

LSS Sermon Starter Story

September 13, 2026

You are welcome to use the following “sermon starter” content in your own sermon. Feel free to use content verbatim or edit as you see fit to adapt to your own voice and context.

Readings

- Genesis 50:15-21
- Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13
- Romans 14:1-12 14
- Matthew 18:21-35

Today’s scripture readings testify to God’s amazing grace. Through God’s amazing grace, we have been set free to choose forgiveness. When Jesus tells Peter to forgive seventy-seven times—or in some translations: seventy times seven times—the point is this: **don’t bother keeping track**. Don’t try to tally up how much wrong someone has done. It’s not your job to decide who is worthy of grace.

Lutherans recognize that by God’s grace each person is simultaneously both sinner and saint. And so, when we as Lutherans engage in social service ministry, that recognition sets us free from seeking to judge who is and is not worthy of assistance. Because we live in God’s amazing grace, because we are centered on resurrection hope, we are free to focus on a different question: When all else has failed, even if everyone else has given up hope, what can we do to help this sister or brother find healing?

The ministry we know today as Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan took root in 1882 when a Lutheran pastor in a small community in central Wisconsin established an orphanage. Pastor Homme’s home was a refuge for young people with nowhere else to go. More than 140 years later, in that same small town of Wittenberg, Wisconsin, Lutheran Social Services continues to care for children in need.

The circumstances that bring children to LSS have changed a lot since the late 1800s. Today, most of the boys who arrive at Homme Youth and Family

Programs are survivors of abuse and trauma. Tragically, many have also perpetrated violence against others. Often, youth come to live at Homme because a court has ordered them to do so, and it's their last chance at avoiding incarceration.

When all else has failed, Lutheran Social Services is there to offer that chance.

The boys live on the campus, attend school, and receive individual and group therapy, homework help, and life skills support. It's a chance to break free from cycles of violence and to learn a new way of life.

I want to share a testimony with you today from Ken, the shop teacher at the Homme school. He's seen how breakthroughs happen with these boys in the woodworking, welding, and automotive shops, as they start to imagine a future where they can earn a living with these skills.

Ken has done this job for 30 years. It's a remarkable dedication to this ministry, and here's what Ken will tell you about what motivates him to do it: **"No one loves these boys more than the Lord does, and my work here is in response to all that He has done for me."**

From time to time, Ken will hear from students after they graduate from the Homme program.

Ken says he will never forget the Saturday he and his own sons decided to go to the local YMCA to play a game of basketball. It was crowded there that day. From the next court over, a tall blonde man noticed Ken's interactions with his boys and walked over to tell Ken how impressed he was with his sons' sportsmanship on the court. He then asked Ken, **"You work at Homme, right?"** Ken nodded, curiously wondering if he knew this man.

"You used to be my shop teacher. We built a shelf together to hold paddles for the canoes." That project was a landmark in Ken's memory as he had only taught that project once, and he instantly remembered the face of a small blonde boy he had in class a little over a decade before. The memories came flooding back, "Oh yes, I remember you. You were a pistol!"

The former student shared that he had married, had two children of his own, and that he was doing well. Then he apologized, “I treated you horribly. But when I look back, **I’m just so thankful that you didn’t give up on me.**”

Your support for Lutheran Social Services helps people in really tough situations to find glimmers of hope. Your support for LSS shares the good news that our neighbors in need are not alone. To paraphrase Ken, the shop teacher: **No one loves these neighbors more than the Lord does. Our work through LSS is in response to all that God has done.** God’s amazing grace is given as a gift, given for you, given for me, given for all the world.