

Our Calling

The Commission on Special Ministries (CSM) consists of teams focused on equipping congregations for compassion ministry. Teams were originally formed to address disabilities and circumstances that might harm the spiritual life of church members. The Lord's call to love each other and to reach the lost has given Special Ministries teams a broader perspective of the resources needed. Compassion is not a resource, but a Spirit-given way of seeing the needs of others, not only in church families but among the people in our communities who need Jesus. The people served by Special Ministries teams are less likely to attend church or be a Christian because of barriers to their participation.

WELS Special Ministries reaches out to individuals, congregations, and families to offer specialized services and resources to address the special need(s) that confront them. We serve people who are physically, mentally or emotionally in need of special consideration as regards their ability to learn, worship, participate in local ministries and everyday living situations. We also serve thousands of people who are away from their church home, e.g. military personnel, people living overseas, in prison, or in some other institution.

Our Current Situation

The publication *Love in Action* highlighted the mission and the resources Special Ministries teams offer, not only for members of WELS congregations, but also for people in the community around churches. The unique demands of post Christian society and national crises offer many opportunities for WELS members to use their gifts to show extraordinary love. To foster caring congregations, a training module with a Bible class was created, and a workshop was offered at the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. Videos on welcoming back church members with special needs or circumstances were also created as part of the Welcome Home initiative. Special Ministries and its WELS affiliated partners provide thousands of volunteers with opportunities to serve others in love. Projects and new resources include:



Mission for the Visually Impaired: Recording new Lutheran audio books and using technology to create audio versions of the Peoples' Bible Commentary

Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Created a ministry resource, "Ministering to People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing." Currently captioning Congregational Services

videos so that WELS members who rely on captioning can benefit from access to these excellent resources

Mental Health Needs Committee Created a training module for churches to learn how to be “Recovery Friendly Churches”

Conquerors through Christ Created resources for parents to talk to their children on the topic of pornography and a preaching seminar for pastors on how to preach about it

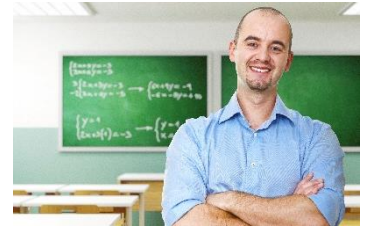
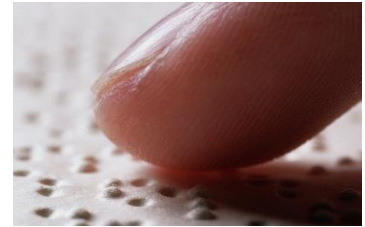
Freedom for the Captives Created “Standing Up for Children” online training for church leaders to prevent abuse and spiritual resources for survivors of abuse

Military Services Created online training for Military Contact Pastors, transitioned from retiring European Civilian Chaplain in Europe Don Stuppy to newly commissioned Chaplain John Hartwig, and created a Lutheran devotional book for military in partnership with Lutheran Military Support Group and Northwestern Publishing House.

Prison Ministry Created a twenty third Prison Ministry correspondence course, “Dealing With Depression and Anxiety” and produced a WELS Connection episode that recruited volunteers for ministry to the incarcerated

Chaplain Certification Provided online training every spring and fall in partnership with Martin Luther College to prepare WELS called workers and church members for using God’s Word in care facilities and correctional facilities, for first responders, fire, and law enforcement

Care Committee for Called Workers Produced and promoted resources for congregations to encourage their called workers to save for retirement



A Look Ahead

Looking to the future, various Special Ministries teams are focused on creating additional training for church leaders and members to care for those who need compassionate efforts to be included in the gospel ministry of our churches.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry: Create training for congregations to include people with special needs and empower them to serve and participate in the congregation and provide resources for churches to support families of people with developmental needs

Conquerors through Christ: Create resources for women who struggle with pornography and for spouses of those who have a pornography addiction

Health and Wellness Committee: Create new training to provide leaders with guidance in starting new ministries for care facilities and senior living residences.

Military Services: Equip and certify WELS/ELS people in uniform to serve as lay worship leaders during deployments, hold a training conference for Military Contact Pastors,

Prison Ministry: Investigate digital means to provide Biblical resources to the incarcerated, create training for congregation members to mentor “returning citizens” (people released from incarceration) and to visit and minister to inmates in local correctional facilities.

Mission for the Visually Impaired Launch an online library of audio books and other resources for the free use of the blind and print impaired.

For more information on any or all of the areas of special ministry, check out the web page at wels.net/special-ministries, compassion ministry modules on welscongregationalservices.net, and ministry resources at www.csm.welsrc.net or contact Pastor Jim Behringer, director of the commission, at 414-256-3241; or e-mail: jim.behringer@wels.net.

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Mr. Kurt Holzhueter, chairman of the Care Committee for Called Workers

Mr. Kent Robinson, chairman of the Mental Health Needs Committee

Rev. Robb Robbert, chairman of the Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Mr. Jerrel Lucht, chairman of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Committee

Mr. Frank Penha, chairman of the Health and Wellness Committee

Advisory:

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