

Why Bother?

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is sending a growing number of missionaries around the world, yet across the street or around the corner is someone who is overwhelmed, suffering and separated from our Lord. As the world continues to change, the LCMS is poised to bring Christ to those who live alongside us in our communities and who need to hear the Gospel.

The restructuring of our Synod positions the Office of National Mission to work collaboratively in new ways, through

strengthened connections to our 35 districts — and through them each of our 6,200 congregations. Our national mission work serves to support, reinforce and encourage the important work occurring in our nation in three distinct venues: rural/small towns, urban/inner-city and suburban.

Although there are many areas of emphasis in national mission work, all have the same goal and purpose: to bring Christ’s forgiveness and mercy into the lives of people — in various places and differing stations in life — always pointing them to Christ’s gifts at the font, pulpit and altar.



Our Aha! Moment

Christians live outside themselves: they live in Christ by faith and in their neighbor by love.” That was one of Dr. Luther’s most brilliant aha! moments. It coincides with his observation that the nature of sin is “to be curved in on yourself.”

The effect of Christ’s Gospel is that it begins unbending you. It begins lifting up your eyes to behold with joy the certain promises of God in Christ, to know them as true for you, to begin to be filled with the hope that flows from them. And at the same time, it opens your eyes to see and meet the needs of your neighbor with a fiery love, a divine compassion.

Luther encapsulated this aha! in the words of the post-Communion prayer in our Divine Service. “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.”

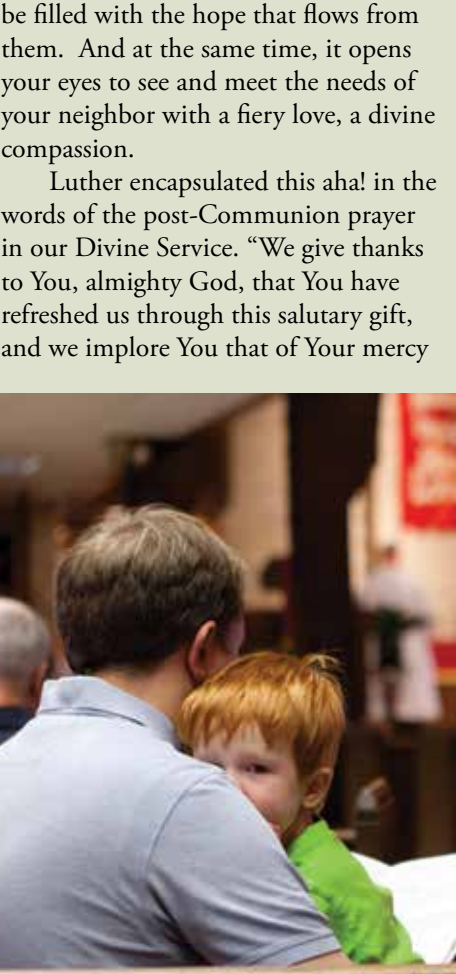
Every time you gather with your fellow saints at the altar, your Jesus comes to you in His body and blood to strengthen your faith by His promises and to set your heart on fire with divine love. That’s another way of saying: He comes to give you a share in His own divine life, for He is perfect trust in the Father and perfect love for the neighbor.

The LCMS’ national ministries exist to serve our rural, inner-city and

suburban congregations, our schools, our pastors, our youth and youth workers, our teachers and deaconesses and many

revitalization at every level — Synod, district and congregation. And we’ll do it all under the umbrella of “Strong Faith,

strong faith FERVENT LOVE



others. In fact, on the following pages, you’ll learn more about *all* the work your Synod does domestically, and it’s a lot! From disaster response to worship to issues of life and health, the LCMS is bearing

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Fervent Love.” In “holding open the door of the Kingdom,” we will let the light of the age to come spill out of each unbent life through **strong faith** and **fervent love** so that congregations are renewed and new outposts of the future are planted and flourish.

Because His life is given to us as our own, the church of Christ remains an enigma in this world. It’s a colony from the future, an outpost of the age that will triumph when our Lord appears in glory, when love will have vanquished all hatred and thanksgiving will have replaced all grumbling.

It’s true that we only experience that in a fragmentary, partial way, because of the sin that clings to us right up to the grave. But despite our weak grasp of the new life, the Holy Spirit still causes the bright light of the coming age to shine through God’s people, like a door to a room filled with light, opening to spill out into the darkness outside, inviting those lost and alone in the darkness to come in with us to the feast of joy that has no end.

witness to Christ, showing mercy to those in need and rejoicing in a robust life together.

As we move forward, we know we have still more work to do, and that work will intentionally have a renewed focus on revitalizing everything we do nationally. We’ll work toward that

The LCMS: the church's w

Black Ministry

Black Ministry in the LCMS began in 1877, only 30 years after the Synod was formed. Though the way this ministry operates has changed over the years, the need for it has not. Central to Black Ministry efforts today is a focus on sharing the Gospel through acts of mercy and through providing assistance, advocacy and networking opportunities for LCMS districts, congregations, schools and organizations seeking to reach out to predominantly black populations. The aim is to touch lives with the Gospel through mercy care.

One of the objectives of Black Ministry is to establish working relationships with African immigrants. The present wave of African immigration greatly impacts the future of Black Ministry.

– Rev. Dr. Fazier Odom, interim director



Deaconess Ministry

Deaconess Ministry in the LCMS serves to form women who are theologically trained to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ through acts of mercy, spiritual care and teaching the Christian faith. These women serve in congregations alongside the office of pastor or institutions where, like the women of old, they continue to work hard, laboring in the Lord's harvest fields, using their gifts to bless and serve others and to reach out to them with the healing balm of Christ's saving Gospel.

Deaconess ministry is centered on serving the Church through education and mercy, and we point to the pastor for Word and Sacrament.

– Deaconess Grace Rao, director



Disaster Response

Disaster Response brings God's mercy and Word of life into the midst of chaos. Working with the thousands of individuals and families all over the world suffering in the wake of disasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, fires and tornadoes, Disaster Response provides an opportunity for the church to be visibly active in reaching out in mercy to serve the hurting and homeless with physical and spiritual care.

In times of tragedy, there is nothing more important than spiritual care, but physical and emotional needs must never be overlooked.

– Rev. Glenn Merritt, director



Life and Health Ministries

LCMS Life and Health Ministries uphold the sanctity of human life and support Christ-centered health and wellness of mind, body and spirit. In the U.S., Life and Health Ministries supports pro-life and chastity programs and coordinates the work of more than 1,000 parish nurses in LCMS congregations. The ministries also send Mercy Medical Teams to locations around the globe and organize health and nutrition projects for some of the world's most marginalized people. Through this work, Life and Health Ministries is carrying the banner that life is sacred and that all people matter to God.

Mercy work is essential to our life together and our witness as the body of Christ. Everything we do supports the sanctity of life and encourages care for health and wholeness of the whole person, both spiritual and physical.

– Maggie Karner, director



Recognized Service Organizations

Nonprofits that are granted LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO) status help extend the reach of the LCMS by addressing the human, social, economic, educational and spiritual needs of people within their communities nationwide. RSOs include nursing homes and senior care centers, adoption agencies, low-income housing for the elderly, food banks, international relief organizations and those that provide immigration and refugee services.

Recognized Service Organizations value their Lutheran identity and relationship to the church. It says who they are and why they show mercy and compassion. They serve those in need and share the Good News of the Gospel.

– Deaconess Dorothy Krans, director

Rural & Small Town Mission

Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM) helps LCMS parishes and districts address the unique challenges facing rural and small-town congregations, which comprise more than 50 percent of all LCMS churches. RSTM's goals are to train church leaders to understand their role in rural culture, to help make their outreach more productive and, most importantly, to enable them to lead dynamic change by being in God's Word. To accomplish this, RSTM offers training to church leaders through webinars and Engaging Rural Communities Events and provides seminary students with practical experience to equip them for work in rural ministry.

Rural and small-town congregations are positioned wonderfully by our Lord to be His hands and feet to an increasingly troubled world. ... our work focuses on strengthening and revitalizing this most important part of our church body.

– Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director

work at home

School Ministry

School Ministry serves as a national voice for Lutheran schools, upholding the standards of Christ-centered schools that are academically strong and respectfully operated. Nationwide, there are 2,335 LCMS schools, which include early-childhood centers, elementary schools and high schools. School Ministry assists, equips and uplifts educators, district staff, education executives and congregational leaders, so that through them, children at LCMS schools may be equipped as disciples of Jesus Christ. It advocates for professional excellence, provides relevant resources and services, and builds collaborative systems of service and support.

We want our schools to make sure their number-one purpose is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise we don't need to exist.

– Dr. William Cochran, director

Specialized Pastoral Ministry

Specialized Pastoral Ministry trains and certifies ministers to serve people who are ill, imprisoned, aging, troubled, conflicted and isolated. Through chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical education, these ordained or commissioned ministers encounter people in the midst of everyday settings as they bear witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

We deal with crisis all the time. ... We rely not only on our education and training, but we also trust that the Holy Spirit is in the midst of it and will bring opportunities to share the message of Jesus Christ.

– Rev. Joel Hempel, coordinator

Stewardship Ministry

Stewardship Ministry assists congregations in cultivating and growing their understanding of stewardship, and in doing so, provides a variety of resources for individuals and congregations alike. Faith Aflame, a process designed to change and improve the stewardship culture of a congregation, equips pastors and lay leaders to discuss how the Gospel invites cheerful and thankful giving. As the joyous activity of the baptized, stewardship involves managing all of the gifts God gives His children to serve their neighbor: time, talents and treasure.

It's hard for me to talk about my faith [with others]. But I have found that talking about what I do for my church, and how I serve, makes it easier.

– Carol Zeile, Peace Lutheran Church, Alma, Mich.

Urban & Inner-City Mission

Urban and Inner-city Mission (UICM) garners expertise and resources to facilitate the revitalization of congregations, schools and special-service ministries. Urban ministry is often associated with a set of complex demographic, social and cultural conditions. LCMS congregations are witnesses to Christ's Gospel and provide a spiritual home for people who are searching for hope and healing. UICM assists congregations in urban areas in reaching these populations with the message of salvation and bring God's Word into sharp focus for people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds.

Lutherans engaged in urban ministry need look no further than within their local church doors and neighbors to find urgent need for mercy care.

– Rev. Quentin Poulson, director

Witness & Outreach Ministry

Witness and Outreach Ministry partners with LCMS districts to provide resources to help congregations reach others with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Its main outreach, "The 72 — Partners on the Road," uses field representatives from LCMS districts that contact interested congregations or those recommended by district presidents or mission executives. Teams of two to four people help train members of congregations to reach out to people in their communities and to involve them in the life of the church.

It's vitally important today that we get churches in our country excited about the mission field all around them.

– Rev. Al Tormoehlen, director

Worship

Worship nurtures a culture of confessional faithfulness, artistic excellence and integrity in the presentation, distribution and reception of God's life-giving gifts in Word and Sacraments. It develops and deepens an understanding and love for the Lutheran heritage in Christian worship and promotes the *Lutheran Service Book* as the core worship resource for the LCMS while also identifying and encouraging the many musical treasures and gifts that the Holy Spirit continues to pour upon the church. The ministry provides a variety of resources that assist LCMS districts, congregations and church workers as they gather around God's Word and Sacraments in corporate worship. It also serves as a resource for worship planning for special events and conferences and provides chaplain services for the employees of the LCMS International Center.

The Church's song is a living thing. We're all part of one great choir, and we don't silence the past or the present, but we both sing together for the sake of the future. ... The Lord is not done giving His gifts, but they come by way of addition, not replacement.

– Rev. Will Weedon, director, International Center chaplain

Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry creates an environment where people are talking, thinking and engaging youth and young adults while keeping Jesus Christ as the central focus of all of its endeavors. The ministry faithfully leads and serves the young community of God's children within LCMS congregations and provides resources and networks to help them reach others outside the faith. The ministry oversees the Council of Lutheran Youth Fellowship Representatives, the National Youth Gathering, Servant Events and LCMS Campus Ministry.

Our priority is to help young people grow in their faith in Jesus Christ. The challenge is to help them understand that Jesus is real, that He suffered and died for them, forgives their sins, and they share in God's promises, guaranteed in the resurrection of Christ from the grave.

– Rev. Dr. Terry Dittmer, director

Church and Community Engagement

Gospel Seeds

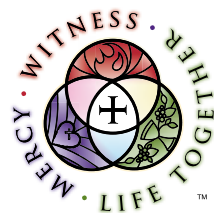
The "Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs" program trains congregations to identify unmet or underserved needs in their communities in order to be a more effective witness to the lost around them. During a four-day training, congregation members conduct interviews with neighbors and local agencies to get to the heart of the most critical community needs. Over the years, the LCMS has found that one out of 10 interviews yields a prospective family that desires a follow-up call from the church. Through Gospel Seeds, the church is able to build closer relationships with neighbors and ultimately make new disciples for Christ.

Soldiers and Veterans of the Cross

Through Soldiers and Veterans of the Cross, the LCMS cares for the spiritual and physical well-being of the servants of the church. Since 2004, Soldiers of the Cross has provided financial support and pastoral care for current LCMS church workers who are impacted by a natural disaster or other emergencies. Veterans of the Cross, which is funded by the LCMS Office of National Mission and administered by Concordia Plan Services, supplements low, inadequate pensions, making it possible for retirees and widows to afford the cost of necessities like medication, food and electricity.



Our national impact



- Strengthen **faith** by encouraging growth in the way God’s Word has free course in our congregations and homes;
- Strengthen **love** by nurturing ministries of mercy flowing from the gifts received at the font, pulpit and altar;
- Strengthen **hope** by encouraging partnerships in the Gospel that clearly confess Christ;
- Strengthen **workers** by fostering intentional care of body, soul and healthy relationships;
- Strengthen **schools** by championing renewed clarity and commitment to the mission of Lutheran education;
- Strengthen **youth work**, nurturing our young people within a community shaped by Lutheran values: devotion to the means of grace and vigorous service to our neighbor. We will provide for our young people a sturdy apologetic for the faith once delivered to the saints; and
- Strengthen **congregations** by fostering a faithful Lutheran approach to confessing Christ to the neighbor and to planting daughter congregations.

Emphasis Areas

While each emphasis area focuses on a specific topic, purpose or group, all have the same goal and purpose: Bring Christ’s forgiveness and mercy into the lives of people! When you hear these ministry names, know they are integral to national mission:

- Witness & Outreach Ministry
 - The 72
- Black Ministry
- Hispanic Ministry
- Rural & Small Town Mission
- Urban & Inner City Mission

National Mercy Operations

- Domestic Grants
- Disaster Response
- Life and Health Ministries
- Deaconess Ministry
- Specialized Pastoral Ministry

Church and Community Engagement

- Gospel Seeds
- Soldiers of the Cross
- Veterans of the Cross

- Youth Ministry
- School Ministry
- Stewardship Ministry
- Worship
- Recognized Service Organizations

Resources

Black Ministry

lcms.org/blackministry
[f](#) LCMSBlackMinistry

Church & Community Engagement

lcms.org/gospelseeds
lcms.org/sotc
lcms.org/votc

Deaconess Ministry

lcms.org/deaconess

Disaster Response

lcms.org/disaster
[f](#) LCMSWRHC

Life and Health Ministries

lcms.org/health
lcms.org/life
[f](#) LCMSLife

Recognized Service Organizations

lcms.org/rso

Rural & Small Town Mission

lcms.org/rstm
[f](#) LcmsRSTM

School Ministry

lcms.org/education
[f](#) pages/LCMS-School-Ministry/110027252354304

Specialized Pastoral Ministry

lcms.org/spm

Stewardship Ministry

lcms.org/stewardship

Witness & Outreach Ministry

lcms.org/the72

Worship

lcms.org/worship

Youth Ministry

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