



Church Worker Care Team

MANUAL



LCMS Kansas District | kslcms.org



Introduction

Church workers are critical to carrying out the mission of the Church. These faithful men and women, who dedicate their lives in service to the Church, are an invaluable resource in bringing the Gospel to the ends of the earth, yet the demands of church work can take a toll on workers and their families.

Healthy congregations need healthy workers. One key strategy for worker well-being is a Church Worker Care Team (CWCT), which we describe in this manual.

We pray that this resource will be instrumental as a first step for your congregation to create a Church Worker Care Team (CWCT). As recent surveys and focus group research in the district and Synod show, there is a pressing need for providing this type of support for our workers.

In **Section 1**, we share a brief description of a CWCT and a Q & A sheet. We also share a brief history of the Kansas District's efforts since 2002 to enhance the lives of our workers and the health of our congregations and schools as well as a list of resolutions adopted at district and Synod conventions encouraging our congregations and schools to establish care for the health and well-being of our church workers and their families as a priority. The section also notes recent data on worker wellness collected by our Synod and district (the full details of which are available on the CWCT webpage, which you can find at <https://kslcms.org/caring-ministry/church-worker-wellness/cwct> under the "Caring Ministry" main section, "Church Worker Wellness", "Church Worker Care Teams.")

Section 2 answers the following questions: What is a Church Worker Care Team? What is the Purpose of the CWCT? How do You Form the CWCT? How to Begin: What Happens After the CWCT is Formed? There is also a page listing prayers with and for church workers.

Section 3 contains the following parts: A Lutheran Approach to the Wellness Wheel; Major Threats to Church Worker Well-Being; and Church Worker Care Team (CWCT) and Worker: Care for Church Workers.

The CWCT webpage includes links to a variety of resources from the Synod, Concordia Plan Services, and other wellness organizations to help enhance your CWCT's ability to care for your workers.

It is our prayer that your congregation and school will see the need for and importance of establishing a Church Worker Care Team and make the health and well-being of your workers a priority.

Please feel free to pick and choose the information in this resource and adapt it to your congregation's local needs and practices. Most of all, we hope that you find ways you can support your workers. Our committee is ready to help you in any way to this end.

God Bless!

THE KANSAS DISTRICT CHURCH WORKER CARE COMMITTEE (2022-2025)

Rev. Dr. Neil Buono, Rev. Lee Hovel (chair), Bethany Johnson, Dr. Rebecca Weller, Clyde Wollenberg, and Jim Bradshaw (staff advisor)



SECTION 1

Overview of Church Worker Care



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Description of a Church Worker Care Team

The Apostle Paul encourages us, as members of the Body of Christ, to lovingly care for each other. “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10). Paul himself received such support: “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me” (Phil. 4:10a). This also pertains to the care of our church workers on the part of parishioners.

Our pastors, teachers, DCEs, and other church workers are continuous care providers to us in the parish, always on call at a moment’s notice. Through surveys and focus groups, our Synod has seen that there is a need for care for our workers. (See the LCMS report “What We Heard,” available on the CWCT webpage, to discover what our workers are saying.) Who is mutually caring for our workers in the church? We want to share some thoughts that you might find helpful as you consider forming a Church Worker Care Team for your church workers.

Our church workers struggle to operate within the competing tensions of the servant/leader paradox. The calling of our workers places them in caring relationships, but at times the care comes at the expense of care for themselves and their family. Church workers are servants to the congregation, yet they also need care as well. (See Section 3, pages 18-19, “Major Threats to Church Worker Well-Being”).

A **Church Worker Care Team** will seek to build a climate of trust and openness with the pastor and other church workers so that they can walk alongside them to care for their needs. In turn, this will allow the church workers to effectively care for the needs of those they serve with the Gospel.

The care team will lovingly and caringly chal-

lenge church workers to practice self-discipline in caring for their own spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. The team might also advocate for their church workers for supportive policies and practices by the congregation, ensuring adequate care for their physical and financial needs as well as the needs of their family. This resource will have specific suggestions and helpful information, outlining in more detail how to offer such support and how to organize a care team. The resource shares the nuts and bolts you will need to develop your team.

Members of the Church Worker Care Team will emphasize that its purpose is to remind the congregation that caring for the well-being of the church workers will contribute to a healthy congregation.

Some of the above has been adapted from resources from Grace Place Retreats. We recommend using the resource “Holding Up the Prophet’s Hand” by Bruce Hartung (CPH 2011), which will also be referenced throughout this guide.



I deeply appreciate the opportunity to be involved with a Church Worker Care Team. The team has encouraged me in personal growth and care. An added benefit is that this group of dedicated lay people has been given a greater understanding of the unique stresses and challenges that church workers experience. Their support and encouragement are a true blessing as we grow in serving the Lord together. I heartily encourage each congregation to establish a Church Worker Care Team.

REV. PAUL TESSARO, SENIOR PASTOR
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Clay Center, Kansas



A Brief Q & A About Church Worker Care Teams

What is the purpose of a Church Worker Care Team?

The purpose of the CWCT is to encourage, foster, and advocate for the health and well-being of church workers in authentic partnership and conversation with them.

Briefly, what is the task of a Church Worker Care Team?

A Church Worker Care Team should seek to build a climate of trust and openness with workers. Members of the team should be reminded that a CWCT contributes to the overall ministry of wellness in the church worker and congregation by providing a confidential listening ear in order to better understand the stresses and burdens of ministry life. Healthy church workers contribute to a healthy congregation.

The CWCT should lovingly and caringly provide support for the church worker's spiritual, physical, and emotional needs in a safe and supportive environment. The team might also advocate for the pastor and other church workers for support policies and practices in the congregation, ensuring adequate care for their physical and financial needs as well as the needs of their families. (Grace Place Wellness: <https://lcef.org/grace-place-wellness>)

Sections 2 and 3 of this manual go into greater depth.

We already have a Church Council and Board of Elders. Isn't this their job?

Because a Church Worker Care Team is a clear statement by the congregation that the church worker's well-being is a significant priority, the CWCT is recommended for this important task.

A Church Council and Board of Elders are governing bodies. While some may include church

worker support in their responsibilities, their governing role can complicate their ability to provide the sort of care and advocacy that church workers and their families may need.

Do team members need special training?

No. All that's needed is a desire to support and serve the church workers. However, the congregation might want to consider having members who specialize in the area of health, human care, and human resources to be a part of the team. This resource guide will be helpful in providing the CWCT with basic information and resources in regard to church workers and their well-being.

How is "church worker" defined in this manual?

"Church worker" refers to *called* workers (ordained and commissioned), but congregations are free to adapt and add non-rostered church workers if they choose.



Church Worker Wellness in the Kansas District: A Historical Perspective

2002

The LCMS Kansas District Sabbatical Policy was adopted by the Kansas District Board of Directors.

September, November 2013

Jim Bradshaw, Rev. Rocky Mease, and Rev. Lee Hovel attended the Ministerial Care Coalition (MC2) Conference. They became aware of the state of professional church workers and their challenges with wellness, which were affecting their personal health, marriage, and ministry. They left the conference with a plan to address this concern in the Kansas District. The group developed a discussion piece: “A Theological Basis for Renewal in Wellness.” The Renewal in Wellness Task Force was formed and held a retreat to establish an action plan to address the well-being of professional church workers. The task force agreed to ask the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Kansas District to adopt the theme of “Renewal in Wellness” in 2014 and leading up to the district convention in June of 2015.

January 2014

The Kansas District BOD approved a resolution to declare 2014-15 as the year of “Renewal in Wellness.” Throughout these years all conferences in the district had a wellness element. Resources were developed and devotions were written for congregation use.

June, Fall 2015

The district convention adopted the theme “Renewal in Wellness” for the triennium; the convention keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. John Hirsch, addressed this theme. The district agreed to participate in a pilot of the Core Needs Survey (See “31 Needs” on the CWCT webpage). Church workers completed the survey at gatherings held throughout the district.

Fall 2016

To address concerns revealed in the Core Needs Survey, a Church Worker Wellness Committee was formed (which was later reactivated as the Church

Worker Care Committee). The Family Life Committee and the Church Worker Wellness Committee met to digest the survey information and to form a response and a plan to address the needs revealed. The Family Life Committee sponsored a marriage enrichment event in which twelve couples participated. The Family Life Committee continued its work to address the needs of professional church worker families.

Spring, Fall 2017

We isolated three major areas for our committees to begin addressing in the district. (See “31 Needs” on the CWCT webpage). Jim Bradshaw, Rev. Rocky Mease, and Rev. Lee Hovel attended the MC2 Conference. One major insight: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recognizes that next to Word and Sacrament ministry and the greater mission of the Church, the health and well-being of our professional church workers is of great importance and needs to be addressed as a priority. There was also much discussion that the delivery of care to workers needs to come from those who do not have ecclesiastical supervision.

2018-2022

A new Church Worker Care Committee was tasked with responding to a worker wellness resolution from the 2018 Kansas District convention. A key outcome: The Church Worker Care Team Manual and webpage.

2022-2025

During the triennium, the committee worked hard to educate the Kansas District’s lay leaders and church workers about church worker care by introducing them to the CWCT Manual and by supplying them with copies. They began raising interest in church worker care through presentations at the 2022 District Convention, a Circuit Visitor gathering, and the 2024 Pastors/Educators Conference. Another focus in this triennium was on the church worker care needs of teachers.



Kansas District and Synod Convention Resolutions: Worker Wellness

See the CWCT webpage for the full resolutions.



2016 LCMS NATIONAL CONVENTION

Resolution 18-02A

To Task the Board for National Mission to Develop Polices for Assessing Worker Wellness and Making Recommendations for Worker Care

Resolution 18-03A

Addressing Indebtedness of Church Work Professionals

Resolution 18-04

To Encourage Congregations and Church Workers to Develop an Intentional Wellness Plan

Resolution 18-05

To Encourage District Presidents, Circuit Visitors, and Congregations to Utilize Resources Already Established for Ministerial Wellness



2018 KANSAS DISTRICT CONVENTION

Resolution 18-02-02

To Support the Well-Being of Professional Church Workers and Their Families



2022 KANSAS DISTRICT CONVENTION

Resolution 22-03-01

To Encourage the Implementation of the Church Worker Care Manual in LCMS Kansas District congregations



2019 LCMS NATIONAL CONVENTION

Resolution 4-03A

To Commend to Synod Priorities for Mission and Ministry Emphasis for the 2019-22 Triennium

LCMS Mission Priorities: *“Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, financial and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.”*



2023 LCMS NATIONAL CONVENTION

Resolution 1-06A

To Direct Districts and Council of Presidents to Provide Strategic Plan for Addressing Wellness of Church Workers

Resolution 1-07

To Address Mental Health Among Pastors and Other Professional Church Workers

“The overall health and well-being of our church workers is of prime importance in fulfilling the work God, through the Holy Spirit, has called them to do.”

FIRST “WHEREAS” CLAUSE, KANSAS DISTRICT CONVENTION RESOLUTION 18-02-02

Insights on Worker Wellness: LCMS Reporter Inserts

See the CWCT webpage for full details.



WHY WORKER WELLNESS?

A worker wellness survey was conducted in 2017 to help determine the extent and particular types of worker wellness needs to be addressed among our Synod's commissioned and related ministers and spouses. The results revealed that...

40% question whether their role truly has any real impact

32% admit that the busyness of life gets in the way of their relationship with God

55% have experienced stress from financial concerns

75% have a spouse that is considered overweight or obese

33% have experienced serious parenting difficulties

26% have experienced serious difficulties while in ministry

24% have been told by a professional that they suffer from anxiety or depression

47% do not have a pastor, confessor or similar type of spiritual companion

33% struggle with substance use (food, alcohol, pornography, etc.)

“One of the Synod’s seven mission priorities is to ‘nurture the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.’ Healthy workers make for healthy churches. That’s why we need to help those who serve us with the Gospel to drink deeply of the Word of God so they will have what it takes to bring the Word to others.”

—Rev. Dr. Robert C. Mueller, Jr., LCMS first vice president

34% COMMISSIONED **45%** OBTAINED
that lack pastoral care

53% COMMISSIONED **41%** OBTAINED
paid below district guidelines

Resolving to focus on worker wellness in 2018, the Synod in convention passed five resolutions — including 2018 Res. 18-05, “To Encourage District Presidents, Circuit Visitors, and Congregations to Utilize Resources Already Established for Ministerial Wellness” — to address worker wellness. This new webpage, www.lcms.org/worker-wellness, is one result of this focus.

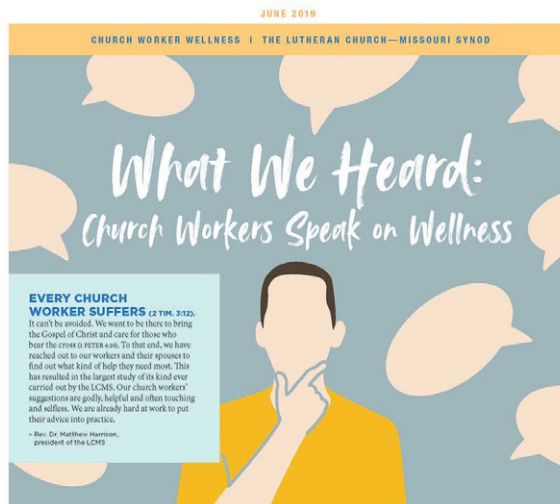
*Of those who have passed. **Of married church workers.

JANUARY 2019 SUPPLEMENT TO REPORTER | The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

“Wellness for New Creations”

January 2019

Contents include “Why Worker Wellness,” the Wellness Wheel, quotations on worker wellness, and resources.



EVERY CHURCH WORKER SUFFERS (2 TIM. 3:12). It can't be avoided. We want to be there to bring the Gospel of Christ and care for those who bear the cross in their lives. To that end, we have reached out to our workers and their spouses to find out what kind of help they need most. This has resulted in the largest study of its kind ever carried out by the LCMS. Our church workers' suggestions are godly, helpful and often touching and selfless. We are already hard at work to put their advice into practice.

—Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of the LCMS

WHY WE CARE

In 2016, THE SYNOD IN CONVENTION PASSED FIVE RESOLUTIONS — including 2016 Res. 18-05, “To Encourage District Presidents, Circuit Visitors, and Congregations to Utilize Resources Already Established for Ministerial Wellness” — to address worker wellness.

In 2017, LCMS RESEARCH CONDUCTED A SURVEY of the well-being of church workers and their spouses.

26% have experienced serious difficulties while in ministry

55% have experienced stress from financial concerns

75% have a spouse that is considered overweight or obese

24% have been told by a professional that they suffer from anxiety or depression

47% do not have a pastor, confessor or similar type of spiritual companion

53% COMMISSIONED **41%** OBTAINED
paid below district guidelines

NOTE: Many of these statistics were also made available in the January 2019 worker wellness insert to Reporter, but we are providing them again to reiterate the need for this discussion with our church workers. Please visit <https://www.lcms.org/2018-reporter-insert-church-worker-wellness> to view the January insert for more detail and other statistics not included here.

In 2019, CHURCH WORKERS WERE INVITED to sign up for worker wellness focus groups.

45 online worker wellness focus groups included commissioned workers, ordained ministers, international missionaries and spouses

380 workers participated in these focus groups

9 key themes were drawn out of the results of the focus groups (See Pages 2-3)

*Of married church workers.

JUNE 2019 SUPPLEMENT TO REPORTER | The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

“What We Heard”

June 2019

Presents findings from focus groups on church worker wellness, highlighting nine key themes.

“New Research Informs Worker Wellness”

June 6, 2024

Content includes resourcing and supporting lay leaders in caring for their church workers.

LCMS Reporter article link: <https://reporter.lcms.org/2024/new-research-informs-worker-wellness>

LCMS Church Worker Wellness

Content includes LCMS resources for supporting church workers.

Church Worker Wellness webpage: <https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/church-worker-wellness>

“I constantly fight the lie that I should not be in this position. The thought of admitting I need help is just one more thing to make me feel unqualified.”

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT
“What We Heard”



SECTION 2

The Church Worker Care Team



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What Is a Church Worker Care Team, and What Is Its Purpose?

What is a Church Worker Care Team?

A Church Worker Care Team (CWCT), composed of selected congregation members, is intended to bring about an **intentional effort on behalf of the church family to understand often unspoken and unrecognized needs of called church workers and their families and to provide support and encouragement.** These needs may be physical, financial, emotional, social, vocational, intellectual, or spiritual. Simply stated, the CWCT represents and encourages the church family in the process of caring for those who are called to care for us.

What is the Church Worker Care Team's purpose?

1. **To enhance the well-being and quality of life** of our church workers and their families and the congregations they serve.
2. **To provide a safe and supportive place for church workers** to share their joys, sorrows, needs, and concerns.
3. **To recognize and celebrate milestones and anniversaries** in the life and vocation of our church workers.
4. Once having identified and gained an understanding of a worker's need(s) or concern(s), the role of the CWCT is **to provide support and encouragement** and, if necessary, **assist the worker in establishing a personal goal or plan of action** that may move them toward a greater sense of well-being.

5. There will likely be situations in which the CWCT comes to understand that the worker has a need or concern that simply cannot be addressed solely through support, encouragement, and personal effort of the worker. There will be times when a worker's needs and sense of well-being are influenced by congregation policy and/or governing board decisions. In such a situation, with the worker's permission, it would be the role of the CWCT **to bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate governing board** and to advocate on behalf of the worker.

Example: A pastor, in visiting with members of the CWCT, expresses worry and concern related to financial stress in the family. These financial issues are creating marital tension. For two years a raise in compensation has been very minimal. Expenses have increased with two children in college. The pastor is feeling that he may need to seek other employment. He has thought of bringing this concern before the governing board but fears that would possibly be viewed as self-serving.



It is important to understand that the CWCT does not have governing authority. Matters that a church worker discusses with the CWCT are CONFIDENTIAL and cannot be shared without consent of the worker.

Forming a Church Worker Care Team

Dr. Bruce Hartung, author of *Holding Up the Prophet's Hand* and former associate professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, offers in his book the following guidelines when forming a CWCT:

- The congregation's leaders should include on the CWCT **individuals who have a heart for staff and their families**. Additional desirable characteristics for CWCT members include the following:
 - ❖ Worships regularly
 - ❖ Possesses effective communication skills
 - ❖ Demonstrates concern for the called workers
 - ❖ Empathizes with people; is able to put self in another's circumstances
 - ❖ Maintains confidentiality
 - ❖ Enjoys the respect and confidence of called workers
- Consider including **people of different age groups**.
- Consider including **representation from both genders**.

The following guidelines for forming a CWCT come from other church bodies that have already established such teams in their congregations:

- **Persons being considered for appointment to the CWCT should be approved by the called church workers before an appointment is made.** Appointment to the CWCT is made by elected congregational leaders (e.g., Board of Elders; Church Council).
- When establishing the initial CWCT, appointments are suggested to be for one,

two, and three years. Upon completion of their first term (whether that be one, two, or three years) subsequent appointments are suggested to be for three years. This establishes a rotation allowing for there to always be experienced members serving on the CWCT.

- It is suggested that the CWCT **be composed of three or more members**, depending on the number of church workers in the congregation.
- It is suggested that the **congregation governing boards determine whether they wish to establish term limits or allow members of the CWCT to serve additional terms so long as they are willing and serving well.**
- Each year the team should choose a chair to facilitate team activities.



HELP NEEDED: TRUSTWORTHY ADVISORS

"In order to feel comfortable sharing or admitting that I have a need, I have to know with certainty that the caregiver is trustworthy and that my call won't be jeopardized."

**"What We Heard," June 2019
LCMS Reporter Supplement**



How to Begin: What Happens After the CWCT Has Been Formed?

Once the CWCT has been formed, it is suggested that they meet to review this guide and become familiar with the information and resources that would be helpful in their discussions with church workers.

Dr. Bruce Hartung in *Holding up the Prophet's Hand* states, "The care team in each congregation will develop its own style and pace" (p. 103). Hartung then shares the following suggestions:

- **In the beginning, the CWCT should meet formally one-on-one with each called worker every three months.** In the beginning the goal should be getting to know the worker and developing authentic trust.
- **After the first year, at a minimum, such formal meetings should occur every six months.**
- **The CWCT may choose, at times, to include a worker's spouse in the meeting.** (It is important to understand that a church worker's spouse faces unique challenges. These challenges may create personal and marital strain which may threaten the couple's well-being and their shared ministry to the church family.)

When the CWCT meets with a church worker, **the conversation should revolve around three questions:**

- How are you doing, and how is the work going?
- What areas are going especially well in your life both professionally and personally?
- What areas, professionally and personally, are a concern and need attention?

Additional questions related to emotional, physical, vocational, financial, intellectual, relational, and spiritual matters can be found in Section 3 of this manual, pages 20-21.

If concerns or needs surface during a meeting, the CWCT will **meet as necessary** to provide support, encouragement, and advocacy with a governing board as needed.

See the CWCT webpage for **additional tools** that may assist the CWCT in gaining more understanding of the worker's thoughts, feelings, and needs.

..... **THREE KEY QUESTIONS**

How are you doing?

What's going well?

What are your concerns?



How to Begin: What Happens After the CWCT Has Been Formed? (cont.)

The following suggestions for activities of the CWCT come from other church bodies that have developed care teams.

ENTRANCE VISITS

An **entrance visit** should be conducted soon after a new church worker has come on staff. Below are **some possible questions for the entrance visit:**

- How are you and your family adjusting to the new community?
- How are you adjusting to the church family?
- Is your housing satisfactory?
- Is there anything we can do to help you?
- Are you needing information regarding medical/dental services, etc.?
- What hopes do you have in this new ministry?
- What hopes do you have for the congregation/school?

- What hopes do you have for yourself and your family? What fears/concerns do you have with this life change?

ADDITIONAL FOCUS AREAS FOR THE CWCT

- Encouraging the church worker in his or her spiritual life.
- Encouraging continuing education.
- Advocating for salaries and benefits.
- Providing ongoing support and encouragement.
- Providing assistance in practical matters.
- Organizing and hosting fellowship activities.



Ground Rules

For every conversation between the church worker and the team

- ❖ CWCT members and church workers are to be open and honest with each other while matters are kept confidential.
- ❖ CWCT members are advocates for the worker in regard to their evaluations and salary.
- ❖ The CWCT is not a decision-making body.
- ❖ CWCT members must resist the temptation to serve as a channel to the church worker for individuals' complaints; individuals should address their concerns personally to the church worker.
- ❖ Praying with and for the church worker will be a significant part of every meeting.



Praying with and for Our Church Workers

MEETING PRAYERS

Prayer is encouraged whenever a Church Worker Care Team meets with a church worker.

Opening Prayer: (Sample) “Our loving God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we give you thanks for (church worker’s name). We have gathered together to grow in our understanding of his/her work among our church family and to grow in our understanding of his/her joys, sorrows, needs, concerns, hopes, and dreams. Enable us to develop a relationship of caring and trust that leads to honest communication and action that enhances the health and well-being of (church worker’s name) and our church family. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Closing Prayer: Just as opening with prayer is encouraged, closing the time together with prayer is important. One suggestion is that the church worker be asked what prayer requests he/she has for the members of the CWCT to be lifting up in prayer until they meet again. The meeting is then closed with prayer being offered for the requests that have been given.

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

The following prayers, some of which were taken and edited from Portals of Prayer, may also be used.

For the Holy Ministry: “O Holy, caring Shepherd, guard those who proclaim the joy of our salvation. Strengthen those you have called into the Holy Ministry as ambassadors entrusted with Your Holy Word. Uplift them when they are weary or heavy hearted. Restore their deep passion for their relationship with You, for their congregations, and their families. Guard what enters their minds, and sustain them to fulfill the ministry to which You have called them. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

For Commissioned Workers: Our Lord and Teacher, we thank You for our commissioned workers who, in following Your example, faithfully carry out their challenging vocation. Grant them the ability to help their students develop the wisdom, knowledge, and life skills they need. Give them a caring and understanding heart for each child’s unique personality and needs. Guide them in sharing Your grace and truth. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

For Music Leaders: We thank You Lord for giving us voice to speak and sing of Your truth and to give you praise and adoration. Thank You for church musicians, including (church worker’s name), who have been called to lead our church family in addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts, giving thanks to God our Father in the name of Jesus. We pray that you would gift our music leader with joy and a melody in their heart. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

ONGOING PRAYERS FOR WORKERS

As an act of continuing support, pray for the well-being of your church workers in the areas identified on the Lutheran Wellness Wheel. (See pages 16-17.)



SECTION 3

The Ongoing Work of a Church Worker Care Team



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Part I: A Lutheran Approach to the Wellness Wheel

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them ... For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

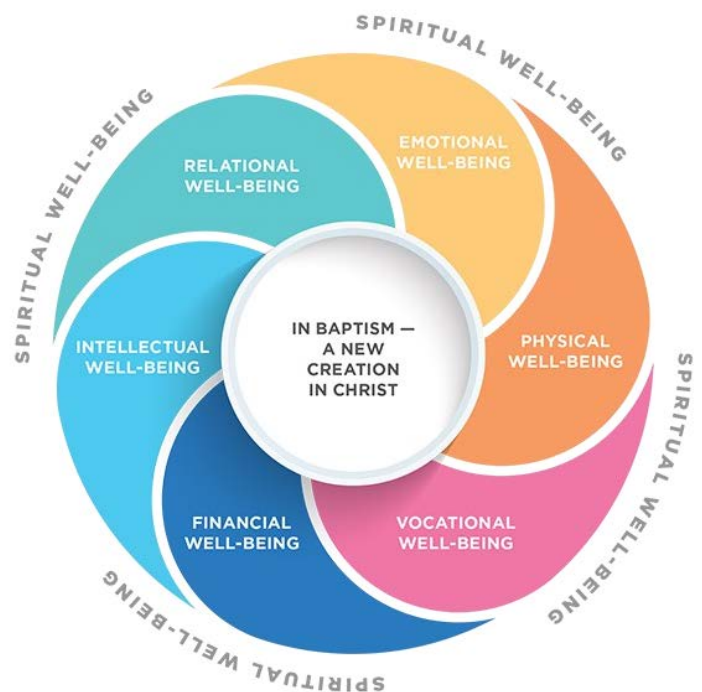
SMALL CATECHISM, FIRST ARTICLE OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

Dr. Bruce Hartung, in *Holding Up the Prophet's Hand* , states that “the overall attitude of care for the health and well-being of each individual in the congregation and community is central to the support of church workers” (p. 89). This care promotes the continuation of the teaching and preaching of God’s Word to the joy and edification of God’s people. The health and well-being of individuals, especially church workers, aids in supporting the work they have been given to do through their many vocations and reflects the proper stewardship of the gifts they have been given. Our bodies are the very instruments by which God delivers His gifts of love and grace to the neighbor. The attitude of care for our bodies should honor both the body that God has given to us, as well as the relationship it has to others.

In order to understand the ways in which we can care for and support our church workers, it is helpful to use the model of the Wellness Wheel in conjunction with a distinct Lutheran view. Grace Place Wellness defines the Wellness Wheel as “a model for personal spiritual well-being and balanced, healthy living.” This model contains seven components: emotional, physical, financial, intellectual, vocational, relational, and spiritual. **The spiritual component is not just a portion of the Wellness Wheel; instead, it encompasses each area of the Wellness Wheel and is central to our well-being.**

As we use the **Lutheran Wellness Wheel**, it is important to understand that we all have areas of vulnerability, weakness, or underdevelopment

that threaten our entire well-being. To put it visually, our well-being is like a bicycle wheel with spokes. When one spoke is broken, it affects the entire wheel. Additionally, each area of the bicycle supports the other. When we compartmentalize our life, one area will damage another instead of supporting it. Taking care of our well-being combats the temptation for compartmentalization in our lives by taking care of one area of life in order to support the entire life.





Part I: A Lutheran Approach to the Wellness Wheel (cont.)

OVERARCHING WELL-BEING: SPIRITUAL/BAPTISMAL

Our Baptism is central to the Christian life, because in it we are given faith, which receives the blessings of the cross: forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We are called to live daily in our Baptism in a continual state of repentance while receiving God's forgiveness for all of our sins. The sanctified life of a Christian is founded upon what Christ has done for us on the cross, strengthened by His Word and Sacraments, and lived out by the good works that flow from faith. Our relationship to God is given to us by faith and not by any merit on our own. God works faith in us, whether we feel it or not. He nurtures us with His Word and Sacraments, which we are to receive daily as our Bread of Life. Without faith, we are considered dead in our trespasses, **regardless of how good our overall well-being is**. This spiritual component is of greatest importance to the Christian life, as it reflects our life in Christ and our love to God and our neighbor.

Well-being	Description	Goal
EMOTIONAL	The full array of human emotions (joy, irritation, closeness, sadness, jealousy, lust, anxiety, anger, panic, depression, exhilaration, etc.), impacted by past experiences (family of origin, behavior patterns, etc.), addictions, relationships, conflicts, success or failure, expectations, satisfactions, etc.	Emotional well-being seeks to express emotions appropriately in each circumstance and to respect and honor the feelings and emotions of others.
PHYSICAL	Personal health through exercise, nutrition, proper sleep, weight control, activities, etc.	Physical well-being seeks to honor our body by keeping it as healthy as possible within the boundaries of disease, illness, and our imperfections, by nourishing it with a healthy diet, exercise, and rest.
VOCATIONAL	Includes work in the ministry, responsibilities at home, and other work God has called us to do according to the gifts He has given us, all with joy, even in the midst of hardship, and all to the glory of God.	Vocational well-being seeks to serve the neighbor in love with the gifts God has given us in our particular stations in life.
FINANCIAL	Managing needs related to salary, debt, and saving for the future.	Financial well-being seeks to use God's gifts of money appropriately, wisely, and for the benefit of the neighbor.
INTELLECTUAL	Continuous learning and education in areas of interest and strength by reading, going to conferences, taking a sabbatical, engaging with mentors and colleagues who challenge, encourage, and give feedback, etc.	Intellectual well-being seeks to keep the mind active by exploring new areas of learning as well as allowing it to rest to keep it fresh.
RELATIONAL	Involvement in social and interpersonal relationships in any area of life, within or outside of work, that are characterized by respect, trust, love, and forgiveness.	Relational well-being seeks to reflect the relationship God has with us as we live in our relationships with others.



Part II: Major Threats to Church Worker Well-Being

“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

1 PETER 5:8

The devil seeks to “devour” Christians who hear the Word of God and keep it, and he also seeks to devour the messengers of this Word of God. Throughout our sinful life, we sinners are bombarded with temptations to forget or ignore God’s Word, and we succumb to the lies of Satan, who disguises himself in many forms. Church workers, like any other human, are sinful and are not infallible, meaning that they, too, are tempted and fall into sin.

One of the major threats to the church worker’s well-being is the threat of spiritual attacks. In addition to spiritual attacks, there are times when church workers may experience burnout, excessive stress, secondary traumatic stress, relational stress, and spiritual pressure of the ministry, as noted by Dr. Bruce Hartung (*presentation to the Michigan District, November 2012*). In order to clearly understand how to support our church workers, it helps to also understand and recognize these major threats to their well-being, and when and why they might occur.

Spiritual Attack. Includes different kinds: relational strife, moral failure, sense of unworthiness, hopelessness, doubt, and spiritual arrogance.

Questions for the CWCT to ask itself:

- Are we in regular and faithful prayer for our pastor and other workers?
- Do we encourage and honor the church worker’s personal devotional time as part of the work week?

- Do we provide for regular times of retreat and refreshment that are not their vacation days?
- Do we encourage their participation in small group Bible study and prayer as part of their work week?
- Do we encourage their use of a father confessor and pastor with whom they can talk, confess their sins, and receive absolution?

Burnout. Occurs more often with people who have a deep sense of mission, a passionate desire to serve others, and high expectations for themselves.

Questions to ask congregational leaders:

- How are expectations defined, and who defines them?
- What happens when expectations are not being met?
- What happens when a member complains to a lay leader that the pastor is not meeting his ministry needs?



Part II: Major Threats to Church Worker Well-Being (cont.)

Excessive Stress. While good stress is healthy and makes us more productive, bad (or “excessive”) stress occurs when it is not handled properly and when the worker experiences chronic stress response, hurting the health of that worker.

Questions for the CWCT to ask itself:

- Do we insist that the church worker take his day(s) off every week and tell him he must take a break from ministerial duties except in cases of true emergency?
- Do we encourage and support his or her regular and faithful involvement in physical exercise?
- Is he or she carrying significant educational debt?

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS). Over time, STS builds up and becomes problematic; it can also be called “cumulative trauma.” It inhibits the energy and spark needed to continue a vocation.

Questions for the CWCT to ask itself:

- Are we aware of the cumulating stress before it becomes problematic?
- Do we provide for our church worker’s regular consultation with a mental health professional, if the need arises?

Relational Stress. Occurs when there is conflict within families, creating strife within these relationships.

Questions for the CWCT to ask itself:

- How are we encouraging the nurturing of their marriage (if applicable)?
- How are we encouraging the use of their time and energy in relation to their family?

- How are we encouraging God’s love in Christ reflected in their closest relationships?

Spiritual Pressure of the Ministry. The God-given responsibility for the care of souls that comes with the divine call is no small matter. It is tempting for the church worker to base his or her “success” on numbers.

Reminders for the called worker:

- Success in the ministry is not based on numbers in any form (e.g., church attendance, Bible study attendance, confirmation class, new members, etc.).
- God works through His Word and Sacrament; if those are taught and administered in truth and purity, that is the greatest “success” and one through which God works and regenerates faith.

Why don’t church workers ask for help? When the Wellness Wheel gets out of balance, there is a reluctance on the part of the church worker to ask for help. They may be drawn toward only receiving positive reinforcement, don’t want to appear needy or vulnerable, don’t want to lose their effectiveness in the ministry, or may be reluctant to trust another person to deal with them competently and confidentially. They also may find it difficult to articulate their problem, thus making it harder to find a solution.

It is the job of the congregation and the Church Worker Care Team not only to understand and identify the major threats to a worker’s well-being, but also to support them in ways that would either prevent or resolve these threats.



Part III: Church Worker Care Team (CWCT) and Worker: Care for Church Workers

Dr. Bruce Hartung says that “the central charge of the Worker Care Team is to encourage, foster, advocate, and plan for the health and well-being of church staff in authentic partnership and conversation with them” (p. 104). Once the CWCT has been formed, it is recommended that the members create a mission statement and a list of objectives for the team. Ultimately, they should support and encourage the church workers and their families, seek to enhance the quality of their lives, and care for their needs. This is all to further the teaching and preaching of God’s Word to the joy and edification of God’s people.

Confidence between CWCT and Church Worker

One of the first objectives should be to establish a trusting relationship between the church worker and the team members. This will create confidence in the called worker within this open and supportive relationship, and it will also give the members of the team time to learn about the worker and his or her position. Since it takes time to develop this confidence and trust, meetings between the worker and team might be more frequent at the beginning. They might also include the church worker’s spouse. The conversations may be loosely structured to foster communication, frank expression of concerns, and a free-flowing consideration of what to do about them. Care and concern for workers, even before any crisis, is important. As noted by Dr. Matt Bloom, a Notre Dame professor who studies worker well-being, “Thriving before a crisis leads to thriving during and after a crisis” (*Caring for the Called* resource manual, Indiana District).

Conversations between CWCT and Church Worker

The meetings can take place between one church worker (or a church worker and spouse) and 1-2

support team members at the frequency desired. The specific details regarding where, when, and the length of the conversations are determined by the worker and team members. The location can be off-site or outside the worker’s usual work locale in order to minimize distraction. A general plan for approximately 90 minutes is sufficient; however, the time may be longer or shorter depending on the direction of the conversation.

Team members should not focus on or ignore any area of well-being, lest they run the risk of leading to feelings of frustration and failure. Instead, they should be interested in the balanced way in which the components of these seven areas of well-being interact, and they should continually be caring about the spiritual life that impacts all of those areas. The spiritual life of the worker is not merely another element among the other six, but it is essential to thriving in the other dimensions of well-being. However, though some areas of well-being might be thriving, it does not necessarily mean that the spiritual life is flourishing. As a sinner curved in on himself, the worker is continually in need of forgiveness through Word and Sacrament, which strengthens his faith. The members of the CWCT must be interested in and supportive of the church worker’s faith in Christ and the sanctified life that flows from it.

Remember, too, the ground rules for conversations between church workers and their care team (see Page 13). Encourage openness and honesty. Respect confidentiality. Be an advocate. Include prayers in your meetings.



Part III: Church Worker Care Team (CWCT) and Worker: Care for Church Workers (cont.)

As the conversations continue, concern of the CWCT member for the worker's well-being will include curiosity in regard to the following components, as explained earlier in the discussion of the Wellness Wheel. **The following questions for the church worker are suggestions.** (For additional resources, including a downloadable self-assessment, visit the CWCT webpage at <https://kslcms.org>.)

SPIRITUAL

- Do you find time for personal devotion and prayer?
- Are there opportunities for Bible study with other pastors or groups?
- Do you have a father confessor and pastor to talk to?

EMOTIONAL

- What kind of affirmation do you receive as you contribute to the congregation and community in which you live and work?
- What are you passionate about?

PHYSICAL

- How do you describe the vibrancy of your physical health (sleep, diet, exercise, etc.)?
- What community support, such as friends and family, do you have for physical health?

VOCATIONAL

- How are you best using your talents and abilities according to your vocation?
- What brings you joy in the ministry?
- What brings you joy in your family?

FINANCIAL

- How secure is your financial state?
- What does generosity look like to you?

INTELLECTUAL

- Do you desire more opportunities for additional learning?
- What are you curious about?

RELATIONAL

- How do you describe the quality of your relationships (family, friends, church members)?
- Is there healthy conflict management?
- Do you feel isolated or lonely?



Part III: Church Worker Care Team (CWCT) and Worker: Care for Church Workers (cont.)

CWCT as an Advocate for Church Workers

The CWCT serves as an advocate for the church workers to the calling body. While the CWCT is not to be considered a problem-solving group in and of itself, any recommendations that are deemed appropriate should be forwarded to the group that is responsible for their implementation, such as the Board of Elders or the Church Council (or other designated group). When specific needs arise, the CWCT should direct the church worker to the appropriate resources. Some are listed below but are addressed in greater detail on the CWCT webpage, the Kansas District [Worker Wellness](#) page, and the LCMS [Church Worker Wellness](#) page.

Concordia Plan Services

- The Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Devotional resources

Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) and other support agencies

- Doxology
- Shepherd's Canyon Retreat
- Grace Place Wellness: <https://lcef.org/grace-place-wellness>
- GracePoint Institute for Relational Health

Kansas District resources: <https://kslcms.org>

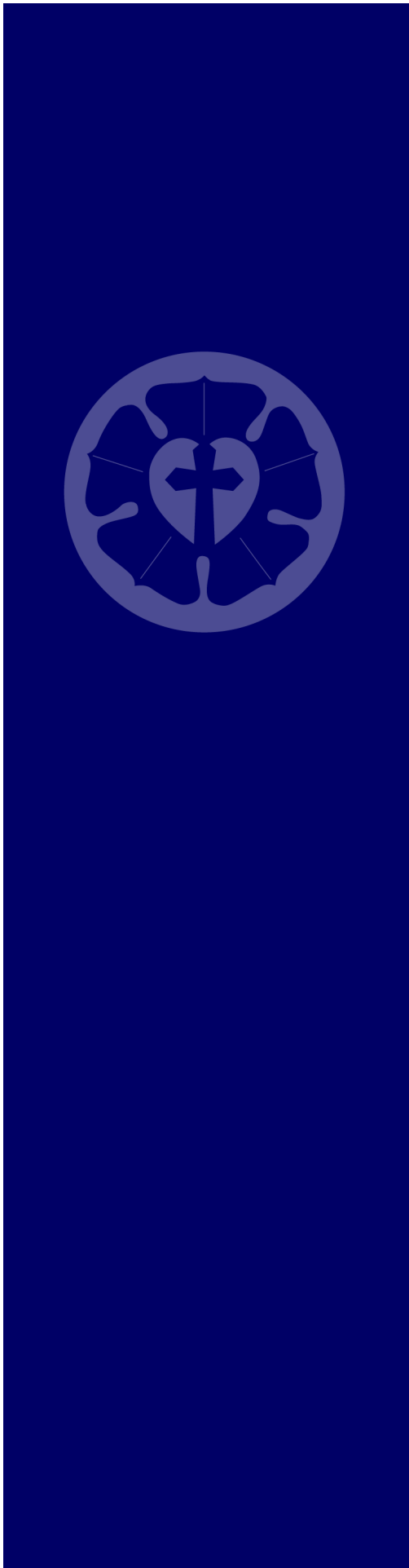
- Kansas District Retreat Center
- Kansas District Sabbatical Guidelines
- Kansas District Pastors' Wives Retreat
- Counseling support

Circuit visitor, neighboring circuit visitor, or vice president of the region

From the beginning of the conversations between church workers and CWCT members, each CWCT member should be honest about the limitation of the scope of his or her responsibility and ability. Thus, church workers must realize that CWCT members are not professional counselors, circuit pastors, or school counselors. The CWCT member should be there to listen, converse, and assist in providing appropriate resources for the church worker.

The process of becoming well is ongoing. As Martin Luther aptly put it: "This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal, but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed" (WA 7, p. 337).

May God bless the work of Church Worker Care Teams, that they may care for and support church workers, which in turn will help create and sustain healthy congregations through the faithful teaching and preaching of God's Word.



DIGITAL RESOURCES

Available on the CWCT Resources webpage:

<https://kslcms.org/cwct/>

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CONTENTS

Self-Care Assessment

Resources for Each Kind of Well-Being

- Videos, articles, websites, and more
- Kansas District Sabbatical Guidelines: <https://kslcms.org/caring-ministry/church-worker-wellness>
- Worker Wellness Bibliography (from Grace Place Wellness: <https://lcef.org/grace-place-wellness>)
- Ways to Welcome Your New Church Worker: <https://kslcms.org/presidents-office/congregation-resources>
- Evernorth Confide Behavioral Health Navigator: <https://www.concordiaplans.org/mental-health>

Surveys and Resolutions

- “What We Heard” (LCMS *Reporter* Insert)
- “Wellness for New Creations” (LCMS *Reporter* Insert)
- 31 Needs of Church Workers (Kansas District)
- District and Synod Wellness Resolutions

Websites of Other Wellness Support Groups

- LCMS Church Worker Wellness: <https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/church-worker-wellness>

Important Numbers

- Employee Assistance Program: **1-800-327-4962**
- Suicide Hotline: **988**

The Church Worker Care Committee regularly reviews and updates the CWCT resource page at <https://kslcms.org>.

