by the Biblical principles of marriage. Provides couples with practical ways to create oneness in their relationship and to avoid spiritual, emotional, and physical isolation. Addresses specific issues related to deployment and military life, and their impact upon marriage and family. Encourages couples to participate in small groups after the seminar for continued fellowship and growth.

**Wives Seminars** – Various seminars to help military wives with marriage and family needs related to the military lifestyle.

### **Discipleship Groups**

Combat Trauma Healing Manual groups for combat trauma sufferers

When War Comes Home Manual groups for wives of combat trauma sufferers

Military Marriage Bible Studies for couples

### **Training for Counselors, Pastors and Lay Persons**

Care and Counsel for Combat Trauma (DVD training program)

**Schedule a seminar at [bridgestohealingministry.org](http://bridgestohealingministry.org)**

**Order resources at [resources.militaryministry.org](http://resources.militaryministry.org)**

**Main 757-928-7200 • Fax 757-928-7201 • Toll Free 800-444-6006**

## Ministry Resources

**The Combat Trauma Healing Manual** (book) \$15.99

A step-by-step program to help combat trauma sufferers regain their spiritual foundation and re-connect with the Church.

**When War Comes Home** (book) \$23.99

A step-by-step program to help wives of combat trauma sufferers.

**Spiritual Fitness Handbook** (spiral-bound book) \$6.95 Christianity 101 for the American Soldier, leading troops through subjects like “What is Christian Faith?” to “Preparing for Spiritual Warfare” (by putting on the armor of God piece by piece) to “Dealing with Tough Times.”

**Leader’s Guides for The Combat Trauma Healing Manual and When War Comes Home** (booklet) FREE

Provides learning objectives, leader tips and discussion questions designed to facilitate interaction.

**Care and Counsel for Combat Trauma** (DVD training program) \$400

A 30-hour video training series designed to educate church pastors and ministry leaders to effectively care for the military in their midst by offering Christ’s love and power for healing restoration.

**Bridges to Healing Introduction Video** (DVD) FREE

Through the experiences of two veterans, you will gain an appreciation for the spiritual dimension of PTSD and learn how to help.

**Ministering to the Military: A Guide For Churches** (booklet) \$3.00

This booklet you are reading is free to church leaders and volunteers.

**www.PTSDHealing.org** (website)

An information and resource re-supply station for veterans seeking help with PTSD related problems.

**bridgestohealingministry.org** (website)

Home base for the network of church leaders and volunteers, and professional and lay counselors who become engaged with the Bridges to Healing ministry. Offers online resources and social networking tools to encourage the formation of a community of practice around spiritual solutions for combat trauma.



## About Military Ministry

Military Ministry, a division of Campus Crusade for Christ International, assists military chaplains and commanders and churches across America in caring for the spiritual well-being of troops and their families before, during and after deployments and integration back to families and friends. Military Ministry seeks to build “Bridges to Healing” between caring Christians and hundreds of thousands of combat trauma sufferers.

### Our Vision

To mobilize, equip and support Christians in churches across America creating a “corps of compassion” that will help heal and restore PTSD sufferers, families, and caregivers. Many churches have captured this vision, but there is much more to do.

### How You Can Help

We ask and pray that you will join with us and together we can serve those who are so selflessly serving us. You can:

- Start a local “Military Ministry” at your church, organization or community.  
[bridgestohealingministry.org](http://bridgestohealingministry.org)
- Order the “Care and Counsel for Combat Trauma” video series. (Call 1-800-444-6006)
- Support Military Ministry financially.  
[supportmilitaryministry.com](http://supportmilitaryministry.com)
- Receive our e-newsletters.  
[www.militaryministry.org/news/e-newsletter-sign-up/](http://www.militaryministry.org/news/e-newsletter-sign-up/)
- Join our prayer team.  
[www.militaryministry.org/prayer/](http://www.militaryministry.org/prayer/)

On behalf of our troops and their families who have, and will continue to find hope and healing through our ministry, thank you! Your partnership is instrumental, and will go a long way to help heal our nation’s heroes.

For more information about Military Ministry, please visit our website at [www.militaryministry.org](http://www.militaryministry.org) or call 1-800-444-6006. For specific information about our ministry to those suffering from Combat Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, please visit [www.ptsdhealing.org](http://www.ptsdhealing.org).

Search for “Military Ministry” on:



YES, our church wants to learn more about becoming Bridges to Healing.  
Please contact me by email:

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Church Name \_\_\_\_\_

Church Website \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide more information on:**

- Prayer ministry
- Bibles for our troops
- Seminars: \_\_\_\_\_
- PTSD mentoring and small group ministry
- Military couples' small groups
- Ministry resources (see page 12 – 13)
- International ministries
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Send me/us the Standard Bearer newsletter**

- By e-mail to \_\_\_\_\_
- By postal mail

**I/we...**

- Will pray for the spiritual needs of military families.
- Would like to volunteer our time to minister to military couples.
- Would like to sponsor a *Bridges to Healing* Seminar at our church.
- Would like to provide a financial gift to Military Ministry.
  - To give online, visit [www.militaryministry.org](http://www.militaryministry.org) and click "Give Online."
  - For additional information on support opportunities, e-mail [development@milmin.org](mailto:development@milmin.org).

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone including area code \_\_\_\_\_

- Please call me



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