

Lutherans

ENGAGE the WORLD

September – October 2013, Vol. 2, Issue 1



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The Moment:

YOUTH

Lutherans

ENGAGE the WORLD

September – October 2013 † vol. 2 no. 1



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Engaging the Church in the work of witness and mercy across the globe in our life together.

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engage

FORTY-SIX YEARS AGO at St. Mark's Lutheran School in Kaneohe, Hawaii, my pastor and teachers made a lifelong impression on me as they joyfully taught and modeled the faith, planting the seeds that would lead to my service as a deaconess.

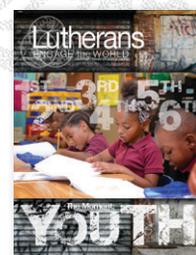
As a teenager, my pastor engaged the youth in study, service and fellowship together. He imprinted upon us a sense that the church was for us because Jesus Christ was for us, not just then, in those awkward teen years, but each day of our lives until we would draw our last breath on this earth, and for all eternity.

Youth ministry and Lutheran education are not passing fancies for the LCMS; they are hallmarks of our work in the world. Enhancing education and youth ministry is one of our six mission priorities. The moment for youth and education in the LCMS has always been *now*.

In the pages of this issue of *Lutherans Engage the World*, you'll get a look into our present-day efforts with young people — from the new school planted in the inner city to the way in which God uses the energy and enthusiasm of thousands of young people gathered in the name of Christ. You'll read how we work to strengthen Lutheran schools and educators and provide grant dollars to assist projects that benefit young people.

In all of it, you'll see that the moment is *now* for LCMS youth and education. By God's grace, we are seizing that moment in great and wondrous ways!

Pamela J. Nielsen
 Associate Executive Director,
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Cover image: Education is a priority for the LCMS. Our congregations operate the largest Protestant parochial school system in the United States.

PHOTO: JILL HELPEL

Grant Encourages Autism Awareness in LCMS Schools



by Megan K. Mertz

After a lifetime of being a little bit “different,” Aaron Likens, the son of an LCMS pastor, was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome — an autism spectrum disorder — in 2003 at the age of 20. Suddenly, there was an explanation for his difficulty in social situations, his repetitive behavior and his preoccupation with the weather and auto racing, among other things.

The diagnosis led Likens on a journey to explain his experiences. He wrote the book *Finding Kansas: Living and Decoding Asperger’s Syndrome* and became an autism ambassador and community-education specialist for TouchPoint Autism Service, St. Louis.

In April 2012, Likens embarked on a month-long “Autism Understanding and Awareness Tour,” sponsored in part by LCMS School Ministry.

“Since one in about every 88 students in the U.S. are affected by autism spectrum disorder, our Lutheran schools are in wonderfully unique positions to welcome these special children

into our ministries. Aaron Likens will bring valuable information to anyone with a passion of serving all of God’s children,” said Dr. Steven Buuck, CEO of Faith Lutheran Middle School & High School in Las Vegas, who heard Likens speak during the 2012 tour.

This year, LCMS School Ministry engaged Likens for another tour, giving him a



“We have to serve all kinds of kids in our Lutheran schools, and we need to encourage Lutheran educators to embrace these students and help them utilize their amazing gifts.”

— Terry Schmidt, director of LCMS School Ministry

\$3,500 grant to speak to the graduates of the LCMS School Leadership Development Program before embarking on a 16-stop tour of LCMS schools,



PHOTOS: REV. JAMES LIKENS

Aaron Likens received the 2012 Champion of Mental Health Award for Missouri for his work in autism awareness. He is pictured with Dr. Keith Schaffer, director of the Missouri Department of Mental Health.



In 2011, Likens served on a panel with Dr. Temple Grandin, one of the world’s leading experts on autism.

colleges and universities in October.

“Every Lutheran school teacher has had students like this in the classroom,” said Terry Schmidt, director of LCMS School Ministry. “We have to serve all kinds of kids in our Lutheran schools, and we need to encourage Lutheran educators to embrace these students and help them utilize

their amazing gifts. Unlocking their gifts is not only a service to society but it’s a service to our church.”

To learn more about Likens and his 2012 speaking tour, visit <http://blogs.lcms.org/2012/aspergers-awareness-tour-includes-cities-nationwide>.

Megan K. Mertz is a staff writer for LCMS Communications.

Recipient: Aaron Likens	Amount: \$3,500	Result: Asperger’s syndrome speaking tour to LCMS schools and universities
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10 Questions

with the Rev. Jonathon Bakker

by Melanie Ave

"BEING INVOLVED IN CAMPUS MINISTRY KEEPS YOU GROUNDED IN YOUR ETERNAL HOPE IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING ELSE THAT HAPPENS AT COLLEGE."

The Rev. Jonathon Bakker is one of many LCMS pastors throughout the country who are bearing witness to Christ on college campuses nationwide and connecting young people to the Lutheran faith. As the pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Chapel at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Mich., Bakker says, "I love being a campus pastor and couldn't have imagined a better spot for me."

1. How did you get involved in campus ministry?

It wasn't until call night at the seminary in 2006 that I learned I was going to be a campus pastor. God was in charge through the placement process and He certainly knew what He was doing!

2. Describe your own college experience.

I grew up Lutheran, but hardly took it seriously after confirmation. It was while I was at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Mich., that I ran into some of the first real personal challenges of my life: my own failings, losing loved ones and the roller-coaster of college relationships. That was when I first realized the critical importance of being connected to Jesus and His church.

3. Describe Lutheran Student Fellowship (LSF) at Central Michigan University (CMU).

The fellowship at CMU is a group of college students who likely wouldn't know each other if not for the fact that they share a common bond in being Christians. The activities that students want to do and get involved in change from year to year, but worship and Bible study, service projects and social activities ... is a pretty good summary.

4. Can you describe a typical day?

There is no such thing as a typical day for a pastor and that goes double for campus pastors! It's always a mixed bag because college students are a unique breed of high energy/low sleep individuals who are impossible to predict. The services, Bible studies and many social activities follow a fairly routine schedule, but students are also spontaneous when it comes to wanting to get together with friends and often they'll invite their pastor.

5. Why should college students get involved in campus ministry?

The challenges to Christian faith that most college students will encounter, especially on public university campuses, are well known. Being involved in campus ministry keeps you grounded in your eternal hope in spite of everything else that happens at college.

6. What advice do you have for incoming freshmen and/or their parents?

Freshmen, first of all, go to church! And then please wait five or six weeks before committing yourself to join any clubs, teams or student organizations. Parents, do what you can to connect your child to the local LCMS campus ministry. Visit the pastor while you're on campus for orientation. Go visit your child for a weekend and make a plan to go to church together.

7. Why should the larger church care about campus ministry?

We should care about campus ministry not only because of the challenges our own Lutheran youth face when they head off to university. We also should care about it because campuses, especially public universities, are full of people who don't share our faith and who are hungry for true meaning in their lives.

8. How can congregations and members support campus ministry?

Tell us about your students! Seriously. Unless LCMS congregations and/or LCMS parents tell campus pastors, deaconesses and volunteers that their youth are going to be attending such-and-such university, we have no way of finding out about them and inviting them to get involved. Also, pray for those in the college communities. Finally, consider financially supporting the work of campus ministries that serve the members of your congregation or your family.

9. Can you describe an "ah-ha" moment when you realized that you were exactly where God had planted you?

It is difficult to pick just one, because many jump to mind, but I would have to say that it is during the Baptisms and confirmations of the students and internationals who the Lord has led to confess the Christian faith through our campus ministry.

10. What do you think of the LCMS' renewed emphasis on campus ministry?

The "Unwrapped" campus ministry conference in January was such a shot in the arm for our college students. The locator services [for campus ministries: www.lcms.org/lcmsu] that are so prominent on the Synod website now are a Godsend. I'm really looking forward to what else they have in store for campus ministries that is yet to be "unwrapped" in the future, and I pray that these efforts, with the Lord's blessing, bear fruit in strengthening young people in the Christian faith!



Melanie Ave is senior writer and social-media coordinator for LCMS Communications.



A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It's something of a miracle. Right in the heart of East St. Louis's urban blight—amidst crumbling buildings, plots of land overcome with vegetation and clusters of adults standing dangerously idle on curbsides—Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School (unityesl.org) boldly stands as a perfect example of our Synod's emphasis, *Witness, Mercy, Life Together*.

by Katie Schuermann



Witness

"Let the little children come to me," Jesus bids His disciples in Luke 18, and Unity does just that. With 11 teachers, three aides, two administrators, one administrative assistant and one custodian, Unity is equipped to reach some 190 full-time students in grades Pre-K-3 through 8 with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"At Unity," says Development Director Paul Miller, "everything begins and ends with Jesus."

Jashira Bolden, a 14-year-old, recent graduate of Unity, agrees. "The best part of school is 'Belong to Jesus Time.' It's at the beginning of each day, and the whole school gets to come together. We [learn] a Bible story each week along with a Scripture [verse]."

"There's so much value in reciting God's Word together as a group," affirms Miller. During "Belong to Jesus Time," students also sing songs, give a monetary offering (amounting to \$3,000 annually) in support of other missions and participate in a "little liturgy" led by Unity's principal, the Rev. Aaron Dickerson.



Paul Miller, development director, explains the history and meaning of the "Jesus Welcomes the Little Children" picture in the school lobby.

MICHAEL SCHUERMAN

Mercy

Most of Unity's students live within a mile of the school, specifically the northern part of East St. Louis, Ill., in Washington Park. Every student pays tuition, and every student receives financial aid.

"Tuition is on a sliding scale based on income," says Dickerson. "Most of our parents are at poverty level, but they really want their kids to get a quality, Christian education. There's not a student here

that pays the full tuition. Families just can't afford it. A lot of them are working two jobs just to make ends meet, especially the single parents."

Dickerson explains that between 85 and 90 percent of Unity's students come from single-parent homes.

"A large number of our students do not have a male role model," says Dickerson. "We try to show them as much love as possible, to let them know that they're

special, that they're created in God's image, that they can be anything they want to be."

Kielynn Palmer, a vivacious second-grader living in what Miller calls "a culture of low expectations," is one of the many Unity students who benefits from this message.



PHOTOS: JILL HEUPEL

Students line up at the beginning of the school day.

“I want to be a cheerleader and a doctor and a nurse,” Kieilyn says, “with a cross on my shirt, so that everyone’ll know I’m a Christian.”

The tuition breaks given to each student make Miller’s job a busy one. The LCMS Southern Illinois District (SID) Mission Board generously grants \$50,000 annually to Unity, but an additional \$650,000 must be raised each year through fundraising efforts and private donations.

“Our Lutheran doctrine, ‘by grace you have been saved,’ has helped me to look at everyone and try to make it happen for them, even if they don’t appear to deserve it,” says Miller, explaining his



tireless fundraising efforts. “That’s how God looks at me.”

Still, even Miller has a limit. “I am retiring in four years. One of the goals we have is to build a \$10 million endowment within the next four years to ease some of that dependence on private donors. Right now, we are at \$140,000, so we’ve got a lot of work to do.”

Unity also benefits from more than just the monetary support of donors. From offering group keyboard lessons to cultivating a school garden to building an altar and pulpit for “Belong to Jesus Time,” various volunteers give of their time and talents to help keep the school and its programs running smoothly.

11
teachers



1 administrative assistant

2 administrators



3 aides



1 custodian



Unity is equipped to reach some 190 full-time students in grades Pre-K-3 through 8 with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"THIS WHOLE PROJECT, from a human point of view, does not make sense. It has to be that God wanted it to happen and made it happen."

— Paul Miller, Development Director



An offering is collected daily, which goes to support other missions.



Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School opened for the first day of school on Aug. 19, 2003.

MICHAEL SCHUEMANN

such a school. Three years later, Miller was called as Unity's first principal.

"Schools such as Unity are a focus of hope in a community," says the Rev. Timothy Scharr, current president of the SID. "The school provides a safe environment for the students to focus on learning. The daily 'Belong to Jesus Time' brings Christ to every student five days a week. ... We pray that the school and church will be a catalyst for positive change within the community."

Thirteen-year-old Nile Clay, an eighth-grader at Unity, embodies such change. He is considering being baptized this year. In fact, just down the street from the school, Unity Lutheran Church is currently averaging one school-related Baptism a month. Still, of the 183 Unity students enrolled in 2012, nearly 130 of them did not have a church home and did not go to church regularly. The harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few.

When asked what advice he would give to other districts wanting to plant mission schools such as Unity, Mueller suggests "pray a lot" and "spend the time to develop wide support for it."

"Trust the Lord," adds Scharr. "He can do

far more than we think or imagine possible by the power at work within us in the Church through Jesus Christ. ... Be prepared to be in this for the long haul. We've been working at this for over a decade with no end in sight."

"This whole project, from a human point of view, does not make sense," Miller confesses. "It has to be that God wanted it to happen and made it happen."

Yes, He did.

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Katie Schuermann (katie@katieschuermann.com) is author of *He Remembers the Barren* (LL 2011) and *Pew Sisters* (CPH 2013) and is a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Sherman, Ill.

Being on the receiving end of so much generosity, Unity's staff and teachers are careful to teach the students how to take care of others with no expectation of receiving anything in return.

"Unity has taught me that not everyone is able to provide for themselves," says Jashira. "I own an organization called 'One Step at a Time' that I started when I was 8 years old, and last year, I got to give each homeless shelter \$1,000."

Students at Unity also understand that simply helping the younger kids at school can be an act of mercy.

"The little kids at our school, they look up to us," explains Keondra Morgan, a seventh-grader at Unity. "We've got to show them the way to behave when they go to school. How we behave affects their behavior."

Life Together

Nineteen years ago, the SID in convention acknowledged the need to do mission work in East St. Louis. Three years later, the district convention decided to plant a Lutheran school, what LCMS First Vice-President Herb Mueller (then president of the SID) calls "one of the strengths of our Synod," in East St. Louis to reach some 30,000 people with the Gospel. The following convention assigned a task force to construct a business plan, perform a feasibility study, survey the community and locate a proper building for



In addition to academic skills, Unity strives to develop faith and character in its students.

JILL HELPEL



The 2012–2013 students, teachers and staff of Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School.

JILL HELPEL



Rev. Aaron Dickerson, school principal, in his office.

MICHAEL SCHUEMANN

LEADERS



PHOTOS: REDEEMER LUTHERAN SCHOOL

Redeemer Lutheran School, Oakmont, Penn., has benefitted from the School Leadership Development Program (SLED), which makes teachers better leaders both in and out of the classroom.

“Through the readings and projects, listening to guest speakers, devotions and prayer, and even eating meals together with my SLED group and our mentor, I’ve become a different teacher.”

—Michael Popp

by Cheryl D. Naumann

For Michael Popp, seventh-grade teacher and athletic director at Grace Lutheran School in Jacksonville, Fla., completing the School Leadership Development Program (SLED) changed his life both in and out of the classroom.

“Through the readings and projects, listening to guest speakers, devotions and prayer, and even eating meals together with my SLED group and our mentor, I’ve become a different teacher,” Popp said with a smile. “And the leadership training has already been a bonus for our school. Our principal became ill, but because I had done SLED and had a network of support, I was able to slide in and substitute for her, finishing out the school year in her place.”

Leadership is a critical element in any school. “Our Lutheran schools need teacher leaders and principal leaders,” explained Terry Schmidt, director of School Ministry for the LCMS. “In the next five years, we are going to have a significant breach created by the retirement of workers. SLED is looking to feed our educational system with dynamic, talented leaders, while also using intentional interim administrators — people who are retired and can go into a school and act as the administrator until someone accepts a call to that position.”

Since 1989, SLED has trained more than 200 educators who are now serving as LCMS principals in early childhood through high school settings. With the guidance of district education executives, those who take part in SLED are nominated by their principals, then selected, recruited and asked to commit to an intense year of academic training.

SLED participants meet face-to-face with their mentor and cohort for three training sessions. In session one, they explore principles of leadership and the role of a Lutheran school leader. During the second session, they explore the history and mission of Lutheran schools, improve planning and decision-making skills, and develop a hands-on leadership project. Finally, they focus on creating a personalized professional growth plan.

Gail Holzer, principal at Redeemer Lutheran School, Oakmont, Penn., identified middle high teacher Sarah Driscoll as a candidate for SLED. “I saw her as a complete educator, adaptable, willing to learn and take on new responsibilities,” said Holzer. “She wasn’t satisfied with the status quo in her own teaching and had a good understanding of Lutheran education, having attended a Lutheran school and Concordia University. This fall she will become the lead teacher for our middle high.”

Holzer also served as a SLED mentor for six women coming from schools in Idaho, Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois.

“Lutheran school administrators are required to do much more than their public school counterparts, so to be fair to them we should provide training and experience so that they can jump full force into their roles without being overwhelmed,” Holzer explained. “By providing leadership training within the church instead of sending teachers to a secular agency, we are keeping the Lutheran ministry perspective and keeping the Gospel perspective. This is absolutely critical to keeping the focus of our Lutheran schools!”

For more information about the SLED Program, call 800-248-1930, ext. 1294 or email Terry.Schmidt@lcms.org.

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Deaconess Cheryl D. Naumann just finished 10 years of teaching biblical studies and language arts at Redeemer Lutheran School in Oakmont, Penn. She administers a *Woman to Woman* program for congregation members and school mothers and is the author of *In the Footsteps of Phoebe: A Complete History of the Deaconess Movement in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*.

Strengthening the Ministry of LCMS Schools



by Cheryl D. Naumann

“When we struggled with declining enrollment and low morale in 2009, a Strengthening Schools and Congregations (SSAC) consultant team came to help us determine the best way to move forward together as a school and congregation,” explained Kristine Bower, director of Early Learning at Beautiful Savior Lutheran School in Broomfield, Colo. “We’re still feeling the benefit of their objective set of eyes. Enrollment is inching up, morale is definitely improved and, most importantly, we started a new practice of getting together as a staff to study God’s Word. SSAC helped us re-energize the practice of putting Christ at the forefront of everything that we do and are about, as we equip children for life in this world.”

Since SSAC’s inception in 1999, more than 200 visits have been made to almost 10 percent of all LCMS schools!

The way it works is simple. First, a three-member diagnostic consultant team visits the school to identify problems or challenges and make suggestions for possible solutions. Then, a second visit is made within two months by one of the team members, with an additional two optional consultation visits.

“SSAC’s goal in the whole process is that the mission of sharing Christ with children and their families can more effectively be accomplished in each of the schools,” commented Donald Weber, education executive for the LCMS Nebraska District. “One of the things that SSAC does is bring hope. Some schools are struggling and just don’t see any way out. A consultation team can come into a situation with background, expertise and fresh

perspective; make an analysis; and offer solutions that the folks there don’t see, which gives them a path to travel to where they want to go. Some schools are just looking for new ideas, and SSAC is in a unique position to provide assistance there too.”

Like ill people who take their medicine and make a full recovery, the SSAC program has had a positive impact on LCMS schools and congregations that adopt the recommendations

to enrollment, finances, relationships, marketing or other problems, they can take advantage of another set of trained eyes. It’s better to contact your district’s education executive right away to ask for a SSAC application than to wait until problems escalate.”

What about cost? “What a deal!” Kaiser continues. “There is no real cost to the congregation!

submitted by the SSAC team. Roy Kaiser, LCMS SSAC project director and principal emeritus of St. John Lutheran School, Rochester, Mich., would like to encourage

“We’re still feeling the benefit of their objective set of eyes. Enrollment is inching up, morale is definitely improved and, most importantly, we started a new practice of getting together as a staff to study God’s Word.”

—Kristine Bower

more LCMS schools to take advantage of SSAC in the spirit of “preventative medicine.”

“SSAC is a place to turn to when issues seem to hinder your ministry,” said Kaiser. “If a school is experiencing tension in relation

The application fee is refunded after an improvement plan is adopted by the school. So, there’s no reason why any school in our Synod can’t afford to take advantage of this opportunity.”

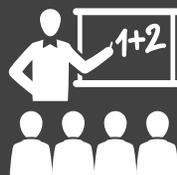
For more information about SSAC consultation services, contact LCMS School Ministry at janice.schroeder@lcms.org.

Lutheran Schools: A Blessed Challenge

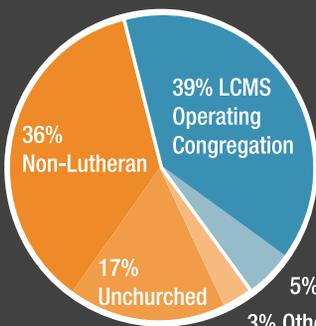
LUTHERAN EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS



6,674 of 16,019 teachers in LCMS PK-8 classrooms are rostered



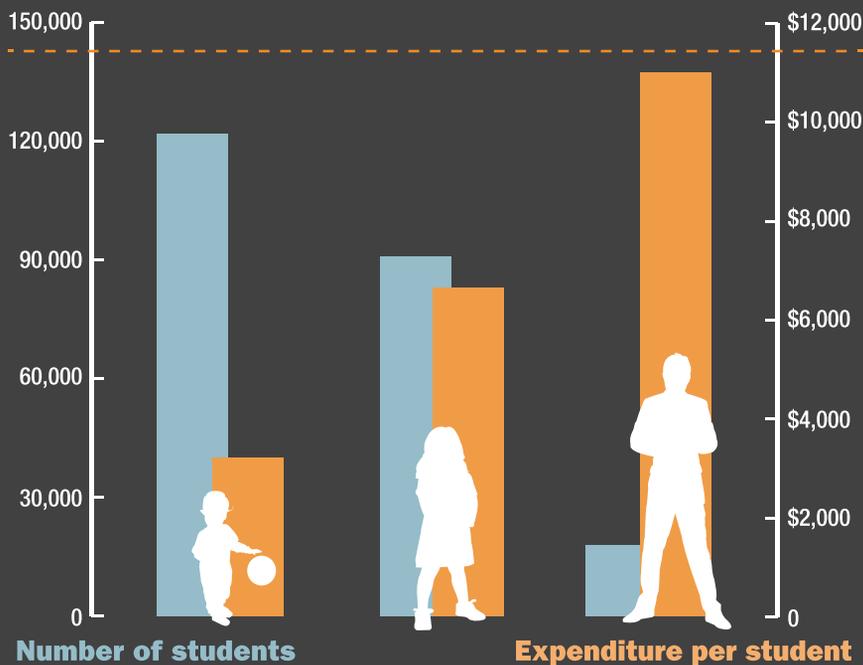
41% of LCMS congregations operate schools or early childhood centers



44% of students belong to LCMS congregations



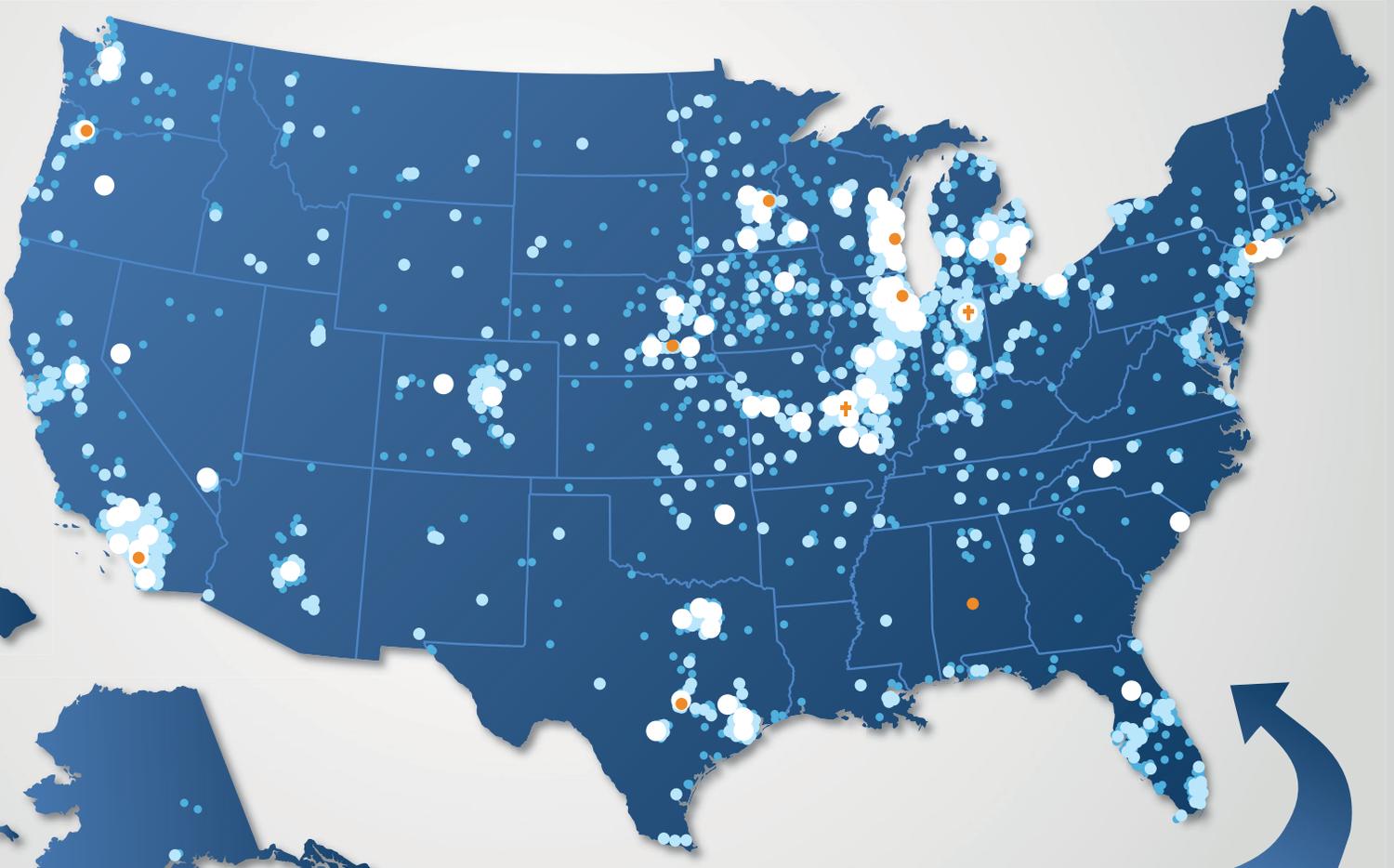
EARLY CHILDHOOD, DAYSCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL NUMBERS



--- The estimated expenditure per public school student (elementary and secondary combined) for the 2012-13 school year. Source: The National Center for Education Statistics



Where Are Our Lutheran Schools?



Largest Protestant Parochial School System in the U.S.

- 1,376 Early Childhood Centers
- 871 Elementary Schools
- 88 High Schools
- 10 Colleges and Universities
- 2 Seminaries

Lutheran Schools at a Glance

With more than 2,300 schools, the congregations of the LCMS operate the **largest Protestant parochial school system in the United States**. The data represented on these pages was collected from LCMS early childhood centers and schools for the 2012–13 school year.

Grant Helps Give Deaf Teens the Word of God

by Megan K. Mertz

When people “hear” the Good News of the Gospel, it’s not always via the spoken word. Jesus Lutheran Church of the Deaf in Austin, Texas, has been sharing the faith through American Sign Language since 1931.

Pastor Mark Seeger runs Jesus Deaf Youth Ministry, which reaches out to the 500 students from all over the state who live and study at the Texas School for the Deaf across the street.

“The deaf students at Texas School for the Deaf (and all deaf schools) are spiritually underserved and are starving for the Good News of Jesus Christ,” said Seeger, noting that many of the students do not have access to deaf churches in their hometowns.

Seeger saw the opportunity to provide easy-to-read Bibles to students who attended the church’s youth events, so in 2010 he applied for and received an Eutychus Youth Grant from LCMS Youth Ministry.

The \$2,500 grant paid for Bibles, “Deaf Church Rocks” T-shirts with the church’s information on them and a pizza party. The youth invited

their friends, and 40 middle school youth and 100 high school youth attended that evening.

So many came, in fact, that Jesus Deaf Youth Ministry soon ran out of Bibles, so LCMS Youth Ministry sent more. Although Seeger had been giving out ministry T-shirts for several years, the Bible giveaway was a new addition to the program.

Jesus Deaf Youth Ministry continues to grow. Seeger prints a new T-shirt each year and gives out more Bibles. During the 2012–13 school year, attendance hit a record high — 305 for the year.

“Since we got the Eutychus Youth Grant, we have easily given out more than 500 Bibles,” Seeger said.



The deaf students at Texas School for the Deaf (and all deaf schools) are spiritually underserved and are starving for the Good News of Jesus Christ.”

— Rev. Mark Seeger

congregation in reaching out to their unchurched peers,” said the Rev. Dr. Terry Dittmer, director of LCMS Youth Ministry. “The program is

meant to enable congregations to invite youth into the church building and hopefully bring them into the church community.”

The grant program is funded by a portion of the offerings collected at the 2010 and 2013 National LCMS Youth Gatherings for the purpose of helping LCMS congregations and related organizations reach out to unchurched and marginally churched youth. During the last three years, 15 grants have been awarded.



A group of high school students show off their new T-shirts and Bibles, which they received at the Jesus Deaf Youth Ministry pizza party.



Students wear their T-shirts to class, helping to promote the ministry among their peers.

PHOTOS: REV. MARK SEEGER

The Rev. Seeger now serves as a missionary at-large for the LCMS Texas District and continues his ministry to deaf students under the name Lutheran Deaf Youth Ministry.

Recipient: Jesus Lutheran Church of the Deaf, Austin, Texas	Amount: \$2,500	Result: Bibles and T-shirts given out to hundreds of deaf students
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LOVE LIVED

by Jeni Miller

It's never too soon to start serving your neighbor. Just ask the 25,000 youth that attended the 12th triennial National LCMS Youth Gathering (NYG) July 1-5.

"The servant projects at the NYG are wildly successful — as are the LCMS youth servant events that happen every summer — and there are not enough projects for all of the kids," explained the Rev. Bart Day, executive director for the LCMS Office of National Mission. "At the NYG, youth participated in hundreds of projects over those days. They want to serve and work and help in ways that relate primarily to showing mercy to those in need."

Our Lutheran youth at the NYG volunteered for hundreds of on-site and off-site service projects benefitting local churches, schools, parks, health-care facilities and other service organizations that provide child and family care, counseling, housing and meals for those in need. A team of LCMS volunteers spent more than two years cultivating relationships with LCMS congregations, community groups, schools and other San Antonio-based service organizations to arrange the projects.

One youth, Amy Wilkie from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who helped clean up and rearrange an outdoor preschool play area, mentioned, "My favorite thing about participating in the NYG was helping people in a different community and having the chance to reach out. This experience confirms that I do want to help others in my own community and pretty much everywhere."

"NYG Servant Events provide a short-term opportunity for young people to

serve their neighbor in a new setting, stretch their understanding of the talents and interests God has given them, and be encouraged in service by other LCMS Christians," said the Rev. Mark Kiessling, Gathering program director for the LCMS. "These experiences ... are opportunities for young people to be encouraged in future service to the Church and world. Also, in a short amount of elapsed time, NYG participants are given a snapshot of the difference the Church can make in a community."

And these opportunities don't stop when the NYG ends.

The LCMS provides and facilitates numerous service project options for youth all year long, especially in the summer months, and youth can serve for a weekend or a week. Sometimes building off of the tasks and contacts established at the NYG, these projects range from construction to human care to outreach events.

According to Kiessling, "The LCMS has a long history of servant events through LCMS Youth Ministry. Thousands of LCMS members serve at these events every year. It would not be surprising for those who served in San Antonio to connect with their 2013 hosts and serve in the future."

Lutheran Youth Corps

Some youth who participate in these events year after year want to take their service to the next level. What can we, as

a church, do to accommodate this desire to serve Christ and neighbor?

“It’s time to do again what we did originally years ago,” said Day. “The LCMS used to be part of the Prince of Peace Corps, the precursor to our GEO (Globally Engaged in Outreach) missionaries, which sent youth overseas for peace and mercy work. Our youth, college kids and young adults have a high desire to serve domestically and internationally as workers of mercy. There is an ever-growing number of LCMS college students and young adults joining the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps. They say, ‘We would do it with the church, but there is nothing for us to do.’ ”

Until now.

The Lutheran Youth Corps, our church’s answer to the growing trend of youth interested in entering long-term service organizations, is scheduled to launch its pilot program in the coming months. With an emphasis on works of mercy and a desire to engage the tail end of the “youth” spectrum in the LCMS, the Lutheran Youth Corps will focus on providing service opportunities for an 18-month period of time in between high school and college or college and full-time work, especially for young people who have not yet settled on a vocation. They will likely be matched with a project or servant event that is related to their particular interests and skill sets.

“The plan is to create long-term servant events for young people in our Synod, for youth to live in community with other volunteers and do mercy projects in that part of the country or world,” explained the Rev. Steven Cholak, special ministries coordinator for the LCMS Office of National Mission. “We want to show what we can do with a Lutheran emphasis to help teach, strengthen and maintain the faith as we do the work of spreading the Gospel.”

As the program is developed, it includes sending seven to 10 youth to live in a house together with a professional church worker who will serve as the spiritual life director during their stay. The director will lead them in daily devotions, connect them with a church nearby for Word and Sacrament, and maintain order while caring for their physical and spiritual needs. Opportunities for offering educational credit or other incentives also are being explored.

Young adults will have domestic service opportunities, such as urban and

inner-city work, as well as international project choices with partner churches and organizations like Bethesda that are operating facilities internationally.

“We have projects in Kenya, Madagascar, refugee camps ... the list goes on,” added Day. “We really want to see kids who participate in our youth events while in junior high, high school and college go on to the Lutheran Youth Corps. In other words, we’d like to see a continuity of service before sending a 23- or 24-year-old to Nairobi for a year. There is just a huge need and desire — and if we don’t do anything for college-age and young adults, they’ll go elsewhere to do it.”

Uniquely Lutheran

But what really sets the Lutheran Youth Corps apart from the other long-term service organizations? A uniquely Lutheran theology and a deep focus on the vocational life in the midst of rigorous service.

“Built into this program will be a week or two of immersion in significant theological training for the youth before being sent out,” said Day. “We’ll talk them through Scripture and the Confessions and vocation and service to neighbor in a Gospel way, to prepare them to go out joyfully and freed by the Gospel to do the work our Lord would give them to do. The mercy work itself is not the Gospel, nor is the work compelled by the Law or salvific. We want to make sure our kids understand what mercy is, where it begins and ends, and how mercy is tied with opportunities to share the Gospel and witness to Christ. We also want to give them a strong congregational life and community wherever they serve to help them in their work and as they process its meaning and their experience.”

As the Lutheran Youth Corps gets up and running, the Office of National Mission is on the lookout for substantial support for these young people who want to serve. Through identification of young adults who may be candidates for this service, and through prayer and financial support, LCMS members can help jumpstart the Lutheran Youth Corps to help our youth show mercy and share the Gospel with their neighbors around the world, in season and out.

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Jeni Miller is a deaconess, freelance writer and pastor’s wife. She lives with her husband and daughter in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



During their week in San Antonio, youth participated in servant events including making home and building repairs, building a baseball field, cleaning up flood debris, repairing a preschool playground and assisting at senior-living facilities.



LOVE LIVED NYG SERVICE PROJECTS



Youth + Service Projects =

- ✚ Christian witness, acts of mercy and service to the Church and world
- ✚ Opportunities to make new friends and grow closer to other Christian friends
- ✚ Bible studies, group building and connection with other LCMS youth

BY THE NUMBERS

One week



5,000 youth engaged in off-site servant events



20,000 hours of service



100+ projects



323,000 meals prepared

1,500 personal-care kits assembled

250 fleece blankets constructed

1,140 school-supply kits gathered

1,006 units of blood donated

500 thank-you cards for the military

64 haircuts for Locks of Love

3,000+ runners in the 5K, raising **\$30,600** for the Lutheran Malaria Initiative

To learn more about LCMS Servant Events, visit servantevents.lcms.org.

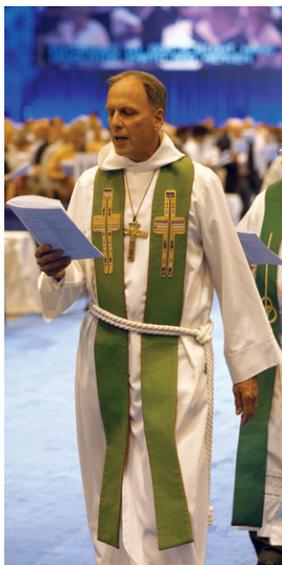


LCMS|SNAPSHOTS

witness, mercy, life together



Some 1,200 clergy and lay voting delegates met in St. Louis, Mo., July 20–25 for the 65th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In addition to addressing the important business of the Synod, the convention included time for worship and fellowship under the theme “Baptized for This Moment.”





San Antonio was a sea of bright-blue backpacks as some 25,000 Lutheran youth, adult leaders, volunteers and other participants arrived for the 12th triennial National LCMS Youth Gathering July 1–5. Participants demonstrated the theme “Live Love(d),” as they volunteered at more than 100 off-site servant events, donating an estimated 20,000 volunteer hours to the local community.



LWML PHOTOS: LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE/BEM PHOTO



Tell us your WMLT story...

Please send your parish or district photos to:

LutheransEngage@lcms.org

OR

Lutherans Engage the World, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road,
St. Louis, MO 63122



More than 3,100 Lutheran women met in Pittsburgh, Penn., June 27–30 for the 35th Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) under the theme “Quenched! by the Water.” During the convention, the LWML adopted a record mission-grant goal of \$1.83 million to support 18 national and international mission projects. LWML members will raise the funds through their “mites” during the next two years.



Mark Hofman speaks to a group of LCMS volunteer supporters.

Deployable Dollars

by Mark Hofman

Deployable dollars — these are dollars used directly for the mission — for “boots on the ground” and the supplies used in the field.

As members of the Missouri Synod, we share a common interest in deploying the gifts and offerings given to the Synod out to where they can have the greatest impact on other people. Because souls are at stake, Synod staff must be both efficient and effective as stewards of the precious resources God supplies through His people. Related to deployable dollars is what has been labeled “fundraising overhead” — these are the administrative costs of raising needed dollars, a sometimes uncomfortable but necessary expense in funding the mission. Overhead costs are rightly a concern for everyone

who cares about our mission. Everyone wants to see the maximum amount of his or her gift sent to fund the real mission.

I want to personally reassure you that, as *Christian* fundraising professionals, my team and I want as much of every gift dollar as possible to get out into the Lord’s harvest field! We want your gifts to change lives and to save lives through the Gospel of Jesus!

That’s why some things the Synod does when it petitions special financial support from households and congregations have changed and likely will change in the future. Restructuring the Synod has

afforded an opportunity to reexamine our approach to soliciting, receiving and utilizing charitable gifts. We are discovering that some past practices were not best practices, while others are marvelous models of stewardship. We’re learning that we can work with you to not only fund the Synod’s work, but also help you maximize the impact of each donation the Holy Spirit leads you to give. We’re seeking the fine line between fundraising excess and starving the mission of needed resources, for the work of the Synod as a whole as well as the individual programs, services and ministry done on your behalf.

We will be using this space in future editions of *Lutherans Engage the World*

to share what we learn and what we can do in partnership with you to boost the level of deployable dollars. I’m certain you’ll be pleasantly surprised that much of what “Steward’s Corner” shares is not about giving more, but about giving in ways that potentially increase the impact of each gift — even if the amount doesn’t increase. This is our common interest: deploying more of every gift to change lives and save lives through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I’m eager to hear your thoughts about these things. I’m looking forward to the conversation. Drop me a note at LutheransEngage@lcms.org.
.....
Mark Hofman is the executive director of LCMS Mission Advancement.

“I want as much of every gift dollar as possible to get out into the Lord’s harvest field!”

— Mark Hofman, executive director of LCMS Mission Advancement





Funding the

Global Mission



IMPACT

The Global Mission and Ministry Outreach of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The impact of the gifts given to the **Global Mission Fund** is felt worldwide. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) sends and supports missionaries, responds to disasters, plants churches, feeds the hungry and much more, all in Christ's name. By God's grace, your gift to the **Global Mission Fund** ensures that resources will be available for strategic ministry work at home and around the world.

Global Mission Fund dollars provide the LCMS the opportunity to expand its outreach through national and international mission initiatives.

INTERNATIONAL MISSION

- Missionary placement and support
- International disaster response and human care
- Establishment and support of international schools
- Liaison to LCMS seminaries, colleges and universities
- Ministry to the Armed Forces
- Support and encouragement of partner churches

NATIONAL MISSION

- Church planting and revitalization
- Domestic disaster response and human care
- Evangelism
- School ministry and accreditation
- Whole-life stewardship resources
- Youth ministry
- Rural & Small Town Mission

CONVENIENCE

Customized giving options and value-added support

When you join the **Ascending Roots** program to support our Global Mission, you become part of a special circle of caring Christians who:

- Receive caring, personal assistance to immediately answer your questions;
- Participate with the church in good stewardship by receiving fewer mailings;
- Enjoy the **Ascending Roots** newsletter, featuring articles and photos; and
- Provide the church with readily available funds for immediate witness and mercy work.

Make simple, secure recurring gifts through an annual commitment customized to the amount and frequency of your support.

Thrivent members may choose to direct their Thrivent Choice® dollars to many LCMS ministries. Please visit www.thriventchoice.com for details.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund investors may gift interest through the SPIN program. Please call 800-843-5233 for details.

OPTIONS

Personalized services to extend your support of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Online

Go to www.lcms.org and click on Make a Gift. Search our giving catalog to discover the many mission and ministry opportunities you can support.



Mail

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Use the enclosed envelope, or send to: LCMS P.O. Box 66861 St. Louis, MO 63166-6861



Phone

Please call 888-930-4438 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST to speak with one of our donor care representatives today.



Questions?

Contact a Mission Advancement representative by calling 888-930-4438 or email mission.advancement@lcms.org.



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Dive into your church's work at home and around the world

Connect with other LCMS Lutherans

Grow in the faith

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Strong Faith, Fervent Love:

Helping Young People Grow in the Faith

www.lcms.org/youth **888-THE LCMS**

School Ministry

Strong Faith, Fervent Love:

Nurturing Lutheran Schools as They Proclaim Christ

www.lcms.org/schoolministry **LCMSschools**

College is tough. You need Jesus. We'll help.

LCMS

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A Moment to Be Bold

When I speak with people around the Synod about the future of the church, the conversation often turns to questions about our children, youth and young adults. “What is the church doing to support them?” That is an honest question. It is no secret that we have significantly fewer children, youth and young adults in the LCMS than we did only a few decades ago. While birthrates are decreasing at an alarming rate, many of our youth are choosing to leave the LCMS for other churches or for nothing at all. What is the church doing to support them? This issue of *Lutherans Engage the World* will start to answer that question.

Flowing from the mission priorities recently adopted at the Synod convention, our national impact will:

- Strengthen Lutheran schools by championing renewed clarity and commitment to the mission of Lutheran education, and
- Strengthen youth work, nurturing our young people within a community shaped by Lutheran values: devotion to the Means of Grace and vigorous service to our neighbor. We will provide for our young people a sturdy apologetic for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Our Lutheran school system, the largest in Protestant America, is one of the greatest tools we have to shape the future of the LCMS. Likewise, our youth and young adults are looking to remain connected to an authentic church, deep in spiritual truth, not blown about by every cultural fad. You see, **the LCMS has exactly what our youth need; we simply must be bold enough to give it to them.** The gifts of Christ, in Word and Sacraments, delivered in liturgy and hymnody, stand the test of time and keep our youth in the one true faith.

The LCMS has her challenges, but let us be bold for the next generation. Let us rally to support our Lutheran school system, our youth and young adults. Let’s give them what they need. Let’s give them Jesus.

Rev. Bart Day
Executive Director, LCMS Office of National Mission



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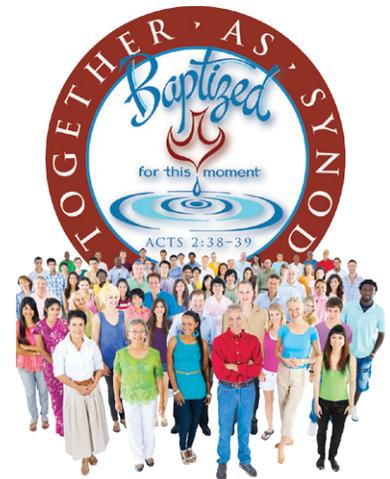
Thank you

**for your participation in the National Offering for
the mission and ministry of our church.**

These gifts will be used where needed most in support of witness, mercy and life together work around the world. Baptized for this moment, you are free to join with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in sharing His forgiveness and mercy in a world desperately in need of it.

The continued gathering of financial gifts from around the LCMS (up to the next Regular Convention in 2016) will be used in support of five areas of ministry.

The Lord blesses, and He will work your gifts toward the National Offering for good and prepare us all to go forth together, confident in our bold witness to the Gospel, certain in our works of mercy and joyful in our life together. Truly, we are "Baptized for This Moment!"



Use your smart phone to scan this code,
or visit www.lcms.org/NationalOffering
to make your gift and follow the progress.

Baptized

