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The Lutheran Beacon

Let your light shine . . .



Published by the SELC District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod JUNE/JULY 2011

As we reach the end
of the Easter Season
and enter into
Pentecost;;
and as we reach the
end of Spring and
enter into the
Summer season . . .
we should remember
that although it might
be time to take a
break (maybe take a
vacation) -
it's NOT a
time to take a
break from
the Lord.

Annual Spiritual Fellowship Retreat Hosted by St. John LC - Massillon OH

by Colleen Pohlod

"The Way of Grace - Living the Sacramental Life" was this year's theme for the annual retreat held in Sugarcreek, OH and hosted by St. John LC under the leadership of Pastor John Telloni. Additionally, Pastor Chris Cahill from Christ the King LC, Lodi, OH and Vicar Brian Rosenkoetter from St. Mark LC, Steubenville, OH gave presentations and lead small group exercises for the retreat.



The retreat opened with 42 joyful Lutheran voices singing "God Himself Is Present". Pastor Telloni began with a devotion about dinner with a perfect stranger, that is, Jesus himself. Pastor Cahill began the first session "The Way of Grace As Daily Repentance" with an object lesson by giving each group a handful of rocks. The individuals chose a rock that represents how they felt at a time when they had to confess a sin & then another rock to represent how they felt when they had to forgive someone. There were dark & light rocks, rough & smooth rocks, big & small rocks. Discussion then centered on the account of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 33 and on confession and forgiveness. What does confession look like? What does forgiveness look like? Forgiving each other with open arms gets us closer to the goal of forgiveness, which is reconciliation & going forward to the future.

Vicar Brian Rosenkoetter led the group in session two "The Way of Grace as Discipleship Formation (Baptism)". The questions posed were: "How can we know that God is for us? That's He's with us? That He'll always be there for us?" Faith is trust...trust in someone or something. We are trusting God's Word. 2 Cor. 1:18-20 tells us that God's promises in Christ are trustworthy. The small groups took time to write down some promises of God that are meaningful to them. (Mt. 28:20; Jn. 3:16; Mt. 5:2-12; Heb. 2:18; Ro. 8:28....and more).

[continued on page 3]

Keep up with the latest SELC news by visiting our website
See the *Beacon* in color
www.selc.lcms.org

GUARDING AGAINST CHURCH MEMBER THEFT

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Theft of Church Funds

Greed, a root cause of theft, exists in everyone - including church members. The theft of church funds by members occurs infrequently, but it does occur. During my seminary years, I once saw an usher, who thought he was alone in the sacristy, pocket loose cash from the offering plates. He was financing an alcohol addiction. A friend of mine, who owned a detective agency, once related how he used a "peep hole" camera to catch an usher in a Roman Catholic Church regularly pilfering church offerings totaling thousands! Years ago, the treasurer of an organization which pooled donations for Lutheran charities, financed extravagant trips and a large boat on Lake Erie by shifting funds to himself. Prior to the Great Depression, the treasurer of a Lutheran fraternal insurance society surreptitiously slipped funds into personal investments hoping to sell for a profit within a short time and then secretly replace the money. The crash came! He was exposed. In the past there have been cases where even clergymen engaged in the theft of church funds.

No One Should Handle Contributions Alone

> MONEY COUNTERS - Three or more persons should count worship offerings. Loose cash should be tallied twice by different counters. Offering envelopes should be opened in the presence of all and counted twice by different persons. Amounts written on envelopes should be checked to see if they correspond with the contributions within. Cash and check totals should be recorded on an Offering Report Form to be given the church treasurer and financial secretary.

> CHURCH TREASURER - All cash and checks should be given the church treasurer for immediate bank deposit. His tallied totals should match those on the Offering Report Form prepared by the team of money counters.

> FINANCIAL SECRETARY - Amounts written on envelopes should be added and compared with totals on the Offering Report Form. Individual

contributions should be recorded and then reported to members on individual financial statements mailed in July and January. Members should report discrepancies to the financial secretary.

No One Should Pay Bills Alone

> BOOKKEEPER - Checks should be prepared by a bookkeeper. All bills should be approved with signatures of the persons responsible for initiating the bills. Records should be kept.

> SIGNATURES - A minimum of two signatures should be required for checks - that of the treasurer and president.

No One should Handle Funds Alone

> TRANSACTIONS - Investments, purchases beyond the budget, etc., should be approved by the Church Vestry. The Voting Assembly should approve large expenditures.

> FINANCIAL REPORTS - The treasurer and financial secretary should present printed monthly reports to the

Church Vestry.

> AUDIT - An auditing committee should annually review all receipts and expenditures for approval by the Church Vestry.

> PASTORS should be excluded from handling contributions and church funds.

Legal Matters

> CONFLICT OF INTEREST - Self-interest situations among decision makers should be avoided.

> FIDELITY BOND - Crime insurance should be acquired with a minimum coverage of \$500,000.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

www.lcms.org - Resources-Congregations-Administrative Resources-"Congregational Treasurers Manual"-Vol. 1; chapter 14: "Responsibilities of Financial Officers" - Vol. 2; chapt. 20: "Internal Control" - Vol. 2; chapt. 26: "Risk Management". A copy of the treasurers manual may be acquired free, postage paid, by contacting SELC President Carl Krueger at selcdist@wi.rr.com or (1-414-481-0520).



Spiritual Fellowship Retreat [continued from page 1]

God's promises are throughout scripture. We are his children, each of us, through the waters of Holy Baptism. If we truly believe and trust in those promises, what should our life as a Christian look like? When we sin, it stems from a lack of trust in God. You walk the line from baptism to death to Jesus' second coming. Trust in His promises and apply them to those sins you struggle with.

After lunch, we opened with the hymn "Just As I Am" and Pastor Telloni concluded the day with our final two sessions: "The Way of Grace as Nourishment and Unity in Christ (Lord's Supper)" and "The Way of Grace (Summary-Living the Sacramental Life)". On the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35) and the parable of the lost son (Lk. 15:11-32) were discussed. Jesus will come to us along the way, through His Word, the sacraments. He is the source of our life. He is our lifeblood. Confession, absolution, grace, unconditional love, the Lord's supper....these are all found in Luke 15. No matter where we are, God's love is the same - constant- divine love and forgiveness. Being transformed in the Christian life we are to become more like the Father and treat others with the same mercy, love and forgiveness as the Father shows us.

The spiritual fellowship ended with a closing service of Word and Sacrament with hymns, re-affirmation of our baptism, the Lord's prayer, and receiving the body and blood of Christ.



Soli Deo Gloria! To God Alone the Glory!

ORGANIST HONORED FOR HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE

by Rev. George Plvan, EM

Phyllis Brna, organist at St. John the Baptist Lutheran Church, Emporia Virginia for 50 years, was honored at a worship service and recognition luncheon on Sunday, May 1, 2011.

After the playing of the prelude prior to the worship service, Ms. Brna was invited by Reverend Stephen Bocklage, pastor of the congregation, to leave the console of the organ in the balcony and come to the front of the sanctuary. Completely taken by surprise, she was accompanied down the aisle by her brothers Joseph and John Brna.

Pastor Bocklage commended Ms. Brna for her half century of dedicated and faithful service at the organ as well as for the church offices she held over the years. After this rite of recognition and prayer, Ms. Brna joined her family members who were seated together in the first pews of the church for the remainder the service. Betty Anne Barrett took over at of the organ and provided music for the service.

Following the worship service a covered dish luncheon reception was held in Ms. Brna's honor in the church's fellowship hall.

Serving as Master of Ceremonies, Pastor Bocklage introduced Roy E. Schepp who read a poem he created in honor of Ms. Brna and her accomplishments at St. John's.

Rev. George Plvan, former Pastor of St. John LC (1956-1970) spoke of the early years of Ms. Brna's organ playing, the thousands of hours she devoted to practicing the organ and accompanying the singing of the congregation. He told of her willingness to travel to Roanoke Rapids, NC and to Franklin, VA, when Lutheran worship services were conducted in those places. He also reminded the gathering that during the years when St. John LC held worship services in the Slovak language she willingly provided musical accompaniment to the singing. This was not an easy task since she was not familiar with the language and needed guidance and help in coordinating her playing to the congregation's singing!

During the recognition program, a number of letters of congratulations from those who could not be in attendance for the day's celebration,

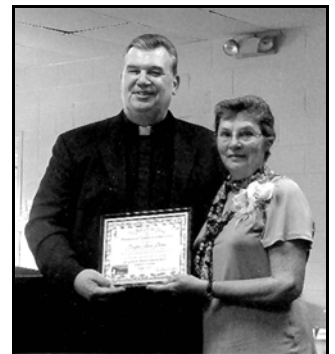
were read by Heather Fajna, Becky Fetko, and Trina Taylor.

Natalie Hartwig, widow of Reverend John Hartwig, another former pastor of St. John (1977-1986), extended congratulations to Ms. Brna. She spoke of the support and assistance Ms. Brna provided to the ministry of her husband and of the appreciation and the love they both had for her while they served the congregation.

Speaking on behalf of the Brna family was Dr. Ted Brna, Ms. Brna's uncle. He provided additional information on the accomplishments of his niece. His congratulatory remarks included insights on the earlier years of Ms. Brna's life that only a family member could supply. His words were not without emotion.

Other remarks were offered by Martha Swenson who grew up alongside Ms. Brna and lived in the same area near the Purdy Road when they were children. She informed the people present of the readiness of her life-long friend Phyllis, to assist with guiding, leading and helping the youth of the church.

Along with his closing remarks a Certificate of Recognition and Appreciation was presented to Ms. Brna by Pastor Bocklage. A memory scrapbook of photos and letters of congratulations, compiled by Betty Lou Seward and Anna



Bocklage, was given by them to their dear friend. A beautiful rose bush was given to the honoree by Anna Bocklage on behalf of the St. John Lutheran Ladies League.

Needless to say Phyllis Brna was surprised, humbled and made speechless by all that took place. Nevertheless it was clear to everyone that she was grateful for the recognition given to her and thankful to the Lord that she was able to serve Him and His people.

The event concluded as the assembly stood and joined in singing the Doxology, a song of praise and thanks to God.

PARTNERSHIP BRINGS GENERATIONS TOGETHER TO SHARE FAITH AND FUN!

by Diane Lenning

Lutheran Haven and St. Luke's Lutheran Church and School have partnered for an Inter-generational (IG) Program engaging seniors and youth in events that promote learning, understanding, and faith between generations for over a year. The most recent event involved Senior Youth Group participants and Seniors from Lutheran Haven's Independent Living Community coming together to enhance the campus of Lutheran Haven.

Benches throughout the Haven campus were in need of refurbishment, so the group seized the opportunity to repaint the benches with Scripture themes. A committee of Haven residents selected Scripture verses they felt would be appropriate and submitted them to the students for interpretation. Diane Stapleton, former set designer and artist at Universal Studios Orlando, currently teaching pre-school at St. Luke's, inspired the students to submit sketches of their Scripture interpretations to the Haven Committee prior to the painting event.

"When the subcommittee members saw the sketches for the first time the room can only be described as filled with the Holy Spirit", said Terri MacFarlane, IG Program Coordinator "You could see the common strength of faith displayed in the drawings."

The event on February 21, 2011 kicked off in the morning with introductions, devotions, and refreshment and then the fun began! Residents joined in to share insights with student participants and choose color schemes. Some even picked up a brush and helped with the backgrounds.

As the morning progressed, the Scriptures began to come to life! Some residents joined in to encourage the students and share stories of



similar experiences, some painted their initials onto the benches as a show of support and participation.

With sublime Florida weather on the day of the event, there was a picnic down by a pond on the Haven campus after the painting was complete to celebrate the outcome and enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

There have been two (2) more bench painting events in March and April and we will continue on with the youth of St. Luke's and the Haven residents as this IG program continues to strengthen our communities and break down barriers between ages and stereotypes, the Lord continues to bless those affected by it.

NOTE: It's that time of the year when our Beacon becomes a two month issue.

June & July and August & September will be combined.

This is your newsletter . . . Articles & Photos are welcome! Send submissions to:



Email: gailmail37-beacon@yahoo.com

Home Phone: 321-752-5519

Cell Phone: 954-401-8452

Deadlines

August/September issue — July 12th

October issue — September 12th

Balance of the year — the 15th of each month

District Youth Gathering

"Come to the Waters"

We rose to new heights at last year's District Youth Gathering in St. Louis. This year, will we sail to new seas on the Jersey Shore and New York Harbor? Our district youth gathering is being hosted in Clark, NJ (just outside New York City) this summer from July 7 – 10.

Western Circuit Groups: If you are interested in bussing out to the youth gathering with the Racine WI group, please contact Tim Hasko before spaces fill up:
262.497.0496 (cellular)



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SELC LWML HUMAN CARE

SELC Human Care Chairman, Nona Schipull

"Open my eyes that I may see," is the beginning of a hymn that our choir likes to sing. While I was visiting relatives in Florida recently, I was privileged to help at a church with the volunteers that make Bibles and devotion books in Braille. They work under the Lutheran Braille Workers who provide the plates for the pages and materials to construct the books and ship them to blind people who want to see Jesus and know more about our Lord and Savior. The book that we worked on was a devotion book of 87 pages. I have no idea what it said because I can't read Braille, but I know that someone will be excited to receive their own Christian devotion book. Each one of us that helped make the books had a part serving others in Christian love.

"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6

A Joyous
Weekend
of
Sharing

LWML Retreat

SELC District Eastern Zone

April 2011



Red River Disaster Generates Legacy Gift

submitted by Robin Paris, Gift Planning Counselor

LCMS Foundation, for Lutheran Haven Foundation & the SELC District

It's hard to believe that something good could come as a result of a terrible natural disaster. But it has.

In early 1997, the Red River, which flows north along the borders of South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota and into Canada, flooded the upper Midwest. Thousands of people were forced out of their homes and businesses.

As soon as people heard about the disaster, donations started to come into LCMS World Relief—eventually adding up to more than a million dollars. Included in those donations was a \$3,000 gift from a woman in California. Hans Springer, LCMS Ministries Support Director of Development for Human Care Ministries (which includes LCMS World Relief), personally went to the Red River area in June 1997 to examine work being done by LCMS World Relief.

So, when the California woman called Springer on a Monday morning in late June to ask how her donation was used, Springer was able to tell her that his funds had helped buy generators, pumps and wet-vacs. "Those folks needed help," Springer told her, "and your gift really helped."

The Start of a Two Relationships

The woman from California, Ethel Hagenlock, told Springer that she had a brother, Clarence Reisner, who wanted to know more about the LCMS World Relief efforts. As he talked to Springer that day, he asked if Springer could help him do something to feed the hungry in this country. Reisner had a sizeable trust fund that he wanted to "do something with" to help other people.

Springer referred him to Frank Spiva, who at that time served as Senior Planned Giving Counselor for the LCMS Foundation in California. Over the next few years, both Springer and Spiva got to know Clarence very well and visited with him many times. Their relationship grew into friendship. Clarence and his sister, Ethel, even gave Springer some of the deep blue larkspur she has grown for years in front of her ranch-style home in an unpretentious subdivision in Reseda.

A Gift for the Lord's Work

Reisner was 94 when he died last December. He left an eight-figure trust in the care of the LCMS Foundation for distribution to various ministries and charities, social service agencies, organizations to feed the hungry, Bible translators, medical clinics, heart associations, colleges, congregations, schools, hospitals, mission societies, plus many others.

"Clarence worked incredibly hard all his life—and with a lot of different people," Spiva said. Reisner owned farms, operated a cold storage plant, had a trucking business and a Christmas tree business, as well as built subdivisions of single family residences.

Since he had seen so many people who needed help over the years, Spiva added, "He had a heart for those people who were having a hard time in life—especially for the hungry and homeless. Only our Lord knows how many souls will be touched by Clarence's wonderful act of stewardship."

In addition to the trust he set up through the LCMS Foundation, Reisner gave away many thousands of dollars each year to charities. "It's a lot harder to give it [money] away than it is to earn it," he commented quite often. Even though he gave away substantial amounts every year, his estate kept growing.

Springer said that when he meets with potential donors, such as Clarence Reisner, "I have an opportunity to help them grow in their faith because of the gifts they make. The church has needs—and we have the opportunity to put those needs in front of the people of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."

"Hopefully," he added, "as they give and as we provide feedback to the donor on how we use what they give, they grow in their faith." As part of the LCMS Ministries Support staff, "We want to grow the giver's heart for the Lord's work," he said, "and people like Ethel and Clarence are a marvelous example of that."

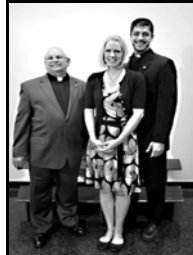
Happening Around Our SELC District

Welcome!!!

Concordia [Ft. Wayne & St. Louis]: Vicars and Candidates assigned to our SELC District.



LtoR: Rev. Dr. Carl Krueger, Jr. Pres.
SELC District, Polly and Eric Rapp,
Travis and Nichole Lauterbach



LtoR: Rev. Dr. Carl Krueger, Sonya &
Christopher Weber

Vicars:

Travis E. Lauterbach, Zion (Clark NJ)

Eric W. Rapp, St. John & St. Mark (Massillon & Steubenville OH)

Roberto E. Rojas, St. Paul (Whiting IN)

Christopher Weber, St. Luke's (Oviedo FL)

Candidate Placed:

Matthew G. Rasmussen, St. John (Hazelton PA)

June/July Calendar of Events

June

11 Deaconess Commissioning and Installation,
Helen DeMario, Peace, Galloway NJ

12 Conduct worship service at Peace, Galloway
NJ

17* *Wedding, Colorado Springs, CO

24-26 LWML International Convention, Peoria IL

July

8-10 Luther League Convention, Zion, Clark NJ

19-30 Mission Trip to Brazil with Rev. Biber and
members of St. Lucas, St. Louis MO

* personal event for Rev. Krueger

Make Bible Reading a Family Affair

Rev. Thomas Daniel EM and his wife, Louise have put a little diversity into their daily Bible readings. Their goal is to *read a psalm a day together* (that'll take up almost half the year). They take turns reading, which keeps them both involved. Wonder what they'll read next?!

Free Money!

by Rev. Ron Meyr (Faith-Viera FL)

Check out your Concordia Health Plans bulletins and look into the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit. **For many of our churches, this does not apply**; however, there are some which may see a significant "rebate" of Medicare premiums or Concordia Health Plan premiums. It was part of the new Obama Health Care Plan passed last December.

In a nutshell, the U.S. government has always encouraged small businesses to help pay for the medical insurance premiums of their workers - this encouragement is also extended to churches.

Here is the skeleton parameters -- of course, you would have to consult your own financial advisors for more details.

--Up to 25% of Concordia Health premiums, or the cost of Medicare withholding and regular income tax withholding (whichever is less), can be rebated back to the church.

--The church can have no more than 10 "full-time equivalent" workers. So, for example, two half time preschool teachers count as 1. This includes "ministers of the Gospel."

--Your average wages for workers cannot exceed \$50,000 (under \$25,000, you get the greatest benefit). Now, for the purpose of coming up with the average, "ministers of the Gospel" salaries aren't included.

--Before you get too excited, if you are in a church which has more than 10 "full-time equivalent workers" you don't qualify. (***Don't forget, if you have separate corporations between school and church, that you may qualify without knowing it.***) If you are in a church where the minister is the only one paid, you won't qualify (since they pay their own Medicare taxes quarterly -- the church doesn't send in any money for a "minister of the gospel" -- they are considered self-employed). This credit works best with some church staff (and/or preschool staff).

--It is called a tax credit, but I can hear you thinking "churches don't pay taxes." True. . . . but you get a check back from the government. Go figure! Since when has the U.S. Tax Code made sense, in particular one which wasn't even read before it was passed?

Questions? Call Concordia 1-888-927-7526 ext. 6744, Cynthia. Or see your latest Concordia Benefits Bulletin. The two forms to fill out are 8941 and 990-T. Takes less than an hour.

Look What's Happening Around the LC-MS

Retreat for Single Church Workers

Grace Place Lutheran Wellness Ministries has been providing continuing educational retreats for 12 years, encouraging (over 4500) pastors and teachers to be good stewards of their whole health so they can serve well and with longevity.

Grace Place is pleased to announce the 2011 retreat for single clergy and teachers - single by choice or loss. ***It will be held June 6-11 at Glen Eyrie Retreat Center in the Garden of the Gods, Colorado Springs, CO*** - a spectacular setting in the Rockies focused around a true Scottish Castle at the base of Pike's Peak. The five-day, five-night retreat will examine vocational and personal discernment and balance of body, mind, spirit, financial and relational health. Registration is \$395 which covers all costs. There is easy access by air or auto into Colorado Springs. To register, visit the website at www.graceplaceretreats.org or call them at 314-842-3077.

We remember in prayer our brothers and sisters in Japan. The LCMS is committed to supporting relief efforts in Japan through Japan Lutheran Church--the Synod partner church there--and the West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, which operates Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary in Kobe. funds gathered through congregations sent by individuals can be sent to: LCMS World Relief and Human Care; 1333 South Kirkwood Road; St. Louis, MO 63122-7295

Closer to home, we remember in prayer our brothers and sisters who have been devastated by the tornados and flooding. Donations can also be made online at www.lcms.org/worldrelief.

The Bible on Trial

Lutheran Hour Ministries, in partnership with Envoy Productions, is proud to present The Bible on Trial: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt, a full-length broadcast program for television. The Bible on Trial lays the overarching question before some of the world's foremost authorities in biblical scholarship and ancient history: "Are the Bible and its claims trustworthy?"

A panel of experts—including Dr. Paul L. Maier of Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich.; Dr. Randall Price of Liberty University, Lynchburg, Va.; Dr. Jeff Kloha of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. and Joel Lampe of The Bible Museum, Goodyear, Ariz.—weighs the evidence from contemporary non-Christian writers and archaeological, bibliographic and eyewitness sources. The balanced testimony from these scholars affirms the reliability of the biblical record. The program concludes with a call to the viewer: "What is your verdict?"

The Bible on Trial airs nationally June 18 on the Inspiration Network (INSP) at 6:00 PM Eastern time. The Inspiration Network is on DirecTV, Dish and more than 2800 cable networks. to find a INSP station near you, visit <http://www.insp.com/findinsp>.

For airing times, visit the broadcast guide at www.thebibletrial.com/broadcastguide.asp.

Congregations desiring information to publish about airing times near them can find brief promotional announcements suitable for bulletins and newsletters at www.lhm.org/newsroom/bulletinannounce.asp. Please check back periodically to get information about additional airings across the country.

NEW! BE WELL REWARDS AVAILABLE SOON FOR PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS

Concordia Plan Services is introducing a new program to compliment its Be Well...Serve Well health and wellness initiative. The new program is designed to encourage Concordia Health Plan (CHP) members to take the next steps toward living healthier lives. Specifically, the new Be Well Rewards program, which will run from May 1-December 31, 2011, offers CHP workers and enrolled spouses up to \$250 each for engaging in healthy behaviors. The Be Well Rewards program features a menu of healthy activities these members can complete. Each activity is worth 25-100 points, and members can earn up to 250 points. Points convert to dollars on a debit card or store gift card, up to \$250 per person. Concordia Plan Services will be providing additional information by mail to all workers and employers who are participating in the Concordia Health Plan in April. Be sure to watch your mail for these details.

In addition, a new website, www.BeWellServeWell.com will be available by May 1st, 2011, which will be the site members will use to access the activities and tracking features of the program as well as find detailed information about the rewards program, including a comprehensive frequently asked questions document.

2011 Luther League Convention
July 7 - 10, 2011

Come to the Waters

A decorative graphic consisting of a series of stylized, overlapping wavy lines that resemble water or clouds, positioned horizontally across the middle of the page.

Zion Lutheran Church
Clark, New Jersey
Registration: \$135 by June 1st
See www.lutherleague.com
for registration packet
and more information