

WARNING ORDER:

OPERATION BARNABAS

JULY 2022

OPERATION BARNABAS

Operation Barnabas is the LCMS' network of care to our nation's military members, families and veterans. We reach out to all branches of the military with a special emphasis on our Reserve members and their families.

ACTS 5:29

"We must obey God rather than men"

40 BRAVE SOLDIERS

Chaplain (LTC) Steven Hokana, USA (Ret.).

The church honors those who serve. The church recognizes that service in the military is not without great personal risk. As such, we remember the sacrifice of Christians who serve and give up their lives for Christ and His Kingdom.

Honoring those who serve is part of who we are as Americans. As we move into summer, we shift into that season of honoring veterans and their families. By tradition the first military holiday in the United States is Armed Forces Day, the third weekend in May. We pay tribute to the men and women who serve our country. Next is Memorial Day, the last Monday of May. We formally pay tribute to the men and women who died in defense of our country. Next, our nation celebrates birthdays of various branches of service as well as organizations in the military. These occur throughout the year. Next are patriotic holidays where veterans feel welcome, Flag Day, the third Sunday in June, and, next, of course, is the Fourth of July, Independence Day. As summer gives way to fall, there are other military-minded holidays: V-J Day (Sept. 2) and Patriot Day (Sept. 11). Lots of days on our calendar remind our country to remember those who serve and their families.

We serve in two kingdoms. The kingdom of civil government and the kingdom of heaven. The first concerns earthly order and works to establish peace. In so doing, the Gospel spreads and grows unfettered. Civil government, often called the "kingdom of the left," is always under and completely subordinate to the kingdom of God.

In the history of the Christian Church, it has been important to acknowledge those who serve in the military and serve our Lord Jesus. It was not always popular in the Early Church to serve in the military. At times there was outright persecution to the point of death. Peter emphasized an important point when he appeared before the Sanhedrin and exclaimed: "We must obey God rather than men" (ACTS 5:29).

It is a good thing to study the saints who have gone before us. In the Augsburg Confession, Article XXI, we read: "Our churches teach that the history of saints may be set before us so that we may follow the example of their faith and good works, according to our calling."

For this reason, it is good to consider the account of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, a powerful event in the Early Church.

“ We serve in two kingdoms. The kingdom of civil government and the kingdom of heaven. ”

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Image: Wikimedia Commons



REPORTS

J-1 Personnel

Roll Call: Gather names and record attendance of members. A time to get to know each other.

J-2 Intelligence

Gather and share information. Provide a report on local units and their deployment schedule; also provide contact information for local military contacts upon request. Identify and assess what is going on in the community concerning veterans and their families.

J-3 Operations and Training

Develop a plan. Draft a listing of possible chapter activities, including veterans celebrations, presentations (as desired and available); develop a strategy to expand outreach into the community. Identify and assign tasks to specific people that include standards and timeframes.

J-4 Logistics

Identify and provide materials for meetings, such as coffee, refreshments, etc., to support the plan.

J-6 Communication

Develop communication strategies to support the plan. Place internal announcements (newsletter/bulletins) as well as provide articles for the local paper.



Photo: Getty Images

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During the rule of emperor Licinius, who reigned in Rome from 308 to 324 A.D., a group of Roman soldiers were stationed near Sebaste, on the Black Sea, during a bitter winter. Licinius was known for his persecution of Christians, ordering the death of thousands of Christian martyrs. During this particular winter, he issued a decree that all members of the legion must offer a sacrifice to the emperor.

Among this legion were 40 Christian soldiers. When these refused to offer the sacrifice to a false god, they were tried before a military court and condemned to be marched into an icy lake, where they would be forced to stand until they froze to death.

The Christians were given the choice to worship the emperor or face this death. Warm baths were prepared near the lake so that any who chose to leave the freezing water and apostatize could do so at any point. As the Christians stood dying in the water, one man yielded, running up the shore to the baths — where he immediately died.

Suddenly, Aglaius, the jailer who had been watching over these 40 men all this time, underwent a transformation. Throwing off his clothes and proclaiming himself a Christian, he rushed into the water, where he met his death with the other 39 Christians.

The story is graphic and powerful. For Christians who serve the two kingdoms, it reminds us that we are never far from persecution. This was an event so powerful that St. Basil of Caesarea, often called “the Great,” one of the Cappadocian Fathers, wrote a sermon in 373 AD remembering these brave legionaries. When he closed out his homily, St. Basil said: “O holy chorus! O hallowed battalion! O unbroken fighting order! O common guards of the human race! Good companions in times of anxiety, helpers in prayer, most powerful ambassadors’ stars of the world, flowers of the church!”¹

The 40 brave soldiers were remembered in artwork throughout the last two millennia. Occasionally hymns have been composed, sermons written, and reflections published about them. We should never forget these 40 brave souls.

We thank God for the great witness of the 40 brave soldiers for Christ. They stand as a testimony of faith in the Lord Jesus and exemplify the words of Revelation 14:12–13:

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

¹ St. Basil, “Homily on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste,” www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2020/03/homily-on-forty-martyrs-of-sebaste-st.html

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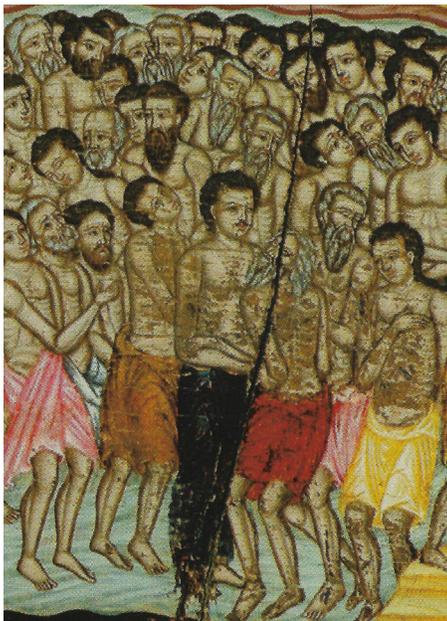


Image: Wikimedia Commons

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Image: Lightstock



We don't leave the 40 brave soldiers to the dust of history, or as a vague memory in the life of the church. This event many hundreds of years ago is relevant and the event resonates with veterans who served both God and country. If you look on YouTube you will find a song written by Tom Green wonderfully evoking the memory of the 40 brave soldiers.²

At the end of the day, we are confronted

by the brave soldiers of Sebaste with a fundamental question: Will we be true to the faith in which we are baptized when the yoke of persecution descends upon us? We are certainly challenged by the world and its assault against Christ and His church. But the strength to withstand persecution, harassment and governmental interference rests in the arms of the Triune God. Thankfully the world in our day is not yet at the level of a Ro-

man emperor bent on destruction of the Body of Christ. We know it can go in that direction. In the last hundred years we have seen this in the likes of Hitler, Stalin, Mao and others who harbor a deep hatred in their heart for Christ, and in the process of their loathing bring down the full force of the government.

We know the church is always in opposition to men who hunger with lust for power. We also know that all things, including government, come from Christ (ROM. 13). The Body of Christ is neither surprised nor unprepared for such oppression. Not because of our energy or effort, or our sinful flesh, flawed actions or thoughts; but because the church rests in the arms of the Lord Christ who sends us His Holy Spirit.

When we proclaim the Apostles Creed, we affirm the vibrant lifegiving Father, Son and Holy Spirit when we say through faith: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

Men and women of faith serve and have served our great nation. Be strong in the Lord. Be faithful in the two kingdoms. However, when the choice comes, always defer to the Kingdom of God. God bless you!

² Tom Green, "40 Brave Soldiers for Christ," www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo2oMlalDos&t=1s.

PRAYER



O GOD, FROM WHOM COME ALL HOLY DESIRES,

all good counsels and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness. Look with favor on those who suffer loss due to war and deployment. Comfort those who so desperately need Your healing hand to move them out of darkness and into Your marvelous light. Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **AMEN.**

RESOURCES

LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces
lcms.org/ministry-to-the-armed-forces

Military Chaplaincy (LCMS):

The link below provides an excellent introductory view of the exciting life and opportunities of the military chaplaincy.

- If Not Us, Then Who?: vimeo.com/208556248

Operation Barnabas logo wear by Lands' End

Clothing and other items with the Operation Barnabas logo can be purchased from Lands' End:

business.landsend.com/store/lcms-maf-ob

The National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations (NAVSO)

NAVSO is a nonprofit organization exclusively focused on transforming the veteran services marketplace (public & private) to improve the lives of veterans and military families: navso.org

VA Medical Foster Home Program for Veterans

The VA now supports over 1,000 veterans in 700 foster homes in 42 states. This resource provides certified care for veterans needing supervision 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: blogs.va.gov/VAntage/69916/veterans-gain-freedom-fuller-lives-under-foster-home-program/

“Veteran-Friendly Community” program

The VA is seeking to enhance services to veterans through their “Veteran-Friendly Community” program. Please see this link for more information: va.gov/ve/engagement/index.asp

Also available is the Veteran Community Partnerships Toolkit. This resource aids in the development of community partnerships with the VA.

Veteran Help

If you are a veteran or you know a veteran who may be in crisis, free confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 and press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online: veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat

National Chaplain Center

patientcare.va.gov/chaplain/index.asp

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs va.gov

National Guard Office of the Chaplain

nationalguard.mil/Leadership/Joint-Staff/Special-Staff/Chaplain/

National Military Family Association militaryfamily.org

U.S. Air Force Chaplain Corps af.mil

U.S. Army Chaplaincy army.mil/chaplaincorps/

U.S. Navy Chaplain Care

public.navy.mil/nrh/Pages/chaplain-services.aspx

Organize a donation drive for homeless veterans

Access the step-by-step guide at va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/FaithBasedDonationDrive-508.pdf.

OUTREACH TO THE MILITARY COMMUNITY



Photo: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Operation Barnabas congregations can honor and support their military-connected members in various ways. Some of the projects that have been successful, and may help fill a need in your community, are listed below.

CREATING A WALL OF HONOR. Collect pictures and/or names of the veterans in your congregation and design a board to showcase their service. You may also dedicate this board using a template provided by Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF).

MAILING CARE PACKAGES. Mail care packages to deployed LCMS chaplains and the service members at their location. For a list of recommended items or mailing addresses, contact Alicia Hinton at alicia.hinton@lcms.org.

HOLDING A VA FORUM. Call your local Veteran’s Administration representative and ask them to come and speak about important topics such as benefits and special programs.

SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING. Hold a service of thanksgiving for the veterans in your community. Some examples include a hosting a July 4th BBQ or Veterans Day Dinner, or acknowledging their service on MAF Sunday.

DINNER FOR STUDENT VETERANS. Reach out to students who are veterans at your local college. Offer to cook a “home-cooked meal” for them.

MANNING A BOOTH. Secure a booth at your local fair/event and discuss how Operation Barnabas can support the military community. For flyers/giveaways, contact MAF.



Contributed photos

OPERATION BARNABAS

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HONORING A NAVY VET

Operation Barnabas and LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces recently had the opportunity to show Christ's love through the gift of a Navy uniform needed in tragic circumstances. A VA employee and U.S. Navy veteran was shot and killed while getting gas. His family knew he valued his time in the Navy and wanted to be buried in his uniform, however the family didn't know where to find a uniform.

Chaplains Muehler and Hokana of LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces were giving a presentation on Operation Barnabas at Trinity Lutheran Church,

Roselle, Ill., outside of Chicago. A member of Trinity told the MAF team that he heard from the local VA about the desperate need for a uniform. MAF sprung into action to help meet the uniform need for the grieving family. With a gift from a generous donor, LCMS Chaplain Merlin Stephan, stationed at Naval Station Great Lakes, was able to work directly with the Uniform Shop to expedite the uniform for the burial. Pictured is Chaplain Stephan presenting the uniform to a VA representative tasked with getting the uniform to the family and funeral home.

FALLEN HEROES

Please pray for all those who mourn the death of the fallen heroes below who gave their all for our nation.



ARMY STAFF SGT. SETH MICHAEL PLANT

30, of Saint Augustine, Fla., died May 10 after being attacked by a bear during a training assignment at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The attack happened in a remote corner of the over 64,000 acre base. Plant joined the Army in 2015 after serving in the reserves, and served at Fort Benning, Ga., and Fort Bragg, N.C., before arriving in Alaska in July 2021. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry

Regiment. His military awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Parachutist Badge.



Image: Lightstock