



*Mona Fuerstenau is the Director of Strategic Ministry Partnerships for Bethesda Lutheran Communities.*

*She travels the country for conferences and workshops to equip the church body to become a place for belonging — a true family for each of God's children. Her prayer is for every life to be enriched when we practice Being Family with people of all abilities.*

*Bethesda's Mission: To enhance the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through the services that share the good news of Jesus Christ.*

#### Resources

[LCMS.org/disability](http://LCMS.org/disability)

Find Bethesda religious resources at [www.cph.org](http://www.cph.org)

[BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org](http://BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org)

### Accepting People of all Abilities into the Church Family *By Mona Fuerstenau*

Being family means authentic love and genuine care, no matter the circumstance or challenge. Being family means being in relationship, which is sometimes messy. Being family is a daily desire to love and to be there despite the situation.

Our congregations are an extension of our families. Many members of that extension have been influential to me, especially as I raised a son with disabilities.

- **The Parish Nurse** — what a blessing! LCMS Parish Nurses receive opportunities for training and supporting families with disabilities.
  - **The Pastor** — who shared with me that looking into my son's eyes during the communion blessing was like looking into my son's soul. He saw my son made in the image of God.
  - **The Children's Program Director** — who saw the performing gifts of my daughter and gave her opportunity to shine. Siblings of people with disabilities often struggle to be seen.
  - **The DCE** — who approached us on our first visit when my son was a teen, talked directly to him, and introduced him to two other teens.
- Support goes beyond Church professionals. Church members can also reach out to families of those with disabilities.
- **Be Sanctuary:** Provide a safe space both physically and attitudinally. Be welcoming and ask questions.
  - **Be Honest:** If you don't know what to say, or do, or if you are worried you might offend, be honest and say that.
  - **Be Relational:** Get to know each person in the family. They are so much more than "just" a family with a disability. Each person has gifts and talents and interests completely unrelated to disability. Fellowship is an important part of faith community life.
  - **Be Purposeful:** Meaningful participation and contribution of all members of the family are necessary. Being family requires give and take. People with disabilities and their families have much to offer the Body of Christ. Look for ways for each of them to serve.

At the 2017 LWML Convention in Albuquerque, the LWML chose to support Mission Grant proposal #15 — Sharing Jesus with people with disabilities. Your support of Bethesda's Religious Life Team with sharing the Gospel and equipping the church is a testament to the fact that so many LWML members already see the need for the church to Be Family to those living with disability. Thank you! Your support allows us to continue to do just that.



### God works through His people

**Diane Molnar**, a member of **Trinity Lutheran Church, Cedar City, Utah** (Rocky Mountain District), learned that East Elementary School was in great need of school supplies. As donations of supplies flooded in, it became apparent there was also a great need for winter clothing, shoes, hats, and mittens. This news spread to a local Catholic Thrift Shoppe who joined in with donations of clean clothing and shoes.

That generosity was followed by a \$1,000 donation, raised at Trinity's annual Oktoberfest, to the school to further assist disadvantaged students in need. What a beautiful testimony to the benevolence of God's people!

*Presenting the \$1,000.00 check to East Elementary Principal Moyle is Trinity Lutheran Church member, Diane Molnar. A special thank you goes to East Elementary Secretary, Renee Sholes.*



Since 2002, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League of both the **Central Illinois District** and **Rock Island Zone** have been actively involved with Cristo Rey, a Hispanic mission church located in East Moline, Illinois. Led by Pastor Dominguez, Cristo Rey has been the recipient of mission grants, food pantry items, and English as a second language classes taught by volunteer LWML members. The ladies of Cristo Rey gather mite offerings for the support of district mission grants and have served meals at LWML functions and other circuit activities. At the 2011 Peoria LWML Convention, Pastor Dominguez and a member of the Cristo Rey congregation presented a display, celebrating the work being done at their church, while this member's wife participated in the Heart to Heart Sister program. Cristo Rey was also a recipient of the Gifts of Love ingathering at Peoria, which assisted them with their outreach activities for several years. Last year, a young woman from Cristo Rey and a lady from another Hispanic outreach in Beardstown, Illinois, attended the 2017 Albuquerque LWML Convention.



For three exciting weeks last November, the Lutheran Women in Mission of **Christ the Redeemer, Tulsa, Oklahoma** (Oklahoma District), DCE Intern Myrthe Harkenrider, and the children of Faith Friends partnered together to learn about thankfulness and how to put their gratitude into practice. During week one, the children (kindergarten to fifth grade) and LWML women assembled Lutheran World Relief kits and tied quilts. While they worked side-by-side, they discussed their thankfulness for all the wonderful gifts God has given them. Week two focused on missions and how Mite Box offerings help missionaries throughout the world. The children were given the special opportunity to Skype with LCMS missionaries in Slovakia! Questions flowed! The third week focused on thanking others, including those whom the children forget to thank, such as their parents. All participants took part in assembling "thank you packages" that included trail mix and appreciation notes. Lutheran World Relief videos were shown, detailing how the quilts and kits they had made were going to be used. President Carol Fruehling said, "Our LWML wants to partner with our staff and show our support for the mission of our congregation. We had a great time getting to know the children. Their enthusiasm speaks well for the future of our church!"



Good conversation inspired the women of the **Washington Zone LWML** (LWML Missouri District) to pursue new heights when planning their fall rally. The "Christian Women's Survival Show" proved to be an occasion filled with activities geared to encourage and equip the daily lives of Christian women. The day zoomed by as everyone enjoyed guest speakers, devotions, a debut of The Singing Saints (a group of pastors and laymen), a fun-filled photo booth, and mission and ministry presentations. Of course, there was a lot of delicious food and singing! The ingathering resulted in a generous collection of many children's socks, hats, gloves, mittens, and monetary gifts that will support the local community. The women of the Washington Zone proved they not only know how to survive, but they can thrive as they "do all things through Christ who gives them strength."



Cloth of every shape and color — large pieces and small — that's what the talented quilting ladies of **St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Reedsburg, Wisconsin**, work with when they gather to quilt. The number of ladies may be small, but their mission is huge and together they design, put together, sew around, and tie hundreds of quilts each year. These amazing works of art are displayed on the church pews during LWML Sunday and after worship, they are sent around the world to warm the hearts of their recipients. What a blessing!

## FALL 2018 THEME: SHOWERED WITH BLESSINGS

Please share your stories and photos of joyful, mission-minded service with  
News Editor Linda Guterres:  
[newseditor@lwml.org](mailto:newseditor@lwml.org) or  
3 Timber Trail, Medford, NY 11763

**Deadline:** April 15, 2018

**Include:** name, address, phone, and email





Have you ever wondered how Naomi mentored Ruth, Paul mentored Timothy, or Jesus mentored the disciples? With many smiles and giggles, LWML members at **St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Alta Vista, Kansas**, learned about mentoring partnerships in the Bible. These six members scored a perfect 100% when they played the Mentoring Match-Up Game. This game, with other suggestions for an LWML Mentoring Brunch, can be found under Leader Helps [www.lwml.org](http://www.lwml.org).



**Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Decatur, Illinois** (Central Illinois District), has been busy with "Stitches of Love," a service project where they make hats for people in need. Some of the hats are unique, made on circular looms in the shape of Minions, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and snowmen. Annalee Karloski said, "Every child in the classroom will get a hat." Annalee continues, "We started out knitting prayer shawls, and then we got these looms. We've given hats and scarves to Northeast Community Fund, Webster-Cantrell Hall, the Cancer Center, and New Life Pregnancy Center."

## Lutheran Women in Mission Respond to disaster with Books, Bags, and Bears



If there's one thing the LWML does well, it's responding to needs when disaster strikes. Just a few months ago, Hurricane Harvey caused massive damage in Texas, leaving many people trying to repair and rebuild their homes and lives.

**LINC Houston** recently held an open house for their community. One of the items they distributed was called, "Waiting in Line Welcome Bag." Most often mothers and children are the people waiting in line for relief and support. To help them pass the time while standing on lines, bags containing encouraging devotions, an Arch Book, and an LWML bear were distributed to those waiting. Dan Zieschang said, "A note on each bear lets the children know that this is their 'safe bear,' and they can grab it when they feel fear as a result of rain, lightning, thunder, flooding."

**Traci Sterba and Lisa Miller, of Trinity Lutheran Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana**, organized a disaster relief effort, providing support and comfort to Texans affected by Hurricane Harvey. They organized Pack-a-Purse, a campaign filling gently used purses with hygiene items, makeup, notes of encouragement, and a \$5 bill. Traci, who had lived through flooding said, "You never really realize what you've

lost until you go to get a Band-Aid®, and you see you don't even have that!"

The campaign went viral on Facebook, and people from all over the country were eager to contribute. As a result, over 100 packed purses were loaded onto a trailer headed for Texas. As if this weren't enough, during the following week, 200 additional purses were collected from members of Trinity and other churches in the surrounding area.



With his truck packed to the brim, Lisa's husband, **Steve Miller**, made the trip to Nederland, Texas, stopping at Holy Cross Lutheran Church. Pastor Francis Schroeder of Holy Cross posted on Facebook: "This was a great day! I received from the Women's Ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana ... over 200 purses! Such an incredible idea and love for others shared! Thank you again to our neighbors and sisters from Baton Rouge!"



The sisterhood of LWML was clearly evident on the wedding day of **Meichun Julie Lin Thompson**. Meichun was **LWML Utah-Idaho District's** first Heart to Heart Sister at the 2017 Albuquerque LWML Convention. Surrounded by her LWML Sisters, Meichun is radiating God's love. May God grant rich blessings on the new Mr. & Mrs. Zach Thompson!