



HIS HANDS

Strengthening, encouraging, and equipping God's people to serve those with special needs.

Monday Night Support Group becomes "addictive"

By Michael Schuessler, *staff minister*

"I am so thankful for this group. I look forward to coming every week because it gives me strength to stay away from the casino. And my victory this week is that I am here."

"Elizabeth" has a compulsive gambling addiction. She regularly attends an addictions support group that meets at Mt. Lebanon in Milwaukee every Monday night. It is simply called Monday Night Support Group. The meeting is open to members of Mt. Lebanon and to anyone whose life is impacted by addictions, making it a community outreach ministry as well.



WELS Special Ministries

WELS Special Ministries provides resources for eight areas of congregational ministry.

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While there are many addictions support groups in Milwaukee, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, groups for Internet pornography, and others, Monday Night Support Group has some very important differences.

First, the main focus of Monday Night Support Group is teaching reliance on Jesus Christ as the power that leads to sobriety. Most 12-step recovery programs only speak of a "higher power." This group uses resources written by pastors and Christian psychologists who specialize in addiction recovery. Their teachings help group members to better understand not only the power of addiction but also the power that Jesus has to set a person free from their addiction. Many of the people who attend refer to this group as a "spiritual meeting."

Another difference is that Monday Night Support Group is open to anyone with any kind of addiction: alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography, etc. We also welcome anyone who is in a relationship with an

addict, as well as those struggling with depression, which often affects those in recovery.

The main purpose of the group is to provide a supportive, Christ-centered atmosphere for people who have given control of their lives over to something or someone other than Jesus Christ and who want to change that.

To raise awareness for Monday Night Support Group, we will hold the 2nd Annual Mt. Lebanon Mixed Scramble Golf Tournament at Silver Spring Golf Course on Sept. 26, 2015. If you are interested in addiction recovery, or just want to play in a really fun (and not too challenging) golf tournament, you are invited! Please mark your calendar.

For more information about Monday Night Support Group or the golf tournament, e-mail Staff Minister Michael Schuessler at staffminister@mtlebanonluth.org, call Michael at 414-510-1143, or contact Mt. Lebanon Church at 414-461-1563.



Parish Nursing

Nurses of the WELS: A gathering of professionals

All WELS nurses and nursing students are invited to join "A Gathering of Professionals" hosted by WELS Parish Nurses this fall.

Under the theme, "Always Be Prepared" (1 Peter 3:15), this uplifting day will include learning, networking, fellowship, service, and Bible study.

Saturday, October 24
Registration & Breakfast – 8:00 am
Opening Worship – 8:45 am
 Wisconsin Lutheran College
 8800 W. Bluemound Road
 Milwaukee, WI 53226

We'll begin the day with worship in the beautiful campus chapel, followed by a short presentation on the history of WLC and the chapel.

Kathie Wendland, RN, BSN, former nurse with the Central African Medical Mission, and member of the WELS Women's Ministry Committee, will deliver the keynote address on "Christian Caregiving."

Chaplain Ken Wenzel of Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries adds an interactive Bible Study, "Christian Hope from Medical Instruments."

A service project is planned for the benefit of active duty military personnel. And you'll get to meet WLC nursing students, because the entire junior class will attend as a required clinical experience, bringing their fresh perspective and their enthusiasm for service.

Register online, beginning September 1, at www.welsnurses.net or call Sue Bolha at 262-677-3485 to register by phone.

Military Services Committee

God gives more than the military takes away

By Steven Prah, *pastor*

“The military giveth, and the military taketh away.” That was how I described our ministry at Risen Savior at a recent pastors’ conference.

Our church in Florida’s panhandle is surrounded by military bases. Roughly 75% of our community is active duty or retired military personnel. In the previous four months we saw more than 30 members transferred to different posts. They made up 25% of our leadership, 30% of our Bible study and worship attendance, and 40% of our Sunday school. And this was the third time in ten years that we faced such a loss!

In general, those on active duty will move to a new post every three to four years. Even in our transient society, most people do not plan to move in three years. Yet in the military, that is simply the reality.

So our congregation struggles to grow, and that can be discouraging. But when our Savior sent his followers to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them, he wasn’t telling them to build up an individual congregation. They were to build God’s Church on earth, just as we are.

A transient military community may make congregational growth difficult, but the Great Commission can still be carried out. As our members transfer out, new prospects move in. The neighborhoods we canvass regularly have 30% turnover per year. As we keep knocking and mailing and inviting, we will be reaching new neighbors and families who need Jesus’ comfort.

Ministry also happens as we encourage those on deployment, support their families, and equip the saints before they move to their next duty station. Isn’t that fulfilling God’s purpose—preparing his people to serve him and to share his grace with others?

Our congregation may not be growing numerically, but God’s people are growing spiritually. God has used the men and women whom we have been privileged to teach, some with no church background and others who hadn’t found a church home in our area. As they transfer from Florida to far-away destinations, we encourage



them to keep growing in the Word. By God’s grace, all the families we recently “lost” are connected to the nearest WELS church.

There was no organized WELS worship held in Okinawa until a few years ago, when one family was transferred there and started worshiping in their home, then placed an ad in the base newspaper. By the time they left four years later, nearly 30 were gathering weekly in the base chapel, using video sermons from WELS churches and being served by a missionary who visited every four to six weeks.

“The military giveth, and the military taketh away.” My lament echoed Job, who lost everything in a single day. His response: “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21).

We certainly did not lose everything. And though our members move away, God’s Church is still being built as he provides new prospects, changes their hearts, equips them, and sends them out to serve him. When the military “taketh away,” God “giveth more.” Praise his name!

Steven Prah served several military bases as pastor at Risen Savior, Navarre, Fla. He is now starting a new mission in Colorado Springs, Colo., home of the U. S. Air Force Academy.

Supporting our military members

By Andy Schwartz, *pastor*



I have a confession: we failed. In our responsibility to support the brave men and women who sacrifice so much to protect our nation and our God-given freedom, we failed.

But we are no longer failing, because we found a way to succeed. How?

Our humble little congregation has seen military folks come and go, and sometimes they have gone because of us. When we should have been supporting them, reaching out to them, keeping better track of them, we didn't. When we should have known that a spouse was gone, and still gone, then gone some more, we didn't follow up after not seeing them for a while. When we should have offered to help with their kids, even once a month, we didn't.

Oh, we had "great" reasons: our own families, our own jobs, our own priorities. But those only demonstrated how we were too busy focusing on ourselves to spend some time with our military families, who were silently screaming, "Can I get a hand here?!?"

Finally, we were led to repent. To apologize. To eat crow. To humble ourselves before God and one another. And to hear that we are forgiven by a loving God who left his throne before he would even think of leaving us. Our Savior Jesus died and rose for us to win us back from our sin and our guilt and our shame. And we are restored!

And then something else happened: we changed.

We didn't offer our military families the world. We simply offered them our ears...and our hands...and a little bit of our time. We devised a simple plan: appoint a group of people that can rely on each other to make sure we know our military, and love them with the love of Christ.

We still struggle, but we struggle in different ways now. In forgiven ways. And it shows.

We assign member families to keep an eye on military families and to call them when we don't see them in "x" number of weeks. It's a simple "Hi, how are you guys doing? Do you need anything? How can we help you?"

At our monthly Military Afternoon Out, families can get free babysitting for three hours so they can have some time to themselves. It is much appreciated by military couples and by the stay-at-home parent whose spouse is deployed. (It's turned into a great outreach to their friends, too!)

Occasional picnics and other outings focus on our military members. And we pray daily, trusting that we have a God who answers the prayers prayed by his precious children.

They seem like little things, but they fulfill our goal to support our military. Even in these simple efforts, we see love flowing from thankful hearts for all that our military does to serve our country and our God.

Don't worry about being the perfect church in military ministry; just act like a forgiven one. Don't reach for the moon; just reaching to hold a baby for a few hours does more good than you know. Don't try to do everything; just do something to show your gratitude. Don't look down on yourselves; look up at the cross and live in the joy of forgiveness.

Our dedicated military members and their families are gifts that many nations do not enjoy. Love them, and know that they love you, too. Let's show our love by serving them, thanking them, and supporting them—in Jesus' name!

Andy Schwartz is pastor at Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash., and a Military Contact Pastor to the nearby bases.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

“You’re Going to Love This Kid!”



Although Christian Educators for Special Education (CESE) is not a branch of WELS Special Ministries (it falls under the work of the Commission on Lutheran Schools), people with a heart for anyone with an intellectual or developmental disability will be glad to know about this group. Their mission is **“to provide Christ-centered support to teachers and parents of children with special academic needs.”**

CESE hosts an annual summer conference. At this year’s gathering participants learned practical ways to support students with autism spectrum labels and other disabilities within a general education classroom. Topics addressed:

- Defining (and redefining) autism
- Listening to the voices of those with autism
- Differentiating instruction
- Creating more active and responsive lessons
- Making the classroom comfortable
- Providing opportunities for communication and social skill development

This year’s conference focused on the importance of pushing beyond mere access and participation. Schools should be asked to challenge students and to understand each learner as complex and capable.

The Keynote Speaker was Dr. Paula Kluth, a consultant, teacher, author, advocate, and independent scholar who works with teachers and families to provide inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities and to create more responsive and engaging schooling experiences for all learners.

Paula is a former special educator who has served as a classroom teacher and inclusion facilitator. Her professional interests include differentiating instruction and inclusive schooling. She is the author or coauthor of more than ten books, including *You’re Going to Love This Kid: Teaching Students with Autism in Inclusive Classrooms*. Paula is also the director of a documentary film titled *We Thought You’d Never Ask: Voices of People with Autism*.

For more information about CESE, go to WELS.net and put CESE in the search box.

WELS Prison Ministry

God's "Snickers Bar"

By Brad Price, *WELS Prison Ministry administrator*

Have you seen the latest series of Snickers commercials? You know—the ones where a person is really rude and unpleasant to be around because they are so hungry? Yet after just one bite of a Snickers bar, they return to their pleasant, kind self.

Meet David, who resembles Mr. T. He is known for his temper, both in and out of jail. Recently, David was challenged to a fight by another inmate in his dorm, a challenge he normally would have accepted without a second thought.

But David had recently been given a taste of the true Snickers bar, God's Word. You see, he is meeting weekly with a WELS lay chaplain, who can personally discuss Scripture with David and encourage him. He is also taking Bible studies from WELS Prison Ministry and recently completed *God Is My Anger Manager*.

David remembered his studies with his chaplain and what he had learned about managing his anger. Instead of fighting the other inmate, he turned away and walked to his cell, where he dropped to his knees in prayer. All the while his aggressor kept hurling insults at him. When David arose, he didn't know how it would end.

As he faced the other inmate, many of the other men in the dorm stood with David, telling the man to go away. He did. But the story does not end there. As they talked a few days later, David was able to share the gospel with his foe. When his certificate for completing *God Is My Anger Manager* arrived, he sent it home to be framed.

This is just one awesome account of how God's Word has changed an inmate's life. How can the Lord use you to encourage the many other David's in jails and prisons across the United States?

Inmates love receiving bookmarks and cards colored by children. When inmate Jerry received a colored card, he wrote back, "I really get a 'pick-me-up' from the cards from the children. I enjoy them very much and knowing that they take the time to make them for me and others. Their efforts are greatly appreciated!"

Test correctors are in a unique position to build up inmates with personal notes that summarize the lesson and express Jesus' love for them. Pen pals comfort and support individual inmates by sharing their faith with them.

What is the end result of all these individual efforts? Incarcerated men and women are restored in a Christian way, just as if they were members of your congregation.

WELS Prison Ministry currently has over 300 volunteers. They brighten the lives of those who spend each day in the darkness of incarceration. There is room for you, too, to share God's "Snickers bar" with inmates. For information on opportunities in WELS Prison Ministry, e-mail prisonministry@wels.net or call 507-354-3130.

Brad Price is Administrator of WELS Prison Ministry and a 2015 graduate of the Staff Ministry program at Martin Luther College.



Mission to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Video remote interpreting: A new avenue to communicate with the deaf

By Matthew Buchholz, member of the WELS Mission to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Growing up, I attended church services even though I have a severe to profound hearing loss. The key to receiving a clear understanding of the message is "visualization." My personal preference was a printed sermon. Without it, I had no idea how much I missed. With it, I realized that God's Word was powerful and inspiring! I was stunned at how much meaning my pastor delivered in every sermon.

Imagine how difficult it is for someone with a severe hearing loss to get everything being said. "I wonder how much I missed? Have I understood the full meaning of God's Word?"

Technologies such as FM systems, hearing loops, and real-time captioning can help, but communication barriers still exist for people with hearing loss. They may receive a limited portion of the message, but still feel like outsiders in a hearing world.

Sign language interpreters at every service would be ideal, but most churches do not provide them. Now there is a solution. It's called VRI (video remote interpreting), and it allows you to connect to sign language ability in real time. You'll need high speed Internet access and a laptop, tablet, or smart phone with a webcam.

Video remote interpreting is set up like video conferencing technologies, such as Skype, Google Hangouts, or FaceTime. VRI is an answer to providing an interpreter for your worship service, and to ensure that the Word can do its work successfully.

Once the online connection is established, a skilled interpreter can remove the barriers between the speaker and the person with hearing loss. The deaf user simply watches the interpreter on the screen, translating in sign language. Communication is two-way: the deaf person

can sign back to the interpreter, and the hearing person will hear the interpreter's voice translating sign into spoken English.

Interpreters can be arranged for the sermon only or for the entire service, or counseling and other uses.

To find out more on video remote interpreting, go to www.openvri.com. You can request an interpreter at www.purple.us/vri or at www.codabrothersinterpreting.com.

Here are some of the highlights of VRI.

- Skilled or certified interpreters
- Arrange a meeting time in advance
- Affordable price per minute
- No travel cost for the interpreter

VRI opens new opportunities to reach people in your community who are deaf or who have significant hearing loss. Will your congregation offer this new way of communication?

Be knowledgeable, be friendly, and be open with your congregation members today.

Matthew Buchholz is a member of the WELS Mission to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and is preparing an online American Sign Language course for Martin Luther College.



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