Ministry to and with People who are Blind

More than **55 million** people in the world today are blind. In the United States alone, there are 11 million blind and visually impaired children and adults. Of those 11 million people:

95% are unchurched

50% are under the age of 65

70% are unemployed

60% are single and isolated

82% do not read Braille

Source: Modern Language Association

Ministry Goal

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in partnership with Lutheran Blind Mission seeks to provide materials and leadership for the following to be accomplished: churches among the blind to be planted, leaders to be equipped and believers to be strengthened, so that people who are blind or visually impaired may read and share the light of salvation seen through the cross of Jesus.

Opportunites and Challenges

- Many people who are blind or visually have been told mistakenly that their blindness is punishment for sin, or that if they had enough faith, they would be healed. When they are not healed, they give up on God.
- Our society has had to retool itself to keep up with technology-based jobs. However, many people who are blind or visually impaired have fallen through the cracks because there are not enough teachers and resources available to train them.
- Many publishers of resources for people who are blind or visually impaired are closing due to economic conditions.
- Setting a goal to reach more people who are blind or visually impaired by the "blind leading the blind" is a clear witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. People who are blind trust others with the same disability because they know and understand what they go through.

But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

1 Cor 7:7b ESV

Ministry Strategy

Provide resources: Braille, large-type and audiocassette Bibles and magazines sent free of charge directly to people who are isolated as a result of their disability provides them an opportunity to read about Jesus. Though people who are blind or visually impaired may be isolated from one another, there is an informal network of communication. These materials often are shared and still more are reached with the Gospel through these free materials.

Leadership: The development of outreach centers brings separated, isolated people who are blind or visually impaired together so they may experience human care and compassion. This earthly experience provides the opportunity of sharing the light of salvation, seen through the cross of Jesus to people who are blind or visually impaired. Programs will be led by a person who is blind, in connection with sighted volunteers from LCMS congregations. Lutheran Blind Mission provides the training, equipping and resources.

Worship Helps

- **Verbalize the changes or movements in a service**: “Please stand, “ Be seated,” “The next song is…”

- **Teach the elders or ushers about the "Stop, Ask, Listen, Evaluate,"** or S.A.L.E., process:

  Stop:
  Don't just step in and perform a task for the person. It is false to assume that he or she needs help and that you know what he or she needs.

  Ask:
  Ask, "May I assist you with anything?"

  Listen:
  Listen to what they say. Really listen and do not try to interpret. If uncertain, ask a clarifying question such as, "I am not sure what you mean. Do you mean you would like me to… ?"

  Evaluate:
  It is okay to sit back and observe. If you see a person who is blind or visually impaired who appears in need of assistance, it is appropriate to repeat the S.A.L.E. process.

- **Appoint and prepare a few people** in the congregation to be observers and helpers. If someone with an obvious disability arrives, especially if he or she is alone, the observer could say, "Hi, do you mind if I sit by you? My name is_____. Would you like me to tell you anything as we go along?"

Since 1942, Lutheran Braille Workers has shared God’s Word — the Bible — in Braille and large type in multiple languages around the world in its ministry to share and show God’s love and promises found in Jesus. This resource sheet was developed in partnership with Lutheran Braille Workers. “Helping Blind and Visually Impaired People See Jesus”
www.blindmission.org | www.lbwinc.org