



Serving Over Spring Break

Rebecca Pumphrey, a student in the pre-deaconess program at Concordia University, St. Paul, St. Paul, Minn., spent spring break this year helping homeowners in Fort Myers, Fla., rebuild after Hurricane Ian.

The March 5–11 mission trip — geared specifically at college students on break — was one of three one-week volunteer deployments organized by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in partnership with the LCMS Florida-Georgia District and Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Myers. Each week included Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) training, as well as work in a variety of rebuilding projects underway in Fort Myers’ Harlem Heights neighborhood.

The Rev. Michael Meyer, director of disaster training for the Synod, said that LCMS Disaster Response staff began connecting with both the Concordia University System schools and the Synod’s seminaries soon after the hurricane hit in September 2022. Over the course of three weeks, 52 students from five Synod schools and one public university with a Lutheran student organization sent students to take part in the service project.

“The students who received the LERT training are fully certified ... [and] are welcome to join with other LERT members in future response efforts. I’m hoping that, once they graduate, they remain connected to LERT,” Meyer said.

“Even more important, though, is that they remain connected to a congregation. ... These are future pastors and teachers, social workers and nurses, engineers and computer programmers. We pray that this experience will nourish the desire to continue that love for the neighbor throughout their entire lives.”

The students also learned hands-on skills, such as drywalling, painting, and floor and cabinet installation — all under the supervision of knowledgeable team leaders. In addition, they met the people they were serving.

The Rev. Greg Michael, pastor of Christus Victor Lutheran Church and Student Center in Athens, Ga., brought four students from the University of Georgia. Michael said that the time they spent talking to the homeowners,

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— Rev. Michael Meyer

their children and their neighbors was as important as the work they accomplished.

“It was good for us to listen to their frustrations and hopes, to commiserate with them in the face of a broken world, and to share the ... love that Jesus has shown to us,” Michael said. “I am confident that Christ was present ... in our efforts.”



Top: The Rev. Greg Michael (right), pastor of Christus Victor Lutheran Church and Student Center in Athens, Ga., works with students as they repair a home damaged by Hurricane Ian. **Bottom:** Student Rebecca Pumphrey of Concordia University, St. Paul, chats with homeowner BreeAnna Noel as she helps repair Noel’s damaged home.

Give God Glory...

... for the members, societies, zones and districts of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, who faithfully and joyfully support numerous LCMS projects and programs through their prayers and mission grants.



... for the Rev. Dr. Walter and Robyn Steele, LCMS career missionaries serving in East Africa. Walter is a theological educator at Neema Lutheran College in Matongo, Kenya, and serves as an advisor in curriculum development for schools throughout the region. Robyn serves as an instructor in nutrition at Matongo and conducts workshops in the region. Their work prepares pastors, evangelists

and deaconesses for the Lutheran churches of Africa. Learn more at lcms.org/steele.

... for the SOS Center, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that facilitates Christian care, educational instruction, after-school programming and life skills activities for children and families in Milwaukee. Learn more at soscenterinc.org.

... for faithful Lutherans like Julie Faulkner, administrator and teacher at Zion Lutheran Preschool in Garrett, Ind. This year marked Faulkner’s 50th year of volunteering for the church’s vacation Bible school. We give God glory for such a dedicated witness to the love of Jesus.

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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Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison Ext. 1402
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Christian J. Boehlke Ext. 1311
Interim Executive Director
LCMS Office of International Mission

Rev. Daniel M. Galchutt Ext. 1730
Executive Director
LCMS Office of National Mission



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.

Offering English Classes in **BELIZE**

“Have a good evening.”

The sentence may have been slightly stilted, but the smile that accompanied it could not have been larger. That is because this common American phrase came from the mouth of a Guatemalan woman who had just begun learning conversational English through a program offered by LCMS missionaries in Belize.

After months of planning, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes started Jan. 28–29 at Good Shepherd (El Buen Pastor) Lutheran Church in the small village of Valley of Peace, Belize. The village, which is tucked between sugar plantations and farms, is home to many refugees from Central America who have fled violence or conflict in their home countries.

The ESL classes begin with a 15-minute devotion led by Pastor Benjamin Flores, an alliance missionary from Bolivia who now serves alongside LCMS missionaries in Belize. LCMS missionary Jordan Logston then teaches the two-hour class. The classes are offered year-round on both Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. Fifteen students of varying English levels are currently attending the classes.

Logston plans to give biannual evaluations. Certificates of graduation will be given to students who complete the class with a passing grade, and special awards will be distributed to students with perfect attendance.

The students were excited to begin classes. In many of the smaller communities in Belize, residents speak predominantly Spanish or Mayan. However, since the official language of Belize is English, the government and many businesses require their workers to speak English. Through these ESL classes, the students will have the opportunity both to improve their English-language skills — and thus potentially to seek out better jobs — and to hear the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Read more about the work in Belize at international.lcms.org/latin-america-caribbean/belize/.



Right: LCMS missionary Jordan Logston (left) reviews a student's entry evaluation.



Above: Logston teaches vocabulary for talking about family relationships.

A More Excellent Way

As the world around us continues to tumble into chaos, my thoughts have been turning to St. Cyprian. He was a lawyer in Carthage (now Tunis, in the North African country of Tunisia) in the third century. He converted to Christianity and was baptized at age 35. A few years later, in A.D. 249, he became bishop of Carthage. He lived in horrible times under Emperors Decius and Valerian. The emperors ordered Christians throughout the Roman empire to make sacrifices to the gods. Cyprian went into hiding; many denied the faith. A controversy developed, and a rigorist party denied any way back into the church for those who had fallen. Cyprian wisely called for serious repentance and restoration.

A terrible plague began in Ethiopia at the same time (some say a combination of measles and an Ebola-like virus), and thousands died. Cyprian preached to his people, echoing the words of Jesus in Luke 6:33–35: If we only do good to those who do good to us, are we doing any more than the heathen or tax collector? He urged Christians to care for the sick and dying (both Christian and non-Christian) at great risk to themselves. Many Christians died doing so. The good bishop urged Christians to also bury the pagan dead, for their bodies were also “created from the dust” and thus were God’s

holy creatures. These acts won a tremendous following among the people, and many became Christians.

Our plague today is a plague of utter confusion, the result of the denial of God the Father as Creator “who created them ... male and female” (Matt. 19:4) and the incarnate Son as Redeemer. This hysteria over sex and identity is hurting millions. The Lord allows this world to continue for one reason, that is, until the full number of the elect enter the kingdom of God. And we who know our Creator Father, through Jesus, His only begotten Son, are here to serve our families, Christian or not, and tell them of a “more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). That way is the way of faith, hope and love in Christ.

In A.D. 258, a Roman official told Cyprian to sacrifice to the gods (practice the state religion) or die. Cyprian refused to sacrifice, and upon hearing his death sentence he said, “Thanks be to God.” “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

In Christ,

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

