



*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*

Charlotte Haberaecker

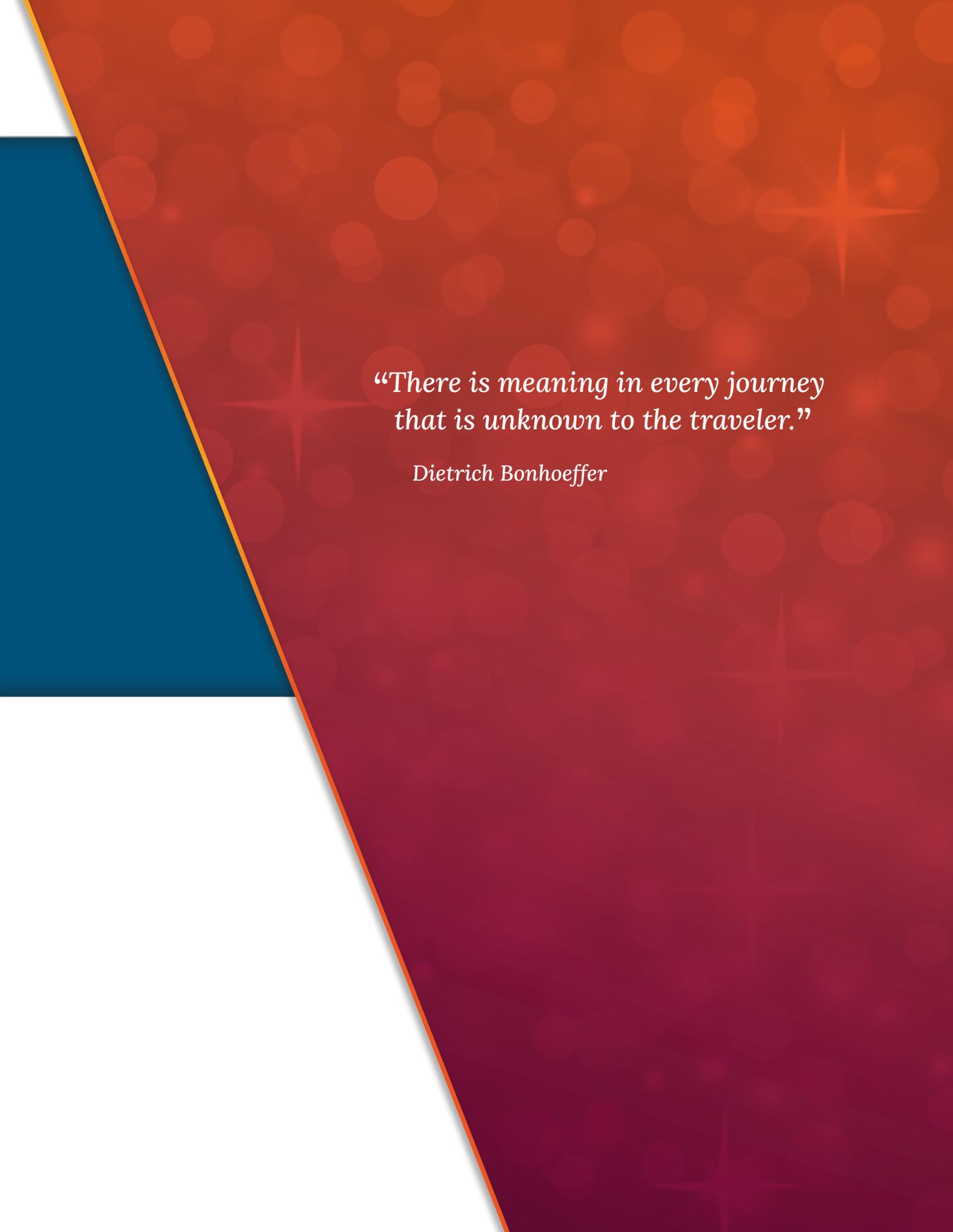


Lutheran
Services
in America®

2020-22 Words of Reflection

by Charlotte Haberaecker
President and CEO

Lutheran Services in America



*“There is meaning in every journey
that is unknown to the traveler.”*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



NOVEMBER 21, 2022

As leaders of organizations centered and rooted in faith, we draw strength from each other as we persist in our mission to bring hope and healing to people.

I began a weekly CEO Update at the start of the pandemic because I thought it was important to stay in touch and communicate through a dark and uncertain time. As one of the largest nonprofit health and human services networks that cares for one in 50 people in America, we were hit especially hard by the pandemic.

While some CEO Updates were about important advocacy issues or programs, others were more reflective. I always received feedback from member CEOs on the reflections—notes like “I really needed that today” which kept me going.

One of my board members suggested that I compile the reflections together. As I look back, it’s clear that where we thought we’d be along the way changed—often—and mostly in ways that brought more challenges and hardships to Lutheran social ministry.

What was also clear was the extraordinary leadership, creativity and perseverance that you and leaders throughout the network demonstrated—examples of true leadership to adapt to never-before-seen situations and lead your teams with grace and courage. Lutheran social ministry stood up when we were most needed and you and your teams are the Front Line Heroes that we lift up for your life-saving work.

These Reflections are dedicated to you—for your remarkable leadership and our extraordinary journey together.

In gratitude for all that you do,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlotte Haberaecker".

Charlotte Haberaecker
President and CEO
Lutheran Services in America

In gratitude
for all
that you do,



APRIL 12, 2020

Easter 2020

Pastor Martin Rinckart wrote the hymn *Now Thank We All Our God* during the plague in 1636. He was performing 50 funerals a day including his wife's—yet in the midst of tragedy, he wrote a song of gratitude. I've often wondered how he could be grateful at such a dark time.

Yet now in the midst of our own pandemic, I'm grateful for you—your leadership, your perseverance and your ingenuity in overcoming the many hurdles you have in caring for your team and for the most vulnerable. Grateful for the lives you are saving, for those you are comforting and for those you are lifting up.

Amid his doubts, trials and tribulations, Job declared “For I know my Redeemer lives and at last he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25).

On this Easter Day may we gain strength for our work ahead, courage for the journey and hope for the future.



MAY 4, 2020

Thank You for Your Leadership

Thank you for your continued leadership and perseverance in the face of the pandemic. As Winston Churchill once said, “It’s the courage to continue that counts.”

Over the past six weeks, we have talked with many of you across the country. Your dedication and unwavering commitment to your teams, your clients and your communities are evident and life-changing and we are sharing your stories and lifting up your leadership and your essential role on the front lines of the pandemic.

In conversations with many of you and at our Lutheran Services in America Board of Directors meeting last week, we heard from member CEOs who spoke candidly of the emotional toll that the pandemic has on the people working on the front lines—the staff’s anxiety about their own and their families’ health, their fear of coming to work, the long hours, their grief in losing long-time clients and staff, the economic toll on their families, and the uncertainty of the current situation and how long it could last. As one CEO put it, “this work is really hard” especially where there is limited recognition for the essential work being done and a negative narrative in the media.

We have also heard from our member CEOs across the country about the incredible steps you are taking to continue to serve your clients despite the challenges and to protect your staff, your clients and your residents. And we have seen your leadership, creativity, and flexibility in adapting to new never-before-seen situations with grace and courage. As one of our board members noted, these are examples of true leadership—to lead your troops through times like these with courage and compassion.

At Lutheran Services in America, we are committed to advocating for you, to supporting you in achieving your mission, and to changing the narrative so that everyone recognizes the essential work that you do, the difficult choices you make every day, the lives you save, and the people you lift up because you are mission-driven.

As people of faith, we remember God’s call to Joshua to be strong and courageous in the uncertain time after Moses died (Joshua 1:1). He chose Joshua to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land—a way they had not been before. May you have strength for the work ahead, courage amidst the uncertainty, and the assurance that you are not alone.

*In gratitude
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that you do,*



JUNE 1, 2020

Hope, Healing and Justice

As people of faith, we pray and speak for hope, healing, justice, and peace and our shared humanity. As Lutheran social ministry organizations, we have a shared mission and set of values that recognize the dignity and worth of all people. Our commitment to honor the “whole person” and their needs with dignity and respect is deeply embedded in the DNA of the work we do across the country and through our work we strive for all people to reach their potential. Because when people reach their potential, our communities and our nation are stronger.

As we work to help heal our country, I wanted to lift up the voices of Lutheran social ministry from across the country.

Last week as the tragic events in Minneapolis unfolded with the senseless death of George Floyd. Damyn Kelly, President & CEO of Lutheran Social Services of New York wrote in a letter to his staff that “human services organizations and those who work in the sector have an obligation to not only act in ways that enhance the quality of life of those we serve but also to speak out against injustice when we see or experience it.”

From his home in Minneapolis, Antonio Oftelie, Executive Director of Leadership for a Networked World at Harvard University and Lutheran Services in America Board member, reflected that “the crisis in policing is like an MRI of society – it illuminates the parts that need to be fixed and healed. The path forward is to work upstream and solve the chronic root causes of social inequities and disparities. During these turbulent times, our ministry and work are more important than ever, as Lutheran Services in America and its members are able to not only provide hope, but also transform the lives of people and truly lift up people and communities.”

I’d like to close with “A Pentecost Prayer for People in Minneapolis and Beyond” from Rev. Dr. John Denninger, President of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, who wrote that “We remember the people of Minneapolis – bearing the breathless moment shared with other cities: Ferguson, Charleston, Charlottesville, Sandtown, and more. Heal our cities as you sent each of us to meet each person in our path with the life-giving, life-changing, Kingdom presence of Christ. Holy Spirit—while we wait, breathe on us once again!”

We are praying not only for the victims of violence and their families today but for our nation as a whole during this heartbreaking time in our history.



JUNE 29, 2020

Reflection

As we reflect on the upcoming July 4th holiday, we realize that we are in one of the most extraordinary times in the history of the world. This is one of the very few times when the entire globe is dealing with the same disaster at exactly the same time and when our country and world are having serious conversations about systemic racism.

As leaders, we have been pivoting, stressed, and stretched. And yet it's God's design that we are in the place we serve and lead during this crucial time. As leaders in Lutheran social ministry, we strive to ensure that all people reach their potential and have the opportunity to live in community with full and abundant lives. As leaders, we bring hope, healing and justice to those we walk alongside and to our communities.

I am grateful for your leadership at this momentous time. On this July 4th, may we have time to rest, reflect and recommit ourselves to our mission and to building abundant lives and community.

Thanks Charlotte...good message...liked the terms pivoting, stressed and stretched. And, as leaders, we bring hope, healing and justice.

Peace to all at Lutheran Services in America.

Be well,

David Fenoglietto, President and CEO
Lutheran SeniorLife

In gratitude
for all
that you do,



AUGUST 31, 2020

A Labor Day Reflection

The world has changed since the beginning of the year and with it so many of our goals have gone unmet or drastically changed. Where we thought we'd be in September is so much different than where we are today. And many of us have been drawing on our short-term “surge capacity” to deal with the acutely stressful realities we face—which is normal during a short-term disaster but difficult to maintain in a longer-term unfolding pandemic.

At a recent board of directors meeting, Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing, our board Theologian-in-Residence shared the story of Ezekiel who worked hard toward his goal of becoming a priest and carrying the Ark of the Covenant into battle. After years of study, he passed the test only to be exiled to Babylon where he would never serve as a priest or carry the Ark of the Covenant. Despite his hard work, he fell short of his goal.

And yet Ezekiel wrote that a day would come when the powerful presence of God would no longer be confined to a small space but that God's presence would fill a new city whose name from that time on would be “The LORD Is There,”— or in Hebrew, *Yahweh Shammah* (Ezekiel 48:35). Not The LORD “was or might be or will be” there, but *is* there. What Ezekiel envisioned, Jesus fulfilled.

As we approach the upcoming Labor Day weekend, may you find time to rest, to reflect, and to remember *Yahweh Shammah*.



OCTOBER 26, 2020

Disruption is in our DNA

October 31, 2020 marks the 503rd anniversary of the Reformation. While many know about the Reformation, fewer realize the fundamental transformation that took place in healthcare and social services at that time—or how it relates to the work we do today.

Early Lutheran reformers didn't want people begging in the streets as they had for generations. Instead they brought an entirely new way of seeing the world that broke with the status quo of the day; one that recognized that when individuals achieve their full potential, both they and their communities thrive. They pooled resources across the community, taking a holistic approach to provide not only food and shelter but healthcare and job training so that people could thrive and become active contributing members of their community. New service and funding models were created, new partnerships formed, and people advocated for the government to play a role in helping people and communities to thrive.

In short, a fundamental rethinking and change in the delivery of healthcare and social services took place that evolved over time and perseveres today in Lutheran social ministry.

Today we're at an inflection point with a once-in-a-life time pandemic, deepening economic crisis, and calls for racial justice. We know we're not going back to the ways things were in January 2020, yet the way forward in the midst of upheaval and disruption is uncertain.

While we don't know what the future will bring, as Abraham Lincoln once said "The greatest way to predict your future is to create it." As a faith-based network that works with one in 50 Americans each year, we have the opportunity to create a better future—one built on our deeply-held shared values—where all people can reach their full potential. One where all children can grow up to be healthy productive adults, where seniors and people with disabilities can live with purpose and meaning, and where systemic racism ends so that everyone truly has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

This is *our* opportunity to chart a new path forward, one that leads us to the future that we want. For 500 years, we've risen to the challenge. Once again the world is ripe for disruption and we are rising to the challenge.

"Oh God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." (Martin Luther)

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that you do,*



NOVEMBER 23, 2020

Thankful for You

As Thanksgiving approaches, I think about my recent conversations with member CEOs in some of the states hardest hit by COVID-19—the battle fatigue, the never-ending vigilance required, the difficult choices. And yet, they persist.

I am grateful that despite a pandemic that is more severe and relentless than we thought it would be, that you persist in your mission to bring hope and healing to people. I'm grateful for your leadership, grace and courage at a time when it's needed now more than ever.

I'm also grateful for the Front Line Heroes in Lutheran social ministry. We highlight a Front Line Hero from our member organizations each day and have compiled our fall stories into a digital booklet. Also check out the stories from our summer edition and a short video honoring Front Line Heroes. And please share your Front Line Hero stories with me so we can highlight them in the future.

I am grateful for the light you shine in the world—and for God's promise that “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5).



NOVEMBER 30, 2020

Waiting

Advent began on Sunday. For some, it's marked by the lighting of the first candle on the Advent wreath that represents hope, followed by the lighting of candles on subsequent Sundays that represent love, joy and peace leading up to Christmas.

I did not realize until recently that the Advent wreath was created in 1839 by a German pastor who was a pioneer in urban mission work and who founded a mission school for children—in other words, the leader of a Lutheran social ministry organization. During Advent, the children would ask every day if it was Christmas yet, so he made a large wooden ring out of a cartwheel and added candles that he would light daily until Christmas.

Innovation and endurance. Hallmarks of Lutheran social ministry organizations then and now.

Advent is a time of preparation and waiting for the coming of Christ. This year when so many are weary, we recall the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, who look forward to something greater to come.”

We wait with hope for the peace and joy of Christmas.

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



DECEMBER 21, 2020

Faith, Hope and Love at Christmas

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.
But the greatest of these is love.*

1 Corinthians 13:13

The apostle Paul shares with us in 1 Corinthians how essential the bedrock virtues of faith, hope and love are to Christians, insisting that love—the greatest virtue of them all—will abide long after our faith and hope have been fully realized. Love is a choice which springs from a deeply held commitment to serve others' needs over our own.

It's with this uplifting message in mind this Christmas season that we recognize the sacrifice and triumphs of our 300 Lutheran social ministry organizations this year—very likely one of the most challenging years we will face in our lifetimes. Most of all, I am humbled by what I have witnessed in 2020, when social ministry leaders and their teams most needed to rise to herculean challenges.

In this season of Advent, we await the birth of our Savior, and our faith in God's promise gives us faith in the work we can achieve together. Our hope in the coming Christ child mirrors our hope for the millions of people throughout our nation we can reach in the year to come. And the love God demonstrates through the gift of Christ frees us to love one another and walk alongside our neighbor—so that together we can effectively meet the growing needs in communities throughout America.

May the love God has for the world, and the love that we share with one another, lift up our ministries in 2021 and beyond.



JANUARY 4, 2021

2021: Called to be Bold

2020 began with the promise of a new decade and the start of many strategic plans. Instead we faced a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, a deep economic recession, and increased calls for racial justice.

As we enter 2021, it's understandable that we might be cautious—with the continuing pandemic, deepening economic crisis, new Administration and Congress, and a deeply divided country.

And yet as people of faith, we are called to be bold. Throughout the Bible, we see examples of people who are called to be bold: **Moses**—who was called to bring his people out of the land of Egypt; **Joshua**—who after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness was called to enter the land that Israel had been promised; and **Jesus**—who was named the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah in Revelations 5:5.

Pandemics are inflection points, times when dramatic changes are possible. We can't go back to the way things were in January 2020 but we can go forward boldly in creating a better future, one where all people have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential, because when people achieve their potential, they and our communities thrive.

But why us? As Lutheran social ministry leaders, we are united in our shared mission and vision—and in the work we do daily to enable all people to reach their full potential. Our mission—and our dedication and commitment to achieving our mission—are our strengths.

As leaders of faith-based organizations, we are called to be bold. In fact we are called to be “bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1), knowing that we are fulfilling God's purpose for us and trusting in His promises.

If not us, then who?

*In gratitude
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JANUARY 25, 2021

Believing Helps Us See

I'd like to share highlights of the reflection that Pastor Mark Huber, our Theologian-in-Residence, gave to member CEOs at last week's CEO Summit seminar.

It was the story of Jesus calling the disciples (assembling his team). He called fishermen who were skilled at one task and invited them to do something totally different—in an area where they didn't seem to have a lot of transferable skills. If “seeing is believing,” then there wasn't much to see on the surface. And yet this is the pivotal moment and our understanding of how God pulls us together, how we work together to accomplish what God has given us in this world. Jesus saw them as more than who they were, where they were from, and what they were doing. He believed in their potential and what they were capable of.

As organizations centered and rooted in the faith tradition, we have the ability to truly see people as God sees them—inherently valued and valuable and uniquely skilled and created to do something in this world. We have been given a profound gift that helps us see and enable people to reach their potential.

The disciples didn't have all of the answers, often didn't get it right, and weren't always sure where they were going. And yet they—and we—are exactly where we need to be. In the midst of our uncertain environment, where we don't have all of the answers or a roadmap to guide us, and where we've been tested and tried, we are reminded that we are “uniquely called to believe in others, to believe in ourselves, to believe in God's promise that we have exactly what we need and that God is going to get us all there, and so then—in believing may we see the potential of our teams, the potential of those around us, the presence of God in all that we do. Amen.”



FEBRUARY 22, 2021

What Comes Next?

“What Comes Next” is the title on the cover of Fortune Magazine this month. In the article, the founder of the Future Today Institute notes that the “desire to know the new normal is really our collective desire to have things stop changing so much.”

It is understandable after a year of disruption, sacrifice and upheaval that we want to know what comes next and to normalize the path forward.

For leaders of Lutheran social ministry organizations on the front lines fighting the pandemic, the past year has been anything but normal and the future anything but certain.

Lent began last week, a time of reflection and preparation for Easter. It also marks our second Lenten season during the pandemic. Few could have predicted a year ago the widespread and pervasive nature of the health crisis or the impact of the pandemic and its aftermath on Lutheran social ministry and the one in 50 Americans we care for.

As people of faith, we know what comes next and where Lent leads us—to the cross and to the empty tomb. Lent is a time of reflection but also of anticipation and hope.

“Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.” (Psalm 31:24).

Charlotte,

Your emails bring me back to what is core and to a faith perspective. This is what I needed on a hectic Monday morning!

Thank you for your steadfast and Christ-centered encouragement!

Angela J Moellering, President and CEO
Lutheran Social Services of Indiana

*In gratitude
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MARCH 8, 2021

So Now What?

Pastor Mark Huber, our CEO Summit Theologian-in-Residence, gave his final reflection of the CEO Summit Series: 2020-2021 last week. Today I'm sharing a summary of his reflection.

As leaders we're under a lot of pressure to answer the question: "so *now* what?" Especially after the past year as we look to the post-pandemic future for our organizations. We're the ones that are supposed to have all of the answers, to come up with the solutions, and to chart the new direction.

So much of our identity as leaders is in trying to figure out where we're meant to go and what we do next, to constantly adapt and keep up an ever-accelerating pace. In a year of so many ups and downs, twists and turns, there are moments when we wish we could simply hit a reset button and do things differently.

The scriptures are full of stories that flip that script, that instead of seeing our identity as something rooted in how we lead next, who we have been and who we could be, that instead our identity comes from God—it is given to us whether we ask for it or not. We are more than the sum of our choices, successes and failures.

God has made us exactly who we are meant to be and has placed us in this moment, in this situation, surrounded us with the people we are surrounded by, and given us the gifts that we have. God has been present in our organizations, with our clients, and with the people that we work with for as long as we have been doing this work and nothing can change that fact.

We can ask "what is next" with the confidence that we have all that we need and that God continues to meet us where we are and to lead us to where we are supposed to be.



MARCH 22, 2021

Hope and Recovery

In a recent conversation with a member CEO, he framed the road ahead for his organization as recovery—both emotional and financial recovery given the toll of the pandemic—and adaptive leadership and implementation since what has made them successful in the past may be different than in the future.

Spring offers a sense of hope and recovery. As Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman wrote in her poem on “The Miracle of Morning:”

*“So on this meaningful morn, we mourn and we mend.
Like light, we can’t be broken, even when we bend.”*

This past year has been one of mourning and mending—the loss of life, our in-person gatherings, and our way of life. As people of faith, we remember in this Lenten season, the path that Jesus took to Calvary—and the disciples’ despair and mourning. And yet along with Job who in his despair declared “For I know that my Redeemer lives” (Job 19:25), we also anticipate His resurrection on Easter.

In the ending to her poem, Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman wrote:

*“Let every dawn find us courageous, brought closer;
Heeding the light before the fight is over.
When this ends, we’ll smile sweetly, finally seeing
In testing times, we became the best of beings.”*

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



APRIL 5, 2021

Hope and Heroes

We celebrated Easter yesterday—after Holy Week as we journeyed from sorrow to hope and resurrection.

Our journey this past year has been dominated by sorrow and separation. And yet we've seen extraordinary examples of hope and healing, of Lutheran social ministry leaders who have demonstrated unparalleled courage and dedication, and frontline workers who have overcome unbelievable obstacles to care for the most vulnerable.

A year ago, we began sharing inspiring stories of our members' frontline workers and their selfless efforts to lift up people experiencing need in their communities—as a way to raise the visibility of the lifesaving work of Lutheran social ministry. Stories from across our national network—from Alaska to the U.S. Virgin Islands, from the Northeast to the West Coast, from the Great Plains and Midwest to the South and everywhere in between.

Our recently released Winter issue of Frontline Heroes stories **honors Lutheran social ministry organizations' courageous work** in communities all around the country. This follows our Summer and Fall collections of stories. Please continue to share your stories so we can amplify the work you are doing.

As people of faith, we know that faith, hope and love can lead us out of the darkness and into the light.

Thank you for shining the light so that people can lead a more abundant life filled with hope and healing.



APRIL 26, 2021

Looking Back and Forward

I started a weekly CEO Update when the pandemic began and recently went back to what I wrote a year ago to see where we've been and where we are a year later.

A year ago I wrote about conversations with many of you where you spoke candidly of the emotional toll that the pandemic had on the people working on the front lines—the staff's anxiety about their own and their families' health, their fear of coming to work, the long hours, their grief in losing long-time clients and staff, the economic toll on their families, and the uncertainty of the current situation and how long it could last.

I also wrote about your leadership, creativity, and flexibility in adapting to new never-before-seen situations with grace and courage. As one of our board members noted at the time, these are examples of true leadership—to lead your troops through times like these with courage and compassion.

A year later, we've seen tremendous heroism among Lutheran social ministry organizations and progress in fighting the pandemic. But we're also seeing a greater level of uncertainty about the future. Many trends that were emerging before the pandemic (e.g., move from congregate care settings to the home, expanded virtual services), have been accelerated requiring organizations to reassess their services, their clients and their business models. And we know the road ahead is one of recovery—both emotional and financial recovery—and adaptive leadership since what has made our organizations successful in the past may be different than in the future.

We've also seen this past year the murder of George Floyd among many others and as a faith-based organization, we recognize that the struggle to redress this one injustice shares common ground with other injustices and inequities that many of those we care for confront every day.

We come together as leaders of organizations centered and rooted in the faith tradition to draw strength from each other and to work together along with national partners to create new opportunities and to persist in our mission to bring hope and healing to all people so they can reach their full potential.

*In gratitude
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As people of faith, we draw inspiration from the words of David in Psalm 57:1, “...for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by.”

Hello Charlotte,

Your words of encouragement couldn't have arrived at a better time.

I miss time with peers, I miss inspiration from gatherings, and most of all I missed attending the CEO Summit this year. I had no idea what a profound influence that event had until I couldn't attend, and I look forward to my next opportunity to gather with my Lutheran peers. As I sit through endless Zoom meetings, I realize the connection is missing, and that “a burden shared is a burden halved.” With Lutheran Services in America peers, the burdens aren't just halved, they're shared so many ways that there is suddenly room to carry hope and inspiration home with me.

Thank you for leading and guiding us through these difficult times. You are appreciated more than you'll ever know.

Sincerely,
Kris Erickson, CEO
Bethany Village



JUNE 14, 2021

Against the Odds: A Remarkable Story of Strength and Resilience

*“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair.”*

2 Corinthians 4:8

Our 2020 Annual Report recognizes the extraordinary work that Lutheran social ministry organizations have done on the frontlines of the pandemic caring for so many during the past year. Lutheran social ministry has been a light for many people in many ways even in the darkest hours bringing hope and healing to their communities.

Without question, the pandemic is an inflection point. It has shined a light on deep, persistent disparities. It has also led many to find new ways to come together and care for each other. This is truly a moment for change, and renewed hope for the future.

For all that changes, one thing will not: Regardless of the obstacles before us, regardless of the odds of success, we remain sustained by our faith and committed to our work in the world.

We remain profoundly grateful to you, our members, for your support and are committed to advocating for you, supporting you in achieving your mission, raising the visibility of your work, and tapping into the knowledge and resources of more than 300 organizations together with national partners in healthcare, philanthropy, academia and business to strengthen Lutheran social ministry and transform lives.

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JUNE 28, 2021

In Memory and Gratitude

As CEOs, one of our most important priorities is building a strong, high-performing board of directors. A board that understands and fulfills its important governance, generative and strategic roles and that brings the knowledge, diversity, and expertise needed to shape the future of our organizations. A board where members embrace their role as ambassadors and “champions and connectors” for the organization.

In conversations with CEOs around the country and in lively discussions at the CEO Summit, I often hear the challenges CEOs face in creating such a board and in recruiting members.

I recently lost an exemplary board member, Ken Daly, who some of our CEOs might recall led the CEO-Board session at CEO Summit 2015. He brought deep expertise having served as a senior partner at KPMG and as CEO of the National Association of Corporate Directors, a nonprofit association that advocates for best practices in corporate governance.

Ken connected his deep faith in God with the work of Lutheran social ministry on the ground. What I remember most about Ken is the sense of joy he brought to all of us. Ken cared deeply about people and was someone who always lifted you up, always made your day brighter, and always made you better. His sense of humor was contagious and his wealth of almost unbelievable stories kept you smiling and inspired.

Ken brought his “whole heart and head” to the work of the board not only contributing to governance but to the strategic direction of the organization. He was a tireless ambassador who seemed to know just about everyone and to generously connect us and our members to leaders in healthcare, business and philanthropy who opened up doors and resources for Lutheran social ministry. Ken chaired a multi-year fundraising campaign for us and with his wife, generously made a three-year commitment to our Results Innovation Lab to help achieve our goal to improve the lives of 20,000 children and youth by 2024 so they can grow up to be healthy productive adults. Ken felt deeply that every child deserved to have the opportunity to thrive. This year alone, over 45 leaders in our network who work with almost 9,000 children and youth participated in the program that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of children and youth.



I'm blessed to have a strong board of directors at Lutheran Services in America, but there's an empty seat at the table. Ken will be greatly missed but not forgotten because his legacy lives on in our hearts and in the difference he made in the lives of so many.

“And he will raise you up on eagle’s wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of his hand.”

(“On Eagle’s Wings”)

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AUGUST 9, 2021

When Will It End?

Only two months ago, it seemed that life was starting to become more normal. People were getting vaccinated, families were gathering, in-person board meetings were planned, indoor dining was expanding, and there was a sense that while the pandemic was still with us, there was a growing light at the end of the tunnel.

Now we're seeing a surge of COVID in pockets around the country, restrictions are back in place in many areas, and in-person meetings are being replaced once again by Zoom. Lutheran social ministry organizations are continuing to face tough challenges such as breakthrough infections among vaccinated staff and residents, whether or not to mandate the vaccine, and how to cope with the acute staff shortages that we face across the country.

Sometimes it can seem endless.

It must have also seemed endless to Job. His wealth and livelihood were wiped out in one day, he lost all of his children, and he was physically afflicted. Even worse, his friends and community insisted that it was all his fault. It's painful to read about the blame and guilt they placed on Job. And yet while broken, Job persisted in his faith declaring "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15), and in his process of discernment, he gained a greater understanding of God declaring "For I know that my Redeemer lives and at last he will stand upon the earth." (Job 19:25). In the end, Job's suffering was alleviated and his fortune was restored in abundance.

We don't know when the pandemic will end. But as a community of faith, we walk by faith knowing that our hope is in Him and that we will not be disappointed.

Thank you for your words of encouragement and your reminder of what God's Word says. Job is a wonderful example of praising and trusting God in the midst of suffering. You captured the endless challenges and the discouragement that we can feel. Thank you for seeking to understand our challenges, for taking the time to encourage us, and for directing us to scripture!

Angela Moellering, President and CEO
Lutheran Social Services of Indiana



AUGUST 30, 2021

Rest for the Weary

*“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest”*

Matthew 11:28)

Next Monday is Labor Day. A day that traditionally marks the end of summer and beginning of fall. Except this year, it feels more like déjà vu Labor Day 2020.

Only a few short months ago, we thought—and hoped—that we would be in a very different place by now. A place where the pandemic was under control and we were moving toward a post-pandemic world—a world that held uncertainty but also the promise of a future where we were not consumed with COVID.

In Psalm 46:10 we hear: “Be still and know that I am God.” It can seem counterintuitive that we would be still in the midst of everything on our plate. As CEOs, our work and responsibilities are always with us even when we’re not “at work.”

Yet it is in the stillness and in our faith that we renew our commitment to our calling and in doing so, make an extraordinary difference in the lives of others.

As a community of faith, we rest in the assurance that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). May you find stillness and rest this Labor Day weekend.

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



OCTOBER 18, 2021

Our Calling

For CEOs across the Lutheran Services in America network, our work is our calling, our vocation. We have a deep and abiding commitment to the mission of our organization, our staff, and the people we empower and care for.

While gratifying, at times it can seem overwhelming dealing with the ongoing pandemic and the seismic shifts in workforce, consumer preferences, the competitive market and more.

Pastor Mark Huber, our CEO Summit Theologian-in-Residence, shared a reflection last year on what it means for CEOs to lead in times like these, the successes and failures we face, and the pressure to figure out “what comes next.” I’d like to share an excerpt from Pastor Mark’s reflection:

“God has made us exactly who we are meant to be and has placed us in this moment, in this situation, surrounded us with the people we are surrounded by, given us the gifts that we have or don’t have.

You, right here, right now, are the person to lead. You are made in God’s image and from the very beginning of all of our scriptures, it says that that is good. That you are who you are meant to be, that when we feel like we have stumbled or have no sense of what is next, that we are filled with God’s spirit and gifts for this moment. That we are more than the sum of our choices and successes and failures, and that God continually meets us where we are and leads us to where we are supposed to be.

God has made you exactly who you are for a reason. Know that God has been present in our organizations, with our clients, with the people that we work with and serve for as long as we have been doing this work, and that nothing can change that fact.”

This was just what I needed to read today. I could hear Pastor Mark’s gentle and calm voice in my head as I read it. In the midst of all of my other emails this was truly a gift. Thank you for all you do!

Anne Dennis-Choi, President and CEO
AK Child & Family



OCTOBER 25, 2021

Grace and Gratitude

*“Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come;
‘Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home”*

Next Sunday is the 504th anniversary of the Reformation. Martin Luther’s theological insight that it’s not about what we have done but about God’s gift of grace to us through Jesus—which opens us up to caring for others—led to the founding of Lutheran social ministry.

A social ministry that did not want to see people begging in the streets as they had for generations but that recognized the dignity and worth of all people. One that pooled resources across a community to enable people to thrive, that partnered with the community, government, and others, and that redefined “charity”—all in the 1500s.

A lot has changed in the past 500 years. But when I look across our network, I see a deep commitment to our mission and to putting people at the center of our work, to ensuring we can meet the “whole needs” of people so they can thrive, and to strengthening our organizations so they can continue to lift up people for the next generation.

And despite the challenges of workforce shortages, the pandemic, the regulatory environment and more, I see a determination to persist, to pivot our organizations, and to reimagine our future.

There are inflection points throughout history, times of significant change or turning points. The Reformation was one of them. I think we’re living through another inflection point—one that will redefine how we empower and care for people, that will reshape our organizations, and that will reinvent our future.

Thank you for your leadership in this momentous time, your commitment to your mission, and your courage to face the future.

Thank you. All weekly emails are inspirational and forward looking. This one is exceptional—connecting the mission 504 years ago to the challenges today.

David Fenoglietto, President and CEO
Lutheran SeniorLife

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



NOVEMBER 22, 2021

From Trouble to Thanksgiving

Thursday is Thanksgiving, a day to give thanks for our blessings. Yet as we persist through 20+ months of the pandemic and continue to face challenges from workforce shortages to financial concerns, there are times when it's difficult to feel grateful.

Many psalms start with a call for help ("Deliver me from my enemies, O my God") and end with praise and gratitude ("I will sing praises to thee, for thou, O God, art my fortress," Psalm 59). From trouble to thanksgiving.

The psalmist trusts that despite the challenges that seem overwhelming and never-ending, they will be overcome by "the God who shows me steadfast love."

Anne Lamott once noted that if there were only three prayers, they should be "Help, Thanks, Wow."

On this Thanksgiving Day, may you find rest and renew your faith and hope in the realization that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

And know that I am grateful for you and the incredible work that you do to make a meaningful difference in the lives of so many people.



DECEMBER 6, 2021

Advent Waiting

Advent began a week ago. A time of expectant waiting and preparation for Christ's birth and coming again.

Waiting can be hard, especially when we're in the midst of uncertainty and have little control over the outcome. Like today when we're waiting to learn more about the latest variant and what it might mean for our family, our organization and staff, and our clients.

The word "wait" appears over a hundred times in the Bible. There's an expectation of waiting—hope of an answer, of strength, of renewed energy to face the challenges ahead.

But waiting can be frustrating. Waiting in line, waiting for news, waiting for the other shoe to drop. Yet the waiting that is so often referred to in the Bible is active—it's listening and understanding, and it starts with stillness: "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7).

There's rarely time in our lives for stillness. There's too much to do—especially these days and in this season. But as we're reminded by Isaiah:

"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Isaiah 40:31

In this Advent season, may you find stillness, hope, and understanding.

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



DECEMBER 20, 2021

The Light Shines in the Darkness

Light and darkness. Joy and sorrow. Hope and despair.

We can so quickly move from one to the other especially in the last two rollercoaster years.

As people of faith, we believe that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5) and that “even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is bright as the day; for darkness is as light to thee” (Psalm 139:12).

Yet at times, it’s hard not to be frustrated, not to be discouraged, and not to be exhausted. And at times we may even lose hope.

As we approach Christmas, we are reminded of the hope that came into the world in the midst of darkness, in the form of an infant child to lead us into the light.

As Lutheran social ministry organizations, we shine a light in the world for all to see. Thank you for the light that you bring into the world to make a meaningful difference in the lives of so many.



DECEMBER 28, 2021

2022?

I recently saw a New Years card with three dates on it: 2020 and 2021—both crossed out—and 2022 with a question mark next to it.

This wasn't what we expected or hoped for a year ago. We want to know what comes next, to plan, to strategize, to be prepared. And yet at the end of the day, no matter how well prepared we are, the future may unfold in ways we can't foresee.

Admiral Stockdale, a prisoner of war in Vietnam, was once asked how he survived for eight years with no certainty about whether or not he would be released. He cited his ability to not only have unshakeable faith but to ground himself in reality. "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

Later on, author Jim Collins defined this duality as the Stockdale Paradox—to confront the brutal facts of your current reality with an unwavering faith in the end game. When asked about what didn't work, Admiral Stockdale replied that POWs who thought there would be a time-certain release—that surely they would be freed by Thanksgiving, or by Christmas, or Easter, or by another date certain—were the most discouraged. His perspective was to ground himself in the likelihood that they were not getting out by Christmas but to deal with the realities of the current situation while not losing faith.

As leaders we too would like a date certain for COVID to be behind us but we move forward in the face of uncertainty to face the brutal facts and support the resiliency of our teams. As faith-based leaders we move forward in our understanding and trust in Emmanuel—God with us—and our commitment to prevail.

Charlotte,

WOW! This is one of the most profound perspectives on how we can view the pandemic. Thank you so much for sharing and for your leadership.

Shirley E. H. Barnes, CEO
Crest View Senior Communities

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



JANUARY 18, 2022

Arc of the Universe

*“What does the Lord require of you but to act justly,
and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

Micah 6:8

Micah was a prophet who witnessed the oppression of people amidst the moral and religious corruption of his day. He condemned people’s rote performance of rites and ceremonies that were devoid of an open heart to God and a sincere inner spiritual transformation. In Micah 6:8, he connects our faith with our actions and our care for those in need with our walk with God.

We honored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday yesterday. He too spoke of the need for inner spiritual transformation: “By opening our lives to God in Christ, we become new creatures...Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit.” He also saw the urgent need for action since “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Over 50 years after Dr. King’s assassination, we continue to see the toll that systemic racism has on the health and well-being of people of color. We see it in the disproportionate share of youth of color removed from their homes and placed into foster care, in the poorer health outcomes, economic status, and homeownership rates of people of color, and in many more ways.

As Lutheran social ministry organizations, we are committed to eliminating racism. We recognize that it starts with an inner transformation, with a fuller understanding of the impact of racism on people’s lives, and a commitment to act. And while it may seem daunting, we’re reminded by Dr. King that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”



FEBRUARY 7, 2022

Trusting our Anchor

David Trost, President & CEO of St. John's United in Montana invited me to present at his strategic board retreat over the weekend. I shared the phenomenal story of Lutheran social ministry across the country as well as challenges and opportunities facing our members and the implications for boards of directors. While I was in Billings, David also asked me to share a devotion which I'm summarizing below.

Of the many challenges and opportunities facing Lutheran social ministry organizations, in many ways the most difficult is the great degree of uncertainty about the future. We know we're not going back to the way things were before the pandemic—but we're not quite sure how the future will unfold. There's rapid change underway—but much of it is outside our control. The question is how do we move forward in the absence of certainty?

At CEO Summit 2022, Pastor Mark Huber, our Theologian-in-Residence, shared a story of his friend who is an ice climber. When you're climbing up a mountain, you rely on your climbing anchor—the foothold that keeps you connected to the mountain. But there's a tendency when you slip to want to lean into the mountain for support—the one solid thing you can see and feel, the thing that you feel like you can count on, and that's far away from the uncertainty below. The only way you can lean backward—where your footing is in fact more secure—is if you trust your anchor to hold you up.

As people of faith, what brings us together and gives us confidence and hope is that we have an anchor to hold onto. God is our anchor who continually meets us where we are and leads us to where we are supposed to be.

Throughout the Bible, we see examples of people who trusted in God as their anchor despite the uncertainty of what they might encounter along the way: Moses who was called to bring his people out of the land of Egypt and Joshua who after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness was called to enter the land that Israel had been promised boldly following God's promise.

In these times of great uncertainty, may we boldly lead trusting in God as our anchor.

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



FEBRUARY 14, 2022

Flying Buttresses

I'd like to share Pastor Mark Huber's reflection at the opening of CEO Summit a few weeks ago.

When Notre Dame was envisioned, Paris was only a small town of about 40,000 people. The vision of the size and grandeur of the cathedral—whose purpose was to create heaven on earth to allow for God's mystery and beauty to be experienced in the heart of the city—must have seemed impossible, ambition moving far afield of capacity.

The workers knew this was a multi-generational project that would not be completed in their lifetime. They also gave it great thought and innovation went into designing the structure of the cathedral. Notre Dame was one of the first gothic cathedrals built using flying buttresses—massive structural supports that redirected the weight placed on the building to allow far more beauty and light inside the building. Interestingly, these buttresses were probably what saved Notre Dame when the roof burned and collapsed a few years ago.

We are all part of a multi-generational project and know the weight that comes from managing day-to-day, solving problem after never-ending problem, dreaming of the future while also surviving the present. Many of our organizations are multiple generations in the making, capacity always catching up to ambition.

As we shoulder the stress and burden of managing in extreme uncertainty, we are supported by the reality that we do not do this alone. The strength of our network continues to prove that we are simply one generation among many called by God to do this work and there is peace knowing that we are not the first nor the last—that we are surely not expected to complete this work during our tenure.

We are supported by our understanding that this work is a calling not simply a job and we are challenged to come up with new ways to remind ourselves of that fact and help our employees experience that deep meaning in their work.

The foundation—the buttress—of our work is a clear and unequivocal claim that all people are valued and loved by God and they have dignity and worth not because of anything they do or don't do but simply because they are.



This bold claim helps us to see that the purpose of our work is ultimately about letting in more light and beauty not just simply remaining standing. It also helps us see that our presence matters, that our work is important. That it's truly a place where God's beauty and mystery are revealed.

Charlotte,

Thank you again for this uplifting, meaningful message. I really appreciate reading and applying these lessons.

Larry McReynolds, Executive Director
Family Health Centers at NYU Langone

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



FEBRUARY 28, 2022

In the Wilderness

Lent begins on Wednesday, a time for reflection and preparation before the celebration of Easter. A time to remember Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness and his journey to the cross.

It's hard to find time for reflection these days. And after the past 2+ years with all of the challenges and uncertainties, it feels at times like we've been in the wilderness. An endless wilderness.

In the Bible, being in the wilderness or desert was an in-between time—a place of danger and questioning, a place where you didn't know if you would reach your destination. After escaping Egypt, Moses and the Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. And in the end, Joshua—not Moses—led the people into the promised land.

But the wilderness was also where the Israelites encountered God. God spoke to Abraham while he was in the wilderness, he spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, he spoke to John the Baptist who became known as the Voice Calling in the Wilderness. It was also where Jesus went before his public ministry began and often went with his disciples to rest, to teach, to heal.

The wilderness was where God made Himself known and where healing and transformation took place. Healing and transforming people and communities—work that Lutheran social ministry does every day.

As we enter the wilderness of Lent, may you find time for reflection and know that even in difficult circumstances and impossible choices, that God shows up, sustains us and reminds us that nothing we do can separate us from the love of God.



MARCH 21, 2022

A Time of New Beginnings

Spring officially began on Sunday. A time of new beginnings, renewal and rebirth.

After the past two years and with everything going on in the world today, it seems like we need spring—and new beginnings—now more than ever.

As I look across the Lutheran Services in America network, I'm reminded that each of you provides a new beginning for so many people—children, parents, older adults, people with disabilities, refugees, veterans, individuals experiencing homelessness and more. You provide hope, healing, and an opportunity for people to realize a more abundant life.

Pastor Mark Huber, our CEO Summit Theologian-in-Residence, shared that hope does not flow down from some magnificent display from the top that changes everything in an instant. Hope claws its way up from the bottom—you start preparing the way for God to move. You start straightening out the road little by little, rock by rock, and you will start to dream, to hope again that there is a way home.

As Lutheran social ministry organizations, we are in the business of hope and new beginnings. As people of faith, we trust in Him who said “Behold I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). And we are reminded that God goes with us, sustains us and gifts us with the seeds of hope to nurture and to share.

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



APRIL 11, 2022

A New Thing

*“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland”*

Isaiah 43:19

Lent is often referred to as a time of being in the wilderness—which in the Bible, was an in-between time—a place of danger and questioning, a place where you didn’t know if you would reach your destination. After the past few years, many of us can relate to the feeling of being in the wilderness.

Isaiah prophesized that God would make a path in the wilderness and lead His people through the desert. About 700 years before Jesus, Isaiah foretold the coming of Christ, his death and resurrection. He spoke of restoration, reformation and repentance.

As we journey to the cross this Holy Week, may we remember Isaiah’s prophesy and God’s reassurance: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. Fear not, for I am with you.” (Isaiah 43:1 & 5).



APRIL 18, 2022

Trusting, Not Knowing

It can be hard to make sense of the world or plan for the future when much is outside our control—like the pandemic, war, divisiveness in the country, and more—and when complexity and the pace of change continue to accelerate.

It was hard for Job to make sense of what was happening to him—his failing health, loss of his children, his rapid fall from a successful life. Even his friends accused him of bringing it on himself since the prevailing view was that suffering was the consequence of sin.

What's remarkable is that while his friends looked backward—trying to get Job to confess what he had done to deserve this—Job looked forward to God's redemption and resurrection. "For I know that my Redeemer lives and that at last He will stand upon the earth" (Job 19:25). Despite the uncertainty and not knowing why he was being afflicted, Job declared not only his faith in God, but that at the end, he would be vindicated and at last see God.

Job never knew why he had been afflicted but he reached the point where he trusted God despite the uncertainty.

As we boldly lead into the future, may we remember that we are filled with God's spirit and gifts for this moment, that we are more than the sum of our choices and successes and failures, and that God continually meets us where we are and leads us to where we are supposed to be.

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



APRIL 25, 2022

With Gratitude

As I look back over the last 10 years at Lutheran Services in America, I'm profoundly grateful for our member CEOs—their commitment and dedication, the perseverance and resilience shown during the pandemic and beyond, the ability to rise to meet the moment always putting people at the center of the work.

From the very beginning, I could see the difference in this network—the shared heritage, mission and values of the members that created a trusted environment where we could come together to collaborate and not compete. Where we could come together with shared goals—and bring in strategic partners in philanthropy, academia, healthcare and business—to not only strengthen organizations but transform the lives of people and communities.

I've shared with the Lutheran Services in America board of directors that I plan to retire in the coming year. It won't be any time soon—I want the board to have time to do an open, transparent, comprehensive search for the next CEO. The board has established an executive search committee and begun to interview search firms. A press release and more will follow as their work progresses.

As CEOs, one of the most important decisions we make is deciding when to leave. We've all seen positive examples of those decisions—where the organization grows and thrives—and negative examples where the organization falters. I've often thought that as important as the work is that we do while we're CEOs, the real test is what happens after we're no longer in the role.

I'm committed to making this an exemplary transition—one that builds on the work we've done and takes it to new heights to expand the impact we have together.

Because the work you do matters. Because the work we do together makes a difference. And because there are no limits to the impact we can have when we come together as a powerful network that reaches one in 50 people living in America.



Dear Charlotte,

You have been an inspiration and a role model for me. You are an amazing CEO and a true and wonderful friend.

Please enjoy your retirement fully!

Love,
Armena Mkhitarian, CEO
Lutheran Social Services of Nevada

Hi Charlotte,

Not what I expected to hear today. I really appreciate the leadership you provided and am thankful to have gotten to know you. You “get it” from those of us in the field battling every day and I am glad you are on our side fighting for us.

Thank you!

Rodney Rueter, President and CEO
Lutheran Sunset Ministries

Hi Charlotte,

Congrats on your big decision! I look forward to a continued relationship with Lutheran Services in America and the future CEO. You and the team at Lutheran Services in America have benefited and blessed us at Missouri Slope, me personally, and our community.

Thank you for who you are and what you do. God bless you!

Reier Thompson, President and CEO
Missouri Slope



Charlotte –

First congratulations on the decision to retire that is a big step.

Second, thank you, thank you, thank you. You leave Lutheran Services in America as an organization and as a movement, in a stronger and healthier and more impactful place than it was before. Incredible gratitude. Please share with us ways that you and the rest of Lutheran Services in America could use our collective support in this time of transition.

Peace,
Bill Hanawalt, Former Board of Director Member

Good morning, Charlotte!

I wish you every blessing as you manage the transition and plan for your next chapter. You have made an incredible mark on Lutheran Services in America—transforming its impact and reach. Thank you for your leadership and passion. You leave a lasting legacy.

Adriene Iverson, President and CEO
Elder Care Alliance

Charlotte,

Congratulations! Though I'm disappointed we won't be able to work together for very long, I look forward to continuing to do so over the coming year. You've clearly had an impactful time with Lutheran Services in America, and your thoughtful and considered approach to this time of transition is commendable.

Best,
Adam Marles, President and CEO
Lutheran Senior Services



JUNE 17, 2022

Unity with Purpose

“Unity with Purpose” is the title of our newly released 2021 Annual Report.

It reflects the shared purpose that unites us as Lutheran social ministry: to empower all people to lead their best lives. This is not new for us—it’s an authentic part of who we are and where we come from. It reflects our shared heritage, mission and values.

When so many in our country are divided, we are united in our dedication and commitment to ensuring that all people achieve equitable outcomes in health and well-being and can realize their full potential.

We are also launching our new website at lutheranservices.org to raise the visibility of the phenomenal work of our members throughout the country—both individually and collectively in our work together. It also provides an opportunity for our strategic partners—in philanthropy, academia, government, healthcare, and business—to join us in our work together.

Because we are united, we are stronger, and our network gives us strength to stand together during challenging times. Because when we are united, we can accomplish amazing things.

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*



JUNE 21, 2022

Juneteenth

Sunday was Juneteenth, a day to reflect and celebrate when the last enslaved Black Americans in Texas were freed—over two years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

It's a day to celebrate freedom and the end of slavery and to reflect on the injustices of the past and recommit ourselves to pursuing a more just future. It's a time to increase our understanding of the ongoing legacy of slavery and to recommit to our shared work to ensure racial equity and justice.

As one of the largest non-profit health and human services networks in the country, we see the disproportionate share of youth of color who are removed from their homes and are placed into foster care, with longer stays and poorer outcomes and we see the inequitable health and well-being outcomes of people based on race, age, and zip code. At Lutheran Services in America, we are committed to racial equity and justice and to reverse the toll that racism has on the health and well-being of people of color and communities.

The announcement in Galveston, Texas freeing enslaved Black Americans took place over 150 years ago, but our work as people of faith continues as we pray and speak for hope, healing, justice and care of our neighbor—so all people can achieve their full potential.



AUGUST 29, 2022

Labor Day at Rest

Next Monday is Labor Day. A day that celebrates the contributions and achievements of workers and represents a day of rest and the end of summer.

But for CEOs, demands on our time are ever greater with less time for rest. As intense as the past few years have been, it seems like even more challenges are being added to our plate and few are subtracted. COVID, workforce shortages, increased regulations, inflation, financial challenges and the list goes on.

In Psalm 46:10, we hear “Cease striving and know that I am God...” As CEOs, we generally don’t cease striving. We’re goal-oriented, mission-focused, results-driven.

And yet, as CEO Summit Theologian-in-Residence Pastor Mark Huber reminds us, “even in seemingly downward spirals of hard circumstances and impossible choices, God shows up and reminds us of our worth. And the God who has made us goes with us, sustains us and gifts us with seeds of hope to nurture and to share.”

This Labor Day, may you find rest and renewal knowing that God continually meets us where we are and leads us to where we are supposed to be.

Good morning, Charlotte!

I do not tell you enough how much I enjoy your inspirational messages. This one in particular was exactly what I needed to read this morning as I enter a very challenging week of decisions. Thank you for your tireless support of your members...and especially us CEOs!

Cyndi Walters, President and CEO
National Lutheran Communities & Services

*In gratitude
for all
that you do,*

OCTOBER 31, 2022

The Extravagance of Grace

Today is the 505th anniversary of the Reformation when Martin Luther shared his theological insight that God's gift of grace in Jesus Christ frees us from being focused on ourselves and opens us to care for others. Or as CEO Summit Theologian-in-Residence Pastor Mark Huber once put it, "it means it's not about us."

How is this relevant or reflected in Lutheran social ministry organizations today?

The foundation of our work is that all people have dignity and worth--not because of anything they do or don't do but simply because they are—and that they are valued by God. As Lutheran social ministry, we create the space where people experience God's grace through our care and compassion. It's the why behind our work and reflected in how we do our work, in relationship with our neighbor, no matter who are neighbor is, where they're from, or what they do.

So why does this matter?

God's grace is extravagant and is revealed in the beauty and light we let into people's lives, to remove the barriers that hold them back from achieving their potential and to empower them to realize their dreams. It's why we persevere despite having to continually pivot and be stretched and stressed. It's our calling, our vocation.

In the midst of our challenges and an uncertain future, may we remember that our presence matters, that our work brings more light and beauty into people's lives, and that we do not do this work alone.



In gratitude for all that you do,

Charlotte Haberaecker

Charlotte Haberaecker
President and CEO
Lutheran Services in America

“For so to help a man that he does not need to become a beggar is just as much of a good work and virtue as to give alms to a man who has already become a beggar.”

– Martin Luther



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