

L U T H E R A N S

# engage

spring 2018



Spring 2018

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### Cover image

A cross cut into the stump of a damaged tree stands outside of Peace Lutheran Church, Rockport, Texas. Recovery work is still underway almost six months after Hurricane Harvey devastated parts of Texas.

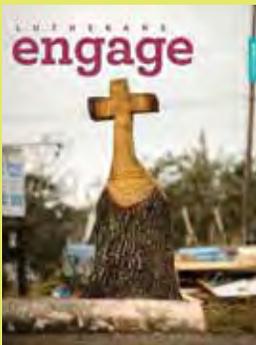


PHOTO: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/  
ERIK M. LUNSFORD

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L U T H E R A N S

# engage the world

## Bearers of His Name



"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die," says Jesus. "Do you believe this?" (JOHN 11:25–26).

Yes, with Easter certainty and rejoicing, we believe it. Why? Because the Bible told us so. God's Word conveyed the faith that saved us. St. Paul said, "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you" (1 COR. 11:23). In and through the Holy Scriptures, we were sought out and found by the beautiful and majestic divine Truth. Sin and death surrounded us, but the full and final answer to our enemy's onslaughts will ever be this: Jesus Christ is risen today.

He lives, all glory to His name. And so do we. We are the bearers of His name, His light, His life, for "on the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ" (*Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, p. 17).

The contexts in which you and I have been called to show forth this Gospel are breathtakingly diverse, but the essence of a Christian missionary's work abides within the unchanging pattern laid down by St. Paul: receive and deliver. Mercy is distributed from the abundance of God's gifts to those who are suffering. Hymns and liturgies that have carried the good confession from one generation to the next are brought by translation into new cultures and languages. Well-formed candidates are examined, called and ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry in their native countries. Those studying in a foreign land are welcomed by its citizens; along the way, they happen to meet Jesus and His disciples — and the consequences are eternal.

What follows in this issue of *Lutherans Engage the World* are blessed glimpses of this resurrection and life. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed,

**Rev. Kevin D. Robson**

*Chief Mission Officer, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

## From the Editor



God is opening Gospel doors in unique ways and in diverse locations at home and abroad — among international students studying on our nation's college campuses, through the singing of the faith in different tongues, by preparing indigenous pastors to serve their neighbors, and as reading skills are learned along with God's Word. Your prayers and gifts to the LCMS Global Mission Fund help make this and so much more possible! Enjoy reading about how God is working through His Church for the salvation of many.

In Christ,

**Pamela J. Nielsen**

*Associate Executive Director, LCMS Communications*



# 17 'Bless the Lord': The Primacy of Theological Education in Sri Lanka

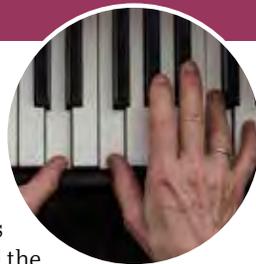
Erik M. Lunsford and Kevin Armbrust

In September, the first Lutheran pastor was ordained in Sri Lanka in over a decade.

# 3 Let Every Tongue Praise the Lord

Cheryl Magness

Deaconess Sandra Rhein assists Lutheran church bodies around the world in creating a hymnal of their own.



# 7 Introducing International Students to Christ

Megan K. Mertz

Campus ministry to international students is flourishing in Minneapolis thanks to a partnership with *Mission Field: USA*.



# 11 Much Done, Much to Do

Kevin Armbrust

Six months after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, the LCMS is still there sharing the love of Christ and rebuilding people's homes.



## 2 Q&A

Donor Ann Panhorst explains what motivates her to give.

## 16 Update

Hurricane Matthew recovery continues in Haiti.

## 21 Mercy Moment

A literacy project in Togo is teaching women to read.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ANN PANHORST

PHOTO: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LINSFORD

# Q&A with Donor Ann Panhorst

| LEARN MORE |  
[lcms.org/disaster](http://lcms.org/disaster)

**Florida resident Ann Panhorst** sees firsthand the importance of helping others when disaster strikes. When hurricanes Harvey, Maria and Irma caused widespread devastation this past fall, Panhorst and her husband, Don, were quick to make a gift to LCMS Disaster Response — in addition to the regular support they provide to their own congregation, Redeemer Lutheran Church in Stuart, Fla., and three of the Synod’s missionaries. The great-grandmother recently took a few minutes to explain what motivates her to give and why generosity is so important to her.



BY MEGAN K. MERTZ

**1** *What led you to make a gift to LCMS Disaster Response?*

I’m originally from the Midwest. After we retired and moved [to Florida] in the early 2000s, there were three massive hurricanes. We were unaffected thankfully, but we’ve seen how it disrupts people’s lives. That was the reason I wanted to give.

**2** *There are many organizations that assist after a disaster. Why did you choose the LCMS?*

I trust the church to be faithful stewards of that gift. It won’t be used for frivolous things like somebody’s Mercedes. I love the idea that it will be Christians helping the people, and they will be witnessing with that help. ... A lot of

organizations come in and give water and food, and then they’re gone. But we’re there for the long haul.

**3** *What motivates you to give?*

We can really witness to people with our love and our care. The people who are hurting get a chance to know that they have neighbors who love them. I’m really motivated to give because of what Jesus did for me. He was so patient with me. He never gave up on me. He’s forgiven me, and I give because He’s given me so much. It’s because of my gratitude for what He’s done. Plus, I just love to give. ... The feeling of joining with other Christians, that’s a joyful thing.

**4** *Do you have a favorite Bible verse?*

Ephesians 2:8–9, which says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith ... not by works, so that no one can boast.” For many years, I didn’t know what to believe or where to find it. I spent a lot of years away from the church. Then one day I walked into Redeemer and heard Pastor Dave [Albers], and I got it. I have nothing to offer. It’s entirely [Jesus]. It’s because of His grace and mercy that He’s forgiven me and made me His child.

.....  
Megan K. Mertz is managing editor of *Lutherans Engage the World* and a staff writer for LCMS Communications.




  
 Christ Je - sus lay in death's strong bands. For our

ENGLISH


  
 ji - li ya dha-mbi. Yu ku - u - me - ni kwa Mu - ngu.

SWAHILI


  
 ከ ሰ ማይ ህይ ወት ሰ ጠን ደስ ይ በ ለን ሁ ላ ቸን

AMHARIC


  
 dan nya - nyi - lah den - gan syu - kur Nya - nyi - an ha

INDONESIAN


  
 利 路 亞。 哈 利 路 亞。

MANDARIN

**Christ Jesus  
Lay in Death's  
Strong Bands**

Stanza 1

# LET EVERY TONGUE PRAISE THE LORD



DEACONESS SANDRA RHEIN ASSISTS  
LUTHERAN CHURCH BODIES AROUND THE WORLD  
IN CREATING A HYMNAL OF THEIR OWN.

BY CHERYL MAGNESS

engage.lcms.org • 3

**D**eaconess Sandra Rhein sits at the piano in a classroom at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (CTSFW). Tsegahun Assefa Adugna, director of Children and Youth Ministries for the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), stands close by. As Rhein plays the piano, Tsegahun closes his eyes, leans his head back and begins to sing a hymn.

The hymn, “When I Behold Jesus Christ” (*Lutheran Service Book* 542), was written in the 1960s by a 16-year-old Ethiopian girl named Almaz Belhu, and Tsegahun sings it in the original language of Amharic. It is Tsegahun’s skill in both Amharic and English that has brought him together with Rhein to work on a new hymnal for the EECMY. Rhein serves as consultant on the project, which is scheduled for completion later this year.

Rhein never expected to be a hymnal consultant or, for that matter, a deaconess. With a bachelor’s degree in Music Education from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, she has long served the Church as an organist and choir director, and she had planned to pursue a master’s degree in organ or church music after her children were grown.

But around the time that she might have begun, she heard about the deaconess program at CTSFW: “I had only a vague notion of this thing called ‘deaconess,’ but after several pastors encouraged me to look into it ... I checked out the program. There was no turning back. The opportunity to study theology and the formation as a servant of mercy was compelling.”

How did a decision to pursue deaconess studies lead Rhein to become

an international hymnal consultant?

“One of my classmates at the seminary was [the] Rev. Isaiah Obare, who is from Kenya. Through our friendship, I became interested in the Lutheran Church in Kenya and wrote a paper called “Toward a Theology of Mercy: Hymnody as Bodily Care to the Church in Kenya,”” Rhein explains. “Isaiah’s father, the Rev. Dr. Walter Obare, who was archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) at the time, had asked the LCMS for assistance in developing a hymnal. Bishop Obare asked if I would help, a request that I took to my professors at the seminary, and a hymnal project was developed, with me as coordinating editor.”

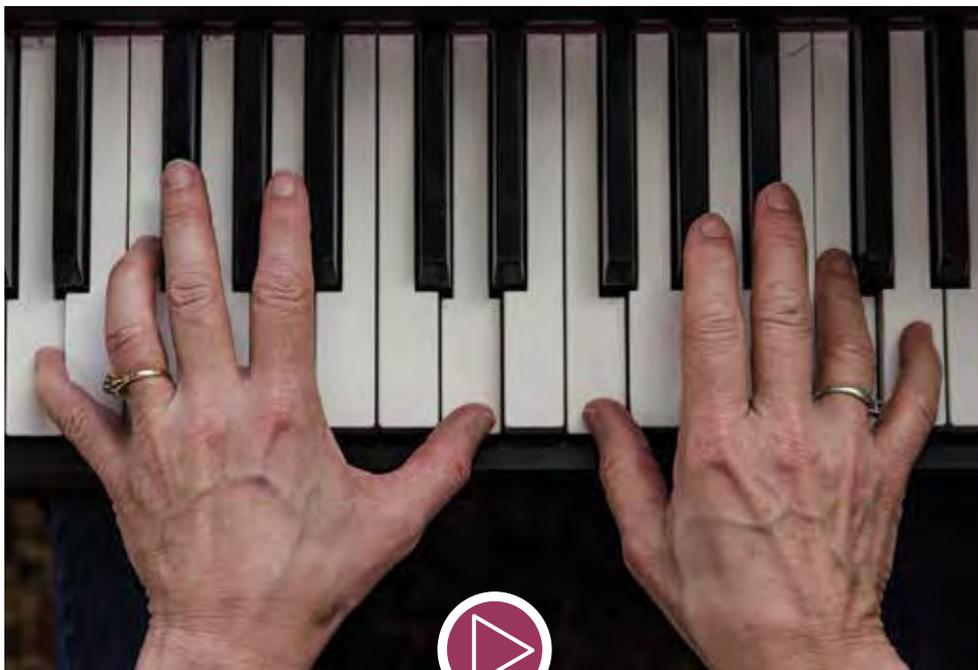
That hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu* (which means “Divine Service”), was completed in 2012 in the Swahili language.

Rhein is now working on hymnals in Amharic, Mandarin Chinese and Indonesian, thanks to generous grants from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation.

### ‘Christ Must Be Heard’

To shepherd a new hymnal from conception to completion is no simple process. To do it in a language that you don’t know, in a faraway country with limited resources and unreliable technology, is more complicated still.

The first and most difficult step, according to Rhein, is to find someone who can translate hymn and liturgical texts into the language of the new hymnal. Not only does the translator need to know both his native language and English, but he is ideally also knowledgeable in theology and skilled in music and poetry, since all of



| WATCH |

See Deaconess Sandra Rhein at work: [engage.lcms.org/hymnal-project-spring-2018](http://engage.lcms.org/hymnal-project-spring-2018)



Hymns in different languages adorn the wall of Rhein’s home studio in South Bend, Ind.



Once a hymn has been translated, Rhein enters the text and melody into the computer.



### Kenyan

#### HYMNAL PROJECT

**TITLE:** *Ibada Takatifu*

**LANGUAGE:** Swahili

**FOR:** Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya

**PROGRESS:** Completed in 2012

### Ethiopian

#### HYMNAL PROJECT

**LANGUAGE:** Amharic

**FOR:** Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

**PROGRESS:** Begun in 2014, scheduled for completion in 2018

### Chinese

#### HYMNAL PROJECT

**LANGUAGE:** Mandarin Chinese

**FOR:** The Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod, China Evangelical Lutheran Church in Taiwan and Lutherans in mainland China

**PROGRESS:** Test booklet with one setting of Divine Service and 50 hymns scheduled for completion in 2018

### Indonesian

#### HYMNAL PROJECT

**LANGUAGE:** Indonesian

**FOR:** Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church

**PROGRESS:** Hymnal committee has been formed, and it met for the first time in October 2017

Rhein has collected hymnals from around the world in her work as an international hymnal consultant.



those come into play in the translation process.

Much of the work is completed with Rhein seated at the piano, listening to the translator “to see if the words flow naturally. One can only tell this,” Rhein says, “by singing the hymns over and over. The rhythm of the words needs to fit naturally with the rhythm of the melody. ... We want hymns to stick with people ... so they need to fit really well.”

The Rev. Eben Ezer, a pastor in the Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church, is serving as translator for the Indonesian hymnal project. He says the process is difficult because “one word in English could become two or four words in Indonesian.”

He begins by trying to understand the text theologically — “Christ must be heard,” he says — and then proceeds to work with Rhein on setting the text to music. When text and music fit, “it is amazing. It means that what we have done is not ... in vain. ... The Lord works through this.”

The translation process brings together not only two languages, but two cultures.

Working with Tsegahun, who freely embellishes as he sings, Rhein aims to write down “a clear melody ... that doesn’t contradict ... the style that is part of [Ethiopian] culture. There’s no reason to block that.”

Once the hard work of translating texts and writing down melodies is done, the more practical work begins: entering the material into the computer, securing copyrights, passing theological review, proofreading, laying out and designing the hymnal, contracting with a publisher for printing and shipping, making audio recordings for training purposes, and holding workshops to introduce the new hymnal to those for whom it was made.

### ‘One in the Body of Christ’

Now that she has begun work on her fourth hymnal project, Rhein says she gets requests almost weekly from people asking, “Can you come do a hymnal for us?” She stresses, though, that “the LCMS doesn’t go to other church bodies and offer to

do a hymnal. That would be presumptuous.”

Instead, a church body must make an official request to the LCMS. Then the LCMS Office of International Mission must decide to pursue the project, after which the leader of the church body (not the LCMS) appoints a hymnal committee. This is where the LCMS comes in, providing a consultant to serve on the committee and be a liaison to the Synod.

Before the project ever begins, there are many questions to be answered: What hymns does the church body already have? What does their Sunday morning worship look like? Is there already an understanding of the liturgy, or is that something that will be taught through the hymnal?

Rhein begins to answer some of these questions by attending services in the church to get a feel for the culture of both the people and their worship life.

To those who ask, “Why do people for whom a hymnal has not been required in the past suddenly need one now?” Rhein emphasizes that a hymnal is not just a songbook.

“The songs are just one part ... because for Lutheran worship it is far more than just singing hymns. ... We believe and teach that Jesus won the forgiveness of sins on the cross, and we receive that forgiveness in the Sacraments — in the liturgy. Hymnals aid our liturgical life by providing the structure and setting for the Divine Service,” she says. “Especially in places where the Church is just beginning, the hymnal is a resource for pastors to bring God’s gifts to His people.”

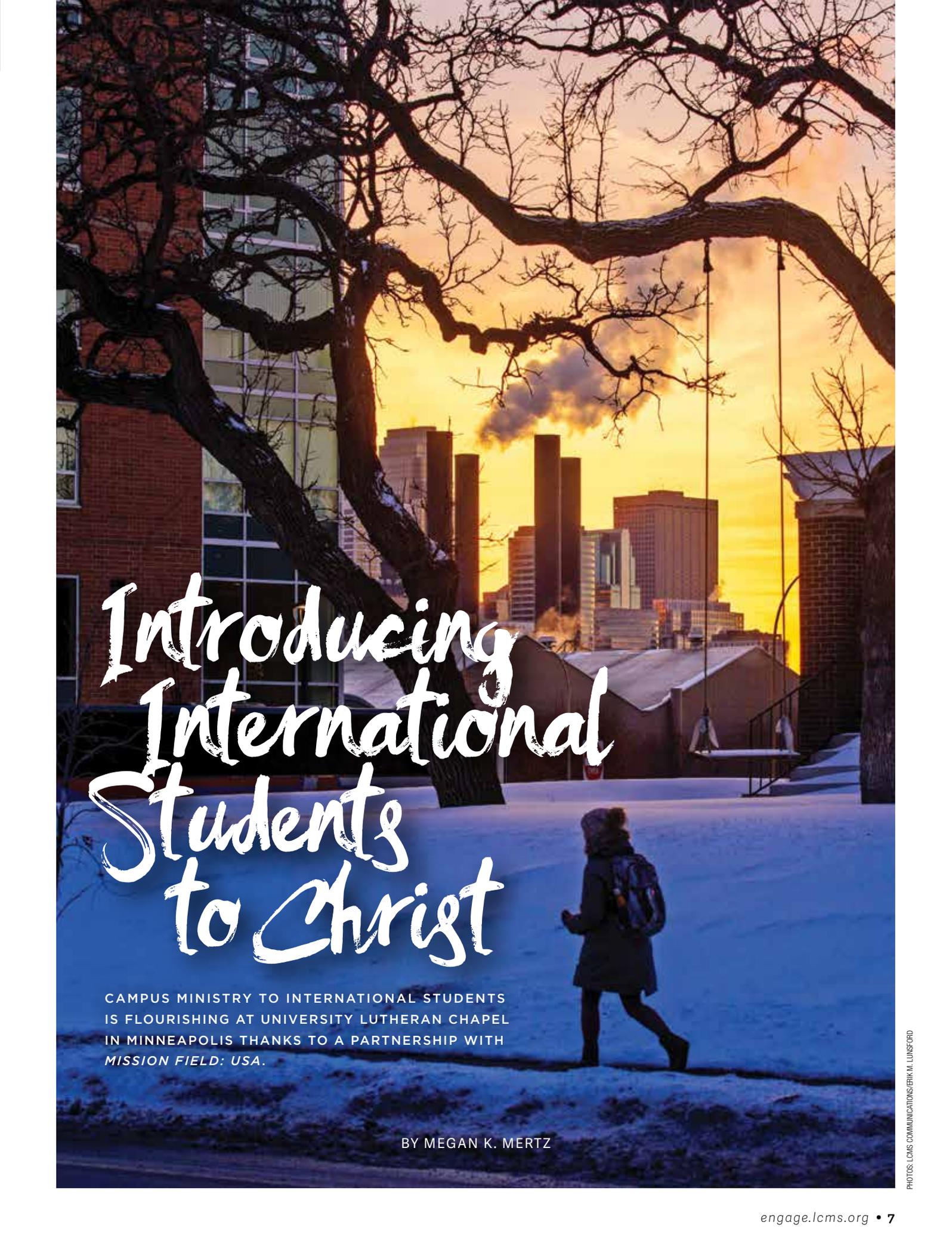
Asked what she has learned in her work as a hymnal consultant, Rhein replies, “People are more different — and more alike — than I ever could have imagined.”

Although there may be many cultural differences, “people worldwide are profoundly alike when it comes to our need for Christ,” she says. “One of the biggest joys ever is when I go to church with [those in another country] and I don’t know the language — I can’t understand a single word — and yet I know where we are in the service because of the liturgy. ... We truly are one in the Body of Christ.”

Cheryl Magness is managing editor of *Reporter Online* and a staff writer for LCMS Communications.



Indigenous craftwork picked up during one of Rhein’s many trips.

A photograph of a winter scene in Minneapolis. In the foreground, a person wearing a dark coat and a backpack is walking across a snow-covered field. To the left, a large, leafless tree with a thick trunk and sprawling branches stands in front of a brick building with large windows. In the background, the Minneapolis city skyline is visible against a bright, golden sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow light, with some clouds catching the light. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

# Introducing International Students to Christ

CAMPUS MINISTRY TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
IS FLOURISHING AT UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHAPEL  
IN MINNEAPOLIS THANKS TO A PARTNERSHIP WITH  
*MISSION FIELD: USA.*

BY MEGAN K. MERTZ



Students and congregation members attend a Vespers service at University Lutheran Chapel's Luther House, near the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

**H**ow do I find truth? Why does God allow evil in the world? What is sin, and why is it important? How does one man save me from this? What makes Christianity any different from other religions?

These are some of the big questions asked by international students who attend the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

God's answers — or at least guidance — are available. The Rev. David Kind, pastor of nearby University Lutheran Chapel (ULC), is equipped and ready to teach God's Word. The problem, however, is that Kind often doesn't know these students, and they don't know where to find him.

God has provided that needed connection in Rebecca Wagner, an LCMS national missionary who serves alongside Kind at ULC and focuses on outreach to international students.

### **Mission Field: Minneapolis**

In August 2016, Wagner began serving at ULC as the Synod's first national missionary to Minneapolis. She was already familiar with the ministry,

since she had been attending events there while working at a local Chinese and Spanish immersion school.

Wagner brings not only genuine friendliness but also the ability to speak Mandarin Chinese and Russian to the

role. This unique combination helps her bridge cultural gaps and make friends with many of the international students.

Kind was eager for the assistance. As ULC's only staff member, he shepherded a congregation of 140 members, ran an active campus ministry for American students, and supervised Luther House — a former sorority house-turned-bed-and-breakfast that ULC purchased and renovated. The top floor of the building now houses six students who are involved in the campus ministry, while the ground floor provides space for ULC's many Bible classes, free meals and game nights.

"There was just no way for me to do international outreach on top of what I was doing already," he says.

But he knew there was a great opportunity to share the Gospel with international students at the university. The Twin Cities campus hosts

**"It's exciting to meet people who are from places where they are never going to hear about Jesus."**

— REV. DAVID KIND



| LEARN MORE |

Mission Field: USA: [lcms.org/church-planting](https://lcms.org/church-planting)  
LCMS Campus Ministry: [lcms.org/lcmsu](https://lcms.org/lcmsu)

| WATCH |

Hear more from Kind and Wagner:  
[engage.lcms.org/campus-ministry-spring-2018](https://engage.lcms.org/campus-ministry-spring-2018)



Rebecca Wagner, an LCMS national missionary in Minneapolis, talks with Juncheng, a Chinese student studying philosophy at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.



nearly 6,500 international students from 130 countries, and almost half of these are from China.

Kind talked with his district mission executive, and together they approached the Rev. Dr. Steve Schave, director of LCMS Church Planting and Urban & Inner-City Mission, about bringing a national missionary to the campus through the Synod's *Mission Field: USA* initiative. The initiative provides resources to support church planting in the LCMS, while also partnering with ministries and districts to send national missionaries to underserved areas.

### ***Making Friends, Sharing the Faith***

During the week, Wagner can often be found meeting one-on-one with students on campus, in coffee shops, at Luther House or in her own home. These discussions are

guided by what the students want to talk about.

"She'll make connections and invite somebody to her house for tea. She's extremely hospitable. It's a lot of relationship building. She spends a lot of one-on-one time with them before I ever see them or meet them," Kind says. "Often there's an openness to hear more about the church or the Gospel. Then she brings them here [to ULC], and we introduce them to Christ."

When Wagner meets with Juncheng, a Chinese student studying philosophy, they often talk about Western morality. During a recent discussion, Wagner turned to the Ten Commandments and to what Jesus says about them in her bilingual Chinese-English Bible.

When she meets with Peiqi, they are able to encourage each other as sisters in Christ. As a Chinese Christian, Peiqi is eager to make Christian

friends on campus, and she attends the weekly international Bible study at ULC.

Sometimes, students seek Wagner out specifically to talk about Christianity. "Last year, there was a student from Saudi Arabia who came up to our table at the student activity fair and said, 'I would like to find somebody to study the Bible with,'" Wagner recalls.

The woman attended adult instruction classes at ULC during the school year before returning to her home country last summer. "When we'd meet up, we'd talk about the Bible and how different the accounts are between the Quran and the Bible," Wagner says. "Even though she has gone home now, we trust that God's Word does its work."

Although Wagner often brings up her faith in these meetings, she's quick to note that she isn't trying to teach theology. Instead, she's making friends, sharing in the

struggles and joys of their daily lives, and sharing her faith as appropriate to each conversation.

"The Bible is applicable to every situation," Wagner says. "So, whenever we encounter difficult decisions or challenges, it's easy to bring up what God says or to say, 'This is how Christians deal with it.' I try to connect as much of our conversation as possible to the Bible."

### ***'You Can't Pass This Opportunity Up'***

When students are open to learning more about the church, Wagner connects them to ULC's activities and to other Christian students.

Some international students attend Kind's weekly international Bible study. For those who have good English skills and want to dig deeper, he invites them to join an adult instruction class, even if

they aren't looking to join the church.

According to Kind, life at ULC "centers around the Divine Service." There's Matins on Monday mornings, Vespers on Wednesday evenings and Bible study on Fridays. Plus, there are ample opportunities to grow in fellowship throughout the year through sledding activities, retreats, free meals and other events.

Wagner's favorite event of the school year was when she took a group of Chinese students to visit an LCMS church in the country that was having a German festival and potluck.

"The pastor and a couple members of the congregation were able to show us all the different parts of the sanctuary and explain the significance of Baptism and Communion. He did a wonderful job of giving those students an in-depth look at what Christians hope in and find joy in," she recalls. "The students were so touched that they prepared a meal for us and took such good care of us."

Kind encourages congregations that want to get involved to start in a simple way. Reach out to your local Lutheran campus ministry and offer to cook a meal or invite them to bring students to your next event. Even though American students often are ambivalent about Christianity, Kind says that international students are "such a joy" because they are so eager to learn.

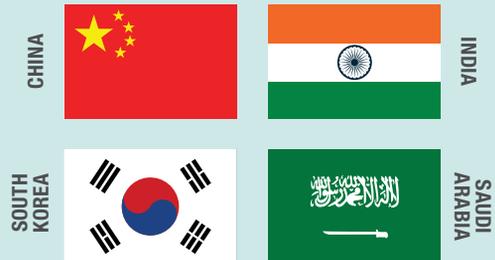
Wagner agrees, noting that the world is coming to their doorstep in Minneapolis.

"Fortunately for us, a lot of people who might not be able to hear the message of Christ in their own country are coming here, where they can ask as many questions as they want," Wagner says. "That's the reason I said yes to Pastor Kind when he asked me to take on this role. It's a wonderful chance to share the Gospel with Chinese students and people from Muslim countries. You can't pass this opportunity up."

## NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S. DURING THE 2016-17 SCHOOL YEAR

# 1,078,822

### TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



### TOP HOST STATES



From Open Doors® 2017 Report on International Education Exchange, published Nov. 13, 2017.

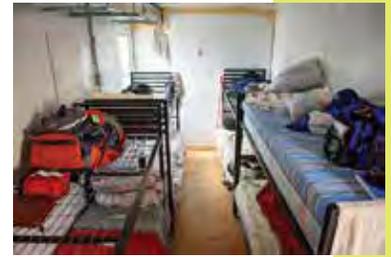
**Top:** Wagner prepares lunch alongside students at Luther House.  
**Bottom:** The Rev. David Kind, pastor of University Lutheran Chapel, leads a Bible study at Luther House later that day.



Neal Brady, a volunteer from St. Marys, Ohio, dons his safety equipment at a home in Rockport, Texas.



# MUCH DONE, MUCH TO DO



LCMS Disaster Response flood buckets are ready for distribution at a warehouse in Tomball, Texas, which serves as a collection point for nearby LCMS congregations.

Volunteers Allison Brady from St. Marys, Ohio, and the Rev. David Winters from Parkers Prairie, Minn., haul away a heavy tree limb in Rockport, Texas.

Klein Spring  
Tomball  
Rose City  
Port Arthur  
Nassau Bay

Volunteers from Mount Prospect, Ill., help rebuild a home damaged by Hurricane Harvey in Port Arthur, Texas.

An Orphan Grain Train trailer provides bunk room for volunteers on the campus of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Nassau Bay, Texas.

Corpus Christi  
Port Aransas  
Aransas Pass  
Rockport

## “PRAY FOR SOUTH TEXAS.”

For six months, this message has remained on the sign in front of Trinity Lutheran Church, Corpus Christi, Texas. The simple call for prayer reflects both the ongoing need in Texas and the faith that God hears and provides.



**T**he recovery work has shifted largely from the outside to the inside since Hurricane Harvey hit the region in late August 2017. The homes now need repairs of the interior walls to make them inhabitable again. The days of mucking out and immediate flood relief are over, but now the seemingly insurmountable task of rebuilding confronts the residents of southeastern Texas.

In the same way, those affected continue to face an internal struggle for their future, even as many of their ostensible needs have been met, at least for the time being.

### **Coastal Bend**

Though the initial stage of recovery has passed, there is still much to be done. And the need for volunteers is as pressing as ever. Like many congregations, Trinity serves as a space for volunteers to stay. Trinity's preschool classroom now houses cots and mattresses instead of desks.

Driving north from Corpus Christi through towns like Port Aransas and Aransas Pass, one sees that the impact of Harvey is still evident. The

median in the road heading north to Rockport is filled with piles of garbage waiting for disposal.

Smaller communities continue to struggle to get back on their feet. The effects of the hurricane are felt in the infrastructure, in addition to the physical damage. Some repairs have been made, while other structures remain untouched months later. Some people have simply moved away. And many cannot afford the housing that remains.

Outside Peace Lutheran Church, Rockport, stands a tree trunk with a cross carved into it by the chainsaw of a Lutheran Early Response Team member from St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Hampshire, Ill. Texas bears the indelible marks of the storm, and yet the love of Christ — demonstrated through His Church — continues to touch the residents of various towns and cities as they recover.

Peace is one of the most active churches in the relief work in the Rockport area. People are noticing. And they are thankful.

Discussing the Synod's impact on southeast Texas following Harvey, Chelsea Beck,

LCMS Texas District coordinator for the Coastal Bend area, said that until the relief efforts, people didn't know about the LCMS. "And now, they say, 'Oh, you are from the Lutheran church. I know you guys will come out.'"

The work being done in the Coastal Bend is thanks to the coordinated effort between LCMS Disaster Response and the LCMS Texas District. The generosity of the people of the LCMS provides grants and supplies to empower volunteers, other agencies and congregations to answer people's needs and to find opportunities to spread the Gospel.

### **Golden Triangle**

Like the road to Rockport, the road to Rose City, east of Houston in the Golden Triangle region, still bears the marks of the power of flooding, including buckled roads, twisted guard rails and debris.

Evidence of progress can be found in many of the homes and communities there. New drywall is being installed. Taping and mudding replace the mucking and trashing that occurred months earlier. There is despair. But there is hope.

"We lost everything we had. Everything," said Larry and Joan Sensat in Rose City, as they reflected on the flooding that devastated their town and their house. But now, their hope is being restored even as their home is being repaired. "It is unbelievable that people have come from that far. ... And the Lutheran church has been here a couple months."

Volunteers are coming from all over the nation, looking to serve and share the love of Christ.

"I can help in a small way, my little way. But each of us together, like our mites, ... each of our little gifts all together can work mighty wonders because God works them," observed Sheila Lutz, a volunteer who came to Texas and who also serves as the district president for the Central Illinois District Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

### **Houston**

But massive flooding and housing difficulties are not isolated to small coastal towns. Houston and the surrounding metropolitan area continue to struggle through the rebuilding efforts.



Volunteers Jon Gehrt, Jim Wille and Bill Makuch from Mount Prospect, Ill., help rebuild a home damaged by Hurricane Harvey in Port Arthur, Texas.



Peggy Winters, a volunteer from Parkers Prairie, Minn., removes fallen tree branches at a home in Rockport, Texas.



In these areas, the LCMS is serving neighbors in need. Trinity Klein Lutheran Church, Spring, serves as a place for volunteers to gather materials and head out to work sites. The church also continues to help connect people with the help they seek.

One of the people helped by the work done through local congregations is Trinidad Hernandez, whose house and belongings were destroyed as a result of Harvey. He noted that the water was four feet high in his house and they lost two vehicles from the floods. Hernandez was first helped by other organizations, but he was given a number to call when he needed further assistance. That number was for Trinity Klein.

Hernandez reflected on the help he received from Trinity Klein: “They have been nothing but a blessing.” Through tears, he continued, “Every time they send volunteers to me, to my wife, they are like angels.”

Salem Lutheran Church in nearby Tomball runs a warehouse that was donated for hurricane relief efforts. Materials come and go daily — overseen and often loaded



Homeowners Larry and Joan Sensat of Rose City, Texas, are being helped by LCMS volunteers after their home was severely damaged by Hurricane Harvey.

**| LEARN MORE |**  
LCMS Disaster Response:  
[lcms.org/disaster](http://lcms.org/disaster)

**| WATCH |**  
See how lives are being changed in Texas:  
[engage.lcms.org/texas-recovery-spring-2018](http://engage.lcms.org/texas-recovery-spring-2018)





**\$9 million+**  
GIVEN to LCMS Disaster  
Response since Harvey hit

**\$8 million+**  
SPENT or ALLOCATED  
for disaster response within  
the next three years



The Rev. Ed Brashier (right), Southern District disaster response coordinator, assesses a damaged tree with the Rev. David Winters, a retired pastor and volunteer from Parkers Prairie, Minn., at a home in Rockport, Texas.



Laurie Holleway from Salem Lutheran Church, Tomball, Texas, loads a pallet of gypsum board destined for a flood-damaged home.

by Laurie Holleway — for sites around Houston.

South of Houston, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Nassau Bay has received help from both the LCMS Texas District and LCMS Disaster Response. The grants from LCMS Disaster Response meant Gloria Dei could quickly receive the funding needed to partner with area organizations and begin the process of rebuilding.

“Gloria Dei is a congregation that is richly blessed, and God has continued to provide the resources to us to be that

blessing, to be His hands and feet in the community. Again, these organizations — Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Disaster Relief, High Socks for Hope, Orphan Grain Train, Fuller Center Rebuilders — [have] allowed us these opportunities, and I give thanks to God for not only the funding, the resources, the know-how, but that God is in it all,” said the Rev. Dan Schepmann, senior pastor of Gloria Dei.

Gloria Dei offers a house blessing for each house that is rebuilt. The congregation

gives the family a cross and a Bible — signed by Gloria Dei staff and the rebuild teams, with highlighted passages and notes — before concluding the blessing with the Common Doxology.

Recounting a recent house blessing, Schepmann said that the work of rebuilding allowed the church’s brand-new church planter, Pastor Rob Bailey, a recent graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to bring “a message of Jesus Christ right there in that home that evening.”

### **God Provides for and through Volunteers**

The congregations of the LCMS throughout east Texas are helping as they are able. For many, that includes hosting volunteers.

“They have provided air mattresses, they provided food last night, they are talking about food tonight. These are just people from the congregation

that are doing this for us because we are happy to come down,” said Jim Lilley, a volunteer and member from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mount Prospect, Ill. Reflecting on the generosity of his hosts, Lilley noted, “They are happy to receive us. So, it is kind of a beautiful thing. You really don’t need to bring much. They provide. God provides.”

“I would say to Lutherans who are interested in coming to do disaster relief that they should come,” said 18-year-old Noah Larris from Hendrum, Minn. “It is a great opportunity to help others in need as Jesus commands.”

Pray for Texas. And volunteer as you are able. “The Holy Spirit is using these moments in special ways,” Schepmann said. “We have the opportunity to share Jesus in these homes.”

Dr. Kevin Armbrust is manager of Editorial Services for LCMS Communications.



# How does money get from the donor to those who need it?

LCMS DISASTER RESPONSE  
RECEIVES DONATIONS



MONEY IS IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE AS REQUESTS COME IN



WHO CAN APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE?

HOW?



COMPLETE A



GRANT APPLICATION

OK, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

LCMS DISASTER RESPONSE  
REVIEWS APPLICATION  
WITH THE APPLICANT



DOES THE LCMS WORK ALONE?



NO. LCMS DISASTER RESPONSE  
COMMUNICATES WITH DISTRICT OFFICIALS  
THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

THE GRANT APPLICATION GOES TO THE GRANT COMMITTEE



UPON APPROVAL



GRANTEE SIGNS LEGAL AGREEMENT  
PROMISING TO REPORT ON AND USE THE  
MONEY AS OUTLINED IN THE GRANT



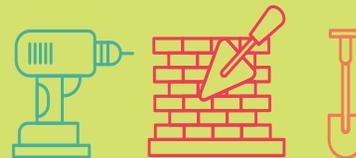
GRANT CHECK AWARDED

TYPICALLY, WITHIN 10 DAYS – 2 WEEKS



MONEY IS PUT TO WORK

LCMS DISASTER RESPONSE MAINTAINS  
COMMUNICATION WITH GRANT RECIPIENT



PROJECT COMPLETED

GRANT RECIPIENT FILES  
A FINAL REPORT





BY KEVIN ARMBRUST

## The Church Continues to Care for Haiti

Total in grants given  
(as of Feb. 9, 2018):  
**\$392,720**

“LCMS Disaster Response is doing everything we can to ensure that there are Lutheran congregations where the community can worship and spiritual healing can take place through Word and Sacrament ministry,” observed the Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, director of LCMS Disaster Response, when asked about the ongoing relief efforts in Haiti.

October 2016 may seem like a long time ago. But many in Haiti are still working to repair the damage caused by Hurricane Matthew.

The Category 4 hurricane struck the southwestern part of Haiti on Oct. 4, 2016, leaving the impoverished nation in the throes of the largest humanitarian emergency since an earthquake hit the country in 2010.

“We are enthusiastic to work for a second year in Haiti after Hurricane Matthew destroyed dozens of pastors’ homes and church buildings,”

Johnson said. “We are working collaboratively with Ministry In Mission, a Recognized Service Organization [RSO] of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

During the recovery effort, LCMS Disaster Response also has been working with Mission: Haiti, another RSO; Water for Life Haiti, a Christian nonprofit organization; and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH) to ensure funds are distributed in a timely manner and used properly for those in need.

### Aid Provided

Within days of Hurricane Matthew, LCMS Disaster Response provided a \$10,000 grant to assist with relief efforts. At that time, food and tarps were airlifted into the area, since bridges and other access points were still impassable.

Soon after, another request

was granted that provided for medical care and more tarps and food for those still in need.

This \$70,000 grant provided medical care for more than a thousand people, as well as food for people in areas where there were still obstacles to larger organizations’ distribution. Nearly 50 pastors and prayer-station leaders worked to distribute food to hundreds of people. In addition, roofs were repaired on pastors’ houses damaged in the hurricane.

LCMS Disaster Response also worked with Water for Life Haiti to dig 10 water wells, with plans for more wells in the future.

Each well provides water for approximately 350 people and 50 livestock, according to Water for Life Haiti.

### More Work to Do

Future work in the country will focus on rebuilding ELCH church buildings and digging more wells.

“We will be rebuilding half

a dozen destroyed Lutheran churches,” noted Johnson. “Each church is in a remote part of Haiti and has over 80 Lutherans attending each Sunday. Currently, they are worshiping under tarps where churches once stood before the hurricane.”

Clean water also is still a pressing need. “We will be drilling four additional deep-water wells in communities that have been devastated by Hurricane Matthew,” Johnson said. “Water wells give clean water to families in areas that are affected by disease and cholera.”

Highlighting the connection between meeting physical and spiritual needs, Johnson said, “We are locating the wells on or near our church properties. The wells bring people to the church, and the church speaks to the community about the living water of Christ.”

The Rev. P. Gnanakumar leads worship on the Eila rubber plantation in the Sabaragamuwa Province of Sri Lanka.

# ஸ்தோத்திரம்

## ‘BLESS THE LORD’:

### The Primacy of Theological Education in *Sri Lanka*

BY ERIK M. LUNSFORD AND KEVIN ARMBRUST

“Father Gnanakumar is God’s gift to us,” said David Nagaraj, a member of the Lutheran congregation in Eila, Sri Lanka, of his pastor, the Rev. P. Gnanakumar. “He guides us and teaches us about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” In Sri Lanka, an island country southeast of India, it is common for Lutherans to refer to their pastor as “father.”

“I love these people,” explained Gnanakumar as he reflected on why he visits every family in his church at least once a week. His simple and powerful response echoes the motivation that has driven this mission work for more than 15 years.

Gnanakumar visits the home of a church member on the Eila rubber plantation in January.



A tuk-tuk, or three-wheeled vehicle, drives down the road at the Eila rubber plantation.



Gnanakumar serves in Eila, a rubber-tree plantation community in the center of the island. He previously served as vicar there and was ordained Sept. 2, 2017 — the first pastor ordained in Sri Lanka in over a decade.

“It’s infectious to see how Gnanakumar interacts with his people. You know these people are being loved, and you know it is being done in the right way,” said the Rev. Steven Mahlborg, an LCMS career missionary to the country. “You can see how he is a very important part of their lives, and that’s part of what being a pastor is about.”

Gnanakumar visits church members. He helps persecuted Christians. He reaches out to non-believers. He encounters people who have never heard of Jesus before. And he tells them all the Good News about Jesus Christ.

“The best part of being a pastor is teaching them good theology,” said Gnanakumar. “There are churches around that lead their sheep astray. But we get to tell them the truth of the Gospel.”

### *Theological Education*

Sri Lanka is warm in weather and hospitality. The food is warm — even spicy. And the ubiquitous tea from the colder highlands warms and sweetens everyone, while offering cooling refreshment.

From stacks of teapots in stores to daily breaks, tea is important. Visitors are welcomed with a cup of sweetened hot tea and a savory doughnut called *vade*. Their homes may consist of only one or two rooms, but those are meticulously tidy. And the tea is served on fine china.

Gnanakumar learned to teach the pure Gospel thanks to theological education he received through the LCMS mission, the Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Sri Lanka.

The Rev. Dr. Edward Naumann serves as the primary teacher for theological education. “It’s been a real joy to see Father Gnanakumar develop from a student into a pastor,” said Naumann. “He is seeing the world and everything around him from a theological perspective.”



The Rev. Charles Ferry, regional director of the Synod’s work in Asia, places a red chasuble on Gnanakumar after his ordination in September 2017.

Naumann teaches Lutheran theology to pre-seminary and seminary students. The small house that hosts Immanuel Lutheran Church, Colombo, also serves as a lecture space for seminary and pre-seminary classes.

This theological perspective is important in Sri Lanka, where people are primarily

Buddhist or Hindu. Though there are Roman Catholic and Protestant missions, the culture is overwhelmingly influenced by Hindu and Buddhist worldviews and traditions.

“In the background, they are always doing something Hindu,” observed Gnanakumar. “As a pastor, I’m always fighting that problem.”

The Rev. Dr. Edward Naumann, LCMS career missionary and theological educator to South Asia, teaches pre-seminary students at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Colombo. Gnanakumar was once one of these students.



During his studies, Gnanakumar (left) also learned from LCMS Area Director and Missionary Rev. Roger James. Here James blesses a child after worship on Palm Sunday 2016.



PHOTO: ROY ASKINS



Now an ordained minister, Gnanakumar preaches during worship on the Eila rubber plantation in January.

*“It’s been a **REAL JOY** to see Father Gnanakumar develop from a student into a pastor. He is seeing the world and everything around him from a theological perspective.”*

— REV. DR. EDWARD NAUMANN

**The people of Sri Lanka NEED THE GOSPEL, and Lutherans are there to proclaim it and train future pastors to bring God's love to them.**



Gnanakumar kneels as he leads worship on the Eila rubber plantation.

The Lutherans in Sri Lanka have worked tirelessly to bring the Gospel to the people there, but not as something that belongs to Americans or any other national group. The Gospel is Good News for them. "It's wonderful that you hear them singing God's Word, praises to God in their own language, in Tamil, in their own music," said Mahlborg. "To me, this says this is something they have taken to heart. It's part of their lives, part of their being."

### Persecution

Yet, the Gospel is not always welcome in a country in which some 93 percent of the people are not Christian. Though the country as a whole does not outwardly persecute Christians, many families will ostracize members who confess Christ.

One family who attends the Lutheran church has suffered persecution for their faith in

the last year and a half since becoming Christians.

This faithful family now lives in a one-room house barely larger than a queen-sized mattress. They lean their bed against the wall during the day so that they have floor space.

The small living quarters are not due to poverty. This is the only place they are allowed to live after being shunned for their faith.

And yet the Gospel compels them to believe and to rise for worship each week. The Good News of Jesus continues to change lives and to bless. And the name of Jesus continues to bring with it persecution and struggle. So it has always been. So it will be until we are all united in His eternal Kingdom.

### Pastoral Care

Into this house and the houses of all his members, Gnanakumar walks each week to share with them the Gospel and to listen to their needs. Each week, he visits every member.

"Of primary importance to him is visiting people in their homes, teaching them about the

Christian faith, helping them understand their problems and God's presence with them, even despite the difficulties of their daily life," Naumann said. "[He is] giving them the forgiveness of their sins and guiding them on this journey of faith."

Gnanakumar's success, under the tutelage of Naumann and the Rev. Roger James, South Asia area director and missionary to Sri Lanka, provides encouragement as they continue work to build a church body in Sri Lanka centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A robust theological education provides training for men to confront the competing worldviews and philosophies present in the country.

Lutherans here also supported the formation of Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Publishing House, which will provide ongoing theological education resources to open the door for future Sri Lankan Lutheran pastors.

### Gospel Fruit

Yet even in this, it is the Word of God that transforms people's lives. Commenting on Gnanakumar's ministry and his



| LEARN MORE |  
[lcms.org/srilanka](http://lcms.org/srilanka)

| WATCH |  
A video about theological education in Sri Lanka:  
[engage.lcms.org/sri-lanka-pastor-spring-2018](http://engage.lcms.org/sri-lanka-pastor-spring-2018)

growth as a pastor, Naumann said that Gnanakumar's work consists of "building them up through the Word of God, using Scripture and, also for himself, having God as his own guide and the Word of God as his own light to lighten his path each day."

God's Word in Sri Lanka is bearing fruit, and the LCMS is working to continue this through pastoral formation and theological education. The people of Sri Lanka need the Gospel, and Lutherans are there to proclaim it and train future pastors to bring God's love to them.

Erik M. Lunsford is managing photojournalist for LCMS Communications.



# Teaching Women to Read the **WORD**

*A literacy project in northern Togo receives support from the LCMS.*

BY MEGAN K. MERTZ

**C**an you imagine being illiterate? You wouldn't be able to decipher the instructions for your medication or read the road signs telling you which way to go.

In the remote reaches of northern Togo, this is the case for many women. Some never had the opportunity to attend school. Others learned their country's national language, French, but can't read or write the language they use every day.

The Lutheran Church of Togo, the Synod's partner church in the West African country, is looking to change that through an ongoing literacy project. More than 170 women — as well as a few

men, including one village chief — attend classes at 16 different project sites to learn to read and write their native language: the Mual dialect of the Moba language.

A grant from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League initially made this work possible. The LCMS later gave grants of \$2,000 in 2016 and \$800 in 2017 to keep the work going.

Classes are held each year during Harmattan, the dry and dusty season when there is little work done in the fields. There are few printed resources in Mual, so LCMS missionary Valerie Sue Stonebreaker worked with local church leaders last spring to create a

booklet of phonetics and short stories to use during class.

Stonebreaker said that while the program provides students with useful skills and a sense of accomplishment, the ultimate goal is to teach them to read so that they can understand God's Word in their own language.

"I would like for these village women (and men) to have the opportunity, the blessing, of being able to read God's Word for them in the language that speaks to their hearts," Stonebreaker wrote via email. "I would like them to be able to have access to God's Word daily ... not only on Sunday mornings."

But learning to read and write Mual isn't an easy task.

There are many variations to the language, so students and teachers often have to work together to figure out the best way to write words and expressions. Some students also face criticism from family members who think the classes are a waste of time.

Despite the challenges, the students have greatly improved their reading, writing and counting skills. Several students are even able to read texts from the Mual New Testament during the Sunday service.

"I have been held back from attending school, and I was not even able to read or write my name," said Kolani Koudoubik, a woman in her 40s who attended classes at one of the project sites. "Now, because I attended literacy class organized by my church, I'm able to read the signposts and ... know where to go."



| LEARN MORE |  
[lcms.org/togo](http://lcms.org/togo)

PHOTOS: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD



Valerie Sue Stonebreaker, an LCMS missionary to Togo, holds the book used in the literacy class.



The Rev. Remi Lare Lambon, a pastor in the Lutheran Church of Togo, leads a literacy class in Kpieri, Togo.



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# Big News

## Bite-Sized Chunks

### Welcome to Life Together!

In the monthly Life Together digital news digest, Synod President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison shares highlights from LCMS publications (including *The Lutheran Witness*) and multimedia outlets. Each email digest contains useful news and information about ministries and resources that will help equip everyone — pastors, church workers and laity — in our life together.

Visit [lcms.org/lifetogetherdigest](http://lcms.org/lifetogetherdigest) to subscribe and begin receiving this free monthly news digest in your inbox.

