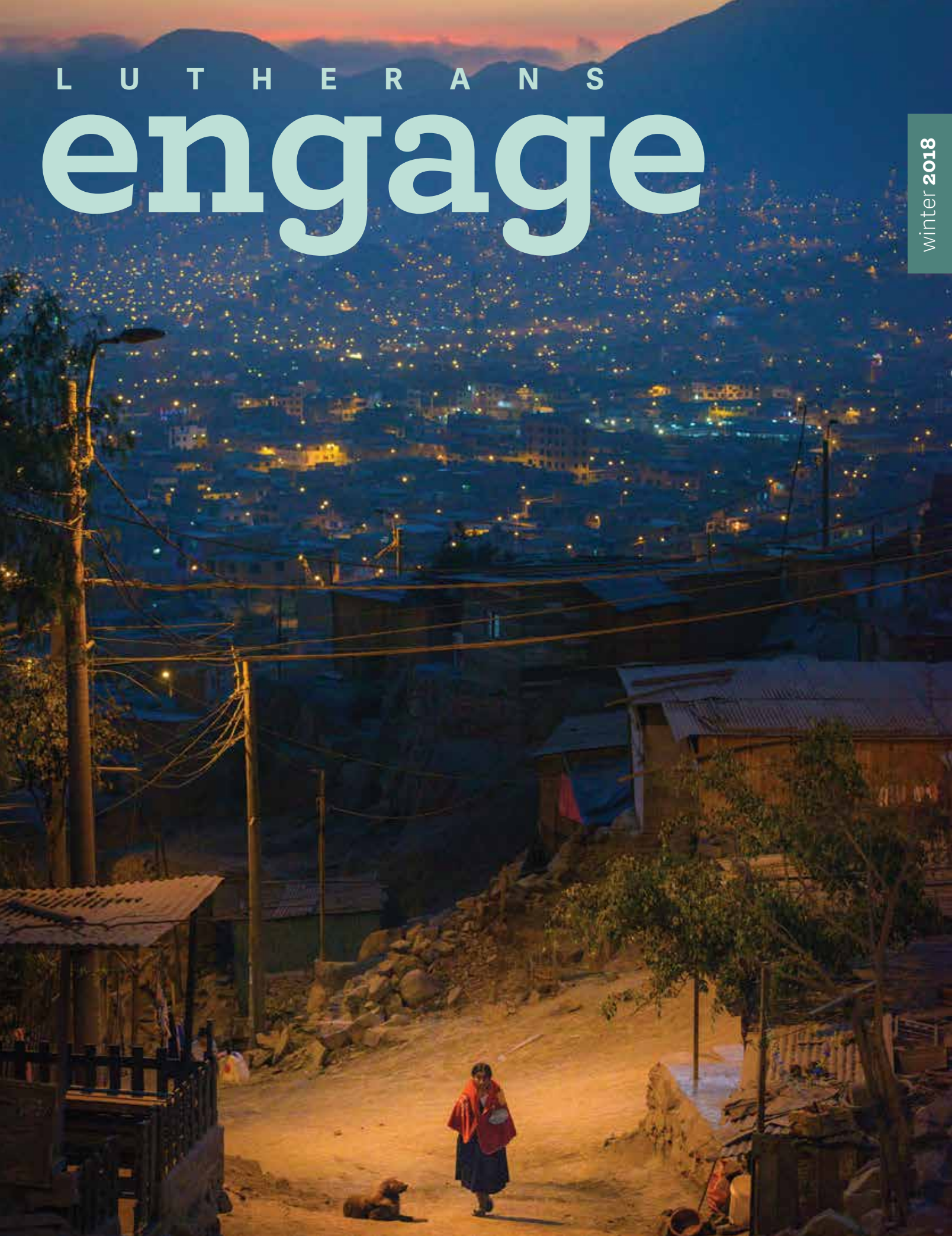


L U T H E R A N S

# engage

winter 2018



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**Cover image**  
Night falls at Castillo Fuerte in San Juan de Lurigancho in Lima, Peru. Castillo Fuerte, a mission of the LCMS, provides a refuge for children in three different districts of Lima.



PHOTO: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

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L U T H E R A N S

# engage the world

## Genuine Mercy



The compassionate mercy of Jesus — reaching out with care for those who are suffering and broken, in the very moment of greatest need — is so integral to the Church's mission and ministry, so irrevocably woven into our life together, that we might be tempted to take such mercy for granted. It's like the air that we breathe. Such "forgetfulness" is of no advantage to the living Body of Christ. His is genuine mercy, our only true comfort. In steadfast willingness, in long suffering, in intentionally bending down in the form of a servant to care for the needs of fellow human beings who are distressed in body and soul, we bring this comfort and mercy to others. His is the true cross from which flows the glad good news of sins forgiven, the resurrection of the body, the life everlasting. This is the mercy that the world so desperately needs right now (Lam. 3:22-23).

What kind of a world are you praying for, right now, even while you wait to be called home to heaven? A countless multitude of fellow baptized saints around the LCMS are answering that question in surprisingly impactful ways. Sometimes our steps are halting and uncoordinated; progress seems painfully slow as sinners trip and stumble over one another in our narrow-minded inability to perceive the power of Christ's mercy at work in the other. Then again, at other times, we are given a blessing to realize the outcome of our labors in a vivid, well-orchestrated symphony of contributors who eagerly and selflessly put forward their gifts and capacities. At all times and in all circumstances, under the watchful, grace-filled gaze of the Lord who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. 121:4), Christ's mercy delivered is the cause for rejoicing.

Get a glimpse of Christ's mercy in the pages that follow — and rejoice!

In Christ,

**Rev. Kevin D. Robson**

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

## From the Editor



Together, you and your fellow Lutherans are restoring, filling, building, bringing healing and sharing the Good News of God in Christ for the world. The stories in this issue of *Lutherans Engage the World* will take you on a journey to where God is working through you and your gifts to make a difference — in inner-city Boston, in the Texas disaster zone, in Latin America and beyond. God is blessing these efforts, and He is changing lives now and for eternity.

In Christ,

**Pamela J. Nielsen**

*Associate Executive Director, LCMS Communications*

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# Making Empty Lives

# Full

A new seminary in the Dominican Republic is preparing men to spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches and show mercy throughout the region.

BY PAMELA J. NIELSEN



PHOTOS: LCMIS COMMUNICATIONS/FERK M. LUNSFORD



Seminarians greet people as they walk to class at Concordia Reformer Lutheran Seminary and Mercy Center in Palmar Arriba, Dominican Republic.



Seminarist Isaac Michado leads chapel at Concordia Reformer Lutheran Seminary and Mercy Center in Palmar Arriba, Dominican Republic.

**“I was living the [good] life, living in the moment,”** Marcelo Rivas recalled. “But at the end of every day, I felt the same thing: I’m empty. I wanted to believe, but in what?”

That’s when Vania caught his eye in a university class in Talca, Chile. She invited him to go to church with her.

He was intrigued to learn that Vania attended a Lutheran church. As a history buff, Rivas knew the story of Martin Luther, but he thought that the Reformation ended with Luther’s death.

He went to church with her the next Sunday and kept returning to hear God’s Word, discovering that the Lutheran church exists, even in Chile.

The Lutheran church came to Talca in 2010, following a massive earthquake and tsunami that shattered the

region and destroyed Vania’s house. Just two weeks prior to the earthquake, Vania’s mother died.

It was too much for her; all alone, she considered suicide.

“The day after the earthquake, the Lutheran church came to Talca,” Vania told Rivas, as she explained how she came into the church.

“The pastors started to organize and help the people. At the end of each day, they also prayed with the people.”

The Lutherans were there to stay. They planted a church, sending a young pastor to Talca. Pastor Omar Kinas and his new congregation cared for

Vania, providing tangible help and the Gospel of salvation.

Now, God was using Vania to share the Gospel with Rivas as the two fell in love.

“It sounds strange,” said Rivas, “but that same year, I also fell in love with Christ.”

He studied theology every day. As he did, others noticed his growing involvement in the church. Family and fellow parishioners encouraged him to become a pastor.

Convinced he was too old, Rivas could not sleep at night, tossing and turning as he wrestled with the idea.

One day, he said to his pastor, “Is there an age to be a pastor?”

“Yes, there is an age,” said the quick-witted pastor. “The age is to be alive.”

Kinas knew that there were scholarships available for men

like Rivas to attend a regional seminary. He contacted the Rev. Ted Krey, regional director for LCMS mission work in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the pieces fell together.

### ***Made Possible by Partnerships***

At the same time God was working in Rivas’ life, Krey and his team were working to move the regional seminary to the Dominican Republic in order to better serve LCMS partner churches in Central and South America.

Krey knows firsthand that one of the challenges facing the region is a lack of pastors, which impedes church-planting efforts.

This past fall, seven years after Vania’s invitation to

church, Rivas and his family moved from Chile to the mountain village of Palmar Arriba, Dominican Republic, to attend Concordia Reformer Lutheran Seminary and Mercy Center. He is part of its very first class, along with other students from Mexico, Venezuela, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic.

“The Lord works through partnerships,” said seminary director and missionary Rev. Joel Fritsche, who eagerly shares how Latin American partner churches joined with LCMS congregations, districts, laypeople and the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League. These partners pooled their vital expertise, willing hands and plentiful resources to ensure the Gospel will be proclaimed in Latin America.

The seminary occupies a small portion of a building that also serves as a day school, a regional mercy center and a congregation. Nearby stand two other facilities made possible by similar partnerships. Next door is a group home for disabled children, and on the mountainside above sits the dormitory for the single seminary students.

### Talking About Jesus

“We are very diverse,” said missionary pastor and professor Rev. David Preus, referring to both the students and the faculty of the new seminary.

The average age of the students — who come from different economic, geographic and educational backgrounds — is about 23. At 42, Rivas is the “old one.”

The instructors include Fritsche, Preus, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Naumann and

Venezuelan pastor Rev. Sergio Maita. They are sometimes joined by guest professors and pastors from the U.S. and Latin America.

As part of their preparation, the students will return to their home countries for vicarage to scope out a location for a mission plant.

“That’s an emphasis here at the seminary, to train these students to plant churches so when they go back [as pastors] they can do that,” Preus said.

be welcomed in their homes. You just show up, and the chairs come out and you’re in the middle of a visit.

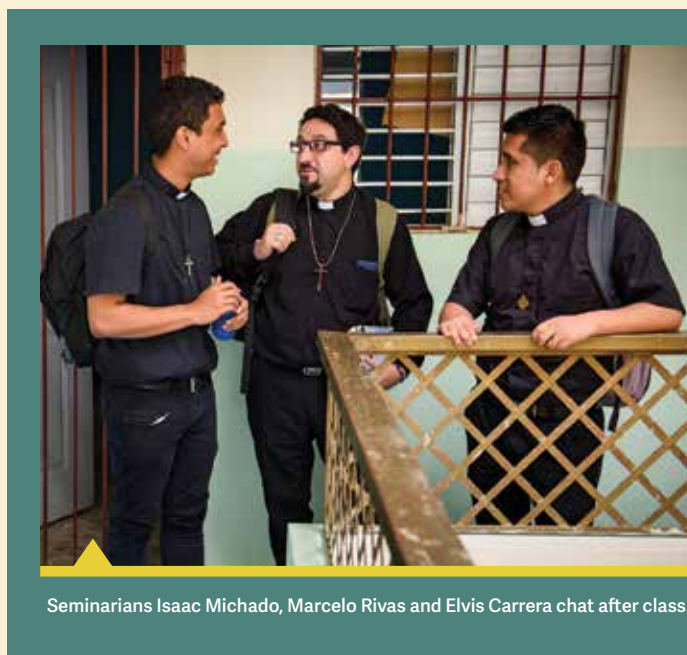
“You need to talk about Jesus not just in the pulpit, but also on the threshold of a house, over a meal, wherever you may find yourself,” he continued.

“The [seminary] curriculum is based on a model of what a pastor in Latin America ought to be,” Preus said. “He ought to be a teacher, an evangelist

Krey said. “It is our earnest desire that these young men would be zealous evangelists, loving shepherds and clear teachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.”

Before they feel ready, these students, including Rivas, will return home to “talk about Jesus.”

“I never thought that I would, by the grace of God, be studying to share Christ to the rest of the world, not



Seminarians Isaac Michado, Marcelo Rivas and Elvis Carrera chat after class.

In addition to studying theology and learning how to preach and lead a worship service, the men participate in hands-on mercy work and visitation in Palmar Arriba.

“The folks here [in Palmar Arriba] live with their extended families all around them. They are a community, always depending on each other and helping each other out,” Preus explained. “Beyond the worship service, we know where to find our members and we know we are going

and a pastor.” Like seminarians across the globe, the men study God’s Word in the original languages, pore over the Lutheran Confessions, and learn to preach and care for people in body and soul.

### Rescuing People from Death

“Our seminary preparation of pastors echoes that of our regional emphasis: spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches and show mercy,”

by my power, but as a tool, to rescue people from death,” Rivas said.

Out of emptiness, loss and disaster, the Church brought Christ to Rivas. Now he will bring Christ to his fellow countrymen. Prayers answered. People rescued from sin, death and the devil on the mission field. Thanks be to God!

Deaconess Pamela J. Nielsen is associate executive director for LCMS Communications.



| EXPLORE |

LCMS work in Latin America:  
[lcms.org/latinamerica](https://lcms.org/latinamerica)



| PRAY |

For the seminary and its students:  
[engage.lcms.org/dominican-seminary-winter-2018](https://engage.lcms.org/dominican-seminary-winter-2018)





PHOTO PROVIDED BY JOHN ELLIOTT

DISTRICT  
DISASTER-RESPONSE  
COORDINATOR

John Elliott



**John Elliott is a busy guy.** He spends his days juggling his work as business manager for the LCMS Florida-Georgia District; his studies in the Specific Ministry Pastor program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and his service as a vicar at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Oviedo, Fla. He also serves as district disaster-response coordinator, so when disaster strikes — as it did this summer with Hurricane Irma — Elliott’s life gets busier than usual.

BY RACHEL BOMBERGER

**1** *How are recovery efforts after Irma going?*

When Irma hit, a lot of insurance adjusters were in Texas due to Hurricane Harvey. This is slowing the recovery here in Florida as congregations are waiting longer than normal for insurance adjusters to work on their claim. Additionally, with Irma’s size and path, there wasn’t one part of the district that was left unaffected. This reduces our ability to source volunteers who live close to the hardest-hit areas. It will take months, and in some places years, to recover fully. The need for funds exceeds the donations, but God is providing in other ways and we are stretching every dollar.

**2** *What is the most common challenge faced by churches after a natural disaster?*

The most common challenge for congregations is the mindset that they have to do it all. This is a very normal reaction to have when many in your community have suffered great loss. This reaction, if left unchecked, can easily become overwhelming and then result in very little getting done. The key to providing a good response as a congregation is to find one thing that isn’t getting done in the community and work to fill that void,

bringing the Gospel with you as you go.

**3** *It’s often said that disaster response is a marathon, not a sprint. Why is this?*

Disasters come in all shapes and sizes, but what is common to them is that the effects last for a long time. As we’ve seen with Hurricane Katrina, it can take years for an area to recover fully. Some psychological effects can last a lifetime. If you try to sprint through a disaster, you will most likely be overwhelmed, worn out or broken.

**4** *What wisdom can you share with victims and workers struggling to stay spiritually healthy during a disaster recovery “marathon”?*

Once you are past the “sprint” of the initial response, it is

important to create and put yourself on a schedule. It is normal for people to try and “sprint” longer than they should. If they aren’t careful, they will create yet another casualty — themselves. By placing yourself on a schedule, you can methodically reduce the starvation of sleep, emotional support and spiritual strength. I also counsel people to look for the warning signs that they aren’t well. If you feel yourself slipping emotionally or mentally, stop, throw your pride in a dumpster and seek some help.

**5** *What Bible verse sustains you when disaster strikes?*

Ps. 27:1: “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

.....  
Rachel Bomberger is managing editor of *The Lutheran Witness*.



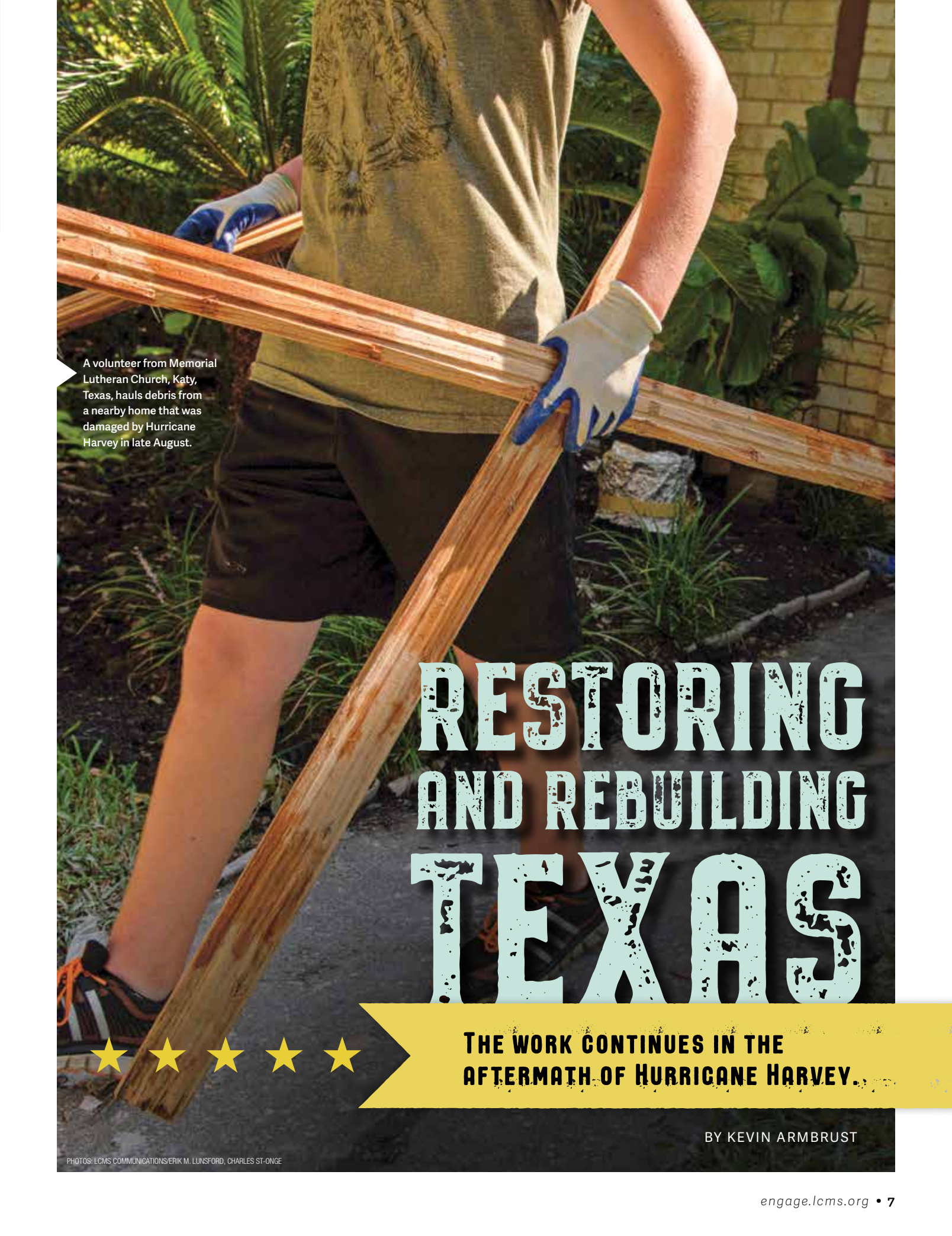
Members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Lake Placid, Fla., serve meals to nearby residents and workers following Hurricane Irma.

*“The key to providing a good response as a congregation is to find one thing that isn’t getting done in the community and work to fill that void, bringing the Gospel with you as you go.”*



PHOTO: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD



A photograph of a person from the back, wearing a grey t-shirt, black shorts, and white work gloves with blue accents. They are carrying several long, light-colored wooden planks across their shoulders. The background shows a brick wall and some green foliage.

A volunteer from Memorial Lutheran Church, Katy, Texas, hauls debris from a nearby home that was damaged by Hurricane Harvey in late August.

# RESTORING AND REBUILDING TEXAS



**THE WORK CONTINUES IN THE  
AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE HARVEY.**

BY KEVIN ARMBRUST

PHOTOS: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD, CHARLES ST-ONGE

Many smaller towns in Texas — like Rockport, pictured here — also were severely damaged by Hurricane Harvey's floodwaters and winds.



“There were a lot of people right away, and now they are gone. But we still have needs,” said one Texas resident.

Julie Tucker, director of Disaster Response for the LCMS Texas District, reported that this is the common sentiment among many in Texas. They are grateful for all that has been done following Hurricane Harvey, but they are still at a loss. Many still clamor for daily necessities.

“It has been estimated that over 250,000 homes were flooded during Harvey and over 15,000 homes have been irreversibly destroyed,” she said. “Families continue to live in tents in their yards in the Golden Triangle and in the Coastal Bend.”

The Coastal Bend includes towns near Corpus Christi, such as Rockport and Port Aransas. The Golden Triangle, which received almost 65 inches of rain in late August, is an area east of Houston that includes Beaumont and Port Arthur. Inland towns like Victoria and Refugio continue to struggle as well. Some in

these towns are still living in mold-infested homes.

LCMS Disaster Response, in collaboration with the Texas District, provided Tucker to serve as the disaster recovery director and set up sites with area coordinators in Port Arthur (Trinity), Rockport (Peace), Corpus Christi (Trinity) and Beaumont (St. John's). Future sites will include Nederland (Holy Cross — for summer opportunities) and Warton (St. John's).

In addition, LCMS Disaster Response's Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT) from throughout the United States have provided important aid to the communities in Texas. “The LERT team in the Coastal Bend was instrumental in getting those communities back on their feet,” Tucker said.

As the greater Houston area continues to recover, congregations both help locally and serve as sites for distribution of supplies and

workers to other nearby areas. Two such congregations are Salem Lutheran Church, Tomball, and Trinity Klein, Spring. Salem has provided warehouse space for supplies, and the congregation feeds and provides showers for volunteer teams. Trinity is tasked with the logistics of sending teams out to work.

One such team consisted of members from LCMS congregations in Columbia City and Seymour, Ind. They worked in homes devastated by floodwaters in Houston, where the muck-out process and demolition has been accomplished. Now the homes are in need of rebuilding.

In the midst of installing new drywall, Mike Terkula, vicar at St. John's, Columbia City, found opportunities to witness to the homeowner, Mark, who is from Turkey and was raised Muslim. Although his children have been baptized, Mark remains unbaptized.

Terkula said that he enjoyed sharing Christ with him, but knows that isn't the end. “I wanted to get him connected

## Some in these towns are still living in mold-infested homes.



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

| WATCH |  
Hear from people serving in Texas:  
[engage.lcms.org/rebuilding-texas-winter-2018](https://engage.lcms.org/rebuilding-texas-winter-2018)

A member of Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, helps muck out homes damaged by Hurricane Harvey.



## THE WORK CONTINUES ...

### IN PUERTO RICO

Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, knocking out the power grid and damaging houses, roads and other vital systems. In the days immediately following, the LCMS distributed \$10,000 of food, water and children’s supplies to families in need. The Synod also has committed to providing more than \$200,000 in long-term aid to assist with building repairs, neighborhood evangelism, and to start mercy houses alongside budding Lutheran congregations in Mayagüez and Ponce. “Hurricane Maria hit the island hard, but it has also opened up new mission opportunities,” said the Rev. Charles St-Onge, area facilitator for the Synod’s Latin America and the Caribbean region. “Please pray with us that the Lord would use us to share His Gospel alongside our mercy work with the hurting people of Puerto Rico.”

### IN SIERRA LEONE

In August 2017, deadly mudslides swept through the outskirts of Freetown, Sierra Leone. Over 600 people were killed, including 30 Lutherans and their immediate family members. After consulting with the local Lutheran church leaders, LCMS Disaster Response gave a grant of \$10,000 to provide housing for 15 families for an entire year, as well as food, kitchen utensils and other basic supplies for an additional 150 people. Disaster Response also sent spiritual care resources to the local church. As a result of the quick response by Lutheran church partners, there is interest in a future church plant in the neighborhood. Soli Deo Gloria!

with the local church so he can learn more.”

Individual stories join together to communicate and witness to the work of the Church. From the beginning, one constant observation pervades: that this disaster has brought people together. Race, economic standing, political leanings and any other factors have faded in light of the needs and the desire to help those in need. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been at the forefront of this effort, working in coordination with the LCMS Texas District.

“The first four or five months have been focused

on mucking and cleaning out flood-damaged homes. Now, for the following years, the focus will be on restoring families in their homes,” said the Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, director of LCMS Disaster Response. “One of the blessings has been the close collaboration with the Texas District, LCMS Disaster Response, Recognized Service Organizations and congregations as we network together to meet needs and serve our neighbor.”

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



# Body and Soul Healing in Rural Togo

BY MEGAN K. MERTZ



*The Synod's first Mercy Medical Team to West Africa treated 800 patients in September.*



**A** young Togolese woman peeked over the wall and waved at nurse anesthetist Elisa Oetting of Concordia, Mo. The 15-year-old had been treated for malaria just days prior and returned to show Oetting that she was already feeling better.

Oetting was one of 12 Americans who joined the Synod's first Mercy Medical Team (MMT) to West Africa in September. In just three days, the team — composed of health-care workers, LCMS missionaries, pastors and hardworking laypeople — worked alongside 12 local medical professionals to treat more than 800 people in a three-room school building in the remote village of Datoudjena, Togo.

Word spread quickly, and more and more people were waiting for the team when they pulled up to the clinic each day. So many people came, in fact, that they had to

prioritize seeing those with wounds, fevers or serious conditions. LCMS missionary nurses Stephanie Schulte and Sarah Kanoy walked through the crowds regularly with the president of the Lutheran Church of Togo to do quick evaluations and take temperatures.

More than 65 percent of the patients seen at the clinic were treated for malaria. "It kills over 600,000 people on the continent a year," said the Rev. Gary Schulte, LCMS missionary and area director for West

Africa. "Many of the victims are children [5 and under], just as many from that age group were the ones being treated at the MMT."

As Oetting gave malaria treatments, she also cleaned out patients' ears. "If you don't have running water, it's not likely that you get an opportunity to rinse out your ears on a regular basis," she said. "People were really thankful to be able to hear well again."

As patients received vital medical care inside the clinic, something even more

important was taking place outside as a team of local Lutheran pastors prayed over each patient before he or she returned home.

"What an outreach for the local church!" Schulte said, noting that mercy and evangelism go hand in hand.

"Jesus is interested in redeeming our bodies as much as He is our souls," Schulte commented. "Just as His Holy Supper is a foretaste of the feast to come, so, too, are physical restorations done in His name a foretaste of the ultimate restoration at the resurrection on the Last Day."

After the success of this first MMT to Togo, additional trips are being planned to serve people in the nearby countries of the Gambia and Sierra Leone.

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



**It was a wonderful trip. I got to serve people and learn about the culture. I also learned about the missionaries and their lives. I've already looked at the dates for next year."** — Elisa Oetting

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



The Rev. Eddie Hosch, LCMS career missionary to Peru, chats with a young girl who attends Castillo Fuerte in San Juan de Lurigancho.

# A MIGHTY FORTRESS of Mercy

BY KEVIN ARMBRUST

*The LCMS is showing God’s love to children in Lima, Peru.*

IT TAKES TIME AND PATIENCE, and the Lord has plenty of each. So does La Misión Luterana del Perú. Much of the work there starts with children — children who need love and care, children who need Jesus.

On the hard city streets of La Victoria, God is present with the children and adults He gathers at Castillo Fuerte (which means “Mighty Fortress”). He is the Castillo Fuerte for the children gathered together in the dusty cerros (“foothills”) of San Juan de Lurigancho. He is the Casa Misericordia (“House of Mercy”) for the little children whose parents are trying to start over in Chorrillos.



The sun sets over San Juan de Lurigancho in Lima, Peru.

Rescuing them from poverty is not the mission, nor is the goal to bring a different culture. “Teaching children the love of Christ through Bible study, the Catechism and daily chapel,” says the Rev. Eddie Hosch, a career missionary through The Lutheran

Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), “that’s really what we are doing as we also meet their physical needs.”

God is at work in these districts of Lima, Peru. LCMS missionaries work tirelessly to bring the Good News of Jesus to the people

PHOTOS: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

**Confirmation in La Victoria**

Deaconess Jacqueline Duke, LCMS career missionary to Peru, sits with children from Castillo Fuerte in the La Victoria district of Lima, Peru.



Victoria reads the Bible with Levi Karth, LCMS GEO missionary to Peru.



The Rev. Eddie Hosch addresses the first class of youth confirmands.



Hosch blesses adult confirmands Walter Fernando and Laura Consuelo.



Deaconess Caitlin Worden de Ramirez, LCMS career missionary to Peru, hugs Naomi following confirmation.



The doors stand open during worship to welcome the community.

Hosch waits for worshippers to arrive.



of this South American city, thanks to the donations and prayers of Christians in LCMS congregations.

Lima is one of the largest cities in the Americas. Roughly 10 million people live there, which means that Lima contains one-third of Peru's population. Lima is a Roman Catholic city, but as is all too common today, few people are active in their faith. The LCMS Office of International Mission works to ensure that people hear the Good News that changes lives.

### ***A Refuge for Children***

The staff of the LCMS' Lima mission teach children the faith through Castillo Fuerte: Casa de Misericordia, with the hope that the children will hear and believe and, as a result, their parents will hear from their children and come to learn as well. The children bear witness to Jesus in their community and schools as well as in their homes.

"God is our refuge and strength" (Ps. 46:1). Castillo Fuerte is a refuge for children who need a safe place. Each Castillo Fuerte location offers food, care, tutoring and, most importantly, Jesus.

"Castillo Fuerte is needed because parents are often in a situation in which they are unable to provide for their children," Hosch explains. "We provide that in a place where they are cared for and loved. But most importantly, we provide the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Castillo Fuerte is also a Casa de Misericordia (House of Mercy). "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:4–5).

"We provide more than just a safe place," Hosch notes. "Each Castillo Fuerte is also a Casa de Misericordia, where the kids come in after school for after-school help, chapel every day and 15 minutes of Bible stories. As they continue to grow, we bring them into confirmation where they memorize the catechism."

Currently, there are three Castillo Fuerte sites throughout Lima: La Victoria, San Juan de Lurigancho and Chorillos. La Victoria and San Juan de Lurigancho also are church plants, and Chorillos is working toward offering confirmation classes and further Christian education opportunities. The mission also operates two other locations in Lima: San Borja, which houses the mission office, a church plant and a teaching center; and Los Olivos, which hosts a congregation.

"It is very exciting to see how well the children know their catechism and that they are excited about it," observed Deaconess Jacqueline Duke, another LCMS career missionary to Peru, reflecting on the children at Castillo Fuerte. "They come to worship by themselves. We hope their parents will see their excitement and come also. Even now, some of their parents are starting to learn the catechism."

### ***In San Juan de Lurigancho***

The journey to Castillo Fuerte San Juan de Lurigancho



Margiory prays during her confirmation.

requires a public train packed with Peruvians, a public bus that haphazardly weaves in and out of traffic, and a motorcycle converted into a people transport.

And then the adventure begins. Even the makeshift transports can't ascend the hill. The unpaved rocky dirt "road" reflects the government's refusal to recognize the neighborhood's existence. Dusty roads filled with chickens, stray dogs and garbage head straight up the side of the mountain in the middle of the cerros.

After the long ride and the arduous ascent, covered in dust and with burning legs, Hosch finally arrives at Castillo Fuerte San Juan de Lurigancho. Children whose lives are defined by their environment of poverty and, in many cases, dysfunction run to their pastor for a hug, a high-five or even a quick dance. He is their pastor, not because they belong to his church, but because he teaches them the Word of God.

On Tuesdays, Hosch holds Divine Service for the community of San Juan de Lurigancho. The vast majority of his congregation are children, including teenagers and

young adults. They come without their parents and by their own choice. Due to the lack of instruments and musicians, the children have learned to sing the liturgy a cappella.

In the midst of the dust and the struggles of life in the cerros, Jesus is present. In His Word. In His Supper. In His body. Just as He promised. And He is pleased to be present with His children.

### ***In La Victoria***

On Saturday evenings, the Divine Service is held at Castillo Fuerte, La Victoria. The rest of the week, this Castillo Fuerte location offers safe and affordable care with a focus on Jesus to children whose parents work in the nearby Gamarra textile district and can't afford to send their children to a safe place during the day.

Nov. 4, 2017, was a significant day at the mission — confirmation, complete with cake and cookies afterward.

Victoria, Naomi, Siomi and Margiory stood in front of the altar and confessed Christ to the Church and the whole world. These four young ladies made up the first youth confirmation class at Castillo Fuerte,



The Rev. Eddie Hosch greets children at Castillo Fuerte in Chorrillos.

“*Naomi is our little evangelist. She’s always telling others about her faith and inviting them to church and to Castillo Fuerte.*”

— Deaconess Caitlin Worden de Ramirez



Children eat lunch at Castillo Fuerte in La Victoria.

Children receive tutoring at Castillo Fuerte in La Victoria.



La Victoria. They were joined by two adult confirmands, Walter Fernando and Laura Consuelo.

Hosch could not contain his joy as he confirmed each person into the Lutheran church. The same joy was reflected in the confirmands.

“I’m very happy,” says Fernando, who was confirmed with his two daughters, Victoria and Naomi. Fernando explained that his daughters’ involvement at Castillo Fuerte led him to attend church. He says that when he saw them reading the Bible and learning more about Jesus, he “wanted to learn more about the Gospel.”

“I am so happy, because I am God’s daughter,” says Consuelo, who helps with teaching English at the mission in La Victoria. Smiling

from ear to ear, she also expressed her joy in being confirmed. “To be here in the Lutheran church is very important to me.”

The evening highlighted both the blessings and struggles of mission work. The juxtaposition of childlike faith and the influence of the community was obvious.

Before worship, at the adult Bible study, one woman spoke her mind. She doesn’t believe hell can exist, she said, because she thinks that all people are basically good.

Upstairs, girls prepared to receive Holy Communion for the first time. One of the girls sat patiently as her hair was being curled. Another was nervous and excited as she played with her white dress.

Outside on the street, a man dug through trash as he

competed with the street dog for daily bread.

But the doors remained open. Even though the street noise is distracting, with its barking dogs and car alarms, the open door affords visibility as people witness the worship and hear the singing. The Lutheran liturgy rings out from this group into the neighborhood.

A young girl looked longingly as her sister received communion for the first time. A new generation desiring Word and Sacrament. Even in their youth, the young people of Castillo Fuerte are witnessing to the love of Christ to their peers, their siblings and even their parents.

“Naomi is our little evangelist,” says Deaconess Caitlin Worden de Ramirez, an LCMS career missionary to Peru.

“She’s always telling others about her faith and inviting them to church and to Castillo Fuerte.”

And the cold air flowed in, as did the sound of the traffic on the street. People coming and going from the clothes factory that shares the building opened and closed doors and talked. The sounds of the city were as prevalent inside the sanctuary as the music sung by the congregation.

Many would consider the noises a distraction. Many would close the doors to keep the cool air out. But the Word of the Lord permeates this neighborhood. It is a word of repentance, mercy, hope and love. It is the message of the cross and the empty tomb. It is the Word of God to Lima, Peru, and to the whole world.



Children read from the Bible during worship.



Hosch walks up the dusty hill toward Castillo Forte in San Juan de Lurigancho.



Children paint woodcuts provided by a member of the community who discovered Luther's Rose and the mission online.

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

Hear more from the missionaries serving in Peru:  
[engage.lcms.org/mercy-in-peru-winter-2018](http://engage.lcms.org/mercy-in-peru-winter-2018)



Hosch blesses children during worship.

### In Chorrillos

Across the street from Castillo Forte, Krochet Kids works with young mothers to help them get back on their feet. Krochet Kids assists mothers — primarily in single-parent families — who have experienced hardships and made poor decisions.

By the time the young mothers complete Krochet Kids, they have learned the life skills necessary to get a job, manage their finances and make better life decisions. They are equipped to start over again.

Recently, at a ceremony celebrating their completion of the Krochet Kids course, the majority of the women said they couldn't have done it without also having Castillo Forte to provide a safe place for their children to go that is only a few steps away. They don't have to worry about where their children are while they learn life skills that will enable them to provide for themselves and their children in the future.

In Chorrillos, the children range in age from infants to middle-schoolers. Thus, Castillo Forte provides

different kinds of care. Some children stay all day, while others come before or after school.

While the children are at Castillo Forte, they learn academics, but they also learn about God's love for them in Christ.

### Opportunities Everywhere

Castillo Forte: Casa de Misericordia. A Mighty Fortress: A House of Mercy. That's exactly what this is: a safe place where God's mercy is available. In Jesus' name.

"I love the kids. Everywhere," says Hosch. "The opportunities here are huge to share the Gospel in a simple way: a lunch, a hug, friendship. All

allowing us to teach the children the Word of God."

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promises, but patient. And so the LCMS mission in Peru works with the children of the underprivileged and the disadvantaged. They work with the prayer that the Word of God will produce faith in this generation's children and their parents. They work with the hope that these children will grow up to bring their children to Baptism and communion. They work with those who need Christ's love and mercy. They work with those who need forgiveness. They work to show mercy. And the children of Lima need it all, just like we all do.

# A 'Truly Lutheran' Approach

BY JENI MILLER

**The *Every One His Witness* Lutheran evangelism program aims to help people share the Gospel naturally.**

**T**he Gospel we are called to share is simple, but our world is complex.”

Ain't that the truth?

The Rev. Dr. Mark Wood, director of LCMS Witness & Outreach Ministry, quoted above, knows that it “takes effort to learn how to share the simple Gospel in the various contexts of our complex world.”

Thankfully, a new program in the LCMS called *Every One His Witness*™ (E1HW) aims to guide that effort and pave the way for faithful Lutherans to bring the message of Christ to their neighbors naturally, through their various vocations. According to Wood, “E1HW seeks to restore evangelism to its proper place as the most important — and the most joyful — work that we do in service to Christ and to our neighbors.”

As part of the development of E1HW, several LCMS churches had the chance to test-drive the program while learning how to reach out organically to those God has placed around them. Hope Lutheran Church in St. Louis was among those churches. The congregation hosted a daylong training seminar for

E1HW in April 2017.

“The program ... is based squarely on the Scriptures and consistent with our Lutheran focus on salvation by God's grace alone and witnessing based on our vocations in all of life,” said the Rev. Randy Asbury, pastor of Hope. “The stories told in E1HW help people to see that bearing witness to Jesus is not a science or a proven methodology. Rather, we get to see how the Holy Spirit works through His Word in the real lives of people.”

Bringing Christ into the conversation, into the “real lives of people,” is exactly what E1HW zeroes in on, mainly through what the program calls the LASSIE approach: “Listen, Ask, Seek, Share, Invite and Encourage.”

“The LASSIE approach is so helpful because it does not present a canned script

of what to say to people. [It] educate[s] and remind[s] us that God's good gifts — His Word, my reason and all my senses — equip us to speak of Jesus to family, friends, neighbors and co-workers in an engaging and winsome manner,” said Bob Myers, a member at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Pensacola, Fla., which also piloted the program. “E1HW reminded me that listening is an important skill to develop, and that every individual has a different and compelling story for us to listen to, and that every individual is one for whom Christ died and is one who needs to hear the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ alone.”

Asbury agrees — and then some.

“For many years, I have been looking for a truly Lutheran training program just like E1HW,” said Asbury. “Too often we Lutherans have borrowed from other traditions and tried to ‘baptize’ their approach to evangelism. That never works, because those other programs are built on a different theological foundation, one that is not solidly focused on salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. E1HW does not give us a sure-fire method; it does give us solid training in how to be more aware of opportunities for bearing witness and how to be more confident in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our everyday lives.”

The E1HW core module kit is now available through Concordia Publishing House. Additional modules on specific witnessing contexts are being developed for those who have completed the core module.

Deaconess Jeni Miller is a freelance writer and member of Lutheran Church of the Ascension in Atlanta.

**Too often we Lutherans have borrowed from other traditions and tried to 'baptize' their approach to evangelism. That never works, because those other programs are built on a different theological foundation, one that is not solidly focused on salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.”**

— Rev. Randy Asbury

| [LEARN MORE](#) |

[lcms.org/witness-outreach](http://lcms.org/witness-outreach)



BY MEGAN K. MERTZ

# SHAPE BY TO ALL SERVICE

LUTHERAN YOUNG ADULT CORPS

PARTICIPANTS ARE LIVING AND

SERVING IN BOSTON THIS YEAR.







The Lutheran Young Adult Corps participants in Boston take the subway between their service sites every day.

**O**NE GRAY AND RAINY OCTOBER MORNING, FOUR YOUNG WOMEN DODGED PUDDLES AS THEY HURRIED THROUGH BOSTON COMMON TOWARD FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BOSTON.

“Good morning!” they called in unison to parish administrator John Lindemann as they passed by the church office and proceeded to the basement, where they set up their laptops on a long folding table in their makeshift office.

Within minutes, they were absorbed in their various tasks for the day. Sarabeth Marcello of Minneapolis worked on a weekly newsletter for the church’s campus ministry and young adults group, while the other three — Laura Grundeman of Naples, Fla.; Rachel McCloskey of Steubenville, Ohio; and Coretta Hedstrom of Lakefield, Minn. — planned a children’s Christmas program.

### *Coming Together in Service*

Although these four are from different places, for 10 months they are living and serving together in Boston through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) Lutheran Young Adult Corps. The program provides young adults (ages 18–26) with long-term service opportunities in urban ministry settings around the country. Those interested can choose between the 10-week summer program and the 10-month gap year.

The program currently has “houses” of four participants in three different cities: St. Louis, New Orleans (which shares its participants with Baton Rouge) and Boston.

Nik Locker, who serves as city coordinator for the Boston house, first heard about the

program several years ago, when it was called the Lutheran Youth Corps. The program went through a period of transition before being relaunched as the Lutheran Young Adult Corps in 2016.

Despite changes in the program, Locker didn’t give up on the idea of having participants serve in his city. He called the LCMS Youth Ministry office and said, “Boston is very interested. What would it take to get Lutheran Young Adult Corps here?”

“We’re a small [Lutheran] community with finite resources. We share people and opportunities,” Locker explained, noting that there are only two LCMS congregations within Boston’s city limits. Having the four participants, he said, enables them to expand their ministry in new ways.

**Previous page, top left:** Coretta Hedstrom plays with a child at Little Blessings Day Care and Preschool at Trinity Lutheran Church. **Top right:** Nik Locker, city coordinator for the Lutheran Young Adult Corps in Boston, tastes cookies being made for an upcoming servant event. **Middle:** From left, Hedstrom, Rachel McCloskey and Laura Grundeman ride the subway to Little Blessings Day Care and Preschool, where they lead the children in music and other activities every afternoon. **Bottom:** Sarabeth Marcello answers a question during Bible study at their shared apartment.



## JOIN THE LUTHERAN YOUNG ADULT CORPS

The application period for the 2018–19 program is open through March 1. Two options are available: a 10-week summer program or a 10-month gap-year program.

| LEARN MORE |  
[lcms.org/young-adult-corps](http://lcms.org/young-adult-corps)



For instance, Marcello and Grundeman are working on a proposal to turn a storage room into a campus ministry room at First Lutheran Church.

“It wasn’t in the plan, but they were open to it,” Grundeman said. “Being able to create a project like that has been really cool.”

Although First Lutheran Church is their home base, the participants divide their time between several different local organizations. Each afternoon, Grundeman, McCloskey and Hedstrom take the T — Boston’s subway system — to Little Blessings Day Care and Preschool at Trinity Lutheran Church, where they carry an electric keyboard from room to room and lead kids in Christian songs.

They also spend time at a local homeless ministry and New England Seafarers Mission — which assists cruise ship workers with sending money to their home countries, receiving mail and running errands when the ship is in port.

After only a few months, Locker noted that the participants have brought “a consistency” to the relationships with some of these

other organizations that they usually only work with sporadically.

### *Living and Learning*

Although corps participants often work long hours, the program isn’t only about work. It also gives them the chance to explore a new city — something the four take advantage of regularly — while getting a taste of church work and learning important life skills.

For Hedstrom, moving to Boston has “been a big adjustment.” At 19, she’s the youngest member of the house, and this is the first time she’s lived away from home.

“I’m trying to eat healthy ... and do all the things that keep me functioning normally,” she said, after a short soliloquy on the benefits of the baby kale she found at the grocery store. “No one tells me to go to bed, so setting my own boundaries has been great for me.”

At the other end of the spectrum, Marcello, Grundeman and McCloskey have had more experience living on their own. Marcello and Grundeman lived away from home in college, and McCloskey just finished another gap-year program learning Spanish in Costa Rica. But the thing that has really stood out to them is how few Christians there are in Boston.

“I had no idea coming into this that it was so secular here,” Marcello said. “It’s super awesome that we get to work in

“God is stretching me in so many different ways. We get to learn so many different things.”

— Coretta Hedstrom

a place that really does need it.”

Along the way, Locker and others have been available to offer advice on things like cooking, cleaning and taking the T. Plus, the women said they are still drawing on lessons taught at orientation in August, specifically the refresher course on Luther’s Small Catechism and the session on what to do when approached by a homeless person.

“God is stretching me in so many different ways,” Hedstrom said of her experience in Boston. “We get to learn so many different things.”

### *Thriving, Not Just Surviving*

Back in their shared apartment, the four women chat and laugh over pizza before settling down for their weekly Bible study.

At the end of the day, they are eager to share the joys they’ve experienced in their various assignments — from seeing a particularly rambunctious child start repeating Christian songs at day care to sharing the Gospel with a

man on the subway who asked about their corps T-shirts.

Julianna Shults, LCMS Youth Ministry’s program manager for the corps, said she’s been pleased to see how the participants “mesh so well.”

“We’re not looking for a specific set of gifts or a certain level of experience,” Shults said of the participant selection process. “We want to know: Are they strong in their faith? Can they be flexible? Do they have a servant heart? Are they going to live well with others? Because that’s part of this too. Those are the kinds of things that tell us that if we put them into this challenging position, they are going to thrive.”

And they are thriving in the Boston house, thanks to the support of Locker, First Lutheran Church and the greater Lutheran community.

“One of the things that I’ve noticed and appreciated a lot is that so many people are so excited that we’re here,” McCloskey said. “They say, ‘We’ve been waiting for you, Lutheran Young Adult Corps folks!’ And they pray for us. It’s been great.”



### | PRAY |

For the Lutheran Young Adult Corps: [engage.lcms.org/serving-in-boston-winter-2018](http://engage.lcms.org/serving-in-boston-winter-2018)

These students at the Synod's seminary in the Dominican Republic are being equipped to go out and plant congregations and share Christ's mercy all around the region (Pages 2-5). By God's grace and with your generous gifts and prayers, this same thing is happening both here at home and in locations all around the world. Praise God!

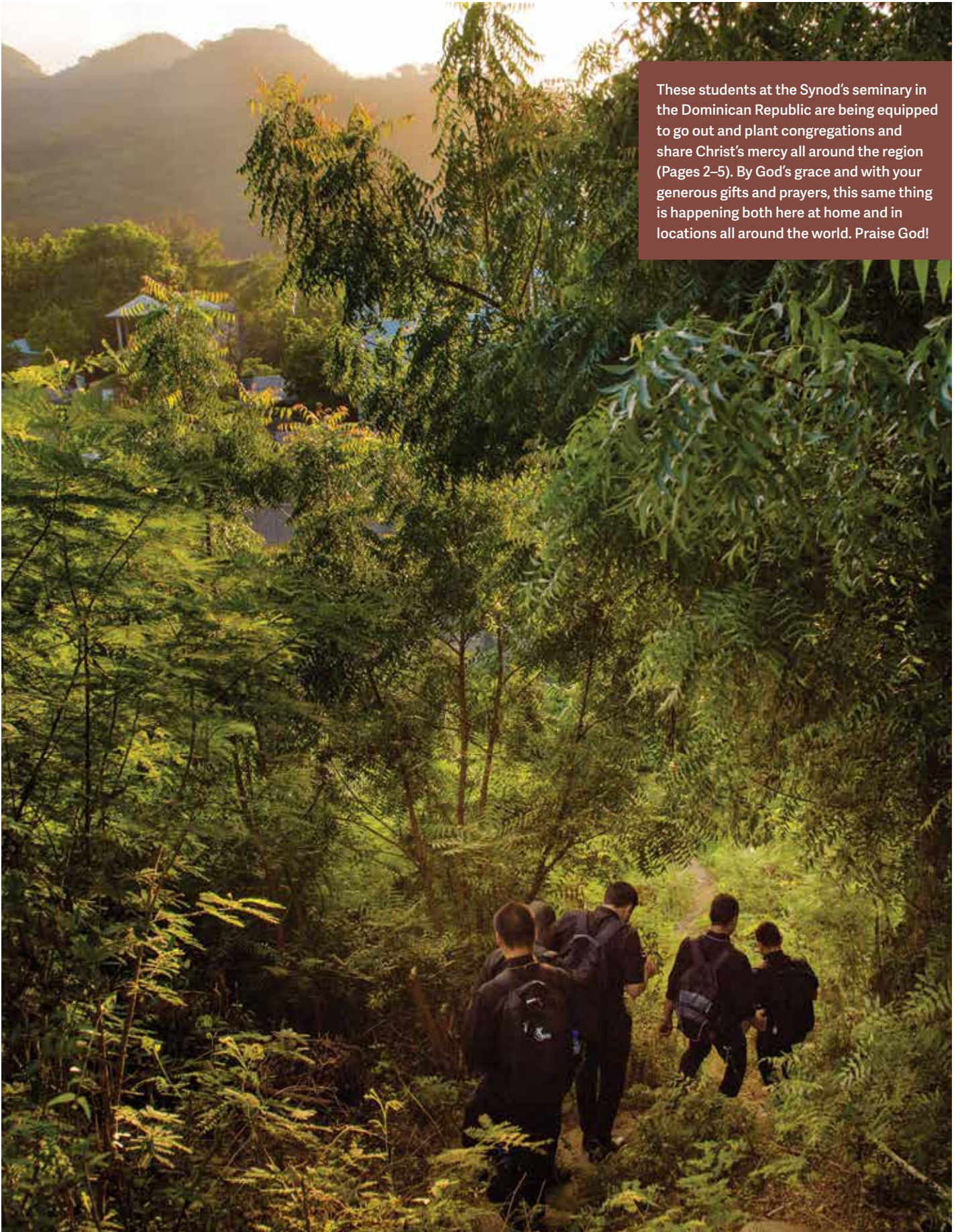


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