



Lutheran Church Charities

Disaster Response • Hearts of Mercy & Compassion • Human Care • K-9 Ministries
Working with you to show the Mercy, Compassion, Presence and Proclamation of Jesus Christ

Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Ministry Frequently Asked Questions/FAQs

1. What is an LCC K-9 Comfort Dog?

An LCC K-9 Comfort Dog provides a vital service to people who need a hug or a smile. This can be someone who has undergone trauma (from natural phenomenon or human-caused tragedies), or who would benefit from a friendly visit, such as schools, nursing home residents, community events, prison inmates just to name a few. All LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs are extensively trained, AKC purebred golden retrievers.

2. What is the difference between a comfort dog and a service or emotional support dog?

Comfort dogs – LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs interact with people of all ages and circumstances. They are permanently placed in Lutheran churches, schools, and other ministries with a team of trained handlers dedicated to outreach ministry in their community. Together with their handlers, they are good listeners, non-judgmental and confidential.

The American Kennel Club has different definitions for different types of working dogs. They are:

Emotional support dogs – Not technically recognized as a service dog under the Americans with Disabilities Act, they provide companionship to individuals to ease anxiety, depression, some phobias, and loneliness.

Service dogs – Individually trained to perform specific tasks and to work with people with disabilities (physical, sensory, psychiatric, and intellectual or other mental disabilities). Example, guide dogs that help blind people navigate.

Therapy dogs – Owned by an individual, they are trained to volunteer in clinical settings to provide comfort, affection, and love. They have a calm temperament, are unfazed by unfamiliar noises and movements, and are comfortable with being touched.

Working dogs – Trained to perform certain tasks, such as search and rescue, explosives detections, cancer detection, and allergen detection.

For more information: <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle/service-working-therapy-emotional-support-dogs/>

3. What are the benefits of an LCC K-9 Comfort Dog?

All LCC K-9 Ministry dogs are trained to provide a calming effect to people, adults and children who interact with them. Dogs offer no judgment, and have no requirements. They are just there to provide love and to receive it, which they do on a regular basis at nursing homes, hospitals, schools and other places in the community.



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In situations of trauma, LCC comfort dogs have soothed the spirits of those affected by the violence at Sandy Hook Elementary, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and the Boston Marathon bombing, and from natural disasters such as Superstorm Sandy, wildfires in the western US, tornadoes and hurricanes. Two dogs in the ministry, Anna and Ezra, assist victims of abuse in family court through the Lucas County Prosecutor's Office in Toledo, Ohio. Anna began this work as part of her overall K-9 Ministry but Ezra has been placed in the primary role of bringing a calming presence to those in the court system. This is detailed in the book, "Extraordinary Dogs," by Liz Stavrinides and John Schlimm (St. Martin's Press, 2019). Several other LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs have similar arrangements with the court systems in their communities.

4. Does the science say that comfort dogs are beneficial?

Yes. Several peer-reviewed studies show that dog-human interactions stimulate the release of oxytocin, a naturally produced peptide hormone and neuropeptide that plays a role in social bonding, reproduction, childbirth, and the period after childbirth. It is associated with such human characteristics that include generosity, trust, and the modulation of inflammation and wound healing.

5. What does a LCC K-9 Comfort Dog visit entail?

A LCC K-9 Ministry visit is fashioned to the need and circumstances. We only go where invited, and that depends on what the visit is intended to do. The LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs and their human handlers regularly visit nursing homes and schools, as well as situations where there has been trauma and loss.

The Lutheran congregations with a comfort dog have also learned to conduct virtual visits via online platforms where necessary under conditions of the coronavirus pandemic.

6. Is there a cost to getting a comfort dog to visit?

No. Lutheran Church Charities and our K-9 Ministry congregations with comfort dogs *do not charge* for services. The ministry is supported by private donations, which can be made here: <https://www.lutheranchurchcharities.org/give-lcc-k-9.html>. LCC is a 501c(3) nonprofit ministry that supports Christian human care ministries of the church.

7. Is there a religious requirement to get a comfort dog to visit?

The LCC K-9 Ministry teams go where there is a need, with no religious requirements attached to the activity.

The majority of LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs are named for a person, location or religious significance in the Bible – Old and New Testaments – and all are assigned a Bible verse that speaks to human caregiving.

Examples include:

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LCC@LutheranChurchCharities.org www.LutheranChurchCharities.org



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Boaz 1 John 4:19, "We love because he first loved us."

Caleb Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Charity Matthew 25:35, "Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."

Hope Psalm 62:5, "Yes my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him."

Myra 1 Peter 5:2, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve."

Samson 2 John 1:6, "And this is love, that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love."

As is often requested, the local Lutheran congregation's comfort dog handler prays with the people we serve.

8. Is there a religious requirement to sponsor a comfort dog?

All LCC K-9 Ministry comfort dogs are permanently placed at congregations that are members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as an extension of their outreach ministry. LCMS has more than 6,000 congregations in all 50 states and two Canadian provinces. But there is no religious requirement to *receive* the love and comfort the dogs and their handlers provide.

9. How does a person or organization request an LCC K-9 Comfort Dog visit?

To request a K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry visit, use the form found here:

<https://lcc.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/366/responses/new>

For an emergency visit, use this form: <https://lcc.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/366/responses/new>

For an LCC K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry® virtual visit, use this form:

<https://lcc.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/1255/responses/new>

10. How does a Lutheran church congregation get a comfort dog?



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Because all LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs require more than 2,000 hours of professional training – and the ministry continues to grow – there are over 70 congregations in process to receive their own comfort dog. It might take up to two years before a congregational comfort dog ministry and dog are ready.

To receive more information on the LCC K-9 Ministry, use this form:

<https://lcc.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/404/responses/new>

11. Are there are risks (allergens, behavior, fear, etc.) with comfort dogs being around people?

People with allergies generally know to avoid breeds of dogs that are not hypoallergenic. Golden retrievers have the type of hair and dander that can be allergenic to people with allergies. LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs are clean and well-groomed daily to minimize hair and dander. The comfort dog's calm demeanor and cleanliness minimizes the spread of allergens and the handlers are respectful to people who may have those concerns.

The training each dog receives, which involves approximately 2,000 hours, is to make it comfortable around other people, to be touched, and to ignore extraneous stimuli. LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs' are trained to provide comfort, affection and love to people of all ages and circumstances.

LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs or their handlers will never approach someone who is fearful of any type of dog. They will remain a safe distance but offer a friendly smile or share encouraging conversation of reassurance. In some cases, when a person who is fearful indicates that they want to interact with a comfort dog, the handler will put the dog in a calm, down position and help the person safely pet the dog in a non-threatening area, such as the dogs back. This often helps people overcome their fears, especially of LCC K-9 Ministry vested dogs.

12. Is there possible risks for coronavirus transmission from comfort dogs?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of August 4, 2020, "there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus that causes COVID-19; based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low; more studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19." (Source:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>)

All human handlers of LCC K-9 Ministry are instructed to observe and practice necessary preventive measures such as social distancing, wearing face masks, and frequent hand washing or sanitizing. Some visits are conducted exclusively via online video conferencing platforms such as Zoom.

13. How do I contribute to the LCC K-9 Ministry?



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The LCC K-9 Ministry never charges those we serve. We pick up all of our travel and meals costs. We are able to do that with the support of donors.

Contributions can be made through the LCC website: <https://www.lutheranchurchcharities.org/give-lcc-k-9.html>

Lutheran Church Charities is a RSO (Recognized Service Organization) of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. We operate with a “dollar in–dollar out” funding process where every dollar given for a cause or need goes directly to that cause or need, with LCC acknowledging the gift and overseeing that the money is used as intended.

14. How can I volunteer with the LCC K-9 Ministry?

Every affiliate congregation has a “Top Dog” lead handler and a team of handlers, all of whom receive specialized training, which is required. All are volunteers.

Individuals who live near the three LCC training class locations – in Northbrook, Barrington, and East Dundee, Illinois – can apply to be “apprentice trainers,” basically foster parents who assist in the early development and training of our comfort dogs. It is physically demanding and a full-time commitment for 18-24 months, with weekly training classes with their golden retriever puppies, providing daily exercise, specific training commands, and they teach the dogs to socialize. For more information about the volunteer apprentice trainer, see <https://www.lutheranchurchcharities.org/traink9s.html>.

For more information on the LCC K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry, see [LINK TO BACKGROUNDER IN MEDIA CENTER](#)

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March 12, 2021 v1.0