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Relationships are Difficult

Relationships are difficult, especially loving relationships! I’m sitting in the doctor’s office, waiting for a procedure on my abdomen, which is no big deal. But the wait is longer than I would like, so I search the newsfeed on my phone, looking for something interesting to read. I find a story about George Conway, the husband of Kellyanne Conway, the counselor to the U.S. president. Don’t worry, I’m not going to get political — well, maybe a little about our church.

Apparently, Mr. Conway tweets and talks and writes about his dislike for the president and his administration. According to the article, when the interviewer asked how his wife feels about his public comments, he stated, “I don’t think she likes it. But I’ve told her I don’t like the administration, so it’s even.” But he added, “When it comes down to the things we disagree about ... we agree on most policy things, virtually all.” He then expressed great pride in his wife and her accomplishments.

The reason this story caught my attention is because it reminded me of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod — and what the Missouri Synod could be.

My ministry takes me to a variety of circles of people, from conservatives to moderates to combinations of the two. In these circles, I hear comments and position statements that too often include disparaging sentiments. I don’t have a problem with the disagreements; I do have a big problem with the nastiness I sometimes hear from my brothers and sisters.

I don’t know if George and Kellyanne live their Christian values at home, or if they are loving and forgiving. I wonder if they pray for one another — not to change, but for God to bless each other. I wonder how good we are at that!

It could be that in my eighth decade of life, I am regressing to the naivete of my third decade. But truthfully, I hate the unkindness. It tears me up when I hear family disrespecting each other. And I hate it when I am silent in my listening!

God forgive me! Forgive my friends and colleagues on all sides. Forgive my church body! Of course, we know we have that forgiveness. “Father, forgive them,” Jesus prayed from the cross (Luke 23:34). It is our Lord’s forgiveness that gives us the strength and courage to work toward unity and community within our church.

Love,
Joel



Worker Wellness Advocacy

BY DEACONESS HEIDI GOEHMANN

Exciting things are happening in the area of LCMS worker wellness! While we are still finishing up research and will continue to research worker needs, we've connected the needed dots to get our worker wellness webpage up and running and available for YOU. The webpage is organized by category:

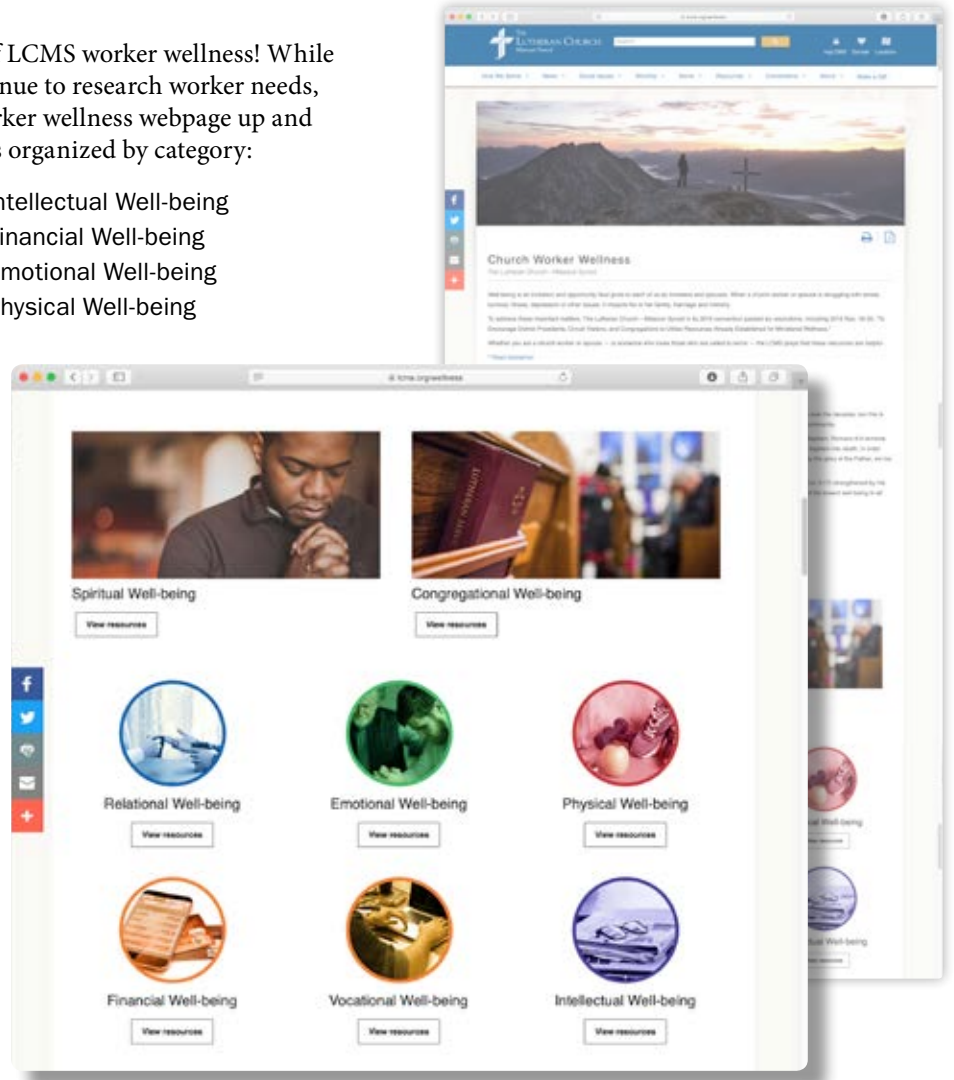
- Spiritual Well-being
- Congregational Well-being
- Vocational Well-being
- Relational Well-being
- Intellectual Well-being
- Financial Well-being
- Emotional Well-being
- Physical Well-being

Many resources are available to all of us, in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and in our local communities. However, it can be difficult and intimidating to find these resources. Our worker wellness webpage is designed to consolidate them and help workers access them more easily.

We would like to hear from you: What resources have you used? What has been helpful to you? What resources are available in your district or region for meeting workers' various needs?

We are thankful for each and every one of the people we have the privilege of working alongside in the Kingdom of God. Can you imagine trying to go it alone? Thankfully, God gives us people, churches, agencies and myriad creative ideas to encourage us each day. Today, I pray for wellness for all of you as you serve Him and are served by our Savior who has given us everything needed for our wellness for eternity.

Visit the LCMS Church Worker Wellness page at lcms.org/wellness.



Caring Connections

Caring Connections is a free online journal written by and for Lutherans in SPM. You may read the latest copy and subscribe at lutheranservices.org/newsletters.

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran pastoral care providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight with the wider community. We invite anyone interested in writing an article to please contact one of the co-editors, Diane Greve at dkgreve@gmail.com or Lee Joesten at lee.joesten@gmail.com. **Caring Connections** does not pay writers, but your ideas will be read by hundreds.



SPM Educational Event

Get ready, friends! May 2019 is coming, and San Antonio is where you want to be. The next Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM) Educational Event will be at the Oblate Retreat Center. "Mental Health: We All Need It" is the theme.

If you are planning to attend, consider offering a workshop. Email your idea along with a paragraph-long description to spm@lcms.org.



May 29–31, 2019
 Oblate Renewal Center
 5700 Blanco Rd
 San Antonio, TX 78216
ost.edu/orc

DISASTER RESPONSE CHAPLAINS

From the Hurricane-Devastated Field

BY DAVID E. FICKEN, COORDINATOR, LCMS
DISASTER RESPONSE CHAPLAINCY

How do I paint a picture of this devastation for somebody who hasn't experienced it?

Initially, people could not drive anywhere because of all the debris from property and tree damage. Now that some of it has been moved to the sides of the roads, the piles loom higher than the cars. Worse than the loss of property, however, is the loss of life. Imagine it: One moment a beloved friend is alive; the next moment that person is gone, killed by the storm. Even after the storm, the danger persisted: Three electrical linemen were killed, hit by cars whose drivers were not being careful enough amid the wreckage.

In the midst of the devastation, though, we've seen people coming together, motivated by their desire to help others. Homeless men are helping without taking pay. People are using vacation time to come and contribute to the relief efforts. Church members are coming from all over the country to show the love of Jesus. Local church members are tirelessly coordinating volunteers, receiving shipments of donations, and serving meals. Pastors are always on call

to help people deal with the questions and problems they are facing in the aftermath of the disaster.

The donations in time, talent and treasure have been an incredible blessing. One man donated the use of his 40-foot RV for up to two years. This offer came within two hours of news that another person would be without a place to stay. Hope on the Beach Lutheran Church, Santa Rosa Beach, Fla., is helping to feed hundreds, even hosting a Thanksgiving dinner. Trinity Lutheran Church and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, both in Panama City, Fla., are serving members and the community by providing food and emergency supplies. LCMS Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) chainsaw teams arrived days after the hurricane and are still working on cleanup projects, sharing the Good News with homeowners in the process. A Lutheran stump grinder from Louisiana is helping people with very reasonable prices, not price-gouging



Destruction to homes from Hurricane Michael in Mexico Beach, Fla.

like some disreputable vendors are doing.

I heard a story about a young woman who stayed during the hurricane. After she rode out the storm and contacted people on the outside, word got out that she was checking on how others were doing. Rather than focusing on her own safety, she walked around and made sure others were okay. That's the kind of love we've been seeing all around us.

God pulls things together! The Good News of Jesus Christ crucified and risen is being preached and the Lord's Supper offered, bringing the "forgiveness meal" to people in their pain and suffering. God brings people healing, bringing them together in Jesus' Name.

PEOPLE NEWS

Dearly Departed

- **Rev. Charles T. Knippel**
May 26, 1927 to
July 23, 2018




Achievements, Awards and Acknowledgements

Congratulations are extended to the following:

- **Rev. Angel Ramos**, Endorsement
Sept. 19, 2018

SPM Scholarships

The Special Pastoral Ministry (SPM) Scholarship Committee met in November to consider scholarship opportunities. Both an ordained minister and a seminarian were awarded scholarships to cover Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) tuition expenses. Another ordained minister was awarded a provisional scholarship to cover additional CPE expenses.

Scholarships are awarded in April, July and November to assist prospective Specialized Pastoral Ministers with Clinical Pastoral Education tuition expenses.

Scholarship recipients may apply for further assistance for subsequent units after completing the first unit of CPE. It is

recommended that an applicant provide verification after completing a basic unit of CPE that he/she plans to pursue a vocational goal within SPM (CPE educator, chaplain, pastoral counselor and/or law enforcement or fire chaplaincy). The rationale behind this recommendation is that the basic intent of the SPM scholarship is to prepare men and women to be specialized pastoral/spiritual ministers.

Applying for ecclesiastical endorsement is an important step for SPM ministers. It is recommended that an applicant provide documentation that he/she is actively pursuing ecclesiastical endorsement when he/she applies for tuition support for third or fourth units of CPE.

Never Forget!

BY REV. CHAPLAIN STEVEN HOKANA (*Excerpts of a sermon delivered on Veterans Day at the LCMS International Center chapel service, Nov. 9, 2018.*)

“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21).

Today, we acknowledge those who serve in our military and protect our freedoms, while at the same time giving thanks to God through Jesus, who frees us from the tyranny of Satan and the grave by His suffering, death and resurrection.

As a veteran, I am wearing what both the church and the country awarded me during my service. The medals on my chest are the three highest awards I received during my time in the Army. The first is the Army Commendation Medal, the second is the Meritorious Service Medal and the last is the Legion of Merit. The medallions around my neck carry significant meaning as well. The first is the Order of Military Medical Merit, awarded to me for ministry with wounded soldiers and their families while serving in medical units. The large medallion around my neck is the one that gives me the most pride: The St. Martin of Tours, which is presented by the LCMS for 20

successful years of military ministry. I wear them all to honor my fellow veterans and their families. When you see a veteran, thank him or her and their family, as both served.

November 11 was first called Armistice Day. One hundred years ago, in 1918, in the 11th month, on the 11th day of the month, at the 11th hour of the day, WW I came to a close. It was brutal and devastating. Massive kingdoms fell. Millions died ... and nothing was resolved, as “The War to End all Wars” gave rise to World War II.

The futility of WW I is best shown by the last day itself. Between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., 10,900 soldiers on all sides were killed. The last American killed was Henry Gunther, killed by machine-gun fire. Time of death: 10:59 a.m.

Those of us in the military don’t forget. None of us should forget. I won’t forget. I will never forget the wounded. The heroism. The honor of consoling those who lost a fellow warrior, a friend.

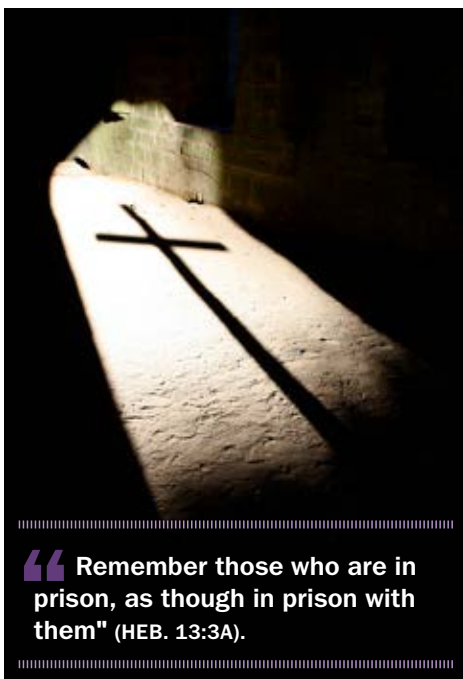
I will never forget those brave men and women who put their trust in Jesus as they



went out to conduct combat operations. I cannot forget how peace came over their faces as I uttered the words, “Take and eat. Take and drink.”

But this is not a day of sadness. It is a day of honor. The best way to honor those who sacrificed so much is to enjoy the freedoms we celebrate in this county. ... With confidence, sleep well on your bed at night. Prosper as a people, work hard and be satisfied, as an expression of your baptized faith. Be a good citizen.

But most importantly, enjoy the forgiveness won for you by Jesus and our freedom in Christ that will never end.



“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them” (HEB. 13:3A).

PRISON AND JAIL MINISTRY

“Captive Souls ... Mercy for All”

BY DON SUNDENE

I was blessed to be able to attend the Prison and Jail Ministry Conference this past August. Attendees came from all over the United States for this inspiring two-day conference.

The topics were very timely. The Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller (LCMS first vice-president) was the keynote speaker, speaking on “Captive Souls ... Mercy for All.” Other topics included “A Product of Our Environment,” “Sanctification and Ministry to Inmates,” “Ministering to Sex Offenders” and “Ministry with the Muslims.” The day ended with a panel of all the conference speakers.

Saturday offered many workshop choices, including “Do’s and Don’ts,” “Getting Your Foot in the Door,” “Models of Funding Prison Ministry” and “Creative Programming in a Correctional Environment.” I wish I could have attended all of them.

It was a blessing to see the wide-ranging impact that our people are making in prison and jail ministry, all inspired by the words of our Lord, “I was in prison and you came to me” (Matt. 25:36).

NOTE: All presentations will be posted on the SPM webpage at lcms.org/spm, as well as on the LCMS Southern Illinois District website.

SPM Contact Information

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spm@lcms.org.

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Resources Shared

Ceremony of Remembrance

BY CHAPLAIN LYNN HANSON

The passing of a loved one is painful and full of uncertainty. Hines VA chaplains provide a special memorial ceremony for family members of fallen veterans.



“Our heroes are here every day. They’re not the heroes you see in movies. They don’t wear capes and masks. Our veterans may be using a cane, walker or wheelchair,” said Dr. Elaine Adams, Hines chief of staff.

The observance is called the Last Roll Call Ceremony of Remembrance, which is held quarterly at the Hines VA Chapel.

Carol Parrotti of Downers Grove paid tribute to her late husband, a Vietnam War veteran, who recently passed away.

“It was a very moving ceremony. It made me feel so good to see him and other veterans honored,” said Parrotti.

The guest speaker was Dr. Maria Hansberry, who serves as a member of Geriatrics and Extended Care. “I have seen incredible acts of love and devotion, which motivate me to do this,” said Hansberry. Her father, her husband and both of her grandfathers all proudly served in the U. S. Military.

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2791 served as Honor Guard. Estella Brown performed the national anthem.

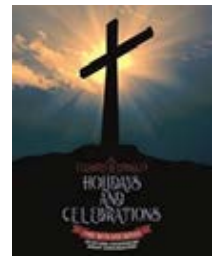
The ceremony was conducted by Chaplains Lynn Hanson, Chris Myers and Rabbi Norman Lewison.

Advent Devotions

This “Time with God” devotional series, *Holidays and Celebrations*, is written to be accessible to people of all ages and abilities so they can be fully included in congregations and faith activities. It is intended for small groups or families who want to engage in rich conversations about Christian topics.

For a free sample, go to bethesdalc.org/wp-content/uploads/advent-devotions-sample.pdf.

For other faith resources, go to bethesdalc.org/services/faith-supports/faith-resources.



Dates to Remember

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|--------------------------|--|
| May 8–10, 2019 | ACPE Annual Conference
Scottsdale, Ariz. |
| May 20–22, 2019 | Caring for the Human Spirit Conference
Myrtle Beach, S.C. |
| May 29–31, 2019 | SPM Educational Event
San Antonio, Texas |
| Sept. 26–29, 2019 | Zion XVII Triennial Conference
Mundelein, Ill. |