

A SPECIAL REPORT

WITNESS

The Lutheran

JUNE/JULY 2004

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One Mission

Abwaze!

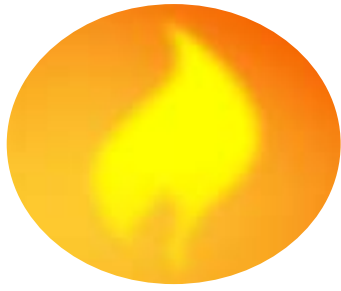
...To the Ends of the Earth

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH



MISSOURI SYNOD

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The Lutheran WITNESS

A MAGAZINE FOR THE LAYPEOPLE OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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One Mission — Ablaze! ... To the Ends of the Earth

When the 62nd Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod meets in St. Louis July 10–15, it will be under the theme, “One Mission—*Ablaze!* ... To the Ends of the Earth.” It’s based on Is. 49:5–6: “And now the LORD says ... ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

The only true God says, “It is too small a thing” for His people to pay attention only to those of their own nation—those who were nationally and culturally just like themselves. “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Walking and working together, we release our God-given resources so that lives throughout the world can be transformed through Christ’s love, in time for eternity.

We in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have **ONE Mission**—to seek lost people for Christ! We proclaim **ONE Message**—that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world! We do so as **ONE People**—united by God’s love in Jesus Christ,

Ablaze! with the power and presence of the very Spirit of God in our lives, on our lips and in our labors!

The word “*Ablaze!*” describes something or someone on fire, full of light, illuminated with the brightness, power and energy produced by the fire of God’s Holy Spirit. In the light of Christ’s love, following the lead of Jesus Himself, we seek lost people for Christ (Luke 19:10). That is God’s mission, which also is our mission ... **One Mission: *Ablaze!***

Even as God gives us His mission, it is also God who makes us “a light for the Gentiles,” that we may bring His salvation “to the ends of the earth.” We are *Ablaze!* as we proclaim the pure Gospel and administer the holy Sacraments, bearing witness of the power of God at work within us. That power propels us to proclaim the light of God’s love to all who are in the darkness of doubt and disbelief, giving witness about Jesus of the hope that is within us to other people so that they may encounter Christ.

Our task, our purpose, our privilege in life is to be *Ablaze!* with the God-given light of God’s love, made real to us in the person of Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord. In and with that light, we are enabled to focus our time, our talents and our treasure on reflecting God’s love in Jesus Christ to the people of the world.

That’s precisely what we do as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod! Congregations, districts, organizations, institutions, auxiliaries, partner churches, pastors, educators and people of our Synod work together for the sake of the Gospel. Walking and working



together, we release our God-given resources so that lives throughout the world can be transformed through Christ’s love, in time for eternity.

As in the past, a national offering will be received as part of the 2004 Synod convention. It is an offering designed to ignite God’s people to seek, serve and share Christ “to the ends of the earth.” The offering will be shared equally in support of world missions, church-worker preparation and human care/world relief. Your financial support for these ministries is essential for the common work of the mission we share as a Synod, united in a major effort to reach 100 million people for Christ by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

This special issue of *The Lutheran Witness* focuses on the various aspects of our walking and working together in the LCMS. I thank God for the ministry we share. May we truly be a church and a people in **One Mission—*Ablaze!***

Jerry Kieschnick
Lives Transformed through Christ,
in Time ... for Eternity!

John 3:16–17
e-mail: president@lcms.org
Web page: www.lcms.org/president



The National Offering

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

LCMS World Relief/Human Care
Feeding Body and Soul

**Join us in this exciting
worldwide initiative.**

Today, your gift to the **National Offering** is crucial in the “igniting activities” of the Synod’s ministries for God’s people to seek, serve and share Christ.

Your support of the **National Offering** will provide LCMS World Mission **Ablaze!** with startup funds to help reach the next 100 million people for Christ. It will assist the Concordia University System in preparing future leaders as we grow **For the Sake of the Church** and help LCMS World Relief/Human Care reach out to our neighbors, **Feeding Body and Soul** in the name of our Lord and Savior.

LCMS World Mission
Ablaze!

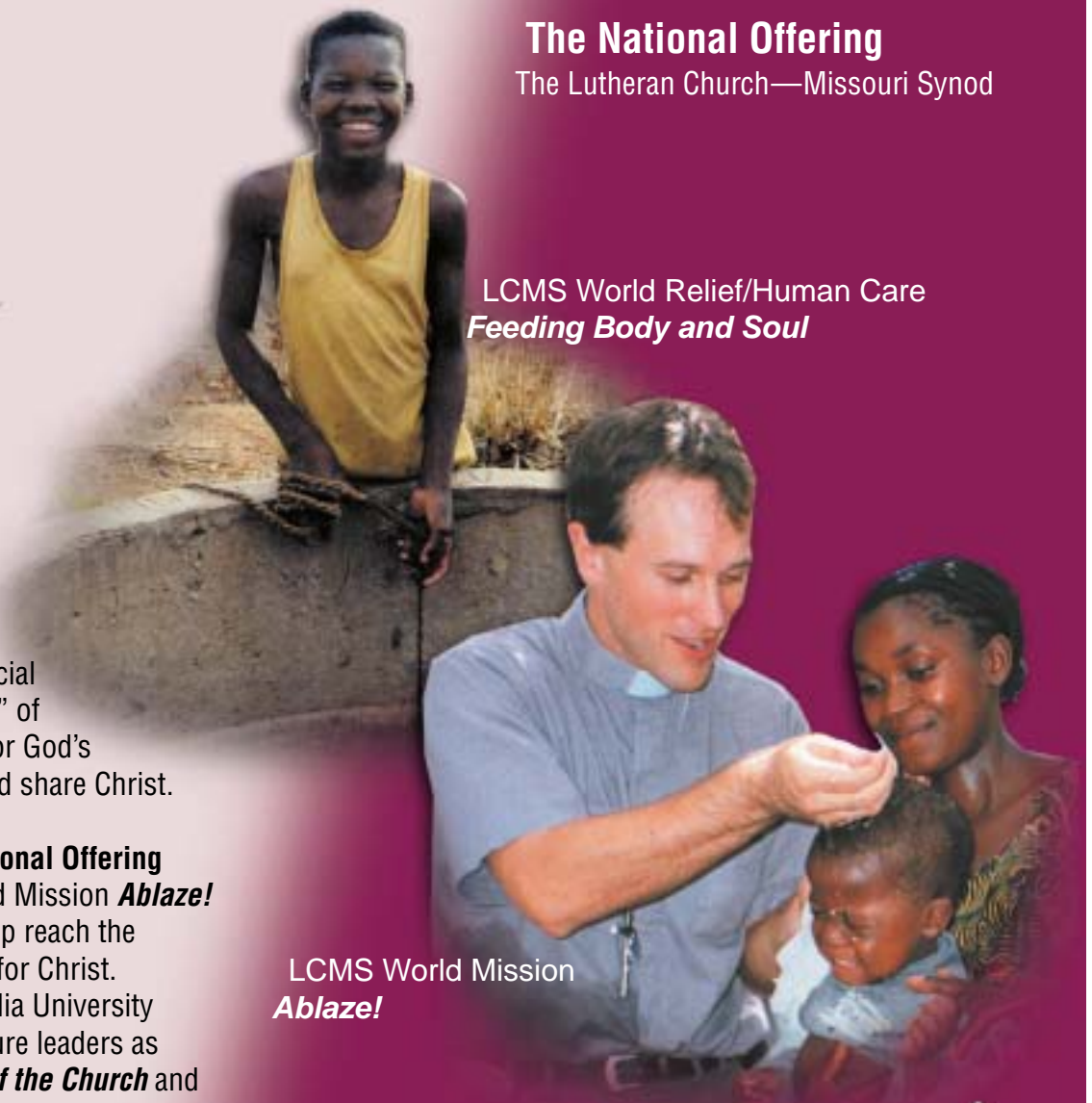
Ablaze!

One Mission Ablaze!
The National Offering
to ignite God’s people
to seek, serve and share Christ
“...to the ends of the earth.”
(Isaiah 49:6)

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SHARING THE FAITH



One of the fastest-growing Lutheran schools, Faith Lutheran High School, Las Vegas, has doubled enrollment in the last five years.

Partnerships are becoming increasingly valuable for **congregations**, turning **sparks** into **Gospel fires**.

Across the United States, congregations are “sparking” ministries to reach, preach and teach the Gospel of God’s love in Jesus Christ. As they seek assistance and resources, they become part of a growing network that reflects the Synod’s goal of “walking together” in proclaiming and serving the Lord.

by James Heine

Sharing the faith in Las Vegas

One of the fastest growing Lutheran high schools is not in the Midwestern heart of “Lutheran country”; it’s in Las Vegas.

Las Vegas is home to more than 1.5 million people, and it welcomes more than 5,000 new residents each month.

In this community of rapid growth and families in transition, Faith Lutheran Junior/Senior High School is seeing rapid growth—and a high rate of Baptisms.

“I once had a young lady ask me during a flight from Las Vegas if I lived in one of the hotels,” recalled Kevin Dunning, executive director of the school. “The Las Vegas I live in is not much different than suburban Los Angeles or Phoenix or St. Louis. I live in a subdivision with a yard, a pool and a mailbox.”

Located in the master-planned community of Summerlin, Faith—with a 2003–2004 enrollment of slightly more than 1,000—is among the largest Lutheran schools in the United States and one of the fastest growing. Enrollment more than doubled over the past five years.

It also ranks as a school with an exemplary rate of Baptisms, according to the School Ministry office of the Synod’s District and Congregational Services (DCS).

Although most students come from the 13 Lutheran congregations affiliated with Faith, many also come from families that have no church home, Dunning said. “About 25 percent of our population is unchurched according to enrollment records,” he observed, “but we estimate the number is probably closer to 33 percent.”

To encourage Baptism, Faith surveys its students twice a year and asks if they have any interest in being baptized. “If they say yes, we contact the parents and have a meeting in which we introduce, in many cases, the Lutheran view of Baptism,” Dunning said. “All of our students are receiving instruction in Christian faith as part of their religion classes, so the meeting is specifically focused on Baptism. If they wish to continue, we set a date for the Baptism in a chapel service, although some elect to be baptized privately or in their own churches.”

In addition to its strong ties to the congregations that support the school, Faith enjoys a vibrant partnership with the Pacific Southwest District, Dunning said, and District Education Executive Rachel Klitzing has provided help whenever asked. “Our region’s representative on the district school cabinet is from Faith,” Dunning added, “and several staff have served the district in a variety of capacities.”

Faith also works closely with the Lutheran High School of Orange County in Orange, Calif., also a fast-growing school. “Several of our administrators and staff

have visited their campus to learn how they do things and to see if there are applications for our school community,” Dunning said.

While the image of Las Vegas may be one of “Party Central,” its residents are no different from people elsewhere, and Faith seeks to serve their needs by providing quality Christian education. “They long for the same things every American does,” Dunning said, “and they have the same hole in their lives that only Christ can fill.”

Celebrating families

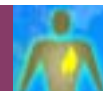
“We Are One,” a family-life event held last July at Camp LuWiSoMo in Wild Rose, Wis., gave more than 300 people the opportunity to meet, learn, enjoy and share their faith, and grow in their understanding of family life and other cultures.

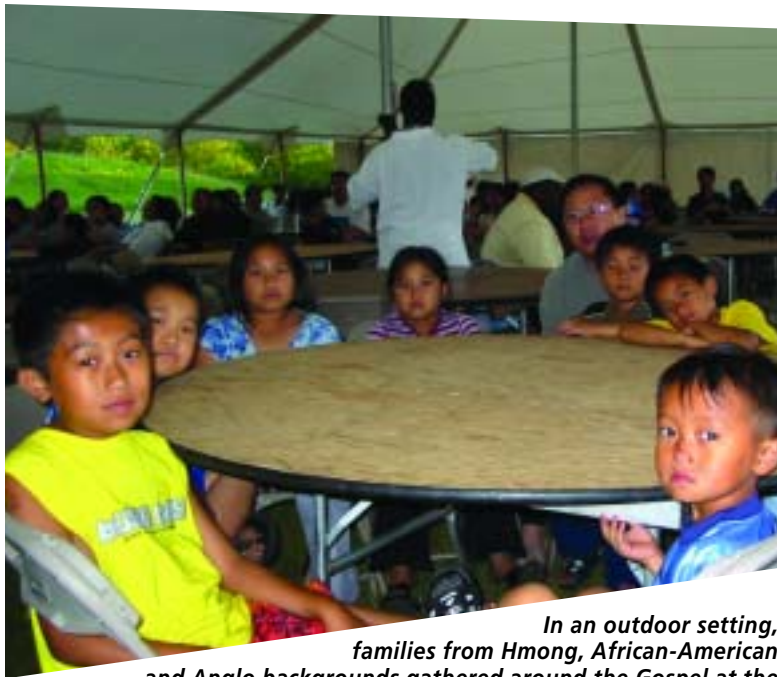
The festival drew Hmong, African-American and Anglo families from congregations in the North and South Wisconsin districts as well as several congregations in Minnesota. It was organized by the South Wisconsin District, Camp LuWiSoMo and the Family Ministry office of LCMS District and Congregational Services. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans provided a supporting grant.



Families from diverse cultures gathered at the “We Are One” family-event last July at Camp LuWiSoMo in Wisconsin. The gathering is a model for future multicultural family gatherings in the Synod.

“We wanted to provide an opportunity that would bring people of diverse backgrounds together to develop their families’ assets,” said Gary Janetzke, director of youth and family services for the South Wisconsin District. “And we simply wanted to give them an oppor-





In an outdoor setting, families from Hmong, African-American and Anglo backgrounds gathered around the Gospel at the "We Are One" event last July in Rose, Wis. The event was designed to strengthen families and family ministries.

tunity to experience outdoor education and outdoor ministry."

The festival also served as a prototype for multicultural family events throughout the Synod, Janetzke explained. A planning manual, "Celebrate Families," was distributed last fall to all the districts of the Synod.

"The guide uses resources developed for the Missouri District and also for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod," said Rev. Jeffery S. Schubert, director, DCS Family Ministry. "We produced an addendum that focuses specifically on the issues you need to consider as you're planning a multicultural event."

In addition to promoting family togetherness and insight into other cultures, the family weekend at Camp LuWiSoMo provided opportunities to share the Gospel, Janetzke said. "Many of the Hmong who attended the festival were unchurched. The camping aspect of the festival was the bridge that brought them to the event and into contact with the Christian faith."

The festival was also a reminder that the Synod today is more diverse than it once was, Janetzke said. "This kind of an event really opens your eyes to that."

A 'gift beyond dreams'

When St. Mark Lutheran Church, Elberta, Ala., sought to improve its member participation and reach into the rural community of 1,600 south of Mobile, the congregation sparked its ministry with the help of two lay volunteers from Florida.

The congregation had already invested two years of study, planning and development, according to John Lobsiger, who with his wife, Betty Jean, served as coordinators. St. Mark had three goals: to return inactive

members to worship and keep others from becoming inactive; improve its outreach in the community; and better assimilate visitors and new members into the life of the congregation.

The congregation decided to use the Harvesters for Christ program from the Outreach Ministry of the Synod's District and Congregational Services. "It was the most active Missouri Synod evangelism program going," Lobsiger said.

Dick and Jean Evers of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Sarasota, Fla., accepted the St. Mark assignment from Rev. Al Tormoehlen, director of Harvesters for Christ. They began a four-week stay in Elberta on Jan. 15 this year.

The Evers met with St. Mark's boards and committees, led Bible studies and workshops on discipleship, spiritual gifts and community outreach, and encouraged the congregation to organize a process for visiting inactive members and encouraging them to rejoin the life of the congregation.

The Evers proved to be a gift "beyond our initial dreams," Lobsiger said. "We started classes with more people attending than we had planned. ... And the numbers increased in every class the second week."

Because of St. Mark's enthusiasm for the Harvesters

Members of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Elberta, Ala., focused on methods for stronger outreach to their community with the help of a volunteer couple from Harvesters for Christ. Their efforts began with Bible-based instruction in discipleship and evangelism.



program, the work also extended to other congregations in the circuit, Dick Evers said. Six congregations sent members to a "Share Life" workshop. "Members from Shepherd of the Bay, a nearby congregation in Lillian, participated in many of the Bible classes. They also requested that we lead a

'Contagious Christianity' Bible course, a session on telephone contacts and a workshop on different ways to reach out to their community, which we gladly did."

Keith Ringers, St. Mark's pastor, observed, "The classes served as a forum for injecting many new ideas and discussing them in the context of the congregation's life and ministry." He said it was "invaluable" to have someone come from the outside and objectively look at the congregation.

"Since the Evers had done the Harvesters ministry in other congregations, they brought a wide variety of ideas and suggestions," he said. "We felt much more connected with the whole Christian church at large. Some things will work here and some will not, but we now know much more than we did."

St. Mark's experience is typical, according to Tormoehlen. Through March 2004, Harvesters for Christ has served 93 congregations in 29 districts and is scheduled to serve an additional 12 congregations between April and December.

"Harvesters continues to become more visible through district gatherings and through word of mouth from those who have partnered with us in this ministry," Tormoehlen said. "The ministry opportunities are exciting, and it's a joy to see the Gospel message proclaimed throughout so many districts and congregations in our Synod. We get calls daily asking for help."

'Beyond Imagination'

Servant Events have traditionally played an important role in LCMS National Youth Gatherings. This year's "Beyond Imagination" National Youth Gathering, July 24–28 in Orlando, will offer opportunities not only in and around the city, but also on the way to and from the event.

"Our first criterion for providing servant events at the gathering is to involve as many participants as possible," said Brenda Zesch, director of Christian Education for Christ Lutheran Church in Little Rock, Ark., and servant events director for the 2004 Youth Gathering.

FOCUSING ON CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES

LCMS District and Congregational Services resources districts so they can assist congregations to develop and foster vibrant Gospel ministries. Specialties focus on ministries for children, family, outreach, schools, stewardship and youth. For information go to www.lcms.org/dcs or call (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1732.

"This meant that we needed to become creative, since less than a third of the participants would be able to actually serve on a community-based event."

Servant Events at this year's gathering will range from "Fast Pass" opportunities that will take no more than 90 minutes to "on the road" events that will precede or follow the Youth Gathering and last several days.

Among the "on the road" events is the Greater Gainesville Gator Gathering July 21–24. Organized by First Lutheran Church in Gainesville, Fla., the event will involve 200 youth in helping Habitat for Humanity build a 60-home subdivision.

"I've always enjoyed doing Servant Events," said Rev. John Roth, pastor of First Lutheran. "I think the experience of applying our faith is one of the best ways to learn and to grow, to serve, and to also witness what Christ is all about."

Although First Lutheran has an established relationship with Habitat for Humanity, having completed one house in the subdivision and begun another, the local Habitat board is "thrilled and almost overwhelmed" at the thought of a 200-member corps of participants volunteering to lend a hand, Roth said.

"Youth want to make a difference," Zesch said. "They want to give back to others in a significant way, and they want to share the love of Jesus through their actions."

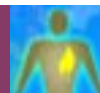
Whether at the Youth Gathering or elsewhere, every Servant Event meets some type of need with the love of Christ, said Greg Arnett, director of Christian education for St. Paul Lutheran Church in Caro, Mich., and a member of the National Servant Events committee. In the process of meeting those needs, participants themselves "grow in their compassion for other people; they grow in

love for God; and they grow in love for their fellow servants," he said.

And although servant events meet tremendous needs, the "servants" often "come away from the experience feeling that they gained more than they gave," Arnett added.

'THE SOURCE' FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

A new, online, free youth ministry resource is "thESource" (www.youthESource.org). Monthly updates, written by youth leaders, discuss current social topics as well as sharing experiences from their perspective.



TOUCHING BODY & SOUL



Education brightens the future for Nicaraguan children through sponsorship from LCMS World Relief and Memorial Lutheran, Houston.

Caring for needs. **Sharing** the Gospel.

That's how Lutherans are responding worldwide through LCMS World Relief and Human Care, the alliance of disaster relief, self-help and human care. With gifts of nearly \$7 million, Missouri Synod Lutherans support programs that touch both body and soul in a mission to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, in the clear name of Christ and His Gospel, and according to the Lutheran Confession of the faith.

by Kim Krull

Moving fast for Nicaraguan children

“It has been incredible,” said John Coulter, a member of Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas. “Two hundred and fifty children are attending school because people cared and got the ball rolling.”

Coulter was talking about children in Chinandega, Nicaragua, who are continuing their educations with help from Lutherans who moved more quickly than Coulter said he ever thought possible.

Coulter and his pastor, Dr. Scott Murray, tossed that “ball” to LCMS World Relief and Human Care when 100 Nicaraguan students needed assistance with school expenses. The Houston Lutherans had met many of the youngsters when they were in Chinandega helping to rebuild and triple the size of *Jesucristo El Buen Pastor* (Christ the Good Shepherd) Lutheran Church, one of several growing missions in Nicaragua planted by Lutheran Church—Canada.

This is a poor, struggling community displaced by Hurricane Mitch and mudslides. Homes are huts with dirt floors. Few families can afford the registration fee, uniform, shoes, books and supplies required for children to attend public school.

That’s why Nicaraguan Lutheran pastor Sandor Arquello arranges sponsorships that allow youngsters to get an education—and a chance to escape poverty. The \$90-per-student funding includes the opportunity for children to take classes at *Jesucristo El Buen Pastor* in math (a weak subject at the public school) and in Lutheran education, including the Catechism.

When 100 sponsorships suddenly ended, the Memorial Houston Lutherans issued an urgent call for help throughout their congregation and to LCMS World Relief and Human Care.

Today, those students *plus* 150 more children are studying academics and growing in their faith. LCMS World Relief and Human Care worked quickly to issue a \$9,000 partnership grant to add to growing contributions from Memorial Lutheran members.

“The Lord is using Pastor Arquello and the tool of Lutheran education to grow the Nicaraguan Lutheran church by leaps and bounds,” said Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director, LCMS World Relief and Human Care. “We are humbled and honored, on behalf of our donors, to be part of this wonderful effort, which brings great blessings, body and soul.”

John Coulter says he is pleased LCMS World Relief and Human Care could lend a hand so fast. “You made a huge difference, and now more people are making donations,” Coulter said.

One day, Coulter and his congregation hope to see those Nicaraguan children graduate from college.



LCMS World Relief and Human Care’s Rev. Carlos Hernandez helps assess needs after wildfires destroyed 750,000 acres in Southern California. LCMS World Relief and Human Care presented a \$50,000 matching grant to add to the \$150,000 collected by the Pacific Southwest District to assist congregations and communities with recovery.

When disaster strikes

Long after ravaging wildfires in Southern California disappeared from the headlines, survivors struggled with the aftermath.

“That was probably the biggest disaster we’ve faced in two or three decades,” said Rev. David Keil, pastor of Ramona Lutheran Church, Ramona, Calif., where the homes of one church member family and three school families burned last October. “Even for those who didn’t lose their homes, the memories of having to pack up in the middle of the night and evacuate and use garden hoses to save houses had an emotional impact.”

While the smell of charred wood still hung heavy, Rev. Carlos Hernandez, director of district and congregation services for World Relief and Human Care, visited communities devastated by fires that destroyed more than 3,600 homes and claimed at least three lives.

Working with the Synod’s Pacific Southwest District, he conducted on-site assessments to help determine long-term recovery needs. “We wanted to be there as soon as possible to meet with pastors and elders, to see the destruction and to pray together,” Hernandez said.

Rev. John Fale, director of chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education, presented “Life After Traumatic Loss” workshops at Ramona Lutheran Church, sharing tips for coping, as well as spiritual resources to assist recovery.

LCMS World Relief and Human Care gave a \$50,000 matching grant to add to the \$150,000 collected by the district to assist wildfire survivors. Even now, many families wrestle with insurance and federal emergency-



COWS AND EFFECT

The soft rain rendered a remote mountain road precarious. Suddenly, our four-wheel drive vehicle slid into the ditch. Despite a 30-yard vain attempt to pull out, the car plowed forward, right side pressed hard into the muddy bank. In grime up to our ankles we—dressed for a Kenyan wedding—got out to push. The mud flew! There was nothing we could do but laugh.

Back on the road, I was shocked when our driver, George, treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, suddenly stopped the vehicle. There, peering through the window, was a Kenyan Lutheran pastor in a black clerical shirt, who was walking down the muddy road.

“Where is he going?” I asked.

George translated between English and the native language: “He’s visiting his churches.”

“How many congregations does he serve?”

“Six.”

“How far apart are the churches?”

“This one is about six miles away.”

“How much does he make per month?”

The pastor looked to the ground and shrugged as if embarrassed.

“He makes about \$12.”

The plight of the 100 pastors of the Kenyan church is difficult. In the past, the pastors received monetary payments from Europe and mission societies. Those funds ran out a couple of years ago. That system produced dependency and discouraged stewardship among Kenyan Lutherans.

How to help?

“Can you help provide cows for pastors?”

Hmmmm. *That we can do!* It sounds funny. But a cow (which costs about \$150 to \$300 in the United States—more than a Kenyan pastor’s yearly income!) can have a tremendous, positive economic effect upon families here, and, in this case, upon an entire Lutheran church body. Income—milk for family and for sale!

LCMS World Relief and Human Care has made a grant that is purchasing cows for Kenyan Lutheran pastors. Most of these men care for the AIDS orphans of deceased relatives as well as their own families of, often, eight or more children.

General Church Secretary John Halackah had an idea: For the sake of dignity and integrity, these gifts also should bring responsibility. “We have determined that the first calf of each cow will go to the parish evangelist or deaconess...” Wow, I thought: “Cows and effect!”

How can you help? Ask your Bible class, Sunday school or other church group to participate in the “Barnyard Buddies” program. A donation of \$100 will buy a cow for another Kenyan pastor.

*Rev. Matthew Harrison
Executive Director,
LCMS World Relief and Human Care*

assistance issues.

“Working with Carlos and LCMS World Relief and Human Care has been a real blessing,” said the Pacific Southwest District’s Stuart Craig, assistant to the president in administrative services and mission development. “It has been good to come together as a church body and assist both members and non-members, to reach out and show we care.”



Lutheran pastors in Kenya, East Africa, serve many congregations, care for AIDS orphans and support their own families on meager salaries. Through the “Barnyard Buddies” program, LCMS World Relief and Human Care provides these workers with their own cow—a source of fresh milk and extra income. A \$100 donation buys a cow for another Kenyan pastor. Learn more by calling (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1390.

Touching needs with Christ’s love

How many lives did LCMS World Relief and Human Care touch with Christ’s love in 2003? Here are some numbers:

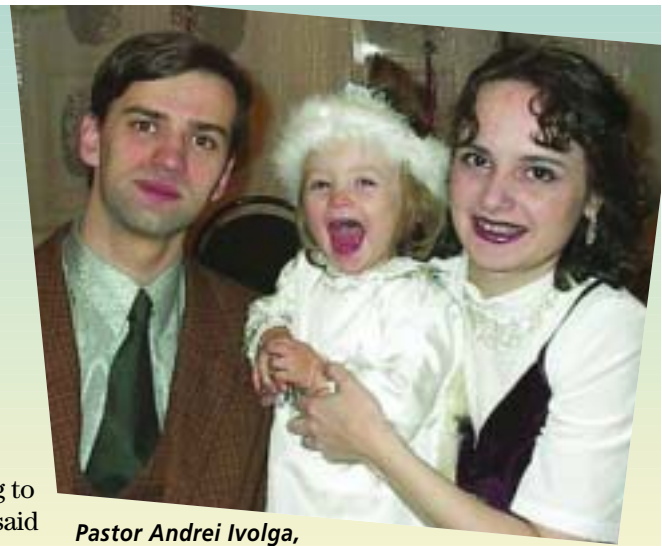
- ❖ **120 LCMS social ministry organizations** are part of Lutheran Services in America (LSA), the alliance of a total 296 Lutheran agencies that served 6.1 million people in more than 3,000 communities in the United States and the Caribbean. That’s one in every 50 people! Services include adoption, foster care, nursing homes and assistance for people with disabilities.
- ❖ **650 parish nurses** listed with LCMS Health Ministries as part of health and wellness ministries.
- ❖ **400-plus LCMS chaplains and pastoral counselors** serve in hospitals, nursing homes, law enforcement, fire departments and other non-church settings.

PASTORS NEED HEAT, TOO

In Siberia, Russia, unemployment and alcoholism run high. Winter temperatures drop well below zero. Last January, Rev. Andrei Ivolga awoke to a flooded apartment because upstairs neighbors had removed water pipes to sell for vodka.

When St. John Lutheran Church, Wheaton, Ill., and the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society (SLMS) called for help, LCMS World Relief and Human Care moved quickly to issue an emergency partnership grant for the young pastor. Ivolga, his wife, Venera, and daughter, Alyona, were living at the Lutheran church in Touim, one of four fledgling congregations he serves.

"By partnering with St. John and the SLMS, we know we are helping to enable much more than needed repairs to Pastor Ivolga's apartment," said Rev. Paul Kienker, World Relief and Human Care special assistant who expedited the grant. "These funds are enabling the Gospel to go forward."

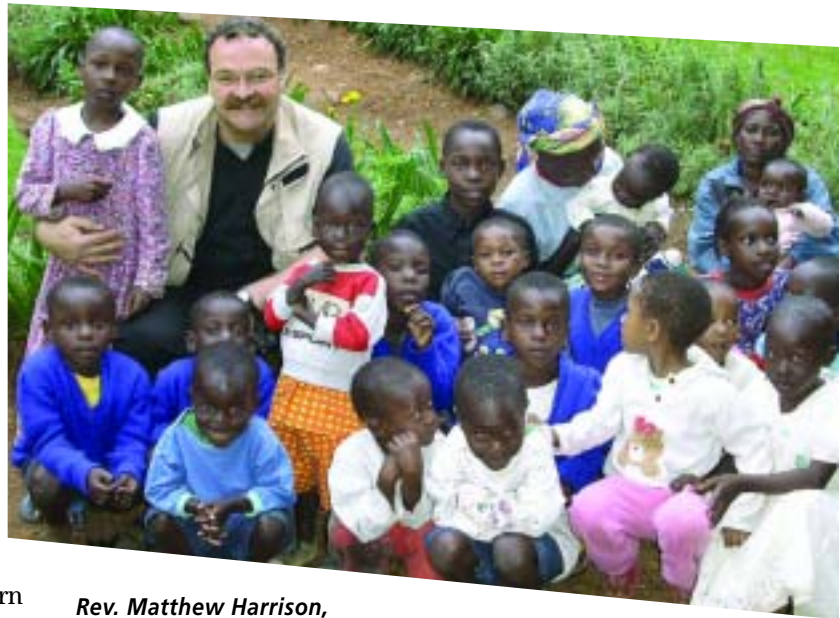


Pastor Andrei Ivolga, daughter, Alyona, and wife, Venera, will have warm housing for the Siberian winter.

- ❖ **\$1.28 million** in foreign grants, including 44 grants in partnership with LCMS World Mission and 20 grants with partner churches for human care, self-help and economic development.
- ❖ **\$999,815** in domestic grants, including 29 grants to congregations, 24 to agencies, 12 to social ministry organizations and two to districts.
- ❖ **\$694,199** distributed for disaster response in the United States.
- ❖ **\$250,609** distributed for disaster response overseas.
- ❖ **\$743,273** donated through LCMS World Relief and Human Care Sunday to feed bodies and souls in Africa.

Additional ministries and services for immigrant and refugee care include preserving life for the unborn through older adults; housing and shelter for the homeless; prison ministry and re-entry programs for ex-offenders and assistance to retired professional church workers in need.

To learn more about LCMS World Relief and Human Care, visit <http://worldrelief.lcms.org> or call (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1380 or 1381.



Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, visits with children from the Lutheran orphanage near Kisii, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. The parents of all these children died from the AIDS epidemic sweeping Africa. Each child has been baptized and attends Sunday school and church. Feeding both the bodies and souls of Kenyan orphans is one of many children's projects supported by LCMS World Relief and Human Care.

YOURS FREE: 'SHARING' AND 'CARING'

These pages feature a sampling of the people whose lives have been touched, body and soul, through the ministry of LCMS World Relief and Human Care. To read more, request "Sharing" and "Caring," the LCMS

World Relief and Human Care newsletters.

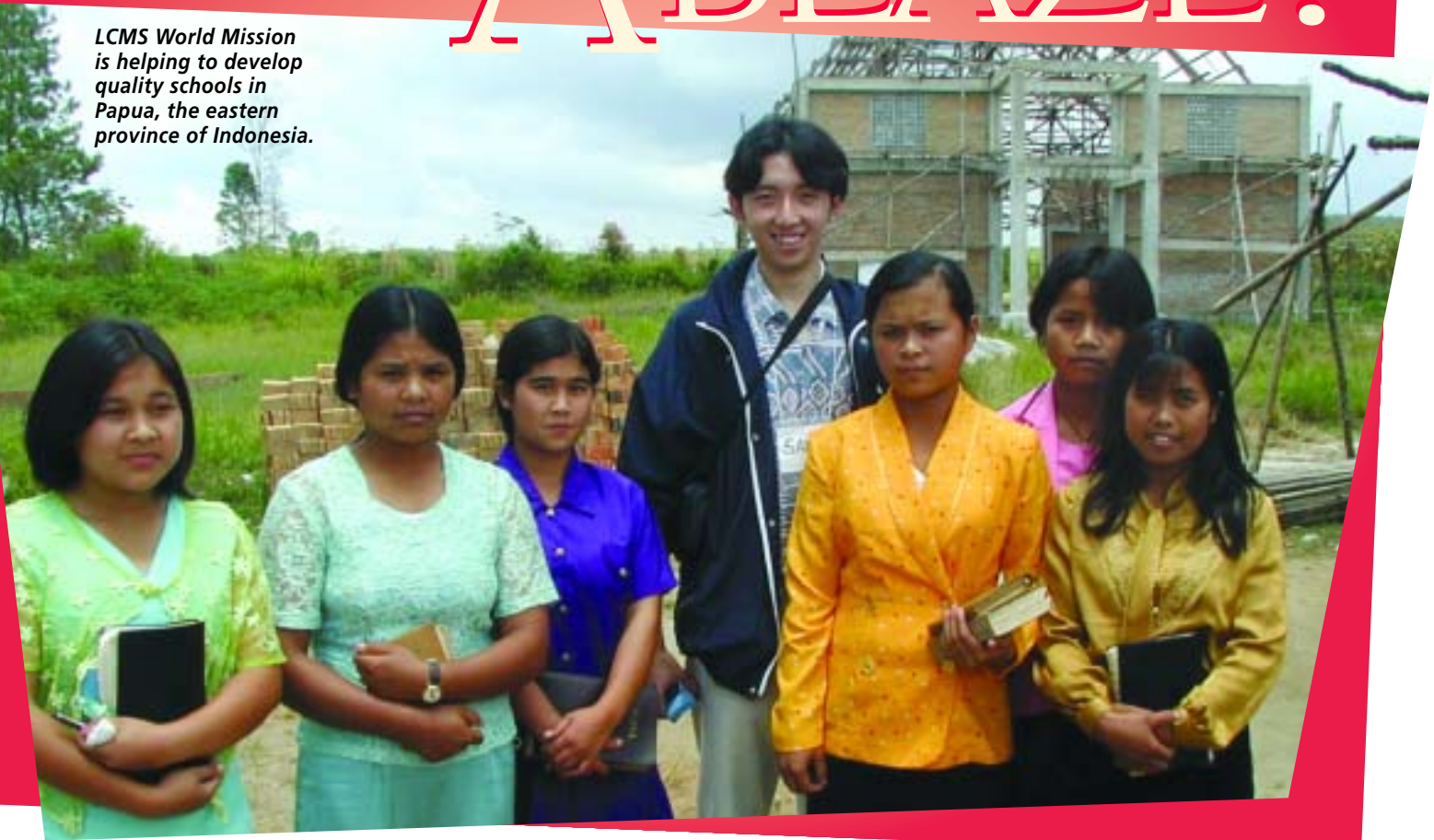
For a free subscription or to make a contribution to strengthen this ministry, send your name and mailing address to kim.vieker@lcms.org or

call (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1380. Your tax-deductible gift to LCMS World Relief and Human Care is used to alleviate suffering, elevate the human condition and spread the Good News.



SETTING HEARTS ABLAZE!

LCMS World Mission is helping to develop quality schools in Papua, the eastern province of Indonesia.



LCMS World Mission and its partners are reaching the unreached.

Seemingly outrageous goals apply to a monstrous need: Four billion people worldwide do not know that Jesus Christ died for their sins. So LCMS congregations, 29 partner churches, more than 100 affiliated or independent mission agencies and individual Lutherans around the earth are setting out to share the Gospel with 100 million unreached people by 2017—the Reformation’s 500th anniversary.

In congregations, pastors equip and encourage members to proclaim the Word to families and friends. In mission fields, missionaries seek out indigenous leaders and train them so they carry forth God’s message of grace.

The Holy Spirit ignites the spark of faith. Our prayers, resources, support—and, yes, our own voices—will “fan into flame” new Christians’ faith and outreach.

by Robin Mueller

Reaching Nubian Muslims

Many of his students are orphans. "I usually show them the love of God and they get encouraged," Rev. Paul Tokichon writes of his work in Sudan, East Africa. "I stand in the position of parents and guide them on the right way." On weekends, he walks up to 12 miles to students' homes "to feel the pain of my students as they come to school every day."

In homes, "I speak the word of God, for this is what Jesus commanded us to do," he says. "They all welcomed the message and were happy to hear about the merciful Jesus."

Last October, Tokichon, a gentle, guitar-playing teacher, left Kenya to become one of 10 teachers serving 1,200 students in two elementary Lutheran schools in southern Sudan. He and Rev. James Loriwonyang were the first commissioned international missionaries sent by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya.

Besides the basic curriculum, Tokichon conducts two Christian religious education classes weekly for both Christian and Muslim children. Muslim families agree to these classes because of the school's high quality education.

For nearly 20 years, civil war has devastated Sudan. The northern government attacked the Nuba people in the southern mountains, bombing villages, destroying schools and crops, kidnapping civilians and choking off supplies. The desperate people had no food, clothing or shelter. Their culture was in ruins.

In 2001, some Nuba refugees delegated Younan Bashir to ask for outreach help from Rev. John Duitsman, then regional director for LCMS World Mission in Nairobi, Kenya. Duitsman encouraged Bashir to return to his homeland to preach.

Just three years later, 38 Nubian congregations are "on fire," with estimates of 6,000 to 8,000 Christians. Four pastors, 31 evangelists, seven congregational elders and the laypeople build their own churches and gladly tell God's Good News to everyone they can. It is one of the fastest growing LCMS missions in East Africa.

LCMS World Relief provided Christian books, literacy materials, clothes and funds for a dam. LCMS World Mission initiated and coordinates the work of the church while supporting the two schools and providing theological education. Iowa District West congregations will support the Nuba schools, churches, training for pastors and teachers, and agricultural development through 2004–05 Sunday-school offerings.

In East Africa, LCMS World Mission seeks out local leaders to run Missionary Training Centers for new worship leaders. The leaders recruit students from surrounding villages and teach them while they plant congregations in their villages.

Rev. Scott Yakimow, the LCMS World Mission coordinator of training centers for East Africa, plans to train Sudanese men at a Kenyan seminary so they can serve at a theological college in Sudan. "They know that God is calling them," writes Yakimow. "They own the responsibility and privilege that this calling brings and are saying: 'Here we are—send us.'"

Missionaries, medical teams and evangelists

"I love Jesus so much I want to tell everyone! But it hurts and grieves me when people reject His great love for them," says Kenjibek, a recovering alcoholic and new evangelist in Kyrgyzstan.

Kenjibek credits the prayers of his wife, Alymkan, and her Bible study group for asking God to change his life. He quit drinking and was baptized. Now he boldly tells other men that Jesus Christ is the Way to freedom and heaven.

After Kenjibek and Alymkan witnessed to their friend, Basherdin, he also stopped drinking and now hosts a home Bible study in his village. Both men (with nine others) are taking pastoral training.

"To be Kyrgyz is to be Muslim" is a common belief here, where more than 50 percent of the country's five million people are Kyrgyz. Yet most residents in this former communist republic are atheists, practice occultism and are captive to "curses." Alcoholism, abuse and adultery tear apart many families.

LCMS missionaries Timothy and Marguerite (Rita) Nickel and Bob and Sue Pfeil arrived in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital, in 1998. After two years of language and culture training, they planted a congregation there. In this mountainous country, however, small, poverty-stricken villages predominate. In 2001, the team began using a mobile medical trailer, eyeglass clinics, health education and English teaching to reach villagers and share the Gospel.

Orphan Grain Train, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization, provides clothing, shoes, medical supplies and eyeglasses. Recently, Christians in Buffalo, N.Y., donated an ambulance to the region.

The missionaries call a home Bible-study host or hostess a "Man (or Woman) of Peace." New Christians, as Jesus taught His disciples, travel in pairs to other



In the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, Paul Tokichon, right, waits with another passenger after a flight from Nairobi to Sudan. Passengers walk to their destinations after their plane lands on the dirt airstrip.





Missionaries Tim and Rita Nickel helped establish an ambulance service in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in order to improve health care. (Rita is at the right, top picture; Tim is in the center, third picture.) In the third picture, the men wear kopaks, a traditional hat.



villages, sharing the Gospel and planting more groups. Five weeks after one team began work in the village of Jange Pakta, 38 people attended weekly meetings. At Vorontsovka, evangelists gathered more than 100 people. A former Soviet KGB member hosts 40 new believers at Ak Suu. Twelve congregations are established, and many are being planted.

Rita Nickel teaches health classes so that the new Christian women attending them can use health education as a witness tool with their neighbors. Together, the Nickels lead Spiritual Freedom Seminars, to set new believers free from past bondage, fear and unforgiveness.

“A changed life is still the best, most effective witness,” says Tim Nickel.

Taking the Gospel back to Asia

“A church member said, ‘I think God is calling you!’ I knew he was right. My heart is blessed. My wife and I both know that what we do on earth isn’t important, but what we do for ... the glory of God is everything!”

Some people call Dr. Funghatou Lo an “educated fool” for leaving his social work professorship and future career as an attorney to become a pastor. In 1980, 14-year-old Lo, a Laotian, resettled in Minnesota with his mother, aunt and three sisters. After several relocations and membership in different denominations, Lo met LCMS Hmong pastor Rev. Yia Vang in Oshkosh, Wis. “I so appreciated his good theology and training,”

Lo recounts.

Lo gathered his relatives and asked, “Since we are one family, why don’t we start a ministry together?” The result was Grace Lutheran Church, Brooklyn Park, Minn., where Lo serves as deacon.

Lo also works as the LCMS mission facilitator for CAME (the Center for Asian Missions and Evangelism), a consortium of LCMS World Mission, districts and con-

gregations doing Asian outreach. CAME began in 1998 to focus on evangelizing 16 million Asian-Americans, the nation’s fastest-growing minority group. Since then, the number of LCMS Asian missions quadrupled to 201.

Now 31 Hmong missions and churches reach out to 350,000 Hmong people in the United States, in places like Orlando, Fla., and Hickory, N.C. Other Asian missions are being launched among the Chinese in Chicago’s Chinatown; Asian Indians in Cranbury, N.J., Lisle, Ill., and Ann Arbor, Mich.; among Koreans in Houston, Texas, and Memphis, Tenn.; and among Vietnamese in Biloxi, Miss., and Rockville, Md.

With a grant from CAME, Rev. Ninh Nguyen of St. Philip, Houston, began www.vietlutheran.org, a Web site that fields queries from every continent. CAME also networks with Lutheran families who have adopted Asian children, helping them to interact with Asian communities.

“In LCMS congregations, Jesus Christ is being worshipped in at least 28 different Asian languages,” says Dr. Jotham Jhang, CAME executive director and the LCMS facilitator for Asian ministries/North America. “Yet 97 percent of Asian people worldwide remain unchurched.”

Now, first-, second- and third-generation Asian-Americans are returning to their homelands, sharing Christ in their native languages with far-flung relatives. In 2002, rotating teams of Hmong and other Christians—paying their own expenses—began traveling to Thailand’s remote villages. They established Christian groups in Paklang and in Chiang Mia, where they have rented a house for Bible study and evangelism training.

Most of the world’s 18 million Hmong (13 million in China alone) practice animism and animal sacrifice. “They want to atone for their sins,” Lo explains. “They know there is an ultimate creator, but they’re not sure who that person is. Christ’s ultimate sacrifice—as well as free salvation and heaven, which they never knew about—are great gifts!”

Mission societies extend the kingdom

“Almost all belong to Islam and I need a lot of prayer to go to them, because there is much fanaticism and discrimination,” says Nisar John, one of 25 seminarians at the new Lutheran Theological Seminary of Pakistan. “I have pain and a passion for these lost souls.”

John first intends to share God’s love physically and socially, using his training as a nurse. He continues a rich Christian legacy—his grandfather was a church elder and his father an evangelist.

“Evangelists call my land the hardest soil,” writes John. “But I know the customs and traditions well. People seem to be very hard, but love will make it possible, the love of the Lord, which is in us.”

The seminary where John studies is the result of a historic 2003 agreement in which LCMS World Mission asked POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach), headquartered in Dearborn, Mich., to spearhead church planting and leadership development among Muslim people in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Less than a year later, the seminary, plus a church and health center, were established in Pakistan, where just 3 percent of the population is Christian.

Muslims call themselves “The People of the Book” (the Koran). POBLO opens God’s Word, the Bible, to Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the United States and in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India. Most of POBLO’s deacons, missionaries and pastors hail from Middle Eastern countries.

“In the future, the church will partner with grassroots groups, who can take a more entrepreneurial approach,” explains Rev. Steve Hughey, director for the Mission Responder’s Network for LCMS World Mission. “Converts or Christian workers from a predominantly Muslim country know the culture, language and have key political and business connections. They are focused and can function effectively without drawing attention to themselves.”

Originally from Pakistan, POBLO Director Khurram Khan met an LCMS businessman in Saudi Arabia who witnessed to him. Connecting to the LCMS, Khan eventually traveled to the United States, where he founded All Nations Lutheran Church in Troy, Mich., in 1996. He established POBLO with family members and other immigrants in 1999 to reach large Muslim populations in Dearborn Heights, Troy, Rochester and Lansing.

POBLO “franchises” itself in other cities, where local boards and evangelism methods develop to reach Muslims from different cultures.

“When we were asked to undertake this great work, we were not well prepared and did not have much funding,” says Khan. “But we have partnerships, and God has given us His heart. We know His truth changes lives.”

Christian Schools Light the Way

“If we’re going to have strong Christian leaders in Papua, in the government and the churches, we need a high quality Christian school,” says Pak Agus, a respected Christian man working with LCMS Missionary Dennis Denow to establish a Christian school in Sentani, Papua, and to develop an English teacher training program on this island. “I hope it will be a model for many other schools like it.”

“Since the governor and most other provincial officials are Christians, they wanted Christian organizations to help with curriculum development and teacher training,” explains Denow. “God has richly blessed the LCMS with a wonderful education system, so this seemed like

a natural connection.”

Indonesia, an archipelago of 18,108 islands, features the largest Muslim population in the world, nearly 185 million people. Just 10 percent of its 210 million people are Christian. Papua, Indonesia’s easternmost province,



In Papua, a province of Indonesia, LCMS World Mission is working with a Christian agency to help establish Christian schools. Missionary Dennis Denow is planning the curriculum.

with its 2.4 million people and 300 languages, represents this challenge in miniature.

LCMS World Mission began work in Indonesia in 1995 with the *Pelita Harapan* (Light of Hope) Foundation, founded by two Indonesian Christian businessmen. The foundation is establishing Christian schools—including 100 *Dian Harapan* (Lamp of Hope) schools for middle-income families, and 1,000 *Lentera Harapan* (Lantern of Hope) village schools for poor families.

Denow came to Jakarta, Indonesia’s capital, in 2000 as the foundation’s deputy director to develop schools in poor communities. He moved to Papua in 2002 to begin this new outreach for LCMS World Mission.

Mission groups collaborate closely. While Denow plans the curriculum, another U.S. missionary from Mission Aviation Fellowship works with government officials on land purchases. Several mission groups and local Christian leaders, who are providing insights into the culture, will serve on the school board. Friends of Indonesia, a mission society based in Columbus, Ind., provides funding for specific projects.

Denow says establishing these new school “lights” in the darkness is urgent and well-educated Christian teachers are desperately needed.





Soon to be residents of Mellen, Wis., are the members of the Andersen Family. A graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Shawn Andersen, right, was assigned to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mellen. In the foreground is Ryan, 12, and seated, from left, are his wife, Karla, holding Eve, 3; Daniel, 10, and Leah, 6.

by Roland Lovstad

Soon to be pastors

No longer students, Shawn Andersen and Matthew Henry are among 189 men who are anticipating their new responsibilities as pastors.

"You want to be their pastor," Andersen said in May as he completed classes at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. "I can't think of anything else."

Andersen expects to be installed this July as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mellen, Wis., a congregation of 300 confirmed members. He will be ordained in June at his home congregation in Racine, Wis.

"I have developed a love of theology and the Lutheran doctrine and hymns," he said. "I would like to instill the same kind of love in my congregation, where they can know they have a Savior who loves them."

Andersen, 37, enters the pastoral ministry after working in the computer field. He and his wife, Karla, have two sons and two daughters.

Henry, a graduate from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was called as assistant pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Oregon City, Ore. He and his wife, Sally, will be moving early this summer for his installation on June 27. He will be ordained at his home congregation, Hope Lutheran Church, Idaho Falls.

"They want me to be responsible for outreach, which should be an interesting task, considering that only 20 percent of the people in the Northwest are churched."

At age 25, Henry said he's been "in school all my life"

EDUCATING FOR SERVICE

For every professional worker who takes a call in the church, there are dozens who serve to make it possible. This strong commitment to Lutheran education also prepares men and women who apply their faith and training in lay vocations and in their congregations.

and now looks forward to his service as a pastor. "It's incredibly exciting, yet humbling."

Kids go to college, too

"He loves to tell people that he goes to college with Mom," said Lasaundra Blakes of her 4-year-old son, Charles Moorer III, who is among the children who attend the Parents Support and Child Enrichment Program at Concordia College in Selma, Ala. "Some nights it's hard to get him to leave for home."

Blakes, who works full-time during the day and takes classes at night to complete a double major in elementary and early childhood education, is typical of the parents whom the program is designed to serve.

Funded by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, the program serves about 50 children, ages 3 to 12. With two full-time staff and part-time student help, the center is open to accommodate students who take night classes. Best of all, the fee is \$5 per semester. (The program guidelines provide that 75 percent of the parents must be from low-income brackets.)

"They tell you straight out that it's not babysitting, it is child enrichment," commented Greg Arnold. His sons, Mark 12, and Matthew, 3, attend while he pursues a degree in business and works as a network administrator at the college. "They just have a great time and they don't know they're learning at the same time."

Blakes' mother recently moved, so childcare was a challenge. By taking Charles to school with her, she is better able to manage schedules. The center also provides an evening meal for the children, so she's assured her son has good nutrition. "There you can openly

express religion," she added.

"I commend Concordia for this work; they saw a need and fulfilled it," Arnold added. "You get a quality education here. It is worth every bit of the struggle."

Witnesses in the workplace

Do business programs have a place at a church college? Absolutely, says the dean of the School of Business at Concordia University in Irvine.

"It's an opportunity to reach people who go beyond the church," said Dr. Richard Harms. "We work with students who have values and ethics and give them an opportunity to discuss the important components. And we send them out to witness in the workplace."

The School of Business has 300 undergraduate majors and 70 enrolled in its Master of Business Administration program, according to Harms. He said the programs serve the large business community in southern California and help to build awareness of the university.

"Accounting firms come to us because they are interested in better students—those who have values and ethics," he said.

A recent survey of students found that 40 percent, regardless of major, expected to work in business, according to Stephen Christian, vice president of university advancement. "We want to be intentional and deliberate in helping students integrate their faith into all aspects of their lives," he said. "Martin Luther said work is a sacred vocation and we want to help other people understand that work is a calling from God."

Intern brings 'can-do'

Historic Trinity Lutheran Church in urban St. Louis was prepared to cancel vacation Bible school last summer. There weren't enough volunteers to help and to teach. Then a student intern with a "can do" attitude arrived on the scene.

Within a few weeks, there were volunteer teachers, publicity was done and 50 youngsters were attending.

Confident that she could organize the event, Rebecca

Rust had a bigger challenge—getting volunteers when she didn't know any members.

"And it worked, by the grace of God alone," she said. "All the volunteers came through and served in areas where their gifts were best displayed."

During her year of internship, a requirement to complete the DCE program at Concordia University, Irvine, she also helped the congregation begin ministries for youth and families.

"There are growth opportunities," said Pastor David Marth. The 165-year-old urban congregation is seeing more young families in its community, and its partnership in a Lutheran middle school has opened opportunities for both youth ministry and family life.

Rust said her education has provided a strong foundation, and experiences outside the classroom helped her build confidence that she could adapt to



Rebecca Rust

situations where God places her.

"I can't believe that I have a job that I want to go to every day," she said. "I couldn't be happier with where I am or what God has me doing."

Trinity has called Rust to continue on the church staff as a full-time DCE to continue the work she has begun.

THE LCMS HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

This past academic year, 17,568 students were enrolled at the 12 institutions of higher education operated by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The count included 1,135 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. While most students are men studying to become pastors, both seminaries also offer deaconess training for women.

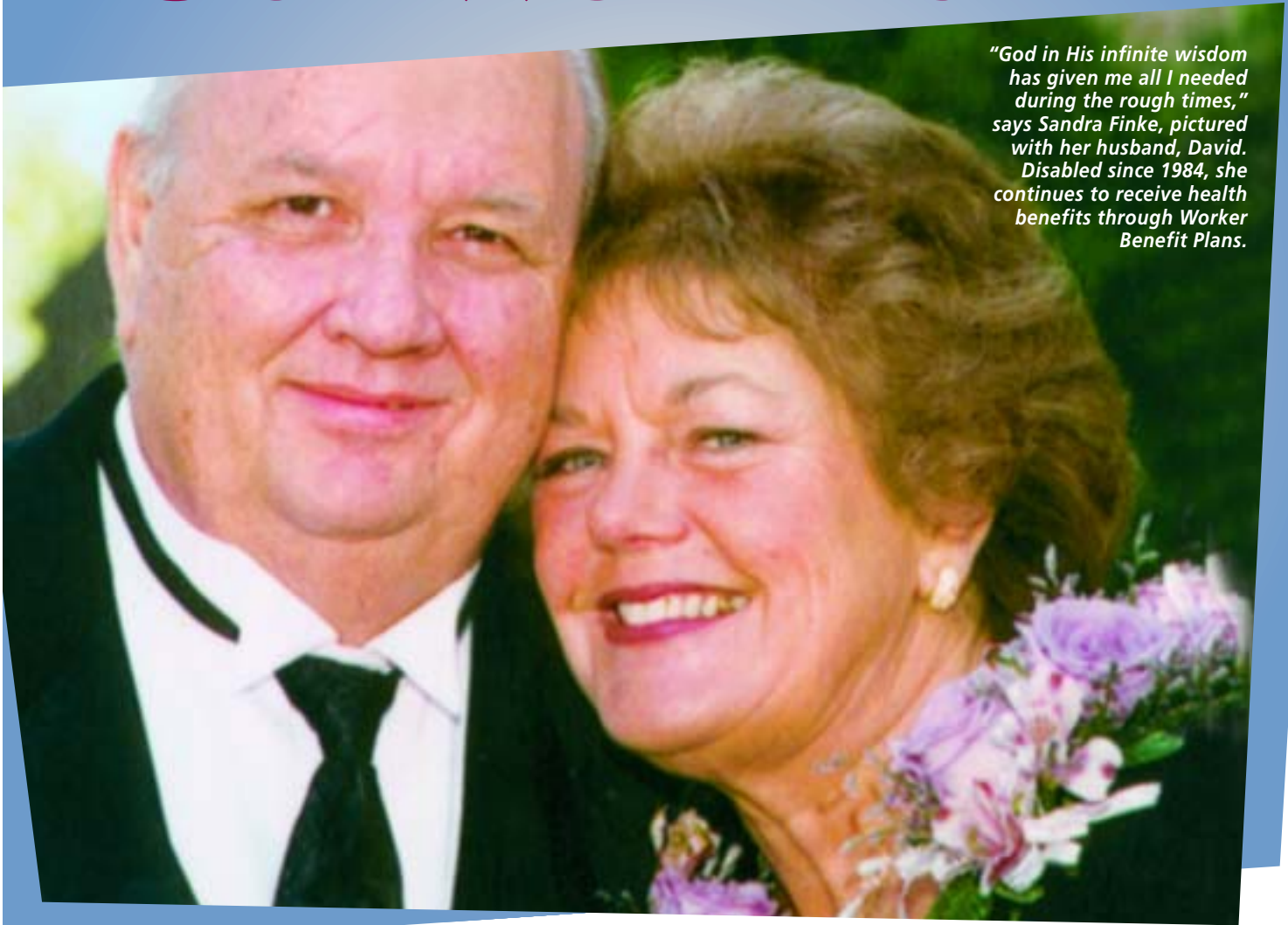
At the Concordia colleges and universities, students can study for these full-time church vocations: pre-semi-

nary, Lutheran teacher, director of Christian education, director of Christian outreach, deaconess, lay ministry, director of parish music, director of family life ministry. (Not all majors are offered on every campus.) Many majors are offered in liberal arts, health, education, science and business.

The campuses are located in Ann Arbor, Mich.; Austin, Texas; Bronxville, N.Y.; Irvine, Calif.; Mequon, Wis.; River Forest, Ill.; Portland, Ore.; St. Paul, Minn.; Selma, Ala. and Seward, Neb.



TAKING CARE OF OUR WORKERS



“God in His infinite wisdom has given me all I needed during the rough times,” says Sandra Finke, pictured with her husband, David. Disabled since 1984, she continues to receive health benefits through Worker Benefit Plans.

The Worker Benefit Plans reflect congregations helping one another.

What we may think of as “benefits” are more like necessities—health care, retirement, disability coverage for our professional church workers and provision for their survivors. In The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, they’re called Worker Benefit Plans. But they allow church workers to focus on their ministries with fewer worries about the well-being of themselves and their families. They are another way that congregations and other LCMS employers assist one another in serving and proclaiming Jesus Christ.

by Roland Lovstad

Disabled Teacher Knows Value of Plans

As she recounts her medical situation, Sandra Finke is still able to maintain her sense of humor, along with a deep appreciation for Worker Benefit Plans.

A teacher at St. John Lutheran School in Mayville, Wis., she came home from a teachers conference in 1984, thinking she had the flu. By the next morning she couldn't breathe, and subsequent tests showed that a nerve in her diaphragm was paralyzed, complicated by asthma.

"I was unable to teach," she said of her 18-year career. "I was hardly able to go from the bedroom to the bathroom without losing my breath."

Once on disability, she thought back to her early years of teaching and to a friend at school who had encouraged her to enroll in the Concordia Health Plan (CHP).

One of the unique aspects of the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan is that when a worker is disabled, the plan continues to provide health benefits through the CHP. "Since that time, I suffered a heart attack and underwent surgery, radiation and chemotherapy for breast cancer." With a little laugh, she continues: "Last spring, I fell down the steps and broke both legs, and last December I had foot surgery."

In 2001, the cancer treatments left her sick and weak, and unraveling the medical bills became an increasing problem. So she called Worker Benefit Plans and asked for help, telling them, "I am so sick physically, maybe I should just give up."

Elizabeth Dixon, her claims representative at the time, told her to go back to bed and she would take care of things.

"She saved my sanity," Finke said. "I have never met the lady, but she was an angel in disguise when I needed one. She was so gracious and kind. Liz would call and e-mail me to keep in contact to let me know where things were."

Although still disabled, Finke has been able to teach a women's Bible class at St. John. "I'm limited in what I can do—I make a lot of 'honey-do' lists for my husband, David. But I still can laugh."



Elizabeth Dixon

When she was very sick, Finke said, she "would look for something beautiful to see, something beautiful to hear and something to laugh about. If I could find those three things in one day it wasn't wasted. God never let me down."

It has been two years since Finke has been able to be in her flower garden, but she's determined to do some work there this year. Meanwhile, she continues to be amazed with Worker Benefit Plans and Liz, the friend she's never met, except by telephone.

'Where God wants me to be'

Four rules have guided Liz Dixon during her 25 years with Worker Benefit Plans: "Assist ... be kind ... don't misdirect ... don't pass the buck." It's that cooperation and diligence that Sandra Finke appreciated when she needed help.

"She is a very special person," said Dixon, now a benefit area specialist. "I did what I needed to do and [she] also worked with me," she said of her contacts with Finke. "It's a really, really touching thing," Dixon said of Finke's expressions of gratitude through notes and e-mails during the process.

Dixon often works with disabled members like Finke, who are eligible for Medicare. She's learned the ins and outs of Medicare and health-care providers and concerns of members. And, she's persistent, insisting, "I will stay until I get it done."

"I'm here because this is where God wants me to be," she said.

During 2003:

- ✿ Nearly \$90 million was dispensed in monthly retirement benefits to LCMS retirees.
- ✿ More than \$12 million was paid in death benefits to surviving spouses and dependents of members who died during retirement.
- ✿ More than \$6.4 million was paid in disability benefits and \$4.8 million in lump-sum death benefits
- ✿ More than \$156 million was paid for health claims, including medical, dental and prescription drugs.



Containing costs

“You don’t want benefits to affect a worker’s decision on a [divine] call,” says Paul Middeke, president of Worker Benefit Plans. What he describes as “portability” allows a worker to move from one “employer” to another with assurance that important considerations—health, disability, survivor benefits and retirement provisions—will be consistent.

Worker Benefit Plans

administers these programs for employees of congregations and synodical organizations:

- ◆ **Concordia Health Plan** — covering 22,700 members and their 28,100 dependents.
- ◆ **Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan** — currently providing benefits for 500 disabled workers and 1,200 survivors of workers.
- ◆ **Concordia Retirement Plan** — monthly benefits for 11,500 retirees and surviving spouses.
- ◆ **Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers** — benefits to 4,304 retirees and surviving spouses.

As Middeke explains, the “Concordia Plans” reflect a Christian community where congregations and other church employers assist one another. “They are well-funded benefits that are secure, designed for portability, and are designed for the unique ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

Even though Middeke believes “there probably is not a comparable product,” he adds that Worker Benefit Plans has to work hard to stay competitive, particularly in the area of health coverage.

As most employers know, the cost of health benefits for workers continues to zoom higher each year. Some LCMS congregations have sought out commercial insurers as a way to lower costs.

Middeke and Jim Sanft, senior vice president and chief actuary, express two concerns: how to hold the line on health benefit expense and how to keep congregations in full participation.

Sanft observes that the Plans “were meant to be a package.” He says, “It works best if everybody participates fully and this provides the most efficiency for the Synod overall.”

Beginning this year, Worker Benefit Plans (WBP) began offering four health-plan coverage options so employers could choose the option that best met the needs of their workers while helping to control their costs. They range from an

option with no deductible for in-network expenses to one with a \$1,000 individual/ \$2,000 family deductible. While 40 percent of the employers, covering 58 percent of the workers, chose one of the less expensive options, most employers selected the option with the least deductible amount.

Still, Middeke is concerned that some workers feel that they are not being supported due to the changes. “Health costs, like deductible amounts, are probably hitting some of our workers for the first time. If we did not allow the employers more choice, the cost and contribution rate increases would be more significant,” he said.

With lower contribution rates, WBP encouraged congregations and other employers to use the savings to set up local funds to help employees with deductibles, provide salary increases or bonuses, or set up Flexible Spending Accounts, which allow pre-tax dollars to be set aside for health care expenses.

“Deductibles and copayments are designed to make us responsible health care consumers,” said Sanft. He pointed to decisions like making a doctor appointment rather than going to the hospital emergency room, considering the necessity of additional tests, and use of generic drugs keep health costs, and therefore health plan rates, lower. The intent is not to ration care, but to encourage good decisions, he added.

The Concordia Health Plan contracts with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota and Aetna for managed care, which negotiates discounted rates with care providers, Sanft said. “We are like an insurance company in that we are the risk-bearing entity. Ultimately, however, it is the entire LCMS—congregations, lay leaders, members, etc.—acting as the Plan sponsor that carries the risk. We are a self-insured trust. We write the checks out of our checkbook.”

He added, “We have literally saved millions of dollars” in prescription services by using the collective buying power of 15 Christian church bodies working together.

Middeke said that the CHP is able to keep its administrative expenses to about 3 percent. He listed “competitive advantages” like not having to pay sales commissions, state premium taxes, and advertising expenses. Plus, the CHP can exclude certain state-mandated requirements that are not consistent with LCMS doctrine,

such as coverage for domestic partners or abortion.

Sanft added, “It’s common for insurance plans to return 70 cents for each dollar; Worker Benefit Plans pays more than 90 cents in benefits for every dollar of contributions.”

Other components of the Plans—retirement

Jim Sanft and Paul Middeke, Worker Benefit Plans



and disability and survivor benefits—are doing well, according to the president.

“We’ve been blessed with very good investments,” Middeke said about the retirement program. “Over the last 20 years, we’ve reduced contribution rates twice and increased benefits eight times, and granted a cost of living increase for retirees about every three years.”

“All our member employees can go to bed knowing that their pension, disability and life insurance benefits are secure,” said Middeke. “What we want to do is provide comprehensive benefits for employees so they don’t have to worry about benefits as they carry out their ministry.”

Thankful for drug coverage

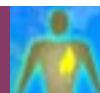
Earlier this year, Rev. Richard Buege, Mankato, Minn., called Worker Benefit Plans to thank them for the prescription coverage that helps him to obtain medicine to control his diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol level.

“As one gets older, one needs more prescriptions,” said Pastor Buege, who developed diabetes as an adult. Controlling the disease with oral medication, he is able to stay active in ministry, including preaching responsibilities at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Burnsville, where he is assistant pastor.

“I used to preach every Sunday until last June, at age 75, I decided to cut back,” he said. “But my health is such that I can accept invitations to preach.”

“Every time I step into the pulpit, I consider it a blessing and honor that God has given me the privilege to share His Word,” he says of his service in six parishes.

“It is a big help to have health coverage. I thank the people involved in providing the care and yet seeking to keep the costs down. We hope and pray that with God’s provision and the work of people like those in Worker Benefit Plans that we can continue to find answers to providing economical health care coverage.”



BUILDING FOR CHRIST



With the mountains in the background, members of Summit Lutheran Church held their first Easter worship service this year. Last August, the congregation formed in Summit, Ariz. It had 125 worshipers at the Easter service.

The **Lutheran Church Extension Fund** is part of an ongoing partnership that benefits everyone.

Thousands of LCMS members are earning interest on their investments in the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. And many of those investors enjoy knowing that their money is providing the funds to build churches, schools and other facilities where ministry can be conducted.

by Roland Lovstad

'STEWARDING' IS GOAL OF CFS

Opportunities in Arizona

A few months ago, Pastor Todd Stocker showed a winter visitor from Minnesota around the house where his fledgling congregation, Summit Lutheran Church, worships in Summit, Ariz., just west of Phoenix. Nearly in tears, the visitor said, "Now, I can actually see the physical outcome of my LCEF investments."

Investors like him will be needed as Stocker and three other mission pastors develop new congregations in communities surrounding Phoenix, where a projected 850,000 people are expected to make their homes.

"It's huge," said Stocker about the impact of LCEF. "We couldn't reach half the people we have now without LCEF." A loan enabled members of Summit to purchase a large custom home west of Phoenix for its first facility while the congregation searches for a future building site.

North of Phoenix is the community of Anthem, where members of Cross of Christ Lutheran Church voted this spring to build their first unit—a school with 12 classrooms and a gymnasium that will serve as the temporary worship center on an 11-acre site.

A planned community, Anthem was desert four years ago; today it has 8,000 new homes and more than 30,000 residents. Another 4,000 homes are still expected.

"The sky is the limit in terms of impact in the lives of these people," said Pastor Kevin Kosberg. "They're regular people who need the Lord and to know there's hope in Jesus."

Cross of Christ was established in 2002 and currently has 230 people in worship. Kosberg has baptized a half-dozen adults and conducted nearly 50 adult confirmations. About 125 families move to Anthem every month.

Stocker's congregation already averages 80 people in worship. "What has been key for us is one-on-one ministry of people inviting friends," he said. Soon, a new planned community will grow west of Summit. The area is projected to grow by 12,000 percent, Stocker added.

"This is a phenomenal challenge," said Cal Fiege, LCEF vice president in the Pacific Southwest District, who is guiding "Plant Now. Harvest Forever," an effort to encourage members of Arizona congregations to invest in LCEF so new congregations will have facilities to serve their growing communities. Growth is so fast in the greater Phoenix area that two more mission congregations could be started, Fiege observed.

The two other mission congregations in the area are Living Word Lutheran Church, Surprise, served by Rev. Kevin Wilson, and Saving Grace Lutheran Church, Queen Creek, served by Rev. Augie Iadicicco.

A 'missionary spirit' in Lincoln

Over the past seven years, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Neb., has grown from 130 to 900 bap-

tized members, opened a preschool, begun a day school and constructed new facilities. Now the congregation intends to begin a "daughter church."

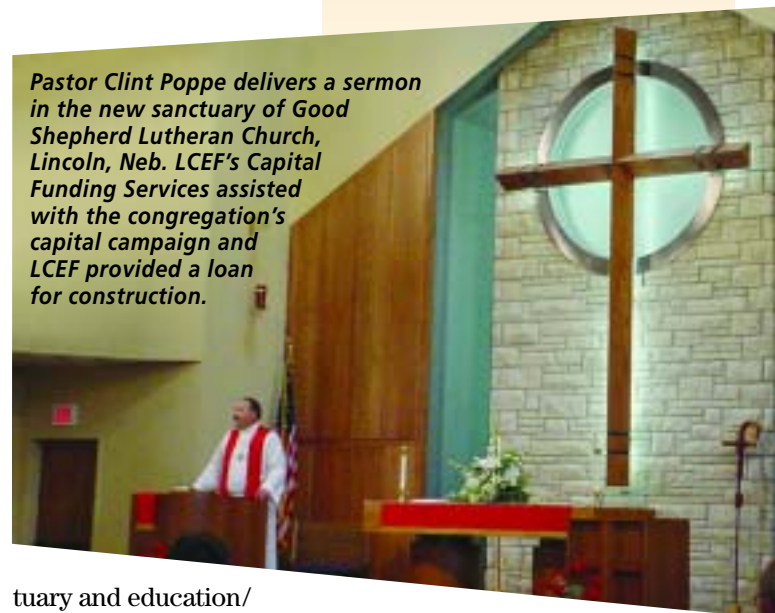
"It's a testimony to the power of God's Word," said Pastor Clint Poppe, who began serving Good Shepherd as a vicar in 1997. Along with a "tremendous hunger to study God's Word," he said the congregation has talented members with a missionary spirit. So many people have reached out to help us."

The congregation's partnership with Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) Capital Funding Services guided the members in raising gifts and pledges to build their new sanc-

Capital Funding Services works directly with congregations, schools and agencies in planning and raising funds for capital projects. Whether it's to build a new facility or eliminate a debt, said Rev. David Schmidt, the objective is to ultimately expand local and global ministries.

As Senior Vice President of CFS, Schmidt believes the long-term impact, which he labels "stewarding," is that members sustain their giving after the campaign is finished. CFS consultants incorporate stewardship principles as they work with congregations and seek to involve members in the campaign and ongoing ministries.

Formed in 1992, CFS became part of LCEF in late 1999. It has worked with congregations—large and small—in completing nearly 500 projects.



Pastor Clint Poppe delivers a sermon in the new sanctuary of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Neb. LCEF's Capital Funding Services assisted with the congregation's capital campaign and LCEF provided a loan for construction.

tuary and education/multipurpose wing. LCEF also provided a loan for the \$3.4 million facility.

"We were growing before we had the space, but now it's a real blessing to have room to worship, for fellowship and to hold Sunday school in classrooms rather than hallways and offices," Poppe said. Good Shepherd dedicated its new facilities in the fall of 2002 as it cele-



brated its 25th anniversary.

As Capital Funding Services (CFS) helped organize and plan the capital campaign, CFS also assisted with mission and ministry planning, Poppe said. "As God blessed us and the congregation started to grow, there was a hesitancy to move forward. The planning helped us think about our unique past, our present and our future."

The congregation wanted to maintain a smaller church atmosphere, according to Poppe, so it set a 900-member threshold as a time to plant a mission congregation or preaching station. It is now reviewing four potential sites for the outreach location.

South Lincoln, where Good Shepherd is located, is growing with new shopping areas, medical facilities, retirement complexes, homes and apartment buildings. Poppe said many members are new to Lutheranism and "there is excitement that's not typical of a 25-year-old congregation."

Building an outdoor ministry

The Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Macon, Ga., is a small congregation with a big heart for kids. Every summer since 1996, the 70-member congregation has operated a Lutheran day camp that now draws about 80 children a week.

"This day camp is very outdoors-oriented," says Jeanne Haslam, camp director. "We enjoy all of God's creation through hiking, biking ... playing all sorts of sports, and participating in arts and crafts."

In 1995, the congregation decided to focus outreach efforts on the youth in their community. It received an LCEF construction loan to develop the camp.

A focal point is the expansive youth pavilion, complete with kitchen, bathrooms, staff room and storage space. Laborers For Christ (LFC), a ministry of LCEF,

helped members of Holy Trinity clear land, pour the foundation, construct the pavilion, hang dry wall and paint.

LFC Project Manager Bob Natzke said, "We worked together as a family during this project. The Laborers and church volunteers generated a great feeling of Christian community."

Haslam added, "Our pavilion is used every moment of every day at camp. We are so thankful for the help Laborers For Christ provided Holy Trinity in constructing this area."

The director said Trinity Woods Day Camp started with 20 children in 1996 and continues to grow.

"Without the initial loan from LCEF, Trinity Woods Day Camp would not exist," Haslam said. "This was a need in our community, and Holy Trinity church members had a desire to serve the children. LCEF loan funds made it all happen."

Check cards go to Youth Gathering

Through LCEF, some youth groups have a convenient way to manage payment for meals, registration fees, hotel bills and other expenses associated with travel to and from "Beyond Imagination," the LCMS Youth Gathering being held July 24–28 in Orlando.

They've deposited their proceeds from car washes, bake sales and other fund-raisers into an LCEF StewardAccount® and will use the VISA® ATM/Check Card to pay expenses. There will be less need for leaders to carry large amounts of cash, and they'll have a record of expenses when they get home.

Since the event will be on a weekend when most banks are closed, LCEF also will process cash withdrawal requests at an on-site booth at the Gathering. Signature purchases with the VISA Check Card also generate income that is directed to support LCMS world ministries.



Junior camp counselors pull a young camper down a slide into Trinity Creek at Trinity Woods Day Camp in Macon, Georgia.

LABORERS FOR CHRIST

Laborers For Christ (LFC) became part of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund in July 2003. The organization is a ministry of dedicated Christians who spend a portion of their retirement years working for LCMS congregations that participate in the LFC program and wish to build their own church facilities.

LFC volunteers function in different ways, some as regional consultants, some as preconstruction coordinators, some as project managers. Most serve as Laborers on projects. They come from many backgrounds, but they share their sense for God's mission, sending them to build up His Kingdom.

INVESTING TO BUILD CHURCHES

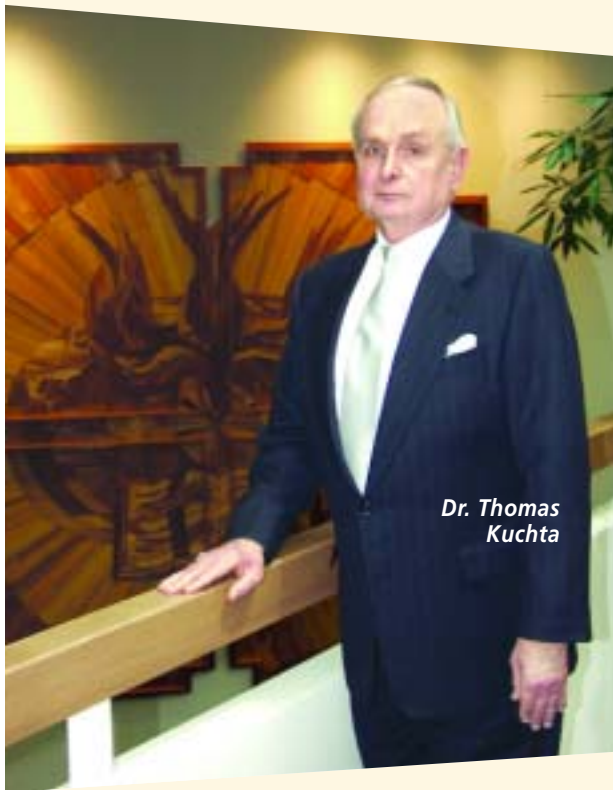
Partnerships—the connection of individuals and organizations—are effective ways to reach out with the message of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The Lutheran Church Extension Fund is one of those examples: investors in LCEF earn interest and also allow these funds to be made available to LCMS organizations that want to acquire property and build facilities for ministry.

During the last fiscal year, LCEF counted 120,116 investors whose deposits provided the funds for 2,797 loans for churches, schools and other facilities. Total assets reached \$1,358,999,000 by June 30, 2003.

Through LCEF, congregations and other ministries can use other services that assist in their plans for effective ministry and outreach:

- ✦ **Strategic Ministry Planning** — A faith-based process that seeks God's direction in planning ministry.
- ✦ **Capital Funding Services** — Assistance in capital campaigns for building or debt reduction.
- ✦ **Demographic Resources** — Data about the population surrounding a congregation or proposed ministry.
- ✦ **Architectural Advisory Committee** — Advice on architectural design, construction and worship space.
- ✦ **Gift Planning Services** — in conjunction with the LCMS Foundation, provides counsel for estate plans that include a gift to the church.
- ✦ **Laborers For Christ** — Skilled laborers who assist ministries to build their own facilities.

For information, contact LCEF at (800) 843-5233 or visit the LCEF Web site at www.lcef.org.



Dr. Thomas
Kuchta

FUNDING THE MISSION

The **Board of Directors** faces tough questions about funding the Synod's national ministries.

by Roland Lovstad

As much as ministries—and opportunities—have grown, the LCMS Board of Directors grapples with how to fund national and international work so it reflects a coordinated and consistent direction for the Synod.

In its 2004–05 national budget, the Board projects \$21 million in revenue flowing from church offering plates through districts to the national offices. These “unrestricted funds” are about \$3 million less than in 1971.

Noting that inflation has been 346 percent during that period, Dr. Thomas Kuchta, vice president—finance/treasurer, said, “It puts into perspective the significance of the problem. ... Something has to give. As a result, we recalled 32 missionaries and cut the mission staff in St. Louis by half last year.”

Fortunately, “restricted funds”—from direct gifts—help to stay the course. Projected at \$62 million, restricted funds will be more than 75 percent of the 2004–05 budget. For the Board, the difficulty is that those funds are directed to specific purposes.

Fewer unrestricted funds, Kuchta said, limit the Synod's ability to operate with a consistent national strategy in coming years. “I've met with the executive directors of the various commissions and boards to determine the dollars needed for overall strategy. That amounts to \$43 million of needs, but we have only \$23 million this coming year.”

Dr. Robert Kuhn, chairman of the Board of Directors, said, “It affects the core services, the basic services that we are demanded to provide by our Constitution and Bylaws.” Synodical officers, theology and church rela-

tions, communication and maintenance of the roster of church workers are some examples of these core services.

“It's easy to fund the core services and distribute the rest, but ... is that good?” Kuhn commented. “Are we no longer trying to think as a cohesive unit?”

The trend affects the Synod's two seminaries and 10 colleges, Kuhn added. Subsidies have declined from \$10 million in 1992 to about \$2 million, of which \$500,000 is for the seminaries. About \$4 million is budgeted to pay down capital debt of the Board for Higher Education/Concordia University System.

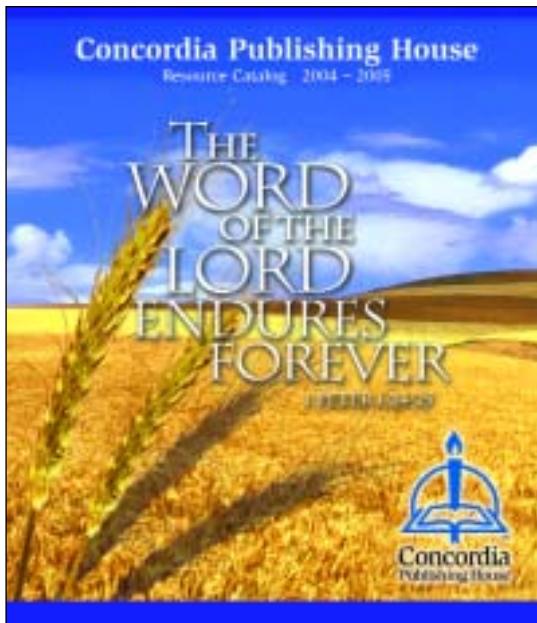
“The burden is on the schools to raise the monies,” Kuchta said. “Since they operate with their own funding sources, they question whether they should be under the Synod. It changes the relationships.”

The challenge, Kuhn said, is how to allocate the resources. “We're not going broke. God's people have supported and will continue to support the work of the Synod.”

While the Board is considering funding proposals, Kuhn said, “We hope the Synod in convention (July 10–15) will give this precedence and decide how this [national work] is to be funded.”

Kuchta admits the solutions are difficult to develop. While congregation income has grown, so have their local ministries and operational expenses. Districts also need funds to address regional ministries.

“We have not done a good job of communicating our national ministries,” Kuchta commented. “If we don't close the gap, I question the long-term viability of national ministries. The Synod has to decide if it wants ministries on a centralized basis and then make a commitment to fund it.”



TEACHING A TIMELESS MESSAGE

God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ is a timeless message. For **Concordia Publishing House**, the challenge is to present it in a way that matches today's needs for teaching and learning.

by Roland Lovstad

To teach the most important lesson of God's salvation in Christ takes careful preparation. An example is "Growing in Christ," the new Sunday school curriculum, a major project targeted for completion in 2006. Last fall, CPH staff began planning based on a major survey of church professionals, Sunday school superintendents and teachers.

"When you boil it down, the survey indicated a very strong commitment in the Synod to CPH Sunday school materials and what people want in a curriculum," said Rev. Paul McCain, interim president. He cited five findings:

- * teach children the Bible as completely as possible;
- * focus strongly on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and "salvation history";
- * be faithfully and genuinely Lutheran;
- * apply doctrine to life;
- * provide clear, easy to teach and easy to use materials.

McCain said CPH is building all the features into the new curriculum, carefully analyzing content to assure balance of Law and Gospel, while providing helpful guides and tools for teachers. Each age level will have "take-away value" for students, he added.

"We are commissioning original new art for the curriculum," McCain said. The art will reflect research from several sources showing that children are more attracted toward realistic art, rather than fanciful or "cartoonish" illustrations.

CPH uses similar methods in preparing other materials, according to McCain. "We work to solicit input and reactions to new product ideas from our customers," he commented. "We use advanced survey software that allows us to receive input very quickly and have it analyzed from people's responses over the Internet."

CPH also is developing a comprehensive curriculum guide for faith integration for Lutheran schools. "We work to serve the needs of laypersons, church workers and congregations. Our constant goal is to be the premier publisher of resources that are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions," McCain said.

He indicated that CPH is seeing more interest in its materials among Christians beyond Lutheran circles. "The more uniquely Lutheran the materials are, in both style and substance, the more they stand out from the very crowded field of Christian books and resources and, therefore, receive the notice and attention of non-Lutherans."

CPH Contributes to Synod

On May 17, Concordia Publishing House presented a check for \$236,000 to the Synod, sharing the results of a successful financial year.

"CPH ended the year in a very positive financial position," said Paul McCain, interim president. "Results from last year's operations exceeded [those of] the year before. And we are pleased to be able to share a portion for the general mission and ministry of the Synod."



WHERE MINISTRIES AND DONORS MEET



Edward Bertram,
director of "For the
Sake of the Church,"
explains endowments
for LCMS colleges
and universities.

The LCMS Foundation

links Christians to giving opportunities.

Thousands of congregation members become part of the mission and ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through the LCMS Foundation. Their gifts, large and small, work for the ministries that touch their hearts: human care, world relief, college and seminary education, missions, radio outreach, district ministries—even the work of their own congregations.

by Roland Lovstad

'Linking' is the Foundation's Role

Staff of the LCMS Foundation describe their work with many kinds of illustrations, yet all point to the basic function of "linking Christians to giving opportunities," said Rev. Thomas Ries, who assumed duties as president in April. "There is so much joy in seeing the potential to bring resources to bear on sharing the Gospel."

He said the Foundation's "linking" slogan reflects its purpose of assisting congregation members in their desires to further the work of their church.

"It's a relationship business," he commented, adding that building those relationships involves sharing the stories of both donors and ministries in order to strengthen relationships of understanding and support.

Wayne Price, vice president—finance, said the Foundation helps "to raise and store the fuel" for ministry.

"It's a conduit by which donors express their interest in the church's ministries," said Price, who served as interim president since last summer. "When they give, they have a voice."

In support of World Relief/Human Care, LCMS World Mission, "For the Sake of the Church" (for LCMS colleges), seminaries and KFYO radio, the Foundation contacts donors through mail and telephone. Gift Planning Counselors, located throughout the country, also work with donors who want to make larger gifts, either directly or through wills and estate plans. The Foundation also manages trusts and endowments that have been established to support LCMS-related ministries and congregations.

Price said the Foundation serves as a primary contact with the donor and, for those who have made gifts through estate plans or other instruments, also represents them after their death.

"There is a trust level there, so that when donors make their gift, they trust that it is going to do ministry," he said. "We make sure the donors wishes are followed; we have that responsibility."

As he learns the ins and outs of the Foundation, the new president said he is impressed by the instruments that LCMS members can use to make gifts. "Gift annuities are an outstanding example," Ries said. "They are a great opportunity for donors to make a gift that provides income and tax advantages during their lifetimes and a future gift in support of the ministry they choose."

Donors have passion and foresight

Not everyone has the capability to ask for a gift, especially a large one. "It takes a degree of confidence to say, 'Here's an important project I want you to know about,'" said Rev. Edward Bertram, director of "For the

During the past five years, more than \$112 million has been raised for endowments at the Concordia colleges and universities to support the education of future Lutheran leaders.



Sake of the Church," the LCMS Foundation campaign to build a major endowment to support the 10 Concordia University System schools. "You usually don't walk away with a check, but an answer that the person will prayerfully consider a gift. And often the response is beyond what we would imagine."

In his role, he sees the necessity of building relationships that share passion for Lutheran education. "It's not something that we take for granted; we have to face it and face it boldly. Our colleges and universities still belong to the Synod, and they are dedicated to producing leaders for the church. It costs big bucks and we dare not have second-rate institutions."

One person with a passion for education helped get the campaign

'SO MORE PEOPLE CAN COME TO FAITH'

Last March, LCMS World Mission received a hand-printed letter on stationery that suggested a children's party invitation. It said:

"To whom it may concern,
"I am Betsy and I am 10 years old. For my 10th birthday I received \$20.

"When I saw in the REPORTER [the Synod's monthly newspaper for lay leaders and professional church workers] how missionaries are having to leave the mission fields because of lack of money I felt terrible. I thought ... people elsewhere are dying and going to hell while I have money to spend any way I want.

"I decided to give the money to you so more people can come to faith in Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. May God bless you and this money."



SUPPORT FOR 595 MINISTRIES

During the 2002–03 fiscal year, the LCMS Foundation distributed gifts to 595 ministries. The Foundation:

✦ Distributed \$30.1 million in direct gifts, including more than \$12 million to LCMS World Mission, \$5.8 million to LCMS World Relief and Human Care, \$2.8 million for seminaries and seminary scholarships,

\$1.2 million to Concordia University System and “For the Sake of the Church” and \$2.5 million for the national Synod;

✦ distributed \$16.6 million from matured gifts such as trusts, endowments, gift annuities and bequests, supporting major programs for mission, higher education, relief and caring ministries and the Synod;

✦ received \$28.4 million in managed gifts through trusts, endowments and other instruments for future support of the work of the church;

✦ received \$45 million in revocable gifts through wills and living trusts for future ministry use.

For information about the Foundation, or to contact a gift planning counselor, call (800) 325-7912 or go to www.lcmsfoundation.org.



Gifts through the LCMS Foundation support LCMS World Relief and Human Care, which provides many helping services, including assistance for children in orphanages.

started. With a \$1 million gift, he helped launch “For the Sake of the Church.” The campaign has a dual purpose: double LCMS student enrollment at the Concordias to educate future leaders who will serve the church as professional workers and as dedicated laity, and build a \$400 million endowment to support higher education. The goal is to achieve those purposes by 2010.

“That gift is already blessed 100-fold,” Bertram observed. “If other such angels would step forward, the endowment would grow quickly. It takes that vision to multiply gifts.”

After five years, “For the Sake of the Church” has raised more than \$112 million in endowments. Bertram said endowments provide permanent funds for scholarships, professorships, libraries and other resources. He

added that endowments give a solid financial base so future generations can address new challenges.

“There are some magnificent things our people are doing,” Bertram said. “We have wonderful members out there. They love their Lord and they’re willing to write the checks.”

Endowments start ministries

Youth ministry is going strong at Zion Lutheran Church in Belleville, Ill., thanks to an endowment fund that the congregation uses to start new ministries.

“One primary stipulation is that it is used to fund *new* ministries,” said Pastor Gary Byers. “It initially funded a director of Christian education, additional staff in the area of finances, as well as scholarships for seminary and college students who are entering full-time church work.”

Zion’s endowment fund, in which member gifts are invested and the interest used to fund new ministries, continues to grow, Byers said.

Supervised by a group of laymen, 80 percent of the fund is managed by the LCMS Foundation.

Twelve years ago, the congregation had seminary vicars oversee its youth ministry, and there were yearly transitions as one vicar left and another began. Endowment funds helped the congregation to afford a worker, then to gradually assume the salary in its regular budget over five years.

“Our youth ministry just took off,” Byers said. With the assistance of the worker, the congregation also was able to start a small group ministry. The endowment also assisted in sending youth to two LCMS National Youth Gatherings.