

From Corn Fields to the Mission Field



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(This article written by Kristin Kaldahl of Spencer, IA.)



Leroy "Spud" Mueller

It's planting time! Every Iowa farmer knows the importance of getting the seed in the ground at just the right time. Leroy "Spud" Mueller was no exception. He spent a lifetime farming the land and planting seeds near Germantown, Iowa.

Spud also knew the importance of planting the seeds of faith in others. He and his first wife, Ann, were active members at St. John Lutheran Church in Germantown. They raised their five children - Dennis, Gary, Patricia, Barbara and Joni - to love the Lord. The Muellers lived their faith and served the Lord in every way they could.

When Ann died suddenly in 1987, Spud faced the tragedy by trusting in his Lord. He later married Mardelle Dornbusch and retired from farming. The couple moved to Paullina and joined Zion Lutheran Church. There Spud worked for the Lord by serving on the Evangelism Board and the Endowment Board. Though his farming days were over, Spud continued to plant the seed.

Spud became an avid golfer in his retirement. While golfing with Gift Planning Counselor, Jim Schroeder, Spud briefly mentioned the possibility of donating farm land. He had been talking to Mission Development Counselor, Gary Thies about the "miracle" work that can be done when estate gifts are given to missions. Spud was excited to think of new ways he could plant seeds of faith for God.

In 2004 Spud gifted a piece of farmland to the LCMS Foundation for a charitable trust. In doing so he avoided the capital gains tax on the sale of the land. The Foundation sold the farmland and the proceeds of the sale were invested to provide Spud an income until he died in 2008. At that time the charitable trust terminated and the trust principle was distributed by the Foundation to the ministries chosen by Spud. These included the endowment funds at his home congregations of Zion, Paullina and St. John, Germantown, as well as the scholarship fund at Zion/St. John Lutheran School in Paullina.

A gift to Camp Okoboji will be used to plant a rain garden and do other landscaping around the Camp's new chapel.

Spud also specified LCMS World Relief and LCMS World Missions as a beneficiary of his charitable trust.

Gary Thies recalls Spud's gift with clarity. In fact, he refers to it as a "miracle story". On a Monday, Gary had received a request for some emergency funds from Concordia Lutheran Church in the capital of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. This was to be the first Lutheran Church built in that country. Construction on the church would have to stop due to a lack of funding. A miracle happened then as Mardelle Mueller walked into Mission Central with a check on Wednesday of that same week to provide the gift at just the right time that it was needed.

"This church wouldn't have been able to have been completed without the wonderful gift from Spud Mueller's charitable trust," recalls Gary Thies. "Our Lord Jesus 'raises up' special people at 'just the right time' to get His work done."

This new church building was dedicated on Palm Sunday 2009. Now people halfway around the world are able to worship the Lord and continue planting the seed.

Spud would have been pleased to see the transformation from cornfields to the mission field of Central Asia. He knew that God calls us all to be a part of that process.

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Cor. 3:9)

Spud's legacy is that in whatever field of work we are in, God wants to use us. He chooses us at our Baptism and allows us to be part of His plans.

As Gary Thies says, "I have seen this for 15 years now, that God always has the right people at the right place at just the right time!"

Is this your time to plant? Contact Jim Schroeder to develop your Christian Gift Plan that includes your favorite ministries.



Dedication of Concordia Lutheran Church in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on Palm Sunday 2009.