

A Message From Pastor Nielsen ~ July 2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

Recently I had the opportunity to hear Pastor Mark Vander Tuig speak. I always enjoy hearing from Mark because he is one of the great leaders we have in LCMC.

He spoke about his vision for LCMC in general and for Peace Lutheran Church in particular. He believes that God has put us here for a reason and that we are in the process of figuring out what that reason is. He seems pretty sure that we have a unique part to play in fulfilling the Great Commission to go make disciples.

We are a people who have to choose what we will focus on. We cannot do everything well. Mark sees four things that we need to stay focused on as Peace Lutheran Church.

Our first focus needs to be prayer. We will never be able to rise up as a church until we have first fallen to our knees in prayer. As a pastor I need to devote more time to prayer. As a congregation we need to have a prayer team, people who come together regularly not to talk or study but just to pray for our congregation, our community and our world.

We have much to confess. Mark cited a study which discovered that of people age 18 to 26, only 4 percent are publicly and actively committed to Christ. Why is that? Is it perhaps that my generation has failed to live the gospel in an attractive and meaningful way? Has the church bored them to faithlessness by our shallow Christianity? Maybe our prayer needs to begin with some serious confession so that we can become more humble, genuine, willing, and free as a Church.

Our second focus needs to be mission. We are here today because a small house church in Antioch believed that it was their job to fulfill the great commission. They sent out Paul and Barnabas as the first missionaries. We are one of 700 mission departments in LCMC. It is our job

to be missionaries in our community and to send missionaries to all the world. I am so excited about the five folks going on mission trips this summer to Uganda, Romania, and Jamaica. We need to be doing more of that and more of supporting full time missionaries around the world.

Mark mentioned meeting a man in Ethiopia who is serving as a missionary in Sudan. And Mark said, "What on earth caused you to go to Sudan?" The man replied, "God." And Mark thought, "Was that a silly question or what?" It is only God who moves people to give their lives for the cause of the Kingdom.

Our third focus needs to be getting connected. Some people think that LCMC stands for "Loose Cannons in Mission for Christ." But we need each other. We need to connect in small groups, in mentoring relationships, in support networks. We need each other.

LCMC is finding exciting new connections with great organizations like World Mission Prayer League, Lutheran Vietnamese Ministry, Eastern European Mission Network, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, the North American Lutheran Church, Youth Encounter, Institute of Lutheran Theology, and others. We have many partners in our mission.

Finally, we need to focus on training and equipping. We are about making disciples: people who pray and study God's Word, people who know what they believe and why they believe it and will share it, people who have a vision and passion for serving others, and people who are connected with the Body of Christ.

Prayer, mission, connection, and training. Those are the things our partners in LCMC are inviting us to focus on. They aren't really new. But hopefully our focus will be renewed as we move forward.

Yours in Christ, *Phil Nielsen*