

Atlantic District Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

The Rev. Dr. David Benke, President,
Vice President of LDRNY

The Atlantic District is the regional representation of the national Lutheran denomination The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). The Atlantic District is the LCMS serving New York State from the tip of Long Island, up along the Hudson River, through the Adirondack Mountains. The Atlantic District is a founding member of Lutheran Disaster Response of New York and sees LDRNY as an exemplary agency that reflects through its work with those affected by 9/11 the district's mission statement, Engaging the World Through the Gospel of Hope.

The Atlantic District reaches out to people affected by 9/11 through the human care ministry of its mission staff. District missionaries reach out to touch the lives of congregation and community members through the healing power of the Gospel. District missionaries reach out to Caribbean, Hispanic, African, and Asian immigrants and others to help them face the direct and wave affects of 9/11. Missionaries assist people in their communities by offering ESL classes; providing referrals to services, accompanying community and congregation members to services, providing interpreting services, spiritual care, and by connecting people to immigration legal services.

The district serves as a connection between LDRNY and local LCMS congregations. It continues to encourage and assist congregations as they reach out to those affected by 9/11 through programs funded by Comfort and Renew Grants and by participating in Camp New Ground programs. In the past, the district worked to assist clergy and their families affected by 9/11 through respite services. We continue to try to be aware of the affects of 9/11 on church workers and their families and try to meet any needs that arise.

In the future, the Atlantic District plans to continue to reach out with the Gospel of Hope through congregations and missionaries to serve those affected by 9/11 and any other disasters that may occur.



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LDRNY MISSION STATEMENT

To respond directly and encourage and facilitate response from others to the needs of persons and their families affected both directly and indirectly by tragedy or disaster.



ATLANTIC DISTRICT

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Atlantic District LCMS

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Maria's story

I met "Maria" for the first time at the front door of a house, sitting on the cold stairs. What impressed me weren't her cold hands, but her inexpressive face, without hope, without life!

Before that happened, I had received a phone call from a woman who was attending our ESL classes and an Alpha Course offered by the Hispanic Outreach of St. John, College Point. We offer ESL classes and spiritual support to the Hispanics in the neighborhood, in order to help newcomers adapt to the new culture they are living in. A Tender Loving Care group provides spiritual support, as well as legal advice. Most participants do not have legal status in the United States. An Alpha Course provides a prayer time, friendship and study of the most important topics of the Christian Faith.

Maria was trying to commit suicide. She was desperate. She had lost for the second time a job after 9-11. With no money in her pocket and the owner of the apartment pushing her out, she was sitting close to the railroads, gathering her courage for the next act. Fortunately she remembered somebody had given her the telephone number of an old classmate from Bogotá, Colombia. Isabel was attending our ESL classes and Alpha; Isabel called and asked me for help!

After Maria and I introduced ourselves, we decided to continue our conversation in a park, a few blocks away.

At that time, Maria was 38, she had left a poor neighborhood without any future, searching for a new opportunity. She is the support for her mother and her 15-year-old son. Now, she realizes, she has no job, no place to live she is hungry, alone.... she was questioning the meaning of life and how unlucky and unhappy she was. Why should she continue with such a miserable life? It had been almost four years since she had seen her mother and son; nobody is interested in her as a person. She is failing to support herself and her beloved mother and son, she thought.

After three hours of conversation, counseling and praying, she promised not to commit suicide. God answered our prayers. She felt better, the expression of her face changed and she told me she has peace again. We didn't know that was only the beginning of blessings: The same day, she got a part time job, and after a week a full time job. She moved to a shared affordable apartment and started sending money again to Colombia. Since then, Maria attended our Alpha courses, called me time to time telling me about her life, we also meet time to time. She is improving her life! She got a better job in a pharmacy and she says, " I'll never say again I'm alone"

Maria is very thankful to God and wants to help other people with problems. She knows how important it is to be close to God and how important it is to be God's vehicle for bringing hope and help to who in need.

At this time, Maria is having health problems, she has some bad tumors. Let us pray for her. Let us pray she can get health insurance. Let us pray she can adjust her status in this country and visit her beloved family in Colombia.

- **The Rev. Hugo E. Berger,**

Mission Field Developer Atlantic District Lutheran Church

