



LUTHERAN  
WORLD RELIEF

## *God's Love* IN ACTION

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# God's Love IN ACTION

## DEAR PARTNER IN MINISTRY,

### As pastors, you know all about loving people in crisis.

Whether it be a parishioner in distress or a neighbor thousands of miles away, you and your congregation are there for those in need.

### And that love changes lives.

It surrounds our neighbors who fearfully face violence and illness and those whose bellies rumble with constant hunger. Your love goes further and deeper to reach the most vulnerable in the hardest-to-reach places.

Through your partnership with Lutheran World Relief, your congregation is an enormous blessing to so many of our neighbors around the world. Your love is reaching farther, changing lives, lifting up those who are suffering.

In this issue of *God's Love in Action*, we're highlighting the ways your love is on the frontlines (right) and the ways you are providing life-saving care in places that will likely never make the evening news. Turn the page to read more.

Please see the HOW TO HELP sections to join us in this ministry and reach our global neighbors in crisis. **Thank you for your compassionate service.**

In faith,



**REV. LISA KIPP**  
Director of  
Congregational Engagement  
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**COVER:** When Aminata Traoré's husband died eight years ago, she was left alone to raise her granddaughter, Oumou. Turn the page to read how your congregation's compassion is helping our hungry neighbors in Mali.



**RIGHT:** Emily Grose, Lutheran World Relief humanitarian action staff member, stands amidst the rubble in Antakya, Türkiye following a series of massive earthquakes last February.



**ABOVE:** Families in Gaza displaced by the ongoing war.



In **UKRAINE**, you are contributing to the largest humanitarian effort in our history by supporting mobile medical units that are reaching people living in communities with no access to health care because of the war. In the first two months of operation, some **5,000 people** were reached by these clinics on wheels and more than **15,000 medical services** were provided.



In **TÜRKIYE**, your love provided both immediate and long-term comfort for those rocked by the devastating earthquakes last February. Because of you, **3,000 people** received **food and hygiene supplies** in the first days following the disaster. And once the rubble had settled, your love was still there. It provided **210 people** with **long-term housing**, complete with plumbing, electricity and heating.



# Your love **ON THE FRONTLINES**

How congregations are making a difference around the world in times of crisis



In **GAZA**, your support is supplying an aid truck filled with essential supplies through the one and only access gate. It is carrying **diapers, feminine hygiene products, laundry powder and more** — enough for more than **10,000 people**. Every item on the truck was provided by generous people like you.



In **LEBANON**, your love is bringing **emergency food** to neighbors who have been displaced due to the conflict in Israel and Gaza. We are in the early stages of **planning a shipment of LWR Quilts, Personal Care Kits and Baby Care Kits**.



In **LIBYA**, your kindness is sheltering and caring for families whose homes were washed away in the devastating floods in September. Thanks to you, more than **2,000 neighbors** have received **tents, tarps and clothes**.



In **MOROCCO**, you are delivering **mattresses, blankets, and insulated tents** for more than **2,000 survivors** of the 6.8 magnitude earthquake that devastated families and homes in September.

## HOW TO HELP:

**\$2,500** can provide fuel for one week for a mobile medical team in Ukraine. War has made fuel expensive and difficult to obtain, but it is essential for keeping this lifesaving mission moving forward and reaching those most in need.

**Can your congregation support the cost of fuel to operate this life-saving mobile clinic?**

See the back page for how to share your congregation's generosity.



## WATCH THE VIDEO:

Watch the video, “**Your love provides housing, healthcare and hope in Ukraine,**” to learn more! Visit [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations).



# MALI

## ACCOMPANYING OUR HUNGRY NEIGHBORS



Aminata Traoré carries the weight of the world on her shoulders...  
**and it's breaking her back.**

**I**n her Malian village, Aminata pounds a local mineral into a powder that she sells. It's used to make the external veneer of cooking pots. The long periods of sitting and pounding leave her in horrible pain — and she can't work as much as she once did. **But her 6-year-old granddaughter Oumou is hungry, so she pushes through her agony.**

A 67-year-old widow, Aminata gave birth to 13 children, though only 10 survived. When her husband died years ago, her

children gradually scattered to look for work in other towns and villages. She was eventually left alone, save for Oumou, who was left behind in her care.

Besides leaving her in intense pain, Aminata's work is also only seasonal. In good times, she makes enough to provide herself and her granddaughter with two meals a day. For much of the year they can only manage to eat once a day.

The shortage of food has profoundly affected Oumou, who has developed anemia from malnutrition. She's often listless. She rarely plays anymore. It's heartbreaking for Aminata, whose only desire is to take care of her granddaughter.

Today, severe food shortages and the tremendous rise in food and fertilizer prices worldwide are making life for neighbors like Aminata even more difficult.

**"Most of the year I have no way to earn money, except from the neighbors' assistance," Aminata says. "Sometimes I go to the fields during the harvest time to glean millet for myself, or sometimes neighbors are moved by my situation, and they help me."**

**“** Sometimes when she is hungry, she will come to me and say, 'I have a stomachache or headache.' **Words can't express how bad I feel. I can't help her out of this situation."**

**ABOVE:** Aminata and her granddaughter Oumou in their home in Mali.



# 5

## WAYS YOUR CONGREGATION'S LOVE HELPS OUR NEIGHBORS IN MALI:



Supporting farmers with training and tools to better provide for their families. Your compassion especially focuses on women, who do most of the farming in Mali.



Building resilience for those impacted by changing weather patterns, flooding and drought.



Comforting our neighbors with quilts and kits. Our neighbors in Mali recently received the largest shipment of quilts and kits in our history!



Improving access to health care for those living in rural areas, particularly protection against malaria.



Responding to emergencies so that your love surrounds our neighbors as soon as crisis strikes.

## WATCH THE VIDEO:



See how **your compassion is helping** hungry families in Mali. Watch the video at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations).

## LIVING IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Aminata is living in unprecedented times, facing challenges such as climate change, global supply chain bottlenecks, and the war in Ukraine, all of which are drastically driving up food prices in Mali.

**"The present situation is worse than I've ever seen,"** she says. **"The difficulties we face today are far different than they were when I was Oumou's age."**

## YOUR CONGREGATION'S LOVE IS ADDRESSING HUNGER TODAY, AND IN THE FUTURE.

Addressing and combating hunger not only helps those suffering today, it also helps create sustainable futures for the poorest populations as well. Because of the kindness of congregations like yours, Aminata — and more than 1,200 other families in Mali — were able to get food and fertilizer kits. The fertilizer helps to boost their crop production, and grow vitamin-rich crops like carrots, cowpeas and drought-resistant moringa. The kit's grain provides nourishment until their harvest is ready. **Your love ensures the most vulnerable are cared for and that in the long-term, they can care for themselves.**

**"I was very happy as soon as I received it,"** says Aminata of the kit. **"I had no food at that time. I really appreciate it."**

## HOW TO HELP:

**\$4,200** purchases grain and fertilizer to support 20 farming families in Mali.

### Each family receives:



Rice



Sacks of Fertilizer



Millet

Due to the war in Ukraine and other contributing factors, the price of these key supplies has skyrocketed in the past two years — leaving more and more families hungry. The fertilizer helps to boost their crop production, and the grain provides nourishment until their harvest is ready. With your support, Lutheran World Relief identifies those with greatest need to ensure the most vulnerable are cared for.

**Can your congregation support the cost of grain and fertilizer for your hungry neighbors?**

See the back page for how to share your congregation's generosity.





# CLOSING CONGREGATIONS: BRINGING NEW LIFE AFTER DEATH

As with many things in life,  
God often places the right  
people in the right situation in  
God's perfect timing.

Such was the situation with **Grace Lutheran Church of Needham, Massachusetts**, a congregation with a storied 70-year history. Since 2019, Pastor Elizabeth Nees had headed the church.

In addition to being a lifelong Lutheran with a passion for combating injustice, Pastor Elizabeth is an accredited Professional Certified Coach. She works with groups and individuals at significant crossroads in their lives. So, when conversations about closing first started, she was the perfect leader to help her beloved congregation consider their future.

Discussions around merging with other congregations led nowhere since it wasn't geographically viable. After a 13-month discernment process, the decision to close was made. Grace Lutheran held its last service in September and plans to give \$250,000 to Lutheran World Relief.

"We knew if we closed, we could share an incredible amount of resources with organizations that we had supported over the decades," Pastor Elizabeth said. **"People took comfort that even though we were closing, these legacy gifts meant this wasn't the end of our story."**

## ? WHY LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF?

"Our congregation knew LWR from a hands-on perspective. A few years back, our youth had led us in an LWR School Kit challenge where we filled 50 backpacks. When we brought it to the local Ingathering, we saw this collective thing we were part of. What we did felt small, but we were part of something bigger than ourselves. It was very important to our members that we gave to a global organization that would use the money in line with our values. Trust was a large part of the decision."



## ? WHAT INSIGHTS WOULD YOU SHARE WITH OTHER CONGREGATIONS?

"My first piece of advice is not to closing congregations, but for those thriving or a long way from struggling. **Every congregation should have a legacy plan.** Institutions aren't always around forever and that's okay. We learned too late that the process took more time than we had, but having a plan allows you to better align your values with your future.

"To those closing, having been through this, I can humbly say we died well. It doesn't mean there wasn't grief. As Christians we know death is never the end of our story, instead death brings new life. **The church itself will never die. It may transform, congregations may close, it might not look like we thought it would. But even if we never see it, our church and the gift we made in closing will make such life-changing impacts for others. It's living on still.**"





## **HOW CLOSING CONGREGATIONS BRING NEW LIFE TO OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED.**

Closing a congregation is never an easy decision and is naturally accompanied by intense grieving. And yet, these congregations live on in their profound impact on others. Here are a few neighbors whose lives have been transformed by these gifts.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

Carinne lives in a deeply impoverished neighborhood in eastern Congo. Here, families can rarely afford necessities like food and clothing. Thanks to caring congregations, her mother Kavira joined a village savings and loan group which provides microcredits to its members. Kavira uses hers to sell fish and send Carrine to school so she can have a brighter future.



### **Lebanon**

Having the opportunity to work can make a radical difference for the future of families, but in Lebanon women faced significant barriers in finding jobs and training. Compassionate congregations gave Lauren a renewed purpose as an entrepreneur and chef after the death of her husband, providing tools and training that will help her business grow past her kitchen table.



### **Guatemala**

For decades, chronic malnutrition and poverty ravaged the San Marcos region of Guatemala. Single mother Guisela struggled to provide for her two daughters, Darriana and Maidy. Now, because of generous congregations, she has learned to farm vegetables, oyster mushrooms and laying hens. And her girls smile again.



### **Indonesia**

Before the kindness of Lutheran congregations, farmers in Indonesia like Rehmuli and her husband Adit were spending their hard-earned money on expensive fertilizers. Through waste management training, they learned how to produce their own organic fertilizer and are using the saved expenses to educate their four children.



**To learn more** about how a closing congregation can provide lasting hope into the future, please contact us by emailing [congregations@lwr.org](mailto:congregations@lwr.org).





## LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF  
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# NEW CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCES

We heard your feedback and are excited to announce a brand-new suite of congregational resources! ***Who will your love reach next?*** is meant to be easily adaptable for your congregation and can be used in its entirety or as individual elements. Use these tools to support LWR as your mission of the month, spotlight your love in the world for an LWR Sunday, use the Bible studies with your small group, or share the videos during an offering mission moment.

View the resources today at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations).

WHO WILL  
*Your Love*  
REACH NEXT?



Small group  
study guides



Bulletin  
inserts



Inspiring  
videos



Quilt & Kit  
blessing litany



Children's  
message prompts



And  
more!

## SHARE YOUR CONGREGATION'S LOVE.



Share restoring hope with God's children by giving online at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations) or by mailing a check to **Lutheran World Relief, PO Box 17061, Baltimore, MD 21297-1061.**

**NOTE:** The dollar amounts listed in "How to Help" represent the actual average cost of providing the respective services. Your gifts contribute to the entire mission of Lutheran World Relief, to be used where need is greatest.

To receive updates, join our email list for congregational leaders at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations).