ROLLING ON THE WHEELS OF FAITH

Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church was a small “settled” mission congregation in the Acres Homes community near Houston when I arrived as vicar in 1986. Two years later, I was called as pastor. The congregation was what I call “settled” because very little mission outreach was carried out to the community, as the congregation had been served by vacancy pastors for many years.

There are a few responses I could have for this little congregation on mission status since its founding: I could pray for a new call to a larger congregation, I could “settle” with the church with no outreach to our clearly needy community — or I could get busy with Jesus’ imperative that we go and make disciples of all nations.

We got busy. In order to reach teen mothers and the working poor, we needed transportation. Thank God for our wonderful mission partners, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League! The LWML gave us a grant to purchase a van for our community outreach. The van helped us put a “face” on the congregation among our neighbors. We could bring young and old to church for worship and our special activities. We focused on building self-esteem, respect and confidence for families and young people to excel beyond their dire situation and living conditions and become people who believed in God and that He had a purpose for their lives.

Many families became baptized and catechized members of the congregation, teen pregnancies slowed down, and young people completed high school and many went on to college. As God’s children, they became witnesses to the Gospel’s power in their lives and communities.

In this issue of Timeline, we recognize the generous and loving ministry our Church receives through the LWML. You may know of their mission work around the world; we highlight their work in urban communities. We also celebrate our own participation in the LWML. While in Houston, I served as pastoral counselor to the LWML White Oak Zone while my wife Otelia served as president. You will read about the work of LWML servant leader Kaye Dumas Wolff, who followed in the footsteps of many mission-minded women in her family, and celebrate the election of Mrs. Gwen Marshall, daughter of a Lutheran pastor and wife of the Rev. Dr. Ulmer Marshall at Trinity, Mobile, as president of the Gulf States LWML, which is hosting the 2019 convention. We also celebrate Incarnate Word Lutheran Church in Atlanta and its outreach to the Kenyan LWML.

After I left Houston, I got a call from one of the youth we had served through our van outreach, the oldest of five children of a single mother. She called to tell me how much she missed my wife and me and how much she was grateful for our ministry. She said she had graduated from college and was getting married. I’m not sure what would have happened to her or so many of those families and children living in the Acres Homes if it hadn’t been for the van provided by the LWML. But I am grateful we were able through the Spirit’s power to reach so many with the good news of the Gospel, using those wheels of faith.
KAYE DUMAS WOLFF: WASHED IN ROYAL ROSEBUD WATERS, READY FOR MISSION SERVICE

Baptismal waters gave baby Kaye Dumas new life in Christ … and tied her intrinsically to the remarkable mission and ministry of Rosa J. Young, the mother of Black Lutheranism in central Alabama.

Kaye was baptized at Christ Lutheran Church in Rosebud, Ala., the mother church of Lutheran ministry to African-Americans in rural Alabama. Founded by Young and the LCMS in 1916, the mission led to the founding of 35 Lutheran churches and schools in central Alabama. Rosa Young’s love of Christ and the “pure Gospel” led her to bring Christ’s light to some of the poorest communities of Alabama. Her work is seen today in the many African-American pastors and teachers who have faithfully served and are serving in the LCMS.

Kaye followed Rosa and her family’s Christ-centered legacy through her own mission service with the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, Lutheran Hour Ministries and Synodical boards. Nationally, she’s been active in LWML for over 10 years as a member of the Mission Advocacy and Grants committee and has chaired both the Gospel Outreach Committee and the HOPE Committee. She served as the Michigan District LWML Leader Development Coordinator 2015–2016, and in 2015 she was elected vice president of Special Focus Ministries, a national position she still holds.

Kaye also has served as a Mission U facilitator with Lutheran Hour ministries, equipping and encouraging members to share their faith in outreach and witnessing, and with LCMS National Mission as Mission Partner Coordinator and chairperson of the Church Planting Task Force of the LCMS Black Ministry. She also served on the advisory council for the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and co-chaired the Multi-Ethnic Symposium there.

“When I traveled around doing witnessing workshops for Lutheran Hour Ministries, most often people would ask, ‘When did you become a Lutheran?’” Kaye said. “There are still many people in our Synod who think that only Germans are born as Lutherans. Thanks be to God for Rosa J. Young that I was born a third-generation Lutheran.”

Kaye’s Alabama upbringing — she spent every summer with her grandmother in Rosebud — and the ministry of Rosa Young have been a defining part of her faith journey as a Lutheran woman engaged in the church both locally and nationally. Kaye grew up knowing Rosa Young as “Aunt Rosa” because they were distantly related by marriage (her grandfather’s brother married Rosa’s youngest sister).

“But I did not realize the depth of her accomplishments until I was almost grown,” she said.

Her Rosebud and “Aunt Rosa” connections culminated three years ago in the filming of the movie “The First Rosa,” a dramatized biography on Rosa’s life and ministry produced by the LCMS. Kaye was instrumental in the making of the movie and served on site as unit production manager. (Watch the movie online at lcms.org/thefirstrosa).

Just as “Aunt Rosa” loved the LWML (called Ladies Aid Societies), who greatly supported her Alabama ministry, Kaye follows an impressive lineage of faithful LWML women, including her aunt Dr. Iri Skinner, who was the first African-American woman to serve with the International LWML Executive Committee. Iri was the Louisiana-Mississippi District President 1984–1988 and was elected as Vice President for Mission Inspiration at the 1993 convention in Edmonton, Canada. Kaye’s mother was an active LWML member, as well as her aunts and cousins.

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Kaye comes with a prestigious Lutheran pastor pedigree as well: her uncle, the Rev. J.T. Skinner (Iri Skinner’s husband); cousins by marriage the Rev. Dr. Richard Dickinson (author of several books on black ministry in the LCMS and first director of LCMS Black Ministry), the Rev. Moses Dickinson, the Rev. Oscar Jones (her second cousin) and the Rev. Percy Dumas (her great-uncle) all served on the Alabama mission field before serving in urban ministries in St. Louis, Chicago and Detroit. All of them are now in heaven. A Dumas cousin, the Rev. Prentice Marsh, is currently serving as pastor of Ephphatha Lutheran Church in Chicago; and the Rev. Dr. McNair Ramsey (second cousin on her mother’s side), retired from Immanuel-Vredenburgh (Ala.), serves as first vice president with the LCMS Southern District.

Like many African-Americans in Alabama seeking better jobs and opportunities, Kaye’s family moved from Rosebud, Ala., to Detroit, when she was just a child. She attended St. Philip Lutheran Church and School, which was founded by Lutherans from Wilcox County, Alabama. But her heart stayed in Alabama’s dark soil and with her beloved grandmother, Rose Ramsey.

“I returned to Rosebud each year on school breaks and summer vacations — whenever school was out in Michigan, I was down in Alabama,” she said.

She also returned to Christ Lutheran Church (and School), helping her cousin Blanche Ramsey teach the children in the one-room schoolhouse. At her grandmother’s home, she remembers washing clothes in an iron pot over a fire in the yard and eating wonderful Southern “soul food.”

“My grandmother went to church every Sunday as did cousin Jinsey (Rosa’s niece) and Ms. Gladys. Sometimes we would have a musician and sometimes not, but cousin Jinsey and Ms. Gladys would lead us in song,” she said.

When Christ Lutheran closed in 1963, her family began attending St. Paul Lutheran in Oak Hill, about 10 miles away.

“I took my children to Rosebud each year so that they would know their great-grandmother and country cousins and learn some thing about my life as a child. One year when my daughter had to give a report at school about what she did on her Easter break, she reported that we had an Easter egg hunt in the graveyard in back of the Oak Hill church (St. Paul). Her classmates thought that was creepy, so she asked me why do we do that, and I told her, “What better place to be on Easter Sunday morning to remind us that Christ is not dead — He is risen?”

**MIGHTY MITES**

Kaye grew up following her mother, Susanna Ramsey Dumas, to church in Detroit as a child, as both her mother and aunt were active in the LWML.

“I had no idea what it was, but I was a part of it because I went to meetings with my mom,” she said. “If Mom was at church for LWML, choir or any work, I was there too. I asked my mom for a Mite Box of my own. Then I asked her for some money to put in it, and she told me that I had to put my own money in my Mite Box. It was an early lesson on cheerful giving. The part I liked about the LWML was hearing about the help it was providing for people all over the world with the money from the Mite Box.”

Despite being involved with LWML for many years on the local level, Kaye said she was not totally familiar with the structure and strength of the national organization until she started working on a national committee.

“Even with my Aunt Iri’s position, we were all talking about how proud we were of her, but we did not have a clue what that meant. She was so accomplished and outgoing in so many things; this was just another thing she excelled at,” Kaye said.

Today, Kaye wants to make sure the information gets from the national level to the women in the pew. She is encouraging pastors and laypeople to read the LWML website, which is updated weekly, and sign up for devotions and news releases.

With Special Focus Ministries, she is working on intentional outreach programs for multicultural women (Heart to Heart Sisters Committee) and young women. The committees are updating those programs to reach more women from a variety of backgrounds and ages to engage them in LWML ministry.

Kaye is married to the Rev. Paul Wolff, assistant pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Dearborn, where Kaye is a member of her LCMS Michigan District. Mites check with the Rev. Christopher Bodley of Acts II, the LCMS Michigan District.

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Kaye is married to the Rev. Paul Wolff, assistant pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Dearborn, where Kaye is a member of her LWML. An IT business analyst for Health Alliance for 25 years, Kaye is retired, and her four granddaughters live nearby.

She still visits home at Christ Lutheran Church at Rosebud, attending the annual memorial service held the fourth Sunday of September.

“I am grateful every day for the ministry of Aunt Rosa,” she said. “While we were filming the movie, I remember what the narrator said: Rosa was a theologian the Lord used to grow the Lutheran Church in Alabama — in ways so spectacular that it set records in modern American mission history.”

Read more about Rosa Young, the making of “The First Rosa” movie and Kaye’s work in the LWML in the online winter 2017 issue of Lutheran Women’s Quarterly.
LWML MITES SUPPORT URBAN MINISTRY

LWML Mighty Mission Mites travel far and wide around the world, performing work such as renovating a seminary in Nigeria, serving the elderly in Haiti and supporting the hurting in Middle Eastern refugee camps. Clean water, disaster relief, food, quilts, Bibles and more travel on Mighty Mites to those in need around the world.

At the same time, LWML Mites support ministry and outreach in urban ministries, served by our African-American LCMS clergy. Detroit, East St. Louis and New Orleans are a few of those cities the Mighty Mites have reached.

DETROIT

In the aching heart of a changing city, the Michigan LCMS District is bringing new life through the Acts 2 Enterprise with support from the LWML, both nationally and through the Michigan District LWML. A2E is a strategic and holistic urban outreach initiative based on the work of Jesus and His disciples in the early church. A2E is under the leadership of the Rev. Chris Bodley, who has over 20 years serving urban ministry and whose father and uncle grew up on the Rosa J. Young Lutheran mission field in Alabama. The initiative gives Missouri Synod Lutherans an opportunity to work together to develop the next generation of healthy urban mission congregations in a city with a depressed economy, high unemployment, poverty and gang violence. The goal is for the Lutheran churches of Detroit to demonstrate and share compassion, justice and mercy and to evangelize and disciple the people of Detroit with the Good News of Jesus Christ — serving as a model for other LCMS urban ministries.

Two key programs in A2E are a jobs program for unemployed and underemployed adults and sports camps for unchurched kids. Both programs embrace sharing Christ-centered faith while teaching basics. A2E Sports Camps are a summer outreach combining sports and sharing the Gospel with hundreds of youth in inner-city neighborhoods. The free five-day sports camps held around the city reach kids aged 5–17 with basketball, cheerleading, flag football, golf, lacrosse, martial arts and soccer. Children play sports in a safe, positive environment with coaches and team leaders from area churches demonstrate Christ’s compassion while sharing the joy of team play.

Jobs for Life is an eight-week class that presents a biblical and Christ-centered framework on employment and steps necessary to increase the student’s chances of employment and/or advancement. The class, which opens and closes with prayer, focuses on finding one’s purpose, overcoming...
roadblocks, strengthening work ethics, doing a career inventory, résumé writing, job searching, interview skills and conflict resolution. There is also a professional closet from which participants may choose clothes for job interviews. Employers and community resource people present key perspectives and opportunities to the students. Read more about the urban ministry initiative at michigandistrict.org/a2e.

NEW ORLEANS

LWML Mission Mites help shelter the homeless, feed the hungry and care for the hurting in the heart of New Orleans. A 2018 LWML grant puts Mites to work at six inner-city parishes — St. Paul NE, Mount Zion, Gloria Dei, Bethel, Holy Cross and Epiphany — reaching out to those in need who have been through very real storms and floods.

Pastors Aubrey Watson, Gregory Manning, Jerome Terry, Warren Lattimore, Limakatso Nare and Collis Parham, whose churches were all damaged (one was destroyed) by Katrina in 2010, have joined together to serve the hurting poor by witnessing to Christ through the “NOLA 4H: Hearts for the Hungry, Homeless, and Hurting” LWML grant.

“My heart is deeply joyful seeing these hard-working pastors come together to expand their ministry to those in need in inner-city New Orleans, still rebuilding and renewing lives wrecked by Hurricane Katrina,” said the Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray.

EAST ST. LOUIS

In the East St. Louis neighborhood of Unity Lutheran Church, poverty is prevalent, and homes are aging and in need of repairs unaffordable to seniors on fixed incomes. That’s why the Rev. Dr. Willie Stallworth is grateful for the LWML Helping Hands grant two years ago that provided Mission Mites to repair 12 homes within three blocks of the church.

He especially remembers helping hands reaching out to Betty Harris and her joy in getting new siding for her home thanks to the LWML grant. In fact, when the crew first showed up at her home, she began to cry, calling it “a blessing and a half.”

The poorest homeowners and elders were the first to be helped, Stallworth said, including Betty, who is raising her young grandson, a student at Unity Lutheran School and who volunteers in the school lunch program (blogs.lcms.org/2016/helping-hand-in-east-st-louis).

“Whenever I host community meetings, I always talk about the LWML,” he said. “They are truly women of faith in our Lutheran Church. They prove a mite is mighty. I thank God for their sacrifice, commitment, passion and zeal and their faithfulness to mission — here and around the world.”
It started with a simple church visit: Kenyan Lutheran pastor Meshack Ngare visited Incarnate Word Lutheran Church in Stone Mountain, Ga., in 2013, where a member was from his Kenyan congregation.

The Rev. Dr. Will Heyliger saw a perfect opportunity to build an intercontinental relationship with brothers and sisters in Kenya. The following year, they entered into a sister relationship with Dago Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Nyagowa parish in the Lake Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya, a church in Pastor Ngare’s parish.

“Our members saw the opportunity to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Christ when Pastor Ngare told us his Dago congregation was worshiping under a tree and could only do so during the dry season. We assisted the Dago congregation financially to complete the church building.”

The next year, Pastor Heyliger visited the Dago congregation and preached the Pentecost sermon as they worshiped in their new church. During his visit, he met Deaconess Eunita Odango.

“Deaconess Eunita works with the pastor, evangelists and other church leaders to care for the needs of women and their families,” Heyliger said. “She also supervises the work of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League in the parish. Her work is exhaustive, as she is responsible for eight congregations in the parish which are scattered around the Lake Diocese and are difficult to travel to.”

Now it was time for LWML sisters to step in. The LWML at Incarnate Word, led by Johnetta Gillies, sold headscarves to raise money for the LWML of the eight congregations in the Lake Diocese. Former member Tiia Kunnapas made a quilt from the headscarves, all of the proceeds from which went to the Kenyan LWML.

Will and Edith traveled to Kenya with member Kathy Black in 2017 to attend the regional quarterly meeting of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League and to visit the homes of parishioners with Deaconess Odango. Pastor Heyliger spoke on what we believe as Lutherans.

Incarnate Word members send boxes of clothes and electronics to the parish for Deaconess Odango to give to the different congregations.

“We look forward to continuing our relationship with the Lutheran churches and the LWMLs with the Lake Diocese in Kenya,” Pastor Heyliger said.

The conference will feature Bible studies, community building, servant events and breakout sessions, along with evening worship.

“We want to grow, learn, serve, worship and celebrate our fellowship with all our brothers and sisters in Christ,” the Rev. Gray said.

More information and registration details can be found on the LCMS website at lcmsgathering.org. The National Youth Gathering Office is also available to answer questions at myregistration@lcms.org or 800-248-1930, Ext. 1155.
CELEBRATIONS IN THE CITY

CELEBRATING SCHOOLS AND THE CITY

The best way to start a school year is in church, especially when the vice-chair of your Board of Trustees was the first African-American to serve as Assistant School Superintendent for the Duval County (Fla.) Schools. St. Paul Lutheran Church in Jacksonville did just that by recognizing community leaders, young and older, and through its faith-based partnership with local Carter G. Woodson Elementary School.

“We are striving by the grace of God to be a community church and not just a church in the community,” said the Rev. James Wiggins, Jr.


“As an older pastor, I was blessed along with our congregation to have these young inspiring African-American brothers present who are impacting the church and community of northwest Jacksonville in such a positive way,” Wiggins said.

The community celebration included those attending the special service.

BELOW: Left to right: Terrance Freeman, Jacksonville District 10 City Council Representative; Brandon Clayton, principal of St. Paul’s partner school, Carter G. Woodson Elementary School; the Rev. Frank T. Marshall, Sr., pastor emeritus of St. Paul; inspirational speaker Austin Franklin, CEO of Good-Natured Life, LLC, and MBA student at Rollins College in Winter Park; Gerlieve Thompson, vice-chair of our Board of Trustees and the first African-American to serve as Assistant School Superintendent for Duval County Schools; and Pastor Wiggins.

CELEBRATING 67 YEARS IN THE CITY

Trinity Lutheran Church and School celebrated its 67th anniversary this summer with the theme “Amazing Grace,” as it continues to serve urban Mobile and the community of Trinity Gardens in Alabama. The church was organized in 1951 by members of Faith Lutheran Church, a church plant through the ministry of Rosa J. Young.

The church has grown and moved into large buildings over the years, dedicating its most recent addition and sanctuary in 1998. The church is pastored by the Rev. Dr. Ulmer Marshall, who grew up at St. James Lutheran Church and School in Buena Vista, Ala., a church that Young organized in 1918.

The Rev. Stephen Wiggins, Sr., pastor of Christ Lutheran in East Point, Ga., who also attended St. James as a child, was the guest preacher. The church will celebrate Marshall’s 45th anniversary at Trinity this fall.