

# In The Way

March 2020

The St-Onge Family in Mission  
charles.stonge@lcms.org  
intheway.org

244 21e Avenue  
Deux-Montagnes, QC  
J7R 4H1 Canada

## Work Under COVID-19

It is March – one of the dreariest months, climate wise, in Montreal. November might seem to be dreary too, but it comes with the anticipation of the first snow that covers the dead grass and leaves like a clean baptismal gown. March, temperature wise, is November in reverse. With rising temperatures comes melting snow – which is not nearly as nice as that first blanket in the fall. The disappearing banks reveal how much sand and gravel we spread around all winter long. Everything gets dirtier and dirtier. March is not a month to lift the spirits of men.

So it seems appropriate that this crisis which has gripped the world comes during this month, the same month in which we generally commemorate Lent and prepare for Easter. Like the remaining patches of white, we see glimmers of the better angels of our natures. People going out on their balconies to sing Leonard Cohen and Tragically Hip ballads. A website in Quebec created for volunteers crashed the other day, overloaded with people wanting to help.

But it also reveals the dirt of the world, and our hearts. Earthquakes, hurricanes, wildfires, floods and, yes, even diseases, are reminders that the world lives under a curse we brought down on it – with the able assistance of our Ancient Enemy and his minions. Tempers fray, and insults are hurled. Fear can reign in our hearts, as it reigned in Caiphas' and Pilate's.

As I am now grounded in Montreal - and being grounded can be a very good thing indeed! - I am focusing on 1) connecting with members and non-members in the community through social media, devotions, and podcasts that I am producing, 2) leading online services with Deb (our pianist/organist) and the girls (our choir!), 3) offering care for our interim pastor Ron Hodel and his wife Gail in the Caymans who are sheltering in place, Obot, Abas and Goodness in Jamaica, and our whole crew in Puerto Rico and 4) working with a deaconess intern in the Dominican, Kate Phillips, to further increase our email responses to inquiries (see "Mission Moment" for another example of this outreach).

In just a few days it will be April. By the end of that month, the snow will be gone. In normal times the streets would also be cleaned and everything ready for spring. In these times, Easter will be less about the trappings outside and more about the message that is always good, and new, and true: Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again on the third day from the grave. Amen!

## Mission Moment

The man who wrote was clearly angry. Late one night a few days ago, unable to sleep again, he stumbled across one of our linked videos about insomnia. Rather than be encouraged by the comfort of the Lord's Word, he lashed out in frustration. Towards the end, he switched to ALL CAPS and wrote: "I'M LOOKING FOR ACTUAL SOLUTIONS NOT CRACKPOT ONES TO HELP ME BECAUSE I HAVE A REAL PROBLEM."

So I wrote back. I pointed out that insomnia can be psychological, but can also be a sign of physical illness. I encouraged him to see a doctor and get it checked out.

Surprisingly, he wrote back: "I want to apologize for the disrespectful tone in my message from from last night. It was uncalled for and I regretted sending it immediately." He said he wanted to see a doctor, but would wait – "until the COVID-19 panic dies down a bit."

That was March 13. I pray for Mark, and I hope you will too: and the many who are reaching out to us in anxiety, looking for the hope that comes in Jesus.



## A Picture's Worth of Words

**Top right:** Gathering together as a region to discuss how we can best handle the pandemic and care for the people in our countries of service. **Top Left:** On March 1 Ascension added five new members: two adults through confirmation, and two young daughters who are preparing for baptism. **Bottom:** On March 13-15 Puerto Rico hosted about a dozen partners from the United States for our spring FORO meeting. The team in Puerto Rico has seen a phenomenal response to their increased social media presence in the last few days.



### Prayer Concerns

For Paulette and the family of Rev. Leland Schmidt, who was called home to be with our Lord on March 6,

For all our missionaries who continue to bring comfort to anxious hearts in the midst of this pandemic crisis,

For all of us, that we might bear a faithful Christian witness to our friends, family and communities, remembering that we ought to help and support our neighbors in every physical need.

### Support this Work

You can donate online at [lcms.org/givenow/stonge](https://lcms.org/givenow/stonge). Or you may send a cheque, payable to **The LCMS**, to the addresses below. Include **St-Onge – LAC** in the memo line.

Mission Central  
40718 Highway E16  
Mapleton, IA 51034

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod  
P.O. Box 66861  
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861