

His Hands

Winter 2017



Military Services

Where two, three, or eleven gather

Katie Martin lives in Jefferson, Wis. She and her husband Josh are raising three daughters and one son.

We passed through an ordinary front door and a dark foyer to enter a room so beautiful it made us pause in wonder. As our hostess closed the door behind us, our eyes traveled in every direction taking in the unexpected beauty around us. The room had no windows other than the skylights which framed the domed ceiling above us. Designed as an interior music room, it was circular in shape and frescoed from floor to ceiling with doors that disappeared into the painted, curved walls.

The room was just one part of a historic home that had once belonged to the family of Marie Antoinette. A stone's throw from the tree-lined parade route leading to the Palace of Versailles, its beauty transported me to that era of opulence. Today, centuries later, this room would again be filled with music, but not to entertain the lavish tastes of the French aristocracy. Rather, it would glorify the King of kings.



WELS Special Ministries

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

Military Services

<i>Where two, three, or eleven gather</i>	1-2
<i>New civilian chaplain for Europe</i>	2

Care Committee for Called Workers

<i>Retirement planning for called workers</i>	3
---	---

Committee on Mental Health Needs

<i>Abuse affects everyone, but you can help</i>	3-4
<i>Understanding domestic abuse</i>	4-5

Health and Wellness Committee

<i>Ministry to the aging: It's not for pastors only!</i>	5-6
<i>Visiting a person with short-term memory loss</i>	6
<i>Resilient Ministry: a gospel approach to recovery</i>	7

Message from the Director

<i>Show Me Your Mighty Hand: Peace from God's Word for special needs moms</i>	7
---	---

Chaplain Certification Program Committee

<i>Financial assistance for Chaplain Certification classes</i>	8
--	---

Mission for the Visually Impaired

<i>Instead of Eyes</i>	8
------------------------	---

We were a group of eleven ladies from varied backgrounds and four different countries. Some of us were military wives, some married to local nationals, some visiting family members who lived overseas, and some following their husbands on a work contract. Some of us were lifelong Christians and others new to the faith. Yet we had one thing in common: a love of Jesus and his Word.

We had gathered for a women's weekend in Paris to sightsee, have Bible study, and enjoy fellowship with sisters in Christ. Our weekend would culminate with a worship service in this beautiful room. The hostess, who had been baptized and confirmed only months before, invited us into her home for worship. This service would become one of the highlights from my eight years living in Europe as the wife of the WELS Civilian Chaplain.

Although living in Europe can be glamorous and exciting, one does not spend every day sipping coffee at a Parisian café or visiting world-renowned museums. Most days, the separation from family, language barrier, and isolation from those who share our faith can weigh heavily on the Christian living overseas.

One of the things I missed in particular was the "big church" experience. I longed to be with other Christians, surrounded by a throng of voices belting out praises to Jesus. Our worship life here was much different than it was in the States. Each week saw us traveling to different locations to worship: in a military chapel with 30 Christians, in a rented church with 10 fellow believers, in a living room with our family and only two or three others.

However, in spite of this distance and separation, God blessed his flock in Europe. It was common to meet Lutherans who would drive or take a train more than four hours one way to attend worship. Christians in London or Zurich who could only worship with a pastor once per month displayed a deep appreciation for the gospel. They reminded us that church is a "get to" instead of a "have to." Those special times gathered around his Word with dear Christian friends at worship or a retreat became the best part of our time in Europe. Even the grandeur of the Alps or the majestic castles couldn't compare to the blessings of being together around the Word of life.

*In spite of this distance and separation,
God blessed his flock in Europe.*

On that Sunday morning in a music room in Versailles, France, we enjoyed a service that none of us would forget. As we sat down and the portable keyboard began to play the first hymn, we knew we were in for a treat. Thanks to the acoustics of the room, our eleven meager voices swelled, sounding like a choir of angels. God reminded us in a dramatic fashion of his promise in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Whether around the dinner table for devotion, at the bedside of a loved one, in a living room in Switzerland, or a music room in France, God comes to us through his Word. Wherever his Word is proclaimed, God is right there strengthening faith, encouraging us, and clutching us tightly to himself for eternity.

New civilian chaplain for Europe

Pastor Don Stuppy has accepted the call to serve WELS military members, their families, and civilians who live in Europe. The chaplain lives in Spiesheim, Germany (southwest of Frankfurt), but travels the continent to minister to souls living far from home—and from their home congregations.

A commissioning service was held at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Yorktown, Va., on November 30. The Stuppys will arrive in Europe in early January 2017, succeeding Pastor Josh Martin, who served as chaplain for the previous eight years.

Donald Stuppy was born in Benton Harbor, Mich. He graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1975 and was assigned to Our Savior, San Antonio, Tex., where his ministry included personnel at six military bases. Don and Marge, who were married in 1973 after meeting on a blind date, had four children while in Texas.

In 1985 the Stuppy's moved to Newport News, Va., to start a new mission. After moving to Virginia, they had their fifth child. A church and parsonage were built in Yorktown, an area that hosts Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard installations. About half of the church has military ties. Pastor Stuppy served Our Redeemer for almost 32 years, long enough so that he can recall baptizing and performing the wedding of the current president of the congregation.

Marge grew up in Muskego, Wis., and attended Milwaukee County General Hospital School of Nursing. While raising their five children, she pursued her bachelor's degree in nursing. When the nest was empty, she returned to school and earned a degree as a nurse practitioner, focusing on cardiology.

Don and Marge are excited about this new chapter in their lives, eager to serve the Lord and his people in Europe, where the "congregation" numbers about 150 souls. They include active military, military who stayed after their tour of duty ended,



civilians living there because of business, and others who simply like it and have chosen to make it their home.

Members of the flock live in England, Italy, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and elsewhere. That keeps the chaplain on the road a lot. The groups may be small, but the bonds of fellowship are strong. Three times a year they gather for retreats to strengthen their ties and get to know one another.

Worship is held in various locations throughout the month:

- London, England – First Sunday
- Frankfurt/Mainz/Wiesbaden, Germany – Second and Fourth Sundays at 11:00 a.m.
- Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany – Second and Fourth Sundays at 4:00 p.m.
- Zurich, Switzerland – Third Sunday
- Vilseck, Germany – Monthly on a Saturday

To learn more about the European chaplaincy, go to wels.net/military. To refer the names of military or civilians living in Europe, go to wels.net/refer.



Care Committee for Called Workers

Retirement planning for called workers

Kurt Holzhueter is an investment advisor and chairman of the WELS Care Committee for Called Workers

Can I afford to retire?

This is a difficult question to answer for anyone, called workers included. Many factors go into such an important decision. Steps taken earlier in one's career can have a significant impact on when the answer becomes "Yes!"

As our committee began to look into retirement planning for called workers, a couple of things became clear. First, the WELS has excellent programs and resources available for successful retirement planning. Second, there are several obstacles that make it difficult for workers to take action. Since getting an early start is one of the most important factors in successful retirement planning, we focused on that.

A typical called worker will rely on the WELS pension, social security, and personal savings/investments such as a 403(b) plan or IRA for their retirement income. The synod's 403(b) offering, called The Shepherd Plan, is a good option.

Student debt, relatively low salary, house payments, family expenses, and lack of time are a few reasons that planning and

saving for retirement are fairly low on the list of priorities for a new worker. If the calling body becomes involved in the process, there is a much greater chance that the worker will get started. This is where a local Care Committee for Called Workers (CCCW) can be invaluable. The committee can walk through the planning process with each new called worker. If there is no CCCW, a volunteer or volunteers can become familiar with the materials and assist the worker with planning.

At welsrc.net/cccw, you will find two easy-to-use tools that can simplify the planning process for both called workers and lay persons. The first is a one-page checklist that outlines the areas that should be considered and provides links to resources in each area. The second is a two-page guide that covers basic information on a wide range of retirement topics. Both tools are useful for new called workers, as well as veterans. You could plan to discuss the topics in depth with all new workers, then briefly review them on an annual basis.

As important as it may be to have the calling body take an active role in this process, another strategy may be even more beneficial. If the calling body is able to provide a financial incentive, it may be the most effective way to encourage workers to begin a retirement savings account. When a worker accepts a call, an account could be opened for them, with a small lump sum contribution made for them for the first year or two. Or an employer match could be offered to help the account grow faster.

Taking a few small steps now can make a huge difference when a called worker is ready for retirement. Find more information, including how to start a Care Committee for Called Workers, at welsrc.net/cccw.



Committee on Mental Health Needs

Abuse affects everyone, but you can help

Ben Sadler shepherds the flock at Goodview Trinity Lutheran Church, Winona, Minn.

Some statistics are so staggering you just can't un-see them. That's how I felt at a conference two years ago on child protection. After hearing two astounding facts, I knew I would never be the same.

1) One of every four women and one of every six men have been or will be abused. At first, I couldn't wrap my head around those numbers. That meant that about a quarter of my congregation were probably survivors, as well as a quarter of my friends and neighbors, and a quarter of my community. And probably a quarter of you reading this.

If those numbers are accurate (and they are probably low), then why is nobody talking about this? Because almost 100 percent of survivors are suffering in silence.

2) Survivors of abuse are much more likely to become addicted to drugs and alcohol, live sexually promiscuous lives, and suffer with a myriad of other mental, emotional, and physical problems. (See cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy to learn more about the Adverse Childhood Experiences study). When a child is abused, they are told the most sinister lie: “You are nothing but a tool for my pleasure.” That lie implants a feeling of unquenchable shame. Shame is different from guilt. One psychologist explains it this way: “Guilt is feeling bad because I made a mistake. Shame is feeling bad because I believe I am a mistake.”

Shame is such a debilitating feeling that we will do almost anything to silence it.

After hearing these statistics, I was convinced I had been doing much of my ministry all wrong. Some of the people whom I was serving were running to drugs, sex, and alcohol, not to escape God, but to escape and cope with shame. In most cases, they needed to hear about the love of God, not the law of God.

The world is a dark place, but with the help of God you can be a light.

The world is a dark place, but with the help of God you can be a light.

How to protect children and help survivors?

- **Establish and enforce a child protection policy at your church.**

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). He also said, “If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Jesus is serious about caring for and protecting children; we should be too. One way your church can do that is through a child protection policy, making sure everyone who has significant contact with children has had a background check, and ensuring that no child is ever left with just one adult.

- **Support survivors in your circle of influence**

In John 4, Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman at the well. Her checkered past seems to resemble someone who had been abused or harmed. See how Jesus treats her? He patiently, gently points her to the living waters of God’s love. Then he spends time addressing her besetting sins.

Most survivors are suffering in silence. What if you followed Jesus’ example by being open to the hurting around you, then listening

with patience and care? There is probably more to the story of your friends and relatives that you don’t know about. If you are looking for tools to help survivors, check out freedomforcaptives.com, a website created by the WELS Committee on Mental Health Needs.

- **Support and volunteer with organizations who protect children and help survivors**

There are many worthy organizations that protect children and help survivors. Working with Care in Action (careinactionmn.org), our congregation has adopted a social worker from our community, who filters needs to our church. We then help support families with children.

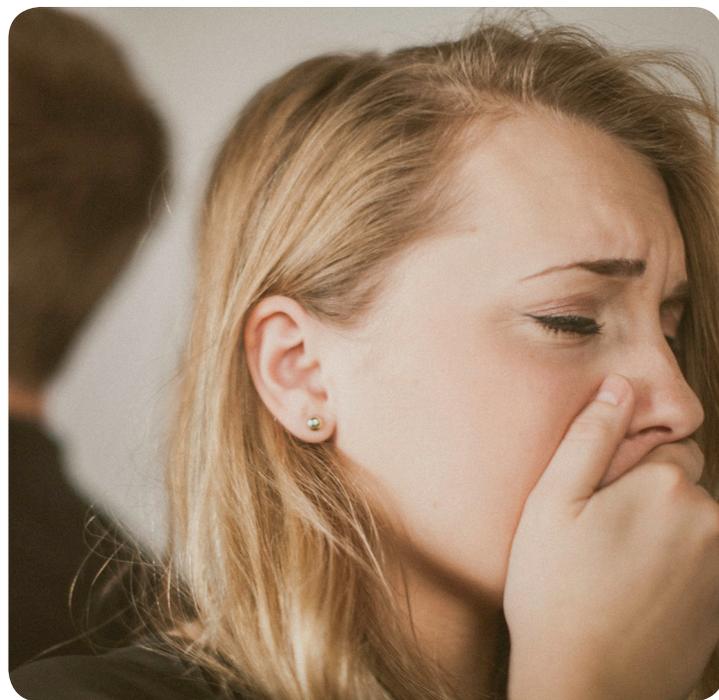
Sexual abuse is more common than most people think, and its consequences can be emotionally and spiritually damaging. We can no longer just be bystanders. God calls us to protect children and help survivors.

For more resources, go to freedomforcaptives.com.

Understanding domestic abuse

Nathan Ericson serves as pastor of Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Oshkosh, Wis.

Although public awareness about domestic abuse has increased in recent decades, on a case-by-case basis it often remains unspoken, unseen, and misunderstood. This hidden nature of abuse presents a problem: well-meaning friends may unwittingly support the abuser and further injure the victim by what they say and do. How can we show true Christian love in ways that will help victims of abuse rather than hurt them? How can we direct abusers toward true repentance? It begins with understanding the nature of domestic abuse.



An abuser will try to deny or minimize his abuse, and sometimes our cultural misconceptions only help him do this. Perhaps we have heard that abuse is a psychological problem or an anger problem or an alcohol problem. Each of those ideas is generally not true. (For example, while the use of alcohol will make abuse worse, there are plenty of alcoholics who are not abusers, and plenty of abusers who are not alcoholics.) Instead, each of those ideas serves to minimize the problem of abuse by shifting blame from the abuser himself to something else.

One of the biggest misconceptions affecting the church's response to abuse is the idea that abuse is a marriage problem, a Sixth Commandment problem. If I mention in conversation that an acquaintance of mine is a victim of abuse and has divorced her husband, will the response be a question about his years of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse and whether he in apparent unbelief has abandoned his commitment to the love of marriage? Or will the response be a question about whether it was right for her to leave? If we think about abuse as a marriage problem, then the abuser's goal of minimizing our perception of his abuse is often successful.

It's helpful instead to realize that abuse is a Fifth Commandment problem. Abuse is violence. It's an attitude of contempt toward the victim and entitlement for the abuser. Abuse isn't about marriage; it's about murder. Just as much as God wants us to uphold his holy will for marriage, he wants us to protect his gifts of health and life.

This distinction will affect the way we interact with both abuser and victim. A counselor will want to counsel abuser and victim separately, both for the safety of the victim and in order to not give the impression that victim and abuser are equally to blame. (Local women's shelters can provide referrals to counseling specialists for each.) A Christian friend will want to help protect the victim not only with physical safety but also by not betraying her confidence, by not offering pressure-inducing comments like "Why don't you just leave," and by not passing along messages from her abuser or only listening to his side of the story.

Finally, pastors and Christian friends will want to direct abusers to true repentance and abuse victims to full hope in Christ. Recognize that the abuser is well-practiced at denying his own guilt. Denial is not only how he gets away with abuse, but also how he has been justifying his own actions. We offer Christ's forgiveness only when the abuser confesses his guilt before God by acknowledging the reality of his abuse and accepting its consequences—which may take months or years of professional counseling rather than minutes in the pastor's office.

Recognize also that the victim of abuse is suffering greatly and needs to know Christ's love for her. She hurts not only from the abuse itself but also from feelings of guilt and worthlessness. She needs to hear again and again how Jesus paid for her guilt, real or perceived, and how he makes her whole with righteousness that she cannot find in herself but only in him.

Christ's love alone can stop the violence of abuse and heal its wounds. As part of Christ's body, you can speak and show his love to abusers and victims of abuse in ways that will help rather than hurt.

FOR FURTHER READING

Bancroft, Lundy. "Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men." New York: Berkley, 2002.

Brewster, Susan. "Helping Her Get Free: A Guide for Families and Friends of Abused Women." Emeryville, CA: Seal, 2006. Originally published under the title "To Be an Anchor in the Storm." New York: Ballantine, 1997.



Health and Wellness Committee

Ministry to the aging: It's not for pastors only!

Robert Hochmuth is retired from full-time ministry, but is still ministering to the retired. He lives in San Jose, Calif.

With the number of aging and infirm increasing, several of our members realized it was an opportunity to enlist and prepare more volunteers to: a) minister to other members, supplementing what one called worker can accomplish, and b) reach out to the unchurched residing side-by-side with our people.

Some may voice a troubled prayer request. Some may be receptive to a folder presenting God's basic message of sin and grace in plain language and in a format friendly to fading vision. Appreciative administrators may provide names of "no preference" residents not being visited by any church.

Another scenario: meeting for Bible study with a member or two—and perhaps with invited friend(s)—can develop into a scheduled and publicized small group. This creates opportunities for members of all ages to serve as accompanists, song leaders, or wheelchair assistants. Getting acquainted with residents can lead to being more comfortable in conversations regarding sin and grace. Then too, precious hymns draw minds and hearts together at the cross.

Whether the approach will be going to bedsides and leaving literature where welcome, or arranging for group meetings, volunteers will desire some orientation and preparation. They can gain confidence from the Word and direction from the experience of the pastor and others. Potential recruits need to know they can get in at an entry level working with mentors or partners.

We will want to recognize that not all residents are troubled believers; some are troubled doubters, and others still need to recognize the consequences of sin and their inability to rescue themselves.

In any case, preparing visitors will definitely call for reviewing the basics of law and gospel, as in Romans 1–8, and for consideration

of frequently asked questions. A variety of helps and study guides is available from Northwestern Publishing House (nph.net) and other sources.

In today's world we do well to alert our people to prevalent humanistic ideas about end-of-life issues.

Our scriptural message dare not change, but when it comes to method there are some suggestions we may want to consider. Foremost is being sure we use language that will communicate with people who have minimal familiarity with the Bible.

Experienced visitors suggest that bedside ministry not be limited to just "reading at" an aged person, but leaving a handout of the Scripture for the devotion in large print to read and retain (or pass along).

In addition to getting God's message across, another significant role of member visitors is taking time to listen to the aging for whom the days go slow, but the years are going fast. Lord, employ us to serve with our ears as well as our voices.

The senior outreach ministry at Apostles, San Jose, Calif., has developed resources, including letters to administrators and to families of new residents, describing their ministry. They also have many large print devotional folders. For samples, e-mail rhochmuth@apostlessj.org.

Visiting a person with short-term memory loss

Curt Seefeldt is director of church relations for The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn.

Sadly, people with dementia often suffer alone. Even though we want to stay connected—having the conversations we used to have—it's hard.

Frequently, the reason is short-term memory loss. Of those with Alzheimer's disease, 90 percent experience short-term memory loss. Many who have other forms of dementia experience it too. It means a person can't remember the recent past, even words spoken just minutes earlier. So how can you still have a meaningful visit?

Give the gift of presence

In many cases, just being there is a gift. Even if you don't have a conversation, your half-hour presence is enough. Enter the room, identify yourself, and explain that you stopped because you wanted her to know you were thinking about her. Bring a card to leave as a reminder of your visit.

Come with a plan

Simply coming to listen to the story your friend or family member tells over and over again is a plan. She repeats the story because her short-term memory loss blocks her ability to know she's doing it. Telling her she just told you that story might lead to a confrontation. She might think you are making fun of her. However, when you



give her your undivided attention, without trying to correct her, it will likely mean a lot to her. You are listening to her! Many of her friends aren't giving her that kind of attention.

Bring something familiar such as a scrapbook with family pictures. Talk about the events and share your memories. Bags of corn or soybeans might bring back recollections for a farmer; garden seeds can trigger recall for a gardener. Bring an object and talk about your common experiences. Tell your aunt how you so enjoyed her mashed potatoes as you place her old masher into her hands.

Plan to talk about shared experiences—the trip you took together or the time you both laughed so hard you couldn't stop. If she suddenly finishes the story for you, let her do it and enjoy the moment.

Sing and pray. For our Christian friends, singing the verses of Jesus Loves Me, This I Know might lead them to join you in singing, "Yes, Jesus loves me" as the chorus repeats. Many with advanced memory loss will join in the words of the Lord's Prayer. Try it, speaking slowly and gently.

Savor the moments

There will be times you know you connected. Maybe it was words. Maybe it was only a look of peace that wasn't there when you arrived. When it happens, remember what worked. What connected today will likely connect the next time you visit.

Savor the gift you are giving. You are showing Jesus' love by showing that you care. You are remembering "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40). It's what Jesus asks us to do to show our thanks to him for his love for us.

Curt Seefeldt has authored the booklet, "It's Alzheimer's – It's Time for Extraordinary Love." To order a free copy, visit The Lutheran Home Association's website: tla.org/services/resources/

alzheimers-resources. Pastor Seefeldt also offers workshops providing emotional and spiritual care for people affected by dementia. Contact him at cseefeldt@tlha.org.

Resilient Ministry: a gospel approach to recovery

Jason Jonker is a participant and volunteer with Resilient Ministry at CrossWalk, Laveen, Ariz.

The numbers are sobering, even if the behavior is not.

- In 2015, over 27 million people in the U.S. were using illegal drugs or misusing prescription drugs. (Retrieved December 2016 from addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/executive-summary.)
- Among Christians, 64% of men and 15% of women admit to watching pornography at least once a month, while 50% of pastors struggle with the temptation of Internet pornography. (Retrieved December 2016 from covenanteyes.com/pornstats.)

How can the church impact a culture struggling with addictions and life-consuming sins?

Many addictions groups focus on steps or principles to follow. The emphasis is on “doing.” That’s not all bad—some guidelines and suggestions can be helpful when individuals are making changes. But “working harder” to achieve recovery can be overwhelming, or may lead to pride in one’s own efforts.

Resilient Ministry brings the gospel into recovery. “Work harder” is replaced with “rest in Jesus.” In some support groups the “higher power” must remain anonymous. Resilient groups are Scripture-saturated and Christ-exalting.

CrossWalk, a WELS congregation in Laveen, Ariz., offers Resilient meetings weekly. Sessions begin with the whole group gathering for prayer and review of key Bible passages. Then the attendees divide into men’s and women’s small groups to share their stories and study God’s Word.

No matter what type of struggle one is having, they are accepted at Resilient. Each person openly confesses sin and shares brokenness in a small group setting. Following a period of confession and self-disclosure, the good news of the gospel is pronounced. This pattern of confession and forgiveness helps each person put to death their old sinful self with its desires. People who once felt alone in their battle find a community where sin cannot hide and the gospel shows its power.

People who once felt alone in their battle find a community where sin cannot hide and the gospel shows its power.

Like most recovery groups, attendance fluctuates. Community awareness is a key to finding new participants outside the congregation. Resilient meets at the same high school where CrossWalk gathers for worship.

A partnership with the Apache Celebrate Recovery group at Whiteriver, Ariz., recently led to joint fellowship at a public park, followed by recovery meetings right in the park, with first-time visitors welcome. A Facebook page (facebook.com/LutheranRecoveryMinistries) also provides a window into our group. Regular e-mail devotions share the conviction and comfort of Scripture and maintain the connection with those who struggle.

At the heart of Resilient is the focus on the Word and meditation on its law/gospel message for renewal. To learn more, contact resilient@crosswalkphoenix.com.



Message from the Director

Show Me Your Mighty Hand: Peace from God’s Word for special needs moms

Jim Behringer is director of the Commission on Special Ministries

Rarely do we find devotional literature written by Christians whose burdens are heavy and will not go away. The chapters of *Show Me Your Mighty Hand* (Wendy Heyn, Northwestern Publishing House, 2016) were written by nine mothers of children who are developmentally or intellectually disabled, some severely. They have written their personal stories as meditations on Mary, the mother of Jesus. There are no easy answers in this book, no facile pretense that all is well, to cover up sorrow and pain. The authors are women who love their children and find joy and beauty in them, but they are also women who endure anxiety, rejection, and judgment, not to mention the physical burden of care.

I recommend this book for parents with the same struggle, but even more so for people who bear other burdens. You will find kindred hearts in the writers of these meditations, and perhaps a perspective on your own problems. And if you are one of those people who have seen a child melt down in public and cast a critical eye on the parent, I think this book will break your heart with sorrow and compassion. It points all readers to the promises of our heavenly Father and his abiding love.



Chaplain Certification Program Committee

Financial assistance for Chaplain Certification classes

The Chaplain Certification Program Committee is accepting applications for financial aid of up to \$400 upon the successful completion of an online course in the program.

Applicants must be a member of the WELS, enrolled in the Chaplain Certification Program, and have already taken one required class. To obtain a form, e-mail specialministries@wels.net.

The following three-credit courses are offered during the Spring 2017 semester (January 4 to May 5):

- **Communicating Forgiveness (THE9520)**

A study of the Scriptural teaching of forgiveness and the many ways this truth can be communicated vividly and meaningfully by God's messengers. (Howard Lyon, instructor)

- **Chaplaincy Issues and Fieldwork (THE9522)**

An overview of chaplaincy, related issues, and fieldwork experience in a specific area of chaplain ministry. (Daniel Krause, instructor)

- **The Spiritual Side of PTSD (THE9601)**

Helps spiritual advisors recognize the signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and provide appropriate spiritual care. (Paul Ziemer, instructor)

Learn more at mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education.



Hand in Hand with WELS Special Ministries

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

To subscribe to the email 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.

Mission for the Visually Impaired

Instead of Eyes

Lorraine K. Raabe loved her career as a nurse and her pastime of writing poetry. She now suffers from macular degeneration, and encourages those with vision difficulty to contact WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired (wels.net/mvi; phone 651-291-1536) and use their many resources, like audio versions of Forward in Christ and morning devotions.

It's in the family genes, I always knew,
My mother and her mother, too.

Their eyesight dimmed as years took their toll.
The spark of light went missing from their soul.
And at that time the thought occurred to me
That, somewhere in the future, I might find it hard to see.

I made a list that would abound
Within God's precious gift of sound.

Jesus' words in hymns of praise,
Sermons telling of His grace,
A baby's cry, a child's laughter
Shall fill my heart forever after.

Bird songs filling nearby trees,
Sporadic buzzing of honey bees,
A thunder clap in falling rain,
The whistle of a distant train.

A choir's voice from balcony,
The strain of strings in symphony
Evoke a thrill of joy in me.

Cascading falls on rocks beneath –
Their powerful force beyond belief,
Oceans crashing into shore,
A kitten's mew, a lion's roar.

Friendly words from those I love,
Prayers from them to God above.

For these I thank God when I rise:
For hearing ears instead of eyes.