


# Mission Opportunities

Once again in the Lutheran church we find ourselves traveling through the season of Lent, the forty days (not counting Sundays) that lead to Easter. What a special time of year, but what a time of year that is often misunderstood by others! Perhaps you could invite your friend, neighbor, or co-worker to join you in the special midweek services that many of our congregations hold during Lent. One church I visited even distributed business cards that invited a person to worship, with directions and contact information for the church on the reverse side. As we journey together through Lent, here are some other possibilities and resources for sharing with others the message of Jesus' journey to the cross and tomb (as well as other tidbits and food for thought!):

- † **Trinity, Des Moines** recognized that there was a void in their ministry. They weren't offering anything directly targeted to young couples. In an attempt to rectify that void, Vicar Brian Lee and his wife set about inviting other couples to join them. To remove possible barriers, they offer free childcare and also provide snacks. The informal group has been well received to date, with several of the couples expressing an interest in membership. Comments such as *"I'm here because this is the most important thing in my life"* and *"We have talked about things that neither one of us knew was so important to the other"* reflect the impact it is making. For more information, contact Vicar Lee at [leeb@csl.edu](mailto:leeb@csl.edu).
- † **Thank you** to the people of Iowa District West! In the past fiscal year, ending Jan. 31, 2009 you contributed almost \$2.1 million that was entrusted to IDW for the work of God's kingdom. In these challenging economic times, that actually reflected a slight increase from the previous year. At the February meeting, the IDW Board of Directors adopted a ministry program of almost \$2.633 million, (approximate 3% decrease) including almost \$1.7 million for mission work in the District and Synod. Thank you for your financial response of faith!
- † **Faith, Adel** continued a long-standing ministry outreach of its Women Guild around Valentine's Day by boxing up approximately 35 "goodie" boxes that are sent to the college students and military personnel from the congregation, along with an encouraging note. It actually becomes a ministry of the entire congregation as the invitation to provide snacks and money for postage is extended to all. It's a simple, fun way (and greatly appreciated by the recipients!) to let the students and military personnel know they are loved, prayed for, and an important part of the body of Christ!
 
- † **Ablaze!** is the movement within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. Excellent resources for both congregational and personal use can be found on both the District ([www.idwlcms.org](http://www.idwlcms.org)) and Synodical ([www.lcms.org/ablaze](http://www.lcms.org/ablaze)) Web sites.

- † **A free audio New Testament Bible download** is available on the *Ablaze!* Web site ([www.lcms.org/ablaze](http://www.lcms.org/ablaze)). This amazing resource—perfect for sharing God’s Word with others—is brought to you through a partnership of Hosanna/Faith Comes By Hearing and LCMS World Mission. You can also go directly to [www.lcmsbibledownload.com](http://www.lcmsbibledownload.com) to download an audio Bible in one of 311 languages! The first download is completely free and for subsequent downloads, you just have to provide some basic contact information. Download your copy today to help you share God’s Word with others!
  
- † **Congregation transformation** or revitalization – I recently attended a five-day training to begin the process of becoming a certified consultant for congregations desiring to fulfill their role as “mission outposts” and be passionate about carrying out the Great Commission. This month I, along with Pastor Bob Riggert, will be meeting with other leaders from Midwest Districts to explore and discuss how we can best use this process (Transforming Churches Network) in our districts. Please pray for us! If you’d like more information or might be interested in the process for your congregation, please contact me.
  
- † **Outreach ministry** – Have a great idea for an event or ministry to reach your community but short on funds? Perhaps the District can partner with you! To apply for an *Ablaze!* grant go to the District Web site ([www.idwlcms.org](http://www.idwlcms.org)), click on the link for Ablaze and you’ll find a link for an application for a grant.
  
- † **Darwin’s birthday** – In connection with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Darwin’s birth (2-12-1809), Lutheran Hour Ministries has prepared a 5-session Bible study entitled *Out of Nothing: The Word, Creation and Faith*. The study tackles questions about random chance, the veracity of Scripture, and evolutionary presuppositions. It shows how God's creation and man's salvation are fundamentally centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ. It joins other video-based studies available on its new men’s Web site ([www.lhmmen.com](http://www.lhmmen.com)) including *He Who Dies with the Most Toys...Still Dies*, *Home Run King*, and *Who Am I? What Am I Doing Here?* The new study will be released shortly.
  
- † Speaking of ideas, Iowa District West will meet in convention June 21-24 under the theme, *Joy in Serving*. We’d like to offer the delegates one or more activities that provide opportunity to serve. Share your ideas with me and you just might hear about the impact it had this summer!
  
- † Although it doesn’t cost any money to share our faith, it does cost money to send missionaries, provide materials, and other items. In addition to raising mission awareness *Fan Into Flame* provides a way for the congregations of Iowa District West to give for the support of mission work in their own community, the district, across the country, and around the world. Additional resources, including small group and worship materials, will soon be available on the District Web site. Contact me for how to get started in planning for this opportunity in 2009.
  
- † In fact, you can contact me about any way in which I might be able to help you or your congregation in reaching out with the love of Christ. Whether it be leading a Bible study, preaching on missions, facilitating a discussion on the congregation’s future direction, or something else, I am ready to serve and partner with you in whatever way you see as being most beneficial for the congregation.

Celebrating the Victory,

Rev. Mark Gerken, Executive Assistant for Missions  
[Mark.Gerken@idwlcms.org](mailto:Mark.Gerken@idwlcms.org)