

His Hands

Spring 2017



Mission for the Visually Impaired

The blind can participate in worship and Bible study

Susan Povinelli and her husband Larry are members at Lamb of God, Madison, Ala.

As a sighted child I can remember flipping through *The Lutheran Hymnal* during church. As my eyesight began to deteriorate during my college years, I had to find other ways to read the hymnal and devotional materials. For many years I received *Meditations* and sermons on cassettes produced by the volunteers of our WELS Ministry to the Visually Impaired (MVI).

But studying the Bible using a cassette tape was extremely difficult, because you could not easily jump between books, chapters, and verses. Then I began using a device called the Victor Reader Stream. This device allows me to quickly and efficiently move between Bible books, chapters, and verses. For details on the Victor Reader Stream, please visit humanware.com.

Today I am able to download countless Bible applications to my iPhone. The iPhone is completely accessible to a blind person because of its VoiceOver feature, which allows a blind person to translate printed words into speech. Our own Northwestern

Publishing House is e-publishing most of its books, such as the People's Bible series, and they can be bought at the Kindle store. In addition, I am able to read *Forward in Christ* and other periodicals through the wels.net website or using the WELS app. For the price of a subscription, I am able to enjoy daily devotions through the *Meditations* app. A free option is to sign up for daily e-mail devotions at wels.net/subscribe.

Most worship materials are also accessible using my iPhone. Since our worship folders and the majority of our pastor's Bible studies are available electronically, he sends me these materials via e-mail. I can access them through my iPhone by connecting a Braille display or listen audibly through a headphone. This enables me to fully participate in worship and Bible study.

Finally, there are many scanning applications that can take a picture of a printed page and convert it into different formats, such as PDF, Word, Text, etc. This software will read the converted page on your smart phone. The number one application, which was developed by the blind, for the blind, is the KNFB Reader Application. Go to knfbreader.com for more information.

As the population ages and their vision decreases, congregations should accommodate all visually impaired people so that they can fully participate in worship and Bible study. For those who have some vision and don't read Braille, Northwestern Publishing House has *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* available in large print. In addition, your church secretary can print out a few worship folders in a large font (14 points or greater).

With modern technology, which is not difficult to learn, and pastors willing to work with visually impaired congregants, there is no reason why a blind person cannot participate fully in worship or Bible study. As technology improves, blind people will have more and more information readily available to them.

To God be the glory for such advancements!



Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Interpreting at the WELS International Youth Rally

Katherine Fager interprets for the deaf in the local schools, and occasionally in the community. She lives with her husband in Whitefish, Mont.

"Are you available to interpret for deaf teens at the WELS International Youth Rally?" That request came from the WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The rally, under the theme "Our God Reigns," was held at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, June 28 – July 1, 2016. Since I was going to be in the Denver area for an interpreters' conference the week before, I agreed to the request, along with Justine Landrith from Colorado Springs. We both had experience working as educational interpreters, and I had interpreted in WELS churches for several years in the past.

This was the biggest venue we had interpreted in. It was a little overwhelming at first. However, the organizers of the Youth Rally and the tech people were very helpful finding a good place for us to stand during the whole-group devotions and entertainment. They arranged for a spotlight on us so we could see our notes, and so we could be seen when the lights went down.

Several weeks before the rally, we had received copies of the worship services, including song lyrics, from the band Koine, and devotions from all the devotion leaders. When Justine and I arrived, we decided which parts each of us would interpret, then worked together to finalize the translation of Scripture lessons and hymns for the whole event. Much of our translation/interpretation is done as we hear it spoken, but "frozen" text like Scripture readings and hymns is often prepared in advance to be sure the proper meaning is conveyed.

One of many positive memories that I have from the rally was the night the pop-alternative band, Modern Suspects, provided the entertainment. After the first song, the band invited the teens to come closer to the stage. Since we were interpreting at the corner below the stage, I wondered how we were going to continue with the kids getting closer to the stage...and to us. Instead, an amazing thing happened. As soon as the kids approached and saw me standing there, they moved out of the way and created a clear path so they wouldn't block the deaf attendee's view of the interpreter. It was still a bit crowded, but the kids recognized why we were there and the space that we needed. It was good to see that attitude and understanding in today's WELS youths.

This was a wonderful team interpreting experience, as well as an amazing spiritual experience. Being able to worship with 2500 youths was something that will stay with me for a long time. God gave us an opportunity to share that experience with a deaf individual who attended the rally. Both Justine and I agreed that it



was something we would do again, and it renewed in us a passion for church interpreting. We were blessed with a wonderful venue, great organizers, and collaboration that benefited both of us. We each had different strengths and weaknesses in translation and vocabulary that complemented each other. It was definitely proof that "Our God Reigns."

By all possible means (including technology)

Gregory Boggs is part of the Technology Group at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Neb., and chairs the Nebraska District Technology Committee

"I have become all things to all people so that *by all possible means* I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

Livestreaming to care facilities

"Is there any way that Grandma, who is in the nursing home, can watch her granddaughter's wedding, or her great-grandson's confirmation, since she can no longer get to church?" That was how our congregation began livestreaming to care facilities via the Internet. Family members provided their relative with a computer on which to watch services.

Then we started working with the facility management to allow us to stream weekly services on a television in one of the recreation or dining rooms. We provided the facility with a small computer device called a "raspberry pie." This device was programmed to automatically turn the TV on to the correct channel at the designated time.

The raspberry pie has been replaced with Roku, which is very easy to set up and can be used on almost any TV, since it is operated with a remote control and does not require a computer. It only requires a wired or wireless connection available at the TV used

for viewing. Roku devices can be found at many national chain stores, e.g. Wal-Mart, Target, or Best Buy, at a very affordable cost (usually \$39 to \$49).

Mt. Olive provides the Roku to several care facilities in the area so that they can watch worship in real time, as well as archived services. While the Roku device has over 1500 religious channels, finding our channel is very easy. Simply search for "Lutheran" or "Mt. Olive."

We find that residents prefer worshipping at the traditional time—Sunday morning. Not only has streaming allowed our members to stay in touch with the church, but it also serves as a passive evangelism tool as other residents join them for worship. As the printing press spread the gospel in Luther's time, God's Word is now being spread through technology beyond the walls of our church to viewing sites around the world.

Hearing loops help hearing-impaired

"Faith comes from *hearing* the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" (Romans 10:17). While our broadcasts provide clear audio of our pastor's teaching and preaching, it can sometimes be a challenge for those listening in the church sanctuary. Many people today are using digital hearing aids. That is why Mt. Olive installed a hearing loop under the carpet in our sanctuary.

In the past, churches have used FM wireless hearing systems with body packs for those needing to hear an amplified signal from the pastor's microphone. These devices helped, but users had to seek them out and churches had a limited supply. Also, the FM system amplified every sound equally, sometimes worsening the audio quality.

With a hearing loop, those in need of amplified audio already have the listening device built into their hearing aids. The loop simply delivers a usable signal to the T-coil in the listener's device. Hearing aids made in the last few years have required this feature. Because the hearing aid has been set up by the user's audiologist for their specific needs, it results in the best possible sound from the pastor's microphone without background noise.

For more information, contact gboggs@mtolivebroadcast.org.



Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry

God's plan gives me peace

Lori Guse and her husband Randy are raising two high schoolers. They attend Morning Star Lutheran Church in Jackson, Wis.

My grocery list. My calendar app. My weekly menu board. My strategic plan for work. My various to-do lists. I use these planning

tools to help my home and work run smoothly and effectively.

Sometimes, though, you can't plan for everything.

Two years ago, my son was diagnosed with autism at the age of 15. It has been a whirlwind of trying to get answers and figuring this whole thing out. My calendar filled up with various appointments: teachers, doctors, other parents with autistic children, specialists. I spent endless hours learning how to be a better mother for my son and how to get him on the path to becoming the best person he can be. Our lives were turned upside down. Each day is a struggle, but little victories are celebrated because we know that this is a marathon, not a sprint.

Sometimes I'm tempted to ask, Why now? Or I look back and wonder how his autism was missed. Instead, I choose to look back and see how God has provided and how his perfect plan has unfolded.

- **I planned** to remain in my previous job. It was fulfilling and provided great opportunities for a successful career. **God planned** for me to take a newly created position at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary which has become a haven for my family. It provides daily spiritual blessings to me and has supported my family with our struggles by offering time needed for various appointments, phone calls, or meetings. Through volunteer time on campus, the seminary has also helped give my son a vision for his future.
- **I planned** to remain in our congregation where our two children attended grade school and were confirmed. **God planned** to lead my family to a new church home where we have had immeasurable support from active and retired pastors, teachers, wonderful members, and others in the ministry. Opportunities to form a parent mentoring group and offer personalized spiritual guidance for my son are being explored.
- **I planned** to have my children complete their education at a WELS school. **God planned** many events that led us to transfer our son to the local public high school. The amount of specialized services and level of support has been overwhelming—in a good way. The transition coordinator at the high school is now working with my son to plan for the next step in his life.

I didn't plan to experience the darkest hours of my life. But in those hours God gave me a complete peace and comfort. Those hard times led to my getting a new set of eyes and ears, leading me in the right direction and giving us a bright hope for the future.

Ever since I was a little girl, I have clung to Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." This helps me remember that my plans are not perfect. An action item is forgotten. Another trip to the grocery store is made for that missed item. But God's plan is the perfect plan. His plan gives me peace.



Committee on Mental Health Needs

Parents vs. porn

Paul Krueger shepherds the flock as pastor at Shepherd of the Hills, Winchester, Va.

You know it as one of the greatest battles in the history of warfare. The setting was a strip of land that had come to be known as “The Boundary of Blood,” along the border between Philistia and Canaan. The Philistines had sent forth a champion to fight for them, a man whose name is now synonymous with giant: Goliath. The giant was too fearsome for any one man to take on, and the Israelites were cowering at the thought of meeting him in battle. Yet one young boy was not afraid. He knew that with God at his side he could be victorious even against such daunting odds. So David went to battle against the giant Goliath—and God gave him the victory.

Today, parents are finding out that it is their turn to take up the sling and stones against another fearsome giant that is calling out a challenge to families. The enemy’s new champion is an even greater threat to 21st century kids than Goliath was to the children of Israel. This giant—this new champion of Satan—is pornography.

Porn has become one of the devil’s most powerful weapons in his battle against humanity. Porn is everywhere we turn. With advances in technology, tens of millions of pornographic websites are available at the tap of a screen on devices that we carry with us constantly. Porn’s greatest danger is that it undoes everything that Christ has accomplished for us through the gospel.

So, how can moms and dads protect their kids against the dangers pornography presents? It probably seems like too big a giant for any one parent or team of parents to take on. It isn’t. With God at their side, parents can conquer and be victorious in the battle against porn and even against Satan himself.

Good news! They will now have even more resources to take with them into that battle. Conquerors Through Christ, a WELS ministry focused on serving those caught in porn addiction as well as those affected by someone else’s addiction, is now expanding its mission to include supporting parents as they prepare their kids to face the threat and dangers of pornography.

The Parent Support System will help moms and dads in the gradual process of nurturing their children’s sexual character. This support, targeted by age groups, will come in the form of videos, printable instruction tools, online forums to ask questions and get ideas, and more!

To be notified when these resources are released, sign up for our newsletter at ConquerorsThroughChrist.net. At the same site, you will find a series of ebooks (under the Resources tab). Current titles include *The Dangers of Pornography*, *Warning Kids About Pornography*, and *Correcting Kids Who Use Pornography*.

Remember, no matter how big the giant, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!

Mental health brochures revised

Alan Siggelkow, a retired seminary professor, serves on the Committee on Mental Health Needs

One of the most difficult health decisions that people can face is choosing a mental health provider for self or a loved one. The person with mental health needs is often very vulnerable—emotionally, physically, and spiritually—and so great care should be taken in choosing a mental health provider. This is especially true for Christians who want to have their faith and beliefs respected.

Most WELS members will go to their pastor first as a source of spiritual counseling. The pastor will often see the need to refer, or may be asked to refer his member to a therapist. The pastor will need to know the mental health providers in his area or have confidence in a therapist who does distance counseling.

The WELS/ELS Christian Therapist Network has published several helpful brochures to aid the parishioner and the pastor in making these difficult choices.

1. “When to Refer” is a brochure designed to help WELS pastors, boards of elders, and teachers as they decide whether to refer their members or students to mental health professionals.
2. “Ask A Therapist” is a tool for use by people facing a mental health issue (or their caregivers) to interview a therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist.



THIS WEEK

11 MILLION KIDS

WILL VISIT PORN WEBSITES.

Learn how to help them break the cycle of guilt and sin.

conquerorsthroughchrist.net

- Is this mental health professional qualified and competent to help me in my need?
- Is he or she someone who will respect my faith and be able to work with my pastor?
- Will I feel comfortable with this person guiding my life in the future by providing mental health help to me?

WELS called workers may want to use this interview tool as they search for mental health professionals in their community to whom they may refer members with confidence.

3. "Christian or Non-Christian Counselor?" This brochure addresses the issue of choosing a Christian or a non-Christian counselor. The objective is always: who will be able to help the person in need most effectively, and who will be able to work best with my pastor as he seeks to provide spiritual counseling.
4. "Therapy Models" is a longer brochure that briefly explains the various models or theories of therapy that are most commonly used. It contains a glossary of terms that are used by mental health professionals.

You can find these brochures at csm.welsrc.net/mental-health. You may also contact WELS Special Ministries at 414-256-3241 or specialministries@wels.net.



Prison Ministry

Meeting Samaritans at the well

Brad Price is Administrator of WELS Prison Ministry

That is how lay leader Fred Ciaramitaro viewed his ministry to the Samaritans of our day as he shared the gospel at homeless shelters and halfway houses for 20 years. He volunteered with Project Share, a former WELS ministry in Bay City, Mich.

In his many years of ministry to many downtrodden people, one story stands out to Fred as he recalls the ministry he retired from two years ago.

"Much of my ministry was at a halfway house in Bay City. I would go every Wednesday to share the gospel with residents, both men and women. One evening, a Hispanic woman brought a Caucasian woman with her to class. The Hispanic woman asked questions, while the other woman was mostly silent. After a few classes, the Hispanic woman stopped coming because she disagreed with the roles of men and women, but the quiet woman continued to attend. It was apparent to me that Judy was not at all familiar with the Bible. This was the best case scenario, I thought, as she did not have any preconceived ideas about the Bible, as many of the people I ministered to did.

"Judy came back each week carrying a notepad. She took notes during class, and often asked questions after class when everyone had left.

After three months, Judy came to class and told me that she would not see me after that night, as she would be released soon. I said, 'Good! Here is my number. Call if you need anything.' Now, I went to Jail Ministry Training and knew that giving out my information was not safe. It was probably the only time I did it in twenty years.

"I didn't hear from Judy for several months after that class. One day my phone rang. Judy called to say that she had reconciled with her husband and was taking confirmation instruction at a local WELS church. 'I'm over halfway through. Would you like to come to my confirmation?' Judy asked. I agreed to go, if she sent an invitation.

"The day of Judy's confirmation, my wife and I arrived just before the service started and sat in the last row. During the service, Judy carried her three-year-old daughter to the front of the church with her husband. That day, Judy and her daughter were baptized, and Judy and her husband were confirmed.

"My wife and I were last in line to welcome the new confirmands. As soon as Judy saw me, her eyes widened. She ran around my wife and embraced me. Judy turned to my wife and said, 'I never would have made it without Fred!' I said, 'Oh no, Judy. It was the Holy Spirit.' Judy replied to me, 'I know, but the Holy Spirit sent you.'"

What a privilege it is to share the sweet message of the gospel with those in halfway houses, jails, and prisons! For more information on WELS Prison Ministry, e-mail prisonministry@wels.net or call 507-354-3130.

"Your brother was arrested!"

Darren Green is pastor at St. Peter, Monticello, Minn., and District Special Ministries Coordinator

"Your brother was arrested!" Those words hit me like a brick through the phone as my parents conveyed the news. The memory of those words and the event have started to diminish, but the emotions that were stirred in me, and especially in my parents, are still there.

I remember the sleepless nights, wondering and worrying about my brother, worrying and wondering about my parents. I remember listening to their struggles and inner turmoil. It took a huge toll on them as they tried to help my brother in whatever way they could, even looking at mortgaging the farm to pay the legal bills.

There were the questions: Why? How? What will people say? What do we say? Was there something we did wrong? Living in a small community means everyone would find out, and that would bring shame. I saw my father shed more tears than I had ever seen in my childhood. However, when we felt as if we had gone through the wringer, when we felt "harassed and helpless," our Savior was there with his compassion.

It was during this dark time that our family was drawn closer to our Savior and his Word. We found ourselves reminding each other of Bible passages, such as Jesus' invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). During the struggles, Paul's words in Romans 8 directed our eyes

and hearts to our caring God. "Our present suffering is nothing compared to the glory that lies ahead." At times when you just don't know what to pray, "the Spirit himself intercedes for us."

In hindsight, it was clear that the Lord was purifying and growing our faith. Through these personal struggles, the Lord led us to see his Word in a new light. Peter assures us that our faith is purified and strengthened as we endure our difficult days: "These (trials) have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold . . . may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

My sister recalls: "What I think I will remember the most is Dad encouraging prayer, and saying that this life and all the trouble in it is just a breath compared to eternity. I had never actually heard Dad confess his faith like that, and I will carry the comfort from those words my whole life. His words sound similar to 2 Corinthians 4:16-18."

As my brother went from jail to trial to prison, it opened my eyes, as a pastor and as a fellow Christian, to the pain that a family endures when a loved one is arrested. Because of my experience, I am better equipped to relate to and comfort others who have similar life events. How precious to know that our compassionate Lord cares for troubled and hurting souls, for those who are arrested and for the families that surround them. The forgiveness of our Savior Jesus truly brings peace and lifts our eyes to know that we have a future, even when today appears bleak. We have the powerful, unbreakable words and promise of our Lord!

My eyes have been opened to the gift the Lord provides in and through the family of God. It is hard to express what the support and encouragement of fellow Christians meant to my family and to my brother. Caring letters and visits to my brother...a listening ear and a kind word for my parents and family...it was actions like these that helped us walk through this dark time. WELS Prison Ministry was especially helpful and supportive with their letters and loving words.

My sister reminded me of something we both notice now: when we hear of a crime and an arrest, we see people quick to condemn, especially on social media. This is to be expected, but it evokes a hurt within me each time. Yes, crime is a serious matter, and yes, justice needs to be carried out. But there are also family members on all sides who are hurting, so I say a prayer for all involved. I also remember that the soul that has sinned is a sinner that Jesus died for. I have a different level of compassion now for the internal battles that lawbreakers face.

Having worked as a volunteer in prison, I have come to realize what a beautiful privilege Christ has given his followers. To think that we can speak for Jesus and assure troubled souls that Jesus died for them, forgives them, and calls them "from darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9-10). Our Creator made us emotional beings who long to hear his love and forgiveness, who need to know that Jesus has opened heaven. What a privilege to be a part of the family of God, to serve our Lord by serving one another!

Thank you, Jesus, for sending me to jail

The author is an inmate at a jail in Florida

My name is Travis; my title is servant. For the past seven months, our Lord has been teaching me what it means to be humble, what true faith is, what it really means to be a Christian. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This means "be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). I used to believe that going to church occasionally, with some prayer here and there, made me a Christian. I was raised in the church, baptized on my 16th birthday when the gospel had penetrated my heart of stone. The next eleven years of my life were plagued with the death of a child, major drug use, divorce, hatred, violence...and then I was thrown in jail.

I used to be an all-star athlete; I have 46 college credits; I'm a baptized Christian. What happened? And why? God says in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for their lack of knowledge." That answers the previous questions...and just about every other question in life.

A week before jail, I prayed: "God, I'm done. I can't live this way anymore. I know I'm knocking on death's door, but I can't stop by my own will power. Please take control of my life. I'm yours." One week later I committed a crime while high on drugs, literally dodging a bullet. Now arrested, my life would change forever.

But Jesus has changed me for his good purpose. I was so deep in sin that God had to chain me up to force a private audience with his disobedient son. "And we know that all things work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Thank you, Jesus! Here in jail he has filled me with his love and his Spirit, with knowledge, wisdom, understanding. He has also restored my soul and is leading me in a path of righteousness for his name's sake.

The first two things I faced in repentance were: "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34) and "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He told me I must lay down my pride, ask for forgiveness, and "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). God then began to show me my error and his righteousness.

My life had fallen apart because I was not obedient. I would say, "I have faith in Jesus," but he told me, "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). Ouch! Then he went deep and told me I had no excuses because "nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). Now I remind myself all the time: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

This gives me a craving to add works to my faith. How? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). To add works to my faith, I must fill myself with the Word

of God. Again, “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:17). Thus Christ has given me all the strength and knowledge I need.

Now I walk the walk, staying steadfast in prayer, offering sacrifices of thanksgiving, binding God’s word around my neck and writing it on the tablet of my heart (Proverbs 3:3). As Paul writes in Philippians 3:12, “Not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” I will speak truth about Psalm 119:1, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord.”

I have been in jail for seven months, spreading God’s Word, memorizing it, fellowshiping with the body of Christ, and defeating the already defeated devil with James 4:7, “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

I had three charges, one punishable by life. My family and future were broken. But now that I have a relationship with our Lord and Savior, my future is saved by his prosperous ways. My family is back in church, forgiveness is in the air, and two charges have been dropped, including the punishable by life. I should be released to a rehab program very soon.

God is good! He has healed me and has revealed to me his intentions for my life. I will close with words from Paul (Philippians 3:13-14): “I do not count myself to have already apprehended, but one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” To my brothers and sisters in Christ—press on!



Message from the Director

Equipping the saints: Where do you find the time?

Jim Behringer is Director of WELS Special Ministries

A pastor confided that, when he prayed “forgive us our trespasses” in the Lord’s Prayer, he would recall all the work he had left unfinished that week.

Similar clouds of guilt loomed over me as I read Ephesians 4, then thickened as I noted yet another responsibility I was failing to fulfill: equipping the saints for works of service. “Great!” I thought. “I hope I can find time to do *that* someday.”

The idea found lodging in my brain, though. I started the Sunday School year orienting our teachers for their work. New church councils started in January with a review of what serving on council meant. The ushers, the new office assistant, and the EFT

(early field training) seminary student all needed training. At least I could equip my members for the tasks they’d been chosen for.

It took years for me to realize that many neglected tasks should be delegated to someone “equipped for service.” (I admit that I learned to delegate long before I learned to equip.) Pastors, I recommend that you delegate most special ministries tasks. Rather than investing a lot of time on a handful of members or prospects, you can delegate this work to a caring member or a committee. But how do you equip those members so the project doesn’t fail for lack of knowledge?

Enter WELS Special Ministries! Equipping someone for ministry—to the deaf, or the incarcerated, or special needs students in Sunday School—doesn’t have to be in the hands of a busy pastor. You can connect your members with Special Ministries, where veterans of this work will gladly share their experience, knowledge, and guidance with lay volunteers.

Our Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has assisted many lay people as they set up looping in their churches. Special Ministries has helped organize support groups for addictions and other needs. We’ve worked with Sunday School teachers who plan to teach a deaf child or one with developmental disabilities. Bring us your challenges, and we’ll offer suggestions for overcoming barriers to your ministry.

Pastors, is there some member with special needs who comes to mind when you pray, “Forgive us our trespasses”? Recruit someone to contact Special Ministries for possible solutions. (Remember: delegate!) Have them call us at 414-256-3241 or e-mail specialministries@wels.net and we’ll get the conversation rolling.

It will be one less thing you have to ask forgiveness for.



WELS Nurses Association

Online parish nursing course

Wisconsin Lutheran College is offering an online non-credit certificate course in parish nursing that will run from June 5 to July 28, 2017. Designed for the experienced RN and the novice, the coursework will develop a Christian understanding of tools needed to develop or work in a parish nurse program, including how to:

- Foster a relationship with your church’s leadership team.
- Utilize health assessment skills to evaluate and address your parish’s health care and nursing needs.
- Prepare for and understand the process of Faith Community Nursing Certification through the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

The fee for the course is \$600, but WELS Nurses Association is offering ten scholarships of \$200. This will be awarded if the nurse contributes \$200 and the congregation contributes \$200,

which ensures that both the nurse and the congregation are invested in a future parish nurse ministry.

Register by May 15 at: commerce.cashnet.com/wlcmarket?itemcode=EMKT-NURSING

Questions about the course may be directed to:
Professor Lisa LeBlanc, MSN, RN, CNL
414-443-8613 · lisa.leblanc@wlc.edu

Special camps for special needs campers

Each year, several WELS camps offer programs for people with special needs. Among them:

- Jesus Cares Camp, July 3-7, 2017, is held at Camp Phillip (campphillip.com) in Wautoma, Wis.
- Camp BASIC (campbasic.com) offers two sessions, June 12-17 and June 18-23, 2017, at Wyalusing State Park near the Mississippi River in western Wisconsin.
- Two Joy in Jesus retreats (tlha.org/jesus-cares-ministries) are held in Minnesota:
 - Camp Omega near Waterville, September 22-24, 2017
 - Green Lake Bible Camp near Spicer, October 8-10, 2017

Different genders, complementary gifts for working together

Kathie Wendland, RN, BSN, serves on WELS Women's Ministry Committee and is co-author of the Bible study "Heirs Together of God's Gracious Gift of Life"

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Perhaps these words of prisoner Paul to the struggling, persecuted church at Philippi bring to mind the blessings so many of you bring to various WELS Special Ministries. Or perhaps you are reminded that Paul wrote this epistle to thank that congregation for remembering him once again with prayers and financial aid. This time they had even shared one of their leaders, Epaphroditus, to "take care of (Paul's) needs" (2:25). God had opened doors for gospel proclamation through their "partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (1:5), not only in Philippi but through Paul all the way to Rome (with many stops along the way).

However, Paul's primary purpose was to encourage his readers, not just in Philippi but through the ages, as they work together, "united with Christ," striving to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (2:2).

It's puzzling to many why an omniscient God would create unique human beings, no two with the same gifts, history, life story, or even the most basic cellular DNA components, to live and work together to accomplish his purpose. But he did! Through his Word he offers guidance for implementing that teamwork, beginning with his creation of male and female. When God's teams cooperate in the spirit of Philippians 2:4, the Holy Spirit works miracles and makes our "joy complete" (2:2).

It's a marvel to contemplate all we share as brothers and sisters in Christ, while also recognizing and embracing the differences our God created in each gender. Although the world ignores these, or pits them against each other, God created us to be complementary—not competitive—in our working relationships. In addition to the obvious external differences, there exist differences that are just as obvious in God's design and purpose for each gender in the brain itself. These are documented in studies of brain activity and can be observed in the way we think, process information, express ourselves, and see our identity and purpose in life.

More significantly, Scripture itself points to innate differences in men and women and God's design for each. For instance, after the fall into sin, God tells Eve that the consequence of sin for her will be centered in broken relationships. The Lord designed her that way, and she sees her identity in relationships with children, husband, relatives, and friends. The relationship development process is ongoing, always aiming for the "happily ever after," a goal that will never be attained on earth.

Adam was designed to work in the garden and take care of it. After the fall, the Lord announces that sin will now distort the satisfaction he was created to derive from his work. Men see their identity in their work, in getting the job done and being respected for it. They aren't happy until they can say it's done and done well.

The ramifications of sin on God's design have turned perfect complementary teams into individuals who irritate one another, misunderstand one another, frustrate one another, and compete with rather than complement one another, even as they share the purpose of communicating Christ to the world. And yet God still wants men, who need to "get the job done," to work together with women, who are more concerned about the process than about reaching the goal. He wants women, who need to think over and talk about and mull every aspect of a task, to work with men who identify a goal, get there, and move on.

How is it possible to have such diverse perspectives come together for the good of the Kingdom of God? The discussion on specific applications could be ongoing (for women) or addressed briefly and succinctly with a numbered list (for men).

Or Christian men and women can work together, keeping Paul's words in front of them: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others."