



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 26, 2007

Contact: Jo Ann Dollard
847/390-1446

Knoxville's Grace Lutheran Church Reaches Out to Single Parents, Receives LSSI Ministry of Hope Award

The Rev. Daniel Schwick, assistant to the president of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), will present the 2006 Ministry of Hope Award to Grace Lutheran Church in Knoxville on Sunday, February 4. This award is presented annually to one congregation in each of the three Illinois ELCA synods to recognize an outstanding ELCA congregation that provides leadership in supporting the ministry of LSSI and other ministries in the community. The other recipients of the award are: Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hinsdale, a Chicago suburb, and Grace Lutheran Church in Champaign.

Grace Lutheran, located at 108 S. Timber Street, is being recognized for its engagement in a variety of ministries, especially its 20-plus years in supporting LSSI's Single Parent Program. LSSI is a statewide human service organization based in Des Plaines.

Paula Graves, program director of LSSI's Single Parent Program in Galesburg, along with the agency's foster care and adoption services there, nominated the congregation because of "their ongoing interest, support and encouragement of our programs. They took the initiative to find out about our programs and invited us to come to their church on several occasions to educate their members," she says. "And they have initiated creative ways of assisting our programs. Their heart is to help the clients of our programs, and we know their doors are open for continual support to LSSI."

The Single Parent Program is aimed at protecting children and encouraging a single parent's self-sufficiency and independence through education and one-on-one support. Congregation members donate Christmas gifts to the program, and also mittens for a mitten tree. Church members have collected and delivered such things as furniture, clothing, bedding and household furnishings to program clients, and have made financial contributions to the program.

The congregation's involvement in LSSI's Single Parent program, which is headquartered

- more -

in Galesburg, began about 20 years ago, before the Rev. Michel Clark was called as pastor to the church. So he doesn't know what initiated the relationship. But he thinks the church's involvement is, in part, "a function of being in a small town. That brings us a lot closer to the need than people in a larger city," he says. "Here, [the need is] inescapable; it's all around us, which is OK. It's a good thing; people are more aware of what needs to happen," he adds.

Also helping the congregation to keep in touch with the community is the congregation's parish nurse. "She keeps us focused and connected [to community needs]," Pr. Clark says. Parish nursing, he explains, is a holistic approach to health and brings the "healthcare perspective into the arena of faith and life."

The nurse holds regular blood pressure screenings and writes a column in the church's newsletter on health topics. She also organized a workshop on the advanced directive (end-of-life healthcare instructions by an individual) and another one on the Medicare drug program. Pr. Clark adds that the church is one of the sites in town that hosts a blood drive and also hosts the local AA group.

"Someone said that this congregation has a 'heart for ministry,'" he says. "I like that. I believe it is certainly true here at Grace."

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In addition to the Single Parent Program, LSSI's services in the Knox County area include foster care and adoption services.

For more about LSSI, go online to www.LSSI.org or call 343-7681.

###