



ILLUMINATIONS

SHARING THE GOSPEL ALWAYS | SPRING 2020

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**BRINGING MINISTRIES
TOGETHER**

SHARING GOD'S LOVE WITH PEOPLE WHO DON'T FEEL LOVED

"I used to walk through the toughest neighborhoods in Detroit, without any fear. Everybody knew me as The Mailman because that's what I did—delivered mail. None of those places ever scared me and the baddest dudes left me alone. But losing my sight in both eyes, that's the scariest thing I ever faced. I didn't know what to do.

Eventually I learned Braille, but still felt pretty lost in my life. Then I started going to a church down the street. They told me about Jesus. They told me I was loved. The pastor's wife ordered me a Braille Bible and soon I could read about God's love for me on my own. **Wow, my life was changed.**

Wouldn't you know it, I ended up at a doctor who was willing to try a new medical procedure on my eyes, and I was able to regain about half of my vision in both eyes. I still read Braille,



but I can also read your Large Print. I still walk through those tough neighborhoods, but now I don't worry because I have Jesus on my side.

- CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE -

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After reading the cover story, I began thinking about what it means to our recipients to receive a Braille or Large Print Bible from LBW. When John said, **"You're sharing God's love with a lot of people who don't feel loved..."** it was a powerful reminder we are serving a population of the world who often live in a place of solitude, wondering whether or not they are loved by others.

And as God often does, he placed an appropriate quote in front of me from renowned American actor Richard Kiel:

"To be loved is important, as is having a sense of accomplishment. But **to love** is equally important in life especially when it is combined with taking action to do something for someone else to make their life better."

This quote immediately brought to mind the words of St. Paul who wrote, **"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."** (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Brothers and sisters, you are showing the world love through your actions. You are making the lives of thousands of other people better by bringing Christ to their hands. You are showing them the most perfect love of all—God's love. Through that love, you are bringing them the ultimate hope found in the faith we all have in Jesus.

You are accomplishing so much through your gifts to LBW. We want you to know the impact your gifts are having, which is why these pages are filled with the stories of people who receive our materials, what is being produced because of your gifts, the partnerships with other organizations, and how LBW is continuing to seek ways to grow, thrive, and reach new audiences with the Gospel.

I pray you feel the sense of accomplishment after reading this newsletter and are motivated to continue your support of this wonderful ministry. Know you are loved by the recipients, staff, and volunteers of Lutheran Braille Workers. Most importantly, know you are loving other people by bringing the Light of Christ into their lives.

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Zemke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "Z".

Jay Zemke, President





SHARING GOD'S LOVE WITH PEOPLE WHO DON'T FEEL LOVED

- CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE -

I've begun tutoring children who are Blind on how to read Braille. More importantly, I share the Bible with so many people who are Blind around Detroit; people like me who lost their vision because they didn't take care of their health.

But y'all don't care why we lost our vision. You still send us the Bible, and devotionals, and other materials without charging us a dime.

You're sharing God's love with a lot of people who don't feel loved, in a place where none of us could afford to buy these materials on our own. **You're the only ones doing this work.**

Thank you for what you're doing. It means a lot to me, and it means a lot to every Blind person I talk to and give a book of the Bible to. Thank you all!"

John R., 51 years old, Detroit, MI

HELLO LUTHERAN BRAILLE WORKERS:

"I would like to order a Russian Braille Bible. It is not said enough how grateful I am for this organization. Twenty five years ago, I was living in Korea when I met two missionaries and they wanted to share the Word of God with me. There was one problem, I needed a Braille Bible and had no way of attaining one. So these two wonderful people went back to the United States did some searching and found Lutheran Braille Workers. The next time I saw them they had a Bible for me.

Since, I've moved to the United States, studied theology and have returned back to Korea where I am now a pastor. Wherever I moved my Braille Bible went with me. I still have my 25 year old Bible and read it every day, it's the most precious thing I have. Lutheran Braille Workers, the volunteers and you have changed my life, for that I am grateful.

I apologize for not thanking you sooner. God's blessing to all of you."

H. Chun, Seoul, South Korea



"Thank you for sending two copies of Favorite Hymns. It's the perfect birthday gift for my mom who knows all of these songs but hasn't been able to sing them for years, and the second copy will help me learn the songs too. It means so much to us!"

Rick, Duluth, MN



PHOTO: LCMS/JOHANNA HEIDORN

BRINGING LARGE PRINT TO PUERTO RICO DISASTER RELIEF

On January 7th, a large magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck Puerto Rico in the early morning hours. Hundreds of aftershocks and precursor earthquakes created a lot of damage in the small Island territory still recovering from the effects of multiple hurricanes in the previous years.

On January 10th, a representative from the LCMS Latin America office reached out to Lutheran Braille Workers requesting assistance as a significant number of Spanish Large Print materials were needed to reach the Visually Impaired in distress. They placed an order for multiple Bibles, sets of the Gospels, hand outs, and other resources.

LBW responded immediately thanks to the efforts of staff and volunteers, as well as through the financial assistance of many

donors. Within a week of confirmation of the requests, materials were already on their way to missionaries and the LCMS representatives in the field.

Since the materials have arrived, LCMS missionaries have been distributing the materials to men and women of all ages. They shared with us about one man who is losing his sight, and actually made an appointment to go in and get a Large Print Spanish Bible. We also learned the Small Catechism is especially helpful as many of the missionaries are able to help educate and teach people through the Catechism materials.

Your support allows LBW to stand ready and able to assist the LCMS and other church bodies when responding to disasters and crises around the world, providing God's Word in Braille and Large Print to help individuals overcome the adversity they face!

WHAT'S COOL IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Ministry Center 12 was privileged to share what we do with an eager group of 172 students at St. John's Lutheran School in Corcoran, Minnesota. Students were able to snack in the dark, play Braille Uno and learn how to write their name in Braille using tennis balls in a muffin tin to simulate Braille dots. Each student went home with their own Braille Alphabet/John 3:16 sheet that the students were able to emboss themselves on one of our Braille presses. The 7th and 8th grade students were even able to make a complete book of Revelations that they proudly shared with the congregation.

St. John's has been collecting donations for Lutheran Braille Workers through their chapel offerings. This was an engaging way for them to learn about our ministry and how their chapel offerings are helping those who are Blind or Visually Impaired see God's Word. What a wonderful opportunity to show these young students how we share God's love!

LBW reaches into dozens of public and private schools each year, whether through video presentations from our headquarters, or through the awesome efforts of our volunteers and Ministry Centers around the country. It is important young people learn about how Jesus loves everybody, including people who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

If you would like more information on how to connect your church or your school to Lutheran Braille Workers, please contact Julie Zemke at julie@LBWloveworks.org or by calling 800-925-6092.



BUY-A-DOT UPDATE

We are excited to share that our Buy-A-Dot campaign to purchase a new plate embossing device is going strong! We are over halfway to our goal with more funds and new volunteers arriving weekly. We can do this!



MRS. DEBBIE SWANSON, DIRECTOR OF HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN SCHOOL, AND MR. KEN LOEBER, LEADER OF BRAILLE MINISTRY CENTER #14, CELEBRATE THE EFFORTS OF THE SCHOOL STUDENTS AND MINISTRY CENTER VOLUNTEERS IN RAISING FUNDS FOR THE BUY-A-DOT CAMPAIGN. BOTH THE SCHOOL AND THE MINISTRY CENTER SHARE SPACE AT HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, EDMOND, OK.

Our Ministry Center volunteers have heard it over and over—Buy-A-Dot is more than just a fundraiser. Our Ministry Centers have recruited dozens of new volunteers simply by sharing what they do with their congregations. More volunteers means more sharing of God's love!

We've also been blessed that this campaign has brought a new generation to be educated about

what Lutheran Braille Workers does to touch those who are Blind or Visually Impaired with the Word of God. Many of our Ministry Centers have opened their doors to local students giving them a first-hand look at how we produce our materials. This has been a rewarding experience



STUDENTS FROM HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN SCHOOL JOYFULLY ADD DOTS TO THE BUY-A-DOT POSTER WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HOLY TRINITY'S SENIOR PASTOR REV. JONATHAN MEYER. THE STUDENTS COLLECTED FUNDS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THEIR CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK AND RAISED OVER \$2,200 FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

both for the Ministry Center volunteers and the students.

Ministry Center 14 invited students to tour their center and assist with the production of Braille material. The partnership among the school, church, and Ministry Center has been revived through the Buy-A-Dot campaign, and together, they are connecting the dots of their ministry in Oklahoma.



READING THE BIBLE TO SHARE WITH OTHERS

In 2019, Lutheran Braille Workers reached out to a narrator, Mr. Jonathan Howard, who works at Concordia University Irvine (CUI), asking if he knew of other people who would be interested in narrating the Bible for distribution on the Digital Talking Book cartridges. Almost immediately there was interest from other teachers, students, and staff on campus, and a team of narrators was assembled for the New Testament reading.

After completing the narration of the New Testament in Fall 2019, Mr. Howard had to build a whole new team to move on to the narration of the Old Testament which started in 2020. Approximately 20 people from CUI have been involved in this incredible project which is important for the growth of LBW's Audio-Digital ministry and efforts to reach new audiences.

LBW is grateful for the opportunity to partner with another Lutheran ministry in Southern California in the ultimate goal of sharing the Gospel worldwide! We hope to have the Audio Bible available for distribution by the end of year 2020.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL TALKING BOOK?

The Digital Talking Book is a cartridge that can be used for playing magazines, books and other files on an NLS Digital Talking Book Player.

HOW DO I OBTAIN A NLS DIGITAL TALKING BOOK PLAYER?

Please visit the National Library Service website to see if you are eligible to receive one free of charge at <https://www.loc.gov/nls> or contact them by phone at 888-657-7323



TECH TALK

FREE CURRENCY READER NOW AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

In January 2015, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP), in partnership with the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, launched the U.S. Currency Reader Program to provide a free currency reader device called the iBill® Talking Banknote Identifier to all qualified U.S.



citizens or legal residents who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

The currency reader is a small, compact, hand-held device which quickly identifies the bill's denomination in one of three ways: a clear natural voice, a pattern of tones, or a pattern of vibrations for privacy. The vibration mode also assists people who are deaf and blind. The currency reader identifies all U.S. currency in circulation, to include the \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 denominations.

More information about the meaningful access program can be found at the BEP's website at www.moneyfactory.gov/uscurrencyreaderpgm.html

DO YOU KNOW A CERTIFIED BRAILLE TRANSCRIBER OR PROOFREADER? LET US KNOW!

With our new plate embossing device on the horizon we are gearing up to produce new plates. We are excited that this equipment will allow us to bring new material into production. If you or someone you know is a Library of Congress certified Braille Transcriber or Proofreader, we need you! Please contact our office to see how you can fill this important role.





BRINGING MINISTRIES TOGETHER

Recently, Lutheran Braille Workers participated in the LLL/LHM Grand Canyon District rally in Phoenix, Arizona. LBW's representative presented the ministry to almost 100 attendees, created connections and relationships with other organizations serving those in need, and gained critical interest and support.

In addition, a one hour servant event was established in which a number of wonderful volunteers assisted in assembling over 1400 copies of The Lutheran Hour sermons in Large Print for distribution to individuals in the United States and around the globe.

One amazing fact which came out of the conference:

There are approximately 70 million people who are deaf in the world, almost all of whom are unchurched. There are four LCMS Recognized Service Organizations (RSO) serving this population.

There are approximately 241 million individuals who are legally or fully Blind in the world and unchurched. Lutheran Braille Workers is the only Lutheran organization serving this population. This is why your support is so critical to sharing the Gospel with people who are Visually Impaired.

PRODUCTION FACTS

2019
44,124
Volumes of Braille
Bibles Produced

2019
11,589
Braille Volumes
Shipped Abroad

2019
15,740
Periodicals
Produced

CHANGES TO IRA LAWS – 2019 SECURE ACT PASSAGE

In 2019, Congress passed the SECURE Act, changing a number of requirements to IRAs, especially as it relates to Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) and inheritance situations. While not a comprehensive list, the following are a few points to consider as you decide whether to support LBW through your IRA.

- Starting January 1, 2020, the new age at which RMDs are required has increased from 70 ½ to 72 years old. This only applies to people who turned 70 ½ after January 1, 2020.
- Individuals with an earned income may now contribute into their IRAs at any age, including past the age of 72.
- IRAs which are inherited after January 1, 2020 must be distributed within 10 years with a few exceptions.



Please note, this article is not intended to provide any type of legal or financial advice and is for informational purposes only. If you have any questions regarding the new law, please contact your attorney or financial planner for legal and financial advice. If you would like to discuss your estate plan with a representative from LBW, please contact Daniel Jenkins at 800-925-6092.





THE MINISTRY OF LUTHERAN BRAILLE WORKERS

Lutheran Braille Workers is the ministry which lovingly reaches out to the margins and invites people who are Blind or Visually Impaired into God's Word and His church by diligently making the human connections and the material resources needed to help them draw nearer to Jesus and to His promise of life everlasting.



WAYS TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY

Hopefully your heart has been filled with joy upon reading these wonderful thank-you letters we have received from our recipients.

If you are moved to continue to support the ministry of Lutheran Braille Workers, I ask you to please consider the following ways to do so:

1. Prayer
2. Volunteering
3. Sharing your heart and passion for the ministry of Lutheran Braille Workers with people you know.
4. Continuing financial support.

Please make a gift through cash, check, or credit card today via the enclosed envelope or by

going to our website www.LBWloveworks.org, or consider creating a monthly automatic gift by debit or credit card through the website as well.

Finally, please consider other ways to give including through gifts of stock, life insurance, IRA mandatory distributions, Thrivent Choice Dollars or Thrivent Action Team grants. If you have questions, please feel free to contact us directly.

Another way to support Lutheran Braille Workers is to share your stories about how Lutheran Braille Workers has benefitted you or your family. These stories help people connect with the ministry of LBW and encourage new support allowing us to continue to produce all of these materials for free. Please share your stories by emailing them to julie@LBWloveworks.org or calling 800-925-6092.

I'm Interested in Providing a Bible(s) for a Person Who is Blind or Vision Impaired

- ☐ \$100 which could provide 20 audio cartridges for the Visually Impaired
☐ \$200 which could fund a complete Bible in Braille or Large Print
☐ \$1000 which could produce five complete Bibles in Braille or Large Print
☐ A gift in the amount of \$ _____

Please contact me with information on:

- ☐ Volunteer Opportunities
☐ Free Assistance with Estate Planning

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State & Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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b r a i l l e a l p h a b e t

a b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Puzzle #2 of 5: Can you read this?

Please keep your newsletters through 2020 to solve the entire puzzle. Turn in the completed puzzle answer and receive a prize. Details will follow in a future newsletter.