

# Celebrating God's Mercy in the Dominican Republic

**J**an. 3, 2021, was a special day for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's mission team in the Dominican Republic. On this day 10 years earlier, six children with intellectual and developmental disabilities moved out of state-run institutions and into the Dominican Lutheran church's new group home.

In the institutions, the children received only basic necessities, no education and little human interaction or love. But at *Hogares Luteranos el Buen Pastor* (Good Shepherd Lutheran Homes), they were surrounded by loving "aunts" and "uncles" from the church who volunteered as caregivers.

"Mission church members, who were new Christians, were putting their faith into action," Deaconess Danelle Putnam Schumann, an LCMS missionary in the Dominican Republic, wrote in a recent blog post. "Some of the members did not have running water in their homes at the time, yet they understood that greater poverty existed in the orphanages. They joyfully gave their time, resources, and offerings to help provide things for the kids that the orphanage did not."

The children were baptized on Easter Sunday in 2011. Since then, they have grown in their faith, received individualized therapy and attended the Lutheran school next door, as they were able. A couple of them — such as Estefani — have even been able to gain some work experience now that they are older.

On Jan. 5, Estefani turned 22 years old and received a special birthday present: a new bedroom to encourage her on her journey to independence. This gift was a bright spot during the challenges of the pandemic, and her group home "sibling" Randy happily stepped in to help paint her new room.

Although Estefani, Randy and their "siblings" did not have a home or a family at one time, now they are part of the family of God. And through the group home, the church demonstrates that all people are valuable to God.



Director Dr. Marisol Martinez (left) and Deaconess Danelle Putnam Schumann (right) pose outside of the group home with its six residents (clockwise from lower left): Moises, Estefani, Francis, Ramona, Junior and Randy.

**LEARN MORE:** [international.lcms.org/good-shepherd-lutheran-homes/](https://international.lcms.org/good-shepherd-lutheran-homes/).

## Give God Glory...



... for the Rev. Dr. John Bombaro and the Rev. Dr. Charles Cortright, LCMS career missionaries in the Eurasia

region. Together they conduct an online seminary program called the Livonian Lutheran Project. Through this program, they train, catechize and mentor future pastors, church workers and recent converts. Read more at [international.lcms.org/we-want-to-be-baptized/](https://international.lcms.org/we-want-to-be-baptized/).

... for Adult Lutherans Organized for Action (ALOA), an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that focuses on helping congregations strengthen ministry for older adults. One of ALOA's newest resources is a cross-generational project called Faith Stories™, which provides direction for older adults to work with young people to record a video testimony

of their faith and life. To learn more, visit [aloaserves.org/faith-stories/](https://aloaserves.org/faith-stories/).

... for a successful missionary orientation recently hosted by the LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM). Five missionaries have accepted the call to serve in two of the four OIM regions as theological educators, church planters and outreach specialists. The week culminated in a "Service of Sending" as they go out to bring God's Word to the nations.

... for LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces' "Adopt-a-Chap" program, which links LCMS congregations with our Synod's military chaplains. These congregations and the chaplains they "adopt" establish a relationship through regular communication. The congregations keep the chaplain and his family in prayer as they learn more about his specialized ministry. To learn more, visit [lcms.org/adopt-a-chap](https://lcms.org/adopt-a-chap).

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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### 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" 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.



# BRINGING PEOPLE INTO THE Good Shepherd's Fold

**O**n Saturday, Feb. 20, Deaconess Rachel Jaseph, executive director of The Shepherd's Hand Community Outreach Center in Fort Wayne, Ind., stepped into the cold with a large sign bearing the words "free diapers."

Soon, people began arriving for the center's third Family Health Fair and Diaper Giveaway. Inside, donated diapers formed a pile several feet tall, and community partners had socially distanced tables promoting secular health resources.

The Shepherd's Hand points people to Jesus Christ in this urban neighborhood. Shepherd in the City Lutheran Church started laying the groundwork for the ministry in 2011 with assistance from donors, The Lutheran Foundation serving northeast Indiana, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and the LCMS. Other LCMS congregations now walk together by providing volunteers and financial assistance. It is a model of ministry that corrals resources to bring people to local Word and Sacrament ministries.

"The work here directly connects people to the Gospel because at all of our events we definitely begin and end with prayer, but we also invite people to join us for worship at Shepherd of the City or at any other of our partner congregations," Jaseph said.

The Rev. Dr. Steven Schave, director of LCMS Urban & Inner-City Mission, has been involved since its beginning. "They have maintained a great example of how human care helps to empower communities, while still holding firm to their Lutheran identity, through our theology of the cross and sanctity for human life," he said. "We have been proud to come



**Above:** Deaconess Rachel Jaseph, executive director of The Shepherd's Hand Community Outreach Center in Fort Wayne, Ind., invites people into the center's Family Health Fair and Diaper Giveaway on Feb. 20.

**Top right:** Volunteer Jean Bristol opens the door for Darryl Parks and Adriana Aguilera during the event. **Bottom right:** Deaconess Tiffany Manor, director of LCMS Life Ministry, leads a workshop on choking prevention.

alongside them to help support their work in reaching out to the least of these and welcoming them into the life of the church."

The Shepherd's Hand is a new LCMS Recognized Service Organization, which is a ministry that walks in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS.

During the health fair, nearly 4,500 diapers were distributed to the 70-plus people who came through the outreach center, one of whom was Roshawn. She previously visited for

a Trunk or Treat event and at Thanksgiving.

"This place is really helpful to me," said Roshawn, who helps care for family members.

Deaconess Kimberly Trombley, the organization's board chair, loves seeing repeat contacts like this: "We're sharing the love of Christ with them with a 'hello,' and that is a door opener to bring them into this space. But then beyond that, it is that relationship that develops that is our hope and prayer that will lead to Word and Sacrament."

## 'Conceived By the Holy Spirit'

*"In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord'" (Luke 1:39-45).*

**T**his is the most powerful testimony to the value of pre-born human life in the Bible, as well as in the history of the world. As a baby in the womb, John the Baptizer responds to the greeting of Mary — indeed, is moved by the Holy Spirit just like his mother, Elizabeth! Elizabeth says by the Spirit (God's words!) that Mary is blessed, and so is the Baby Jesus she carries. And she acknowledges that Jesus is Lord even in the womb. Wow! The Lord took on our flesh and in every way is like us — except for sin — that He might redeem us. And like Him and John, we are each genetically distinct, unique individuals *in utero*.

You make it possible to provide resources to care for the unborn, the developmentally disabled, those in crisis and those suffering from the travails of this sinful world. And we do this together in the name of Jesus. Jesus loves us and showed it on a cross. We love others and help them bear their crosses. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40).

In Christ,

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

