



ASCENSION'S GIFTS OF HOPE MINISTRY 2021

"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU," DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE." JEREMIAH 29:11

MADAGASCAR

THE SOUTHERN DESERT REGION OF MADAGASCAR IS IN THE THROES OF A DESPERATE FAMINE



Our Gifts of Hope international focus this year is Madagascar. The island nation off the southeastern end of Africa has a population that is 42 per cent Christian. Of that, some four million are Lutherans – that's one of the largest Lutheran populations in the world.

Malagasy Lutherans can trace their faith roots back to Norwegian missionaries who began arriving in the 1860s. The Malagasy Lutheran Church places high priorities on evangelism, leadership development, and social ministry. There is an active, growing ministry in a land facing some extreme difficulties.

Today, the southern desert region of Madagascar is in the throes of a desperate famine, driven by the worst drought in four decades. This, experts say, is a front line of climate change.

"The gravity of the situation has forced thousands of people to leave their homes to search for food while those remaining barely get by, surviving with measures like foraging for wild food," according to a top official with the United Nations' World Food Program.

The infant mortality rate in Madagascar is very high, about 25 deaths per thousand births. Communities need quality health care to protect the lives of mother and child. In vulnerable communities in Madagascar, lack of opportunities for economic independence is a key barrier to the flourishing of women. Young women often find themselves in a vulnerable position where they are more likely to experience sexual assault and violence or become trapped in low wage (or even forced into unpaid) jobs.

Young children, both male and female, are often unable to attend school, instead being required to do what is needed to bring income into their households. Elderly people in these communities often lack a support network that provides purpose and companionship.

Communities in Madagascar are facing many challenges. Gifts of Hope 2021 is blessed to accompany our brothers and sisters of the Malagasy Lutheran Church in service through prayer, learning and sharing financial gifts.

THIS YEAR, GIFTS OF HOPE ALTERNATIVE GIFTS MINISTRY INCLUDES...

opportunities to support education and training for children, young women, midwives and nurses; provide medical supplies for Ejeda Hospital; give new mothers the care they need for their baby deliveries; and provide nourishment of body and spirit for the elderly. Our gifts will strengthen and grow the work of the vocational programs of the ILOFAV Womens Training Center, the Sekoly Fanomanana Mpitsabo (SEFAM) nursing

school of The Malagasy Lutheran Church, and other ministries of the church for the benefit and well-being of the people in Madagascar.

The Hospital Loterana Ejeda was founded by American missionaries in 1964. Through Gifts of Hope, we can help Ejeda Hospital update and equip their facilities so that they can provide for the health and safety of the community.





NEW CITY PARISH

A NON-PROFIT URBAN COALITION OF NINE CONGREGATIONS OF OUR SOUTHWEST CALIFORNIA SYNOD

Our local community extends beyond the neighborhoods of the Conejo Valley. Our Gifts of Hope local focus this year connects us with our brothers and sisters in Christ in New City Parish, a non-profit urban coalition of nine congregations of our Southwest California Synod of the ELCA located in Los Angeles, Inglewood, and Compton. New City Parish was established in the aftermath of the 1992 civil unrest to address the growing social and economic needs of the community and to do so with the understanding of the transformative power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Member congregations host food pantries providing hot meals, bagged groceries including fresh produce and dairy. Distribution of food also serves as an introductory first step connecting those in need with ministries and services of the member churches and partners in ministry. New City Parish's diverse ministries include job skill training, financial responsibility classes, and a sewing collective teaching tailoring and other skills for work in the garment industry. Youth ministries emphasize service, growing in faith, fellowship and leadership. Local youth gatherings and discussions have grown, now connecting youth at Ascension and throughout California with young leaders at the helm.



Responding to the call was a group of five Lutheran pastors whose congregations and communities were directly affected by unrest and who had first hand knowledge of the plight of the community. Over the next several months, these Pastors (Albert Starr, Carlos Paiva, James Lobdell, Brian Eklund and Joesph Chu) met and prayed together to decide what to do next. From these meetings, New City Parish was born with the vision of providing hope, healing, and support to the community.

Gifts of Hope will support three areas of New City Parish ministry: Lifting Up Youth in Faith, Education and Justice; Expansion of Food Programs; and Sustaining and Growing Education and Employment Opportunities.

We look forward to building relationships with congregations, joining them in service, lifting up young leaders and providing opportunities for many to participate in the ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis in 2022.



The animals of God's Global Barnyard are back again! Barnyard animals help stop hunger. Not only an important source of food, the animals provide income opportunities for families in need. Gifts of Hope to God's Global Barnyard will help break the cycle of hunger and poverty and inspire hope for the future.

New City Parish's mission is to manifest the presence of Jesus Christ within their parish boundaries through cooperative ministries which enhance spiritual growth, multicultural understanding, education, and social and economic well-being. Their vision is to change lives by providing the Word and Sacraments along with service ministries of the Church, holistic, intentional evangelism, and multifaceted outreach.

Thank You For Joining In Celebrating Ascension's Gifts of Hope 2021. Your Gifts Give Hope For A Brighter Future to Many, Near and Far.