

OCT Chaplain's Corner



Dear Chaplains and Commanders,

Last month I gave you a little homework. I asked you to think of one person you had not heard from lately, pick up the telephone, and simply say, “I was thinking about you and wanted to see how you are doing.”

So, I have a question for you. How many of you actually did it?

I hope a lot of you did. And if you made that call, what happened? Maybe everything was fine. Maybe you spent a few minutes catching up with an old friend.

But perhaps you discovered something else. Maybe that person was having a difficult week — illness, loneliness, grief, or something they had not told anyone about. Maybe they simply needed to hear another human voice say, “I was thinking about you.” We do not always know what is happening behind someone's front door.

That is one reason Buddy Checks are so important. A Buddy Check does not require a program, a committee, or a meeting. It requires us to notice one another and care enough to reach out. And if you did not make that call last month, your homework is not late. You can still do it today.

Tag! You're It!

This month I want to share a simple tool that can make reaching out a little easier. Dale “Chappy” Iannello has created *A Simple Buddy Check*, which you can find at lotcs.org

The idea is simple: Tag! You're it! Choose a message, send it to someone you have been thinking about, and encourage that person to tag somebody else. One veteran checks on another, who checks on another, and before long one simple act of kindness has traveled farther than any of us expected.

An electronic message should never replace a telephone call or a personal visit when someone truly needs us. It is simply another tool in our toolbox — a way to open the door and say, “You crossed my mind today, and I wanted you to know that you are not forgotten.”

Is There Anything I Can Pray About for You?

There is another resource I want you to know about. We now have a Prayer Request page at lotcs.org. Requests submitted through that page come directly to me as your VFW National Chaplain.

If you have something weighing on your heart, or if you would simply like someone to join you in prayer, I invite you to use it — and to share it with a veteran, family member, or fellow member who may need it. Sometimes people are comfortable talking face-to-face, sometimes they will pick up the telephone, and sometimes it is easier to quietly write down what is on their heart and ask someone to pray. I am here, and I am listening.

When you make your Buddy Check this month, consider asking one more simple question: “Is there anything I can pray about for you?” Sometimes that one question opens a door.

Remembering Those Who Serve

October also gives us opportunities to remember service and sacrifice.

On October 13, we celebrate the birthday of the United States Navy. To our Navy veterans and their families, thank you for your service. Every branch has its own traditions and history, but all of us who wore the uniform understand something about leaving home, missing family, and depending on the people serving beside us.

On October 26, we recognize the National Day of the Deployed. As veterans, many of us know what deployment means. We remember saying goodbye — birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and ordinary days spent far from home. We remember letters and telephone calls, and reading the same letter more than once because it was a little piece of home we could carry with us.

Deployment does not affect only the person wearing the uniform. There is a family back home — a spouse holding everything together, children wondering when Mom or Dad is coming home, parents watching the news a little more closely than they used to. Those families serve, too.

As chaplains, this is another place where our ministry can make a difference. Perhaps someone in your Post has a son, daughter, grandchild, or spouse currently serving away from home. Find out. Send a card. Make a telephone call to the family. Ask if they need anything. And most importantly, let them know they have not been forgotten.

Keep Looking

There is a pattern here, isn't there? Last month we talked about noticing who was missing. This month I am asking you to keep looking.

Chaplaincy is often found in those small moments. It is remembering the person who has not attended a meeting lately, checking on the widow or widower facing another anniversary alone, sitting beside someone in a hospital room, praying with someone who has something weighing heavily on their heart. And sometimes it is simply picking up the telephone or sending a message that says, “I was thinking about you.” None of those things are complicated, but they matter.

So here is your assignment for October: make a Buddy Check, then tag another. If you completed your homework last month, wonderful — do it again. If you did not, this is your second chance. And this time, encourage another VFW member to make one too.

One call becomes two, two become four, and before long we have created something much larger than a message or a telephone call. We have created a habit of looking after one another — something every Post can do, every Chaplain can encourage, and every one of us can be part of.

Thank you for the compassion and dedication you continue to bring to our veterans, their families, and our communities. Keep learning. Keep reaching out. Keep noticing who is missing. Keep praying for one another. And never underestimate what God can accomplish through something as simple as letting another person know: “I was thinking about you.”

Oh, and about that homework — next month, I may just ask you again how many of you actually did it.

In Faith and Service,

Deborah “Debb” Halter

VFW National Chaplain, 2026–2027

Department of Missouri Chaplain

Big Ten Conference Chaplain

