

God's Love

IN ACTION

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LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF

CONNECTING LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS WITH
NEIGHBORS AROUND THE WORLD | WINTER 2023

God's Love

IN ACTION

DEAR PARTNER IN MINISTRY,

One thing that regularly strikes me during my conversations with congregations across the country is how far you are willing to go. For your worshippers, for your ministries, for our neighbors in need across the globe. **Time and time again, you reach beyond your communities, beyond even your comfort levels, to ensure that God's grace and love is shared, that God's presence is felt by our vulnerable neighbors experiencing heartache and poverty.**

In this issue of God's Love in Action, you'll meet one such family that exemplifies the distance we go to reach those neighbors who need your love the most. Agata and Oscar live far beyond cities, several hours' walk from health clinics or services or even schooling — their eldest son walks two hours each way to classes each morning. The drive to their home is rough and unpaved and more than three hours from the closest city.

And yet, no matter where in the world I find myself, your congregation's love is always there. It is one of the greatest privileges of this work — seeing your generosity cloak our neighbors worlds away.

Thank you for joining in God's redemptive work and caring for our neighbors. Your love and generous support will continue to traverse distances, until your love reaches every neighbor.

In deep gratitude,



Daniel Speckhard

**AMBASSADOR
DANIEL SPECKHARD**
President and CEO

SEASON OF HOPE

LENT

SHARE GOD'S LOVE WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS THIS LENT

Lent may be a time of waiting, but it need not be one of inaction. By making Personal Care Kits, your congregation can deliver tangible hope to our neighbors in need around the world. Go to lwr.org/lent to access all the information and resources you need for your congregation's **Personal Care Kit drive.**

Our neighbors in crisis need as many Personal Care Kits as your church can send.

***How many Personal Care Kits
will your congregation make?***





The powerful impact OF A PERSONAL CARE KIT

The simple, everyday contents of a Personal Care Kit can make a world of difference to a neighbor in need.

When natural disasters strike or war drives families from their homes, our hearts ache with compassion, but often we don't know how to help. Making Lutheran World Relief Kits is a simple, fun and tangible way to offer comfort to those suffering and express love to our neighbors in need.

Kits are specifically designed to help people coping with poverty, disaster, conflict and more. In the direst of situations, these extensions of your congregation's love bring dignity and hope.



Congregations play a critical role in helping ensure we have enough kits for the constant demand we receive. Personal Care Kits, which provide much-needed self-care and critical germ-fighting tools, are one of our most requested items.

Moses Kabogo, LWR staff in Tanzania, spoke about how

Personal Care Kits are used,

and their incredible impact for our most vulnerable neighbors. He has witnessed firsthand the impact of Personal Care Kits on pregnant and new mothers.

WHO RECEIVES PERSONAL CARE KITS IN TANZANIA?

We distribute Personal Care Kits to health facilities in Tanzania, focusing on pregnant and those new mothers who have just delivered.

HOW ARE THESE KITS USED?

Most pregnant and new mothers, especially in the rural areas, do not have access to personal care items. The kits distributed through LWR in health facilities provide these mothers with items such as towels, soap and nail clippers. The items help them clean and cover themselves and their babies, protecting them from the cold. In addition to keeping themselves and their babies clean, they also love the soaps because they smell so good!

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF A PERSONAL CARE KIT?

It is a huge challenge to get pregnant mothers to give birth at health facilities. It is often far from their homes, and they worry about the expenses of medical care. We found that distributing Personal Care Kits is a great incentive for women to come to the health facilities. This way we can make sure the mothers and newborns receive the proper care plus they have supplies to help them when they get back home. ■



To learn more about how your congregation can make LWR Personal Care Kits, visit lwr.org/lent.

FEATURE VIDEO: A MOTHER'S HEARTACHE

▶ WATCH THE VIDEO:

Hear from your neighbor in Tanzania, Agata, and her struggle to feed her children. Learn how your congregation can support them. To watch the video, visit lwr.org/congregations.

[Read the feature story on the next page.](#) →





A MOTHER'S HEARTACHE

DESPERATE STRUGGLES OF A TANZANIAN FAMILY

Smiles are a rare sighting on Agata Nicolaus Mtowe's face. Some days, there's not a lot to be joyful about. A mother of six in rural Tanzania, Agata spends her days caring for her children — a 6-year-old son, 4-year-old twin daughters and year-old triplets — and keeping up the house. Her exhaustion seeps into her bones, she is tired all the time. The worry weighs heavy on her small frame. When asked about her hopes for her children, she looks down to the floor with a sullen face. She can't speak to hopes and dreams, only regrets.

"I try my best to do what I can, but I can see them not growing well."

Agata lives with her husband Oscar Raymond on a small farm, their only source of income and food, although occasionally her neighbors will give her pumpkin or sunflower seeds. Oscar farms maize and beans; this year he's trying onions. If he harvests 10 sacks of maize, they might keep five and sell the remainder. Currently, they have one bucket with roughly 45 pounds of beans. It's meant to feed them until the next harvest.

Usually, they have enough food remaining to get them through, but this year is difficult.

To prepare for Agata's delivery of the triplets, they had to sell more of their produce than normal so that they could pay for the extra expense of a C-section. They ran out of the food they set aside, but neighbors have come together to supply them with some small amounts. Agata fears it is not enough.

She's already having trouble producing enough breast milk for the triplets. She often must remove one child while they are feeding to allow the others a chance to have some. The milk only seems to come if Agata's eaten enough pumpkin or sunflower seeds, but she only gets them if her neighbors give them to her. She knows her babies are not getting enough to be satisfied.

As a mother, Agata worries all the time. Her children are hungry, and she can't afford soap so the children often wear dirty clothes. Her husband is exhausted from farming, leaving for the fields at 6 a.m. and often not returning until evening, so Agata often finds herself alone in the child-rearing and housework.

The babies don't sleep — most likely from hunger and the penetrating cold. Agata says it is the nights that are the most difficult.

Her eldest child, Evans, 6, tries to be helpful. He says his dream is to “grow big to help Mommy.” He attends primary school, leaving the house at 5 a.m. for the two-hour walk each way and returning around 4 pm. Evans is very helpful with his younger siblings, often holding the triplets and playing with them while his mom cooks. He also helps by fetching water and firewood. Compared to a 6-year-old in the US, Evans is very small. But with more than 50% of the children stunted in Tanzania, he looks to be a “normal” sized first grader here.

While the needs of her family are great — school fees, food, soap, clothing, there’s always something — the one time Agata smiles, a faint, barely visible one, is when she is asked about her family.

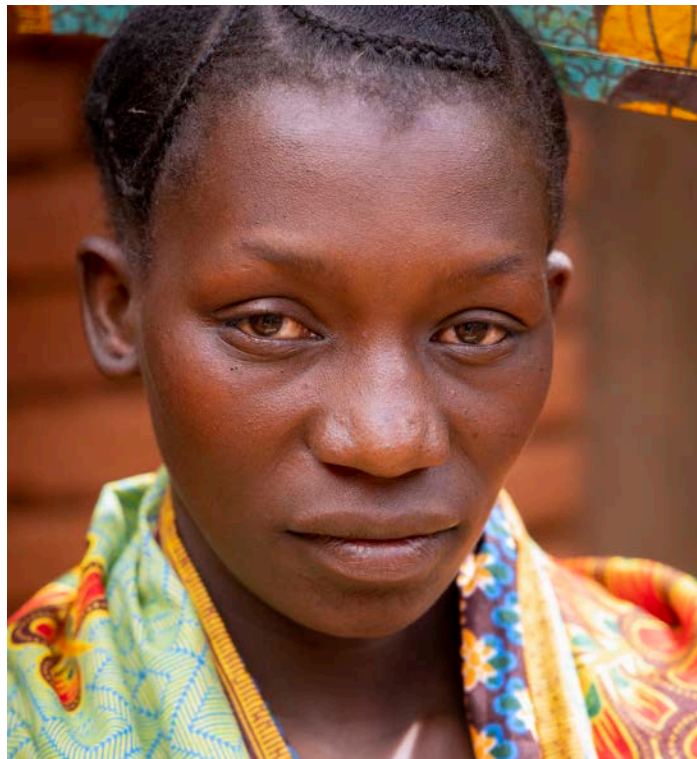
“I enjoy being a mom. It makes me happy to see all my children together in one place, laughing and happy.”

Unfortunately, without your love, those moments will be as rare as Agata’s smile.



HOW YOUR LOVE IS HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS IN TANZANIA

While the need in Tanzania for families like Agata’s is overwhelming, because of your support, we are improving the health and nutrition of mothers and their families. Your love is training and sending community health workers into remote villages like Agata’s to teach parents how to make nutritious meals and share critical hygiene skills. And Agata’s family, along with countless other families in Tanzania, has received Personal Care Kits and LWR Mission Quilts. These are simple interventions that have truly profound impacts. The kits are a tangible act of kindness, produced by congregations around the US, that reminds our neighbors in Tanzania of God’s ever-present grace and love. ■



TOP LEFT: Agata Mtwele with her family. Agata constantly worries that she does not have enough food for her children. She knows they are hungry but doesn’t know where to turn for help.

LEFT: Agata Nicolaus Mtwele at her home in Tanzania where she lives with her husband and six children.

TOP RIGHT: Agata’s son Evans, 6, wants to grow big so he can help take care of his mom.



Share Agata’s story with your congregation and inspire generosity by downloading a publicity pack — complete with a newsletter article, bulletin insert, video and more — at lwr.org/congregations.

You can give today to **help mothers like Agata**, by visiting lwr.org/agata, or by mailing a check to **Lutheran World Relief, PO Box 17061, Baltimore, MD 21297-1061**.

EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH: A TESTIMONY OF GRACE IN ACTION

For more than three decades, the members of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Texas have prioritized service of others. Each year, they host the Houston Ingathering, coordinated for the last 15-plus years by Epiphany's Sandy Miller. Pastor Jeff Muchow believes deeply in the good work of his congregation, particularly the quilts and kits team. Jeannine wanted to find a tangible, yet simple way to bring her congregation together while helping others. Good Shepherd was familiar with Lutheran World Relief through their quilting ministry. Stories of the global refugee crisis had been on the hearts of members, and she knew that people wanted to help but weren't quite sure how. Assembling Personal Care Kits seemed the perfect solution.

"It's one thing as Lutheran Christians to talk about being saved by grace for the good works that we can do but to have people actually do it so visibly through Lutheran World Relief and trying to help people even across the globe, this is truly a testimony of grace in action," Pastor Jeff said. "This is pretty cool."

The Quilt & Kit Ministry started small some 36 years ago, with only two collection points in Houston and has grown every year. Since the beginning, now-retired Pastor Lee Eschberger and his wife Marlene have coordinated quilt and kit drop-off sites.

"The first year, the total shipment was not that large," Pastor Lee reminisces with Marlene. "It was a small rider truck and it continued to grow each year after that until finally we had to use two large U-Haul trucks. We still enjoy it. It's always good to go and we have met so many good people."



This year, Epiphany Lutheran made 404 Personal Care Kits, several School Kits and three boxes of quilts. Including their contribution, the Houston Ingathering brought in total:

- Quilts: 4,294
- Blankets: 7
- School Kits: 3,584
- Personal Care Kits: 3,706
- Baby Care Kits: 645
- Fabric Kits: 168

The 1,600 boxes were loaded by dedicated volunteers into a 53-foot truck.

Linda Brown coordinates most of the quilt and kit-making and serves as the president of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, DayLilies at Epiphany Lutheran in Houston, Texas. She feels honored to be able to serve God in this way.

"I feel this is a really important mission of our church," Linda said. "To be able to help others who are facing terrible times in their lives. We are so blessed that I feel these quilts and kits are just a small way of sharing the love of Jesus with others."

Sandy, who credits Linda's leadership with much of the success of the Ingathering since she's been at the helm, thinks the Quilt & Kit Ministry serves as a way for her congregation to share their blessings with others.

"Every year we hear of more people in need around the world," Sandy said. "I feel so very blessed living where we do and being able to serve in this way. It is my hope that by receiving a quilt or kit, others may come to know the love of Jesus."

Thank you to the entire Epiphany Lutheran congregation. You are truly a blessing to others. ■

LEFT: Volunteers at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas

ABOVE LEFT: Linda Brown, President of Epiphany's Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) group, the DayLilies, and coordinator of the Quilt & Kit Ministry, at Epiphany Lutheran in Houston, Texas.

ABOVE RIGHT: Ingathering volunteers at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas (From left to right): Sandy Miller, Marlene Eschberger and Pastor Lee Eschberger, Donnie Schulz and Linda Brown



To learn more about how your congregation can serve together in this meaningful, hands-on way, visit lwr.org/lent.

ONE YEAR LATER: THE WAR IN UKRAINE



It's been nearly a year since war in Ukraine has devastated a country and left millions fleeing violence. In that time, your love has enveloped thousands of our neighbors in need. This is how you've made a difference.

Essential health care services. Your love has provided critical medical supplies and equipment, mobile health clinics, training of health workers, and mental health support for Ukrainians in need.

Emergency shelter. Because of you, Ukrainians who fled their homes are supported with emergency housing and hot meals. Shelters were upgraded to prepare for the harsh winter and much-needed quilts and kits were distributed.

Empowering local partners. Your kindness helped to support Ukrainian partners, strengthening their ability to drive the emergency response.

Protecting vulnerable women and girls. In times of crisis, women and girls are often the most vulnerable. Your generosity has ensured these women and children have a safe place to turn and find support when they need it.

Water, sanitation and hygiene. Your gifts have improved health facilities and basic sanitation in collective centers serving our Ukrainian neighbors.

Cash assistance for Ukrainian refugees in Poland. You are providing a safety net for those most in need by providing emergency cash funds for families who fled to Poland. ■

ABOVE: LWR President and CEO Daniel Speckhard and Chief Humanitarian Officer Tamara Demuria walk past a children's playground and destroyed buildings on a recent visit to Bucha and Irpin, a suburban town outside of Kyiv. In the early days of the war, one of the worst acts of violence was fought between Ukrainian forces and advancing Russian troops here.

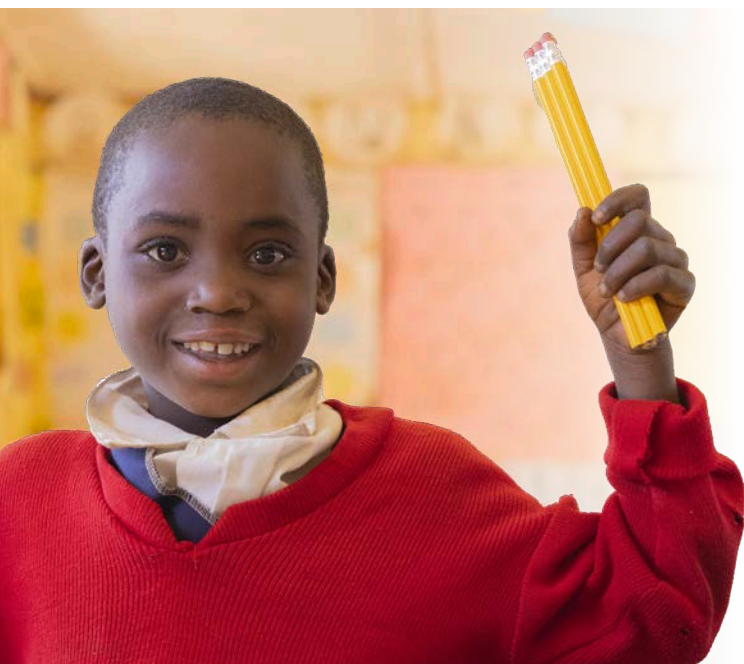
BELOW: Chief Humanitarian Officer Tamara Demuria comforts a Ukrainian woman during her recent visit to the country.





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THE GRACE OF JESUS

Neema ya Yesu. Neema ya Yesu. The Swahili words, meaning the grace of Jesus, were sung with swelling pride by young schoolchildren and teachers, filling the small room. The community had come together for a recent School Kit distribution in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, and their response to receiving your generous gifts brought tears to the eyes of all present – to thank Jesus first and foremost for his grace. Dear friends in Christ, with each kit you pack with love, you are sharing the grace of Jesus with your neighbors. It's a love that is so known that it overflows from the hearts of moms and dads in joyful song and dance. It's a love witnessed in the smiles of preschoolers. It is the love of Jesus and his all-encompassing heart. Thank you for sharing this love with our brothers and sisters around the world. May we continue to share the grace and love of Jesus, until it reaches every neighbor.

SIGN UP FOR OUR CONGREGATIONAL LEADER EMAIL LIST TODAY.

Receive up-to-date resources each month to assist you as you inspire your congregation to share God's love with your neighbors around the world.



UKRAINE RESPONSE UPDATES



LEARN MORE



FREE BIBLE STUDY



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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
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- Creative ways to engage your congregation in hands-on ministry



Share your congregation's love by giving a gift online at lwr.org/congregations or by mailing a check to **Lutheran World Relief, PO Box 17061, Baltimore, MD 21297-1061.**