

## Further Into Moral Injury

by **Stephen B. Boyd**

**Minister for Chaplains and Ministers in Specialized Settings**

At General Synod 29, the delegates gathered adopted a resolution titled, To Recognize the Need for Compassionate Care and Healing to Our Veterans. The resolution, proposed by six of our United Church of Christ congregations from the Ohio Conference, addressed the problem of reintegrating our nation's veterans into the civilian population upon their return from the current wars. The Summary of the resolution reads: "This resolution seeks to address the needs of the United Church of Christ to recognize that there is a need for ministry and mission that helps the veterans of the military who served in periods of war and peace to reintegrate fully into society upon their separation from military service, and to serve their families who waited for the return of their family members serving in the military."

I had the opportunity to lead the educational forum discussion for this resolution and was pleasantly surprised at the interest and depth of engagement surrounding this sensitive subject. At the end of the day, through a process of dialog and amendments by the delegates, the Resolution of Witness was published with an additional paragraph, which stated: "Be it further resolved the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the Office of Local Church Ministries to partner with the Soul Repair Center of Brite Divinity School in the development of resources for use by our military chaplains, Veteran's Administrations Chaplains and our local congregations to express compassionate care and a healing ministry to our veterans and their families."

Since my own return from the Gulf, veteran reintegration has been an ongoing concern of mine. As I work closely with the Armed Services and our military chaplains, it made sense to add this resolution to my portfolio. As a result I have had the opportunity to work with Rita Nakashima Brock and the Soul Repair Center, participate in Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C., and speak to Associations, Conferences and congregations about welcoming our veterans home.

Much of what I have tried to do is to listen to the stories of congregations. Together, we are working to discern how we can effectively reach out into our communities and receive those returning veterans and their families. Another important step has been to identify resources that may be helpful in starting the conversation about compassionate and healing congregations in our local churches. Rev. Dr. John Schlupe, one of the writers of the resolution, has created one such program, Warriors Journey Home. Additionally, I have had the pleasure to work with Rev. Zachary Moon. Rev. Moon's recently published book, *Coming Home*, is an excellent resource. Structured around Bible study and conversation, Zachary asks the challenging questions which should be addressed before a congregation begins an active outreach to the veteran community.

I am always interested in celebrating the successes that congregations are having in this specialized ministry. Please feel free to contact me about the suggested resources and other programs on which you may be working.

Learn more:

- General Synod Resolution - To Recognize the Need for Compassionate Care and Healing to Our Veterans: <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/gs29-10.pdf>
- Warriors Journey Home: <http://www.warriorsjourneyhome.org/>
- Coming Home: Ministry that Matters with Veterans and Military Families: <http://bit.ly/20XspEw>
- Contact Chaplain Stephen B. Boyd: [boyds@ucc.org](mailto:boyds@ucc.org)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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