

# **Military Ministry**

# **TOOLKIT**

# **for Congregations**

**Rev. Lt. Seanan Holland**

**Gail Forsyth-Vail**

**Rev. Dr. Monica L. Cummings**



# Introduction

The Military Ministry Toolkit is for congregations seeking to be more inviting and inclusive of military members, veterans, and their families. The series of six one-hour workshops provides a structured process for learning about issues related to military service, respectfully discussing issues of war and peace, and preparing to welcome and support military personnel, veterans, and their families.

Unlike non-spiritual care and support that veterans, military personnel, and families can obtain within the military or through agencies such as the Veterans Administration, this program offers a spiritual component in the context of our faith tradition. It brings into ethical and moral discussions the complex history of Unitarian Universalism regarding issues that involve war, a topic which may be “lost in translation” with a program offered in another faith tradition or secular setting. It approaches issues from a Unitarian Universalist perspective—that is, it assumes that war affects each of us in different ways and it affirms that each of us deserves a place to share how war has affected us.

Intentionally, the program neither takes a “for” nor an “against” position on war. Rather, the Military Ministry Toolkit challenges our faith communities to become truly welcoming to a group of people who have sometimes felt they must hide a crucial piece of their identity and life experience for fear that it will not be well received or accepted by Unitarian Universalists.

## Goals

This program will:

- Provide a process for a congregation to assess its current programs and ministries in order to become more inviting toward and inclusive of military personnel, veterans, and their families in the congregation
- Provide a covenanted space for sharing personal experiences with war, military service, and peace activism
- Enable congregational leadership to hear the stories of veterans, military personnel, and families in the congregation
- Engage participants in learning about issues surrounding military service for military personnel, veterans, and their families
- Foster respectful, non-judgmental discourse about the ethical and moral dimensions of peace and war
- Equip and engage the congregation to reach out to veterans, military personnel, and their families in the local community.

## Origin and Development

This toolkit was originally conceived by the Reverend Lt. Seanan Holland, a Unitarian Universalist minister and a Navy chaplain. With the support of the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), Chaplain Holland worked with others to implement a Military Bridge Builders program at various UU congregations in response to several perceived needs. Congregations were asking for adult religious education programs on military-related issues. Unitarian Universalist military chaplains felt a need to share their experiences and observations with ministers, lay leaders, military personnel, and veterans. Members of the military asked for Unitarian Universalist worship services and showed interest in our faith.

While he was a CLF ministerial intern, Chaplain Holland developed, field tested, and revised the Military Bridge Builders program with the support and input of several UU military chaplains, lay leaders, and congregations. The program was then revised and prepared for online publication by the staff of the UUA's Faith Development Office to make it more widely available to our congregations and their leadership. The authors of this expanded version are the Reverend Dr. Monica L. Cummings, Program Associate for Ministry to Youth and Young Adults of Color and a former military serviceperson, and Gail Forsyth-Vail, Adult Programs Director and a daughter of a U.S. Army veteran.

## Facilitators

It is recommended that two people co-facilitate this program. At least one facilitator should be someone with pastoral experience and skill and an ability to care for the health of the congregation. In many cases, a minister is the appropriate person. A religious educator, or a congregational lay leader who is also a mental health professional, may also be suitable. At least one facilitator should have experience dealing with military issues as a veteran or a spouse or other family member. While informal surveys show that a very high percentage of Unitarian Universalists have loved ones serving in or affiliated with the military, some Unitarian Universalists may never have met a person in the military on active duty. It is important that at least one facilitator be able to bring stories and memories from their military experience.

### ***Facilitator Preparation***

We recommend a minimum of two months preparation to support the launch of this program in your congregation. The material itself will take time to prepare. More importantly, over the course of two months you will be alert to both explicit and subtle ways the workshop topics surface in your congregation. You will be able to plan how to

effectively facilitate the program and implement its goals, and you will have ample opportunities to generate interest in the program.

Read the workshops and preview the workshop materials, including video clips. Workshop 6 uses a video clip in the Opening and another in the Closing. Workshop 3 includes a quote from President Barack Obama's Nobel Peace Prize speech in 2009; if you will have Internet access and the ability to add 40 minutes to Workshop 3, plan to watch the entire speech with the group. Find the video clips on the UUA website on the [Military Ministry Toolkit page](http://www.uua.org/re/adults/militaryministry/index.shtml) (<http://www.uua.org/re/adults/militaryministry/index.shtml>). If your workshop will be held at a site without Internet access, you may want to download the clips you want to show the group. You will need equipment to play and project the video—for example, a projector and screen, or a large video monitor that connects to your computer.

A 23-minute video, [Embracing the Unitarian Universalist behind the Uniform](#), is part of this toolkit. Preview the video and consider sharing it in your congregation to raise awareness of and interest in military ministry and to promote the workshop series. Let the voices of Unitarian Universalists involved in the military introduce an opportunity and challenge to become more welcoming toward military personnel, veterans, and their families.

Workshop 5 guides the group to plan, promote, and lead a congregational worship service together. Discuss potential dates for a military ministry worship with congregational staff and worship leaders, in advance.

The readings in these workshops draw heavily from two books you may wish to purchase from the UUA Bookstore for your congregation: the meditation manual [Bless All Who Serve: Stories of Hope, Courage, and Faith for Military Personnel and Their Families](#) by Matthew Tittle and Gail Tittle (Skinner House Books, 2010) and [War Zone Faith: An Army Chaplain's Reflections for Afghanistan](#) by Capt. George Tyger (Skinner House Books, 2013). Both books offer many additional readings for congregational worship.

Whether or not you have military experience, you may want to read about issues that shape military ministry. Here are some recommendations:

- *Off to War: Voices of Soldiers' Children* by Deborah Ellis (Toronto: Groundwork Books, 2008)
- *A Terrible Love of War* by James Hillman (Penguin, 2004)
- [Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War](#) by Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini (Beacon Press, 2012)

- *AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America's Upper Classes from Military Service and How it Hurts Our Country* by Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer (Harper Collins, 2007)
- *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* by Edward Tick (Quest, 2005)

### ***The Facilitator's Pastoral Role***

Anticipate that participants will be attracted to this program for a wide variety of reasons and will bring diverse experiences, concerns, and commitments. Some will come with a need for care; some will come with a need to challenge. Some may come from a great distance to engage with these issues spiritually in Unitarian Universalist community. Military veterans from different generations of war will have diverse expectations, offerings, and hopes. Non-military participants may have deep questions about the complexity of distinguishing between a war and the warrior.

Because many people may not feel safe to raise issues involving the military in a Unitarian Universalist congregation, feelings and stories that have not been previously shared in your congregation may emerge for the first time during this series of workshops. Participants may speak of trauma they experienced in military service, of their own experience with killing, or their civilian experience of violence at the hands of the military; people in your congregation who have immigrated to the United States may have direct or indirect experiences of war which they may have never had a safe opportunity to reveal. There may be participants who are anxious or grief-stricken about a deployed loved one.

Additionally, there may be participants who have experienced other traumas wherein they feared for their lives. Stories from the 9/11 attacks, the Boston Marathon bombing, school shootings, urban violence, or police shootings may come to the fore. And, it should be acknowledged that people from many segments of the U.S. population—African Americans, women, people of color, immigrants—have lived with a threat of violence in their own communities, without necessarily having experience related to the military. Whether or not they share about a traumatic event, trauma survivors who attend may be deeply affected by the stories shared by others. Survivor guilt may emerge, as well as grief over the loss of friends, loved ones, or strangers who shared the same event. Remember that while trauma is individually experienced, it is also part of our cultural experience together. The ministry we offer should hold both the individual and our society in mind.

You may observe participants who are anxious. Perhaps they are worried about a deployed loved one, or they are considering how to hold, or how to share, a war-torn

past. It may be helpful for the group to include someone who can be a caring, non-anxious presence (possibly a member of the congregation's caring committee) and simply sit by an anxious person during the program.

At times, as the facilitator, you may need to back off. While a participant sharing their most painful stories can enrich the group's experience and support the storyteller's healing, such sharing can be difficult. If a veteran has learned to carry the burden of war in a way that allows them to function and maintain relationships, it may be unwise to ask them to re-arrange that burden and share more than they are comfortable with. However, if you sense that a storyteller has emotionally integrated the pain of their experience, you can help them explore the learning or the good that has come from it.

You will need to take care of individual needs while protecting the health of the group and the congregation. It is likely that people will share deeply personal and sometimes emotional stories and commitments. Challenging, even divisive issues may arise. Be prepared to respond pastorally in the group setting, while at the same time being ready to determine when someone can benefit from referral to a professional health care provider or service agency. Familiarize yourself with local psychological, emotional, and social support resources including the nearest Vet Center, American Legion post, or Veterans of Foreign Wars post. If you are near a military base, reach out to the Military Base Chaplain and the unit Family Readiness Officer for active personnel and families. You may also wish to recommend resources and support available through the CLF [military ministry](http://www.questformeaning.org/page/welcome/militaryministry) program ([www.questformeaning.org/page/welcome/militaryministry](http://www.questformeaning.org/page/welcome/militaryministry)).

For veterans of combat, violence is part of warfare and can become a cultural norm. The feelings and events that combat vets have experienced are far enough outside most civilian experience that they may be reluctant to share them for fear of not being understood. As a spiritual community, we may not be able to completely understand a veteran's stories and experiences, but it is still important for us to hear those stories and honor their witness. If it seems appropriate while facilitating, acknowledge the value of carrying traumatic events together. It might also be helpful to remind veterans that many other people who have experienced non-military trauma face a similar challenge. An essential point of this program is that healing from trauma, especially the very communal traumas of war, requires community support.

# Implementation

## ***The Workshops***

The program includes six one-hour workshops. The first four invite deep conversation among participants. The final two workshops provide tools for inviting the whole congregation into the conversation about military ministry:

Workshop 1: Individual and Family Messages Received about Military Service

Workshop 2: Assessing Your Congregation's Approach to Military Service

Workshop 3: Philosophical and Ethical Questions about War and Peace

Workshop 4: The Impact of War and Military Service on Families

Workshop 5: Inviting Engagement through Congregational Worship

Workshop 6: Next Steps

## ***Scheduling***

Schedule the program for the convenience of potential participants. You might consider, for example, meeting weekly or biweekly after worship or on a weeknight. Or, you might offer the first four workshops, two at a time, on two Saturday mornings. The program asks participants to spend some time in reflection and processing, between sessions. Therefore, it is not advisable to offer more than two consecutive workshops on a given day.

Workshops 5 and 6 are planning workshops. In Workshop 5, the participants plan a congregational worship service and in Workshop 6 they choose their next steps in military ministry. If you wish to use the worship service to inspire additional people to join you for Workshop 6, Next Steps, allow enough calendar notice to make that possible.

## ***If the Group Is Very Large***

The program must allow adequate time for personal sharing. If your group has ten or more participants, you may want to schedule workshops for 75 minutes, or 90 minutes with a short break. Plan enough time so you can close each meeting in a caring way rather than rushing to end on time. Ensure that you finish the time together on a hopeful, relaxed note.

May this Military Ministry Toolkit enrich and deepen your congregation's ministry. May it help you provide important, sincere outreach to military personnel, veterans, and their families in your congregation and in the broader community.

# Workshop 1:

## Individual and Family Messages Received about Military Service

### Introduction

In this workshop, participants have the opportunity to talk about messages they received about military service. Expect a wide range of responses. Some people's families of origin and some families today see military service as an honor, while other families shun it. The tone of discussion this week will set the stage for future discussions. For this reason, creating a covenant is especially important. Set the expectation that participants will respect one another's viewpoints and will remember to bring their Unitarian Universalist values to every workshop.

### Opening (10 minutes)

#### *Materials*

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Chalice lighting words
- Name tags and markers
- Optional: Refreshments

#### *Preparation*

- Optional: List the names and scheduled meetings of future workshops on newsprint, and post.

#### *Description*

Welcome participants individually as they arrive. Invite them to make and wear a name tag or use a name tag they already have. You may want to make light refreshments available.

Gather the group and light the chalice. Invite participants to begin the time together with a reading. Read "Pueblo Blessing" from *Bless All Who Serve* (page 23):



*Hold on to what is good, even if it is a handful of dirt.*  
*Hold on to what you believe, even if it is a tree that stands by itself.*  
*Hold on to what you must do, even if it is a long way from here.*  
*Hold on to life, even if it is easier to let go.*  
*Hold on to my hand, even if I have gone away from you.*

Invite participants to introduce themselves by name and contribute, in one sentence, what they hope to achieve by taking part in the Military Ministry Toolkit workshops. Leaders should introduce themselves; if you have military experience, tell the group.

Ask participants to indicate by raising a hand or in another manner if they have served in the military or belong to a military family. Say that whether or not they have military family experience, if they are interested in making the congregation more welcoming to military personnel, veterans, and their families, they are right where they need to be. Share that this first workshop will examine the messages they have received, growing up and today, from family and community related to military service. For example, were familial and community messages positive, negative, or neutral about military service?

Say, in these words, or your own:

*Families have tremendous influence over what information is shared about living and deceased family members. The narrative that is shared becomes the story passed down through the generations. If the family story is supportive of military service, one that acknowledges with pride the service of forebears, then subsequent generations will more likely have a positive attitude toward the military. In contrast, if the family narrative centers on how Pop Pop John returned from the service an alcoholic or Auntie Denise returned mentally unstable, then future generations may be less inclined to support the military or consider military service. While some people are aware of how their attitudes toward military service have been formed, others have never examined the formation of their beliefs.*

Transition to the next activity by saying:

*Before this examination starts, however, let's make decisions about how we will be together.*

# Activity 1: Covenant or Group Agreements (10 minutes)

## **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

## **Description**

Say, in these words, or your own:

*In any group there is value in establishing ground rules or an agreement of behavior, also known as a covenant. A covenant is a list of guidelines that establish how the group wants to be together so that all participants feel safe. The guidelines usually include keeping confidentiality, speaking one at a time, and using “I” statements. In addition, we want to create a covenant with a multicultural lens, to ensure that it serves the needs of people from traditionally marginalized communities as well as the needs of people of the dominant culture. For example, if participants in a group are of Asian/Pacific Islander, African, Arab, Indigenous, or Latino/s Hispanic descent, if any have a transgender identity, or have a disability, care must be taken that their voice is not silenced by members of the group who have been socialized to believe that their thoughts or opinions are more valuable than those of people who are different from themselves. A covenant is a living document and should be reviewed and updated during the course of the program.*

Post a sheet of newsprint and title it “Covenant.” You may want to begin by suggesting:

- Workshops will begin promptly at scheduled times.
- Everyone will respect one another’s opinions and their right to express them.

Ask participants to add to the list. Encourage each contributor to clarify what they mean (for example, “what is said here stays here”) in the form of a behavior guideline that is clear to everyone. Lead the group to agree on explicit confidentiality guidelines.

When there are no new additions, ask if everyone can agree to the covenant. You may ask participants to sign it. Discuss what happens if someone breaks the covenant.

When all seem comfortable, post the covenant. Keep it available for the duration of the workshop series so you can refer to it in future workshops.

## **Activity 2: Individual and Family Military Experience – Messages Received (20 minutes)**

### ***Materials***

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Timepiece (minutes) and a chime or bell

### ***Preparation***

- Write the small group discussion questions on newsprint, and post.

### ***Description***

Explain that participants now have the opportunity to discuss the messages they received from their family and community about the military and military service as they were growing up.

Have the participants form triads. Each member of the group has two minutes to reflect and share on these questions:

- Who in your family served in the military?
- What was the undercurrent in your family about this?

Alert participants at two-minute intervals that it is time to switch speakers. After six minutes, ask triads to give each member two minutes to reflect and share on these questions:

- What messages about military service did you receive early in your life?
- What messages did you receive from your school and community?

Ask the triads to now reflect on how the messages they received from family and the wider culture influenced their own opinions. Give small groups five minutes for this discussion.

Reconvene the large group. Ask a few volunteers to share. Seek diverse responses and point out the diversity of messages about military service that emerges. Say that it can be a challenge for a community such as a congregation to be supportive and loving to all individuals with such a diversity of experiences, opinions, and feelings. Remind participants that their UU values are resources they can draw on to help them do just this, and that these workshops are another tool. Invite participants to name UU values that call them to make their congregation a welcoming home for military personnel, veterans, and their families.

## Activity 3: The Relationship of Race and Class and Those Who Serve (15 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Handout 1, Who Serves Now

### **Preparation**

- Copy the handout for participants.

### **Description**

Share with the group:

*The Conscription Act was enacted in 1917 and discontinued in 1973. During that time, wars and conflicts were fought with mandatory military registration and draft for all eligible males. While these programs were designed to ensure that all able-bodied men would serve if called, the system never worked as envisioned. For example, during the Civil War, men could pay a substitute to fight for them. During the Vietnam War, those with connections could avoid combat by securing positions in the National Guard or avoid service altogether with college and graduate school deferments. The United States has had an all-volunteer military since 1973.*

*Family history with the military and one's personal opinions influence the choice to volunteer. Other factors may include aspects of the identities people hold, such as race/ethnicity, age, gender, and class.*

Ask:

- What are some ways you think race or class, in particular, play a role in who serves in the military?
- Are any of these class or race identity factors reflected in your own family military experience? How?

Distribute and Handout 1, Who Serves Now. Give participants a minute or so to look it over. Then, ask:

- What do the data indicate regarding the race or ethnicity of military volunteers? What about socio-economic class? Age? Gender?
- Does anything surprise you?
- How do the data reflect your personal knowledge of who serves in today's military? If you have served or are currently serving, do you see yourself reflected in the data? Do you fit the profile of the majority or minority? How do you feel about that?

- Can you draw any conclusions from the data? Do your conclusions reflect any important observations one might make about our society?

Say, in these words, or your own:

*This data confirms that we cannot make assumptions about who in our congregation might be serving in the military now, may have served in the past, or may be going to serve in the future. Different people with individual military experiences may have different needs. The congregation's approach to being welcoming will need to be multifaceted. One size won't fit all.*

## **Closing (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle

### **Description**

Close by reading "Only Begun," by Rev. Bill Sinkford, from *Voices from the Margins: An Anthology of Meditations* (Skinner House, 2012):

*Spirit of Life and Love, dear God of all nations:*

*There is so much work to do.*

*We have only begun to imagine justice and mercy.*

*Help us hold fast to our vision of what can be.*

*May we see the hope in our history,*

*and find the courage and the voice*

*to work for that constant rebirth*

*of freedom and justice.*

*That is our dream.*

*Amen.*

Extinguish the chalice.

## Handout 1: Who Serves Now?

From “[2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community](#)” (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy) under contract with ICF International; updated November 2012).

[http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2011\\_Demographics\\_Report.pdf](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2011_Demographics_Report.pdf)

### ***Race/Ethnicity***

Less than one-third (30.2% or 426,916 of Active Duty members identify themselves as a minority (i.e., Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, multi-racial, or other/unknown). The percentage of Active Duty members who identify themselves as a minority is greater in 2011 than it was in 1995 (from 10.5% of officers and 28.2% of enlisted members in 1995, to 23.0% of officers and 31.7% of enlisted members in 2011). The overall ratio of minority officers (54,753) to minority enlisted personnel (372,163) is one minority officer for every 6.8 minority enlisted personnel. To conform to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directives, Hispanic is not considered a minority race designation and is analyzed separately as an ethnicity. Overall, 11.2 percent of the DoD Active Duty force is of Hispanic ethnicity.

### ***Geographic Location***

While the Active Duty population is located throughout the world, the three primary areas in which Active Duty members are assigned are the United States and its territories (86.5%), East Asia (7.1%), and Europe (5.8%). The ten states with the highest Active Duty military populations are California (161,864), Texas (131,121), Virginia (125,418), North Carolina (106,689), Georgia (74,468), Washington (65,453), Florida (58,974), Hawaii (48,682), Kentucky (44,421), and Colorado (39,004). These ten states comprise 70.5 percent of the personnel stationed in the United States.

### ***Education Level***

The majority (82.5%) of officers have a Bachelor's or higher degree. Few (5.3%) enlisted members have a Bachelor's or higher degree, while most (93.4%) have a high school diploma and/or some college experience. In the past 16 years, the percentage of Active Duty members who have a Bachelor's and/or an advanced degree has

decreased for officers (from 89.6% in 1995, to 82.5% in 2011) but has increased for enlisted personnel (from 3.4% in 1995 to 5.3% in 2011).

### **Age**

About one-quarter (25.1%) of Active Duty officers are 41 years of age or older, with the next largest age group being 26 to 30 year-olds (22.5%), followed by 31 to 35 year-olds (20.1%), 36 to 40 year-olds (19.0%), and those 25 years old or younger (13.3%). Nearly one-half (49.3%) of Active Duty enlisted personnel are 25 years old or younger, with the next largest age group being 26 to 30 year-olds (22.8%), followed by 31 to 35 year-olds (13.1%), 36 to 40 year-olds (9.2%) and those 41 years old or older (5.5%). Overall, the average age of the Active Duty force is 28.6. The average age for Active Duty officers is 34.7, and the average age for Active Duty enlisted personnel is 27.4.

# **Workshop 2:**

## **Assessing Your Congregation's Approach to Military Service**

### **Introduction**

In this workshop, participants explore the congregation's approach to military service and attitudes toward military veterans and currently serving military personnel. They will examine how military service is treated in worship, in large congregational events, in social justice and religious education statements and programs, in informal conversation, in the ways leaders speak with young adults or those bridging to young adulthood, and in the ways pastoral care is offered to military personnel, veterans, and their immediate and extended families. The workshop will also explore similarities in the experiences of those in the military from generation to generation and ways in which those experiences can differ depending on cultural and political circumstances.

In assessing your congregation's response to military personnel, veterans, and their families, participants may discover that some Unitarian Universalists hold values or assumptions that conflict with some closely held principles or assumptions of military people and/or veterans. Point this out early in the session. Use the emergence of differing values, principles, and assumptions as an opportunity to think deeply about how people with different perspectives can remain in healthy religious community with one another.

### **Opening (10 minutes)**

#### ***Materials***

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Covenant from Workshop 1
- Chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation



## **Description**

Light the chalice and offer words familiar to the congregation. Invite participants to listen to two different passages written by two different Unitarian Universalist soldiers many years apart.

Introduce the preface written by Jenkin Lloyd Jones to introduce the 1913 publication of his Civil War diary. In his lifetime, Jones was a moving force in the Unitarian Western Conference and later a peace activist. This passage shares his feelings and thoughts when he left home to join the Union Army at the age of 19:

*... On the way to Camp Randall, the tears, which had scarcely dried from the heart-break that followed a mother's last embrace, started afresh at the sight of the dome of the old University building at Madison. For the months preceding the enlistment, the struggle had been not choosing between home and camp. No! not even between danger and safety, life and death, but what seemed the final choice between a country to save and an education to acquire. For in the dim haze of the farmer boy's horoscope, the University outline was shaping itself. In choosing his country's cause it seemed to him that he was relinquishing forever the hope of the education of which he dreamed...A great thing was done for humanity in America, between 1861 and 1865. If it could not have been done otherwise, it was worth all it cost. And if this same dire predicament were to come again, I would do my past all over again. But Oh! it was such a wrong way of doing the right thing!...*

Now introduce the second passage. Here, military chaplain Rev. George Tyger shares a message with soldiers under his pastoral care in Afghanistan in 2011:

*We in the military have dedicated our lives to many high ideals. Freedom, honor, loyalty, and duty define the American way of life. We place ourselves in harm's way to defend those ideals so that those at home can sleep safe each night. When we lose friends, an emptiness remains that even the highest ideals cannot fill. The cost of those ideals is the struggle to find meaning in these losses.*

Invite responses to the two passages: What is similar? What is different?

Explain that this workshop will look at ways this congregation responds both to the idea of military service and to people who have or are serving in the nation's military. Say that, for this workshop, we will focus on the *experience* of veterans, currently serving military personnel, and their families. Say that philosophical, ethical, and political questions regarding war and peace will be the subject of Workshop 3.

Review the covenant from Workshop 1.

# Activity 1: Military Service and Our Congregation (20 minutes)

## **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

## **Preparation**

- Find out how your congregation approaches, welcomes, and includes military personnel and veterans by talking with veterans, personnel currently in military service, the congregation's minister and/or religious educator, members of the social justice committee, and/or others.
- Anticipate that individuals or the group may experience discomfort when veterans, active duty personnel, military family members, or other participants share personal stories. To prepare, review the section "The Facilitator's Pastoral Role" in the Introduction to this program (page 4).
- Post blank newsprint.

## **Description**

Invite participants to consider in silence:

- A military visitor must walk past the Peace and Democracy Task Force Table in order to get to the sanctuary. On the table are bumper stickers for sale, saying, "War is not the Answer" and "Support the Troops; Bring them Home."
- A military visitor in worship hears a litany of names of those killed in war during the last week.
- During coffee hour, a military visitor is asked difficult ethical questions about particular events in war (Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo).

Say:

*These scenarios reveal aspects of a congregation's attitude and approach to members of the military, veterans, and their families. The exercise that follows will help us learn more about our congregation's current approach to military service.*

Explain that personal stories and experiences are likely to emerge. Remind the group that they have covenanted to speak from their own experience and to honor the experiences of others by listening deeply and not challenging another's perspective.

After each question, gather participant responses before adding information you have gathered in preparation.

- What traditions or rituals in your congregation relate to military service? Is military service acknowledged on or near Veterans' Day and/or Memorial Day? How?
- What visible art, posters, plaques, announcements, flyers, and so on relate to military service and/or to war? How are military service and war depicted?
- What annual or recurring events, rituals, or parts of worship acknowledge present wars and military deployments? What form do these take? Are they spiritual, political, or both? Are they pastoral? Are they protests?
- How is our congregation's prophetic voice raised around issues of military service?
- How do our traditions, rituals, programs, and events serve to strengthen the Unitarian Universalist faith of the people who participate in them? Are there people who do not participate in some traditions, rituals, programs, and events for stated reasons?

## **Activity 2: Generational Military Experiences (15 minutes)**

### ***Materials***

- Handout 1, From Citizen Soldier to "Support the Troops"

### ***Preparation***

- Copy the handout for participants.

### ***Description***

Distribute Handout 1 and invite participants to read it. Lead a discussion, asking:

- How does this handout match any experiences you might have of the different cultural and political contexts facing veterans in different generations? What differences do you see among the cultural and political contexts of those who served before, during, and after the Vietnam War era?
- From your experience, what have been religious or faith community responses to different wars? Are your experiences with a Unitarian Universalist congregation or with another faith community?

## Activity 3: What Might Be Changed or Added? (10 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### **Description**

When you have gathered information about our congregation's rituals, traditions, programs, and events, and considered the cultural, political, and religious contexts for each generational cohort, say:

*How might we do things differently? We are going to make space for veterans, currently serving military personnel, and families to respond first.*

Engage participants who have experience in or family ties to the military with these questions:

- As a veteran/military person/family member, how do you respond to our congregation's approach?
- What new or different approaches would you like to see added?
- Is there anything you would like to change? What needs to happen for such changes to take place?

Invite those who have no personal experience with military service to add their thoughts and ideas about changes and additions.

## Closing (5 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle

### **Description**

Light the chalice and share this excerpt from the sermon, "Red, White, and UU," delivered by Rev. Cynthia Kane in March 2009:

*Returning from... war are people—especially young people—with a crisis of faith, hurting and wounded to the core. For many of the service members, all they thought they believed about God and goodness is destroyed; they are looking for a way to make sense of their experiences and their lives.*

*The question for UU congregations is this: will we be the communities that can open our arms to these hurting people? Can we model how to move beyond*

*assumptions about military members and their reasons for serving, and reach out to souls searching for another way of thinking, another way of being in the world? I believe we can.*

*I believe we have the sensitivity; sensitivity and open-mindedness—especially to people with differing views and practices. After all, is this not the essence of Unitarian Universalism? Freedom, reason, and tolerance...*

*I believe we have the awareness; awareness of our own struggles and our own biases. Most of all, I believe we have the understanding; understanding that we who have made the choice to serve in the military have done so for our own particular reasons. Though initially my call to Navy Chaplaincy did not make sense to me, it does now. Since conflict and fighting have been a part of human history since the beginning of time, then for me to do the work of peace is more than just practicing peace, I must understand the making of war.*

*...We—you and I—we are a part of our nations' souls. We, too, are patriots who cherish the rights and privileges of our countries. And we, too, support and defend our countries' ideals through the very practice of our faith. Our countries need us. And we, in the military, need you.*

Extinguish the chalice.

# Handout 1: From Citizen Soldier to “Support Our Troops”

Excerpts from *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, by Andrew Bacevich (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Bacevich is a Professor of History and International Relations at Boston University. He is a graduate of West Point and a Vietnam veteran. His son died in May 2007 fighting in the Iraq War.

*Note: President Richard Nixon created the All-Volunteer Force in January 1973.*

## **[Citizen Soldier to All-Volunteer Army]**

*Through the first two centuries of U.S. history, Americans remained leery of the threat that a large “standing army” might pose to liberty at home. As a result, placing their faith in the citizen-soldier as the guarantor of their security and ultimate guardian of their freedom, they accepted a common obligation to share in the responsibility for the country’s defense... For the generations that fought the Civil War and the world wars, and even those who served in the 1950s and 1960s, citizenship and military service remained intimately connected.*

*...As with so many other aspects of life in contemporary America, military service has become strictly a matter of individual choice. On that score, beginning with Vietnam and continuing to the present day, members of the elite, regardless of political persuasion, have by and large opted out.*

*...Whereas previously Americans had recognized a link between citizenship and military service- for example, according to veterans a privileged status in American public life- Vietnam all but severed that relationship. [pp. 26-27]*

*For Americans who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s- that is to say, the generation that today dominates national life- Vietnam was a defining event, the Great Contradiction that demolished existing myths about America’s claim to be a uniquely benign great power ... [p.34]*

*Vietnam demolished the notion of military obligation and brought the tradition of citizen-soldier to the verge of extinction. And it persuaded many that war itself- especially as waged by obtuse American generals doing the bidding of mendacious civilian officials- had become an exercise in futility. [p. 99]*

## **[“Support Our Troops!”]**

*...Celebrating the American in uniform, past and present, offered [President Ronald] Reagan a means of rallying support for his broader political agenda. His manipulation of symbols also offered a sanitized version of U.S. military history and fostered a romanticized portrait of those who made it. These were essential to reversing the anti-military climate that was a by-product of Vietnam and by extension essential to policies that Reagan intended to implement, such as a massive boost in defense spending and a more confrontational posture toward the Soviet Union. [p. 106]*

*...For Reagan, it was self-evident that Vietnam had been “a noble cause.” Noble too were the soldiers who had endured that war. Nameless others had wronged America’s fighting men, misusing and mistreating them, and denying them the victory and honors that were rightfully theirs...*

*By implication, Reagan was establishing support for “the troops”- as opposed to actual service with them- as the new standard of civic responsibility....to anyone making that choice [to serve in the military] Reagan granted the status of patriot, idealist, and hero; of citizens, he asked only that they affirm that designation. [pp. 107-108]*

# Workshop 3:

## Philosophical and Ethical Questions about War and Peace

### Introduction

This workshop considers issues which have engaged philosophers, ethicists, and people of conscience for centuries, giving participants the opportunity to explore ideas in a covenanted faith community. The moral issues surrounding war and peace challenge *all* people in our congregation, not only those who serve or have served in the armed forces. This workshop will draw out some of the differing views of participants by looking at the ways Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists in the U.S. have responded to war over the course of this nation's history. Participants will contribute their own stories of moral responses to war and peace. The workshop introduces "just war" theory and pacifism, and explores the idea of a "third way" which has arisen in response to the perceived inadequacies of both philosophies in our contemporary world. It includes a brief look at the Unitarian Universalist Association's 2010 [Statement of Conscience on Creating Peace](#).

If a congregation is to have an effective ministry to military personnel, veterans, and their families, the ethical, moral, and philosophical questions about war, as well as cultural assumptions about those who serve or do not serve in wartime, must be freely examined in all their complexity. Our ethical response to the problem of war must simultaneously hold a particular war and the whole of the cultural and political history of warfare in mind. For participants to negotiate these topics respectfully in a covenanted setting gives us all cause for hope that Unitarian Universalists can approach these topics respectfully in the wider congregation and in the wider world.

### Opening (10 minutes)

#### *Materials*

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Covenant from Workshop 1



## **Description**

Light the chalice. Share these words from President Barack Obama's 2009 Nobel speech:

*The soldier's courage and sacrifice is full of glory, expressing devotion to country, to cause, to comrades in arms, but war itself is never glorious. And we must never trumpet it as such. So part of our challenge is reconciling these two seemingly irreconcilable truths: that war is sometimes necessary, and war, at some level, is an expression of human folly.*

Invite each person to introduce themselves. Share these or similar words:

*If a congregation is to have an effective ministry to military personnel, veterans, and their families, the ethical, moral, and philosophical questions about war, as well as cultural assumptions about warfare, must be freely examined in all their complexity and not oversimplified. Our ethical response to the problem of war must simultaneously hold a particular war and the whole of the cultural and political history of warfare in mind. If we can negotiate these topics respectfully in a covenanted setting, it is cause for hope that Unitarian Universalists can approach these topics respectfully in the wider congregation and in the wider world. Consider that the quality of our group process together as we talk about issues of war and peace might be a measure of the ministry that we have the capacity to offer within and beyond the walls of our congregations.*

Review the covenant from Workshop 1. Invite people to affirm the group covenant as they move into the conversation about the ethics and philosophy of war and peace. Tell them that while you hope the conversation will be rich, it will truly only scratch the surface, and that there will be resources provided for further individual and group study and discussion.

## **Activity 1: Moral Responses to United States Wars**

**(25 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, History of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist Response to United States' Wars

### **Preparation**

- Copy the handout for participants.
- Write on newsprint and post:
  - When have you engaged with moral, ethical, or philosophical questions of war and peace? Consider a single action or position you took regarding issues of war and peace at some time in your life. Alternatively, share such a story from a loved one.
    - What were the circumstances? What were the outcomes of your (or your loved one's) actions or your position?
    - Was your (or your loved one's) action or position in any way connected with religious faith? Was it connected with Unitarian Universalism?
    - Was your (or your loved one's) action or position in any way connected with a deeply held moral, ethical, or philosophical stance?
    - What, if anything, would you change if you had the chance for a “do-over”? Do you have any regrets or does your loved one have any regrets?

### ***Description***

Invite participants to consider the varying responses Unitarian Universalists have had to war over the course of history, explaining that the primary focus of your inquiry will be the wars within living memory of participants. For the purposes of this discussion, living memory includes accounts about particular wars participants received from parents, grandparents, and other significant relationships. Distribute the handout and ask participants to read it.

Invite participants to move into groups of three and to use the questions posted on newsprint to share their own experiences. Explain: Each person in the triad will have four minutes to share. After all three have shared, the group will have three minutes more to respond to one another's stories. Say that you will keep time and tell them when to switch speakers.

After the sharing time, call participants back to the large group. Invite brief comments about the exercise of sharing stories.

## Activity 2: Peacemaking (20 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Handout 2, Just War Theory
- Handout 3, Pacifism
- Handout 4, Peacemaking
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Equipment to view all (37:00) or part of President Obama's 2009 Nobel Prize speech

### **Preparation**

- Copy the handouts for participants.
- Write on newsprint the URL for [President Obama's 2009 Nobel Prize](http://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/index.php?id=1221) speech (<http://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/index.php?id=1221>) and the URL for the UUA's 2010 [Creating Peace](https://www.uua.org/statements/statements/13394.shtml) Statement of Conscience (<https://www.uua.org/statements/statements/13394.shtml>), and post.
- Optional: Preview the video of President Obama's 2009 Nobel Prize speech. If you will have Internet access and wish to show all, arrange to extend this workshop.

### **Description**

Explain that much of Western ethical thought on war and peace has fallen into two different philosophical approaches, "just war" and pacifism. Distribute Handout 2, Just War Theory and Handout 3, Pacifism. Invite participants to read them fully at their leisure. Point out the bolded portion of the Just War handout and read it aloud, emphasizing the four components of Just War. Ask:

- Is this approach adequate for the challenges of our current time?
- What possible problems do you see with this approach?

Point out the bolded portion of the Pacifism handout. Read that section aloud. Ask:

- Is this approach adequate for the challenges of our current time?
- What possible problems do you see with this approach?

Allow about five minutes for each handout.

Distribute Handout 4, Peacemaking. Invite participants to read it to themselves or have a volunteer read it aloud. Lead a discussion, pointing out that Unitarian Universalist ethicists are making an important contribution to the development of this ethical

framework. Mention that the UUA's 2010 [Creating Peace](#) Statement of Conscience is available online and that there are discussion resources to go with it, should your congregation be interested in pursuing the questions in this workshop further. Ask:

- How might it change our congregation's response to military personnel, veterans, and their families if we viewed military action through a "peacemaking" framework?

Mention that peacekeeping is an ethical framework that was outlined by President Obama [in his Nobel Prize lecture](#) in December 2009. Invite participants to view the 37-minute speech at home. If there is interest, help the group schedule a time to view and discuss the President's speech with the entire congregation.

## Closing (5 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle

### **Description**

Close by reading two excerpts from the Creating Peace UUA Statement of Conscience:

#### ***I.***

*For Unitarian Universalists, the exercise of individual conscience is holy work. Conscientious discernment leads us to engage in the creation of peace in different ways. We affirm a range of individual choices, including military service and conscientious objection (whether to all wars or particular wars), as fully compatible with Unitarian Universalism. For those among us who make a formal commitment to military service, we will honor their commitment, welcome them home, and offer pastoral support. For those among us who make a formal commitment as conscientious objectors, we will offer documented certification, honor their commitment, and offer pastoral support.*

#### ***II.***

*Our faith calls us to create peace, yet we confess that we have not done all we could to prevent the spread of armed conflict throughout the world. At times we have lacked the courage to speak and act against violence and injustice; at times we have lacked the creativity to speak and act in constructive ways; at times we have condemned the violence of others without acknowledging our own complicity in violence. We affirm a responsibility to speak truth to power,*

*especially when unjust power is exercised by our own nation. Too often we have allowed our disagreements to distract us from all that we can do together. This Statement of Conscience challenges individual Unitarian Universalists, as well as our congregations and Association, to engage with more depth, persistence, and creativity in the complex task of creating peace.*

Extinguish the chalice.

# Handout 1: History of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist Response to United States' Wars

- Unitarian and Universalist institutions have, at times, supported what is identified as “just war” and, at times, argued against war itself or against particular wars. There have always been religious leaders and lay people who fell on both sides of any debate about support for particular military actions, as well as debate about whether to engage in military action of any kind.
- Unitarians and Universalists took different positions on United States' wars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depending on the circumstances of the war and their own regional and political affiliations. This record is summarized in “Embattled Faith,” an article appearing in the July/August 2003 issue of *UU World* magazine:

*Some of the Congregational churches that had called for the American Revolution in New England also embraced Unitarianism a generation later. (Boston's Second Church, led by the Rev. John Lathrop from 1768 to 1816, was called “a nest of hornets” by the British.) The Universalist minister John Murray was a chaplain in the Continental Army. On the other hand, most Unitarians opposed the War of 1812. The Rev. William Ellery Channing, who helped form the American Unitarian Association in 1825, also helped found the American Peace Society a few years later. The Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears wrote the Christmas carol “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” as a peace hymn in response to the Mexican–American War. But Unitarians overwhelmingly supported the Union cause during the Civil War. Thirty ministers served as chaplains; prominent Unitarian officers included Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Col. Robert Gould Shaw; the poet Julia Ward Howe wrote “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” as an anthem for the Union Army. A decade later, however, she would come full circle. Appalled by the slaughter of the Franco–Prussian War, she issued a proclamation calling for the establishment of Mothers' Day in the name of peace: “Arise, then, women of this day! Say firmly: ‘Our husbands shall not come to us reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience.’”*

- There were Universalists who served on both sides of the Civil War, including Rev. Quillen Hamilton Shinn, a late-19th-century missionary who spoke in his sermons of his service in the Union Army and James Anderson Inman, co-founder of Inman's Chapel in North Carolina, who joined the Confederate Army in 1860, taking with him his Bible and a book by Universalist Thomas Whittemore.
- In the 20th century, there was strong support among the Unitarians for U.S. entry into World War I with the mission to make the world safe for democracy. Pacifist ministers, including John Haynes Holmes, were cut off from aid from the denominational body, which later apologized for this stance. You can find out more about this series of events in [The Taft-Holmes Debate](#), a story from Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History, Workshop 5. On the other hand, Clarence Russell Skinner, professor of Applied Christianity at the Universalist Theological School at Tufts, was defended by the school's dean when his pacifist stance came under attack.
- World War II was widely viewed as a just war and the American Unitarian Association issued a statement in favor of military action, while still calling for respect for those who were conscientious objectors. The Universalist Christian Register published essays denouncing Hitler while the denomination collected War Relief Funds to aid both soldiers and civilians in the battlefields of Europe and Asia. Many individual Universalists and Unitarians served in the conflict.
- The war in Vietnam tore the nation, and Unitarian Universalist congregations, apart. Many clergy, as well as many people in the pews, strongly opposed the war on moral grounds and took public stances against the war. Some questioned the morality of war itself and moved toward or into a pacifist position. Others in the pews did not agree, believing that the Vietnam War was a justified use of United States military; many of them simply left Unitarian Universalism. You can find out more about this period of time in [Workshop 10](#) of the UUA Tapestry of Faith program Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History
- The response to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that began in 2003 and 2001 has been more nuanced. Religious leaders and people in the pews have expressed support, opposition, or ambivalence about the war itself, while expressing agreement on all sides that we must support those who are serving in the military and fighting in the wars. Find out more in "[Embattled Faith](#)," an article by Neil Shister in the July/August 2003 *UU World*.

## Handout 2: Just War Theory

*This handout is from the UUA Tapestry of Faith program Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History, [Workshop 5](#); based on information in God's War by Christopher Tyerman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).*

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/resistance/workshop5/workshopplan/handouts/182329.shtml>)

In the 4th century BCE, the Greek philosopher Aristotle outlined what he considered to be acceptable categories of warfare. In his work, *Politics*, he declared that war was never to be an end unto itself, but was legitimate when waged under certain circumstances: as a form of self-defense, to secure an empire, or to enslave non-Hellenistic peoples. Later, the notion of war waged for the sake of a peaceful, prosperous, and secure state was enshrined in Roman Law, and the concept of "just war" was born.

This Greco-Roman concept of just war was not explicitly religious in nature. Early Christians developed their own theological understanding of war. Some Christians derived the concept of war by divine right from the Judaic tradition, whose scriptures tell stories of the Israelite people going to battle with God on their side. There were also Christian theologians who rejected the morality of war, favoring a more pacifist stance. Among them was Origen, a 3rd century CE theologian who argued that the battles of the Hebrew scriptures were allegorical in nature.

The definition of "just war" changed with the conversion of the Roman state to Christianity in the 4th century CE. The idea of war fought for God and with God's approval became merged with the political definition of a just war. Augustine of Hippo, in the 5th century, stated that sin was the cause of war, but that sin could also be combated by war, as long as the *intent* of the conflict was to establish a Christian peace. **He established four essential components of just war: 1. a just cause, 2. an aim of defending or recovering rightful property, 3. sanctioning by a legitimate authority, and 4. fighters who are motivated by right intent.**

The concept of divinely justified war had a powerful influence during the period of the Crusades and the Inquisition (beginning around 1100 CE). During that period, the image of Christ was often transformed into a warrior-hero, the model of a righteous soldier. Thomas Aquinas, in the 13th century, made important contributions to the development of Christian just war theory, and the Catholic church has since added these elements to their doctrine:



*The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition. — [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)*

Just war theory is not only a Roman Catholic doctrine, however. It has been heavily debated across the spectrum of Christianity. After World War II, the concept of a just war was reexamined in light of the Holocaust. Twentieth-century theologian Reinhold Niebuhr speaks for many modern just war theorists when he says:

*It has since become quite apparent that tyranny would have conquered the world if the material resources of civilization had not been organized and harnessed so that force could be met by superior force. — from Love and Justice, Part III, Section 41*

## Handout 3: Pacifism

*This handout is from the UUA Tapestry of Faith program Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History, [Workshop 5](#).*

*(<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/resistance/workshop5/workshopplan/handouts/182329.shtml>)*

**The exact meaning of the term "pacifism" can be difficult to pin down. It is used to refer to perspectives ranging from absolute rejection of violence of any kind to a principled refusal to engage in military activity and a belief that conflict among nations should never be resolved through war. Although pacifism is often tied to antiwar movements and its adherents may utilize nonviolent methods of resistance, pacifism as a theory implies a dedication to a way of life or a world view that sees the application of force as the root of the problems in society and never the solution.**

Pacifism, in this workshop, is defined as a political and/or religious stance that rejects all forms of violence against persons.

Christianity has been an important influence in the development of theories of pacifism. Articulations of pacifism rooted in Christian tradition can be traced back to the first centuries of the early church, to theologians, including Origen, who argued that much of the violence in the Bible was allegorical in nature. Grounded in a belief that the Christian struggle is spiritual, not physical, and a view of Christ as a model for nonviolent action, Christian pacifism is an integral part of the Quaker, Moravian, Mennonite, Amish and other faiths.

Modern pacifist theory in the United States dates back to the abolitionist movement, and Unitarians and Universalists played no small part in its development. In 1814, Unitarian minister Noah Worcester wrote a well-circulated pamphlet entitled "A Solemn Review of the Custom of War," the first significant work of American pacifism. Universalist Adin Ballou converted to Christian pacifism in 1838 and founded the pacifist Hopedale Community in 1840. Henry David Thoreau was strongly opposed to the 1848 Mexican-American War and advocated nonviolent civil disobedience. Many Unitarian abolitionists joined the journalist and reformer William Lloyd Garrison in founding the New England Non-Resistance Society, which states in its founding document:

*We register our testimony, not only against all wars, whether offensive or defensive, but all preparations for war; against every naval ship, every arsenal, every fortification; against the militia system and a standing army; against all military chieftains and soldiers; against all monuments commemorative of victory over a fallen foe, all trophies won in battle, all celebrations in honor of military or*

*naval exploits; against all appropriations for the defense of a nation by force and arms, on the part of any legislative body; against every edict of government requiring of its subjects military service.*

These early pacifists influenced generations of social justice reformers, including Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. Pacifism is not necessarily rooted in a religious orientation, and pacifism in various forms can be found among socialist movements throughout history and among some anarchist groups of the early 20th century. Pacifism as theory and practice enjoyed a resurgence after World War I, as reports from the battlefields inspired many to reject the ultimate utility of war.

Expressions of pacifism often generate utopian or secessionist movements, such as Adin Ballou's community of Hopedale, when adherents find they cannot continue supporting a government that supports violence. John Howard Yoder, a 20th-century theologian from the Mennonite tradition, argued that the church's responsibility is not to transform the sociopolitical order through direct engagement, but rather to establish its own community, one that is "*in* the world, but not of it." One ongoing tension within pacifism is that between personal conviction and governmental authority. Today, many people continue to align themselves with this rich and evolving tradition.

## Handout 4: Peacemaking

*This handout is from the UUA Tapestry of Faith program Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History, [Workshop 5](https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/resistance/workshop5/workshopplan/handouts/182329.shtml). (<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/resistance/workshop5/workshopplan/handouts/182329.shtml>)*

The 2006-2010 Study/Action Issue for the Unitarian Universalist Association asks the question: "Should the Unitarian Universalist Association reject the use of any and all kinds of violence and war to resolve disputes between peoples and nations and adopt a principle of seeking just peace through nonviolent means?" This Study/Action Issue was proposed as an effort to develop an alternative to both just war theory and pacifism. As the Unitarian Universalist theologian Paul Rasor writes, "we should avoid getting caught up in a debate between just war and pacifism." Unitarian Universalist ethicist Sharon Welch agrees and suggests that "a third way" exists that includes "joint efforts to prevent war, stop genocide, and repair the damage caused by armed conflict." Welch calls this third way peacemaking and Rasor describes it as prophetic nonviolence. Whatever its label, the strategy seeks to "move beyond old divisions and adopt a position that integrates critical elements from both traditions." Welch identifies the third way as having three components:

- Peacekeeping — early intervention to stop genocide and prevent large-scale war.
- Peacemaking — bringing hostile parties to agreement, negotiating equitable and sustainable peace agreements that include attention to the pressing need for post-conflict restoration and reconciliation.
- Peacebuilding — the creation of long-term structures for redressing injustice and resolving ongoing conflict as well as addressing the root causes of armed conflict, economic exploitation, and political marginalization.

This third way calls for the use of violence only as a last resort. It draws some of its inspiration from earlier Unitarian and Universalist thinkers such as William Ellery Channing and Adin Ballou. Channing advocated 19th-century versions of just war theory and observed that "peace without can come only with peace within." Ballou's pacifism was deeply nuanced; he advocated for the use of "uninjurious force" in cases of self-defense or to protect society from violent criminals.

Peacemaking or prophetic nonviolence seeks to position itself as an alternative to both just war theory and pacifism. It is a relatively new theory, and one to which Unitarian Universalists are making an important contribution. Whether it is able to provide an alternative path and help bring stability and peace to our planet remains to be seen.

# Workshop 4:

## The Impact of War and Military Service on Families

### Introduction

In this workshop, participants learn about some of the challenges military families experience when military personnel are deployed or stationed away from home. The workshop suggests ways a faith community can be of service to military families.

### Opening (10 minutes)

#### **Materials**

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Covenant
- Chalice lighting words from the booklet *Bless All Who Serve*

#### **Description**

Light the chalice and invite participants to begin the time together with a reading. Read or invite a participant to read words by Barbara Merritt from *Bless All Who Serve: Sources of Hope, Courage and Faith for Military Personnel and Their Families*, edited by Matthew and Gail Tittle (pages 62-63):

*It's time somebody told you that you are lovely, good and real; that your beauty can make hearts stand still. It's time somebody told you how much they love and need you, how much your spirit helped set the free, how your eyes shine full of light. It's time somebody told you. It's time someone told you that with all your flaws and weaknesses you are an extraordinary person, well-worth knowing. No one—especially not God or the people who love you—expects you to live without making mistakes or stumbling occasionally. It's time you looked at your own life with more kindness, gentleness, and mercy.*

*It's time someone told you that you are not on this earth to impress anyone, to dazzle us with your success, to conquer all obstacles with your competence, or to offer one brilliant solution after another. We are happy you are here with the rest of us struggling souls. We are all striving to be as faithful as we can be to the truth that we understand. No more is required.*

*It's time someone told you that the work you do to increase your capacity to love and to pay attention is more important than any other activity. As you advance closer to what is ultimately true and life-giving, you bless others.*

*It's time somebody told you how absolutely beautiful your laughter is. You bring joy into our world.*

*Just possibly, messages of love and acceptance have always been circulating in our midst. The hard part is not seeking out these positive and creative affirmations that remind us that we are loved. The hard part is taking in the love.*

*It's time someone told us all that we are valued and infinitely worthwhile.*

*And it's time we believed it.*

Invite responses: What resonated with you? Why? What did you find challenging? Why?

## **Activity 1: The Impact of War and Military Service on Families (15 minutes)**

### ***Materials***

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, Challenges Faced by Military Families

### ***Preparation***

- Copy the handout for participants.

### ***Description***

Distribute and ask volunteers to read aloud Handout 1, Challenges Faced by Military Families. Discuss the handout:

- What was surprising or new information for you?
- How do you feel about some of the issues facing military families?

If participants are comfortable sharing the challenges their families have encountered as military families, invite them to do so.

## **Activity 2: Relying on Our Strengths (25 minutes)**

### ***Materials***

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper and pens/pencils

### ***Preparation***

- Write these questions on newsprint, and post:
  - When was the last time you moved to another state? What were some of the joys and challenges you experienced?
  - Think back to a time during your childhood or youth when you were the new “kid” in school. What was your experience making new friends?
  - Think back to a time when you were going through a personal crisis or family crisis. Who was there to support you and how long had you known them?
  - What skills did you use to meet these and other challenges similar to those mentioned in the handout?

### ***Description***

Explain that this exercise will help participants identify coping skills they have used to manage life transitions and challenges.

Ask participants to reflect silently on the posted questions for a few minutes. Then, have participants form small groups of four or five to share their responses. Distribute paper and pens/pencils if needed and ask groups to select someone to take notes on the skills and strengths mentioned.

For the last five minutes of this activity, reconvene the large group. Post blank newsprint and ask each small group to report a brief summary of their discussion. List the skills and strengths mentioned. Invite participants to appreciate all the great coping skills listed. If anyone identifies a skill they feel they may not be strong in, encourage them to work to increase their feeling of competency.

## Activity 3: Support and Information for Military Families (5 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Handout 2, Support and Information for Military Families

### **Preparation**

- Copy Handout 2 for participants.

### **Description**

Say that no matter how strong we are, we all need help now and then; if you are in a military family or know someone who is, you may be wondering where to start seeking different kinds of support or information. Distribute Handout 2, Support and Information for Military Families. Invite participants to look it over, discuss it, and, if they can, suggest additional resources to add.

## Closing (5 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle

### **Description**

Close with the reading below, “Each Day” by Kristen Harper, from *Voices from the Margins: An Anthology of Meditations* (Skinner House, 2012).

*Each day provides us with an opportunity to love again,  
To hurt again, to embrace joy,  
To experience unease,  
To discover the tragic.  
Each day provides us with the opportunity to live.*

*This day is no different, this hour no more unique than the last,  
Except...Maybe today, maybe now,  
Among friends and fellow journeyers,  
Maybe for the first time, maybe silently,  
We can share ourselves.*

Extinguish the chalice.



## Handout 1: Challenges Faced by Military Families

During the best of circumstances, relationships and caring for children and youth can be stressful. Add to that stress worrying about a parent or significant other who is in a war zone or stationed far from home and the load of stress and worry can push families to the breaking point. Dealing with everyday home maintenance, car repairs, and family scheduling along with keeping medical appointments can be overwhelming for someone learning to operate as a temporary single parent. Additionally, while many civilians are rooted in communities with family members within an hour drive or less, many military families undergo frequent relocations that require them to live far from immediate family who could be supportive during times of overwhelming stress and worry. One tragic result of this is the rising rate of child abuse in military families.

During the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, record numbers of National Guard and Reservist were called to active duty. Active duty families who live near or on military installations, live in communities with others experiencing similar family situations, challenges and have access to numerous resources. However, the families of National Guard and Reservists usually live in communities among many civilians who vaguely remember we are at war and can be indifferent or vocally anti-war. Additionally, many National Guard and Reservists take pay cuts when they are activated for active duty service and their families have the additional burden and stress of meeting financial responsibilities with less money.

The children of military personnel have life experiences that are vastly different from their civilian peers. For example, children and youth in military families have to process conflicted feelings when their deployed parent misses school activities, sporting and milestone events. There is the constant challenge of meeting and making new friends after relocating. One of the biggest burdens these children and youth have to contend with is meeting school requirements that differ from state to state. Consequently, they are sometimes left behind a grade. Furthermore, partners of military personnel experience difficulty transferring their professional licenses and certifications from state to state, which can hurt their ability to support their families and can add another layer of stress.

In 1993, President Clinton signed into law Don't Ask, Don't Tell. In 1996 Congress signed into law the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Although today Don't Ask, Don't Tell is no longer military policy, DOMA is no longer law, and many states recognize equal marriage, military culture is not necessarily open and accepting to couples and families who are gay, lesbian or transgender. Many people in the military services suffer economic, social, emotional, or psychological stress because of having to hide or deny significant aspects of their selves, lives, and families or because family/partner benefits are not yet completely equal for servicepeople who are gay/lesbian.

## Handout 2: Support and Information for Military Families

**Blue Star Families** <http://bluestarfam.org/>

**Business and Professional Women's Foundation** Joining Forces Mentoring program, <http://bpwfoundation.org/>

**Military Officers Association of America** <http://www.moaa.org/>

**National Military Family Association** <http://www.militaryfamily.org/>  
Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children,  
<http://www.militaryfamily.org/get-info/military-kids/education/interstate-compact.html>

**U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation**  
Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Program <http://www.hiringourheroes.org/>

**Veterans Administration** Audio/visual resources about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), [www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp)

**The White House** Joining Forces, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/military-spouses-back-to-work; article on spouse professional license portability](http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/military-spouses-back-to-work;article%20on%20spouse%20professional%20license%20portability),  
<http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=119605>

# Workshop 5:

## Inviting Engagement through Congregational Worship

### Introduction

This workshop provides a framework for planning a worship service to engage the congregation in ministry to active duty military personnel, veterans, and their families. Participants revisit insights from the first four workshops and choose some to share through congregational worship. They plan a worship service and assign roles and responsibilities.

Two books published by Skinner House and available from the UUA Bookstore can serve as a source of readings for your worship service:

[\*Bless All Who Serve: Stories of Hope, Courage, and Faith for Military Personnel and Their Families\*](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=3467) by Matthew Tittle and Gail Tittle (2010);

<http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=3467>

[\*War Zone Faith: An Army Chaplain's Reflections for Afghanistan\*](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=3658) by George Tyger (2013); <http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=3658>

Well in advance, with your congregation's worship committee and/or minister, set a date for a military ministry worship service. Obtain any instructions regarding lay-led worship. Invite a minister, religious educator, or worship committee chair to attend this planning workshop to help resolve logistical questions that may arise. Communicate the worship service date to program participants.

About a week ahead, remind participants by email, social media, phone call, or other means that they will plan a worship service at this workshop meeting. Share the questions you will use in Activity 1 (see "Preparation") to help them review their insights and discoveries from earlier meetings. Ask them to reflect on their hopes for the congregation's ministry to military personnel, veterans, and families.

## Opening (5 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Covenant from Workshop 1

### **Description**

Light the chalice and invite participants to listen to these words of 17-year-old Erika, whose father was serving in Afghanistan:

*My dad's away a lot, on training, in lots of places. He's in Afghanistan now. He'll be there for another year.*

*He was supposed to be coming home on leave in October, but they've moved it back to December or maybe even February. One thing I know for sure is that we'll be without him for Christmas. It will be our first Christmas ever without him. I don't even want to celebrate. I don't even want a Christmas tree.*

*The reason is, it's hard to have fun when at the same moment he might be in the middle of a battle. I could be laughing and singing and right at that moment, he could be getting shot or bombed, or maybe he's hurt and scared. Why should I have fun when he's not?*

*I don't tell him how I feel because I don't want him to feel bad and start crying. Once he called when we were having dinner. Mom had cooked all this great Hispanic food and we were stuffing our faces. Dad called and said all he'd had to eat that day was a hot dog. I worry that he's going to starve to death! We send him Hispanic food that he can cook for himself over there. He has to eat!*

Invite participants into a moment of silence, asking them to call to mind and to honor the very real challenges, fears, hope, love, and resilience of children of soldiers. Say that Erika's complete story and that of her eight-year-old brother Edwin can be found in a 2008 book, *Off to War: Voices of Soldiers' Children* by Deborah Ellis.

Review the group covenant.

# Activity 1: What Have We Learned and Discovered?

## (20 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### **Preparation**

- Write on three separate sheets of newsprint, and post:
  - What does Unitarian Universalism have to offer to military personnel, veterans, and their families? What does our congregation have to offer to those already in our congregation and those who have yet to discover us?
  - What gifts might military personnel, veterans, and their families offer to our congregation and to our faith?
  - What words or stories would you use to invite others in the congregation to join you in actively welcoming military personnel, veterans, and their families and in engaging in military ministry in the wider world?

### **Description**

Invite participants to go around the circle and share briefly their responses to the posted questions, responding to each question one at a time. Record responses on newsprint. Post additional newsprint, as needed.

# Activity 2: Planning Worship (25 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Handout 1, Sample Order of Worship
- Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbooks, *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*
- Newsprint reflections from “What Have We Learned and Discovered?”
- Optional: Written instructions for leading worship in your congregation
- Optional: Additional resource books such as [\*Bless All Who Serve: Stories of Hope, Courage, and Faith for Military Personnel and their Families\*](#) and [\*War Zone Faith: An Army Chaplain’s Reflections for Afghanistan\*](#)
- Optional: A computer with Internet access ([UUA Worship Web](#))

## ***Preparation***

- Invite your minister, religious educator, or worship committee chair to join you for this workshop.
- Make two or three copies of instructions for leading worship in your congregation and set them out.
- Copy handout for all participants.
- Set out hymnbooks and additional resources for worship planning. The UUA Worship Web provides a searchable database of worship resources of all kinds.

## ***Description***

Distribute Handout 1, Sample Order of Worship. Explain that it offers a starting point— suggestions your group can follow or adapt in planning a worship service. Say that the group is also free to design its own order of service. Point out the resources you have set out to help with the planning.

Build on the reflections shared in the previous activity to plan a worship service together. Use the expertise of your invited guest(s) to help with the process. Decide who will offer reflections and who will lead other parts of the service. Write your order of worship on newsprint as you create it. On a separate piece of newsprint, write assigned tasks and deadlines. Here are some sample tasks and deadlines, although your group will, of course, create its own:

- Draft of reflection submitted to at least one other person for comment and suggestions by \_\_\_\_\_. Comments and suggestions returned by\_\_\_\_\_.
- Readings chosen by \_\_\_\_\_
- Conversation with music director or music committee regarding music and hymns for the service by\_\_\_\_\_
- Order of service elements finalized by \_\_\_\_\_
- Rehearsal with microphone for the service, including a run-through of all logistics on \_\_\_\_\_

In addition, consider offering in your printed Order of Service and on your congregation's webpage or social network sites some links for worship attendees to find out more. These include:

- [UUA Committee on Military Ministry](http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/military/index.shtml), which provides support and information to those interested in becoming Unitarian Universalist military chaplains (<http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/military/index.shtml>)

- [Unitarian Universalist Military Ministry](http://www.uumil.org), which describes a project that offers lay-led services to active duty military personnel in the Great Lakes Naval Recruit Training Center in Chicago ([www.uumil.org](http://www.uumil.org))
- [The Church of the Larger Fellowship's Military Ministry](http://www.questformeaning.org/page/welcome/militaryministry), which offers resources and support (<http://www.questformeaning.org/page/welcome/militaryministry>)
- [Soldier's Heart](http://www.soldiersheart.net), which provides a model for addressing the emotional, moral, and spiritual wounds of veterans, their families, and communities ([www.soldiersheart.net](http://www.soldiersheart.net))

## Closing (5 minutes)

### Materials

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle

### Description

Share this Veterans Day prayer by Karen Bellavance-Grace:

*"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'Thank You,' it will be enough"*

—Meister Eckhart

*Today we have set aside time to publicly say thank you to our siblings who have served in the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Navy and Marines; to say 'Thank You' to all who served, whatever their role, wherever their service took them.*

*We say 'Thank You' to those whose service was brief, and to those who made a career of their service.*

*We say 'Thank You' to those who remember their service with fondness, and to those whose time in service still haunts them.*

*We say 'Thank You' to those who returned to us largely intact, who found jobs, started families, and who continue to find ways to serve their communities.*

*We say 'Thank You' to veterans who returned with brokenness so deep that they continue to struggle to find a role or even a home in our communities.*

*God of many names, Source of all Love, in the face of all this, sometimes the only prayer we have is 'Thank You.' We pray it will be enough.*

Extinguish the chalice.

If participants ask, tell them that the reading can be found on the [UUA Worship Web](http://www.uua.org/worship).

# Handout 1: Sample Order of Worship

## Order of Worship

Opening Words

Chalice Lighting

“Roll Call” (see below)

Reading

Introducing the Military Ministry Workshop Group

**Reflection** (Brief reflection offered by one of the workshop participants.)

**Reflection** (Brief reflection offered by one of the workshop participants.)

Lighting of Candles (Invite congregants to light candles to honor or remember loved ones who have served and their family members. Depending on the congregation's practices, congregants may share brief words about why they are lighting their candle.)

Hymn

Offering and Offertory

**Reflection** (Brief reflection offered by one of the workshop participants.)

Invitation to Join Military Ministry Efforts

Hymn

Closing Words

## Hymns - Suggestions from *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*

Hymn 7, The Leaf Unfurling

Hymn 34, Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire

Hymn 100, I've Got Peace Like a River

Hymn 108, My Life Flows on in Endless Song

Hymn 121, We'll Build a Land

Hymn 128, For All that Is Our Life

Hymn 143, Not in Vain the Distance Beacons

Hymn 159, This Is My Song

Hymn 388, Vine and Fig Tree

Hymn 389, Gathered Here

Hymn 1008, When Our Heart is in a Holy Place

Hymn 1012, When I am Frightened

Hymn 1021, Lean on Me

## Roll Call

*By Rev. Dr. Lisa Presley; used with permission.*

Let there be a roll call to honor of those who serve, and who have served in the military.

Let us begin with a minute of silence for all those who have lost their lives in military service for this country.



As you hear a description that fits you, I invite you to stand or raise your hand and be recognized. Please remain standing or keep your hand raised during the entire roll call. Please do not applaud.

- All those serving on active duty.
- All those serving in the Guard and Reserve.
- All those who have served in the military.
- All those who have served in the Guard and Reserve.
- All those who served in alternative service.
- All those who currently have family serving on active duty.
- All those who currently have family serving in the Guard and Reserve.
- All those who have had family serving on active duty.
- All those who have had family serving in the Guard and Reserve.
- All those who have or have had family serving in alternative service.

Let us enter now into a time of reflective silence or prayer to acknowledge all those in our midst who serve or have served, and the loved ones they represent.

### **Readings – Suggestions**

Readings from the meditation manual *Bless Those Who Serve*

Readings from *War Zone Faith*

Excerpt from the UUA 2010 Statement of Conscience, Creating Peace:

*For Unitarian Universalists, the exercise of individual conscience is holy work. Conscientious discernment leads us to engage in the creation of peace in different ways. We affirm a range of individual choices, including military service and conscientious objection (whether to all wars or particular wars), as fully compatible with Unitarian Universalism. For those among us who make a formal commitment to military service, we will honor their commitment, welcome them home, and offer pastoral support.*

# Workshop 6: Next Steps

## Introduction

In this workshop participants brainstorm ways to integrate the learnings from this program into their lives and the life of the congregation.

## Opening (10 minutes)

### **Materials**

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Covenant from Workshop 1
- Chalice lighting words familiar to participants
- Optional: A copy of *Bless All Who Serve*

### **Description**

Light the chalice and invite participants to begin the time together with a reading that is familiar to your congregation.

Then, read or invite a participant to read these words by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker from *Bless All Who Serve: Sources of Hope, Courage and Faith for Military Personnel and Their Families*, edited by Matthew and Gail Tittle (page 42):

*What words tell the truth? What balms heal? What proverbs kindle the fires of passion and joy? What spirituality stirs the hunger for justice? We seek answers to these questions—not only for ourselves, but for our communities and our society. What are the ways of being with one another that enable life to flourish, rich with meaning? When violence has fractured communities, isolated people, and broken hearts, how can life be repaired? We ask these questions not to arrive at final answers, but because asking them is fundamental to living.*

Invite responses: What resonated with you? Why? What did you find challenging? Why?

Say that this final workshop will support participants to remain engaged in supporting military families after the conclusion of the program.

## Activity 1: Creating an Action Plan (40 minutes)

## **Materials**

- Handout 1, Action Plan Ideas
- Pencils/pens
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Equipment to view the video message from Jeff Pixley

## **Preparation**

- Preview the [video clip of Jeff Pixley](#) (1:15). If you will not have Internet access during the workshop, download the video.
- Copy the handout for participants.
- Test equipment immediately before the workshop.

## **Description**

Show the group the video clip of Jeff Pixley. Ask:

- What reasons might you, as an individual, have for doing military ministry work?
- What reasons might a faith community give for creating a military ministry?

Say that you hope participants will continue the work they have started in these workshops and that, to help them, they will now work on an action plan of next steps to take as individuals and/or as a congregation.

Distribute Handout 1, Action Plan Ideas. Ask participants to read the handout and circle ideas they find appealing. Allow about five minutes. Then form small groups of four or five members. Ask the small groups to discuss possible action steps, with each member choosing one or more actions to commit to individually and the group choosing one they might commit to as a group. Explain that they can also choose an action plan that is not listed. Allow ten minutes for this part of the activity.

Once participants have chosen an action or actions, ask them to take the next several minutes and list the steps needed to complete each action. Suggest they identify any allies or other resources they will need, plan specifically how they will approach allies or secure resources, and set deadlines. Say that they may work individually or together in their small group.

For the last ten minutes, reconvene the large group. Post blank newsprint and invite participants to share their planned actions (but not the steps) with everyone. List the actions on newsprint. If any group has chosen an action to pursue together, encourage the participants to make plans to meet again and continue working on the actions.

## **Closing (10 minutes)**

### ***Materials***

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Equipment to view the video message from Kimberly Paquette
- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle

### ***Preparation***

- Preview the [video clip of Kimberly Paquette](#) (1:18). If you will not have Internet access during the workshop, download the video.
- Test equipment immediately before the workshop.

### ***Description***

Thank everyone for their participation and their commitment to helping the congregation become a true home for military personnel, veterans, and their families. Invite participants to share one new idea, piece of information, or experience they are taking away from these workshops.

Show the video clip of Kimberly Paquette.

Extinguish the chalice.

## Handout 1: Action Plan Ideas

- Create and lead an annual Sunday worship service that focuses on and honors military veterans and their families.
- Repeat the Military Ministry Toolkit for Congregations workshops with a new group of participants.
- Work with congregational leaders to construct a mission and vision statement that expresses your commitment to supporting military families in the congregation and the larger community.
- Identify resources from the Unitarian Universalist Association (national, regional, district, cluster) for building congregational commitment to support military families.
- Create and build an ecumenical partnership with another faith community to work on supporting military families in your local area.
- Team up with a civic organization that deals with supporting military families.
- Create an ongoing discussion and action group that keeps the congregation abreast of the challenges military families encounter.
- Create an oral history project that captures the military experiences of members of the faith community.
- Provide more pastoral support for those in active military service and their families through outreach efforts, packages and notes from the congregation, acknowledgement during joys and sorrows, and other means.
- Use social media and other means to reach out and welcome active duty military personnel stationed in your area. Train your ushers and greeters to offer a warm welcome.
- Add *Bless All Who Serve* and *War Zone Faith* to your congregation's library. Consider purchasing copies of either or both to give to those who are on active duty military service. You might even supply an extra copy or two for them to share with a friend.
- Lead a discussion group on the book *War Zone Faith*.

- Petition your state/local government to make it easy for spouses and partners of military personnel stationed near you to transfer professional licenses. (For more information: <http://www.militaryfamily.org/get-info/spouse-employment/50-state-licensing-chart.html>.)
- Form a short-term or long-term talking circle or an ongoing ministry for veterans.
- Set up a project for veterans to write or record a short testimony of their military service to include in the congregation's history.

***Additional suggestions...***