

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN REGION

LCMS MISSION
ANNUAL REPORT

2025



Summary

The LAC Region comprises Central and South America as well as the Caribbean. This year we celebrated our 125th year since starting mission work in Brazil. Missionary church planting has led to the LCMS having 10 partner churches in our region, which include Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela, Mexico, Haiti, Guatemala and Uruguay. After 14 years of working closely with the Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica Luterana (ICEL) Bolivia, altar and pulpit fellowship was declared by Rev. Dr. President Matthew Harrison in St. Louis in May 2025.

Our missionaries directly support church planting in 10 countries or are a step removed by preparing pastors for these church plants. While we plant churches, we do not create national churches. Our work is to throw out the seed with reckless abandon, purposely and intentionally gather in those who respond to the Gospel around Word and Sacrament, as that is where Jesus has promised to be and give of His life-giving signs and gifts for the forgiveness of sins.

The Lord of the harvest has continued to provide alliance missionaries, particularly from our partner church of Brazil (IELB), for which we are grateful. An alliance missionary is a pastor from a partner church who is called and sent by our partner church to work alongside LCMS missionaries in the planting of churches under our supervision and support. We are grateful for these dedicated men and their families who faithfully teach alongside our LCMS missionaries.

SPREAD THE
GOSPEL

PLANT
LUTHERAN
CHURCHES

SHOW
MERCY

Spread the Gospel



The Gospel always seeks free course, and serious missionary efforts are always intentional and involve the throwing out of the Gospel in a variety of fashions, which include literature, continuing education courses, Luther Academy, and other missionary ventures.

VDMA

VDMA is a digital initiative of LCMS Mission LAC to provide solid Lutheran orthodox literature to pastors in 22 countries. To date, there are 420 pastors and seminarians who receive free theological works in Spanish and Portuguese in exegesis, practical, historical and doctrine. More than 54 books have been released to Latino seminarians and pastors, whereas previously, Latino pastors only had an average of 3 Lutheran books.

A team of 35 translators and editors continues to translate and provide these resources under the capable leadership of Deaconess Cheryl Naumann, who has ably directed this initiative at the behest of the VDMA committee for the past 10 years. Partners include Concordia Publishing House, Lutheran Heritage Foundation, Lutheran Academy and many others. Though these books are sent digitally, LCMS Mission also sends physical copies to 40 libraries across North America, as well as South America, in the hope that students and the like will find these and be exposed to good Lutheran theology. Many of these VDMA books can be found on Amazon for a minimum price of \$1-\$3, and more than 2500 such books have been sold across a dozen countries, making excellent Lutheran literature available to anyone interested.

Spread the Gospel

We are thankful to report that all 8 of the Confessional Lutheran Dogmatic series are now in Spanish and 2 are in Portuguese, with another 3 in process. We are also thankful for the e-book of our new Spanish hymnal, Himnario Luterano, which can be purchased online via Amazon and used on one's tablet or cellphone, making this hymnal, which the Synod adapted in the last convention, even more versatile, especially in mission settings where it is difficult to make accessible physical books across Latin America.

LUTHER ACADEMY

Luther Academy courses, in coordination with executive Rev. Dr. Bennett and Rev. Carlos Schumann, also continue to be taught yearly across the Americas. In the last triennium, 34 theological conferences have been held involving 19 countries and more than 600 pastors and seminarians across 15 countries.



Plant Lutheran Churches

The planting of Lutheran churches is the primary focus of LCMS LAC, as we are committed to bringing to the people in the countries that we serve the fullness of the Gospel as confessed in our liturgy, creeds, Law and Gospel preaching, pastoral care, Small Catechism, and instruction in Christian righteousness.

Missionaries

Church planting continues, as in the last triennium, in Belize, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, and Puerto Rico. Our missionaries also assist in planting Lutheran churches in Mexico and Uruguay. At the time of this writing, 50 LCMS and Alliance missionaries are actively planting Lutheran churches. In 2025 alone, we have seen 12 new missionaries join the work in LAC, which is the largest influx of missionaries in one year in the past six years.

Twelve districts, perhaps hundreds of congregations, RSOs, Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson of Disaster Response and individuals of Synod visit our mission sites twice a year during FORO meetings to receive reports, attend worship, study theology and review the work that is presented to them.

In Cuba, we have seen our work expand from one pastor to three, with an additional 2 men currently studying, a deaconess, and five more preparing for diaconal work. We are also glad to report that the Sinodo Luterano Mexico has grown from 3 pastors 10 years ago, to 10, with another five studying and potentially another 6 joining the Concordia Seminary (CMSCR) in the Dominican Republic, next year.



Plant Lutheran Churches

Short-term Teams

In LAC, an average of 30 Short-Term Teams support church planting. A secondary goal is to have 50% of our teams focus on mission education, strengthening our laity in their understanding of Lutheran missions both abroad and at home. Our capacity to handle short-term teams in proximity to Lutheran church plants through our FOROs has allowed us to see an average of 50 teams a year, with 25-30 handled by our LCMS missionary coordinators and the rest through RSO partners such as the Belize Mission Society, Ysleta, and MOST. We are grateful for these partnerships with our RSOs at our FOROs and their collaboration in placing their teams in proximity to our church plants. Special thanks to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, for sending nearly 100 seminarians and deaconess students to the Dominican Republic for three consecutive years for mission education on Short Term Teams. Likewise, through an initiative by the Office of the President, 10 new district presidents were in the Dominican Republic in 2025 with Rev. Dr Cory Rajek to learn of the work of LCMS Mission around the world and how to partner with her in her worldwide work.



Plant Lutheran Churches



New Lutheran church plants in the past three years are found in Choluteca, Honduras; Havana, Cuba; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Tijuana, Mexico; Chetumal, Mexico; San Pedro Peralta, Mexico; La Chorrera, Panama; Cienfuegos, Santiago, Dominican Republic; Salto, Uruguay; and Canelones, Uruguay.

Missionary Care

The planting of Lutheran churches requires that a missionary be prepared and supported in this task. As such, our Language Institute, which teaches missionaries Spanish and English, is in its 10th year. A missionary needs, through the Network Support Mission model, to have an average of 150 donors before deploying to the Dominican Republic for orientation. Once arriving in the DR for orientation, missionaries engage in 4 months of intensive language learning, cultural adaptation, studying religious currents in Latin America, making visits, preaching, and the like. Following this, they deploy to their field of service, often still learning Spanish and beginning their church-planting work.

Human Care missionaries, Deaconess nurse Tirzah Krey and Deaconess nurse Jamielynn Tinkey Flores, lead the human care circle. Rev. Dr. Jonathan Naumann and Rev. Dan Conrad, both veteran pastors and missionaries, serve as chaplains to our English and Spanish-speaking missionaries and serve as professors at our CMSCR seminary. This Human Care circle advocates for our missionaries, helping obtain visas, housing, access to medical services, finances, education for children, and the like.

Plant Lutheran Churches

Our average tenure of missionary service in LAC is 6.9 years, which is potentially the highest average achieved in the past 20 years. The Human Care circle continues to directly contribute to the longevity of missionaries continuing to serve in LAC.

LCMS Mission LAC Human Care also supports a once-a-year missionary conference, which this past year was held in St. Louis in recognition of LCMS mission work, which began in Brazil in 1900 with missionary Mahler. Concordia Historical Institute partnered with the LAC region under the banner 'Remember, Repent, Rejoice', and has upheld Brazilian missionary work in its main exhibit for 2025-2026. All of our missionaries were made CHI members. Concordia Historical Quarterly dedicated its spring issue to missionary essays. Additionally, Krey and Naumann published a missionary book of 8 historical essays of LCMS LAC work in her mission fields. We are grateful to Altenberg and Historic Trinity in St. Louis for allowing us to use the two chalices that were brought from Germany with the Saxons for our divine service in those churches, as we visited our American Lutheran roots and studied with Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast the early church planting efforts of the LCMS and the founding of her seminaries.



Plant Lutheran Churches

Pastoral and Diaconal Formation

Our Concordia Seminary (CMSCR) in the Dominican Seminary is in its 9th year of existence. Forty-four men have graduated from our residential and online (FPH) programs, and via colloquy since its inception. In May 2026, we anticipate the graduation of 13 pastoral students. Twelve men are currently in the pastoral residential program, which teaches men to be evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. In this four-year program, men study Greek and Hebrew and receive four classes in the Lutheran confessions. Additionally, 16 men are currently in the FPH online program, which is also a joint program with Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, the Specific Ministry Pastor Program in Spanish/English. In July 2026, we await with joy the graduation of our first seven men from the FPQ program in Bolivia, which is taught in the Quechua language. We anticipate 10-12 new men entering our residential pastoral program in September 2026. Our 9th annual symposia is focused on Church Planting, in which Rev. Dr. Detlev Schulz's book *Mission from the Cross* will be presented in Spanish, and church planters from LAC and missionaries alike will participate.

In this past triennium, we graduated 50 deaconess students from our second cohort, bringing our total to 146 graduates from the three-year program. A third cohort of 69 diaconal students, from 11 countries, has completed their first year of studies.



Plant Lutheran Churches



Expanding the Reach

This year, we launched our Phoebe Academy in three countries, which focuses on encouraging deaconesses in the Word, fellowship, and diaconal work. The goal is to annually offer courses, Bible studies, workshops, and special studies, as requested, across different church bodies and mission fields.

A Lutheran teacher program is being built and, Lord willing, will be launched in this next triennium to bolster Lutheran identity in our schools across the region.

LCMS Mission and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, in coordination with Rev. Kevin Robson and Rev. Bart Day, have partnered with Concordia Seminary Argentina to remodel a portion of their seminary to expand their capacity to receive students and to rent a portion of their property, enabling the seminary to support an additional professor. Currently, the LCMS Mission endorses the salary of one professor at Concordia Seminary, Argentina. These remodels will contribute towards the seminary's goal to pursue accreditation for its pastoral students for the first time.

Show Mercy

Mercy Work

Our Mercy Center in the Dominican Republic (an institute of CMSCR) offers 10 workshops for the laity. New workshops are on Stewardship, Marriage and the Himnario Luterano. These workshops are taught across the region and in 15 countries, as requested by pastors or partner churches, with an average of 15 workshops offered each year. These are meant to help lay people be a force for mercy in their homes, workplaces, and communities.

Our deaconess graduates today work in the Lutheran Hour, Sunday School, homes for the elderly, Lutheran schools, afterschool programs, vacation Bible schools, hospital and elderly home visitation, working with youth, group homes for people with disabilities, soup kitchens, and any other places where the marginalized are found.

Mercy houses in Belize, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico and Venezuela include Lutheran schools, group homes, after-school programs, food kitchens and disaster relief centers. In each of these areas, the Gospel is offered alongside bodily care.



Show Mercy

Haiti and Venezuela

Haiti continues to be a challenging situation with a weak government in place. Our Haitian Lutheran church continues to serve its people in dire circumstances, and LCMS Mission strives financially to support the six districts there twice a year.

The Venezuelan exile now exceeds 8 million people and is the single largest exodus of people from one country in the western hemisphere since World War II. LCMS Mission continues to support the faithful work of its partner church in Venezuela by forming pastors, preparing deaconesses and working with the board of directors of the Iglesia Luterana Venezuela (ILV) in its ministry and mission needs through the FORO in Venezuela. We strive to connect Lutheran immigrants with our LCMS missions around LAC and assist these refugees as they settle in their new countries. We continue to work with our partner church in Chile to send tens of thousands of dollars in medicine to Venezuela through Lutheran communities and their neighbors throughout the year.

