

Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights

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July 2016

Why Am I So Passionate About Urban Ministry?

Linthicum, the author of *City of God – City of Satan*, was the North American Mission Enablers (NAME) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod conference speaker one spring in the late 1990s. I vividly remember how he opened his presentation on urban ministry—he opened his arms and said, “God Loves the City” and then put both hands on his chest and stated, “I love the city.” The illustration reignited my passion for mission to the city in ways that I have not forgotten nor lost the zeal for it.

But why am I so passionate about it? This is a question that we all have to ask about anything that we feel so strongly about. It is about checking one’s motive for it so that, as missionaries, our hearts may be in sync with the heart of God. This is not about me—it is all about Jesus. I know I may be sounding a little preachy in this, but it is the only way that I can express what I believe so strongly about the message of the Gospel for all people.

It is good to begin where the Church began her ministry in the Apostolic age in Jerusalem. This is the city for whom Jesus wept when he said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Luke 13: 34-35). Jesus’ sorrow was not over the geographic place, the city of Jerusalem, but his was over the inhabitants of the city—all inhabitants of the city.

As God’s heart is grieved over the lost people of our cities, I believe my heart should also grieve with him for I am a member of his body, the Church. For I know, as others have said it

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Urban Ministry . . .

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before, the church is the hope of the world, and that hope is made real only through the witnesses of us all, who by grace through the message of the Gospel have been brought to faith.

Why the city and not the villages? Three reasons for the strategic beginning of the mission of the Church in the city:

1. Cities are known as the centers of political power;
2. Cities are known as the centers of economic power; and
3. Cities are also known for being the centers of religious power. Cities have powerful influence over a nation and the world. Thus, if we lose the cities, we lose the nations with them.

Why am I so passionate about urban mission /ministry? Because it is strategic; the rich and the poor live together side by side in cities. Since the cities are centers of economic, political and religious powers, all the nations also gather or are represented in cities. The evangelization of a country then begins by winning the hearts of people in the city, and from there the church fans the flame of the Gospel to the entire region—the country and the world. Thus, Jesus said that we will be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

*~Rev. Yohannes Mengsteab
Mission & Ministry Facilitator, Area B*

[Post from the LCMS Texas District website dated June 13, 2016, <http://txlcms.org/why-am-i-so-passionate-about-urban-ministry/>]



Focus on Stewardship

In our Lord's parable of the vineyard workers, the vineyard owner says to those who worked the longest, "Or do you begrudge my generosity" (*Matthew 20:15*)? It's an unfortunate translation. It's not wrong, but it doesn't give us the full picture. What the vineyard owner actually says is this: "Or is your eye evil because I am good?" Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (*Matthew 6:21-23*).

This statement comes right in the middle of our Lord's teaching about giving. He said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

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Stewardship . . .

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"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

(Matthew 6:19-24).

Having an evil eye does not let in the light. Having an evil eye means that we are so focused on what we don't have, that we are unable to rejoice in what God has given. An evil eye makes us distressed when we see others prosper. It makes us rejoice when others suffer. An evil eye makes us so love ourselves and our money, that we don't want to share with others; we don't want to give of what we have because we are so focused on keeping what we have and getting what we don't.

Whereas a good eye is an eye that lets the light in so that our lives are filled with it. This light shines upon all that we have and reveals that it comes from our Father's divine goodness and mercy. A good eye that lets in the light, unencumbered by the darkness, so that we have a good will, a benevolent disposition, and a genuine happiness to see others prosper and the desire to be part of it.

Jesus came to give you a good eye and to take away the darkness that fills your life. Christ our Lord, through His death and resurrection, has forgiven your sin, removed your evil eye and given you new eyes that let in His light and

truth. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

(2 Corinthians 8:9).

The reality is that you have all that you need and more. You have the love of God in Christ Jesus. You have the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. You have house and home, all that you need for this body and life. So, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy. And you will see that your hearts will follow, just as Jesus promised.

(Stewardship newsletter insert for July 2016, provided on the LCMS website

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=4170>)

~submitted by Kathy Angst



The Monday evening Bible study group completed their study on *The Spirituality of the Cross*. A new study on the book of Acts

will commence on Monday, August 1st. All are invited to join this study.

If you are interested in joining this study, please read through Acts before the first meeting. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the study guide, please give your email address to Barbara Szalkowski.

The group meets 6:30-8:00 pm; a pot-luck format light dinner (usually sandwiches, chips, veggies, fruit, dessert, etc.) is provided by the participants. Child care is available on request; contact the Church office.

~Pastor King

ECE Recognitions and Promotions



Ms Vida (far right)



Ms Cooper (far right)

Elvira Triana, "Ms Vida" and Liz Cooper were recognized for their years of service during the May 25th Chapel service. Both were presented with flowers, a plaque, card and gift card by Denise Goehring (photos, far left), representing the School Board, and President Ken Harvey. Ms Vida retired at the end of the 2015-2016 term and Ms Cooper celebrated 25 years of service.



Chapel and Pre-K Promotions



~Denise Goehring with photos submitted by Connie Meave

FOCUS ON "FAMILY" IN WORD AND SONG



GOOD FOOD



PUZZLE CHALLENGES



SUMMER FAMILY FELLOWSHIP



**GAMES WERE PLAYED BY
YOUNG AND OLD**



**STEPPING
STONE CRAFT**



**63 PEOPLE BETWEEN THE
TWO NIGHTS HAD EVENINGS
FILLED WITH FUN, LAUGHTER
AND GOOD FAMILY
FELLOWSHIP**



Dominican Republic Ministry Update

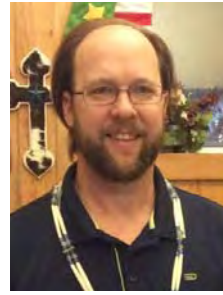
¿Cómo puede hacerse esto? (How can this be done?)

Many of us have questions about the Christian faith, even those of us who were baptized as infants and raised in the Church. As the Pharisees and other religious leaders took note of Jesus, what He was preaching, teaching and doing, many of them reacted strongly on the offensive. But there was one man who recognized something definitely Divine about this Jesus, and decided to quietly go talk to Him by night when no one would see him and ask some questions. That's Nicodemus. We heard the story yesterday in our Gospel reading here in the Dominican Republic.

Jesus teaches Nicodemus about the Kingdom of God and how one becomes a member of it. He points Nicodemus to the cross, where the Son of Man will be lifted up, and to Holy Baptism, the new birth by water and the Spirit, that Jesus Himself will institute between His resurrection and ascension. And what's the reaction of this unique Pharisee? He asks, "How can this be?"

Recently we rejoiced in the Feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, who propelled the disciples forward with the Gospel. That same Spirit who has given you new birth in the water of Holy Baptism has worked faith in your heart. That same Spirit continues to work to

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Alaska Ministry Update

God at Work

We all know that God works in mysterious ways. We also know that God's timing is not our timing. However, that does not mean we don't still often struggle with not knowing how and when God works.

There are several places we are absolutely certain God does work – in His Word and Sacraments! For these are where He has promised to be. He has also promised to be wherever two or three are gathered in His Name. Yet, even still many often wonder if there is someplace else or somehow else God is working, or maybe even more to the point... How is He using each of us individually?

Once in a while we are privileged to get a glimpse into the wonderful patience and love God has for His people in the events of this world. While the most recent event I experienced didn't demonstrate how God has used me, it does show how God has used countless Christians to give witness to His Word.

After the service on Easter morning, an elderly gentleman came up to speak with me. This gentleman is well known for speaking boldly against the Gospel of Jesus. He has been an advocate for rejecting the "white man's God" and returning to the historical beliefs of the Native people.

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Dominican Ministry . . .

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ground you in Jesus Christ and Him crucified for you. He continues to make you wise unto salvation.

Nicodemus had questions for Jesus. So do we. Where do we go for answers? We go to God's Word. Beyond that, we tread dangerous ground. The Church has been there before. It's one of the reasons why we have three ecumenical Creeds in the historic Christian faith, each drawn from Scripture.

The questions about Jesus or the Trinity weren't the problem, it was the answers and where those answers came from: placing reason and/or emotion over and above the Scriptures. Today I am thrilled that in our Dominican Church, people are regularly coming to their pastors, deaconesses and other missionaries with questions. Sometimes I struggle to answer them in Spanish. This was the case this past Sunday in youth group at Las Americas. But I'm grateful to God for my teammates who support and lend their more experienced language skills when needed. I'm grateful for these wonderful new Christians who are hungry for answers from God's Word, who also have been blessed with the faith to know where NOT to look for answers. Many of them are also becoming content to live in the tension of some of the seemingly paradoxical things we Lutherans learn to live in, like the two natures of Christ and the relationship of the persons of the Holy Trinity. Thanks for your continued prayer and support!

~Pastor Joel Fritsche

[From <https://www.scribd.com/doc/313567910/Fritsche-Mission-Newsletter-May-2016>]

Alaska Ministry

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This man was taught the Christian faith from childhood, but had rejected it and resisted it at every turn. What could he want to speak to me about?

Surprisingly, he began to speak of his resistance to the Lord, but as he did so, he spoke with repentance. He had finally come to understand that Jesus was not the problem. Like many who look at the Church, he saw sinful people. And He was right to see them as such. What he had now come to understand was that Jesus was the perfect Savior of all these sinful people; a savior that he himself, as a sinful person, needed.

What a glorious revelation for him to know and understand. I know heaven rejoices over this gentleman. A seed planted long ago by the generations that raised him, and watered through the years by faithful people who spoke God's Word finally bore the fruit of eternal faith.

You may never know or realize the work the Spirit is doing through your faithful service, but that does not mean the Spirit is not working. You may never taste the fruit of your labors this side of heaven, but that does not mean God is not using you to water life and faith in someone else. How glorious it is that God tells us, "As you are going, make disciples of all Nations!"

Too often we want to stop and watch to see the results, but it may not be given for us to see them this side of heaven. As always we walk and live by faith in the one who has called

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Support Missions

The **Aschenbeck's ministry in Alaska** is made possible only by donors like you! Donate online: <http://www.alaskamissionforchrist.org>

Mail donations to: Alaska Mission for Christ, 8100 Arctic Blvd., Anchorage AK 99518

Note "Keith Aschenbeck" in the memo section and 100% of your donation will go to directly support his ministry. Donations are tax deductible. Statements are sent out after the end of the year. Thank you for your support!

Contact Pastor Keith:

E-mail: revkeithamc@gmail.com

Address: 537 Mushers Way
Tok, AK 99780-0537



To support the **Fritsche's ministry in Dominica**, you may send a tax- deductible gift to either of the following:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Mission Central
40718 Highway E16, Mapleton, IA 51034

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of Joel & Clarion Fritsche."

Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on our online giving page at <http://www.lcms.org/fritsche> or call (888) 930-4438.

Alaska Ministry . . .

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us and redeemed us. He has made us into a priesthood of believers through which He works in the world to shine the light of glory. But, we do have the assurance to know how and when He works in our lives to bring forgiveness and life – His Word and Sacraments! In that knowledge we can find rest, strength, and courage for every moment! Come Lord Jesus! Amen!

~Pastor Keith Aschenbeck

[From

http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5412083fe4b04d2a0e9ac9d6/t/5751c31c3c44d8a453fe420d/1464976174667/May+2016+Newsletter.pdf]



A Door Offering to support Social Ministry – funeral meals, assistance to members and others in times of accidents, disasters, or other circumstances of need – will be taken at the end of the July 31st worship service.

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**All American Salute
to the 4th**

July 4, 2016 • 6:00 pm

Food & Fireworks after the Concert

Trinity Lutheran Church

800 Houston Ave.

Houston, TX 77007

For more information:

<http://www.hlc-tx.org>

Immanuel Lutheran Church - July 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
3 Usher Team #1 Worship @9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am	4 Offices Closed No Bible Study 	5 All Boards Meetings @ 7:00 pm	6 Women's Bible Study @ 10:30 am	7 Bingo @ 1:00-3:00	8	9 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
10 Usher Team #2 Worship @ 9:00 am Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am	11	12 Council Meeting @ 7:00 pm	13	14	15 Newsletter Deadline	16 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
17 Usher Team #3 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am	18 No Bible Study	19	20 Women's Bible Study @ 10:30 am	21	22	23 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
24 Usher Team #4 Worship @ 9:00 am Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am	25	26	27	28	29	30 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
31 Usher Team #5 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am	Social Ministry Door Offering Sunday, July 31st					