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LCMS Black Ministry
Summer • 2011

Timeline

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN GOD'S DESIGN IN WITNESS, MERCY AND MULTIPLYING MISSIONS FOR CHRIST.

CHRIST'S *care in crisis*

"For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." • **MATT. 5:45 b,c**

By **Rev. Quentin G. Poulson**,
LCMS Black Ministry
Director of Mission Networking



Rev. Perry McCullum is a down- to-earth guy, straight-talking, hands-on and committed to his ministry. He is the pastor of Pilgrim-Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, a merger ministry in Birmingham, Ala., and he has served unofficially as a trusted vacancy pastor simultaneously for two other congregations in the area. Rev. McCullum's duties were already overextended before a tornado struck the state for a 40-mile stretch to cause historic havoc to the cities and towns in its way. Out of state briefly during the storm, he returned home to see devastation along the way and later to learn of the impact to those whom he served faithfully and the surrounding communities.

Picking up pieces of wood, glass, brick and rubber from yards, helping those trying

to salvage whatever mementos they could find, Perry and volunteers have other more pressing work, which is the restoring of wounded souls with healing and hope in the words and saving work of Jesus Christ, ever present, though often invisible. God tells us that He can be "our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling" (Ps. 46:1-3).

Mounting Gloom and Doom

We all watched in horror as the tornados swept across the midwestern states and the southern terrain of Alabama and Mississippi, North Carolina and Virginia; and later on, Massachusetts, leaving many miles of wreckage and carnage. Breaking hearts too. We haven't forgotten a year ago the British Petroleum—Deep Water

Horizon oil well explosion that left a massive oil spill in the Gulf Coast, which has affected the quality of life and economy of the entire region. The long-term harm to the environment—the delicate wetlands, its fish and water fowl—of what is considered to be among the most precious ecosystems in the world is unknown. Clean-up will go on for years at great expense and distress to those hoping for recovery.

Lord, where are you?

Hundreds of displaced people are holed up in shelters and motels waiting for permission to return to their flood-drenched homes, abandoned before the swollen Mississippi River crested to overtake their farm, town or city on its downward journey into the lower river to the Gulf Coast. A 5 p.m. news camera spans a scene of volunteers rushing to fill sandbags hoping to hold back rising waters. Elsewhere, flood-surged rooftops cradle the

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Serving **CHRIST** *in community*

By Christine Weerts,
*Director of Development and
Communications, Concordia College, Selma*

After tornadoes roared through Alabama in late April, students from Concordia College Selma's Spiritual Life team and the Army ROTC sprang into action.

A special collection was held on campus, including 2,000 pounds of bottled water. Care packages were also prepared.

Because two Concordia students are from Tuscaloosa, one of the hardest hit areas, students felt deeply moved to help those affected by the deadly, destructive storms. The Tuscaloosa students' grandfather lost his house and two cousins died.

"It's just mindboggling to see this happen to people you know and talk to every day. I'm overwhelmed," said Lutheran education student Russell Elser. The team made three trips to

damaged areas to deliver needed items.

Concordia's Army ROTC cadets spent a day in Tuscaloosa, delivering food and water to victims, many of whom are homeless following the tornadoes.

The students' quick response to the storm victims has been inspiring, bringing the school's mission to life serving neighbors in need.



Spiritual Life President Demario Davis helps unload 2,000 pounds of bottled water. Photo by Joshua Stewart



ROTC students deliver water and food in Tuscaloosa.

The Stages of Diversity—Part III

By Rev. Russell Belisle,
Chaplain, Methodist Hospital,
Germantown, Tenn.



(This is part 3 of a series called “Race: The Struggle Within.”)

Dear Christian Family,

In my last installment of *The Struggle Within* series, I wrote of the era of good feeling, *kumbyah*. In that writing, I mentioned that relationships in diverse congregations are often surface level and we don't feel free to discuss our true feelings of race and diversity for fear of damaging the congregational culture.

From this *kumbyah* stage we move forward to what I have termed as the challenge stage. This begins when a person can no longer be silent about their true feelings. In Jeremiah 20:9, the prophet says the word of God is like fire in his heart and fire in his bones. He cannot keep the Word of God in; it has to come out. Isn't that what our true feelings are like? They are in our heart and they have to come out. Sooner or later, someone is going to express their true feelings and that is going to challenge this *kumbyah* of good feeling.

It is during this challenge stage that people begin to be genuine with themselves and each other. When I served diverse congregations, this is the time when members admitted to me both true feelings and discomfort. For example, a Euro-American member may say they find it difficult to discipline an African-American employee for poor work performance or tardiness. This person did not want to be accused of being a racist. He told me that it was easier to let it go then to face the issue. It bothered him when African-Americans would show up 15 to 20 minutes late for service. He wants to say something, but it may come

off as racist. Then again, African-American church members have voiced to me, and each other, how they feel that the Euro-American members of the congregation are too relaxed in raising their children. They don't like the way the children call older adults by their first names, speak back to adults or are allowed to play in the chancel area of the church. These behaviors are seen as disrespectful in the eyes of many African-Americans. The challenge is for church members to be able to discuss their genuine feelings concerning diversity, race and culture.

The challenge is often handled poorly. Many of us are not in the habit of sharing true feelings or being genuine. Many of



us are not in the habit of dealing with the true feelings of another. Admitting our true feelings can scare us. I may not be comfortable with my own feelings about diversity, and it may be difficult for me to process the feelings of others.

Face it, we may like the superficial relationships. We may like things the way they are, keeping our true feeling to ourselves and putting up with the attitudes and behaviors of others that rub us the wrong way. When someone finally voices their true feelings, there is discomfort. The glass house in which we live is fractured and, like Adam and Eve after eating the forbidden fruit, our eyes are open to

how each other really feels. The feelings are voiced and now we have to deal with them. As human beings, we do not grow and mature in comfort. Someone, or something, has to push us. This will produce a challenge.

The church has a different feel when people begin to voice true feelings. People may begin to be a little less friendly toward one another. The pews on Sunday morning may have us sitting on one side and them on the other. As time goes on, more dissatisfaction with the church music, leadership and social climate are voiced. During the *kumbyah* stage, coming to church was a joy, but now it has become a hardship. With the discomfort, the exit

light comes on and members begin to think of reasons to exit the congregation and find a place where they are comfortable again. A few members may seek another congregation where diversity is not a challenge to them.

During this stage, what is really challenged are our old relationships. We experience challenges to what was taught to us by our parents, relatives

and people we trust. We ask ourselves if we really believe that our faith is big enough to work through this, or are we only faithful in comfort. The challenge is to our identity, because a relationship with someone who is different from me will change me. Things will not be the way they used to be. Yes, this is a true struggle within.

The diversity challenges a congregation faces can be difficult, and uncomfortable. Feelings will get hurt and relationships will be tested. Some will leave the congregation. Those who stay and do the work will enter into the third stage, the

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The Specific Ministry Pastor

By Rev. Larry Frazier,
Pastor, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Chicago
Vice President, Northern Illinois District

The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is an asset to our church in these times of declining membership and financially strapped congregations.

Many vacant congregations currently are served by neighboring pastors that preach and serve Sacraments on Sundays, teach Bible classes and officiate at weddings and funerals. These congregations often are small, but somewhat viable. Unfortunately, their hopes of being able to call a pastor are practically nonexistent. There are two reasons for that—they don't have enough money and there are not many pastors available for call.

There was not much hope for these congregations to enjoy the independence of having their own pastor, and in some cases move toward free-standing status—until now. The SMP program affords a congregation the opportunity to call upon the talent it has within. Men with the desire and aptitude for the pastoral ministry can, with the support of their congregation, prepare to become the pastor of that congregation.

The four-year SMP program, under the supervision of our two seminaries, affords men the opportunity to obtain training and ordination while still serving in their home congregations. Acknowledging that the pastoral call originates with God, we agree with Paul as he writes, “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” (1 Tim. 3:1).

“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.”

(1 TIM. 3:1)

Pastoral training of any description requires



From the Specific Ministry Program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from left, Rev. Robert Briggs (mentor), and students Johnathan Lewis and Johnny Greer.

Photo@Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

that the Holy Spirit engender a love for God's people in the heart of the student. We keep in mind that God's love for the church overshadows everything: “And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?” (Rom. 10:14-15).

The SMP program may not be accepted by all segments of the LCMS, but C.F.W. Walther offered the following opinion on congregational autonomy during the 11th synodical convention in 1863:

“We dare never give them (congregations) occasion to think: ‘If you want to get a pastor, you'll have to support the president...’ No, a congregation should and must know that there is no need to fear that we will touch its right; it must

decide whom to call, and we have nothing to say about that.

We merely say: ‘If you want to act with foresight, wisdom, and humility in dealing with such a sacred matter, then get advice from the best advisors—and as a general rule those are the district presidents. But we do not insist that you must go to the president.’”

Concerning preaching and the pastoral office, C.F.W. Walther says, “What is the preacher to effect by his preaching? Remember: He must alarm the secure sinners and arouse them from their sleep of sin; then he must bring the terrified to faith; then he must lead the faithful to certainty with regard to their state of grace and their salvation; those made certain he must then bring to sanctification; and he must strengthen the sanctified in their holy and blessed estate and preserve them in it until the end. What a task!”

The SMP program is a ray of hope and opportunity for a congregation to use the gift of leadership which God has placed within it.



God's Celebration—Mission Restart

By Rev. Bryan Reeves,
Pastor, Celebration Lutheran Ministries, Park Forest, Ill.

The impact of God's hand on Celebration Lutheran Ministries is hard to contain to just one family or person. This journey has provided the opportunity for us to witness our youth program transform the lives of young people.

Over the summer (of 2010), God brought to our doors a young lady who was often known for (and even witnessed) stealing goods from the program. As a ministry, we did not take this as an opportunity to reprimand her, but rather embrace it as a teachable moment, or as we like to say here at Celebration, "a time to love on" this child. With the love and caring for the overall well-being of this young lady, she has experienced the love of Christ and has now become a shining star. She was one of our teen volunteers for our donor events, she has increased her attendance in our worship journey and is now one of our strongest promoters for the C4underground (30-hour famine campaign to fight against hunger.)

We would be remiss if we did not share with you the family who walked in off the street, loaded on everything imaginable, after just having a fight. This family is now taking advantage of all the community connections that Celebration offers through the course of a week, beginning with worship journey on Sundays. The mother is regularly attending Alcoholics Anonymous and regularly uses the work out equipment donated by Curves. The children are actively involved in C4underground, mom is in choir, daughter is learning from our praise team leader how to play guitar and the son is learning how to play the drums.



While all of this is nice, the joy is we began instruction on Holy Baptism for the son. The father has since moved out to benefit the health of the family; however, he did attend our worship journey this past Sunday. God has not revealed the full story of this family's journey, but it is a great feeling to be able to minister to a family.

Chicago church chosen for nutrition program

By Teresa Rai Knight,
Public relations liason,
St. Philip Evangelical Lutheran Church, Chicago

St. Philip Evangelical Lutheran Church, Chicago, was selected as a site for the University of Illinois-Extension College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) on April 25. Six parishioners completed the six-lesson

course and were awarded the Certificate of Recognition for Successful Completion of the Extension EFNEP Building Healthy Lifestyles curriculum.

St. Philip will host a summer cooking/nutrition class, to be conducted by the University of Illinois Extension, for our youth, targeting males 3-18 years old. Our Near-Peer Mentoring and Intergenerational Mentoring members will participate. Four

45-minute classes will cover the following topics: My pyramid, breakfast, hand washing and snacks! Instructional "pods" will include students ages 3-5, 6-8, 9-11, 12-15 and 16-18 years. (Anyone who thinks this won't be a "stitch" hasn't ever invited kids in the kitchen.) The maximum class size is 20. The instructor doesn't seem to be concerned and it was she who designated the age ranges. Stay tuned!

New Orleans congregation celebrates new home

By Rev. Jerome N. Terry,
Pastor, Bethel Lutheran Church, New Orleans

More than five years ago, Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans, and the Ninth Ward was the hardest hit part of our city. The Ninth Ward was the home of Bethel Lutheran Church for more than 40 years. Our church was destroyed by the flood waters of this disaster, and we did not have flood insurance to cover our loss. Our insurance company was gracious enough to compensate Bethel 20 percent of what we had the building covered, which amounted to \$100,000.

Since Katrina, the members of Bethel have worshipped in various locations in and around the city of New Orleans. We were blessed to worship in one location for three years. This allowed us the opportunity to consider rebuilding at our original location or search for a new church home site. We then found that original site was located on the periphery of a contaminated landfill

where 149 toxic chemicals were found in the soil, 49 of which were carcinogens. We were able to acquire last July a site where a congregation was disbanding. After reaching an agreement for the purchase of the site, we closed on Nov. 23. What a blessing it is to have a permanent church home!

Since all of this has happened, God has continued to bless our mission and ministry to His people in the city. Since July, we have baptized eight children, and received 14 people into membership, including two families with children. We continue to reach out to our new neighbors and to those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We are in a revival mode, and God has blessed us by blending into Bethel members from two other Katrina-affected congregations, which have not been resurrected. So essentially, we are three congregations molded into one.

Our work is only beginning in and around our new location at 4127 Franklin Avenue,



The congregation of Bethel Lutheran Church purchased the property previously owned by St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans.

New Orleans, LA 70122-6007. There is much work needed on the facility because it was built more than 60 years ago. Plumbing and electricity need to be brought up to code since we are not grandfathered in. We have new challenges in which we need your prayers and support. We are essentially a new mission congregation. We need divine inspiration and guidance from the Holy Spirit so we can fulfill what Christ has commanded us to do: "Go into All the World" (Mark 16:9).

Exciting time to be in missions in New Jersey

By Rev. James Buckman,
Urban mission strategist, LCMS New Jersey District

It is becoming clearer that the local church must be the vessel for sharing the Gospel. Local churches are realizing in turn that sharing the Gospel is more than a building plan and big tent gimmicks.

Seventy percent of Christians do not want to experience God in a church building. Yet it has nothing to do with time constraints because 75 percent of these Christians who did not go to a church building last week watched at least two hours of religious television this same week.

"Churches Without Walls" is about understanding that we must go to them. And when the Holy Spirit introduces us to those looking for Christian community, we humbly and joyfully join them there, in their upper room or by the well in the

middle of a hot afternoon.

At our conference this year, we had fantastic speakers sharing their very best in how we can go to where people are at. Rev. Jon Beyer did an amazing job of sharing his church's story about partnering with the public school system, the YMCA and many others. Rev. Quentin Poulson blessed us with real examples of LCMS ministries which are going to the lost in urban centers. Our attendees were blessed to have a deep bench of excellent speakers to choose from.

We had 110 paid attendees this year, up from 85 last year. It is exciting to see the mission movement growing here. Two years ago I approached President William Klettke about having a "jam session," where we encouraged all the churches with contemporary worship to come together for a time of sharing, encouraging and worship. He approved and the NJ Jam was born.

Last year, we had 165 paid attendees; we are expecting 200 this year (Nov 5th). Our theme for the 2011 event is "Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus." By God's grace, this has grown beyond New Jersey. Last year we had five districts officially promote the NJ Jam.

On June 11, we will have our first short-term mission team for 2011 on site in North Bergen. It is coming from Lansing, Ill., to help us plant a "Church Without Walls." By God's grace and the gathering of the Holy Spirit, we will plant a house church this summer.

This fall, we will start our first "House Church Planters Training Track" through the New Jersey District's Leaders and Learners. Two pastors from out of state sent emails asking if they could enroll leaders from within their membership. To learn more, visit www.njdistrict.org/urban-immigrant-ministry.

Chicago church reaches out with center

By Rev. Stéphane Kalonji,
Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Chicago

The Dr. William H. Griffin Community Center, Inc. was created in 2009 as an auxiliary organization of Zion Lutheran Church, Chicago. The center was named in honor of Dr. William H. Griffin, who served the congregation for nearly a decade and was instrumental in leading it to its restart with a full-time pastor. Dr. Griffin also served both in parishes and in specialized ministries within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for more than 50 years. The community center is incorporated in the State of Illinois.

Since its creation, the center, has provided youth summer jobs in partnership with the city's Youth Ready Chicago program, and youth summer meal programs in partnership with the city's Department of Family and Support Services. Using part of Zion's former elementary school, the center is also open for academic tutoring, abstinence education, computer lab, food pantry,



Stage acting at the Dr. William H. Griffin Community Center, Inc.

clothing bank and much more. Grants from the Northern Illinois District, LCMS World Relief and Human Care and Black Ministry Services along with an ongoing collaborative support from Lutheran Church Charities made it possible for Zion to equip and launch its community center. The U.S. Department of Borders and Customs and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services have also provided support with a donation of more than 30 computers.

While Rev. Stéphane Kalonji, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, serves as the community center's executive director, the center has

recently welcomed new leaders:

- Dr. Vernita Boyd, academic tutoring program director (Boyd is a math and science professor at Chicago State University).
- Mary J. Lovett, Food Pantry director.
- Evelyn Howard, Abstinence and Stage Acting program director.
- Eva Campbell-Bell, Winter Coats and Prom Dresses program director.

The Dr. William H. Griffin Community Center continues to grow as it continually explores new programs to offer in response to the needs of the community. This center is Zion Lutheran Church's springboard for gospel outreach.

For more information, contact Rev. Stéphane Kalonji; Dr. William H. Griffin Community Center, Inc.; 9905 S. Winston Ave.; Chicago, IL 60643. Or call (773)629-6768; fax (773)233-9868; email DrGriffinCenter@aol.com.

Discipleship training in St. Louis

By Rev. Quentin G. Poulson,
Black Ministry Director of Mission Networking

St. Louis Lutheran congregations in Black Ministry gathered once again on April 30 to strengthen their united purpose in Christ's mission. It was the second assembly since agreeing to form a learning community of pastors, teachers and lay leaders, committed to revitalizing the St. Louis congregations after decades of decline in growth and missional engagement.

The first gathering focused on the Holy Spirit, His qualities and work in the life of the Church. This time, the attendees were to study principles of discipleship. Why discipleship? The decision was made by consensus of the leaders, based upon the determination to entrust the Holy Spirit speaking through God's Word. Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my

disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31b).

In Christ we have a uniquely, mutually beneficial relationship He describes in saying, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). What people learned from the gathering on discipleship was that an active connection with Jesus Christ is the key to unlocking the door to freedom, stronger faith and richer fruitfulness. Under the Holy Spirit, the baptized believer remains an active learner and follower, and grows to be Christ-like in character and conduct. A disciple of Christ has an open mind and heart for learning. A disciple is a believer, is a follower and an active witness to God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. Leaders in the participating St. Louis congregations praise and honor



Christ for the camaraderie. They recognize the work that is needed in the ongoing transformation process. Realistically speaking, this is just the beginning of revitalization. Change may not be visible to the average eye, and not yet quantifiable in numbers of membership participation for quite a while. However, as one pastor said: "We are counting on the Lord to keep His Word. What greater assurance is there?" Well put.

A Tale of Two Unitys

By Rev. Reholma McCants, *Pastor,
Unity Community Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh*

The story of the two Unitys is unique and a long-time coming, but I believe that now is the time to reflect and reveal their beauty.

It began in 1973 when I was teaching at Central City Lutheran School in St. Louis. Lutheran teachers had to attend the church associated with the school, which created a problem for me because all the Lutheran churches in St. Louis were “white.” The mood at that time among most African-Americans was one of black pride because we felt that we had achieved so much as a people. So I broke the rule and attended St. John Lutheran Church in East St. Louis, Ill., where my friend, Rev. Kermit Ratcliff, was pastor.

Because the surrounding neighborhood was slowly changing, St. John’s membership growth began to plateau while another Lutheran church nearby saw its membership come to a stand-still. Rev. Ratcliff met with Rev. Dan Schmalch of Trinity Lutheran Church and their congregations to explore the possibilities of their respective situations. Consequently, they decided in favor of a merger, elected to maintain both pastor and changed the church name to Unity.

At Unity, the members greeted you with a friendly and warm welcome that was genuinely heartfelt and immediately made a stranger feel at home. I remember they formed a bowling league in which a lot of the members participated. They met every Friday night and seemed to really look forward to a weekly outing of fun. I can truthfully say they conducted themselves like brothers and sisters in Christ without the bickering, quarreling and backbiting that are synonymous with most churches today.

Oh, did I mention that St. John’s was an all-black church and Trinity was an all-white church? When they came together as one, this difference paled against the backdrop of Christ’s peace and love. When I glimpsed the peace and tranquility the members shared with each other, I prayed to the Lord, that if He would allow me to start a mission, I would name it Unity.

The Lord answered my prayers and enabled me to start a mission in Pittsburgh and I did indeed, name it Unity. Unity-Pittsburgh has a lot in common with Unity-East St. Louis. In 1973-74, Unity-East St. Louis had no school. Now it has a thriving school. Unity-Pittsburgh, located in the Homewood-Brushton section of the city, has ministered to “at-risk” inner-city children for the past 24 years and is going strong. We are now working towards opening a second site in Clairton, a small city near Pittsburgh, to be named Unity III.

I challenge all of our urban churches to do the same and I raise the question to them: Where will Unity IV be?

Thank God for Unity-East St. Louis; there wouldn’t have been a Unity in Pittsburgh without it.



God's restoration in urban areas

Building Hope in the City held an Urban Ministry Summit June 2-4 at Redeemer, Lutheran Church in Hyattsville, Md. Building Hope in the City is the brainchild of Rev. Jeff Johnson, executive director, who operates the urban mission center in Cleveland and its affiliate in Cincinnati. It was designed to help dwindling urban congregations to join forces in order to rekindle an active engagement in Gospel mission.

The struggling remnant faithfully conducts Word and Sacrament ministry. Still, they have experienced conflict over mission priorities, fearing change to the point of inaction. Building Hope in the City works toward revitalization by bringing leaders together into ongoing learning communities for mission collaboration that touches new lives with Jesus. The agency attracts likeminded Lutheran Christians to replicate missions that bring forth “vibrant city neighborhoods ... renewed and new congregations ... passionate followers of Jesus ... it's all possible. Come and see!” (www.buildinghopeinthecity.org).

The Urban Ministry summit acknowledged the obvious economic, health and safety concerns of urban life and the need for authentic Lutheran teaching. But there is also the reality of the post-church era, which includes a prevailing culture that sees church life as foreign, Christians as the enemy, the practice of any faith life more individualistic than institutional and causes a blurring of the lines between the religious and the secular worlds. Perceptions about class and race come into play too. The summit brought a Christ light “building hope” to the dread of having to face reality.

At the summit's opening banquet, the keynote speaker, president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, Dr. John Nunes, reminded us of the power of words and their hidden meanings, even in the upsurge of popular trends. “Urban” is not just about concrete and steel or commerce.



Dr. John Nunes speaks at the 2011 Urban Ministry Summit ... “Christ is changing dope dealers into hope dealers.”

Urban is a euphemism for non-white people, which can be code for stay away, move out, disdain, ignore or disenfranchise economically, socially, and politically. The code is applied in so-called “Christian” circles. This includes traditional European denominations like the ELCA, LCMS, and the Mormons—the English-speaking middle to upper class denominations in the United States. The western Christian church of today is in steady decline, disengaged from uncomfortable realities, and most unlike its African counterpart (uncompromising in doctrine, wholistic, and exploding in growth). The Africans, says Dr. Nunes, are “employing their gifts in doing the work of the Lord. They are full and flourishing.”

The LCMS is just discovering that the urban areas in the United States are where God is leading the people and awakening the decaying congregations. The flight away from the cities in the 60s, 70s and 80s was not authorized by the voice of God. New people groups of all types are flocking to urban areas today. Summit speakers echoed sensitivity to these and other realities.

The speaker list included Rev. Johnson, Rev. Jonathan Reitz, CEO of CoachNet Global, which coaches and listens to mission leaders to help them create environments that accomplish God's will, and Rev. Mark Junkins, who has built a healthy and sustainable LCMS multi-

ethnic church planting movement in Houston. Southeastern District President Jon Diefenthaler's devotion on Jonah inspired us to love the lost sinner waiting to hear the Gospel, as we live and serve under God's promises to make us Christ's change agents. The testimonies of Rev. Eric tLinthicum, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Joseph Lavala and Juanita Maldonado rejoiced in the triumph of God's restoration from personal brokenness.

Urban Ministry embodies the emerging church that calls us and informs us to be wholistic in true worship as Christ taught, caring for the body, mind, social wellbeing and soul; connecting doctrine and the authentic faith in Christ which must do good works. WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER! Praise God, “the emerging church doesn't do boxes with titles and labels,” says Dr. Nunes. It sees Jesus, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

2012 FAMILY CONVOCATION

Save the date

The LCMS Southeastern District Coalition of Lutherans in Black Ministry is sponsoring, managing and responsible for the Black Ministry Family Convocation, to be held July 11-15, 2012, on the campus of North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, N.C. The university is on the site of the former Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary.

Under the theme “Sing to the Lord a New Song,” we will celebrate the “new” Black Ministry. We will also honor Immanuel's history. Registration and other information will be shared at a later date.

For more information, contact Rev. James McDaniels, revjmcDaniels@aol.com or 336-402-4150.

Ethnic Immigrant ministries

Hispanics celebrate Easter at complex

“For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me” (Matt. 25:35-36).

On Holy Saturday, a New Life Celebration was held at the Fairfax County Family Resource Center on Commerce Street in Springfield, Va., with many low-income Hispanic families and day laborers coming from the 520-unit apartment complex.

Hispanic mission developer Rev. Pedro Lopez led a prayer and praise group for the nearly 100 gathered for this community celebration of Christ’s resurrection.

Children enjoyed sitting in the neighborhood fire truck and patrol car before eating lunch and participating in an Easter egg hunt. Dozens received groceries from the Capital Area food bank. Spanish Bibles, Portals of Prayer and American Bible Society brochures also were provided.

The event was sponsored by the covenant congregations of Hispanic Mission Development of Northern Virginia, which includes St. John’s, Alexandria; Prince of Peace, Springfield; and Grace, Woodbridge.

In January, these three Southeastern District churches received a three-year, \$20,000 grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries for a mission of mercy called the San Mateo Project. The goal is to establish a safe place for immigrants while building a sense of belonging by sharing information, food and hearing of God’s Word.



Both articles on this page were written by **Yvette Moy**, *Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, Va.*



Rev. Pedro Lopez, left, St. John Hispanic Outreach minister, and fellow musicians share the Gospel through song. Below, children got to meet local police officers.

Members of Prince of Peace and St. John’s provide weekly community meals, Bible study, English-as-a-Second Language classes, after-school ministry and free government surplus food. They are joined in this mission by members from Bethany and Concordia Triangle as pre-covenant congregations planting Gospel seeds with more than 1 million Latinos living in Northern Virginia.

Sunday worship services began at Grace in November. In recent weeks, there has been one baptism and 15 confirmations. For this



we continue to give thanks to our Risen Lord!

Muslims asking questions

Given the recent unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, what better time than now to share the hope of Jesus Christ with Muslims living in the United States? Many have questions about Isa bin Mariam. Perhaps it is because Jesus is mentioned more times in the Quoran than Muhammad.

While few of us can aspire to be Islamic scholars, each of us can pray for opportunities to give an authentic testimony of our faith. God does the rest. A good friend of mine and I saw several people while prayer-walking in the neighborhood.

As we turned one corner, Naylah pursued us and asked for help in broken English. She was looking for a white medical building to get a reading of her blood pressure. Apparently she was diabetic and was lost. It was chilly, but we knew the location and



offered to guide her.

As the three of us now walked together, Naylah told us how she left Baghdad and lived in Jordan before she came to the United States. She took comfort in the fact that my partner and I had visited the Hashemite Kingdom. Her son lives in France and she was staying with her mother, but not for long. Soon she would lose her home.

We asked if she was a widow; she said no, but pulled her hands apart. Separated? No. Divorced? Yes, a new word we had to spell for Naylah. As a Muslim woman, she was very alone and without provision. Asked if she worshiped God, she said she was visiting a Catholic church as Jesus was a great prophet. We gave her an Arabic Bible tract and told her Jesus is the Christ.

My prayer partner and I both hugged Naylah. She asked us when we would return. We told her to look for us in a few weeks. We would not forget her.

More than a month later, we met a Saudi couple and a Pakistani woman. After a brief conversation, each accepted a copy of the Injeel (New Testament).

Amazingly, Bangladeshis, Ethiopians, Moroccans are asking questions, too.

Hmong conference scheduled for August

The 18th annual LCMS Hmong Ministry Conference will be held Aug. 4-6 in Brookfield, Wis. The theme is "Passing the Faith."



Rev. Lang Yang

Everyone will come together for fellowship, networking, and learning to be active in service of expanding Christ's Kingdom.

For more information, contact Dr. Lang Yang, numlaaj@yahoo.com or 989-239-4758; or Rev. Blong Vang, tbvang@yahoo.com or 920-303-1438.



On a mission in Uganda

Multiplying Ministers ... Four Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) students recently completed their vicarage and were ordained as pastors at the third ordination service in the LCMU history. It took place in Nakabango (rural Jinja) on Sunday, December 5, 2010 and brings the number of ordained pastors in Lutheran Church Mission Uganda (LCMU) to nine. The seminarians are in front, from left, Daniel Nkoyooyo, Nicholas Bwire, Robert Wakiison and Benson Barahuka. Back, Aaron Bamuwamge, Samuel Ogwang, Charles Bameka, Daniel Preus, John Fehrmann and Jake Gillard. Originally printed in Chapel Light Newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

Hispanic ministry on the move

At the Urban Ministry Conference in the Washington D.C. area, sponsored by "Building Hope in the City," *TimeLine* caught up with Rev. Aurelio Magarino of Hispanic Lutheran Mission Society of Washington D.C. and president of the Hispanic Ministry Convention.



Rev. Aurelio Magarino

What does Rev. Magarino think of the Synod's restructure plan, which includes an office of Hispanic Ministry?

"I receive the news with expectation and I praise the opportunity to empower us to

be more effective to the [LCMS] church in the growing and changing [Hispanic culture and language] demographic."

Going further, Magarino said, "Particularly in Hispanic Ministry, valuing the visual presence in St. Louis, which [the prior absence] has been damaging and demoralizing ... However, because God is the God of new beginnings, it is my hope and prayer that the present situation is about to change."

"LCMS Hispanic Ministry is expanding by God's grace, as more men and women enter the seminaries for theological training."

Race *(continued from page three)*

work stage. How do we work through the feeling and attitudes of those who remain? This type of work we are not taught to do in school or the work place. What if the Church was the place where we work on diversity? In the next and final installment of *The Struggle Within*, I will share with you strategies for ways to constructively work with diversity in the congregation.

It is with hope that this short series is meaningful to you and you will be able to use this information to help foster healthy discussions of diversity within your congregation, work place, and community.

Please feel free to share with me your feelings and reflection. I can be contacted at Belisler@methodisthealthcare.org.

Gaspar installed as Dominican mission pastor

Dr. Willy Gaspar, a 45-year-old dentist, was ordained and installed as the first pastor of the emerging Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission March 13 at Amigos de Christo Church in Las Americas, near Santo Domingo.

Gaspar, who serves as LCMS World Relief and Human Care projects manager overseeing earthquake recovery in Haiti, was colloquized in February by professors of Concordia Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina (IELA).

“We are grateful to the Lord of the harvest for providing the first man such as candidate Gaspar for his holy ministry in the Dominican Republic so that His people might be granted repentance and true forgiveness through faith in our dear Lord Jesus Christ,” said Rev. Ted Krey, regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean with LCMS World Mission.

Gaspar and his wife, Santa, began their theological studies in 2005 with Rev. Walter Ries Jr. from Brazil and Danelle Putnam, LCMS World Mission outreach missionary at the Bible Institute in Santo Domingo.

Following their confirmation, the couple started a Sunday school in their garage. Working with Krey, Gaspar helped begin regular Sunday evening services and in 2010 he started confirmation classes



with seven people. An additional 10 were confirmed in December and more are waiting to begin new classes.

Currently about 50 to 70 people attend church services held under a small tent on property in Las Americas that was purchased in March 2010. Plans are to have a sanctuary built there this year.

Fluent in Creole, French and Spanish, Gaspar wrote to Reporter about his feelings on becoming a pastor: “I do not remember much the day in my life I finally took the true decision to become pastor. But, what I know, never in my 45 years of my life have I been so happy. The happiest days in my life could be the day of my graduation as doctor of dentistry, or the day I get married, or maybe the day when was born my first daughter; but I can say, all of these happiest days do not mean anything comparing to the joy I am feeling for the ordination because I am in the right way.”

The IELA seminary will oversee all theological training for the new Dominican Republic church body whose name is Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Confessional (IELCO) and has agreed to help establish an independent Lutheran seminary in the Dominican Republic by 2017.

In his e-mail, Gaspar listed several reasons for his happiness, including:

- “I feel the grace of the Lord in my life.”
- “I am working to share the joy of Christ with others.”
- “I recognize then I get my full insurance of life from the death of our Lord.”
- “At last, so happy, because I recognize that Jesus is preparing our permanent home for all of us all who recognize that [His] death was not an accident.”

Reprinted, with permission, from Reporter Online (www.lcms.org/reporter), the online newspaper of the LCMS

Easter at Santisima Trinidad

What better way to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus than by welcoming more followers into his kingdom? Every Easter Sunday, Rev. Jose Angel Hernandez welcomes new members via baptism or confirmation from all his mission sites.

This year, five baptisms and 11 confirmations/first communions were celebrated at Santisima Trinidad, Juárez, Mexico, with two participants being baptized and confirmed in the same service. One new communicant was in tears before the service because her godparents hadn't

shown up, so two Ysleta Lutheran Mission staffers volunteered to fill in. Her tears quickly turned to smiles.

When Rev. Hernandez spoke of their willingness to help, one staff member said, “Jesus said in Mark, ‘Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name, welcomes me,’ so we felt honored to stand up for her and for Jesus.”

Reprinted with permission from the newsletter of Ysleta Lutheran Mission Human Care, El Paso, Texas.



YLM staffers Chris Hill and Erin Mackenzie with their newly adopted goddaughter, Julia (center).

Education

Black Ministry recruitment

By Eric Ekong, Student,
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

I walked amongst my fellow incoming seminarians into the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus in the fall of 2009 for the opening service, aware of my place among future pastors, a unified group dedicated to proclaiming God's Word, from different life experiences and seminary burdens. Not just financial either. I carry the burden of Black Ministry. Maybe I am alone in my thinking, but here are my feelings about the LCMS.

In 1869, Synodical President C.F.W. Walther stressed the need for English speaking pastors to reach former slaves in the southern United States. By 1877, just 30 years after the founding of the Synod, an intentional mission effort began. In 1881, Nathaniel Gurkhalter became the first black man to enter Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Ill., however Gurkhalter did not finish his seminary studies. It was not until 1902 that the Springfield seminary graduated its first two black pastors, Stuart Doswell and Lucius Malley. In the first 100 years



of the Synod, there were only 135 black pastors to graduate from the various Lutheran seminaries (*Roses and Thorns*, Dr. Richard Dickinson). A quick look at the stats from one of our seminaries, there has only been 25 Master of Divinity graduates since 1950. The gathering of statistics for different routes such as Colloquy, Alternate Route, Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO), and now Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) proved a bit harder task to track. Dr. Dickinson writes of men in the past being turned away or misled. Our latest problem is the lack of men entering any sort of training for the ministry. There is an estimated five M.Div. and seven SMP currently being formed at either seminary. Realize this number is a combination between our two LCMS seminaries and their entrances into the ministry will vary. My discussion pertains to current residential track seminarians. SMP students serve simultaneously in their ministries.

Lutheran history tends to repeat itself. Black Ministry previously reported goals "to recruit 100 African-American men for the ministry by 2010, to provide senior pastoral supervisory for beginner pastors and seminarians and to recruit 200 educators by 2010." To the casual onlooker, these would seem to be lofty goals considering the economy, churches calling pastors, and the number of formation students enrolled residentially.

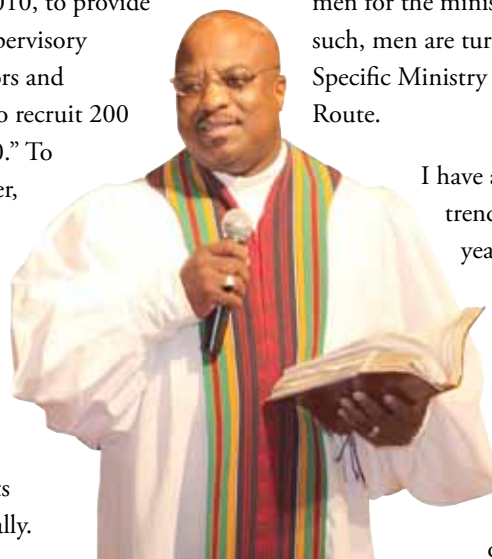
The need is greater than when the Black Ministry was first started. Just to add some context to this conversation ... "In 1976, there were 175 black congregations and only 46 black pastors." As of July 2010, there were roughly 400 black congregations and only about 75 black pastors available. There is a difference between available supply and obvious need of 325 pastors.

Considering the attrition by retirement, death, dropout, etc. we must add another 25 pastors over the next ten years, in order to meet our current need, with no new congregations added, we will need an additional 350 new black pastors over the next ten years. This means that we will need a minimum of 35 graduates per year for the next ten years. In order to accomplish this we will need 140 seminarians enrolled each year, and not one can drop out." (Taken from the then Board for Black Ministry Services' Priorities 2010 PowerPoint) Something tells me the seminaries would love this type of enrollment considering the current overall trends. There is a worry that there is a loss of faith in the seminaries to form black men for the ministry moving forward. As such, men are turning to other routes like Specific Ministry Program and Alternate Route.

I have a different view on this trend after spending my first year and half at seminary.

While these other routes may provide a quicker influx of men into the ministry, it does have long lasting effect on the overall ministry.

By not branching out and experiencing



different people, cultures, and viewpoints we become inclusive. One of the major problems throughout our church body is the lack of understanding of different views, cultures, and backgrounds. It is the very same thing that has happened in the past throughout our Concordia University system. You do not have to take my word for it, read either Dr. Dickinson's "Roses and Thorns" or "This I Remember." This lack of interaction with the rest of our brothers and sisters in the Synod has only led to ignorance between each other. This is not to say all are like this in the ministry, but this is an ongoing problem among all LCMS communities.

The residential program potentially facilitates cultural understanding and positive change. Additionally, the historical residential program uniquely advances pastoral formation and the social interaction of men learning from each other. Removal from one's normal environment mirrors to an extent the exile experience of God's people in the prophet Jeremiah's time devoting time praying for the welfare (shalom) of the world (Jeremiah 29:4-14). This time of exile yields growth to become a new man before going into the ministry, without losing his foundation being, that he draws from and carries to the parish community and possibly the world. In the same way a person contributes to the wellbeing and future ministries of their seminary colleagues, making the residential experience stand apart from the alternate paths to ordination.

I believe that the rising alternate routes miss out on this type of transformational environment, and also miss out on the cultural exchange that can impact our future pastors, congregations and schools; Black Ministry, Concordia universities/colleges and seminaries.

The responsibility rests on our pastors to share their own seminary experiences with potential pastors desiring to serve God. My youth home congregation benefited from a pastor who fostered the environment that



Eric Ekong received his vicarage assignment at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Starting on Aug. 1, he will be serving at Blessed Savior in Florissant, Mo., under the supervision of Rev. Matt Roeglin. Eric says, "I am pretty excited about these next steps. Everything that I hoped would be present in a vicarage placement is there for me to learn and grow from this next year." Congratulations to the Ekong Family. In photo, the Ekongs are pictured with the Roeglins.

opened the door for men to grow, learn and realize their calling to the ministry. Black Ministry can benefit by promoting mentoring relationships that pastors can initiate with seminarians.

Our churches are next in line for the cultivation of these men. The pastor cannot do all the recruiting and mentoring. More than half of today's seminarians credit someone taking notice [of them] and suggesting the ministry. How many young men have gone through our Sunday school, confirmation and vacation bible school programs with no further mentoring? Church includes family outside of the church as well. Likewise, our Lutheran schools, next to the parents, have the most exposure to these men in cultivating an interest in the pastoral vocation.

Pastors and congregations, teachers, pastors, etc., can capitalize on the opportunity to partner with Black Ministry in identifying and nurturing the young men before they enter high school, in a similar way Dr. Dickinson and Dr. King connected to them catalyzing the network of emerging professional church workers. The current financial and lack of leads coming to Black Ministry probably caused the present day gap in recruitment.

Finally, the CUS and both seminaries come into the picture. Many would cite Selma as the desired location for future

seminary students. For reasons mentioned above I would reject that theory. However, considering Selma is the pre-dominantly black Concordia, it carries the bulk of the burden for producing black seminarians. All of the previous groups mentioned must stay in contact with students. Seminaries must be in constant contact with BBM and CUS to identify these students. I am not confident in the role of a black instructor on campus making things easier. Seminary preparation still requires disciplined study and prayer under proper guidance, to an extent which the nonresidential potentially sidesteps. Not to ignore the stated reasons for SMP in certain situations, nor the challenges to overcoming the biblical language barriers, financial barriers and the impact of the social economy. The black church needs to pray and take the initiative for the cause.

We're all at fault for our lack of enrollment. I've heard for years the worry that as our current pastors retire or die, we will run into a shortage of black pastors. What is our future in the LCMS? This problem will persist without our ownership and action. Rectifying it requires unified effort to replenish the supply of pastors. Let's challenge ourselves, and let's turn to our heavenly Father from whom all blessings flow to fulfill the need. Otherwise, we'll see the future mimic the past.

Go to page 4 for more on the Specific Ministry Pastor program.

News from Concordia College-Selma



School holds 85th graduation ceremony

Some 71 graduates received diplomas during the 85th commencement ceremony May 14 at Concordia College, Selma, Ala..

"It's always a great blessing to celebrate the graduation of our students, who have worked hard, persevered and earned their diplomas," said Dr. Tilahun Mendedo, Concordia College

president.

The theme of graduation, "Call to Serve," (Mark 10:45), emphasized our mission to "prepare students through Christ-centered education for lives of service to the church, the community and the world."

The commencement speaker was Dr. Belle S. Wheelan, president of

the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Wheelan was the first African-American and first woman appointed to serve as the organization's president.

Graduating students represent communities around Alabama, several states and the country of Trinidad.

Celebrating home and heritage

As a homecoming celebrating history and heritage, Concordia welcomed the members of the LCMS Black Clergy Caucus to campus for its annual meeting in February.

"We are so proud to be hosting the Black Clergy Caucus,"

Dr. Tilahun Mendedo said. "Their blood and sweat made CCS; this

school is their history, their life, their heritage. When they come to campus, it's a homecoming. I see them as fellow brothers, sharing this asset, heritage, this jewel."

In their home churches, the clergy help with fundraising and student recruitment.



Rev. Aubrey Watson of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, New Orleans, preaches to students during chapel on the Concordia campus.

Letting our Gospel light shine

The Gospel light shines at the newly opened Christ Chapel on the Concordia campus. Synod President Rev. Matthew Harrison and members of the LCMS Black Clergy Caucus joined staff, students and faculty in dedicating the chapel in February.

"Since our founding, we have shared the light of the Gospel," said President Rev. Dr. Tilahun Mendedo. "We are pleased to open our chapel and our campus to the community as we raise our voices in praise." Concordia will continue offering chapel services to students weekdays in the historic Baake Hall.

Christ Chapel recalls the first Lutheran church founded in rural Alabama by Rosa J. Young. Working with Lutheran missionary Nils Baake, she dedicated Christ Lutheran Church in Rosebud in 1916. The chapel is on the grounds of a former orphanage, property the college expanded on last year.



From left, Rev. Matthew Harrison, LCMS president; Rev. James A. McDaniels, vice president of the Black Clergy Caucus, and Dr. Tilahun Mendedo, president of Concordia College, celebrate the dedication of Christ Chapel.

All Concordia College, Selma, articles were written by **Christine Weerts**, Director of Development and Communications.

New chaplain, deaconess installed

With a mission to provide a “Christ-centered education,” Concordia College installed a new campus chaplain, Rev. LaVaughn Wiggins, and its first deaconess, Meseret Alemu, to serve students on the Selma campus. Rev. Kurtis Schultz, president of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, presided over the installation service.

“We are pleased to add these two fine spiritual leaders to our campus,” said Dr. Tilahun Mendedo, Concordia president. “With the addition of two new staff members, we will provide students more opportunities to develop their spiritual lives.”

The installation service featured the Gospel praise music of the Concordia Choir and faculty choir, members of the Concordia band, presentation of colors by the ROTC cadets, liturgy by Rev. Steve Washington of Trinity Lutheran Church, Selma, and sermon by Dr. McNair Ramsey, who had served as interim campus pastor.

Rev. Wiggins, a native of Mobile, will direct the chaplain’s office work with students and the Spiritual Life Committee, head weekly chapel services and lead on-campus Bible studies.

Rev. Wiggins previously served as pastor of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Jackson, Miss. Before entering the ministry, he served as a firefighter for the City of Prichard, and for International Paper Company. He received his master of divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind., in 2002.

Deaconess Alemu was born to dedicated Lutheran ministers in Yirgachefe, a small city in the southern Ethiopia known for its coffee production. She is working in student services as admissions manager as well as with spiritual ministry on campus.

Before coming to Selma, Deaconess Alemu served Faith and Trinity Lutheran churches in Mobile as youth program director. She received her bachelor’s degree from Moody



Lutheran pastors from the area attended the installation service of the two new ministry leaders at Concordia College, in front, Deaconess Meseret Alemu and Chaplain Rev. LaVaughn Wiggins. Back row, Rev. Doug Davis, Messiah Lutheran Church, Prattville; Rev. Kurtis D. Schultz, president, LCMS Southern District; Rev. Steven Washington, Trinity Lutheran Church, Selma.

Bible Institute in Chicago; her master’s in youth and family and counseling ministries from Denver (Colo.) Seminary and her master’s degree in deaconess studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

“I decided to become a deaconess because I have felt the calling to serve God since I was a young girl,” Alemu said

Night of Miracles for Unity School

The Spring Fundraising Dinner for Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis IL was a night of miracles and blessing.

In January, the dinner committee recruited 45 table captains to help gather friends to attend the dinner. There was no ticket required. Table captains were encouraged to invite a table of friends who would be interested in learning more about the miracle of Unity.

Two weeks before the dinner, it appeared there would be 250 attendees. However, God worked a miracle, and 350 people came to enjoy the festivities. All preparations were made at the Hilton Garden Inn in O’Fallon Ill., including table centerpieces. The program began promptly at 6:30 p.m. with an invocation

and prayer.

The support staff served a very delicious meal in a very courteous and efficient manner. The Unity Angelic Voices Choir performed, and Principal Paul Miller presented a ministry update. Two Unity parents gave their testimony about the impact of the school on their children.

At the end of the evening, guests were presented with an opportunity to make a donation to the Belong To Jesus Scholarship Fund. Net proceeds, after all bills are paid and pledges received, will be \$85,000. God has done another miracle ... Praise Him!

Through the workings of the Holy Spirit and the generosity of our supporters, Unity will now have a balanced budget



From left, Paul Miller, Unity principal, Charlene Dickerson, pre-kindergarten teacher, and her husband Rev. Aaron Dickerson, seventh-grade teacher and assistant principal.

by the end of the year. The mission and ministry of Unity can continue to be a vital presence in the community and in the lives of the students. Thank you God for your miracles!

Christ's care *(continued from page one)*

last holdouts—huddled bodies with their pets and chickens perched on top like birds in a nest. Awaiting rescue, their weary faces reflect the sunset-shimmering waves of the Mississippi River. “I’ve known rivers, deep, dusky rivers. My soul has grown deep like the rivers” (Langston Hughes).

Not Just Us

The world has seen “a mess of” tragedies of earthquakes and tsunamis in Haiti, Australia and Indonesia. Japan had both simultaneously, aggravated by a consequential nuclear energy meltdown to send waves of radiation contamination into the air and sea, to alarm the world, threatening scores of generations to come. Modern nations will rethink their energy use options.

Ours is not the only place or era of overwhelming trials and tribulations humanity has seen, and most likely not the last either. The ravages of war and persecution make living beyond painful existence near impossible. People in North Korea, India and Pakistan are starving; children in Africa and in some American cities and rural areas do not escape the plight of poverty either. Where are the people of God to be the hands of mercy? Mere human words do little to soothe the worries. Our lot is to believe in the everlasting love of our Lord Jesus to draw out the resources within our grasp so God may take us places and use us as His hands of mercy to feed, clothe, rebuild and restore lives to the

best of our ability and more so, under the power of God’s grace.

Shout to the Lord

God promises to always be among His people in all seasons and events. Natural and manmade disasters have inundated our nation and globe in the past few years to such a degree and intense frequency that people naturally question the goodness of a divine being who allows people to suffer catastrophic loss of life and property without His intervention. To the surprise of many who do not know God, such typical pondering and waving an angry fist are neither faith-destroying nor offensive to the One whose wisdom and love have no limits. God can take the questions, mumblings and grumblings. God expects it and replies in mysterious ways to show forth mercy that opens the floodgates of healings, restorations, blessings and deeper faith. Jesus’ blood bought salvation in dying on the cross for all sins is God’s greatest show of love and sacrifice for the world.

Like at His cross on Mt. Calvary Jesus stands ready and able to take our place in facing the hurt of difficulties and loss, even to handle the anxiousness and fears we feel. God wants us to trust and depend on Him and experience His strength, love, holiness, compassion and help. Our Savior calls us to cling to him like the last safety line in reach, if we are



Photos ©LCMS World Relief and Human Care

faithful and willing: “Come to me all who are heavy laden, burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11: 28, 29).

Blind Grace

In this fallen world of sin and brokenness, it is natural to question God’s caring in the face of disaster, except we who are spared should wonder why as well since our sin and unworthiness are no different in deserving God’s grace. Our suffering fellow humans compare to the Galilean rebels Pontius Pilot executed or the eighteen construction workers who perished when the tower of Siloam fell upon them. There we go but for the blind

grace of God. Praise His name for positioning us to minister to disaster victims and those who care for them.

Jesus calls upon us to repent of our sins in wastefulness, thanklessness and arrogance in placing blame or turning our backs on those in need. Our heavenly Father “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

Asked how things are going in his region, where whole neighborhoods appear “like a bomb exploded,” Pastor Perry McCullam says the walk through fire and rain is a witness to miracles. One man emerged from rubble by clinging to a single panel of

Continued on Page 19



Christ's Christmas Club

By **Melvin Amerson**, *Stewardship consultant, United Methodist Church*

Soon the season of Christmas will be with us and we will become inundated with commercials and product advertisements on television, radio and the internet. Next comes the pressure and urge to purchase or reciprocate gifts. Lastly, there's the challenge of locating funds.

Recently, I engaged in conversations with family, friends and co-workers about Christmas Club accounts. The mere mentioning of it stirred numerous fond memories of the past. Several wondered whether Christmas Club accounts still exist. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this, banks typically offered non-interest bearing savings accounts that would permit people to set aside money each pay period leading up to Christmas for the sole purpose of saving funds for Christmas gifts. These accounts were

extremely popular before the credit card era. Unfortunately, few financial institutions offer these accounts today.

Since Christmas is about the celebration of the birth of Christ, let us re-think the concept of Christmas Club accounts with a Christ-centered focus. Establish a church-wide Christ Christmas Club account program. A program of this kind is designed for believers to set aside funds for special ministry projects or missional words that will bless others at Christmas. Unlike the other account, this one will produce eternal yields and dividends in Kingdom building works, in the form of life touching expressions of love.

Please consider this spiritual investment opportunity. All Christians are eligible to open a Christ Christmas Club account. There is no minimum amount to start one. No background or credit checks are



required. All that is required is a love for Christ and others. Consider depositing an additional \$5, \$10, \$15, \$20 or more each Sunday in a designated offering envelope, to bless others in the spirit of Christ, who is our Bright and Morning Star.

Alzheimer's at a glance

Normal Lapses vs. Warning Signs

Early Alzheimer's can manifest itself in different ways, says Darby Morhardt of Northwestern University's Alzheimer's Disease Center in Chicago. Though everyone occasionally blanks, some lapses are more cause for concern.

What's Normal:

- Forgetting names and appointments now and then.
- Sometimes forgetting why you came into a room or what you planned to say.
- Sometimes grasping for the right word.
- Misplacing keys and wallets.



- Trouble balancing a checkbook at times.

What's Not:

- Forgetting recently learned material
- Problems staying organized day to day, losing track of steps in making a call or

playing a game.

- Forgetting simple words more often.
- Putting things in unusual places, like a watch in the sugar bowl.
- Paying bills twice or not at all.

Did you know ...

Every 71 seconds, an American develops Alzheimer's disease. By mid-century, that number will shrink to every 33 seconds. The number of Americans estimated to have Alzheimer's is 5.2 million; 16 million Americans are estimated to have Alzheimer's by 2050. *Source: Alzheimer's Association*

How to get free school supplies

Are you interested in getting free school supplies for your community? Would you like to create a program at your congregation to aid families with school-age children in need?

Back-to-school time means buying school supplies. Most schools provide students with a list of supplies they need for the coming school year. This can put a strain on the family budget and for some families, buying new school supplies may be wishful thinking. An organization called Kids In Need Foundation provides guidance to non-profit organizations. Explore the possibilities listed below for getting free school supplies.

1. Most schools have a family resource center that can put you in touch with local resources for free school supplies. These programs are usually confidential, so your child does not need to worry about the other kids

knowing he got his supplies for free.

2. Check with your church. Many churches pool resources and ask for community donations for purchasing school supplies to give to families that cannot afford to buy them.

3. If you meet your local United Way or Salvation Army financial guidelines, they can help you get free school supplies through a program called Running Start.

4. Watch store flyers and sales circulars for school supplies being offered free after rebate. This is quite common at the start of the school year. You need to pay for the item up front, and it costs a stamp to mail the rebate form in, but then you receive a check in the mail getting your purchase price back.

5. The Kids In Need Foundation School Box Program's mission is to ensure that every child is prepared to learn and succeed by providing free school supplies nationally to students most in need. The program does not distribute supplies to students based on requests from individuals. The School Box program is an organized, corporate sponsored program that distributes supplies because it is being financially

sponsored by companies for specific schools or districts.

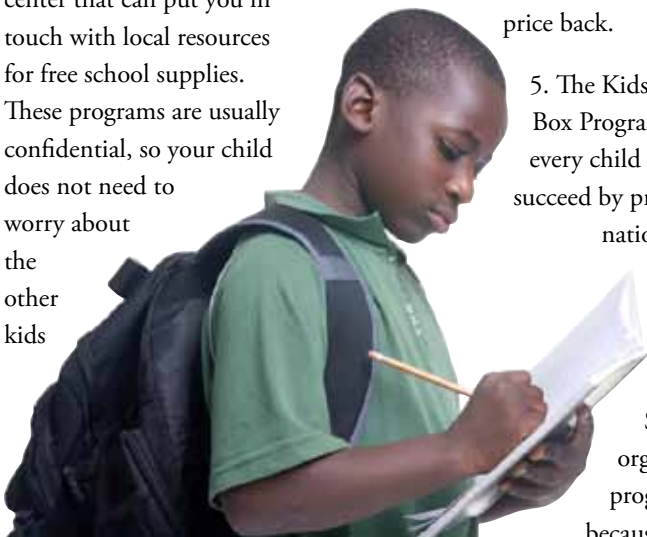
Educators might spend up to \$2,000 a year of their own money to provide school supplies for their students whose families cannot afford to purchase them. A school supplies giveaway program is an effective way to prepare children for the school year while alleviating the burden on teachers of having to purchase supplies for them.

A manual that describes the process, step by step, of conducting a Kids In Need School Box program in any community may be found at www.kinf.org/SchoolBoxProgram.pdf.

This document is meant to give you the steps you can take to organize and conduct a school supplies giveaway program in your community. By partnering with corporations and philanthropic organizations, the School Box program provides completely assembled school supply kits to elementary and middle school children who otherwise would have to do without the basic tools for learning.

Conducting a School Box program requires a small group of individuals to dedicate some time, energy, and effort toward helping families and making kids smile.

For more information, visit the Kids In Need Foundation web page, www.kinf.org.



Photo@istockphoto.com

Christ's care *(continued from page 17)*

wood. "Our members should have had funerals but for the grace of God," he said. One member lost everything of value but God spared her life and her daughter's life. While cleaning up yards, some passersby stopped to give him hundred dollar bills to help the survivors.

Bound in Christ

Among the Christians responding to the need for help,

a group from a sister LCMS congregation drove from the Atlanta area to deliver 100 cases of bottled water. With the help of the Southern District, LCMS World Relief and Human Care has stepped in to make a tremendous difference in the adjustment period while insurance agencies and governments process recovery claims for members of Pilgrim-Prince of Peace, and St. Paul in

Birmingham, plus many others throughout Alabama. Black Ministry has joined the ranks of caring groups responding in varied ways to help God's people in recovery.

God works through the faith of those facing losses too, moving many people who have their own troubles to reach out to fellow disaster sufferers. There is always someone worse off,

and if nothing else, a survivor can give prayerful comfort and witness to God's kindness. Pastor McCullum, taking up the mantle of leadership in Birmingham that works grace under pressure, urges a coming together among the righteous in recovery, pressing forward in WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER as Christ's gives care in crisis.



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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Upcoming Events

National

- June Youth Ministry Month
- June 19 Holy Trinity Sunday
- June 19 Father's Day
- June 20 World Refugee Day
- June 21 First day of summer
- June 23-25 Gospel Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah
- June 24 Parents' Day
- June 23-26 Lutheran Women's Missionary League Convention, Peoria, Ill.
- July 4 Independence Day
- July 7-10 National Children's Ministry Conference, Orange, Calif.
- July 7-10 Youth Gathering, Concordia, Selma, Ala.
- July 18-20 School Funding Academy III, Camp Lone Star
- July 27-29 National Worship Conference, Seward, Neb.
- Aug. 5-6 Lutherans For Life National Conference, Austin, Texas (*The conference will focus on helping participants grow in their understanding of what it means to be adopted in Christ and how this action of our heavenly Father affects our relationships with one another and the manner in which we deal with life issues in our congregations.*)
- September Christian Education Month (*Remember to celebrate and promote LCMS Christian education in your congregation.*)

- Sept. 5 Labor Day
- Sept. 9-10 Lutheran Hour Ministries Outreach Conference, Chicago
- Sept. 11 Grandparents' Day
- Sept. 23 First day of fall
- October Clergy Appreciation Month (*Remember to celebrate and appreciate the faithful men called to be God's shepherds of sheep in your congregation*)
- LCMS World Mission Month (*Remember to celebrate and promote LCMS World Mission in your congregation*)
- Oct. 10 Columbus Day
- Oct. 23 C.F.W. Walther Bicentennial Celebration (*In recognition of the 200th anniversary of the birth of C.F.W. Walther, the first president of the LCMS*)
- Oct. 31 Reformation Day

Regional

- June 23-26 Ohio District GOSPEL (education executives) Conference, Salt Lake City
- July 29 Southeastern District Tending the Flame Conference, Richmond, Va.
- Aug. 4-6 National LCMS Hmong Ministry Conference, Brookfield, Wis.
- Sept. 17 Eastern District Creation Conference, Niagara Falls, N.Y.
- Oct. 8 South Wisconsin District Fourth Annual Ethnic Fold Fair, Wauwatosa, Wis.

Alert!

Get your articles in

Articles for the next issue of TimeLine are due by July 15. Please send them by email to willamae.winston@lcms.org. Please send us your local and regional news.

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