



a mission movement to encourage and celebrate sharing our faith

UPDATE

WINTER 2010

Café Ablaze—a neighborhood coffeeshop on Long Island, New York

Lutheran Church of the Resurrection found a creative way to build relationships with the community

The idea for Café Ablaze initially came to Susan Sexton, a member of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Garden City, N.Y., when she noticed that the church's neighborhood lacked coffeehouses. After talking with some friends, she realized that people loved the idea of a coffeehouse, but the options in Garden City simply weren't meeting the demands. After prayerful consideration, Susan suggested an idea to her pastor, Rev. Jeff Browning, who encouraged her to "go for it." She hoped to establish a coffeehouse on the church's campus, which would provide opportunities to form relationships with people in the neighborhood and build bridges to sharing the Gospel.

To spread the word about Café Ablaze, a volunteer team relied on targeted publicity and promotion in their community. They used local newspapers, entertainment Web sites, radio station announcements, and flyers to gather support and pique the interest of Garden City residents.

On Saturday, Nov. 22, 2008, a team of more than 30 volunteers labored to transform the gymnasium of Resurrection into a Christian coffeehouse. The tables were decorated with sophisticated centerpieces. The room was filled with candlelight to set a café mood. A Christian band, Eyewitness, took the stage to perform for attendees. A delicious spread of desserts, donated by members and local businesses, was set out.

When the doors opened that night, members of the congregation and visitors from the Garden City community flowed in and filled the café to capacity, at over 180 people. Guests enjoyed listening to relaxing music, chatting with friends, and sampling the various coffee, desserts, fruit, and gelato in the friendly atmosphere.



Concert at Café Ablaze

Since that opening night, Café Ablaze has hosted a coffeehouse about every three months. On Saturday, Nov. 21, 2009, Café Ablaze celebrated its one-year anniversary with special performances by Christian singer and songwriter Cathy Virgilio and musical artist Tommy-Lee Sexton. The next café, in March 2010, will feature the Christian band, Cross Purpose, with an opening act by Christian singer, Tiffany Smitelli.

Ginny DeMille, minister of Christian outreach at Resurrection, shares how God has worked through this ministry. She said that one young couple saw the advertisement for Café Ablaze in the local newspaper and decided to attend. They enjoyed it so much that they attended the next one, and are now worshipping regularly at Resurrection. Another family noted that they felt "truly welcomed and cared for" at Café Ablaze—from the welcoming team who first sold them tickets to those saying good-bye at the end of the evening. This family, now a member of Resurrection, responded to the Christian compassion and enthusiasm created by Café Ablaze. Above all, the volunteers involved with this outreach ministry stress that every interaction—from selling tickets to purchasing supplies to advertising—is a chance to share the love of Jesus with the community.

Café Ablaze has encouraged the members of Resurrection to be more active in mission outreach. Deborah Cavacchioli, co-chair of the Café Ablaze ministry, says she has watched members of Resurrection—who might normally be shy about inviting friends to church or sharing their faith—actively reach out to neighbors, co-workers, and friends through Café Ablaze.

Resurrection is an *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregation, which means that they have covenanted with the Atlantic District and also with LCMS World Mission to plant up to four congregations by the year 2017. Resurrection recently planted a new church and preschool, THE LIFE, in nearby Old Westbury, N.Y. For more information on this church plant, visit <http://www.thelifeny.org/>.

If you would like to learn more about Café Ablaze, please visit Resurrection's Web site, <http://www.resgc.org/pages/cafeablaze>. For specific information on this ministry, contact Ginny DeMille at 516-746-4426, ext. 12, or send her an e-mail at ginnygc@optonline.net.



facebook

Planting a seed of hope with a Facebook® friend in Georgia

A member of Trinity Lutheran Church, in Athens, Ga., shares about a Facebook conversation that turned into a faith discussion.

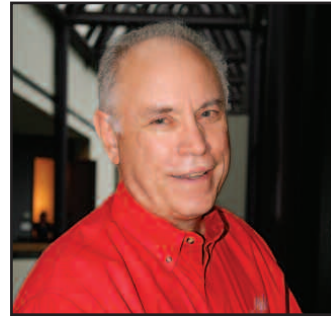
“One of my Facebook friends posted something in their status about people needing to trust in God rather than the government. Most of the responses they received were positive, but one person objected, citing separation of church and state. This person turned out to be agnostic. A heated debate resulted—discussing whether we were a Christian nation, who God is, etc.

“The young agnostic lady is a former classmate of mine, and I was not sure how she took the tone of the debate. I also wanted to witness to her, so I sent her a personal message through Facebook (not able to be viewed by others) about what Christianity was about. I was fairly direct about our condition before God as sinners and how Jesus provided the sacrifice for our sins. She replied with some of her spiritual history and why she struggles with the ideas of religion, particularly when it comes to politics and hell. We sent a couple of correspondences back and forth and the conversation ended with a good tone. However, I feel that I was very direct with her in letting her know her spiritual condition without the righteousness of Christ applied to her account. While at this point, she is still rejecting the Gospel, I can rejoice that a seed was planted and the Gospel proclaimed.

“This case was a good example of how arguments can bring someone into a conversation about the Lord, but won’t resolve things. The arguments should be shifted to a proclamation of Law and Gospel at the appropriate time.”

Recipients of Ablaze! Awards honored in Tampa, Fla., in November

LCMS World Mission was pleased to announce the winners of the 2009 *Ablaze!* Awards at the Mission Partners’ Conference in Tampa Bay, Fla., on Nov. 18. Executive Director Rev. Dr. Thomas Zehnder announced the winners and presented them each with their awards. LCMS World Mission is grateful for the partnership of these mission-minded co-workers in the Lord’s harvest.



Executive Director Dr. Tom Zehnder with 2009 *Ablaze!* Award winners President Keurulainen of the New England District, Rev. Dr. Bob Scudieri, and ladies of the LWML.

The 2009 Executive Director’s *Ablaze!* Award 2009 recipient is Rev. Jim Keurulainen and the New England District. This award is given annually to a district president who exemplifies a heart for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with unreached and uncommitted people through active involvement in the *Ablaze!* movement. President Keurulainen and his staff, congregations, schools, and members work tirelessly in a region on the country which statistically ranks as one of the most “unchurched” areas in the United States. Under Keurulainen’s leadership, the New England District has set courageous goals to involve 50 percent of their congregations in the revitalization process and 60 to 75 percent of pastors in local learning communities. The district is intentionally working to assist its congregations in becoming active mission outposts of the Gospel.

The 2009 LCMS World Mission *Ablaze!* Vision Award recipient is Rev. Dr. Robert Scudieri. This award is given to an individual who has worked in collaboration with LCMS World Mission and exemplifies a vision for creatively identifying the lost and reaching them with the Good News of Jesus. Bob has demonstrated this vision throughout his career in ministry—as a parish pastor, district mission executive, and most recently a synodical executive (LCMS World Mission—National Mission associate executive director)—in exemplifying innovation and creativity for developing faith-sharing tools and techniques. Specifically, Bob has provided leadership for the Center for U.S. Mission, Open Arms Institute, Apple of His Eye Mission Society, and the Mission Partners’ Conference. We give thanks to God for Bob’s faithful service and leadership.

The 2009 LCMS World Mission *Ablaze!* Partners Award recipient is the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML). This award is given each year to an LCMS World Mission national or international partner that demonstrates a heart for reaching out with the Gospel by pursuing the goals of the *Ablaze!* movement in its daily ministry activities. The LWML was honored for its overall support for *Ablaze!*, as well as the generous contributions to support outreach in local, regional, national, and international mission fields. Members of the LWML have given faithfully, not only financially, but also of themselves, to plant seeds of faith in those around them. Additionally, in February 2008, LWML President Jan Wendorf issued a challenge to all LWML districts to send two teams each on short-term mission trips over the next few years. To learn more about the LWML and their mission resources, visit www.lwml.org.

To view past recipients of the *Ablaze!* Awards, visit <http://blog.lcmsworldmission.org/?p=1737>.

Church plant in Winnebago, Ill., shares the Good News in a growing suburb

In 2005, pastors of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Rockford, Ill., noticed that the small, quiet farming town of Winnebago was building new subdivisions. They asked Rev. Robert Rub, a retired pastor, if he would be interested in serving as a part-time mission plant pastor. The St. Paul pastors took him and his wife, Gail, on a tour of the town. During the tour, Gail turned to her husband and said, “The fields are ripe for harvest.” After praying for direction, Pastor Rub began

serving the people of what was then called Winnebago Lutheran Mission. The church has grown considerably since 2005.

Pastor Rub enthusiastically credits God with Our Savior’s growth. “I don’t consider that I can accomplish anything. Any effectiveness of this outreach is God’s doing.” He is also quick to point to the blessing of the encouragement of the Northern Illinois District and other congregations in his circuit.

Risen Savior reaches out to the community in various ways:

- sponsoring a float during Winnebago’s Fourth of July parade, throwing Frisbees with the church’s information printed on them;
- offering free children’s Christmas crafts during a downtown open house;



- going Christmas caroling in a new subdivision; and
- sharing their excitement and God’s love in such a way that the church continues to attract new people!

The church members are enthusiastic about sharing the Gospel, love to meet and welcome new people into their midst, and look for even more ways to reach out to their communities. Why do they do it? Pastor Rub sums it up this way: “We’ve got something we want to share with people!”





A campaign to gather financial support for the *Ablaze!* movement and LCMS World Mission

UPDATE

WINTER 2010

Wittenberg Project progresses with outreach plans



This medieval fair, held behind the Castle Church, is one of the many festivals that attracts German and international visitors to Wittenberg.



The 16th-century building owned by the International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg



Wittenberg's Christmas market is in front of the Old City Hall and very near the town church, St. Mary's, with its iconic twin steeples.



Rev. David Mahsman and his wife, Lois

Wittenberg, Germany, holds a special place in the history of the Christian faith and mission work. It was on the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church that Martin Luther posted 95 his theses in 1517—the spark that ignited the Reformation.

More recently, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its German partner/sister church, the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (known by its German acronym, SELK), formed the International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg (ILSW) to continue vibrant Gospel mission and ministry in Wittenberg. The work of ILSW is supported by the church bodies and by

the *Fan into Flame* campaign. Funds from the campaign are allowing planning to go forward and will provide support for the ongoing implementation of ministry initiatives. Since September 2009, Rev. David Mahsman has been serving as the managing director of the ILSW. A career missionary with LCMS World Mission, David is doing exploratory research and building relationships in Wittenberg.

The ILSW owns a 16th-century building near St. Mary's Church in Wittenberg, where Luther frequently preached. The ILSW hopes to use this resource as an instrument of Gospel proclamation. David is researching the idea of creating a new visitor's center and interactive "Luther experience." David shares, "An interactive museum or exhibition in the building would help visitors understand Luther's emphasis

on justification by faith and that would present the Gospel to people in multiple ways. We have an opportunity potentially to share the Gospel in a clear way with tens of thousands of people—or more—every year." David is also looking at such possibilities as using missionaries who would build relationships through teaching English-as-a-Foreign-Language classes and hosting university and seminary students from the United States as they study theology and outreach.

Mahsman adds, "I believe the Wittenberg Project has the promise of reaching many people with the Gospel. Many know the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ today because of what God did 500 years ago in Wittenberg. Now God is giving us the privilege of helping to bring the same Gospel to people in the very same place."

Through *Ablaze!* Bible Listening Project, LCMS children share God's Word with listening groups in India

In July 2007, LCMS World Mission launched an initiative to share God's Word through a Bible listening program. The second phase of this program distributed BibleSticks®, digital players loaded with an audio drama of the complete New Testament, to students in more than 260 participating LCMS elementary schools during the 2008-2009 school year. The elementary school phase of the project was completed in cooperation with the Lutheran Schools Ministries of the LCMS.

But, reaching thousands of Lutheran elementary students with the spoken Word was just the beginning. The design of this innovative program included a local fundraising element, through which each participating school had the opportunity to support the planting of one or more Bible listening groups in India. This can be done for as little as \$160 per listening group, which covers the cost of digital audio players ("Proclaimers") and trained evangelists. To date, more than \$46,000 has been collected from 77 Lutheran



elementary schools in 24 states across the country. This means that more than 290 Proclaimers that are being sent to our partner church in India.

Jean Anderson, a teacher at Zion Christian School in Nampa, Idaho, shares, "Our students were very excited to have their own BibleSticks and listened to the Bible stories over and over again. The time spent in the classroom listening to God's Word was another way to reinforce the Bible lessons learned during the school year. We pray that people in India may hear the Good News of Jesus their Savior in their own language and the Holy Spirit will work faith in them."

The next phase of the *Ablaze!* Bible Listening Project will be an invitation to every one of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's 6,120 congregations and 2.3 million baptized members. This

congregational phase is planned to begin in October 2010. With the continuing involvement so many LCMS congregations, only the Lord knows how many Bible listening stations could be sponsored in India.

LCMS World Mission sincerely thanks those generous *Fan into Flame* donors who have partnered in this project. Over \$1.4 million has been received in cash to distribute more than 55,000 digital audio Bibles to young people and their families.



More *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations receive grants for church planting

Churches from Hawaii to North Carolina take steps to plant new communities of faith

In the third and fourth cycles of grant distributions for *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations from *Fan into Flame* funding, 16 more congregations were approved to receive grants to support the planting of new churches. The 16 congregations are:

- Christ Memorial Lutheran Church, Fitchburg, Wis.
- Concordia Lutheran Church, Chula Vista, Calif.
- Ebenezer Lutheran Church, Columbus, Ohio
- Faith Lutheran Church, Bentonville, Ark.
- Faith Lutheran Church, Oakville, Mo.
- Friendship Celebration Lutheran Church, Meridian, Idaho
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Honolulu, Hawaii
- Grace Tabernacle Lutheran Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.
- King of Kings Lutheran Church, Chesterfield, Mo.
- LINC-Twin Cities, St. Paul, Minn.
- Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fort Collins, Colo.
- Resurrection Lutheran Church, Cary, N.C.
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Mobile, Ala.
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas
- St. John Lutheran Church, West Bend, Wis.
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, Merced, Calif.

The most recently distributed grants were received by nine of these congregations in October 2009. Two of those nine, Grace Tabernacle Lutheran Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., and LINC-Twin Cities, Minn., share their plans for their church plants.

Grace Tabernacle Lutheran Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

This multi-site church plant in Miami, Fla. will be led by Rev. Bernard Julmiste, a seasoned Haitian church planter. Currently, it is estimated that only 30 percent of the large Haitian population attends church. Many local schools are struggling with violence, so reaching out to provide alternative youth activities and fellowship opportunities is important.

The broader vision of this church plant includes the establishment of 12 missions by 2017, reaching out to unchurched Haitian families, business people, and refugees through evangelism teams and community events. This first church in Miami will serve as a central hub for future church plant work, from which pastors and deacons will be trained and go out two-by-two, to neighborhoods such as “Little Haiti.” The ministry will communicate and connect with people through Haitian radio stations, be present in local public gathering places, and plan events in parks. A local Lutheran church—in the heart of Little Haiti—will be rented and/or used as a base for the ministry, with worship in the fellowship hall.

Grace Tabernacle Lutheran Church itself started six years ago with only six people, and now the average weekly worship is 140 people and growing. This church is already the “mother church” of two other churches in the area, and now they are ready to expand into Miami.

LINC-Twin Cities, St. Paul, Minn.

With a “Relational-Organic-Intentional” approach, this church-plant will be geared toward 20-somethings, while also engaging the multi-ethnic urban community in the urban midway area of St. Paul, located just west of downtown Minneapolis-St. Paul. Several ethnic groups have settled in this area and several universities are also located there. Partners will include other churches, including another successful recent church plant, the Alley, and campus ministries in the area. They will communicate and connect with people through an engaging Web site with a “digital lobby.” Social networks on the local campuses will also be utilized to build relationships and communicate with potential members.

Learn more about *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations

- Go to www.lcms.org?8086
- Order the *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations booklet and DVD. Call **1-800-433-3954** to order.

