



Fostering Lutheranism Through Online Theological Education

There's renewed interest in Lutheranism in Europe right now, and at the center is the Luther Academy, the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, with assistance from two LCMS missionaries: the Rev. Dr. John Bombaro and the Rev. Dr. Charles Cortright.

Bombaro and Cortright originally went to Latvia to help the Luther Academy obtain accreditation as a professional Bachelor of Theology program for pastoral students. As part of that, they would offer a professional B.Th. in English under the same accreditation, due to the increase of English as a desired and useful language.

But when COVID-19 became a concern in March 2020, the program — known as the Livonian Lutheran Project — switched from in person to online.

“We didn't have an established marketing system with which to conscript students, but what we did have was years and years of faithful missionaries who had contacts,” explained Bombaro. “Those personal contacts yielded a lot more fruit than we had anticipated. ... We would have deemed it a success if we could have netted four students last fall. Through our contacts we had 47.”

When the initial class launched in September, students attended from Latvia, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Russia and Pakistan, among others.

“A number of our students are poised to replace pastors who have been literally killed for



LCMS missionary Rev. Dr. John Bombaro gestures as he teaches during an online class for the Livonian Lutheran Project.

serving Christ,” said Bombaro. Sixteen of the students are from Pakistan — 15 are training to be pastors, along with one deaconess student.

Due to the time difference, some of the classes start around 10 or 11 p.m. in Pakistan, which means the students are up late. They face many hardships and challenges, even though they greet them willingly. Some drive to a remote parking lot and watch class on a phone. Others gather around one laptop. And as they seek to serve, they ask for the church's prayers:

“Keep Pakistani students in your prayers, especially as they all are working; they come home late and, in some cases, they are the only breadwinners in the family.”

The students' sacrifices motivate their professors. “Christ wants His Gospel to get out and there are people who have said, ‘Here I am, Lord, send me,’” said Bombaro. “We're willing to redouble our efforts for those who are willing to make those kinds of sacrifices to serve the church [and] to serve Christ in His kingdom.”

Give God Glory...

... for the members, societies, zones and districts of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, who faithfully and joyfully support numerous LCMS projects and programs through their prayers and mission grants.

... for Beautiful Savior, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that offers premier long-term care for seniors in Belton, Mo. Residents enjoy a friendly, home-like atmosphere where they can build relationships, celebrate life and grow in their faith. Learn more at beautifulsaviorhome.com.

... for the Rev. Eric and Johanna Stinnett, LCMS career missionaries serving in Ethiopia. Eric is a theological educator and teaches at Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he trains future Lutheran



Students at Mekane Yesus Seminary, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

pastors and church workers. Recently, Johanna was interviewed about living in Ethiopia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Read the interview at thelc.ms/stinnett. To read the full issue of *Lutherans Engage the World*, visit engage.lcms.org/winter-2021-archives.

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.





Caring for Those Who Serve

The Rev. Chad Czischke straddles two vastly different worlds. Most of his time is spent at Family of Christ Lutheran Church in Houlton, Wis., where he prepares sermons, teaches Bible classes and does all the things that take up a typical parish pastor's time. But one weekend per month, and at various other times throughout the year, Major Czischke dons fatigues and serves alongside an armored battalion of the Minnesota Army National Guard as a military chaplain.

In early March, Czischke said goodbye to his family and the members of Family of Christ and left for a nearly yearlong deployment to Kuwait. During this time, he and his chaplain's assistant will care for more than 700 soldiers.

Although it's unusual for a congregation to plan for its pastor to be gone this long, "this is part of our congregation's mission," says congregational president Becky Volovsek. "It's a way that we can help ensure that the men and women of our armed forces have spiritual support and are hearing about the love of Jesus."

Congregational leaders had nearly a year to figure out how to handle Czischke's absence. As the deployment drew closer, they also began thinking about ways to support Czischke's wife and daughters while he is away.

"One thing I've learned about military families is they are proud, they are independent," Czischke says. "It's very hard for a military

family to reach out and say, 'Hey, I need help with this.' ... As a congregation, you need to reach out to them."

Individuals offered to provide rides and babysitting, and the elders are helping out with snow removal, yard work and house repairs. The hope is that these small gestures can help lighten the load that both the chaplain and his family must carry during a deployment.

"Whenever you have your pastor leave for any extended period of time, there's some turmoil," says Family of Christ founding member Jerry Schouten. "But it's a big deal, in my opinion, to think that somebody is there for those in the military who really need him. It's an honor to be able to share Pastor Czischke. We've got to feel proud that we've got somebody who's willing to do both."



The Rev. Chad Czischke, pastor of Family of Christ Lutheran Church, Houlton, Wis., and a chaplain with the Minnesota Army National Guard, prepares to leave for a yearlong deployment to Kuwait. An image from his first deployment in 2015 is pictured above.



Luther on the Sacrament and Love

Dear Friend in Jesus,

Please enjoy these words from Dr. Martin Luther as he discusses the profound connection between the Lord's Supper and love for the needy.

In Christ,

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

WHOWER IS IN DESPAIR, distressed by a sin-stricken conscience or terrified by death or carrying some other burden upon his heart, if he would be rid of them all, let him go joyfully to the sacrament of the altar and lay down his woe in the midst of the community [of saints] and seek help from the entire company of the spiritual body — just as a citizen whose property has suffered damage or misfortune at the hands of his enemies makes complaint to his town council and fellow citizens and asks them for help. The immeasurable grace and mercy of God are given us in this sacrament to the end that we might put from us all misery and tribulation [*anfechtung*] and lay it upon the community [of saints], and especially on Christ. Then we may with joy find strength and comfort, and say, "Though I am a sinner and have fallen, though this or that misfortune has befallen me, nevertheless I will go to the sacrament to receive a sign from God that I have on my side Christ's

righteousness, life, and sufferings, with all holy angels and the blessed in heaven and all pious men on earth. If I die, I am not alone in death; if I suffer, they suffer with me. [I know that] all my misfortune is shared with Christ and the saints, because I have a sure sign of their love toward me." See, this is the benefit to be derived from this sacrament; this is the use we should make of it. Then the heart cannot but rejoice and be strengthened.

When you have partaken of this sacrament, therefore, or desire to partake of it, you must in turn share the misfortunes of the fellowship, as has been said. But what are these? Christ in heaven and the angels, together with the saints, have no misfortunes, except when injury is done to the truth and to the Word of God. Indeed, as we have said, every bane and blessing of all the saints on earth affects them. Here your heart must go out in love and learn that this is a sacrament of love. As love and

support are given you, you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in his holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing. You must fight, work, pray, and — if you cannot do more — have heartfelt sympathy. See, this is what it means to bear in your turn the misfortune and adversity of Christ and his saints. Here the saying of Paul is fulfilled, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" [Gal. 6:2]. See, as you uphold all of them, so they all in turn uphold you; and all things are in common, both good and evil. Then all things become easy, and the evil spirit cannot stand up against this fellowship.

Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 53–54.