

WELS Commission on Special Ministries Updates Spring 2018

Caring for strangers Caring for strangers is how early Christians drew pagan hearts to the gospel. Yes, they proclaimed the resurrected Savior from sin. Yes, they were devoted to apostolic doctrine and fellowship. But records from the early church and comments from non-Christian writers indicate that Christian compassion for strangers attracted interest in the gospel. WELS churches provide spiritual care and assistance for members who have disabilities. We call this “compassion ministry.” Jesus called it love. But what we do for our own members is often something needed by others in the community. We already visit our members in care facilities. Why not expand that – with the cooperation of the activities director – to provide worship services? Where we have worship services, why not expand that – with the cooperation of the activities director – to offer special events for the families of the residents (Mother’s Day Saturday, summer picnic, etc.)? Your Christian love and concern can create opportunities for the gospel for people you’d never meet at your church (“strangers”).

Another way to meet strangers Your local jail is staffed by people of your community and its residents will be released into your community. They all have family in the community. Starting a Jail Ministry might be a good way to connect a lot of people outside the church. WELS Prison Ministry offers free Jail Ministry Team Training in jails where the church is permitted to conduct Bible studies, and we have specially tailored Bible studies for jails. Contact Pastor Frey, if you would like further information: pastorfrey@cableone.net

“Excellent resource – best I’ve seen.” That praise came from a WELS foster parent who has taken abuse prevention training twice before seeing **“Standing Up for Children: A Christian Response to Child Abuse and Neglect.”** All WELS churches and schools need to be safe places where leaders actively work to prevent abuse. WELS Freedom for the Captives (FFTC) offers online training videos taught by experts Mr. Victor Vieth, the national director emeritus of Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center and Prof. John Schuetze, WELS seminary professor and counselor. The training consists of four videos with quizzes for each of the videos. Those who watch the videos and pass the quizzes will receive a certificate to show they have completed training. For a few larger conferences, Mr. Vieth is willing to do the training. For information or to get access, email freedom@wels.net.

Financial aid for continuing education via Chaplain Certification In fall 2018, the WELS Chaplain Certification Program (CCP) offers these three online courses: A Scriptural Approach to Addictions Counseling, Frontline Chaplaincy (for military, police, fire), and Geriatric and Care Facility Ministry. The cost for the Geriatric course is completely covered by a grant from the Citizens of Heaven Grant Program of Martin Luther Elder Care Ministries. Military Contact Pastors can receive a financial grant for the Frontline Chaplaincy Course through the generosity of the Lutheran Military Support Group. Financial aid may be available for any CCP course for people enrolled in the program. For more information, email chaplaincert@wels.net.

About one third of your older members have hearing loss. When you greet people after service, count the number you see with hearing aids (and realize that not everyone who needs a hearing aid has one). The Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has resources to help your church keep hard of hearing members engaged in worship and participating in Bible class – you’ll find useful information on the Special Ministries Resource Center at csm.welsrc.net/mission-for-the-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing/. If your church is “hard of hearing” friendly (for example, has a loop or other assistive devices), that’s a good thing to share on your website and other publicity.

Looking for information to share about the struggle with pornography? Go to the Conquerors through Christ website conquerorsthroughchrist.net and scroll down. You’ll find something for everyone, parents,

women, teens, videos and book reviews! Put the CtC business cards in your church restrooms or some other discreet location and mention resources in your newsletter and sermons. Pastors have discovered that when they mention this struggle in sermons and Bible classes, members feel that they can seek help for their struggle.

Confirming and Communing Someone with Special Needs Years ago, Special Ministries produced a book on the subject of preparing someone with developmental or intellectual disabilities for communion. The books became very out of date. Pastor Joel Gaertner, chairman of the Commission on Special Ministries and National Director of Jesus Cares Ministries, has rewritten this resource. If you would like a copy, email Joel at jpgaertner@tlha.org.

An extension of YOUR ministry The Special Ministries work done by Military Services and by Prison Ministry is designed to maintain and augment the gospel ministry of the local congregation and its called workers. We have awareness of the unique lives and challenges of military life or incarceration. Our resources are meant to assist you as you strive to keep your flock connected to Jesus. Please take a moment to consider which of your sheep are active duty military (that includes the National Guard and Reserves) or who might be in jail or prison. Go to wels.net/refer and put us in contact with them.

Retirement Planning Resources The Care Committee for Called Workers (CCCW) has produced resources to help congregations (especially those with a CCCW) walk with their called workers through the resources available for retirement planning. Find them at welsrc.net/ccw.

Custom-made solutions The Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI) can produce special confirmation resources for the blind or visually impaired, including Braille and large print. If you have an older member who needs large print, or who qualifies for materials for the blind, WELS spiritual materials can be sent to them for free. MVI is also available to help people whose ability to read is impaired in some way. The catalog is available at wels.net/visually-impaired. Contact Special Ministries for more information, specialministries@wels.net.

Do you have a Seniors Organization (OWLS) at your church? For various reasons, WELS members who are in their senior years have been starting fellowship and service groups that are not connected to OWLS (the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors). Recognizing this, but hoping to share the fun and fellowship of a national gathering of WELS seniors, the OWLS have announced that their fall convention will not be an OWLS only event, but the OWLS "Convention for Seniors." This year's event will be held October 10-12 at the beautiful Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. The theme of the convention will be "Finish Your Race" (a nod of the head to Elkhart Lake's famous "Road America"). Tours of the race course, Kohler Design Center or the Wade House (a stage coach hotel that is an historic site) will supplement the interesting workshops and the fellowship events of the convention. Interested in more information? Would you like Convention for Seniors materials to share with your senior members? Contact Convention Coordinator Werner Lemke (507)354-3929 or wandjlemke@msn.com.

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