

# SHARING

## newsletter

## Pro-life family counseling center shares hope in Russia

By Elizabeth Truong

In the spiritual vacuum left by the fall of communism, many Russian people struggle with divorce, substance abuse, unexpected pregnancies and the long-term effects of previous abortions, loneliness and intolerance. For families, and especially women, who are shouldering these burdens, the Hope Counseling Center in St. Petersburg is a beacon of grace-filled light and hope.

With more than 100 visitors per month, the Hope Counseling Center, operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR), an LCMS sister/partner church, has plentiful opportunities to share the hope of Christ in word and deed. Its monthly operating expenses are covered by a grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, and Director Olga Ryumina writes, "In every morning prayer, before we begin our work, we thank God for the funds that allow us to keep working for the good of women and strengthening their families in the light of Gospel truth."

The center provides computer training and clothing for those in need. The staff shares spiritual truths by weaving the Word of God into many of its services and activities. In the center's computer training, the challenges and problems of life provide content for students to type about — and an opening to share God's Word in response.

Most clients served by the center come through referrals of past clients who speak warmly of the love and practical help that they received through the center. Ryumina says, "Our clients look at us as kind and

patient people, which is a rare thing in our hardened society."

The center also serves as a resource for Lutheran congregations that have witnessed the effectiveness of the center's ministry and see the need for a similar family focused ministry based out of their own congregations. The staff has also provided basic training in family ministry for pastoral ministry students at the ELCIR's nearby seminary.

Deaconess Maria Popova benefits from Hope's support as she serves at a congregation in Saransk, a small town in the republic of Mordovia, about 300 miles southeast of Moscow. Ryumina explains, "There are a large number of surgical abortions performed in Saransk. No one there provides pro-life information, even the physicians. Maria's modest steps in this sphere are already accomplishing

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a great deal in sharing the Christian view of childbearing." She is passionate about educating women in her town about the affects of abortion and the alternatives that are avail-



Deaconess Maria Popova serves a congregation in Saransk, Russia. As a part of her ministry, she provides information to women about pregnancy and alternatives to abortion.

able when facing an unwanted pregnancy.

"We realize more and more that the women we serve know very little about the life of a Christian and they open their Bibles very rarely. If we don't use the Bible in our activities, the light of truth would never be available to most of them," says Ryumina. "We may hear, 'What's the sense in praying? Nothing changes!' But when their problems push them into a corner, they start listening better, looking for help and trying to follow biblical guidelines."

To learn more about LCMS work in Russia, visit [www.lcms.org/russia](http://www.lcms.org/russia).

## Give God Glory...

... for the students at Immanuel Lutheran School, Perryville, Mo.

"During Lutheran Schools Week, our students collect their loose change 'chicken feed' to donate to LCMS World Relief and Human Care to help build a chicken farm in Haiti. During our family times throughout the week, the students were given a chicken phrase and had to decorate a chicken to match the phrase. Immanuel students brought their 'chicken feed' in every day to donate toward the chicken farm. Their total donation amount came to \$327," writes Sandy Hadler Roth, an art teacher at Immanuel.



Eighth-grade Immanuel students pose with their decorated chicken poster, which they titled, "No Spring Chicken."

### How Your Gifts Support LCMS World Relief and Human Care

You can help make projects like these possible with your continuing or new gifts to "Where Needed Most." Please use the envelope provided in this issue to send your gift to help LCMS World Relief and Human Care continue to reach out with Christ's mercy around the world. (Note: Thanks to your generous gifts, this publication may occasionally feature projects that have been fully funded.)

The mission of the church through LCMS World Relief and Human Care is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, motivated by Christ and His Gospel, according to the Lutheran confession of the faith.

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# Sharing mercy and life together in flood-ravaged Minot, North Dakota

By Kim Krull

Months after the Souris River crested in June, some 4,100 families continue to deal with flood-damaged or destroyed homes in Minot, N.D. Many are spending the winter in Federal Emergency Management Assistance (FEMA) trailers.

"It's still overwhelming," said Sue Hendrickson, secretary at St. Mark Lutheran Church, whose home filled with water to the roof. She now lives in a FEMA trailer parked in her yard. "At least my husband and I don't have small children [like many families whose homes were flooded]. I don't know how they're managing in such small space."

Nearly 300 families from three LCMS congregations and the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch (DBGR), an LCMS Recognized Service Organization, are among those affected by the historic floods.

Since summer, LCMS ministry leaders representing LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) have traveled several times to Minot, working with partners to help with emergency and long-term recovery efforts.

In early 2012, the Rev. Glenn F. Merritt, director of LCMS Disaster Response, plans to return to Minot to help address the huge need for rebuilding in the community. Plans are in the works to open Hope Village this spring at Our Savior Lutheran Church as a center for volunteers who, Merritt hopes, will come from throughout the country to lend a hand. (To help, sign up here: [www.oslcnw.com](http://www.oslcnw.com).)

"The task of rebuilding homes and lives in Minot would be truly overwhelming if not for the support and encouragement of fellow Lutherans," Merritt said. "Both volunteers and continuing financial gifts are going to be needed long after winter ends."

To date, WR-HC donors have made possible a total \$269,800 in grants for the district, DBGR and the three LCMS congregations to provide families with financial assistance for temporary housing and other emergency needs.



Deb Walker, left, a member of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Minot, N.D., tells the Rev. John A. Fale, interim co-executive director with the Office of International Mission, about challenges since floodwaters ruined her family's home. Since summer, ministry leaders representing LCMS World Relief and Human Care have continued to work with partners on long-term recovery efforts. (Al Dowbnia photo)

In addition to providing financial help, LCMS ministries have cared for their congregations and community in many ways. Our Savior Lutheran turned the church fellowship hall into an emergency meal center. St. Mark Lutheran hosted a "community giveaway day" of donated household items.

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In November, St. Paul invited families affected by the flood to an evening meal, to provide fellowship and mutual support. This was the first of what members plan to make a monthly activity.

Amid the devastation, the Rev. Dr. James Baneck, president of the LCMS North Dakota District, says he is thankful for how the church-at-large is reaching out in Minot, both physically and spiritually.

"This is our mercy and life together as we help one another in time of need and crisis," said Baneck, referring to the new LCMS emphasis for the church, "Witness, Mercy, Life Together."

St. Paul members Jim and Peggy Roberts also live in a FEMA trailer since floodwaters ravaged their home. Like most Minot residents, they, too, lacked flood insurance.

The couple plans to rebuild. "There will be some things we can't do," said Peggy. "There are a lot of needs now. And come spring, there will be even more."

See video interviews and more pictures from WR-HC's disaster response in Minot at [www.lcms.org/disaster](http://www.lcms.org/disaster), [www.facebook.com/lcmswrhc](http://www.facebook.com/lcmswrhc) and [www.youtube.com/mercycubewrhc](http://www.youtube.com/mercycubewrhc)

## From the Executive Director

*"I came that they (the sheep) may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10*

The Christian church is in the midst of Epiphany, a time of celebrating the wonderful, revealed Light of the World given to us by God. Jesus came to give life to the full. As we listen to the appointed Gospel readings from Mark, it is clear from these readings that Jesus gave life: as He called people to repentance; as He preached and taught in the synagogue; as He cast out demons, lifted fevers and cleansed lepers. Doing all of this because He was "moved with compassion." The living Lord of Life has compassion upon His creation and gives life.

Giving life continues now through the work of His church. Abundant life is given through the Gospel as the Light dispels darkness. Those who are dead in their trespasses and sins are made alive through the forgiveness of sin.

We take Scripture seriously, taking God at His Word as He speaks about life. He is the creator of all life. There is nothing in existence that hasn't come from Him. Because life is a gift of God, beginning at conception, we are serious about protecting and serving all human life until its end in death. Whether it is through the compassionate service of our disaster response, our institutional chaplains and pastoral counselors, pregnancy counseling centers through our life ministries, our parish nurses and mercy medical teams, or assisting our church workers through our Veterans of the Cross and Soldiers of the Cross ministries, we value and serve life.

Your gifts make it possible for us to bring the compassion of the Lord of Life to those in need within our borders and throughout the world. As we begin this New Year, I am confident that our Epiphany Light will bless us with what is needed to continue these ministries of mercy. And I look forward to your continued partnership in our Witness and Mercy.

A blessed New Year in Jesus,

Rev. John A. Fale  
Interim Co-Executive Director, Office of International Mission  
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