Strong Faith, Fervent Love: Revitalizing Congregations

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Black Ministry provides encouragement, assistance, advocacy and influence to LCMS districts, congregations and schools for synodwide engagement in ministry to people of African-American decent and other ethnic cultures. The ministry promotes faithfulness to theology that is contextually holistic, touching lives with the Gospel through mercy care in the context of daily experiences.

“Proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

— 1 Peter 2:9b-10 —
B
dlack Ministry in the LCMS began in 1877, only 30 years after the Synod was formed. Though the way this ministry operates has changed over the years, the need for it has not. Our early efforts were focused on Lutheran education with the establishment of all-black Lutheran day schools in the south. Concordia College Alabama, Selma, Ala., founded in 1922, holds the distinction as the nation’s only historically black Lutheran college or university.

Central to our Black Ministry efforts today is a focus on sharing the Gospel through acts of mercy by providing assistance, advocacy and networking opportunities for LCMS districts, congregations, schools and organizations seeking to reach out to predominantly black populations. The aim is to touch lives with the Gospel through mercy care. Each year, the Black Ministry Family Convocation provides those involved in Black Ministry with an opportunity to gather, learn and worship together.

“The 21st century is an exciting time to be involved in the mission of God and His Church, especially as it pertains to the growing minority ethnic population in the U.S. Among those ethnic groups, the African-American and black population is growing in a variety of ways,” said the Rev. Roosevelt Gray Jr., director of LCMS Black Ministry.

In the past, the black population in the LCMS has been largely concentrated in the Southern and Southeastern districts, a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that forced African migration to the U.S. prior to the 19th century. Cultural shifts show that many are moving north for school, jobs and other opportunities.

Growth also is coming from new immigrant black groups — people whose origins are from Africa, but who are now coming by way of Canada, Europe, Central America, South America and other countries.

“Some see this as a challenge for the nation, but the church must see it as an opportunity for the Gospel,” Gray said.

Individual Lutherans and congregations can support Black Ministry locally and across the Synod. Here’s how: Pray that God would provide men and women to serve in Black Ministry. Reach out in witness and mercy to your black neighbors, friends and co-workers. White suburban congregations can partner with black congregations in urban centers to strengthen each other in their life together. Your gifts to the Global Mission Fund will provide financial support for Black Ministry efforts across the Synod.

“God doesn’t see a white church or a black church or a yellow church or a brown church; His Church is called to provide His salvation of grace for everybody, regardless of color or culture, with equal access to God through Christ,” Gray said.