

Coming Together to Care for Ukrainians

With the rapid escalation of tensions in Ukraine, millions of people have been impacted and forced to flee their homes. In this difficult situation, the church prays and provides for those affected.

The Rev. James A. Krikava, associate executive director of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Office of International Mission (OIM), Eurasia and Asia Operations, explained that the OIM quickly began working with partners in Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Germany and the Czech Republic to help those affected by this crisis. This work includes aid for our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine (ELCU).

At the time of this writing, some ELCU congregations continued to operate, and their members were helping to provide food, clothing and housing to those in need. Despite the danger, many ELCU pastors also continued to visit their members and aid anyone in trouble. To help protect those delivering the life-giving Word and Sacraments, the LCMS provided financial assistance that was used to buy helmets and body armor for these pastors.

The LCMS also has provided funds for:

- **Food, accommodations, documents and clothes** for eastern Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Lviv and Vinnytsia;

- **A hospital** in Lutsk for that cares for refugees and military personnel;
- **Congregations** of the ELCU, including their members; and
- **Food banks and medicine** for the community.

In neighboring Romania, Sergiu Trifa, the son of Romanian Lutheran pastor Rev. Sorin-Horia Trifa, traveled to the Isaccea Border Point to wait for Ukrainian Lutheran refugees who were fleeing their country. The Ukrainian refugees had to navigate difficult border procedures to enter Romania. Once they arrived, Sergiu took them to Constanța, where they were registered and given a hot meal. The refugees then traveled to Brașov, where they will stay with Rev. Trifa and in another home offered for this cause.

The Rev. Serge Maschewski, bishop of the ELCU, said that the needs are always changing: “Today we need food. Tomorrow we need medicine. The list changes daily.”



Sergiu Trifa, the son of the Rev. Sorin-Horia Trifa, a Romanian pastor who works with the LCMS, snaps a selfie with Ukrainian refugees in Romania.

But despite the difficulties they now face, Maschewski emailed Krikava and LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, saying, “I want to give special thanks to the faithful of the LCMS, and personally to President Harrison and Pastor Krikava. God bless you! We, by the power of God, will overcome all things, and the Lord will grant us victory!”

To learn more about the work in Ukraine and help those affected by this war, visit lcms.org/ukraine.

Give God Glory...

... for the youth group at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Rugby, N.D., which holds a pancake breakfast every year to raise funds for the *Christ's Care for Children: Kenya* (CCCK) program. The youth sponsor a Kenyan student named Pamela, so they call their fundraiser Pancakes for Pamela. Learn more about sponsorship opportunities at lcms.org/ccck.

... for Lutheran Social Services of Indiana (LSSI), an LCMS Recognized Service Organization located in Fort Wayne, Ind. LSSI has served the Fort Wayne community for over 120 years by providing services and programs that empower individuals and families to move toward social, emotional and spiritual wholeness. Learn more at lssin.org.

... for the Rev. Dr. Gerald and Heidi Paul, LCMS career missionaries serving in the Cayman Islands. Gerald is a pastor and church planter who, along with local church leaders, reaches out to both locals and expats with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He also serves as an adjunct professor for Concordia the Reformer Seminary in the Dominican Republic. Learn more at lcms.org/gerald.paul.



One of the priorities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, motivated by Christ and His Gospel, according to the Lutheran confession of the faith. This is accomplished under the familiar name of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, which the Synod uses to describe the mercy work directed by the policies of the Boards for National and International Mission and implemented through the programs of the Offices of National and International Mission.

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You Make the Difference through LCMS World Relief and Human Care

You make the ministry described in this newsletter possible! Your prayers and contributions to World Relief and Human Care “Where Needed Most” help deliver our Savior’s mercy to people in need. You bolster tightly restricted donations from others to help fully fund important mercy projects, allowing us to report here the impact you are making in Christ’s name. The courtesy envelope in this issue allows you to send a future contribution as the Holy Spirit leads, when He leads.

Providing Help and Hope After Disaster

“We’re from St. Paul Lutheran Church, and there are people here who care about you, who love you and who can offer you the hope of Jesus Christ.”

This was the message that Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) members shared with residents of Mayfield, Ky., after an EF4 tornado cut a 166-mile path through the area on the evening of Dec. 10, killing 78 people and causing extensive damage. St. Paul Lutheran Church in nearby Paducah, Ky., served as a hub for LCMS recovery efforts by providing meals and a place for the volunteers to stay. For four weeks following the tornado, nearly 70 LERT members — LCMS volunteers trained to deploy rapidly in the event of a disaster — converged on Kentucky to assist with the cleanup and walk alongside those who were impacted.

The Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, director of LCMS Disaster Response, and the Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, president of the LCMS Mid-South District, asked St. Paul’s pastor, the Rev. David Appold, if the church could serve in this way.

“They are the best guests we could ask for,” Appold said of the volunteers. Receiving free assistance from trained LERT members is “amazing to people. And then to follow up and say, ‘Can we pray with you?’ People just love to be loved.”

In total, the LERT volunteers assisted 50 families by cutting up damaged and fallen trees and dragging debris to the street, where FEMA trucks could pick it up and haul it away. “They cleared the most dangerous trees,

the ones that have the hangers and the widow-makers [broken limbs that could fall at any time]. We want to make sure that the property is safe for the people when they are working around their yard,” said Janet Simko, district disaster-response coordinator for the LCMS Mid-South District.

The volunteers include both new and experienced LERT members. For Cheryl Delair of Milwaukee, it was her first disaster after going through the LERT training a few months ago. “I didn’t think I’d be coming down for anything so soon, ... but I know there’s a need here,” she said. “It’s heavy work, but it’s manageable if you’re careful. Everybody can help.”

Learn more about LCMS Disaster Response at lcms.org/disaster.



▲ LERT member Kenny Hollman from Christ Lutheran Church, Jacob, Ill., removes debris at a home outside Mayfield, Ky.

Top: LERT member Laura Ciletti from Brookfield Lutheran Church, Brookfield, Wis., helps remove debris at a home outside Mayfield, Ky.

Answering Jesus’ Call

I’m chuckling as I write this. Our LCMS Disaster Response team has recently published what is a first for the LCMS — and probably for any denomination in the world. It’s a “Chainsaw Safety and Use Manual.” Our district disaster-response coordinators were in town last week, and they presented me with a copy. I am sure this is also the only book to have gone through both doctrinal review and legal review before publication!

Years ago, our staff developed a brilliant approach to disaster work. It’s a “congregationally based” model, which connects LCMS volunteers with congregations. I’ll never forget when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. I preached in Baton Rouge to a full house of local members, refugees and many who had been devastated by the destruction. I asked the district president what was needed in those initial days, and he said, “Chainsaws.” So, we brought down a load of chainsaws. At the time, I was thinking, “These poor people need outside help. How is this going to be possible?” But then Pastor Scott Schmieding began announcing all the jobs for which volunteers were needed, and the whole congregation stepped forward to volunteer.

When tornadoes and hurricanes hit, chain-saw teams are always a huge need. Our men (and women!) love to serve, and there are many ways to serve other than sawing trees. Our experienced people contact the congregations in need, working with the LCMS district and many others, and get what is needed ASAP. And we go. We as the LCMS have tremendous capacity. It just so happens that because of the expertise and strong desire of our people, we are especially good at chainsaw work. Who would have thought we’d answer Jesus’ call by doing this? “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40).

The LCMS has trained some 15,000 Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) members over the years. Although my chainsaw days are about up, the LCMS is just revving up!

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison
President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

