



Report of Federal Chaplaincy Ministries

ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Ministries extend the witness of this church around the globe. Federal chaplains accompany uniformed military personnel across the full spectrum of wartime and peacetime service, veterans who have borne the battle and have returned home, and those incarcerated in federal correctional institutions and the staffs of these facilities. They provide word and sacrament, pastoral care and counseling, and spiritual and organizational leadership ministries to these groups and their families.

The vision of Federal Chaplaincy Ministries: Exemplary clergy will provide for the religious and spiritual needs of men, women and children in their pastoral care and for strong connections between chaplaincy ministry and other expressions of the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ across this church.

The ELCA currently sends 198 pastors and seminary students as chaplains and chaplain candidates to the:

- Department of Defense 165 chaplains and chaplain candidates
- Department of Veterans Affairs 30 chaplains
- Department of Justice 3 chaplains

Federal Chaplaincy Ministries has two strategic aims:

1. Attract the next generation of chaplains.
2. Strengthen connections between chaplaincy ministries and congregations, synods, churchwide colleagues, and institutions and agencies of the ELCA.

Initiatives to achieve strategic aims

Practicing and retired chaplains and committed lay volunteers extend their ministry by implementing five specific initiatives.

1. **Seminaries:** Each year chaplains visit and participate in the life of all eight ELCA seminaries. Entering chaplaincy as a specialized ministry requires pastoral experience, but it's important to create awareness early in the formation of pastors of the great need for chaplains and the opportunities to serve.
2. **Colleges and universities:** Chaplains cultivate young men and women open to serving as rostered leaders in this church at the 26 ELCA colleges and universities.
3. **Prayer Book for the Armed Services:** At the 2013 Churchwide Assembly in Pittsburgh, Maj. Gen. Howard Stendahl, who was serving as the U.S. Air Force Chief of Chaplains, presented the first printing of the ELCA *Prayer Book for the Armed Services* to the presiding bishop. In three years this prayer book has had four printings and was promoted at numerous synod assemblies in 2016.
4. **Federal Chaplaincies Scholarship Fund for Leaders:** Since the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, a scholarship fund has been established that has exceeded \$70,000 of additional donations on the way toward an overall goal of \$350,000. The first two scholarships will be awarded for the 2016-17 academic year to support future chaplains. A new development team will convene Sept. 30, 2016, to map out the fundraising path for the scholarship as part of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*.
5. **"Centurion Connection":** At the beginning of 2016, chaplaincy volunteers expanded from a pilot program in seven synods to 17 synods participating in "Centurion Connection" (Mark 15:39, Matthew 8:8, Acts 10:1-8). Currently, 19 synods have identified "Centurion Contacts" to foster ideas and actions for congregations, synods, agencies and institutions in support of military members, veterans and their families. Typical congregational, conference or synod activities include:
 - Focused prayer for military members serving around the globe, veterans in our communities, families of those who serve and chaplains who provide ministries.
 - Preparing and sending care packages that include copies of the *Prayer Book for the Armed Services* to deployed chaplains and those serving in military medical facilities, training bases (such as Great Lakes Recruit Training Command, Parris Island, Forts Jackson, Benning, Sill or Leonard Wood for new recruits), pre-deployment sites and chaplains afloat.

- Organizing congregational or regional retreats at a Lutheran camp for veterans and their family members.
- Connecting with Reserve and Guard military units in local communities through the “Partners in Care” program.

Also, the South Carolina, Southern Ohio and West Virginia-Western Maryland synods are part of a formal “Rural Clergy Training Program” in cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The program relies on pastors in communities 50 miles away from one of the 152 VA medical centers to support clergy colleagues with information and contacts to aid veterans, military members and their families.

Young adult ministries

Chaplains serve 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 70 percent of people in uniform are between 18 and 27 years old. Military chaplains practice their day-to-day ministry immersed in the world of these young adults.

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