

Planting Seeds in the Dominican Republic

In September, a family in San José de Ocoa, a community located two hours west of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, reached out to missionaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and asked to be baptized. It was an unexpected request, since the LCMS mission team did not have any contacts in the area.

The two Lutheran pastors in Santo Domingo eagerly agreed, and on Sept. 27 God brought seven members of the family into the Body of Christ through the waters of Holy Baptism.

Following the Baptisms, the two pastors — the Rev. Sergio Maita, a Lutheran missionary pastor from Venezuela, and the Rev. Ted Krey, regional director for the Synod’s Latin America and Caribbean region — began traveling to the community on a rotating basis for follow-up visits. Seminarians and deaconess intern Kate Phillips also sometimes accompanied them.

Soon, news of the visits began to spread. Children showed up to learn Bible stories with Phillips, while neighbors gathered in the house, at the doorway and even at the windows, eager for the opportunity to hear the sweet, refreshing Word of the Gospel.

On Dec. 12, more than 80 residents and guests gathered in a local park for a worship service and four more Baptisms — marking the beginning of a brand-new mission start in the area. This gathering spot for the community

was the perfect location to accommodate the growing group and connect with new contacts.

Following the service, numerous people asked to be baptized, including 18 youth. Lord willing, the catechesis and Baptisms will take place over the coming weeks, and these fledgling Christians will continue to shine the light of the Gospel in their families and throughout their community.

“The amazing part about this day was not just the fact we were able to hold the first

Service of the Word in Ocoa, the Baptisms and [have] a great turnout in the community, but also that members from both congregations in Santo Domingo came together to serve,” said Phillips, noting how Lutherans from other areas collected clothing to share with those in need in Ocoa. “It was wonderful to see the youth teach the kids about Jesus, sharing the faith from one generation to the next.”



Clockwise from left: The Rev. Ted Krey, regional director for the Synod’s Latin America and Caribbean region, speaks during a service held in the Dominican Republic in 2018. The Rev. Sergio Maita, a Lutheran missionary pastor from Venezuela, baptizes an infant during the Dec. 12 service in San José de Ocoa. Deaconess intern Kate Phillips meets with a group prior to the pandemic.

Give God Glory...

... for St. Martin Lutheran School for the Deaf in Dearborn, Mich., a division of Ephphatha Lutheran Mission Society, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO). St. Martin offers a Christ-centered program that’s designed to meet the communicational, emotional and social needs of its deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The school provides K-8 classroom instruction in American Sign Language and research-based best practices for dual literacy in English. To learn more, visit smlid.org.

... for Lutheran Disaster Care, Inc. (LDC), an RSO in Arlington, Texas. Through its member churches, LDC provides trained volunteers, much-needed supplies and the ability to do mass feedings at disaster sites. To learn more, visit lutherandisaster.care/cms.

... for the Rev. J.P. and Aimee Cima, LCMS career missionaries currently serving in Cambodia. J.P. serves the growing Cambodia Lutheran Church (CLC) and travels throughout the country to equip and empower leaders in the CLC. Aimee serves as mercy manager for the Asia region, where she supports the personnel serving there and works with local church partners to coordinate mercy work. Learn more about the Cimas and their work at international.lcms.org/mercy-manager-of-asia.



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.

“Sharing” is the newsletter of LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295. Contributor services line: 888-930-4438. Website: lcms.org.

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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” 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.



FINDING NEW WAYS TO Stand for Life

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many things since early 2020, but the abortion industry is not one of them. And neither is the stand for life that Lutherans continue to make in defense of the most vulnerable among us.

On Jan. 16, pro-life advocates gathered in their cars on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, for the March for Life Chicago's "Moving the Movement Tour." The event was one of six stops connecting participants across five states in a series of pro-life car rallies.

The Fort Wayne event was hosted by LCMS Life Ministry and organized with the help of Right to Life of Northeast Indiana, in addition to the March for Life Chicago.

Rather than canceling the annual march (which typically draws thousands of participants) due to COVID-19, the March for Life Chicago team decided to "voice its support for life in a new way — emphasizing the pro-life movement in local communities." Each stop included a diaper drive to supply local pro-life ministries in each city.

The car tours enabled participants to support life in a legal and safe way, and some participants were able to attend for the first time.

"We came out to support life. We're a little too old to walk when it comes to [life marches], and we saw that this was going to be a drive-in thing, and we were happy to be able to participate," said Ralph Selking of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Decatur, Ind., who drove in for the event.

Two weeks later, on Jan. 29, the National March for Life in Washington, D.C., also looked quite a bit different. Instead of tens of thousands of marchers, the 2021 event was by invitation only. Fewer than 100 pro-life leaders — including LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison and LCMS Fifth Vice-President Rev. Christopher Esget — marched solemnly together in the nation's capital.

Deaconess Tiffany Manor, who took the helm as director of LCMS Life Ministry in 2020, said that standing for life is as crucial now as ever.

"The lie of abortion must end," said Manor. "God's truth will prevail. He creates and values all life — this is why every year thousands of Lutherans peacefully and respectfully march, rally and parade for life in their communities, to proclaim Christ and to share His love, forgiveness and mercy."



Deaconess Tiffany Manor, director of LCMS Life Ministry, waves to the rows of cars during her introduction at the March for Life Chicago drive-in rally on Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021, at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Abiding in Christ's Love

The apostle John provides us with profound and powerful teachings on love. Love defines the life of the Christian and the Christian community. Its concrete expression is often elusive in our individual and corporate lives. That's why John began his first chapter of his first epistle this way: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8–9).

Christians will sin, but Christians are sinners forgiven. Christians are to love one another, but Christians will be hated by the world. Love for fellow Christians marks Christians. Other texts tell us that Christians are to love any neighbor. To refuse to love is to deny Christ. Hatred is as bad as murder. Christ's death for us shows us what love is and does. Christ is our Savior and our example of love. To close our "hearts" (really, to "have no compassion") for a brother in need is a denial of God's love in Christ. So, the apostle bids us to live what we confess about Jesus.

"For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one

another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:11–18).

In Christ,

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

