

WARNING ORDER:

OPERATION BARNABAS

4TH QUARTER 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.

LUKE 8:30, 33

"Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion,' for many demons had entered him ... Then the demons came out of the man."



Images: Lightstock

MAN SAVED — LEGION DESTROYED

CH (LTC) Steven Hokana, USA (Ret)

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. The basis for today's meditation is recorded in Luke 8:26–39, which reads:

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met Him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before Him and said with a loud voice, "What have You to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. And they begged Him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged Him to let them enter these. So He gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the

city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So He got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with Him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

There is much to take in from this Gospel reading. It seems like a highly visceral event. Just imagine it: a naked man possessed, surrounded by the stench of death, wild-eyed with rage and fear, playing host to demonic power and imbued with physical strength that comes with a maniacal ability to shatter the chains meant to safeguard him. Then we contend with the great and magnificent power of God's Son, Jesus, who dialogues not with the man but with the demons. *Legion* is their name; there exist so many wicked spirits within the man that he/they have no ordinary moniker. The Lord grants the demons their last request, to go

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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.

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and possess the herd of pigs on a cliff. Off they go over the edge. The man is restored, most likely better than he was before, but his now-normal state frightens the locals, those who knew him for years. The man restored by Jesus begs to go with the Lord. Instead, Jesus tells him he has a mission among his own friends and family to fulfill.

Wow! What a whirlwind event. There are some key elements that we are to take away. First and foremost, this is an event that takes place outside of the customary Jewish region. Jesus is the Savior of all, and He demonstrates His messianic fulfillment by traveling to the Gerasenes (a Gentile area — hence the herd of pigs), and conducting a miracle. Second, this demonstrates the love of God in Christ by His presence in a non-Jewish region (ugh, how humiliating) and entering a place of the dead. It is bad enough to go to a cemetery filled with your own kind! But to enter a non-Jewish burial ground? Please! Just how far is the Lord Jesus willing to go to save one man? The answer is in Christ's action; He goes all the way to a place of unholiness in the extreme — and ultimately to the cross for the sake of an entire world sickened by sin, Jew and Gentile alike.

In reading about ancient Judaica at the time of Jesus, the children of Abraham did not care for Gentiles. They did not care for Romans. As a matter of fact, they considered Romans the personification of pigs. So to hear this event as told by Luke has some powerful nuance. “My name is Legion!” *Legion* is a distinctly Roman word, a name meant to strike fear in those who lived under the thumb of Rome. Legions were vicious, brutal and merciless. They were focused and organized and tasked with a single purpose: to annihilate those who stood before them. The legion responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was called the 10th Legion — and they had a boar as their mascot! This hairy pig, with disgusting fangs and all, was displayed on banners, flags and shields. To the locals, educated and uninformed, lower class and elites, this was an unsurprising symbol for the hated Romans. Pigs

and boars were considered filthy and unclean, nasty and destructive, violent and barbaric. The Jews saw a strong similarity between swine and their Roman overlords. Psalm 80 says, “The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it.”

An article by Dr. Malka Z. Simkovich states this:

The rabbis saw the boars' tendency to roam and plunder the hillside reminiscent of the destruction and violence wreaked by the Romans, who ravaged the hills of Judea and devastated its population . . . moreover the boar image was likely strengthened by the fact that the tenth legion of the Roman army, Legio X Fretensis (“of the straits”), which took active part in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD, was known as “the Boar” because of its prominent emblem.¹

It is interesting to note that the next time in history we hear of boars and destruction, it is leveled at Martin Luther by the papacy. The posting of the Ninety-Five Theses brought about the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* (“Arise, O Lord”), where Pope Leo X, hearkening to the Psalms to further denounce Luther, calls him a wild boar among “the sheep of Your pasture” (PSALM 79:13). Luther burned this document in defiance. But in his statements, Luther put forth a component that is at the center of the account of Jesus and Legion. Some call it “holy love”; we call it “grace alone.”

If you think of Jesus as true God and true man, the encounter with the demon-possessed man is extraordinary for us. Demons announced Jesus' true nature as the Son of God, saying, “What have You to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me” (LUKE 8:28). It is one thing to have His disciples call Him the “Christ of God,” as Peter did in both Matthew 16:16 and Mark 8:29. It is another thing for an enemy in full opposition to acknowledge Jesus

¹ Dr. Malka Z. Simkovich, “Why Rome Is Likened to a Boar,” *The Torah* (website), 2019, <https://www.thetorah.com/article/why-rome-is-likened-to-a-boar>.

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Image: Getty Images



Navy Chief Petty Officer Joshua Karst

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for who He is! Standing in the cemetery, among the dust, filth and bones, seeing row upon row of white-washed tombs, is the promised Messiah, our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is the very same eternal God who loves us and has authority over rulers, principalities and legions of demons. We are all aware of Jesus having two natures. In the hymn “Beautiful Savior,” we hear this picturesque stanza proclaim both: “Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations, Son of God, and Son of Man! Glory and honor, Praise, adoration, Now and forever more be thine!” (LSB 537:4).

Jesus is true God, and He is also true man. We know of His birth, His ministry, His passion and His death on the cross. We see Jesus rise from the grave, conquering death. We see His transfiguration, and we see His ascension into heaven with a promise to return. Jesus mysteriously comes to us in two natures, which carries a powerful meaning for all humanity. This is God’s Son, temporal and incarnate, who dwelled among us out of love. This is the promised Christ of the Old Testament who delivers us all from sin, death and the power of the devil. This is the Jesus who promises to be with us and draw us to the cross even though we suffer, fall into sin, get lost, become desperate and need salvation.

This text has special application for those who are or have ever been in the military. There is relevance for family members whose loved ones have served too. In my theological mindset, the demons within the demon-possessed man wanted everyone to hear of a military connection with the name *Legion*. Many combat veterans can identify with this man. Think of those who wear the uniform. Much was asked of them. Many served with no problems or negative ramifications. They protect their country and complete their time of service and move on with their lives. But some

have trouble adjusting. Things go sideways for a while. They contend with the feeling of being lost, shrouded in old memories, sad and horrible images of war and death. But over time, and with the love of God and family, these veterans can get on their feet and move on in life. The trauma fades into a chapter of their life and not the sum total of who they are. For others, well — that’s a whole different story.

I met a veteran combat medic who, while ruminating about the war, would taste blood in his mouth. The only thing he could do to purge it was to down a bottle of whisky. Many of you know men and women who want to come back from war, but it is too elusive. They act out, becoming violent, and their family cannot handle their viciousness. They develop addictions as a coping mechanism. This drains the souls of their loved ones and afflicts finances, relationships and any remote opportunity for happiness. Many who suffer this way hate themselves more than anyone can hate them. As a result, they hide — they are now among the dead in their suffering. They reside physically and mentally among the graves filled with old bones, dust and filth. They feel naked and vulnerable. It is through anger, fueled by shame, that their violence and ostracization occur. If you know someone like this, the Good News of Jesus is for them. If you *are* that someone, the event at the cemetery resonates in your very soul.

Christ did not come to save those who are confident and self-assured in their salvation. Jesus Himself declares, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (LUKE 19:10). We know this is the plan Jesus has for us. At the start of His ministry, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor;
He has sent me to bind up the
brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those
who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor.
(ISAIAH 61:1–2)

When finished reading Isaiah, Jesus declares, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” The event in the graveyard is not about demons. It is about the promises of God in Christ for you: Redemption and forgiveness, love and peace. There is a custom among veterans; when we meet a Vietnam veteran, we shake their hand and say, “Welcome home.” When Jesus extends His arms on the cross and suffers for all humanity, and when He dies, pouring out His life, He is saying to the veteran and their family who suffer, “Welcome home! This is for you!” The Lord is proclaiming, “Your sins are forgiven!” Just as Jesus exorcised the legion out of the tormented man in the region of the country of the Gerasenes, He frees all who trust in Him.

The event concludes in a very interesting way. The locals are afraid of the formerly demon-possessed man’s normal demeanor now that the demons have been kicked to the pigs. Some among you will be afraid when you are healed by Jesus. They are comfortable seeing you suffer. Let them be. They will get used to it. Second, the healed man wants to follow Jesus, but the Lord tells him of a mission only he can accomplish: “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.’ And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him” (LUKE 8:39).

As veterans, we are to return home to tell the great and wonderful event of forgiveness. Whether transgressions occur in war or peace, whether they are something intentional or survivor’s guilt, we are forgiven, and we need to announce this to those closest to us. This includes family but also fellow warriors. Help those around you. When you do, you are proclaiming the story of salvation. They will see it in your heart and give thanks to God for your return. Welcome home! Time to leave the graveyard. Move out with this change of mission. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

FALLEN HEROES



ARMY SERGEANT AARON COX

24, of Mabank, Texas, died June 5 as a result of a training accident near Camp Croft, Hungary. Cox died from wounds sustained by a vehicle accident during preparations for Exercise Saber Guardian 25. He was an infantryman with the “Strike” 2nd Mobile Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky. Cox enlisted in 2021 and had a previous deployment to Poland. His awards and decorations include the Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Expert Infantryman Badge and Air Assault Badge.



ARMY CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 DUSTIN K. WRIGHT

40, of Woodlawn, Tenn., died June 11 as a result of wounds from an AH-64 Apache helicopter training accident. He was a pilot assigned to 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Fort

Campbell, Ky. Wright joined the Army in 2010. His awards and decorations include the Air Medal with “C” device, the Army Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Army Achievement Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Expert Infantryman Badge, the Army Aviator Badge, the Army Parachutist Badge and the Army Pathfinder Badge.



AIR FORCE AIRMAN BRAYDEN LOVAN

21, of Greenville, Ky., died July 20 in an on-duty incident by an unintended discharge of a Sig Sauer M18 pistol. The Air Force Global Strike Command has announced an immediate pause and subsequent investigation of the use of the M18 handgun. Lovan was a security forces specialist assigned to the 90th Security Forces Squadron, 90th Security Forces Group, 90th Missile Wing, F.E. Warren AFB, Wyo. He enlisted in the Air Force in 2023.



Image: Lightstock

DAYS TO REMEMBER



SEPTEMBER

- 11** Patriot Day
- 18** Air Force Birthday
- 19** POW/MIA Recognition Day
- 29** Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day

OCTOBER

- 13** Navy Birthday
- 26** National Day of the Deployed

NOVEMBER

- 10** Marine Corps Birthday
- 11** Veterans Day

PRAYER



Photo: Lightstock

Almighty and ever-living God, we give thanks to You for the gift of life! We thank You for Your steadfast presence and for the assurance that You will never leave our side. You are present in all the ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies we experience. Blessed Lord, we learn in Holy Scripture that there is no place that You will not go to bring about Your work of salvation. We read today about the encounter at a cemetery — a place of the dead and a place of no hope. You confronted a man whose soul was attacked by a legion of demons that made his body an infestation of

evil. We are blessed by reading this event and pray that we never lose sight of Christ alone as our deliverer from sin, torment and the pain of death — even death itself. Only You have power over demons and can deliver the lost. Only You restore hope and grant everlasting peace and serenity.

Lord Jesus, as we confront demons and evil, aid us and remind us that You shield us, Your children, from all harm, body and soul. Help us and assist all who need Your deliverance. Bless our days to see all the wonderful joys You give, our Redeemer and the Savior of all. **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

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: va.gov/lovel-federal-health-care-va/programs/va-medical-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/vc/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/Office-of-the-Joint-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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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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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.

COFFEE FOR COASTIES



Looking for inspiration for your Operation Barnabas Chapter? Consider Coffee for Coasties! In a recent outreach effort, LCMS Coast Guard Auxiliary Chaplain Bill Schmidt visited U.S. Coast Guard Station Sandy Hook and the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bonito to deliver coffee as a gesture of appreciation. The coffee was a gift from the Operation Barnabas chapter at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, where Chaplain Schmidt also serves as the assistant pastor. It's a simple yet meaningful way to show support and care for those serving in the armed forces.

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN



Chaplain Craig Muehler, director of LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, recently visited Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Tomah, Wis., located near Fort McCoy. He preached during the worship service and joined the congregation afterward for a special Armed Forces-themed coffee hour. The gathering also provided an opportunity to highlight the work and mission of Operation Barnabas.

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL



First Lutheran Church and School in Clearwater, Fla., has officially joined the Operation Barnabas network! In the accompanying photo, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Chaplain and LCMS Florida-Georgia District Operation Barnabas representative, the Rev. Bill Schmidt, presents a certificate of recognition to First Lutheran's pastor, the Rev. Andrew Apple, marking their congregation's commitment to supporting military members, veterans and their families through this vital ministry.