

Uplifting Local Leaders *to Maximize Impact*

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The Name on the Front

by REV. DR. MICHAEL ZEIGLER,
Speaker of *The Lutheran Hour*®



“And the name on the front is a whole lot more important than the name on the back,” says the classic line from one of the greatest sports movies of all time—*Miracle*, with Kurt Russell portraying Coach Herb Brooks, the coach of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team, the team that lived this “miracle on ice.” Twenty college-aged, amateur players defeated the greatest hockey team in the world, the Soviet Union, and went on to win Olympic Gold that year. This classic line sums up Coach Brooks’ approach—the name on the back stands for the individual; the name on the front stands for the team.

A recent Gallup survey shows that self-reported well-being is steadily falling in places like North America, Australia, and Western Europe. A *New York Times* columnist suggested this is related to “values that are more secular, more individualistic, and more oriented around self-expression ... values [that] worship individual choice ...” In other words, life is depressing when you’re all about the name on the back.

The Bible gives us the antidote to me-first thinking summed up in the phrase, “the mercies of God.” An early follower of Jesus named Paul used this phrase 2,000 years ago in a God-inspired letter written to small teams of Jesus-followers living in ancient Rome. At a turning point in this letter, Paul invokes “the mercies of God,” which is shorthand for everything God has done to rescue us from the miseries of me-first thinking, to give us a new mindset through Jesus, His Son.

The mercies of God in Jesus, they turn the pattern of this present age right-side out. God’s mercies put us in the right place, in the right order. God’s mercies assure us that we are known, included, called, and sent out for the good of

You don’t have anything to prove, but you do have a part to play.

others. Mercy is an others-focused attitude, because God is an others-first God. The Bible reveals that God isn’t a solo competitor. God is the eternal Team of Three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father, He puts the Son first. The Son puts the Father first. This is the Team Spirit between them. Teamwork goes to the heart of reality.

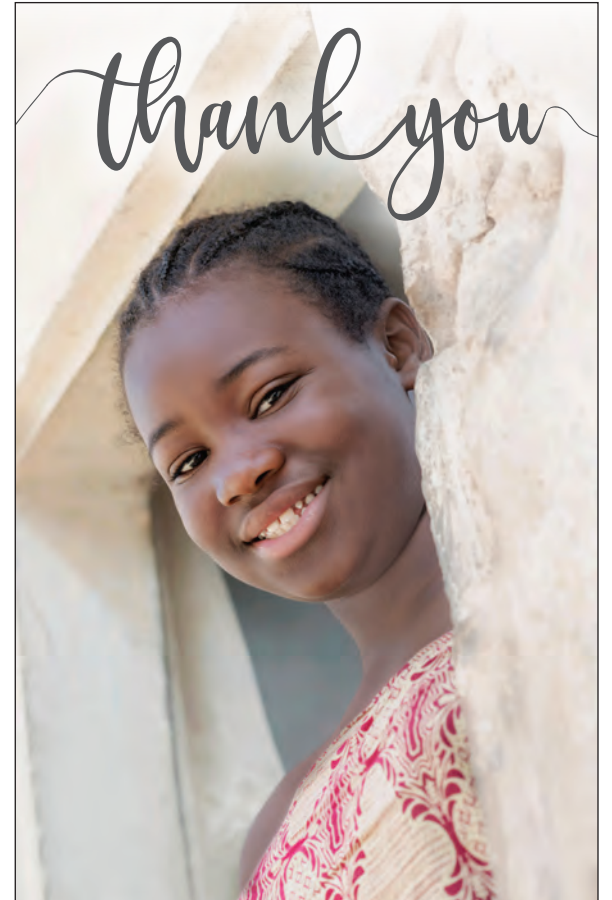
God’s Son became human, part of Team Human. He took the Name Jesus, to give us this mindset. His others-first way of life culminated in His sacrifice for us on the cross. And He rose from the dead to put this Name—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—front. These are the mercies of God.

Paul, inspired by God’s Team Spirit, speaks to his fellow Christians in ancient Rome and he speaks to us today. He speaks like a good coach who wants us to win the battle. The battle with evil is not against any individual or group; the battle is against the source of evil. The battle is against a way of thinking that says, “me first.” God’s wrath, God’s eternal opposition, is directed against this opponent, this mindset, this life wasted on the wrong name. The mission of Jesus was to defeat this evil at its source. And He

did. He said, “I have conquered—have overcome the world” (John 16:33). And we share in this victory when we trust Him, trust not in ourselves but in Jesus. And so the Bible says, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—faith” (1 John 5:4).

And even this faith in Jesus is a gift (Ephesians 2:8). It’s not earned by tryout but freely given when you hear God’s Word, God’s promise for you. So, trust Him. Depend on Him. You don’t have anything to prove, but you do have a part to play. So, by grace, “put on” (Ephesians 6:11) His jersey and play for the Name on the front. ♦

Adapted from a sermon for The Lutheran Hour that aired November 16, 2025.



*Thirteen-year-old Tisha attends a Lutheran school in Tanzania but struggles to understand her purpose as a young Christian. She was introduced to LHM’s **Bible Correspondence Course** program that encourages students to study God’s Word in a structured and engaging way. After completing the first lesson, she now actively participates in class discussions and encourages her friends to enroll in the courses.*

Your generosity allows people like Tisha to become more confident in their faith. Visit **LHM.ORG/GIVE** or send a gift in the enclosed envelope today.

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Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church

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Uplifting Local Leaders *to Maximize Impact*

by CHAD FIX

Around the world, billions of people have yet to hear the saving message of Christ. Many of these people long to hear the Good News in a way that speaks to their own lives. LHM equips local believers to share the Gospel in their own language and culture so that it connects deeply and transforms lives.

LHM stands apart from most global ministries. With more than a century of experience equipping laypeople and building Gospel-centered communities worldwide, LHM has developed a ministry model that goes far beyond translation to transformation through the Holy Spirit.

Our ministry model identifies and equips local leaders who understand the language, customs, and daily realities of their communities. These cultural insiders are uniquely positioned to share Christ's love in ways that best connect with people, meeting them where they are and addressing the needs they face every day. Through locally developed programs, resources, and media in native languages, LHM proclaims the hope of the Gospel in ways that build trust and open doors for lasting relationships. This personal connection draws people into fellowship and strengthens local Christian communities across the globe.

With billions still waiting to hear the saving message of Jesus Christ, the need is urgent, and the time to act is now. Because of our proven ability to leverage local talent, partnerships, and resources, LHM is uniquely positioned to expand the reach of the Gospel to every corner of the world.

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**These cultural insiders ...
share Christ's love in ways
that best connect with
people, meeting them
where they are and
addressing the needs
they face every day.**

Three Approaches to Reach More People with the Gospel



Expansion Through New Ministries

Because of our ability to leverage local resources, LHM is uniquely positioned to go out into the world and grow, nurture, and expand the body of Christ. Expansion through the efforts of our existing ministry centers is radically increasing global Gospel impact by uplifting the next generation of Christian leaders to do ministry in their local context, in their native language, in a specific way. These ministry expansion teams are focused on areas of outreach that reflect the core of LHM's work around the world.

Regional Ministry Model

LHM is well positioned for a multidivisional global mission rooted in localized regional leadership because our unique ministry model has always prioritized raising local leadership around the world. By taking the next step of creating a ministry model that shifts leadership to regional presidents who are located closer to where ministry is happening, we can ensure that our mission is tailored to the unique needs of specific areas. As oversight shifts to regional leadership, LHM will continue to invest in professional development opportunities for staff members. These will serve as valuable platforms for collaboration, learning, and strengthening the mission of LHM across each region—ultimately allowing us to reach more people with Christ's message of hope.



Expansion Through Partnerships

LHM has embraced the ability to leverage partnerships with respected organizations to increase impact and production capabilities, without diminishing organizational standards of quality. A new multi-language project with SAT-7 uses topical content from our **Project Connect** booklets as a framework to create new programming in Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish that introduces people to the Gospel by addressing the challenges of daily life with biblical truth. Each program is tailored to the unique language, culture, and felt needs of the audience, and points viewers to additional resources to help them further explore the topics covered. We will continue to intentionally explore additional partnerships in all areas of ministry and operations to increase our ministry impact around the world.

As LHM continues to expand its reach into areas of the world it has not yet explored, training individuals to start ministry will be critical to the success of this initiative. LHM's proven models equip local Christian leaders so the Gospel doesn't just go further, it goes deeper to reach those who are lost.

New Satellite Ministry Centers

Lutheran Hour Ministries is expanding into new areas around the world through the efforts of existing ministry centers and uplifting a new generation of Christian leaders to do ministry in their local context, in their native language, in a specific way. Through an extensive training program, the existing ministry center hubs provide all the necessary philosophical and educational support to equip these new teams to be as successful as possible.

On Feb. 26, the team of three in the Democratic Republic of the Congo graduated from their internships to become a satellite ministry center based in Kinshasa, a city of 20 million people. Since graduation,



Democratic Republic of the Congo internship graduates

Three Approaches to Empower Leaders

Professional Development for Staff

LHM continues to invest in professional development opportunities for staff members that serve as a valuable platform for collaboration, learning, and strengthening the mission of LHM across each region. These ongoing workshops bring together leaders for an enriching exchange of knowledge and ministry experiences. These gatherings provide not only high-level training opportunities with insightful presentations covering strategic, operational, and professional development topics, but they also foster stronger bonds of collaboration among team members. The valuable sharing of tools and innovative ministry strategies give participants new ideas that allow LHM to reach more people with Christ's message of hope and enhance ministry impact in the respective areas.



Volunteer Training

Expanded volunteer training opportunities are critical. For example, volunteer coordinators in Central and South America equip local volunteers to engage in successful conversations with people who request guidance about topical issues found on **Vivenciar.net**. Last year, they spoke with more than 5,000 people! Face-to-face training of volunteer coordinators includes practical discussions, presentations, strategies for using digital tools, and tips for recruitment and training of volunteers. Community and collegial exchanges are fostered within this international group of coordinators. Equipping these local leaders is a strategic investment in the growth of volunteer development and exponential impact.

Regional Certified Trainers

This program teaches the knowledge, attitude, and skills needed to be a trainer while successfully equipping staff and volunteers in LHM's outreach philosophies and models such as spiritual postures, spiritual conversations, the *Spiritual Conversation Curve*, **Equipping the Saints** evangelism training, and **Bible Correspondence Courses**. Through this model, learners experience a short but intense training program designed to help them become subject-matter experts who can then become trainers themselves. This disseminates vital information and skills faster and more efficiently throughout the organization.

Together, we are bringing the Gospel to every nation. Your partnership with LHM equips believers to share Christ's love in their own language and culture, so that every ear may hear and every life be transformed.



the team has returned to work developing additional radio and television programs, youth events, and social media content creation.

On March 28, the team in Bolivia also graduated from the internship program and became a satellite ministry center for **LHM-Paraguay**. LHM-Bolivia continues to share God's love in Bolivia in a variety of ways, including youth workshops which provide meaningful guidance, connections, and spiritual growth; social media; and multimedia content creation.

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Bolivia team
internship
graduates



Director Workshops Held in Asia and Latin America

Regional workshops for LHM ministry center directors take place throughout the year, serving as opportunities to gather staff for training to strengthen ministry efforts. Throughout the week, a series of insightful presentations cover strategic, operational, and professional development topics that deliver valuable tools to enhance ministry impact in the respective areas.



LHM–India’s Mumbai satellite office hosted the Asia Directors’ Workshop from March 15–21. The program commenced with a traditional Indian welcome, during which attendees received garlands and were presented with small gifts as a customary gesture of hospitality, followed by a formal welcome address by CEO Kurt Buchholz.



The central theme of the workshop was “Synergy” and provided a meaningful time of learning, fellowship, and collaboration among participating leaders. The primary focus of the



workshop was holistic outreach led by Rev. Dr. Tony Cook, global chief research & innovation officer. A significant part of this session

involved conducting a SWOT analysis of each participant’s ministry in the context of holistic outreach to determine, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and

threats. Multiple sessions were conducted to explore the practical application and long-term impact of SWOT analysis on ministry programming, followed by group discussions and team sharing.



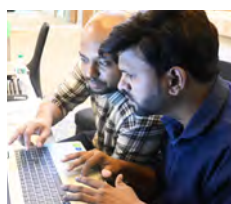
In addition to the holistic outreach sessions, Bryan Tay, president of Asia Ministries, led engaging

and interactive sessions focused on learning methodologies, incorporating participatory activities that helped the directors grasp the concepts effectively; Iantha Scheiwe, director, global transformation, facilitated a session aimed at understanding diverse regional perspectives through photographs captured during her mission engagements to broaden participants’ understanding of cultural contexts and ministry realities across different regions; each ministry center director shared a presentation about his or her ministry to foster mutual learning and encourage cross-regional collaboration; and the attendees visited the local ministry center and interacted with the staff to gain



valuable insights through personal interactions and shared experiences.

Following a day dedicated to sightseeing and cultural engagement, the workshop wrapped up with a session focused on practical application of synergy in ministry. Participants engaged in group activities to evaluate their ministry



strengths and share ideas within their tables. One representative from each table then circulated among other groups to add insights and learning, creating a dynamic and collaborative exchange. This session was both engaging and effective in reinforcing the workshop’s central theme.



After five days of intensive preparation, learning, and fellowship, the workshop concluded with farewells. Participants expressed deep appreciation for the hospitality, camaraderie, and collaborative spirit experienced during the workshop.



LHM–Paraguay hosted the Latin America Directors’ Workshop in Asunción April 8–13 for team leaders from 11 ministry centers and satellites. Each day began with devotional time followed by 18 different sessions throughout the week.



Just as it was in Asia, the central theme was holistic outreach. Jennifer Prophete, director of **The Hopeful Neighborhood Project** and a member of LHM’s global research and innovation team, revisited the definition of holistic outreach by exploring how ministries reflect Christ’s care for the whole person. Using ministry examples, participants applied this concept to their own contexts. A new tool

called the Wellbeing Wheel was examined as a framework for understanding how ministry engages the whole person, highlighting the relationship between a person’s sense of self and eight areas of wellbeing, and emphasizing that these areas are interconnected rather than independent.



Karin Semler, global chief ministry officer, led an engaging group activity using LEGO bricks to explore creativity and leadership; Rev. Germán Novelli, director of LHM Hispanic Ministry in North America, presented ideas for reaching Hispanic populations in the United States and abroad with the Gospel and preached at the workshop’s closing service at Cristo Rey Lutheran Church; Buchholz shared LHM’s global mission and



vision and encouraged attendees to remain forward-looking and creative in addressing the challenges of a changing world; Scheiwe facilitated an interactive session connected to the holistic outreach theme; and the LHM–Paraguay team presented a cultural program featuring Paraguayan dances and music (including the harp, Paraguay’s national instrument). ♦

Chad Fix oversees the corporate communications of Lutheran Hour Ministries.



Looking Back with Sights on What's Ahead

by KURT BUCHHOLZ, Global CEO, Lutheran Hour Ministries



As we approach the close of another fiscal year on May 31, I find myself reflecting with deep gratitude on all that God has done throughout this year through Lutheran Hour Ministries. What began as plans and prayers at the start of the year has become a tangible impact of lives touched, needs met, and hope extended in ways both seen and unseen.

This year has not been without its challenges. Like many ministries, we have navigated uncertainty and rising costs, made difficult decisions, and stretched our resources to have maximum impact. Yet through it all, we have witnessed God's faithfulness. Time and again, the right people stepped forward, the needed resources arrived, and doors opened just when we needed them most.

Our organization continues to grow not just in numbers, but in depth ... of relationships, of

impact, and of commitment. I want to express sincere thanks to each of you who as part of the LHM family make this ministry possible. To our staff, who serve with dedication and heart; to our volunteers, who give generously of their time and energy; and to our supporters, whose prayers and financial gifts sustain and expand this work. You are the hands and feet that carry this mission forward. Your commitment is not only appreciated; it is essential.

The impact of our collective effort cannot always be fully measured in numbers or reports. While we celebrate milestones and accomplishments, we also recognize the quieter victories such as restored relationships, renewed faith, and moments of compassion that ripple far beyond what we may ever see. These are the true markers of our ministry at work.

Fiscal year-end is also a time of accountability. We are committed

With billions of people still not having heard the saving message of Christ, we know there is much more to be done.

to transparency and faithful stewardship, ensuring that every dollar entrusted to us is used with integrity and purpose. Our team works diligently to align our financial practices with our values, recognizing that good stewardship is itself a form of ministry.

As we look ahead, we are prayerfully preparing for the fiscal year with both vision and discipline. With billions of people still not having heard the saving message of Christ, we know there is much more to be done. Strategic planning, careful budgeting, and continued reliance on God's guidance will shape our path forward. We are not simply closing books; we are opening a new chapter filled with opportunities to

grow, deepen our reach, and serve with even greater effectiveness.

For those of you who are considering making a fiscal year-end gift, I want to express my gratitude. Your support enables us to continue this critical work and expand our reach to share the Gospel with those who have never been reached before. Together, we are making an eternal impact.

Thank you for standing with us, believing in the mission, and partnering in what God is doing through this ministry. As we step into a new fiscal year, may we do so together with appreciation for what has been, belief in what is to come, and a shared commitment to the work ahead. ♦

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Engaging With the Gospel Message at Conferences

by MEGAN MCDANIEL

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (NADCE) CONFERENCE

BOCA RATON, FLORIDA / JANUARY 21-23

At the end of January, LHM staff presented and exhibited on behalf of LHM at the National Association of Directors of Christian Education (NADCE) conference in Boca Raton, Florida. This event offered an opportunity to connect with DCEs from across the country. Many meaningful conversations were had at the exhibit booth, hearing how LHM resources are being used in churches nationwide and sharing updates on our recent work.

Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies, vice president of ministry engagement, delivered a keynote on relational ministry and the conference theme, “Rest Assured”, while Ashley Bayless, vice president of global content, led an engaging session on “Reaching Gen Z Using Spiritual Conversations.” Hundreds of LHM resources were shared with participants as we celebrated and supported the vital work of Christian educators.



This event offered an opportunity to connect with DCEs from across the country.



BEST PRACTICES FOR MINISTRY CONFERENCE

PHOENIX, ARIZONA / FEBRUARY 12-14

Several LHM staff members gathered in Phoenix, Arizona, in February for Best Practices for Ministry. This annual conference has been hosted by Christ Church Lutheran for more than 10 years as a reminder to professional and lay church workers that they are loved, they are not alone, and they matter.

LHM was grateful to spend the weekend listening, learning, and connecting with pastors and church leaders. From hosting sessions on topics like multiethnic ministry and engaging major secular events with the Gospel, to having meaningful conversations at our booth with attendees, the week was full of encouragement and shared purpose.

Participants went to the LHM booth to express their appreciation for the breakout sessions and to look at all the displayed resources. Some people stopped by the booth just to share how much they love LHM and our resources.

Breakout sessions led by LHM staff included Lakies, who presented a session titled “How to ‘Find Yourself’ In A Secular Age”; Rev. Germán Novelli, director of Hispanic Ministry, presenting on “Is My Church Ready For Multiethnic Ministries?”; and Dr. Kari Vo, theological writer and author of many **Daily Devotions**, leading a session titled “Loving Impossible People.”

“It’s vital for LHM to be at conferences like NADCE and Best Practices for Ministry. There are so many interactions at these events that exhibit the deep appreciation and trust the church has for LHM and its work,” says Lakies. “Presenting at these conferences allows us to truly walk alongside those who are serving in ministries across the country, sharing ideas from our research and expertise, as well as supportive resources that can be put to work in any ministry context.” ♦

Megan McDaniel reports on the impact of LHM’s ministry work around the world.

“... participants left more equipped than when they arrived, which is exactly why it’s important for LHM to be at conferences like this.”



NURTURING YOUR FAITH: *Journey Through*

SESSION TWO *Journey Through Depression*



PART I: PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

The weight is unbearable. Getting out of bed feels like climbing a mountain. Activities that once brought joy now feel hollow and meaningless. You're exhausted, yet sleep won't come. Your mind whispers that you're alone in this darkness—but that's a lie. Depression affects one in six people during their lifetime, touching Christians and non-Christians alike, pastors and laypeople. Before we journey through depression, we must pack our bags with truth about God and about this condition that tries to convince us we're walking alone.

The truth is, you are NOT alone! God is with you. "The Lord God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9b). And many people are, too. Researchers estimate that one in fifteen people experience depression each year. Depression impacts all kinds of people, but it doesn't get to have the last word. There is hope. We have a God who cares for our wellbeing.

Whatever pain you're experiencing, Jesus invites you to believe that you are not alone. He is with you. He loves you so much that He gave

His life to rescue you. Your journey through depression is not one of isolation; God is always with you.

What Is Depression?

Depression is more than sadness. Signs include loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed; sleeping much more or less than usual; trouble concentrating or making decisions; recurring thoughts of death or suicide; feeling anxious or hopeless; inability to carry out duties. Some, especially children, may seem angry instead of sad. Some may use alcohol or substances to cover feelings.

There is no single cause. Possible factors include the following:

- Physical causes: for example, low thyroid or heart conditions;
- Biological predisposition: like hair color or height, depression can have biological roots;
- Trauma: from a single event (accident, disaster) or ongoing abuse;
- Earlier grief and loss: depression may stem from grief over the death of a loved one.

PART II: DEPRESSION AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Read Psalm 22.

Do you recognize some of this psalm, especially the beginning? Yes, Jesus used this lament psalm as a prayer while He suffered on the cross. He had memorized it previously, and now the Spirit brought it to His mind in this most dire of circumstances. We may not conclude that Jesus was depressed here, but we can see clearly that David, the psalm's author, experienced prolonged darkness, sadness, and despair.

And David wasn't the only *hero of the faith* who experienced this.

Remember Job, Moses, and Elijah—pillars of faith who struggled with despair. These were not weak believers or people on the margins of God's story. These were giants of faith whom God used mightily, yet each experienced profound darkness that drove them to the edge of hopelessness.

Job, a man the Bible describes as "blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil" (Job 1:1b), suffered the loss of everything: his children, his wealth, his health, and his reputation. In the depths of his anguish, Job cursed the day of his birth (see Job 3:3-4). He wished he had never existed,

see next page



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believing it would have been better to have been stillborn than to endure such suffering. Job's lament was raw, honest, and deeply human—yet God did not condemn him for these words. Instead, God met Job in his suffering and ultimately restored him.

Moses, the great lawgiver and leader who had witnessed God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt, reached a breaking point while leading God's complaining, rebellious people through the wilderness. The burden became so overwhelming that Moses asked God to kill him (see Numbers 11:15). This was the same Moses who had seen the burning bush, who had confronted Pharaoh, who had witnessed the parting of the Red Sea. Yet the weight of leadership, the constant criticism, and the seemingly impossible task before him drove him to ask for death as a release from his burden.

Elijah, the mighty prophet who had called down fire from heaven and confronted the prophets of Baal with stunning boldness, fled in fear after Queen Jezebel threatened his life. Exhausted and terrified, he sat under a broom tree in the wilderness and prayed for God to "take away his life"(see 1 Kings 19:4). Just one chapter earlier, Elijah had been triumphant on Mount Carmel; now he was suicidal in his despair. God responded not with condemnation but with gentle care—sending an angel to provide food and rest, then meeting Elijah in a still, small voice.

These accounts teach us that depression and despair are not signs of weak faith. Even God's chosen servants—those who walked closely with Him and were used powerfully in His kingdom—struggled with the darkness of depression and the desire to escape their suffering even through death.

Can people of faith struggle with depression? YES! Pastors and church workers struggle as much as laypeople. In fact, Martin Luther transparently suffered from depression, which was called "melancholia" in his day.



Which biblical figure's struggle with despair resonates most with your experience? Why?

REFLECT

PART III: JOURNEYING THROUGH DEPRESSION WITH GOD

Read Psalm 23.

How Is God with Me in My Depression?

People with depression may ask, "Why is God letting me suffer? Will He heal me? Does He care?" The answers to "Why" questions about God's will are impossible to fully comprehend. But you can take comfort in knowing that your depression is not God's punishment or because of a weak faith, for we know that God placed all of the punishment we deserve on His Son at the cross (see Isaiah 53:5). Certainly, there are natural consequences in this world that we work through with God's help, but those struggles are not caused by God's punishment on us. Rather, they are a consequence of the Fall, one of the signs that our world (ourselves included) is broken.

Therefore, we can answer the question, "Where is God in my suffering?" We know that Jesus "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4b) to His cross and conquered death through resurrection. We have a High Priest who is able "to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15b) because He went through a dark night of the soul FOR US. He is not far from you, in fact, He is closer than a brother.

Some Steps Along the Journey

Jesus walks with you on your journey through depression. Lean on Him and His Spirit as you take some practical steps through depression:

Care for the Body... Because we are fearfully and wonderfully made, we must care for soul and body. People journeying through depression benefit from

good nutrition, physical exercise (which rebalances neurotransmitters and hormones), adequate sleep, and stress-management breathing practices.

Find Professional Help... Your primary care doctor can check for bodily causes (thyroid or vitamin deficiencies) and refer you to mental health professionals: psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors. Ongoing counseling is highly recommended for depression. Research shows counseling and medication together are more effective than either one alone, especially for intense or prolonged depression.

Pray the Lament Psalms... God's Word gives us words to say when we feel disconnected from Him. We can lament—complain to God in faith. Psalm 13 is one, but there are more than 60 others. These psalms use strong language to complain directly to God. Consider praying Psalms 6, 16, 42, and 61. Remember that Jesus Himself prayed a lament psalm: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" (Psalm 22:1a) from the cross, speaking for us!

Embrace the Sacraments... Receiving the Lord's Supper gives tangible forgiveness in Christ. Christ Himself comes to you in this Sacrament! In addition, remember your Baptism—not just as a past event, but as how Jesus brought you into His body, His family. He marked you as His deeply beloved child forever. He placed His Name on you.



REFLECT

Which steps along the path do you most need to take in your own life right now?

CONCLUSION: BEDROCK TRUTH

Many once felt ashamed about struggling with despair and depression, stopping them from seeking help. This still happens today, but it doesn't need to be that way.

Jesus says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your

souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

Suffering is a normal part of Christian life in this broken world, including despair and depression. We will never be free from suffering until Christ returns. But we also know that God can use suffering—even depression—to bring good: making us aware of our need for Him and helping us trust His grace shown in Christ.



REFLECT

What is one specific action you can take this week to care for your mental health or to support someone on their journey through depression?

Watch an interview with Dr. Rick Marrs discussing the journey through depression at lhm.org/biblestudies



PRAY

Heavenly Father, teach me to trust in Jesus when life gets difficult and to remember Your love for me is everlasting. In Jesus' Name. Amen.





Changing Lives ... One Gift at a Time!

by DR. KURT SENSKE, *Chairman, Int'l LLL Board of Directors*

"You are seen. You matter. You are not alone."

A gift, at its best, is never just an object. It is a moment of connection, a tangible expression of care that can quietly, and sometimes profoundly, redirect the course of a life. For those of us entrusted with leadership in ministry, it is worth reflecting on how even the simplest act of giving can become a catalyst for transformation.

In many cases, the true power of a gift lies not in its material value, but in what it communicates: "You are seen. You matter. You are not alone." These messages can reach places that sermons, programs, and strategies sometimes cannot. A thoughtfully given gift can break through isolation, restore dignity, and ignite hope in someone who may have long felt overlooked.

Consider the young person who receives his or her first Bible after engaging with staff and volunteers through one of our ministry centers. That single gift can become a lifelong companion that shapes faith and anchors the person through seasons of uncertainty. Or think of a family in

crisis who receives not only spiritual support, but daily necessities through one of LHM's holistic outreach programs. The immediate need is met, yes—but more importantly, a seed is planted: the realization that God's provision often comes through the hands of others.

As board members and ministry leaders, we often focus on budgets, sustainability, and stewardship. While these are all essential responsibilities, behind every line item is an opportunity for impact that extends far beyond numbers. Each dollar given, each resource allocated, carries the potential to intersect with a human story at a critical moment.

What's equally important is the spirit with which the gift is given. When generosity flows from genuine compassion rather than obligation, it carries a different weight. People sense authenticity. They recognize when they are recipients not of charity, but of love. That distinction can be life changing. It can restore a sense of worth in someone who has

internalized scarcity—not just of resources, but of affirmation and belonging.

There is also a ripple effect to consider. A life touched by generosity often becomes a life that gives in return. The Bible course student who was supported may one day mentor others. The family who was helped may become the first to volunteer when another family is in need. In this way, a single gift multiplies, extending its reach far beyond its original intent.

For ministry boards, this perspective reshapes how we think about giving. It moves us from simply meeting needs to participating in transformation. It challenges us to ask not only, "What are we funding?" but "Whose story might this change?"

Ultimately, giving is not just an act; it is a ministry in itself that embodies grace in practical ways. When we give with intention, humility, and faith, we do more than provide—we partner in the quiet, powerful work of changing lives, one gift at a time. ♦

Sharing God's Love Through Puppet Shows

by CHAD FIX



Half of the population in Cambodia is under the age of 25. This statistic makes reaching youth a critical part of LHM's ministry efforts throughout the country. Working with pastors and principals, one way that **LHM-Cambodia** reaches the youth population is by hosting puppet shows in local schools. As children grow older, the LHM-Cambodia staff coordinates soccer competitions, Bible study groups, music concerts, and other events to stay connected and works with pastors and other Christian leaders to maintain ongoing relationships.

In March, the team in Cambodia had an opportunity to share God's love with students and families at a school in Preah Vihea Province. They presented a puppet show based on the story of the Prodigal Son that allowed them to share the message of God's grace and forgiveness in a fun and meaningful way.

Approximately 250 students, teachers, and parents attended two separate programs. Following each presentation, LHM staff and volunteers distributed notebooks and booklets to help participants reflect on what they had heard and to learn more about the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

"We are grateful that God opened the doors for us to enter these schools and share His love in such a creative way," says Bryan Tay, president of LHM's Asia Ministries. "Please continue to pray that the seeds planted through this outreach will grow and that God will draw many hearts to Him." ♦

Out-of-the-Box Options to EXPAND the GOSPEL'S REACH



Research shows that about 90 percent of wealth is held in appreciated assets like stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate, and more. Did you know you can turn them into a legacy of changed lives? Whether you donate these now or as part of your estate plan, giving non-cash assets to LHM can share the Gospel with communities around the world.

To learn more contact our gift-planning team at 1-877-333-1963 or visit

 **LHM.ORG/GIFTPLAN**



Spiritual Mentoring: An Extraordinary Gift from Experienced Believers

by PAUL SCHREIBER

Empowering Connections Through Spiritual Conversations

by PAUL SCHREIBER

A recent gathering at Redeemer Lutheran Church and Preschool in Salem, Oregon, shows how faith conversations can help build relationships and empower Christians to be a hopeful presence with their family, friends, and neighbors.

On Saturday, January 31, Jennifer Prophete, director of **The Hopeful Neighborhood Project (HNP)** and National Good Neighbor Day, conducted a workshop on *The Spiritual Conversation Curve*. Forty-eight members from eight area LCMS churches attended to hear Prophete speak on how individuals can get better at having spiritual conversations.

Prophete's presentation highlighted how well LHM's *Spiritual Conversations in the Digital Age* (SCDA) resources work in helping people become more comfortable in talking about faith and Jesus. "What impressed me the most in this workshop is how many people were hungry to hear about how to share their faith," says Prophete. "They were energized to know they didn't need special skills to talk about Jesus. They just needed to understand the insights highlighted in the SCDA Curve to feel equipped."

The Curve is a research-based resource that helps Christians identify if others are unreceptive, receptive, or seeking, in respect to the Gospel. Its power is in its simplicity, reminding us to adapt to the spiritual needs of the other person rather than them adapting to us. In this way,

we can *lean into* rather than *veer away* from these conversations. By gauging a person's "spiritual posture," we can speak with grace and sensitivity, keeping our faith discussions open and comfortable as God works to create and sustain faith. Go to lhm.org/curve to find out more.

Congregations play a key role in equipping Christians to live into their vocation as a neighbor. In this respect, hosting a *Spiritual Conversation Curve* workshop is a perfect tie-in. Workshop content is designed to help attendees view their spiritual conversations, when they occur, with an attitude of attentiveness that is natural and suited to the situation, thus resisting the

urge to *declare* the Gospel when it's not appropriate to the conversation. For more information on hosting an LHM workshop of SCDA or *Households of Faith*, please go to lhm.org/requestaspeaker.

For expertise on empowering neighborhoods and enhancing communities, please contact Prophete at hopefulneighborhood.org/coaching. There you can get a free starter kit, schedule an introductory call, or email an HNP coach with your own questions. "Working with Christians to enhance their presence and improve their communication in their local neighborhoods is important," Prophete says. "Both HNP's and SCDA's resources are wonderfully helpful tools to do this." ♦

Paul Schreiber reports on the impact of LHM's ministry work in the United States.

"What impressed me the most in this workshop is how many people were hungry to hear about how to share their faith."

Have you ever considered spiritually mentoring someone? It may sound challenging but—spoiler alert—you're probably doing it already! Exploring this topic is the **Project Connect** booklet *Spiritual Mentoring: You (Still) Have So Much to Give* by Ron Merritt. You might think a special skill set or professional training is required before you mentor, but that's not the case. Mentoring is about sharing your life, connecting with others in honest conversation. It's about being a friend and cultivating meaningful relationships in Christ-centered, life-on-life ways.

"Spiritual mentoring is not weird or abnormal; it happens all around us."

"A booklet on spiritual mentoring is needed in the church today because too much wisdom is going unshared between generations," says Chris Macky, LHM's content development manager. "Living faithfully in this world is difficult, and we all need people who are further along the path—in life and in faith—to pass on what they have learned. This is how faith travels from one generation to the next: through friendships and relationships of trust."

It's mistaken to think that your age or lack of experience exclude you from mentoring. "Nothing could be further from the truth! Younger people are hungry for older adults to include them in their lives and faith. They welcome building relationships with seasoned believers who will listen to their ideas and incorporate both generations' visions for life and ministry," says Merritt, who understands relationship building. He's a retired LCMS principal, former Nigerian missionary, and has benefitted from mentors himself.

"Spiritual mentoring is not weird or abnormal; it happens all around us," says Merritt. Still, mental roadblocks can divert us from mentoring. We may feel our life's struggles disqualify us from helping others: "Who am I to give you advice?" Or maybe it's a time thing: "Life's just too busy already." And then there's the Bible: "I'm just not well versed enough." This booklet addresses these questions, and more.

In all these hesitations, we lean on God who gives us strength to be a friend and mentor to others. Jesus said, "Come, follow Me" (Matthew 4:19a). "Follow Me" as you see how your life's struggles mirror those that others have and how your responses can be a blessing to them. "Follow Me" as you mentor during life's everyday rhythms, in time spent doing things you'd do anyway like getting coffee or running errands. "Follow Me," as you seek truth together in God's Word, learning side by side with them.

You can find this and dozens of other Project Connect booklets at lhm.org/projectconnect. ♦



“I would like for people to know that God is our anchor, He is our hope. We are lost at sea without our anchor, so we need Him to hold on to,” says Annette Oldsen Hanchett of Depew, New York.

This strong conviction stems from her connection to the Lutheran faith since she was little. Her family’s Lutheran history extends through seven generations of pastors.

Annette’s grandfather graduated from the one-room school on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and her father served as a pastoral advisor of the Lutheran Laymen’s League (LLL) for a while when she was growing up.

Her father was a pastor for 72 years, and she still has almost 50 years’ worth of his sermon notes. In the 1940s, he was also a founder of the Lutheran camp, Camp Pioneer. “If I think back to 1946, when Camp Pioneer was dedicated, Dr. Walter A. Maier was the Speaker of **The Lutheran Hour** at that time,” she says. “He came to the camp, which was a small camp at the time. I was six years old at the time, and I remember seeing him standing on a hill overlooking the lake as he dedicated the camp. My family knew Dr. Maier very well.”

Her Lutheran heritage continued to deepen, as her uncle, Dr. Armin C. Oldsen, was the Speaker of The Lutheran Hour from 1951 to 1953. She grew up listening to The Lutheran Hour on the radio every

Sunday afternoon after lunch and remembers listening to her uncle. “Back in the 50s, I remember Uncle Armin being featured in an article in the LLL newspaper that they published,” Annette recalls. “I remember they had a family picture with the article.”

She has been a part of the Lutheran Women’s Mission League (LWML) for more than 50 years and continues to be active in the Buffalo zone. “The Lutheran faith is just in my blood, and it has never left me,” says Annette.

“We know we have to get our own missions here at home, but we need to broaden them,” she says about her involvement with both LWML and LHM. “A sign at my church says, ‘The service has ended, now the service begins.’ As you go out that door, that service, you take with you out into the world, and we should do that by doing around our own communities, our own nation, right here at home.”

She stocked LHM’s **Project Connect** booklets in her church’s display for many years and was also

the head of the booth at the Erie County Fair in Hamburg, New York. Each year, millions of people visit the fairgrounds, and Annette used this opportunity to share the Gospel message with all who would hear it. She ordered materials, including coloring sheets and LHM’s Project Connect booklets, and gave them out as people came to their table.

Annette remembers “one time, my late husband, Larry, showed a woman a booklet because she was grieving. He said, ‘Take this, and hopefully God is your hope, and you can walk with Him.’ She didn’t want to take it at first since she couldn’t believe it was a free booklet. She was so grateful, and when she took the booklet, she insisted on giving Larry a 50-cent piece.”

Throughout her many years of ministry, she used many LHM tools, and the fair was a 10-day outreach each year.

“I always look forward to the first day of the New Year, when the LHM float is seen in the Tournament of Roses Parade, showing Christ is our hope. I try to live in the joy of the Lord and to maintain a great attitude every day,” she says.

“What stands out about LHM compared to other organizations is the Gospel,” says Annette. “LHM revolves around the Gospel. This is our faith, this is our hope, this is our trust. And God, our Savior, must be the focal point. Like the saying says, ‘There are three in a marriage, the first one being Christ.’”

“It is a blessing and a privilege



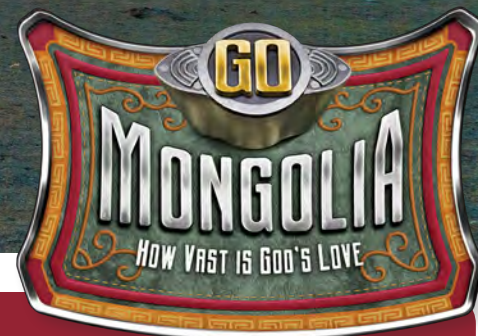
to support LHM and its mission of *Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church.*”

You can join LHM’s mission by supporting our growing global ministry efforts. Visit lhm.org/give to see the various ways you can make a gift that supports sharing the Gospel with people around the world. Are you interested in learning about gift options that provide long-lasting support for Lutheran Hour Ministries while also potentially being financially beneficial to you? Contact our gift-planning team at 1-877-333-1963 or lhm-gift@lhm.org. ♦

“It is a blessing and a privilege to support LHM and its mission of *Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church.*”



Students See How Vast God's Love Is with Gospel Adventures: Go Mongolia!



by MEGAN MCDANIEL

Lutheran Hour Ministries, in partnership with Group Publishing, takes grade school- through middle school-aged children and some adults on a week-long adventure each year. **Gospel Adventures: Go Mongolia!** is an informative and interactive virtual learning experience, complete with five days of FREE curricula in two age-appropriate formats, and bonus materials. Participants learn about the foods, animals, people, and places of Mongolia with Gospel Adventures. Visit gospeladventures.org to sign up!

How Students Can Make an Impact Around the World

As a way to support children's ministry around the world, individuals, schools, and churches participating in Gospel Adventures: *Go Mongolia* can choose to donate through chapel offerings or coin drives. These donations will go toward LHM's Global Kids Fund, which supports programs that are similar to the ones they see during the Gospel Adventures program.

Your gifts will fuel programs for youth in Mongolia and elsewhere that are designed to share the Gospel with those who have not yet heard it. The ministry hosts vacation Bible school, youth gatherings, and workshops, provides holistic outreach to youth in need, and develops a variety of age-appropriate resources that teach about Jesus and offer biblically-based guidance.

By supporting our Global Kids Fund, YOU can help share Christ's message of hope with children throughout Mongolia through LHM's programs.

To learn more about the impact you can make through a gift to the Global Kids Fund, visit gospeladventures.org/fundraising.asp today!



Hands-on Experiences

Teachers shared feedback from their Gospel Adventures: *Go Mongolia* experience this year, including their students' favorite parts of the program and how their classroom activities and discussions connected them with life and kids in Mongolia.

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Perham, Minnesota, participated in Gospel Adventures during National Lutheran Schools Week this year. "The teachers who follow the program in their classroom use the curriculum lessons provided, and they love the images, videos, facts, and the activities you can do with the



kids," says Candice Bicondoa, principal.

"They love learning about other countries, the different cultures, and how people live," says Bicondoa. "We love that we can show them virtually what God is doing around the world in the lives of His children. This was St. Paul's fourth school year participating in Gospel Adventures, and I used it at a previous Lutheran school for several years."

**Photos provided by St. Paul's Lutheran School*



Students in preschool through fifth grade at Mountain View Lutheran School in Las Vegas, Nevada, "traveled" to Mongolia during Nevada Reading Week in March. "We used the coloring pages, made the gers, watched the videos, and collected coins with the coin boxes," says Christy Schneider, kindergarten teacher. "We sent the coin boxes home as an optional activity and collected \$225 for LHM's Global Kids Fund that week."



"The videos and the song were the students' favorites," says Schneider. "We made an eagle using the Mongolian flags as feathers, and the kids loved seeing that come together and then 'flying' in the narthex of our church." ♦

**Photos provided by Mountain View Lutheran School*





Campus Ministry, Kids and Grief, Difficult People—Upcoming Project Connect Booklets by PAUL SCHREIBER

In the works are three new booklets from **Project Connect**. *Real. Beauty.* by Chris Macky, LHM's content development manager, offers campus chaplains and missionaries a winsome resource for introducing Jesus to non-Christian students in a clear and engaging way. For students new to campus life, the booklet's accessible language, practical next steps—read a Gospel, find a local church community, and connect with resources via a QR code—make it a valuable resource for navigating life at school.

Campus ministry is different than other types of ministry. “Beyond the unique cultural values of Gen Z (those born between 1999 and 2015), college itself is a distinct life phase. Students are explicitly *expected* to experiment with new ideas, explore different worldviews, and be open to perspectives they’ve never encountered,” Macky says.

“There’s enormous pressure—both internal and external—that college is supposed to help students figure life out. This booklet acknowledges that beneath surface questions about majors and careers is a deeper question: ‘What am I really here for?’ Campus ministry must engage students at this existential level, not just offer religious answers to academic questions,” Macky says. “The booklet meets students in this searching posture, framing Jesus not as one more thing to know but as the answer to their actual *hunger* for meaning, authenticity, and purpose—the very things college promises but can’t deliver on its own.”

The children’s booklet *Heaven Is Our Home* is written by Suzie Sallee, LHM’s community facilitator, congregations. It’s illustrated by Masaru Horie. This booklet warmly invites little ones to honestly grieve the death of a grandparent, while also trusting in Jesus for today and eternity. Parents and caregivers will find this booklet a welcome resource for guiding children through difficult times with biblical insight and engaging rhymes.

Sallee says, “When a young child experiences the death of a loved one, they have a lot of questions swirling in their heads and lots of emotions that they don’t understand. I feel it’s important to share that life doesn’t end here, but that heaven is our true home with Jesus. My prayer has been to explain it on a level they can comprehend.”

And, to whet your appetite for summer reading, *Loving Impossible People* by Dr. Kari Vo is in the works, too. The title sums it up. It’s about dealing with and loving those people you find *impossible* in your life. Project Connect booklets are at lhm.org/projectconnect. ♦

Tour Options Now Available for the 2027 Rose Parade by CHAD FIX



Two Tour Options Available!

32ND Annual LHM Sightseeing Float Tour

- Spend one day with exclusive “hands-on” float preparations and decorating with the Petal Pushers
- Receive a complimentary Petal Pushers sweatshirt and a souvenir parade program
- View the parade from a preferred reserved grandstand seat
- Attend the post-parade FLOAT FEST on New Year’s Day for an up-close look at the completed floats
- Admission to a variety of historical and cultural sites throughout Southern California
- Stay for five nights in a deluxe hotel (DoubleTree by Hilton in Claremont)
- Motor coach transportation throughout tour
- Many meals included with this package (including daily breakfast and a special New Year’s Eve dinner)

7TH Annual LHM Decorating Float Tour

- Spend three days participating in “hands-on” float preparation and decorating with the Petal Pushers floats for the 2027 Tournament of Roses Parade
- Receive a complimentary Petal Pushers sweatshirt
- Stay for five nights at the Best Western Plus in West Covina
- 4 days of round-trip private motorcoach group transfer (from hotel to float decorating pavilion and to the Rose Parade)
- View the parade from a reserved grandstand seat
- Daily breakfast included

Many people say attending the annual Rose Parade on New Year’s Day is a “bucket list” item for them. Cross this item off your list and make plans to be in Pasadena, California, for the 2027 parade by joining a tour group through Luther Tours. The two parade tours offer a fun-filled week with an opportunity to see firsthand how the beautiful and meaningful floats are designed, constructed, and decorated for the annual parade.

The Lutheran Hour Ministries float will be part of the parade for the 76th time, this year with a theme of “God’s Promises Welcome All.” As the only Christian float in the Jan. 1 parade, the LHM float carries on a mission of providing a Gospel witness to viewers along the parade route as well as on televisions and streaming platforms worldwide. The LHM float is a self-funded project of the Southern California District of the Lutheran Laymen’s League and is not included in LHM’s operating budget.

Both tours run from Dec. 28, 2026, through Jan. 2, 2027. Find more info, or register today, by visiting shop.petalpushers.org/pages/decorating-tours. Pricing and deadlines can be viewed online; airfare not included with either package. Questions? Contact LHM Float Committee Chair Dick Gast at chairman@petalpushers.org or 949-230-2501. ♦

2027 LHM Float rendering



Transforming Lives in CAMEROON

by CHAD FIX



At just 20 years old, Yvana carried the weight of the world on her shoulders. A teen mother who was abandoned with two little children to feed, hunger often knocked at her door, nights were long and filled with tears, and hope felt like a stranger.

This all began to change when she learned about the Divine Sewing School hosted by **LHM-Cameroon**. This holistic two-year training program empowers young women with practical skills and spiritual nourishment during weekly classes led by the dedicated LHM team that reflect Christ's ministry of restoration—caring for both body and soul.

Each day begins with a devotion, quiet moments of prayer, Scripture, and reflection. Participation in LHM's **Bible Correspondence Courses** further encourage thoughtful engagement with Christian values, enabling learners to discern God's will in their daily struggles.

Alongside spiritual formation, the program offers vocational training by providing at-risk women with tangible and marketable skills like dyeing cloth, making patterns, and tailoring new clothing. These new skills have led many graduates to open a successful business on their own and achieve their dreams of economic independence.

"Here, I feel at home," says Yvana. "Here, I am reminded every day that Jesus will never abandon me, even in challenging times. Here, I am learning to dream again."

Yvana is just one of the program's many success stories since it debuted in 2013. In March, LHM-Cameroon celebrated the graduation of its 12th cohort of young women from the Divine Sewing School. Each year, 25 young women from Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and even Chad enroll in the two-year program that God uses to completely transform these young women's lives. By rooting learners in the life-giving Word of God and equipping them with sustainable skills, the program lifts women from vulnerability to dignity and from dependency to stewardship. The young attendees grow in confidence, attain financial autonomy, and learn how to contribute meaningfully to the flourishing of their communities.

Yvana's journey has not only changed her financial outlook, but it has also led her back to church. On Sundays, she now lifts her voice in worship, her children by her side. "I once thought I was abandoned forever," she confides, "but now I know I am God's daughter. The Lord has restored my joy." ♦



"HERE, I FEEL AT HOME. HERE, I AM REMINDED EVERY DAY THAT JESUS WILL NEVER ABANDON ME ..."



Reaching Communities in Mexico Through Holistic Outreach by CHAD FIX

From their office in one of the world’s most populated cities (Mexico City), staff and volunteers from **LHM–Mexico** engage local communities with Christ’s message of hope in numerous ways. Two of its most successful programs are holistic outreach activities that attend to people’s physical and emotional needs as well as their spiritual needs.

In the city of Matamoros, on the United States border, the BREAD program has strengthened the mission and engagement of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church under Pastor Omar Garza, the new president of the Mexican Synod. With the support of 18 volunteers, an average of 150 people are served a weekly meal that is part of a two-hour program including Bible study, fellowship, prayer, and the sharing of LHM materials. Individuals also receive a printed Bible message that they can take home to share the Good News with their friends and family.

LHM’s support of this program contributes to the growth of the congregation and its positive impact on the Matamoros community.

Brigada Médica is a holistic health outreach program that serves different communities by offering basic services such as free dental cleanings, haircuts, student medical certificates, and more. Since students throughout the country are required to present a health certificate at the beginning of each school year, this program creates valuable opportunities for outreach and follow-up connections with students and their families. Many volunteers participate, including doctors, nurses, dentists, and stylists. Through their dedication, LHM–Mexico is grateful to serve people’s needs while also sharing the love of God in Christ through printed materials and personal interactions.

During visits to churches throughout the country, the LHM team spends a week in each

location, implementing the Brigada Médica program alongside special outreach activities supported by local volunteers. These efforts include evangelism training workshops that train congregation members in effective faith-sharing practices, as well as “summer-style” programs for children who attend school for only half a day. Children and parents from the community are invited to a special closing service at the church on Sunday, helping connect them with church members and the pastor. Many participants of Brigada Médica become LHM volunteers and ambassadors within their congregations. A recent seminar under the theme “Christian Attitudes” at San Pedro Congregation in Mexico City focused on hospitality, reception, and warmly welcoming both visitors and current members. ♦

LHM–Mexico is grateful to serve people’s needs ...

A Simple Step That Makes a Lasting Difference by CHAD FIX



Creating a will is one of the most meaningful steps you can take to ensure your wishes are honored. Yet, many adults put it off as something to address later in life. The reality is that having a will in place is not just about wealth; it’s about clarity, care, and peace of mind. A will allows you to direct how your assets are distributed, reduce stress and uncertainty for your family, and support your favorite charitable causes to help ensure that their important work continues for generations to come. Without a will, these important decisions may be left to the courts, often resulting in delays and outcomes that may not reflect your intentions. National Make a Will Month in August is an annual encouragement to create or update your will. This not only protects your loved ones but shapes a future that reflects your values. Thanks to modern tools and resources, creating a will is more accessible than ever. Whether you work with an attorney or use a trusted online platform, the most important step is simply getting started. Visit lhm.org/giftplan to request our Will Planning Guide as our gift to you.

Already have a will that includes LHM?

Many people have included LHM in their final plans and have not yet shared this decision. If you are one of these people, please let us know! For more information, or to tell us we are in your estate plans, contact LHM’s gift planning staff at lhm-gift@lhm.org or 1-877-333-1963. ♦



A journey for kids across the globe & through the Gospel!

LEARN MORE AT

 **gospeladventures.org**

Congregation Spotlight:



How YOU Can Join LHM's Mission

by MEGAN MCDANIEL

Congregation name:

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Congregation size:

1,356 baptized members

Location:

York, Nebraska

Contacts:

Pastor Mike Neidow &
Pastor Ben Kaiser

How does your congregation support LHM?

We have been blessed to financially support **The Lutheran Hour** over many years, assuring that it is broadcast over one of our local radio stations. **Project Connect** booklets are supplied at church for those attending, and are stocked at a local truck stop for people traveling down the road. Those booklets have also been supplied at both our county and state fairs. We also use some of LHM's online materials in our adult instruction classes. The *Households of Faith*, *Better Together*, and *Spiritual Conversations in the Digital Age* kits were distributed to families to help them in discipling their family members. Various Bible studies have been used by LLL members and others. We also encourage our people to utilize LHM's **Daily Devotions**.

What was the motivation behind supporting LHM?

We trust that LHM and all its resources are faithful to God's Word and will communicate clearly the truth that people need to know and believe. We also recognize the "kingdom" impact LHM materials have in the church, our community, and throughout the world. We are blessed, in our small way, to join LHM in its mission and ministry.

What has been your members' feedback? What do your members like about LHM?

Our members have expressed great appreciation for the resources LHM offers. They rest assured that the materials are scripturally sound, easily understandable, and down to earth. Simply put, they connect with the resources they use. Our members like that the materials are distinctly Lutheran, which makes discernment not difficult, unlike many other materials that are out in our world today.

— Photo from Emmanuel Lutheran Church

If your congregation would like to learn more about how you can support LHM's mission, contact Robin Forsythe at **314-317-4152** or robin.forsythe@lhm.org. If you would like to make a gift of support, visit lhm.org/give. ♦

Sharing the Gospel with Children Through Project Connect Booklets

by MEGAN MCDANIEL



Bring hope to your community through **Project Connect**, a topical booklet ministry resource. These booklets are written from a Christian perspective and address a variety of topics, from forgiveness and the afterlife to depression and anger management.

Booklets are available as PDFs or MP3 audio, or they can be ordered online from LHM's storefront. Below are a few examples of how individuals in their communities encourage others using this popular outreach tool.



"I go wherever the Lord opens the door for me."

"I've known about Lutheran Hour Ministries since I was a child, through my church in Collinsville, Illinois, and through KFUO, says Karen Anders. "As a child, I remember my aunt regularly enjoyed and listened to **The Lutheran Hour** every Sunday afternoon, and I remember listening to it too, each time we were there visiting her. My mom also always supported Lutheran Hour Ministries, and now I am happy to support LHM to help share Jesus with others here and around the world."

Anders has been doing puppet ministry for many years. She performs a variety of puppets from behind the stage, including ventriloquism. The puppets are very personable; they tell Bible stories, and they sing songs. "I always share the message of salvation, and I give them stickers and a Project Connect children's booklet at the end," says Anders. "I read through a booklet with them, and then I tell them that they will get their own little booklet as a gift from my puppet friends and me."

Anders has traveled all over the country to perform puppet shows. She performs at churches, daycare centers, and an Indian reservation. "I go wherever the Lord opens the door for me," says Anders.

"I am so happy that there are so many different topics and booklets for children and that these little children's booklets help kids learn about Jesus. What a blessing these little booklets are to get children to get to know Jesus, His love for them, how He died for each of them, and how they can tell others about Jesus."

"I think they should be available in every church to reach our people with topics that may be concerning them in their lives and could help them when they are at church."

Suzie Sallee, community facilitator for congregations at LHM and author of many Project Connect children's booklets, uses them to bring hope to children in her community. Sallee is always looking for ways to give back to her community, especially around Christmas and Easter. Every year for Easter, she fills baskets with candy and toys and includes Project Connect children's booklets. This year, she filled 93 Easter baskets and gave them to children in her neighborhood.

"I have been offering this to low-income neighborhood children since 2020, and between Easter and Christmas, with the support of my community, I've been able to organize donations and offer baskets and gifts to over 1,000 children," says Sallee. "My goal is to give them a hand up and not a handout. I couldn't be more grateful to my community for their hearts to serve." ♦



"I couldn't be more grateful to my community for their hearts to serve."

Hispanic Ministries Off to a Busy U.S. Start in 2026

by PAUL SCHREIBER

Conferences, congregational visits, and collaborations mark LHM's Hispanic Ministries' early 2026 efforts. Complementing those activities are two new part-time additions joining the team. Katherine Sanabria is program coordinator for **Vivenciar.net** and will oversee its upcoming U.S. rollout. She'll work with volunteers in ten U.S. cities. Jessica Gallegos is the new producer of the **Para El Camino** and **Sentido Latino** podcasts. She will extend both programs' reach and ministry by adding more preachers and guests to deepen discussions and enrich user experience.

In February, Hispanic Ministries Director Rev. Germán Novelli led a Best Practices for Ministry (BPM) conference presentation in Phoenix on multicultural churches in the United States. "We led a conversation on ministering to our country's different ethnic groups. As a nation founded and formed by immigrants, it's vital that we equip ministers, lay leaders, churches, and communities to bring the Gospel to all peoples," Novelli says.

Following BPM, Novelli met with Hispanic and multi-ethnic Lutheran congregations and their



"... people everywhere need to hear the Gospel."

leadership in Naples, Miami, West Palm Beach, Orlando, and Tampa, Florida. Discussion topics centered on mental health, bilingual ministry, and detailed the work of Sentido Latino, Para El Camino and, especially, the addition of Vivenciar.net as a new online resource.

"When we visit vibrant faith communities in the U.S., we share—but we also learn, take copious notes, and applaud their ministries' efforts and successes. These intentions

strengthen our partnership. We are not groups of people enclosed in offices trying to produce great ideas. We hit the road with a purpose: to share, to listen, to celebrate," Novelli says.

These connections extend to South America, too, where Hispanic Ministries collaborates with ministry centers there. "When we produce materials and new resources, when we create podcasts and seasonal devotions—in everything we do—we keep in mind how the world today—due to the internet—is a global village, and people everywhere need to hear the Gospel," says Novelli, who recently met with Latin American directors in Paraguay.

LHM's Hispanic Ministries has a global focus. In the U.S. its context-based resources reach U.S. Latinos to strengthen their faith and family life. A new series of Easter-based devotions this spring by Deaconess Noemí Guerra—*Cristo Vive* ("Christ Is Alive! 50 Days with the Risen Jesus")—is one such resource. "Around the world, an audience of 600 million Spanish speakers need to meet Jesus. Our digital tools, social media connections, podcasts, apps, and internet messaging are helping make that happen," Novelli says. ♦

Celebrating 75 Years of Ministry in India

by CHAD FIX

On March 14, church leaders, staff, donors, volunteers, subscribers, and well-wishers from throughout the Republic of India gathered to celebrate 75 years of LHM's ministry presence in the world's most populous country. From humble beginnings in a small room in Chennai, **LHM-India** became a pioneer in the field of Christian radio broadcasting to proclaim the Gospel to people who previously had little or no opportunity to hear the Good News of a God who loves them and provides forgiveness and new life.

The success of that radio outreach only scratched the surface of what would be accomplished over the next three-quarters of a century. Recognizing the cultural influences of music, song, and drama, the LHM team in India began sharing the Gospel through devotional songs, short dramas, dialogue, public music programs, stage plays, and dance.

In recent years, they have continued to broaden their efforts beyond these successful culturally relevant activities to also provide television programming, digital resources, holistic programs, print materials, and rallies held in large cities and remote villages to reach multitudes of diverse populations throughout the country. The LHM-India team has also expanded in recent years while overseeing satellite ministry centers in Mumbai, India, and Nepal.

"What a wonderful story we tell when we look back at all that God has accomplished through your ministry over the last seventy-five years," says LHM CEO Kurt Buchholz. "What a wonderful story we imagine about what God will do over the next seventy-five years." ♦



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CHANGING LIVES AROUND THE WORLD *with the Gospel*

by CHAD FIX



Uganda

Byamukama is a father of two and works in a neighborhood market. He grew up in a Christian family but never went to church during a childhood that was filled with challenges. He recently attended a film screening hosted by **LHM-Uganda**. After watching it, he wanted to enroll in their **Bible Correspondence Course** to learn more about Jesus. "First and foremost, thank you for staging such an inspirational and entertaining film," says Bayamukama. "I grew up believing that God does exist and that He created us, but little did I know about Him and His might and power. God teaches us about His ways in different forms, and He has used your ministry to teach me a lot about Him."

... little did I know
about Him and His
might and power.

Ege continues to stay in touch with LHM staff to learn more about the Christian faith.

Ege is 19 years old and reached out to LHM staff in Central and South Asia through WhatsApp. He shared with the staff that he had been a nonbeliever since he lost his father at 13 years old. The LHM staff had several conversations with Ege about Christianity, and he asked many questions that helped him understand Christ's love. Ege was encouraged to visit a local church with one of his friends and he continues to stay in touch with LHM staff to learn more about the Christian faith.

Central & South Asia



Liberia

Felecia is a mother of three who has experienced a variety of struggles in her life. When she received a brochure detailing the programs and resources offered by **LHM-Liberia**, she was interested in learning more about their Dorcas Sewing Class since providing financially for her family has never been easy. This program empowers single mothers to learn practical skills like operating a sewing machine, taking measurements, and preparing patterns. In addition to skills development, the Dorcas Sewing Class also fosters a sense of community among the participants, many who hear the Gospel for the first time during the ongoing classes. "This class means everything to me," Felecia shared with quiet determination. "Through sewing, I can feed my children, send them to school, and hopefully one day stand on my own with my own business".

"This class means
everything to me."

Ana continues to stay involved with the ministry and grow in her faith.

Ana is 15 years old and comes from a complex family environment. Some of her uncles attend church and introduced Ana to Christianity. They invited her to participate in a children's program with her cousins so she could look after them. Through her participation in the camp, Ana became involved in various group activities, and it was in that space that she began to take an interest in the work done by the LHM team in Bolivia. She was interested in learning more about their ministry efforts and volunteering for their programs. Ana began going to church and stayed connected with the Bolivia team. Because of her complicated childhood background, she expressed a desire to help people who have encountered similar experiences to hers. Through conversations and activities in conjunction with the LHM team, she was able to understand God's love for people and how He is always thinking about our well-being. She continues to stay involved with the ministry and grow in her faith.

Bolivia



Individuals around the world experience the Gospel through Lutheran Hour Ministries' culturally relevant programs and resources nearly 275 million times each week. Below are just a few examples to show how God has been using LHM recently to change lives around the world with His Good News.



Nepal

Munna was suffering from depression and loneliness while struggling to take care of her family. She found **LHM-Nepal** on social media through their videos about motivation. After reading more of their posts, she contacted the staff members and asked to learn more about Jesus. LHM staff encouraged her to go to a local church. After Munna attended a few services, she reached back out to the LHM-Nepal team to share how much her situation had improved. She was feeling better and found a job. Now she is going to church every week and is learning more about Jesus.

Munna contacted the **LHM-Nepal** staff members and asked to learn more about Jesus.

"I thank God for using you as instruments to improve my life."

Lucia was a student at a school where **LHM-Nicaragua** conducts interactive talks with students. She recalls that during her time in school, the sessions had a profound impact on her. "The booklets and information you provided helped me make important decisions," she says. "I thank God for using you as instruments to improve my life." Before becoming involved with LHM-Nicaragua, Lucia faced significant challenges in managing her time and responsibilities. Life felt like a series of unfulfilled tasks, leading to confusion and frustration. Through the LHM presentations, Lucia discovered God's purpose for her life. "Please continue sharing these messages with other young people. We need a lot of guidance to make good decisions in our lives."



Nicaragua



United States

Alan was recently introduced to **The Lutheran Hour** by a friend and has become more fervent in his faith as a practicing believer over the past several months. His eyes are now open, he is "on fire" for the Lord, and he is very appreciative for the part **The Lutheran Hour** has played in his new walk with Christ. He even plans to go with his friend spreading God's Word among people in his local community soon.

Alan is very appreciative for the part **The Lutheran Hour** has played in his new walk with Christ.

"... I had many questions that I asked the staff of LHM-Latvia to answer and allow me to dig deeper."

Noelle is a 25-year-old student at a local arts school. She met the **LHM-Latvia** staff while they were presenting a program at the school. They gave Noelle their Bible Correspondence Course materials, and she was eager to work her way through them. "I think it is a very good way to talk about matters of faith, how to highlight the most important themes, and how to awaken interest so that everyone can search further for themselves," says Noelle. "This has happened to me. While studying this publication, I had many questions that I asked the staff of LHM-Latvia to answer and allow me to dig deeper." ♦



Latvia

CHURCHES BENEFIT WHERE LHM SUNDAYS ARE HELD

by PAUL SCHREIBER

LHM Sundays
are an ideal
vehicle for
Ambassadors to
promote LHM
resources.

More churches everywhere are hosting **LHM Sundays**. All that's necessary to do this is to determine which Sunday in the year works best; visit lhm.org/lhmsunday to download LHM's materials to assist you; and then to include these materials in your church's services for LHM Sunday.

More than a chance to display and highlight LHM's varied ministry resources, these special Sundays show how God is changing lives with the Gospel at home and abroad, and for church members to discover new resources that can help them grow in their faith.

For a growing number of churches, it's an LHM Ambassador who spearheads an LHM Sunday. "There have been about 2.5 times as many churches doing LHM Sundays this fiscal year over last," says Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies, LHM's vice president of Ministry Engagement. "By far, Ambassadors are leading this engagement!"

This increase has involved the work of many people, including Lakies, Suzie Sallee, community facilitator, congregations; Polly Gregali, community facilitator, LLL; and the many calls made by Team 360, notes John Heithaus, director, Annual Giving & Donor Engagement. "Honestly, it's the pastors and Ambassadors who make LHM Sunday possible. Without them, all LHM can do is produce LHM Sunday materials, which would sit unused without their willingness," Heithaus says.

A genuine love for LHM's mission prompts many to become Ambassadors. "I love the goal of Lutheran Hour Ministries," says Jo Riester, an

Ambassador who attends Ascension Lutheran Church and School in Tucson, Arizona. "Often in my visits with older people, they wonder why they are still here. Your resources help me remind them that when we say, 'Come, Lord Jesus,' it's important to remember that He's not going to come, until everyone has had an opportunity to hear about Him. And that's where we come in!"

For some, their love of mission goes back 50 years. Gregg Kremkow has been an Ambassador since 1977 when he was recruited by Rev. Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, former Speaker for **The Lutheran Hour**. Watching *This Is The Life*

episodes in high school sparked Kremkow's early interest. After his military service in Vietnam, it was involvement in the LLL that ignited his passion. He enjoys networking and the people connections. "I've used LHM material in Bible class, and I also have a **Project Connect** stand. I put up a display at our county fair, too. It's a great time to meet people and kids." He attends Guardian Lutheran Church in Dearborn, Michigan.

Rachel Happel's ambassadorship is less than a year old. She works closely with her pastors at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids Iowa, who take care to mention LHM in their Sunday prayers and encourage congregants to visit the LHM display table on LHM Sunday. Tableside, Happel shares LHM's resources with members and visitors and points them to LHM's Project Connect display stand. Her reason for becoming an Ambassador: "I feel LHM does so much good in the variety of ways it shares the Gospel at home and around the world. I wanted my church to see what LHM offers and does."

LHM Sundays are an ideal vehicle for Ambassadors to promote LHM resources, but it's only one way. "LHM's ministry begins at the grassroots level with the laity. It begins with individual relationships, one by one. But LHM's staff isn't large enough to personally interact with every church and pastor—we wish it was—so that's where Ambassadors come in," Heithaus says. "Ambassadors are our representatives. By organizing LHM Sundays, they have a multiplying effect in spreading the word about LHM's ministry work and in resourcing others in their faith walk." ♦

Downloadable Materials to Help Host an LHM Sunday For Your Congregation





Music Ministry Connects Communities Across the Globe

by MEGAN MCDANIEL

Across cultures and generations, music has served as a universal language—one that transcends barriers of age, background, and belief. From local concerts to multi-day celebrations, these community events offered by LHM ministry centers around the world bring people together over the shared appreciation of music and the hope of Jesus.

A three-night Gospel music event titled “Musical Celebration” was led by Bryan Tay, president of Asia Ministries, in Singapore. The program was designed to connect people together through music, sharing the message of the Gospel in a meaningful and engaging way. Christian Musician Fellowship (CMF) participated in the program by leading praise and worship songs. Staff members from **LHM–Myanmar** and **LHM–South Korea** traveled to Singapore to participate in the event. Given the significant Myanmar community in Singapore, a special gathering titled “Bless Myanmar Night” was held. During this program, participants shared personal testimonies, reflected on the Word of God, and joined together in heartfelt worship.

In addition to the concert, the Myanmar staff was able to visit Singapore to support an introductory program at the LHM Asia office. This was a valuable opportunity to strengthen relationships, observe ministry activities, and engage in fellowship with local partners in the region.

In **Latvia**, LHM staff held a concert titled “*I Will Join You in My Heart*” at a local Lutheran church. The event brought together members of the church as well as visitors from the surrounding community. After the concert, a fellowship gathering took place, which provided an opportunity for shared conversation and community building.

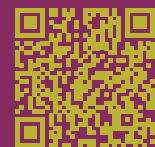
LHM–South Korea partnered with an ensemble of church organists to present a Lenten devotional concert this year. The organists engaged with audiences through their performances to deepen their musical and spiritual abilities. The program was structured to reflect the spiritual journey of Lent and included compositions by Olivier Messiaen, Johann Sebastian Bach, and others. Attendees left the concert encouraged with their reflection time. ♦



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Celebrating Christ's Love on Children's Day in Thailand by CHAD FIX

Thai Children's Day is celebrated annually on the second Saturday of January and is one of the most widely celebrated days for families with activities held by cultural institutions and nonprofit organizations aimed at fostering joy and learning.

In the days surrounding this celebration, the **LHM-Thailand** organized a Children's Day activity for around 800 students at two different schools in Kamphaeng Phet Province. In addition, they coordinated with a local pastor

to hold events for nearly 1,500 students at three schools in his community.

The purpose of this activity was to encourage children and youth to recognize their responsibilities while learning various skills that will contribute to a positive future for them in line with the National Children's Day slogan, "Love Thailand, Care for the World." In addition to creating happiness and enjoyment, the LHM team shared a skit adapted from the parable of "The Lost Son (The Prodigal Son)." This helped the children learn about life values, parental

love, and forgiveness within the family. The team also focused on pointing them to God's love and forgiveness.

The children at each school showed strong interest and actively participated in the activities. Every student received a gift set that included ministry resources like the LHM booklet, *Do You Know Who Jesus Is?*, as an encouragement for the children to learn more about the love of Christ.

We give thanks to God for the opportunity to share the Gospel through this annual activity. ♦



Help The Lutheran Hour Reach New Audiences

by CHAD FIX

Today, because of faithful supporters like you, **The Lutheran Hour** remains the world's longest-running Christ-centered radio program, reaching hearts and sharing the life-saving message of salvation every week. Now in its 93rd broadcast season, the program continues to air weekly on around 1,700 traditional radio stations throughout North America.

What is not as well known is that the broadcast can also be accessed on many different digital channels to share the love and hope of Jesus Christ. The Lutheran Hour is available as a podcast, on the "Connected by LHM" app, and through media platforms like iHeartRadio, Spotify, YouTube, Amazon Alexa, Google Home, and Sirius XM satellite radio. In addition, individuals who can't listen on a local station or online can dial in on their phone to hear the latest sermons. Simply call LHM's main phone number (800-876-9880) and press option three to be forwarded to listen to The Lutheran Hour.

These media platforms present opportunities to increase listenership of The Lutheran Hour through targeted marketing and promotional efforts that reach new audiences. You can be part of expanding the program's digital reach. Thanks to a generous, limited-time Matching Grant from a private foundation, every **dollar you give to this effort will be doubled—up to \$75,000**. That means your gift will have twice the impact for reaching more people with the Gospel anywhere and anytime through The Lutheran Hour.

To support this grant opportunity, visit lhm.org/lutheranhourmatch or mail a check to Lutheran Hour Ministries at 660 Mason Ridge Center Dr., St. Louis MO 63141, and write "Digital TLH Match" in the memo field. ♦

Help Shape the Stories That Matter!



Your generous support powers our ministry efforts around the world—now help shape how we share them. Take a short survey about *The Lutheran Layman* and make sure it reflects what matters most to you.

Click the "Take the Survey" button at lhm.org/layman or call us at 1-800-876-9880.

