

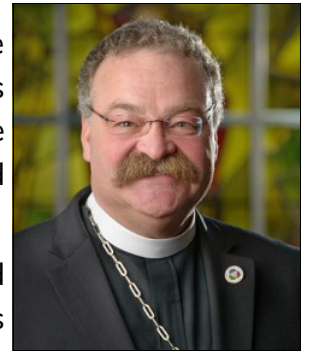


LCMS Synod President Elected

The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, having received 51.76 percent of the votes cast, is the president-elect of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) for a fourth term of office, 2019–2022.

The nomination process for the position of Synod president began last fall with the mailing of nominating ballots to all congregations of the Synod. All nominations were required to be submitted by Feb. 20, or five months prior to the start of the Synod convention, when the ballots, received by an outside auditor, were tallied and delivered to the secretary of the Synod.

The resulting candidates for the office of president were the three ordained ministers who received the highest number of votes in the nominations process and who consented to serve if elected. The three nominees for Synod president were Rev. Dr. Harrison; the Rev. Dr. David P.E. Maier, president of the LCMS Michigan District; and the Rev. Timothy M. Klinkenberg, senior pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Orange, Calif.



Four weeks prior to the convention, the secretary's office provided a secure method and opportunity for two voting delegates registered by each congregation or parish to participate in the vote via electronic balloting services provided by Election-America, a Garden City, N.Y., company (now to be known as YesElections) that conducted the balloting via a Web-based voting site, June 22–25. The voters in the presidential election were the 6,449 pastoral and lay voters validly registered by the congregations and parishes of the Synod (Bylaw 3.12.2.3) before the March 24 deadline, or their substitutes (as validly submitted before June 15).

The results of the ballot tallied and reported to the secretary of the Synod by Election-America are as follows:

Harrison was voted president-elect: received 3,014 votes (51.76 percent);

Maier received 2,323 votes (39.89 percent); and

Klinkenberg received 486 votes (8.35 percent).

The bylaws of the LCMS instruct the secretary of the Synod to notify the candidates in the Synod's presidential election of the results of the balloting at least two weeks prior to the convention. The candidates were informed on June 26th of the results of the June 22–25 ballot.

For more information about the convention or candidates, please see www.lcms.org/convention.

Managing Rejection

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Sorry for Yourself?

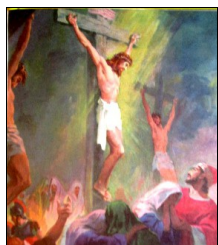
"Have a Happy Face!" (Humph! Easy to say when things are going well. Not so easy when your world turns topsy turvy and you're rejected.) "Cheer up! Throw yourself a party." (Yeah! How about a pity-party.)

Elijah Rejected

The O.T. prophet Elijah knew what it was like to be rejected. Overwhelmed with the hostility of wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, he slipped into the pit of self-pity. For boldly speaking against idol worship, Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him. He became a man on the run. At one time he was so discouraged he fell asleep praying God would take His life. God later confronted him hiding in a cave. Full of the pain of rejection, Elijah griped and complained. God lovingly uplifted Elijah from the swamp of self-pity and restored him to a powerful prophetic ministry. Read about it in *1 Kings 19*.

Jesus Rejected

Jesus, the Son of God descended from heaven, should have been overwhelmingly respected. Instead, He was



frequently insulted and rejected. Emotionally stressed, sweating blood while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him." (Luke 22:43) Uplifted, He calmly and willingly carried His cross

to Calvary to be crucified for us.

Rejection Caused by Others

The devil uses people to trip us up and cause rejection, especially when we're doing something good. Elijah's rejection was caused by others. He was faithfully following God's will when Ahab and Jezebel murderously rejected him. Our sinless Savior was unjustly rejected through no fault of His own. St. Paul was unfairly rejected. 2 Cor. 11:23-33 describes his unjust imprisonments, floggings, beatings, stonings, betrayals, etc. His sufferings, however, did not plunge him into the mire of self misery. Instead, he writes to the Colossians: "I rejoice in what I suffered for you."

(Col. 1:24) He writes to the Church at Philippi (and to us): "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4) The word, "always", reminds us to rejoice during bad times as well as good. Good advice when we suffer rejection for following God's will and doing good. After fulfilling His Father's will, Jesus ascended into heaven. Christians, at times rejected on earth, will be accepted in heaven.



Self Caused Rejection

More often than not, offending someone causes a retaliatory response. Hurt someone and you may end up with a bloody nose. King Saul blew it. Because of hostility, pride and sinful decisions, he was rejected by God. (1 Sam. 15:24-26) Then again, the pain of rejection could be internally imagined. Worrywarts sometimes falsely create negative images of themselves and their life circumstances. Losing self-confidence makes them tense and affects their performance. We sometimes see this in athletes.

Tips for Handling Rejection

- **Self Examination** - Are you the cause of your rejection or something/someone else?
- **Take a Nap** - When feeling rejected, rest up. A rested, clearer mind can better see causes.
- **Consult a Close Friend** - Discuss your feelings. A frank discussion may reveal things overlooked.
- **Realize Spiritual Warfare** - The devil is our enemy. His name, Satan, means Accuser. He accuses us before God and us personally to induce feelings of rejection. (Job 1-2) (Zechariah 3)
- **Engage the Spiritual War** - Seek battle strategies in God's Word. Become a prayerful warrior.
- **Feel Rejected by God for Your Sins?** Repent and believe the Gospel's full forgiveness. (John 3:16)
- **Feel Rejected by God Because of Troubles?** Trust Him. He lovingly disciplines. (Heb.12:4-11)
- **Be Grateful** - Remembering your good, God-given qualities & blessings should give you a happy face.

RELATED RESOURCES

www.selc.lcms.org - Stewardship - Life Issues
"Controlling Stress"
"Handling Difficult People"

Celebrating Installation of Pastors to the SELC District

Holy Cross Installs New Pastor

by Dorothy Lux

Holy Cross Church in Alsip, Illinois celebrated the installation of their new pastor, Rev. Daniel Murray of Chatham, Ontario, Canada on Saturday, May 18. Participating in the service of installation were SELC District President Rev. Wally Vinovskis from Macungie, PA, Rev. Dr. Carl Krueger from Cudahy, WI, Rev. Dr. Kevin Bergmann from Munster, IN, Rev. Luke Jacob from Racine, WI, and Rev. John Gutz from Streator, IL.



A lunch reception followed in the church fellowship hall to welcome Pastor Murray, his wife Julia and sons Ben and Sam. May God bless Pastor Murray in his new ministry at Holy Cross.



l to r: Dr. Rev. Kevin Bergmann, Dr. Rev. Carl Krueger, Rev. Wally Vinovskis, Rev. Murray, Rev. Luke Jacob and Rev. John Gutz

Zion Installs New Pastor

by Doug & Nona Schipull

Jeremy Heilman was installed as Pastor of Zion Ev. Lutheran Church at a worship service at Zion on June 8. Rev. Waldemar Vinovskis, SELC President, was the Officiant and Rev. Dr. Carl Krueger, SELC President Emeritus, delivered the sermon.

Other members of the clergy participating in the service and the laying on of hands and blessing of



Pastor Heilman were Rev. Bill Geis (Zion's spiritual son), Rev. Mark Zuehsow (Vacancy Pastor), Rev. Luke Jacob (Pentecost, Racine, WI, 3rd VP of SELC), Rev. Richard Ramirez (Dr. Martin Luther, Chicago IL), Rev. John Henry (St. Paul, Whiting, IN), and Rev. John Gutz (Holy Trinity, Streator, IL).

Hymns and Scripture readings were centered around the theme "Here am I, send me." (Isaiah 6:8). The Processional Hymn was "Lift High the Cross." Carrying the cross was Crucifer Kumelachew Stoller. Acolytes were Emilie and Jaimee Stoller; Organist was Nona Schipull.

A luncheon banquet to celebrate the installation and welcome Pastor Heilman and his family was held at Allegra Banquets in Schiller Park, IL.

We thank and praise our Almighty God for answering our prayers for sending us a new pastor to serve the Lord at Zion.

The entire Installation Service can be viewed on Zion's website: www.Zionnorridgeil.org

BITS & PIECES



Rev. Otto Baker – We thank God for watching over Pastor Baker during his hospitalization. Pastor Baker is now home to continue his recovery.

We ask for your prayers for Pastor and Rosemary Baker that God's healing and caring hands will be with them through his convalescence.



to **Rev. Richard Ramirez**, Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Dr. Martin Luther (Chicago IL), and his family upon the death of his Mother, Neva Ramirez, on July 7, 2019. The funeral was held at DML on July 12 and Internment followed at the U.S. Military National Cemetery near Santa Fe, NM. Rev. Ramirez's Father, David, was a Veteran and much of the Ramirez Family resides in the Santa Fe area.

Don Roegge Retires

SELC President Waldemar Vinovkis presents **Donald Roegge** with a plaque noting the District's gratitude for Don's work on behalf of the SELC District at St. John's in Hazelton, PA on June 30. May the light and love of Christ continue to shine forth in your life for many others to see. Thank you for your dedicated service to the Lord, Jesus Christ, and His Church.



SMP Training Completed



Pastor Alan Mercer successfully completed his SMP training at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. We congratulate him and ask for God's continued guidance for Pastor Mercer and the congregation at Peace (Galloway NJ).

St. Luke's CONCERT SERIES

Save the Date!



Concerts are FREE and Open to the Public!

Fall Season 2019

BRASS BAND OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
Matinee: 2pm | Evening: 7pm

ORLANDO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19 | 7PM

UCF SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16 | 7PM
Open Dress Rehearsal:
Friday, November 15 | 6pm

BRASS BAND OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

THREE PERFORMANCES:
Friday, December 6 | 7pm
Saturday, December 7 | 2pm & 7pm

Spring Season 2020

ORLANDO CONCERT BAND

SATURDAY, JANUARY, 25 | 7PM
Open Dress Rehearsal:
Friday, January 24 | 7pm

UCF SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 | 7PM
Open Dress Rehearsal:
Friday, February 14 | 6pm

LUTHERAN CANTATA CHOIR AND CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

SUNDAY, MARCH 29 | 3PM
FREE Reception Following Performance

ORLANDO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

SATURDAY, APRIL 18 | 7PM

Check out The Lutheran Beacon in full color

WWW.SELC.LCMS.ORG

NOTES WORTH "NOTING"

Clergy Housing

The Freedom from Religion Foundation, or FFRF, has decided not to pursue an additional challenge of the clergy housing allowance at the Supreme Court level. This means that clergy housing and parsonage allowance provisions will likely to remain in place for tax year 2019 and for years beyond.

For those unfamiliar with court events, the legal battle over the clergy housing allowance has persisted for nearly a decade. FFRF claims that the clergy housing allowance favors clergy as a special class of taxpayer and penalizes ordinary taxpayers and 501(c)(3) organizations who lack such a provision.

FFRF initially won victories at the district court level in 2013 and 2017, but lost at Appeals Court. The next step for FFRF would be to appeal to the US Supreme Court, but they state on their website "After "counting heads," we concluded that any decision from the current court would put the kibosh on challenging the housing allowance for several generations."



Reaching Rural America FOR CHRIST

a newsletter of LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission

Providing free monthly webinars on topics relevant to congregations in town and country setting.

Learn more about them at www.lcms.org/rstm. For information about events or contact their office at 888-463-5127.

To view their monthly newsletter, go to: <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=1308#rstmnewsletter>

Websites Worth Knowing About

* The LCMS website for church worker wellness:
<https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/church-worker-wellness>

*The Basin and Towel (including a section for resources for SELC workers)
www.basinandtowel.org

curated and administered by Chris Cahill, D-MN., Ministerial Care Coordinator of the SELC District

*The SELC District 2019 Professional Church Workers Conference Website has been updated – Now including photo and media galleries, plus all the homilies, reports mentioned by Darrell Zimmerman, and the conference survey results on the page "A Bit of a Blog".
<http://selc2019pcwc.strikingly.com/>

*The Look-up conference on mental health and the church is coming - Monday, October 7, 2019 to Fort Wayne. This one day event will provide practical approaches for addressing mental wellness and reducing stigma around mental illness. Early Bird Registration open July 1st. Enter your email at www.LookUpConference.org to receive a reminder when registration goes live!

Want to share just a tidbit of information on what's happening in your church . . . but don't have time to "get to it"? Just send a line or two or a photo with a caption and we'll include it on our "Bits & Pieces" page

The Lutheran Beacon

This is your newsletter . . .

Articles & Photos are welcome!

Send to: gailpete37@yahoo.com

Gail Peterson, Ed.

**DEADLINE FOR THE OCTOBER
ISSUE IS SEPTEMBER 12TH**

Faith Viera Celebrate Ordination Anniversaries

by Pastor Ron Meyr

Sunday, June 9th was a special day at Faith Viera (Rockledge FL). Former Assisting Minister, Al Bielenberg was celebrating his 65th anniversary of ordination from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. July also marks his 90th birthday. Because this is Florida, the church has a considerable number of retired and active pastors and so Pastor Al suggested we celebrate ALL THIRTEEN ORDAINED CLERGY WHO WORSHIP REGULARLY AT FAITH VIERA --ranging from Pastor Al (65th) and all the way "down" to Pastor Kevin Duff (3 years!)

All ordained clergy had a display set up of their positions, seminaries, and major ministries which people browsed between services. Clergy recognized included:

John Baker (American Baptist Seminary) 1980, Midvale, Idaho; Ontario, Oregon church and U.S. Air Force Chaplain (retired)

Al Bielenberg (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis 1954) Tennessee, Baltimore, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Frank Burkett, Southeast Bible College (Assembly for God), 1974

Kevin Duff, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2016; Faith Viera, FL

Dr. Doug Fountain, Concordia Theological Ft. Wayne, Ind. 1983, Lake Worth, FL and Family Counselor, Faith Viera

Curtis Heydt, Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, 1977, Chaplain, U. S. Army, retired

Alan Koch, Concordia Seminary 1994, retired, Sherman Oaks, CA, Clewiston, FL (former Dr. of Music Ministry and principal Lake Worth, FL)

Rosalie Norman-McNaney, Harvard Divinity, Gordon Cromwell, ordained American Baptist, Cranston R.I. and Vitas Hospice Chaplain

Ron Meyr, Concordia Seminary St. Louis 1980, Sask. New Jersey, Viera, FL

James Peterman, 1955 St. Mary's Roman Catholic Seminary, Baltimore, Army Chaplain, retired.

George Richards, 1980 SW Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth TX and Melbourne, FL

Harlan Schoenrock, Concordia, St. Louis 1970; Covington, London, Wales, Melbourne, FL

Frank Tantillo, 2004 ordained Fruitland Baptist Bible College; Perry GA; Henderson, NC, Melbourne, FL

As Pastor Meyr said, "It doesn't matter where you start, as long as you end up Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod and SELC!" (well, he didn't actually say that, just probably thought it!)

What's Happening at the Haven

by Dianne Leining

The lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer don't seem to fit at the Haven. Our residents are anything but. We have a very active summer and sometimes it does get a little crazy!!

Before it got too hot, we took a Paddle Boat ride down the St. John's River while enjoying a wonderful lunch prepared fresh on the boat. There were several sightings of Florida wildlife and flora along the banks. It was a great way to spend a relaxing afternoon with friends.

In June, in connection with St. Luke's Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Counseling Services the Haven provides space for an Alzheimer's/Dementia Support Group to meet twice a month. It is a help to our residents that are caregiver's for their loved ones.

We visited the Museum of Seminole County History. There was so much to see and learn about our home county. There was even a section on Oviedo and how the Duda family began their generous works and the beginnings of their farming of the celery crops. We had a wonderful guide that told us many stories of how our area came to be civilized and grew. After all that knowledge, we just had to stop at our favorite German restaurant, The Willow Tree Café and unwind.

On the Summer Solstice, we held a fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Association. They deemed that day, "The Longest Day", so we started early with

a pancake breakfast, followed by a great exercise workout to kick things off for our fun filled day. Throughout the day residents participated in a scavenger hunt following clues and visiting different areas of our campus. In the fellowship hall our activity staff hosted a heated and fun filled volleyball game with our residents and staff which never seemed to end. Heading down to the administration office was ladder toss and corn hole games with some of our favorite Haven staff, Linda Kirk and Jerry Griffing. Chef Joe provided a light lunch with sandwiches and soup, all the while collecting donations. With drinks in hand, we started back up in the heat with a fun some fun water games. Our residents participated in a water balloon toss, parachute game, and water gun fun. After our water fun, we ended the day with a late afternoon matinee, that John Wayne epic "The Longest Day." After all was said and done, our generous residents came through and helped us raise \$1,600 for the Alzheimer's Association.

Our annual 4th of July luncheon was the biggest ever with 159 residents enjoying bar-b-qued chicken, brisket and all the traditional picnic type trimmings. We played several games, sang patriotic songs and voted best red, white and blue attired residents.

We are grateful for all our freedoms and know that our Lord is pouring His blessings and grace on all the residents and staff of the Haven!

See Page 8 for photos of our summer fun!



2019 LWML National Convention, Mobile, Alabama

Report of Western Zone Delegate, Julie Stoller

submitted by Nona Schipull

The 38th Biennial LWML National Convention was held June 20-23rd in Mobile, AL, hosted by the members from the Florida-Georgia, Gulf States, and Louisiana-Mississippi Districts. The convention theme was "In Praise to the Lord!", based on 1 Chronicles 16: 23-24. The Convention Goal Statement was: "Led by God's power, we praise and proclaim the Lord among all the nations.

The first day's events included "Servant Connection" projects, "Gifts from the Heart" collection, delegate orientation, and district caucuses during the day. The opening worship service and celebration of the Lord's Supper that evening was jubilant, with 3,000+ voices joining to sing "Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng" as the processional anthem. The Rev. Dr. Ulmer Marshall, Jr., of Trinity Lutheran Church, Mobile, AL was the Proclaimer, reminding us that "Praise is what we do as we Remember God's wonderful works, Tell others what great things the Lord has done, and Praise Him and look forward to what He will do for us. The mass choir sang two pieces, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks", and "Of the Father's Love". Our spirits were nourished in Holy Communion which was served using beautiful ceramic communion ware created by a local Gulf Shores artist. The opening offering, which amounted to \$43,693.31, was designated to contribute to the 2019-2021 LWML Mission Goal.

Friday, the second day, began with singing, led by the Rev. Dr. Dien Ashley Taylor, our pianist and song leader. The banner procession included the official LWML banner carried by President Patti Ross. District banners were carried in by the District Presidents, accompanied by Young Women Representatives. The banners were unique and beautiful displays reflecting the convention theme, "In Praise to the Lord!".

The first Bible Study, led by Donna Pyle, was titled, "Tell the Story of His Glory." Part 1 was based on the story of King David's first attempt to return the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem as told in 1 Chronicles chapter 13. David was an involved and passionate leader, yet his first attempt to bring back the Ark of the Covenant ended in the death of Uzzah, one of the Levites, because the Ark was being transported improperly. We are reminded the God is holy and His Word is to be obeyed.

We were asked to think about how we treat His Word. Do we share it with everyone? Do we approach Him and His Word in reverent fear and respect?

Delegates voted on Bylaws Amendments and the Mission Goal for the biennium. The Rev. Dr. Brent Smith, gave the Keynote Address, encouraging us to sing, tell, declare and go, in joy, to the mission field here and abroad, pressing on in the mission of God, sharing the love of Jesus Christ. The Mites in Action Speakers for the day included Jaclyn Rychel, of Ministry in Mission, Haiti, and Lynn Corker, of Women of the Pearl, Uganda, and Jean Jaskierny, of Tanzanian Sewing Center. Friday evening's entertainment was provided by Joe Castillo, Sand Artist.

Saturday morning the Mission in Motion Pledge Walk was begun with the blowing of the shofar by Steve Cohen and was led by the Excelsior Band of Mobile. 848 walkers proceeded around the Mobile waterfront and raised \$59,612.79 for mission grants.

Saturday morning's meeting began with the Bible Study Part 2 - "Tell the Story of His Glory." Donna Pyle reminded us that our relationship with God is personal. She enumerated ways to commemorate God walking with you by: journaling what God has done, setting apart time to meditate on His Word, talking about His mercy often, using everything around you to remind you of the mercy of God, and praising God. The Mites in Action Speakers this day were Laura Davis Hemminger, of Lutherans for Life, and the Rev. Gregory Manning, of NOLA 4H.

Saturday afternoon session the Election of Officers was held with the following results: Debbie Larson – President, Marie Chow – Vice President of Organizational Resources, Dcn. Betty Knapp – Vice President of Special Focus Ministries, Karla Koehler – Treasurer, and Rev. Brian B. Noack – Pastoral Counselor. The highlight of the day was the revealing of the Mission Grants for 2019-2021. The Grant Goal was enough to fund the top 21 grants. We stood and joined hands and sang "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." The bar has been raised--our new goals are in place. May we respond to God's blessings by promoting and supporting these missions "In Praise to the Lord!"

[continued on Page 10]

[LWML - continued from Page 9]

Sprinkled throughout the convention meetings were visits by “Glory Mae”, better known as Jan Struck, the Humorist Interrupter. Glory Mae let us into humorous insights of convention life through conversations with her friend Marva Lee. She changed her cantankerous behavior as her interaction with LWMLers progressed and became “Glory Will” anxious to work on service projects, by the end of the weekend. Convention participants were also given a welcome to Lexington, KY, the sight of the 39th Biennial Convention, June 24-27, 2021. Saturday night concluded with a performance by the Voices of Mobile, a college choir who sang songs old and new for our entertainment.

Sunday morning our sessions came to an end with Mites in Action Speakers, Stephanie Schulte and Lauren Awe, of LCMS Mercy Medical Word, and the installation of new officers. The convention was then closed with a Service of Sending, with Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Walton, President, LCMS Florida-Georgia District, Proclaimer, reminding us that we are ordinary women serving an extraordinary God. The Gifts from the Heart were dedicated to the four agencies receiving them: Women's Resource Center, The Penelope House, Home of Grace, and NOLA 4H.

LWML Mission Grants for 2019-2021—Paid for by “Mites” Contributions

1. Water and the Word for Rural Schools in Kenya, \$80,000
2. Teach Me Too—Preschoolers with Learning Needs in Austin (LSEM), \$100,000
3. Mission Outreach for At-Risk Young Women in Africa, \$100,000
4. God's Grace for This Generation (LAMP), \$100,000
5. God's Word Changes Everything (LBT), \$95,000
6. Mobile Medical Mercy Mission Bus for Guatemala, \$100,000
7. Restoring Hope for Detroit Children and Families, \$100,000
8. Lights for Christ Scholarships in Guatemala, \$95,000
9. Wind River Indian Reservation Transportation at Fort Washakie in Wyoming, \$40,000
10. Ministry in Motion at Trinity in Mobile, AL, \$58,000
11. Touching the Living Word (LBW), \$100,000
12. Women's Witness and Mercy Asia—Mission Central, \$100,000
13. Digital Media Development (LFL), \$30,000
14. Hope and Healing Hub of Downtown Lincoln, NE, \$50,000
15. Pre- and Post-Seminary Training for Local Church Workers in Africa, \$62,650
16. Preparing Leaders for Tomorrow (LCMS School Ministries), \$80,000
17. Christ for You, Anytime, Anywhere (KFUO Radio), \$60,000
18. Sri Lanka Multipurpose Building Construction, \$50,000
19. Making Jesus Known in the U.S Ethnic Communities at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, \$100,000
20. Music Outreach, Classes, and Resources on the Border in El Paso, TX, \$98,400
21. LCMS Deaconess Ministry (LCMS Office of International Mission), \$39,523

A Rare and Unforgettable Moment

(A minuscule example of God's creative genius as reflected in the First Article of the Creed)

by Pastor Ken Ballas, EM

Part II

As if the aforementioned unexpected simultaneous sightings in an otherwise nondescript dead tree were not enough to assimilate in just a few minutes that glorious late spring morning, also observed alighting in a bush between me and this remarkable tree was a perky Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher holding tightly in its beak a dragonfly-like insect nearly half as long as itself.

Seemingly oblivious to my presence, the tiny Gnatcatcher was obviously preoccupied with figuring out how to ingest its “super-sized breakfast” without choking – a seemingly formidable task the feathered sprite finally managed to accomplish before elegantly scraping the side of its beak on a napkin-like twiglet and darting off into the underbrush just to the right of the trail. “Some appetite for a Gnatcatcher,” I thought to myself.

Clearly that morning was a privileged “rarest of moments” literally overflowing with opportunities for experiencing first-hand in highly concentrated form fairly common yet perhaps otherwise “once-in-an-earthly-lifetime” samplings of the magnificent handiwork of our powerful and loving Creator-Redeemer God.

For example, the female Cardinal's compliance in satisfying the voracious appetite of a young Cowbird called to mind my wonderment of a summer scene decades earlier in Connecticut where I chanced to observe a pair of adult Cowbirds with a fully grown streaked-breast juvenile conveniently perched on the same tree branch between them.

What primeval instinct motivated that still only week's-old Cowbird to choose to bond with this parasitic duo (likely the fledgling's biological parents) who would now “mentor” this youngster regarding how to propagate its race by victimizing one of dozens of other potential

foster parent species living in a variety of nesting habitats? The fascinating display that materialized in a matter of minutes that June morning was repeated in only a slightly lesser degree the very next day as while walking with my Lois and our granddaughter, Haley, along that same trail but in the opposite direction shortly before dusk resulted in another amazing influx of birds perched in the very same tree: several Robins and Catbirds, a Flicker Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow Warbler and Song Sparrow.

That other hikers (some with dogs on leash) passed within a few feet of this plethora of roosting winged creatures without disturbing (or likely noticing!) added birds entering or leaving the exposed branches of what I, too, would have perhaps earlier dismissed as little more than an unsightly seemingly useless arboreal candidate for a fireplace.

I now know that the Creator and Preserver of all life also had in mind a different purpose for that still nameless tree as an unusually welcoming gathering-place as well as veritable feast for the eyes of a privileged few observers of what I prefer to call (also among some Audubon Society friends) “God's birds” – reason indeed not only to echo ecological or environmental concerns reminiscent of words like, “Woodman, spare that tree!” but also from a theological perspective in keeping with the psalmist and hymn-writer alike, “MY GOD, HOW GREAT THOU ART!” (see Psalm 104:2)

2016 note: Sadly, that same tree, its roots long rotted with age, was eventually found lying broken across the trail having obviously collapsed from its own weight (I still have a few pieces of that old yet indelibly memorable sampling of the Creator's handiwork and divine purpose in being an essential part of our still beautiful world).



SEPTEMBER 23 - 27

POWER WEEK

MINNEAPOLIS
SAVE THE DATE!



(Twin Cities Location to be announced)

POWER WEEK includes the following **Core Trainings**:

Churches Planting Churches – Monday-Tuesday, Sep. 23-24

Certified Trainer Training* – Wednesday, Sep. 25

Church Planting Essentials – Thursday-Friday, Sep. 26-27

These Core Church Multiplication Trainings are being offered by the Center for United States Missions at no cost to participants.

(Participants are responsible for their own travel, lodging and some meals)

District Presidents and Mission Execs are encouraged to select and send 3-5 persons to be trained in these curricula and certified as ***trainers for their Districts***.

- Congregation leaders, planters, pastors *will receive training* in these core church multiplication curricula:
 - Churches Planting Churches*** – *provides courageous teams and congregations training to plan for and launch new faith communities.*
 - Church Planting Essentials*** – *intensive training for individuals and teams who are starting new faith communities.*
- Those who become certified trainers *will receive the needed resources to present these trainings* in their congregations, circuits, and networks on behalf of their Districts. ****Certified Trainers must also attend Churches Planting Churches and/or Church Planting Essentials.***

Questions? Need More Information? Reserve your spot for these trainings?

Contact Center for United States Missions Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Peter Meier,
peter.meier@cui.edu | 952-221-0362



How to Prevent Abortion

Vol. 17, No. 2
a publication of

**Life Matters
WORLDWIDE**

P.O. Box 3158
Grand Rapids, MI 49501
(616) 257-6800
1-800-968-6086
www.lifemattersww.org
staff@lifemattersww.org

MOST WOMEN WHO OBTAIN ABORTIONS say they rarely attend church, if at all. According to the research, Protestants are actually under-represented in the population of women having abortions. But it's troubling to learn that "one in five abortion patients [of those who report a religious affiliation] identified themselves as born-again, evangelical, charismatic or fundamentalist."^{*}

The bottom line is, too many teens from Christian homes wind up at abortion clinics. They know having sex before marriage is wrong, but they don't want to disappoint their parents by admitting their sin or the pregnancy that results from it.

Their reaction is almost as old as time. After Adam and Eve sinned, their natural inclination was to hide and cover up. From Eden on, sin has driven us away from God and each other. Yet the good news is that the cross of Jesus Christ brings sinners back together and to God!

REDEEMED PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW BETTER, but sometimes our messages express an utter lack of grace: "Don't bother coming home if you get pregnant!" "I'll disown you if you ever humiliate me that way!" or "You'll be expelled from your Christian school!"... as though unwed pregnancy is the unpardonable sin.

Sometimes teens mistakenly *perceive* this is how parents and others will respond without anyone having said such a thing to them. It's appalling to think that babies have died as a result of a false assumption. Parents would be horrified and heartbroken to learn a grandchild has died on that basis. We need to be pro-active.

LET'S GET A FEW THINGS STRAIGHT:

- A) Sex is God's good gift, intended for the protective provision of marriage.
- B) Sexual sin is wrong whether it results in pregnancy or not.
- C) A baby is God's gift no matter how conceived.
- D) Human beings bear God's image at every stage of life.
- E) Children (born and unborn) should not be killed for a parent's sin.

Teens may be confused on these points and see ending a pregnancy as a way to avoid admitting sexual sin. Some parents of wayward teens may also see abortion as a way to preserve their reputations. The message that's too often heeded is this: "Get rid of the unborn baby and get rid of the problem."

Abortion does *not*, however, solve problems. It does not bring the freedom, joy, grace, acceptance, love, peace, blessing, and hope that confession of sin provides. No, instead it compounds the sin and sorrow.

HOW CAN WE SPARE EACH OTHER PAIN?

What messages can parents, churches, and Christian schools give teenagers to help them understand *both* the sinfulness of sex outside marriage *and* the futility of hiding a resulting pregnancy under the cloak of abortion? Can we encourage confession and pave the way for transformation long before our

children face these temptations? Here are six things we can do:

- 1 Leave doors of communication open:** "You can talk to me about anything."
- 2 Express a willingness to help in times of trouble:** "Whatever happens, we'll get through it together."
- 3 Be honest and mature about your emotions:** "I may feel hurt and get angry when you disappoint me, but I'll never stop loving you."
- 4 Show mercy to people who confess sin** (sexual or otherwise), following Paul's example in 2 Corinthians 2:5-8: "You are forgiven."
- 5 Demonstrate compassion to families who struggle with a teen's unplanned pregnancy:** "How can I help?"
- 6 Celebrate every baby's life,** regardless of how he or she was conceived: "Thank you for not choosing abortion!"

WHERE WILL A TEENAGER GO?

When she becomes pregnant outside marriage, will she go to her parents or to her friends? To the pregnancy care center or to Planned Parenthood? To her church or to the abortion clinic?

No one wants to become an unwitting accomplice in an abortion. Therefore, let's not abandon anyone to abortion through a thoughtless comment. Let's choose our messages wisely.

^{*}"Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients, 2008," Guttmacher Institute, May 2010, www.guttmacher.org/report/characteristics-us-abortion-patients-2008, accessed 6/22/2017; note that this would be 15 percent of the total number obtaining an abortion (20 percent of the 75 percent who report a religious affiliation). An earlier study found that 13 percent of women obtaining abortions call themselves 'born-again' or 'evangelical' (Jones et al., "Patterns in the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions in 2000-2001," *Perspectives on Sexual & Reproductive Health*, 34:5, September/October 2002, www.guttmacher.org/journals/psrh/2002/09/patterns-socioeconomic-characteristics-women-obtaining-abortions-2000-2001, accessed 6/22/2017). The pattern continued, for the most part, in the most recent report: "Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients in 2014 and Changes Since 2008," Guttmacher Institute, May 2016, www.guttmacher.org/report/characteristics-us-abortion-patients-2014, accessed 6/19/2017.