



President Paul Sieveking

**An example for Lent**

When I was in college, I received a very impressive letter from a “Lutheran Evangelistic Crusade” that was coming to Fort Wayne, Ind. The first paragraph spoke about the credentials of the speaker. The next told of the purpose of this crusade—to fight the evils of alcohol abuse. Then came a request for my help, an invitation to appear on stage with the evangelist. As a young, gullible student, I was flattered to be counted worthy until I read the final paragraph which explained that the evangelist often filled the stage with drunks and derelicts he could point to as examples of how destructive alcohol can be. Then I realized that I was being asked to be one of the derelicts. It was a very convincing practical joke!

St. Paul wasn't joking when he used the same technique. He wrote to encourage Timothy to remain faithful to the Gospel and not permit anyone to rob him of its power. He pointed to a living example of what the Gospel can do in person's life. He pointed to a sad case, a terrible sinner, so bad he had actually hated Jesus. This sinner had mocked and blasphemed. He had brutally persecuted Christians. All the while, he had believed that he was doing God's will. This derelict had to be one of the worst people who had ever lived—the foremost, the chief of sinners.

Paul, of course, was talking about

himself. This great servant of God remembered his past with deep regret, and to the end of his days on earth regarded himself as foremost of sinners. He didn't say “I was ... I used to be. ...” He said, “I am” chief.

Yet, Paul wasn't driven to despair by his sin. In gratitude he wrote, “For that reason I was shown mercy ... so that in me ... Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe” (1 Tim. 1:16).

Would you care to argue with St. Paul over who is the chief of sinners? Maybe you've never hated Jesus or persecuted His church, and maybe you don't see yourself as a brutal person, but everyone of us could give Paul a pretty good run for the title, “foremost ... the worst ... the chief of sinners.”

Why would Paul, or any of us, want to boast about our sinfulness this way? Because the memory of sin is the surest way to keep us from pride. Pride may have been a particular problem for Paul. Yet, his confession came from a truly humble heart—from the heart of a poor, miserable sinner.

Paul needed to remember that he was a sinner so that he would always remember that he was a forgiven sinner, so that he would always remember the love which had been shown to him, so that he would remember the trustworthy saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).

Unless you recognize that you are a sinner, that you too caused Jesus' suffering and death, you can't even begin to realize how truly amazing His love for you is or what your forgiveness cost Him. You are a sinner, but in Jesus, you are a forgiven sinner. That's the reason we observe the season of Lent.



Paul's sin also was a constant reminder to live for Jesus, to abstain from sin, to be zealous in his service. He recognized he didn't deserve God's love, so that he would never stop doing everything he could to show how much he appreciated all the love shown to him. You know how it is when you love someone. You can't help but demonstrate it and do whatever you can for the one you love, the one who loves you. That's how it is with God's love. When you remember the seriousness of your sin and the love Jesus has shown to you, you want to respond. You want to show Him that He didn't die in vain. You would do anything for Him. You willingly and eagerly serve Him because now you live for Him!

Paul again pointed to himself as the example, “For that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an exam-

ple to those who would come to believe in Him for eternal life.” Paul was saying, “Look at what Jesus has done for me. If He could love me ... save me ... turn my life around ... there is hope for everyone ... even you. No sin is so terrible that it cannot be forgiven. No sinner is so bad that God's love cannot save him ... and even use you to serve in His kingdom.”

As Paul remembered his sin and was overwhelmed by God's love, he wrote with great emotion—maybe with tears in his eyes—this doxology. He began with thanksgiving: “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because He judged me faithful and appointed me to His service.” Paul was saved to serve.

*(Continued on Page H.)*

# EDUCATION



Rev. Bob Riggert  
Executive Assistant

## 'Peace be with you'

Peace is often not a reality for many youth. Obviously, the world is not a peaceful place. Because of family breakups, communication breakdowns, and financial concerns, the home is not peaceful.

Tending to school responsibilities and activities as well as jobs and other commitments, their schedule is not peaceful. Most significantly the hearts of many youth are not peaceful as they are burdened by guilt and tested with temptations. Into that world comes Jesus, saying, "Peace be with you!"

Those words from John 20:26 are the foundation for a paint-brush and proclamation ministry of Director of Christian Education (DCE) Aaron Hansen and artist Eric Hibbler. The duo shared their message and their gifts at the November 2009 "ImpACT" District Youth Gath-



ering. Hansen noticed Eric's special gift, and they began working together at Zion Lutheran Church, St. Charles, Mo. Their gifts continue to open doors to share the message in other district and congregational settings.

Youth at the gathering were invited to come on stage and write their fears and failures on the large canvass. DCE Hansen directed the youth to God's Word and the reality of sin and the reality of the cross.

Hibbler drew the cross and the crucified Christ over the youth notations. Dabs of red paint running down on the hands and feet of Christ emphasized that the blood

of Jesus has indeed washed away all our sins. The cross of Christ covers our sins and brings us peace.

The gathering committee had determined that the artwork would be offered as a gift from the gathering. Youth groups interested in the painting were invited to submit their name for a Sunday morning drawing. The painting is now the property of Trinity Lutheran Church, Perry. The youth ministry of Trinity is being revitalized and this was the first gathering at which the congregation had been represented for many years. "Peace be with

you!" youth of Trinity.

More than 300 youth and their counselors from 45 congregations were part of the 26th annual district gathering. The 2010 gathering will be moved from the Thanksgiving weekend to the Nov. 19-21 weekend (a week earlier). District gatherings continue to take youth to the peace and power of Jesus.

Hansen (the son of Pastor Lyle and Colleen Hansen, Good Shepherd, Fort Dodge) grew up in Whittemore, Iowa. He graduated from Concordia University Nebraska, Seward. Following his internship at Zion, St. Charles, Aaron received a call to serve as youth ministry director at the congregation.

DCE Hansen is one of numerous district sons and daughters serving in the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We rejoice that they are proclaimers of His peace.



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Rev. Mark Gerken  
Executive Assistant

**A roar of celebration goes up!**

Did you hear the roar coming from Adel? At the conclusion of Faith, Adel's participation in Fan Into Flame, the effort in Synod to raise \$100 million for mission work, financial secretary Craig Jensen announced that members had pledged \$70,545, smashing the goal of \$50,000 that they had set for themselves! It has since climbed to \$79,405. There was celebration and awe at the response of the congregation to the challenge to raise funds to help reach those who do not know Jesus as their Savior.

Faith, Adel, is one of nearly 30 congregations in Iowa District West to participate in Fan Into Flame with total pledges over \$324,000. May their story encourage you to consider being part of this aggressive effort within the Synod.

Rev. Mark Gerken, Iowa District West mission executive and a member of the Fan into Flame steering team, met with Faith's stewardship committee to explain the program and the options that were available to them. The committee also met with the consultants assisting the Synod to receive guidance as to how to best adapt the program to

the needs of the congregation.

The suggested goal for a congregation the size of Faith was \$35,000. The committee felt that the congregation could do more than that. After going home and praying about it, they decided on the goal of \$50,000, this in spite of the fact that plans will be brought to the congregation in February for a building expansion!

Faith, Adel, followed a four-week campaign, using Bible studies, sermons, and posters put up around the church to raise awareness and to pique everyone's curiosity on how to spread flames for *Ablaze!* There also were signs equating Jerusalem with Adel, Judea with Iowa District West, Samaria with the United States, and then the rest of the world. Arrangements were made for President Sieveking to preach prior to Commitment Sunday to help raise awareness of the need for mission outreach.

A tool to show the progress of how much money was pledged was a flat world map put on the wall in the sanctuary. Starting with a small flame for Adel, flames were to be added spreading across the world as pledges came in. Members of the stewardship committee were asked for their commitment ahead of time as well as commitments from two organizations. Those pledges were placed on the map right away.



On Commitment Sunday, the committee supplied Pastor John Burger a pretend fire with copper mylar paper, yellow tissue paper, logs, and flashing lights for a children's message. It was to show that the Holy Spirit

is alive in us and that we are to let God use us to spread the fire about God's love and mercy. The children were shown the map with the flames spreading over it and how we were raising funds to spread God's Word over the entire world.

Teresa Wichtendahl, chair of the stewardship committee, shared the following Bible passage that she believes totally explains the success of the campaign.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

"Now isn't that the best verse ever to describe what happened in our church?" asked the excited Wichtendahl. "It struck me that we came up with a goal, but it was a man-made goal. The Holy Spirit had another goal already in mind for us and used our congregation to attain it!"

The congregation planned to have a suggestion box plus a luncheon in January to brainstorm ideas on how to use the 15 percent that will come back to the congregation. Since members come from several communities in Dallas County, the plan is to look for ways to reach the entire county.

For assistance and materials for planning a Fan Into Flame emphasis in your congregation, contact Mission Executive Mark Gerken.

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# MISSION SNAPSHOT



Rev.  
Scott  
Jensen

## **'Mission work' sometimes means 'clowning around'**

Very few concepts encompass such a variety of emotions, visions, and circumstances with Christians everywhere as that of "mission work." For many, it involves traveling to distant countries or impoverished areas.

At Our Savior in Sheldon, it means ministering to the spiritual needs of rural/small-town America.

One of the most beautiful gifts of all mission work, Our Savior's included, is the unimaginable depth to which God affects people in the most common of situations. In just the two short years that our congregation has been "official," and in the years before when it served as a mission plant in Sheldon, a wide variety of circumstances have brought people through our doors, all held together by the common bond of the Holy Spirit working in relationships throughout our town.

The most recent obvious example of the Holy Spirit at work in our members' lives happened a month ago when two members of Our Savior were up at the local hospital "clowning around." Patches and

Izzy Kidding are caring clowns that visit the local hospital and nursing home to clown around with the patients and bring a smile to their faces. Now, there are certain rules that one must follow when clowning. You can't ask why the patients are hospitalized, you can't ask to pray with them, and you can't talk about church stuff. However, if they bring any of this up, it is free game.

It just so happened that on this day the Lord was at work in a very apparent way. Patches and Izzy were the only two caring clowns clowning around that night. And as they made their rounds, they came



Our Savior Lutheran Church, Sheldon

into a room where a woman lay. They clowned around for a while, but after they finished their routine, something interesting happened. The woman started to ask questions. She shared information with them at will, and they got into a great conversation.

She finally asked if they knew of a good church home where she could attend and not be judged by the clothes she wore. Izzy looked at Patches, and Patches looked at Izzy, and they were both overcome with joy as they shared their story about a little church that welcomes all people with the love of Jesus.

After this woman was released from the hospital, she was in church the next Sunday and has been here every week since. After visiting with her, she has decided to join the church and told me that she has never been baptized. So, in the coming weeks, she will be going through adult instruction, receive Holy Baptism, and be welcomed into God's family at Our Savior in Sheldon.

We ask you for your prayers of thanksgiving for the lives that have been touched by the Gospel through the people at Our Savior.

We are so thankful for the opportunities God gives us to take His Word to all people. And as the message spreads and the Kingdom grows, please pray that He prepares our hearts and minds for the changes in facilities, schedules, and resources it takes to accommodate the ever-growing body of members.

Pray that mission-mindedness persists in our actions as a congregation so we can continue to minister to the needs of the dying all around us.

May God continue to bless you as you uphold His missionaries in prayer and as you shine His light in your own lives as well.

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Gary  
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### **Blokers from Czech Republic draws visitors**

The night was cold and the mist was coming down. I knew that there was a possibility that perhaps NO ONE would show up at Mission Central on a weekday night like this! But, once again the Lord was going to teach us a lesson to trust in HIM and His “not normal” people who HE calls.

Our missionaries from Prague in the Czech Republic, Rev. James and Mabelle Bloker, were scheduled to speak at 7 p.m. They had such a great story to tell, and then the “not normal” people started to come!

What a joy to hear how God is working in this former Communist country that was controlled by the Soviet Union! Then we looked around and saw that God had called people to come hear these dear missionaries from such an amazing distance! People came from Ghana West Africa; Carroll, Harlan, Mapleton, Denison, Des Moines, Ute, Storm Lake, Schaller, and Sioux City, Iowa; Hubbard and Lincoln, Neb.; as well as from South Dakota and Idaho! It was amazing to see how far people will drive to come to see what God is doing in the mission field.

The group prayed for the Bloker family and sent them back to the Czech Republic to tell more and more people about their Savior Jesus!

### **Fort Dodge Leadership comes to Mission Central**

It was on a weekday evening that Pastor Al Henderson and his elders and church council members came to Mission Central. What a joy to welcome this group who came to get some new ideas of mission and outreach vision for their congregation at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge!

The group enjoyed a tour of the facilities and the museum, as this group had never been to see Mission Central before. A special presentation was given to point out some of the congregations and people of the Midwest where congregations were experiencing excellent growth and outreach.



A detailed study had been completed that revealed that about 20 percent of those surveyed in Lutheran congregations were fully and completely aware of the true meaning of the Gospel. The study also revealed the decrease in the numbers of Christians in the Western Hemisphere, in comparison to the rest of the world. It was an excellent evening to meet and a great opportunity to envision the future.

This “mission retreat” concept was rewarding to all the members that attended, and several commented that they wanted to come back and bring others!



### **Congregations bring confirmation students**

Rev. Andrew Ratcliffe from St. Paul in Sac City, Rev. Roger Carlisle from Peace in Wall Lake, and Rev. Don Peterson from Emmanuel in Lake View all brought their confirmation students for a special day of training at Mission Central. What a joy to welcome these young missionaries and to provide them with a new and exciting vision for the mission of the Lord's church!

Upon arriving, the group had some foot races, then toured the facilities and Mission Museum. The young people much enjoyed the museum and also had questions about many of the artifacts!

A special “Youth Mission Presentation” for the students showed youth from around the world who had never heard the name Jesus until they heard about their Savior from some of our missionaries! Afterward, the group enjoyed some food prepared by our staff at Mission Central, then headed back home, remembering some of the things that they had learned at a place in the middle of a cornfield called Mission Central.

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Ellie  
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## **Thank You, God!**

Looking back over the past year, I am thankful for God's many blessings. Jan. 1, 2009, started out at 3 a.m. as I headed to Pasadena to have a once-in-a-lifetime experience of riding on the Lutheran Hour float in the Rose Parade. Three days prior to that, our IOWAY Petal Pusher team was a powerhouse of 37 happy workers. We decorated the Lutheran Hour float and other floats with thousands of gorgeous flowers.

After the parade and a picnic lunch, we headed south to the Mexico border. It was an eye-opening experience to meet Lutherans in Mexico and to lend a helping hand. Part of the group painted, part conducted a vacation Bible school (VBS), some joined with a group of women to make beautiful church banners, and the three pastors in the group answered theological questions translated by Melissa Salomon, director of Lutheran Hour Ministries for Mexico.

It was a joy for our group to present a \$3,000 check to Melissa for the

roof for the first Lutheran day care center in Tijuana!

Then in July, God blessed 27 Iowans with two weeks of amazing experiences and adventures as they shared His love in the inner city of Los Angeles. Our group divided into five teams to work with five of the Nehemiah Lutheran churches. The first week was spent canvassing the neighborhoods around the churches to invite the youth to come to VBS the following week. They also prepared their lessons and crafts and learned the VBS songs.

The Iowans made me proud with their strong Midwestern work ethic. We worked on various projects. We constructed a playground, painted murals, cleaned, painted, and set up a food distribution center for the homeless.

I thank God for Pastor Arthur Porter, who I have had the great privilege of working with for the past three years. I wish him God's blessings as he continues his ministry in Alabama.

Because of safety issues in Tijuana, our group did not go into Mexico as we had for the past six years. Instead, we did a mission outreach in the Watts/Compton and Skid Row areas. We provided 150 backpacks filled with supplies and

food. Part of our team cleaned up the backyard of a woman who was unable to do it. It was a huge job. While doing that, the other part of the team walked down a street in Compton and visited with people. We offered Bibles and witness bracelets. Also we asked if we could pray with them. A policeman stopped and asked what we were doing. A team member said we were telling people about Jesus. He said, "That's great, because you are going to need Him."

Skid Row, an area where 7,000 to 8,000 homeless people live, was a truly heartbreaking and unique experience. God blessed us as He opened our hearts and eyes to the needs of others. We handed out food, clothes, Bibles, and backpacks. We prayed with many homeless people, both young and old. One situation that broke my heart was meeting a homeless pregnant mom with her 6-year-old daughter.

I thank God for giving the idea of "Spare a New Pair" (of underwear) to Paula Jolly from Norwalk. God has blessed the proj-

ect and thousands of items have been sent to a pastor and his wife in California who distribute them to the homeless.

Speaking of homeless, the Junior High Youth Gathering learned about the needs of homeless in Des Moines through an IOWAY project of collecting hundreds of health items that were distributed at Hope Ministries.

A big thank you to God and to each of the individuals and church groups who generously donated toys, backpacks, and school supplies for the IOWAY toy outreach to children in the inner city of Los Angeles. In early December, for the past eight years, five to eight pallets of items are loaded on a semi and sent to California to make it a happy Christmas for many children. The children first hear of the love of Baby Jesus, sing Christmas songs, and then receive what, for some of them, is their only Christmas gift.

I thank God for Elroy and Barb Koch, along with the many helpers at the Orphan Grain Train, who sort and pack many  
*(Continued on Page H.)*

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### Wonderful dreamers in Manilla

"We have been blessed with some real dreamers and Pastor Paul Frank leads the way," said member and Trinity Lutheran Church leader Garry Gruhn. "He and others have built scenes for VBS, parade floats, confirma-

tion class projects and more." Trinity in Manilla offers opportunities for Christ-centered activity to all ages. "We have quite a Sunday school and VBS program that has drawn a lot of attention and a number of children and families into the life of Christ at Trinity," said Frank. "We built a mountain, which had a rock climbing wall up the face of it. It was awesome. Kids were showing up 45 minutes early for VBS so they could have more time on the wall. Our parade float was Noah's Ark; the kids painted the animal faces

on, and a lady in the congregation made head pieces for the animal ears. It has become a parade favorite. In fact, we still have the ark in dry dock waiting for the next parade season. During VBS 2009, it was fun to sit in the shade of the tree of life in our fellowship hall and share the story of the Lord of life."

"Our focus on youth activities and opportunities has drawn in some families previously unattached to any church at all and has helped to re-

engage some of our own families as well. The children know they have a place in the life of this ministry. They are welcomed into the worship services, into the Sunday school classes, into many activities of fun and fellowship, into service projects for our Lord as the kids help us tend to the needs of our senior citi-

*(Continued on Page H.)*

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### PARISH NURSE

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

February is National Heart Month. Heart disease is the nation's number one killer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, success on fighting the disease has slowed down because of unhealthy lifestyles, poor diet habits, obesity, and physical inactivity. Barriers to good nutrition include limited time, lack of motivation, inconvenience of healthy eating, and confusion about the effects of various foods on health.

"Open the Door to a Healthy Heart" is a national consumer awareness campaign about diet and heart disease. The campaign is educating consumers that heart-healthy eating starts with something as simple as a look inside your refrigerator. These are 10 tips for a heart-healthy refrigerator:

- ♥ Choose more low-fat and fat-free dressings, condiments, sauces, and spreads instead of full-fat ones to have in your refrigerator.
- ♥ Keep healthier foods like fruit and vegetables where you can see and eat them. Americans waste an average of \$10 a week on produce that spoils.
- ♥ Store healthy foods in the front and less-healthy foods toward the back.
- ♥ Purchase low-fat foods like skim or 1 percent milk, lean meats, and soft margarine spreads.
- ♥ Consider color-coding foods with stars or hearts stickers for heart healthy choices.
- ♥ Make healthy foods appealing by keeping low-fat dips next to cut-up vegetables and fruits.
- ♥ Have leftovers of an entrée with vegetables and other side items on a plate for a balanced TV dinner.
- ♥ Have cut-up vegetables in containers so that they are ready for meal preparation and snacking.
- ♥ Freeze foods in portions sizes for fast heating in the microwave.
- ♥ Freeze cut-up fruit in bite-size pieces for fun snacking for kids and adults.

May God bless our efforts to provide a healthy diet and promote a healthy lifestyle for our families.

*In His Service,  
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# CELEBRATIONS

## EXAMPLE FOR LENT

(Continued from Page A.)

What an example Paul was of what Jesus can do, in fact, of what He also has done in you! He has chosen you, a contender for the title of foremost sinner. He has forgiven you through His death on the cross. He trusts you. He empowers you. He has saved you to be His servant. He points to you as an example of what His love can do.

As we observe another Lent, we join St. Paul in pointing to ourselves as examples—chief of sinners, forgiven sinners, loved sinners, saved sinners, grateful sinners, servant sinners.

## We congratulate

### Birthdays

- Feb. 6—Helen Andersen, 90, Good Shepherd, Fort Dodge.  
Feb. 10—Gerhardt Gutz, 90, Zion, Storm Lake.  
Feb. 28—Arlon Benz, 90, Good Shepherd, Fort Dodge.

### Anniversaries

- Feb. 5—Arthur and Lorraine Beeck, 55, St. John, Charter Oak.  
Feb. 13—Charles and Lois Sykes, 55, St. Paul, Ida Grove.  
Feb. 17—James and Shirley Beck, 50, Trinity, Cherokee.  
Feb. 19—Keith and Joan Ballantyne, 55, Trinity, Cherokee.  
Feb. 20—Robert and Joanne Meeves, 55, St. John, Charter Oak.  
Feb. 21—Butch and Marlene Munson, 50, Zion, Denison.  
Feb. 26—Walter and Ardith Lage, 60, Zion, Manning.  
Feb. 28—Pete and Betty Paulsen, 60, Zion, Denison.

## IOWAY

(Continued from Page F.)

of the toys and backpacks that go to California.

I am thankful for Jodi Jurgemeyer who skillfully designs the *Connections*, a quarterly publication of IOWAY events.

I am thankful for the IOWAY Advisory Board that helped in many ways to expand the IOWAY ministry. I am thankful for the 100-plus people who attended the second IOWAY banquet and renewed friendships.

At the banquet, Melissa Salomon shared what God is doing in Mexico. I thank God for Melissa and for her daily efforts to share Jesus with others and to invite us to join her in the Mexican mission outreach.

I am thankful for the many gifts of money to support youth and adults so they could serve God on the mission trips. Without that support, many would not have had a life-changing opportunity to serve God in this way.

There are many more people to thank but no more space, so I thank God for each of you who pray for and share in the IOWAY outreach. You are greatly appreciated. God bless you!

## WONDERFUL DREAMERS

(Continued from Page G.)

zens, and they join us for a touring Christmas caroling group around town and at our local nursing home. Psalm 8:2 says, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise. ...' We hear the children and infants sing God's praise here at Trinity every day and the song is a sweet, sweet sound," said Frank.

And that's not all! Trinity, a congregation of 327 baptized members, reaches out in other ways. "We also have a group that makes a big pile of quilts every year, members sent a pallet of brand new backpacks to Los Ange-

les, and two separate groups went to New Orleans/Biloxi," said Gruhn. "We've started a men's group, thanks to the ideas provided by the Lutheran Laymen's League, and our Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF) sent members to Alaska for VBS outreach. We support missionary Patrick O'Neal and his family who serve South Korea, and we've sent huge care packages to our troops. Our evangelism board has sent care packages to our college students, and we started a junior LYF and a grade school LYF called the Lions of Judah. We're

also dabbling with the use of several of our musical members who play guitar, trumpet, and trombone."

Trinity has definitely leveraged the gifts and talents of both its leadership and its members for Christ. LCEF is blessed to partner with this ministry and all LCMS organizations. If your ministry has financial needs, contact your district LCEF vice president Carole White.

### April issue deadline: Feb. 15

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