



## Compelled To Serve!

Rev. David W. Peters  
Executive  
Director



I really enjoy telling the story of how LSS-MT came to be. In some ways it's a crazy story, but it inspires me! It seems that in the late 1940's Montana Lutherans (of all different stripes!) got together and decided they needed to be involved in social ministry. They were not at all certain just what exactly they were going to do, but they were certain that they had to do something for the poor and needy. **They were compelled to serve, especially the weak and the vulnerable.**

Pastor Rolf Norman from Wolf Point was called and sent off to learn social work in New York City. In 1950 he moved to Helena and began to discern how best Lutherans could incarnate the hope and

healing of Christ. This was the beginning of the Lutheran Welfare Association (our name at the time). Initially Pastor Norman did casework at the state hospital in Warm Springs and at a girl's vocational school in Helena. In a few years adoption services were provided and short-term care for infants was offered in conjunction with the Montana Children's Hospital. The years to follow saw chaplaincy

programs, mental health counseling, refugee resettlement, and more.

What I so enjoy about our story is that it is a story of risk and trust! Not knowing exactly what they would do, those



Pastor Rolf Norman

Lutherans felt compelled to serve! That compelling faith led to real hope and real healing for broken lives!

Today LSS-MT is one of 300 social ministry organizations affiliated with Lutheran Services In America. Because people still feel compelled to serve hope and healing is provided in 3,000 communities in the United States and the Caribbean. Get this...**one in 50 Americans has been served by a Lutheran social ministry like LSS-MT in the last year!**

Over a quarter of a million staff and volunteers provide programs ranging from health care to disaster response, counseling to care for the elderly, adoption to advocacy. Compelled to serve! I am grateful for those visionary and dedicated Lutherans of more than a half a century ago. And I am grateful to all who continue to share the vision and offer support.

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Visit us on the web at  
[www.lssmt.org](http://www.lssmt.org)

"Joining Hearts in Hope!"

## Lutheran Ministries of the Montana Synod

by Rev. David J. Ophus

On December 11 of this past year I had a great privilege. Gathered with about fifty people at a church in Missoula, I watched as four adoptions were finalized at a "Celebration of Adoption." What a thrill it was to witness this life-giving ceremony. Lutheran Social Services of Montana is a vital ministry we all share. Have you ever considered a gift that will under gird the ministry of LSS-MT

for years to come? There are several ways to do this. You may choose to make LSS-MT a beneficiary of a portion of your accumulated assets in your will. Or, you may make LSS-MT a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or designate it to be the beneficiary of a certificate of deposit at your death. If you would like to receive income during your lifetime, you may consider a Charitable Gift Annuity or a Charitable Remainder Trust. In exchange for a gift the donor receives a

lifetime income as well as a federal tax deduction and qualifies for the Montana Tax Credit, a dollar for dollar cancellation of your Montana state taxes for up to 40% of the value of the gift.

**For more information** on how you can give a gift to LSS-MT, contact me:

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Missoula, MT. 59802  
406-549-2180  
[ophlms@bigsky.net](mailto:ophlms@bigsky.net)

## In Memoriam – Joseph Meyer Jr. (1919 – 2004)

Last summer we said goodbye to one of the "saints" of LSS-MT, Joe Meyer. Joe was a person with a kind heart, positive spirit, and desire to serve those in need. In 1963 he, along with his wife, Ruth, moved from Missouri to Billings where he served as "Area Director" for eastern Montana. In 1966 he became the third Executive Director and served until 1974. Under his leadership LSS-MT added hospital chaplaincy, foster care, and (dear to Joe's heart) the availability of counseling to outlying areas. We give thanks to God for his service, his support, and his dedication to the ministry of LSS-MT.

## Year In Review

Sheila Howe,  
Director of  
Adoption Services



Each new year brings opportunity to review the previous year's work and plan for the future. In looking back at 2004, our fourteen adoptive placements seemed to have come in clusters with January, May and June being our busiest months.

time adoption through LSS. Of the 32 couples, 6 had one previous child through adoption, 1 had two previous children through adoption, 2 had one previous birth child, and 1 had one previous child through adoption and one previous birth child.

Of our 32 placed couples, 23 lived in cities or smaller towns and 9 lived in rural areas or outside larger cities.

The range of adoptive mother's ages was 28 to 49. The average age was 36.5 years old. Two mothers were in their 20's, 20 mothers were in their 30's, and 10 mothers were in their 40's. The range of adoptive father's ages was 29 to 53. The average age was 37.2 years old. One father was in his 20's, 22 fathers were in their 30's, 8 fathers were in their 40's, and 1 father was in his 50's.

The average waiting time was 11.86 months for a placement, after reaching ready and waiting status. (Couples are placed on the waiting list when their Profile letters are submitted). The shortest wait was 1 month and the longest wait 3 years 10 months. Six couples waited two years or



*Cassie...Striking a pose!*

longer for a placement, and 14 couples waited six months or less.

As we look forward to providing compassion and hope to our birthmothers and adoptive families, we continue to plan ways to improve our services. Updating brochures, enhancing workshop and increasing adoption awareness are some of our goals for the new year.

## Book Review

### Becoming a Family

by Lark Eshleman, PhD.

This book offers numerous tips on enhancing attachments between parents and their adopted child. These tips are especially helpful for adoptive families who adopt older children and who adopt children internationally. Information on preparing your home, bringing your baby home, parenting to enhance attachment and helping your child's school experience be positive is included. Paying attention to the clothes you wear and how they feel to your baby and limiting environmental change for your child are two of the many suggestions included in this book.

*You didn't know me yet*

*Your mother decided that adoption was the best means to insure your needs would be met*

*I believe your mom loved you very much*

*She was just having trouble with food, clothing housing and such*

*She wanted to raise you, care for you and her life with you share*

*Without a husband, without a father for you, without a family, she didn't dare*

*She searched her heart, prayed to God and made the decision*

*To find for you a loving caring family was her mission*

*At the same time I was praying to God above*

*For a little child, a special boy, for my wife and I to love*

*We will provide for you food, shelter, a home; There will be fields prairies and hills to roam*

*We'll have horses and pigs, goats, chickens and ducklings*

*We'll eat cake, pie cookies, ice cream, several helpings*

*In church on Sunday, to the Father Son and Spirit we'll pray*

*That Michele will have a loving husband and a beautiful child like you someday.*

*Written by Dan, Adoptive Dad*



*Manny's first Christmas*

The following statistical report summarizes our infant program activity for 2003 and 2004. During this time LSS-MT placed 32 infants with adoptive families. Of those 32 placements, 24 were first-time adoptions through LSS, 7 were second-time adoptions through LSS and 1 was a third-

## International Adoption

Alaina Lammer Knight  
Caseworker  
Bozeman Office



In 2004 LSS provided home study services for the families of fifteen children placed through International Adoption. Most of the children came from China. Children were also placed from Russia, Liberia, Guatemala,

Korea, and the Philippines. Ages of the children placed this year ranged from four months to 14 years.

Naturally, adoption of older children, and children from a different culture raises concerns in how to best transition a new child into your family. Please read the book review on this page that deals well with this subject.

## Celebrate Adoption!

Sheila Howe,  
Director of  
Adoption Services



Children, adults and families of all sizes joined together in November to take note of the role that adoption has played in their lives. As part of a growing national trend, adoption

celebrations were held in Missoula, Helena, Great Falls, and Billings. Adoption finalizations, personal adoption stories and uplifting entertainment were highlights of these events. Lutheran Social Services of Montana, Catholic Social Services, Child and Family Services Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services and Wendy's of Montana collaborated to make these events a success.

The most special part of these celebrations was witnessing how blessed people feel because of their connection to adoption. An adoptive mom stated, "My child was born in my heart long before I met her." "I'd like to

thank my mom and dad for taking me in and giving me a



*Theresa with big brother Nathan (Not pictured...David, Connie & Shane)*

home. For eleven years, I've wanted to have a home and now I have one," proclaimed an adopted daughter. What wonderful stories to celebrate and share to raise the importance of adoption in our communities.



*Bryan, Kerry & Elle at Great Falls Celebration*

## Hearts Joined... Adoptive Placements Oct.-December 2004

- Isaiah James  
with Dan & Nila
- Grace Ardene Rose  
with Brad & Linda
- Owen Michael  
with John & Denese

## Meet Our Staff...Mary Louise Knapp



*Mary Louise Knapp*

Mary Louise Knapp, Missoula area Birthparent/Adoption Caseworker has worked at LSS-MT since 2000. She holds a Masters Degree in Applied Behavioral Sciences/Counseling and provides decision-making counseling for birthparents. Besides working with domestic adoption services, she provides international home study services for countries such as China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Guatemala, Ethiopia, and more.

Mary Louise has worn many

hats. She's taught elementary school, consulted as a certified human resource specialist, facilitated support groups for Jr. high school students, acted as a Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian Ad Litem, has been active in prison ministry and performed in community and professional theatre.

She has raised two daughters, Beth and Sarah, and is "grandma" to four grandsons with one more on the way. Of course, she loves to baby-sit!

In her spare time, she serves on the Board of Directors of a local non-profit agency, which provides intensive Family Based Therapy services. She also acts as a client instructor of third year law students at the U of M Law School and adjudicates speech/drama state competitions for high school students. Mary Louise is a member of her parish council and is a minister of homiletics/sermons. She views her work at LSS-MT as ministry and sees the unity of Christ in everyone she encounters with her work at LSS-MT.



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### Our Mission

"Lutheran Social Services of Montana is a ministry of caring people and congregations responding to God's love in Jesus Christ by serving children, families, and individuals through counseling, education, adoption and specialized ministries."



## "Joining Hearts in Hope!"

## Care Team Ministry

Libby Artley,  
Statewide  
Care Team Coordinator



Care Team Ministry helps those who need assistance...transportation, meals, respite, repairs and housework. Volunteers work an average of two hours a month since the care is provided by a team. Care Teams provide the ideal way for committed, caring Christians to respond to Christ's call to "share one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:1) In the past several months, nearly two thousand hours of service have been provided by Care Teams throughout the state.

Comments of gratitude include: "They make me feel so loved." "We truly appreciate your blessings, thoughtfulness and generosity." "My shawl has been my constant companion since surgery and reminds me of God's presence and love."

Care Team Ministry is: People caring for people... Creation of prayer shawls for those who are ill, shoveling snow, repairing a back porch, rides to the doctor, providing a meal, laughing and crying over memories...

If you want to get involved or want more information, please call me at the Billings office (245-9949).

## Tsunami Relief

Lutheran World Relief launched WAVE OF GIVING™ to fund its rebuilding efforts in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. In just its first week, WAVE OF GIVING™ has generated more than \$4.7 million dollars.

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) has been responding to emergencies and disasters since 1945. Working through partners and global relief and development networks, LWR works in 50 countries to provide relief, combat the causes of poverty and restore the dignity it robs from peoples' lives.

LWR is supported by the ELCA World Hunger Appeal, LCMS World Relief, individuals and parish groups.

To contribute online go to [www.lwr.org](http://www.lwr.org). Choose "South Asia Tsunami/Wave of Giving" for your contribution.

You may also call **1-800-LWR-LWR-2**, or mail a check or money order to:

**Lutheran World Relief -  
South Asia Tsunami/  
Wave of Giving  
P.O. Box 17061  
Baltimore, MD 21298**

100% of the money donated to LWR for "South Asia Tsunami/Wave of Giving" will go to relief and recovery efforts for the communities affected by the tsunami.