

Special, Loved, and ALMA'S WORDS MADE

"Each of us wants to be the kind of person who is missed. That's the way our Lord meant it to be. ... It's true that you are only one person in 3 billion. Yet you must be important, for you are a unique creation of God — the only you in history!"

So wrote Alma Kern in a Winter 1966 *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* article. A resident of East Meadow, New York, Alma was called home to heaven on October 10, 2011.

During her 89 years on earth, Alma served the Lutheran Women's Missionary League in many capacities, including Atlantic District LWML President, international LWML Third Vice-President, and *Quarterly* Stewardship Editor. A popular speaker, she led numerous retreats, addressed many district conventions, and in 1989 spoke at 17 seminars from Ottawa to Vancouver when LWML-Canada was being formed.

Alma was an inspirational author. Besides four years of "In His Service" articles in the *Quarterly*, she wrote four books published by LWML: *You Are Special, You are Loved, You are Precious*, and *You Make a Difference*. Alma was the first woman to write for *Portals of Prayer*, and two of her devotions are included in *The Best of Portals of Prayer* (published 1990). With her husband, Rev. Herbert Kern, she was a member of the Sermon Research Committee for the late Oswald Hoffman of The Lutheran Hour.



"Alma was not only a good woman, but she was also a great woman," says her husband. "She was a helper in many different ways," he adds. They met when he was filling a five-week vacancy in Albany, New York.

Although she was the organist, Pastor Kern admits that he "did not really see her" until another pastor suggested that he should get to know her better. Finally on Good Friday evening, he asked if he could walk her home after the service. She agreed, even though she was wearing high heels and her home was three miles



away, with a ride available. (Round trip for Herb: a six-mile trek!) On Easter afternoon, they went for



a ride in the country, and the rest is history. They were married for over 66 years and have three children, seven grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Following graduation from Albany State Teachers College, Alma taught briefly in a public high school before moving to Bronxville to become the first dean of women and an instructor in business at Concordia Junior College. After graduation from Concordia Seminary, Pastor Kern was called as missionary-at-large for the Atlantic District; in 1944 he also became an LCMS tent evangelist. He did this for five summers, and Alma assisted after their marriage in 1945. Together they could put up the tent in two hours.

Precious ...



A DIFFERENCE

By Marlys Taege Moberg



In 1950, the District asked Pastor Kern to begin a mission in East Meadow, Long Island. The result was Calvary Lutheran Church, where they continued to hold membership after retirement.

Although Alma is now with the Lord, her written words live on, motivating, inspiring, and encouraging all who read them. Like her other three books, *You Are Precious* is full of good, practical advice:

- ▶ There is a special role for you. Watch for it! Snatch it! (PAGE 14).
- ▶ The past cannot be changed, but you can be changed (54).
- ▶ When your knees knock, kneel on them! (104).
- ▶ All you are and have are gifts from God. Thank Him for what He has given you. Recognize your gifts; develop them (18).
- ▶ *You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you* (Isaiah 43:4a RSV). Know it in your head. Stow it in your heart. Show it in your life (9).

In her stewardship pages in the *Quarterly*, Alma shared her wisdom:

- ▶ **USE OF TIME (JANUARY 1966)** – “Even a minute is precious. Most of us have more money than time. When your life ends, you will very likely pass on some money and material things to your loved ones. But you cannot bequeath your time. You either use it or lose it forever.”
- ▶ **STOP TIPPING GOD (WINTER 1967)** – “How do you feel about leaving a tip? Are you really anxious to express your gratitude? Or do you leave the suggested fee grudgingly? What do you

think about the gathering of funds in the LWML society meeting, rally, or convention? Is it just another collection? Do you put in a token dollar to spare yourself embarrassment? Or is it an act of worship in which you indicate how much God is worth to you?”

- ▶ **COME BEFORE WINTER (FALL 1968)** – “Is there a friend or loved one you could cheer by a letter, phone call, or a visit? Don’t delay.” So wrote Alma after driving through snow and freezing rain to a visitation at a funeral home. As she and the surviving spouse talked of years gone by, the widow said, “Oh, if only Dan were really here! How much he would have enjoyed seeing you and chatting like this.” Alma continued, “Pangs of remorse struck me. Why had I waited until his funeral? Why had I not made this trip a month or two before to cheer his dying days? ... Let’s praise and encourage our friends while they are alive. Is there an act of kindness you keep putting off?”
- ▶ **SPICE OF LIFE: VARIETY! (SPRING 1968)** – “Women no longer need the women’s society of the church as a social outlet. But we’ve got something no other organization can offer. ... We’ve got Good News! Jesus has given us the ‘pearl of great price.’ Let’s display it as a jeweler would — in the most attractive way possible. Let’s tell it with excitement, enthusiasm, and variety!”

That’s exactly what Alma did throughout her life! **Q**

Marlys Taege Moberg was Quarterly Editor-in-Chief from 1966 to 1977.

REFLECTIONS FROM PAST LWML PRESIDENTS

Jan Wendorf

What a privilege I had to work closely with this woman of faith, a woman whose writings I had admired for many years! While serving as the Vice President of Christian Life, I was the project manager for what would be her fourth and final book published by the LWML, *You Make A Difference*. The Executive Committee voted to invite Pastor and Alma to the Tampa convention in June 2005, to help promote the book and do author signing of all of her books. Confident that God would give her the strength she needed if it was His will for her to attend, she agreed to come. Alma was 82 at the time, Pastor Herb was 88. Three months after the convention, they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Quite a remarkable ministry team!

Betty Duda

Alma Kern was one of the most beautiful Christian women I ever knew. I admired her patience, humility, and love for her Lord. She used her God-given talents to serve the Lord with gladness and joy. The books she wrote were given to the LWML as gifts. They are still inspiring women everywhere. Her leadership was quiet but powerful. She was a blessing to all of us.

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Ida Mall

The humility Alma showed could only have come from the Lord. When she could have easily told everyone what she had done, she remained silent. She let her writing do the speaking. Her spoken words in her books are a testimony to her love for the Lord. The words in a couple of the titles of her books could be used to speak of Alma — she was/is “special,” and she was/is “loved.”

A humorous story: She was my roommate for my first meeting as a District President for an ILWML meeting. When I opened the door to our room at Concordia Seminary St. Louis and saw the

long row of cutout dolls lying on the bed, I wondered what we would have in common. Although we did not have cutting out dolls in common, we both loved the Lord and the LWML. It was my joy to have known and served with Alma for many years.

Gloria Edwards

I do remember that she was always very kind, very humble, and very funny. She had a very quick wit and was just great with words. The last time I saw her was in NYC when she received a “Witness in the Public Square” award from the Atlantic District. Her response was, as always, kind and gracious, with a wonderful overlay of humor.