

The Advocate

for Students with Special Learning Needs

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'Operation Know and Grow'

Working together in ministry

by Carole Schlesselman

When Jesus commanded, "Go therefore and teach all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19 KJV), He did not end with "but exclude those with special learning needs."

Our Lord wants everyone to know about His redeeming love—and we are to be about the task of fulfilling His command. However, to reach out to those with special learning needs and to teach them about our Savior is a great challenge.

Until now, little has been offered to help in this task. The Ephphatha Center of Lutheran Special Education Ministries saw the need for this special outreach and offers assistance to meet this challenge. "Ephphatha," an Aramaic word that means "be opened," is taken from Mark 7:34. The word was spoken by our Lord when He touched the ears and tongue of a deaf and mute man. Immediately upon our Lord's command, the man could hear and was able to talk plainly.

Appropriately named, the Ephphatha Center desires that the hearts of all of God's special people be opened to His great love for them. Ephphatha Center consultants hold degrees in special education, have taught in Lutheran schools, and have a working knowledge of the special education catechism and other valuable materials.

Operation Know and Grow

In 1995, the Ephphatha Center

of Lutheran Special Education Ministries began a special project called "Operation Know and Grow." This is a nationwide outreach to congregations, schools and families with children having special needs. The Center's goal is to reach as many handicapped children as possible, teaching them to **Know** about Jesus and to **Grow** in His love for them.

To reach this goal, the Ephphatha Center offers consultations to pastors, school teachers, Sunday school teachers, church boards and parents who need advice on how to present God's precious love to their special children. Staff members offer suggestions for materials and resources to help teach

children with learning disabilities, mental impairments, deafness and other challenges in both academic and religious settings.

Since July 1995, the Ephphatha Center has received more than 400 requests for assistance from educators, pastors and parents in 35 states and three Canadian provinces.

Help for Congregations and Schools

"How do I teach a child with Attention Deficit Disorder? He can't sit still long enough for me to teach him!"

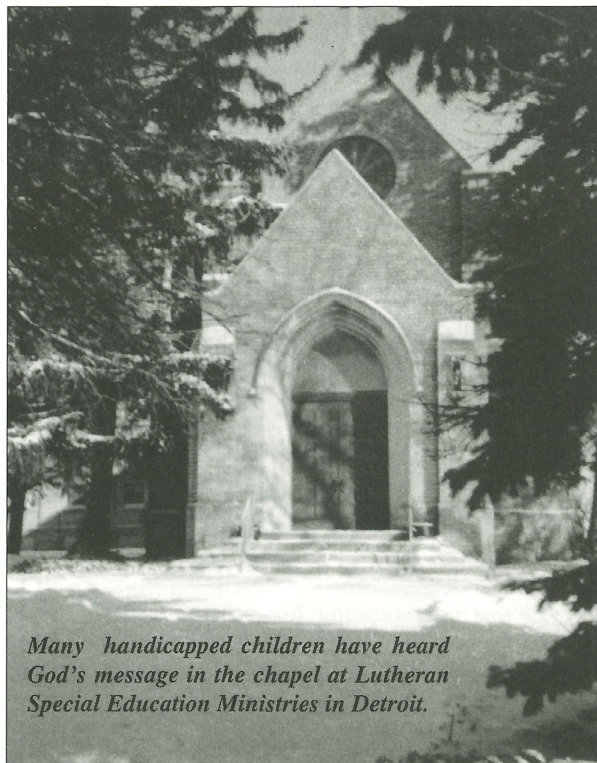
Consultants at Lutheran Special Education Ministries hear this question quite often. In the past year, **Operation Know and Grow** has helped many parochial schools. Requests come in for help in starting a special education program at a Christian day school. Consultants work with the

school's staff to problem-solve so the school can begin this essential outreach. The Ephphatha Center sends information on how the staff there can start a program on its own. Assistance is available for preschool through high school levels.

Pastor Mitchell Gowen of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Aiea, Hawaii, wrote this letter of appreciation to the Ephphatha Center:

"Last year, our church and school needed expert advice on inclusive classrooms. A growing number of students were exhibiting signs of ADD, ADHD and other learning challenges that our teachers were not prepared to deal effectively with. Dr. George Krause spoke highly of De-

(Continued on next page.)



Many handicapped children have heard God's message in the chapel at Lutheran Special Education Ministries in Detroit.



From left: Elsie Turner, Patty Barrett, Tammie Schroeder, Johanna Clark, Linda Harter, Adam Nedeski and Mary Ann Reid participate in activities at Calvary Lutheran Church, Lincoln Park, Mich.

troit School for the Deaf while I was attending classes at Concordia Theological Seminary and so the call for assistance went out to the newly named 'Lutheran Special Education Ministries.' What our church and school received was expert and caring advice combined with resources and powerful hands-on help. Our school is in the process of accreditation and thanks to LSEM we have made inclusivity a priority."

The Ephphatha Center has helped many congregations reach out to God's special children through Sunday school, vacation Bible school and confirmation classes.

The concerned pastor of a non-verbal, physically handicapped teenager called Lutheran Special Education Ministries to find out what kind of confirmation program he could use. A consultant was able to provide materials and assistance to teach the catechism so this special teen could know of his Savior and grow in His love.

What joy the Ephphatha Center staff members experience when they receive letters like the following from Rev. David Huber of Our Master Lutheran Church in Inkster, Mich.:

"The time, product information and guidance you shared last month with me over the phone was much appreciated, as was your quickly sending the Lutheran Special Education's 'Teacher's Guide for the Simplified Cat-

echism.' You enabled me to get classes underway with the two girls a week later. Thanks for being there with the answers when we needed them."

Operation Know and Grow is fulfilling a need in many congregations.

Help for Families

Lutheran Special Education Ministries receives numerous calls from concerned parents of special needs children. Common questions include, "How can my child go to Sunday school?" or "Can my child succeed in a Christian day school?"

Consultants encourage parents to contact the Center and are ready to provide resources and advice for the academic and spiritual growth of special needs children.

A mother of two children with learning challenges learned of the Ephphatha Center at her church in Minnesota:

"After reading your letter sent to the Ladies Aid, I understand there may be service available for my children through the church. Our middle son is deaf and our third son has Down's Syndrome."

Operation Know and Grow is there for this mom and her two precious special children. Parents can be sure the specially trained staff is eager to assist them.

The Lutheran Special Education Ministries staff become involved with these special needs children in a personal, very important way. Whenever a parent calls, the child is immediately placed on the staff's prayer list. What comfort to know that caring, Christian people are daily lifting these children and their parents up to the Lord for His guidance and reassuring love.

Resources

Understanding how difficult it is for teachers and pastors to find the time to locate materials for special education, the Ephphatha Center established a resource library. They re-

main up-to-date on resources available to help God's special people know about Him and grow in His love. There are more than 10 specialty Bibles, including "The Holy Bible English Version for the Deaf," "The New International Reader's Version" and picture Bibles for lower reading levels.

For the hearing impaired, there are visual Sunday school programs and confirmation materials with sign language. The staff members wrote a teacher's guide for "The Simplified Catechism," which is published by Northwestern Publishing House.

The staff plans to develop more materials to teach those with special learning needs. Knowing that Jesus wants everyone to know of Him, including His special children, the Ephphatha Center is determined to have materials available even if it means they must write and publish them at the Center.

With God's help, **Operation Know and Grow** is Lutheran Special Education Ministries' answer to our Lord's command: "Go therefore and teach all nations . . ."—including My special lambs!

For help with your special child of God or for further information on **Operation Know and Grow**, contact the Ephphatha Center at Lutheran Special Education Ministries, 6861 E. Nevada, Detroit, MI 48234; phone (313) 368-1220; fax (313) 368-0159.

About the author: Carole Schlesselman is a former Lutheran school teacher with gifts in the area of writing, especially poetry. Carole and her husband, Bob, have four grown children and are members of Trinity, Utica, Mich. Currently, Carole serves her Lord as the church secretary at Hope Lutheran in Warren.

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Around the ministry

New York

by Paula Rosen, Director
New York Programs

Lutheran Special Education Ministries of New York will increase its programs to children with special needs by 204 percent for the 1996-97 school year. It will be a year of firsts: Our first self-contained classroom and our first high school resource room.

Martin Luther High School in Maspeth, N.Y., will be added to our list of partnership schools. Holy Trinity Community School in Hollis will house the first self-contained classroom for children with more severe educational challenges as well as maintaining its full-time resource room.

Trinity Lutheran, Hicksville; Redeemer Lutheran, Glendale; Lutheran School of Flushing and Bayside; and Leif Erickson Day School, Brooklyn, all plan to include at least a half-time resource room next year.

Eileen DiLauro, Elizabeth Munz, Rose Marie Sheridan and Lois Geary will be back to teach next year. David Doring and Margaret Aronson join Dr. George Groth as school psychologists for Lutheran Special Education Ministries. We are blessed to have each of these very talented, special people. Each of them helps affect the lives of the children they work with—and also the lives of the entire family. That is one of the benefits of working in a Christian school. We have the opportunity to touch the lives of people because the Lord has touched ours. We love to share His love.

Michigan

by Kathy Krause, Director
Michigan Programs

Where did the school year go? Students are excited with the prospect of summer vacation; teachers are looking forward to a much-needed respite; and parents (only some) are agonizing over how to keep their kids busy during the summer months.

This year brought much joy to the Michigan programs! Twenty schools across the state which are in partnership, an incredibly dedicated staff, and students who have made remarkable gains. We think especially of East Bethlehem, Bethany and St. Paul, which have been home to some students with a greater degree of need. These students were welcomed into classrooms, merged into the mainstream of the school population, and made great academic strides. The Lord is truly abundant in His blessings.

Our entire staff participated in the LEA Convocation held May 2-4 in Detroit. Many staff members served as presenters. How wonderful it is to see Lutheran educators from across our nation come together to gain new "tools" that will enhance the lives of their students. Gaining knowledge to impart knowledge.

Where did the year go? It went into the lives of children who have grown, physically, academically and spiritually!

Ephphatha Center

by Kathy Krause, Coordinator
Ephphatha Center

The winds of March and rains of April have given way to the flowers of May. What a joy to view the Lord's palette of colors in the blossoming world around us!

As the flowers bud and then bloom, so does the outreach of Ephphatha Center. We have been blessed by family, school and congregation contacts in 35 states during this school year. More than 400 children with special learning needs in congregations, schools and families now have materials and teaching methods in place so that Christ's love can be taught at their learning level.

Operation Know and Grow was established to enable these precious gifts of God to *know* Jesus and *grow* in His love for them. To support this endeavor, our ministry was blessed

with a \$6,000 grant from the Siebert Foundation for a state-of-the-art computer and to reprint our "Teacher's Guide," which was written to supplement "The Simplified Catechism" from Northwestern Publishing. Other grants are pending to continue this much-needed work.

As we marvel in the varied formations and colors of the spring flowers, let us remember that each child is also a precious flower in bud, waiting to bloom with the love of their Lord. We give praise to a loving God who commissions us to go and tell His story to *all* children, no matter their handicap or disability.

Illinois

by Jim Krone, Director
Illinois Programs

For the ministry, spring is a time to review and evaluate the school year. Our teachers' case loads are filled. We are serving many more students than we ever have before in the history of the Illinois program. During this time of review and evaluation, we will gather information from teachers, principals, pastors and parents who are served by our program. This input is valuable in helping us know how we can serve children more effectively and efficiently.

In our efforts to serve all children with special learning needs, we also provide teacher inservices, case consultations, teacher support and materials. These services are offered to all Christian schools that request help. For the 1996-97 school year, due to a 15 percent increase in services, we need to increase secretarial support and administration staff.

Due to technology changes in the fields of education and special education, Lutheran Special Education Ministries also needs to adapt and make changes for its students. With the help of organizations like Aid Associations for Lutherans and Hewlett Packard, we have been able to increase our support services through technology.

As we provide encouragement to students by helping them understand their strengths and teaching them to cope with their weaknesses, we are building their confidence that helps them realize that they are God's special children.

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Pooled Income Funds: A simple stewardship answer

During these times of complex economic conditions and uncertainties, there are two basic stewardship concerns we all face:

- How can I use the Lord's gifts to provide for my family while supporting His work?
- How can I manage my resources in a God-pleasing manner?

One simple answer is a Pooled Income Fund Agreement.

The Pooled Income Fund provides you with quarterly income payments for life, significant tax savings and a way for you to make a future gift to your favorite ministry.

You can open an agreement with at least \$1,000 in cash or marketable securities. Your assets are then pooled with other assets in what's called a Pooled Income Fund. Four times each year, you receive your proportional share of the Fund's total net income.

The Pooled Income Fund consists of units. When you transfer your assets to the Fund, you are issued a number of units, based on the value of the assets you transferred. Earnings from the Fund are distributed on a per unit basis.

After the Lord calls you home, you can choose to have a beneficiary receive payments from your Pooled Income Fund Agreement for a number of years. Afterward, the fair market value of your units goes to the ministry or

ministries of your choice.

The quarterly payments from your Pooled Income Funds are taxed as ordinary income. However, there may be significant additional benefits:

- No Capital Gains tax on securities transferred.
- A charitable income tax deduction on the amount you transfer.
- No current gift taxes are due.
- Reduced estate taxes.
- Probate costs may be reduced because the assets in your Pooled Income Fund bypass probate.

A Pooled Income Fund provides a simple stewardship answer to many complex questions. It provides you with an earned income for life, while allowing you to make a gift that will continue to express your Christian love long after your death.

For more information about a Pooled Income Fund Agreement or other estate planning ideas, contact the Lutheran Special Education Ministries' Development Office at (313) 368-1220.

Save labels

If you're fixing a quick meal during these busy summer days and you're having some Campbell's Soup, please remember to save the labels!

Send them to Lutheran Special Education Ministries, 6861 E. Nevada, Detroit, MI 48234.

Allen Ripper is new business manager

"I'm deeply honored to be called as the Director of Finance and Stewardship for Lutheran Special Education Ministries," said Allen Ripper.

Allen brings to Lutheran Special Education Ministries his many years of experience in accounting, business management, computer technology and development.

Born in central Illinois, Allen grew up on a dairy farm and has been a Lutheran for most of his life. Before joining Lutheran Special Education Ministries, he worked for Ozark and Trans World Airlines and the LCMS Foundation.

He and his wife, Jane, have four sons: two are married and the other two attend the University of Michigan in Dearborn. The Rippers live in Redford, Mich., where they are members of Grace Lutheran Church.

Allen looks forward to serving the constituents of Lutheran Special Education Ministries. He replaces Harold Zink, who is retiring after serving Lutheran Special Education Ministries for 15 years as business manager. We thank God for Harold's faithful services and wish him God's richest blessings in retirement.