



Report of Federal Chaplaincy Ministries

Always
being made
New.

25 YEARS TOGETHER IN CHRIST

“Always Being Made New”

Federal Chaplaincy Ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) extend the witness of this church around the globe providing military chaplaincy, serving veterans, and offering ministry in federal correctional institutions. More than 200 pastors of this church serve as federal chaplains. Chaplains accompany uniformed military personnel across the full spectrum of wartime and peacetime service. Chaplains accompany veterans who have borne the battle and returned. Chaplains accompany those incarcerated in federal correctional institutions and the staffs of these facilities.

Currently, the ELCA has 231 pastors and seminary students serving as chaplains and chaplain candidates in the:

- Department of Defense 194 chaplains and chaplain candidates
- Department of Veterans Affairs 32 chaplains
- Department of Justice 5 chaplains

New Prayer Book for the Armed Services

This year a new *Prayer Book for the Armed Services* has been added to the family of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* materials. Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, in cooperation with worship formation and liturgical resources staff, is presenting this worship booklet suitable for individual devotion and corporate worship. Congregations are urged to present copies of this *Prayer Book for the Armed Forces* to those serving in uniform and to provide them to chaplains for use in worship and pastoral care.

Chaplains and Ethical Reflection

ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Ministries address ethical concerns in their organizations and join thought leaders in this church to contribute to our public witness. Practicing military and federal prison chaplains participated in the 2012 and 2013 annual Lutheran Ethicists Gatherings. At these ethics gatherings, theologians and academics of this church interacted with military and federal prison chaplains as they considered military ethics and the criminal justice system. Also, at federal correctional institutions, ELCA chaplains convened groups of inmates to read through and provide feedback to the task force in preparation of the draft social statement on criminal justice.

Young Adult Ministries

Chaplains serve very large young adult populations. For example, in the U.S. military, approximately 3 million people are on active duty or serve in the Reserve or Guard. About 75 percent of people in uniform are in the 10-year age cohort of 18–27 years old. ELCA military chaplains practice their day-to-day ministry immersed in the world of these young adults. In 2013, new staff in young adult ministries joined the ELCA. Ms. Rozella White, program director for young adult ministry, made visiting military bases and a hospital with wounded warriors among her “first stops” with the observation: “Chaplaincy is the largest young adult ministry I know about.”

Full-Communion Relationships

This church’s full-communion relationships provide the foundation for deepening ecumenical ties in chaplaincy ministry. In 2013, federal chaplains continue a second year of joint conferences with chaplains of the ELCA and The Episcopal Church. Chaplains attend two regional conferences per year. In May 2013, the ELCA and Episcopal presiding bishops visited the spring joint conferences. For the ELCA, this connection is based on *Called to Common Mission* which formalizes relationships between the two denominations. This increasing cooperation coincides with the decision in 2011 by The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod to withdraw from joint conferences with ELCA chaplains. Further,

ELCA chaplains benefit from full-communion relationships with the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the Moravian Church.

Looking Ahead

Appointed by the presiding bishop, the ELCA Chaplaincy Advisory Committee consults with the staff to plan for chaplaincy ministries. In 2013, two working groups focused on two initiatives to strengthen chaplaincy:

- (1) **College and Seminary Liaison**, to attract the next generation of chaplains, and
- (2) **Congregational Liaison**, to facilitate specific ways congregations can support chaplaincy ministries.

Nearly every week a congregation in the ELCA contacts the Bureau for Federal Chaplaincy Ministries with an offer of monetary support, volunteer service, or donations-in-kind. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, often referred to “the sea of good will” among the American people toward the military and veterans. When it comes to the baptized people of God in this church, the spirit of support overflows. It is this church’s intent to channel those prayers, words, and deeds to keep chaplaincy ministry strong.

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