

Temple Talk/ Mission Moment SCRIPT

Good Shepherd Sunday SEASON 2026 with LSSI

For use by program staff and volunteer speakers

By Rev. Kelly Nieman Anderson

NOTES:

- The ELCA churches in Illinois are encouraged to commemorate their partnership with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois on or around Good Shepherd Sunday every year.
- More information and additional resources can be found at www.LSSI.org/GSS
- If you are using LSSI giving envelopes, including a special offering or in-kind collection, or sharing the GSS bulletin inserts (available via the link above) please include information in this talk about how to give money, why the church and its members financially support LSSI, and how their donations make a difference in the lives of our neighbors.
- This script is intended to be modified by the speaker as desired.
Contact Rev. Kelly Nieman Anderson (kanderso@lssi.org) with any questions.

Greeting and Introducing LSSI

Good morning! Thank you for the opportunity to join you and share a little bit about the work of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois or “LSSI”.

Some of you already know this, but LSSI is *your* social service organization. It was started by Lutherans over 150 years ago and is still supported by Lutheran churches like this one, all across the state. The work that we do is an extension of *your* hands and hearts in the community. LSSI’s ministries offer:

- hope to families in the child welfare system;
- healing to those affected by incarceration, mental illness, and substance abuse;
- and housing to seniors and adults with disabilities.

LSSI’s clients, staff, and supporters are not far-off strangers. These are people with whom we share in life, *and* also our neighbors. LSSI is one of the largest human service providers in Illinois – caring for about 1 out of every 200 Illinoisans every year.

More details about all of our programs are available on our website, www.LSSI.org and through the resources I brought to share with you today.

Optional Connecting to the Good Shepherd Bible readings

In today's Gospel reading, we learn that Jesus, our best shepherd, is inviting us to leave our comfortable sheepfold and experience truly abundant life. Since the first resurrection centuries ago, Christians have come to understand that Jesus was showing us that abundant life is possible for all people and all of creation. LSSI brings that abundant life to some of our most vulnerable neighbors every day.

We are truly all sheep in the sheepfold together. And the Good Shepherd is calling us out to take care of the vulnerable, provide for the disadvantaged and comfort the weary among us. To take ownership for the health and wellbeing of all the sheep in our collective sheepfold, ensuring all people can experience joy in this abundant, resurrected life. LSSI's clients may not be Lutheran or even know what Lutheran means. But they can all experience the wonders and signs of God's love through LSSI's programs and your faithful acts of generosity.

Optional Tell Your Story

Personalize this section as needed. Share a story about how your work at LSSI has changed someone's life, led to a positive outcome or a successful achievement, or brought you joy.

Introducing LSSI's ministry for:

Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Some of the neighbors that LSSI serves are adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The formal name for LSSI's 10 group homes are CILAs, or Community Integrated Living Arrangements. These living arrangements came into existence in the late 1980s as a shift away from institutional living. Prior to that, adults with developmental disabilities were kept separated from society, often for their entire lives. It limited their ability to work and enjoy other aspects of daily life.

But now, thanks to you, LSSI's 10 homes are all community spaces where the clients live with 24/7 staff support. We take care of the clients' medical needs, help them with their finances, teach them independent living skills, and improve their quality of life. LSSI staff also provide meals, recreational outings, and connections to local day programs.

Thankfully, our clients are now walking along a road that few of us could have recognized just a few years ago. They get to share God's love and joy with the community, and we get to experience God's love through these beloved neighbors.

Tell a Client Story (if NOT showing a video)

One of our clients, Bryan, has lived at an LSSI group home for over 26 years. He has developmental disabilities and is hearing impaired but does not use American Sign Language. Like many in the deaf community, Bryan created his own way to communicate with loved ones early in life, but that created challenges in helping Bryan feel accepted in groups. Bryan is one of our neighbors who can be easily ignored or dismissed because our minds convince us it will be impossible for us to communicate with him. But, thankfully, LSSI staff chose to lead with their hearts, and not just their minds. They took time to learn *his own* version of signing, so that they could provide him with the dignity of shared communication. When their hearts recognized Jesus in their neighbor Bryan... then their minds and bodies were able to continue the daily difficult work of communicating with him.

Thankfully, LSSI staff aren't the only ones who celebrate and welcome Bryan. He also participates in a local day program, to build skills, socialize, and connect with his community. The members of that nonprofit also lead with their hearts and see Jesus in neighbors like Bryan and his friends. He was recently recognized by this organization for 40 years of participation with the day center. Staff, family, and friends attended the celebration. They cheered Bryan as he jumped from his seat and waved his arms triumphantly when he was given his award.

Through the services provided by LSSI, Bryan has been freed to flourish and thrive for decades. He is living fully into the resurrected life, living in an environment that promotes his independence, maintains his safety, ensures his dignity, and surrounds him in love. LSSI brings healing, justice, and wholeness to people and communities. But they cannot do not do it alone. Through the partnership of churches and individuals across Illinois, LSSI is able to offer that hope — and that dignity — to neighbors like Bryan.

Tell a Client Story through a Video (about 4 minutes)

I brought a video with me to share with you, highlighting some of our church partnerships with LSSI's CILA homes.

➔ *Video Plays*

LSSI serves thousands of clients, and each has a unique story. What all the stories have in common is that LSSI's transformative care depends on your support.

Closing / Gratitude and Request for Ongoing Support

LSSI can offer these life-changing programs only through the financial support of people and congregations like you.

LSSI has 10 group homes across the state, and just like your house, these homes need ongoing renovations, repairs, and updates. Just like in your families, the residents and staff find dignity and joy in personalized care – like a birthday cake, or a special lunchbox, or new Blackhawks curtains. State funding helps support the costs of caring for residents but doesn't cover capital improvements or even routine "fun", like a game night with pizza or holiday party. Please consider how you can help support LSSI's clients and residents this month and invest in support for the next generation of services needed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share the good news about LSSI's ministry and thank you for partnering with LSSI and choosing to make a difference in the lives of our clients. The role you play in our good work is the work of the Good Shepherd – and we couldn't do it without you.