



# A CENTURY OF OFFERING HOPE



Lutheran Social Services  
of the National Capital Area  
1917-2017

# A CENTURY OF OFFERING HOPE & COMPASSION

*“We have been discriminated against, persecuted, beaten, tortured, degraded, humiliated, and ignored everywhere and every time. But today, by the blessing of God, LSS provided services that offered hope to us, and promoted the well-being of children, families, and communities most in need, regardless of religion, race, national origin, gender, age, or ethnicity. We have been able to restore our dignity and integrity.*

*A word of thanks is due to Lutheran Social Services, the only society that has stretched out its arms, and with its open-door policy, lodged and collected our family, as well as a large number of other disillusioned, disadvantaged, and justifiable families.“*

~Refugee Family, 1999

This is a highlight from a thank you letter taken from a well-worn notebook labeled “client appreciation.” The notebook was found in a bottomless storage closet during our archival dig at the beginning of our centennial year. Although every letter speaks of a different journey, each embodies the spirit of an individual shown hope and compassion after being tossed aside and forgotten.

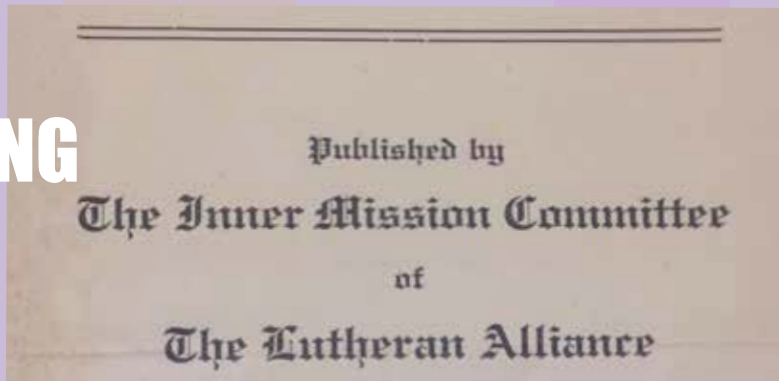
Since 1917, Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA) has mobilized community members to walk with those in need, offering hope and compassion to our most vulnerable neighbors. Within that century of service, our nation has witnessed multiple wars, felt the ups and downs of the economy, and experienced a range of policies practiced by diverse local and federal administrations. Through it all, LSS/NCA has not only stood the test of time, but has transitioned itself to meet the changing needs of the community.

When an alliance of seven Lutheran congregations originally banded together to inspire a growth of services in the nation’s capital, it ensured new beginnings for thousands of children and families. Today, LSS/NCA continues to serve the community through resettlement, cultural orientations, employment training, adoption, foster care, health workshops, care navigation, and mentoring. Staying true to its tradition of redefining its services to meet immediate needs, LSS/NCA is paving the way for another century of service.

*We appreciate your investment in this long-standing mission.*



# 1917 THE BEGINNING



Dedicated to stimulating “missionary activity, to encourage works of mercy in our Lutheran congregations...and to endeavor to bring the Gospel and ministrations of Christian Love to those not now reached...” the Lutheran Inner Mission Board (now LSS/NCA) is founded by the Lutheran Alliance of Churches in Washington, D.C., on February 26, 1917. Its members include: St. Mark’s, Lutheran Place Memorial (Girards St.), Epiphany, Reformation, Luther Place Memorial (Thomas Circle), St. Paul’s, and the Fine Arts Commission.

The agency’s goals are to assist local Lutheran churches with their own activities in Washington, D.C. The Inner Mission Board has a small office at Luther Place Memorial on Thomas Circle in Washington, D.C. and hires a retired missionary as a “worker.” The agency operates as an arm of the Lutheran Alliance of Churches of Washington, D.C., supported through local church donations.

“...to endeavor to bring the Gospel and ministrations of Christian Love to those not now reached.”



Luther Place Memorial: First Office Headquarters

# 1920s THE ROARING 20s

**1923:** The Inner Mission Board separates from the Alliance and is renamed The Lutheran Inner Mission Society (LIMS). The agency hires Miss Bertha Heiges of Altoona, Pennsylvania, to coordinate volunteer services in hospitals, institutions, and with other community needs among the local churches in Washington, D.C. (The selection of a female leader makes headlines in the Washington Post.) Her office is located at 820 11th St. N.W. The Alliance grows to 13 member churches.

## LUTHERAN ALLIANCE PLANS WIDE ACTIVITY

### Woman Engaged to Direct Volunteers in Work of Large Program.

The Lutheran Alliance, including fifteen Lutheran churches in the city, have started a systematic service, in hospitals, corporations, homes, juvenile court, and kindred institutions. They have secured Miss Bertha Heiges of Altoona, Pa., to take charge of the work, and give her entire time to its prosecution. Miss Heiges has had experience under the Pennsylvania State Sabbath School associ-

**1925:** The American and Augustana Synods join the Alliance, making a total of twenty-five churches. Mission functions are paid by individual memberships of \$1.

**June 17, 1927:** LIMS is incorporated with new headquarters at 15th & I St. N.W. There is a dedicated budget of \$2,500.00 (just over \$34,000 in today’s market). The agency hires a new secretary to oversee operations. The new mission: “visiting and conducting of services in area institutions and hospitals, enlisting and coordinating volunteer services of individuals and groups from the various churches, distributing religious pamphlets and tracts, and the monthly publishing of *The Inner Mission Bulletin*.”

**Budget \$2,500**

**1929:** LIMS establishes a service committee that is then disbanded later in the year. The agency refocuses its efforts on mission work. Records state that LIMS board members felt “that the Society should concentrate on the spiritual side of the work...And the governmental agencies did, and properly should take care of the material needs or needy citizens.”

# 1930s

## THE DEPRESSION

**1930:** Following the stock market crash in 1929, the Great Depression left many without basic needs. By 1933, half of Americans had witnessed their banks fail. Thus, the expansion of ministry services, emergency assistance, and an emphasis on family welfare and relief. “The changing needs require a changing program, and the society attempts to adopt its work to meet such needs.” LIMS visits local hospitals, jails, and other institutions, providing ministry and fellowship on Sundays and holidays. The agency delivers needed toiletries, holiday items, and cards to institution residents, and delivers Christmas trees to hospital wards and toys to sick children.

**1933:** First mention of Miss Frances Dysinger who serves as the Executive Secretary for LIMS from 1932 through 1946. A 1933 newspaper article mentions that Miss Dysinger was elected conference secretary at the National Lutheran Inner Mission Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

**1935:** Between 1930 and 1935, the agency’s budget nearly doubles to \$5,000 (over \$90,000 in today’s value). Public relations becomes an increasingly important need for Society Programs. As a result, a yearly Roll Call dinner is held each January to begin the Society’s annual financial drive, the “*Mercy Messenger*” replaces the “*Inner Mission Bulletin*,” the agency’s first film “*Inasmuch*” is produced, and Inner Mission Circles are created in each congregation to foster a core of dedicated people and foster support for the Society’s programs.

**Budget \$5,000**

During a time of severely limited resources, LIMS witnesses the strength of the faith community. Congregational support continues to be the agency’s main source of funding throughout the Depression.



Milk line during the Great Depression

**1937-1938:** Relief items given to local families include rent, coal, and milk for children. The agency’s budget for milk during this period is \$1,974 (over \$34,000 in today’s market.) Items purchased in agency logs include over 6,000 quarts of milk.

**1939:** The budget for relief items is \$2,374, which is about a third of the agency’s total budget that year (\$41,800 in today’s market). Institutions visited by LIMS include The Gospel Mission, Lorton Reformatory, St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, Gallenger Hospital (later D.C. General), Washington Sanatorium, and Glenn Dale Hospital.



Washington Sanatorium 1939

# 1940s

## THE WAR YEARS

**1941:** Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the United States' entrance into WWII, LIMS expands due to emerging community needs. The society provides ministry to military service members which continues into the 1960s. To meet demands, LIMS partners with other community agencies and the federal government. LIMS begins assisting refugees arriving on American shores, including families fleeing Nazi Germany and later, refugees fleeing Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Because of the agency's growth, LIMS experiments with various social service programming, bolstering its outreach to vulnerable families and children in the surrounding community.

**"LIMS begins assisting refugees arriving on American shores, including families fleeing Nazi Germany."**



WWII Refugees arriving at Ellis Island

### Lutheran Aid Society Gets New Quarters

The Lutheran Inner Mission Society, welfare agency for Greater Washington Lutheran Churches, has moved to new headquarters and announced an expanded program.

The new headquarters are at 738 Jackson pl. n. of the office fall, according to F. Bautz, executive quarters of formerly at 1

Mr. Bautz, the society has center on Sunday at 4 p. m. C. Ritchey, the society has expanded so

### House, Once Occupied by T R, To Be Dedicated by Lutherans

A building which was once used as a temporary White House by President Theodore Roosevelt will be dedicated as a Lutheran Church center on Sunday at 4 p. m. The four-story brick building, which is at 736 Jackson pl. nw., was occupied for four months in 1902 by the Roosevelt family while

The building was purchased in 1944 by the National Lutheran Council, an agency serving eight Lutheran Church bodies with a total membership of over three million. During the war it was used as a Lutheran service center. Agencies occupying the building will be Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Luth-

**1945:** The agency operates a daycare center at its office on 11th Street N.W. This includes after-school care and a teen club. (The program was discontinued in 1948.) This building also serves as a halfway house for women who are returning to society after serving time in the Lorton women's jail. The budget in 1945 is \$10,700 (over \$145,000 in today's market.)

**Budget \$10,700**

**1948:** The agency hires its first full-time social worker, Irene Ritchey, and expands social services to include temporary lodging for unemployed, financial assistance to families, and a camp for white and "negro" children. In addition, the LIMS office moves to 736 Jackson Place N.W., across from the White House. This building also houses several other Lutheran organization offices.

**1949:** Resettlement Act of 1949 is passed in Congress and the agency is approached to act as the region's resettlement headquarters for refugees fleeing war-torn Europe. Refugee families are referred to LIMS by refugee intake workers on Ellis Island. A refugee woman is hired to help and 212 persons are resettled.

# 1950s

## MID-CENTURY GROWTH

**1950:** The agency witnesses substantial growth, especially in refugee and children services. Displaced Persons (DP) fleeing post-war Europe, including Jewish families surviving the atrocities of Nazi rule and families fleeing the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe depend on the agency for basic needs and community connections. While local congregations supply housing and friendship to refugee families, local farmers from Maryland and Virginia offer employment opportunities that are essential for self-sufficiency.

LIMS hosts a Yule Service for 160 displaced persons celebrating their first Christmas in the United States.

LIMS hires its first Institutional Chaplain, Rev. Paul Amt, who will continue to serve the agency for more than 20 years. An LIMS clergy intern, Carl Ehrhart, is also hired to provide outreach to patients at local hospitals, prisons, and reformatories.

**1951:** With the continuing existence of military bases in the Washington area, the society offers use of its facilities as a lounge, operating as an informal referral service for worship and activities for the 35 Lutheran churches in the area. On the weekend, the society office is equipped with writing supplies and a radio-TV for service members based in the Metro Area.

**“LIMS is interested in beginning an adoption program which would be the first Lutheran adoption agency in the area.”**

**1953:** Offices are moved to 2633 Sixteenth Street NW, home to several Lutheran agencies. New programs are formed to counsel unwed mothers, discuss the “problem of aging,” and begin a child care fund.

**1954:** News articles indicate that LIMS is interested in beginning an adoption program, which would be the first Lutheran adoption agency in the area.

**Budget \$28,568**

**1956:** LIMS applies for a child placement license for a second time and it is accepted. (The agency withdrew its application in 1948.) “Adoption applicants must be mature, happily married, financially stable, and practicing Christians.” The Agency also works with the unwed mother to help her “think through the ramifications of relinquishing the baby.” Refugee arrivals decrease with the termination of the Walter-McCarren Act.

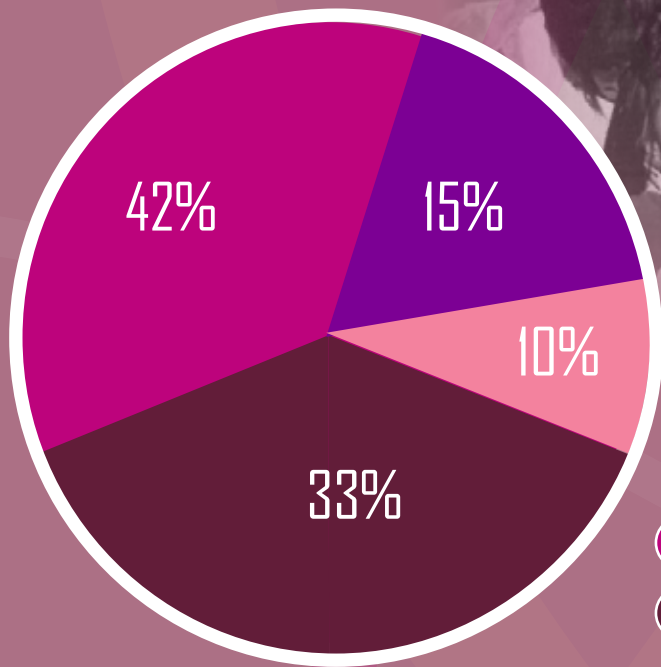
**1958:** Near the end of the decade, LIMS has 8 boarding homes across the region which serve 31 unmarried mothers. In addition, 18 children are adopted through the agency and 15 children are housed in LIMS foster homes. (A total of 36 children were adopted between 1956 and 1958, following the agency’s successful licensing.)

News articles depict an LIMS celebration, recognizing 40 years of community service. New Executive Director, Reverend Paul Orso, and a new social worker, Annelie Gross, attend. The agency has a total of 4 staff members.

Another American Christmas



# 1960s A GREAT SOCIETY



**BUDGET 1960: \$40,838**

- Chaplaincy Services
- Social Services
- Adoption Services
- Counseling

**1960:** The 1960s brings great change in the country and in our community. LIMS reorganizes its internal structure to care for more clients and is renamed Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, Inc. (LSS/NCA).

**1963:** A local news article details a local, compassionate family that fosters several children through the agency, reflecting a strong foster care program.

**1964:** The Great Society Legislation focuses on creating a new community-oriented mental health support system. Thus, governmental units close state-operated mental hospitals and open community-based mental health centers. However, these centers are not adequately funded, and many of them are forced to close. Seeing a need, LSS/NCA provides residents experiencing mental health problems with temporary shelter and counseling.

# 1970s THE VIETNAM WAR

## WXPost MAY 31 1975 Cambodian Boy Enters Hospital for Surgery

By Judy Luce Mann  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Khoan Ngeik, 10, a Cambodian refugee who needs open heart surgery, was admitted to Georgetown University Hospital yesterday after the Lutheran Social Services of the Washington Metro area announced that it would raise the estimated \$7,000 to pay hospital costs.

The child arrived in Washington on April 17 and tentatively scheduled for surgery May 8 after doctors at Georgetown diagnosed him with congenital heart disease.

**1970:** As the sixties close and the decade turns, the looming Vietnam War forces an incredible number of refugees from Southeast Asia to the Washington Metro area. As they did a generation earlier, LSS/NCA offers a welcoming hand and community connections to arriving families, assisting predominantly refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

**1974:** LSS/NCA resettles a 10-year old Cambodian boy, Khoan Ngeik, who needs open heart surgery to survive. (This is the first documented case of an unaccompanied refugee minor entering the agency's care.) Georgetown University Hospital cancels the operation at the last minute because there are no funds to cover it. LSS/NCA guarantees the hospital payment of \$7,000 if they perform the operation. Over the course of the next year, LSS/NCA financial documents show various payments to Georgetown for Khoan's medical bills.

**1975:** Partnering with federal agencies, LSS/NCA formally begins its Refugee and Immigrant Services Program, providing assimilation services that include job training, language assistance, and emergency aid. Today, this remains one of the primary programs of LSS/NCA.

## They Have Given Love and Care To 53 Infants

Sweetest little fellow  
Everybody knows  
Don't know what to call him  
But he's mighty like a rooster...

By Ellen Key Blum

THEY'RE ALWAYS rooming two babies very hard to find for one more in the Arlington neighborhood of the Washington Post. And there's been a steady stream of babies since 1964. The National Adoption Agency offered a paper at last year's own. And people in the East wanted a little baby don't care if it's a girl or a boy. They're hard to give up. But they're worth it.



Vietnam Refugees take tour of Washington DC

# 1980s

## A GROWING DEMAND

**1980:** The agency operates in several unique program areas. While continuing to provide many of their original services, including ministry to local jails, the agency also hires multiple social workers to support delinquent youths, and facilitate workforce entry and counseling. In addition, the agency collaborates with the D.C. Department of Social Services to provide aid to pregnant teens, including family crisis counseling and intervention.

**1982:** In the years following the 1979 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, and subsequent war, almost 10,000 refugees fled to live in the United States. About 200 families settled in Alexandria, between 1979-1982.

**1983:** The agency opens services for a growing homeless population in the D.C. Metro Region. Services include mental health counseling and transitional housing. (Incubated by LSS/NCA, this program becomes an independent non-profit recognized as *Housing Up*.) News articles detail a picnic for local homeless families.

**1984:** LSS/NCA begins to formally care for unaccompanied refugee minors resettling in the U.S. without family or loved ones. This service requires resettlement expertise and foster care families to ensure the youths' safety and education. To accommodate a growing service, the agency opens several branch offices in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

Budget \$1,977,234



Snapshots from this 1983 Washington Post article: "This is a good highlight in my life, but there is no place like home" said Darryl Jackson, 29.

"I still miss my home," said Sarah Hicks, 56, who sometimes stays at the House of Ruth when her friends cannot take her in. When her husband died in 1979, she said, her house was repossessed. "The notion here is that the homeless are people, too, and should not be neglected," said Phyllis Lawrence, director of the support project.

Despite the warm day and good food, some were not able to shake their depression and lay face down in the grass. But most of them appeared to have a good time.

Two women spent the morning sitting in the bleachers...watching a player practice his serve. Two men registered to vote and began to argue. "Don't vote for Reagan," one of them said. "Look," said the other. "I may be homeless, but I'm not stupid."



LSS/NCA welcomes its first wave of Afghani refugees



The Washington Post



# 1990s

## ADDRESSING LOCAL DEMANDS

**1990:** LSS/NCA continues to serve the homeless population. Harnessing the mental health and housing resources already in place, LSS/NCA develops partnerships with congregations throughout Northern Virginia to support victims of domestic violence. These services include safe housing, counseling, and job training. Given its breadth, this program separates from LSS/NCA in 1999 to become NOVACO; the agency is still in operation today.

**1992:** Bosnian refugees flee ethnic cleansing by the Serbian Army. LSS/NCA becomes one of the predominant resettlement agencies for that population in the United States.

**1995:** News articles report that LSS/NCA hosts day camp for refugee children.

**Budget \$5,265,000**



LSS/NCA clients take day trip to Chesapeake Bay

Youth affected by HIV join project Safe Haven



**“LSS/NCA creates project Safe Haven, a summer camp offering support to and fulfilling the unmet needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS.”**

**1998:** With a need to streamline the agency’s growing budget, LSS/NCA leadership focuses organizational resources on programs that promote self-sufficiency, family unity, and employment.

Partner congregations ask LSS/NCA to address the growing AIDS epidemic in the Washington D.C. region which has the highest HIV rate in the country; the disease is being spread to children at birth.

As a result, LSS/NCA creates project Safe Haven, a summer camp offering support to and fulfilling the unmet needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS.

**1999:** LSS/NCA opens an office in Baltimore to expand resettlement options for an influx of refugees from Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

# 2000s THE NEW CENTURY

**2000:** As the new century begins, LSS/NCA refocuses resources on the community's greatest unmet needs. Although church partnerships continue, they are limited. Many congregations reorganize and begin their own internal service projects, leaving LSS/NCA to manage larger programs requiring federal oversight: refugee resettlement and foster care.

In addition, the agency continues to provide aid to the most vulnerable neighbors, including the city's homeless residents and mentally ill. The agency builds a Day Service program that provides life skills training and supervision for those with mental health disorders caused by addiction or age.

**2003:** In an effort to reignite church partnerships, LSS/NCA begins the Earth-keeping Project, a collaboration with local church volunteers. The project promotes urban garden and landscaping projects, builds green space for local schools, and offers teens work experience. Meanwhile, Help the Homeless Walkathons raise money for LSS/NCA housing assistance programs.

**2006:** LSS/NCA establishes the Disaster Preparedness & Response Program to assist families displaced by Hurricane Katrina who relocated to the Washington, DC and Baltimore regions. Recognizing the need for additional help during emergencies, LSS/NCA leverages resettlement resources to spearhead disaster preparedness training among local relief organizations.

**Budget \$6,441,401**

# 2010s 100 YEARS & COUNTING

**2010:** Following the September 11th attacks and the resulting wars in the Middle East, America experiences a heavy influx of Special Immigrant Visa holders and refugees from the region, in 2010. These families served as allies to American soldiers during the conflicts and therefore were targeted for their service by radical Islamic groups.

**2012:** As the lead for disaster response, LSS/NCA offers assistance to those impacted by the devastation of Hurricane Sandy.

As a result of conversations with leaders from partner congregations, the agency formally pilots Caregiver Support. With an aging population in the general community and in local congregations, LSS/NCA offers support and resources to those caring for aging or ill loved ones. (These services are discontinued a few years later due to a lack of financial support.)

**2017:** LSS/NCA celebrates 100 years of service at Passport to the World, featuring a world marketplace showcasing food and talent from all the countries and communities served by LSS/NCA over the past century.

Today, in the spirit of its founding ministry of caring for "those not now reached," the agency offers hope and mobilizes communities to serve and advocate to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and less fortunate, whatever their origin, race, or religion.

**Budget \$9,947,941**





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LSSNCA.org  
United Way 8146  
CFC 78343

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA) walks with those in need and mobilizes community partners to provide services that offer hope and rebuild lives.