

# MERCY WORKS

Spring 2006

Volume 1, Issue 1



# *from the* PRESIDENT



*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

Greetings to you in the Name of Jesus Christ,  
Savior of the world and Lord of the universe!

It is my privilege to provide this introduction for the inaugural issue of “Mercy Works,” a new publication dedicated to highlighting the deaconess ministry within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. As one considers the vocation of deaconess, one is reminded of Phoebe, who was commended by Paul with these words, “she has been a great help to many people, including me.” (Romans 16:2) We are not certain whether Phoebe held the office of deaconess in the same sense we understand it today. However, we do know that her service (*diakonia*), like the ministry of so many other women mentioned in Scripture, is indicative of the important roles women have served in the church.

In this spirit, the LCMS supports the vocation of deaconess. Deaconesses are women who are theologically trained and competently prepared to serve as professional church workers. They support the church’s public confession and are ready to serve their Lord, meeting needs that Luther described in relation to the vocation of diakonic love and mercy as being as broad as the need of a neighbor.

The deaconess ministry serves the very heart of the corporate life of mercy of the church. Diakonal work humanizes the Scriptural teachings of Christian love, compassion, and kindness. That which the Lutheran

Confessions states is an assumed reality in the church community, such as alms, charity, and works of love, is brought to fruition through this service.

The types of ministries deaconesses perform are as varied as the backgrounds of the women themselves. Their service may involve spiritual care, aspects of medical or nursing care, administrative responsibilities, instruction in the faith, mission work, care for the weak or impoverished, care for those with special needs, women’s ministries, children’s ministries, cross-cultural ministries, institutional chaplaincies, or any number of other roles needed for the church’s life at the congregational and institutional levels.

We are truly blessed in the LCMS to have the wonderful gift of deaconesses. It is sincerely hoped your life will be enriched as you read this quarterly publication and learn about the tremendous ministries of these faithful women of God. We are thankful for their dedicated service and commitment to our Lord and His church.

A special thanks is also expressed to LCMS World Relief and Human Care for their support of this publication and assistance to the deaconess ministry.

Fraternally and sincerely, in Christian love,

President Gerald B. Kieschnick



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## Spring 2006



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# INTRODUCTION

## *from the Publisher*

### The Moment of the Lutheran Deaconess is NOW.

**E**piphany 2006 afforded me the opportunity to peruse Mark's gospel in the original Greek (mostly on airplanes) and note the verbs Jesus does. Already chapter one of the gospel gives us the complete paradigm for the church's life in this world. The church is the body of Christ and as such, she is in fact, Christ in and to the world. Allow me to note four verbs Jesus does with special reference to what I shall call "THEE deaconess moment."

**1. Jesus GOES.** "Let's go!" he says to his followers (1:38). "And it happened... Jesus came to be baptized." (v.9) "And immediately, the Spirit cast him into the wilderness." (v.12). "And going along... immediately he called them (the sons of Zebedee) (v.20). "And he went into Capernaum and immediately into the Synagogue..." (v.21). "And immediately he went out and into the house of Simon... Coming to Simon's mother-in-law, he raised her and she served..." (v.31). Jesus moves. He acts. He does not wait passively for events to happen. I may get in trouble for this comment, but after some years of interaction, particularly with the CDC deaconesses, just as our congregations cannot address the diakonic needs within and around them with passivity, so it is time for us to assist deaconesses in ever more assuming the posture of Christ—ACTION. I should have preferred this little journal be titled: Mercy: DRIVEN to Serve! Just as Simon's Mother-in-law is healed and immediately serves Christ, so the faithful deaconess is baptized for action. That's her mandate. It's time to have consecrated women serving as CEO's of institutions of

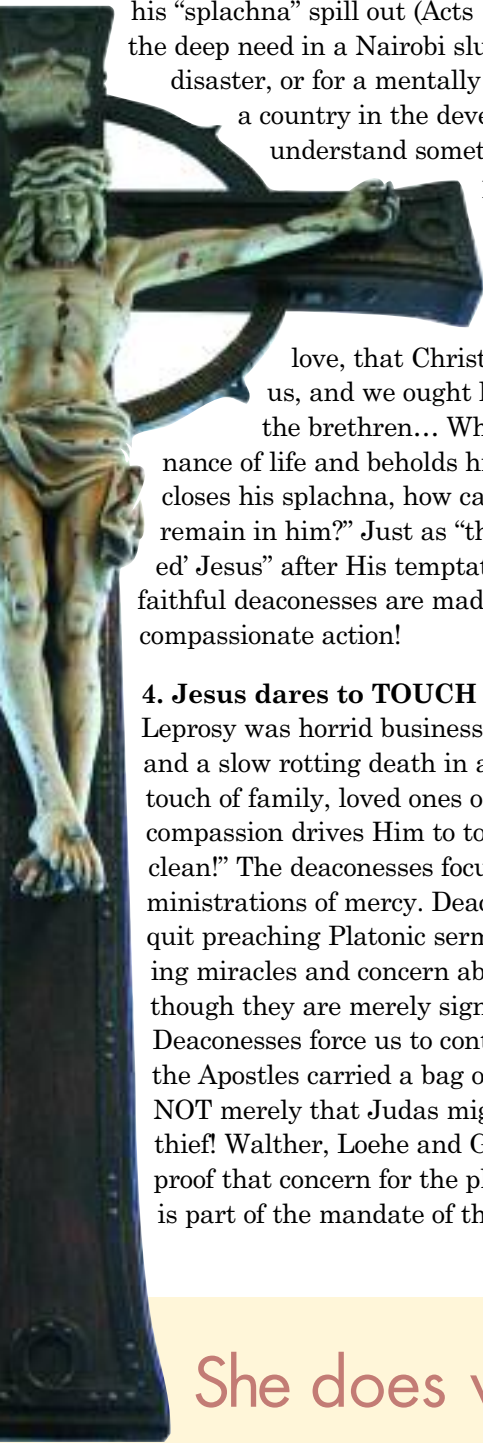
mercy, creating organizations of mercy, taking over institutions, serving in congregations, coordinating and leading missions of mercy and diakonia. It's time for deaconesses to take the reins of every possible vocation supporting such ministrations of mercy. It's time to act.

**2. Jesus PROCLAIMS** the Good News "in their synagogues and in the whole of Galilee" (v.39). Just because the Office of the Ministry and its tasks are not given to women, this hardly means there is no task for women in speaking and teaching the gospel... Quite to the contrary! Loehe writes that the deaconess is responsible for "Seelsorge" (cure of souls) for those whom she serves! She speaks of Christ to all whom she serves. And our deepest hope, dream and joy is that wherever the deaconess serves she speaks the Gospel. She brings the altar, font and pulpit to all whom she serves, and she draws them back to the same. She brings Christ, Christ's Word and the Church! Let's have done with the summarily ridiculous, nay heretical idea, that the Gospel is ineffectual unless spoken by an ordained clergyman!

**3. Jesus HAS COMPASSION!** "A leper came and bowed down before him...If you will it, I will be clean" (v.40). "Jesus had compassion..." The word is *splachna*. It's used throughout the gospels of Christ. In the Greek/Jewish pre-N.T.writings it's used for that deep longing and disquiet of a mother's love for a hurting

What does a deaconess do? She *SERVES*.

She shows the compassion, the mercy the



child (4 Mac. 14:13). When Judas' hanged body falls his "splachna" spill out (Acts 1:18). If you've seen the deep need in a Nairobi slum, or in the wake of disaster, or for a mentally ill person in chains in a country in the developing world, you understand something of Christ's "compassion". And He plants that same compassion in his church by the Gospel. "By this we have known love, that Christ laid down His life for us, and we ought lay down our lives for the brethren... Whoever has the sustenance of life and beholds his brother in need and closes his splachna, how can the love of God remain in him?" Just as "the angels 'diakonoun' Jesus" after His temptation (Mk. 1:13), so our faithful deaconesses are made for compassion and compassionate action!

**4. Jesus dares to TOUCH** the untouchable! Leprosy was horrid business, horribly contagious and a slow rotting death in absolute isolation. No touch of family, loved ones or friends. Yet Jesus' compassion drives Him to touch. "I will it... be clean!" The deaconesses focus us on Jesus' physical ministrations of mercy. Deaconesses force us to quit preaching Platonic sermons about Jesus' healing miracles and concern about physical needs, as though they are merely signs of spiritual healing. Deaconesses force us to contemplate the fact that the Apostles carried a bag of money for alms – and NOT merely that Judas might show himself a thief! Walther, Loehe and Gerhard all see this as proof that concern for the physical needs of others is part of the mandate of the apostolic office!

Deaconesses force us to come face-to-face with Acts 6 and its careful organization of a system to care for the needy as a direct result of the church's fellowship (koinonia) in Christ! Deaconesses force our congregations, our circuits, our districts, our Synod to recall that all the great stewardship passages we love so much in St. Paul (II Cor. 8&9) have to do directly with the collection for the poor in Jerusalem! Deaconesses must have a diakonia of TOUCH, just as Christ did.

Now is the moment. What does a deaconess do? She serves. She does what needs to be done. She shows the compassion, the mercy the love the instruction of Christ. Where Christ says "No" to women's service at ONE place, He and his church say a round, hearty and full bodied "YES! And MORE!" in a thousand places delimited only by need and gifts. Let's finally get on with saying YES! We at LCMS World Relief and Human Care pledge to do whatever it takes to continue to open doors and dream about possibilities and rejoice when possibilities become realities... realities to GO! To proclaim the Good News! To have COM-PASSION! And to Touch the untouchable. "Let's Go!" (Mk. 1:38). ✚



*Rev. Harrison was pastor at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Westgate, Iowa and Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind. before accepting the call to serve as LCMS World Relief / Human Care's executive director in 2001.*

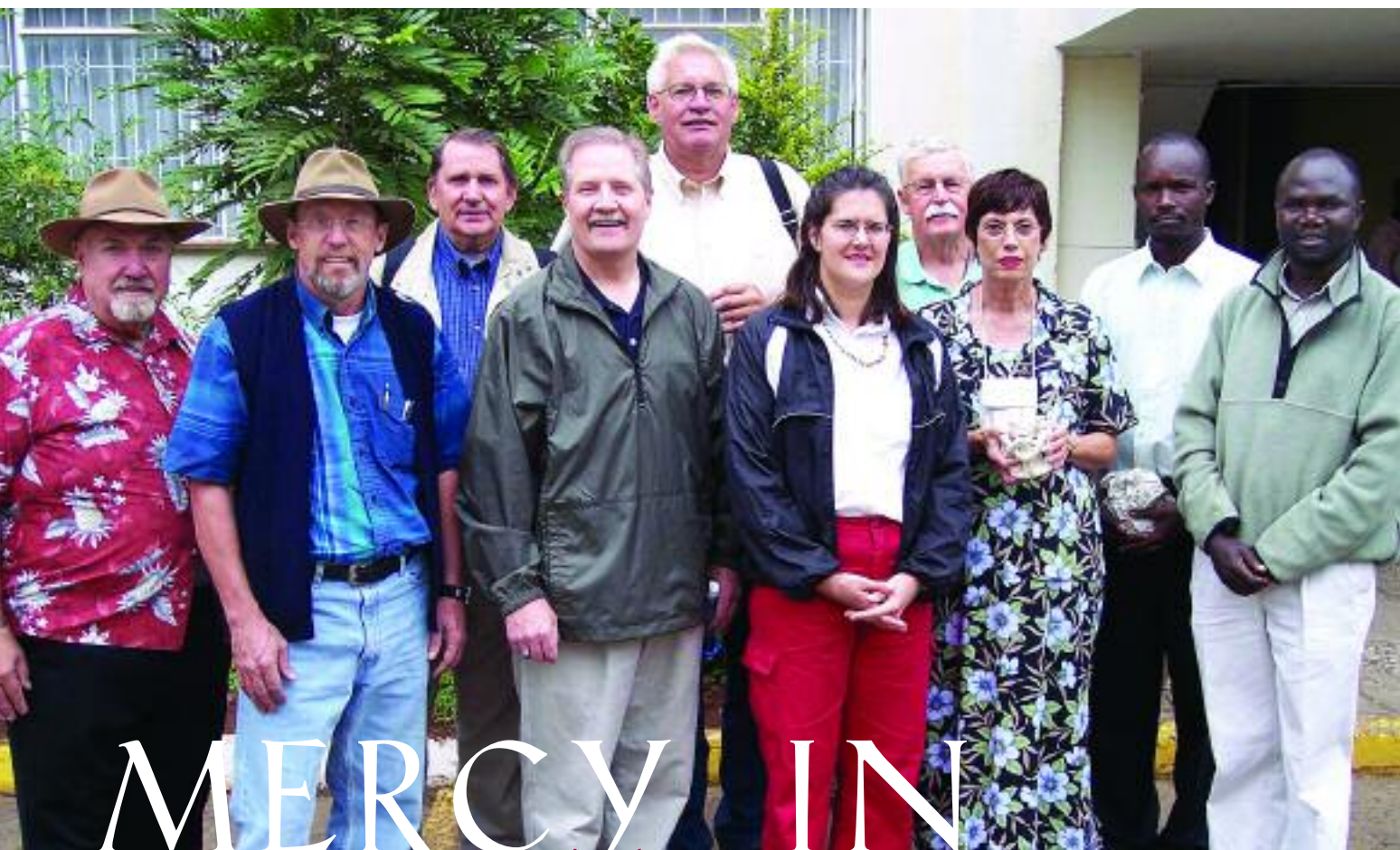
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*Christ.*



**LCMS, WR/HC Medical Assessment team to Kenya.** L-R: Front: *Dr. William Foster; Rev. Claude Houge (WM-Kenya); Rev. John Fale (Associate Executive Director, WR/HC); Dr. Anita Scriber; Carol Broemmer (RN); Rev. David Chu Chu (Projects Director, ELCK).* Back Row: *Hans Springer (Foundations); Rev. Paul Kienker (Foundations); Fred Broemmer (Facilities Engineer); and Matthew (ELCK).*



# MERCY IN VOCATION

*John Pless*

**Have you noticed** how frequently the word “mercy” surfaces in the liturgy? In the confessional prayer, we implore the “Most merciful God” to “have mercy on us” and so forgive, renew, and lead us in His ways. The *Kyrie* is an extended prayer for mercy both for ourselves, the whole church and the world. The great angelic anthem, the *Gloria* invokes the sin-atoning Lamb of God to have mercy upon. The theme is repeated in the *Agnus Dei* as we come to eat and drink of Christ’s testament. Mercy is the way that God works. To the people of Israel, He declares Himself: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex. 34:6). So Israel would appeal to

the sure mercy of the Lord in prayer and supplication as we see in the Psalms. Jesus is the merciful King who comes to save so a Canaanite woman calls out to Him for mercy (Matt. 15:22) as does a blind beggar (Mk. 10:47) and ten lepers (Lk. 17:13). It is by God’s fatherly mercy that we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead Peter tells us (see I Peter 1:3). God is merciful; and He bestows mercy on sinners.

God gives and we receive. That is the pattern of the Divine Service. Luther scribbled a note that was found in his pocket upon his death on February 18, 1546. It read, in part, that it is true we are all beggars before

God. We are all beggars before God. But the God in whose presence we stand is the Lord who delights in showing and doing mercy. We hear it in his merciful words that withhold from us the punishment that our sin merits, words that bestow pardon and peace. In His mercy, He has saved us and given us a new identity as people who have received mercy (see I Peter 2:10).

God's mercy in Christ Jesus is the source of our vocation, our calling. We are called by His mercy from unbelief to faith, from darkness to light, from death to life. Faith alone receives God's mercy. Love hands on the mercy that faith receives. Those who receive mercy now show mercy. This applies to all Christians generally, but also to deaconesses specifically in their calling to embody and show mercy to the suffering, the sick and those in need.

The doctrine of vocation locates the bestowal of mercy to the neighbor in the life of every Christian as he or she lives in the world. The office of the deaconess embodies the church's corporate life of mercy in the world, as the care and compassion of Christ are extended to the hurting and hopeless. It is not given to the office of the deaconess to do the work of the pastor, that is, preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. The office of the pastor is that of preaching Christ and giving out His gifts at the font and altar so that faith is created and sustained. In that sense, it can be said that the office of the pastor is there for faith (see Augsburg Confession V) while the office of the deaconess is there for love, that is, works of mercy. For deaconesses to take up what is given to the pastor to do is contrary to God's revealed will (see I

Corinthians 14:33-35 and I Timothy 2:8-15), and it introduces confusion into the doctrine of vocation. Rather it is given to deaconesses to be the hands and feet of God's mercy moving into the world.



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neighbor just as Christ became incarnate not to be served, but to give Himself in service to the world.

We see the movement of mercy illustrated in the post-communion collect that Luther included in his 1526 *Deutsche Messe*: “We give thanks to you, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore you that of your mercy you would strengthen us through the same in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”<sup>1</sup>

In this collect, Luther gives doxological expression to a theological proposition that he had made six years earlier in “The Freedom of the Christian” where he argued “...that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and the neighbor....He lives in Christ through faith, and in his neighbor through love” (AE 31:371). The existence of the old Adam is focused on self. The old Adam is curved in on himself to use the imagery of Luther. This egocentric existence stands in contrast to the life of the new man in Christ. The new man lives outside of himself, for his calling is to faith in Christ and love for the neighbor. Thus Luther continues “By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor.” (AE 31:371<sup>2</sup>). Faith is active in love and so takes on flesh and blood in service to the



The post-communion collect has a pivotal place in the liturgy. It is the hinge that connects God's service to us in the sacrament with our service to the neighbor in the world. This thought is also demonstrated in Luther's hymnody. In his hymn on the Lord's Supper, "O Lord, We Praise You" (LW 238), Luther confesses the blessings bestowed by God in the body and blood of His Son in the first two stanzas. The final stanza is a prayer that the sacrament might be fruitful in the lives of those who have received the Lord's testament:

"May God bestow on us his grace and favor  
To please him with our behavior  
And live together here in love and union  
Nor repent this blest communion  
O Lord, have mercy!  
Let not your good spirit forsake us,  
But heavenly minded he make us.  
Give your Church, Lord to see  
Days of peace and unity,  
O Lord, have mercy!"

Luther also translated and revised a 15th century hymn generally attributed to John Hus, "Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior" (LW 236-237).<sup>3</sup> The ninth stanza of his hymn expresses the thought that the sacrament both nourishes faith and causes love to flourish:

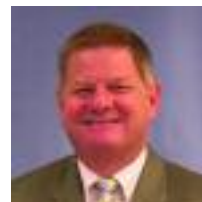
"Let this food your faith nourish  
That by love its fruits may flourish  
And your neighbor learn from you  
How much God's wondrous love can do"

Luther's understanding of vocation is consistent with his liturgical theology. God serves us sacramentally in the Divine Service as we receive His benefactions by faith, and we serve God sacrificially as we give ourselves to the neighbor in love. The *communio* of the sacrament exhibits both faith and love according to Luther. "This fellowship is twofold: on the one hand we partake of Christ and all saints; on the other hand we permit all Christians to be partakers of us, in whatever way they are able," (AE 35:67) writes Luther in 1519. In his 1526 treatise, "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ-Against the Fanatics", Luther is more pointed: "For it is necessary for each one to know that Christ has given his body, flesh, and blood on the cross to be our treasure and to help us receive the forgiveness of sins, that is, that we may be saved,

redeemed from death and hell. That is the first principle of Christian doctrine. It is presented to us in the words, and his body and blood are given to us to be received corporeally as token and confirmation of this fact. To be sure, he did it only once, carrying it out and achieving it on the cross; but he causes it each day anew to be set before us, distributed and poured out through preaching, and he orders us to remember and never forget him. The second principle is love....**As he gives himself to us with his body and blood in order to redeem us from our misery, so ought we too give ourselves with might and maner for our neighbor**" (AE 36:352) (emphasis mine).

We are called by the mercy of God to saving faith, and that same mercy is now channeled through us to the need of the neighbor. In the economy of God's mercy, we receive and we give. We have been shown mercy by the Lord of heaven and earth. Having received His mercy in the forgiveness of our sins, we now are freed to live mercifully toward one another, bearing the burdens of the weak and needy, feeding the hungry and bringing hope to the hopeless for in serving them we are serving Christ. Mercy moves full circle from Christ to us and from us back to Him as He hides behind the mask of the neighbor to receive our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. From start to finish, it is the mercy of God. Deaconesses model for us all the wonderful way that God's mercy moves in sacrificial giving to bring comfort and healing. ✚

*The Rev. John T. Pless is assistant professor of pastoral ministry and missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN.*



1 *Lutheran Worship*, 153. Also see AE 53:137-138 and *Works of Martin Luther VI* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), 329-332 for material on background and usage of this collect.

2 AE refers to Luthers Works, American Edition (St. Louis Concordia; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1955-76). Also see Eberhard Juengel's fine commentary, *The Freedom of a Christian: Luther's Significance for Contemporary Theology*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988).

3 See Robin Leaver, "Luther's Catechism Hymns 7. Lord's Supper" *Lutheran Quarterly* (Autumn 1998), 303-312 for an argument that Luther, in fact, substantially re-writes this hymn so that it reflects more clearly his teaching that the body and blood of Christ are present and received in the sacrament. Leaver also notes the parallel between stanza 9 and the post-communion collect (309).

Faith alone receives

*God's Mercy.*





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# The Myths and Truths About MERCY and MISSION

Beverly Yahnke

After spending every Sunday of my childhood in church, one would think I should have acquired a pretty good understanding of what it means to give and receive mercy. I surely heard my share of sermons encouraging the faithful to be merciful, even as our Father in heaven is merciful. Yet, I can recall singing the hymn, “Hark the Voice of Jesus Calling,” on mission Sundays, admittedly worrying a bit as I sang:

Let none hear you idly saying,  
“There is nothing I can do.”  
While the multitudes are dying  
And the master calls for you.  
Take the task he gives you gladly;  
Let his work your pleasure be.  
Answer quickly when he calls you,  
“Here am I. Send me, send me!” (LW318)

You see, by the tender age of nine I was pretty confident that the hymn was written for men (it was the sixties, after all). Worse, I really believed there was very little that I could do. I wasn’t nearly ready to pound my chest with confidence saying, “Here am I. Send me, send me!” Instead, I glanced furtively around me to determine if anyone else in the congregation was singing heartily, preparing to be sent somewhere in God’s name. I would have had less angst if I could have sung, “There he is. Send him. Send him!”

After several decades of reflection, I’ve come to understand that I’m not the only Missouri Synod Lutheran who may have harbored myths about what mercy and mission is all about. In fact, I’ll be so bold as to suggest that this new magazine, *Mercy* couldn’t appear on the scene at a better time, inviting each of us in the church to examine carefully and precisely what it is that mercy can mean in these tumultuous times. Let’s begin by putting to rest some of the myths about mercy and mission.

Some of us have honestly come to believe that only certain people with very special gifts are called to be merciful, like missionaries, for example. Nothing could be fur-

ther from the truth. St. Paul makes clear that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 2:3). St. Paul goes on to explain that as our Heavenly Father has poured out His comfort upon us in our times of trouble, we may also then provide comfort and mercy to others in any trouble giving them the same comfort that we have first received from God. He does not ask from us anything that He has not first given to us richly and abundantly. Have you been baptized into the body of Christ? Have you received Christ’s blood-bought gifts of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation? Then you are one of those people with very special gifts, whom God will use powerfully to bring His mercy and comfort to His people. The Master will, indeed call for you!

Others of us have come to believe that mercy is really something that we deploy others to do on our behalf. We’re very mistaken if we imagine that mercy is primarily an institutional or churchly response in the wake of tsunamis and hurricanes and natural disasters. Mercy is not a simple economic gesture, nor is it a philanthropic spectator sport. Mercy is more than writing a check, even if we’ve written a very generous check. Deploying others and writing checks is important, I agree; yet, have you noticed just how satisfying it is to be merciful from afar? The exercise of mercy is not about enhancing our opinion of ourselves as caring Christians. Mercy ought not feed my feelings of pride as I deign to bend low and help one who is, for whatever reason, less fortunate in this moment than am I.

The clearest picture of mercy given us, of course, is the Passion of our Lord and Savior. On a certain Friday afternoon, this Jesus of Nazareth subjected Himself to the will of His Father, on a bloody cross, and three days later, redeeming all mankind from sin, death and the power the devil, He rose triumphant for all eternity. Our most holy God, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, has radically transformed our understanding of divine love and mercy. His gift of mercy, rooted in selflessness



and love, allows room only for our personal humility and thanksgiving before God. He teaches us that mercy is about emptying ourselves. Mercy is about pouring ourselves out in service to others without counting the cost. Mercy is a state of being that colors our every perception, desire and choice; it is a virtue that shapes every moment of our lives and it is given us by God Himself.

Mercy is never something that I give, it is something I have received. Mercy is something I cannot give away, but can only share; it is something in which I wrap another needy soul. Mercy is a deeply personal and spiritual response to the need or the suffering of another.

We would be right to discern that mercy and mission is not an episodic excursion into the world of God's needy children. It's not a hobby for the well to do, nor is it a dalliance for those with lots of discretionary time on their hands. The practice of mercy cultivates an eager spirit that is ever vigilant for opportunities to serve and a heart that delights in the smallest tasks we can accomplish in God's name and to His glory.

When we quiet the raging clutter and chaos of our lives I've discovered that in each day God sets opportunities of love and service before us. Women of this century have surely learned that God will use the many facets of our vocations as wife, daughter, spouse, parent or employee to do His merciful work on earth. He may even call some of us to serve in the vocation of deaconess.

What does His merciful work look like? When our love for others wraps them in God's own kindness, compassion and gentleness, it is God's merciful work that we do. When our concern for others is guided with a single minded prayer that God would use us to provide relief,

heal ills, remedy distress and speak boldly of His love for us in Jesus Christ, it is God who is mercifully at work in us and through us. We can, indeed, take the tasks He gives us gladly and we will always find that His work provides us with peace, transcendence and a cheerfulness of spirit.



Photo courtesy Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

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The needs of God's people in this world are beyond calibration. There are continents swollen with souls that are abandoned, neglected, hungry, diseased, captive to poverty, ill educated and despairing. Do we have the will to see them? Do we have the will to serve them? Do we dare to let our Heavenly Father bring at the expertise, experience and wisdom He has given us that we might share them mercifully with those in need? Perhaps you are not that different from me. Perhaps you, too, remain a bit shy about blurting out, "Send me! Send me!" It is my fervent prayer that in these days God will ignite among us all a passion to do His merciful work, confident of God's abundant promises and blessing: Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy. (Matt 5:7) ✚



*Dr. Beverly K. Yahnke is a clinical psychologist and the Executive Director of Christian Counseling Services in Milwaukee. Her Clinical Work allows her to serve children and families requiring traditional psychological services. Yet, she invites her clients to bring the resources of their faith with them into the counseling setting. Dr. Yahnke has written numerous articles in the area of psychology, education and faith and is a much requested speaker for clergy, educator and parent gatherings.*

# An Eager Midwestern Coed

Pamela Nielson

*I*t was sometime in the fall of 1980, on the campus of Concordia River Forest, Illinois that I first learned the word, “Deaconess”. I had eagerly come to be trained as a youth worker and I had all the requisite energy, grand ideas, and conviction to accompany my plan. There were lots of us future church workers that year, future teachers, music directors, DCE’s and pastors. I was familiar with these vocations. But what was a deaconess? Learning the answer to that question changed my life in ways that I could have never imagined. In the spring of 1985, I became a deaconess, and over the past 26 years, as countless people have asked me that same question, the Lord has increased my understanding and ability to articulate an answer.

We deaconesses have a motto, words that were written for us long ago by the German Lutheran pastor Wilhelm Loehe. The deaconess motto offers a wonderful framework for answering the question, “What is a deaconess?”

*Whom do I want to serve?  
The Lord and His wretched ones  
and His poor.*





## **What is my want? *I want to serve.***

The Greek root of the word deaconess (*diakonia*) means servant. A deaconess is one who serves on behalf of her Lord and His church. This vocation of service and training is very broad, reaching from parish to prison, home to hospice, child to the childlike, rural America to urban Asia, institution to island mission, and bedside to graveside. It is this grand breadth of service that attracts a variety of women to the diaconate even as it attracts a variety of churches and church agencies to seek the service of a deaconess.



## **Whom do I want to serve? *The Lord and His wretched ones and His poor.***

Deaconess service is rooted in the incarnate Christ, who humbled Himself by becoming one of us in order to serve us with His suffering and death on the cross. By His death we receive the Gospel gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. It is Christ's love, active for us upon the cross, which motivates and sustains the service of a deaconess no matter how difficult the service or how wretched a soul she is called to serve. A deaconess serves her Lord Jesus by serving her neighbor who is in need both physically and spiritually. You will find deaconesses serving the very young and the very old, new wives and mothers, teenagers, widows, orphans, the sick, dying, destitute, imprisoned, brokenhearted, and guilt-ridden. Deaconesses have been active in such service since the days of the early church. The diaconal office was established by the young church of which St. Luke writes in the book of Acts. The widows and orphans were being overlooked. The church set about choosing and appointing 7 men as deacons to look after these souls and provide for their needs. The early church followed suit and expanded this diaconal work to include woman deaconesses whose service was largely to women, children and those whose existence was lived on the margins of society.

Lutheran deaconesses came on the scene in the Germany of the 1800's and in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the early 1900's. The names, dates and places have changed over the years, but deaconess service remains as service in Christ to the needy and hurting of this world both within and without the church.

A deaconess brings physical care to those who need it, companionship for the lonely, a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear, and a gentle touch. Such “hands-on care” is always accompanied by spiritual care for the hurting soul, with a mouth that speaks clearly of the Savior, hands that frequently fold in prayer, and feet that lead others to the church, where our Lord gives His gifts in Word and Sacrament. The model for such service is none other than our Lord Himself, who fed the hungry, healed the sick, taught the children, and comforted the grieving, even as He forgave sins and pointed to Himself and the gifts He brings.



## **And what is my reward? *I serve neither for reward nor thanks, but out of gratitude and love; my reward is that I am permitted to serve.***

“Permitted to serve” aptly describes the heart of a true deaconess. The service that God has called her to is indeed a privilege. As children of God and heirs of heaven we constantly receive and bask in His mercy and grace in our Baptism, in Holy Absolution, in the Word proclaimed and preached and in the body and blood of our Savior. This unending supply of grace and mercy is both the source of strength and comfort for the deaconess to serve her neighbor in need. God does not need our service, He serves us. Our neighbor needs our service, and in Christ we are able to serve him with the gifts God bestows.

The deaconess serves in a unique and complementary fashion with the pastor. Her service is guided by his ministry and leadership. She works alongside the pastor, assisting him to do those things that he alone is called to do in the Office of the Ministry. Together their service extends the church's reach into the lives of God's people.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod regards the office of deaconess as a professional church work vocation. Deaconess training is very rigorous, with a required major in theology, hours of fieldwork and a year-long internship. Deaconesses are listed on the roster of commissioned ministers of religion along with the teachers, directors of parish education, outreach and parish music of the LCMS. As such they are called and contracted to serve in the parishes and agencies of

the synod and its recognized service organizations. The salary and benefits that come with such service provide for her life in this world.



***And if I perish in this service? “If I perish, I perish,” said Queen Esther. I would perish for Him who gave His life for me. But He will not let me perish.***

It is our Lord and Savior who perished in His service to us, guaranteeing that we will never eternally perish in service to Him. This certainty motivates and provides the deaconess courage and strength for her task. Deaconesses often serve in lonely places where the ravages of sin not only beset those served but also endanger the deaconess. Deaconesses who serve in prisons are ‘confined’ behind locked walls and doors with inmates who have committed unspeakable crimes. A deaconess serving in far off Thailand works with children rescued from the sex trades of Asia, facing exposure to HIV and the possibility of an angry pimp locating their house of refuge. Deaconesses serving in the inner cities of our nation frequently face the threat of crime and brutality that seem part and parcel of extreme urban poverty. Deaconess service involves long days of work for many years, but only and always with the strength and energy God provides.




***And if I grow old in this service? Then shall my heart be renewed as a palm tree and the Lord shall renew me with grace and mercy.***

Among the deaconesses of the LCMS one observes a broad range of ages, young college graduates, mothers whose nests are empty, widows and second career ladies, all of whom have been led by their Lord to this

service. There are also, in the deaconess community, a handful of retired deaconesses. These veterans of the cross have faithfully served their Lord and His church for many seasons. They are wise women of God who serve now as mentors and teachers to the entire deaconess community, embodying what it is to be a deaconess.



***I go my way in peace, casting all my care on Him.***

The last words of the deaconess motto point us to where we began, to Christ: Christ who grants each of us His peace that passes all understanding; Christ who carries our burdens and knows our sorrows; Christ who is with us in His Word and Sacraments, accompanying us every step of the way as we live and serve Him upon this earth. 



*Deaconess Pamela Nielsen serves as Senior Editor for Sunday School, Youth and Family materials at Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. She holds a B.A. in Theology from Concordia University River Forest, IL and an M.A. in Religious Studies from*

*Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. Her service as a deaconess includes nearly 20 years of work in a number of Midwestern churches working with parish education, care for the elderly, children, the sick, dying, grieving and poor. Prior to coming to CPH she served as Director of Community Services at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. Happily married to Jeffrey, they are blessed with three children, Rebekah 17, Aaron, 15 and Anna 10 who keep their lives rich and exciting.*

***I go my way in peace, casting all my care on***

***Him.***





# Why Do a Pastor and Congregation Need A Deaconess?

One Pastor's Perspective *Mark Sell*

The Lord called me to pastorates in two different churches. I served a large church (over a thousand communicants) with a school. In that context, administrative responsibilities loomed large. The church already had two full time pastors, one part time pastor and recently our third full time pastor had taken a call. The church had a wonderful grade school with a faithful principal and faculty. Did we need another pastor?

*The cruciform life of every Christian  
began at their baptism wherein they were buried into the life and death  
of Christ and rose into a life of love of others.*

*The deaconess embodies the suffering servant of*

*Jesus*

My other pastoral call was to a small congregation in Southern Utah (140 communicants) that was steadily growing. The church searched for acceptable avenues to spread the Gospel in the Mormon context (approximately 92% Mormon in 1990). Therefore, the church decided to start a school. Furthermore, she allowed me to serve the community through the local hospice program. I was a hospice chaplain for six years. How could a deaconess help in Southern Utah?

I am sorry to say, that I did not realize the breadth of the deaconess office until I left congregational ministry. Since then, I have worked with deaconesses in many different contexts. This servant-oriented office is a gift that is misunderstood, often not known to exist, and sadly underused in the church.

Here is a synopsis of the life-long work of a deaconess in the words of St. Paul,

“3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, ESV)

First and foremost the deaconess devotes her life to acts of mercy and charity to those broken by sickness and sin. Deaconesses do what it takes to get the charitable work of the church done. They remind me of the faithful and persistent service of our LWML ladies. They possess the same compassion but with a rigorous theological education. They work hard, do not give up, and are passionate about spreading the Gospel. Their office is an embodiment of the theology of the cross.

The deaconess is not a pastor, D.C.E., or teacher. The training and the tasks for each office is different. The deaconess will not preach, will not administer the

sacraments, and will not use her office to be a pastor, or to educate as a teacher. However, the deaconess is as vocationally diversified, as every woman whom God created. A deaconess could be a director of a retirement home or social worker in a hospital. She can uniquely serve and spiritually counsel women where it is sometimes awkward for the pastor.

However, what stands out the most about the service of the deaconess is from where these different vocational opportunities begin. They flow from the cross of Christ, His suffering for our sin.

The cruciform life of every Christian began at their baptism wherein they were buried into the life and death of Christ and rose into a life of love of others. St. Paul and St. James taught us that faith and deeds are inseparable. A person can only “speak” of faith and deeds separately, but in the daily life of every Christian they are inseparable. The deaconess embodies the suffering servant of Jesus Christ. She seeks opportunities to serve people who suffer because Christ served her in His suffering. Just as Christ brought comfort, mercy, and hope to her, she seeks to serve people—weak, poor, and in need—both in Word and deed.

As I look back at my pastoral ministry, I wish I had better understood the office of the deaconess. A pastor and a deaconess make a great team for a congregation. Each office with its own gifts and responsibilities in service to the Gospel, is called to care for Christ’s people. In a small congregation, this team would work well in many areas of visitation and follow up, whether from surgeries, hospital stays, or working with sufferers of cancer, ALS, or Alzheimer’s. A deaconess could help with evangelism, Sunday School, VBS, women’s ministries and so forth.

In today’s context of institutional chaplaincy, a deaconess is an ideal fit in a hospice, hospital, or retire-



# Christ.

ment home setting. People in these institutions are separated from their church. The chaplaincy is a marvelous intersection between the church and the place where people are hurting, lonely, and in need of God's presence in His Word. The deaconess faithfully brings God's mercy and compassion and appropriately connects these people to their spiritual leaders as well.

Because they are biblically trained, deaconesses do not preach, conduct funerals, administer sacraments, or pretend they are "really" pastors. (Truthfully, the deaconess who usurps the deeds of the pastoral office has abandoned her office and works against the church rather than in service to her.) Now is the time (chairos) for the LCMS to be a leader in Lutheranism in the service of women in the church. The deaconess serves in a God-pleasing office where she faithfully carries out her work without confusing her office with other churchly offices. A deaconess chaplain is in the unique position to exemplify the faith and maintain the integrity of scripture and the Lutheran confessions as she serves in many different stations of life.

In a large congregation the service of a deaconess multiplies because of the administrative responsibilities associated in a larger team ministry. Not only would a deaconess serve well in the areas mentioned above, she could also serve in administrative roles in a church and in a school. For example, "confirmation class" is expanding beyond the traditional two-year program in 7th and 8th grade. A deaconess would be helpful in a religion program that brings "confirmation" to all grades.

My experience serving the church with deaconesses came after I left the local congregation when I was an editor at CPH. There, deaconesses served as editors. The senior editor of Sunday School curriculum is deaconess Pamela Nielsen. She writes, edits, and administers, as the developer of CPH's new Sunday School materials.



Photo courtesy Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

Currently I serve with *Friends of Mercy*, a recognized service organization of LCMS World Relief and Human Care. We bring pastors and congregations into contact with Human Care's "acts of mercy" domestically and internationally. Deaconesses are important team members in Human Care. I often work with deaconess intern Eva Morlok (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis). She has wonderful research skills and theological abilities. She and other deaconesses in Human Care exhibit a creative willingness to do what the department needs, to get done the work of mercy.

There is no shortage of work, in serving people in need. As *Friends of Mercy* expands, deaconesses will have a prominent role. Deaconesses can serve in urban renewal programs with city congregations or with HIV/AIDS education in the community they can serve. In a home in Kenya for women fleeing from genital mutilation, or care for orphans of the AIDS epidemic all over Africa they can provide; a hospice program in suburban homes, or work with the poor and hungry in the community. Lutheran deaconesses always bring the hope, mercy, and compassion that forgiveness of sins creates and sustains in suffering people. As I help pastors and churches with acts of mercy, I hope they too will learn of the compassionate work of the deaconess. ✚



# IN HIS SERVICE

FEATURING DEACONESS KIM BUELTMANN,  
DEACONESS AT ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH  
IN CHAMPAIGN, IL

**For the past four years, Deaconess Kim Bueltmann has been** living out what the deaconess motto describes by serving God and his people.

“It is a joy to instruct these young people in the faith and watch them grow. Again, it is such an amazing blessing to watch their faith grow, and a humbling experience to be used by God in furthering the development of their faith. I came here hoping to make a difference and be a blessing, but it’s amazing how much these young people have made a difference in my life and have blessed me,” shares Dcs. Kim, who has been touched by, and has touched, the lives of many during her years of service at St. John Lutheran Church in Champaign, Ill.

Deaconess Kim grew up at Camp CILCA, a Lutheran camp in central Illinois where her father, an LCMS pastor, served as the director of the camp for 12 years. During her time there, she was influenced by many

camp counselors who were studying to be church workers. Even after her father took a call to Quincy, Ill, she continued to return to Camp CILCA each summer as both a camper and a worker. While in Quincy, her interest in church work continued as she was influenced by the Lutheran school teachers and DCEs she encountered while serving as a representative on the district youth committee.

From a young age, Dcs. Kim knew she wanted to be a church worker, but she had not considered studying to become a deaconess. She admits, “One of the counselors from camp was studying to be a deaconess, but I didn’t really know what one was, and it sounded so foreign to me, since I had never heard of one.” Instead, with her interest in working with youth and music, she entered Concordia University, River Forest (CURF) as a DCE student.

Once she began the DCE program at CURF, she realized as a DCE student she would have to take a lot of



education classes, but she was not interested in being a classroom teacher. Instead, she was interested in studying theology and music, so she started exploring other options. She recalls the first moments she became interested in deaconess ministry: “One day, as I was mulling this over in my head, I walked by the deaconess office, and read the deaconess motto on the bulletin board. Out of nowhere, it struck me: ‘This is what I want to do!’ I ran to find that camp counselor and asked her all about the deaconess program and switched my major.”

As part of the deaconess program, Kim completed her deaconess internship at St. Philipp Lutheran Church in Gifhorn, Germany. While there, she served in the areas of youth and music. She also had the opportunity to teach confirmation, lead Bible studies, lead district confirmation retreats, visit homebound and hospitalized members, help with a children’s group, and direct a children’s musical.

In 2002, Kim completed the deaconess program and graduated from Concordia University, River Forest with a BA in theology and a minor in church music. She also received her first call to serve at St. John in Champaign. She has been serving there along with the two pastors and principal for almost four years. Her main roles are directing the youth program, teaching 6th grade confirmation, teaching the high school Bible class, directing the youth choir, serv-

ing on the evangelism committee, leading VBS, leading several retreats throughout the year, and leading Family Time Training, a program to teach families how to have family devotions.



“Trust God to lead you,  
and He will guide you in  
the right direction.”

*Dcs. Kim Bueltmann*  
St. John Lutheran Church

When asked what advice she has for women interested in deaconess ministry, she replied, “If you have a heart for serving others and sharing your faith, go for it! When I started out, there was only one option for becoming a deaconess: go to River Forest. Now there are programs at both seminaries, which is great. Trust God to lead you, and He will guide you in the right direction. That is one thing that has constantly amazed me throughout my life. God’s plan has always prevailed. Even when I am trying to go another direction, He gently guides me back His.” She also has advice for congregations considering calling a deaconess. She said, “They should definitely consider it. Whatever your needs are, you can find a deaconess to fill. Deaconesses are so

diverse, and they can work in many different areas. It’s terrific. The one thing they all have in common is a strong desire to serve their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” ✚



*Dcs. Intern Eva Morlok*  
LCMS World Relief and Human Care

# Some Thoughts From the **First Deaconess** in **SIBERIA**

*by Gloria Vladimirova*

**In the same way, let your light shine before others,  
so that they may see your good works and give glory  
to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:16)**

**A**lmost a year ago my American friend Maggie Karner was recalling the story about the first time she visited my home congregation, St. Andrew's Lutheran, in Novosibirsk, Siberia, Russia. She was amazed that even though she did not understand the Russian language, she felt at home in worship because the liturgical life of our parish was so similar to her church in the United States. I am happy to serve at St. Andrew's because I know my work in other parts of the life of our congregation are helping other people feel at home here as well.

It was God's blessing to me when He sent Dr. Arthur Just, director of the deaconess program at Concordia Theological Seminary, to Novosibirsk at the very beginning of my deaconess internship. He presented a diakonia seminar in our parish that was very helpful for my parishioners to understand how we can serve our neighbors, as Christians. It also was a chance for our members to learn about the vocation of deaconesses and their call.

Most of my internship has been occupied with forming and developing a new crisis pregnancy center sponsored by our church. In the United States, I was trained specifically to start this type of ministry in Russia. The problem of abortion is very large here in Russia. Through the Soviet period in Russia, no contraceptives were available and the government encouraged abortion as a form of birth control, because women were needed as workers. So the whole abortion culture was formed during that time. Even now in the world, Russia still holds second place in the number of abortions annually: for every 10 pregnancies, only 3 are allowed to be born.

As Christians, we realize that the problem of abortion in Russia is not an economic problem, but a spiritual problem. The main thing we have to do is change the minds of people, so they can evaluate the sanctity of human life as opposed to the tragedy of death caused by abortion, which is still legal in Russia.



The work of our center has many dimensions. First, we are doing crisis pregnancy counseling. Russian people are not accustomed to seeking help in situations like a crisis pregnancy. I can understand that. The sphere of personal life in Russia is very intimate and very sensitive to any external interference. We must be very careful and aware of this mindset with our clients. Sometimes we have a chance to share the Gospel with them. Sometimes we can show God's love only by our action. But this care is very needed.

Second, we are doing youth presentations about love, marriage and chastity. We consider this to be preven-

tive work among the youth. We have already done a chastity presentation at the most "difficult" school in our area. Children who study at this school are all in the database of the police. I worried a lot before the presentation, but they listened! It was so encouraging for me. It means the seeds we planted in their hearts can be fruitful.

As we follow our mission of changing the hearts and minds of people, I consider education of our community very important. We translate, print and distribute many booklets and pamphlets about fetal development, abortion, and consequences of sexual relations.



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*"I am happy to serve* at St. Andrew's because I know my work in other parts of the life of our congregation are helping other people feel at home."



As it is for many working women, it's a challenge for me to balance my work and my family. I think it is especially challenging for deaconesses, because we have to serve the church. At the same time we also are caregivers of our family. It is an art to plan your time in order to devote enough time to both of them.

I can speak a lot about who we are as deaconesses and what our vocation is. But in this article I would like to say what is essential for my deaconess ministry here in Russia. It is true that deaconesses do not have the call to preach the Word and administer the Sacrament. But we can carry out the external service of the church, expressing the public activity and social responsibility of the church. The church should not only be a close community designed just for the benefit of ourselves. We have no right to keep hidden in our community; especially if the work concerns the saving of people lives, both temporarily on earth and in eternity. I think of my deaconess work as someone who stays near the doors of the church, inviting people inside to know Christ's love through our caring work. At the same time I also open the doors of the church to this sinful world, applying either God's love in Gospel or God's Law where it's needed.

What is different about being a deaconess here in Siberia? I think people here have even less of an understanding of what the deaconess vocation is. Many of them just think I am a Roman Catholic monk or nun. It takes plenty of time to explain who I am and what I do at the church. This is especially important if you are dealing with unbelievers. On the other hand, maybe this is a great chance to share the Gospel with them! I hope so. ✚



*Gloria Vladimirova is a deaconess intern in Novosibirsk, Russia. She is a native Russian and former social worker, who was invited to study at*

*Concordia Theological Seminary in the deaconess program with the intent that she would return to Russia in service to the Siberian Lutheran church as Russia's first Lutheran deaconess. She is now approaching the midpoint of her internship studies.*

I'm busy almost every day. I work at the center five days a week from the morning until 5 p.m. I also have my hot-line cell phone with me all the time. I am also teaching women's group and sometimes Sunday school on Sundays. I am not complaining, because everybody in our church is working hard in their own way.

I also participate in the work of the Sunday school. Sometimes I teach the youth group. We are talking about bioethics and pro-life issues. I also organize meetings and support of our Sunday school teachers. I also help with some celebrations, like the Christmas pageant.

My work at the Crisis Pregnancy Center takes a lot of time, but my work teaching the women's group in our congregation is also very important. I am only one person, and even if I work very hard, I am still limited according to my time and physical abilities. But by teaching others, together we can all work to spread God's Word and the Christian way of life, like ripples on the water that spread out in all directions. I believe in my parishioners, and most of them are good helpers for our center. They also will work as more intensive volunteers after additional training that I plan to provide for them.



# MERCY WORKS

## Journal Profile

*Mercy Works* is a magazine dedicated to the ministry, training and placement of LCMS deaconesses. It is published quarterly by LCMS World Relief / Human Care. Contributors include LCMS deaconesses active in a wide variety of ministries; students enrolled in the deaconess training programs available through LCMS universities and seminaries; and Lutheran theologians, professors, and pastors involved in diakonal ministries and vocations.

## Advertising

*Mercy Works* is a 4-color publication throughout (dimensions: 8.0625" x 10.4375"). Ad space is offered in full page and half-page sizes (inside cover ads are full page only; no ad on back cover).

### Rates

	1 issue	4 issues
Full page	\$1,000	\$3,000 (total)
Half page	\$600	\$2,000 (total)

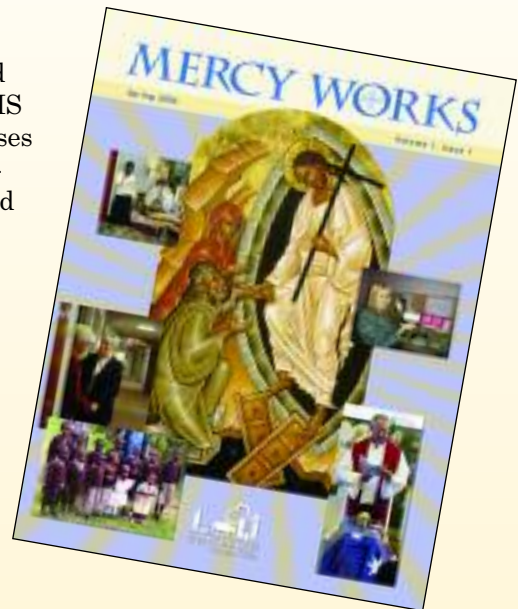
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- Electronic versions of advertisements are preferred. Prospective advertisers may submit CMYK, grayscale, or bitmap files, in Quark 5.0 or later, EPS, TIFF, PDF, or JPEG format. Please contact Greg Koenig (greg.koenig@lcms.org) for other options.
- Resolution should be 300 dpi or higher. Embed fonts where possible; otherwise, include fonts with ad file. Allow a half inch margin on all sides. No bleeds, please.
- Make checks to LCMS, WR/HC-Mercy Works and mail it to the address mentioned above attention to Deaconess Ministry.

## Publication Schedule and Deadlines

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Summer 2006	July 2006	June 20, 2006
Fall 2006	October, 2006	September 20, 2006

Electronic files may be e-mailed to: [bbdesign@mindspring.com](mailto:bbdesign@mindspring.com)



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