

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 8, 2019

Stacy Hoeft is LEA's 2019 *Christus Magister*

Stacy Hoeft was selected by LEA's board of directors to receive LEA's top honor, the *Christus Magister* Award. Since 1965, this most prestigious Lutheran Education Association award has been presented to Lutheran educators who have made significant contributions to Lutheran education.

Stacy is president/CEO of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, a national LCMS RSO serving thousands of special education students in more than 60 schools across the United States. She previously served Lutheran education as a principal, early childhood director, teacher, and athletic director. Previous honors and recognitions include Van Lunen Fellow, SLED Mentor, LCMS Michigan District Principal of the Year, and keynote speaker on the topics of documentation and a U.S. Supreme Court case in protection of the ministerial exception.

Stacy earned a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from Concordia University Wisconsin. She is currently working on a Master's Degree in Special Education at Madonna University.

When asked about her greatest joys in ministry, Stacy said, "It's difficult to narrow down all my joys because I am truly blessed by joys EVERY SINGLE DAY! So often, the special education students I serve are forced to make a decision between receiving the special education services they need and the Christian education they so desire. Being able to see the relief on the faces of students and their parents that through our services they are able to have BOTH brings me great joy."

As president/CEO of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Stacy faces many challenges every day. She says, "My greatest challenge in my current ministry is finding the funding to make special education resources available to as many Lutheran students and schools as possible."

Stacy's nominator said, "Perhaps Stacy's greatest impact for Lutheran schools and educators was her role in the US Supreme Court case "Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission." In this landmark case, Stacy successfully worked with legal counsel to defend the ministerial exception that allows our church and schools to call workers without the interference of the federal government. Stacy dedicated eight years of her life to this legal effort, which ultimately led to the church's victory with a unanimous 9-0 decision in January of 2012. By answering, 'Here am I, send me,' Stacy has been given the opportunity to impact Lutheran education at the local, regional, and national levels."

In support of Stacy's nomination, one colleague said, "She's not only a faithful steward of her administrative responsibilities, but she is the perfect face of LSEM on the front lines. She is a gifted story-teller in a world that resonates with narrative leadership. It's a daunting task to breathe new life into a 145-year-old ministry, but Stacy has done just that. Her capacity to bring the joys and challenges of special education to a noisy world has set her apart."

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