

# RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

*Serving in the Name of Christ*

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THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MISSOURI SYNOD

Recognized Service Organizations

*To extend its mission outreach, education and social ministry, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod works with independent Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) that agree to ensure their programs are in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS.*

## Lutheran Braille Workers

SHARING GOD'S LOVE TO THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED



**“I know when I read Jesus’ name, because His love travels up my arm and to my heart.”**

These are the powerful words of a 13-year-old boy in India after receiving his first book of a Braille Bible. His excitement at knowing the love of Christ was palpable and a reminder that the ministry of Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW) is centered in sharing the Gospel to people who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

Too often in the world, blindness or vision impairment are considered minor problems affecting a small section of the population. Yet, according to the World Health Organization, in 2019 it was estimated that there are 253 million people in the world who are either Blind or moderately-severely Visually Impaired — what we would know as legally Blind or worse. It is further estimated that 95% of this population is unchurched, meaning 241 million people throughout the world (or the equivalent of the fifth-most populous country) are waiting to know the love of Christ in their life.

What is even more remarkable and amazing is that there are very few international organizations mass-producing Braille and Specialized Large Print Christian materials, and certainly none other in the LCMS. This has led to an even greater request for these materials from people and churches in the United States and throughout the world, a demand which is only increasing.

The origins of Lutheran Braille Workers trace back to 1943 and the response of a young lady to a request for German Braille Bibles. Helene Koehler, after hearing about this need in Germany (even during World War II) felt a tug on her heart, and with her family’s support and encouragement, learned Braille. She then began the process of transcribing a German Bible into Braille using a stylus, going backwards, one solitary dot at a time. Eighteen months later, after filling up dozens of boxes with page after page, Helene had produced one German Braille Bible. She shipped it off and thought her role in this production was complete. Six weeks later she received a letter from the pastor who had requested these materials who wrote,

*(Continued on page 2.)*

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“Thank you so much! This is exactly what we needed. May I ask, how many more can you produce?”

Helene wrote in her journal, “It is overwhelming to think about how much effort went into producing one Bible! How in the world will we ever meet this demand?” But then Helene wrote something which became the foundation for the entire ministry of Lutheran Braille Workers. She wrote, **“But if people are asking for the Gospel, how can we ever say ‘no?’”**

78 years later, through the tremendous blessings provided by God, Lutheran Braille Workers has morphed into the premiere ministry of Christian Braille and Specialized Large Print resources. Throughout its history, LBW has produced almost 15 million volumes of the Bible, Luther’s Small Catechism, Portals of Prayer, *Lutheran Service Book*, and countless other devotionals, Bible studies, Lutheran Hour sermons, Scripture-based calendars and other Christian titles. LBW has worked in 40 languages, sending materials to 168 countries around the world. What is the most remarkable aspect of this ministry? Every single one of those 15 million volumes has been delivered to the recipient completely free of charge!

This amazing ministry has been made possible through generous donors (since LBW doesn’t charge for its books) and an incredible army of volunteers who work tirelessly producing these Braille and Specialized Large Print resources by hand. Currently, LBW has over 3,000 volunteers working in 115 Ministry Production Centers throughout the United States. These men, women and young adults spend hours building each book page by page, all in order to bring the Word of God to those living in physical, and often spiritual, darkness. What the volunteers love about this ministry, however, is that each book they produce is being packaged and sent directly to the recipient with no middle man. They know where these materials are going throughout the world, which is an incredible connection to the people waiting to know the love of Christ in their lives.

In fact, our volunteers often receive thank you letters as well including one letter from a 14-year-old girl

in Mexico, Lucy, who wrote, “I have been blind since birth and have never seen a face, not even my parents. But now I know, when I get to heaven, Jesus is the first face I will ever see.”

With the average age of LCMS members increasing, the Specialized Large Print ministry of LBW has taken on even greater importance. These 18-point, Aphont font-type, special paper books are often some of the last materials the elderly, who are suffering from macular degeneration, glaucoma or other eye diseases, are able to read. Within LCMS congregations, pastors are requesting more and more of the free resources from LBW to provide to their congregants, local nursing homes, senior care facilities or other parts of ministry.

Currently, Lutheran Braille Workers produces Braille in 16 languages and Specialized Large Print in 6 languages (including English, Spanish and Kiswahili). LBW also produces materials in audio formats in English, including Portals of Prayer, LCMS publications and the ESV Bible. Within English Braille and Large Print, LBW has well over 100 titles available including the full ESV Bible, Luther’s Small Catechism, *Lutheran Service Book*, Portals of Prayer and other titles which are all free of charge to the recipient, church or organization.

For a full list of the titles available, or to learn more about this exciting ministry, please visit [lbwloveworks.org](http://lbwloveworks.org). In addition, if you are interested in having a representative of Lutheran Braille Workers speak to you or your organization, or to discuss ways to work together in growing God’s Kingdom, please contact the ministry directly through the website, or by phone at 909-795-8977.

When a recent recipient was handed the book of John in Arabic Braille, his reaction after reading John 9 was revealing of the power of this ministry. He began jumping up and down and shouted, “When I touch the words, they touch my heart.”

Helene Koehler asked the question 78 years ago, “If people are asking for the Gospel, how do we ever say, ‘no?’” But with the continued support of the church, donors and volunteers, and with God’s constant blessings, LBW will always be able to say “YES!”



**LBW**

LUTHERAN BRAILLE WORKERS

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about *Lutheran Braille Workers*, please visit [lbwloveworks.org](http://lbwloveworks.org).



## *Camp Concordia:* BUILDING FOR CHRIST – BODY & SOUL

**DEFINITION:** *Concordia* - Peace prevailing over discord and upheaval. ([www.definitions.net/definition/Concordia](http://www.definitions.net/definition/Concordia))

If you walk into the middle of a week of summer camp at Camp Concordia, you may NOT think of things as being harmonious, tranquil and calm. You would NOT think of the “peace that passes understanding.” Instead you would observe what appears as chaos, wild play and uncontrollable ... laughter ... while campers canoe and swim, complete a team challenge or shoot an arrow, hike out to pick wild berries or set up to have a cookout. You might even encounter a tired staff member, a camper in tears over a scraped knee and a hot busy summer camp kitchen with fresh homemade pizza baking in the big convection oven. What is really behind the curtain? No. No. Not “what.” WHO is behind the curtain of an organization whose mission is tagged “*Building for Christ – body and soul*”? The people God uses to glorify the Father’s name! Young adults, campers and parents.

**LIFE CHANGING FOR YOUNG ADULTS:** Since its inception in 1957, Camp Concordia has been led by 12 camp directors who have trained and sent out hundreds of young adults. Those young adults have given of themselves in service to children during

summer camp. Hundreds of young adults. It’s an amazing commitment and it is an exhausting, life-changing opportunity.

Recently at a Best Practices conference, I ran into the Rev. Dr. Mark Hoehner, who told me, “It was at camp [serving as a summer camp staff] that I decided to become a pastor.” While a good handful of summer ministry staff have had a negative and defeating experience leading campers (the hours are long and caregiving intense), a majority have come away with a sense of awe regarding what God did in their life and how the Holy Spirit shaped their faith in Jesus. Leading kids with an outcome of faith in Christ is *life-changing*.

**MADE FOR CAMPERS:** They come to have fun — and have it *abundantly*. Some are scared. Upon arrival, others almost forget to say goodbye as they run to hug an old camper friend. Observing a young lady run to say “Hi,” a camp staff member said, “You must be friends from back home.” To which the camper replied, “No. We’ve only known each other through camp.”

According to Sarah Weishaar (“Turtle”), former summer camp staff member and children’s ministry director at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lakewood, Colo., “Camp Concordia has been supportive to the



work a church does to raise up children ... Campers would come back from camp and tell plenty of stories to other children and spark their interest. As a church worker, I could confidently talk to parents and say that not only is Camp Concordia a solid safe place for their kids to go, but that the Biblical theology and foundations taught [are] top notch. Camp Concordia is not only encouraging kids to explore nature but also do it through a spiritual and Biblical lens. As a church worker I would highly encourage anyone wanting to send their kids to camp to send them to CC because of the care and love and compassion the kids receive!”

**SUPPORTING PARENTS:** Parents are key to influencing their children to trust and have faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. **Camp supports parents.**

*“What is Camp Concordia to my kids? This was the third year my kids attended camp (skipped 2020 b/c of COVID). Each year my kids come home with more stories, more Bible and more friends. Our family camps often. We’ve camped at the fancy campgrounds with all the amenities, but each year when my boys go to Camp Concordia they are already planning for next year. [My son] recently attended the confirmation camp with his youth group and I was told when they returned that he was going to be a pastor or teacher by several of the parents that attended. His confidence in his faith and his ability to speak devotions or prayers just amazes me.”*

—SARAH GAPINSKI, MOM OF 13-YEAR-OLD

*“Camp Concordia has helped my pre-teen daughter grow in God and grow with fellow Christians serving people! She has learned that it is cool to be Christian and to serve the Lord. This as a parent brings me so much*

*joy...She is so excited to go back next year, and she wants to be a counselor one day. When we read the Bible, she will sometimes talk about connections she has from camp. I am so thankful for the ministry that this camp is.”*

—ANGELA SCHMIDTKE

*“My kids always LOVE their counselors. They look up to them and when they see them loving and serving Jesus, they also want to love and serve Jesus. Also, camp is just a really great place where I know they will have a great time and they will be cared for not just with their basic needs but also spiritually and emotionally.”*

—LAURIE GRIFFITH

While the appearance of discord and upheaval of summer camp goes on, good things are happening. Concordia is happening. Things of peace and coming to understand who one is in Jesus Christ. I am grateful that over the last seven years God has allowed Camp Concordia to become a stronger place of ministry that supports the parents and church leaders’ roles of influencing faith. During these years Camp Concordia has been raised out of an uncontrollable debt, no certain usage and a case of embezzlement, to a ministry with accountability, a strong board of directors who care about ministry to children, steady camper numbers each summer, no debt and plans for a future.

Camp Concordia intends to be a functional arm of the LCMS Michigan District, and the camp’s board of directors has been grateful to see the many churches, schools and their workers coming alongside this goal. Pastors, principals, teachers, directors of Christian education and family life ministers who have the insight to the experiential nature of teaching the faith that Martin Luther applauded get this function, and Camp Concordia is equally grateful to support their work.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about Camp Concordia, please visit [camconcordia.org](http://camconcordia.org).

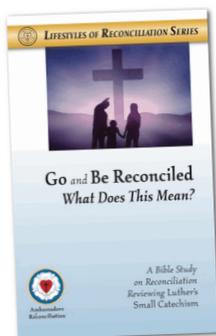
RESOURCE FEATURE

# Ambassadors of Reconciliation



A discouraged pastor shared, “Some members of our church demand we wear masks while others refuse. Now, it seems everyone is offended by someone. We need reconciliation!” We wish this was just an isolated incident, but this refrain has become all too common. Thanks be to God for the tremendous opportunity!

What!?! The mission of Ambassadors of Reconciliation is to equip Christians and their churches for living, proclaiming and cultivating lifestyles of reconciliation. Yes, even these challenging times are an opportunity to demonstrate our love for one another. Ambassadors of Reconciliation has resources (Bible studies, books and devotionals), reconciliation seminars and training as well as reconciliation services for those needing outside help to reconcile.



*Go and Be Reconciled: What Does This Mean?* is a six-lesson Bible study on daily reconciliation that reviews Luther’s Small Catechism. Participants learn how to reverse the temptation to address conflicts with the world’s ways by studying key Scripture passages and acquiring new tools for remembering the basic principles and applying them in everyday conflicts.

An online two-hour presentation of this study can also be **scheduled for your church or organization at NO COST** when employing a Thrivent Action Team grant! Visit [aorhope.org/intro-seminar](http://aorhope.org/intro-seminar) for more information.

Reconciler training is now available online. No more travel! From entry-level Personal Peacemaking, through very advanced training for serving as a reconciler in the most complex of cases, visit [aorhope.org](http://aorhope.org) for more info. A great starting point is “Coaching People to Reconcile.” In this online practicum, you learn the fundamentals of guiding someone to reconcile in the midst of a dispute — even the many COVID challenges we experience today!

Finally, if you find yourself embroiled in a conflict and you’re not sure where to turn, then Ambassadors of Reconciliation can help! Whether in your family, in your church or community, there are trained reconcilers eager to help you. We can work alongside your pastor or other church leaders to assist you. Give us a call!



**Ambassadors  
of  
Reconciliation™**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about *Ambassadors of Reconciliation*, please visit [aorhope.org](http://aorhope.org).

— LCMS DISASTER RESPONSE —  
**SURVIVAL KIT PROJECT**  
 EQUIPS CONGREGATIONS FOR OUTREACH



Over the last several months, LCMS Disaster Response has been working to reinvigorate one of our congregation projects that we had let slip away, at least as an emphasis. That project is the assembly and distribution of Disaster Response Survival Kits. In summary, it's a simple endeavor for small groups in your congregation [think of your ladies' aide group, youth or young adult group] to gather a number of basic supplies, divide and place them into bags and then distribute them to needy or at-risk families within your community.

While a number of the items are universal [first aid kit, food, water, flashlight, etc.], others may be dependent upon the people you're serving and the area in which they will be distributed [hot or cold climates, distributed to the young or old, etc.]. You can find a suggested list of what your group can include in these kits at [lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/disaster-response/resources](https://lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/disaster-response/resources) as well as additional information in the project itself.

Once assembled, your group can bless a number of different groups within your community in the name of your congregation. Young mothers, homebound members or needy families could all benefit from the basic level of preparation that this kit can provide. Of course, included in each kit is a spiritual care resource called "Trusting in His Love." You can email us at [disaster@lcms.org](mailto:disaster@lcms.org) for as many free copies of this

document as you need, we're happy to see them used — we will also mail you as many of the Survival Kit bags as you need. Just don't hesitate to ask.

The cost for these kits can be very reasonable. For the most basic of kits, \$10–15 each is realistic. However, a more robust kit can be put together for just a little bit more, \$20–30 each. And don't think you have to come up with all the funds on your own — connect with stores in your community, speak to managers, and you may have a portion of the items donated. For further assistance, Thrivent Action Team funds could be used to feed your group putting the kits together, or to purchase the included items themselves.

In conclusion, thank you for your interest in this project! It is simple but can also be a unique opportunity to confess to your community that your congregation desires to help and serve the neighbor in times of need. And, Lord willing, it can give you another opportunity to share the Love of Jesus at the same time.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about *LCMS Disaster Response*, please visit [lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/disaster-response](https://lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/disaster-response).





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PHIL. 4:4-9

**“ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things”



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**For more information about the LCMS RSO ministry, visit [lcms.org/rso](http://lcms.org/rso).**

**If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, contact Deaconess Dorothy Krans at 314-996-1636 or [dorothea.krans@lcms.org](mailto:dorothea.krans@lcms.org).**

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**WANT MORE RSO NEWS OR LOOKING FOR AN RSO?**

*Check out our searchable directory and find more RSO news at [lcms.org/rso](http://lcms.org/rso).*

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