

January Birthdays

Kevin Siemers	Jan. 1st
Doug Pohlman	Jan. 2nd
Richard Voss	Jan. 2nd
Kaelianna Jones	Jan. 3rd
Jonathan Gillespie	Jan. 4th
Spec. Ryan Boetel	Jan. 7th
Julie Reimers	Jan. 7th
Courtney Stowell	Jan. 8th
Curtis Kazemba	Jan. 10th
Anita Mayou	Jan. 10th
Darren Voss	Jan. 10th
Tanner Hiveley	Jan. 12th
Tyler Ellingson	Jan. 13th
Jordan Harlow	Jan. 13th
Lois Puck	Jan. 13th
Jerilyn Gillespie	Jan. 15th
Stacey Wacker	Jan. 18th
Kash Gilmore	Jan. 20th
Dylan Lende	Jan. 20th
Kevin Zinn	Jan. 23rd
Melanie Van Gelder	Jan. 24th
Matthew Mayou	Jan. 26th
Robert Palmer	Jan. 28th
Arlo Puck	Jan. 28th
Dawson Iverson	Jan. 29th
Kevin Place	Jan. 29th
Mary Finnern	Jan. 31st

January Anniversaries

Charles & Wanda Untiedt Jan. 22nd

Trinity Officers/Boards

Chairman:	Doug Pohlman
Vice Chairman:	Randy Finnern
Secretary:	Adam Wolff
Treasurer:	David Untiedt
Trustee:	Bruce Ihnen
Elders:	Tim Ahrenstorff Don Majerus
Finance:	Dennis Voehl Dan Reimers Richard Voss Dale Knips
Ushers:	Chad Ihnen Adam Wolff Rod Voss Wade Wacker
LWML President	Vicki Place
Vice President	Karlyne Ackerman
Secretary	Arlys Schuett
Treasurer	Shirley Finnern
LWML Delegates	Janet Majerus Wanda Untiedt
Nominating Comm.	Lorraine Reimers Arlys Schuett
Education Super:	Tricia Voss
Youth Group:	Janet Majerus



Upcoming Events/Announcements

Updates Needed: Please help us update our records and return the postcards to the church office. We would like to have an up-to-date listing for all our members. If you have moved, gotten married, had a child, changed your phone number, cell phone, and/or e-mail address we would like to know so that our records can be accurate. Thank you!

Birthdays and Anniversaries: If you would like your birthday or anniversary printed in The Lutheran Witness to commemorate a birthday of 90 years or more or an anniversary of 50 years or more please contact the church office two months in advance, so that notification can be sent to the district office.

Newsletter deadline: Thursday, January 18 is the deadline for the February newsletter. Thank you!

Prescription drug coverage: Thrivent Members benefits are available. Express Access prescription drug discount card may help. It provides an average of 30% off all prescription drugs. For more information and to apply go to thrivent.com/community/membership/benefits or call 800-847-4836.

Contending For Truth In An Age Of Anti-Truth... Issues, Etc. is a radio talk show produced by Lutheran Public Radio and hosted by LCMS Pastor Todd Wilken. Topics include: Is Islam a Religion of Peace?, "Angels & Demons" by Dan Brown, Adoption, Decision Theology, Handel's Messiah and more. You can listen to what you want when you want at www.issuesetc.org.

Thrivent Choice: Remember to enroll as Thrivent members your Choice Dollars. Trinity & Concordia Lutheran Church is eligible to receive Choice Dollars. Please consider us a your choice. To learn more about Thrivent Choice, visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or call 1-800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent choice" when prompted.

Text Message Scripture/Devotionals: Sometimes it is nice to receive something during the week, if you would like to have a scripture/devotionals sent to your cell phone. To sign up please contact the church office.

Electronic Newsletters: If you are interested in receiving the monthly newsletter electronically please send me an e-mail making the request.

ConnectPlus: LCEF is now offering a new investment option called ConnectPlus. Please go our website lcef.org or call (800)843-5233 for more information. *Continued on page 6*

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What is Happening At Your Camp?

Camp Okoboji
1531 Edgewood Drive
Milford, IA 51351
Phone: 712-337-3325 Fax: 712-337-3318
e-mail: camp.okoboji@lidwlcms.org
Web site: www.campokoboji.org

Our Promise of Jesus at the Lake

A friendly, safe, refreshing and relaxing Christian experience
An exceptional value for you and your family.

Jan. 13: Make it! Take it! - Wood and Pallet Signs

Jan. 26-28: Ice Fishing Retreat

Jan. 27: Winter Games

Jan. 28: Worship at 9:45 a.m.

Jan. 28: Omelet Brunch 9:30 a.m.– 1 p.m.

Online Registration Process: Camp Okoboji has launched its new registration process. You can now register for all camp programs, retreats and events. If you have questions or need assistance please contact the camp office at 712-337-3325. This is the time to get those registrations in! www.campokoboji.org

For more information on any of these topics please feel free to contact Camp Okoboji.

FACEBOOK! "LIKE" us on Facebook - www.facebook.com/CampOkoboji-LCMS
and refer to the Camp Okoboji News flier hanging in the narthex.



498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250

January 7

"Breaking News!"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer

Epiphany calls us to believe that the Light has come into the world. A New Year's message about confidence, if you'll believe it!
(Isaiah 60:1-6 ("Arise, shine, for your light has come."))

January 14

"How Well Does Jesus Know Me?"

Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour: Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus

It's nice to have someone know and understand you. Today the Lutheran Hour asks, "How do you feel about Jesus knowing you?"
(John 1: 48-51)

January 21

"Meeting Millennials Where They're at"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer

Robots can't produce disciples. How can we mentor those who don't know Jesus, or don't know Him well enough?
(Mark 1:14-20 (Jesus calls His first disciples.))

January 28

"Cause I Said So"

Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour: Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus

Many have pretended to be the Messiah. In today's text, Jesus authority is recognized and obeyed by His competition.
(Mark 1: 21-28)

Thank you for sharing with your parishioners that Lutheran Hour is broadcast at 1:00 pm each Sunday

Cindy Nederhoff – 712-722-0885 – cnederho@dordt.edu

Church Information: The town's congregations have gotten together a published an informational card in regards to locations and times. Please feel free to pick up and share with others.

Sacred Music For The World... You can listen to the best of the Church's music 24/7 at www.lutheranpublicradio.org. You'll hear hymns like "Thy Strong Word," "The Church's One Foundation," "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart," "God's Own Child I Gladly Say It," "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" and more. You can also listen on mobile devices like an iPhone, iPad and an Android phone. If you have any questions, please call (618) 223-8385. Christian Music: Music for Members sections on thrivent.com/music is available to discover original Christian music by amateur and professional musicians is now easier than ever. You can find and download an array of free music.

Items for sale: LWML has cards for sale including birthday, get-well, and sympathy. Cards can be purchased individually for \$0.60 apiece or by the box. The amount is written on the box. Thank you.

Cancelation & Reminder: Since it is becoming more challenging to get radio announcements out. A system have been set up. Please subscribe by using the following directions. Mrs. Shannon Stone would like you to join Concordia & Trinity! *To receive messages via text, text @c83311 to 81010.* *Standard text message rates apply. Recipients Subject c83311@mail.remind.com. These instructions are also available in the narthex and on the church's website. Please contact the church office if you have any questions. Trouble using 81010? Try texting @c83311 to (712) 264-5343 instead. To unsubscribe, reply with 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

MN Relay: If you or a family member living in MN needs help hearing when answering the phone there is help available at no cost to you. Please contact the consumer relations office (800)657-3775, e-mail: mn.relay@state.mn.us or visit www.mnrelay.org for more information. There is also a brochure in the narthex hanging on the bulletin board.

Pictorial Directories: The directories are still available. If you would like to purchase a copy please see the church office.

Caregiver Discussion Group: This group discussion will be held on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. at the Bethlehem Lutheran, 401 7th Ave N, Lakefield in the Fireside room. For more information see the flier in the narthex.

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Member Visits: The elders with pastor have finished working through a book entitled, "Pastors and Elders: Caring For The Church And One Another." Our desire now is to try to make contact and visit with all members in the churches. Rather than visits being seen only in times of trouble or concern,



HUGE GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS HELP WITH ANNUAL MAILING

Each year at Thanksgiving time, all of the volunteer missionaries come together at Trinity Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa, where they donate their time, effort, and talents to help put together the Annual Thanksgiving Mailing from the Lord's Mission Central. This is the only mailing that is done. Once a year, Missionaries Gary Thies and Brent Smith put out a full-fledged mailing to all the individuals, congregations, and groups that have been so kind to



provide gifts during the past year. It contains a thank you letter, a collection of photos of events during the year, a personal photo of Brent and Gary (this year's photo included a special friend), and a suggestion for a special Thanksgiving or year-end project. It is really a HUGE JOB! This year nearly 5,100 letters had to be assembled and mailed. The Lord once again provided a special group of NOT NORMAL people! Yes, He called 30 volunteers from nine congregations in the Des Moines area who provided 107.5 hours of labor and had it done in RECORD time. The entire event was coordinated by Kathryn Sprecher of Des Moines who was able to direct all of the workers to specific responsibilities. All but four of the volunteers are pictured here. What a special blessing! The Lord always seems to "put the right people at the right place at just the right time."

SCHNEIDERS COME FROM MADISON, WISCONSIN

Who would drive 401 miles to a place called Mission Central in order to present special gifts to three dear people? You would have to be truly NOT NORMAL! Rev. David Schneider and his wife drove all day to get to Mission Central to present a supply of special devotional books entitled "Arrows of Light, Devotions for Worldwide Christians." This special volume is truly a work of art inspired by the Holy Spirit. Rev. Schneider, a long time missionary who has served around the world, compiled this volume and it is truly a wonderful book. Pictured are the Schneiders presenting copies to three amazing NOT NORMAL missionaries: Marilyn Schroeder, Kathryn Sprecher, and Judy White. It was a special blessing. Mission Central will also be distributing these volumes.



Mission Central – LCMS World Mission 40718 Highway E16 Mapleton, IA 51034 712-882-1029 Gary Thies gary.thies@lcms.org www.missioncentral.us

the hope is for them to be more heartening with a life together we share as the body of Christ beyond Sunday mornings. This will be a gradual and slow process, but one that will at least start “officially” in September. The tone for all of this comes from Jesus who sending out the Seventy-Two said, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ (Luke 10:5)

PORTALS OF PRAYER: The Trinity LWML has a box in the narthex for gathering USED Portals of Prayers. We will distribute them to various locations for others to read. God bless you for your support.

LifeDate: Each quarter a new edition will be placed in your bulletin boxes. This is coming to our congregation with only the shipping costs. So if you would no longer like to receive this publication please contact the church office.

Portal of Prayer: The app is now available. Audio Listen to recordings of each day’s Bible readings, devotion, and prayer. Devotions + Prayers Applicable, easy-to-read meditations and prayers. Over 2500 Devotions Read seven years of *Portals of Prayer* devotions. Search, Save, and Share Search past devotions by keyword, save your favorites, and share prayers. Download on the app store or get it on google play.

Offering: It takes \$9000 per month to operate our church, just for your information.

Adult Bible Study: Study at Trinity at 4:00 p.m., we will be discussing the Augsburg Confession. All are welcome to grow and learn what God gives to us.

Storm Cancellations: If Church needs to be cancelled during the winter months, text notifications will be sent to you if you have signed up to receive them. You can also check the church website at www.trinitysv.com or the following sources.

- Ø KICD 1240 AM 107.7 FM Spencer – Live reports & Website
- Ø KKOJ 1190 AM KRAQ 105.7 FM Jackson – Live reports & Website
- Ø “Weather Related Announcements” at exploreokoboji.com
- Ø “Weather Announcements” at myradioworks.net
- Ø Call an Elder or Pastor

The 14th Annual "Generation to Generation" Antique Auction will be held at Martin Luther High School, Northrop on Saturday January 13th beginning at 9:45 a.m. Several parties have donated or consigned items. Many advertising items are on the (see the flier in the narthex) and a complete listing of piano player roll titles is on the MLHS website. Morning coffee and rolls and sandwiches will be available. This is an all-day sale. Proceeds benefit the Student Tuition Aid Funds of Martin Luther High School. For a detailed listing and pictures go to www.martinlutherhs.com under Special Events.

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LWML Mission Sunday for January: 2017–2019 Mission Grant 5, Current Missionary Need, LCMS International Mission \$100,000. With fervent, sustained support of LCMS mission projects, Mission Central, located in Mapleton, Iowa, seeks to serve as an avenue for continued support for missionaries throughout the world to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This grant would provide for a variety of necessary missionary resources such as orientation and training,

language training, transportation to and in the country of service and on furlough, various types of insurance, housing, medical care, utilities, and education of missionary children, to name a few.

Altar Guild Blessing! Thanks to Lenora Kazemba for providing new artificial flower arrangements for the church seasons.

Directory Updates: Riley Pohlman (transfer)

Poinsettias given by the following people at Trinity this Christmas season are as follows:

Gary & Arlys Schuett—Al & Marie Schuett

Shirley Finnern—Gordon Finnern, Art & Clara Finnern and Vicki Vander Veen

Shirley Wiese—Delbert Wiese, Ray & Gertrude Ihnen

Brad & Karla Brinkman - Herman & Amanda Frahm and E M Brinkman

Stan & LeAnn Pohlman —Norman & Helen Pohlman, Marvin Kazemba and Barbara Kennedy

Jeff & Lisa Dean & Boys—David & Hazel Dean and Doug Geertsema

Glen Kleen—Gloria Kleen

Vernon & Tootie Walsh—Darold Place

Gary & Vicki Place—Norman & Helen Pohlman and Charles & Dorothy Place

Velma Hammer—Leslie Hammer

Pastor & Amy Gauthier—Minnetta Cook-Gauthier

Bruce Ihnen family —Don Ihnen and Larry Schwartz

Carmen Voehl—Duane Voehl

Dennis & Susan Voehl—Loren Ulbricht

Doug & Sue Pohlman—Norman & Helen Pohlman and Vernon & Ellen Voss

LaVonne Larsen—Lester & Dennis Larsen

Gordon and Leyla Fischer - Art and Lucille Fischer and Larry Fischer

Arlo and Lois Puck - Julie and Kenny Puck

Donna Voss - John Sr. and Brenda Voss and Gert. and Ray Ihnen

(Please let me know if there are any corrections to be made.)



Catch the Lutheran Hour float in Jan. 1 parade

By Cheryl Magness on December 14, 2017 in National News

“Bringing Christ to the Nations” is the theme of the Lutheran Hour Ministries float that will be featured in the 2018 Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif.

The parade kicks off at 8 a.m. Pacific Standard Time on Jan. 1, with nearly 40 floats, 20 marching bands and 20 equestrian groups. Among TV stations that air the parade is the commercial-free HGTV (Home and Garden Television) cable channel as well as a number of local stations.



Riding the Lutheran float — the only Christian-themed float in the parade — will be: Phillip Johnson, chairman of the International Lutheran Laymen’s League Board of Directors; Linda Stoterau, representing the LCMS Pacific Southwest District (her husband, Rev. Dr. Larry Stoterau, is district president); Rev. Glenn Lucas, associate pastor of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Lake Forest, Calif.; Daniel Andriamanjaka, director of Lutheran Hour Ministry’s Madagascar Ministry Center; and eight members of LCMS congregations in southern California “who make a difference as they bring Christ to the nations in their activities and/or the activities of organizations they represent,” according to float spokesman Dick Gast.

The float — a project of the Southern California District of the International Lutheran Laymen’s League — is a 68-year tradition in the annual New Year’s Day parade. Its purpose is to provide a Gospel witness to millions of viewers along the parade route and in some 150 countries worldwide.

For information about joining the “Petal Pushers” volunteers who decorate the Lutheran Hour float, visit petalpushers.org.

To find out more about St. Louis-based Lutheran Hour Ministries, visit lhm.org.

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.

Story by Pamela J. Nielsen | Photography by Erik M. Lunsford | Winter 2018

“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, lay-people 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.

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 to 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 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,” 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 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!



Restoring and Rebuilding Texas

The work continues in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

Story by Kevin Armbrust | Photography by Erik M. Lunsford | Winter 2018

“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 irrecoverably 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 disas-

ter 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 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."

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!

<https://engage.lcms.org/rebuilding-texas-winter-2018/>

Supreme Court hears case of Colorado baker under fire for marriage view

By Cheryl Magness on December 6, 2017 in National News, News, Reporter 3

By Roger Drinnon

Oral arguments were heard Dec. 5 in the case of Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips, sued by the Colorado Civil Rights Commission for sexual-orientation discrimination for refusing to make a custom cake for a same-sex wedding ceremony.

The contentious case of *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* likely will determine whether the government can compel Americans to use their abilities and vocations to perform services that violate their faith and conscience. Arguments were extended from the scheduled 60 minutes to 90 minutes to accommodate both sides of the case.

“I am here at the Supreme Court today because I respectfully declined to create a custom cake that would celebrate a view of marriage in direct conflict with my faith’s core teachings on marriage,” said Phillips at a rally following the oral arguments.

He spoke amid chants of “We got Jack’s back!” from a crowd of supporters.

“For that decision, which was guided by an established set of religious beliefs, I’ve endured a five-year court battle. ~~It’s been very hard on me and my family,~~” he said. ~~“There have been tears and many difficult days for us.”~~

Phillips said he and his family have faced death threats and harassment, and he has been forced to stop creating the wedding art that he loves while also losing much of his business, as the family struggles to pay bills and keep the shop afloat.

“It’s hard to believe that the government is forcing me to choose between providing for my family and employees and violating my relationship with God. That is not freedom. That is not tolerance,” Phillips

added.

The LCMS joined an amicus brief for the U.S. Supreme Court in support of Phillips earlier this year with seven other organizations advocating for religious freedom in the case. The LCMS brief was one of approximately 50 briefs that included scores of religious organizations filed in support of Phillips



In July 2016, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) attorneys and allied attorneys petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to take up the case. According to ADF case details, an administrative-law judge ruled in December 2013 against the cake artist, saying that designing cakes for same-sex wedding ceremonies is not speech protected by the First Amendment.

The commission also ordered Phillips and his staff to design cakes for same-sex wedding celebrations; take “corrective action,” including comprehensive staff training; implement new policies to ensure compliance with Colorado anti-discrimination laws; and file quarterly “compliance” reports for two years to show that Phillips has implemented the changes and to document any patrons denied service.

ADF attorneys indicated that when the U.S. Supreme Court rules in this case, it will have a major impact on religious freedom in America, collectively stating, “It could very well be the most important decision in our lifetime” in terms of religious liberty.

ADF also has appealed a related right-of-conscience case to the U.S. Supreme Court. In the case involving Arlene’s Flowers, the Washington Supreme Court upheld a ruling against florist Barronelle Stutzman, who declined to create custom flowers for a longtime customer’s same-sex wedding.

The U.S. Supreme Court could consider this case along with Masterpiece Cakeshop or hold it until its Masterpiece decision is made, and then send the case back to the lower court for reconsideration in light of the new opinion. Last year, the Synod also joined an amicus brief for Stutzman’s case, *State of Washington v. Arlene’s Flowers*.

Although neither Phillips nor Stutzman is an LCMS Lutheran, the outcome of each case may pose significant ramifications for the Synod, its agencies, affiliated institutions and members of LCMS congregations.

“Tolerance should be a two-way street. Phillips gladly serves anyone who walks into his store, but, as is customary practice for many artists, he declines opportunities to design for a variety of events and messages that conflict with his deeply held beliefs. In this case, Jack told the couple suing him he’d sell them anything in the store but just couldn’t design a custom cake celebrating their wedding because of his Christian faith,” said ADF Senior Counsel Kristen Waggoner after filing an opening brief with the high court in August

Waggoner represents both Phillips and Stutzman.

“The First Amendment protects Jack’s right to create artistic expression that is consistent with his core convictions,” she said. “Individuals can support both same-sex marriage and Jack, and people should have the right to disagree on critical matters of conscience. The same government that can force Jack to

violate his faith and conscience can force any one of us to do the same.”

The U.S. Supreme Court now must decide, in effect, whether Christians who do not support same-sex marriage have the same liberty as others to live consistently according to their religious beliefs and whether Christians can be compelled to express messages or promote events that violate their faith.

If the high court rules against Phillips (and Stutzman), the ADF says potential ramifications include lawsuits against other creative professionals and Christian business owners who express themselves through their business activities, a rule of law that would not support First Amendment rights for all people.

“I’m profoundly thankful to the Supreme Court of the United States for taking my case. I hope and pray it will affirm the freedom of artists to peacefully express themselves in ways consistent with who they are,” said Phillips.

Last year, the Synod in convention adopted Resolution 14-01 to encourage intentional leadership in matters of religious freedom.

Resources:

To learn more about what the Synod is doing regarding religious liberty, visit its “Free to be Faithful” webpage.

To read about other amicus briefs the LCMS has joined, go to lcms.org/board/amicusbriefs.
Roger Drinnon (roger.drinnon@lcms.org) is director of Editorial and Media Relations for LCMS Communications.

Why forgive?

Wow! We live in a fragmented world. Vitriol and bitterness in words and actions are the way of our day. It is not so for us as Christians. When our sinful nature punches through to cause damage and death to those we love, Christ Himself mandates we forgive and receive forgiveness for those offenses.

That can be so difficult. But think of what Jesus did for you and me! He poured out His life to forgive and free us from death. Forgiveness wipes clean the junk that holds us back. It brings into focus a life filled with hope and happiness.

Forgiveness is important and essential in all aspects of our lives. As God rules your heart and the whole universe from horizon to horizon, there is no limit to this beautiful and powerful gift.

The following truths are very important reasons why we are to be a forgiving people.

Forgiveness:

- ▶ Is a powerful, healing gift that cleanses the whole world and restores the individual in and through God’s only Son, Jesus.
- ▶ Is demonstrated in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. By His actions, we have joy in our hearts and the ability to extend that same love to others.

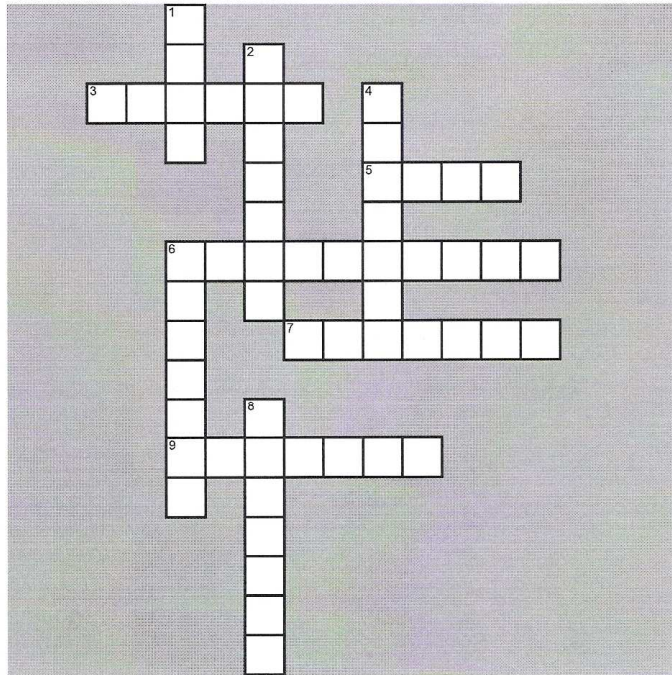
- ▶ Restores broken relationships.
- ▶ Sets one free from guilt. There's no more compensating for the guilt and feelings of shame. There's no more self-medicating the pain and filling the emptiness with food, drugs or alcohol.
- ▶ Allows us to stop hurting others because we have been hurt.
- ▶ Means wholeness and harmony are restored, and peace prevails in our lives.

Excerpted from *Forgiveness is a Choice*, by Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana for Lutheran Hour Ministries

<https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/ministry-to-the-armed-forces-first-quarter-2018-newsletter>



Epiphany 1



Across

- 3 "You were ____ with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12)
- 5 "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold, the ____ of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'" (John 1:29)
- 6 "It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear ____, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 3:21)
- 7 "And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my ____ Son; with you I am well pleased.'" (Luke 3:22)
- 9 "He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he ____ before me.'" (John 1:30)

Down

- 1 "I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and ____." (Matthew 3:11)
- 2 "On coming up out of the water he saw the ____ being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him." (Mark 1:10)
- 4 "Jesus said to him in reply, 'Allow it for now, for thus it is fitting for us to ____ all righteousness.'" (Matthew 3:15)
- 6 "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have ____ yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:27)
- 8 "Jesus answered, 'Amen, Amen, I say to you, no one can enter the ____ of God without being born water and Spirit.'" (John 3:5)

JANUARY & FEBRUARY

2018 Sunday School

<p>Who? Sunday School: <i>All Pre-K - 8th Grades</i> Confirmation: 6th -8th Youth Group: 7th-12th</p>	<p>What? Sunday School classes are on the 1st & 3rd Sundays of each given month. On the 5th Sunday kids might sing or recite during Church.</p>	<p>When? Sunday School will run 10:15-11:30 am. We rotate often with lesson, craft, skit, snack and music. The 5th-8th graders will also act as teacher assistants!</p>	<p>Why? Proverbs 22:6 <u>Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.</u></p>
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CHRISTMAS PROGRAM THANKS!

So proud of the kids again! Blessed by all the Christmas gifts and support. Special thanks to piano & organ players, "Shirley" times two!! Our goal for the kids is to know that Jesus is their Savior and also learn many Bible Stories. This past year we hope the kids learned about Martin Luther and the Reformation. Thanks to Lucas & Kiera for acting out Martin's favorite Christmas hymn, **From Heaven Above to Earth I Come!**



MISSION MONEY

500 years ago, Martin Luther knew his people needed two important things: the Bible translated into their own language, and a Small Catechism to help them understand it. Today, kids and families all around the world need these same things! **\$5 GIVES A BIBLE BOOK TO A CHILD WANTING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT JESUS! PLEASE CONSIDER SENDING IN THE LWML MITE BOXES IN FOR OFFERING. THX!**

Jan. 7th: Sunday School 10:15-11:30
Wrap up of the 12 days of Christmas!
Lesson: Jesus & Zacchaeus

Jan. 21st: Sunday School 10:15-11:30
Lesson: The Triumphal Entry

Feb. 4th: Sunday School 10:15-11:30
Lesson: The Widow's Offering
Kids might recite during service.

Feb. 18th: Sunday School 10:15-11:30
Lesson: The Lord's Supper

Early Childhood/Pre-K: Miya Finner, Brynlee Barnes, Lucas Riemers, Paisley Nissen, Xander Untiedt, Izzebelle Pohlman, Lauren Riemers

K: Kane Barnes
 1st: Leah Schuett, Hattie Hintze
 2nd: Bailee Barnes, Henry Hintze,
 3rd: Brock Nissen
 4th Mason Ahrenstorff, Roman Voss, Dylan Schuett
 5th: None
 6th: Kiera Ahrenstorff, Kamryn Meyer, Lucas Ahrenstorff
 7th: Gabriel Wolff
 8th: Sadie Voss