

WARNING ORDER:

OPERATION BARNABAS

FEBRUARY 2025

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.

PS. 139:14

"I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well."



Photo: Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Christian Salazar

IN CHRIST WE ARE MADE PRICELESS

CH (LTC) Steven Hokana, USA (Ret)

The month of February can be a challenging time for veterans and their families. Winter is still here. Where I live, this is the time of snowstorms, with blocked roads, closed schools and cancelled medical appointments. If you are like me, every February I ask the same question: "When is winter going to end?" Yes, this is the season where it is still dark and cold.

Another challenge February brings is a sense of personal failure. Your diet has crashed and burned; your workout program has fallen by the wayside. Instead

of letters and cards from family, the bills from Christmas are starting to stack up. If not careful, one can slide into a period of darkness dominated by a foul, cynical mood. February ... ugh!

For me, February has history, my history. I was in Desert Storm; our medical unit was hidden in the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia. We invaded Iraq at great speed behind the 24th Infantry Division, and I was among the units providing medical support. I think of those I lost. February is a sad time. We know about depression, excessive drinking, concerns of being cooped up in a home with family. It can be a difficult time. I saw war up close for the first time. There was death and injury, fellow soldiers killed, as well as lots of Iraqi soldiers and civilians. We had people tortured by Saddam's forces in our hospital. Lots of images from a war over 35 years ago.

I have deployed to other places too — Afghanistan was my last war zone. We carry these images around with us, and at times, like an overpacked rucksack, they can weigh us down. But our loving God, who sent His Son to

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“ ... our loving God, who sent His Son to the cross for our redemption, does not abandon us. ”

Photo: Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Graves



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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the cross for our redemption, does not abandon us. A sad time, yes! But also, this is Lent! It is a season of hope — in Christ our sins are forgiven.

The Good News is that God speaks to you and your family during February. Please do not isolate yourself from the promises of God and the forgiveness of sins won by our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not let feeling irredeemable and unloved dominate your thoughts. We are special, not because of age, location, where we live or any other reason but one: God declares us wonderful. We read in Psalm 8:

What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet. (PS. 8:4-6)

I am not talking about our complexity as humans, but rather, about how all people are redeemed by Christ the crucified, a loving act that no one deserves, but is freely given. In our redemption, we are created in His image with a purpose. Paul writes: “I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (PHIL. 4:12-13).

Have you ever explored the word “unique”? You’ve heard the phrase, “one of a kind?” Not long ago I had an

exceptional day where I got to see the Gutenberg Bible and a very distinctive photo. Both these experiences highlight how much Jesus Christ, who poured out His life on the cross, loves us.

The Gutenberg Bible — there are about 49 in existence, and of these only 21 are complete. Sauntering into the library lobby, I approached a young lady sitting behind a desk. The student acknowledged me. I asked to see the Gutenberg Bible. The student pointed her thumb over her shoulder and nonchalantly said, “There it is.” She directed me to what looked like a massive whiskey barrel in the middle of the lobby, about fifteen feet high. It was a semi-circle of wood planks intended to protect the Bible from natural sunlight.

I just stared in awe at this Bible, looking it over from top to bottom. How old and magnificent! It was opened to Joshua 1, the page accompanied by an artistic rendition calling the reader to “Be strong and of good courage.” The movable type press is one of the instruments God used to bring humanity out of the medieval era and into the modern world, launching the Reformation by printing Luther’s writings.

As children of God redeemed under Christ, we are every bit as special as the Gutenberg Bible. You may not consider yourself rare, ornate or beautiful. But by the grace of God and His redemptive work on the cross, you are a new and wonderful creature. Think of Psalm 139 again and take to heart: “I praise You,

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Photo: Lightstock



Photo: Lightstock

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for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works” (PS. 139:14).

We are reminded by King David that we are created in the image of God and are exceptional in His sight! The Hebrew word for “wonderfully” comes from the word “*pala*” (paw-law), which means to be different, striking and remarkable. Yes, we are! Yes, *you* are! Through the activity of Jesus on the cross, our sins are forgiven. Even more, you are given a great gift that ties our uniqueness and identity to Jesus in Holy Baptism. We belong to Him. We are now a new creation.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 COR. 5:17-18).

When Christ enters your life, the old fades, and the new is put on. We now have a change of mission. We carry the message of love, peace and hope to others. Let me tell you more about my exceptional day.

After I saw the Gutenberg Bible, I then saw an artifact that was difficult to wrap my head around, it was so special and so unique. The very first photograph! At first glance, it appeared as a hot plate, metallic black, and what appeared like dark stains on its surface. After staring into it an image appears: a town in France in 1820! Just think, how many pictures have been taken since that time? Is there a number ascribed to all the photos by all the people in the world? How many weddings, class photos, trips around the world, selfies, photos of people goofing off in photo booths? How many? There had to be a first. There it was. In a dark, unsuspecting room, a unique, one-of-a-kind, rare historical first.

As a veteran or family member, we thank you for serving our nation. As a redeemed child of God, your time of service is not yet over. You have a purpose and a mission: go out and proclaim the Good News of Jesus. Tell the world about a wonderful God who loves you. Use your individuality as a child of God in Christ. Remember the Lord Christ, who transforms you through His act of love, dying on a

cross. This sets us apart and makes us unique.

Okay, you much-loved child of God in Christ. Hear how Paul the apostle highlights our individuality and identity in Ephesians 2:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
(EPH. 2: 8-10)

The Gutenberg Bible will eventually become dust and fade into history. The world’s oldest photo will eventually turn to rust. But the promises of God, in Christ Jesus, for you, endure the test of time.

Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His, we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. ... For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations. (PS. 100:3-5)

OB SPECIAL OPS: NEWS FROM THE FIELD

This section highlights recent Operation Barnabas activities across the U.S. We hope these examples will be replicated in other congregations and chapters, that these activities might serve as a catalyst for other means of sharing God's mercy to military-connected people in our communities. Please share your activities, including pictures, so that others might gain from your experience.

CATALINA LUTHERAN CHURCH, TUCSON, ARIZ.

Catalina Lutheran Church participated in the annual Wreaths Across America on Dec. 14.



STEWARTVILLE, MINN.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH recognized 28 veterans during their Veterans Day service in November. Each veteran received a certificate with their name, branch of service, and service dates.



FALLEN HEROES



ARMY CAPT. ERIC RICHARD HART 34, of Indianapolis, Ind. died Dec. 28 from a non-combat

incident while deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Hart was a quartermaster officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 38th Infantry Division, of the Indiana National Guard. He was commissioned in the Army in 2015. His

awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal and Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal.



Image: Lightstock

DAYS TO REMEMBER FEBRUARY



— **FEBRUARY 3** —
Four Chaplains Day

— **FEBRUARY 19** —
Coast Guard Reserve Birthday

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

Nailed! Moral Injury

Moral injury after combat poisons the soul, but a conscience normed by the cross of Christ brings God's exclusive healing remedy. Dr. Schreiber is available for church/circuit presentations. His book is available at outskirtspress.com/Nailed

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 988 and press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/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/

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

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Your generous gift to partner with Operation Barnabas makes a tremendous difference and helps to care for our nation's military members, families and veterans. Click here to give.

GIVE NOW

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We want to hear from you! If you've got ideas for future issues, comments, feedback on articles you've read in *Warning Order* or news from your part of the world, please let us know. Write to alicia.hinton@lcms.org with your stories, and be sure to include your name, city and state.

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PRAYER



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JEREMIAH 17:5; 7–8

“Thus says the Lord ...

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

Almighty and ever-living God,

we lift our prayer to You in this season of Epiphany. Much has happened already in 2025 as we move through the Church Year. Some things change, and some remain the same. Loved ones have passed; loved ones are born. Out of this comes both sadness and rejoicing. Many experience physical limitations for the first time, while others exult that God has touched their bodies and granted healing, remission and good health. Winter is with us, still we know spring is around the corner.

The first two months of 2025 are but a blip on the tapestry of eternity You paint for Your children.

Help us embrace the words You said to Jeremiah. We trust Your Word and promises. Grant us, O Lord, real growth in our lives, like the well-established tree in Jeremiah 17. Invigorate the deep roots of faith You set in us so when tough times and unsettling chapters come, our growth continues in You.

Help us to rest confidently in Your love. Make us fruitful in all we do. Help us to always give thanks for the promise of Your Son's coming into the world to redeem us. His mission is clear: granting forgiveness of sins, winning eternal life through His death on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead. We live in anticipation of the hope of spending eternity with You.

We ask this in Your holy and precious name. **AMEN.**