

SHARING newsletter

Acts of mercy lead to new congregations in Chile

By Elizabeth M. Truong

When an 8.8 magnitude earthquake shook Chile on Feb. 27, 2010, members of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile (IELCHI) sought out fellow Chileans in need. Mindful of their limitations as a small church body, they wanted to help, even though there were no IELCHI congregations in the south, where earthquake damage was the most severe.

Thanks to an initial grant of \$61,000 from LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC), the IELCHI sent teams of pastors and lay volunteers to make weekly trips to care for those in need. The teams walked alongside the families as they recovered — and looked for ways to help them — providing a door and windows as a family rebuilt, or supplying electrical wiring. Every team included a pastor who provided spiritual care, comfort and counseling from God’s Word for victims and relief workers.

The Rev. Carlos Schumann, IELCHI pastor and former president, explained that simply by being present in people’s lives provided avenues to share Christ’s mercy. He said, “We were sharing Christ even without words — with our tears and our hands.”

WR-HC staff the Rev. Glenn Merritt and the Rev. Carlos Hernandez travelled to Chile twice in the months following the earthquake to help the IELCHI pastors craft an action plan as they visited ministry sites together. Merritt and Hernandez also provided disaster training to pastors and members of the IELCHI and plan on returning to Chile in late March 2012 to continue assessing needs

and supporting the IELCHI’s efforts. Pastor Schumann said, “We had a plan, but we needed more ideas. [Merritt and Hernandez] encouraged us and walked along with us in the middle of the disaster and [were] an important help for us.”

Today, because of the faithful witness and acts of mercy shared by the Lutheran teams, the IELCHI is planting two new congregations — one in Constitución and one in Talca. An additional WR-HC grant of \$150,000, to be provided over the next three years, has made it possible for the Rev. Omar Kinas, a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, to begin serving in Constitución and Talca as project manager and missionary. The grant covers the Kinas family’s living expenses, evangelistic materials and resources for volunteers. Additionally, the LCMS most recently committed to provide a grant of \$100,000, which will allow the mission in Constitución to purchase property where it can conduct worship services and meet regularly.

Kinas shared the story of Angelica Escobar, who lost her 19-year-old son in an accident shortly before the earthquake. Facing these traumatic events, she fell into a state of deep depression. Through participation in Bible studies and worship, along with pastoral and professional counseling in the months following the earthquake, she has a new outlook on life — becoming one of the Constitución congregation’s most active members. She helps with worship services and shares Christ’s mercy with others in her vocation as a nurse.



IELCHI President Rev. Cristian Rautenberg (second from right) talks with victims of the 2010 earthquake.



A member of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile, right, visits with a woman whose home was damaged by the earthquake and offers “Strength for Hard Times” pamphlets provided by Lutheran Hour Ministries.

God’s Word is a great comfort to Escobar as she moves forward — and intentionally shares the Gospel with the people who He places in her path.

To learn more about LCMS witness and mercy work in Chile, visit www.lcms.org/chile.

Give God Glory...

... for Immanuel Lutheran Church, Belvidere, Ill., which has supported mercy work in Haiti, Kenya and Madagascar since 2006. The congregation collects funds to provide orphans with special Christmas events. Working with The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya’s Diakonia Compassionate Ministry, food, medicine and small gifts are given out with God’s Word. Immanuel encourages its members to provide for one child through a \$15 donation. Pastor Allan Buss said, “This is one of our expressions of being a witness — in Acts 1:8 ... local, regional, national and to the ends of the earth. Kenya is one of our ‘ends of the earth’ missions.

“Part of our core life at Immanuel is ‘Being Christ to Others.’ I personally am humbled by the growth of the congregation in this initiative of mercy.”



DCM gives spiritual and physical support to the vulnerable in Kenyan communities, including orphans, people with disabilities and those in need of healthcare.

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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Kendall Cares Clinic provides care for nearly 400

By Elizabeth M. Truong

In a place where unemployment is higher than the national average, and home foreclosures have increased by 600 percent, a free community clinic providing basic human care services was a welcome blessing for the residents of Kendall County, Ill.

In May 2010 more than 600 volunteers from four LCMS congregations banded together to host the first-annual “Kendall Cares Clinic.” Volunteers served 374 visitors to the clinic, mercifully caring for their physical needs in Christ’s name. Along with the medical, dental, chiropractic and optical screenings provided, clinic visitors benefited from free haircuts, meals, clothing, oil changes and tire rotations.

Brenda Ulrich, the clinic’s coordinator, explained that many families’ lives were touched through the merciful care and services offered. She wrote, “One of our parking lot attendants began talking with a man and told him about the clinic. The man admitted that he was headed to a nearby Wal-Mart to steal some food. Our attendant persuaded him to check in to the clinic. Pastor Peter Hoffmann from St. Luke Lutheran Church, Montgomery, spoke with the man throughout the day and learned that he was thinking of leaving his wife and family.

“Pastor Pete took him to the clothing closet at the clinic and he picked out a suit. They ate a meal together and talked. He left, but a while later, he returned with his whole family and had the suit on. They had a family photograph taken, were able to get some food and were given a ride home. All through God’s grace and timing, this man was not put in jail on the day of the clinic, but connected with a pastor and strengthened his relationship with his family.”

Ulrich also wrote, “God provided just the right number of people for us to serve and the right number of providers and supplies to serve them.”

A \$5,000 grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, made possible by the gifts of LCMS members, helped cover operating expenses for the clinic, and provided the means to pay for follow-up medical expenses for families who could not afford the more advanced treatment they needed. Ulrich wrote, “What a blessing this has been! Two people with severe dental infections have received care and are now on their way to restored health. They would have been unable to pay for additional care and would not have been cared for as quickly, which would have resulted in additional pain and cost.”

Following the success of this first clinic, the four congregations hosted it for the second time on May 21, 2011, and plan to do it again on April 28, 2012. The congregations hope and pray that the clinic will create ongoing avenues for outreach in the community, in which many members will participate and, eventually, lead to the formation of a Lutheran congregation among the Hispanic community in nearby Plano, Ill.

To learn more about domestic grants available through the LCMS, visit www.lcms.org/domesticgrants.



Several local hairstylists volunteered their services for the day to provide guests with free haircuts at the clinic.



A volunteer from Brenart Eye Clinic, Yorkville, Ill., helps at the Kendall Cares Clinic by providing eye exams for guests.



The 2010 Kendall Cares Clinic benefited from the service of more than 600 volunteers from four local congregations.

From the Executive Director

Yesterday I overheard three pastors seated across from me at a pastoral care conference in Washington, D.C. One of the men remarked, “I’m trying to get my congregation involved in justice ministry. I just can’t get them going.” Another responded, “When I talk to my people about what they want, they say they want mercy, not justice.” After a brief pause, he continued, “Because they know what they’ll get if they ask God for justice.”

In the Gospel lesson for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, the apostle John records Jesus’ words to Nicodemus, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (John 3:17–18 ESV).

Our sin condemns us to an eternal death. Thanks be to God that Jesus came to pay the price God justly demands for our sin through His suffering and death. Eternal death has been mercifully removed from us in the resurrection of His Son. God’s mercy declares us forgiven and compels us to live mercifully with our neighbor.

Each day of living in His kingdom is a day of receiving His mercy. In turn, we show mercy to our neighbor next door, our neighbor across the United States and our neighbor across the world.

Your support, through prayers and gifts, enables The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to speak mercy through the Gospel and to show mercy in the relief of suffering.

Peace be with you through His mercy.

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