Sharing Christ’s Love through Pancakes

At Cross and Resurrection Lutheran Church, the Chapel at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) in Ypsilanti, Mich., not even a pandemic has ended their 10-year tradition of serving up pancakes and waffles to hungry students on Friday nights.

Between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m., volunteers from both the church and university mix ingredients from scratch while hundreds of hungry college students order free pancakes and waffles with their choice of toppings.

“A large majority of our students that come here are not Christians and are very upfront about it,” said the Rev. Bryan Schindel, senior pastor of Cross and Resurrection. “They don’t have a church background, and they also want to know why we do this.”

Despite the late hour, it’s the opportunity to share the love of Jesus Christ that brings church members back each week. “Our hope and our prayer,” said volunteer pancakes leader and EMU student Evan Rogers, “is that through our relationship with them, we can show that the Lord has a lot of love for them.”

Schindel saw a need for the outreach when he was a chaplain working ride-along with police. The students were looking for things to do on Friday evenings after the student center movies let out for the night. Some students got into trouble, so Schindel wanted to provide a place to go when nothing else beside the bars were open. Students came up with the idea for pancakes, and the congregation generously supported the ministry. Over time, word spread.

“I love how nice and personable everyone is,” said student Paris Brister. “You can talk to them about normal stuff, but also about God.” Brister was with a group of friends who have visited the event before.

For Schindel, it’s tough knowing that faithful students will move on after their time in school, but it gives him joy to be a part of their lives during this time when they face many challenges, including moral temptations and anti-Christian influences. Thanks be to God that at campus ministries across the country, pastors like Schindel are there to reach out with the Word of God and care for students, no matter what may come.

You Make the Difference through LCMS World Relief and Human Care

You make the ministry described in this newsletter possible! Your prayers and contributions to World Relief and Human Care “Where Needed Most” deliver our Savior’s mercy to people in need. You bolster tightly restricted donations from others to help fully fund important mercy projects, allowing us to report here the impact you are making in Christ’s name. The courtesy envelope in this issue allows you to send a future contribution as the Holy Spirit leads, when He leads.
PREPARING MISSIONARIES for Service

2020 WAS A DIFFICULT YEAR for international mission, and yet the Lord still continued to call and prepare workers for His harvest fields despite the global pandemic.

In August, four new LCMS missionaries gathered — yet remained socially distanced — for an abbreviated and intense week of missionary orientation. Although COVID-19 changed many aspects of the event, LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) staff worked to ensure the safety of all involved so that these new missionaries could be properly prepared.

"Missionary orientation imparted an amazing, exhausting and wonderful week of learning," noted Justin Logston, who will serve in Belize with his wife, Jordan. "Having the opportunity to attend missionary orientation in person was magnificent, and I am grateful to the LCMS International Center team for going above and beyond to give our group that chance."

Thanks to the support of Mission Central and generous Lutherans around the Synod, all four new missionaries arrived on the field by early December. The Logstons spent their first few weeks in language training in the Dominican Republic before heading on to Belize, while Barbara Rebentisch and another new missionary deployed directly to their final destinations in Taiwan and Central Asia, respectively. Rebentisch, who was already a resident of Taiwan before joining the OIM, will use her Mandarin language skills to assist the mission team with translating and editing Chinese theological resources.

"Flights, border closings, the pandemic — all of those things are huge issues, so it’s really the Lord’s timing," said Kendall Cortright, OIM director of Missionary Services. "You have small windows of opportunity to get people in or out because the situation is constantly fluctuating."

Despite the challenges, the Lord continues to call workers to missionary service, and an even larger group is expected for the next round of orientation this spring.

"We are grateful for the church’s continued support of missionaries throughout the four regions of the Synod’s endeavors, and we are confident that the Lord will continue to provide," said OIM Executive Director Rev. Daniel McMiller. "We operate in faith, following His will to send missionaries.”

A Great Message from Luther

Martin Luther once wrote: "Our Lord and Savior Jesus has left us a commandment which applies equally to all Christians, namely, that we are to render ... the works of mercy [Luke 6:36], to those who are afflicted and in a state of calamity, and that we are to visit the sick, try to free the captives, and do similar things for our neighbor so that the evils of the present may be somewhat lessened. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself gave us the brightest example of this commandment when ... he descended from the bosom of the Father into our misery and our prison, that is, into our flesh and our most wretched life, and took upon himself the penalty for our sins so that we might be saved" (LW 42:121–22, emphasis added).

Dear Lord, grant us merciful hearts after Your own.

In Christ,
Pastor Matthew C. Harrison
President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Above right: People look through piles of clothing during an event for the homeless at First Trinity Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh.