“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth.”

— 1 JOHN 3:16-18 ESV —

Strong Faith, Fervent Love: Reaching Out Through a Network of Ministry

Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) are 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations that are independent of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but operate ministry programs that foster the mission and ministry of the church. These organizations reach out in mercy and love to meet the needs of those who are suffering, poor, sick or lonely. They address human, social, economic, educational and spiritual needs.

**LCMS RSOs can:**
- Issue calls for ordained and commissioned ministers on the LCMS roster
- Use the LCMS logo
- Apply for loans through the Lutheran Church Extension Fund
- Seek LCMS grants
- Participate in the Concordia Health Plan
- Participate in the LCMS Group Purchasing Agreement

**DEACONESS DOROTHY KRANS**, director
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The Lutheran Mission Society is there for people who fall through life’s cracks.

It’s there for people who have been wounded by job loss, personal or relational tragedies, loss of hope and direction, according to the Rev. Dr. David R. Maack, executive director of the Baltimore-based Lutheran Mission Society. It provides for both the physical and spiritual needs of people.

Said one 41-year-old woman, who had lived on the streets since childhood and came to the Lutheran Mission Society for food: “I was hardened with hatred. I wanted to change my life so bad, but I didn’t know how. The Lutheran Mission Society showed me how. They taught me to believe — in myself and in Jesus.”

The LCMS works with 181 independent Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs), like the Lutheran Mission Society. RSOs extend the church’s reach by providing faith-based social and mercy ministry and outreach. The current roster of RSOs includes 115 social ministry organizations, 33 mission agencies, 14 camps, five campus ministries, two communications organizations and 14 other nonprofits devoted to specialized outreach.

RSOs are able to address human, social, economic, educational and spiritual needs that would otherwise be beyond the resources of one organization alone, said Deaconess Dorothy Krans, director of LCMS RSOs.

“RSOs are showing the love and compassion of Christ as they serve the suffering, the lonely, the aging, the families, the youth and others.”

The LCMS began recognizing service organizations in 1979. The LCMS Board of Directors approved a new RSO application and review process in 2008 ensuring that RSO programs are in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS. RSOs can reapply every five years.

Once an organization has been granted RSO status, it can issue calls for ordained and commissioned ministers on the LCMS roster, use the LCMS logo, apply for loans through the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, seek LCMS grants, and participate in the Concordia Health Plan and the LCMS Group Purchasing Agreement.

“RSOs value their Lutheran identity and relationship to the church,” Krans said. “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.”