

LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES 1973-2008 - A HISTORY

Compiled and written by Corky Blake

A BEGINNING

Lutheran Congregational Services is affiliated with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LCS's roots can be traced to 1971 when congregations and their pastors of the Eastern Pennsylvania Synod formed a chaplaincy service to provide pastoral care and visitation for persons confined in hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions. Prior to the creation of what was aptly named Lutheran Chaplaincy Services of the Lehigh Valley, the Rev. Charles Fisher provided a Lutheran presence in local hospitals and institutions.

From the beginning, LCS and its predecessor organizations have been guided by a mandate to serve congregational needs and to cultivate close working relationships with congregations. Its founders envisioned an organization with a simple structure; the result today is a model for ministry that is both simple and unique. LCS owns no real estate, neither seeks nor receives any federal, state or local government funding, employs a small professional staff, utilizes volunteers in the delivery of some of its services, and offers its ministries and services at little or no cost to congregations and other clients. The decision to maintain this agency as a small, financially conservative, highly responsive ministry with its roots firmly planted in the congregations is intentional and one LCS strives to uphold. As current president and CEO, the Rev. Dr. Dennis Ritter boasts, "We've never owned property. We've always been a concept. Where do you go to see Lutheran Congregational Services? It is in the congregations and the communities that we seek to serve. We take pride in responding to changing needs and opportunities. We have our bags packed lightly."

These are themes that are repeated over and over through LCS's first 35 years.

A MISSION

"Ten years from now I do not want to hear people say "where was the church?" I want us to show them that we are here and that we are concerned about the quality of life that other people endure."

Shirley Lucore, May 1979 Director's report

The formal incorporation of Lutheran Chaplaincy Services of the Lehigh Valley, Inc., occurred on March 5, 1973. The work began the previous June when members of the Board of Directors accepted invitations to serve. Synod staff member the Rev. Jan Walker provided invaluable assistance along with the guidance and expertise of The Rev. Dr. Claude Schick. Early accomplishments were measured by administrative progress and program direction planning. Committees wrote by-laws, developed job specifications for the director, publicized goals and financial requirements for the program, interviewed candidates and hired a director.

Those who signed the articles of incorporation included the Rev. Harvey Weitzel, the Rev. Robert A. Laubach, the Rev. Gotfried Jacobsen, the Rev. H. Joseph Slusser, the Rev. Arthur R. Seyda, Kathy Rohrbach, David Bausch, Dr. Coleman Hamel, Ruth Mohlenhoff, Dale Newhart and Edna Graver. The Rev. Charles Fisher served as the agency's first coordinator. The first board included all of the above, except Pr. Weitzel, who was replaced by the Rev. Paul Spohn.

Initially the agency was structured so that each congregation had a direct say in its governance. Congregations chose delegates who would elect board members and approve its budget at the agency's annual meeting which was held in spring. In its early going congregations from across the three districts that comprised the Lehigh Valley area provided the majority of the funding for the agency along with strong support from the Synod.

Deborah Sieger assumed responsibilities as the first executive director in January 1973. The Board of Directors adopted a goal of fostering local congregational commitments toward the people in institutions and then recruiting volunteers to serve effectively. It was hoped this goal would be achieved by October 1973 so three institutions would be served as a result of local church commitments -- the Good Shepherd Home, Lehigh County Prison and Gracedale County Home. By December, service would be expanded to Muhlenberg Medical Center, non-county nursing homes, especially in the Easton area, and Allentown State Hospital.

Lutheran Chaplaincy Service of the Lehigh Valley became a clearinghouse to identify problem areas and service possibilities throughout the Lehigh Valley. The modest beginnings of the new organization showed a 1973 budget of \$15,901, including receipts from 46,337 communing members at 30 cents each from synod offerings. The director's salary was set at \$12,000 with a car allowance of \$1,200. Office expenses were estimated at \$1,569.00

May 14, 1981	St. John's, Nazareth	The Rev. Thomas Cvammen
May 25, 1982	Good Shepherd, Easton	The Rev. George Zacharda
May 2, 1983	Northampton Community Center	The Rev. George Zacharda
May 15, 1984	Northampton Community Center	The Rev. George Zacharda
May 15, 1985	Northampton Community Center	Atty. Bradford Wagner
May 14, 1986	Northampton Community Center	Atty. Bradford Wagner
May 12, 1987	Northampton Community Center	Atty. Bradford Wagner
May 10, 1988	Northampton Community Center	The Rev. Philip Hoh
May 17, 1989	Northampton Community Center	Flora "Sue" Weber
May 23, 1990	Muhlenberg College	Flora "Sue" Weber
May 22, 1991	Muhlenberg College	Flora "Sue" Weber
May 26, 1992	Muhlenberg College	Flora "Sue" Weber
May 26, 1993	Muhlenberg College	The Rev. Robert George
May 25, 1994	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	The Rev. William Maxon
May 24, 1995	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	The Rev. William Maxon
May 22, 1996	Northampton Community Center	The Rev. William Maxon
May 21, 1997	Northampton Community Center	The Rev. William Maxon
May 20, 1998	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	The Rev. William Maxon
May 19, 1999	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	Atty. Bradford Wagner
May 17, 2000	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	Atty. Bradford Wagner
May 23, 2001	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	Atty. Bradford Wagner
May 22, 2002	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	The Rev. John C. Kunkel
May 21, 2003	Jordan Lutheran, Orefield	The Rev. John Tomlinson
May 26, 2004	Holiday Inn, Bethlehem	The Rev. Thomas Vega-Neel
May 25, 2005	Holiday Inn, Bethlehem	The Rev. William Maxon
May 24, 2006	Holiday Inn, Bethlehem	The Rev. William Maxon
May 23, 2007	Muhlenberg College	The Rev. David Newman
May 21, 2008	Muhlenberg College	The Rev. David Newman

APPENDIX

LCS' Current Vision Statement

Lutheran Congregational Services is the agency with which congregational leaders choose to partner to do creative and effective ministry.

LCS' Current Mission Statement

Empowered by God's grace, Lutheran Congregational Services, Inc. provides quality ministries, professional consultation services, and appropriate referrals through creative partnerships with congregations and other agencies.

The Name Game

Lutheran Chaplaincy Services of the Lehigh Valley -- incorporated
March 5, 1973

Lutheran Services of the Lehigh Valley, PA -- May 6, 1976

Lutheran Congregational Services, Inc. -- November 18, 1999

The Leadership

The Rev. Charles Fisher -- Coordinator (1971-73)

Deborah Sieger -- Executive Director (January 1973-July 15, 1976)

Patricia Higham -- Executive Director (July 1976-1978)

Shirley Lucore -- Executive Director (1978-October 1985)

Lois Emsweller -- Acting Director (October 1985-January 1986)

Ernest Siegfried -- Executive Director (February 1986-December 2002)

The Rev. Dr. John Brndjar -- Acting Director (January 2003-June 2004)

The Rev. Dr. Dennis Ritter -- President and CEO (July 1, 2004-present)

Annual Meetings/Dinners

Date	Location	Board chairperson
May 3, 1973	St. Stephen's, Bethlehem	David Bausch
May 2, 1974	Muhlenberg Medical Center	David Bausch
May 1, 1975	Muhlenberg Medical Center	Dr. Coleman Hamel
May 6, 1976	St. Peter's, Allentown	Dr. Coleman Hamel
May 5, 1977	Grace Lutheran, Allentown	Lois Emsweller
May 9, 1978	Grace Lutheran, Allentown	Lois Emsweller
May 16, 1979	St. Peter's, Allentown	Lois Emsweller
May 8, 1980	St. John's, Nazareth	The Rev. Thomas Cvammen

In her first report just four months into the job, Sieger identified two major goals:

1. Coordinate ongoing Lutheran volunteer activities of clergy and lay persons in Lehigh Valley institutions. Evaluating the effectiveness is important.
2. Develop local congregational commitments to institutions and training people to serve effectively in them. The goal is to establish commitment of service in six institutions. To achieve this goal, training sessions will be set up for those who would serve.

In his chairman's report, David Bausch proclaimed the "first full year of operation proved to be 'very fruitful'." A model for lay ministry was planned and implemented in a variety of Lehigh Valley institutions. The Board of Directors developed a major policy statement to provide direction over the next two years. The primary objective of the Lutheran Chaplaincy Service was to continue to be recruitment and training of volunteers to serve in local institutions. Two additional areas of need had been identified:

1. Develop mechanisms which will assist pastors in serving their parishioners.
2. Work with congregational social ministry committees and help them understand the ramifications of a full ministry of outreach.

LCS/LV spread the word by speaking on Sundays at 18 Allentown district churches. This reaped 35 volunteers from 8 churches. They attended training sessions and went on to serve 3 local institutions.

LCS/LV's ability to respond quickly was pointed out by Sieger when she wrote "the Board, volunteers and staff have done everything from arranging emergency infant baptism to nursing home confirmation to getting funds for an older person's center at a local congregation. The initial goal of establishing ministries at six different institutions has been met as evidenced by the following numbers:

Gracedale -- 49 volunteers, 1,360 hours, 65 served

Good Shepherd Home -- 21 volunteers, 385 hours, 35 served

Allentown State -- 12 volunteers, 305 hours, 3,120 served

Lehigh County Prison -- 1 volunteer, 15 hours 1 served

Volunteer Friends (juvenile probation program) -- 1 volunteer, 12 hours, 1 served

Muhlenberg Medical Center -- 2 volunteers, 45 hours, 120 served

Easton area nursing homes -- 8 volunteers, 24 hours, 200 served

Totals -- 94 volunteers, 2,146 hours, 3,542 served

By the end of 1974, LCS/LV had rostered about 150 volunteers. The Board recognized the logical expansion would be to develop programs that met the special needs of those not in institutions. An aging ministry, begun in 1974, was an example. Volunteers from 42 congregations saw the needs of older citizens were met and information regarding services and rights was disseminated. Lutheran Social Services of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod showed confidence in LCS/LV's ability to deliver social services by approving grants for the Aging Ministry and a Brokerage-Linkage telephone information and referral project for a three-year period. The newsletter COOL (Coalition of Older Lutherans) was sent to congregational leaders with necessary information.

The Brokerage-Linkage System of information and referral was a "catch-all" service to pastors, congregations and individual church members. Nearly 200 calls were received in the first year from people searching for social service information or help with personal problems. LCS/LV assisted other agencies to solve client problems. The program helped coordinate church-related projects.

The Congregational Educational Social Ministry Project was one outgrowth. This was a valley-wide program to give assistance to congregations without social ministry committees and those with committees which were not functioning well. The Committee helped Cedar Church (Cetronia) start the Lutheran Pantry.

BRANCHING OUT

"It is the volunteer who relieves the loneliness of an older person, who brings some hope to a mentally disturbed person, or who provides for the first New Year's Eve party that one resident of the Good Shepherd Home ever attended."

The year 1975 proved to be a "year of expansion." Nearly 100-percent of supporting congregations contributed to the core volunteer ministry. Additional funds were received from Lutheran Social Services, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Manpower of the Lehigh Valley and Northampton County Area Agency on Aging. Additional staff was added with this money as services were increased. Hattie Hammer joined in October 1975 and assumed part-time duties as assistant to the director. Her major tasks were to assist with the development of volunteer and public relations for the agency. There were 107 volunteers servicing 300 people each week and giving 2,044 hours in local institutions.

Representatives from mental health agencies requested LCS/LV's assistance for preventive volunteer activity. This was centered initially in

tournament and a new spring fundraiser for 2008 entitled *Wine, Music and Food*.

Where is LCS going in the next 35 years? Oh, the places it could go with the success of the "Stepping out in Faith" program with its goal of \$600,000 toward the endowment fund -- \$300,000 for disaster preparedness and response, \$200,000 for strengthening marriage, family and youth programs, and \$100,000 seed money for new ministries.

But regardless of its financial situation, Lutheran Congregational Services survives and thrives by staying true to its founding principles:

"Lutheran Congregational Services, Inc., an agency of the ELCA, makes Christ known through its ministries to congregations and its training and support of ordained and lay congregational leaders."

Former LCS Mission Statement

families restore 15 properties thanks to the help of 150 volunteers from 20 congregations contributing more than 1,500 hours. LCS acquired an emergency grant from Lutheran Disaster Response to contract Ruth Doty to serve as a Disaster Recovery Coordinator and partner with agencies in the northern tier of the synod in long-term recovery efforts in Pike and Monroe Counties. Doty led the partnership of various entities. The agency also received a Preparedness Grant from LDR to develop a comprehensive plan to respond to disasters throughout the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod's 14 counties. This plan became a model for other synods nationwide.

And when it rains it pours -- LCS worked to guide our synod's response to Hurricane Katrina, which battered the Gulf Coast in late August. The agency organized contributions and sent a truck with clean-up and construction supplies and equipment to Biloxi, MS, in addition to transferring the synod disaster trailer to the hard hit area. This ongoing cleanup continued into 2006 for LCS volunteers. Pr. Ritter spent nine days in the Ocean Springs, MS area as an assisting minister. Others volunteered in Mississippi and Louisiana leading week long Camp Noah experiences. In all, 65 volunteers composed of five teams served 150 children, with each youngster receiving a quilt or blanket to keep.

When more flooding ravaged eastern Pennsylvania in June 2006, LCS's response was swift and decisive. Nearly 195 individuals came forth to donate 2,950 hours and restore 15 properties and help 100 families.

Marriage Preparedness sessions were introduced to the Pocono Mission District and new Workshops for Confirmands were added through a Thrivent Youth Initiative Grant. The staff was blessed when the Rev. Kerry Smart, a UCC minister, was called to be a half-time coordinator of congregational services beginning August 2005. A year later an endowment fund was officially started and bolstered by the Mae Nagle life insurance bequest.

As Lutheran Congregational Services reflects on 35 years of service, it remains true to its humble beginnings. Marriage Preparedness classes, Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training, Workshops for Confirmands, Grief Seminars and its role as the LDR affiliate for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod all help define LCS as an agency whose call is to be in service to the whole church. In addition, LCS continues to respond to new needs with ministries and services, adding in recent years occasional workshops for church administrators and secretaries, congregation council retreats, stewardship consultations and workshops, and a national web based system for background checks which congregations are being urged to institute for staff and volunteers. The agency even gets in the swing of things with an annual fund-raising golf

the Allentown area. Volunteers even pitched in to help with basic needs during a state employee strike at the local nursing centers. The first Summer Youth Camp at Allentown State Hospital was conducted. This ministry was a constant for more than two decades.

The Indochinese Refugee Relocation became a high-profile project taken on by LCS/LV. Involvement was challenging. Ellie Seiferth joined the staff through monies granted through Lehigh Valley Manpower. Most of Seiferth's time was spent trying to help young single men (former military personnel) adjust to the American culture. The typical extended Indochinese family unit faced far fewer socialization problems than the single men. Sponsors were quick to find jobs for heads of households. Public assistance was seldom used and only as a last resort. LCS/LV lined up 20 sponsoring congregations.

Because of the expansion of programs to include non-institutional ministries, the Board voted on May 6, 1976 to change a by-law and rename the agency "Lutheran Services of the Lehigh Valley, PA." The Board also faced the prospects of replacing its first director, Deborah Sieger. "She took an idea and made something out of it," wrote board Chairperson Coleman R. Hamel. "People serving people remains the cornerstone, and the agency has remained flexible and able to respond quickly to unmet needs in the community."

LS/LV now was operating from its main office at St. John's Lutheran Church in Easton and from a satellite office near Good Shepherd Home in Allentown. Patricia Higham succeeded Deborah Sieger as director in July 1976.

Higham, in her first annual report, noted the Board and staff were largely "second generation" and at a state of maturity where they must make careful choices in programming and expanding level of support. Programs included chaplaincy, aging ministry, social ministry (speakers bureau, workshops, newsletter); information and referral, refugee settlement, representation within the church and in the community. However, the name change and additional programs led to a sense of confusion. Where was the program going? How did it fit the concept of chaplaincy? LS/LV needed to evaluate its programs and future.

As a result, LS/LV went back to pastors who supported the ministry. The staff visited 96 Lutheran churches in the Lehigh Valley as part of "Operation Outreach." LS/LV listened and incorporated a staff plan for 1977. The recommendations included the following:

- More visibility of LS/LV. Goals were to start a speakers bureau, develop a slide presentation, bulletin inserts, a newsletter

"People Serving People," expand the mailing list, and ask for church ambassadors.

- A high level of accountability, operating with a line budget, report to churches and get their input,
- Embark on a program of development. LS/LV cannot continue to depend on temporary grants, and support from congregations doesn't cover expenses, especially with LS/LV wanting to expand staff and purchase a copier.
- Integrate programs into a meaningful whole and understand the importance of chaplaincy, which is often ministering to the sick and lonely. This was affirmed when LS/LV took on the sponsorship of the Lehigh Church for the Deaf.
- LS/LV should not add programs just to get more money. LS/LV should consolidate what it has. The agency already is expanding workshops to marriage enrichment,

LS/LV's success was recognized valley wide. The model of volunteer recruitment was so successful it was adopted by newly appointed directors of volunteers at institutions such as Gracedale and Good Shepherd by the mid 1970s. The church provided the bulk of volunteers but now the institutions were catching up and doing their own recruiting and scheduling worship services. The use of computers by hospitals created highly sophisticated automated patient notification system so volunteers didn't have to notify pastors anymore.

Those who used to be admitted to these institutions, especially older citizens, now were remaining at home and attended to by an array of new supportive services such as County Office of Aging and Meals on Wheels. Only five percent of those over 60 were in institutions. Churches still had a responsibility to extend their area of ministry to people in the community and help keep them out of institutions. LS/LV answered the call with an expanded ministry. The staff began to interact more and more with congregations and do work through social ministry committees.

In 1978, Higham resigned after completing her second year when her husband took a job in England. In her concluding report, Higham said the Board and staff had taken positive steps in all four priorities established in the previous year: visibility, accountability, development, and programs. An expanded newsletter circulated to more than 700 and two bi-monthly newsletters were combined into one monthly LS/LV newsletter. Later in 1978 a professional staff assistant was added.

During this period, executive director Siegfried went on medical leave and resigned after 17 years in December 2002 to become a lay assistant at Hope Church in Cherryville. The Rev. Dr. John Brndjar, who was named president pro tempore during Siegfried's medical leave, became president in January 2003 until a successor was hired.

The show must go on. The Confirmand Workshop engaged 301 youth. The Marriage Preparedness Series counseled 102 couples and the Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training Ministry celebrated its 10th anniversary, by expanding into the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Lutheran Disaster Response registered 56 congregations to help in disaster situations. Little did these volunteers know how much their help would be needed locally in the upcoming years. Two initiatives in the works for 2003 were a Parish Nurse Education Program and Congregational Health Ministries offered as separate ministries but in cooperation with the Bethlehem diocese of the Episcopal Church.

"At its best Lutheran Congregational Services is a partner in the journey of life and death."

The Rev. Dr. Dennis Ritter, LCS President and CEO

The search for LCS's leader concluded when a former long-time Board member, the Rev. Dr. Dennis Ritter, assumed the duties of president and CEO on July 1, 2004. Less than two months later, Ritter was heading LCS's disaster relief right in our home territory. An August hurricane and subsequent September floods ravaged residents up and down the Delaware River and its tributaries. Two homes in Raubsville, located six miles south of Easton, were rebuilt under LCS direction.

It was also a year that saw the conclusion of two popular programs. The Ministry to the Deaf ended in the spring as LCS could no longer promise staffing and the needs of the deaf community were changing. The ministry was subsequently transferred to St. Paul UCC, East Allentown. In addition, coordinating Lutheran worship services at Cedarbrook and Gracedale was transferred to the activities departments of those facilities. Volunteer Home Care was discontinued as a LCS-sponsored program.

LCS was ushered into cyberspace in early 2005 as the agency launched its first web site. The agency introduced two programs: Discovering God's Vision for Your Life and Living Your Strengths. The Board approved the establishment of an endowment fund as well.

The agency remained in disaster response overdrive in 2005 when another flood occurred along the Delaware River in April. LCS helped 90

Siegfried followed up the name change with the following remark: "Each year the Board rejects the idea of merging into larger social ministry organizations. Lutheran Congregational Services is unique. It is the only one in the ELCA. It was created 28 years ago and has maintained a simple structure and uniqueness. The long-range plan calls for carefully controlled expansion and extension of service to congregations outside of the Lehigh Valley. It continues to look forward to working with congregations in all nine mission districts of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod."

LCS's mission has been accomplished by fine-tuning established programs such as Marriage preparedness, Workshop for Confirmands and Christmas Ingathering; it's been accomplished by exploring new horizons by offering programs for the 21st Century such as Care for the Caregiver, Path of Grief, Parenting for the 21st Century and Blending Families.

The new century also paved the way for the agency to move the day before 9/11 into its current home in the former parsonage of St. Peter's Lutheran on Hanover Avenue in east Allentown. The Rev. John C. Kunkel, in his 2001 annual report, so accurately noted that the world became a different place since the events of 9/11.

LCS IN THE 21st CENTURY

"Because we are unique and one of a kind, the harshest yardstick is by standing alone there is no yardstick to measure or compare our work. There is concern to spend more time defining our identity and purpose. There is concern of reduced finances yet a request to expand services and geographically."

The Rev. John C. Kunkel, 2001 Chairperson's Report

As Ernest Siegfried wrote in his final annual report in 2001, the need and dream of Lutheran congregations of the Lehigh Valley gave birth to this agency, a social ministry organization which would grow quickly from a simple chaplaincy program into a multi-faceted provider of congregational services.

LCS recognized, too, it required periodical self-reflection. In the first five months of 2002, a specially appointed council of three Board members and 12 non-members representing LCS's constituency met to analyze and assess LCS's ministry and programs. Facilitated by the Rev. Chip Fairchild the council developed 15 recommendations, which were clustered into five major categories for the Board's consideration.

The Long-Range Planning Committee initiated a program called "Partners in Ministry." For the first time, LS/LV asked people to donate to the agency. LS/LV obtained an additional grant of \$10,000 from the Lutheran Social Services Board of the Synod, which enabled the agency to appoint another professional staff assistant. Territory was divided along regional lines to serve congregations in a more personal way. Packets were distributed to celebrate Social Ministry month in October. Programs were integrated under the generic heading Social Ministry. This was done to "place great importance on a ministry to the institutionalized and those with special needs and encourage volunteerisms in institutions and community." LS/LV offered a planning model for social ministry committees and acted as a consultant.

Among the highlights of LS/LV's menu of programs in the late 1970s were the Lehigh Church for the Deaf, which conducted monthly services, the Allentown State Hospital Work Camp and Christmas Ingathering. Bi-weekly Sunday services at Gracedale and Easton Cluster's Talent Night at Gracedale were introduced.

The sponsorship of Family and Friends Council for nursing home residents created an advocacy group that encouraged volunteers to visit nursing homes, compile information and referrals in a leaflet for the physically handicapped. This brochure, "A Guide for Better Living," was distributed to area hospitals and doctors. Guided by John Marquette Jr. (St. James Coopersburg), this resource booklet was one of the first directories of its kind. It became so popular it required a second printing and became a model nationwide. By 1980, more than 5,000 copies had been requested.

The Family Life Center Program was a cooperative venture with Lutheran Home at Topton and the Lutheran Inner Mission Society. The Board voted to invite this program of individual counseling and support groups into the Lehigh Valley area. For the first time LS/LV could provide family services and direct services to the individual. The venture marked the beginning of a new era of cooperative programming among Lutheran agencies.

Shirley Lucore came on board as LS/LV's director. The Board of Directors continued to be composed of four representatives from each of the three mission districts and one synodical appointment. Lucore, in her first report, emphasized LS/LV must: 1. Inspire and equip lay people to do social ministry within their congregation; 2. Challenge these church members to serve within their community; 3. Serve as their representatives to meet special needs.

GROWING PAINS

"Volunteers serving in the community have a responsibility to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger and visit the sick and imprisoned."

To stay true to its ever-changing mission of meeting the needs of the community, the Board adopted a by-law change to "alter the purpose of the organization to a wider scope to provide ministry for those in need." The rationale was the original statement didn't reflect the variety of the services LS/LV provided.

Among the social ministry programs evolving were training for grief ministry volunteers through Topton Home's Family Life Services and a workshop for confirmands. Both became long-lasting LS/LV standards. The confirmand workshop pilot program attracted 275 youth who interacted with the residents of Good Shepherd Home and Gracedale to experience their physical and mental disabilities. Also, a workshop in sign language was conducted and support was offered for Lutheran marriage encounter.

The agency entered the 1980s admittedly experiencing growth pains -- 1980 was a record year for participation by congregations and individuals in the programs and services offered by LS/LV. Lay volunteers rose from 350 to 500 and they visited nearly 1,400 church members, most of whom participated in 65 worship/fellowship activities. More than 200 were trained as shut-in visitors; 51 were trained in grief ministry. Fourteen refugee family sponsorships were secured. A newsletter "Silver Threads," was created to inform senior citizens and was distributed to more than 400 on the first mailing list. Volunteers provided comfort and basic care during a strike at Gracedale.

The slate of programs was stretched beyond the capacity of the staff, which, along with the Board, realized future programming decisions would become more critical. Still, it didn't deter the agency from taking on tasks when they arose. A Marriage Preparedness Series for engaged couples started with three pilot sessions in 1982 and helped guide 38 couples into marriage. The Grief Ministry Training and Social Ministry Workshop for youth gained national recognition.

LS/LV worked with the Good Shepherd Home to find low-cost housing for elderly in the way of low-cost apartments and shared living arrangements. Within a year, the Silver Threads mailing list grew to 1,000. Ingathering collected more than 20,000 gifts for distribution.

attended a learning event in the fall of 1996 on the dynamics of hate and hate groups. LS/LV began organizing a network of congregation communicators to spread the word of its work. The agency agreed to open its services to seven congregations from the Pen Argyl-Bangor Slate Belt area.

"Many things have changed over the last 25 years," wrote the Rev. William Maxon in his 1997 chairperson's report, "but what's remained is the commitment of LS/LV to respond quickly in the name of Jesus and the name of our supporting congregations to those in crisis in the Lehigh Valley and beyond."

During the first 25 years:

- An estimated 111,200 individuals participated in the agency's programs.
- More than 8,500 volunteers were trained to serve as congregational representatives while visiting residents of nursing homes, prisons and other institutions.
- More than 300,000 gifts and \$46,000 were collected as part of Ingathering.
- The marriage preparation course guided 1,348 couples.
- More than 7,300 individuals received information and referrals.

As LS/LV started its second quarter century, the agency continued to do so much with so few resources, including no government funding. LS/LV agreed to enter into a covenant with the Lehigh County Conference of Churches to work together in disaster response. The agency began preliminary conversations with the directors of the Bethlehem Area Council of Churches to do cooperative ministry.

LS/LV took on additional responsibilities in 1998 when Lutheran Disaster Response appointed it the coordinating agency for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The agency then responded when tornadoes hit Lyons and Bowers and Lake Carey in the Poconos. Volunteers and staff provided generators, saws, and financial aid.

Less than two months before the end of the century, on November 18, 1999, the Board of Directors officially approved a name change to "Lutheran Congregational Services, Inc." This was done to reflect the agency's mission beyond the Lehigh Valley by eliminating the geographical reference. Moreover, the agency exists because of the congregations and is responsible to the congregations, the Board reasoned.

August 1992. LS/LV issued a plea for supplies. LS/LV collected and shipped a tractor trailer loaded with bottled water, canned food, soap and other supplies to the Lutheran Disaster Response facility in Florida. The appeal produced more than \$40,000 in offerings. Three years later, LS/LV was called to make an appeal for the Oklahoma City bombing victims and Virgin Island hurricane victims. Quickly, \$11,346 was raised and forwarded to Oklahoma City and \$3,586 was sent to the Virgin Islands.

LS/LV stepped up when swift action was needed at home. A woman from a local congregation was suffering from leukemia and needed a bone marrow transplant to save her life. Within two hours of receiving the request, the LS/LV staff had contacted all 94 congregations and recruited 40 donor candidates, including several who were compatible. Part of LS/LV's ministry always has been to serve as a clearinghouse for information and referrals. These phone calls, which can average from five to eight a day, range from a need for clothing, food and shelter, a need for counseling because of drug and alcohol abuse and a request to monitor family crises.

SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITIES

"The Lutheran Services of the Lehigh Valley is a social ministry organization accountable to its supporting congregations and structured to be creative and flexible in:

A. envisioning and identifying ministry needs in partnership with its supporting congregations, and

B. creating programs in response to specific ministry needs of congregations and community."

LS/LV 1995 Mission Statement

LS/LV took on additional responsibilities in 1996, signifying a major shift in its duties when it agreed to serve as the coordinating agency for ELCA/LCMS Disaster Response. Bishop Strobel assigned to LS/LV the task of coordinating the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod's response to any disaster appeal for money, supplies and volunteers. The agency's first task was aiding flood-ravaged residents of the upper mid-western U.S. In less than a month a synod-wide appeal collected 3,500 Christmas gifts and \$3,000 in cash for families who lost their homes in the flood. John Clark and George Roeder drove a donated truck to Grand Forks, N.D. to deliver the donations. A disaster preparedness workshop was attended by 24 people following a July 1996 flood in upper Bucks County.

The agency continued to be a resource for clergy. Nearly 140 ministers

Eight congregations helped to resettle 45 Indochinese refugees. Government cutbacks and tough economic times lowered the number of refugees who could be accepted, and by June 1983, the LS/LV's refugee settlement program came to an end. The agency still provided informal assistance to those previously in the program.

CHOICES -- a decision making program for children -- was made available in the fall of 1983. The three-week session drew 314 participants.

Through the generosity of a grant from the Prosser Trust, the Rev. David Bradford was added as a part-time pastoral specialist for parish services, grief ministry and marriage enrichment. The grief workshop had grown from 44 participants in 1982 to more than 200 in 1983. A marriage enrichment program was started in 1984. The six-session series was offered twice with 32 couples entering the pilot program. In the spring of '84, The Rev. Thomas Tomlinson was called to specialize as a part-time minister to deaf persons in the Lehigh Valley and Reading. Another pilot program begun in 1983 -- "Use and Abuse of Alcohol and Other Drugs- A Primer" -- was continued into 1984.

By 1985, LS/LV's 16 programs were serving 6,000 people. With so much happening at LS/LV's two offices, a congregational council contact program was initiated to begin informing congregations of the agency's activities and programs.

In October 1985, Shirley Lucore resigned after seven years. Lois Emsweller served as office manager until Ernest Siegfried was hired to become executive director in February 1986. This began a tenure by Siegfried that lasted into the next century. Siegfried, in his inaugural report, said social ministry is "being about your Father's business." LS/LV's effectiveness was recognized by Lutheran Brotherhood, which awarded the agency a grant to test a volunteer recruitment strategy aimed at non-traditional volunteers.

"It is the mission of Lutheran Services of the Lehigh Valley to initiate and augment ministries to persons in need. It achieves its goal by developing and maintaining programs in its service area and by assisting laity and clergy of supporting congregations in social ministry."

LS/LV 1988 Mission Statement

Lutheran Service and Family Counseling was brought into the Lehigh Valley from Topton with an office at the Good Shepherd Home. LS/LV and Good Shepherd Home administered the program which took on more cases than ever. UPWARD, an alcohol and drug counseling

program under Lutheran Welfare Services, was re-organized. Dr. James Hershberger served as interim director of Lutheran Counseling Services and UPWARD. The program delivered 1,450 alcohol and drug counseling hours; 3,050 hours of counseling were provided by Family Life Services in 1986. At this same time, LS/LV considered but opted not to join forces with other synod organizations in creating a revenue-generating social ministries corporation.

The Board and staff noted LS/LV's deaf ministry was at a crossroad. They recommended it was time to call its own deaf ministry pastor to the Lehigh Valley rather than sharing one with Reading. The Rev. Ann Paynter, the agency's volunteer coordinator and parish specialist, assumed responsibility of the deaf ministry and conducted 11 services in 1987. By 1990, the Rev. Bruce MacLaughlin came on board. He stabilized and nurtured the program during a 10-year stay as the ministry moved from Allentown to Holy Trinity Memorial in Catasauqua.

The agency's office was consolidated and centrally located at the former Wholistic Health Center behind Rosemont Lutheran in west Bethlehem by the late 1980s. However, this positive step couldn't hide what Siegfried termed the "devastating decrease" in giving to the Lutheran Social Ministry Appeal in 1987. This shortfall curtailed many ministries in the Synod at a time when members were hurting worse than ever. Family Counseling Services and Alcohol and Drug Programs were reduced, and due to a lack of funds, a planned respite care program was put on hold. Change also was occurring at the national level with the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

But from the ashes ... rises a phoenix, or more specifically, Lutheran Services of the Lehigh Valley. The 1988 Lutheran Social Ministry Fund Appeal fell \$100,000 short of requests. The agency entered 1989 with an unbalanced budget and a \$50,000 deficit. Nevertheless, the Respite Care Program was developed, initiated and Ruth Groman was hired as administrator; Two other new programs -- a support group for families of persons with AIDS, coordinated by Lori Hertzog, and Teenage Suicide Awareness, led by Dick Roth -- were started.

Miraculously, and thanks to the diligent work of the Board, under the direction of President Flora Weber and staff, 1989 ended with LS/LV reducing its deficit and financially finishing in the black. Later in the year the Board met at a retreat to review the agency's mission and organizational structure. Under a professional consulting firm, LS/LV developed a long-range financial strategy. If the staff and board wondered if their hard work was worth it they just had to look at the results. The Teenage Suicide Awareness Ministry had identified two teens who had been contemplating suicide. Respite Care, which

provided in-home care to relieve family caregivers, drew 75 volunteers in what became an ecumenical ministry.

Hurricane Hugo ushered in the 1990s and introduced LS/LV and its volunteers to disaster relief. Volunteers paid their own way to help Hugo victims in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. On the home front, LS/LV mobilized to help find a bone marrow donor for a parishioner of Bethany Lutheran in Reading. Faith Lutheran (Whitehall) agreed to be the Lehigh Valley testing site and drew 115 volunteers to be tested. Another 25 helped as volunteers and \$2,500 was donated.

Lutheran Services of the Lehigh Valley offered more than 20 specific ministries. Ingathering remained a staple of LS/LV, collecting nearly 20,000 items and \$3,802. More than 500 visits were made to Gracedale and Cedarbrook, and the Teenage Suicide Awareness Ministry brought in 71 teens and adults in four sessions. The 1992 annual dinner and meeting at Muhlenberg College featured the Rev. John Steinback, senior pastor at Luther Place Memorial Church, Washington, D.C., as its speaker.

LS/LV paused in 1992 to celebrate its 20th anniversary. Its mission, in large part remained the same as it partnered with 94 member congregations through a staff of six full and part-time persons and several hundred volunteers. The most important aspect, wrote director Siegfried in his annual report, is helping congregational social ministry committees through workshops and training sessions conducted by the staff in individual congregations. They assist to assess a community's needs and then train volunteers to take action.

"This agency touches the lives of real people with support groups for the divorced and separated, suicide awareness workshops; marriage preparation series and grief ministry."

Ernest Siegfried, 1993 Director's Report

The Board worked to provide a solid financial base through continued short- and long-range planning. This foresight allowed several new programs to be created. Support groups for separated and divorced persons didn't attract large numbers but were very good for those who participated. Grief Support Groups for those who lost loved ones were added. A Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training Ministry that was created to train lay ministers so that they could assist pastors in the distribution of communion to members at home or institutionalized was well-received.

When a major crisis hit, LS/LV and its network of volunteers responded with open arms. Hurricane Andrew, the last of three Category 5 hurricanes to hit the U.S. in the 20th Century, devastated south Florida in