

# **A BRIEF GUIDE FOR CONGREGATIONS WELCOMING HOME THEIR MEMBERS WHO ARE VETERANS**

## **A Ministry with and For Veterans**

The Rev. Tom Williams

### **Five things a congregation can do for vets returning from war**

1. Acknowledge that Vets are part of the congregation and welcome them home.
2. Accept their self definition – some want to be heroes, some just want to be left alone. Encourage all to know they are welcome.
3. Prepare to listen to those who ache. Some will ache and some will not. And listen to the family. Prepare for changes in relationships. Don't expect things to be the same.
4. Prepare to aid those who need help. Offer information on possible sources for help to all the congregation not just vets.
5. Dare to pray publicly for victims of war including vets.

**Resources** (Web sites) [NB: The following is a short list of resources. Some are government agencies and some are non-traditional veterans groups. Do not be put off by the name or the politics of the name. ALL are very pro-vet and put that first. For example, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) is an old anti-war group and pretty radical but they also are one of the main reasons that Agent Orange and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are now recognized by the Veterans Administration (VA) as causes of disabilities. One needn't agree with any group's politics to receive help.]

1. The National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (a center funded by the Veteran's Administration) has a booklet titled "Returning from the War Zone: A Guide for Families of Military Members" It can be found at:  
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/manuals/GuideforFamilies.pdf>
2. The New York On Line Access to Health (NOAH) has a number of links to sites for resources for veterans. It can be found at:  
<http://www.noah-health.org/en/mental/disorders/ptsd/complications/veterans.html>
3. Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) maintains a web site with many resources to include veterans' services and/or counseling resources. They can be found at: <http://www.vvaw.org/mc/>.
4. The National Veterans Foundation provides phone assistance at 1-888-777-4443 from 9 AM to 9 PM PST and offers counseling, referrals, and information.  
<http://www.nvf.org/>

5. Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) maintains a very good web site with numerous links to other organizations and/or governmental entities. They can be found at <http://www.ivaw.org/vetresources>.

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