



Sharing Hope in Honduras

This past fall, Rosita stood before a group gathered at Buen Pastor (Good Shepherd) Lutheran Church in Comayagüela, Honduras, and talked about how she had experienced the grace of God in her life.

“She had lost her sight almost completely,” explained the Rev. Herb Burch, a missionary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) based in Belize. “As a result of [a clinic held by MOST Ministries], her condition was diagnosed, arrangements were made for needed operations, and her sight was restored. She became a member of Buen Pastor out of gratitude for all the Lord has done for her.”

Rosita is one of 255,000-plus people who have received help through MOST Ministries, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization. The organization partners with Lutheran pastors, LCMS missionaries and others to send volunteer teams around the world to hold eyeglass clinics and serve in other ways as requested.

Over the past few years, MOST has supported LCMS mission efforts in Latin America — especially in Honduras and Belize — by sending teams to hold eyeglass clinics for the community.



LCMS missionary Rev. Herb Burch looks on as a woman tries on glasses during a MOST Ministries clinic held in Belize in 2022.

Each team brings nearly 4,000 pairs of donated and refurbished eyeglasses of various sizes, styles and prescriptions so that every person who needs glasses can receive their very own pair. The team is sometimes also able to help someone with a more serious eye issue, like Rosita, get the proper local care.

Each clinic has a local host — often a local Lutheran church or pastor — who is invited to share the Gospel with those who come. The hosts usually give out bracelets with different colored beads that represent the story of salvation.

“We have the pastor do this as a way for the community members to recognize him as their spiritual leader in the community,” said Kaleigh Bone, team administrator and communication specialist for MOST Ministries. The team then leaves the registration papers with the local host so that the church can follow up with those who were served.

While this type of eye care may be routine for the average American, it is greatly appreciated by those who come to the clinics. “Members of Buen Pastor look forward to the MOST ‘brigades,’ as they are termed in Spanish,” Burch said. “Buen Pastor has become a beacon of hope and Gospel sharing ... through visits from [these] teams.”

Give God Glory...

... for LAMP Ministry, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO) with locations in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and New Haven, Mich. LAMP volunteers and staff share the love of Jesus with indigenous people in remote areas of northern Canada through vacation Bible schools, sports camps, Bible study programs and women’s retreats. Learn more at lampministry.org.

... for LeadaChild, an LCMS RSO located in Olathe, Kan, dedicated to sharing the Good News of Jesus’ love with children in developing countries. The organization provides scholarships, school registration and supplies so children can attend Lutheran schools and educational enrichment programs. Learn more at leadachild.org.

... for Perry Lutheran Homes and Lutheran Family Service, both LCMS RSOs serving in Iowa. In January, they came together with two LCMS congregations to care for those affected

by a shooting at Perry High School. On the afternoon of the shooting, pastoral staff from both churches led prayer services at the three Perry Lutheran Homes campuses, inviting residents, staff, parents, children and community members to attend. At the request of Perry Lutheran Homes staff, Christian counselors from Lutheran Family Service were deployed to help those impacted process the day’s trauma and be reminded of Christ’s love. Read the full story at reporter.lcms.org/2024/lutherans-offer-christs-comfort-after-iowa-school-shooting.



A Perry Lutheran Homes resident makes prayer crosses for those impacted by a shooting at Perry High School.

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 | |
| Rev. Dr. Cory J. Rajek | Ext. 1311 |
| 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.



Helping Young People Blossom in the Church and Community

Rebecca's Garden of Hope (RGOH) has been serving children in the Orlando community since before it was officially registered as an LCMS Recognized Service Organization in 2011. RGOH got its start as an outreach effort of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Orlando, and it now offers a template that many LCMS congregations have used to start their own successful tutoring programs.

"People in the community are receptive because the tutoring is free," says Sanya Parson, executive director and founder of RGOH. "Tutoring and mentoring is the invitation we use to help more young people know Christ as their Savior."

Yet even as the program was helping thousands of children across the country improve their grades, Parson wondered, "What else can we do to help our children reach their full potential?" She saw that many families in these underserved communities didn't fully understand how to prepare their children for life after high school.

In early 2023, RGOH launched a new program — Next Level You — to help middle schoolers and high schoolers learn life skills, make Christ-centered choices, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and start exploring career and college options. As part of this new effort, RGOH staff and volunteers took a group of young people on two college visits, helped students through college interviews, and assisted with completing the necessary paperwork to enroll in college.

One of the participants, Gemini, experienced hardship and seemingly insurmountable challenges, including living in a car with her family. Yet through support and encouragement, she persevered and is now attending one of the colleges the group visited, where she is majoring in dietetics. In addition to the mentorship and college prep she received through Next Level You, Gemini was awarded a scholarship from RGOH to pursue her educational goals.

"I look forward to showing ... how committed I am to using these resources to become a dietician," she writes in a thank-you letter. "I will also continue helping tutor other students with Rebecca's Garden of Hope and mentor them so they will set goals to want to succeed as well."

Parson hopes other congregations working with at-risk youth will see the unique opportunities this level of support offers and contact RGOH to learn more.

RGOH's volunteers have included college students, engineers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, pastors and even someone who works for NASA. Yet, Parson says, "it's not rocket science."



Next Level You participants pose for a photo during a college visit in 2023.

"It's not rocket science. It's about building relationships, being available, coaching and working together..."

—Sanya Parson, executive director and founder of RGOH

It's about building relationships, being available, coaching and working together with these youth to help them accomplish their goals. ... It provides a way to reconnect youth with our churches and help them grow both spiritually and educationally while building on a foundation in Christ."

Learn more at rebeccasgardenofhope.org.

Following Jesus' Example

Years ago, many of us had gotten the idea that mission work excludes care for people in need, or that the church as a body, including the local congregation, has no mandate to care for the physical needs of its members and neighbors. To be sure, without the clear Gospel of Christ's blood-bought forgiveness received by faith, all would be for naught. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" Jesus asks in Mark 8. But we also see in Jesus a deep care for the needy and the suffering. From the Gospels, we know all lives are precious to Jesus. We see that the apostles continued in a very orderly way to attend to real needs (2 Cor. 8–9; Acts 6; etc.). Thus, we always preach the Gospel, plant churches and show mercy.

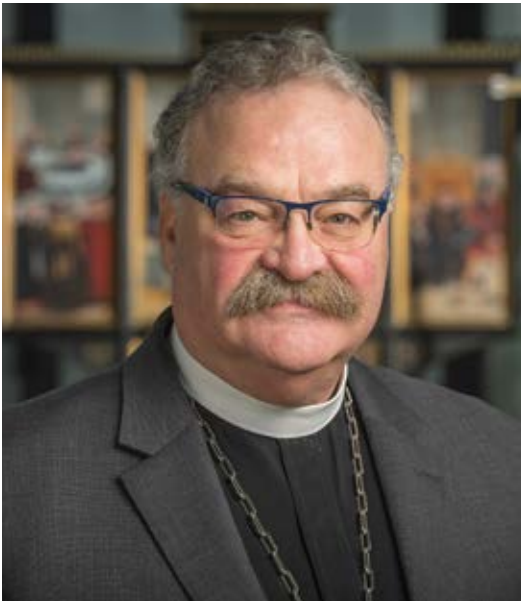
Over time, I've discovered a plethora of statements by Martin Luther on both the individual and corporate life of mercy of the church in the name of Jesus. Here's one to keep in mind:

This is a proper way to preach: first to emphasize faith, what it does and what its power and nature are, namely, that it gives us enough of everything necessary for piety and salvation, that one can do nothing except through faith,

and that through it we have everything God has. Now if God has dealt this way with us, has given us everything that is His, and has become our own, so that we have all blessings and enough of everything through faith, what are we to do now? Are we to be idle? To be sure, it would be best for us to die. Then all this would be ours. But since we are still living here, we should do for our neighbor as God has done us and give ourselves to him as God has given Himself to us. Thus it is faith that saves us. But it is love that prompts us to give ourselves to our neighbor, now that we have enough. That is, faith receives from God, love gives to the neighbor. (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967], 67.)

In Christ,

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



Photos: Rebecca's Garden of Hope, LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford