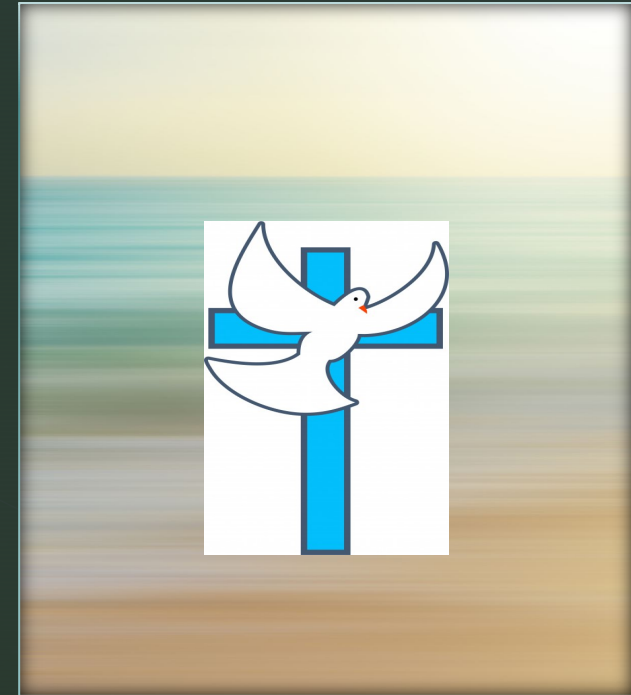


What can the church do to help a combatant? “Carry one another’s burdens”

Fr. Nigel W.D. Mumford



Purdue University – Military Family Research Institute - 2019

Let's Begin in Prayer

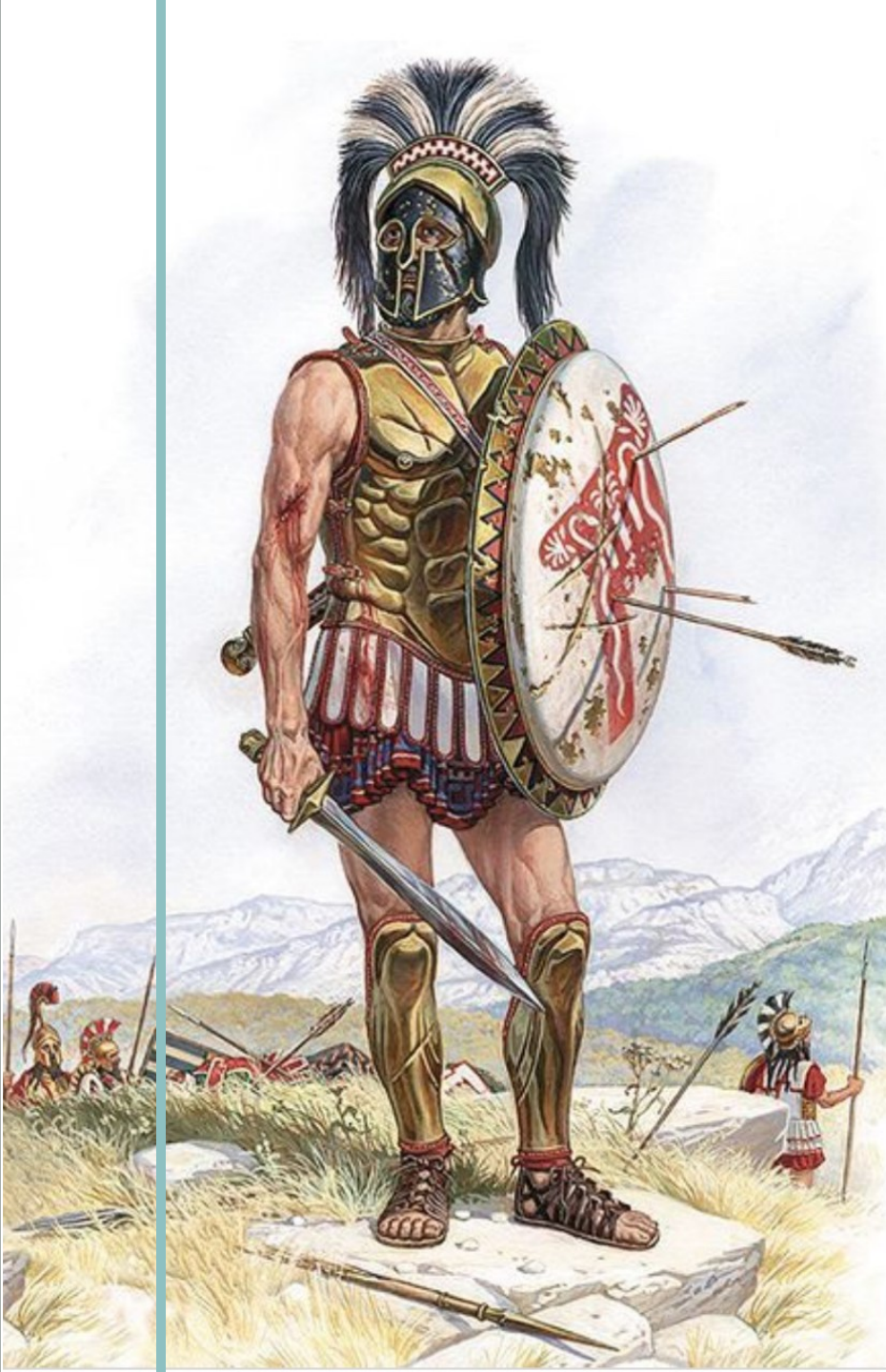
- Lord God, we ask for Holy Wisdom to help our combatants adjust from battle-mind to peace of mind.
- We ask for help for those “haunted” by war memories and the collateral damage the enemy has over the combatant’s mind, body and Soul.
- Help us to help them defuse the emotional unexploded bomb of anger, depression, suicidal thoughts and ideations, exaggerated startle response, lack of sleep and the obsessive video, in the mind, that keeps playing... and all the other triggers of Trauma.
- Help us to help them and welcome them home. Help us to truly carry one another’s burdens. Amen.



“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

[Luke 11:46](#)

- How can the church help carry the burdens our combat veterans?
- How can we “Carry one another’s burdens”?
- What can the church/we/I do to welcome home those who have seen and experienced hell on earth?
- What can we do as an individual or in corporate power to welcome home and help those who have given everything, up to the ultimate sacrifice?



The Human Condition

- 800 BC (before Christ) or 2,800 years ago wives, mothers, sisters, friends and fathers noticed and first recorded that their men were very different when returning home from war.
- **Moral codes** are also part of our earliest written histories.
- Our evolutionary **survival instinct** and **human empathy** are baked into our DNA
- Thus, ingredients and incidents of PTSD have been around a long time, probably even the cavemen.

Biblical PTS Events?

- Moses surely had PTS from his people following him around in the desert 40 years
- Do you think he was triggered by the phrase....
 - Are we there yet?
 - After all, Moses was a basket case!



The Crack/Top Guards at the Tomb?

- The guards "became like dead men" when the angel arrived. Matthew 28:4
- They were on the ground with the 1,000 yard stare
- But, the women were fine.
- An early case of PTSD?



It can be **TOTALLY** debilitating: WW I Lessons

In U.K., so many combat vets were on the streets **shuffling around, shaking, stuttering, and unable to function** from PTS that the government needed to create **RESIDENTIAL HOMES!**



Post War issues have pierced the Soul of human beings from the beginning of time.

▼ A historical fact as old as the human condition

Man living with seeing man's inhumanity to man.

Normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

**KEY
POINT**

Tough guys and tough women get PTS, too!

My Personal Experience Living with PTS



- Today, an Episcopal priest.
- Formerly, an employee of Her Majesty the Queen, as a Royal Marine Commando Green Beret.
- My call sign was 006 ½. (Sir Sean Connery gave me that tile but that is for another time)
- **"TOUGH GUY": Rose to marine drill instructor.** Took 200 recruits through basic. About a 100 made it.
- Job to make grown men cry.
- For some reason, as a priest, I still make grown men cry!



- During my seven years as a Royal Marine. I spent a total of one year in country.
- I saw, as many of you have, man's inhumanity to man. I have stared death in the face.
- I've seen the effect of a machine gun on ten people in a truck.
- I watched my best friend get shot...
- I was wounded in the head, there was a lot of blood... I can go on and on with many war stories... but you get the picture.

Cracking:

Full “Shell Shock”

My biggest fear came to fruition: that one of my lads would die in combat. When I got the news, I totally cracked with what was called then "shell shock."

No one was there when I hit the wall after I was told that three of my recruits were killed in an IED.

Not one of my friends came to see me when I was hospitalized because of the shame of shell shock.

I believed, erroneously, that I had not trained the marines enough. I could not speak for a week and I had a very bad stutter for six months. My career as a drill instructor ended.

One cannot give orders on the parade ground with a stutter! The lads would fall over... like a scene from Monty Python.

I was given the honor of staying in the Royal Marines and joining signals. I reminded the CO that I had a stutter... ummm

I was honorably and medically discharged from the Royal Marines ... **a totally broken man.**

My personal
description of
"shell shock" or
as it is now
known PTS.

*After the Trauma,
The Battle Begins,
Preface at p. xv*

The mind is witness to a catastrophic event

The intellect cannot cope with what it has seen

The body reacts physically under duress

The heart receives emotional scar tissue

The soul weeps

This mental trauma is a total body reaction to horror...

- **Personal Recovery:** started praying for others, for their healing...another story...but not for post-trauma wounds back then.
- 9/11 happened. I was living an hour and a half from ground zero.
- Went to help at St. Paul's chapel after being given a code to get through the military cordon.
- Went into a traumatic scene.
- Someone said to me, **“Nigel, God has re-cycled you.”** Those few words changed my life.



TIP: HELPING OTHERS HELPED ME HEAL!

- Took *my trauma* history/experience and *turned it around* to help *others*.
- After 9/11 I ministered to many people. Especially many therapists of New York City who not only experienced the attack physically and then watched it over and over on the TV but then had to spend all day talking to their clients about the subject.
- Primary and secondary Post traumatic stress heaped on their Souls.

SO WHAT ARE THE BURDENS TO BE CARRIED OR HEALED IN COMBAT VETS WITH PTS?

- HAUNTING MEMORIES
- MISPLACED GUILT
- MISPLACED SHAME
- TRIGGERS TO *RELIVING* BAD MEMORIES/AUTOMATIC REACTIONS
- TENDENCY TO ISOLATE AND WITHDRAW FROM OTHERS & GOD, MAKING IT ALL WORSE

...IN SUMMARY

BIBLICAL AUTHORITY FOR HEALING MEMORIES?

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **TAKE CAPTIVE** every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5

BUT HOW?

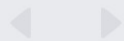


**A PROGRAM TO
HEAL MEMORIES,
STOP TRIGGERS,
STOP SHAME,
BREAK ISOLATION**

- Thirteen years ago, we (two bishops and I) came up with a retreat that has ministered to over a thousand combat vets and spouses over the years, from all over the USA from Canada, the UK and even one combatant from Australia.
- I could go on for hours, but I'd rather show you how we help...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ni_54fMpwhs&t=1s





News Distribution Network, Inc.
social.newsinc.com ▼



FROM VETS ... OVER THE YEARS

*What can **INDIVIDUALS** do to help bear these burdens?*

Make an Effort

Make an effort to talk to us at coffee time, even introverts.

Come along side us.

Thank Us

Affirms we were doing our DUTY

Affirms my sense of honor and dignity when I may be filled with unfounded but unshakeable shame

Says I am loveable and worthy of your time.

Be a Brother/Sister

Carry our burden by listening and asking us our story with the intent to love

Listen, Love & Pray for Us!

More on Being a Brother or Sister

Pray. Adopt a veteran. You don't need to tell him or her but target that person with prayer and love. It was Mother Theresa who said, "One Soul at a time."

Invite your adopted vet to breakfast or lunch... home/diner.

Be a Barnabas or Barnabett... that is an encourager

Volunteer at the VA, clinics etc.

Before building a relationship, It might be difficult and it may take a while to talk about spirituality or religion. Take your time.

1

Don't hit us over the head with the bible.

2

Don't judge us

3

Please don't ask us if we ever killed anyone.

4

Don't patronize us: "The poor dear," and "bless his heart." It's not helpful.

WHAT **NOT** TO DO?

HOW CAN **CHURCHES** HELP?

Put yourself in their shoes... what would you like the church to do for you if you were haunted by nightmares, fear, anger, shame, guilt or self-condemnation?

1. Connect them through Community.

- Start support groups
- Breakfast clubs
- Small groups for vets.

2. Connect them to Christ!

- Bible studies. Teaching. Help those who have rightly rejected the wrong (condemning) Jesus!
- Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! Romans 8:1
- Christ came to set the captives free! Luke 4:18
- Christ paid for all sins for all time for those who trust in Him. John 1:29
- Two generals said THIS: best thing Churches can do is connect them to Christ!

HOW CAN **CHURCHES** HELP?

Put yourself in their shoes... what would you like the church to do for you if you were haunted by nightmares, fear, anger, shame, guilt or self-condemnation?

3. Teach vets how to have a living relationship with Christ

- Bible studies
- Teach two-way prayer methods
- Teach and model daily quiet time.

4. Honor Military Service and Be Aware of Deployments

- Encourage medals and uniforms on Memorial Day and Veteran's Day Weekends
- Notice/pray for those going and coming home from deployment ... simple welcome home
- Note in bulletin those away on deployment (not too much fuss, an acknowledgement)
- Encourage congregations to ask about decorations and badges.
- Have a vet give his/her testimony.

HOW CAN **CHURCHES** HELP?

Put yourself in their shoes... what would you like the church to do for you if you were haunted by nightmares, fear, anger, shame, guilt or self-condemnation?

5. Equip for spiritual battle: some still have the power of the enemy leading their lives

- Name Satan means the accuser.
- Become aware of the signs of suicide and resources for counseling.
- Make opportunities to confess sin and have forgiveness declared/absolution.
- Pastors anoint trigger fingers.
- Teach your church how to pray simply for God to take away thoughts and influences that are not of God.

6. Teach your church how to pray for the healing of memories and traumas

HOW CAN **CHURCHES** HELP?

Put yourself in their shoes... what would you like the church to do for you if you were haunted by nightmares, fear, anger, shame, guilt or self-condemnation?

7. Remember vets in financial need

- How to deal with VA, help getting required documents (e.g., DD214, military medical records), counseling.
- Teach Financial Peace University.
- Help with job search skills, employment seminars.

8. Devine Recycling ... need to be needed

- Encourage to use the resources they have (time, finances, experience) to help their fellow brothers/sisters in arms.
- Offer ministries that are unique to service members in a way that they can use their experiences to help others. Recycle...
- Have old soldiers, most of us wounded veterans ourselves, adopt a young wounded veteran.

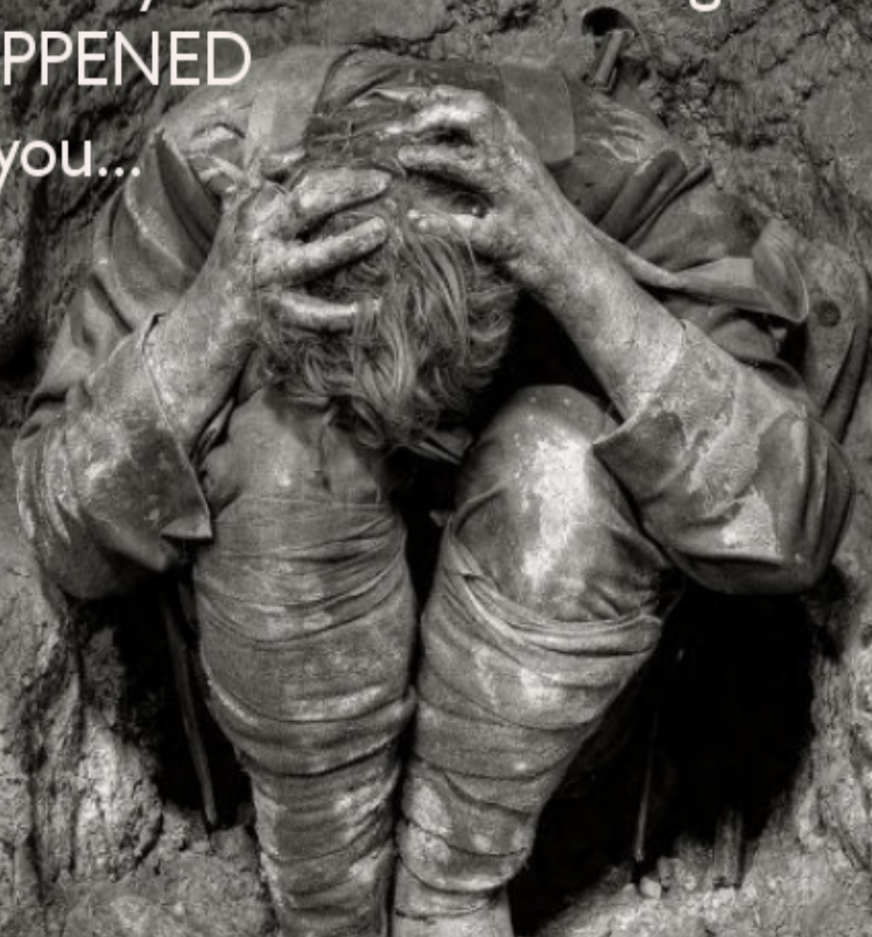
TIPS:
Helping the heavy
burden of guilt...

Teaching Freedom from False Imprisonment

- Catholic Vietnam vet fixated on the commandment thou shall not kill. The original translation is thou shall not commit murder. He thinks he had shot about 32 Charlies. He had tormented himself in breaking one of the ten commandments.
- I had him read from Ecclesiastes 3:3 “There is a time for everything under the sun. **There is a time to kill and a time to heal.**”
- He then got really angry... WHY DIDN'T ANYONE SHOW ME THIS over the past 40 years...
- He had imprisoned himself...anoint the trigger finger.



Combat Stress, Moral Injury,
Is NOT you...It is something that
HAPPENED
To you...



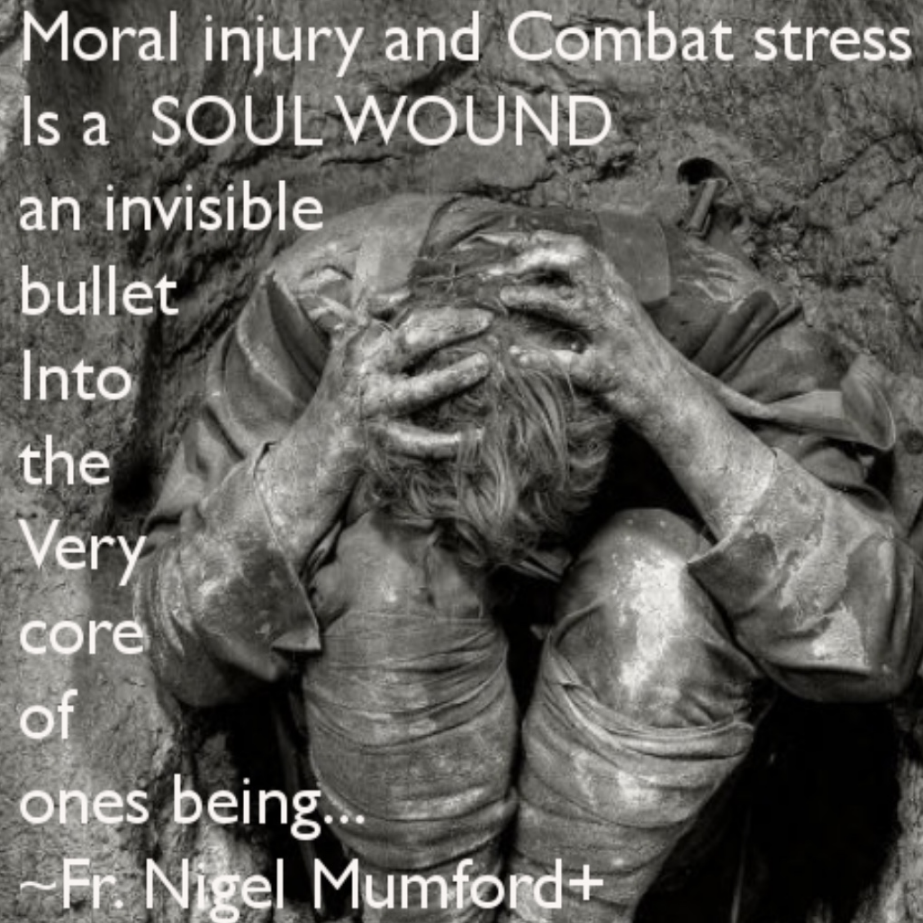
Fr. Nigel Mumford+
www.byhiswoundsministry.org
The Welcome Home Initiative©

**NOT YOUR
FAULT!**

**A MORAL INJURY
HAPPENED TO YOU!**

**There is nothing
wrong with YOU...**

Normal reaction to
abnormal stress and
situation.



Moral injury and Combat stress
Is a SOUL WOUND
an invisible
bullet
Into
the
Very
core
of
ones being...
~Fr. Nigel Mumford+

The Welcome Home Initiative©
www.byhiswoundsministry.org

You took **an**
INVISIBLE
BULLET TO
THE SOUL!

**ALL HUMMANS ARE
BUILT WITH THE
POTENTIAL FOR
DEBILITATING PTS!**

***LET YOURSELF BE
HUMAN, AND
REACH OUT TO
OTHER HUMANS TO
GET OR GIVE HELP!***

Survival instinct
(everyone has it)

Human empathy for
others (we all wish we
had more of it)

Moral codes (designed
into us all)

=

Feelings of shame and
unworthiness of the love
of Jesus or the Church
due to real or
PERCEIVED serious
sin

AND/OR reliving
haunting memories with
which the mind cannot
cope (none of us wish
for that!)

We can also teach people to be free of survivors' guilt....

We are not in control of when we will be called home. We only know 100% of us will die one day. When we go home, that is in God's hands, not ours.

Jesus came that you may have life, and life abundantly. Live it! Live it for Him and those who lost it. Would your friend want you to suffer and mope through the days you were granted?

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

- Brother Yun the heavenly man “Don’t let your past ruin your present or your future”
- Jesus died that we might have life and life abundant, can I challenge you to live your life to the fullest with abundant, joy filled life? By carrying one another’s burdens.
- In Luke 9:2 Jesus taught His disciples to: “Preach the Kingdom and heal the sick.”
- Let us come alongside our veterans and walk them out of the valley of the shadow of death.





The Stakes: The Magnitude of the Hurt

- In 2013, the VA released a study that covered suicides from 1999 to 2010, which showed that roughly 22 veterans were dying by suicide per day, or one every 65 minutes
- I will close with a poem I wrote that tries to capture what it is like to be a captive of PTS....

A Poem: The Combat Veteran

Lost Souls... are wondering around

Vacant looks, empty eyes, memories... playing on an unseen movie screen.

“I’ve seen man’s inhumanity to man, do you have any idea what I have experienced?”

Have you any idea what I had to do?”

Please don’t walk by... looking the other way

I am a fellow human, smile at me, how about a “Good morning”

I’m real you know, I served that you might have freedom.

The Combat Veteran

I may look different; I'm covered in badges and patches

I know you can't see my wounds

There are no bandages for the mind

There is no crutch

It's in my head... unseen

I'm a bit lost you know... if only I could tell you...

If only you would listen to my story.

If only you could somehow... understand.

The Combat Veteran

I'm hurt

I'm weeping

I'm broken

I need a friend

I'm not really sure who I am, although I knew before who I was before deployment


Could you dare to be my non-judgmental friend?

Perhaps, just perhaps you might listen to my story...

Could you, would you, find something in me to like?

I'm a bit lost you know... show me the way, are YOU the one who can help me?

Rev. Nigel W.D. Mumford

A silhouette of a soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet, carrying a young child on his back. They are standing on a rooftop or high vantage point, looking out over a city skyline at night. The scene is lit with a soft blue glow from behind, and the city lights are visible in the distance. The text is overlaid on the soldier's back.

Lets get on
with the business
of healing...

~Rev. Nigel W.D. Mumford+

www.ByHisWoundsMinistry.org

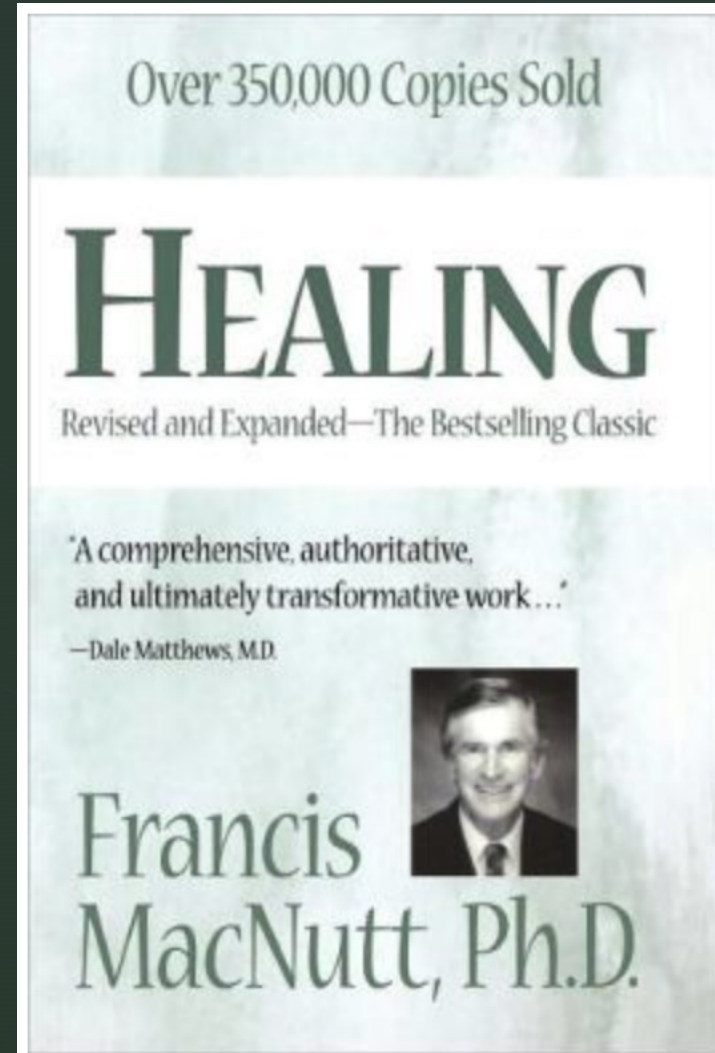
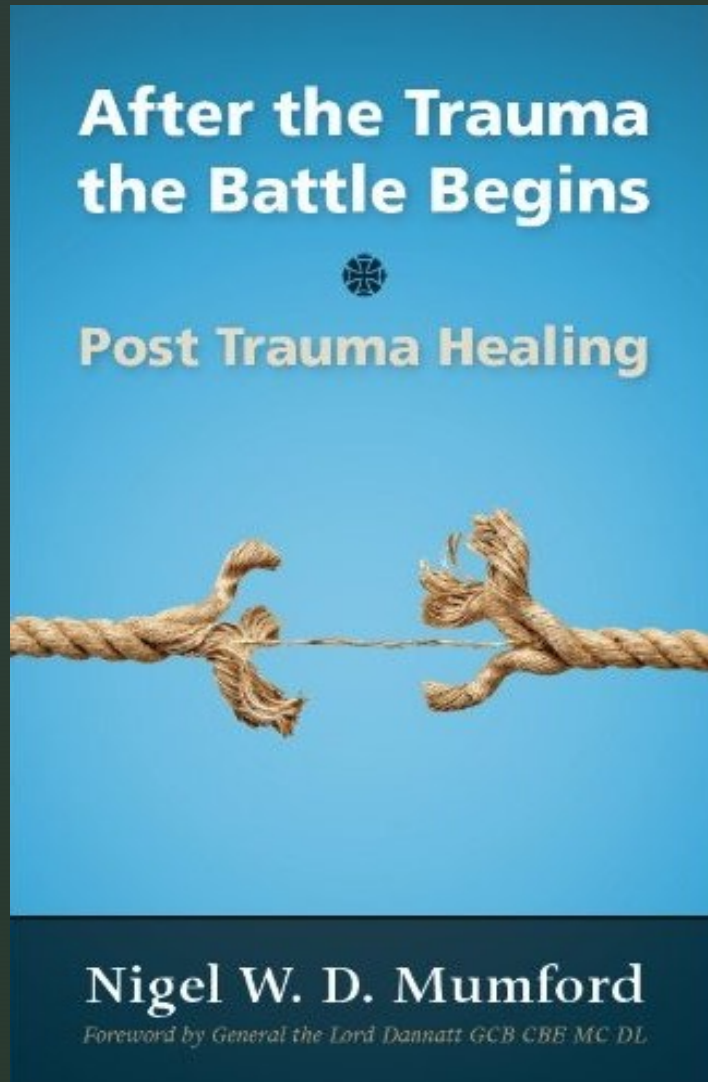
Start a Welcome Home Initiative?

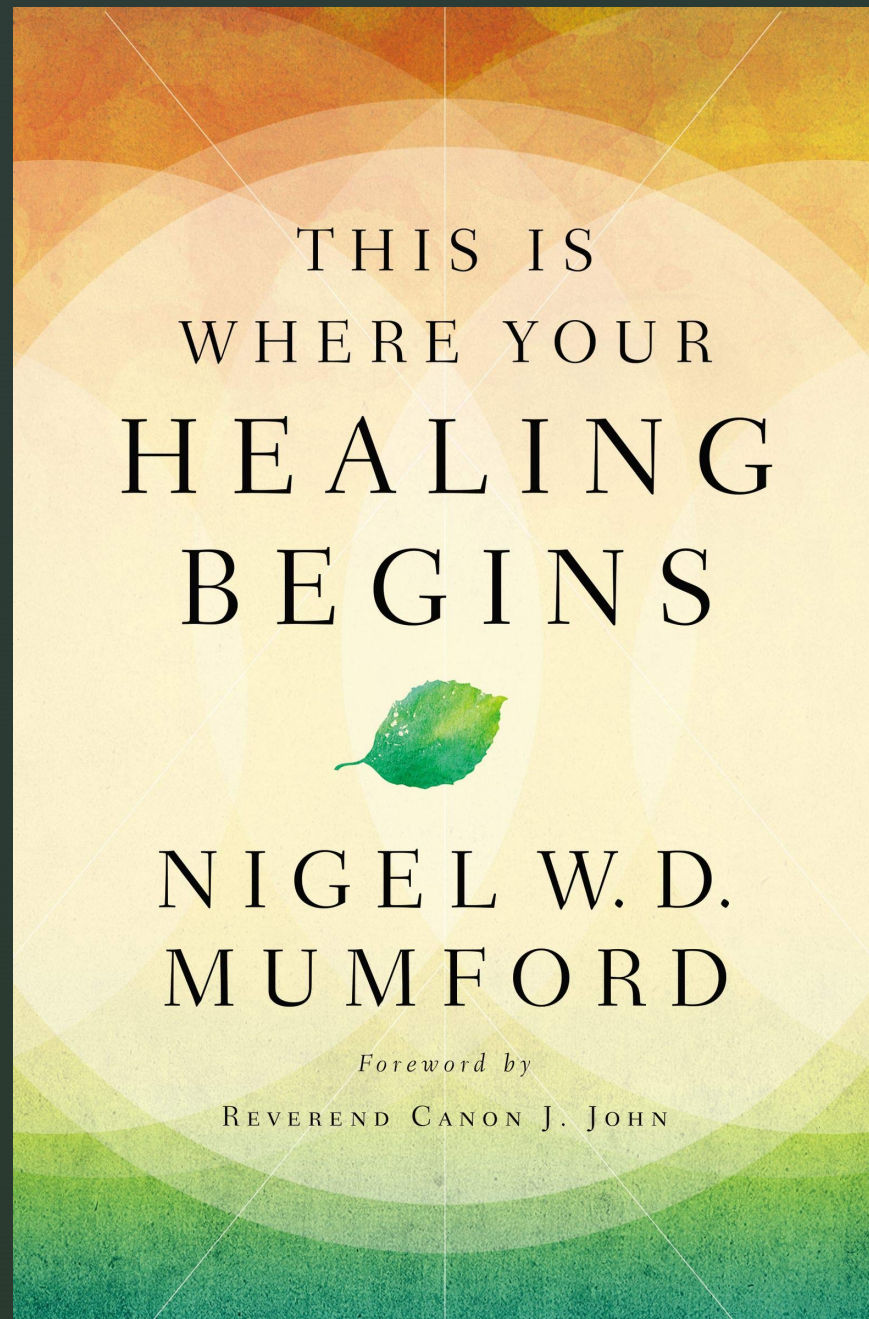
You can refer vets to the two we do in Virginia Beach each year---completely free

You can learn how to run one in your community

www.byhiswoundsministry.org

Further Reading





About the Healing of
ALL Dis-Eases

Published by Simon &
Schuster

Releases in April
2020

Available for Pre-Order
on Amazon.com