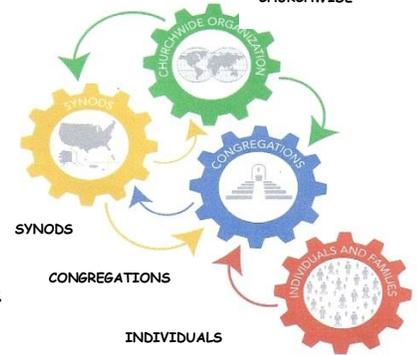


April 2019

Mission Support

CHURCHWIDE

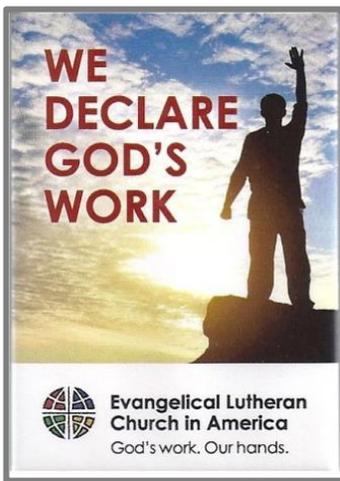


# Missional Storyteller

We say **THANK YOU** and **SHARE MISSION SUPPORT STORIES**.

## Did you know?

Mission Support under the heading *Address social issues and work for justice*, funds social ministry organizations such as Lutheran Services in America, that impact the lives of **1 in 50** Americans. Notice that the Lutheran Services in America are part of the response in U.S. disasters.



## LIRS (**Lutheran** Immigration and Refugee Service) and Partners Support Hundreds of Asylum Seekers Released at Bus Stations in El Paso

At the end of December 2018 **Lutheran** Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), headquartered in Baltimore, and its partners stepped up their efforts to help as hundreds of asylum seekers were released by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at parks and bus stations in El Paso, Texas with nowhere to go.

Lutheran and other churches, in Texas and New Mexico, along with hundreds of volunteers, immediately stepped in to provide transportation to temporary shelters, as well as food, clothing, blankets, and other essential services to the recently released families. LIRS is directly aiding these efforts on all fronts including by providing ground support, coordination and monetary support.

Founded in 1939, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service is one of the largest refugee resettlement agencies in the United States. It is nationally recognized for its leadership advocating with refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, immigrants in detention, families fractured by migration and other vulnerable populations. Through nearly 80 years of service and advocacy, LIRS has helped over 500,000 migrants and refugees rebuild their lives in America.

The Lutheran Churches in 1939 remain today. These Lutheran churches are the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)**, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod LCMS, and the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (LELCA). Each denomination brings commitment to following God's call to love the sojourner, the experience of being an immigrant church, and the leadership to make ministry with migrants and refugees a priority. Each contributes financially to the LIRS mission.

LIRS partners on the ground are reporting that the vast majority of individuals coming through are family units - in particular, fathers with young children on foot through the desert. The humanitarian crisis we are facing right now at the border is due to conflicts driving families from their homes in Central America, the unprecedented backlog of asylum cases in the U.S., and the government's inadequate care for children and families who have traveled miles and miles across the desert to plea for safety.

Partnerships are with local service providers across the country. With funding and technical support from LIRS, our local partners help refugees put down roots in new communities and assist vulnerable migrants with legal and practical needs. Through partnerships, we can manage resources to effectively extend the reach of our services and strategically share our strengths and expertise. The partners are Refugee Resettlement Partners, Immigration Services Providers, Foster Care Programs Partners, Family Reunification Partners, and Safe Release Support Partners.

## STORIES

**PASTOR PORTILLO—Iglesia Luterana la Transfigurcion, Irving, TX**

**"My America...is capable of incredible change."**



I came to the United States in 1980 after Archbishop Romero was assassinated in El Salvador. I was persecuted by a paramilitary group that was called the Death Squad in the '80s because...I had traveled with Romero to many towns and assisted him as an altar boy.

As a Lutheran pastor in America, I became a bridge connecting all kinds of community leaders from our neighboring cities throughout Callas County. My talents and gifts in some ways have been accepted and in other ways rejected as an immigrant who has a different skin color, culture, and a strong Spanish accent.

The greatest challenge that I have faced is discrimination from people who seem to resist any change in their community. But through meetings and prayers, I have been helping to educate people to properly understand the newest immigrants in American society.

Over the last 10 years, Irving and other cities in north Texas have drastically changed with the influx of new immigrants from all over Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The Muslim community is also growing rapidly in our city and they come from all over the world. We have over 48 different languages spoken in our diverse city.

**SELENA BESIREVIC—Attorney at the Harris Law Firm P.C., Denver, CO**

**"My America...is called home."**



Home. It takes only four letters to write the word, but some, it takes a life time to find its meaning. The word has caused me, as a former refugee, much pain, confusion, and uncertainty. When I finally found its meaning, I found peace. Home for me was Bosnia and Herzegovina. The bloody aggression and genocide inflicted upon Bosnia in the 1990s forced me and my family to run to save our lives. America opened its doors and welcomed us to its shores. With resilience, ambition, strength within ourselves and support from **LIRS**'s help, we got back on our feet.

My fellow migrants: just as my family did, you will encounter obstacles and people who will not accept you. You will be judged by the community, as well as by people who come from the same place as you. This is inescapable. You must remember one thing: you are in America now, where the only person who can stand in your way is you. Other roadblocks and people can stop you only if you let them. That is the beauty of this country. You have the freedom to shape your own life and build your own future.

We come from a place where other people got to write our books of life and dictate our faith. America is giving you a chance to start over, a chance to write your own book of life. I am still writing mine; it includes all my mistakes, all my regrets, all my successes; and all of my happiness; but the most important part is that it's MINE. From this day forward, start writing the chapters of your book of life. And it is my hope for you that one day soon, you will no longer feel like a refugee, but a person who can smile and say, "I am home."

**RANA ALMISHLIB—Loans Operations Officer at LIRS, Baltimore, MD**

**“My American...is a place of freedom.”**

I'd like to share how this country is free and blessed. Anybody can be a citizen no matter their race, color, or religion. I want to share about the way that this country gave me a lot of power-that I can be equal, no matter my gender or my religion.

I would encourage anyone who couldn't find this peace and equality in their country to be grateful and motivated to do it, work towards U.S. citizenship.

My new life started here, in a peaceful country. No matter what difficulties I have been through, either in my origin country or adjusting here, I can only say it was worth all of the sacrifices.



## **Flood Buckets Distributed Around the Synod**

### **Emanuel Lutheran, Council Bluffs**

15 flood buckets to Missouri Valley

10 to Sidney area

### **Our Saviors in Council Bluffs**

1 to South Omaha,

5 to Pacific Junction through St John's in Mineola,

19 delivered to the Council Bluffs Police Department

### **Hope Lutheran in Sioux Center**

24 flood buckets to Trinity Lutheran in Merville, who

shared them with families in need in Merville,

Kingsley, and Hornick

### **Immanuel in Forest City**

10 flood buckets to Algona for surrounding areas



### **PLEASE NOTE:**

There are more flood buckets available around the synod. Bill Peters is our synod's Disaster Response Coordinator. Please give Bill a call if you are in need of flood buckets or other assistance. 712-454-4590

**Watch for more information for an in kind offering for the synod assembly. We will be collecting and assembling flood buckets & supplies at the assembly!!**

# Lutheran Disaster Response Updates

## POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Lutheran Disaster Response works in partnership with congregations, synods, social service organizations and other partners in the United States and around the world. With their deep knowledge of local needs and how to address them, these partners help us work in ways that are relevant and effective for each community. Through these partnerships, we accompany survivors from the time a disaster strikes until communities are rebuilt. Lutheran Disaster Response is in for the long haul!

Did you know that **100 %** of your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response go to the disaster?

## Cyclone Idai



### Situation

Cyclone Idai made landfall in Mozambique on March 14. It has caused widespread flooding and destruction in parts of southeast Africa including Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. At least 300 people have been killed across the impacted region and thousands more are at risk due to the continued rise of flood waters. At least 1.5 million people have been affected by this devastating storm, being reported as one of the worst weather-related disasters ever recorded in the southern hemisphere.

### Response

Lutheran Disaster Response is working with our global partners and companions to respond to this disaster. In Zimbabwe, for example, ACT Alliance members are planning on providing blankets, hygiene kits, food, clothing and diapers for up to 6,000 affected people and children to ensure that basic needs are met. We are also reaching out to our companion churches in the region as they assess needs in their communities and prepare to respond.



## Tornadoes in the Southeast

### Situation

On March 3, powerful tornadoes hit Alabama, Georgia and Florida, causing widespread destruction. At least 23 people have died in Lee County, Alabama, and others are still unaccounted for. More than 1,000 homes have been reported damaged. Search and Rescue, debris removal and damage assessments continue in Alabama and Georgia.

### Response

Lutheran Disaster Response is working with the Southeastern Synod, local congregations and In Spiritus (formerly **Lutheran Services of Georgia**) to provide immediate and long-lasting support to communities impacted by this disaster.

## U. S. Flooding



### Situation

Heavy rainfall last month caused rapid snow melt that has resulted in major flooding across at least four states. So far, three people have died and hundreds of homes and business have been impacted. Mandatory and voluntary evacuation orders remain in place. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 200 miles of levees have been compromised in four states and historic flood levels have been recorded at 42 locations across six states. Though water is receding, in many areas, more rain is anticipated along with warmer weather that may increase water levels from snow and ice melt.

### Response

Lutheran Disaster Response, through congregations, synods and our affiliates across Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin and Missouri is responding to this disaster. The road to recovery will be long, and Lutheran Disaster Response will be there to accompany those affected through every phase of this disaster. Your gifts are needed to launch recovery efforts. Gifts designated for "U.S. Flooding" will be used to assist those affected by the floodwaters, until the response is complete.



## Hurricane Florence

### Situation

In September 2018, Hurricane Florence struck the Carolinas and the surrounding states with dangerous winds, storm surge, and extensive flooding. The hurricane caused more than 50 deaths, displaced thousands of people from their homes and caused billions of dollars in damage.

### Response

Lutheran Disaster Response is working with **Lutheran Services Carolinas** (LSC), the North and South Carolina synods, and other community partners to help those impacted by the hurricane. Currently, through LSC, we have assisted 112 households in 21 counties across North and South Carolina with unmet needs such as, home repairs, temporary and permanent shelter, furniture, appliances and more.

## Fires in California months later

### Situation

In late 2018, wildfires raged across both northern and southern California, destroying thousands of homes and nearly wiping out the town of Paradise, north of Sacramento. Nearly 90 people were reported dead and thousands of people remain displaced from the Camp Fire in the north, which destroyed more than 13,000 homes.

### Response

Lutheran Disaster Response is working with **Lutheran Social Services of Southern California, Lutheran Social Services of Northern California** and the California synods to respond to this fire. Your gifts have helped survivors buy essentials like groceries and other basic needs. In the months to come, we will continue to work with our partners to address such longer-term needs as rebuilding homes, replacing lost property, and emotional and spiritual care.



## Venezuelan Refugee Crisis



### Situation

Growing numbers of people continue to leave Venezuela for reasons, including insecurity and violence, lack of food, medicine or access to essential social services, and loss of income. The United Nation reports that 2.3 million Venezuelans live outside the country of which about 1.6 million having left the since 2015. While not all may be refugees, it is evident that a significant number are in need of international protection. The passage and arrival of thousands of people from Venezuela in search of better opportunities has particularly impacted the border areas in Colombia, causing some social and economic conflict. In addition a number of Venezuelan refugees are fleeing to Peru. The country has become the largest refugee hosting country in Latin America, with 126,997 asylum applications since 2014. Other countries across South America are also receiving Venezuelan migrants. The Venezuelan migration crisis is a Latin American crisis which requires a regional response. Through our network of companion churches and ecumenical partners, our church is in a unique position to influence events -- not only within countries of migrant transit or destination -- but at the regional level.

### Response

Lutheran Disaster Response, in partnership with companion churches and other Lutheran partners, is accompanying Venezuelan families affected by this humanitarian crisis, throughout the Latin America region. Support, so far includes:

Supporting for **Union Evangelica Pentecostal Venezolana** (UEPV) and **Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Valencia** (IELV) in providing basic necessities to low-income and vulnerable children and families and coordinating training opportunities for UEPV, IELV and other local organizations in Venezuela to help improve service delivery in their communities.

Supporting **Lutheran World Federation-Colombia** in providing relief assistance and livelihood opportunities to Venezuelan refugees and the host communities.

Assisting **Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Colombia** (IELCO) in welcoming and providing hospitality to Venezuelan refugees through congregations.

Partnering with the **World Association for Christian Communication** (WACC) and IELCO to address the communication and information deficits affecting migrants, and the host communities.

Supporting **Iglesia Luterana del Peru**, **Lutheran World Relief** (LWR) and local partner, **Encuentros-Peru**, in assisting Venezuelans with basic needs and legal assistance in Peru.

## Ice Cream Machine and Game Afternoon

Around 70 people from ages 5 to 80something attended the **Cross Generational Ministry Lab** in Sioux City March 16<sup>th</sup>. The morning was lead by churchwide representative Linda Staats and Emily Dalen led the afternoon. There were numerous ways presented to involve all ages in activities to help build relationships.

I visited **Trinity Lutheran in Estherville** recently. They mentioned their ice cream machine. I asked a few people about their machine. They proudly told me they use it for special occasions like Wednesday nights for Lenten services and for their upcoming Game Afternoon. For Game Afternoon participants are asked to bring their favorite board games, snacks, and a friend or two. Games, snacks, and ice cream sounds like

**Cross Generational** fun to me!

## **May 3-5**      **WIS Assembly in Sioux City**

Plans are coming together, with a big part being the Bishop election. Pat and Ann have done a fabulous job with a Hunger Table in years past. Ideas for a forum as time might allow? What kind of presence do we want to have at assembly?

Missional Storytellers have a table. Please, visit our table.

Barb Brennan, Mission Interpreter (Missional Storyteller)

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