



## DP Vantage Point

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*For Christ and for His world SWD magnifies partnerships,  
multiplies ministries, and maximizes resources.*

Wednesday, October 5, 2016

*Devotion for the September SWD Board of Directors  
**This is our time to plant new Lutheran congregations***

*Brothers in the Pastoral Office:*

Over the course of the past few months my reading has focused on several of the new Luther volumes which have been published by CPH. Not long ago, I read a Luther "postil" based on John 20:19-23 in Volume 77.

The scene is the upper room where the disciples have locked themselves away, hiding, mourning, and afraid. It is the third day. Easter Sunday. We all know the events of the day. The Easter Gospel. The women at the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Jesus. Suddenly John says, "Jesus came and stood among them". The One who was dead is alive in their midst.

Listen to what Jesus tells His disciples. It is important for them; important for us. "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Jesus' work of redemption is finished. Death was defeated by the Easter Sunday resurrection. The Father had sent His Son to achieve that. Now, as Jesus was sent, the disciples are sent. Sent by Jesus. Sent to proclaim forgiveness. Sent to forgive. And so we are sent; Sent by our Lord Jesus to proclaim the good news. Sent by our Lord to forgive sin in His name. And that takes place primarily in divine service, in our congregations.

There is no doubt but that the world in which we live desperately needs the Gospel, the good news of forgiveness and life for the sake of Christ Jesus. Look around. Of the 72 counties in the state of Wisconsin nearly everyone is less than 50% churched. Look around. We find ourselves in a culture where up has become down, where wrong has become right, where the gross sins formerly scorned by society are now not only accepted but paraded for all to see. To exacerbate that situation, we live in a society where the church, our Christ-centered confession of faith, our Law and Gospel proclamation, our Christian morality are increasingly challenged, and even openly scorned. In this kind of world it bears upon us as church to proclaim and to confess.

This is not time to be silent. We have been sent to proclaim, sent to forgive. Our Lord's words in Luke 12 come to mind, "What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs."

John 20: Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Sadly, I have heard it said in our midst that we don't need to plant new churches. We have enough. I strongly disagree with that sentiment. We will never have enough. Here's the reason for my sentiment. In his 1879 Essay to the Iowa District, titled "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod", CFW Walther quotes Martin Luther who states:

[Luther] It is a shameful thought if a congregation says, "We have our church and school now, so let others worry about [their churches and schools]!" No, God demands that we assist others in getting churches and schools. A Christian and also a congregation are plants that have grown from the seed sown by other Christians and congregations. Therefore this congregation and every individual Christian are to be a seed from which new Christians and congregations can ever again grow. That is why the apostle says so emphatically, "The Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother" (Galatians 4: 26). Just as surely as we are now members of the Church, so surely we should also be fruitful mothers; and if we are unfruitful mothers, that is, if we do not produce spiritual children or fail to do those things whereby such children can be produced, then we are not obeying our calling, and God will not say, "You pious and faithful servant," but rather, "You unfaithful servant!" God grant that we never need to hear Him say those words to us! [Walther, C.F.W. (2014-01-18). Walther's Works: Church Fellowship (Kindle Locations 8757-8765). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition. ]

Those words were true in the days of Luther and Walther. Those words are true this day as well. We in this generation, our generation, are reaping the benefits of those who have planted churches before us. Rev. Bernie Raabe planted 54 new congregations during his time as SWD mission exec. You may be a member or a pastor of one of those congregations. What will we pass on to the generation after us? Will the next generation after us give thanks for what we have passed on to them? Will they give thanks for the Lutheran congregations that we have planted in this day? In our day? Lord have mercy and grant it be so!!

Walther's words set a goal before us: "Therefore this congregation and every individual Christian is to be a seed from which new Christians and congregations can ever again grow.... Just as surely as we are now members of the Church, so surely we should also be fruitful mothers."

### **A Word from Luther:**

This is how you should explain all the passages of Scripture which talk about works. God wants us to let the righteousness that we have received in faith break forth, demonstrate itself, and benefit others, so that false faith becomes known and rooted out. God gives no one His grace so that it may lie down and be of no benefit, but so that it would give a good return, and through knowledge<sup>18</sup> and outward public demonstration entice everyone to God. Christ says, "Let your light shine before people, so that they see your good works and praise your Father in heaven" 19 (Matthew 5 [: 16]). Otherwise it would be like a hidden treasure and concealed wisdom, and what benefit are either of them? Yes, in this way your righteousness is not only known to others, but you yourself also become certain that it is right.

Luther, Martin (2015-11-03). Luthers Works, Volume 78 (Church Postil IV) (Luther's Works) (Kindle Locations 7520-7526). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

## **SWD News and Tidbits:**

### **1. Search for new SWD Mission Executive:**

A Call Committee has been convened according to the Board Policy Manual. The committee consists of the following: Mryon Buss (Chair), Bryan Seider (Board Chair), Rev. Darrell Bergelin, Mr. Al Beyer (both members of the SWD Board of Directors), and two at large members, Rev Lance O'Donnell and Rev. Eric Skovgaard, along with President Wille.

The position description for Executive Assistant to the President for Missions is attached. It is written to include "mission stewardship" which includes a funding missions.

It is being shared with you along with a "nomination form" so that you might put forward the name(s) for consideration.

The Call Committee has established a deadline for receiving nominations as Monday, October 31. After that the Call Committee will vet the list and conduct a series of interviews with potential candidates, after which they will present their recommendation(s) to the SWD Board of Directors.

Please keep the process in your prayers! "Lord, show us the one You have chosen to take the place in this ministry." Acts 1.

### **2. Thanksgiving Baskets:** What does \$30 buy you these days? How far does \$30 go towards your monthly food budget? With the rising cost of food in today's economy, for most people \$30 doesn't go very far at the grocery store. With the shape our economy is in, there are too many people out of work, and who are experiencing financial difficulties.

Last year, many individuals and congregations in the South Wisconsin District provided funds for Thanksgiving meals to families living in the central city of Milwaukee. The meal consists of a turkey and all the fixings for a traditional Thanksgiving meal. The goal every year is to fulfill the requests for Thanksgiving baskets we receive from central city Lutheran pantries in Milwaukee. Last year 1058 baskets were delivered to the pantries, and we have the same goal of 1058 this year. Again this year we will partner with Brookfield Lutheran who has purchased, assembled and delivered Thanksgiving baskets to families in the central city for many years. The letter is included in your conference folder. Please share it with your congregation, this is part of our mercy component; a witness that we care for the whole person.

### **3. Circuit Visitors Winter Retreat:**

Winter Retreat is scheduled for February 20-21, 2017 in conjunction with NWD at Holiday Inn Stephen's Point. Dr. Stephen Saunders, head of psychology at Marquette University, has agreed to serve as our plenary speaker on the subject of mental health concerns in the parish. Dr. Saunders is an LCMS layman, and has recently published a book titled: The Christian's Guide to Mental Illness: Recognizing Mental Illness in the Church & School.

### **5) Congregational Visitation continues.**

- a) This past Sundays I visited Apostles' Lutheran in Platteville, and then Mount Olive, Madison for their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. One third of Mount Olive members have joined the congregation in the last seven years. What a blessing!!
- b) I have also been at Mount Olive, MKE for various call committee meetings, and Hope, Fond Du Lac for various meetings.

- c) In the weeks ahead the following will be visited...
  - I. Preach for the 50th anniversary at Good Shepherd, Two Rivers, October 9
  - II. Preach for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Paul, Cascade, October 30
  - III. Preach at St. John, Beloit, November 6
  - IV. Preach at Immanuel/Trinity, Borth and Auroraville, November 13

**6) The annual Great Lakes and Great Plains Regional District Presidents' meeting** will be hosted once again this year at the SWD office, Thursday and Friday, October 20-21.

**7) Other scheduled events:**

- a) October 4 Retired Pastors Waupaca
- b) October 6-8 CSL Board of Regents, preach at CSL chapel October 7
- c) October 10-12 Pastors' conference
- d) October 13-18 Dominican Republic Partners meeting, DR. [SWD's foreign mission partnership]
- e) October 25 All Staff meeting
- f) November 2-5, CUW Regents leadership mtg, Austin Texas
- g) November 8, Circuit 9
- h) November 9 CPTLN Oklahoma Avenue
- i) November 14 Circuit 5
- j) November 15-20 COP and LCEF Fall conference Chicago
- k) November 21 Circuits Racine/Kenosha

**8) Passionate Believers work conference** is set for Saturday, February 4, 2017, with the theme, "21<sup>st</sup> Century Lutheranism: What does this mean?" Our keynote speaker is Rev. Dr. Larry Rast, President of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. More information will be forthcoming.

**9) At the September 2016 Council of Presidents' meeting the following LCMS vacancy report was received:**

- Number of Districts Reporting: 35
- Sole Pastor vacancies: 329
- Senior Pastor vacancies: 48
- Associate/Assistant Pastor vacancies: 70
- Total vacancies: 447
- Pastor Part-Time: 305
- New Ministry Starts: 10
- Congregations Closed: 8

**10) Commissions on Constitutional Matters, and Handbook** were appointed by the Synod President at the September COP meeting in consultation with the COP:

- a) Ordained for CCM: George Gude and Gerhard Bode, Sr.
- b) Attorney for CCM: Neely Owen
- c) COH Members Ordained Dale Sattgast, David Totsky and Richard Nuffer
- d) COH Attorney Heidi Abegg and Jacob Spencer

## 11) Congregational Vacancies and Pastoral Calls:

### Pastor calls & vacancies

- Elm Grove – Elm Grove Lutheran (associate)
- Franklin – Risen Savior
- Milwaukee – Mt. Olive (evaluating)
- Milwaukee – St. Peter/Immanuel
- Sheboygan – St. Paul (associate)
- Sheboygan Falls – St. Paul (associate)
- Twin Lakes – Hope (sole)
- West Bend – St. Andrew ( sole)

May our Lord bless!!

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### ***"Confessing Christ for the Next Generation"***

*This our time:*

- 1. to be distinctly Lutheran,*
- 2. to plant new congregations,*
- 3. to honor our Christ-centered vocation,*
- 4. to embrace our communities.*