January 17, 2020

**Free Training for Community Clergy on Advancing Veteran’s Whole Health**

GETTYSBURG, PA— From March 17-18, 2020, United Lutheran Seminary, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs National VA Chaplain Center, the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center, is offering a two-day training to educate community clergy about issues facing returning Veterans and their families following deployment. The Reverend Chris J. Antal, DMin., a veteran of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, and staff chaplain at the Crescenz VA Medical Center, will facilitate the training.

 **“We are so pleased to partner with the U.S. Veterans Affairs to present the Community Clergy Training Program,” says Chelle Huth, Deacon and Director of Lifelong Learning at United Lutheran Seminary.**

Community clergy from all faiths and organization chaplains are invited to attend. Training topics will address post-deployment readjustment challenges, the psychological, physical, behavioral, and spiritual effects of war trauma on survivors, such as moral and spiritual injury, and the important role of community (clergy/congregations) in helping to reduce mental health stigma and support Veterans and their families. Attendees will learn about VA and community mental health services and how clergy can connect with at their local VA to request information or assistance. All attendees will receive contact hour certificates from VA.

After attending a recent training provided by Chaplain Antal, Reverend Nicholas Seeberger, Pastor of Church on the Sound, wrote “Your presentation was compelling, challenging and extremely helpful. Your style was inclusive and thoughtful. As I shared, I thought the sessions were primarily going to be about information and problem-solving. Instead there was reflection, discussion and soul-searching in addition to well-researched material. You are well-suited to this task of clergy training. Your commitment to providing a pathway for healing and hope to this often overlooked or misunderstood part of our population is quite evident. Thank you!”

One-fourth of individuals who seek help for a mental health problem do so from clergy. Clergy and houses of worship are an important contact point for Veterans. Clergy may recognize Veterans who are struggling in their return to civilian life, but not know how to support them. This training will help clergy understand the differences between military and civilian culture, provide guidance for pastoral care to Veterans and their families, and teach them to recognize some signs and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, and how to minister effectively to moral injury.

This training is to build capacity of faith communities so clergy and congregants (active members of religious communities) are both welcome to attend. Ideally, faith communities would register a team that includes their spiritual leader and at least one Veteran from their congregation who are committed to implementing lessons learned in their context.

The two-day event starts March 17 at 8:00 a.m., and ends March 18, at 3:00pm. The training is provided free of charge. United Lutheran Seminary is generously donating the meeting space, which is handicapped accessible.

[**United Lutheran Seminary Gettysburg campus**](https://www.unitedlutheranseminary.edu/about/campuses/gettysburg) **has free parking on site. The seminary is located within two hours by car of Baltimore and Washington D.C., The campus is situated in the heart of one of our country’s most charming and historically important towns.**

Registration is limited to 50 and registration is required no later than March 10, 2020. Register online:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/community-clergy-training-for-advancing-veterans-whole-health-registration-64828354353>

**Accommodation can be found at local hotels. Please contact Chelle Huth** **chuth@uls.edu** **or 717 338 3038, for information.**

For questions or concerns about the training contact:

Chris J. Antal, Staff Chaplain, Michael Crescenz VA Medical Center, (215) 823-4392

For media inquiries, contact:

 Rita Chapelle, Chief, Medical Media & External Affairs, Michael Crescenz VA Medical Center, (215) 823-5800, X5916

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