



Compassion ministry seeks to include everyone

God made each of us with different strengths and weaknesses. But people with disabilities often find that others decide for them how they can and cannot participate in church life, even though they have as much interest in the work of the church as those who are fully abled. If we fail to include and accommodate people, both the church and the excluded person suffer. Consider the following tips about working together in the kingdom.

Don't assume what someone can or cannot do

On first meeting someone, you don't know what they can understand or do. Some people may struggle to express themselves, yet can understand your communication without difficulty. People who use wheelchairs may have above-average intelligence. People who are blind are not necessarily hard of hearing. Get to know that individual rather than make assumptions.

Put the person first

Our primary identity is as redeemed children of God, not blind, deaf, crippled, etc. Person-first language makes the person, not the disability, the subject. If the disability isn't relevant, don't mention it. If it is relevant, put the person first (e.g. "a person who uses a wheelchair" rather than "a handicapped person"). Fear stems from ignorance, so take a few minutes to learn from the person with a disability, rather than avoid them. A simple conversation can eliminate fear and foster a relationship in love.

Build a social ramp, not just a wheelchair ramp

Making the first friend is the hardest. Train individuals in your congregation to reach out and be that first friend to someone with a disability. Have them introduce other members to the newcomer, and model how to communicate with the person who has a disability. Consider how you can be a "social ramp" for someone who longs for friendship yet has a difficult time with social interactions.

Address barriers to seeing and hearing

Large-print bulletins and hymnals work well in traditional worship settings. Some churches now use tablet computers to display worship slides in a user-friendly manner and allow those with disabilities to follow song lyrics, sermon notes, liturgy, and even announcements.

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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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A hearing loop linked to the church audio system can dramatically improve a person's ability to hear. Sign-language interpreters can be employed locally or through online services.

"Let the little children come to me"

Children with disabilities often leave the church, along with their families, when a frustrated Sunday school teacher says, "I'm sorry—I just can't do this anymore!" Give your teachers and youth leaders the resources they need to keep their classrooms welcoming for all students. Adding a second teacher to a classroom can make a world of difference.

Consider the whole family

Family members of persons with a disability face many extra stressors. Offering respite care for date nights, weekend getaways, or running errands shows sensitivity and love for the whole family.

Ask and listen

The best teaching resource we have may be the person in front of us. Ask questions like "What would you like to try doing that you haven't been able to explore yet?" Then be prepared to follow through!

Helping more people than you first thought

Consider how "universal design" concepts can help you reach people in your community. Not everyone learns best by listening to a spoken message, and the same tools that can help a person with an intellectual disability participate more fully in worship may benefit others, such as people learning English as a second language.

Everybody belongs

Some people make involuntary noises or movements that others find distracting in worship. Church leaders can model an attitude that makes everyone feel welcome and comfortable. Many people with disabilities have meaningful contact only with family and paid caregivers. Rarely do they have opportunity to form lasting friendships. Could your small group ministry include people with disabilities?

Everybody wants to serve

All people can contribute actively with their gifts. Be intentional about asking what people with disabilities would like to offer, and be careful not to decide for someone what they cannot do. The person with disabilities, like any person, will know best their own abilities.

Larry Povinelli is a disability rights attorney. He worships at Lamb of God, an inclusive congregation in Madison, Ala.

For more resources on including people with disabilities, e-mail specialministries@wels.net or call 414-256-3241.

Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Ministry

Failure is not an option possible

Our kids filed into the church pew and sat quietly through the whole service, hands in their laps. The elderly lady behind me leaned over to whisper a compliment: "Your kids are so well behaved!" They were *that* time...and that time *only*. In fact, it was a candlelight service and five of the six kids were sleeping. My wife and I laughed all the way home.

You see, we are not a discreet, unnoticeable, quiet, calm, sit-down dinner kind of household. We can't possibly pass ourselves off as a typical family. I don't like being the center of attention, yet it doesn't seem to bother my kids. When I reflect on our blessings, I can't help but think: this is God's plan. What an honor that he chose me to have a large family, that he chose my wife to be my life-long companion, that he chose these kids to be part of our family. I dare not say, "Let me think this over first."

I was at work when my wife called to excitedly announce that we were expecting twins. I was excited too, until she said, "One of them will be here tonight. On your way home from work you should stop and meet the other one at Children's Hospital." A typical wife gives her husband six-to-eight months' notice when expecting a child. My wife gave me less than six hours.

Our now-adopted twins were suffering from severe neglect and were being removed from a foster home. My wife, without hesitation or consultation, decided to bring them into our home. She didn't know their health conditions, or their background, or their legal status, or where they would sleep. She knew only that two children needed a home *now*. I am indescribably thankful for a wife who knows what needs to happen, takes action, and asks questions later.



Special camps for special needs campers

These WELS camps are designed for people with developmental disabilities:

- Camp BASIC (Brothers And Sisters In Christ) is for persons age 10 and older with moderate developmental disabilities. Two sessions are held at Wyalusing State Park in western Wisconsin: June 16-21 and June 22-27, 2020. Register at campbasic.com.
- Jesus Cares week at Camp Phillip in Wautoma, Wis. is June 29 – July 3, 2020, for those with mild to moderate disabilities who are ambulatory. Register at campphillip.com.
- Joy in Jesus retreats in Minnesota are for those 18 and older. Register at jesuscarescamps.org.
 - Camp Omega near Waterville, September 18-20, 2020
 - Green Lake Bible Camp near Spicer, October 11-13, 2020

Our nuclear family has been sewn together through adoption, foster care, biological children, and kinship care. We all proudly share the same last name. Our home is a blend of four biological families, three ethnicities, four toddlers, two elementary age kids, and three adults. Currently five people in our home have special needs. We utilize wheelchairs, feeding tubes, speech devices, orthotics, braces, accessible vehicles, oxygen concentrators, suction devices, incontinence supplies, and much more. Our kids are supported by a team of 17 doctors in 13 specialties. We average eight therapies and three doctor appointments each week.

If all that had been presented to me ten years ago, I would have been terrified of failure. But now I can tell you: God has blessed our family with adequate financial means, more-than-adequate access to medical equipment, and a well-trained team of doctors, nurses, and therapists. He has surrounded our family with love and provided unthinkable possibilities.

We've all heard the phrase, "Failure is not an option." But "option" suggests a personal ability to fail or succeed. Failure is not possible when we trust in our Savior. As Christ lay in the grave, it appeared to the world—and to his disciples—that he had failed. But his death and resurrection were all part of the plan, and God's plan cannot fail.

Not every family or person is equipped to take on foster care or adoption. But God laid before us uncertainties that looked like options to fail, then turned them into successes for me and my family.

What possibilities has God laid at your feet?

Jeb Lucht and his wife Cindy are raising their remarkable family in Kewaskum, Wis. They are members at Good Shepherd, West Bend. He serves as chairman of WELS Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry.

Find resources for those with special needs at wels.net/iddm.



Military Services

Combat trauma support group demonstrates love

Leonard Ravenhill tells a story in *The Last Day Newsletter* about a group of tourists visiting a humble village. Passing an old man sitting beside a fence, a youth asked mockingly, "Hey mister, were any great men born in this village?" "Nope," said the old man, silencing their snickers, "only babies."

That's how we all start out, but along the way we gain wisdom in how to appreciate other people and their life experiences, so that we might love them as best we can in Christ. After all, people are God's true treasure. "For God so loved *the people of the world*..."

Learning how to best love and treasure soldiers affected by combat trauma or PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is a challenge we are embracing at Abiding Savior, Killeen, Texas. In addition to our gospel outreach to soldiers at nearby Fort Hood, we host a one-hour combat trauma support group on the first Thursday of each month.

Seven soldiers form the core of our group. They are grateful that we offer a meal before we meet. Breaking bread together gives these heroes time to open up and get to know our pastor and staff, and makes it easier to invite others.

Each session begins with a devotion. The group prays through selected psalms for faith-based optimism. Participants go home with a laminated verse to memorize and put into practice.

Next, we watch “Care and Counsel for Combat Trauma,” a series of DVDs from the American Association of Christian Counselors (available at crumilitary.org/store). An accompanying workbook, provided by our congregation, enables group members to earn a certificate by viewing all 30 videos and taking exams. Soldiers are not only finding relief for themselves but learning how to share relief with other sufferers.

Class members are free to interrupt a video at any point for discussion and sharing of concerns, fears, insights, and relief from the Word of God. Chaplain Dave Archer, a certified combat trauma counselor, is a great blessing to all who attend our sessions.

One lesson we have learned is that God gives us himself in the midst of “triggers.” A trigger happens when the past interrupts the present without apology, and often without warning. Soldiers testify that reaffirming Christ’s promise, “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you,” truly brings relief amid the most horrifying triggers.

“Listening is loving” is the other insight that has especially been impressed upon us. Combat trauma victims often are not heard and find it hard to open up. Few things say “I love you” more to a soldier with PTSD than honest listening. Jesus, help us listen, listen to understand, listen with empathy, and listen to learn how to pray for the one sharing.

Achieving relational greatness—the ability to love and cherish people as God’s true treasure—is a gift of his grace. Growing to love and cherish those who have incurred unseen wounds is challenging. Please pray for our efforts to do so at Abiding Savior and for all who suffer from combat trauma.

Tim Soukup serves soldiers of our country and soldiers of the cross as pastor at Abiding Savior, Killeen.



Care Committee for Called Workers

Proposed changes to improve retirement benefits

The WELS Retirement Strategy Committee, a special committee appointed by the Synodical Council several years ago, has announced proposed changes to the WELS retirement program. It is proposed that the WELS Pension Plan be frozen and replaced with a defined contribution plan, wherein all eligible workers would receive contributions to their accounts in the WELS Shepherd Plan.

After an extensive and prayerful study of many options, these changes are recommended because the defined contribution plan will better support our workers and our overall ministry efforts than the current Pension Plan, as well as stabilize costs over time for sponsoring organizations. Here’s more:

How will the retirement program work if the proposed changes take effect?

The sponsoring organization for each worker in eligible service will send a quarterly retirement payment to the WELS Benefit Plans Office, similar to how Pension Plan payments are currently remitted. A contribution will be deposited into the defined contribution plan account—the WELS Shepherd Plan—of each eligible worker on a quarterly basis. The contributions to a worker’s defined contribution plan account will vest immediately at the time the contributions are deposited to the account.

What will happen to earned pension benefits?

Workers will not lose any earned benefits. After a worker’s WELS service ends, the Pension Plan will pay the benefit earned for service performed through Dec. 31, 2020. If a worker dies before he or she begins receiving his or her Pension Plan benefit, the surviving spouse will be able to receive surviving spouse benefits from the Pension Plan.

How much will be contributed to each worker’s defined contribution plan account?

Beginning Jan. 1, 2021, all workers will receive a “base” contribution of \$500 per quarter of eligible full-time service.

Workers who are age 44 or older on Jan. 1, 2021, will receive an “additional” contribution per quarter of eligible full-time service besides the base contribution. This is because contributions made to the defined contribution plan account of a worker who is closer to retirement do not have as much time to earn investment returns before the worker retires. Learn more about this at welsbpo.net.

How will contributions to the defined contribution plan accounts be invested?

A worker can choose his or her own fund(s) and/or portfolio from the options available in the defined contribution plan based on the

worker's personal goals. The account of a worker who does not make an investment election will be invested in the default investment option, which will be the target retirement date fund that most closely aligns with the worker's projected retirement date based on the worker's age.

Can workers or their sponsoring organization make additional contributions to the defined contribution plan?

Yes, workers can save and invest their own money, and organizations can make additional contributions on behalf of their workers.

Other advantages to workers include immediate vesting, control over investments, and various ways to take distributions. Unlike the pension plan, any assets remaining in the account would pass to beneficiaries upon the death of the worker and spouse.

How much will a sponsoring organization be billed per worker and how will those funds be used?

The quarterly "total retirement payment" charged in 2021 will be the same as the quarterly Pension Plan contribution rates in 2020. The amount needed to fund the contributions to workers' defined contribution plan accounts will be submitted to the defined contribution plan. The remainder will be used to pay the frozen Pension Plan benefit obligations and the administrative expenses of both plans.

What are the next steps with regards to these proposed changes?

The proposed changes will be a significant topic on the agenda at each district convention in June 2020. A standard resolution will be provided for each district to review, discuss, and vote on during the convention. The plan is for a representative familiar with the proposed changes to attend each district convention. If each district approves the resolution with broad consensus, the proposed changes will likely be implemented on Jan. 1, 2021.

Learn more at welsbpo.net. There you will find a detailed FAQ, a video explaining the changes and the benefits, and a calculator to estimate benefits.

Freedom for the Captives

How God blessed me even in the storms of child abuse

It was all I ever knew. The screaming, the threats to harm me, the pain. My food intake was restricted. I was kept from the outside world. I believed all this was normal. I believed I was hopelessly wicked. I didn't tell anyone. There wasn't anyone to tell and no reason to ask for help. This was life as I knew it and if I wanted it to be good, I had to be a better person. That's just the way it was.

Then my eyes were opened. I slowly learned that my life was not normal; in fact, it had been riddled with abuse. There was a scary

world out there I hadn't known. People acted very differently from what had been my normal. I was dumped into a culture totally foreign to mine.

The more time I spent with Christians, the more I learned that my life hadn't been how God intended for a child to live. God never approved of the grudges held against me that made my soul burn with overwhelming guilt and terror at my sinfulness. God didn't approve of the horrible abuses I suffered at the hands of my parent. I wasn't the property of my parents, to do with as they saw fit. I was the dearly loved child of God.

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God never willed this upbringing on me: one filled with emotional, verbal, physical, and spiritual abuse. The scars were numerous and deep. No, he hadn't willed this life for me, but he allowed it to happen. Why did he allow it? That is a deep question that may never be entirely answered, but I have seen the good he brought out of the awful mess of my childhood.

Would I have the faith I have now, if I hadn't had to wrestle with pain and fear? Would I have the great hunger for God's Word if I hadn't been deprived of the truth for so long? What about my appreciation for forgiveness? Would I take it for granted if it hadn't been withheld from me for so long and in such painful ways? I don't know.

Certainly there are many who knew the truth their whole lives and cling to it with great strength. I have examples of that in some good friends of mine, but some people fall away after growing up in the Word. I know that I see God's grace and forgiveness as precious blessings after feeling I was without them for so long.

Then there's the understanding I gained from my past that I wouldn't have if I had been raised in a God-pleasing way. I understand abuse survivors. I have received a gift of extreme empathy from my struggles that drives me to help hurting people. I wouldn't trade that for anything.

Do I wish I hadn't been abused? Do I wish I had a normal upbringing? There are times I think about what it would have been like to grow up without abuse. I still have difficult struggles because of what I endured. Life would be much easier if I didn't have these struggles. While it never should have happened, I gained too many blessings through the abuse to wish I had never had this experience. My empathy for others, my faith that grew through my trials, and other great blessings came from what I went through.

If God gave me a choice to go back and either relive the awful abuse I went through and have a strong faith, or live a normal,

carefree childhood and fall away from God, I would choose to go through the abuse all over again. God knew what he was doing in allowing me to endure abuse. I'm honored he chose me.

Due to the sensitive nature of this article, the author's name has been withheld.

Freedom for the Captives is a ministry that equips the Body of Christ to protect children and empower abuse survivors. The website is freedomforcaptives.com.

What do I say to a sexual assault survivor?

Sexual assault terrifies those who have been victimized, leaving them frightened, depressed, ashamed, confused, and angry. Survivors are impacted sexually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I have ministered to women and men, young and old, who have experienced this type of life-changing trauma.

Here are some suggestions for pastors (and others) who want to say and do the right things for someone whose safety and dignity have been violated in this way.

- Pray with—and for—the survivor. Ask what they would like you to pray for. After you have spoken to God on their behalf, tell them you have done so.
- Use Scripture to proclaim God's comfort and encouragement, such as Psalm 34:18-19: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all."
- If the event is very recent, addressing safety and other immediate needs are top priorities. If the victim is a minor, comply with laws pertaining to mandatory reporting of child abuse. If the victim is an adult, provide information about facilities that specialize in treating such trauma. (Contact a Christian counseling agency, domestic violence shelter, or law enforcement to learn what resources are available in your community.) Offer support as the adult survivor decides whether they want to contact law enforcement. Help them to develop safety plans. Respect their decisions. They are likely feeling quite powerless, so it is important to empower them to make their own choices whenever possible.
- The ministry of simply being present is powerful. For many survivors, trust has been shattered. A pastor can be a source of comfort and offer hope that trust can be rebuilt with others. However, be sensitive. If a male committed the assault, the survivor may not feel at ease with another male, not even a pastor. Be very thoughtful about any physical contact: a hand on a shoulder, a hug, or even a handshake may not be well received at such a time.

- Empathetic listening is key. You don't need to have all the answers. Responses don't need to be eloquent. Gentle, loving affirmation and validation is often what is desired most.
- Not every sexual assault survivor will develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but some will. Encourage the survivor to seek, or help them find, Christian counseling with a mental health professional who has specialized training and experience in providing trauma-informed care.

Many survivors report that they have never heard their pastor address sexual assault in a sermon or Bible study. Imagine that you had been violated in this way. What a balm for your aching heart and mind and spirit to hear your pastor talk about how God hates abuse, how he is a God of justice, and how he is close to the brokenhearted!

May God bless your efforts to bring hope and help to sexual assault survivors.

Sheryl Cowling is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Board-Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress, and Board-Certified Professional Christian Counselor. She provides counseling services at WLCFS – Christian Family Solutions in Germantown, Wis. Her church home is Crown of Life, Hubertus.

Training for Christian therapists

"Acting on Hope" is a course designed to help Christian psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists improve the way they use Scripture in their counseling.

The next class will be offered in January 2021. A minimum of six students are needed. If you are interested, contact Prof. Alan Siggelkow at ahsiggelkow@gmail.com.

Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Lovin' the loop!

When I arrived in Greenville, Wis., in 2015, I was taken aback by Immanuel's new worship facility. How could such a beautiful building be lacking anything?

But if the beautiful message proclaimed there cannot be clearly heard by everyone, there is definitely something missing.

At the time of construction in 2010, Immanuel's leaders considered installing a hearing loop. The estimated cost of \$20,000 caused it to be trimmed from the budget, along with many other "frills."

At first, I knew little about hearing loops. But a month after I joined the staff as technology director, Les, one of our members, asked if there was anything I could do about the sound during worship. He was not able to hear the sermon very well and he really needed something done. We conferred frequently about possible solutions.

I began to research hearing loops and the dramatic difference they make for the hard of hearing. A local AV vendor quoted us a cost of \$35,000 because post-construction installation would be more difficult. Sadly, I informed Les that the cost was prohibitive, but I would investigate other fixes. Les was hopeful.

A company called AudioFetch said they could help for much less. AudioFetch uses wi-fi to send the audio from your system. The user downloads the app on their phone and connects with the signal to hear the system. I was excited to get Les hooked up. But we discovered that older phones connect at a much slower speed. That resulted in a delay between the sound leaving the minister's mouth and reaching the user's ears. (Think of when the words and lips of a character on screen are not synchronized.)

A second issue: the user has to connect their phone and their hearing aids either by using headphones (nobody likes that) or by using Bluetooth. So the wi-fi signal reaches your phone with a small delay, then uses Bluetooth to connect to your hearing aids. The cost of \$1000 was much more palatable, but after many attempts, we could never get it to work easily for Les.

In 2018 a new building project got underway to connect our school with our new church via a large hall, classrooms, kitchen, etc. I made sure to include a hearing loop in the budget. It was approved, installed, and works great!

Since vendors were now knocking at my door, I had them estimate the cost to loop the church. A bid of \$11,000 was okayed by our leadership, and it was installed in September 2019. A buzz in the line, caused by older lighting fixtures, was addressed and we now have a hearing loop that works as advertised.

Our members who use the new system are giving me many thumbs up because they can hear what they came to hear. Now the beautiful message of the gospel is being heard clearly in our beautiful building, bringing beautiful results in the lives of God's people.

Mark Meyer tries to stay on the cutting edge of technology that fits into his ministry. He has a Masters in Technology in Education from Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn.

To learn more about hearing loops, contact Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at mdhh@wels.net or go to csm.welsrc.net/mdhh.

Share the gospel with captions

"Could you please add captions?"

If you have published any videos online, you may have seen this question in the comments. Many churches are posting sermons,

church services, or devotional videos to their websites and apps.

This is a great way to spread the gospel. But without captions, it can also be a way to alienate deaf and hard of hearing people who need to hear the message of Christ's forgiveness.

After WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MDHH) received that comment on some videos we shared last year, we decided that any content we post will be captioned. The committee is also committed to assisting others in the synod with captioning their content.

"Why should I add captions?"

- Deaf people will have access to the gospel.
- Hard of hearing people can more easily hear the Word of God.
- People learning English can more easily follow the message.
- Captions increase watch time, especially on Facebook. Many people don't turn on the sound for videos anymore, and will quickly scroll past a video they can't understand without sound. If there are captions, users are more likely to watch longer and receive more of the message.

"Okay. I get it. I should add captions. But I don't know how."

Thankfully, it's become much easier, and there are many tools to help.

- Use auto-generated captions. Both YouTube and Facebook have tools to create automatic captions. These are not always accurate, but are better than nothing, especially if the speaker is clear.
- Write your own. Both YouTube and Facebook have a built-in editor where you can type in your own captions fairly easily. You can then download the file to upload it in other places (if you post your video to both Facebook and Vimeo, for example).
- Use a captioning service. Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has been using Rev.com for the last few months with great success. The captions cost \$1.25 per minute of video, have a fast turn-around (24 hours or less), and are high-quality, accurate captions.

"I'm still not sure how to create captions or upload them."

- Google it. "How to create/upload captions to Facebook/Vimeo/YouTube/[insert option here]" will give you step-by-step instructions on how to create or upload captions to any service you might be using to host your videos.
- If you need further assistance, message us at [facebook.com/wels.mdhh](https://www.facebook.com/wels.mdhh) or e-mail us at MDHH@wels.net. We want to help you make your videos more accessible!

If you already caption your video content, please let us know. We'd love to share it on our Facebook page and let people know when they inquire about captioned resources.

Monica Brandt has a degree in American Sign Language. She serves with the Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and interprets for her church, Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Chaplaincy Certification

Bringing Jesus to the brig

As I walked from jail cell to jail cell, speaking with young men who still consider themselves to be Marines, I pondered: How did I get here? Just months before, I had been leading a team against feared cartel leaders who had been indicted by our government. Now I found myself being escorted by a Marine MP in a special housing unit and chapel where I am expected to speak words of encouragement, bring the hope of the gospel, and provide spiritual guidance to incarcerated men who still quickly react to the words *Semper Fidelis*.

The process to become a lay worship and Bible study leader at a Marine brig started as I was nearing retirement from public service. I had spent 24 years as a criminal investigator with the U.S. Marshals Service, following eight years in the enlisted corps of the U.S. Air Force. A few years after entering the military at age 17, I came to faith in Jesus. During the ensuing years, my wife and I raised three of our own children, one of our nephews, homeschooled our children, attended college, and caravanned around the country to different posts of duty.

Now I sensed a tug on my heart to serve in full-time ministry. I shared that desire with my parish pastor and began to research how I could serve God as a lay person. A pastor friend encouraged me to look into WELS Chaplaincy. I applied and was accepted into the Chaplaincy Certification Program.

One of the courses required an internship in a chaplaincy setting. A Marine officer friend (and fellow communicant) introduced me to the Navy chaplain at the Camp Pendleton Brig. The chaplain needs to ensure that those approved as worship leaders are either ordained or can obtain proper licensure. WELS Military Services certified me as a Distinctive Religious Group Leader, approving me to conduct liturgical services at the base brig and lead Bible studies one night per week.

Although our warriors are well trained to defend our nation, many are broken, spiritually blind, and still need Jesus. Going to them where they are can be daunting, due to security training and awareness, background investigations, waiting to enter the brig, unfamiliar smells and sounds, high or low lighting, and tension that you can sense. One must also remember that proselytizing is neither approved by the military nor acceptable for civilian

volunteers. But when all these obstacles are surmounted, I have the privilege of opening the Bible and speaking the wonderful words of God to agnostics, atheists, druids, Protestants, and even other Lutherans.

It is amazing to watch God work in our lives when we go and do his will. I have seen how God opens some doors and closes others to get us where he wants us. I have concluded that no matter where God puts us, he expects us to be faithful to him and his Word. The gospel is still the power of God for salvation—even in the brig.

Tom Nunley is a member at Christ the Vine, Temecula, Calif.

Learn more about the Chaplaincy Certification Program at wels.net/chaplains.

Chaplaincy Certification online classes in Fall 2020

The following online classes will be offered through Martin Luther College during the Fall semester, August 24 to December 18. Go to: mlc-wels.edu and click on "Academics," then "Continuing Education."

THE9521 – A Scriptural Approach to Addiction Counseling - 3 credits

A study of addictions, especially substance abuse and pornography, and the ways Christians try to help through law/gospel counseling and referral.

THE9525 – Geriatric and Care Facility Ministry - 3 credits

A team-oriented approach to serve the aging and residents in care facilities. Provides knowledge and skills for congregation members to offer spiritual care for the homebound and institutionalized.

THE9534 – Grounded in Scripture - 3 credits

An introduction to theology, focusing on scriptural teachings of special importance to chaplaincy ministry.