



Raising Up Strong Leaders for the Church

In March, small groups gathered around tables in the Pallottine Renewal Center in St. Louis. The scene looked like any youth group meeting: high school youth, adult leaders and pastors in the midst of sincere discussion and occasional bouts of laughter. But at the head of each table sat a high schooler, leader's guide in hand, guiding the discussion.

This is what YouthLead — formerly the Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF) — is all about. It has helped prepare LCMS youth for leadership for 40 years.

“In the '70s and the years following, youth didn't necessarily need another social organization to be a part of. But they did value leadership training. They did value being a part of the church. ... They had sophisticated questions, and LYF became a way to address some of those,” said the Rev. Dr. Terry Dittmer, who oversaw the program for decades.

LCMS Youth Ministry develops curriculum for both youth discipleship and leadership development. An “executive team” of five youth, elected every three years, are trained in the curriculum. Then during the four-day leadership development event, the executive team trains their peers.

And it spreads from there. LYF participants return home and find opportunities to train more youth at youth group retreats, in Sunday school classes and at district youth events.



Aidan Quirk, a Lutheran Youth Fellowship executive team member from Bismarck, N.D., leads a small group discussion in March.

“It has a ripple effect,” said the Rev. Steve Richardson, associate pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Montgomery, Ala., who has brought youth from his congregation to the training for the past five years.

One of his young members, Jackson Smith, who now serves on the executive team, was eager to put his newly realized leadership skills into play. Smith started asking leaders in the congregation how he could help, and he quickly took over operation and organization of St. Paul's acolyte program.

“Whereas youth can be leaders tomorrow, I think it's important that we're leaders today,” said Smith. “That just better equips us to be leaders in the future.”

By the grace of God, 40 years of alumni are using their leadership skills to serve as pastors, teachers, district presidents, Concordia University System professors, missionaries and faithful laypeople in a variety of occupations. Through this program, God is raising up strong leaders for His church.

YouthLead is now looking to the future with the development of additional resources aligned with the “7 Practices for Healthy Youth Ministry.” This will include resources for adults who mentor and champion young leaders, as well as potential regional conferences and connections to other programs like LCMS Servant Events and the LCMS Youth Gathering.

Give God Glory...

... for Sharon Field of Prairie Stix N' Cottin Strings, who creates sewing projects like magnetic Bible bookmarks for use as evangelism tools. She donates the proceeds from the sale of those items to LCMS World Relief and Human Care. She also gives them away to various LCMS congregations and Recognized Service Organizations, as well as to complete strangers as she tells them of the peace she's found in Jesus. She hopes that more people will be inspired to use their talents to tell others the Good News.



... for Deaconess Kim Buelmann, an LCMS career missionary serving in Germany as a refugee outreach facilitator. Kim assists

congregations in Leipzig and Chemnitz by providing outreach to refugees who are primarily from Iran and Afghanistan. In addition to worship planning and leading music for worship in the Farsi language, she offers diaconal support and teaches the Bible and catechism to refugees and socioeconomically disadvantaged Germans.

... for Lutheran Ministries Media, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that produces a weekly broadcast worship service called Worship Anew. Each service includes music, Scripture readings, prayers and a message delivered by a pastor. Worship Anew is available to watch via TV, DVD subscription and the internet. Learn more and find the broadcast schedule at worshipanew.org.

One of the priorities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, motivated by Christ and His Gospel, according to the Lutheran confession of the faith. This is accomplished under the familiar name of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, which the Synod uses to describe the mercy work directed by the policies of the Boards for National and International Mission and implemented through the programs of the Offices of National and International Mission.

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You Make the Difference through LCMS World Relief and Human Care

You make the ministry described in this newsletter possible! Your prayers and contributions to World Relief and Human Care “Where Needed Most” deliver our Savior's mercy to people in need. You bolster tightly restricted donations from others to help fully fund important mercy projects, allowing us to report here the impact you are making in Christ's name. The courtesy envelope in this issue allows you to send a future contribution as the Holy Spirit leads, when He leads.



Caring for People in Latin America Amid COVID-19

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:37-40).

In a part of the world where hospitals are overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases, and the numbers continue to rise, there is something that fuels a much greater fear in people’s minds and hearts than the virus.

With no running water for washing hands, they live in one-room, tin-covered huts on steep, dusty hillsides. In the poorest areas of Lima, Peru, hand sanitizer and masks are not even a thought. Every last coin is spent on physical sustenance. Peru had one of the earliest and longest-lasting lockdowns in Latin America. Now with prolonged unemployment, the over-riding fear of starvation is palpable.

Through a special \$5,000 grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, the Peruvian Lutheran church distributed food baskets with rice, beans, oil and other provisions to those in need. In the Los Olivos congregation, members could either use the food themselves or give their basket to another family. Vicar Elvis Carrera used the food distribution to do a short Bible study with each recipient, to pray for them and to give them hope.

“Some of them cry a lot because of their situation, but they can see with this mercy work



“Some of them cry a lot because of their situation, but they can see with this mercy work that God never left them alone.”

— Vicar Elvis Carrera



Top, left to right: A woman and her son receive face masks in Guatemala. Children walk up the hill in San Juan de Lurigancho, Peru. Bottom, left to right: Pastor Patricio Mora gives a bag of food to a woman in Panama. The Rev. Osmel Soliz Bernal, an LCMS alliance missionary, prays with people in Peru. Volunteers prepare hygiene kits in Peru.

that God never left them alone. They come here to receive physical food, but they also receive spiritual food. They can take this home to their families,” Carrera said. “We thank God. That is the only thing we can say.”

The church is reaching out in similar ways across Latin America. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Panama has used a \$5,800 grant from the LCMS to help meet the needs of its church workers, one of whom has been without

a salary for some time due to the pandemic. The Lutheran churches in Guatemala, Mexico, Chile and Uruguay have also used LCMS grants — totaling nearly \$45,000 — to provide the hungry with good things from the Lord.

“Please pray that our Lord will continue to work even in the midst of these challenging times to bring people closer to Him,” said Missionary Pastor Arthur Rickman.

Christ Dwells Only in Sinners

Dear and Beloved Friends in Christ,

We live in unsettling times: COVID-19, the George Floyd murder, the political landscape, the economy, racial unrest, the genuine desire to improve policing amid high disrespect and violence toward dedicated officers, disturbing Supreme Court decisions. What even to think day by day?

All these matters affect the church and us, who call ourselves Christians. The church is not called to resolve the world’s problems. As a famous Lutheran once put it, when the church attempts to Christianize society, all that happens is the secularization of the church. The church’s sacred tasks are the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ and the administration of the Sacraments (Augsburg Confession IV-VII). Without these, there is no church.

The Missouri Synod has long regarded as vital the Christian education of its youth and churchly charitable activity, both while teaching and speaking the Gospel of Jesus and His free forgiveness aloud. The Word of God shapes Christians too, and in doing so, it also shapes them to be responsible citizens. Such citizens participate as voters, as advocates for just causes, and as promoters of justice, order and

civility. In the church and her institutions, we pursue love for all.

We are sinners. “Christ dwells only in sinners,” as Luther said. All institutions, including the church, reflect this fact. We are called to repent where we fall short of loving our neighbors and, by the power of Gospel, to seek to do better. This cycle never ends for us on this earth.

Through LCMS World Relief and Human Care, we demonstrate fervent love for millions, for church workers, for disaster victims, for Lutherans and others around the globe, of every imaginable genetic background. We follow the apostolic directive: “Do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

Dear Lord, let us not grow weary of showing Your blessed mercy, especially in times when it is most sorely needed. Amen.

In Christ,

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

