

# WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER



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No. 3

News and Notes from the President's Office

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL MISSION

# Life Together

*"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1).*

By the Rev. J. Bart Day  
Executive Director of the LCMS  
Office of National Mission

### Life Together a Gift

Life Together begins in Christ. There is no life apart from the one "through whom all things were made" (John 1:3). The life of Christ is the life of the world, our life together. The miracle of the Incarnation is that our Lord descended to take up our life. He wears our fallen human flesh, that He might bear our sin and be our Savior. In His bloody enthronement at Calvary, He draws all creation to Himself. Here is our salvation. Here is our life together.

In the Divine Service, our Lord lovingly invites us to eucharistic eating and drinking. With His body and blood, we proclaim His death and receive His life. The crucified One gives us the gift of forgiveness and the seal of immortality. As He is, so we shall be. The post-Communion collect roots our life in Christ and our life together in that same: "We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another."

The living Christ creates "fervent love toward one another." The work of the Church in WITNESS, MERCY, and LIFE TOGETHER flows from and to the cross. What joy and freedom we have in serving our Lord and His holy bride, the Church. We are no longer burdened by the Law's requirements. The Gospel, Christ in us, compels us to share His Word to the ends of the earth, to share the mercy and love of Christ with those in need, and to share in the corporate life of the Church. Life together is the best living. Selfish ambition and pride disappear as we pray for and support the body of Christ. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.

In his little book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers several helpful insights into our life together. For Bonhoeffer, our life together is a concrete reality. God is not a God of emotions but a God of truth. That truth is revealed in the divine revelation of the Word and the Word made flesh. The justified sinner lives in the community of sanctification, a gift

from God that no man can claim. Life together is a gift.

Of course, the body and all its members suffer under the delusions and false advertising of the world, the devil and our own sinful nature. The promise of power, prestige and possessions always comes at the expense of hurting those we love the most. Our life together becomes a life of isolation. The body and community suffer. The powerful in the community weed out the undesirables. As Bonhoeffer notes: "The exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ; in the poor brother, Christ is knocking at the door." Our life together includes all for whom our Lord died: the world. The body of Christ cares and comforts in word and deed.

As the Office of National Mission (Life Together) begins its work, we pray that the Lord will strengthen and support the work of our Synod. The Office of National Mission is doing the work of "Home Mission." The world is at our door. The challenges facing the Church in our post-Christian culture can appear overwhelming. In the face of such challenges, the Church must stand ready to proclaim the Gospel boldly. Being a faithful Lutheran has never been more critical. The world is crying out for authentic confession and genuine life together. The Church has both to offer.

### Our Work in Life Together

The newly created Office of National Mission oversees most of the domestic work of the Synod. There have been plenty of challenges to face during the restructuring process, but there have also been unexpected surprises. As one person put it, "The restructuring process is like cleaning out your hallway closet, the one you never touch until you are forced to. Yet once you start digging around, you are amazed at the treasures that have been forgotten and unused for many years." As the Synod is working to better communicate and collaborate on projects, new and exciting opportunities for mission are being discovered. For this we give thanks.

The Office of National Mission is made up of six departments. They include the work of the former

## Jesus Only

*"And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only" (Matt. 17:8 ESV).*

Jesus only. In this instance "Jesus only" was a letdown for Peter, James and John. They'd just glimpsed glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, complete with Moses and Elijah. No time to build booths. It was back to the grind of preaching, teaching and healing. At the end of the transfiguration chapter comes another disturbing passion prediction by Jesus: "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed" (Matt. 17:22-23).

Their only option was Jesus. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (John 6:68). All or nothing. Jesus or nothing. But with Jesus came suffering and death. Their knowledge would remain partial until they'd seen the risen Christ. "Put to death for our transgressions, raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). And then, just one thing remained: Jesus only. The apostles, just like us, wavered and still had the flesh about their necks (Gal. 2; Acts 15:39), but trials and crosses always threw them back upon Jesus only. "I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

Service in the church is often very hard business. We come into these vocations having been encouraged by our pastors, teachers, fellow

Christians and family. "You'd make a good pastor!" "You'd be a wonderful teacher!" Soon we find that it's not all Moses and Elijah in glory. Not at all. Times of joy may be punctuated with long periods of deep trials, congregations in turmoil, challenging relationships with staff and church members.

The stress of disappointment and gossip can sap all energy, throw

pastors into lethargy, parch preaching and drive us to separate ourselves from the world. If I could change just one thing in the Missouri Synod by waving a magic wand, I'd turn every bit of gossip and unhealthy complaint about church workers into a prayer for them. Valid critique and appropriate accountability are good things, but they also require careful and positive implementation, preferably while things are going well.

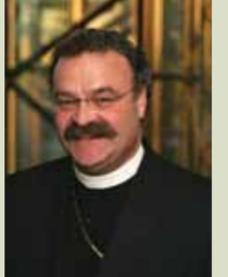
And it's not just the "weak" church workers who have this experience. C. F. W. Walther, Friedrich Wyneken, Franz Pieper and Friedrich Pfotenhauer (and for that matter, Luther himself) all had serious and long-lasting struggles with stress-related depression and breakdown. After telling Walther about his life-long struggle with depression, Wyneken wrote:

The longer and the more I have suffered under my heavy spiritual *Anfechtungen* [i.e., trials, struggles], I have experienced in a practical way the necessity and importance of pure doctrine. Since every doctrine is connected with justification, and undergirds it—indeed, proceeds from it as from the center [of the faith], and leads back to it—I have found in this doctrine my only stay in the midst of my difficulties (*At Home in the House of My Fathers*, p. 425).

Wyneken's trials forced him to the heart of it all—justification—Jesus, put to death for our transgressions, raised for our justification. Jesus only. We all pass through times of trial and difficulty. I'm very thankful for those trials I experienced in the parish because they have made me much more sympathetic to others and much more compassionate. Such trials leave us clinging to Jesus only. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" And wonderfully, and somewhat ironically, they render us ever more to be "little Christs" to our brothers and sisters in their challenging moments, so that we can come to them with "Jesus only." "Whatever you have done to the least of these . . ." (Matt. 25:40). Perhaps Paul said it best: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

When we began the trek into this church work business, they told us, "You'll be a good pastor or teacher or . . ." But the way we become such workers is the Jesus way—"the Son of man must suffer many things." Only through such trials are we reduced to "Jesus only."

■ Pastor Matthew Harrison, President  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



*"Service in the church is often very hard business."*

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# From C. F. W. Walther to Hanoi

*New LCMS school in Hanoi 'tremendous accomplishment,' says Walther kin*

By Kim Plummer Krull

When Jim Wolf served with the Marines in Vietnam in the late 1960s, it was a less than ideal first visit, especially, he says, for a "sheltered German Lutheran kid."

Back then, he never imagined that he would one day return to help build economic ties between the United States and the Southeast Asia country and even be welcomed as a friend of the Vietnamese government.

And the thought of an LCMS international school opening in Hanoi would have been "impossible to conceive" some 40 years ago, he says—even for the great-great-grandson of the Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the LCMS leader called the "father of the Missouri Synod."

Wolf—a former Marine, retired global banking executive and LCMS member with deep Synod roots—says that the years-in-the-making relationships that both he and the LCMS have developed in Vietnam "must be the Lord's plan."

"Otherwise, it's impossible to fathom," said Wolf, of Pittsburgh, Pa., whose mother, Edna Marie Walther Wolf, 95, is believed to be the oldest living direct descendent of the church pioneer who played a key role in the Synod's founding in 1847 and served as the first LCMS president.

Wolf calls the new Concordia International School Hanoi (CISH), which opened in August, "a great way to reach more people" and "shine our light" in Vietnam.

"It's a tremendous accomplishment. It's not easy being officially recognized as an international school in Vietnam," said Wolf, who has longstanding ties to the country, first through his military service and then his career. "My hat is off to all those dedicated servants who worked so diligently over the years to make it a reality."

As an executive with Standard Chartered Bank, Wolf's work in trade and investment development took him all over the globe, including back to Vietnam.

The opening of the Synod's newest international school represents "a lot of work" by the LCMS, Wolf said. "It's a great step that's sure to plant seeds."



Students arrive at Concordia Hanoi on August 24, the school's inaugural day of classes. Concordia's K-7 enrollment is approximately 50 students.

## Years in the Making

After years of building relationships and tackling legalities, the Concordia school received approval from the Hanoi government and opened with about 50 students in pre-kindergarten through grade seven. CISH is modeled after two sister institutions in Asia, the Hong Kong International School and Concordia International School Shanghai, China. LCMS educator Steven Winkelman serves as the Concordia Hanoi head of school.

The Synod selected Vietnam as its third international school site, building on human care work that began in 1995 through LCMS World Mission as a registered non-governmental organization in Vietnam, headed by the Rev. Ted Engelbrecht. Over the years, LCMS projects to help poor families earned recognition from Vietnam's National Institute of Nutrition, including programs to teach mothers about prenatal nutrition and farmers about crop diversification.

CISH addresses another great need: improved education in the world's 13th most populous country. "I've spoken with leaders in both the Vietnam government and in the U.S. State Department, and all agree very strongly that education is a top priority for the two countries to be working on together," Wolf said.

Families connected to the U.S. embassy and Hanoi's huge multinational business community also expressed a desire for more international educational opportunities for foreign and American children as well as local students. At present, only students holding foreign passports can be enrolled at Concordia Hanoi, according to guidelines set by the Vietnamese government.

In Hanoi, the expatriate population consists of more than 20 different nationalities, Winkelman said last year in a *Reporter* interview, with citizens from the United States, Australia, Canada and Great Britain making up the largest percentage of native English speakers. The largest foreign populations come from Japan and South Korea.

## Strengthening Ties

As an international school in Hanoi, CISH must operate differently than the traditional LCMS school in the United States. Vietnam is a predominantly Buddhist country, Wolf said, "with a significantly smaller minority Christian population."

"It won't look like our American [LCMS] schools, but it can have an impact," Wolf said.

Wolf, a member of Peace Lutheran Church, McMurray, Pa., plans to visit CISH on his next scheduled trip to Vietnam in November. He retired from Standard Chartered Bank in 2006 but continues to work as an economic development consultant for companies pursuing business opportunities in Vietnam. His desire to help strengthen American ties with Vietnam ignited when work took him back to Hanoi in 2005, his first return since his military service.

Although he "always wanted to go back," Wolf said he was surprised that he and his wife, Mary, were "welcomed with such open arms" as Americans in Hanoi.

"That keyed in my mind that I wanted to continue to do things there that were much more positive than my first experience in Vietnam as a Marine," Wolf said.

A conversation with Vietnam's ambassador to the U.S. affirmed Wolf's decision to use his expertise on behalf of two countries once torn by

war. "The ambassador told me that my [military] service was honorable, because my country asked me to do it. Now, he said, you are doing something from your heart that is even more honorable," Wolf said.

As he continues his work in Vietnam, Wolf also follows LCMS work there, including the opening of the Concordia Hanoi school. He has met with LCMS World Mission's Rev. J.P. Cima, who is based in Vietnam, and worshipped with Cima and his wife, Aimee, and other expatriates at an international congregation.

## Part of the Walther Legacy

Like his great-great-grandfather, Wolf is a strong proponent of Lutheran education. He speaks fondly of his church-focused childhood in St. Louis, Mo.

"When I grew up, everything revolved around the church—Walther League, Boy Scouts, the church sports teams," he said. "Going to a Lutheran grade school and high school provided a great foundation for my life and my faith."

He looks forward to joining in the Walther Bicentennial celebration, participating, when possible, in events that begin this fall and will extend through the 125th anniversary of Walther's death in 2012.

Walther helped lay the foundation for a church body that now ranks as one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with more than 2.3 million baptized members in some 6,200 congregations. The LCMS operates America's largest Protestant parochial school system.

"A bit of pride swells up," Wolf says, at the mention of the LCMS founding father's lasting leadership. "It's neat to have him for a great-great-grandfather."

As the newest Concordia international school begins serving students and families in Hanoi, Walther's legacy continues to grow. "He believed strongly in reaching out and serving others," Wolf said of Walther. "I know this new LCMS school would make him happy."

To learn more, visit the Concordia International School Hanoi website at [www.concordiahanoi.org](http://www.concordiahanoi.org).



The staff and educators have been preparing for months for the opening of Concordia International School Hanoi. Staff includes Hai Quang Trinh, Vietnamese Relations; Amy Winkelman, Admissions; Meg Brainard, Curriculum and Instruction; and Lia Garcia Halpin, Communications.



## SUPPORTING MISSIONS ABROAD

# Help Needed to Fund Theological Education around the World

### \$250,000 matching gift available

By the Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver  
Director of Church Relations—  
Assistant to the President

Since the time of the Reformation and the early days of Wittenberg University, the Lutheran Church has been a church that excels at education, in particular theological education. Education is a vital part of our LCMS heritage and has blossomed to become a core competency of the LCMS. In fact, from its very beginning, the Missouri Synod emphasized the importance of Lutheran education with the founding of day schools, high schools, colleges, seminaries, and more recently, international schools such as Hong Kong, Shanghai and Hanoi. Around the world, both Christians and non-Christians alike associate education with the Missouri Synod. It is really no surprise, then, that a major missionary emphasis of the LCMS involves theological education.

Building on our strong tradition of education, President Harrison announced in May 2011 the establishing of a Global Theological Education Initiative, along with a generous matching offer of \$250,000 from an anonymous donor. This initiative involves several components.

The first provides funds to both Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, to offer scholarships for



*Theological education support—a major missionary emphasis of the LCMS—helps partner churches and emerging churches raise up and train national leaders like those shown above attending a Lutheran theological training event in Madagascar.*

international students from around the world who are considered to be future leaders of their church. This component of the initiative helps partner churches build capacity both in leadership and in their ability to provide theological education at their own institutions. A second component of this initiative provides support for the regional seminaries of LCMS partner churches. A third component provides funding for LCMS

professors and pastors to travel to a partner or even a non-partner church and teach at one of their regional seminaries or theological education centers. Each year, the LCMS receives more requests than we can meet from partner churches to provide theological education.

In practical terms, the Global Theological Education Initiative will greatly assist our LCMS partner churches. Currently, Concordia

Seminary, St. Louis, has two professors from the seminary of our partner church in Argentina studying at the graduate school so that they can return to their country and better prepare pastors for Hispanic ministry in South America. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina is the world's largest Spanish-speaking Lutheran church. By assisting the Lutheran Church in Argentina, the LCMS maximizes its mission outreach in the region while at the same time building local capacity for the future.

In Papua, New Guinea, St. Timothy Seminary is in desperate need of renovated toilet, shower and dormitory facilities. Currently, this need hinders them from enrolling more students to study for the pastoral ministry. Elsewhere, the Lutheran Church in Nigeria (LCN) recently celebrated its 75th anniversary. At the celebration, Archbishop Ekong mentioned the need for visiting seminary professors from the LCMS at their seminary.

Recently, the Lutheran Church in South Africa (LCSA) requested that the LCMS send a professor who could teach the Small Catechism in a practical way so that students would know how to use the catechism in everyday ministry. We were able to fulfill this request by sending the Rev. Randy Asbury from Hope Lutheran Church, St. Louis. Each of these examples demonstrates the various needs that the Global Theological Education Initiative is designed to meet so that the Gospel of Jesus may be spread throughout the world. Part of our Life Together as a church is to respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters, both near and far.

Time is short for the matching grant opportunity. Please consider supporting the Global Theological Education Initiative by visiting <http://lcms.org/projects>.



## Opportunities to Support Our LCMS Missionaries

By the Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver  
Director of Church Relations—Assistant to the President

Nearly 75 years ago, Friedrich Pfo-tenhauer, fifth president of the Missouri Synod, preached the following words at a mission festival:

To be sure, when we members of the Lutheran Church consider that the treasure of the Gospel, which makes us so rich and happy, should also be brought to others, it should make us willing to do diligent work for the mission. By that mission and through our work, many will be won for the kingdom of Christ! We should ourselves be eager to preach the Gospel to another person and to participate in the mission work of our beloved Synod, while we educate messengers in our institutions and send out

*"The Church has always seen the missionary task as a great privilege, duty and gift given by our Lord Jesus."*

The Church has always seen the missionary task as a great privilege, duty and gift given by our Lord Jesus. The Lord has called the Church wherever it is located to make disciples by teaching and by baptizing people into the Lord's holy name—Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19–20). Jesus calls for His Church to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the field (Matt. 9:38). Jesus also calls for His Church to support financially the sending of these laborers into the field. Historically, the people of the Missouri Synod have responded eagerly to the Lord's call to pray and support laborers in the field.

Last July, the LCMS sent out more than 30 missionaries to 16 countries. In addition to these newly sent missionaries, the

LCMS has many in the field who are also in need of prayer and support.

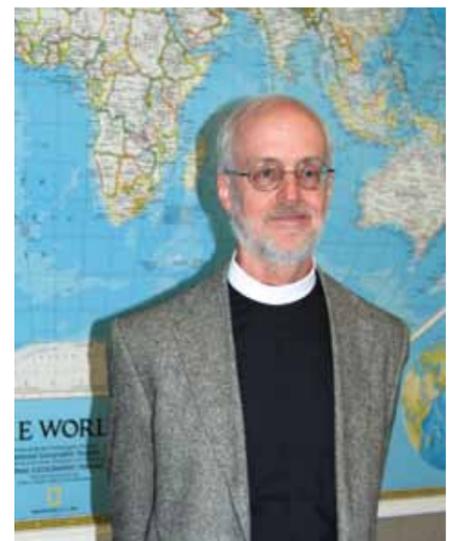
Among the new career missionaries sent out are Rev. Alan Ludwig ([www.lcms.org/Ludwig](http://www.lcms.org/Ludwig)) who serves



*Rev. and Mrs. Tony Booker, Czech Republic*

in Siberia, Russia; Rev. Tony Booker ([www.lcms.org/Booker](http://www.lcms.org/Booker)) who will serve in the Czech Republic; and Rev. Dr. Carl Rockrohr and Deaconess Deborah Rockrohr ([www.lcms.org/Rockrohr](http://www.lcms.org/Rockrohr)), who will serve in South Africa. Please remember these missionaries, as well as all LCMS missionaries, in your prayers, and consider supporting them as you are able.

President Harrison wrote in his letter that accompanied the May 2011 *Lutheran Witness* that a generous gift from an anonymous donor provided a matching opportunity for LCMS Mission Outreach. This first matching challenge has been met, and now we have the chance to respond to additional opportunities to send out laborers into the harvest.



*Rev. Dr. Alan Ludwig, Siberia, Russia*



*Rev. Dr. Carl, Deaconess Deborah and Ted Rockrohr, South Africa*

Please visit one of the missionary's links or go to [www.lcms/missionaries](http://www.lcms/missionaries) to learn more about each of our LCMS missionaries and how to support them.



## DISTRICT IN MISSION

# The Koinonia Project— A Quick Report

By the Rev. Herbert C. Mueller  
LCMS First Vice-President

**Koinonia** (pronounced “koy-no-NEE-ah”) is a Greek word translated as “fellowship” or “participation,” literally “to have something in common.” “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the ‘fellowship’ (*koinonia*) of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9). Because God has called us, we have Jesus in common. The same word is behind the phrase in our creed, “I believe in . . . the communion (*koinonia*) of saints.”

“The Koinonia Project” is the moniker given to the effort by the Office of the President of Synod to foster discussion groups around the Synod working toward greater theological unity under God’s Word.

As our concept paper explains (see <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=1041>), the heart of the effort is the development of various study groups for theological discussion. Some will utilize existing groups in circuits. Others will be specifically chosen to represent a broad spectrum of opinion.

An informal advisory group has been established to help First Vice-President Herbert Mueller refine the concept paper and to help “put legs on” the idea. These seven pastors from around the Synod provide a broad perspective: Pastor Wally Arp, St. Luke’s, Oviedo, Florida; Pastor Allen Buss, Immanuel, Belvidere, Illinois; President Terry Forke, Montana District, Billings, Montana; Pastor Wayne Graumann, Salem, Tomball, Texas; President Dale Sattgast, South Dakota District, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Pastor Harold Senkbeil, New Berlin, Wisconsin; Pastor Tony Steinbronn, Mission Executive, New Jersey District, Mountainside, New Jersey. Ongoing consultation is also taking place with the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Council of Presidents, our theological faculties and others and will be expanded in the future.

### Pilot Groups Already Forming

Various pilot groups will be formed in the next several months. District leaders in the Northern Illinois District have asked to form pilot groups in their district. We pray this can begin yet this fall. The Nebraska District and the South Wisconsin District have also asked to form pilot groups.

Presentations have been made in Kansas, South Wisconsin and Texas. Future presentations are also scheduled in Nebraska and Wyoming. Circuits in Kansas and Texas have expressed interest, as well as others across the country.

As a long term effort, the Koinonia Project will create multiple opportunities for theological dialog under the Word of God toward the goal of greater concord in our life together. Study groups will seek to

- clearly define the point(s) at issue.
- affirm where the members of the group agree on what we confess.
- explain what we therefore reject (showing also where we may still disagree).
- work towards agreement on what we will, therefore, do together.

### What Does a Koinonia Group Look Like?

The following steps are suggested to form a successful *Koinonia* group:

- 1) Bring respected and capable people together, 8–12 in a group, for theological dialogue under the Word of God, with the help of a chaplain/facilitator.
- 2) Begin with a discussion of what it means to be a Synod of brothers and sisters who walk together in our confession of the Word of God. The Augsburg Confession is a great place to start the conversation.
- 3) Much prayer is needed across the Synod for this ongoing effort.
- 4) The chaplain/facilitator leads the group into the Word of God with regular worship and holds the group accountable to behavior fitting that of brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 5) A broad spectrum of people will need to be involved as we move forward and the project grows across the Synod. Over time, various groups will need to be multiplied. Participation by the seminaries and theological faculties of the Synod will be essential.
- 6) The groups themselves must live in the baptismal rhythm of repentance and forgiveness, confession and absolution, dying to self and living in Christ and for one another. Regular worship, study of Scripture and the Confessions and prayer are the center of this life together. The Word of God works repentance and faith. God’s *koinonia* is a gift in Christ, and God gives His gifts by His Word.

- 7) Groups must to operate in a spirit of trust, providing “safe places” for honest theological conversation.
- 8) Each group will take the time necessary to form a “statement of the controversy.” What exactly is at issue in the matter they are discussing? Can the folks on one side explain the position of others in a way that those others will recognize and accept? Such a process will enable the group to understand and to agree on what the issue actually is.
- 9) Then groups will need to identify areas of agreement. What do we affirm together? What do we, therefore, reject? How does the Word of God apply? How do our confessions keep us focused on Christ and His Gospel at the center? Where do we still disagree? How does it matter?
- 10) Through this process we look to God’s Word to instruct us so that we grow towards being able to say: Here is how we will proceed. Here is where our conscience

is captive to Christ so that we confess God’s clear Word. Here is where we have Christian freedom. Here is where we have more work to do. Here is what we will agree to do together out of love for one another and for the common good.

- 11) Some grant funding is in place to develop pilot groups. Ways need to be found for these efforts to be studied by the whole Synod. Much remains to be done.

Our Synod is not a hierarchical organization, but a fellowship of congregations and church workers united by our confession of Christ in the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. We have no power over one another save the power of the Word of God and fraternal persuasion. We come alongside one another as brothers and sisters who help each other hear the Word of God clearly. Pray that God would use this effort to increase our fellowship with one another in Christ Jesus.

For more information, email *Herb. Mueller@lcms.org*.

### LIFE TOGETHER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

District and Congregational Services, with other groups coming from LCMS World Mission and World Relief and Human Care. The new department is focused on supporting the “Home Mission” of the Synod in our Life Together. The six departments are:

- Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs)
- Stewardship
- Schools
- Youth
- Worship
- Church and Community Engagement

Each department is engaged in great work to support the mission of our Synod. Some of the work is well-known to people throughout the Synod; other work is not.

Deaconess Dorothy Krans is supporting the work of **RSOs**. Previously, RSOs were under the program boards that best aligned with their particular work. We have the unique opportunity to better help coordinate and encourage collaboration among the various RSOs of synod. RSOs are a valuable asset as they are able to provide faithful Lutheran services in many areas beyond the ability of the Synod.

Under the leadership of Rev. Wayne Knolhoff, **stewardship** continues to equip districts with valuable resources to encourage lifelong stewardship that focuses on our whole life in Christ. Stewardship also works with several congregations who use resources like Faith Aflame as part of their stewardship life.

**School ministry** remains one of the most vibrant parts of our life together. Directed by Bill Cochran, school ministry continues to provide critical services that help sustain and grow our parochial schools. From SLED (School Leadership Development Project) and accreditation to providing support for expanding technology to information shared on the Lutheran portal, school ministry continues to look to the future and how best to support exemplary education while proclaiming the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Keeping our **youth** engaged is the work of the Rev. Terry Dittmer and his staff. Through services and programs, the Synod youth department continues to provide helpful resources and opportunities to serve. Most know about the National Youth Gathering in 2013, but there are other opportunities through LYF (Lutheran Youth Fellowship), annual servant events, as well as online resources at *thEsource*.

**Worship** staff continue their work by providing faithful resources like *LetUsPray*, as well as completing the companion volumes to *Lutheran Service Book*. By engaging the church in ongoing conversation on this vital area—one that impacts every congregation of Synod every Sunday morning—Worship seeks to be a resource for materials that incorporate both the riches of the past with that which is faithful from the present.

The newly formed group, **Church and Community Engagement**, brings together the most dynamic ministry opportunities in the Office of National Mission. Here is our life together work of evangelism and outreach (The 72—Partners on the Road, Rev. Al Tormoehlen), church planting and revitalization, rural and small town mission (Ralph Geisler and Rev. Lee Hagan), black and ethnic ministry (Rev. Quentin Poulson) and the work of Rev. Carlos Hernandez who oversees Hispanic ministry, Veterans and Soldiers of the Cross and Gospel Seeds, a program encouraging congregations to work in their communities to support the needs of the least of these.

The Office of National Mission serves a critical role in supporting our work at home. By the time this goes to press, we will have hosted a National Mission Conference to hear from district presidents, district mission executives and others in order to help our office shape its work for the future. We are absolutely committed to remaining relevant and supportive of the needs of the Church. May the Lord bless us in our life together.

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