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Weekly Newsgram - May 23rd 2018

Memorial Day Former chaplain: 'It's not a holiday, but a holy day'



In 2017, Lt. Col. (Ret.) David Trogden told those gathered at the Opp, Alabama Memorial Day Celebration that heroes are those who gave their lives for Americans' freedoms.

"For far too many, Memorial Day has become nothing but picnics, fishing, going to the beach and hot dogs and hamburgers," he said.

"It's about heroes."

Retired Army Lt. Colonel David Trogden is one of those heroes. He struggles with PTSD after being hit by a rocket while serving in Afghanistan. In an interview Trogden said, "Struggling with PTSD, I've battled suicide thoughts a lot because you feel broken and you feel useless because you can't do what you used to do. Honestly, if it wasn't about faith, families, and horses, I wouldn't be alive now." That blast also left him with a traumatic brain injury.

After 25 years as a warrior, it's still tough for Trogden to transition to civilian thinking.

"I went from having a purpose in life. One day I was a soldier, and a chaplain and combat vet and I hung around long enough I was Lt. Colonel. The next day I felt like a nobody," he said.

Sitting in a room and opening up to a counselor just didn't appeal to him. Knowing the healing affect horses had on him, Trogden wanted to offer the same therapy to other veterans.

"They're like big therapy dogs is what I tell everybody," said Trogden. "You always identify with one of the horses or a horse will pick you out and will become your buddy. Horses are amazing because they read your facial expressions, they read your body language. And every part of a horse's body is as sensitive as your fingertip, so when you're hurting they know it. That's why they're so good with therapy."

At last year's Memorial Day service Trogden said heroes are not on a ball field but on a battlefield.

"They are heroes who sacrificed the comforts of home and their lives," he said. "They did it for people they never met, but our society seems to forget a lot about heroes."

Trogden said that googling the definition of hero reveals that it is "a man - or woman - of distinct ability and character."

"Today, we honor true heroes," he said. "This morning I was able to walk around the cemetery, where I saw the flags placed. I love to walk through cemeteries. I like to read tombstones and see all I can about those who have been laid to rest. I saw heroes from World War II, heroes from Korea, heroes from Vietnam and even one who was a hero from WWII, Korea and Vietnam."

Trogden said that those who serve in the Armed Forces aren't comfortable being called heroes. "Because we aren't," he said. "Heroes to me are those who didn't come home or those who wait at home not knowing whether we are alive or dead. So we have that great honor to celebrate Memorial Day not as a happy day but as a holy day."

"We remember the price that was paid so that you and I could be free," he said. "The price that was paid so that you and I could be part of the greatest nation. So we can gather together at meetings like this. Gather on Sunday. Have freedom of the press. Freedoms that are too often taken for granted."

[Healing-Our-Patriots-With-Equines
Memorial Day 2017 Opp, Alabama](#)

Executive Director Notes Veteran/Military Friendly Congregations



Veteran/Military Friendly Congregation

Veteran/Military Friendly Congregations (VMFCs) are worshipping congregations and communities which consciously and visibly seek to be friendly to veterans, military members, and their families. This is a ministry of the MCA which we received from Care for the Troops in 2016 and which has shown great promise as we make it known around the nation. The VMFC ministry got a shot in the arm with a phone conference on May 2nd at the National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting when Chaplain Ev Price called in to see what could be done by us partnering with another the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, which is an Episcopalian organization established for lay men in the Episcopal Church.

Ev serves as the Vice President, Military Affairs, for the Brotherhood of St. Andrew and after the call MCA President, Chaplain Mike Langston appointed Chaplains Matt Woodbery, Ron Skaggs, Donnie Hays, Clifton Montgomery, and Phil Clark to explore how we might go about furthering this partnership and advancing this needed ministry in our nations congregations. As it turned out, it also included partnering with Ed Junod, the President of [Vet to Vet Tennessee](#), which has also been attempting to do the same thing. After a flurry of emails between Ev, Ron and Ed, along with some excellent suggestions from Jack Figel, the MCA office administrator, the VMFC ministry is advancing at a rapid pace.

As noted earlier, we are currently in the process of re-designing the [website](#) and looking at additional social media ways to connect with chaplains, and also with those who might want to keep initiatives such as these in front of chaplains. Having a network of congregations across the country who understand the challenges facing those who serve, or have served, in the military has been a goal of MCA that has had some starts and stops over the years. It now appears that using a "team of teams" approach between MCA, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, and Vet to Vet Tennessee is paying dividends. We look forward to adding to the team as we go forward.

One of the things I learned very quickly as a General Officer is that there is remarkable wealth in the people and organizations who want to help and support the military.

Getting them all talking with each other, however, is indeed a challenge. The recent events in the VMFC ministry are certainly steps in the right direction. If any of you are aware of any congregations who want to step up to the plate and are supportive of military families, veterans and their families, please let Matt Woodbery, Ron Skaggs and Ev Price know at, respectively, mwoodbery@hotmail.com, 1stSgtSkaggs@gmail.com or evpricega@gmail.com.

The VMFC initiative proves that even as each one of us is a wealth of information, when joined together there is so much more we can do as a team. This has been absolutely amazing to watch play out on-line. Kudos to Jack for helping to pull this together on the MCA side of the house. Well done team of teams!

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[VMFC Basic Manual](#)

Remembering Those Who Served Graveside service to commemorate War of 1812 chaplain

SOUTH THOMSTON - Citizens will gather at the graveside of Elder Samuel Baker in the Village Cemetery, Dublin Road, Sunday, May 27, at 2 p.m. and pay their long-overdue respects for his patriotic service as a chaplain during the War of 1812 and his contributions as a 19th-century theologian and utopian.

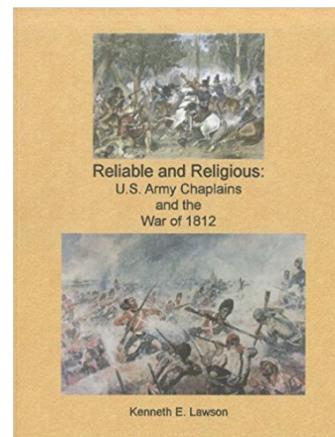
The Wessaweskeag Historical Society, in association with the Randall Collins Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3108 (Belfast) and the Elder Samuel Baker Circle, have coordinated this community event.

Baker, born in 1785, served as an Army clergyman with Lt. Col. Erastus Foote's Massachusetts Regiment (Maine at the time was part of the Bay State) in 1814. Records for this period are rather fragmentary and contradictory, but research indicates that the Massachusetts governor called upon a volunteer militia to "suppress a threatened invasion" by the British, and Foote, an attorney by profession, organized at least a dozen companies that were to be stationed at Thomaston, St. George and Camden.

After the war, Baker rose to prominence (and also sank to controversy) as an outspoken progressive theologian and public education advocate. He sermonized on a national stage as a major contributor to the weekly Sabbath Recorder, and in 1858 he floated a proposal for a planned community ("utopia") to be situated in "Greater South Thomaston" (today's Owls Head).

Sunday afternoon's ceremony will consist of a eulogy and a short talk about chaplaincy during the War of 1812, the decoration of the chaplain's grave with a wreath and an appropriate veteran's marker. VFW Post 3108 plans to have an honor guard, a rifle squad and a bugler on hand to help officiate.

[Article](#)



The Military Chaplains Magazine 2018 Themes and Submission Deadlines

Summer Issue - Chaplains and World War 1

Articles to be submitted by June 30

Publication July 23

Fall Issue - Religious Accommodation in 2018

Articles to be submitted by September 30

Publication September 24

Winter Issue - Chaplaincy and Religion in a Post-Truth World

Articles to be submitted by November 30

Publication December 21

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