



FROM PRESIDENT PATTI

## If Someone Took Time to Listen

In the mission grant article about the funding of a conference for Operation Barnabas there is a quote from Angela Cook, RN, suicide prevention coordinator for the St. Louis Veterans Administration Medical Center. “Suicide prevention is everybody’s business.” If someone only took the time to listen to a hurting veteran — “and that person could be you ... just caring is very important” — more lives might be saved, she said.

If someone took time to listen. That’s what it starts with.

I do a lot of air travel these days and I frequently run into servicemen and women in uniform. I don’t assume I’ll get into any deep conversations, but I usually ask if they are coming home or leaving for duty somewhere. It’s a question that is a chance to say, “welcome home, thanks for serving” or “God go with you and keep you safe,” if they are leaving. Sometimes it can lead to longer conversations.

I signed up to serve with the Navy when I finished nursing school. It was during the Vietnam war. The military was not particularly popular at the time. I was frightened that my brother would get called up. (Of course, being the older sister, I just knew he was not cut out for the Army.)

I also had a high school friend from church get his legs blown off by a mine in Vietnam. He was a distance runner in high school. I didn’t like the war, but I hated the way our soldiers were talked about and treated when they returned to the U.S. I worked on an officer’s medical ward and was there when some of our prisoners of war started returning. I did a lot of listening.

The Women in Mission of the LWML have long been associated with caring for the military. They started their organization in the middle of WWII, so they knew the needs of the servicemen and their families. To this day, they either help on the home front or join the military themselves.

Today the Lutheran Church has chaplains, enlisted, officers, and civilian personnel serving in the United States Armed Forces. To be a follower of Christ in the military setting can be a challenging job, but it can also provide great witness opportunities — listening to the needs and cares of fellow soldiers.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the LWML women in this issue who have served in the Armed Forces over the years, or who have supported their family members who serve. They have many stories to share if “someone took time to listen.”

I’d love to listen to your story.  
Send me an email.



Patti  
[president@lwml.org](mailto:president@lwml.org)