



Mercy on Holy Ground

by Jeni Miller

MERCY ABOUNDS

580+ ordained or commissioned men and women serve as institutional and emergency services chaplains, pastoral counselors and clinical pastoral educators



Check out lcms.org/specializedpastoralministry for detail on the work and training of LCMS chaplains who serve around the world



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There is perhaps no more important place on earth for a Christian to show mercy to his or her neighbor than at the deathbed of a dear brother or sister in Christ. Pastors and deaconesses are called to that very place to proclaim to the dying saint our victory in Christ and to point them to the cross, where that victory was already won.

“As chaplain, my service to the dying is many times the most intimate Word and sacramental ministry,” shared the Rev. Ed LeClair, hospice chaplain at Lutheran Senior Services in St. Louis, Mo. “When I bring the Word to the room of the dying, for me at least, I’m on holy ground as I declare God’s truths to the patient and their family. When is God’s Word more impactful than at the time of death or shortly thereafter to those remaining? Or when is the Sacrament of a more restorative nature than when taken shortly before death?”

LCMS chaplains who serve in hospitals, nursing homes and other institutions visit the bedside of those who are dying, offering their time in ways that medical professionals cannot. They listen, answer questions and bring God’s Word to bear amid difficult circumstances.

“Sometimes when people are dying and have time to think, they have a lot of questions,”

explained Deaconess Jessica Feldmann, hospital chaplain at Providence Medical Center, Wayne, Neb. “These are the best times to talk because people are ready to hear what the Gospel of Christ says. It is at these times that I bring passages such as Eph. 2:8–10 to remind them that they are not saved by their own doing, but because of God’s grace through faith.”

Another benefit of having chaplains who serve the dying lies in the unique skill that pastors and deaconesses hone in distinguishing Law and Gospel. “In serving the dying, the Gospel needs to be front and central,” said LeClair. “The person is living the result of the Law. So what they need most of the time is the sweetness of the Gospel. We don’t bring medical news or means of physical comfort; we help bring a presence of peace.”

“Having God’s Word proclaimed in these circumstances truly does take away the sting of death, and He wants His dear children to die with the hope of the resurrection in mind,” agreed Feldmann. “He calls pastors and deaconesses to this ministry to remind those who are dying, and their families, of His peace in a sometimes un-peaceful event. If God can take the sting out of death, He can prevail over everything.” **LW**

Deaconess Jeni Miller (jenikaiser@aol.com) is a contract writer for LCMS Communications.

