

**DEAR PARTNER IN MINISTRY,**

As we continue to turn a corner in our fight against COVID-19 in the United States, our neighbors around the world are suffering. Health care systems are collapsing in India. Neighbors in Nepal are crying out for more oxygen. Men, women and children seeking safety in Mali are forced into overcrowded camps, putting them at high risk for rapidly spreading coronavirus.



**Access to the COVID-19 vaccine is rapidly changing our lives in the United States, and now the kindness of your congregation can deliver this same hope to our neighbors in some of the most forsaken corners of the world.**

As a congregation that cares deeply for others, **you are invited to join Lutheran World Relief and be part of the largest global health effort in human history** and help those who would otherwise be forgotten gain access to a COVID-19 vaccine.

The details of how your congregation can help, including a powerful video you can download and share, are all available at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations).

Today and always, none of the work we do would be possible without your congregation's generosity. **Please contact me if I can be of any assistance to you or your congregation.**

**Until your love reaches every neighbor.**

*Lisa Kipp*

**REV. LISA KIPP**  
Sr. Manager of  
Congregational Engagement  
[lkipp@lwr.org](mailto:lkipp@lwr.org)

P.S. Don't miss the article of how one congregation in Portland **inspired their congregation through a matching endowment gift** to give over \$15,000 to help our most vulnerable neighbors gain access to a COVID vaccine and more!



A SEASON OF  
**HOPE**

**ADVENT SERMON SERIES**

**Are you planning ahead?**

Invite your congregation to experience **A Season of Hope** during a 4-week series based on the RCL Advent texts from the gospel of Luke.

**FREE FOR YOUR USE THIS ADVENT:**

- 4 weeks of sermon illustrations
- Accompanying photos to help you tell the story
- Powerful video to be used each week during worship and/or on social media that highlights your congregation's love in action around the world
- 4 week small group Bible study guide
- Candle lighting litany

**Sign up for our congregational leader email list at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations) to receive these materials in your inbox as soon as they are ready.**

**STUDYING JUSTICE LEADS ONE CONGREGATION TO PARTNER WITH LWR**

**LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS.** These words from the prophet Amos boldly hung from the bell tower of St. James Lutheran Church for all in downtown Portland, Ore., to see. But they were not just prophetic words that looked nice on a banner, **these were the words shaping how the people of this 131-year-old congregation believed God was calling them to be in the world.**

St. James spent much of the past year studying racial justice and supporting needs in their local community, but justice group leader Mandy Ellertson wanted more. At the end of February as more in their congregation were beginning to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, Mandy approached Pastor David Knapp with her concerns. **"You and I are starting to get shots in our arms, and it is costing us nothing," she expressed. "What would happen if we took some money out of our pockets for what it might actually cost to receive a vaccine and send it to others in need?"** For Mandy, making sure the vaccine was available for all in the world was a matter of justice.

Pastor Knapp immediately reached out to Lutheran World Relief to ask how they could help their most vulnerable



neighbors in the world gain access to a vaccine. After sharing the details of how LWR is partnering with organizations around the world to build healthy communities, St. James was on board. Even more, the congregation's endowment team wanted to do their part to make the fundraiser even more successful and offered to match the congregation's giving, up to \$5,000.

**Members of St. James expressed that if the banner hanging from the stones of their building was going to identify them as a congregation seeking justice in the world, then they had better put their money where their mouths were.** Throughout the Easter season, Pastor Knapp and leaders of the congregation got the word out, and then celebrated in May by announcing that not only had this 260-member congregation matched the endowment teams' gift of \$5,000, but they had doubled it.

**As an incredible expression of faith and an act of justice, St. James gave \$15,905** to LWR to reach their most vulnerable neighbors.

**How might you creatively inspire those in your congregation receiving their own COVID-19 vaccine to reach out with compassion and use their generosity to ensure others receive this same security?** ■



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*God's Love*  
**IN ACTION**

**LET'S END THIS PANDEMIC FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE.**

**Will your congregation support the largest global health effort in human history?**

**Visit our suite of resources to help your congregation love our global neighbors.**

<p><b>GET PUBLICITY TOOLS</b></p> <p>Tell a neighbor's story in your church's publications</p> <p><small>Due to the pandemic, Elsa Marina Amaya had already been out of work for months when back-to-back hurricanes swept through her village in Honduras. Will your congregation help her feed her children while she rebuilds their lives?</small></p>	<p><b>READ MORE</b></p> <p>One church's closure is the beginning of hope for thousands</p> <p><small>Closing a church is an extremely difficult decision, but one congregation's closure resulted in brighter futures for more than 15,000 people in India and Nepal.</small></p>	<p><b>SPECIAL GIFT</b></p> <p>Honor your quilters &amp; kit makers</p> <p><small>To show our gratitude, we've created the Quilt &amp; Kit Affinity Pin as a special gift for our faithful LWR quilters and kit makers. Please encourage those in your congregation to pre-order their FREE PIN to let their love shine!</small></p>
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**Created specifically for pastors and church leaders like you, this resource hub includes:**

- Videos to download and share with your congregation
- Publicity tools that make it easy for you to share stories in your church's newsletter, bulletin or on social media
- Creative ways to engage your congregation in hands-on-ministry
- And more!

**LWR.ORG/CONGREGATIONS**

**LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF**  
700 LIGHT STREET  
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LWR.ORG

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Jake Lyell for LWR

# WILL YOUR CONGREGATION JOIN THE LARGEST GLOBAL HEALTH EFFORT IN HUMAN HISTORY?

**M**ORE THAN A THOUSAND PEOPLE LIVE UNDER TARPS IN A DUSTY CAMP CALLED SENOU ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BAMAKO, MALI'S CAPITAL CITY.

These families are the innocent bystanders of Mali's ongoing war. When violence finally drove them from their homes, often with nothing but the clothes on their backs, they found relative peace in this makeshift camp. But still, though shielded from gunfire, they are far from safe.

These families are living in one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. There are no jobs. There is no food, because there is no rain. Only the kindness of strangers keeps them alive.

## Are safety, security and hope too much to ask?

Senou resident Aisata Dicko has known untold suffering in her 40 years of life. The last straw was witnessing her 13-year-old son being killed by insurgents more than two years ago. Heartbroken, she grabbed her other children and fled central Mali, the only home they've ever known, to seek safety in the camp.

Aisata's family has so many needs as they struggle to survive day by day. The last thing they need is COVID-19. But she and her neighbors are not sure whether a COVID vaccine will ever reach them. After all, they often go a day or more without anything to eat.

## Will your church help our most forsaken neighbors?

Though many of us in the U.S. have begun to resume normal activities, the pandemic continues to affect poor and vulnerable communities who desperately need basics like food and water and an opportunity to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Will you reach out in love to help them?

### Your congregation's generosity will:

- Equip clinics to receive and store the vaccine.
- Train health care workers to coordinate vaccination campaigns.
- Provide essentials for survival, including masks, clean water and emergency food assistance.

**Your church's gift will help to ensure the largest global health effort in human history reaches the dusty camps, poorest slums and most remote villages... Until your love reaches every neighbor.**

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your gift to us, or give online at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations).

### WATCH AND SHARE



Visit [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations) for more information, including a powerful video you can watch and share with your congregation.



## CHILDREN NEED SCHOOL KITS!

As school supplies go on sale this summer, it's the perfect time to make School Kits! Education is one of the most powerful tools a community has to break the cycle of poverty. Let's ensure children don't fall behind due to a lack of basic supplies.

Learn more and download instructions at [lwr.org/congregations](http://lwr.org/congregations).



LWR field facilitator Vony Menno (left) teaches women about improved farming techniques during a forest conservation and agroforestry training in Sumba, Indonesia.

## AMID GLOBAL SHUTDOWNS, YOUR LOVE PERSISTED

*Meet Vony Menno, your hands and feet on the ground*

Many of us will look back over the past year and a half and remember the many things we missed out on: Easter services, vacations, graduations, mission trips. But let's also remember that your love continued to reach neighbors in need.

Oktolina Reformita Alu Menno, who goes by Vony, lives in Indonesia with her father and siblings and loves to sing in her church's choir. She is also your hands and feet on the ground, serving as an agriculture and livelihoods expert in the country.

Vony's job is to teach farming communities how to get the most out of their land. Traditional, inefficient practices have caused major deforestation and the burning of savannas to make way for crops and livestock. Vony teaches families better ways to farm, so they can grow more food and increase their income, while also protecting and restoring their land.

Normally, she would focus her time organizing trainings with community members, farmers' groups and local government leaders. But in March, she quickly expanded her work to educate people on COVID prevention and safety protocols, ensuring meeting areas had space for social distancing and

providing masks, hand sanitizer, handwashing equipment and temperature checks at every meeting.

It has been a challenging year, but Vony has remained dedicated to helping her neighbors, most of whom have lived in poverty all their lives. "COVID-19 has significantly affected income in the community," she said, a fact that has continued to motivate her work every day. After all, poverty does not get put on hold just because there's a pandemic. "I am always happy to see and feel the changes in communities that I have assisted. I love to see the positive changes in their perspectives, behaviors and values. This is why I joined Lutheran World Relief."

We are so grateful for your congregation's generosity in keeping God's love in action, and that many of you have been able to resume serving in a more hands on way recently. Meanwhile, Vony and hundreds more of our amazing colleagues continue to carry your love wherever it's needed.



Aisata Dicko (40) fled the insecurity in central Mali after watching her 13-year-old son being killed by insurgents. She and her children have lived together in the camp for the last two years. Without a regular food source, she is forced to rely on donations from neighbors, which often means that the family will go a day or more without food. (Jake Lyell for LWR)