



Military Services

Guarding the faith of our faithful guardians

Lucas Hendricks serves on the Lutheran Military Support Group (lutheranmilitary.org) and is a member of Trinity, Woodbridge, Va.

Death. For the Christian, that word has lost the terror of a permanent event. We know that death is the beginning of life eternal in paradise. But what if your vocation regularly brings you face to face with mortality? You crave the reminder that death is temporary, because it looks, smells, and feels so permanent.

Our military men and women are either in combat, recovering from combat, or preparing to go into combat. They need soul care, but church involvement with the state is problematic. Attending a local congregation is an option—when they are stationed near one and have time to attend. But when deployed, or stationed far from a confessional church, they lose access to the sacrament and mutual encouragement. Yes, technology—when available—can connect

them to biblically-sound resources. Yes, they can always read God's Word. But what hungry souls they become after many months away from their Christian brothers and sisters!



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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Meanwhile, the military chaplaincy travels with them. They may hear familiar prayers and hymns, receive words of comfort and encouragement. But they also hear unfamiliar doctrine and subtle error that may scratch “itching ears.” All views are considered equal. If you think their Christian faith will be attacked in college, picture the same trials in the pressure of combat! The church has an obligation to their sheep that volunteer to be sheepdogs* for a season. So what can we do?

Service members

- Know the regulations governing religious accommodation (such as for practices like our view of fellowship and close communion).
- Take an active role in your own soul care—what the military calls spiritual fitness. This is about your readiness for combat and your resilience when faced with the horror of war.
- Find out if there is a WELS/ELS church near you by going to yearbook.wels.net/unitsearch. Call the pastor to request his services.
- Contact WELS Military Services (military@wels.net) and ask what they need from you.
- Support your local congregation and WELS Military Services with your offerings.

Pastors

- Learn about installations near you and introduce yourself to the senior chaplain.
- Contact WELS Military Services (military@wels.net) to learn what sheep may be in your pasture. They can also offer suggestions for effective ministry.
- Call on troops and their families at home. Become familiar with their circumstances.
- Visit them at work. Meet their chaplain and their commander.
- Invite them to take on tasks in your congregation that fit their schedule and abilities.

Synod leaders

- The Armed Forces Chaplaincy Board needs to hear from you, not for their benefit, but for the benefit of our members in service.
- Can we get WELS/ELS recognized as an option for religious preference? This would offer another statistical reporting avenue; more important, it would alert leadership and the unit chaplain to the unique religious needs under their command.
- Sixteen years of conflict have taken their toll and WELS/ELS service members are not immune. Because of the military's organization, they can be isolated from the greatest source of resiliency, the means of grace. Suicide and divorce, risky and illegal behaviors are symptoms of the stress. What a huge opportunity for our God! He offers the cure for sin, fear, hurt, hatred, war, death. What a huge opportunity for his church! We have the medicine of the Gospel.

* *The analogy refers to citizens (sheep), attackers (wolves), and protectors (sheepdogs).*



It's different in Deutschland

Paul Horn is chairman of the Military Services Committee and pastor of Mighty Fortress Lutheran Church, Hiram, Ga.

I have to pay to use the restroom at the gas station? I don't get free refills on my coffee? I have to pay for water at the restaurant, and tell the waiter if I want my water “still” or with bubbles? What do you mean I can't call an Uber? Isn't that a German company? They don't speak English in this village? Doesn't everybody speak English? No stores are open on Sunday? But I don't have everything I need to make dinner tonight!

Americans living on the German economy soon discover that some cultural norms in the United States are not normal in Europe. Even with global trade and Amazon there are some things you just can't get in Germany. My wife and I experienced some of this “culture shock” this summer when we visited our civilian chaplain, Pastor Don Stuppy and his wife Marge, who serve the spiritual needs of our WELS members scattered throughout Europe.

Don and Marge were just six months into their new ministry when we arrived. We spent the next two weeks traveling over 1800km (1180 miles) with them to Munich, Vilseck, Zurich, Ramstein Air Base, and Wicker. This is a typical two weeks for the Stuppy's. Once a month they also squeeze in the Netherlands and England!

One thing Americans cannot get in Germany every Sunday, especially Christians who belong to a confessional Lutheran church body, is the divine service with Holy Communion in English. Over two weekends the four of us met with WELS members in their homes or apartments, a military base chapel or a community center. The gatherings ranged from eight to twenty souls. Some locations had a piano, other places we used music from a laptop. But every place had what these American Lutherans needed: a familiar liturgy, God's Word proclaimed, Christ crucified preached, his body and blood distributed, hymns sung in praise and thanks, their Savior's blessing received with grateful hearts.

WELS members in Europe expressed their deep appreciation. Even though our chaplain is only able to visit them once or twice a month, they crave that time to be fed and nourished and encouraged, to hear the promises of their Savior, and to build up their brothers and sisters.

Here in the United States we can fill our coffee cup as many times as we want without paying extra. We can order a glass of water at a restaurant and not see it on the bill. We can shop on Sunday. We can go to church every week. Some of our brothers and sisters cannot. We thank God for providing this ministry in Europe so that we are able to faithfully bring God's Word and sacrament to his people.

What can you do to support your brothers and sisters? Pray for our civilian chaplain, his wife, and the people they serve. Email our chaplain (welschaplain@gmail.com) and let him know you're praying for our ministry in Europe. Consider adopting the European Civilian Chaplaincy as your next mission project in your school or church. Learn more about our services to the armed forces at wels.net/military. Then, instead of talking about all the things we can't do, you'll be saying, "Look what our God has enabled us to do!"

New online training for military contact pastors

Paul Wolfgramm, a member of the Military Services Committee, served with the U.S. Marines in Iraq.

A new narrated power point available at WELS.net University offers an introduction to the military mindset. The courses on WELS.net University, an online learning environment designed to support the training needs of the Wisconsin Synod, are free. Visit wnu.wels.net to create an account, explore the course categories, and enroll. "Training for Military Contact Pastors" is available under the Special Ministries heading.

The course addresses the need for making God's Word available to our members on active duty, and offers tips and suggestions for our pastors to reach them. WELS Military Services can bring the Word to those who cannot regularly attend a Sunday morning church service. In addition, military members face potent and regular temptations such as alcohol abuse and pornography, and face unique challenges associated with marriage and post traumatic stress disorder. The second part of the presentation discusses the importance of a solid Christian education before entering the military; Distinctive Religious Group Leaders; ways to address the transient and remote nature of the military; worship locations; and ways to involve military veterans from the congregation.

The course is available to anyone, but is especially tailored to military contact pastors (MCP's) without military experience. WELS has over 100 MCP's throughout the continental United States, serving congregations close to military installations. Although these men are called primarily to serve their local congregation, they also perform vital work in reaching out to the military. Active duty members rely on MCP's to be familiar with military protocol,

to serve them with God's Word and sacraments, and to provide Christian counseling. The training course ensures that MCP's have a basic understanding of the military and the synod resources available for their work.

Finally, all members should be aware of wels.net/refer. If you or someone you love is on active duty, in the Guard or Reserves, please register at this easy-to-use website. Without this information, WELS Military Services cannot provide spiritual support to those who are in our armed forces. Registered personnel receive a welcome package and regular devotions, plus ways to connect with our national civilian chaplain, our European civilian chaplain, our military contact pastors, and fellow WELS members on base.

When service members deploy, move overseas, permanently change station, or leave the military, PLEASE UPDATE wels.net/refer. (Don't forget to notify your pastor as well.) Military service removes our members from their former and familiar spiritual support group. Please go *right now* to wels.net/refer and help connect yourself or a loved one with God's Word.



Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

"I think you could be good at it"

Bill Truebenbach is a staff minister and program consultant for Jesus Cares Ministries, a ministry of The Lutheran Home Association. His home church is Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.

Twenty-nine years of public sector work had done me in. I resigned my full-time job for a no-time job. God has always supplied, so I walked my streets praying for work in his field. A guest pastor had given me the itch by talking about volunteer ministry, and visits to a prison with my brother had given me a taste. There had to be more I could do.

One day my pastor dropped by with some news. "They're looking for someone for Jesus Cares Ministries, and I think you could be good at it," he suggested. "Great!" I replied, before going to look up what Jesus Cares Ministries (JCM) was. That was sixteen years ago.

I had no background in what The Lutheran Home Association (TLHA) and JCM were looking for, but that did not stop me from applying. They hired me! Really? I now reflect on how God has always been in control, and the many blessings he has provided to this sinner. He has allowed me to be part of a ministry that serves people with a developmental disability. He allowed me to become a second career staff minister. And now, as I approach retirement at the end of this year, he will allow me to continue advocating for families who have a loved one with special needs.

How did I learn to work with people who have a developmental disability? I read, I studied, I attended seminars and webinars. They help. Yet the best way is to just work with someone with special needs. Many who do this work have said, "We do not teach them; they teach us."

One who became a close friend was David Koss. Although he wore hearing aids in both ears and had some cognitive challenges, he was able to live independently. We did so many things together: basketball games, football games, movies, concerts, restaurants, fishing. David faithfully called me almost every day to see how my day was going, what I was doing, and if any new JCM programs were starting. He went with me to an annual meeting in Belle Plaine, Minn., so he could see the TLHA campus and I interviewed him in front of the attendees. When I asked David what he wanted to see in the future he said, "That there is a JCM program in every church in our synod."

David's passion for the ministry fueled my passion, and reminded me of the importance of serving all people. In his last years he moved to a facility where he could be cared for. It was a joy for me to speak at his memorial service and share his faith one more time. David loved the Lord, and I know many more like him in the ministry.

There are so many memories, joys, victories, and satisfactions I could share: being at the baptism of an adult with special needs; the confirmation of someone with special needs; hearing their professions of faith; seeing their smiles; going to the Lord's Supper with them on their first time; a journey to Malawi, Africa for Jesus Cares. What more could one ask for?

I have been blessed to help churches and pastors with their disability ministry needs. JCM has grown, yet many are still not being served. There is a great need for our churches to consider a disability ministry such as JCM Bible class or simplified "Worship at

the Cross" service. Learn more at ttha.org/jesus-cares-ministries or call Rev. Joel Gaertner at 888-600-TLHA (8542).

There is also an urgent need for parents of special needs children to be connected with other Christian parents who are starting or have been on that journey. My hope and prayer is that through the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry branch of Special Ministries (wels.net/iddm) I can connect those parents online, with small parent-mentoring groups. Get them connected. Get them talking.

Why? They're looking for someone. Want to join me? I think you could be good at it.

Wheeling around Camp SOUTH

My name is Alex Timothy Heldman. I am 12 years old and going into 7th grade. I live in Wisconsin but heard of Camp SOUTH through my Uncle Duane Vance. Camp SOUTH, which stands for Sharing Our Unity Through Him, is held in Covington, Ga. for kids entering 4th through 8th grade.

I was born with a condition called spina bifida so I have difficulty walking without braces for my legs. My parents decided to let me try out the camp and it was lots of fun! The food was good, the kids were nice, and there was a lot to do. This was my first time at camp and I had to do things a little differently, since I have used a wheelchair since I was three years old. In order to get around the campground I rode in my van with my dad since the camp is very hilly.

I was thankful that the camp allowed me to skip the water, mud, and running events and go bowling instead. I didn't bowl my all-time best but still had a lot of fun. I was surprised that we were able to have drinks and snacks as we bowled. Tuesday night's "Survivor Challenge: You Can't Win Trivia" was great since we could party to the music while we answered Bible trivia questions. After the evening activities, during free time I played golf-cornhole and pingpong until it was snack time. I also enjoyed watching the other kids play ship-shore down by the lake and making s'mores on Thursday night.

I was on the black team and we didn't win the victory medals on Tuesday or Wednesday. Finally on Thursday the black team won the victory medals after the "Recruiter vs. Recruiter: Battle of Honor" and in bowling, which meant I got to go to the front of the line for lunch and dinner on Thursday.

There was so much to do that each day just flew by. We were encouraged to arrive at the activity center early before devotions so everyone was on time and we could watch fun videos until devotion started. There were even board games that we could check out and play if we had extra energy. I would say that my favorite things about camp were playing games in the evening and the music that was part of each morning and evening devotion. It was great to have a live band to lead all the praise songs. As we were getting in the van to leave on Friday morning I told my dad: "Camp was so fun! Can we come back next year?"





My mom and dad were kind of nervous to allow me to attend the camp because it was not specific to special needs, but Pastor Jon Enter did a good job familiarizing them with the layout of the camp facilities so they were well prepared in what to bring for me for the week. I would encourage other children with special needs or different needs to not be afraid to try Camp SOUTH. It was an amazing time and I am glad God gave me this opportunity to hear his Word and make new friends.

For more information about Camp SOUTH, send an email to: info@HopeLutheranWPB.com.

A purpose in disability

Elise Rosenbaum is a senior at Martin Luther College. She grew up at Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.

Growing up with a brother who has Down syndrome had more impact on me than I initially realized. I never saw Matt as being that much different from my other siblings—in fact, some people would ask if Matt and my youngest brother Adam were twins. I cannot imagine life without Matt and I know that God had a purpose in placing him in my family.

Last December, Matt put on his wish list: “Elise home for Christmas.” But I would not be there because I was going on a Kingdom Workers service immersion trip to Malawi. I was thrilled to be going to Africa after desiring it for so long.

My interest in Africa began when a new girl joined my class in sixth grade. Her family had just moved back to the United States after her dad had served for several years as a missionary in Malawi. I loved hearing her stories and dreamed of going there myself someday. Just nine years later, my dream became a reality. I asked four girls to join me: Bekah Bartz (the missionary’s daughter), Elizabeth Bergemann,

Brittany Krause, and Emily Unke. We applied, were interviewed, and were eager to learn and grow from the experiences ahead.

Two short weeks in Africa taught me a great deal. One week was spent helping with Vacation Bible School; the other was observing the disability ministry. I loved getting to see the work that they were doing. There is no fancy medical equipment and the volunteers do not have much specific training, but it was incredible to see what they are able to accomplish with what they do have.

Chikondi, a young boy who has cerebral palsy, was a great example of this. The volunteers set up sticks and Chikondi had to practice walking over them. Once he made it through all of them, we cheered. He had the BIGGEST smile ever. It was so rewarding to see Chikondi’s and the volunteers’ faces light up with pride at his accomplishment.

The simplified “Worship at the Cross” services they put on are very similar to those put on by Jesus Cares Ministries in the United States. The volunteers go to the people since traveling to the church is hard, if not impossible, for them.

Their greatest challenge, however, is changing the mindset toward disability in their culture. The president of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa explained that many people in Africa see a disability as a curse. They hide their loved ones away in their homes and don’t give them the proper care. Families don’t bring their loved ones to the church for help. It is by word of mouth that the church finds out about those in their villages who need their help. The ministry’s vital task is to share the news that God has rescued all people from sin and he has a purpose for all people.

The disability ministry in Malawi is serving God by providing assistance and support, as well as sharing Jesus’ love for those who have a disability. Rather than being a punishment for sin, God has a purpose in disability.

Interested in this service immersion trip? Learn more at kingdomworkers.com/opportunities.



Chaplain Certification Program

Who will serve those who serve?

DiAnn Krigbaum is a member of New Life Lutheran Church, Rockford, Ill.

What happens when a police officer's family is in crisis and needs to call 911? Easy answer, right? When I'm finished sharing my experience you might have a different perspective.

I had more than twenty years on the job as a Rockford, Ill. police officer. For over half of my career I served as a detective, investigating and fighting for justice for victims of violence. Too often those victims were women, children, and families.

In 2008 my family became the victim when we were traumatized by divorce. My twin sons had just begun college; my 12-year-old daughter was in sixth grade. When Satan attacks us emotionally it affects us physically and spiritually as well. I was a severely depressed mother who had become the primary caregiver. I was on overload—physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually.

My daughter was profoundly affected. Ashlee has an intellectual disability and had no words to express her pain. We adopted her at age five, when she had already endured more rejection, shame, and loss than someone her age should. A crisis social worker came to my home to help with the anger and fallout.

As the situation escalated the social worker told me to call 911. I couldn't. I froze. I was the police! I was supposed to help solve and fix problems. My mind was racing. What would my co-workers and supervisors think of me? The enormous shame and pain from loss and failure left me unable to move.



The collateral damage severely wounded every member of my family. I nearly lost my job. Had God abandoned us?

But God did not forget about me and my family. He appeared "undercover" in the form of a chaplain. My pastor at the time was also a volunteer police chaplain. He came to my rescue by repeatedly reminding me that God was not trying to harm me but to give me hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11-13). As my companion at difficult court appearances, doctor visits, and therapy appointments, he showed me what it means to be a faithful, merciful friend and advocate. He became my spiritual advisor and listened to more tearful conversations than I can count.

By God's grace, I survived in my career until age 50, when I retired with a police pension and sufficient means to take care of my family as a single mother.

That's when Pastor Phil asked me to take chaplain courses with him through Martin Luther College. He suggested it would help my faith grow and allow others to learn from my experiences.

In an online forum with other pastors and lay students, I was able to share my experiences as a police officer and spiritually wounded WELS member. This provided healing, learning, spiritual growth, and friendships with many Christian friends and called workers. In 2014 I received my Chaplain Certificate from Martin Luther College.

Since then I have been serving as a volunteer police chaplain in my community. God has provided several opportunities to serve families and women in crisis. I've been able to witness and minister to them, telling them about my God and Savior. He is a just and merciful Father who fights for the fatherless, the widows, and the orphans.

We all have a story. God does not define us by our failures. Rather he calls us back to him to remind us who we are—children of God.

Visit mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/wels-chaplain-certificate to learn more about the Chaplain Certification Program.



Care Committee for Called Workers

Assist your new called worker with the transition

Matt Kock is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Minocqua, Wis.

Our church and school recently welcomed three called workers and their families. We wanted to help them with the transition and on-boarding process, which would provide a good test for our new Care Committee for Called Workers (CCCW).

We streamlined communication as much as possible, with one main point of contact from our congregation and school. We also tried to consolidate information into a single message vs. sending multiple notes. We recognized how busy their lives would be and wanted to simplify things as much as possible. By starting the process well in advance of their arrival dates, they wouldn't feel rushed.

Pastor Stephen Luchterhand notes: "This cross-country move (Arizona to Wisconsin) was a challenging one for our family, especially because our children are older (late high school to college age). The evident care and concern, attention to detail and intentional communication, and enthusiastic search for solutions by Trinity's CCCW lessened our anxiety considerably and removed considerable barriers during the process."

It's important to keep the called worker's family in mind during this process. We placed pictures of the new called workers and their families in the fellowship hall shortly after the calls had been accepted. Not only did this allow our members to put a face with the name, but it reminded the congregation to keep the families in their prayers.

We also asked about the family's areas of interest. For those seeking employment we came up with a list of businesses and contacts for them to consider, as well as congregation members who could be used as references. Our tuition fund application was shared with students attending Luther Prep School.

Teachers Mike and Melissa Wieting were appreciative. "It was so nice to be referred to members of the community who could help us with buying a home and moving to the area. They had names of a realtor, mortgage company, an insurance contact, and a moving company that led us through the intimidating process. We had never had to purchase our own home before so we had lots of questions. Our care committee even stepped in to preview homes on our behalf before we made a special trip to the area to see a property. Being a few hours away, an overwhelming process was made easier due to our CCCW."

While the Call cover letter shared a summary of compensation and benefits, there were many details that needed to be addressed during the transition, such as: the timing and frequency of payroll; local banking options; tax withholding elections (yes, Social Security can be withheld on line 6 of Form W-4 for ministers of the gospel); and contributions to the Health Savings Account and 403b plan. There are nuances between the different health insurance plans offered through WELS. Understanding these differences, and/or coordinating a call with a benefit specialist to review together, would be productive.

Now that the called workers are here, we have stayed in touch. From helping to find a chiropractor and contractor, to directing them to a good beach for a family swim, there was much to share as they settled in. Most important, we "pray continually" for our called workers (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This encouragement has become a regular part of our CCCW report to the congregation.

Interested in starting a Care Committee at your congregation? Find resources and a how-to video at csm.welsrc.net/download-csm/called-worker-care.



Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Luther and sign language

Amid a host of Reformation 500 celebration ideas, from Lego Luther figures to books and movies, this one stands out. The Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MDHH) has produced an eight-minute video that uses sign language, voice, and captioning to explain Luther's Seal. The Reformer designed the seal to symbolize the heart of his teachings about faith in Jesus. As a graphic adds each part of the seal, Matthew Buchholz explains the meaning using American Sign Language.

The video is a special gift to deaf Lutherans who may be interested in learning about the symbolism of Luther's seal. MDHH also hopes that it will be used with children to teach them about Luther's seal while seeing it described in sign language.

You'll find the video at the Special Ministries Resource Center at csm.welsrc.net/mdhh. It will be a fun way to draw people into the anniversary celebration and show them the eternal blessing of faith in Jesus. Share it on social media and with your family, too!

Tuition grants for American Sign Language class

Martin Luther College is offering American Sign Language and Introduction to Deaf Culture (ASL 8001), an online, three-credit course, from January 3 to May 4, 2018. The course provides the basic foundation of American Sign Language through an overview



of deaf culture and an introduction to the signing of finger spelling and basic vocabulary with beginning-level conversations. The instructor is Matthew Buchholz, a member of the WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Here is what previous students have said:

"I never expected to receive so much from this experience. . . I have a deeper understanding of the culture, needs, and resources available to the deaf and hard of hearing community and a *whole bunch* of signs in my arsenal." (*Trisha*)

"I already have oodles and oodles of ideas on how I can revamp some of my lesson plans for next year to include sign language." (*Sandy*)

"Thank you also for making this course available and affordable. Beginning to learn ASL has been a wonderful challenge, but for me, learning about deaf culture in this course has been invaluable. I hope that this course is made available in the future so that more people can have a greater understanding of the deaf and hard of hearing." (*Cori*)

"I didn't really know what to expect when enrolling in this class. I would have never imagined learning all that we have learned." (*Jill*)

A limited number of \$450 grants toward tuition are available upon request and will be paid upon the completion of the course. Learn more at mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/registration. A poster to promote the class can be downloaded from the Special Ministries Resource Center at csm.welsrc.net/mission-for-the-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing.



Health and Wellness Committee

2018 WELS Lutheran Seniors convention

Seniors from any congregation in the WELS or ELS should set aside Oct. 10-12, 2018, for the OWLS Convention for Seniors, which will be held at the beautiful Osthoff Resort, in Elkhart Lake, Wis. The theme of the convention will be "Finish Your Race."

Whether your congregation has a seniors group or an OWLS chapter or no senior gatherings for fun and service, you'll find fellowship, learning, and inspiration at the OWLS Convention for Seniors. Watch the WELS website in spring of 2018 for more information.

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.