



For Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, our choices are grounded in the clear, simple directions we were left with over 2000 years ago: *Love your neighbor as yourself. And I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.*

Lots of people are guided by the first direction – Love your neighbor as yourself. What struck me when I came to LSS ten years ago, is that our work seems to also be guided by Christ’s other intention, “I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.” For us, it’s not enough that neighbors are safe and off the street – or even warm, dry, and fed.

Guided by those clear, simple instructions – love your neighbor as yourself and I came that they might have life and have it abundantly – Lutheran Social Service of MN has a stand that we call “My Life, My Choices”. We are working with the Department of Human Services in Minnesota to do what I’m calling “compassionate re-design” – supporting people in living delightful lives in the community while spreading our community resources to serve more people.

Guided by those clear, simple directions – love your neighbor as yourself and I came that they might have life and have it abundantly - LSS has chosen to send our Abundant Aging design and book study to 1200 Minnesota Lutheran churches. Written by Marilyn Sharpe of our LSS Board Services Committee, the book study calls people approaching the end of full-time work to intentionally plan their elderhood, finding new vocations with which to contribute to their communities.

Guided by those clear, simple directions – love your neighbor as yourself and I came that they might have life and have it abundantly - LSS has chosen to pour everything we know how to do into a new Center for Changing Lives in Duluth to see if we can actually end homelessness for youth there.

And we are partnering again this year, with Heading Home Minnesota; the State Interagency Taskforce on Homelessness; Catholic Charities and other providers; and our designer friends of the Public Strategies Group, to finish a new design for youth services in Minnesota that so far we are calling, “Not Even One Night.” We are taking on the really big possibility that young people who decide to leave unsafe homes never actually experience living outside of community but instead get connected to a loving, caring adult immediately who can help them finish growing up and taking their place in the adult community.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly. Thank you for making that your choice, too.

We partner with churches all over the state and would love to visit your church & explore more deeply the ministry we share as Lutherans in Minnesota. To set up a visit, contact: congregations@lssmn.org.

Jodi Harpstead
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