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.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

February 23, 2021
LSA CEO Virtual Summit Series
2020–2021 — Looking Forward: Post-Pandemic Realities and Opportunities
lutheranservices.org/ceo-summit-series

March 19-20, 2021
LCMS 2021 Virtual Life Conference

May 18–20, 2021
LCMS Foundation Gift Planning Training — St. Louis, Mo.
lcmsfoundation.org/gift-planning/training

Shepherd’s Heart Ministry

L
ike many other disaster response agencies, Hurricane Katrina was the catalyst for our genesis. Seeing the catastrophic impact on thousands of people, the members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Gardendale, Ala., wondered, “What can we do?” Remembering the words of Scripture in James 2:15–16 (NIV), “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?”, in January of 2006 the members of Good Shepherd voted to call the Rev. Ed Brashier as a deployed missionary to the Gulf Coast.

Because Pastor Brashier’s first career was as a lineman for Alabama Power Company, he already had 20 years of experience in disaster response, but now, instead of building power lines, he was delivering the power of Christ to hurting people. It began as weekend trips to remove trees from houses with members of Good Shepherd, but eventually Pastor Brashier was contracted as Director of Camp Restore and served with his family in New Orleans until August of 2008.

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It was relatively peaceful for the next two years, with no major storms ravaging the USA. Then came the Day of Devastation in April of 2011, when 50 tornados tore through the South, leaving a trail of death and destruction. Encouraged by the Rev. Glenn Merritt and with grants from LCMS World Relief and Human Care (now LCMS Disaster Response), Shepherd’s Heart Ministry resumed its mission of sharing the love of Christ with hurting people.

The following year Shepherd’s Heart Ministry incorporated in the state of Alabama. As LCMS Disaster Response developed the Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) ministry, Shepherd’s Heart had the privilege to serve in a loose partnership with the leadership of LCMS Disaster Response, the Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson and the Rev. Michael Meyer. The LERT volunteers have multiplied the ministry of disaster response and elevated the ability of the LCMS to bring the comfort of Christ Jesus to thousands of people after disaster strikes.

It has been a source of great joy and pride to see the membership of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod rise to meet the need of those affected by disasters. From individual congregations, campus ministries and other agencies such as Lutheran Church Charities, volunteers have leaped into action to bring comfort to people in a time of overwhelming need.

What does the future hold for Shepherd’s Heart Ministry? As a new Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS, the vision is to build and operate a Disaster Response Training Center.

This would involve the following:

- Purchase property in North Alabama and create a multifaceted campus to serve as a training center for disaster response;
- Offer week-long instruction in the following areas: LERT training, Chainsaw Safety & Operation, Skid-Steer Operation, Compact Loader Operation, and Advanced Tree Felling Techniques;
- Provide the facilities to host retreats, conferences and evangelism training opportunities;
- Develop and maintain a warehouse for the collection and distribution of materials needed by LERT teams for disaster response; and
- Provide Recreational Vehicle (RV) sites for rent to help fund the ministry.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Gal. 6:10 NIV).

For more information about Shepherd’s Heart Ministry, please visit shmlcms.com.
Many people are blessed with amazing creative gifts and talents. When those talents are then used to make beautiful and useful items that they share with others, that gift multiplies and blessings flow. One never knows the potential length and breadth of that gift, or the blessings that are given to others.

The Trinity Lutheran Church (TLC) Quilters, from Algona, Iowa, are a wonderful group of very talented Christians who sew, knit and crochet blankets to give away. Some of those blankets made it all the way to Good Shepherd Community in Sauk Rapids, Minn. Good Shepherd is a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS and has been in existence since 1963. Today, we are a full-continuum, 30 acre senior living campus offering patio homes, senior apartments, home health care, assisted living, memory care and skilled long-term care.

A fun, little-known fact is that, from 1963 to 2007, Good Shepherd had more volunteers than paid staff until we opened our second campus, Shepherd of Grace, located in Becker, Minn. Our volunteers primarily came from the 17 sponsoring LCMS congregations affiliated with Good Shepherd. Volunteers continue to be a vital, necessary extension of our paid staff. Without them, we wouldn't be able to offer the same level of care to those we serve.

One of our special volunteer programs is called Shepherd's Watch. This program is a presence ministry to residents under hospice care or in the final journey of their life. Some people don't have family close by or even any living family members. Shepherd's Watch was designed to offer care and comfort to those who need that special TLC (tender loving care) and can be a supplement to the family’s presence. Our volunteers are trained by hospice staff to provide emotional support, aromatherapy with essential oil patches and hand massages. They read Scripture, devotions or a good book, and play relaxing or comforting music loaded on to iPods. Sometimes they just sit with them, holding their hand, and are just present. We believe that no one should die alone.

The gift of these wonderful blankets, handmade with love by the TLC Quilters, will be a great addition to our Shepherd's Watch baskets. It will be like getting a warm hug from our Christian brothers and sisters, who just happen to live in Iowa.

The TLC Quilters in Iowa, just like the Shepherd's Watch volunteers in Minnesota, provide a labor of love. They give from a selfless desire to provide love, care and compassion to others, and to share Christ’s love through their amazing gifts and talents. If I were to ask any one of them, they would be humble and say that they aren't doing much, but to that person who is alone in the world and at the end of their life, they are doing everything.

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Lora is a dedicated volunteer from Shepherd of the Pines Lutheran Church located in Rice, Minn., and she is one of our Shepherd’s Watch volunteers. Lora feels that Shepherd’s Watch is her calling to share Christ’s love with those who need her, and she says, “I get way more out of the ministry than they do.” She has made herself available night or day, whenever she is needed. In addition to Shepherd’s Watch, Lora spends many hours each week at Good Shepherd doing individual visits with many of the residents in our skilled care center. When you give to someone else through volunteering, you are richly blessed also.

Shepherd’s Watch is just one of the programs related to spiritual care or chaplaincy at Good Shepherd Community. The Rev. Keith Weise, our pastor and chaplain, provides wonderful spiritual services to everyone who lives and works on our campus. He is the pastor of our church, The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd. Our chapel became an official LCMS congregation in 2003. At that time, we were the only official LCMS congregation on a long-term care campus in the United States. In addition to worship services, Rev. Weise also provides individual prayer visits, spiritual counseling, Bible studies and much more. He is a true blessing to all of us.

Our chapel is located literally in the center of our 30 acre campus, and our ministry is at the center of all that we do. We believe in resident-centered care and we strive to serve from a holistic perspective, taking care of all aspects of the person in mind, body and spirit. The values we live by are service, compassion, trust and respect.

Thank you to our new friends at Trinity Lutheran Church in Algona. We greatly appreciate the wonderful gift of your beautifully handmade blankets. Please know that your love, care and compassion can be felt in their comfort and warmth across the miles.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Shepherd’s Watch volunteer program is currently on hold.
“What will I leave behind?” That can be a nagging question, especially for the 10,000 Americans who will turn 65 today, tomorrow and each day for the next 20 years. Our current “Age Wave” has propelled congregations to address issues of importance for older adults. For nearly 30 years, Adult Lutherans Organized for Action (ALOA) has equipped congregations for more intentional and dynamic ministry by, for and with older adults. ALOA does that by providing practical help and valuable resources. One of ALOA’s newest resources is Faith Stories™.

Research shows that legacy questions such as “What will I leave behind?” become increasingly important as we get older. In 2018 ALOA began a partnership with Prince of Peace Christian School, Carrollton, Texas. Under the supervision of Upper School instructor Nick Weiss, high school students videotaped congregation members telling their Faith Story. In the past three years, this cross-generational project has grown to become an exceptional experience for both teens and older adults.

A Faith Story is the first-person telling of an individual’s journey or selected milestones, of their relationship with Jesus. Whether included with family documents or recorded on a cell phone or video, a Faith Story communicates the importance of our personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Every Christian has a Faith Story, although we might not think of our journey with Jesus in that way. By its very definition, a Faith Story is autobiographical. The use of the first-person “I” adds a level of immediacy and a degree of intimacy that instantly communicates the importance of the content. Many people use a chronological organization, which reflects normal stages of faith development. Others highlight people, places or events that became signature faith milestones in their life. Still others follow a standard storytelling arc: setting, character development, action, climax, resolution. Regardless of the specific approach, each Faith Story reflects who God is and how He has worked in their life.

The process of reflection can be revealing. In our busy lives, sometimes we aren’t aware of how busy God is! Thinking through our relationship with God not only offers the opportunity to express thanks for His blessings, but also to consider possibilities for continued growth, as His story continues through us.

Some people reveal their Faith Story at a family gathering or milestone event such as an anniversary or confirmation. This allows loved ones to share their own recollections and ask questions. Viewing, reading or hearing this personal testimony to God’s presence can encourage others in their spiritual walk or even lead someone to consider a relationship with Jesus Christ. Other people ask that their Faith Story be shown or read at their funeral. Only God knows the potential reach of such a personal legacy gift from the heart.

After three years of successful field testing and “tweaking,” ALOA’s Faith Story initiative is ready to be shared and embraced throughout the LCMS and beyond. To see a sample Faith Story and multiple resources that answer the question “What will you leave behind?”, go to aloaserves.org and click “Faith Story.”

In addition to initiatives like Faith Stories and information on key areas that affect older adults, ALOA’s free monthly webinars provide access to experts in the field and links to high quality resources. This year, an Older Adult Ministry Toolkit is being created to serve as a guide to congregations in providing intentional ministry. This is the first component in ALOA’s three-year development of its Congregational Centers for Vital and Resilient Aging program.

This article was written by Dr. Mary Manz Simon, ALOA board member.
I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

JOHN 10:14-18

LOOKING FOR SUMMER CAMP ADVENTURES AND RETREATS?

Check out one of our RSO camps:

Camp Concordia, Inc.
Gowen, Mich.
www.campconcordia.org

Camp Luther of Nebraska, Inc.
Schuyler, Neb.
www.campluther.org

Camp LuWiSoMo, Inc.
Wild Rose, Wisc.
www.luwisomo.org

Camp Okoboji Lutheran Association
Milford, Iowa
www.campokoboji.org

Camp Omega, Inc.
Waverly, Minn.
www.campomega.org

Camp Perkins Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, Inc.
Ketchum, Idaho
www.campperkins.org

Family Adventure and Recreational Ministry
Chipita Park, Colo.
www.farmministry.org

Heit’s Point Lutheran Ministries, Inc.
Lincoln, Mo.
www.heitspoint.com

Lutheran Camp Association, Inc.
Albion, Ind.
www.lutherhaven.org

Lutheran Outdoors Ministry of Texas, Inc.
(Camp Lone Star)
La Grange, Texas
www.lomt.com

Lutheran Valley Retreat, Inc.
Fiorissant, Colo.
www.lvr.org

Shepherd’s Hill Retreats, Inc.
St. John, N.D.
www.shretreat.org

South Central Lutheran Camp Association of Indiana
(Lakeview Ministries)
Seymour, Ind.
www.lakeviewministries.camp

Valley Camp Ministries
North Bend, Wash.
www.valleycamp.org

Walcamp Outdoor Ministries, Inc.
Kingston, Ill.
www.walcamp.org

Check out a list of other Lutheran camps at nloma.org/camp-directory.

(WANT MORE RSO NEWS OR LOOKING FOR AN RSO?
Check out our searchable directory and find more RSO news at lcms.org/rsos)

(NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of Lutheran camps, nor is every camp on this list affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.)

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For more information about the LCMS RSO ministry, visit lcms.org/rsos.

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