

FOCUS: Mercy Through Chaplains



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MINISTRY TO THE ARMED FORCES

Military Chaplains — merciful service for our armed forces

By Rev. Craig Muehler

Amid warfare going from 18th-century muskets and cannons to 21st-century high-tech weaponry, American history is replete with the selfless, merciful service of chaplains who minister to our nation's defenders at home and abroad.

The history of America's military chaplains predates the Constitution. As our young nation began to form, one of the last conflicts before the Revolutionary War was the French and Indian War, in which some 31 chaplains served. It was during the French and Indian War that a nascent military leader named George Washington identified the importance of religious freedom for his troops. Although there was no formal organization of a military chaplaincy at this time, a significant number of military units were accompanied by their own chaplain.

Today, military chaplains perform their ministries in ever-changing, pluralistic and increasingly dangerous environments. One of the mottos used often among chaplains to navigate these land mines and rough seas is "cooperate without compromise." The priest would never be expected to do a Lutheran wedding and a Lutheran chaplain would not be expected to compromise the tenants of his faith either. The motto implies professional respect and dignity for all, while not compromising the tenants of one's faith or conscience.

One of the troops

Chaplains literally eat, sleep, train, work and exercise with their flocks in combat or in garrison. This is the only ministry where you in reality spend most of your time with your people and because of that, the chaplains also have to meet the military standards to serve as an officer in the military. As chaplain, you become part of the culture, part of the institution, part of the family of warriors, even though the chaplain is a noncombatant part of the team. People of all faiths and people of no faith feel comfortable speaking with their chaplain about what is burdening their hearts, minds or souls with the assurance of complete confidentiality.

Command Adviser

The chaplain is often called upon to advise the commander in areas of ethics and morale of the unit. Unfortunately, pressure from atheist activists now has our nation's most senior military leaders limiting the free exercise of religion for our military personnel. This is occurring during a time when service members are either training constantly for combat, or they already are serving in harm's way, defending our nation against its enemies. Commanders today need the advice of chaplains who will speak the truth, no matter what, now more than ever.

Chaplain Craig Muehler, U.S. Navy Capt. (Ret.), is director of LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces.

SPECIALIZED PASTORAL MINISTRY

What is Specialized Pastoral Ministry?

By Rev. Joel Hempel

Here's the painful truth: Those who are swimming in modern American culture do not typically sit down with a Christian minister to explore the big "why" question.

But when that day comes — and it always does — when they are experiencing a crisis, or they are transitioning through difficult times in their lives and find themselves in the company of a professional chaplain or pastoral counselor, we want that minister to be from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod!

Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM — not to be confused with SMP/Specific Ministry Pastor) includes ordained and commissioned ministers of the Gospel bringing the presence of Jesus Christ in the world — in institutions and emergency contexts on the streets, in pastoral counseling centers and in clinical pastoral education. Those in SPM serve hurting and broken people who are often in crisis; they are also trained/equipped to minister to those who are discovering how to live life fully as God's redeemed children. In addition, some in SPM are called upon to equip ordained and commissioned colleagues to become as competent in their ministries as is possible according to their God-given potential.

Pastoral/soul care

Pastoral care — sometimes referred to as care of soul (care of one's God-given life) — is an all-inclusive, two-word phrase for describing pastoral counseling and the ministry of chaplaincy. Pastoral care refers to what one does, not what one is. That is, pastoral or soul care in SPM is the ministry provided that has resulted from specialized training and learning combining a person's theological education, additional post-seminary/university skills and experience, essential knowledge in the social sciences, and healthy personality working together in a complementary and integrated manner.

Care for all

One of the primary differences between those in parish ministry and those who serve in SPM is not only the context for ministry but the kinds of people who receive the ministry. Whether a pastoral counselor, a clinical pastoral educator or a chaplain who works on the streets next to police and firefighters — those to whom the specialized pastoral minister is called represent all denominational and faith groups along with those who have no declared faith. But each one of them is of God's creation and a beloved one for whom Jesus died.

Thus, those in SPM are the blessed ones privileged to enter the lives of anyone broken by life and circumstance. Those in SPM enter hospital rooms, prison cells and other rough edges by the grace of God, prayerfully assessing the person's need and applying the Word of God that brings, through the Holy Spirit, faith and life.

The Rev. Joel Hempel is the interim director of Specialized Pastoral Ministry for the LCMS Office of National Mission.

PHOTO: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD



PHOTOS: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

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MINISTRY TO THE ARMED FORCES

WHY → Why chaplains?

The principal reason for having chaplains in the armed forces is to proclaim the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and provide spiritual ministry for our nation's military service members and veterans. A chaplain serves as a member of the armed forces under the authority of the state as well as serving as a pastor under the authority of the church body to which he belongs.

Lutheran theology of the chaplaincy says that chaplains are operating in the structure of the state, under authority of the law, to help maintain justice and freedom in God's creation. The chaplain should obey the rightful laws and orders given him.

In his role as a pastor, he is a leaven who administers the Gospel and serves the people entrusted to his care with the kind of love Christ exemplified. This is the scriptural basis for the civic and spiritual functions of the chaplaincy.

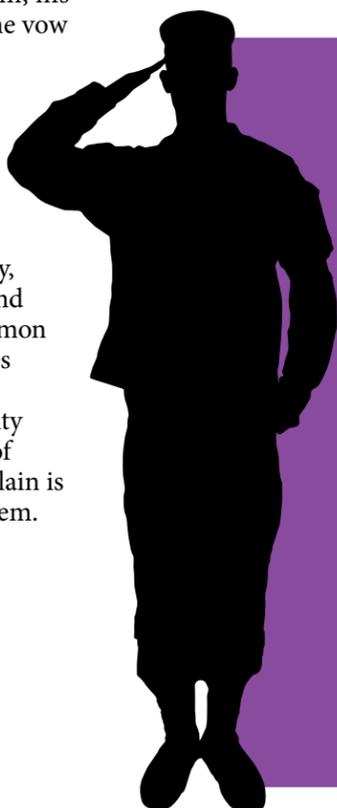
Military chaplains serve in a pluralistic environment reflecting the composition of our nation. Clergy willing to work in this environment — particularly those with a missionary heart and a willingness to sacrifice themselves for others — will always be needed by the armed forces to provide pastoral care, spiritual leadership and religious support for the military community.

WHO → Who are chaplains?

The vocation of the chaplaincy is an extension of the call to the pastoral office in a setting other than a local congregation. Wherever a duty assignment takes an LCMS chaplain, he is a Lutheran missionary; he ministers in this missionary environment by the same authority of Christ as when he was serving as a parish pastor. At ordination and installation, the Lutheran pastor/chaplain pledges his voluntary allegiance to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Throughout his tenure as a chaplain, his ministry remains bound to the same vow and commitment.

The ministry of the chaplain is the same ministry of Word and Sacrament as defined by *The Book of Concord* and applied by the LCMS Constitution and *Handbook*. The chaplain's constituency is a military community, ever-changing in its composition and established by the nation for its common defense. That community comprises men and women for whom Christ died. While many in that community may be Christian, a great number of them are not, so the Lutheran chaplain is called to be a missionary among them.

For more information on the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, visit lcms.org/armedforces.



WHERE → Where are chaplains?

We have chaplains deployed overseas in combat environments, including Reserve chaplains mobilized from their stateside parishes, as well as chaplains serving within the United States to support domestic contingency operations. Chaplains go wherever their people are deployed. They are called to serve wherever their flock is called to serve our nation.

HOW MANY → How many chaplains does the LCMS currently sponsor?

Currently, the LCMS has 67 active-duty chaplains, another 71 chaplains who serve in the Reserve and National Guard units and 22 who serve in the Civil Air Patrol. The specific number of chaplains required in the armed forces is reflected in recruitment goals that change from time to time, according to need. It is noteworthy that Lutheran chaplains historically have been sought after because of the excellent service they have consistently demonstrated in the dual roles of staff officer and pastor.

WHAT → What do they do?

The vast majority of the people whom the chaplain serves are enlisted personnel: The military chaplain is a pastor to them, a pastor in uniform. The uniform is a necessary ingredient of his ministry. The military chaplain must be able to identify with the people he serves. In identifying with them, he, like Paul, should strive to be "... all things to all people, that by all means (he) might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). There are times when he participates in physical training with the people he serves, deploys with them and comes under the same enemy fire.

COMMAND: Most officers can be given command. Command is the authority that an individual in the military service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. The chaplain does not exercise command. The military chaplain is also a pastor to his fellow officers, but he is not directly responsible for the religious and moral welfare of those in the command. In the U.S. armed forces, this responsibility belongs to the commanding officer. The commander, however, discharges this responsibility through the chaplain, who is a member of the commander's staff. Authority is delegated to the chaplain to make decisions in specific areas. His primary responsibility is to plan and carry out the Command Religious program.

Much of the chaplain's relationship with his commander is in his capacity as a staff officer. As a staff officer, especially a senior one, the chaplain also may be involved in supporting and directing ministries of many other chaplains. As long as an LCMS chaplain is not directed to do anything contrary to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, he is expected to follow all orders and guidance from those who have legitimate authority.

FAMILY MEMBERS: There are some assignments in the military where a chaplain's ministry will be at a chapel that has comprehensive programs for all members of the military family. Even chaplains in troop units or on a ship have family ministries.

FAITHFUL MINISTRY IN A PLURALISTIC ENVIRONMENT: Historically, LCMS chaplains have been very effective in working with clergy of other faiths in the military and in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). In addition to Title 10 of the United States Code, all federal agencies have regulations or directives that prohibit chaplains from being forced to do anything contrary to the tenets of their faith and their conscience. Chaplains are responsible to their commanders to see that the religious needs of all personnel within the command are met.

The first American to receive an endorsement as a military chaplain

was a Lutheran pastor in the Revolutionary War by the name of **CHRISTIAN STREIT**. He received a letter from Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the "Father of American Lutheranism," certifying him to the Army and vouching for his effectiveness. Rev. Muhlenberg signed the letter as the Senior Minister and President of the German Lutheran Ministerium in the State of Pennsylvania. This letter constituted the first denominational endorsement known to have been given a clergyman in his process of changing from civilian to military status. It wasn't until the 20th century that denominational endorsements would be required for all U.S. military chaplains.

The first LCMS pastor to receive an endorsement as a military chaplain

was **FRIEDRICH WILHELM RICHMANN**. In March 1862, he received a call to serve in the Civil War as Chaplain to the 58th Regiment of the Ohio Volunteers of the U.S. Army. He was personally endorsed by C.F.W. Walther, the first president of our Synod.

HISTORIC FIRSTS



SPECIALIZED PASTORAL MINISTRY

WHY Why SPM?

Some may wonder why there is a need for SPM. There are two ways to respond to that. One, nearly all people within the LCMS will someday find themselves in crisis or in an emergency situation in the emergency room of a hospital, visiting a loved one in prison, making use of a nursing home, visiting a counseling center, finding comfort from entering hospice, etc. When they arrive at these times of great need, we believe it is ideal to have an LCMS minister waiting for them. Of course, parish pastors and others visit their members at these times of crisis. But the chaplain or pastoral counselor, whose ministry is stationed at these centers, develops an expert knowledge of these institutional systems. As a result, the specialized pastoral minister can be intentionally supportive to those in parish ministry, and that is particularly helpful to parishioners in need.

SPM is also — and maybe mostly — for those who are outside of the parish. This part of the ministry is certainly where the bulk of their time is invested. “Go into all the world . . .” Jesus told his disciples. That’s the calling of those in SPM. They go. They leave the walls of the local parish and go into the neighborhoods and institutions of the world where people are working and living and often struggling to find meaning and hope. Our ministers go to those who often will never come to the church or who have wandered away from the church.

WHO Who are they?

Those in SPM often come by way of parish ministry. In fact, if a seminarian or deaconess student is interested in SPM — and we encourage exploration of this specialized field — they need to have no less than two years of congregational-ministry experience. However, if someone comes to their deaconess or ordained-ministry education as a second-career person and they have had extensive experience as a layperson in congregational leadership and service, their experience will be considered as an equivalent.

It should be emphasized that SPM is not in competition with parish ministry. The vast majority of people called into ministry will serve in a local parish. However, there are others who may be more suited for SPM, and we want them to be aware of opportunities to serve in this capacity.

In addition, there are pastors and deaconesses and DCEs out there who are currently wrestling with where the Lord wants them to serve. There are also congregations that can no longer afford to have a full-time pastor or they can’t afford to support a second minister. Specialized Pastoral Ministry will not be a good fit for everyone who is vocationally searching, but God may well be nudging someone in this direction.

WHERE Where are SPMs?

Through spiritual care in times of turmoil, those whose ministry is in SPM declare and deliver Christ’s mercy through their words and service. The church is present through its chaplains, pastoral counselors and pastoral clinical educators in congregations, Recognized Services Organizations, training centers, prisons, hospitals and the homes of individuals.

SPM is needed outside the “walls” of the church, in places where people are struggling with life in as many contexts as one can imagine. SPM chaplains work in institutions such as hospice care, retirement homes and homes for people who are physically and/or mentally challenged. Pastoral counselors work one-on-one or in small groups in clinics, private practices, counseling centers and congregations.

SPM is present in places of addiction recovery; in nursing homes and in industry, as well as on the streets, in police and fire stations and in homes. Where people are experiencing spiritual and emotional pain on top of physical suffering, there you will find ordained and commissioned ministers of the Gospel representing Christ.

HOW MANY How many SPM chaplains/pastoral counselors/clinical educators?

Within the LCMS SPM, there are 562 ordained or commissioned ministers of the Gospel. Of that total, 10 are clinical pastoral educators, 87 are pastoral counselors and 97 are emergency services chaplains, with the remaining number in institutional chaplaincy.

WHAT What do they do?

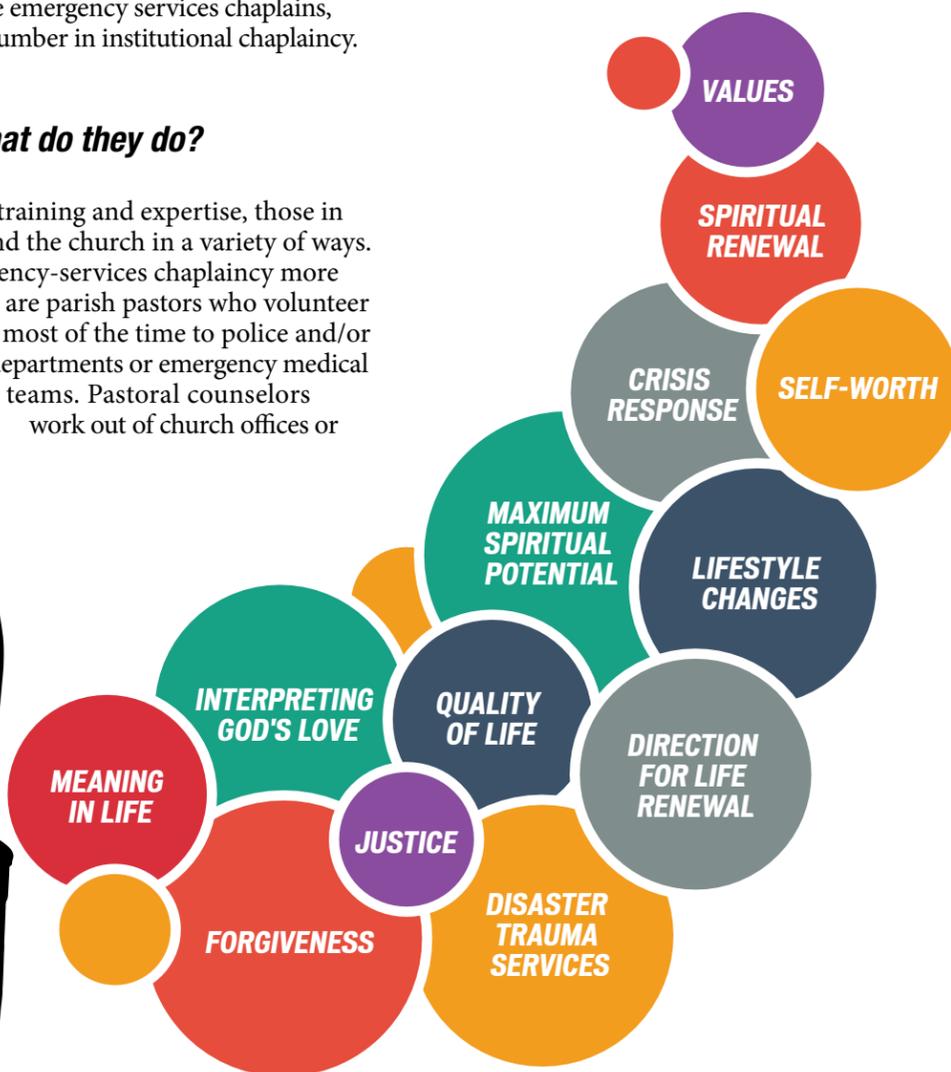
Depending on their training and expertise, those in SPM serve God and the church in a variety of ways. Those in emergency-services chaplaincy more often than not are parish pastors who volunteer their services most of the time to police and/or fire departments or emergency medical teams. Pastoral counselors work out of church offices or

counseling centers. Institutional chaplains may be serving in one of a variety of medical facilities (general or VA hospitals, mental-health settings, rehabilitation centers, etc.), as well as in nursing homes and retirement communities, prisons and jails, hospice services, and so forth. Where there are people struggling in life or going through crisis, scared because of some traumatic event — there you will find specialized pastoral ministers.

There are also those in SPM who teach others how to minister more competently and confidently in the contexts to which they have been called. These are clinical educators. They are clinical pastoral education (CPE) supervisors and pastoral-counseling training supervisors. In addition to post-seminary or post-university training needed to become an LCMS-endorsed and board-certified chaplain or pastoral counselor, these clinical educators have acquired additional education and preparation to serve in this calling.

It is difficult to briefly describe what each specialized pastoral minister does day in and day out. But in general, they visit with people, listen attentively and compassionately, assess what is needed, and intervene accordingly — sometimes with counsel, sometimes with advocacy, sometimes with a word of challenge and sometimes with the comfort of the Gospel. They are prayerful for wisdom and discernment and the courage to be what God needs them to be with that person.

To learn more about SPM, go to lcms.org/spm.





Ministering to Veterans – Where SPM and MAF meet

By SPM Chaplain Rev. Lynn Hanson

PHOTO: ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

I SERVE AS A CHIEF (SPM) chaplain in a very large Veterans Affairs hospital. Daily I visit veterans who served our nation, fought our wars and returned home with horrible physical and mental scars. Many of these war vets suffered unimaginable spiritual injury.

One veteran I visited —I will call him “Jim” — shared with me, “Chaplain, during Vietnam I did all kinds of horrible things. I regret doing all that. I tried to live a good life afterwards. It still bothers me.” I listened as Jim continued to lament over the horrible acts he committed during war. Eventually he stopped. **I COULD SEE THE PAIN** of those horrible memories in his face. After empathizing with his pain, I spoke the Gospel to him. I told him of God’s love through Jesus the Christ for us. I told him Jesus redeemed us from all sins. Jim said, “I don’t think I can be forgiven for what I did.” Again, I proclaimed the Gospel to Jim.

Over and over I told him how much God loved him. I asked him if he was truly sorry for his sins. Jim said, “Yes.” I asked, “Do you believe God forgives you?” “Yes.” I then pronounce the Absolution. Jim wept.

Eventually Jim said, “Chaplain, I’ve never been baptized. **WOULD YOU BAPTIZE ME?**” I said yes. Later I returned to Jim’s room with *Lutheran Service Book*. I explained Baptism to him, went through the rite with him and asked if he wanted to be baptized. He replied yes. I then conducted the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Afterward, he sat in a chair with a huge smile on his face. Jim said, “Chaplain, you can’t imagine how happy I am. All that junk from my past is gone.”

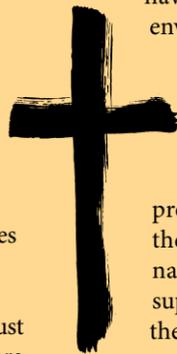
The Rev. Lynn Hanson, an SPM chaplain, is the chief chaplain at the Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Administration Hospital, Hines, Ill.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

LCMS CHAPLAINS

continue to answer the call to serve our Lord, His Church and our nation with courage and integrity. They serve in difficult times and they are prepared for the battles ahead. Being prepared is always on the minds of our men and women serving so faithfully in our armed forces.

All of our nation’s military branches have been involved in continuous expeditionary armed conflict since Operation Desert Shield began in August of 1990. Since Sept. 11, 2001, alone, more



than 2 million military members have deployed to dangerous combat environments in the Middle East. Of that 2 million, more than 6,000 have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Your LCMS chaplains serve in these exceptional military institutions for the purpose of providing pastoral care and support to these great Americans who defend our nation. Your prayers help lift up and support military chaplains in proclaiming the life-giving message of the Gospel to our nation’s brave service members.

O Lord, almighty God, as You have always granted special gifts of the Holy Spirit to Your church on earth, grant Your continual blessing to all who minister in Your name in the armed forces, in institutional and emergency services chaplaincy, in pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education, that by Your grace, they may honor Christ and advance the good of those committed to their care, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

1917

In 1917, the **LCMS created the Army and Navy Board**, primarily for the purpose of coordinating ministry to soldiers and sailors by pastors near armed-forces installations.

1981

When the Synod was restructured in 1981, the Standing Committee, **Ministry to the Armed Forces of the Board for Mission Services** assumed this important responsibility.

1931

In 1931, our Synod convention **called for district mission boards to endorse pastors for military service**. When it became apparent that a central authority was needed, the Synod, at its 1935 convention, established the Army and Navy Commission. The creation of that first commission led to the development of successive Synod agencies responsible for coordinating LCMS ministry to the armed forces.

1998

Renamed the Ministry to the Armed Forces Committee in 1998, the MAFC, through its director, provides information concerning the challenges and opportunities in military and related ministries to seminarians and pastors who express an interest in these areas of ministry. Those who exhibit a continuing interest may eventually be issued a call for full-time service.

1948

The **name was changed to the Armed Services Commission** in 1948 and to the Armed Forces Commission in 1965.

MAF HISTORIC FACTOIDS

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

We are called Specialized Pastoral Ministry.

Because there are both commissioned (some of whom are women) and ordained Ministers of the Gospel serving in SPM, some people have understandably wondered how it can be that deaconesses, for example, can serve in “pastoral” ministry or provide “pastoral” care. It is important to note that the expression “pastoral care” is not used in reference to an office (as in pastoral office). *Rather, it is commonly understood in SPM circles as the kind of specialized competency used to*

serve those people who are in crisis and/or suffering spiritually and emotionally.

In addition, thus far the LCMS has favored the term “pastoral” care over against a more generic “spiritual”-care reference because “pastoral” care — in both the pluralistic contexts of SPM as well as the wider community of recipients’ various church-denominational backgrounds — has been understood as a more uniquely Christian term, and Christian, of course, is who we are and what we do!

“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth”

(Ps.121:1-2).