



For We Are God's Helpers

2021 Annual Newsletter

Share your gifts, live your faith, change the world ... and let the world change you.

You Are Part of God's Plan

In early 2020, before the pandemic, LMH had a booth for recruitment at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles' Religious Education Congress in Anaheim. We participate in it every year as a recruitment opportunity. Janice England, program director, was approached by Jessica Santavy, staff member of Olancho Aid Foundation (OAF), about the possibility of collaborating with LMH. OAF is a non-profit organization which operates under the Diocese of Juticalpa, Honduras. For over 20 years, OAF has sent short-term volunteers to help in the various OAF programs. What OAF was seeking from LMH was long-term lay missionaries who could give continuity in the programs and also serve as mentors.

With your prayers and support, we were able to recruit a family that is perfect for this new project. Jacob and Nancy Pederson, and their children Santi and Soliyana, will begin their service in the Diocese of Juticalpa, Honduras, in January 2022.

Jacob will serve as a school psychologist at Escuelita Nazareth, a school for special needs students. For Jacob, going to Honduras "feels like an answer to prayers." Being able to use his skills "feels like I will be able to offer the best I can offer," he says.

Nancy will serve as an ESL teacher at IOCR – the high school in Juticalpa. OAF was very much in need of a long-term English teacher and a school psychologist was on their wish list. Thanks to you, we are able to enter into this partnership and hope to continue it for years to come. Nancy is happy to be part of this new project. She looks forward to her time teaching in Honduras as an opportunity to "grow in service" and a way to commit to "not just talk the talk, but walk the walk."

We are excited to be adding Honduras as the 37th



LMH Candidates Josie Cruz (left) and Jacob and Nancy Pederson will begin their service in January, 2022.

country where LMH has served over the past 66 years. We could not do that without your prayers and support!

Your support will also ensure the continuation of our mission in the Diocese of Damongo, Ghana, where Josie Cruz has been assigned as an accountant. "I am going to Ghana, a country that I have never been to, and I am really excited," she says. "I'd like to be with the people and learn their culture. I want to give back because I always felt blessed by God." She will have every opportunity to do just that.

Part of God's Plan cont.

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Josie will work with Karen Hunka who has been serving as an accountant in Damongo since 2019. There is a need for their expertise both in the Diocesan Secretariat as well as the Girls Secondary School.

The Diocese of Damongo is an impoverished, rural diocese unable to attract professionals because of its limited ability to pay for such services. All the more important are Lay Mission-Helpers whom you send there. Karen will complete her term of service in 2022, so this will allow for a smooth transition. It is our hope that we will be able to send teachers to the Diocese



Jacob and Nancy Pederson, and their children Santi (left) and Soliyana (right) will serve as Lay Mission-Helpers in Honduras.

in 2023.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support of our missionaries. You are truly part of God's plan for the people in mission communities.

Transforming Lives through Evangelism

By Karen Hunka

On February 3, 1995, Pope St. John Paul II established the Diocese of Damongo in Ghana, where I have spent the last three years serving as a missionary. Shortly after being appointed, The Most Reverend Philip Naameh, the first Bishop of the Diocese, conducted a survey which revealed the illiteracy rate for women in the area was 96%. For this reason, the Bishop made educational intervention the Diocese's highest priority.

Many children lived in remote villages, far from Damongo. This made it impossible for them to attend school higher than the primary level. Because of this, the Diocese was quick to establish St. Anne's Girls' Boarding House, located right in the village of Damongo, where girls from the far off villages can live in order to further their education at the junior high level. In 2003, the Diocese then established St. Anne's Girls' Senior High School (SAGISS). This is where I live and work.

The Diocese did not stop there. For the boys and girls who wanted to develop their talents in craftsmanship, in 2005, the Diocese established a Technical/Vocational School and in 2006, it developed a Business/Vocational school. Also in 2006, in order to provide a good Catholic education to boys, St. Cyprian Minor Seminary was founded.

On October 13, 2021, I watched as 30 exceptional girls from the class of 2021 graduated from St. Anne's Girls' Senior High School. These girls were first-year students



Karen serves at St. Anne's Girls' Senior High School in the Diocese of Damongo, Ghana.

when I arrived in January, 2019. It was a blessing to be able to watch as they went from giggly girls to serious young women. Many of them have shared with me their desire to be teachers, nurses, and lawyers. Two girls from the Home Economics class told me they plan on opening their own pastry shop. Without the intervention of the Diocese none of this would be possible. Now they have bright futures before them.

The Diocese celebrated its 25th Anniversary in June, 2021. The theme of the celebration was "25 Years of Grace: Transforming Lives Through Evangelism – The Way Forward."

I am thankful to LMH for giving me the opportunity to live and work alongside the Bishop, priests and laity as they continue to move forward, transforming the lives of men and women, boys and girls that are fortunate to live here in the Diocese of Damongo.

Thank You for Your Support

By Marie Brouwers,
LMH Board President

During this time of year, we often think fondly of our friends and family. For as long as I can remember, I have known that there had been a very special person in my family that left us far too soon. He was Monsignor Anthony Brouwers, the founder of Lay Mission-Helpers. He was my father's first cousin and they lived and played together on the street where they grew up in Lincoln Heights.

My father had no siblings and Monsignor was like an older brother to him. I think the fondest memory my family shares is the day he baptized my youngest sister, his namesake, Antoinette Josephine Brouwers (Toni Jo) in December of 1963. My family watched with amazement as he stood from his wheelchair to pour the holy water over her head. I was only eight years old when he passed away a month later from multiple myeloma, but I knew even then what a special man he was.

I was born in 1955, the same year the Lay Mission-Helpers Association was founded. In 2013, I learned from my sister in Massachusetts that there was to be a Memorial Mass to celebrate the life and legacy of Msgr. Brouwers on his birthday, September 5th. There I met Elise Frederick, the LMH Executive Director at the time. She invited me to the Veteran LMH Christmas party where I met so many amazing people who had served as Lay Mission-Helpers. I was so impressed with their dedi-

cation and commitment that I remained involved and supported the work of LMH. A few years later, I was asked to join the Board of Directors and currently serve as president. It is so humbling to be part of such an amazing organization.

Monsignor Brouwers' legacy would not be possible without those of you who support LMH. We



**Monsignor Anthony Brouwers
at a meeting in 1963.**

are the oldest international lay mission program in the United States. For over 66 years, we have depended on selfless lay people with the valuable skills needed in our mission locations. We have survived during this pandemic because of our incredible staff and the flexibility of our missionaries and candidates. But most importantly, we have survived and thrived because of you, our supporters. We hope you will continue to support the Lay Mission-Helpers any way you can.

I hope you and yours have a wonderful and blessed Christmas season and a healthy 2022.

The Rose Gala: You Did It!

Thank you for sponsoring, donating and supporting the Virtual Rose Gala 2021 and the Silent Auction which took place in October. We raised \$38,902 through the Gala and \$4,101.57 from the Silent Auction.

Did you miss the event? You can still watch it online and hear the wonderful stories from our mission sites. The recording of the gala is available through our website: www.laymissionhelpers.org/gala. Thank you for making these two fundraising activities such a success. All funds will help us say "Yes" to the requests for help in Ghana, Uganda and Honduras.

Your generosity will make an impact on students, families and communities around the world.

There is No Gift Too Small to Make an Impact

If you are considering a legacy gift to your favorite charities, please consider the Lay Mission-Helpers Association. Our Tax ID number is #52-2407129. You don't have to be wealthy to leave a legacy gift. You can leave as much or as little as you want.

Your generosity will support the service of Catholic professionals serving in mission and at the same time your cherished values will live on. Call our office at (213) 368-1870 for more information or to discuss your options.

"A Glass of Water with Two Ice Cubes"

Every Fall, Lay Mission-Helpers Association partners with the Missionary Childhood Association of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and organizes the Monsignor Brouwers Scholarship Essay Contest for Catholic Middle School Students.

This year, the topic was, "What does it mean to be a missionary at home or at school?" Three winners were chosen. Each of the three winners received a certificate and a \$500 check towards their school tuition. The prizes were awarded at the annual Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) Youth Appreciation Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels on October 20, 2021.

The following excerpts from the winning essays are but an example of a missionary spirit growing in these young lives.

"Being a missionary or a person of faith requires an individual to be of service to others."

– Devone Kearsley, 6th grade, St. Cyril of Jerusalem School in Encino.

"Being a missionary means showing and expressing your love for Jesus and doing as Jesus did."

– Maylee Acuña, 7th grade, St. Joseph School in La Puente.

"This past year, I have been a missionary from home. My grandfather was placed in hospice care and my life and the lives of my family came to a screeching halt (...) I tried my best to help with anything, whether it was getting him a glass of water with specifically two ice cubes or turning the TV on and off (...) The missionary spirit in me had awoken..."

– Natalia Espinoza, 8th grade, Our Lady of the Rosary School in Paramount.

Thank you for helping us plant the seeds of a missionary vocation!



The winners of this year's Msgr. Brouwers Scholarship Essay Contest stand with Archbishop José Gomez (top), and with their families and LMH representatives (middle) at the MCA Youth Appreciation Mass at the Cathedral.