

His Hands

2018 Report to the Twelve Districts from the Commission on Special Ministries

In this issue...

Compassion leads to inclusion and outreach

WELS churches are hearing a lot about “compassion ministry.” The Commission on Special Ministries has advocated for compassion ministry since it was founded. Our motto is “Love in Action.” Christian compassion is not new or foreign to the church. The New Testament urges the followers of Christ to serve one another in love: “Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

People who struggle with problems leave the church when no one at church reaches out to help them. We don’t have to have the answers. Maybe we don’t know where to find the answers. But we can say, “I



WELS Special Ministries

Look inside for these articles, addressing areas where Special Ministries seeks to help those who face barriers to regular worship.

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don't know how to help, but I want you to know I'm glad you're here. I'll pray for a solution. How I can help?"

Outreach is harder when people believe that churches are uncaring. Compassion ministry grows strong bonds with members who face challenges. Our concern for people in our community with special needs shows the public that the love of Christ is real.

If you love someone, you listen to them. If you listen to people with special needs, you'll find that they want to participate in the church. Hard of hearing people want to be on the church council. Blind people want other members to talk to them after church.

Love leads to inclusion. God has given all Christians gifts to serve, even if that Christian struggles with an addiction or has a developmental disability. It is well worth the effort to find ways to include people with special needs in serving. People are not defined by what they can't do. Instead, our churches are blessed when people with special needs can serve and not just be served.

Compassion ministry opens church doors to hurting or struggling people in the community. Families with relatives in jail are drawn to churches with active jail ministry. Members will invite families of children with special needs when Sunday School classes are prepared to include such children.

It doesn't happen without conscious effort. Compassion moves the congregation to extend invitations continually and to keep promoting their resources for people who might need them.

Special Ministries has resources and guidance for churches that have compassion on members of the church or of the community. We can help you demonstrate love in action.

Learn more about WELS Special Ministries at wels.net/special-ministries or call 414-256-3241. Find resources, including the His Hands newsletter, at csm.welsrc.net.



Deaf and Hard of Hearing

One size does not fit all

The Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MDHH) helps churches and other ministries serve two very different populations. Even among the deaf and the hard of hearing, a diversity of experience, challenges, and solutions exist. One size does not fit all!

Yet all people with hearing loss need Jesus. That reality unites the MDHH in striving to educate and provide resources for church leaders and members. People with hearing loss can worship and be active in their church.

MDHH can help you solve the "sign language challenge." A deaf visitor to a WELS church said that he learned to love Lutheran worship when he was in college, but he needed an interpreter. The church

Visually Impaired

Who is helping whom?

Technology is helping us to break down many Special Ministries barriers. The Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI) is a great example. For years, MVI had a printed catalog of resources. Of course, blind people could not read it! We assumed that a family member or friend would help our patrons choose materials.

Christian literature in Braille has always been available through this catalog. MVI also offers large print materials and audio cassette recordings of Christian literature and music.

Today, the MVI committee includes blind members. They use the computer with the assistance of technology called JAWS, which tells them what is on the screen. These leaders are guiding us to make quality spiritual resources available online. Within the next year, we hope to offer an online library of audio books. The resources are also available to anyone who has any disability that prevents them from reading a book. The MVI catalog will soon be revised so that the blind can search for themselves.

Learn more at wels.net/mvi. Find resources at csm.welsrc.net/mvi.



contacted MDHH. The next Sunday the church had an interpreter and even several MDHH members to meet the man and assess his situation! Answering questions about interpreting and helping to locate interpreters are two MDHH services. An online course on American Sign Language and deaf culture is offered annually through Martin Luther College to broaden knowledge and skills among WELS members.

People with mild hearing loss shouldn't miss parts of the sermon. An Assistive Listening Device, such as the Williams Sound System and a headset, can help. For those who wear hearing aids equipped with a T-switch, a hearing loop can greatly improve understanding and participation in worship.

MDHH helps churches understand the importance of including deaf and hard-of-hearing members in worship and other activities, which brings wonderful blessings.

Both the deaf and hard of hearing were created to be part of the Body of Christ. MDHH helps churches understand the importance of including deaf and hard-of-hearing members in worship and other activities, which brings wonderful blessings. Far from needing pity, these brothers and sisters in Christ can bring spiritual perspectives, talents, and experience to the life of the church, usually with just a bit of help from technology. We serve each other with our gifts. That's how Jesus created his church!

Learn more at wels.net/mdhh. Find resources at csm.welsrc.net/mdhh.



Freedom for the Captives

New abuse prevention training resources

How do we protect children from abuse? How can we prevent it entirely, or help a child when abuse is discovered? The mission of Freedom for the Captives (FFTC) is "Equipping the Body of Christ to protect children and empower abuse survivors." FFTC has developed online training and certification for WELS leaders at our churches, schools, and other organizations. The course is called "Standing Up for Children: A Christian Response to Child Abuse and Neglect." Training sessions can be scheduled by contacting Special Ministries (freedom@wels.net or 414-256-3241). Please include your name, phone, email and plan for using the training in your request for access.

Visit the website at freedomforcaptives.com.



Conquerors through Christ

Getting it right about moral issues

Have you ever expressed disapproval of pornography and been met with a blank look? After a generation of industry marketing, many accept porn as a healthy part of sexuality.

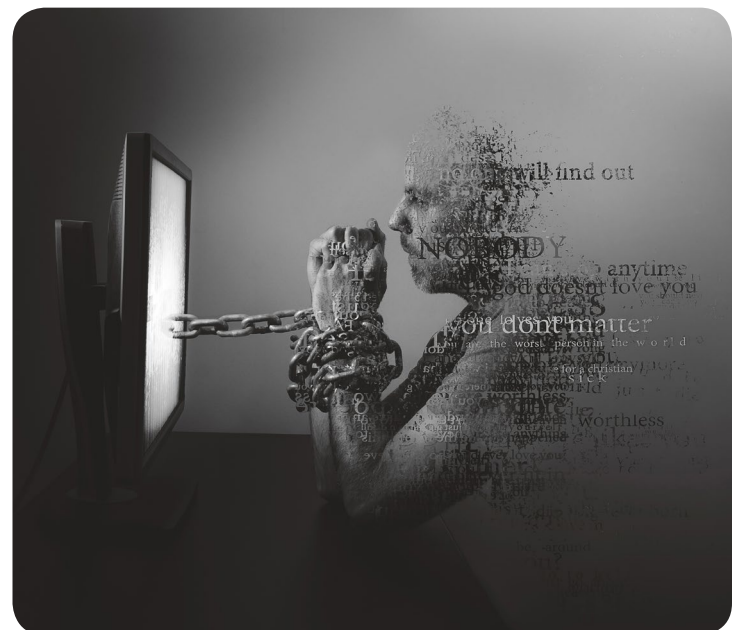
So Christians may be relieved that the dangers of pornography are receiving greater scrutiny and awareness. Recent criticism has focused on its connection with the devastation of sex trafficking, or the impact of sexual addiction.

The topic absent from the public forum is sin. Using porn has a corrosive effect. It not only harms a marriage, but our relationship with God. Even if no sex trafficking is involved and no addiction occurs, something is dying in the human heart. The prayer, "Create in me a pure heart, O God," can become empty words. Guilt and shame take over.

Conquerors through Christ continues to prepare resources to help Christians reject, resist, and recover from porn. An excellent Bible study, "Bought at a Price," and e-books for parenting are available on their website. New materials for high school students are in production.

It's not enough to say that porn is wrong. God has provided a path to return to him through forgiveness in Christ and the power of his Spirit. Let's get the message out!

Visit the website at conquerorsthroughchrist.net.



Parish Nursing

Personalizing our church family's love

What congregation doesn't need people with gifts of teaching and administration? Many tasks require someone who is good at interacting with people, quick with Christian insight and encouragement, and being generally helpful.

Did you think "parish nurse" when you read the description above? Maybe you've never had such a position and think it an unnecessary addition to the church worker list. But WELS churches with an active parish nurse program will strongly recommend it. "Church family" evokes an image of caring for each other, and parish nursing personalizes that love.

A WELS parish nurse is a currently licensed Registered Nurse (RN) who promotes both physical and spiritual wellness in the congregation. The parish nurse conducts a wellness-based and non-invasive practice, and the ministry is performed according to the congregation's mission statement and under the direction of the pastor.

Christ Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, Minn., summarizes the work this way: "The primary purpose of the congregation is to spread the Gospel of Salvation in Jesus Christ. In addition, a congregation serves as a 'home' and a 'family' to its members who have not only spiritual needs but also physical, emotional, and psychological needs . . . The Ministry . . . is one way to encourage this sharing of God's love and the growth of faith among those with special needs related to health."

Well-trained parish nurses can be a great blessing to your family of faith.

Well-trained parish nurses can be a great blessing to your family of faith. Pastor Mike Woldt of David's Star Lutheran Church, Jackson, Wis., lists these advantages:

- Good training will help parish nurses share the law and gospel message of Scripture with the people they serve.
- Good training will help parish nurses function within the framework of the congregation and in partnership with the called leaders of the church.
- Good training will help parish nurses recognize opportunities for serving God's people with the abilities they possess and the skills they have cultivated as practicing nurses.

Learn more at the Parish Nursing area of welsnurses.net, the website of WELS Nurses Association.



Support Groups

Help for the hurting

Mutual support and Christian encouragement can turn a crisis or a burden into spiritual growth and a deeper relationship with Christ. That's why churches are turning to support groups to serve their members and the community.



Addiction support groups are not new. WELS Special Ministries, along with WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions, promote Christian spiritual components missing from the standard twelve-step program.

Believers faced with a variety of challenges can benefit from support groups. For example, Samaritan Partners is a Special Ministries program to help caregivers. A Christian who provides care for a parent, spouse, or child shoulders heavy responsibilities and can easily feel isolated. A regular gathering of caregivers can bless church members with fellowship and encouragement. As a bonus, it can serve as an outreach to the community.

We want to develop resources for grief support groups. If you have skills or interest in this area, please contact Special Ministries (specialministries@wels.net or 414-256-3241).

Do you know hurting people in your congregation or community that could benefit from a support group? Our resources and experts can help you avoid common pitfalls in getting a gathering going.

Contact Special Ministries at 414-256-3241 or specialministries@wels.net.



Prison Ministry

Remembering those behind bars

Many would be surprised to learn that the early Christian church needed to do prison ministry. Yes, needed. John the Baptizer and Jesus were incarcerated, of course. The Book of Acts relates several instances of the apostles being jailed. Many followers of Jesus were locked up for the “crime” of being a Christian.

That’s why the New Testament instructs: “Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” (Hebrews 13:3)

Prison Ministry was organized to provide WELS seniors a way to “remember those in prison” in a distinctly gospel-based structure for volunteering. From the start, pen pal opportunities and Bible study correspondence focused on sharing the gospel. The original structure was well thought out, and today is no longer limited to senior involvement.

Our ministry to men and women behind bars has grown and been refined as we understand more about the experience of incarceration and how much impact Bible study can have. The central office and our volunteers respond quickly to letters and correspondence course tests, recognizing the isolation of those who are doing time. We continually bring Christ and His salvation into our communication, understanding that everyone needs to know about their Savior, including those who struggle with their guilt alone in a prison cell.

Prison Ministry also trains WELS and ELS laypeople to serve inmates in local jails through Jail Ministry Team Training (JMTT), in keeping with our emphasis on empowering face-to-face ministry.

For more information on volunteering or receiving training, call 507-354-3130 or e-mail prisonministry@wels.net.

Learn more at wels.net/pm. Find resources at csm.welsrc.net/pm.

To add an inmate to the mailing list, go to wels.net/refer.



Military Services

Guarding the faith of our faithful guardians

Military men and women defend us. They willingly serve our country. Their training prepares them to be leaders, achievers, warriors. We might think that these people don’t need a thing, except maybe a call from home or a package of items that are hard to get when you’re far away.

Few people consider the spiritual needs of our military men and women. Yet during those years in service, they may face life-or-death situations. They encounter pressures that civilians would never guess come with military life. They may feel they are sinning when they use violence against the enemy, not understanding the role that God has for them.

This is why we need you to provide WELS Military Services with contact information for members in the military. Our 125 Military Contact Pastors, our National Civilian Chaplain Paul Ziemer, and European Civilian Chaplain Don Stuppy understand the issues. If our service members connect with God’s Word, then instead of drifting away from their faith, they often gain a new appreciation for the Lord and his Word. Please go to wels.net/refer for the sake of the spiritual needs of those who serve us!

Learn more at wels.net/military. Find resources at csm.welsrc.net/military.

To add a service member to the mailing list, go to wels.net/refer.



Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Inclusion can be the key

C.S. Lewis once pointed out that “membership” came into common language through Paul’s writing about the “Body of Christ.” He said that the world wants to define a “member” in terms of how all members are alike.

In the Body of Christ, the members are not the same, but they belong to each other. Family members (mother, father, child, grandparent) are also very different. They use their position to love and help each other. Members are not alike and don’t have to be the same in order to serve God’s purpose.

How many members of your church can you identify as intellectually or developmentally disabled? Statistically, one in six children have one or more developmental disabilities! Many of these do not remain members of the church when they grow up. Yet God created them to be members of his body.

WELS Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry (IDDM) seeks to help congregations share the gospel with those who have

WELS Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry (IDDM) seeks to help congregations share the gospel with those who have special education needs.

special education needs. We are also passionate about helping churches to be a Christian network for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their families. Our partner, Jesus Cares Ministry, is a prime supplier of Christian education materials to conquer this barrier. IDDM’s resources help churches to include special needs families in worship, fellowship, and serving.

Inclusion of adults and children with these challenges will flow from our faith that Christ died for all, and all people need to hear that. Jesus calls us to love and serve one another. We want each person, regardless of ability, to see their place as a member of the Body of Christ. When we strive to be inclusive, challenges will lead to joys. Let IDDM help your church, or connect your family to others who can help. We belong to each other!

Learn more at wels.net/liddm. Find resources at csm.welsrc.net/liddm.

To add a special needs individual to the mailing list, go to wels.net/refer.



Chaplain Certification

Going outside the walls

In case it escaped your notice, people are not generally breaking down the doors of our churches, asking us to serve their spiritual needs. There is usually plenty of room in our pews.

But outside the walls, an enormous mission field awaits. Some of those souls are unable to attend regular worship, while others are simply ignorant of their greatest need. Even if they have questions about God, they may not know whom to trust for reliable answers.

So we need to go outside the walls, and chaplaincy is an excellent way to do that. Chaplains seek to bring the comfort of a compassionate, listening heart to hurting souls. So they go to meet people where they are, sometimes in a time of tragedy or great loss, and bring with them a human, caring presence. In some cases, that compassion will open a door to direct—or redirect—a lost sheep to the Good Shepherd.

There are opportunities for chaplaincy in many areas: in hospitals and care facilities, in jails and prisons, in police and fire agencies, on

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campuses and in locker rooms, at everyday workplaces and at once-in-a-lifetime disasters. And if someone is going to be there, don't we want it be someone who can properly apply law and gospel?

Chaplain Certification classes, offered online through Martin



Luther College, demonstrate to public institutions that a chaplain has completed a certain level of spiritual guidance training appropriate to serve those within that institution. Required courses include Communicating Forgiveness, A Spiritual Approach to Addiction Counseling, and Chaplaincy Issues and Fieldwork.

Earning a Chaplain Certificate does not, by itself, qualify one for a call into the public ministry, but it surely makes the student more qualified to minister to souls.

Learn more at mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/wels-chaplain-certificate, or contact Rev. Robert Dick, chairman of the Chaplain Certification Committee, at chaplaincert@wels.net.



Care Committee for Called Workers

Keep your staff happy

The Care Committee for Called Workers (CCCW) exists to provide assistance to WELS calling bodies, their called workers, and other staff. Every calling body can benefit from having a committee focused on supporting and encouraging its workers. The CCCW has resources that can help you establish a new care committee or improve one that is already in place.

Calling bodies can support their called workers in several areas:

- **Spiritual support** can involve encouraging personal prayer and Bible study, staff Bible study, and other opportunities for the strengthening and expression of faith.
- **Physical needs** begin when a called worker accepts a call. The new worker may need assistance securing housing, locating doctors, dentists, banks, auto repair shops, etc. Ongoing discussions may involve salary and benefits, vacation policy,

Christian Therapists Network

Online course on Scriptural counseling

The WELS/ELS Christian Therapists Network initially focused on finding counselors who are members of our churches. Now the Network is launching an online class for masters-level therapists. "Acting on Hope I: Peace, Comfort, and Hope in Christ Crucified and Arisen" (PSY9501) will be offered through Martin Luther College.

"Acting on Hope I" is the basic course in the Acting on Hope/Bible-Based Counseling Curriculum. As students learn from each other, the teacher, and the textbook, they will develop their own way of using Scripture in counseling sessions that will best honor the Word of God, best help their clients, and that will respect and use evidence-based counseling best practices and methods.

The one-credit course is worth 25 clock hours and lasts for ten weeks. Tuition is \$310. The instructor is Rev. Alan Siggelkow, LCSW, a former parish pastor who taught pastoral counseling at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for 20 years.

Learn more at mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/registration/new-student-registration or contact Alan Siggelkow at ahsiggelkow@gmail.com.

home repair and improvement, tax preparation, and providing support in emergency situations.



- Support for **intellectual needs** means encouraging called workers to continue their education. The calling body is encouraged to subsidize the cost of continuing education, including travel and child care expenses.
- **Emotional support** includes offering assistance to alleviate stress or deal with workplace conflicts. This is especially important when personal or family counseling may be needed. You can show appreciation by recognizing personal and professional anniversaries with gifts, providing a meal during busy times, arranging child care for an evening out, or inviting the called worker over for dinner.
- **Retirement planning** and investing should be addressed as early as possible in a worker's career. It is important to understand the WELS pension plan, Social Security, and personal investing such as the WELS Shepherd Plan. By using the available tools and resources, each worker can become financially literate and develop a long-term plan for a comfortable retirement. Calling bodies are encouraged to help build their workers' retirement accounts either through matching contributions or a lump sum contribution.

The synodical CCCW serves local committees and workers by producing user-friendly resources, such as a how-to video for starting a local care committee and retirement planning tools.

Learn more at wels.net/ccw. Find resources at csm.welsrc.net/ccw.

Hand in Hand with WELS Special Ministries

To learn more about WELS Special Ministries, visit wels.net/special-ministries.

To subscribe to the e-mail version of *His Hands*, visit wels.net/subscribe.

To refer military personnel, prisoners, or people with developmental disabilities for Special Ministries resources, visit wels.net/refer.

To support WELS Special Ministries, visit wels.net/support-special-ministries.

For assistance in making a gift to Special Ministries, contact the Ministry of Christian Giving, **800-827-5482**.

