



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

Report for Lutheran Women's Missionary League

Veterans of the Cross

Reporting Period: Fiscal Year 2016-2017

Veterans of the Cross (VOTC) and Soldiers of the Cross (SOTC) are two programs which support the transitional and long-term spiritual and physical well-being of the current and retired servants of the church.

When financial stress threatens to impede or diminish their proclamation of the Gospel, Soldiers of the Cross provides assistance to current workers. Veterans of the Cross (VOTC) provides small, periodic stipends and pastoral care for church work retirees (or their surviving spouses) who struggle to pay for basic living expenses.

The VOTC program was created in 1937 to help care for the spiritual and physical well-being of retired servants of the church, who had enrolled in the old, low-benefit pension plan. They often had staggering medical expenses and experienced difficulties meeting their basic needs. Today, some retirees need supplementary assistance because of lifetime service in small congregations that are unable to afford full-time salaries and thereby have a lower rate of contribution to the worker's Concordia Plan Services retirement account.

LCMS' Veterans of the Cross helps veteran church workers and their spouses in financial crisis. The program supplements low or inadequate pensions of retired LCMS pastors or their widowed spouses to help them afford the cost of necessities such as medication, food and utility bills. The average monthly support is between \$500 and \$1,000. VOTC stipends are approved annually and continue as long as need is demonstrated.

The Veterans of the Cross support program is administered for The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod by Concordia Plan Services. The program is funded by the LCMS office of National Mission thanks to faithful donors.

During the year beginning July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, the Veterans of the Cross support program provided \$238,210.70 in assistance to 26 recipients.

Our LCMS church workers are susceptible to suffering just like those they serve. Sometimes this suffering is connected with health issues, sometimes financial issues, and unfortunately, some church workers suffer due to the unloving words and actions of their own congregations. But Scripture is clear: If one part of the body suffers, we all suffer (1 cor. 12:26). As so together – as the Church – we seek to care for our faithful servants who are suffering.





Sometimes workers are reluctant to accept the grants. Carlos Hernandez, director of Church and Community Engagement with the Synod's Office of National Mission tells them, "Look, this is not our money – this is God's money. You've been praying to for help? This is God helping you. He's just using us as a conduit. Know that this is a prayer that's been answered. And we're just here as servants of God."



(Please note: due to the confidential and sensitive nature of this program, we are unable to share photos which would intrude upon the privacy of our workers.)

This report has been compiled by Mary Hamilton, LCMS Grants Manager with the above information provided by Tina M. Luhr, Veterans of the Cross Support Grant Program, Concordia Plans Services.

