Ministry in Saskatoon hospitals

The call to love and serve as Christ commands is an urgent call. **Gord Martens**, chair of the **LuMinHoS** board, highlights the Vision Statement, "LuMinHoS (**Lutheran Ministry in Hospitals of Saskatoon**) presents the comfort of Christ to all Lutheran patients admitted to Saskatoon hospitals."

Hospital chaplain, **Rev. Richard Engel**, comments, "God has richly blessed and affirmed us in our calling. The Holy Spirit reminds us how significant the word 'all' is in our vision. To love and serve in a pan-Lutheran ministry is to understand the Holy Spirit is moving through all of our churches, while God patiently gathers us into the precious and life-giving body of Christ."

With the Spirit as his guide, Engel hopes that at the end of each day he was able to minister to patients as compassionately as their own pastor would.

In each visit, Lutherans are asked about their congregation. With their permission, Engel will inform the pastor of their home church. If a patient has no congregational connection, or has lost thier connection, an offer is made to help (re)connect them.

"We praise God for the doors that have been opened in our ministry," Martens explains, "which includes a follow-up ministry to patients who no longer have parish fellowship and would like to become part of a church again."
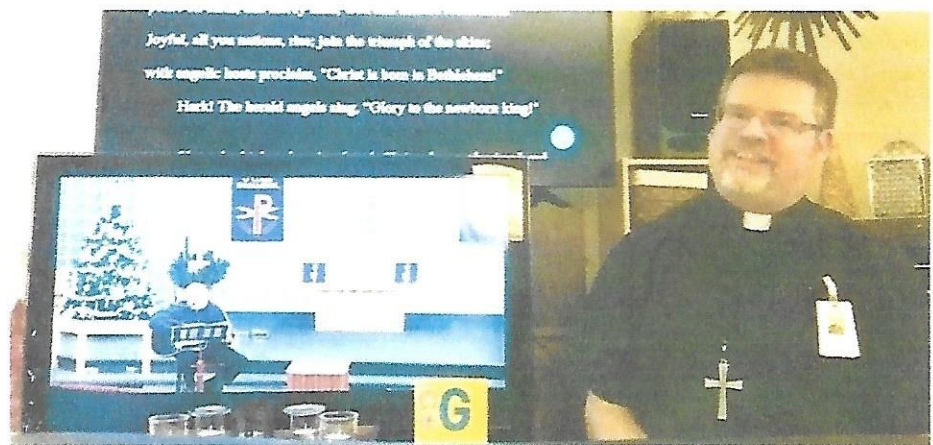
Ministries across the globe are affected by COVID. Despite this challenge, the various LuMinHoS committees (more recently referred to as 'teams') continue to do their good work.

Engel aims to connect with at least 35 to 45 patients per week.
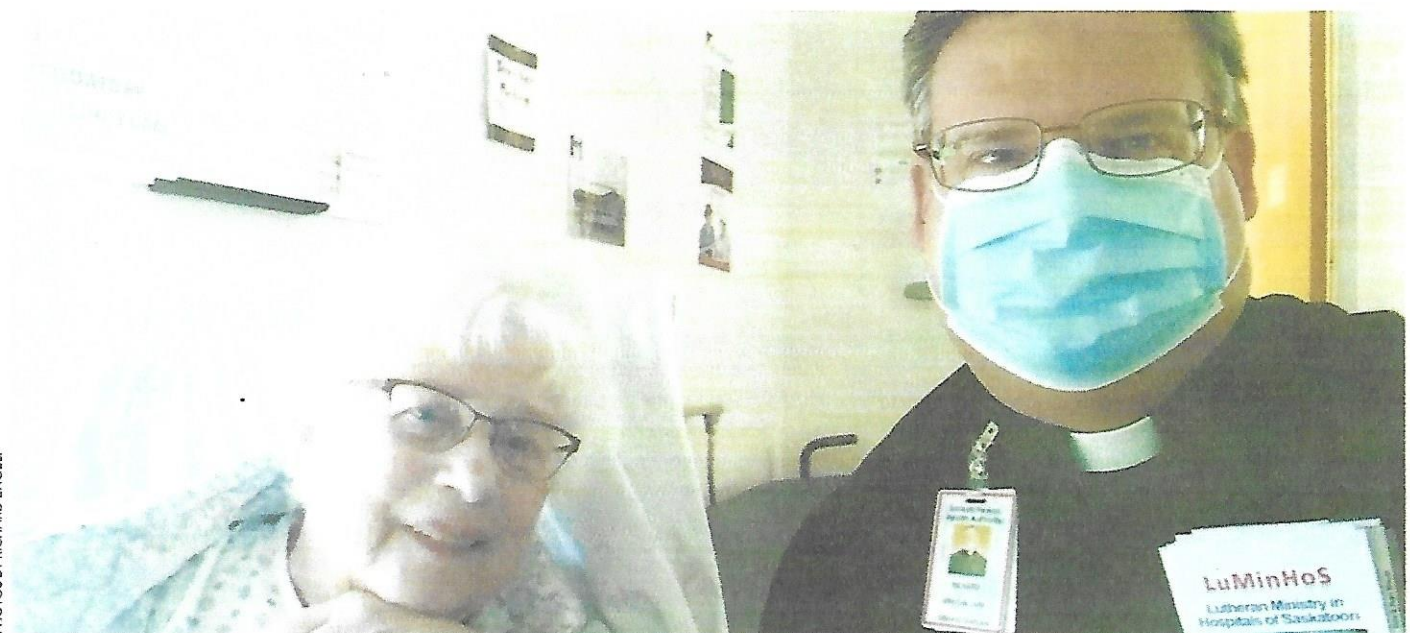
COVID-19 has reshaped how LuMinHoS does ministry yet God's grace has been abundant. Martens comments, "God has blessed our ministry by allowing our chaplain continued access to the hospital wards. The comfort of Christ through Word, Sacrament and prayer has been especially important to our brothers and sisters in Christ during COVID-19, when patients have limited visitors."

Retired **Bishop Allan Grundahl** explains, "For many years the dedicated people on the LuMinHoS board handled

Chaplain Richard Engel and board chair Gord Martens record a virtual Christmas service.

PHOTOS BY RICHARD ENGEL.

Chaplain Richard Engel visits a hospital patient.

everything. As ministry expanded, three **Volunteer Management Teams (VMTs)** emerged."

The **Communications Team** produces a newsletter called *The LuMinHoS Caregiver*. It continues to inform readers how they may be supportive, especially now. It produces pamphlets for patients, convention displays, etc. This team also updates the website and Facebook page, recruits LuMinHoS representatives in Saskatoon area congregations, and maintains a Saskatoon Lutheran Directory of rostered leaders, congregations and ministries.

The **Events Team** puts together fundraising events (some virtually now) to support LuMinHoS. It also assists with recognition events for our volunteers.

Lastly, the **Visitation Team** arranges for cover chaplains, recruits and supports lay visitors (currently suspended due to the pandemic) to assist our chaplain with visits, and keeps records of the number of visits made. All of these teams also work together with the board and its committees.

"A hospital stay is an anxious time and often finds us in an extremely vulnerable state" explains Engel. "The opportunity for prayer, the proclamation of God's Word (oftentimes combined with Holy Communion), and the offer of a small wooden cross reminds patients God has not forsaken them. Patients are so appreciative of this."

Martens continues, "We rely on the prayers and donations of our Lutheran Communities to continue our serving. Please consider becoming a Prayer Supporter. Check our website (www.luminhos.org) for prayer requests."

Engel proclaims, "Truly, we all have an opportunity to live out our baptismal promises in support of this ministry; to support and bear God's creative and redeeming Word to all, in this corner of our world."

—Rev. Richard Engel

Chaplain Richard Engel provides some Christmas cheer.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PATIENT'S FAMILY