

Assisting Church Workers Amid the Pandemic

A Lutheran school teacher who was unexpectedly furloughed. A school secretary struggling to afford groceries now that the office is closed. A pastor who can't quite make the mortgage payment this month.

These are a few examples of the ordained, commissioned and lay church workers who could receive a special Soldiers of the Cross grant from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to help cover their expenses amid the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. As of May 15, \$417,152 had been distributed in 288 grants to workers across Synod.

Since 2004, the Soldiers of the Cross program has traditionally delivered emergency financial support and pastoral care to rostered professional church workers in crisis. In early April, as churches and schools across the country were shutting down to help stem the spread of the coronavirus, the program's scope was expanded. Now any employee of an LCMS church, school, Recognized Service Organization or institution can request a one-time assistance grant through their district.

Initially, \$2.5 million was earmarked for this COVID-19 response — \$1 million from Lutheran Church Extension Fund and \$1.5



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million from the LCMS, pulled from contributions previously given for Soldiers of the Cross, LCMS World Relief and Human Care, and LCMS Disaster Response. The LCMS also is encouraging ongoing donations to help even more workers.

"In this tumultuous time that we're going through as a country, we're also seeing that affecting our church workers in very tangible, financial ways," said the Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, director of LCMS Disaster Response, who is

currently overseeing the grant program. "This is a way that we can help our church workers who are going through a financial hardship."

One recipient, a pastor in Wisconsin, recently shared the impact the Soldiers of the Cross grant has had in his life: "On behalf of my family and myself, I want to sincerely thank you for the \$2,000 check from the Soldiers of the Cross Fund. It was an answer to prayer and God willing will help us to be able to stay in our house."

Give God Glory...

... for LCMS colleges and seminaries, whose staff have served their students and communities during the COVID-19 shutdown. Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis., assisted medical professionals by printing N95-modeled respirator masks on 3D printers, and the other schools have served in numerous ways as well. Read more at blogs.lcms.org/2020/lcms-colleges-and-seminaries-serve-students-and-communities-during-pandemic/.



the pandemic, visitors — including clergy members — were no longer allowed inside, so they began writing and distributing a daily prayer to each resident. "Even separate, our daily prayers and devotions united us with the greater family of Jesus, a sure hope and great comfort," said the Rev. Max Phillips, CEO of the organization.

... for those making face masks for those in need. In LCMS Iowa District West, Disaster Response Coordinator Ellie Menz is overseeing the production and distribution of masks and gowns to hospitals, retirement communities and other organizations. Through this effort, Lutheran Women's Missionary League members from three congregations recently sewed a large number of masks for the residents of Perry Lutheran Home.

... for Perry Lutheran Home, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that provides senior housing and care in Perry, Iowa. During

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.

"Sharing" is the newsletter of LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295. Donor care line: 888-930-4438. Website: [lcms.org](https://www.lcms.org).

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

Rev. Daniel F. McMiller Ext. 1341
Executive Director
LCMS Office of International Mission

Rev. Robert M. Zagore 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" 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.

Stemming the Spread of COVID-19 in West Africa



As the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads around the world, almost everyone has been impacted in some way — including The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s partners in Africa.

In April, the LCMS approved a grant of \$6,250 to the Sierra Leone church to help combat the transmission of COVID-19 by increasing public awareness of the need for safety measures such as hand-washing and by providing funds to build 154 hand-washing stations (one at each church and school). Part of the grant also will be used to print and distribute educational materials on good hygiene amid a pandemic.

The LCMS first began working in Sierra Leone in 1983. Since that time, the country has been ravaged by civil war (1991–2001) and an Ebola epidemic (2013–16). There are currently 126 Lutheran congregations with about 4,000 members, 28 schools, 156 teachers and 5,159 pupils.

The Rev. Daniel F. McMiller, executive director of the LCMS Office of International Mission, said the Lutheran church in Sierra Leone “has suffered greatly ... grown quite well and is living at peace. It is also minimally supported from the outside, which is a great blessing and no small factor in its peaceful nature and its focus on the establishment of sound teaching and practice rather than political interests vying for power and influence over material assets coming from the U.S. ... This [grant] is a great endeavor at modest cost that will save money and — most importantly — lives in the future.”

Stephanie Schulte, a nurse who serves as mercy medical coordinator for West and Central Africa, said, “The church in Sierra Leone has been through the refiner’s fire and is one of the strongest churches that we work with in West and Central Africa. We have received several messages from different leaders within the CELCSL [Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church—Sierra Leone] expressing concern for our health and the health of our families. It is a blessing to work with such an outward-looking church.”

The LCMS is funding similar grants, ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000, in Liberia, Togo, Guinea, Ghana, Burundi, the Republic of Congo

and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The grants will be used for hand-washing stations, soap, educational materials and some food supplies, as people are under lockdown and finding it difficult to feed their families, especially in urban areas.



Time for Loving ‘in Deed and in Truth’

“For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ... 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 in truth” (1 John 3:11, 16–18).

The Bible calls Christians to real love.

We are directed to love our neighbors as ourselves, especially other Christians (v. 16) but also non-Christians. “Let us not grow weary of doing good, ... do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9–10).

What’s the motivation? To earn points with God? Not a chance! To show the world how great we are? No way! It’s amazing that our dear Savior chooses to work His love through us, poor sinners that we are. Why do we serve others? It’s who we are in Christ! “He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers” (1 John 3:16). It’s all very simple. Jesus told His disciples several times: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). This is the *heart* of the Christian faith. Christ — by His life, death and resurrection, and in His blessed Word and Sacrament

— serves us the Gospel, the free forgiveness of sins. The word John uses for “heart” in 1 John 3 is the same word used for Jesus: “He had *compassion* for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36, emphasis added).

Thanks be to God for the great compassion Jesus has planted in your hearts! My wife, Kathy, and I have been honored to join in donating to LCMS World Relief and Human Care these many years so that we can continue to care for many. It’s a critical time. Come what may, virus or no virus, “let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

In Christ,

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



Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford