



"Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest."

— JOHN 4:35 —



Resources and Services

- A four-day training workshop that including agency and residential interviews
- Follow-up coaching
- A training manual
- Demographic studies
- Introductory presentation on Gospel Seeds

Strong Faith, Fervent Love: Training Modern-Day Disciples

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) "Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs" Onsite Training Initiative prepares congregations to converse and connect with their neighborhoods and communities. Congregations are trained to model the early Church's ministry to the needs of body and soul, (Acts 6:1–7) reflecting Christ's invitation to respond compassionately to bodily needs (Matt. 25:35–40). In concert with *Mercy* work to unmet or under-served community needs, congregations *Witness*, and as the Holy Spirit leads and empowers, invite neighbors to catechesis and into the *Life Together*. Through the LCMS "Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs" Onsite Training Initiative, modern-day disciples of Jesus learn how to do what He sent (John 20:21) His first followers to do, two-by-two (Luke 10:1).

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Revitalizing Churches Through Human Care *by Megan K. Mertz*

Around the corner or across the street from every church in the U.S. is a family who needs to hear the Gospel. These families also may be looking for day care, job training, English-language classes, help preparing for citizenship and so on.

The “Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs” process trains congregations to identify the most critical community challenges so that they can join hands with their neighbors and respond in tangible ways. In the process, closer relationships develop with neighbors, ultimately making new disciples for Christ.

Through a four-day training led by the Rev. Dr. Carlos Hernandez, director of LCMS Church and Community Engagement, congregation members

are trained to conduct interviews with neighbors and local agencies to get to the heart of area problems. Over the years, Hernandez has discovered that one out of 10 of these residential “cold calls” will yield a prospective family that desires a follow-up call from the church.

When Hernandez came to Peace Lutheran Church, Decatur, Ga., only three teams went out into the neighborhood to visit with residents, yet these visits produced much fruit. Residents were eager to talk about ways to improve their community, and some of them were interested in discussing spiritual issues as well.

“Last year, [we gained] 12 new households and baptized nine,” said the Rev. Dr. Victor Belton, pastor of Peace,

during a Gospel Seeds training. “We’ve grown exponentially, and Gospel Seeds is the reason.”

Peace has become a regional training center in the Atlanta area for the Gospel Seeds program, training other local congregations to successfully reach out to neighbors. Hernandez is working to establish these types of regional centers in other areas of the U.S. to revitalize LCMS churches and reverse trends in declining membership. By offering needed human-care ministries, churches can find ways to bring the saving message of Jesus Christ to the lost in their communities.

“We want our LCMS folks to get out of the church building and into the streets where the mission field is,” Hernandez explains.

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