



# For We Are God's Helpers

2022 Annual Newsletter

*Share your gifts, live your faith, change the world ... and let the world change you.*

## You're Part of Their Bright Future

Our Founder Msgr. Anthony Brouwers valued teachers and highly esteemed their role in society. He understood that without teachers there would be no doctors, priests, accountants, or any other professionals. Thus, from the very first class of 1956, LMH has been sending teachers to help students dream big and be equipped to reach those dreams. It is in that cherished tradition that Nancy Pederson was sent to Honduras as an English Acquisition Teacher to teach students English as a foreign language at Cardinal Rodriguez School in Juticalpa. Her husband Jacob is a school psychologist at the Escuelita Nazareth School for special needs children.

Thanks to your support, students in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades are learning English from an experienced teacher whose specialization is precisely teaching English as a second language. By reaching the 7<sup>th</sup> grade alone, the students at Cardinal Rodriguez School are better off than many of their country men and women since according to the UN Health Development Program Report 2021, the average number of completed years of education of Hondurans aged 25 and older is only 6.53. However, since most of Nancy's students have never encountered English, and the few who have are very uncomfortable practicing it, they have a lot of work ahead of them to improve their chances for a sustainable future. Hence, Nancy's methodology is "to create connections for students in English," she says. "It's not just about teaching vocabulary and phrases, it's about enabling the students to connect the dots in a language they don't know." Working with them, she draws from her experience as an English teacher in a community college where students ranged from high school aged to late adulthood.



**Nancy Pederson is serving as an English Acquisition Teacher at Cardinal Rodriguez School in Juticalpa, Honduras, with her husband, Jacob, and two children.**

The experience is beginning to bear fruit: students' comprehension is growing as is their comfort with the language. Some even approach her and speak English to her on their own accord. The next step is to encourage students to practice with each other which is always hard for teens. Nancy's students might not realize it yet, but a good command of the English language will serve them well in college and university and open up many career opportunities for them. The hope is that with a solid educational foundation,

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they will enter into careers that will allow them to earn more than the current national gross income per capita of barely \$1,912.17 (World Bank, 2021).

Good education and proficiency in English are the keys to a better life. Unlike their mothers and grandmothers, if they take this opportunity seriously, students won't have to "take their laundry to the river to wash it" because they will have the means to live better. Quality education and a good job, in turn, might help them safeguard "the right to remain in one's homeland in dignity, peace, and security" (Vatican's Dicastery



**Nancy Pederson teaches English at Cardinal Rodriguez School in Juticalpa, Honduras.**

for Promoting Integral Human Development).

Through your faithful support of our lay missionary work, you play an important part in opening up numerous possibilities for these students and their families. That is a treasure which moths or rust cannot damage.

# Three Years is Not Enough

Some people who apply to LMH think three years of service sounds like a long time. We let them know that three years allows them to really enter into the community and make a difference. This is true for Karen Hunka who is finishing her fourth year of service in Ghana – three years was not enough for her.

As you might recall, for the first couple of years, Karen served as an accountant at the Diocesan Secretariat. She did such a good job that the Bishop asked her to audit all of the parishes. This very first internal audit in the history of the diocese equipped pastors with tools to better manage their resources to serve the people.

Karen has lived on the campus of St. Anne's Girls Senior High School (SAGISS) and the students enjoy her presence, affectionately calling her Granny Karen. Even though it was not her assignment, Karen was often asked to help out at the school, writing checks, creating a budget, following up on unpaid school fees and creating a payment plan, making sure there was food to feed the girls when supplies were low and much more.

This year there is a new headmistress, Madam Mary Assumpta. Unfortunately, because the previous headmistress was out of the region, there was no formal handing over of the position, and so Karen, who at this same time was formally assigned to be the bursar of SAGISS, stepped in. This was fortuitous for Madam Mary, who was not only new to the school, but new to Damongo and was struggling. They make a good team and have been

able to bring up the quality of the school as well as the attendance which had been affected by the pandemic.

Madam Mary is very grateful for all that Karen has done for her and the school. She is hoping we can send more quality LMHers to work with her and make a difference in the lives of the students. Karen's presence has proven very beneficial to the students and the school which is yet another example of how your generosity with LMH blesses lives. Thank you.



**Karen serves at St. Anne's Girls Senior High School in the Diocese of Damongo, Ghana.**

# From Cleveland to Damongo



**LMH Class of 2022 candidate Mark McGraw points to Ghana, where he will serve for the next three years.**

Your support continues to help us respond to the needs in Ghana. As Josie Cruz completes her first year and Karen Hunka her fourth, Mark McGraw is going to start his mission assignment there at the beginning of the new year. Your generosity ensures that Mark will be well prepared to serve, having completed the four-month residential Formation Program in L.A. Classes in scripture, mission theology, moral theology, communication, ecumenism, Islam, spirituality, Catholic social ethics, self-care in mission, conflict resolution, and cross-cultural issues have given him the tools to respond appropriately to challenges of cross-cultural living and serving which undoubtedly will come.

If you ask Mark when he wants to start, he will say, "yesterday." His eagerness to use his gifts comes from his deep conviction

about service. "I do not believe that the gifts God gave us are meant to stay inside us," he says. "They should be shared with others." Rural Damongo will be quite a change from his native Cleveland, but Mark is looking forward to putting his skills to good use, which fit well with the needs there. He will manage facilities and oversee income-generating projects in the diocese. The income will help the bishop allocate additional resources to care for the sick, educate children, feed the hungry, and help the needy.

Mark's missionary training will conclude at the Commissioning Ceremony at St. John the Evangelist Church in Los Angeles on December 11 at 10 am. You are cordially invited to witness Mark's missionary promise to serve God's people in the Diocese of Damongo for the next three years.

## *An Unexpected Loving Gesture*

Earlier this year, we were saddened by news of the death of our veteran missionary Jim Farrell who served as an LMHer in Papua New Guinea in 1969. As the Ventura County Star reported, "He was honored to accept this position [of a lay missionary]. Along with sharing the Word of God, he also spent his time as a missionary supervising building projects and sharing his knowledge of citrus and vegetable production, and tractor and equipment maintenance with those he encountered. This opportunity became one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences of his life."

After his three years of service in Papua New Guinea, Jim's love of neighbor continued quietly until his passing... and beyond. Unexpectedly, we learned that Jim left us a legacy gift. His last act of generosity was accepted with profound gratitude and humility. It was a fitting final gesture from a kind and loving man who lived a life of service and valued the missionary service of others. May he rest in peace!

You, too, can be like Jim and include Lay Mission-Helpers Association in your legacy plans (our Tax Id #52-2407129). There are many options: making a gift in your will or trust in the form of a specific amount, percentage or remainder of assets, designating LMH as the primary or contingent beneficiary of your IRA account, 401K, life insurance, or your POD (payable on death). Your compassion will touch lives for years to come.

# Your Skills Needed

Each year, the missionary bishops we partner with request the services of Lay Mission-Helpers. We would love to answer all of their requests, but we need committed Catholics who are willing to share their skills and live their faith in another land for a few years in order to do this. Have you or someone you know been considering global mission service? Here are the current needs:

- The Diocese of Damongo in Ghana would like to have teachers to serve at St. Anne's Girls Senior High School. These teachers would help provide quality education to young women who will be better equipped to make a difference in their family and community after they graduate.
- The Diocese of Ho, also in Ghana, has a specialized school for students in grades 4-8. Their goal is to better prepare students for secondary school. An English or math teacher as well as someone with school administration background is on their list of needs.
- Degreed medical personal such as registered nurses, physical and occupational therapists, as well as people with administration or accounting backgrounds is what the Diocese of Kabale, Uganda, is most interested in. The needs are not limited to these and after Covid, are more urgent than ever.

Interested persons can complete a preliminary application on our website to start the application process. We have two discernment weekends scheduled in February and April 2023 for people who have completed the application process.

Not sure if mission life is for you? LMH will host a Virtual Information Day on January 18<sup>th</sup>. Contact Janice England at [program@laymissionhelpers.org](mailto:program@laymissionhelpers.org) for more information.



**Students at St. Anne's Girls Senior High School want you to join them in Ghana (top, bottom), as do students from the Diocese of Ho (middle).**