

# Pastor Kory's Page

Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD

September 13-14, 2014

## A "Participant's Guide" to our 2014 Mission Festival

This weekend we welcome guest speaker, Gary Thies, from Mapleton, IA. I met Gary on a Friday afternoon about three years ago. We drove a twelve-passenger van full of students from Concordia Seminary to the cornfields of western Iowa. As we unloaded, we were greeted by a friendly man in overalls—Gary! He began showing us around the property along this country road. Sharing the current price of corn and the value of farmland, telling the story of his tractor collection, and, of course, giving us the grand tour of the out-of-the-way site now known as "Mission Central."

That was an impactful weekend for us. Gary taught us a lot – and not just about corn and tractors! We spent time hearing his insights about our Lord's church in all corners of the world, hearing about our LCMS missionaries and how their needs are met through the generous people connected to Mission Central, hearing the stories of many of the artifacts in the missionary museum (like the Conquistador's stirrup!), and hearing about how the Holy Spirit works through a grassroots effort like Mission Central to move mountains for God's Kingdom!

I would like to pass along a few of Gary's insights from that weekend three years ago. Perhaps some of these ideas will help you engage more fully in this mission festival. Perhaps some of these things will remind you that you are God's workmanship and that you have an important role in His mission.

**Don't be normal!** Normal people don't devote their lives to Jesus' mission to seek and to save the lost. Normal people don't make major sacrifices to support or participate in that mission. Normal people don't consider that their unbelieving neighbors will spend eternity apart from God in hell. The spiritual and physical needs in the world around us are many and urgent! *So don't be normal!*

**Retirement? What's that?** Gary is a retired banker. He spends his retirement in the recliner watching countless hours of TV—*not!* Note this: Gary has devoted his "retirement" to expanding God's kingdom by connecting Lutheran missionaries with the supporters they need in order to serve in foreign missions. And note this: Mission Central is entirely run by volunteers, many of whom, like Gary, also devote their "retirement" to The Lord's work.

How might our Lord use *you* in your "retirement" years to do some extraordinary things in His name?

**YOU are the church!** Oftentimes, people say things like, "The *church* needs to do something about this." But remember, biblically, the church isn't someone or something else—it's you! You are the body of Christ and there's no telling what God can do through His church! So the church's work isn't "someone else's business." Instead, you are God's hands and feet and voices!

**Gary's Gift** – Gary shared a short & sweet "gift" with us students, Num. 11:23. In that passage, The Lord says to Moses, "*Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you.*" Satan is constantly tempting us to believe that The Lord's arm is too short – that He can't handle our problems much less the world's. Nothing could be further from the truth! Again, let's not be "normal"! Don't underestimate what God can do, even through unexpected people like you or me.

**Taking Jesus Personally** – Who did Jesus come for? It's an important question. He came for the world, but who else? I hope and pray that you can say with confident faith, "*Jesus came for me!*" Jesus came personally to save you and rescue me! Are you taking Jesus *personally* in your journey of faith? Do you trust that what we confess in the creeds is what God did for you? Do others see your relationship with Jesus demonstrated in your everyday life? Do you take Jesus' mission personally, or treat it as "someone else's business"?

**Powerful Stories** – I still remember the stories Gary shared with us three years ago. Here's an example: one of Mission Central's supporters was an airshow pilot. She was flying at a particular airshow and had just announced to the crowd that her proceeds were being given to support a Lutheran missionary family. As it turned out, that particular airshow was her last. The plane malfunctioned and she lost her life that day. She flew into the waiting arms of her Savior ... With Gary's assistance, the missionaries who were being supported by this pilot's final flight were brought back to the U.S. to attend her funeral. In His wisdom, The Lord used the tragedy of this woman's death to continue to promote His mission near and far.

I hope you remember the stories Gary shares this weekend and pass them on, and also prayerfully consider how God is calling *you* to support and participate in His Greater Story & Mission!