



President Paul Sieveking

Let the little children come to Jesus

A preschooler took her new coat to her mother, crying, "Mama, something's wrong with my coat!" She was learning to button her own buttons. She had worked hard poking each button into a hole, starting at the bottom, but when she got to the top, she had a button left over, and her coat didn't fit right. She had poked the first button into the wrong hole. After that, every button was in the wrong hole. The first button is the most important. If it would have been right, everything else could have been right, too.

It's important to get off to a good start. If you make a mistake in buttoning your coat, you can go back, undo them and start over again. Unfortunately, you can't do that in life. You can't go back and start over again, so you've got to make sure every button is right.

Christian parents know it is important for their children to get that first button right in their life with Jesus. That's why we put such a strong emphasis on Holy Baptism. Parents bring their little ones to be baptized because they realize that's the beginning of a child's spiritual life. It is a good start—but just the start. So, we charge parents and sponsors with the responsibility of nurturing that faith, praying for the child, bringing

the child to worship and providing for the child's continuing education. The first button has to be right and all the other buttons along the way.

Some parents brought their children to Jesus to have Him touch them and bless them. These parents may have seen the hands of Jesus heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, even raise the dead. It's no wonder they were eager to bring their children to Jesus.

But, the disciples tried to prevent them. They were concerned about Jesus. He had spoken plainly to them about His suffering and death. They couldn't imagine that He would want to be "bothered" by little children at a time like that.

It seems today there are some parents who, instead of bringing their children to Jesus, actually prevent them from coming to Him.

They have little concern for their children's spiritual welfare. It is too much trouble. They don't want to be bothered. They don't have the time to read Bible stories or teach their children to pray. They don't want to be embarrassed when their children won't sit still in worship. They don't need the hassle of listening to memory work.

It's not worth a fight over attending Bible class or youth group.

Sometimes parents hinder their children by their own example. Instead of "bringing" their children to Jesus, they "send" them. It doesn't work. One Sunday a little boy was being pushed out the door and sent to Sunday school. His father was getting dressed to play golf. The little one asked, "Dad, when am I going to be old enough to go golfing with you instead of

having to go to Sunday school?"

You can rephrase the question to fit the situation: "When can I decide to sleep in or go fishing or out to brunch like you?" What obstacles some parents put in the way! They not only hinder their children, they also hinder themselves.

If you, as an adult, neglect the Word, are you not preventing yourself from growing closer to Jesus? You may have been baptized and confirmed, but if you stop at that point, aren't you skipping some button holes? Things in your life don't fit right anymore. You may have all kinds of reasons or excuses, but have you stopped coming to Jesus for the blessings He offers you in the Word?

When Jesus saw His disciples hinder the children, He was outraged! He called the children to Him and said, "Let the little children

come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14 NIV). The King James Version said, "Suffer the little children to come to me." Bring them ... cause them to come ... do whatever you can to get them to me.

"The kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

When the grownups failed to set the example for the children, Jesus set the children as the example for the grownups to teach them instead, such as:

Humility. Little ones know they are little and weak. They haven't learned about pride and prestige.

Trust. Little children have so much confidence in their parents. They still think mom and dad know just about everything.



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EDUCATION



Rev. Bob Riggert
Executive Assistant

Grace-based youth and family ministry

“Did you hear that Terry died?”

The youth leader of Zion, Manning, recently shared that shocking news with me. Thirty-nine-year-old Terry died suddenly from a heart issue. His sudden death left Terry’s widow, three children and mother in shock. Because of my relationships with Terry during his teenage years, I was asked to lead the memorial service.

Praise God for His grace to Terry. Terry was brought to the waters of Holy Baptism by his single-parent mother. Sunday-school teachers, youth counselors and other mentors provided prayer support and faith nurture for Terry. The youth ministry of the congregation included experiences at junior-high week, youth week and district and national gatherings. These were important for Terry.

Terry sometimes was not understood or accepted by his school peers. He was welcomed by his church peers. Grace was extended through relationships.

Praise God for His grace to me. I must confess that I often grew impatient with Terry. While he was not rebellious or disrespectful, he often was distracting in class, and it was frustrating to me. Terry didn’t fit into my neat confirmation and church behavior “box.”

Conversations with the widow indicated that the family is not active in a church. However, Terry

had made sure that his wife was confirmed in a Lutheran church. He knew the basics and wanted a faith foundation for their life together.

Terry’s sudden death caused me to reflect on the importance of congregational youth ministry and district support of youth ministry. It has been the objective of the Youth Services Committee to provide experiences that share the message of God’s grace in Christ with youth. We strive to demonstrate grace in our acceptance of youth regardless of their backgrounds, situations and faith challenges. Youth events provide an opportunity for grace connections.

I also reflect on the importance of family ministry. Who’s going to provide the grace connections for Terry’s children? They don’t have a multi-generation history with a congregation. Their family priorities and needs may be different than those of the “typical” church family. They need to hear about and experience God’s grace in their time of grief, God’s acceptance of them and God’s plan for them. Family ministry must be missional.

After 14 adventurous years leading district youth ministry, I am transitioning from that district role (and the stewardship role). I have been blessed to be part of 14 junior youth and youth gatherings, youth camps, confirmation camps, several national gatherings and a variety of other national, district and congregational youth ministry activities. I am extremely grateful to the many district youth leader partners and the dedicated congregation youth leaders. Thank you to all who have ministered to the “Terrys” and thousands of

other youth. Thank you for teaching them about God’s grace and demonstrating that grace in caring conversations, youth rooms and gathering hotels.

God’s grace will be celebrated in worship, taught by presenters, demonstrated by leaders and experienced with peers at the fall district youth gatherings.

“Sacred”

is the theme of the Oct. 29-30 Junior Youth



Gathering

at the Sheraton Hotel in West Des Moines. Youth in grades 6-8 will explore the “Sacred” teachings of the Ten Commandments. Registration materials have been sent to all congregations and are available on the district website. Registrations are due by Sept. 23.

“Journey” is the theme of the Nov. 18-20 Youth Gathering. It will be a regional event with the Nebraska and South Dakota Districts at the Embassy Suites in



La Vista, Neb. Registration information has been shared with congregations and is available at the district website and at www.NEYOUTH.org.

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Rev. Mark Gerken
Executive Assistant

Grace Place Retreat

Six couples and one individual from Iowa District West and the Nebraska District participated in a Grace Place Retreat at Camp Okoboji, June 13-17.

Grace Place Lutheran Retreats, a Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is focused on keeping professional church workers healthy *physically, emotionally, relationally, fiscally and spiritually*. Loss of our most valuable human resources—our church professionals—is becoming a devastating crisis.

Grace Place invites church workers and leaders to take a “pause point” to reflect on the state of their whole health, re-tool by learning new health skills and strategies to combat chronic stresses and then rejuvenate through rest, fellowship and being in God’s Word.

The retreat at Camp Okoboji, made possible through a grant provided by the Iowa West and East LWML, was led by Dr. John Eckrich and Dr. David Ludwig. The good doctors led participants through a look at the four pillars of our relationships: spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical. All of this was undergirded with a realization of God’s grace, which is “counter-intuitive” (to use a buzz word



from the weekend), that is, it runs counter to logic.

Following the retreat, participants were invited to enter an Internet-based *lifelong learning module* to further their knowledge and practice of healthy lifestyles as they continue to serve God and others by vocation and personal pilgrim walk.

One popular concept was to think in terms of the “we” in relationships, that is, what is best for the relationship rather than our sinful tendency to think only of ourselves. “The retreat has us thinking more about the ‘WE’ in our marriage and relationships with others. We’re striving to implement the ‘WE’ in our congregation,” shared Rev. Gerry Bruhn, Bethany, Sioux City.

When asked what she would say to someone considering attending a Grace Place Retreat, Jolene Erickson, Germantown, responded, “I would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to go! There was so much information that will help improve any type of relationships whether it be marriage, family, friends, work or church.”

In fact, plans are in the making for another retreat to be held next year. Rev. Mark Gerken, Iowa District West executive assistant for Missions and Human Care, said, “I’d really like to encourage congregations to consider allowing their pastor and, if married, his wife to attend. It could even be presented as a gift in connection with Clergy Appreciation Month this October. The women of the LWML are to be commended for their interest in supporting our professional church workers.”

For more information, please go to www.graceplaceretreats.org.



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+GROUNDED + GROWING + REACHING+ OUTREACH RESOURCE AND TRAINING EVENT



Rev. Mark
Gerken
Executive
Assistant

+Grounded + Growing + Reaching+ Outreach Resource and Training Event is the must-attend event for you and your congregation this fall. Designed to meet the needs of families and individuals, church workers and leaders and church groups and entire congregations, +Grounded + Growing + Reaching+ will be an amazing day with something for everyone. Mark your calendars now for Saturday, Nov. 5.

This Outreach Resource and Training Event is an excellent opportunity for you to hear an exciting keynote speaker, participate in your choice of interesting break-out sessions, connect with ministries from across the district at the Ministry Fair and possibly participate in an easy, hands-on community service event.

Best of all, +Grounded + Growing + Reaching+ is for the entire family! Special programming is included for children and teens ages 0-18. Early childhood professionals from district congregations will provide child care for the youngest attendees ages 0-4. Area directors of Christian education will lead fun activities for children ages 5-12. Teens ages 13-18 have the unique opportunity to participate in a special five14

training program by Lutheran Hour Ministries. Through five14, Christian teens will learn to step into the unique role God has created for them as His witnesses. Learn more at www.whatsfive14.com.

Rev. Bob Newton, president of the LCMS California-Nevada-Hawaii District, will serve as keynote speaker for the event and will lead two exciting large-group discussions. Attendees will be able to participate in their choice of three



break-out sessions on a variety of outreach topics geared toward congregation members and church workers alike.

Also included is the option to participate in an easy and unique "Love in Action" community servant event. Smoke detector batteries should be changed yearly and as a way to help meet this need, we will be handing out 9-volt batteries to St. John's neighbors. This easily reproducible event is the perfect opportunity for individuals and families to connect with the community, build relationships with neighbors and

share the love of Jesus in a practical and grace-filled way!

+Grounded + Growing + Reaching+ will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 5, at St. John Lutheran Church in Storm Lake, Iowa. The cost for +Grounded + Growing + Reaching+ is \$15 per individual or \$30 per family and includes all materials, coffee and rolls, lunch and all activity options. Registration is due by Tuesday, Nov. 1.

More information will be made available at www.idwlcms.org, including online registration. Additionally, registration forms and publicity materials will be sent to all district congregations.

The +Grounded + Growing + Reaching+ Outreach Resource and Training Event is sponsored by Iowa District West and the Personal Missions Subcommittee. Iowa District West can be reached at 515-576-7666 or by email at jill.davis@idwlcms.org.

Special thanks to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and Lutheran Church Extension Fund for support-

ing +Grounded + Growing + Reaching+.

Don't miss this exciting day of being +Grounded+ in God's Word, +Growing+ in Christian faith, and +Reaching+ out with God's grace!

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Gary Thies

Workers come all the way from Conway, Ark., to help!



The evening of June 20 was a night that we will long remember at the Gary and Maxine Thies home! The wind and rain came in sheets and huge puffs. Yes, we wondered about Mission Central across the road, as we heard trees snapping and falling. When the morning of June 21 came, we could see six large trees down in our yard at our home; but when we looked across at Mission Central, things were in good shape once more! At our home and in our yard, it was covered with limbs, and huge trees had been uprooted. It was a disaster zone.

On June 21, we had scheduled to have a group of about 17 people visit from Peace Lutheran Church of Conway, Ark. When this group of special missionaries arrived, we were so happy that they were willing to help haul limbs and branches to

the creek! These young people and adults worked so hard. They were a big help. Here is a picture of this famous group of missionaries helping. They are standing by one of the big trees that blew down at our home.

After the work period, the group enjoyed a trip to the museum and the barn, and then they finished with a visit to the world famous "Wayside Chapel." What a great time it was for these young people. God bless you dear friends and helpers. You came at "just the right time" to help us. The Lord sends helpers when they are truly needed!



Volunteer secretaries meet at Mission Central

So many people don't understand how Mission Central can function with "no overhead." Many have said, "That's impossible." But, with God, all things are possible.

One amazing group who helps here at Mission Central are our volunteer secretaries. At the present time, we have nine volunteer secretaries who donate their time and efforts at no cost. They type in their homes and listen to the microcassettes that are dictated by old Missionary Gary. The stationery is furnished by a family in Columbus, Neb. Each of the secretaries has to find, raise, hunt and collect their own postage. That way, when the letters are mailed, there is no

cost to the missionaries. As a result, when a gift comes in to Mission Central, 100 percent of the gift goes directly to the missionaries or the mission project. The world says this can't work, but it can! What a blessing to see how the Lord can raise up these secretaries at "just the right time."

Some time ago, some of the volunteers got together and spent a day at Mission Central. These special people are pictured here in the photo on the left. Perhaps you know them. They come from Austin, Minnesota, Utica and Fremont, Neb., Des Moines, Denison, Pleasant Hill and Early, Iowa. We just added a new secretary from Arlington, Neb. The Lord truly is sending us special helpers.



Long-time helpers and friends come from St. Paul, Sioux City

What a JOY it was to welcome friends whom we have known for 17 years from St. Paul Lutheran

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IOWAY



Ellie
Menz

I like the number 10

2011 marks the 10th IOWAY mission trip to Los Angeles for me, the 10th trip to Pasadena, Calif., to decorate floats for the Rose Parade and the 10th year of helping others become involved in personally reaching out to serve God by serving others.

This 10th anniversary was marked by two IOWAY mission trips this summer. The first was a 10-day outreach in Leadville, Colo., followed by a 14-day outreach in Los Angeles, Calif.

Colorado Team



Our plans were to travel by Amtrak to Denver and then by vans to Breckenridge and Leadville. Plan B went into effect when Amtrak was shut down due to flooding on the Missouri River. The tracks were sand-bagged; so, we rented minivans and headed west.

On the way, some of us experienced altitude sickness even though we drank lots of water to avoid the effects of the 11,200-foot altitude. Good Shepherd



Lutheran in Leadville is at the highest altitude of any LCMS church in the United States!

Once in Leadville and with Vicar Chad Potts, we reached out to the community of Leadville with a morning vacation Bible school (VBS) at Good Shepherd. Then we loaded up tents, tables, chairs, crafts, snacks, skit backdrop, skit supplies and our team. We took a 20-minute drive to a trailer park to conduct a second VBS in the afternoon.

Each morning, we were up early for devotions and breakfast at the church. We were a great team with one person making toast, two cracking and frying eggs and others with various jobs. Chickens had to work overtime to feed our 13 hungry workers!

Camp VBS "Majestic Kingdom" was a big hit with the children. Some of the team also discovered they could help build an outhouse with the expert guidance of Lonny Cummins. They did this as a service for a community mountain trail.

Twice, we took a beautiful mountain drive to Breckenridge to sand and paint a fence that surrounded the preschool and day care. We also moved branches and small logs and put down mulch.

We brought 12 suitcases filled with Bibles, clothes, backpacks and

other supplies and distributed the items at the trailer park. The people were very grateful. Two boys were so excited to receive a Spanish Bible. One said to the other, smiling broadly, "Remember when we used to have a Bible?"

California Team

God put together another amazing Iowa group to plant seeds and share His love with people in California.

Landing at LAX at 2:20 p.m. on June 28, we hit the ground running! We loaded our 32 suitcases and 16 backpacks into the four rental vans and headed to the hotel. By 4:30, half of our team was heading to St. Phillips Lutheran Church in Compton to teach VBS that evening. Now, that is a record! We had VBS at St. Phillips each evening of the first week, along with canvassing and making preparations at four Lutheran churches each morning in the inner city area.

On July 2, we headed to the Watts and Compton areas and worked

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Carole
White

At the end of June, three bus loads plus multiple car loads of women (and a few men) from Iowa District West made the trek to Peoria, Ill., for the National Lutheran Women's Missionary League Convention. They went to make new friends, connect with old friends, gather around God's Word, work on service projects and adopt a challenging mission goal of \$1.825 million for the 2011-13 biennium. They gathered around the theme, "Being with Jesus—Living on the Edge."



District treasurers, from left, Allison Hein-North Wisconsin District; Sue Fleischmann, English District; Beth Marth, Ohio District; and Carole White, Iowa District West.

Dr. Ken Klaus was the proclaimer for the opening worship service. Klaus talked about the women who went to the grave early on Easter morning. A daunting task was ahead of them to prepare the body that had been in the grave for three days, much less how were they to move the stone from the



Karla Hustedt, president, Storm Lake Zone "Living on the Edge."

entrance. But they were going to do what they could do to show their love for their Lord! That's living on the edge! That's what we are to do!

The treasurers of our LWML districts are an example of women living on the edge. Sometimes their job is a daunting task but, like the biblical women who made that early morning trek, they are willing to serve their Lord and Savior.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) sponsored a breakfast for the LWML district treasurers at the convention, which gave them an opportunity to network. LCEF shared these tools available to them:

- StewardAccount[®]** (like a money market) to support LCMS ministry and earn interest while funds are idle.
- no fees
 - no minimum balance requirements
 - unlimited deposits or withdrawals
 - online access for easy transfers to/from bank accounts, online bill payment
 - account would not need to be changed every time a new treasurer or financial secretary is elected.

Joyful Response for "electronic mites."

- Individuals or societies can voluntarily sign up for monthly mite payments directly to the district treasurer (who would then split and

send 25 percent for national along with customary mite submissions).

- Requires District Steward-Account[®] for mites to be deposited before sending on.

- no minimum amount required

Imagine the possibilities for increasing mites: Women who can't attend every meeting, women who choose not to ever attend but would like to support mission projects, more consistent/timely receipts, plus!

These same tools are available to all members of the LCMS as we live on the edge for our Lord Jesus Christ.

For more information, contact Carole White.



Carole White (center) sitting on the hot seat. The Gospel Outreach of the LWML put attendees on the hot seat to practice witnessing opportunities.



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CELEBRATIONS

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

(Continued from Page A.)

Dependence. Little ones don't worry about where their next meal is coming from or whether they will have a roof over their heads. They trust that mom and dad will take care of everything.

Obedience. Psychologically, children want to obey their parents. They need structure and discipline. They want to please mom and dad. Little ones have short memories. They are resilient. They keep coming back. They haven't learned to hold grudges and nurse bitterness.

The kingdom of God belongs to such as these. You receive it like a little child when you recognize your weakness and your sinfulness and when you are willing to take God at

His Word and trust His promises. By the Spirit, you depend on Jesus alone as your Savior and when you are growing up in His Kingdom, seek to please Him with your life and obey His commands. The kingdom of God belongs to you.

Jesus gave those little ones and their parents so much more than they expected that day. He took them up in His arms and held them close. He played with them and laughed with them. Then, He put His hands on them—those powerful hands that would one day be nailed to a cross for them—and He blessed them.

What a beautiful picture of the kingdom of God: Jesus and the children.

MISSION CENTRAL

(Continued from Page E.)

Church in Sioux City, Iowa. When Rev. Mark and Rose Krause came from Riga, Latvia, these dear folks came to hear their final report. They have been praying for and supporting the Krause family for some time. They so much

enjoyed hearing how the Lord is opening the doors in the former Soviet Union countries of the Baltics.

It truly was a special time for these dear friends. On Page E, you see the group next to the Mission Central sign.

IOWAY

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with David Dunson to paint the exterior of two houses in about five hours. It was a great feeling of accomplishment to help the two families.

The second week went very quickly as we all worked together to conduct VBS at two churches in the morning, and then everyone taught at two different churches in the late afternoon/evening.

July 9 was another busy day. We helped paint an outdoor mural at Hope Memorial. After painting and enjoying "Ernie's chili," we went to Skid Row, an area with approx-

imately 7,000 homeless people. We worked with Gerald and Kimberley Fortier who have an outreach at Union Mission. We sang at the church service, distributed warm meals, clothes, underwear, school kits and health kits. It is hard to explain the feelings experienced while helping 150 people who have no possessions and are grateful for what is offered.

How did these experiences affect team members? Visit the IOWAY website at www.idwlcms.org or call 515-386-8420.

We congratulate
(September 2011)



Birthdays

Sept. 26—Ila Sanderson, 95, St. Paul, Ireton.

Anniversaries

Sept. 9—Arlo and Lois Buck, 55 years, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Carroll.

Sept. 9—Elmer and Joyce Denker, 60, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.

Sept. 9—Darrell and Karen Slechta, 50, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.

Sept. 18—Merritt and Junith Comstock, 55, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.

Sept. 22—Morrelle and Darlene Christiansen, 65, St. Paul, Ida Grove.

Sept. 23—LaVerne and Laverne Christiansen, 60, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.

Deadline for the November 2011 issue: Sept. 15

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