



Sharing the Gospel with Millions Through the SENT Initiative



by CHAD FIX

In 1917, 12 laypeople gathered in Milwaukee to support the church in word and deed and formed what is known today as Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM). These 12 founders likely could not have imagined all that God had in mind for the work of their hands or the profound impact their decisions would have around the world for the next 100 years and counting. The beautiful part is not that these 12 laypeople were called to action, but rather they diligently acted when the world and the devil sought to distract.

Since that formation, LHM has been sowing seeds of biblically inspired hope, love, and transformation throughout our communities and around the world, and we know our work is still FAR from complete.

“If God could work through those 12 laypeople to achieve such incredible Gospel impact over the next century, I started to imagine what could be done not with 12, but with tens of thousands of called, equipped, and SENT laypeople, driving forward in faithful service to make the Gospel known to the billions of people around the world who are still waiting to hear it,” says LHM President & CEO Kurt Buchholz.

In 2015, LHM took a bold step to expand Gospel proclamation efforts by launching the **SENT Initiative**. Fueled by a \$750,000 grant from The Lutheran Hour Ministries Foundation, LHM set forth in our calling to go out into the world and grow, nurture, and expand the Body of Christ. As an expansive, holistic, multi-layered plan to answer the pressing challenges and realities of the 21st century, the SENT

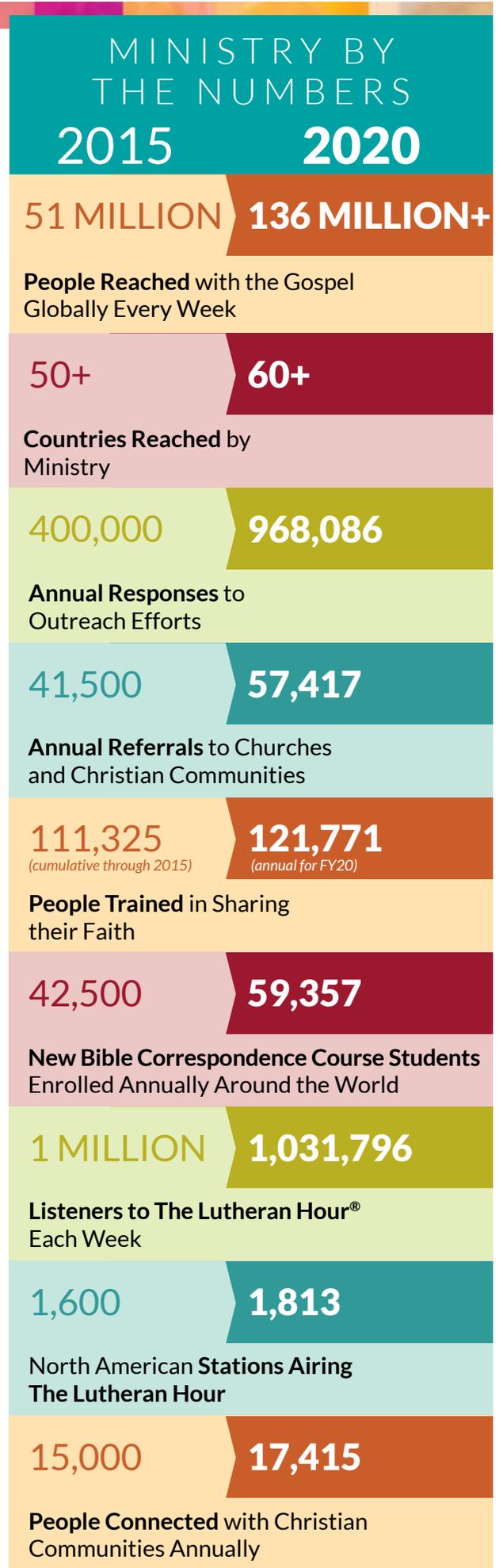
Initiative brought greater vision, clarity, and definition to the work LHM was already doing.

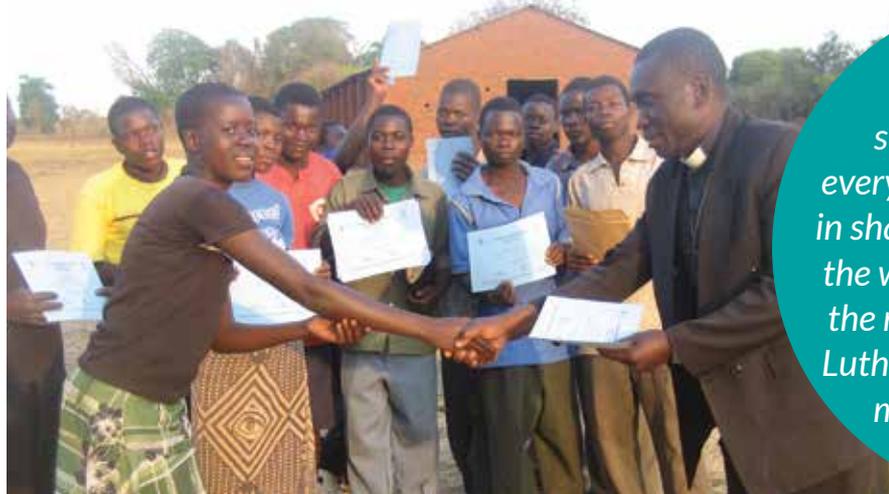
“We said yes to leading the SENT Initiative because we believed it was the answer to some of the hardest challenges around sharing the hope of Christ with those who desperately need it,” says Jim and Vickie Dankenbring, co-chairs of the National Leadership Council for SENT. “As we looked around at the world, we acknowledged that our children and grandchildren live in a world of skepticism. This skepticism causes uncertainty about the relevance of the church and, for many, uncertainty about there even being a God. This is what gave us resolve to accomplish the goals needed for SENT. And we knew we were not alone. We are members of the priesthood of all believers. When we stand together in purpose, God will do amazing things in this world.”

To create the greatest impact for friends, families, churches, communities, and the world, LHM focused ministry efforts through SENT on four key areas:

- **Energizing, Equipping, and Engaging Laity for Outreach**
- **Growing God's Kingdom through Expanded Media Outreach**
- **Bringing the Gospel to the Unreached Around the World**
- **Engaging Communities in the Digital Mission Field**

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Every person contributed to the success of SENT, and every gift made a difference in sharing the Gospel around the world. Each gift allowed the mission and ministry of Lutheran Hour Ministries to make an exponential impact!

By implementing these strategies, LHM established a goal of expanding our weekly Gospel reach from 51 million in 2015 to 108 million by 2020. However, through the grace of God and the dedicated efforts of staff, volunteers, and donors, we quickly surpassed that initial goal! Today, we are reaching more than 136 million people each week with the Good News of the Gospel.

“LHM has been given tools, technology, and partners with which they can work,” says Jack Kidwell, former Int’l LLL president and long-time LHM volunteer leader who served as co-chair of the Upper Midwest Regional Leadership Team for SENT. “By following the Lord’s call, they can increase the impact of their work many times over. These impacts are more than compelling stories; they are eternal changes in people’s hearts and lives through Jesus Christ.”

“There is a dire need today for evangelism, and we are happy to be doing our part to help spread the Gospel through LHM,” says Gene Partlow, co-chair of the Atlantic Coast Regional Leadership Team for SENT. “SENT is such a great reminder that we are all called to participate in the *missio*

Dei—that eternal purpose of God to draw all people to Him. It’s a tremendous blessing to have the support of an organization that helps us share Jesus with others.”

The funding aspect of SENT was quietly launched in 2015 with a goal to raise \$242 million by the year 2020 in support of this bold plan for sharing the Gospel far and wide. It is with gratitude to God, and deep appreciation to the more than 130 volunteer leaders of SENT and the multitude of people who stepped forward to donate to this effort, that The LHM Foundation’s initial \$750,000 investment paved the way for exceeding this funding goal and raising more than \$264 million through this initiative!

“Whenever I get a piece of mail or see something online, there’s always a story attached of real people who have been impacted by the gifts that we are giving,” says Jan Wendorf, an LHM Board member throughout SENT who served on the initiative’s Upper Midwest Regional Leadership Team. “These are lives that have been saved for eternity. I don’t think there is anything

more exciting or worthy of our financial support than an organization whose goal is to tell more people about Jesus.”

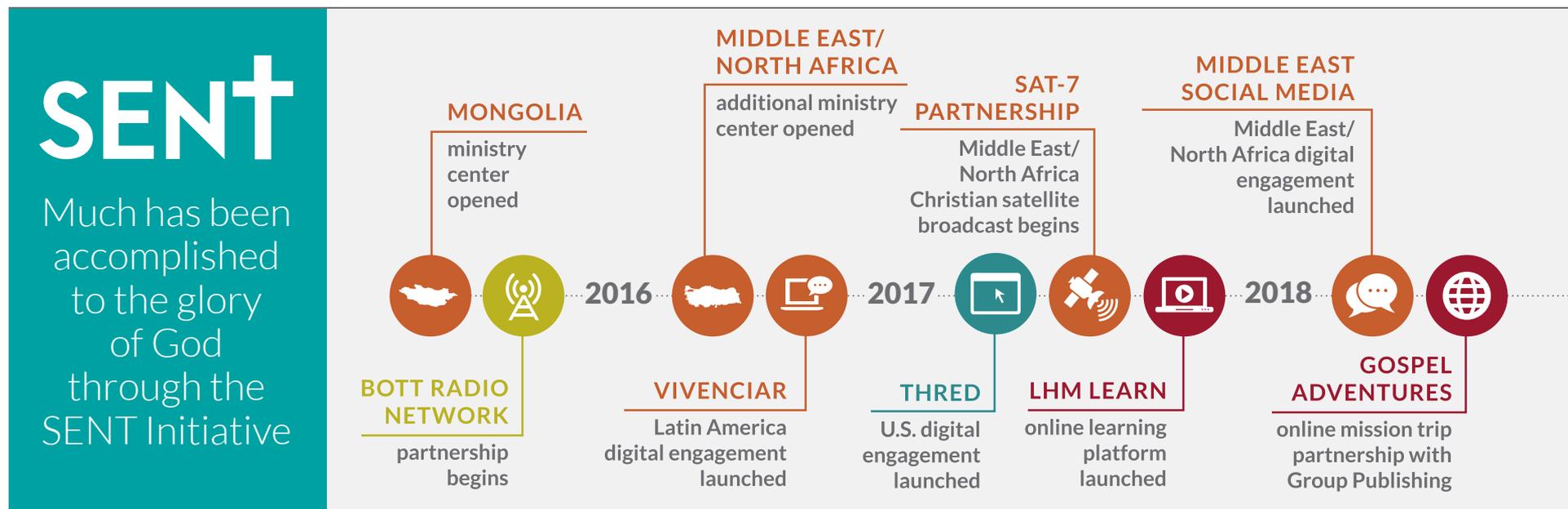
“We realize that no one person or organization can reach the world’s entire unreached population on its own—and that’s why it has been so important to be able to walk side-by-side with people like you to spread the Good News of salvation and eternal life through Jesus,” says Buchholz. “God has shown that He can do more through people like you and me than we could ever imagine—if we only allow ourselves to go where He is sending us.”

We have all been SENT to fulfill God’s mission—the Body of Christ working as one to touch lost and hurting souls. From laypeople who have supported LHM for decades to church workers, and from pastors to the thousands of individuals who have been introduced to LHM’s work through SENT, you are Christ’s followers whose heart and commitment to ministry inspire and motivate everyone at LHM.

As we come to the end of the SENT Initiative and celebrate its success, the world is facing new challenges. Therefore, the need for the hope and love of Jesus Christ is even greater than when SENT began five years ago. LHM is prepared to once again step up NOW because God has truly called us to share these wonderful gifts that He has given us during uncertain times.

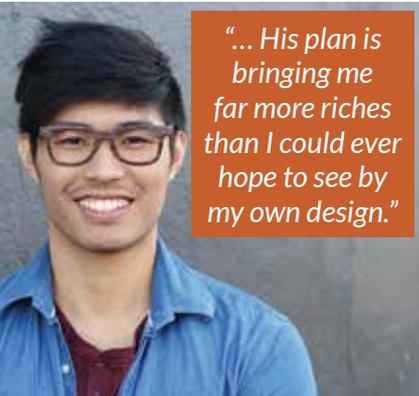
“I hope you are humbled to see how God uses our talents and treasures to make His Gospel known,” says Buchholz. “Thank you again for your prayers, your volunteer service, and your financial support of the SENT Initiative to reach millions of lost and hurting people with Christ’s message of hope. Together, we are SENT!”

We have all been SENT to fulfill God’s mission ...



Touching Lives with the Gospel Through SENT

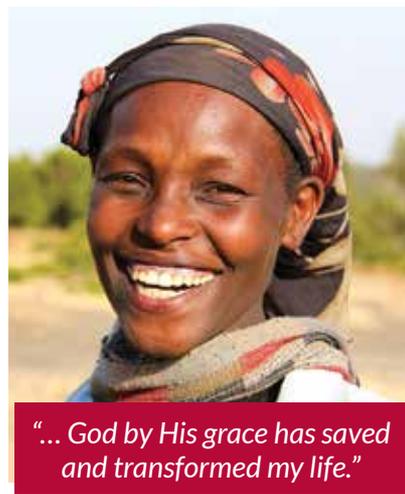
While the large numbers illustrate the depth and enormous impact of what God has accomplished through the **SENT Initiative** around the world, the fruit of our ministry efforts is really about the individual people being reached. Here are just a few examples of individuals whose lives have been changed by the Gospel due to the generous support from people like you.



“... His plan is bringing me far more riches than I could ever hope to see by my own design.”

“I found light in **The Lutheran Hour** sermons while listening at all hours of many sleepless nights,” says John, a college student struggling with loneliness after his girlfriend left him. “Eventually God walked me out of my darkness, and I regained the love of my life and was able to move away from my addiction to pornography. God truly used **The Lutheran Hour** as a tool to change my life, and His plan is bringing me far more riches than I could ever hope to see by my own design.”

Angalia lives in Nairobi, Kenya. Like too many women there, she turned to prostitution to survive. To her dismay, that way of life failed to provide sufficient income. Sadder yet, her choices left her feeling too guilty to step through the doors of a church, where she might find help to turn her life around. “One day, a friend invited me to a fellowship activity led by **LHM-Kenya** ministry staff,” says Angalia. “Next, I participated in **Reaching Rahab**, an LHM program which helps women like me escape prostitution through vocational training. I also completed LHM’s **Bible Correspondence Courses** and turned away from prostitution and toward the Savior. I continue to grow in my faith, and I am happy that God by His grace has saved and transformed my life.”



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Celebrating the Success of SENT

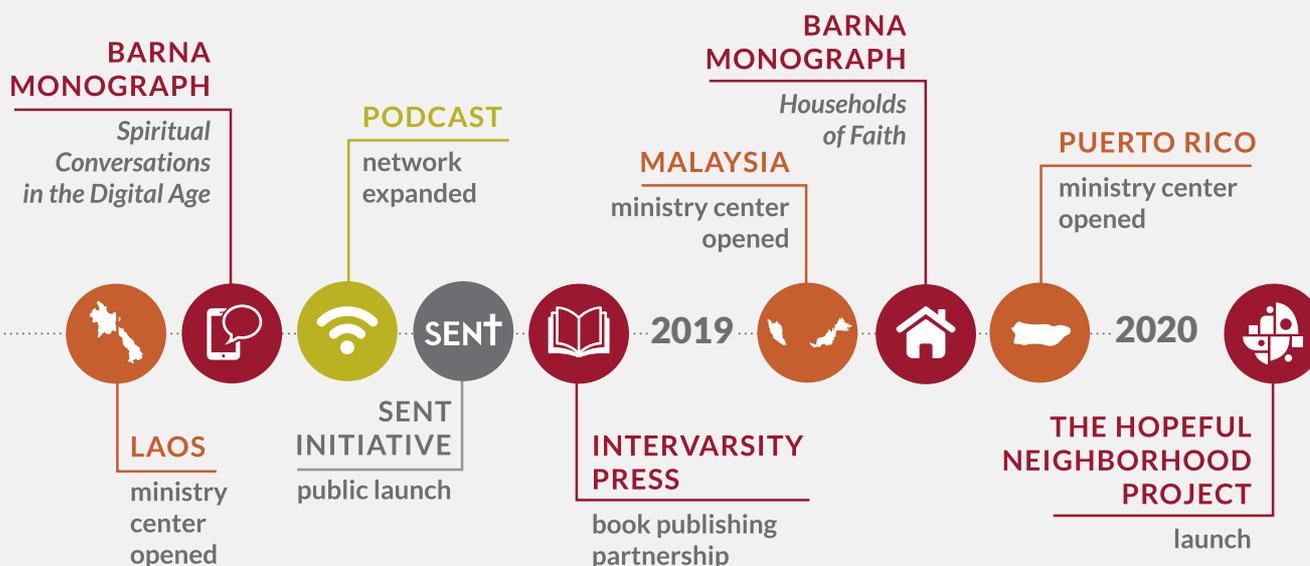
“God has truly done amazing things through the **SENT Initiative**.”

Nearly 300 volunteers, staff, and donors participated in a virtual event on Oct. 18 to celebrate the highlights and successes of the **SENT Initiative**. In addition to celebrating the unveiling of **SENT**’s ministry impact and financial results, attendees heard from an international director whose ministry was launched because of the initiative; listened to Jim and Vickie Dankenbring, co-chairs of the National Leadership Council for **SENT**, provide touching personal reflections from their involvement; and watched an impact video that illustrated the tremendous impact of sharing the Gospel around the world.

The virtual **SENT Celebration** also included a special presentation by LHM President & CEO Kurt Buchholz. He unveiled a piece of artwork, commissioned by the Center for Liturgical Art at

Concordia University, Nebraska, in honor of the **SENT Initiative**. This piece will be displayed at the LHM headquarters as a reminder of all that was accomplished through the **SENT Initiative** to share the Gospel far and wide.

“God has truly done amazing things through the **SENT Initiative**,” said the Dankenbrings. “To name just a few: the weekly Gospel reach nearly tripled; five new mission fields opened; a partnership with SAT-7 launched new Christian satellite TV programming in the Middle East and North Africa; and a distance learning system called LHM Learn equipped believers through courses in five faith-strengthening categories. These accomplishments do not end with **SENT**; their effects are far-reaching and will continue for years to come. In fact, God is just getting started!”



Highlights Include:

- Increased weekly Gospel reach to more than 136 million
- Opened five new mission fields
- Established and conducted a three-year research partnership with Barna Group
- Awarded the Evangelism Resource of the Year by *Outreach Magazine* for the *Spiritual Conversations in the Digital Age* monograph
- Launched several digital engagement platforms around the world
- Aired **The Lutheran Hour** on several new media platforms
- Recruited more than 130 volunteer leaders, across six regions



"I was eager to learn more, so I am now taking LHM's Bible courses and reading my digital Bible ..."

dig deeper into God's Word and follow Christ in our everyday lives. Our members also liked that the courses show how God can use all of us to share the Gospel. Several members have come up to me before worship on Sunday with excitement in their voices saying, 'Pastor, guess what!? I actually had a spiritual conversation with someone.' And

then they would tell me all about the experience. I feel like these courses have equipped and encouraged our members to live out their faith more intentionally and confidently."

A mother of four and a grandmother of two, Gaew lives in Bangkok, Thailand, and spends much of her life caring for others. Oftentimes, her life leaves her feeling drained and discouraged. "One afternoon, I turned



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on my radio and heard *Home for Love*, one of LHM's radio broadcasts in Thailand," says Gaew. "The content variety drew me in, yet the program offered something even more precious: encouragement in my hour of need. I contacted the LHM ministry center to receive a free Bible Correspondence Course that I heard about on the air. The studies ignited such happiness in my heart that I believe the Lord used them to provide His leading in my life. My life is not chaos like before. I know God and trust in Him, so I'm happy now." Ministry staff also introduced Gaew to a local congregation, where she could attend services and receive spiritual nourishment. Today, her faith is growing stronger. She continues her Bible Correspondence Courses and craves to know the Lord better—and desires Him to bring her family members to faith in Jesus, too. †

Chad Fix oversees the corporate communications of LHM.