



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

Ordinary people for extraordinary work

A father who always took naps on Sunday afternoons since he worked long hours the other six days wanted a special Sunday on Father's Day. His children wanted him to go outside to romp around in the backyard. Instead, and after a big Father's Day dinner, his eyes got heavy and he slumped into his easy chair. His kids tried to wake him, so he pretended to sleep. Finally, after several unsuccessful attempts to wake him, his 3-year-old daughter climbed in his lap and pried open his eyelids. She turned to her brothers and said: "It's OK, he's still in there."



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

What if Christ's disciples were like the father? What if they pretended to be asleep after hearing His command and ordinance to go make disciples of all people? Where would we be today? Who would spread the Gospel, and who would let the lost sheep remain to be ravaged by a sinful world?

'I can't do that'

Jesus described how His disciples would go into a world decimated by sin. He told them to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and drive out demons — a pretty tall order.

They probably thought: "Well, I can't do that." They'd be right. They can't, at least not on their own.

Think about the huge responsibilities Jesus gave His disciples. After they watched Him perform the tasks and preach the Gospel, He said they'd go to strange lands and do the same thing.

Jesus knew how His people were oppressed and burdened, even by church people. They needed relief! They had no way out of their plight. Their slavery to sin and tyrants, and oppression from whole bunches of folks brought them nothing but pain and suffering. They didn't know where to turn for help — like sheep without a shepherd.

This is what Jesus meant when He said:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." — **MATT. 9:37-38**

More workers needed

When it comes to the mission of the Christian Church, there's so much to do! But there's just not enough people to do it. This year a total of 80 young men in the LCMS completed seminary to assume more than twice that number of vacancies created by retirements and other factors. The task hasn't changed: The healing of the sick, cleansing the lepers, relieving the oppression and proclaiming the forgiveness of sins is still needed here today. More than ever, the healing balm of forgiveness, comfort and love

Continued on Page 2



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

GOOD NEWS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

are needed.

Suppose for a minute that today we prayed for Jesus to send laborers into His harvest field. What would it be like if we asked people to show up for their job for the kingdom of God? We'd cook the coffee, prepare the room and set the time. But when the time neared, we nervously glanced at our watch, looked at the clock ... but no one else showed up? Would Jesus turn to us and say: "Well, I guess it's all up to you. You have to go out to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and drive out the demons."

Would you accept that call? Or would you refuse to take the challenge because you knew full well you'd never fulfill those responsibilities?

How disappointed would we be, even if we did take the job and finished our first week but, lo and behold, we hadn't healed one single soul, to say nothing of raising a single dead person? How would you feel?

But think about this: Those 12 men — fishermen, businessmen, a tax collector and a business treasurer — who eventually messed up the books and betrayed Jesus ... how were they capable of doing the job Jesus gave them?

God will provide

Of course, none of them were capable on their own of doing any of the work Christ commissioned. But because Jesus called them and it was His commission, He also gave them the necessary skills to do the work. He wouldn't have sent them out to heal the sick, raise the dead and drive out demons without the right stuff.

Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to empower those men to accomplish the mission of His Holy Ministry. He chose them, specifically, so that the power of the Gospel was the foundation, rather than their own accomplishments or importance.

God chose the most unlikely candidates to do His work. He called simple, sinful and ordinary people to be His presence among the people. He can choose folks with broken lives to do His work. Regardless of where they have come from, they respond to His call, adhering to His gifts and teaching. God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

Like a garden

I once asked in a Bible study how we can be partners in God's overall salvation plan. The answer might have surprised some: God only asks us to do our small share of the overall task. In gardening, the first task is planting the seed. Of course, we have to make sure the garden is watered and weeded. But other than that, the seed's going to do its job. The water and nutrients in the soil will do their job. God's design will make the seeds germinate and grow. It's a sight to behold, watching a garden bear its fruit.

That's how the great commission works. We're members in the royal priesthood of all believers, according to 1 Peter 1-2. Jesus didn't ask us to bring any special skills we don't have, but to bring the gifts He offers, to carry out our part for God's Kingdom.

Jesus asks us to be faithful and proclaim the Gospel through our words, our actions and our deeds. He assures us He'll give the provisions we need. An unwillingness to respond is like saying to Jesus that He hasn't given us what we need. Jesus gives His Church — and you — all the nutrients, all the watering, all the planting that is necessary for His Work to be done.

Yet it's easier said than done, isn't it? Our self interests, personal desires and angst hamper our ability to respond positively. Our love of neighbor is short. Our relationship to God often lacks the zeal to witness of Him to others. Our reliance on our own abilities to sustain our comfortable living standards causes us to shirk our privilege of good Christian stewardship for His kingdom.

Thankfully, God in His great mercy

continues to forgive us, empower us, use us and lead us by the power we need to be God's workers. He sent His Holy Spirit to renew, guide and strengthen us for the work of His kingdom. The Holy Spirit causes conversion — not us. We plant, water and tend. He gives the increase! So who better than Jesus to know the challenges of the work for His kingdom? He knows the work isn't simple or painless. Not every ear you speak to, nor every heart we want to touch will see the presence of Christ when we share the Gospel.

There will be rejection

Surprisingly, there are even people in our towns who don't want to be part of God's eternal Kingdom. Not everyone will welcome our message with open arms.

Jesus said:

"Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

—MATT. 10:21-22

When we share the Good News, Satan isn't happy. He'll throw every opposition, failure and disappointment at us. But Christ's mission that has called us is for the joy of the glory of God, not our own. God is still the source and fountain of the Gospel message. We are His witnesses.

Jesus is calling — young and old alike. He calls us to do His work with the gifts and diversity He showers on us. He doesn't send us out because we're successful. He calls the faithful to bring the glory of God Almighty and His eternal and glorious kingdom to a world that pretends to be asleep.

Synod called us to be *Every One His Witness*. We've continued an initiative called *Each One Reach One*. If all hear the calling to be God's ambassadors, our 26,000 members would be doubled. How are we doing? May God grant us the grace and zeal necessary for us to bring His message throughout the world.

Barr honored with community service award

Dr. Marilyn Barr, a member of First Lutheran Church, Fort Smith, Ark., was recently named the recipient of Fort Smith Noon Exchange (FSNE) Club's prestigious Book of Golden Deeds Award. The honor was presented at the organization's 77th annual Golden Deeds Banquet held March 1 at The Blue Lion at UAFS Downtown in Fort Smith.

The yearly award recognizes a worthy person or group that continuously donates time, talent and energy to help those in need. Barr's history reflects her lifelong commitment to such service:

A Fort Smith native, Barr began her post-college career as an educator at a Lutheran school in the western United States before teaching at Department of Defense schools in Germany. She then progressed through medical school and established her own practice in Fort Smith. She maintained her license following retirement, and often assists members of her congregation, performs physicals on a volunteer basis for the Girl Scouts and has served as a medical officer for community service events. She braved the grim aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, wearing a hazmat suit and breathing apparatus in order to provide medical care to survivors of the 2005 disaster.

On a less spectacular but equally important basis, she serves as a sup-



portive friend to elderly parishioners, keeping them connected to the church and community, providing rides to appointments, running errands and more.

Barr was saluted at the awards ceremony by friend and FSNE member Judith Hansen, who described her as "a wonderful example for the younger generation of what it means to be a servant in Christ to others.

"She has a philosophy of quiet service; she would be happy if all her kindnesses and golden deeds took place far from public view," Hansen added.

Following Hansen's remarks, a very surprised Barr was brought onstage to receive the award. Her humility was evident.

"It's not service, it is just what you do," Barr said.

Congratulations to Dr. Barr!

Sebastian County, Ark., Judge David Hudson (left) and Fort Smith Mayor George McGill presented Dr. Marilyn Barr with the Book of Golden Deeds Award, identifying her as "a shining example of the spirit of volunteerism."

Congregation mission commitment receipts as of March 31, 2019 (3 months)

Anticipated amount (25 percent of budget).....	\$383,069
Actual receipts	\$400,443
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	\$17,374
Use of mission commitment receipts	
Allocated to Synod for world missions.....	\$113,883
Allocated to Tanzania.....	\$6,250
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70 % of receipts) ..	\$280,310
Total receipts	\$400,443
Mission commitment receipts comparison	
Actual receipts as of March 31, 2019	\$400,443
Actual receipts as of March 31, 2018	\$390,610
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$9,833

GOD



One Nation



Pantry, closet restocked

On March 18, 13 members of the Faith, Hot Springs Village, Ark., Ladies Guild went to Zion Lutheran Church, Avilla, to visit its Food Pantry and Clothes Closet as a servant event. Sarah Brown talked about the Food Pantry and Jeanette Irby talked about the Clothes Closet. Seventy-five bags of food were packed and the closet was restocked.

In photo above: Members prepared 75 bags to restock the food pantry. From left, Debbie Kjarland, Shirley Smestad, Ruth Rysan, Jan Wendling, Caryl Galler, Susan Peterson, Veronica Detjens, Judy Kluba, Sherry Galatas, Mary Benke, Linda Benson and Lydia Weichert.

In photo at right: Members also worked to sort clothing and restock the clothes closet. From left, Jeanette Irby, Ruth Rysan and Debbie Kjarland.



CSL summer workshops address contemporary topics

Pastors, church workers and congregation members are invited to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis' (CSL) Summer Workshop Series to explore contemporary topics that influence the practice of ministry and worship.

Hosted by congregations across the country from May through August, and led by Seminary faculty, the workshops offer an opportunity to delve deeply into topics such as biblically responding to conflict, a vision for a more effective confirmation process, the ongoing cre-

ation debate and an introduction to the early church. Several new workshops and venues have been added to this year's schedule.

"These summer workshops offer pastors and laypeople a unique opportunity to study theology with our Seminary professors to gain a deeper understanding of how God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions address contemporary issues and how we might better proclaim and confess Jesus in the church and the world," said Rev. Paul Sieveking, director of Continuing Education.

The cost for each three-day summer workshop is \$140 (unless otherwise noted), which includes Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits.

Registration and payment should be made no later than 14 days prior to the beginning of each workshop. Interested participants should reach out to each workshop contact for directions, lodging and meal information.

Learn more and register for the workshops at csl.edu/summerworkshops or contact Continuing Education at 314-505-7286 or ce@csl.edu.

Bethlehem group visits Ark Encounter



Members and friends of Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn., made a March road trip to Kentucky to visit the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter. Seventeen pilgrims ranging in age from four to 80 enjoyed the two-day trip.

Three children, two youths, four adults and eight seniors traveled from Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn., in March to visit Ark Encounter in Williamston, Ky., and the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky.

On Monday, March 11, the group investigated the Creation Museum's many displays affirming the Scriptural account of creation by God in exactly six days. They viewed geological evidence for a catastrophic flood and learned about the lack of fossil evidence for transitional "kind" species. They spent time in the museum's several theaters, which featured lectures, a 3D film titled "In Six Days" and planetarium presentations.

They also saw unusual live animals like the "zonkey" and "zorse" in the museum's zoo. These crosses between zebras and donkeys or horses are evidence that there can be breeding between animals of the same "kind" as stated in the Bible's description of Noah and the flood, but not between animals of different kinds.

Following an evening of barbecue and karaoke, and Tuesday-morning devotions focusing on Genesis 6, the group took a short bus trip to Williamstown and Ark Encounter — where they were awed by the sheer size of the Ark as soon as it came into view.

"As we walked up to the entrance, one of our youth commented on how small the door was to let the animals into the Ark," said Larry Larson, group leader. "Once we were inside, it was even more astounding as we passed cages for a variety of animals, including dinosaurs. The fascinating thing is the

amount of physics involved to move fresh air into the ark along with fresh water, and to remove what had to be an incredible amount of waste from the ark. There was also an area for growing fresh vegetables for those eight souls to eat on their 150-day voyage.

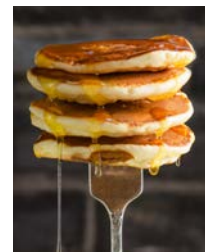
"The Ark was truly the highlight of the trip. Everybody marveled at its incredible size. I commented that Noah needed to live to be 600 just to build it to the dimensions God gave him!"

As a Bethlehem team prepared for a week-long mission trip to West Virginia, and a karaoke fundraiser to finance it, Larson reflected on the growth in faith experienced after visualizing what the words of Genesis 6 relate, and noted that everyone, regardless of age, was thrilled with the trip.

Bethlehem is also preparing for a June visit from Rev. Steve Misch from Del Rio, Texas, who narrated Lutheran Hour Ministries' series on the creation. The series, used by Bethlehem for monthly studies, was filmed at the Creation Museum.

Pancakes at Concordia

With help of seed money received from Thrivent Financial, the annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper was held at



Concordia Lutheran Church, Nashville, on March 5.

More than 50 people attended the event to enjoy pancakes and sausages, cooked by members of Concordia. A Thrivent Action Team organized the event.

Donations of \$696 were received and sent to Karen and Carl Cecil, LCMS Refugee Outreach facilitators who are serving in Germany.

Honoring stubborn fathers

By Frances Bacic

Media/Marketing,
LWML Mid-South District

“Stubborn” is one word to describe my father and many of our fathers. My father is a retired factory worker and a farmer. This past January my father had an accident, which resulted in the loss of his arm. He essentially put his arm too close to a moving part and the rest is now history.

He is stubborn. In this case being stubborn is working in his favor. He did not give up and is determined to live life as he would before the accident. He just may have to find a new way to do things. Do you know my father is already using a chainsaw, feeding his cows and doing much of what he did before his accident? He has determined to do it his way.

For synonyms for the word “stubborn,” a quick look in a thesaurus shows “tenacious,” “unshakeable,” “single-minded,” “intractable,” “steadfast,” “willful,” “perverse,” “persistent,” “determined,” “tough,” “headstrong,” “adamant” and “persevering.” All these words describe our heavenly Father, too.

He is firm in purpose and unwavering. He is fixed in direction when it comes to us and our salvation. Like a piece of flint He is firmly fixed in place and position to do what is necessary to save us.

2 Thess. 3:5 says:

“May the Lord direct your hearts

into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”

Our heavenly Father is also stubborn.

He has not given up on His creation.

We have failed Him and we are still failing Him daily. But He is determined, so determined that he sent His Son to die on the cross in our place.

Ps .51:10:

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

My prayer is that we all live with a stubbornness, being steadfast and unshakeable in our faiths; determined to live as Christ would have us live.



Getty Images

Feel treasured at LWML fall retreats

What is more precious than diamonds? You!

We are each the precious, treasured possession of our heavenly Father, who sought us and claimed us as His own in Christ. From coal to diamonds, we are continually being transformed in Christ, reflecting His glory and light to a dark world.

Join fellow LWML members and guests for a dazzling fall retreat hosted by the district LWML at one

of three locations near you. Dates are Sept 6-8 at the Mount Eagle Retreat Center in Clinton, Ark.; Natchez Trace State Park, Lexington, Ky.; and Eagle Rock Camp in Tallassee, Tenn.

We will walk in the light of God’s Word together, as we lift our voices in praise while encouraging and having fellowship and fun in Christ.

Watch for registration to open soon or see your local LWML for more information.



Lutheran pastors *for life*

Pastors from the Nashville and Middle Tennessee circuits attended a screening of the movie “Unplanned” to show their support for the sanctity of human life. They are, from left, Revs. Lane Reuter, Our Savior, Nashville; Greg Bauch, Ascension, Madison, Tenn.; David McMinn, Shepherd of the Hills, McMinnville, Tenn.; Philip Young, Redeemer, Nashville; Ken Shaw, Trinity, Gallatin, Tenn.; Eric Phillips, Concordia, Nashville; and Erik Christensen, Our Savior, Nashville.



Grace says farewell to long-time cantor

By Rev. Larry Peters

Senior Pastor,
Grace, Clarksville, Tenn.

On Sunday, June 2, the members of Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, Tenn., gave thanks for the life and ministry of their cantor and music director of 22 years, Rocky T. Craft.

Rocky decided to retire from regular playing this year after more than two decades of building a profound legacy and lively music program at Grace. During the time he was cantor, Rocky oversaw the installation of a 65-rank Casavant pipe organ (sanctuary), an 11-rank Moeller pipe organ (chapel), a grand piano and clavichord.

He built a choir of 35 voices that has not only sung at both services each

Sunday morning, but tackled some of the greatest musical literature in special concerts — everything from the Faure *Requiem* to the Christmas portion of the *Messiah* to Stainer's *The Crucifixion*.

He inaugurated a "Music at Grace" concert series that has provided five to seven concerts each year and brought thousands to get to know the Church through these events.

Rocky will be hard to replace. Later this summer, the congregation hopes to announce a suitable successor who can continue all that Rocky has begun. His musical leadership from the console has contributed immensely to the life and impact of the congregation, which is sad to see him retire even though it rejoices in what his leadership has provided to the church over these last two decades.



Teaching families how to cope



In the Mount Elgon region of Uganda, farmers depend on their coffee crops to feed and support their families. There used to be two rainy seasons in the region. Now the rains are unpredictable.

There were often long droughts followed by heavy rains, which caused flooding that brought pests and plant diseases that wiped out entire coffee crops, taking with it a family's only hope of income.

Kayaga Rose and her family know this struggle all too well. The sporadic rain, pests and plant diseases took a toll on her entire family. Aside from their coffee crop, they had few other resources to support themselves. Without their crops, the family was in serious danger of hunger.

To help farmers like Kayaga face such challenges, **Lutheran World Relief** (LWR) has developed ways to help — without controlling the weather!

Through the generosity of donors, Kayaga and many other farmers were taught more effective coffee-production techniques like composting and creating shade, and given access to better equipment and drought-resistant seeds.

The family now has the tools and skills they need to grow quality coffee that sells for good prices, providing income to feed their family. LWR donor support has helped this family to move from survival to stability.

Other children continue to face starvation; other mothers struggle to provide for their children, so LWR's work continues, and every gift makes a difference.

To learn more about the many ways to help break the cycle of poverty and help support lasting change, visit lwr.org.

60 years (!) of Grace, Clarksville

On Sunday, March 31, Grace, Clarksville, Tenn., celebrated its 60th anniversary as a congregation. The original charter Sunday was Easter, March 29, 1959, under the leadership of founding pastor and charter member, the late Rev. Harold Tessmann.

On hand for the celebration was Dave Warren, a charter member who is still a member of Grace, and the son and daughter of Pastor Tessmann, Rev. David Tessmann and Becki Tessmann Welch.

With a festive Divine Service in which Rev. David Tessmann, who is now retired and living in North Carolina, assisted, Rev. Larry A. Peters, senior pastor of Grace for nearly half that history, preached, and the Rev. Daniel M. Ulrich, associate pastor, presided.

During a reception between the services on Sunday morning, the congregation welcomed many special guests and heard Rev. David and Becki talk about the first years of the life of the church — before there was a parsonage, church building or congregation.

A whole series of events is planned for the 60th-anniversary-year celebration. The Fellowship Hall featured a series of scrapbooks on the congregation's life and history, and a new display case in the Narthex showed off the original chalice, baptismal bowl and cover, processional cross, altar cross and other memorabilia from Grace's past.

— Submitted by Rev. Larry A. Peters



From left, Revs. Larry A. Peters, Daniel M. Ulrich and David Tessmann celebrate Grace, Clarksville's, 60th anniversary. Tessmann is the son of the congregation's founding pastor.



Deadline for the September issue is July 15

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.

Send email submissions to: LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to: Judy Otto
150 N. Maury St.
Holly Springs, MS 38635

A safe and sparkling Independence Day!

On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress formally adopted the Declaration of Independence, launching our fledgling nation into a battle for freedom and the right to the inalienable rights with which our Creator endowed us: Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

As John Adams famously wrote to his wife, Abigail, advocating widespread national celebration:

"A Resolution was passed without one dissenting Colony 'that these united Colonies are, and of right out to be free and independent States, and as such, they have, and

of Right ought to have, full power to make War, conclude Peace, establish Commerce and to do all the other Acts and Things which other States may rightfully do.'...I am apt to believe (this day) will be celebrated by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary Festival.

"It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward, forever."

