

His Hands

Winter 2016



Ministry to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Ein Herz für Menschen mit Hörverlust (A heart for people with hearing loss)

Marilyn Sherod

What's up with the German title? Let me explain. Many years ago my husband Bill and I were able to return to Germany with our two youngest children, who had been born there. We stayed with our former landlord, August, and his family. One of their cars bore a sticker that read: "Ein Herz Für Kinder" (A Heart for Children).

I am hoping that my unusual title will draw your attention to the need to have a heart for people with hearing loss. Due to various degrees of hearing loss (which may steadily increase), many people are either discouraged from coming to church or, when they do attend, struggle unnecessarily to "get" what's actually being said. As one whose inherited hearing loss has deteriorated to the point where I am clinically deaf, I speak from experience!

Did you know there's a "fix" for this that's not too expensive for your church and can also be an evangelism outreach to your community? The cost is generally no more than the price of a good set of hearing aids. It's a simple solution that makes it possible for persons with cochlear implants or hearing aid users to be able to hear the sermon crystal-clear – directly in the ears! The fix is known as an Induction Loop System (ILS) or hearing loop.

The majority of hearing aids today have a telecoil (also known as a t-coil or t-switch) built into them, and it's a quick matter for the audiologist to activate them, making it possible to utilize this looping. That's what happened at Cross and Crown Lutheran Church in Georgetown, Tex., on Easter Sunday 2010. It enabled me to walk into church that day and hear every word of the sermon. Awesome! (If you are buying a new hearing aid, make sure it has a telecoil.)

After we moved to California, I searched the Internet. Way north of us, in Santa Rosa, I found three doctors of audiology who had looped many facilities in their area. I asked for help and within days they gave me a referral. By January 2012, we had Zion Lutheran in Torrance "looped." If you need help with looping, contact: mdhh@wels.net.

WELS Special Ministries

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

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Bill and I are “alums” of WELS Builders for Christ (active 1995 to 2001), but at the time I had no knowledge of an ILS/hearing loop. Since then, I’ve tried to spread the word that it’s best to include this system when a new church is being built, although it’s usually possible to install it in existing sanctuaries.

P.S. – One Sunday after Cross and Crown in Texas was looped, Pastor Eric Hartzell asked a layman to deliver his sermon in his absence. On the way home from church, I remarked: “Certainly was a good sermon.” Bill replied: “I didn’t get much out of it; I couldn’t understand him.” Amazed, I responded: “Really? I heard every word!”



Military Services

Christmas in Okinawa

Charles Gumm is pastor at Community Lutheran, Honolulu.

Just after Christmas, I left Hawaii for a trip to visit our WELS military personnel and their families on Okinawa, an island between Japan and Taiwan. Our synod’s Military Services Committee and the Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) asked me in October 2015 to look into developing a more consistent ministry to WELS service members stationed throughout the Pacific. We already have an organized mission of five families on Okinawa, so that was chosen as the place to begin. I had previously made one trip there in October.

Japanese tourism is huge in Hawaii, so getting flights is very convenient. From Honolulu to Tokyo is about six hours, then another two-and-a-half hours from Tokyo to Okinawa.

The week after Christmas was an excellent time to visit as most of our members had much of the week off, so we were able to do a variety of things together over a period of four days. For me, one of the most memorable moments was our visit to the underground headquarters of Japan’s navy during the brutal World War II battle (April to June 1945) that left over 200,000 people dead.

Throughout the week it was difficult for me to shake the horror of war and how it destroys even the lives of those who survive it. What a contrast with the message of Christmas, so filled with hope, strength, and encouragement.

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with hope, strength, and encouragement. At various times our conversations drifted to this contrast.

This Christmas visit was also special because I was able to spend at least one day with almost all the participating families. It was like an extended pastoral visit! The added time gave me the opportunity to get to know the adults and the young people as well. We spent New Year’s Eve playing games throughout the night. One evening I led a devotion with the family that was hosting me before we turned out the lights.

On Sunday afternoon we all met for Bible study and worship with Communion in one of the beautiful base chapels. We also discussed the possibility of having regular Bible classes and worship via Internet. Currently I give confirmation classes to one young person on Okinawa with very good results. So we are excited about developing more frequent contact, even if it is a virtual meeting. My next visit is scheduled for June, when we will celebrate two high school graduations and one confirmation.

Many thanks to the LMSG, the new WELS / ELS veterans group, for providing travel funds for this trip. Their goal of providing more personal support for WELS military personnel throughout the world is a worthy one. Even though we may never be able to provide a church setting like our members are used to back home, we can help them grow in their faith in ways they might never have if they had not journeyed to the distant corners of the world.

Supporting our soldiers with the weapon of the Word

Matt Brown is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn., where he serves as contact pastor for Fort Campbell, Ky.

Pastors serve God’s people with God’s Word on Sunday mornings, in Bible classes, in hospitals, at home, and many other places. Pastoral visits are welcomed by the sick or those dealing with a spiritual challenge. But when the member is in the military, personal visits can be very limited.

Since 2001, our military has been in a constant state of deployment. Dozens of members in our congregation have been deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world to fight the forces of evil and to protect our country and our allies.

When deployed to war zones, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines face physical, emotional, and spiritual struggles that most civilians will never know. They have lost friends in battle, suffered injuries, taken lives. They have experienced the horror of war. Their pastors long to convey the comfort of Jesus' death and resurrection, but visits to the war zone are impossible. Phone calls are very rare. E-mails can be read, but are not always responded to. So how do we serve our service members with the gospel they need?

Before a soldier in our congregation deploys, we arrange a visit to spend time in God's Word, celebrate the Lord's Supper, and pray. During the deployment, we serve the family at home. We e-mail the soldier, pray for them, and send cards and letters, but personal pastoral contact is impossible.

That's why WELS Military Services is a great blessing. At that last pre-deployment visit, we give our soldiers a spiritual deployment kit that includes a Bible, prayer book, and multiple devotions on an MP3 player. They now have another contact with home; more important, they have another contact with God's Word.

Your congregation may have seen one or more members deployed in the past 15 years. Your church body recognizes the importance of this ministry, but you can be involved, too. Keep our armed forces in your congregational and personal prayers. Ask your veterans how the congregation can serve them and use them to reach veterans who are unchurched. Your gifts to WELS Military Services help to support a civilian chaplain in Europe and provide workshops to train stateside contact pastors.

Please refer names of active duty personnel to WELS Military Services. Use the form at wels.net/military. The name will be sent to the nearest WELS military contact pastor for follow-up to connect that individual with Word and Sacrament.

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Like any of us, service members can get distracted from spending time in God's Word, often due to the demands of their job. But it is that very Word that will comfort, encourage, and equip them to be witnesses to Christ in a rich mission field. WELS Military Services wants to unleash the power of God's Word in the hearts and lives of our military personnel. Thanks for your support!



Prison Ministry

Letters from our brothers in prison

Brad Price is administrator for WELS Prison Ministry

Thousands of tests, pen pal letters, and questions pass through our WELS Prison Ministry House in New Ulm, Minn., each month. Every week we also get a booster shot of God's grace as our incarcerated family writes letters of thanksgiving. Below are letters from two men who are very active in our ministry programs. We gladly share them with you (spelling and grammar as received).

Dear WELS,

I want to thank you. I've been doing your Bible studies since 2011. I've learned a lot from you and all the kind words you wrote to me means more than you will ever know.

God loves us so much that He gave His one and only Son to take our sins to the cross. Christ spilled His blood to wash us clean. Paul spent a lot of his life in chains for Christ. I believe Christ has forgiven me. The Old Man comes out in me and as Paul said, "I do the things I don't want to do, what I want to do I do not do. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is my sinful nature. I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."

From your kind words I've come to learn that not everyone looks at those who are in prison as throw aways. To everyone who puts in their personal time to the WELS Special Ministries, God will bless you in many ways.

*Thank you again and God bless you,
Peter*

Peter has completed all 36 Prison Ministry Bible Teaching Series (BTS) books, as well as six books from the People's Bible series.

Thank you and God bless all of you there at the Synod... Receiving all that you sent me has really shown me that there are people out there who have faith in me! Doing your studies has helped me move down the new path that I have taken where the weeds have been cut away by people like you!

Before the path was very cluttered. Just the feeling to have someone that cares has helped me alot. Remember, I am without biological "family," but guess what? I do have a "family"! YOU!! - Elvis

Elvis has also completed all 36 BTS booklets, one People's Bible Series book, and the People's Bible Teaching Series book on the

Holy Spirit. Elvis is also an artist. He made the pictured quilling plaque for us.



I often hear that volunteers got into prison ministry to share the saving message of Jesus with a forgotten person and bring some joy to their life. As a fruit of their faith, our incarcerated family supports us as well, living Paul's command in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

To learn more about WELS Prison Ministry and how you can be involved:

- E-mail prisonministry@wels.net
- Visit wels.net/prison-ministry
- Call 507-354-3130



Care Committee for Called Workers

Holding Up the Prophet's Hand

*Bruce Hartung, Concordia Publishing House, 2011
Reviewed by Jim Behringer, Director of Special Ministries*

If you've ever been grateful to a church worker who selflessly gives so much of themselves, you've felt the desire to show that appreciation. You probably have said thank you, maybe remembered the worker with a gift. This book helps congregations give the kind of support that really matters. Bruce Hartung provides a resource that is both practical and a model of Christian conversation and practice.

Holding Up the Prophet's Hand combines spirituality drawn from the gospel of Jesus Christ with sound advice and suggestions that

reflect Hartung's years of working with Christian congregations. He reminds readers of Satan's strategy to prevent the gospel from reaching souls. In this spiritual warfare, church members need to be aware who is most vulnerable to burnout:

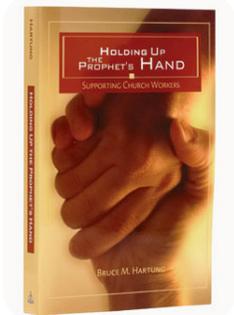
"Church workers are more likely candidates for burnout if they bring to the task a passion for:

- sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ;
- fulfilling the calling the Holy Spirit has given them;
- helping deepen people's relationship with the Triune God;
- walking closely with the people they love, sharing both burdens and joys."

What is more effective than expressions of appreciation and opportunities for retreats? Hartung says that church workers experience real support when an organization is healthy and behaviors are positive and healthy, based in true relationships nourished by Word and Sacrament.

The book has four parts:

- why worker health matters
- resources
- actions congregations can take
- a section on "when things go south" (suggestions for really serious church worker problems).



Each chapter includes a "speaking personally" section, in which Hartung contrasts the advice he gives in the chapter with his personal thoughts. This is an important element, missing in most "how-to" books – the author confesses his own failings and weaknesses in applying the principles. In doing this, Hartung is true to his assertion: "Life in the real church on earth differs from life in the ideal church." The church, he admits, is not a place of perfect harmony and flawless relationships, but mutual care, forgiveness, and support.

Useful materials are provided to encourage meaningful conversations with church workers. He recommends that churches organize "Worker Support Teams" and gives sound advice (clearly based on experience) about how to use them. He commends WELS Care Committee for Called Workers materials.

This book will be helpful in the hands of congregational leaders, concerned members, parish nurses, and anyone looking for spiritual and practical guidance in supporting church workers.

To obtain WELS Care Committee for Called Workers (CCCW) materials:

- Visit the Special Ministries Resource Center at csm.welsrc.net
- Call 414-256-3241
- E-mail specialministries@wels.net

Encourage your called workers

Pastor Bill Bader is one of many workers, called and hired, serving Christ at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School, Onalaska, Wis.

"Well, I assume you have an active Care Committee for Called Workers." When our district president spoke those words at a recent call meeting, he was looking at me, because I've served on the Western Wisconsin District CCCW for many years. He had a right to expect that we'd have a functional CCCW committee.

The truth is, we had a very active committee in the past. We currently have someone who is interested in starting one and needs some direction. The whole scenario reminded me how important this is. Our congregation has added incentive because we desire to increase the pastoral staff and have seen turnover in our teaching staff due to retirements. We should be doing many "transitional interviews." We are blessed to have dedicated people on our Board of Education and Board of Elders who have functioned very well in this capacity.

It's time to restart our CCCW. We refer to it as a "Care Committee" because it includes our hired staff (custodians and secretaries). The purpose of the Care Committee is to enhance and encourage those who serve in the full-time work of the church and school. I expect we'll have to answer questions asked in the past: "What exactly is the purpose of the CCCW?" "Who receives the information?" "Who's on the Care Committee?"

A different set of people are now asking these questions. They need answers. One issue rings true, whether you are restarting a committee or establishing one for the first time: make sure the right people are on the Care Committee. Before anyone is asked to serve, run all the names by your staff to ensure everyone is comfortable with the proposed people.



Every congregation is different as far as reporting and setting up the function of the committee. There are great suggestions on the synod website. Go to csm.welsrc.net and click on "CCCW."

We place much emphasis on recruiting people for the preaching/teaching/staff ministry. But retaining those people is just as important. The CCCW can be one part of that task.

The writer to the Hebrews said it well, "Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no benefit to you" (Hebrews 13:17).



Committee on Mental Health Needs

Helping others through the grief of suicide

Kurt Ebert lives in Thiensville, Wis., where he is pastor at Calvary Lutheran.

"...The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort... comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

That glorious bit of praise from the pen of St. Paul serves as rich encouragement for those who have been comforted in their hurt by the Savior who cares for them. It helped us lay a path of comfort in ministry following the death of our 16-year-old son, who took his own life and left in the wake of that tragedy a family reeling from the loss.

It wasn't until over three years had passed—years of wrestling with God, of fleeing to his Word and fellowship for comfort, of actually experiencing the ray of sunshine that finally can break through the clouds of grief—that my wife and I were in a position to offer God's comfort formally with others. With the help of advice from the staff at WLCFS – Christian Family Solutions and a book by James Miller called *Effective Support Groups*, we started a monthly support group at our church.

Mental health leaders persuaded us to limit this group to those who are grieving the death of a loved one through suicide. That was the area of our immediate experience, and we have found that suicide grief has some elements that require unique attention, especially the stigma that surrounds suicide and the intense guilt that often fills those who are left behind.

We printed a flyer and distributed it to key locations in the community: funeral homes, counseling offices, high schools,

hospitals, police departments. Word started to get around. We put a free monthly notice in the local paper. Our most effective advertising may be the message sign in front of our church, which thousands of people see every day.

We made the difficult decision not to make this a specifically Christian support group. That may sound strange, coming from a pastor. But we knew that many non-Christians in the community would feel alienated from such a group. We wanted to share Christ's love in a way that they could see our concern for them, with the prayer that helping them through their grief may eventually open doors to share our great Comforter.

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Newcomers are shown some guidelines. We are here to share our suicide grief. We are an "open" group. We may be silent. We are free to speak our grief. We are here to listen to others. We will protect each other's privacy. Participants are invited to speak with the leader privately about faith in Christ.

Participants have commented that they appreciate group leaders who have walked their path and understand their special sorrow. They also appreciate a sense of honest transparency and forward motion—the encouragement that, one day, they also can expect to see the sun shine again.

Freedom for the Captives—a new ministry for victims of child abuse

Sheryl Cowling, LCSW, BCPC, BCETS, is a member of the Freedom for the Captives Committee and a psychotherapist at WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions.

She cried tears that seemed to come from the very depths of her being as she recalled the painful, frightening abuse that was the hallmark of her childhood. Her father's drunken rages were often accompanied by physical blows and cruel words that still trouble her mind on a daily basis. She loves her heavenly Father, but sometimes finds it hard to believe all the wonderful things about him because her earthly father was the exact opposite.

He spoke very softly, slowly, cautiously, as if trying with all his power to maintain emotional control. He was telling – for the first time ever – the secret he carried with him for years, actually decades, that made him feel like less of a man. As a boy, a close



family friend had abused him sexually. Flashbacks and nightmares were frequent visitors. A sense of deep shame was a constant companion. He loves God, but feels like damaged goods and so questions whether he is deserving of God's love.

These stories illustrate the heartache that far too many boys and girls feel, and often continue to feel even as grown men and women, because of sinful child abuse inflicted upon them. Toxic shame, depression, anxiety, anger, and fear are experienced all too often. If this wounding is not addressed in a caring, competent manner, it can fester and the damage can persist long after the actual abuse may have stopped. Addictions, low self-esteem, depression, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are just some of the ways this may manifest itself.

In response to the stories of hurting individuals, WELS Special Ministries decided to reach out to those in need of healing, and to those who love and care for them. The Freedom for the Captives website (freedomforcaptives.com) is the response to this need. It was created by a team comprised of WELS pastors, seminary professors, psychotherapists, and a legal expert. It is loaded with helpful information for survivors, their loved ones, pastors, lay church leaders, and the larger community.

Please visit freedomforcaptives.com. You'll notice that for survivors the website features numerous Bible passages about God's hatred of abuse, love for the oppressed, and the hope and healing that are found in him. It includes informative articles, book reviews, and frequently asked questions. There is helpful direction about how to find a counselor who is specially trained in helping survivors of child abuse, and it includes links to many such counselors.

For pastors and lay leaders, there are additional links to articles about church policies and training opportunities. Every church needs to be prepared to respond should a student confide to a teacher that they are being abused by a parent, or should a teen tell their pastor about molestation by a non-relative adult, just for two examples. Churches also need policies on how to respond

when an alleged or convicted abuser wants to worship, with an emphasis on safety.

If anyone desires additional support or information, they can contact the committee directly by leaving a message on the website. Their message will be treated respectfully and they will receive a timely response from a committee member.

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While the website is still in its infancy, the initial response has been very positive. Survivors have commented on how “rich” the website is, with precious Scriptures that have brought much comfort and hope. Others have noted how well organized it is, so that a variety of pertinent information can be easily accessed. Some appreciate the book reviews, because so much has been written on the topic that it can be overwhelming to choose just one or two titles without a recommendation. Mostly, people have commented that they are so pleased to see the body of Christ working together on behalf of child abuse survivors who are deserving of love, respect, and protection.



Chaplain Certification Program

Lord, who do you want me to meet today?

Fred Voss shepherds God's people at Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage, Alaska, as well as his community, police and firefighters as chaplain.

What is the role of a police and fire chaplain? It's about serving people with the love of Jesus on perhaps the worst day of their life. It doesn't matter who they are or where they come from. That's why I pray, “Lord, who do you want me to meet today?” Ride with me for a shift and I'll show you what I mean.

1:04 a.m. – I am dispatched to a fire station following a fire. One child escaped, two other children and the father did not. One

child died, the others were rushed to the hospital. I was called to speak with the firefighters. “Who, Lord?” The young firefighter – the one who held the baby who had died – needed someone to talk to. Then it was on to Fire and Police Dispatch. They were all listening, silent witnesses as they prayed and cried. “What happened to the other child and the father? Was there anything more we could have done?” They had unanswered questions, but now here was a chaplain who had come to listen, to fill in the blanks, to help.

Sometimes God surprises me.

7:30 a.m.—I am dispatched for an in-home death. Walking through the next steps with the daughter of the woman who had died helped her, but she was not the only one. God wanted to introduce me to the on-duty officers. Looking back I can see how God's hand delayed the Medical Examiner and funeral home so that the conversations I had with them opened doors about life, death, dogs, children, aging parents, and spiritual questions and answers.

2:15 p.m.—I am called to another in-home death. The officers were gathered around the wife as she turned from one to the other seeking comfort, hope, and direction. She took my hand and wouldn't let go as sobs of grief poured out. She held on through the difficult phone calls that followed. I thought, “Lord, I know why you put me here.” But little did I realize that the Lord had someone else for me to meet. The Medical Examiner arrived and began the examination. The M.E. was visibly upset, especially when the wife asked to see her husband one more time. This man was the M.E.'s doctor. The Lord then used me to minister as both struggled with death.



10:50 p.m. – Only one hour left on shift when dispatch called, “Chaplain, please come to interview room 2.” A woman who had witnessed her loved one’s shooting death only a few hours earlier needed to talk. The detectives were done, but the tape kept rolling, so every word that was spoken was heard by officers, detectives and those who would review the tapes later. The Holy Spirit was working as I was planting seeds of comfort and hope founded in Jesus.

We never know how many people are listening, so I pray, “Lord, who do you want me to meet today?”

Chaplains gather to TAWC

The Association of WELS Chaplains (TAWC) announces the resumption of meetings under the theme: “Chaplains Care for Souls in Crisis.”

Date: Friday, April 15, 2016
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location: WELS Center for Mission & Ministry
N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive
Waukesha, WI 53188
Cost: \$25 (includes lunch)
A streaming option is also being offered for \$15.

Morning Presentation: Post-Trauma First Aid
by Rev. Robert Dick

Afternoon Presentation: PTSD: Symptoms and Interventions
by Dr. Brandon Hayes

Continuing Education Credit: MLC has granted three CEUs for the two presentations. Both presentations will be livestreamed.

Originally this association was to promote communication between and additional training for WELS and ELS pastors who serve as full-time or part-time chaplains to the military, the hospitalized, and those living in jails, prisons, nursing homes, or other residential institutions.

Today the opportunities for chaplains are much broader (e.g. fire and police) and include not only paid staff but also volunteers and laity.

The purpose of The Association of WELS Chaplains is being redefined to offer those engaged in chaplaincy and related pastoral ministries the following:

- An opportunity for fellowship
- A means of participating in the professional experience of others

- A program for the advancement of knowledge in the field of chaplaincy
- A means to promote the growth and recognition of spiritual care in our facilities and agencies
- A means to encourage dialogue with other institutions served by chaplains and to include them in our conferences and education program



WELS Nurses

Spring Conference

Date: Friday, April 1 and Saturday, April 2, 2016
Location: WELS Center for Mission & Ministry
N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive
Waukesha, WI 53188
Theme: Our Time of Grace
Registration: Registration ends March 29. Register at welsnurses.net

