

Military Contact Pastor Handbook

"Official 2021 Edition"



WELS Ministry to the Military

"...his faithfulness will be your shield"
Psalm 91:4

Handbook Preface

WELS Civilian Chaplains to the Military—Military Contact Pastors (MCPs)

The purpose of this handbook is to offer insight into the unique nature of ministry to the military. The handbook provides some tools and resources that can be helpful to your ministry as an MCP or as a civilian chaplain to the military. As a committee we are trying to share some of the military culture that may affect your approach to ministry to the military.

We pray that the Lord will bless our efforts. We are fellow servants who strive with you to learn how we might better serve those in military uniform. We expect to learn with you and from you!

We have a wide range of experiences. Some of our MCPs have served military personnel and their families for years. Others are newer to it. Some have attended MCP workshops while for others have never had the opportunity to attend.

We encourage you to ask questions, share insights, and make suggestions to the Military Services Committee. We are eager to hear from you so that we can make future editions as effective as possible. Any feedback for the Military Services Committee may be emailed to military@wels.net or mailed to “WELS Military Services” at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM)

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How to Minister to Those Who Serve

FOR THE WELS CONGREGATION:

As our servicemen and women defend our freedom, they face unique challenges. We recognize they need spiritual support and guidance that addresses their specific needs. The men and women who have served our country in the armed forces deserve praise—and, if needed, a helping hand.

While you can't compel the military members, their families, and veterans to accept our efforts, being known to the military members, their families, and veterans before a need arises aids in opening doors to understanding how we can support them.

We encourage every WELS congregation to develop a culture that loves, appreciates, and supports its military members, their families, and veterans.

How do we get started?

Strive to make sure your pastor and congregation are aware when their member:

1. **Joins the military.** Encourage or help the member to register at wels.net/refer.
2. **Will deploy.** Verify that the member is registered and has provided updated information at wels.net/refer.
3. **Is deployed.** Express concern for the member's family and a desire to help them while the military member is away from home.

It is important to track the movements of a member in the military for continued spiritual support. When a service member moves, please provide updated information at wels.net/refer so that an MCP or the national civilian chaplain can maintain contact. This is helpful, even if the home pastor remains the service member's primary pastor.

Get to Know Your Military Families

Getting to know your military families soon after meeting them aids in learning how to support them and building rapport and trust. Because of the military mission, one spouse may deploy, leaving the other spouse and children in unfamiliar surroundings. The following are suggestions that congregational members can do when military members come to your congregation:

- **Prepare a "Yellow Pages" of recommended doctors, dentists, and auto repair shops.** Military families move more often than most American families and having recommendations from the local congregation goes a long way in building relationships.
- **Take the first step and invite them out for coffee.** One month after the family arrives, take them out for coffee and welcome them to the community. Allowing a short amount of time to pass gives them time to unpack and decompress after their transition but doesn't allow too much time to go by before the welcome gets cold.
- **Introductions are key.** It's essential to introduce the new family to others with similar interests. Remember, especially the children and the spouse need to have friendly support. They are most likely in need of friends and need help getting to know people.

Supporting Military Families During Deployments

Here are some critical Do's and Don'ts when the military member deploys leaving the family at home:

Do:

- offer to babysit for grocery shopping or a night out or appointments.
- offer to mow their lawn or help with simple household tasks.
- offer dog-sitting if you know they are going to visit a family or when a single military member is deployed.
- sit by them at church so they know you care and offer to help with small children.
- pray for the military members and their families.

Don't:

- ask questions about where the spouse is deployed or what they are doing.
- ask for specifics about when the military member is leaving or coming home.
- be pushy about offering help, just listening is always helpful.

Ideas for Volunteering

Volunteering time and talents to service opportunities is an excellent way for congregations in any community to support military members, their families, and veterans. It's also a fun way for congregations to connect with the community and demonstrate Christian love in action.

Service opportunities that fit the skills and time availability of most congregational members can be discovered in a number of ways. A significant first step is to ask the military members, their families, and veterans in your congregation and local community how you can give of your time and talents. Additionally, established service organizations offer many service opportunities.

Before committing to an activity with an organization, check with your pastor or staff minister to make sure that the organization's beliefs are in agreement with yours. <https://www.charitynavigator.org/>

Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) is a non-profit organization providing Christ-centered support to WELS/ELS military service members, veterans, and their families. The group is a national-level organization, designed to have national reach, but local impact. In many WELS and ELS congregations, LMSG has liaisons who share information received from LMSG with their congregation. Some of their responsibilities are to make the congregation aware of the difficulties military service members and their families face every day. This includes identifying projects and situations that may assist in providing God's Word to deployed service members. Check their website for more information. <https://lutheranmilitary.org/>

Fisher House Foundation is best known for its network of 87 comfort homes where military and veterans' families can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment. These homes are located at major military and VA medical centers nationwide and in Europe, close to the medical center or hospital served. Each location has many ongoing and special event volunteer opportunities. Check their website for more information. <https://fisherhouse.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

United Service Organizations (USO) is an American nonprofit-charitable corporation that provides live entertainment, such as comedians, actors and musicians, social facilities, and other programs to members of the United States Armed Forces and their families. Most volunteers will greet guests, assist with center activities and programs, and support staff members as needed. Volunteering with the USO offers an opportunity for individuals and congregations to directly serve military members. Check their website for more information on how to become a volunteer and locations near you. <https://www.uso.org/take-action/volunteer>

Ideas for Military Care Packages.

Care packages are the best way for loved ones to send a little piece of home to deployed service members. They're also a fun way for families to stay connected while apart. Always check with your service member or their family before purchasing any items. Some items may not be allowed in the area they are serving, or they may already be receiving too much of an item. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Contact the post office.**

Before you can create a care package, you need shipping supplies. The United States Postal Service (USPS) offers a free "Military Care Kit" with the necessary supplies for sending packages overseas, including boxes, packing tape and customs forms. Visit the USPS website to get your free kit, which will be shipped to you and arrive at your doorstep within 5 to 7 business days. The USPS website will also state what you can and can't ship overseas.

- **Strike a pose.**

What better way to send a little piece of home than to send pictures from home? Take pictures of the kids, the pets, the house, friends, anything you think your service member is missing. How should you send them? You can send them the old-fashioned way by simply mailing prints of the pictures. If you plan to include a large number of photos, load them onto a USB flash drive. Join a photo-sharing site like Snapfish or Shutterfly and make albums, calendars, and other gifts. Or you can load images on a digital picture frame so they can be easily displayed and viewed like a slideshow.

- **Baked goods.**

Now that they've seen home through pictures, give service members a taste of home by baking some homemade yummys. Keep in mind that not all baked goods will survive the transit time and temperature changes en route to the care package's final destination. One way to overcome that is by baking a cake in a jar. This is basically a mini cake made inside a jar that promises to still be moist and delicious by the time it arrives on the other end. The recipe can be found at this url:

<https://www.military.com/spousebuzz/blog/2013/07/how-to-make-military-care-package-cake-in-a-jar.html>.

- **Provide entertainment.**

Service members can always use entertainment when they have a chance to enjoy some down time. Include books, Sudoku, and crosswords puzzles. Go to your local store and use their price matching policy for new ear buds, DVDs, and iTunes gift cards. Also check out Jo-Ann Fabrics, Michaels, and A.C. Moore for pens, notepads, stationery and envelopes, the perfect hint for them to write letters back to you.

- **Personalize the package.**

Homemade artwork from the kids is always a big care package hit. Not only is it a morale boost for your service member, but it also helps the kids stay connected with the parent they're missing. Don't forget to decorate the inside of the box!

- **Pack non-perishables.**

The best food to send is usually of the non-perishable variety, especially those snacks in cans or jars to prevent crushing. Beef jerky, tuna, trail mixes, Pringles, candy that won't melt, and well-packaged cookies and crackers are safe bets.

- **Include necessities.**

Service members may have the ability to get toiletries and other necessities, but it might not be their favorite brands. Head over to a drug store and load up on travel size shampoo, body wash, hand sanitizer, deodorant, sunscreen, toothpaste, lip balm, foot powder, throat lozenges, and baby wipes. While you're there, put some Ziploc bags in your shopping cart to house any items that could leak.

Have you encountered other opportunities or ideas that would help congregations serve those in the military and their families? Contact the Military Services Committee of Special Ministries at specialministries@wels.net so that they can improve this document.

Acronym Soup

The military loves acronyms! One problem is that there are so many. Another problem is that one acronym can stand for many different things.¹

One can try using Google or a site like www.ask.com to try to find the meaning of an acronym, but it is unlikely that the correct answer will be apparent from the long list of possibilities. Even restricting definitions to military usage will not ensure clarity.

There is no shame in asking, “What does that stand for?” Unfortunately, sometimes we end up in a conversation with a group of others who all speak the same acronym language. At times like this, acronyms will be thrown out with only a verb or two between them. It will seem as though we stepped into a foreign land where American English is unknown. If those speaking are trying to impress us with their self-contained vocabulary, we do not owe them an effort to try to quickly catch onto their phrases. But most often when this occurs, they simply are defaulting to familiar and comfortable slang. The remark, “I’m not following this.” quickly brings them back into the normal world.

Here are a few acronyms. (These acronyms are tied to CENTCOM definitions—as refined by Third Army.)

AA – Armies in the Atlantic	AAFES – Army Air Force Exchange Services
ACC – Air Combat Command	AE – Armed Forces in the Middle East
AETC – Air Education & Training Command	AFSC – Air Force Specialty Code
AG – Adjutant General	AMC – Air Mobility Command
APO – Army & Air Force Post Office	AP—Armies in the Pacific
ASG-KU—Army Support Group Kuwait	BN – Battalion
BX – Base Exchange	CFLCC – Coalition Forces Land Component
CO – Commanding Officer	CG – Commanding General
Co – Company	DEFCON – Defense Condition (which is different from an Alert Level)
DEFAC – Dining Facility	
ECP – Entry Control Point	FOB – Forward Operating Base
FPO – Fleet Post Office	MAJCOM – Major Command
MOI – Memo of Information	MOS – Military Occupational Specialty

¹ ACC can stand for “Army Command Center” or other things.

MTF – Medical Treatment Facility

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer

NCOIC – NCO in Charge

OIC – Officer in Charge

PACAF – Pacific Air Force

PCS – Permanent Change of Station

POC – Person of Contact

PX – Post Exchange

SNCO – Senior NCO (E-7 thru E-9)

TDY – Temporary Duty

UCMJ – Uniform Code of Military Justice

USAFE – US Air Forces in Europe

USARCENT – US Army Central

XO – Executive Officer

JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, supplements English-language dictionaries and standardizes terminology used within the Department of Defense, other federal agencies, and among the United States and its allies. It is a compilation of definitions, abbreviations, and acronyms applicable to the Department of Defense and its components, often used as a primary source for official correspondence and planning documents.

(v2019 AFH1 E-6 Study Guide, p. 129) It can be found through Google.

Short – Will be moving soon

Short Tour – 12-18 Months – Usually without dependents

Long Tour – 2-4 years – Depending on marital status

2 Digit Midget – Less than 100 days until move

Single Digit Midget – Less than 10 days until move

Going Down Range – Being deployed (usually to the Middle East)

Remote – Usually 1 year without family (i.e. Korea or Turkey)

Jarhead – US Marine Personnel

Grunt – US Army soldier

Squid or Swabby – US Navy Personnel

Zoomie or Wing Nut – US Air Force Personnel

DEFAC – Dining Facility, formerly called “Chow Hall”

Latrine or Head – Rest Room

Flightline – Where aircraft or helicopter are parked (Usually next to the runway)

Class VI – Base/Post Liquor Store

Gate Shack – The small building at the entrance to base or a restricted area

Military Phonetic Alphabet

All branches of the U.S. Government and military departments use the International Civil Aviation Organization alphabet for radio communication. This phonetic alphabet was adopted by the U.S. Armed Forces in 1956 and is currently used by North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries and civil aviation around the world. Table 15.1. shows the letters, code words, and pronunciation.

Table 15.1. Military Phonetic Alphabet

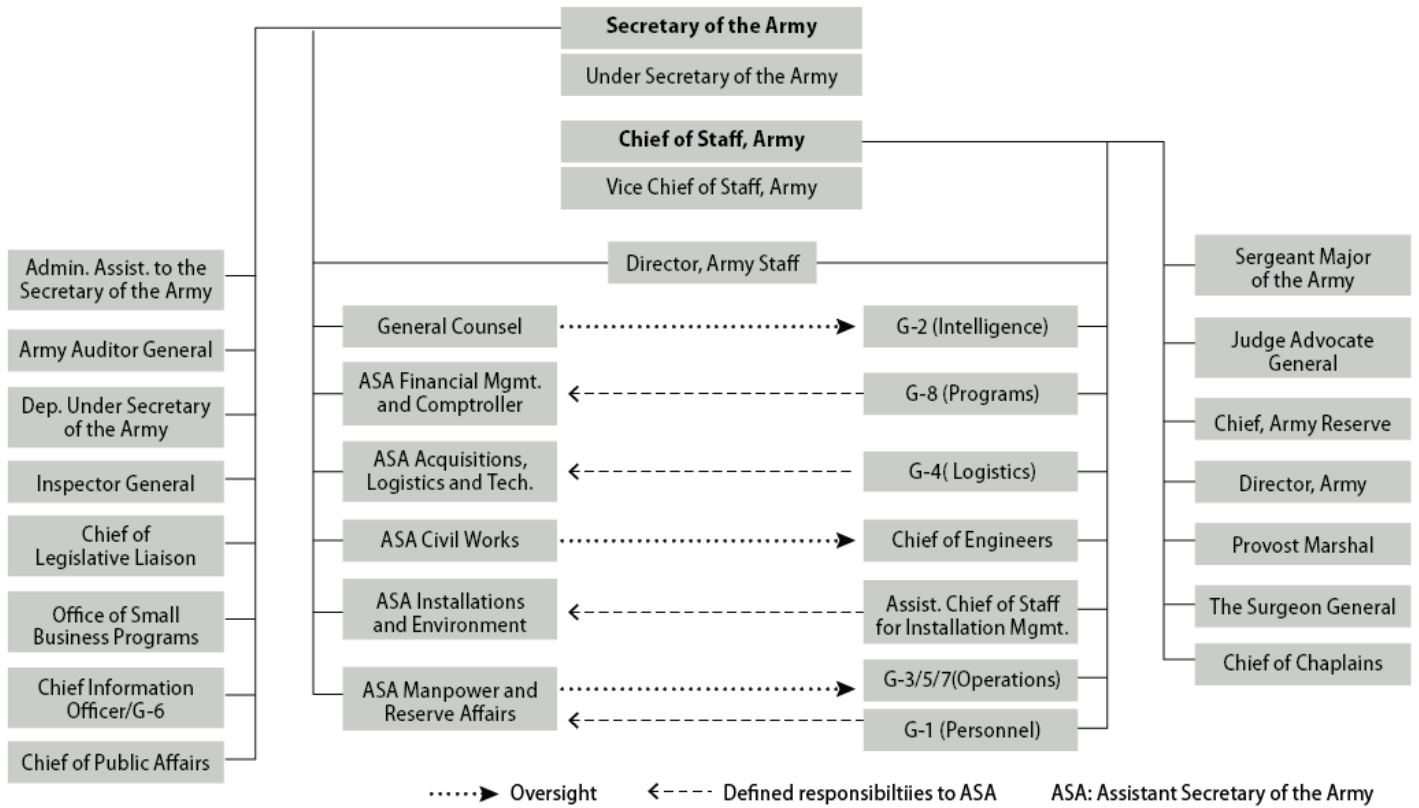
A	Alfa	AL fah	N	November	NOH vem ber
B	Bravo	BRAH voh	O	Oscar	OSS car
C	Charlie	CHAR lee	P	Papa	PAH pah
D	Delta	DEL tah	Q	Quebec	Keh BECK
E	Echo	EKK oh	R	Romeo	ROW me oh
F	Foxtrot	FOKS trot	S	Sierra	See AIR ah
G	Golf	Golf	T	Tango	TANG go
H	Hotel	HO tell	U	Uniform	YOU nee form
I	India	IN dee ah	V	Victor	VICK ter
J	Juliet	JEW lee ett	W	Whiskey	WISS key
K	Kilo	Key loh	X	Xray	EKS ray
L	Lima	LEE mah	Y	Yankee	YANG kee
M	Mike	Mike	Z	Zulu	ZOO loo

(v2019 AFH1 E-6 Study Guide, p. 129)

U.S. Military Enlisted Ranks and Insignias

Military ranks and insignias vary depending on the branch of service. Some can look similar and others are quite different. Additionally, where the rank is located can vary depending on the uniform the individual is wearing and whether the individual is enlisted or an officer. These ranks and insignias can be viewed at <https://militarybenefits.info/military-ranks-insignia-charts/>.

Army Command Overview



Source: Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Institute of Land Warfare, *Profile of the United States Army*, September 2018.

Army Command Overview 2

USNORTHCOM – North America

USSOUTHCOM – South America

USEUCOM – Europe, West of Africa, Greenland

USCENTCOM – Middle East

USPACOM – Asia, Australia, etc.

*Note: Wisconsin National Guard troops start out in USNORTHCOM, prepared at Camp Shelby by USNORTHCOM, but move to USCENTCOM for Middle East duty.

Of special interest to the WELS for ministry to deployed troops:

USCENTCOM Command Centers:

CFLCC—Camp Arifjan, Kuwait

Central Command—Qatar

Central Command—Saudi Arabia

U.S. Central Command—Tampa, Florida

USEUCOM operates 58 military installations. 48 of these are presently in Germany.

** Of special note for those who try to serve WELS military personnel, wherever they may be—there presently are 440 military bases of the various branches of service in the continental United States.

Air Force Command Structure

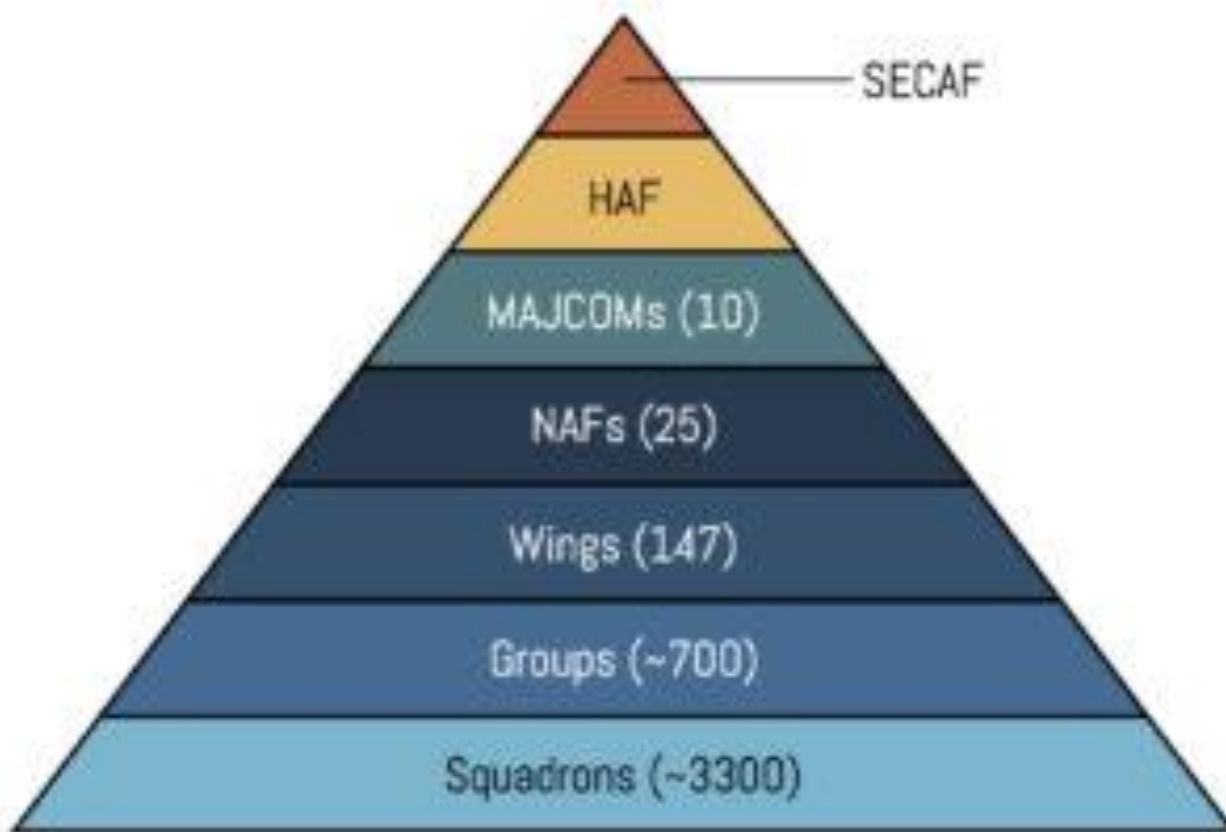


Figure 1: Air Force Organizational Structure. Each line of the organizational hierarchy is labeled with its unit designator and the number of units, where applicable.

The functionally based Major Commands are:

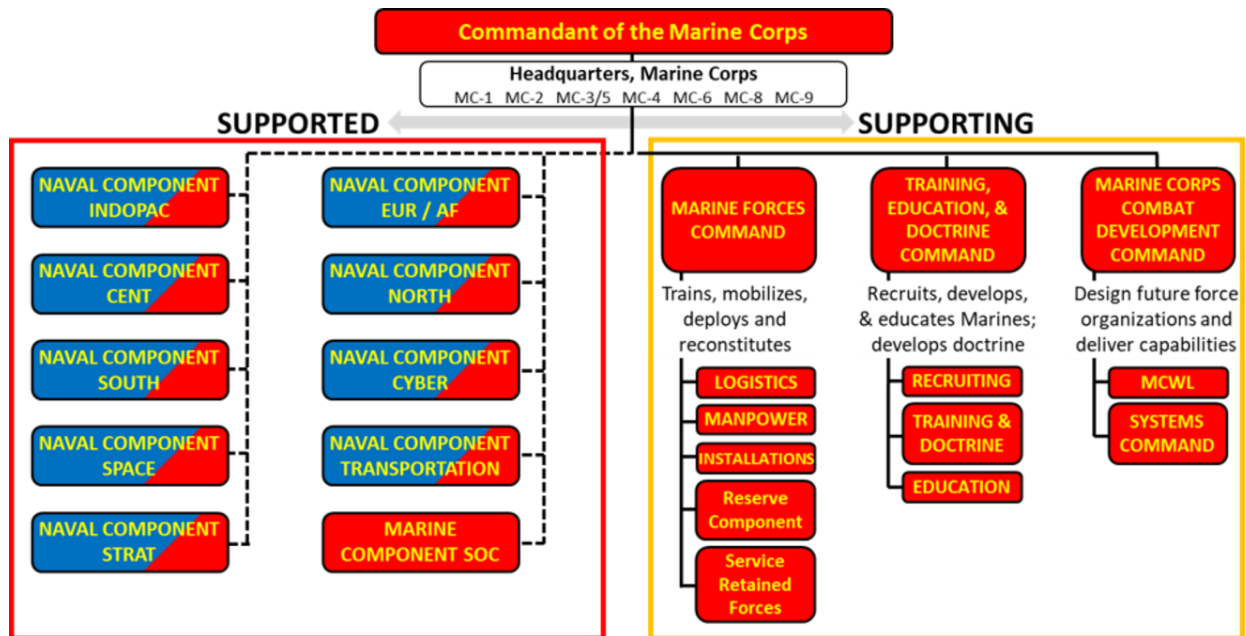
1. Air Combat Command
2. Air Education and Training Command
3. Air Force Global Strike Command
4. Air Force Material Command
5. Air Force Reserve Command
6. Air Force Space Command
7. Air Force Special Operations Command
8. Air Force Mobility Command

The geographically based Major Commands are:

1. Pacific Air Forces
2. United States Air Forces Central Command
3. United States Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa

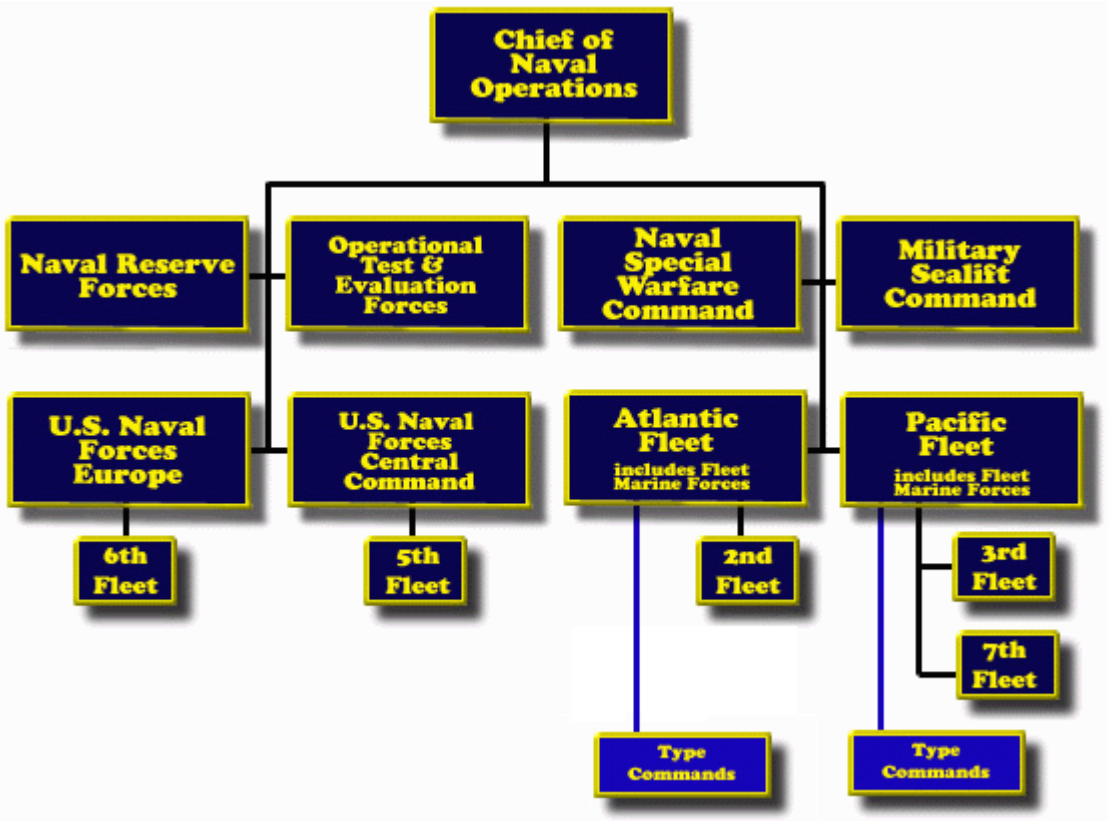
(<https://aerospace.csis.org/aerospace101/air-force-organization-101/>)

Marine Command Structure



(<https://warontherocks.com> - Source: Image generated by the authors.)

Navy Command Structure

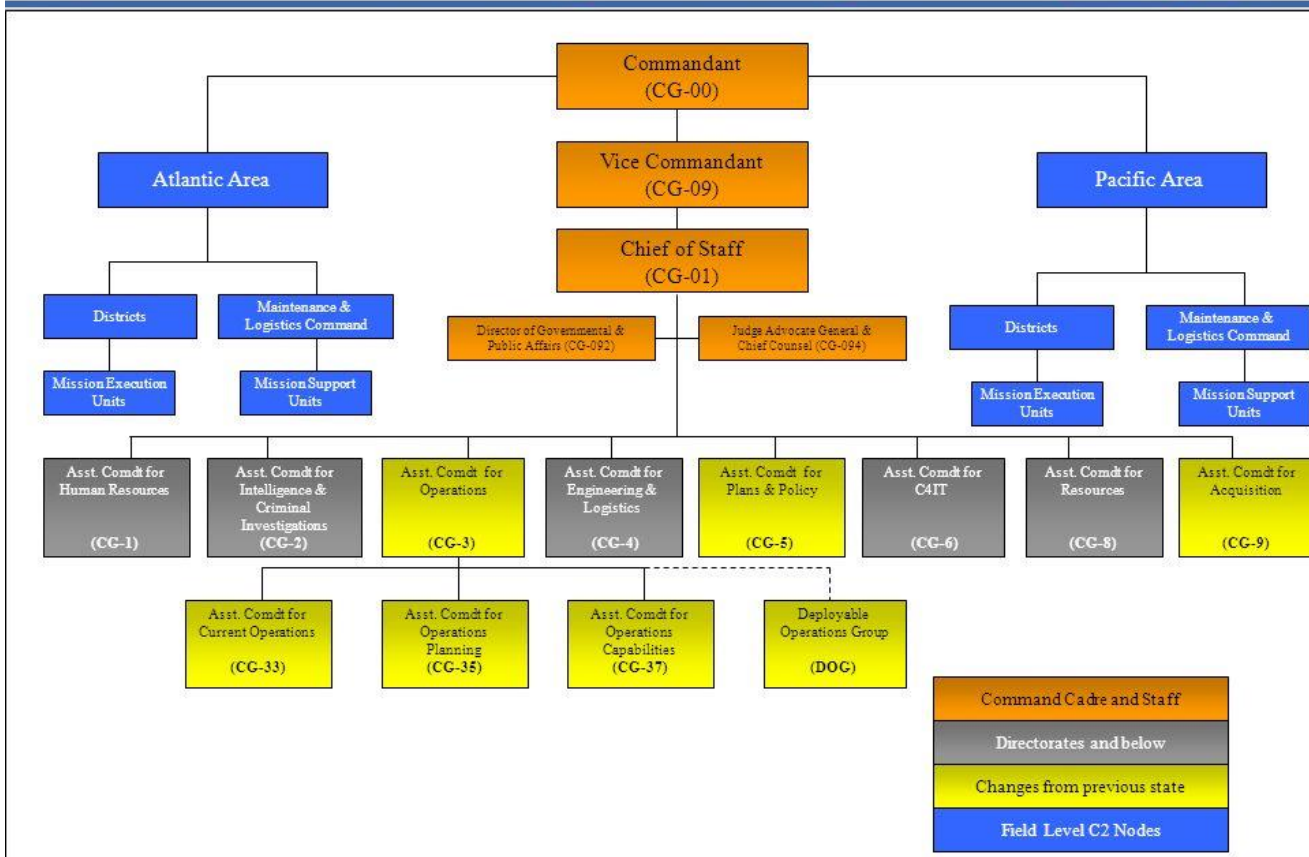


(<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/navy/overview.htm>)

US Coast Guard Structure



United States Coast Guard Current Organizational Alignment



(<https://slideplayer.com/slide/8801735/>)

Field of Ministry Evaluation

A tool to enhance gospel ministry to WELS military personnel and their families

Which military installation(s) have I been asked to be responsible for?

What is the drive time from church to the front gate?

How many military personnel am I responsible for?

How many family members accompany them?

Are there children who should be attending Sunday school and/or confirmation classes? If so, how many?

Are there adult family members who are potential for a BIC?

Are there family members with special spiritual or physical needs?

Of the total number of souls I serve, what percentage are military and family members?

Have I made contact with a base/post chaplain on this installation within the last year?

How has my congregation made its ministry known on the installation?

How important does my congregation consider my MCP ministry?

Have I asked one of the military personnel (or a family member) to serve as a contact person for the installation?

Have I lined up volunteers to help transport those without their own vehicles?

Would it be practical and possible to conduct a service, Bible class, VBS, Jesus Cares or some other ministry on or near this installation?

How long does it take me to contact new referrals from the CSM office?

How quickly do I forward address changes to the CSM office in Milwaukee?

Is there a volunteer in the congregation who could make phone calls, send out letters, maintain an address list, and submit info to CSM Office?

Have I asked a military veteran to serve as a liaison to the Lutheran Military Support Group?

How frequently is ministry to military personnel an agenda item for board of elders and/or church council meetings?

What needs have I identified?

What opportunities have I identified?

How can I meet these needs and seize these opportunities?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Notes:

Carrying out your Ministry

A variety of ideas not necessarily in order of importance

Preface: Acts 10 (esp. vs. 22-24) *“The men replied: ‘We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.’ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.”*

- God had prepared Peter to go to the Gentiles. The first Gentile he went to was a military officer.
- We note the soldier’s faith, reputation, and eagerness to share the message.

- Annually set aside time to evaluate your MCP ministry.
- Develop a one-year ministry plan.
- Set some attainable goals.
 - a specific amount of time (@ month/week) to give to MCP ministry
 - a certain number of visits to military personnel, installations, chaplains
- Learn about the mission(s) of the military installation(s) you serve.
- Work with individuals with special needs on military installations.

Inquire whether many families at the installation are in the Exceptional Family Member Program.

Jesus Cares Ministries (JCM) has established a program in which pastors or volunteers from a local WELS congregation are able to hold either simplified worship services or simplified Bible Classes on the military installation to share the gospel with military family members with special needs. This work takes place in coordination with both the base chaplain and the base Exceptional Family Member program (EFMP). The chaplain gives the permission for the religious work to take place. The EFMP connects families who have loved ones with special needs with the JCM effort. To learn more about how to do this, please contact Jesus Cares Ministries jcm@tlha.org.

- Attempt to make personal contact (phone or in person) with each person whose name you receive from the CSM office or home pastor.
- Annually stop at the installation chapel to introduce yourself to the chapel staff and head chaplain. Ask what the best way is to serve WELS military members on base.
- Leave contact information, church location, and service times at the chapel. The Military Personnel Poster can be downloaded at <https://welscongregationalervices.net/download/c005/> under the download tab.
- Inquire about the possible use of the chapel for a service, Bible class, extension of VBS, etc.
- Use your active military or retired military people to get you on the installation.
- Use your active military people as contacts for new military.

- Ask your active military people or retired military to provide rides for those who don't have their own vehicles.
- View your MCP ministry as a privilege and opportunity.
- Embrace your MCP ministry with enthusiasm.

Religious Accommodation

WELS is classified as a Distinctive Religious Group. This describes a religious group that has its own distinct identity. WELS is officially recognized as a distinctive religious group by the Department of Defense through the Armed Forces Chaplains Board.

As a Military Contact Pastor, you may need to address “Religious Accommodation” as a member of a Distinctive Religious Group when dealing with the different branches of the military. The Department of Defense has established rules to ensure religious accommodation is considered. According to the Navy War Plan 1-05, September 2012, Glossary 2, “Religious Accommodation. The reasonable and good faith effort to support religious requirements within the boundaries of good order and discipline.”

The “magic words” for MCPs and WELS service members offer resources to ensure religious accommodation for WELS Members. The following are policies as stated by the Department of Defense (DoD), the US Navy, the US Air Force, and the US Army.

Religious Accommodation Regulatory Authority References:

Department of Defense

According to DoDI 1300.17 *Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services*, “It is DoD policy that:

- a. The DoD places a high value on the rights of members of the Military Services to **observe the tenets of their respective religions** or to observe no religion at all. It protects the civil liberties of its personnel and the public to the greatest extent possible, consistent with its military requirements, in accordance with DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1000.29 (Reference (c)). (p.2)
- e. **Requests for religious accommodation** will be resolved in a timely manner and will be approved when accommodation would not adversely affect mission accomplishment, including military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, health and safety, or any other military requirement. (p.3)
- i. All requests for **accommodation of religious practices** will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Each request must be considered based on its unique facts; the nature of the requested religious accommodation; the effect of approval or denial on the Service member’s exercise of religion; and the effect of approval or denial on mission accomplishment, including unit cohesion. (p.4)
- j. Service members whose requests for **accommodation of religious practices** are approved will be informed of the specific elements of that approval. Specific elements will include that such approval does not apply for their entire military service commitment and that, at the discretion of the Secretary concerned, new requests for the same accommodation are necessary upon new assignment, transfer of duty stations, or other significant change in circumstances, including deployment.” (p.4-5)

(DoDI 1300.17, February 10, 2009)

US Navy

In the US Navy, SECNAVINST 1730.8B states, “DON policy is to **accommodate the doctrinal or traditional observances of the religious faith** practiced by individual members when these doctrines or observances will not have an adverse impact on military readiness, individual or unit readiness, unit cohesion, health, safety, discipline, or mission accomplishment.

Accommodation of a member’s religious practices cannot be guaranteed at all times and is subject to military necessity. Determination of necessity rests entirely with the commanding officer. (p.2)

Members seeking **religious accommodation** must submit their request in writing through their chain of command to their commanding officer, commander, or as otherwise specified in this instruction.

Commanders will respond to requests for accommodation in a just and timely manner, supporting religious freedom and respect for religious diversity within the Sea Services.

Commanders and commanding officers shall approve requests for **religious accommodation** within the guidelines of this instruction. (p.7)

Additionally, the US Navy states regarding Religious Accommodation, “The Navy has a regulatory requirement to meet religious ministry needs, to include providing faith-specific religious support. If

accommodation of religious needs has a significant adverse impact on the force's ability to accomplish the mission, then limits on accommodation may be considered. The level of justification needed for limitation is based on the severity of the adverse impact. The requirement is captured in Navy Tactical Task 4.4.5, Accommodate Religious Needs. (NWP 1-05, September 2012, p. 1-2)

US Air Force

The US Air Force Instruction 52-101 assigns responsibility to the base/wing chaplain to ensure religious accommodation.

“Chaplains. IAW Title 10, United States Code, Section 8067 (h), chaplains provide religious worship and rites, **religious accommodation**, pastoral care, unit engagement, counseling and spiritual care. Chaplains will not perform duties incompatible with their endorsing organizations, professional role and noncombatant status. (T-0) Chaplains will not serve in any military capacity other than those specific duties contained in the 52XX Specialty Description found in the Air Force Officer Classification Directory. (T-1)” (p.3)

“**Religious Accommodation.** Chaplain Corps personnel advise and assist commanders and supervisors in responding to and facilitating religious accommodation requests. In accordance with DoDI 1300.17, *Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services*, section 4, “it is DoD policy that requests for accommodation of religious practices should be approved by commanders when accommodation will not have an adverse impact on mission accomplishment, military readiness, unit cohesion, standards, or discipline.” (T-0)” (p.10)

“Additional Worship. When the wing chaplain (or equivalent) validates and documents a need for worship opportunities or other religious support the assigned chaplains cannot provide, he/she may coordinate with **civilian religious leaders** in the area to provide for the religious needs of Airmen and their families. (See 3.7.5.) (T-3)” (p.10-11)

US Army

The chaplain advises the commander on **religious accommodation**. Soldiers may request religious accommodation in accordance with AR 600–20. Commanders are the approving authority for **religious accommodation** requests that do not require a waiver of Army regulation (see DODI 1300.17 and AR 600–20). (AR 165-1, p.6)

SAMPLE REQUEST FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

XXXX-XX

2 March 2021

MEMORANDUM THRU Title of Soldier's first line leader, Unit Name (OFFICE SYBOL), Standardized Street Address, City, ST, and ZIP+4

FOR Commander, Unit Name (OFFICE SYBOL), Standardized Street Address, City, ST, and ZIP+4

SUBJECT: Request of Religious Accommodation for [Soldier RANK Last, First MI, ex: "*PVT Smith, John M.*"]

1. References:

a. DOD Instruction 1300.17, (Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services), Incorporating Change 1, Effective 22 January 2014.

b. AR 600-20, (Army Command Policy), 6 November 2014.

c. *This We Believe*: Statement of Belief of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), wels.net/about-wels/what-we-believe/#toggle-id-19 "The Church"

2. Purpose: The purpose of the memorandum is to request the following religious accommodation (in accordance with the References mentioned in Paragraph 1): an Exception to Policy allowing [Soldier rank, name: "*PVT Smith*"] *to be away from Fort Jackson from 0800 to 1130 on Sundays to attend the nearest WELS congregation while attending Initial Entry Training (IET) at the U.S. Army Basic Combat Training Center, Ft Jackson, SC. This approval would also be for [Soldier rank, name: "*Pvt Smith*"] to ride with a non-IET permanent party service member who also attends the same WELS congregation. (The time accounts for an hour round-trip travel, an hour for worship and an hour for Bible study.)*

3. Discussion: [Soldier rank name: "*Pvt Smith*"] is a confirmed member of the WELS and regularly attends [Home Church]. According to WELS doctrine and practice, religious worship and actions should only be observed among those with whom there is complete agreement on doctrine (see reference in Paragraph 1.c. and Paragraph 6 of this memorandum for additional information). As the WELS does not endorse military chaplains, there are no services offered on Fort Jackson among whom there is unity of doctrine for [Soldier] to

worship and practice his faith. The only place available is the nearest WELS congregation to *Fort Jackson, which is Hope Lutheran Church at 1400 Kennerly Rd, Irmo, SC 29063 (about 21 miles from Ft Jackson)*. This can be verified by visiting: <https://yearbook.wels.net/unitsearch> (NB: search using "Columbia SC" or the ZIP Code and choose a 50 mile radius). Worship on Sunday mornings at *Hope Lutheran Church, is either 0830 or 1100, with a Bible study in-between at 0945.*

4. Benefits of approval: A Soldier will be given the opportunity to practice his religious beliefs. Also, this Soldier will have his faith and spiritual resiliency strengthened, allowing the Soldier to give **his/her** best effort during IET.

5. WELS Military Services, a committee of the national church body focused on providing ministry to WELS members in the military, has assigned local parish pastors near military installations as the Military Contact Pastor for that installation. For *Fort Jackson, that is the Reverend Jason Zahn, pastor of Hope Lutheran Church, Irmo, SC*. He may be contacted at *Commercial 803-781-8673 or Email pastor@hopeofcolumbia.com*.

6. Description of the WELS: The WELS is a Christian, liturgical church body that grew out of German missionary societies to America. They were organized in 1850 in Wisconsin. They have nearly four hundred-thousand baptized members. The Armed Forces Chaplain's Board (AFCB) recognizes the WELS as a Distinctive Faith Group (DFG). The WELS believes, teaches and confesses that Scripture teaches religious fellowship should be only practiced between those who are in perfect agreement over all doctrines of Scripture, that Scripture defines religious fellowship as joint worship, joint communion, joint church work, and joint prayer, and that Scripture teaches that to practice or try to join in religious fellowship with those whose confession or practice shows there is not complete agreement over all doctrines of Scripture is not in keeping with God's Word. In accordance with the above, the WELS is not in fellowship with the two largest Lutheran denominations that endorse for the Chaplaincy, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). As such, there are no chaplains that are in perfect agreement over all doctrines of Scripture with the WELS. For them to lead, or for WELS Soldiers to participate in worship, prayer, etc. with them would be religious fellowship with those whose confession or practice is not in complete agreement over all doctrines of Scripture. Therefore, local civilian pastors are the only option for religious support to Soldiers of these faith groups.

7. The point of contact for the memorandum is the undersigned at [Soldier's Contact Information]. For additional information about the WELS, and to verify [Soldier rank, name: *PVT Smith*]'s membership status and attendance habits, please contact his/her pastor, the Reverend [home pastor], at Commercial [Home Church Phone #].

Respectfully submitted,

[SOLDIER FIRST MI LAST eg: *John M Smith*]

PVT, USA

Distinctive Religious Group Leader

The definition of a Distinctive Religious Group from a 2017 MSC report:

Distinctive religious group: This describes a religious group that has its own distinct identity. WELS is officially recognized as a distinctive religious group by the Department of Defense through the Armed Forces Chaplains Board.

A DRGL is a Distinctive Religious Group Leader, a qualified, endorsed, trained lay person who is officially recognized by the military to represent a distinctive religious group. Since WELS does not endorse chaplains in the military, we are looking for ways to better serve our troops when they are in places that are inaccessible to civilian pastors. Training lay people who are in the military to lead worship and Bible study while they are on a ship or downrange will allow us to serve our people with Word and Sacrament when we are not able to.

Military Responsibilities for a Distinctive Religious Group Leader (DRGL)

What is a DRGL? DRGLs are military members who have official status to conduct religious ministries at their unit. They are officially sanctioned, both by the military and by their religious organization.

Why a DRGL? The military has a constitutional obligation to provide opportunity for religious worship to all of its members. Practically speaking, it is not able to do this solely with military chaplains, so it uses volunteers from the different religions to provide the right type of services.

Military members are free to worship without any interaction with the military or military religious services. They are even free to lead worship privately, but if they do so, they must keep this activity separate from the military.

DRGL status give a military member an official status in the Command Religious Team. This is beneficial in many ways. It allows the military member to officially use government buildings, such as chapels, to lead services. DRGL status also allows other military members to officially use the DRGL as a religious resource.

Responsibilities: As a member of the Command Religious Team, a DRGL has two sets of responsibilities:

To the Military Chain of Command

- Keep required documentation up to date
- Faithfully work with the Chaplain to provide services at an appropriate time
- Report attendance numbers
- No collection of offerings

To their religion

- Faithfully adhere to the tenants of their religion
- Only participate in religious services that are in keeping with their beliefs
- Provide sacraments in an appropriate way
- Use the DRGL leadership position as a servant leader opportunity.

The military has defined a Distinctive Religious Group Leader and their requirements in the following ways:

US Army - Chaplains have roles and responsibilities beyond their unit of assignment. Chaplains are responsible for unit, area, and distinctive religious group religious support. *Distinctive religious group religious support*. Religious group-specific religious support is given to authorized personnel for the exercise of precise

requirements of denominations or religions. Personnel and mission constraints determine the availability of distinctive religious group support. Distinctive religious group support is often provided on an area basis and augmented by distinctive religious group leaders (DRGLs) (see chap 5) (AR 165-1, p.6)

5-5. Distinctive religious group leaders

a. DRGLs are qualified individuals certified by recognized ROs to assist commanders and military chaplains in accommodating religious requirements of Soldiers and Family members belonging to religious groups with distinct religious needs that cannot be met by available military chaplains. A DRGL provides a very precise service for a prescribed period of time to further the CMRP in the free exercise of religion. The DRGL must be sponsored and approved by a local chaplain. The DRGL has no inherent authority or implied permission to conduct religious activities outside of the CMRP.

b. DRGLs—

- (1) Are volunteers.
- (2) Do not function as military chaplains or as a separate military religious authority.
- (3) Are not provided for non-religious groups.
- (4) Must be sponsored and supervised by an assigned chaplain.
- (5) May collect offerings at approved services in accordance with chapter 15 of this regulation.
- (6) Will not be paid or receive any services, travel, or other personal expenses from appropriated funds (APFs), but the congregation is entitled to the funding of distinctive religious group activities in accordance with the approved CMRP and local policies governing CTOF.
- (7) Will not perform collective Protestant Services.
- (8) Perform a service within the CMRP in cooperation with the command and the Chaplain Corps for U.S. authorized personnel. There is no international, interagency, or coalition role even though services generally remain open to the public.
- (9) Will complete all background checks and training necessary in order to be approved to work with children in accordance with DOD and Army policy.

c. A DRGL seeking to provide religious services in U.S. Government controlled facilities must submit an application packet, requesting the approval of a sponsoring local chaplain. If the sponsoring local chaplain's higher headquarters requires additional approval or reporting, the sponsoring local chaplain will comply with the policies of the appropriate higher headquarters. In order to be approved, the prospective DRGL packet must include, at minimum—

- (1) A signed letter of approval on official letterhead from a RO whose principal purpose is to support an individual's belief and practice of his or her religion. The approval letter will—
 - (a) Include the group's origin, purpose, general worship practices, the length of time it has existed, and the number of members of the religious group.
 - (b) Certify that the applicant currently has favorable ecclesiastical standing with the RO and is religiously qualified for the purposes of serving as a DRGL.
 - (c) Clearly state the sponsoring religious group's concurrence that the DRGL serves in compliance with the appropriate CMRP under the supervision of the chaplain. (AR 165-1, p.12)
- (2) A letter signed by the prospective DRGL, including:
 - (a) A description of the volunteer religious services the DRGL proposes.
 - (b) Documentation of the distinctive need for these religious services, explaining:
 1. Why the service cannot be conducted by a military chaplain.
 2. Why the local chaplain-led services cannot meet the specific theological and/or distinctive religious requirements of the group.
 - (c) An acknowledgement that the DRGL will serve in compliance with the CMRP, under the supervision of the sponsoring local chaplain, and will serve and/or continue to serve only with the approval of the approving chaplain.

d. Review of status.

- (1) DRGL status must be approved annually.
- (2) DRGL status must be reviewed whenever there is a change regarding the distinctive religious needs of the religious group requiring the use of a DRGL (such as transfer of Soldiers requiring DRGL or availability of chaplains capable of meeting identified religious needs).

e. Removal of DRGLs. The approving chaplain has the authority to remove the DRGL. Circumstances for removal include:

- (1) Change of circumstances requiring the use of a DRGL.
 - (2) Allegations of inappropriate conduct regarding the DRGL.
 - (3) Failure by DRGL to properly serve the religious needs of the religious group.
- f. Request for re-approval. If a DRGL feels that they have been unfairly removed, they may request re-approval by the approving chaplain's next higher supervisory chaplain. (AR 165-1 p.13)

US Navy - lay leader. A volunteer appointed by the commanding officer and supervised and trained by the command chaplain to serve for a period of time to meet the needs of a particular religious faith group when their military chaplains are not available. The lay leader may conduct services, but may not exercise any other activities usually reserved for the ordained clergy. (NTRP 1-02) (Glossary 2) Lay leaders, in a much more restricted manner, meet some faith group-specific needs. (NWP 1-05, September 2012, p. 2-3) Religious services are conducted according to the manner and forms of the Religious Organization (RO) authorizing representation by the lay leader or civilian religious ministry professional (p. 2-4). If deployed, the chaplain seeks to identify a volunteer and arrange training in order to organize and support lay-led worship. The chaplain identifies online and other distance support (p. 2-5).

Commanders may appoint lay leaders to accommodate religious diversity inherent in the members of the command. Appointments will be in writing for a specific period of time not to exceed 1 year. Only authorized personnel representing their own religious organization may be appointed. (MILPERSMAN 1730-010, p.1)

In Most cases, lay-led services constitute a temporary accommodation of specific religious requirements in an operational setting when assigned chaplains are not able to provide. (MILPERSMAN 1730-010, p.1)

Commanders shall appoint authorized personnel as lay leaders on the basis of volunteerism, high moral character, motivation, religious interest, and certification by the appointee's religious Organization. Commanding Officers (COs) shall ensure that lay leaders are trained and supervised by a military chaplain. (MILPERSMAN 1730-010, p.1)

ROs (Religious Organizations) are also the source of authorization allowing some personnel to be considered for service as religious lay leaders during deployments. Such personnel must be appointed by their commander (see Military personnel manual (MILPERSMAN) 1730-010, Use of Lay Leaders in Religious Services, and NTRP 1-05.1, Religious Lay Leaders); however, the guidance concerning the content of the religious services they lead comes from the ROs. (NWP 1-05, September 2012, p. 1-4)

For deploying units, or where religious resources are not readily available to Sailors and their families, a different, higher minimum standard for Command Religious Program (CRP) efforts to fulfill the tactical tasks exists, to include the previously mentioned requirements, plus:

1. Conduct of regular periodic religious needs assessments
2. Solicitation of the necessary expert advice of a chaplain to analyze the results of needs assessments and crew need generally in order to design an appropriate CRP
3. Arrangement for the training and certification of lay leaders
4. Command logistical support for the CRP, to include a religious ministry mount-out box
5. Regular access for the crew to chaplain call
6. Certification of the CRP by the cognizant force and fleet training authorities.

(NWP 1-05, September 2012, p.2-3)

SUBMARINE FORCES

Lay Leaders are the principal instruments of religious accommodation while underway. This naturally means that pre-deployment assessment of religious requirements, and the training and certification of lay leaders is of critical importance. Lay leaders typically have limited connectivity with chaplains once their boat is underway, so they must be fully trained and supplied prior to getting under way for deployment. (NWP 1-05, September 2012, p. 4-7)

In the US Navy, it describes Lay Organizations. Chaplains may support faith group-specific lay organizations with the concurrence of the wing/installation chaplain (or equivalent). Lay organizations have a primarily

religious focus but are not Chaplain Corps programs. Their activities are consistent with the Chaplain Corps mission of providing spiritual care and opportunities for the free exercise of religion (e.g., Officers' Christian Fellowship (OCF), Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), The Navigators, The Knights of Columbus, Campus Crusade for Christ and Worldwide Marriage Encounter). This may present opportunities such as Jesus Cares Ministries or MOPS as a means to minister to our military families.

US Air Force - AFI 51-101 (p.9) 3.7.3. Distinctive Religious Group Leaders (DRGLs)/Non-chaplain Lay Leaders. Personnel (e.g., Buddhist Lay Leader, Church of Christ Lay Leader, Muslim Lay Leader) must provide written validation of their credentials on official letterhead (original; no photocopies) by a recognized religious organization, which will serve as the credential recognized by the Armed Forces Chaplains Board (AFCB). (T-0) Documentation must be maintained in official files. (T-2)

“Magic Words” for the MILITARY CONTACT PASTOR:

Providing services on a military installation

It is ideal for military members to become active members of your congregation, but there are circumstances where it may be beneficial for you to conduct worship on a military installation. This may be as simple as individual communion, or in the case of multiple service members, as broad as a “satellite worship site.” This information is meant to help you start the process.

When is worship on a military installation appropriate?

Any time a member is restricted to the installation. Basic training is the most common situation, but restriction to the installation for punishment and temporary assignment for combat training are common as well.

When can you enter an installation and lead worship?

Only the service member can trigger this process. Your presence on the installation generally can happen only at their request. This right, known as “religious accommodation,” only applies when the regular process for providing religious services is found to be insufficient. If you want to know the process the service member needs to follow to make this request, see the Military Services Committee’s help guide for the service member at csm.welsrc.net/military.

When can this process start?

It should start right away. While you can’t compel the military to allow you on the installation, being known by the local chaplain community before a service member requests religious accommodation will help the process go smoothly.

How do I start?

Call the installation chapel and ask to speak to a chaplain. Explain who you are and that you want to be available as a resource for the day they have a WELS or ELS member in the command. Asking him or her to lunch would be appropriate.

Lunch? Really?

Yes, or something similar. Chaplains are legally responsible for taking care of their service members. Professional interaction will help them see what a positive resource you are. Take the opportunity to ask them about their duties. It can help you advise your members in the military on what they should and should not expect from their chaplain.

What can I expect?

No two chaplains are the same, and you may get anything from a cold refusal to a warm welcome to be part of the Command Religious Program. Each service, installation, and chaplain will handle outsiders a little differently.

What can I do to make this interaction go well?

You should respect that there are two aspects of a military chaplain's duties (see the table below), and most of what they do is not directly worship related. From their perspective, even if the service member goes to you for worship, they still "belong" to that chaplain. This is not in a religious sense, but in the sense that they have been delegated by their commander with the responsibility to ensure that the service member is cared for.

Role of a military Chaplain

As a Religious Professional:

- Provide worship to those of their faith group
- Be a confidential counselor on life and morale matters to all members of the command

As part of their military duties, responsible to the commander to:

- Enable the free practice of religion for all members of their assigned command.
- Maintain a knowledge of the morale within the command.
- Provide ethical guidance to the members of the command, especially commanders.

Having trouble?

If you know that a service member has officially requested services and has been routinely denied, contact the WELS National Civilian Chaplain, Paul Ziemer (military@wels.net). He is connected to the chaplain program at the Department of Defense and can request assistance in ensuring that local commands respect their service members' constitutional rights.

Have you run into an unfriendly chaplain when trying to make a connection on base?

Unfortunately, there's not too much that you can do if they aren't denying someone the right to worship. Chaplains rotate every two to three years, so be persistent and look for new opportunities. Do you have a high-ranking active duty officer or enlisted member in your congregation who would be willing to make introductions?

What does this right look like?

A request for religious accommodation should either result in the command helping the service member get to your church for worship or official sanction for you to enter the installation to worship with that service member. That may mean a chaplain or enlisted member escorts you to and from a private area to conduct worship. It is unlikely you will get open access to the installation or permission to hold regular services. The only exception would be if there is a large and regular WELS or ELS presence on the installation, but this generally only occurs during wartime mobilizations.

IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

The military is known for being specific about the use of terms. However, across branches and even installations, you will still find wide variation in the terms being used. In general, explaining in plain language who you are works the best, but here is a list of key words that you might use or hear.

Military installation/Installation: Property that falls under military jurisdiction and is generally off-limits to civilians. Each service uses different terms, and some services have multiple terms to describe the type of facility it is. Here are a few: camp, post, base, air base, air station, naval station, dockyard, arsenal, armory, training center.

Military chaplain: Chaplains are formally-trained religious ministry professionals and staff officers that are endorsed by an ecclesiastical organization and commissioned in the Armed Forces by the U.S. Government to ensure the free exercise of religion, provide specific religious ministry, and advise the commander within the pluralistic and unique military environment. To be a chaplain, they must have a master's degree with at least

72 semester hours, 36 of which must be in theology, as well as two to three years (depending on branch of service) of professional work experience in a civilian setting.

Enlisted religious affairs personnel: Sometimes called a chaplain assistant, the official name has recently been changed in both the Army and Air Force to “Religious Affairs Specialist,” while the Navy calls them “Religious Program Specialists” or “RPs.” Chaplains are paired with enlisted personnel that aid and supplement the chaplain’s religious advisement and religious support missions. Each service trains their respective enlisted religious affairs personnel specifically for their service’s chaplaincy prerogatives. The skills vary by service and mission set. One specific duty they often perform is the scheduling of worship facilities on the installation.

Civilian chaplain: A WELS term to describe a ministry professional called specifically to serve our military members, but not commissioned in the military. Military chaplains may or may not know exactly what this means.

Military contact pastor: A WELS term to describe pastors who serve the military communities near their congregation. This term will not be known outside the WELS.

Distinctive religious group: This describes a religious group that has its own distinct identity. WELS is officially recognized as a distinctive religious group by the Department of Defense through the Armed Forces Chaplains Board. This fact is not well known by WELS members in the military or military chaplains and may need to be explained.

Religious accommodation: The official term to describe the service member’s right to request religious services that meet their specifications.

Ministry Day/Partner Day: These or similar terms describe an open house hosted by the installation chaplain community to get to know local church pastors. Not all installations offer this, but some do annually. You should attend whenever possible and get to know the local chaplains.

Head chaplain/Senior chaplain: These or similar terms describe the senior military chaplain on the installation. It is unlikely that you will meet or get to know this person. They are responsible for the religious programs for the whole installation and often have responsibilities to commands at the general or admiral level. Requests to see them will most likely be denied. Working with the subordinate chaplains is often better.

Unit chaplain: A chaplain who holds responsibilities to one specific unit. These chaplains deploy with the units they are assigned to.

Installation chaplain: A chaplain who is responsible for religious services on the base. They manage the local chapels and often hold regular religious services for their denominations.

Command Religious Program: This term describes the religious program established by commanders to ensure that the religious needs of everyone in their command are met. It is written and managed by the chaplain and can include outside religious professionals to meet the needs of the unit.

Have you encountered other terms and concepts that you would like to learn about? Contact the Military Services Committee of Special Ministries at specialministries@wels.net so that they can improve this document.

“Magic Words” for the WELS SERVICE MEMBER:

How to have religious services on base

Your rights:

Even if you have been in the military for some time, you may not know that the military has a responsibility, within the confines of military necessity, to allow you to practice your religion and assist you in finding a worship opportunity that meets your religious needs. The military calls this “religious accommodation.”

When you should invoke this right:

When you cannot access regular worship, such as during basic training, periods of restriction to base, exceptional distance from a local church, if there is a large group of WELS/ELS believers at the installation who need to worship, or a long period of training away from home.

Situations where you should not invoke this right:

When you have the means to access local WELS/ELS worship or when deployed. When deployed, a pastor will not be able to physically come to worship with you, but you still have options. Keep in contact with your home church pastor, the pastor from the congregation nearest to base, or the WELS National Civilian Chaplain.

It’s your responsibility:

Only you can trigger the chain of events within the military that leads to your religious accommodation. Your pastor, mom, or friends aren’t the answer—YOU ARE.

What you need to do:

1. ALWAYS be RESPECTFUL, kind, and polite, but insistent. Maintain your military bearing while you stand your ground and know the applicable regulations/orders/policies.
2. You must make a request for religious accommodation through your chain of command. This needs to be in writing but can be handwritten in extreme circumstances. (See the example below.)
3. Be ready to answer all the questions that you will be asked:

Q: Why can’t you worship with the Protestants/other Lutherans?

A: You are a member of a “distinctive religious group” recognized by the Department of Defense and the Armed Forces Chaplains Board. DoDI 1300.17 states: “The DoD places a high value on the rights of members of the Military Services to observe the tenets of their respective religions...” In accordance with section 2000bb-1 of Title 42, USC, “requests for religious accommodation from a military policy, practice, or duty that substantially burdens a Service member’s exercise of religion may be denied only when the military policy, practice, or duty: a) Furthers a compelling governmental interest. b) Is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.”

Q: How are we (the unit) supposed to know what specific person you need to help you worship?

A: You should have the contact information for either the Military Contact Pastor (nearest WELS or ELS pastor) or Chaplain Ziemer (the WELS National Civilian Chaplain at military@wels.net) to give them.

Q: Why do you want a WELS/ELS pastor to come?

A: Only he can perform all the sacraments included in the worship of my religion.

Q: What exactly are you asking for?

A: Help in getting the WELS/ELS pastor on base during regular religious worship times and a private place to worship and receive the sacrament of Holy Communion.

What to do if you are denied this right:

Contact your unit chaplain. Also, consider speaking to your unit-level Equal Opportunity NCO or appealing to your next-level commander. If that isn't working, your inspector general or local staff judge advocate is the right resource. It is generally best practice to try to solve issues at the lowest level, but if you have always maintained your military bearing and are respectfully insisting on reasonable accommodation to stay connected to the church and your Savior, you should have no issues as you move up the chain of command. Keeping the WELS National Civilian Chaplain informed can help you navigate this process, and if all else fails he can apply pressure through the Armed Forces Chaplains Board but understand that using this path jumps several chains of command.

Word to the wise:

If in a basic training situation, this request will have to start with your drill sergeant or drill instructor. Outside of basic training scenarios, this request can begin with your unit chaplain, but letting your direct chain of command (enlisted chain of concern) know your concerns is the right thing to do.

Useful definitions:

The rules governing official worship can be very confusing. There are several layers of orders and directives which govern how you can worship, and what your chaplain's and unit commander's obligations are to assist you. Sometimes you could be misunderstood because the service you are in uses different or specific wording to describe an action or duty. Below is a description of common terms that should help you.

Military Contact Pastor: This is a WELS term to describe the WELS/ELS minister closest to your base who can help provide you religious services. Your chain of command won't know this term, so just say "pastor" or "minister."

Facilitate: A DoD term to describe the duty of every chaplain to help their military members worship in a way that is acceptable to their religion.

Distinctive Religious Group: The DoD term to describe a religious group that has been recognized as having distinct practices that require separate worship opportunities. WELS is an officially recognized DRG.

Religious Accommodation: The DoD term to describe the military's responsibility to help you find an appropriate worship opportunity.

Military Necessity: The general term used to describe the compelling reason the commander has for denying a religious accommodation. Without a clear, stated military necessity, the commander should grant a religious accommodation.

Spiritual Deployment Kit – SDK

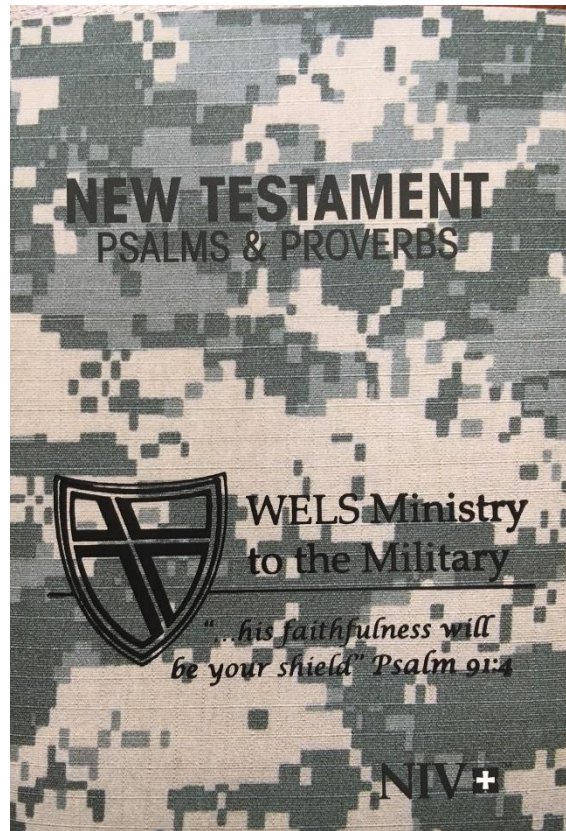
The Military Services Committee helps churches serve their members in the military when they are away from home. We could serve far more members in the military! We have the manpower and the commitment to minister to many more in the armed forces than we currently serve. We simply don't know about many of our church's members who are in the military.

You can help us by referring your congregation's military members to our ministry. Simply go to wels.net/refer and provide their contact information and we will reach out to them.

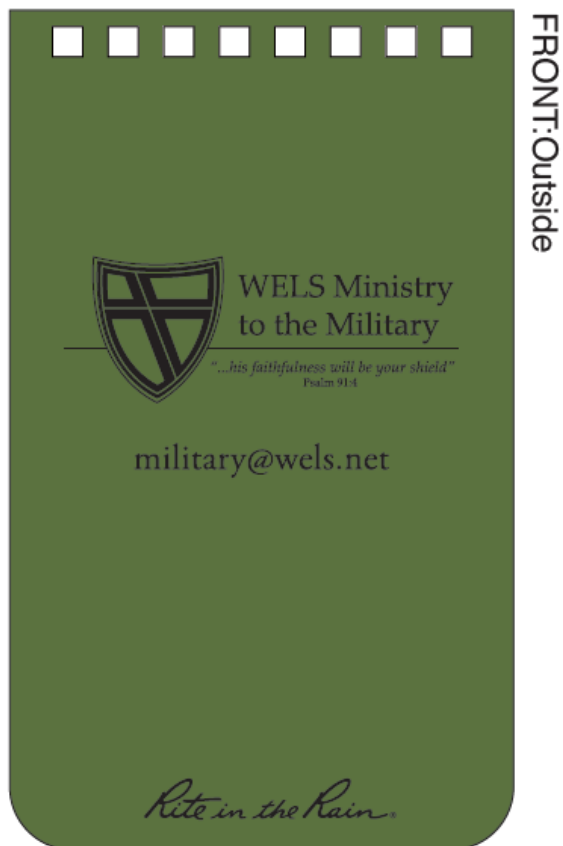
Military members can use the wels.net referral form to request a FREE "Spiritual Deployment Kit" (SDK) which includes of the new *Christian Service Members' Handbook*, a camo NIV New Testament, and a water-resistant Rite in the Rain notebook. Civilians are able to purchase the *Christian Service Members' Handbook* at nph.net. MCPs can order themselves a free personal sample of the new *Christian Service Members' Handbook* from Special Ministries. MCPs can also order as many free camo New Testaments from Special Ministries as they can distribute to military personnel.



This faith and worship resource is designed to aid Christians who serve in the military. Filled with prayers, devotional orders, topical Scripture passages, and more, this essential pocket companion offers comfort and support to soldiers on active duty.



Military men and women in all branches of the service will treasure this convenient pocket-sized Bible. Including the New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs from the accurate, readable, and clear New International Version. It even carries the popular woodland camo design and added content unique to those serving in the military.



The 3x5 inch notebook is wire bound at the top with heavy-duty, green PolyDura covers. Its convenient size and functional page format make it standard operating equipment for warriors facing tough operating environments and the need to have information and note taking capability readily available.

These are custom Rite in the Rain waterproof notebooks with 50 lined sheets (100, front and back).

The Lutheran Military Support Group has provided Military Services copies of the Christian Service Members' Handbook to give away, so MCP can have copies of the handbook to give to military members. But we also are trying to lure WELS members in the military to use wels.net/refer to help us communicate with them. When they register via wels.net/refer, they can also request a free copy of the handbook along with complimentary copies of a camo NT NIV, and a waterproof "Rite in the Rain" notebook. The Rite in the Rain notebook is only available through wels.net/refer.

Interesting Military Web Links

<https://welscongregationalervices.net/c005/> - MCP training video and downloadable resources

<https://csm.welsrc.net/military-resources/> - WELS Military Ministries Resources

<https://csm.welsrc.net/military-occasion-and-national-holiday-resources/> - military holiday resources

<https://lutheranmilitary.org/> - Lutheran Military Support Group

<https://online.nph.net/christian-service-members-handbook.html> - if you want to order the Christian Service Members' Handbook on your own

csm.welsrc.net/military-resources/ - Spiritual life in the military may encounter unexpected challenges. That's why WELS Military Services offers an online video, "Staying Close to God's Word While in the Military."

<http://www.defenselink.mil/> - U.S. Department of Defense website – lots of links

<http://www.army.mil/>

<http://www.navy.mil/>

<http://www.af.mil/>

<http://www.usmc.mil/>

<http://www.uscg.mil/>

<http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/insignias/officers.html> - a description of officer rank and insignia

<http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/insignias/enlisted.html> - a description of enlisted rank and insignia

<http://www.defenselink.mil/sites/f.html#family> - variety of DoD websites relating to family matters

<http://www.dla.mil/hqchaplain/SiteMap.htm> - Command Chaplain site map – lots of links to chaplain info in the various branches

<http://www.mca-usa.org/> - The Military Chaplains Association of the USA

http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/dod101/dod101_for_2002.html - The Department of Defense description of itself – a good overview

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/index.html> - GlobalSecurity.org is focused on innovative approaches to the emerging security challenges of the new millennium.

<http://www.fpri.org/> - Foreign Policy Research Institute

<http://www.centcom.mil/sites/uscentcom1/default.aspx> - U. S. Central Command – Military command for the Mid-East

<http://www.pamij.com/beitz.html> - The Culture of Military Organizations: A Participant-Observer Case Study of Cultural Diversity

<http://www.strategypage.com/default.asp> - Looks like a right-wing info page – lots of articles on various subjects

<http://www.mqup.mcgill.ca/book.php?bookid=1693> - info on a book – Understanding Military Culture

http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2004/n10062004_2004100603.html - a news article from American Forces Information Service

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/> - supporting our troops and their families

<http://www.militaryonesource.com> - all sorts of info for the military person and his family

A Chaplain among Chaplains

Applying the Doctrine of Fellowship in the Diverse Situations of Special Ministries

Special Ministries is special because of the special needs of the people served by this ministry. But it is often also special because of the special situations under which the ministry is carried out.

Prisons, hospitals, military installations, and warzones are not the daily workplaces of the WELS parish pastor. If he enters some of these places, it usually is as an individual spiritual caregiver who is ministering to a person in his congregation. This is not the case with a *chaplain*.

A chaplain has been defined as: *a member of the clergy who has been assigned to a special chapel, institution, ship, branch of the armed forces, etc.*² The adjective *special* sets the situation apart from the *normal*.

We are here not concerned with how the physical circumstances may be different, although those may be challenging factors for the caregiver. Prison bars, a flight deck, or sandbagged bunkers present their own challenges to ministry. But we are here primarily concerned with the fact that our ministry is often carried out shoulder-to-shoulder with spiritual caregivers who do not share our beliefs. This includes the non-Christian as well as the heterodox Christian.

In a typical parish ministry, we may live next door to the Baptist pastor and wish him a hearty “Good morning!” as we gather in the morning paper. But we drive off to different facilities and groups of people to do the work of ministry. Not necessarily so for the chaplain.

The WELS, Jewish, Muslim, and Baptist chaplains may drive into the same parking lot, walk down the same hallways—even work out of the same office, use the same chapels, and fill out the same report forms. To the outside observer (and maybe to some insiders) they may appear to be conducting a joint ministry as members of the same team.

What are we to think about this? How does this fit with being faithful to the will of the Lord God? We have been blessed as a synod by being able to still recognize and experience the precious gift of unity of faith. We often refer to this as *spiritual fellowship*. We have seen the sad results that come when this gift is not treasured and preserved.

This is one of the reasons why our synod does not participate in the military chaplaincy program as it is currently structured. But questions need to be asked: “Does our civilian chaplaincy to the military compromise our stand on doctrinal fellowship? Might it?”

As we carry out our ministry in the apparent company of other faiths, it is only right for others to be asking how the following biblical directives are being observed:

“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.” (Romans 16:17 NIV)

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and

² Apple Dictionary

Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

“I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God,
and they will be my people.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.
Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18 NIV)

Our answer is that our ministry as chaplains among other chaplains is no different from our ministry as pastors among other pastors. We may minister in the same building, and be classified as part of the same group, but those external similarities do not bind us together no more than the Lutheran and Baptist parish pastors who visit members in the same hospital are bound together. As Scripture-based chaplains, we do not change our message to blend better with others, and we do not pretend that our ministry is the same as others.

We maintain that not only are we permitted to minister to souls in these situations, but we are actually directed to do so by our Lord. Jesus made it clear that he wants his people to be among the throngs of this world to bring testimony of his Word. “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15 NIV). “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18 NIV).

The old phrase is: *In the world, but not of the world.*

The follow-up question asks exactly how we do this. The application in special ministry is the same as in parish ministry. We do not commune with, we do not share pulpits with, and we do not enter into joint prayer with those who do not share our faith. We delight to express the unity of faith among those we are united with, and we refrain from giving the impression of spiritual unity where it does not exist.

In special ministry we may be invited to do any of the above more often than in typical parish ministry. Some may even expect these actions of us. But that does not change our ministry. However, it may change our attitude—but not for the better.

If there is one word that may seem to characterize the attitude of WELS chaplains toward the other chaplains, I think that word is *defensive*. And I understand that.

My area of experience is with the military. I can understand why a WELS civilian chaplain to the military may tend to be defensive. But I also must say that this can easily become a hindrance to his ministry—and most often it is unnecessary.

We are a small church body. We have the same worker-training schools in our background. Some of us had the blessing of WELS schools from pre-school through seminary. We are comfortable with our own. We are not naturally comfortable with others who represent religious groups that do not take their stand solidly on the Bible.

We tend to operate with a religious “Geiger counter.” When we mingle with people, we tend to take religious readings. By what they say or do, by the affiliations that they have, we register them as: *Reformed*, or *Catholic*, or *Liberal*, or if necessary, *Heathen*, etc. When the needle on our meter is in the “green” we smile. When it moves to the “red” we frown. Not just our words, but also often our body language demonstrates the assessment we have made. Those around us pick up the signals.

As spiritual leaders, shouldn't we be aware of religious differences and alert to Satan's attacks through false teachings? Absolutely, just as a medical doctor notices the signs of disease among the people he mixes with. But the recognition of false doctrine does not call for immediate rejection of the "patient."

The basic question is: "What is our relationship to the person?" Is this a fellow Christian? Is this a friend? Is this a neighbor? Is this a co-worker in Christ's kingdom?

The next question is: "How do I properly express this relationship?"

Let me give an illustration. My sister married a fine Christian man—and shortly afterwards became a practicing member of his non-Lutheran church. At an anniversary celebration (in the church basement) of my grandparents the WELS pastor became engaged in lively conversation with my brother-in-law. They were talking about big trucks—the kind my brother-in-law drove. They smiled, laughed, and enjoyed one another's company.

Years later, when one of my parents died, another WELS pastor came to the funeral home to solemnly express his sympathy to my brother, to me, to my WELS cousins—but not to my sister or her husband. When he came to them at the end of the line by the casket, he paused; looked at them; and then stepped away. It wasn't that he did not recognize them. He was not their pastor. He did not agree with their church body. And he felt constrained to show that.

Which WELS pastor demonstrated the correct attitude toward my brother-in-law? Which one was in a better position to point out to him the truths of God?

So, exactly what is our relationship to chaplains of other faith groups? Some may be fellow Christians—and some may not be. Some may be doctrinally closer to us than some others. But we do not share a spiritual fellowship with them. We cannot call them a brother or sister in Christ. We cannot act as if they were.

Then, what are they to us? *They are neighbors.* They spend time around us. The path of our life crisscrosses with theirs. They have a job to do, and we have our job. We are not enemies. We are neighbors.

It really is as simple as that. And, just as simply, Jesus tells us what our attitude towards these people should be: "He answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27 NIV).

The Buddhist chaplain and the ELCA chaplain are to be the objects of our love. It may well be that the Lord has brought them into the circle of our life that we may minister to them while we are ministering to others. They may be seeking better answers than what they now have. They may be wondering why we are different. They need to know that we have not rejected them as unworthy of our time, attention, or concern.

They need to know that they have been accepted by us—not as one in the faith, not as a person whose approach to God is an acceptable one among many—but as someone we are concerned about: as our neighbor.

We can respect them for the good that they do, and the good intentions that they have. We can listen to them as they reveal their thoughts and plans. We can be their friend if they will permit. *Friendship is not fellowship.*

I suspect that one of the reasons we quickly become defensive is our lack of confidence in ourselves, and maybe even in our God.

With the spiritual Geiger counter firmly in hand, we often feel called upon to explain why we do not share the belief system of our neighbor. We feel obligated, for instance, to explain why our church body does not endorse military chaplains. Why we practice *close communion*. Or, why we baptize babies. We feel a need to explain. Sometimes it seems that we almost apologize for being there.

We fail to recognize that among other chaplains these are not the questions being asked. Most are not as doctrinally sensitive as we. They are not there to debate religious questions. We do not have to validate our faith.

We are of a certain faith group. Why we are of that group is not the question on the table. Pertinent questions involve whom you hope to serve and how you plan to do it. If you cannot give Holy Communion to those outside of your faith group, that fact will affect a ministry plan for the population of the institution or installation. If you are willing to visit with people outside of your church body, that also will affect the overall plan. Why you will or will not do something is a different topic. Maybe at a different time there will be occasions to discuss that.

Inclusivity is the byword. We may not support that concept, but it is the reason why we are able to receive the support of institutions, including our government, for carrying out our ministry at gatherings outside of our church body. Others want to include us! They feel that our members have a right to be served by us instead of simply being packaged with others. In the military, it is no longer a choice of *Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish*. There is a drive to have all faith groups served, and this includes the Wiccan. Military chaplains will go to great lengths to enable each faith group to be served as well as possible. WELS members in the military make up just one, very small, group that is on their list of concern. We have to thank our Lord for this.

Among military chaplains a number of questions often arise from those who do not know us well—and that number is great. The first is: “Why does your church body have a ministry to the military if you are against military service?” The question grows from ignorance of our reason for not endorsing our clergy as military chaplains. The concern is that a WELS civilian chaplain may try to turn soldiers into pacifists.

Another question is: “Aren’t your people already being served by our Lutheran military chaplains?” Here we explain that we are of a different faith group from other Lutherans, even if part of our name is the same.

A question probably often wondered at, but not openly expressed is: “Are you saying that I do not have a legitimate ministry, or that I am not conducting my ministry well enough?” The answer again lies with the words: “We are a different faith group.” Our belief system requires our people to be served by our clergy.

A faith group that is very similar to us in this regard is the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, our synod pointed to that similarity in its words to Congress during the Second World War. This church body maintains that its people must be served by its own clergy—and the military has generally gone along with this. The reason why we are not given the same opportunity under the military chaplaincy is probably because of our size.

By the way, the Executive Director of the Armed Forces Chaplain Board agrees with our decision to not endorse our clergy as military chaplains. He gives two reasons for his position: 1) we are too small of a church body. “A WELS military chaplain may easily end up with a unit 100 miles away from the closest WELS military person.” And, 2) our belief system is too exclusive for the military chaplaincy. “Your chaplain would too often have to excuse himself from performing a duty. This would only place an extra burden on the rest of the chaplaincy staff.” I think he is correct. (But there may be a solution for this...)

A question that is being asked more frequently is also very important: “Is it God-pleasing to have a member of a church body not in fellowship with us teach us how to better conduct our ministry?”

We surely would not bring in a Roman Catholic priest to give a presentation at one of our pastoral conferences, would we? Then why does WELS Military Services regularly bring in military chaplains from different church bodies to give presentations at workshops for Military Contact Pastors? And, would it be wrong for one or more of our special ministry chaplains to attend classes led by someone from outside of our fellowship?

The fact that these things are happening does not automatically make them right. And, we surely would not want to begin walking down the path of granting exceptions to God’s rules because of special circumstances. Special ministries are still subject to the whole counsel of God.

The question is: “Is it a sin to receive instruction from those who do not adhere to Holy Scriptures?” In the fields of geography and geometry, we would quickly answer: “No.”

What about in the field of theology? Again, we would be compelled to answer: “No.” But we would want to quickly point out that this could be very dangerous. So, as a general policy, we might determine not to do it.

So, let’s take up the role that we ask military chaplains to fill at our workshops: information resources. “What are the signs of PTSD?” “What do troops in the warzone worry about most?” “What do you think are the critical needs of a soldier returning from the warzone?” “How do you think a parish pastor may best serve the military members of his congregation?” “How can I gain access to the military installation close to my church?”

There are people who understand Marines and sailors, senior citizens and the mentally disabled, the visually impaired and prisoners, better than we do. Some people have much more training and experience with serving these people than we do. We can learn from them.

If they are not in our fellowship, we do not want their theology. We want their insight and the benefit of their experience.

We will not ask them to fill a spiritual role. We will not agree to an activity or setting which may be inappropriate, or cause someone to be spiritually misled. We will clearly lay out our expectations for someone who is to make a presentation. And, in the event that something went awry, we have the obligation to give correction.

It is a privilege to serve as a chaplain. It is an honor to be able to bring the gospel to people whose situation is special.

The situations he ministers in may vary greatly from time to time. The externals may be quite different from ministry in a typical parish. He must be flexible—but that does not mean wishy-washy in doctrine.

St. Paul, who surely was not weak in doctrine, is an example for us who find themselves ministering in diverse situations. He put it this way: “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22 NIV).

He is a good example for us modern-day chaplains who work among chaplains.

Paul C Ziemer

Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome

Serving a military population can be frustrating. It seems that the greater the percentage of military families in our congregation, the greater the frustration.

It isn't that military families are less spiritual or faithful than others. They just don't fit well into the parish mold. Sometimes trying to incorporate them into congregational life is like trying to do the proverbial herding of cats.

In a typical congregation (at least in my imagination) the backbone of the membership is made up of middle-agers. They are in a position to strongly support the congregation with their gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Senior citizens, on one side, can still give guidance and encouragement, and on the other side are the up-and-comers, who are now past their college-age days. A large base of children gives promise of future workers.

In this *typical* congregation most of the people stay put! Of course, some move away, but others come in by transfer or confirmation. There is time and opportunity to train people for special service in the congregation. In some congregations, a person would probably not be asked to serve in a leadership position if he had not been with the congregation for at least 10 years. After all, it takes a while for a person to learn about the people he would be serving and how best to serve them in that location. It also takes a while for the congregation to get to know the person, and gain confidence in him.

So what does a pastor do with people who will probably be members for three years at most—and most of them under the age of 30? How can a pastor develop any continuity of training and care if a person goes overseas for a year at a time during these three years? And what do you do if a large portion of your congregation might head off on a training exercise for weeks at a time without much prior notice?

I suppose one attempt at a solution is to make a very serious outreach effort to the civilian population in your area. But the questions still remain: "How can I best serve the military people? How can they be integrated into the life of the congregation? How can their gifts be put to use in the kingdom?"

There is no list of easy answers that will fit all situations. I suggest that instead of fighting against the military milieu—embrace it!

Give some thought to this: How many companies in America, in the world, are larger than the U.S. military? How many are as well organized? How many stress honor, loyalty, and duty as much as the military? How many companies do as much training? How many place as much emphasis on leadership?

Why is it, then, that a military person usually has such a difficult time fitting into a responsible position in a Christian congregation?

For him, or her, the short stay is the commonplace, not the unusual. If the military can rotate people in and out of a setting without losing quality of leadership, why can't we?

I suspect one of the causes of our problem is that we expect our military people to live as if they were civilians—and then moan if they are not completely successful at this.

A congregation with a large civilian base may be able to get away with this, but it is still a mistake to write these people off—as we might be tempted to do with our college students. In the good ol' days a congregation could say, "He'll be back from the Army after two years, then he can rejoin us." Today the career warrior is more the norm. And after 20 or 30 years of military service there is a good chance that he or she will not return to the childhood congregation.

The military is a world unto itself. It is networked like no other community. It not only talks its own language, but it operates according to its own rules. It is segregated according to rank. There is a wide divide between enlisted and officer. Only a civilian would ignore this or be ignorant of it.

Seldom can we find tighter ties of friendship, especially if people have been in combat together, or if families have waited together for their loved ones to return from war.

How can we integrate these people quickly into a meaningful relationship with us? We may be in the dark, but they are not. They already know the answer, even if they are not aware of it.

Some sectors of the military use the phrase more than others, but all are familiar with the concept: *Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome!*

Any military person is apt to end up in a situation where the normal supports are not present, and the common answers do not apply. What do you do if your parachute only partially opens and you land short of the drop-zone with a broken ankle? *Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome!* What do you do if your landing craft crashes against the rocks instead of landing you on the soft sand of the shore? *Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome!*

What do you do if your Executive Officer is wounded or killed before the mission is completed? *Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome!*

Most of our military personnel are regularly trained to take over the job of the person above them, and to teach their job to the person under them. The success of missions and the preservation of lives may depend upon this tactic.

So, these people come to us with all of this training and experience. Instead of trying to retrain them to act as civilians, encourage them to do what they have been trained to do: *Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome!*

It would be a mistake for us civilian pastors to arbitrarily set up a form that these people are to follow. They know much more about the process than we ever will.

Make it their mission. Let them solve the problem. Let them develop the strategy and lay out the battle plan. Best if they can figure it out for themselves. If necessary, allow a group to tackle the problem, but only as a last resort mix officers with enlisted.

Here's a typical situation: A person will only be with a congregation for a short time. What can he do to serve his Lord while at this location? How can he support his family spiritually? How can he support the congregation? How can he support the mission of the church?

Does he know the mission of the church? (Does the church know?) How will he learn? From whom will he learn the position he is to serve in? Whose job does he also have to learn? Who has to learn his job?

It is good to remember that the enlisted person has been trained, programmed some might say, not to think, but to obey. This doesn't mean that the person is lazy, or not creative. From basic training on he has been conditioned to quickly absorb and comprehend the order, and then carry it out. Some day he may become the owner of a company, or maybe even an officer. But right now, he functions best when he is shown his duty. In congregational life he needs to have direction and expectation delivered to him.

This is not as easy to accomplish, as it may at first seem. I recall a meeting in my first congregation, which was mostly Navy, where a workday was being planned. A man a bit older than the others did most of the talking, but the whole group was involved and offered thoughts of when and how the workday might take place. At the end the older man (probably 26) said, "OK, we'll all meet on Saturday at 900 hours." And with one voice the group responded with, "Yes, Sir!" On Saturday everyone was there.

I was thinking, boy this is great. Look at all the cooperation we are getting! Then it slowly dawned upon me that, while not in uniform, the larger group recognized the “older man” to be an officer—and responded accordingly. This was not great. This was legalism.

So how can we give direction and expectation to the enlisted personnel without resorting to legalism? The same way we do for a young civilian. Only we cannot expect the person to have learned these things by observing others in the congregation. We have to show him the picture of our congregation with all the different niches for service. We have to suggest which of these we think best fit him. It helps to provide guidelines and instructions—not micromanaging but enough to remove the questions of where to start, and exactly what to do.

For both officers and enlisted, it seems to work best if they can choose when to carry out the task they agree to. Saturdays are not always free. Nor are evenings. Some entire weeks are completely out of the question. But then, other entire weeks may be very free. Military life seems to go in cycles. There are times of intense preparation. Times of deployment. Time for being on leave. But sometimes troops are only marking time. They may spend a month or more of very light duty, and a lot of discretionary time.

At one time, I had a number of people in Special Forces who were finished with duty by 3:00 PM each day—and weekends were usually free. A motivated group arrived at church most every day to repair roofs, paint crosses, trim trees—and anything else they could think of. We got a lot of work done.

But, of course, once their pre-deployment training began, and after they shipped out, none of them were available. From a high level of activity, we sunk to almost zero activity. That’s the way it is with military personnel. The rule is: *Use ‘em while you got ‘em!*

The enlisted among Special Forces don’t fit the mold of the military in general. They are encouraged—and trained—to think for themselves. Instead of waiting for orders, their orders are: “Decide what needs to be done, then do it!”

We are back to *Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome*. This is the home field of Special Forces and officers. They are used to it.

I find that officers are good people to use for making plans and developing programs. They are accustomed to looking for solutions to problems and determining what resources will be needed to bring things to a successful conclusion. They also are usually skilled in matching a person’s abilities with a certain task.

A former member of mine, an Army Ranger, once informed me, “You know, Pastor, we measure people the first Sunday they are with us.” Seldom do my members wear uniforms to Sunday morning worship at our church. But by time the worship and fellowship is over every military person most likely knows if the visitor is officer or enlisted, Special Forces or Airborne, seen combat or served as an instructor—and if they will be working with him in the weeks to come.

Rank, group, experience, and area of expertise say much about what can be expected of the person.

As spiritual leaders, we might object to this. We want to know about the person’s spiritual training, about the strength of his faith, and the experience he has gained among assemblies of believers.

Our objection may be valid. Being a Brigadier General and war hero does not equate to Christian leader. It may well be the opposite!

But our military people also have a point. The military-based externals do say something about the person. It reveals leadership abilities, faithfulness to a task, willingness to endure tough-going, and even a lack of desire to have attention called to what one has accomplished.

The test question is: “Does the person faithfully show up for *duty*”? Does he show his (or her) commitment to the Lord and his kingdom by worshiping regularly and conducting his life (this includes language) according to Christian directives? If so, then it is safe to expect the externals will show through in the spiritual.

Let's put it into a civilian parish situation. If as a new pastor to a congregation, we ask someone if a certain person (Bob) might make a good leader of the new Outreach Program, the answer may center on externals. "You know, his dad was foreman at the plant for many years—and well liked. Bob is a lot like him. He started his own business a few years ago, and now has a whole crew working for him. He's good with people. He works hard. And he doesn't give up easily."

None of those factors are spiritual, but if the spiritual is in place in Bob's life, these externals are pretty good indicators of whether or not the Lord has given to Bob the gifts necessary for this task in his church.

And so, it does come down to *gifts*. It is the Lord who provides gifts to his church. For some congregations, those gifts come dressed in military uniforms.

Who are we to dismiss them as unusable?

The Chaplaincy Question

If a person researches the question of why the WELS is not an endorsing agent for the military chaplaincy program, he is apt to regularly find reference to chaplains' manuals and Presidential Committee reports from the 1950s.³ It raises the question if the WELS is still stuck in the Cold War timeframe when it comes to this issue. Many changes have occurred in the military since the Korean War, even since the Vietnam years. Might some of these changes make it possible for the WELS to begin calling pastors to serve as military chaplains? Should the question be revisited?

Actually, the question is regularly revisited. It's just that the answer doesn't change. Should the WELS endorse pastors to serve as military chaplains? No.

In a paper produced by the Military Services Committee in 1982 these words were directed to pastors like us: "As a contact pastor for WELS with its distinctive doctrines and usages, you have standing with the Armed Forces. Your help is needed by the military if official directives and policies about religious opportunities for Armed Forces personnel are to be followed. For example, a basic guideline* states: 'Our traditional faith in freedom of worship makes it important for the Armed Forces to make appropriate provision for religious opportunities.' Surely, all will understand that a chaplain or clergyman of another and different denomination cannot provide appropriate religious opportunities for members of our Synod. Only you can do that." (underlining mine)⁴

Years ago, the WELS Military Services Committee hosted a regional meeting of contact pastors at San Diego. At that meeting a Navy chaplain gave a talk on, "The Military Chaplaincy Today." In the minutes from that meeting this conclusion is drawn from the chaplain's talk: "If we receive static from the chaplain, we should ask him if he would object to our talking this over with his CO. Military personnel have the RIGHT to see us, if they want to, to carry on their "religious practice." If these rights are being infringed upon, something will be done."⁵

Today we find a different situation. It is no longer true that "all will understand" that clergy of a different denomination cannot provide appropriate ministry to members of our synod. It is not just that our name "Lutheran" causes others to think that we are just a slightly different flavor from the ELCA. The official position of the military is that the chaplain is to conduct an *inclusive* rather than an *exclusive* ministry. This is merely a carryover of what is common thinking in our country as a whole.

I find that telling a Commanding Officer that his troops have the RIGHT to see me would not seem to be the best course of action. I recall being banned from all bases in Kuwait, with MPs searching to arrest me if I were found on a military installation, because one CO thought I was circumventing his chaplains. The issue was quickly resolved, but the lesson stuck. Many commanders see the military chaplains as the prime answer to meeting the religious needs of the troops.

³ "The Chaplain" Department of the Army Field Manual, FM 16-5, (1952) and, "The Military Chaplaincy", A Report by the President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces, October 1, 1950, quoted in a WELS tract, "The Chaplaincy Question" as part of the "Continuing in His Word" series of the 50's.

⁴ "The Military Contact Pastor" The "basic guideline" quoted from was the President's Committee report referenced above.

⁵ Regional Meeting of the WELS Military Contact Pastors, San Diego, CA February 14, 15, 1977

I can understand that, and respect that position. Civilian chaplains can easily get in the way of military operations. They are a foreign object. They do not have the military training, the military mindset—and they are not completely under military control. They can easily become the proverbial loose cannon.

The guarantee of the free exercise of religion is codified for the Armed Forces in Title 10, United States Code, sections 3073, 3547, 5142, and 8067, with the provision for the appointment of officers as chaplains in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The free exercise of religion (such as WELS personnel being served by WELS clergy) is further defined in additional sources. One is the Department of Defense Directive 1300.17. Under the heading: “Accommodation of Religious Practices within the Military Services” it describes the commander’s responsibility for religious accommodation—“providing it will not have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, standards, or discipline.”

Joint Publication 0-2, Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF) states: “Religious support to the personnel of each Service is the responsibility of the component commander and the joint force commander insofar as it affects the accomplishment of the mission.”

From these statements it might be concluded that whether as a civilian, or military officer, we could expect access to our military people through the commander in the area. But this is not necessarily so. Recently a rider was attached to the annual defense authorization bill. The rider would allow military chaplains to lead prayers as they see fit in any situation. The background was a Navy chaplain’s claim that he had the right to pray in the name of Jesus outside of his own pulpit.

Senator John Warner, head of the Armed Services Committee opposed the change until there is more debate. The Pentagon is fighting the language of the rider, arguing that allowing chaplains to pray any way they want, in any setting, could alienate troops. “This provision could marginalize chaplains who, in exercising their conscience, generate discomfort”⁶ at events troops are required to attend.

The Department of Defense’s position is set forth in this way: “Such erosion of unit cohesion is avoided by the military’s present insistence on inclusive prayer at interfaith gatherings.”⁷

Thus, we are shown that it is believed by the Pentagon and the Department of Defense that a WELS pastor serving as a military chaplain according to his conscience and the teachings of his church body would have an adverse impact upon the cohesion of the unit—thus not permitted under Directive 1300.17.

In the literature for recruiting Army chaplains, the assurance is given that a clergyperson will never be required to violate his conscience or the teachings of his church body.⁸ In a 2005 meeting with the chief Army recruiting chaplain from the Pentagon, the possibility of WELS military chaplains was explored by reviewing what the Army would expect of our pastors under varying circumstances, and what we as a church body would expect. After honest discussion, the question was put to the recruiter: “Would the Army accept as a chaplain a person who would always pray in the name of Jesus, always state that there is no salvation except through faith in Jesus, would offer Holy Communion only to those who shared the faith of his denomination, and would not preside at the burial of a non-Christian?”

⁶ “Congress looks at rules on how military chaplains pray”, The Virginia Pilot, September 2006

⁷ Ibid

⁸ “For God and Country”

The answer was: “Such a person could not function as a religious leader in a group as diverse as the U.S. Army.”

About a month later, Air Force Col. Richard Hum, the Executive Director of the Armed Forces Chaplain Board also graciously agreed to a meeting. He had done some preparation before our meeting and had a fair knowledge of our church body and its doctrinal positions. After discussing various aspects of ministry to the military, he offered the opinion that clergy from our church body just didn't fit in with the military chaplaincy program. He appreciated our candor and praised our efforts to serve our people without sending military chaplains. He expressed the desire to assist our efforts making use of a civilian chaplaincy program by being willing to recommend us to commanders as reliable religious assets.

The Armed Forces are government agencies. They carry a massive and complicated responsibility. The presence of military chaplains is not so much to make sure that each person can have his/her spiritual needs addressed in the specific manner they desire, as it is to support the morale of our fighting force. The military environment is built on unity. Troops are trained to march in cadence. Basic training is designed to rework the psyche of the person to put the welfare of his unit and his mission before his own desires and needs. The military chaplain who is exclusive is counter-productive to the spirit of unity. In short, religion is a tool to further the ability of the military to carry out its work. Military chaplains are the prime operators of that tool.

We may not agree with that approach to religion, but we cannot argue that it does not make sense. We also cannot say that the military is insensitive to the diversity of the faith groups within its midst. Great efforts are made to try to address this spiritual diversity. But this task is assigned to the chaplains, thus requiring them to flex and bend to meet the diverse needs. A Baptist chaplain who is assigned the responsibility of ensuring the repair of a mosque and the offering of ministry to Muslims, will scratch his head at our insistence that not any Lutheran chaplain, but only a chaplain from our small church body, will be required to minister to our people—and able to offer very limited ministry to any others.

WELS clergy do not fit into the role of military chaplains. If that were attempted both the military and our clergy would suffer—and our people would not be well served.

So, where does that leave us? Does that exclude us from ministry to the military? Are WELS military people cut off from pastoral care?

Most of our WELS military personnel and their families live in the States. Many are close to WELS congregations, such as yours. This does not mean that all we have to do is ring the church bells at 9:00 am Sunday mornings and they will come to us to have all of their spiritual needs met. But it does indicate that we have access to them. Our visits to installations expand the amount of access.

We have quite a few military people in Europe. They are more difficult to reach, and we cannot promise each group weekly ministry. But the hard-working WELS chaplains who have served that field have been able to serve the souls quite well.

Service people aboard ships or stationed far from a WELS pastor present another level of challenge. Mailings, e-mail, and personal contact when they come ashore become our method of ministry.

The war zone is a challenge unto itself. Security issues dominate the picture. Cost of ministry is not low. But not only is this ministry desperately desired, it also serves as a testing ground for stateside military ministry—and provides a backflow of benefits for the WELS civilian chaplaincy program, as a whole.

The military is appreciative of anything that supports the troops and enhances the chances of the success of its mission. WELS civilian chaplains can offer the military something that it cannot get from no one else: proper

and highly appreciated spiritual care for WELS military personnel. Some stateside commanders and chaplains may be aware of this. Those in the war zone are very likely to know this.

Third Army, which leads the Coalition Forces in the Middle East, issued this MOI (Memorandum of Instruction) for all of its commanders and subordinate command personnel in April of this year: “Purpose: The purpose of this MOI is to facilitate Endorsing Agents, Religious Presenters and Others visiting Kuwait and Qatar.”⁹ WELS civilian chaplains fall under the category of *religious presenters*.

The MOI outlines the steps by which non-military religious leaders can gain access to troops. This includes military housing, if needed. Of special significance is the background statement: “Religious Endorsers provide special oversight and support to chaplains. They are the civilian liaison representative to the Federal Government for the religious groups that provide chaplains to the military. Religious presenters greatly enhance spiritual religious support to soldiers unavailable elsewhere in theater.”¹⁰

Commanders and chaplains have been directed to provide access to troops for people like us. The compliance is not reluctant. We have been asked by chaplains in the field to send a civilian chaplain over around Christmas time this year. When a Wisconsin Guard unit experienced heavy casualties within a month of its arrival last summer, a request was made for our chaplain to visit that unit—and special provisions for a speedy trip and clearance were made. (The Heathrow liquid explosive alert aborted this trip.)

We do not fit into the military chaplaincy. But we fit very well into the plan for military people to be supported in an appropriate spiritual manner.

Where we are unknown there is apt to be reluctance and maybe even suspicion on the part of commanders and chaplains. I have run into more than one person who assumed that since my church body did not endorse military chaplains, and since I was “Lutheran” I probably would be anti-military and try to convince troops that what they were doing was against God’s will.

It is not wise to present ourselves as those who make demands. We still serve on military sites at the pleasure of the commander—and that commander most likely appreciates the often-tireless efforts of his chaplains to carry out their assignment.

It does no good to enter into a doctrinal debate. If issues like church fellowship are not understood by the majority of the leading theologians of our land, how can we expect a career soldier to grasp the heart of the issue. Better to indicate what we can do. We usually don’t even have to address what we cannot do.

Relationships. Relationships. Relationships.

As is true in so much of our work, positive relationships provide the open door for ministry. We need to find chaplains who have an understanding of our ministry. If that is not already in place when we meet them, we can define ourselves by indicating how we have served, or how we might be able to serve, military personnel. From chaplains we can branch out to any other type of military leader, including a commander.

⁹ CFLCC MOI dated 11 April 2006

¹⁰ Ibid

But the best forge for shaping a relationship is not the furnace of talk, but action. Show what we can do. If we do not yet have access to an installation, show what we can do for military personnel and their families off base. Then use those acts of ministry to demonstrate our ability to do more if we had base access.

And remember, our best relationships are with the WELS people we serve. When WELS service personnel ask their chaplain or commander to grant us access because of the value of the ministry we offer to those people—that request will carry a lot of weight.

There is one area of ministry that the Pentagon repeatedly points our WELS clergy to: *Homeland Security*.

In a phone conversation with the Command Chaplain of CENTCOM with offices in Tampa and Qatar, I received this advice: “Your strength is homeland ministry. Your church body is organized and equipped to do this. I believe the day will come when our country will very much need what you have to offer. But it will not be on a foreign soil, it will be in our homeland. We cannot assume that the 9/11 type of disaster will not happen again. It may happen many times. Prepare for such an event. The standing of your clergy with the military and the community will empower them to step in and serve both military and civilians in a way that few others may be able to do.”

We have not yet placed much emphasis on this form of ministry. Perhaps the time has come to do so. The invitation for our civilian chaplains to obtain a synodical I.D. was not just to help gain access to military installations under present conditions. It was also to be part of a larger picture of being able to be identified as a government-recognized and trusted person who can step forward to minister in a national crisis.

In addition to opportunities to minister to a civilian population, there will be an increased need for ministry to the military families. Military chaplains will be stretched thin, and probably overwhelmed with the demands that a disaster can bring. If our civilian chaplains can respond by saying, “We will take responsibility for offering worship services and counseling for all of our people at this installation—plus anyone else who desires our ministry” they will be able to provide a critical service to our nation.

Expect to hear more about this in the future.

As civilian chaplains we have an assignment from our Lord. He has promised to be with us, and his blessing rests on our efforts. Thousands of people have already been faithfully served by this ministry, and the work is far from finished.

There is a place for WELS clergy in ministry to the United States Armed Forces. But that place does not come equipped with the uniform of a military officer.

Paul C. Ziemer

(This was written when the war in Iraq was raging)

MCP's Role in a Funeral with Military Honors

As a parish pastor, you may be called to officiate at the funeral of an active-duty or veteran member of the U.S. Armed Forces. Generally speaking, the funeral is conducted the same as most funerals, with the exception that the casket may be draped with the US Flag. "The religious event is driven by the family."

Different circumstances will cause some variations, but certain procedures always apply.

KIA

The warrior killed in action receives special attention by the US Military under the direction of the Department of Defense.

No matter where the death occurs around the globe, there is a series of events that take place.

- In a war zone:
 - A memorial ceremony will be held in the field.
 - A "Hero's Flight" will be ordered to transport the body. The first trip may be by helicopter but eventually it will be carried to Dover AFB aboard a plane such as a C-130. The plane is usually empty except for the crew, a member from the unit of the fallen warrior, and the KIA inside of a casket.
- At Dover AFB:
 - A special crew at Port Mortuary will prepare the body for burial.
 - Special care will be taken to ensure that the body is able to be presented in the most caring way for later viewing. A parade dress uniform is used.
 - Families of the fallen may choose to gather at Port Mortuary before the next step is taken.
 - The staff at Port Mortuary is available for advice or assistance to the family.
- At the funeral:
 - In most cases, a Hero's Flight will carry the fallen warrior to an airport close to the site of the funeral. A hearse will be used for the final trip.
 - The pastor will need to be aware of the questions he and his members may be asked by the news media. The best response is: "Out of respect for this warrior and family, I won't offer comments." If a pastor chooses to make a comment, he should make it a positive comment and make it short. Some reporters may try to get a hot soundbite by working something political or inflammatory into the question.
- At the gravesite:
 - The pastor again controls what takes place. Military representatives will offer what they can provide (honor guard, rifle salute, taps, etc.).
 - The pastor should be aware that veterans and active-duty troops may place a high degree of importance upon some actions that civilians may only consider interesting. The dismissal of them may be viewed as insulting to the dead warrior's memory. Before ruling some things out, it would be well for the pastor to consult with military people as well as the family.
 - After the pastor concludes his graveside service, the events or ceremonies that follow are considered distinct from the religious ones.

A Non-combat Death

A Military Funeral with Honors may include the following:

- A [military chaplain](#) for family members.
- A casket draped in the [flag of the United States](#) and as a [pall](#).
- A casket team serving as [honor guards](#) in a ceremonial role over the remains and as [pallbearers](#).
- For funerals for an enlisted [non-commissioned officer](#) of E-9 rank and commissioned officers, the casket may be transported via a horse-drawn [limbers and caissons](#). For all other funerals, the casket is transported using a [hearse](#).
- Fighter jets in [missing man formation](#) by the [United States Air Force](#) may perform an aerial flyover.

- The formation of a rifle party consisting of an odd number of service members, between three and seven, will fire a [three-volley salute](#) (size varies according to the rank of the deceased).
- The sounding of "Taps" is performed by a lone bugler or an audio recording, at a distance 30 to 50 yards from the grave site while a "[Final Salute](#)" is given. (In specific cases with the United States Military Academy, a muffled [drum roll](#) might accompany the bugler.)

The family may accept any or all of these military honors. It may also eliminate some, such as the presence of the military chaplain. But the honors that are not part of the religious portion of the event should be objected to with care. If they do not have religious overtones, the question "What would the fallen warrior want?" is a helpful one. Those who have served with the warrior or have at one time "worn the uniform" will probably be best able to answer that.

The Death of a Veteran

The officiating pastor is still in charge of the funeral and committal. It is Veterans Affairs (VA) that represents the Department of Defense.

Almost all veterans can receive Military Funeral Honors at no cost. Veterans can receive the honors and memorial items whether they're interred in a Veterans' cemetery or a private one.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for providing Military Funeral Honors. "Honoring Those Who Served" is the title of the DOD program for providing dignified military funeral honors to Veterans who have defended our nation.

Public Law 106-65 requires that every eligible Veteran receive a Military Funeral Honors ceremony upon the request of the family.

The DOD program calls for funeral home directors to request Military Funeral Honors on behalf of the Veteran's family. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration cemetery staff can also assist with arranging military funeral honors at VA national cemeteries. Veterans' organizations may assist in providing Military Funeral Honors.

As mandated by federal law, an honor guard detail for the burial of an eligible Veteran shall consist of no fewer than two members of the Armed Forces. One member of the detail shall be a representative of the parent Armed Service of the deceased Veteran. The honor guard detail will, at a minimum, perform a ceremony that includes the folding and presenting of the flag of the United States to the next of kin and the sounding of Taps which will be played by a lone bugler, if available, or by audio recording.

Committal Services at a National Cemetery

Obviously, arrangements must be made in advance of the day of the service. Upon arrival at the national cemetery, representatives of the cemetery will meet the pastor and family to deliver the deceased's burial documents. They will lead those who have come to honor the deceased, to a committal shelter. The committal service will take place at this location, not at the gravesite. It is expected to last for about 20 minutes. The burial happens after the committal service.

Pastors and families need to be aware that viewing facilities aren't available at national cemeteries. The family must arrange for funeral services at a different location.

The family may choose to have readings by a friend, family member, or member of the clergy of their faith. They may also request to have Military Funeral Honors performed at the committal shelter.

The family, if it desires, should arrange for Military Funeral Honors through the funeral director, or request help from a Veterans Service Organization, or from VA national cemetery staff.

Coming Home

As an active member of the military who is just coming home, or arriving soon, you are probably both nervous and excited about the homecoming. Even if you have been through mobilization/deployment before, this one has been different because of the increased stressors of the time.

Regardless of your experience and assignment, you will have a natural period of adjustment. You may find this tip sheet helpful in ensuring a successful homecoming and readjustment.

Reuniting with your Spouse:

- It is normal to feel nervous and anxious about homecoming. Often service members wonder whether my spouse will still: “Be proud of me?” “Love me and need me?” “Expect things from me?”
- Plan for homecoming day. After homecoming, make an agreement with your spouse on the schedule for the next few days or weeks. Where do the children, extended family or friends fit in?
- Realize the day of homecoming is very stressful. You and your spouse may not have slept much and may be worn out from preparations.
- Don’t be surprised if your spouse is a bit resentful of your mobilization/deployment. Others often think of the deployment as more fun and exciting than staying at home—even if you know otherwise.
- Take time to get used to each other again. Reestablishing sexual intimacy will take patience, time, and good communication—some people need to be courted again.

Communicate!!

- Tell your spouse how you feel—nervous, scared, happy, that you loved and missed them. Listen to your spouse in return. The best way to get through the re-acquaintance jitters, regain closeness, and renegotiate your roles in the family is by talking and actively listening.
- You’ve both been used to doing what you wanted during personal time. Feeling like you need some space is normal.
- Your fantasies and expectations about how life will be upon return may be just fantasies. Be prepared to be flexible.
- You and your spouse may be facing a change in job assignment or a move. Readjustment and job transition cause stress. This may be especially true for demobilizing Guard/Reservists who are transitioning back to civilian life.
- Resist the temptation to go on a spending spree to celebrate the reunion. The extra money saved during deployment may be needed later for unexpected household expenses. Stick to your budget. Show your care through your time and effort.

Reuniting with Your Children:

- Children may be feeling the same confusing things you and your spouse feel—worry, fear, stress, happiness, excitement. Depending on their age, they may not understand how you could leave them if you really love them.
- They may be unsure of what to expect from their returning parent. They may feel uncomfortable around you or think of you as a stranger.
- It’s hard for children to control their excitement. Let them give and get the attention they need from you before you try to have quiet time alone with your spouse.

- Children’s reactions to your return will differ according to their ages. Some normal reactions you can expect, and suggestions for handling them are:
 - **Infants:** Cry, fuss, pull away from you, cling to your spouse or the caregiver they know. Talk to them while holding, hugging, bathing, changing, feeding, playing, and relaxing with them.
 - **Toddlers:** Be shy, clingy, not recognize you, cry, have temper tantrums, return to behaviors they had outgrown (no longer toilet trained). Give them space and warm-up time. Be gentle and fun. Sit on the floor at their level and play with them.
 - **Preschoolers:** Feel guilty for making you go away, need time to warm-up to you, intense anger, act out to get attention, be demanding. Reinforce that they are loved unconditionally, listen carefully, accept their feelings, find out new things they are interested in, play with them, control attention-getting behavior.
 - **School Age:** Excitement, joy, talk constantly to bring you up to date, boast about you, guilt about not doing enough or being good enough. Review pictures, schoolwork, family scrapbook, praise for what they did during deployment, do not criticize.
 - **Teenagers:** Excitement, guilt about not living up to standards, concern about rules and responsibilities, feel too old or unwilling to change plans to meet you or spend extended time with you upon your return. Share what has happened during deployment, encourage them to share, do chores together, listen, respect privacy and friends, don’t be judgmental.
- Reassure your children and spouse and communicate your love to family.
- Children are excited and tend to act out. Accept and discuss these physical, attitudinal, mental, and emotional changes.
- Get re-involved with your children’s school and social activities.

Single Service Members

- You certainly have missed your family and friends, and they have missed you. Let them be part of the reunion but balance your needs with those you love and care about. You can expect a period of readjustment when you return home.

Remember...

Go slowly—don’t try to make up for lost time.
 Accept that your loved ones may be different.
 Take time to get reacquainted.
 Seek help, if needed.

Lutheran Military Support Group

LMSG Mission Statement

Lutheran Military Support Group is a non-profit organization providing Christ-centered support to WELS/ELS military service members, veterans, and their families.

LMSG Organizational Concept and Design



LMSG is an incorporated Wisconsin nonprofit, run by a Board of Evangelical Lutheran (WELS/ELS) veterans from all branches of service, across the United States.

The group is a national-level organization, designed to have national reach, but local impact. We are designed to be both an auxiliary to WELS Military Services and the ELS Christian Service Board in their support of active duty service members, and an independent organization supporting the needs of our military veterans and our “military families” of both active duty members and veterans.

We All Can Make A Difference

There are many opportunities to make a synodwide difference by driving national programs, projects, recognition and support for Lutheran military members and their families. Our organization wants to encourage local awareness, education, and projects at the congregational level. There are also outreach/evangelism opportunities that might present themselves to individual congregations as the result of the activities of LMSG.

Our Logo contains a representation of the American Flag.



It also contains the shape of the fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) an ancient symbol for the Christian Church.



And most importantly a “swooping” Cross. Our ever-present reminder of what Christ did for us.



“With God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26

[\(https://lutheranmilitary.org/who-are-we/\)](https://lutheranmilitary.org/who-are-we/)

Grants Awarded

2020 Grants

- **\$10,000** Awarded to support the work of the National Chaplain’s office.
- **\$5,000** Awarded for grants to be used by the National Chaplain’s office to be used for Chaplain Certification Scholarships to our MCP’s.
- **\$20,000**– Awarded to Military Services Committee (MSC) for WELS/ELS Military Contact Pastors (MCP) Conference in 2020.
- **\$8,000** Awarded to Armed Forces Network (AFN) television programming for “Military Minute Devotions.”
- **\$1,500**- Awarded to the Member Assistance Program (MAP). Assistance will be available for the mental health needs for both active duty personnel and veterans to be used in 2019.

[\(https://lutheranmilitary.org/grants/\)](https://lutheranmilitary.org/grants/)

Role of the LMSG Liaison

Congregational liaisons are the local voice of the Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG). Liaisons serve a vital role in the operations of the LMSG as the link to their individual congregations. The liaison is responsible for the promotion of LMSG by organizing activities such as the annual Ammo Can donation at Memorial Day and Veterans Day. It is desired that the liaison be a veteran or a family member of a veteran.

“Sometimes you don’t include processes simply because you don’t understand them well enough. Sometimes it’s because they haven’t even been discovered yet.” Philip Mella

LMSG Church Liaison is simply a volunteer that links the LMSG to the church body. Church liaisons are ambassadors to LMSG from their churches. By virtue of this position, church liaisons become key distributors of critical and timely information in their churches. As church liaisons begin to develop in their roles, they will share information to active duty, reservist, guardsmen, and veterans in their congregations to help all in areas of health, PTS, and other issues.

Moreover, church liaisons are agents of action for their churches. By initiating prayer meetings, and offering time-sensitive information, the church liaison will be able to help influence the retired, veterans, and active duty.

Therefore, the LMSG Liaison Committee has developed a process that will enable the church liaison to request funding for an event that might occur at the church or an individual which we call Morale Welfare and Relief Team. The process begins with an event that occurs and the church liaison is made aware of and thinks that LMSG might be able to help in this event. The church liaison makes a request by using the LMSG Morale, Welfare, and Relief Request Form which is sent to the LMSG Liaison National Coordinator. At this point, the LMSG Liaison National Coordinator will call the LMSG Vice President to request that the LMSG Morale, Welfare and Relief Team meet to discuss the request from the church liaison due to an event that has occurred. The MWR team will review the request and make a recommendation to the LMSG Board of Directors or is less than \$500 The MWR Team could authorize the funding to help with the event. If the amount is larger than \$500 The MWR team would recommend to the Board of Directors and the Board of Directors will review the MWR Team's recommendation and approve, disapprove or make changes to the recommendation. This process for a grant request will help streamline the process to help the church liaison to solve an issue or event at their church or individual. Recommend that the Board of Directors approve the LMSG Process for grant request as recommended by the LMSG Liaison Committee

Dwight Johnson-Chairman LMSG Liaison Committee

[\(https://lutheranmilitary.org/role-of-the-liaison/\)](https://lutheranmilitary.org/role-of-the-liaison/)

Continuing Education

WELS Chaplain Certification

Relevance for Military Contact Pastors

An MCP functions as a civilian chaplain to the military. Chaplaincy is a unique form of ministry and for that reason we encourage MCP to consider participating in the WELS Chaplain Certification Course. At a minimum, MCP will find the course “Frontline Chaplaincy” to be directly relevant to the ministry to the military. We also encourage further study of military ministry by taking the elective “The Spiritual Side of PTSD.”

As an encouragement to take these courses, the Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) has established a scholarship fund that will pay \$500 toward an MCP’s tuition for these three-credit online college courses.

Purpose

The WELS Chaplain Certificate (CC) program exists to help address the challenges that face WELS chaplains in meeting requirements to gain access and to carry on ministry with public or private healthcare agencies, in hospitals or correctional facilities, on military installations, and with public safety agencies. The Chaplain Certificate program is offered by Martin Luther College in cooperation with WELS Commission on Special Ministries.

There are four required core courses and several electives. The electives are offered for those who want to specialize in a particular area of chaplaincy. A special foundation course in Christian doctrine (THE9534 Grounded in Scripture) is required for all lay workers (non-CRM) before other courses are taken.

Required Core Courses

- **THE9520 Communicating Forgiveness** – A study of the scriptural meaning of forgiveness and the many ways this truth can be communicated vividly and meaningfully by God’s messengers.
- **THE9521 A Scriptural Approach to Addiction Counseling** – A study of addictions, especially substance abuse and pornography, and the ways Christians try to help through law/gospel counseling and referral.
- **THE9522 Your Chaplaincy and Ethical Issues** – A practicum in chaplaincy requiring a field site and discussion of chaplaincy issues and experiences.
- **THE9532 Chaplaincy Seminar** – A week-long, face-to-face seminar following the fieldwork course including group interaction and portfolio presentations to the Chaplain Certification Program Committee.

Elective Courses

- **THE9523 Ministry to the Incarcerated and Their Families** – A study of service to the incarcerated and their families and the ways in which jail ministries can be established.
- **THE9524 Frontline Chaplaincy** – This elective is specially designed for those who would serve as chaplains to people on the frontline of the defense of our society, namely the military, the police and firefighters, and their families.
- **THE9525 Geriatric and Care Facility Ministry** – A team-oriented approach to ministry for people who are aging or residents in care facilities. Provides both knowledge and skills for congregation members to provide spiritual care for homebound and institutionalized.
- **THE9533 Grief, Loss, and Trauma – Help for the Hurting** – Explore grief, loss, and trauma from a biblical as well as mental health perspective. Develop understanding of what happens when someone experiences a traumatic loss and learn how to minister to such a person, both initially and in the long term.

- **THE9601 The Spiritual Side of PTSD** – Helps spiritual advisors recognize the signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and provide appropriate spiritual care.

While ecclesiastical endorsement requires specific theological training, other religious training may be provided through studies and certification based on the type/level of chaplaincy that is desired or required by the calling body/hiring agency.

Note that other courses or experience might qualify for experiential learning credits for these courses. These courses are open to all—pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and laypeople. One does not have to be accepted into the CCP to take the courses. The courses may also be a part of the individual's personal continuing education program.

******Specific courses that are of particular interest to MCPs** are the “Frontline Chaplaincy” and “The Spiritual Side to PTSD.” However, there may be cases for other that could fit into your role as MCP. For example: “Geriatric and Care Facility Ministry” if your ministry includes VA hospitals or a veterans’ home, or “A Scriptural Approach to Addiction Counseling” if your ministry includes military personnel or veterans who are struggling with addiction.

Program

Participants in the program will complete four basic courses (10 credits) and one elective (3 credits). The electives are offered for those who want to specialize in a particular area of chaplaincy. A calendar of course offerings can be found at <https://mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/wels-chaplain-certificate-course-calendar/>

Entrance Requirements

- Official transcripts of highest degree earned
- Congregational membership in good standing in WELS or denomination in fellowship with WELS
- Ability to spend at least 10 hours per week for each 3-credit college course
- Ability to take online courses (computer and internet access required)
- Ability to take a one-week seminar at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

One more thought: Offering Lay Members Training for Assisting in Ministry to the Military

Chaplain Certification Courses are also available to lay members. For those who lack the theological training required for confessional Lutheran chaplaincy work, the CCP offers “Grounded in Scripture.” This course focuses upon the scriptural teachings of special importance to chaplaincy ministry and is a prerequisite for those who have not received theological training at MLC.