



Setting Prisoners Free in Christ

by Pastor Emeritus E. James Rivett, Prison Ministry Coordinator, SID, with Joy Dougherty



Over one hundred participants representing twenty-five districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) gathered at the Crowne Plaza St. Louis Airport on September 29–30, 2012, for a synod-wide Prison and Jail Ministry Conference under the theme “The Lord Sets the Prisoners Free.” (Psalm 146:7c) The conference included six plenary sessions and fifteen workshop sessions designed to train, equip, and connect those who are doing or want to do prison and/or jail ministry.

A grant from the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League approved at the 2011 LWML Convention in Peoria, Illinois, made this conference possible and enabled many to attend. It also made workshops available and facilitated the production of a conference video for future training. Participants representing 130 federal and state prisons as well as jails were empowered to bring the Gospel to hundreds of inmates in those facilities.

“Doing prison ministry is doing pure Gospel,” declared one attendee.

Volunteers, both professional church and lay workers, shared how the Lord has been using them to proclaim Law

and Gospel through worship services, Bible classes, prison seminars or workshops, catechism studies, re-entry programs, prayer, and more. Some volunteer on their own time in the prisons, using their own resources to share the Good News, called a “ministry of presence.” Many go into more than one prison to teach the Gospel.

Pastor Jim Rivett shares this heart-warming story: “One of the blessings of doing prison ministry is how the Lord used us with a woman — I will call Mary — who was an inmate at an Incarceration Impact Program in Southern Illinois. Mary had received a Bible through an LWML Southern Illinois District Grant, in 2012, to purchase Bibles for inmates. She asked if she could keep the Bible when she went home after completing the 14-week paramilitary program. I showed her how to use it and recommended that she begin by reading the Gospel of Luke and Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. Mary began to attend Sunday services weekly.

“Mary completed the program successfully and went home on parole to the East Side of the Greater St. Louis area. About a month later, I received communication from a



Christian organization that works with former inmates to assist them in finding employment. I learned that Mary was doing well and wanted to thank me for the Bible. She had asked the employer to tell me how the Lord had used His Word and His ministry of presence through volunteers to turn her life around and that she would be working for such an organization to help other former inmates.”

Through this conference, volunteers are now able to share more effectively with inmates that, with God, there are no “mixed signals.” He offers salvation in Christ to all people through His boundless grace, no matter what their station in life may be. All wrongs are erased when, through the power and working of the Holy Spirit, we receive Christ as our Savior and become sons and daughters of our heavenly Father. *Q*

Current Mission Grants Highlighted This Issue

Training Indigenous Pastors and Deaconesses – Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana — \$100,000

One of the greatest challenges we face as Christians is proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in countries throughout the world in the native languages of those countries. An LWML grant awarded at its 2013 Convention in Pittsburgh will assist Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, to train indigenous pastors and deaconesses in confessional doctrine so that they, in turn, can teach others in their own country to spread the Gospel — reaching countless people who might not otherwise hear that saving message.

Strengthening and Expanding Campus Ministry — \$100,000

Technology is growing rapidly in our world today, and the ability to use it to reach the more than 100,000 LCMS students attending colleges and universities in the United States to support and sustain their saving faith in Jesus Christ is truly a gift from God. LCMS U, as an online campus ministry in the Synod, will serve to expand campus ministry by giving our LCMS students tools they can use to strengthen their faith and reach out to others who may not know Christ.

Jesus Our Savior Lutheran Schools, Winnebago Tribe, Nebraska — \$58,553

Establishing a Christ-centered, Native-led ministry, offering Word and Sacrament that is supported by the community, is the vision of Jesus Our Savior Lutheran Schools – Winnebago Tribe, Nebraska. By God’s grace, this is becoming a reality through academic excellence and Christian outreach. An LWML grant provides additional staff, curriculum materials, and two part-time instructional assistants to enhance classroom support and community outreach, extend this great vision, and bring glory to God.

Mission GRANTS

Mission Goal: \$1,830,000.00 | 2013–2015

1. Training K-9 Comfort Dogs for LCMS Chaplains.....\$30,000
2. Lutheran Children’s Books for Southeast Asia.....\$72,000
3. Training Indigenous Pastors and Deaconesses – Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.....\$100,000
4. Rebuilding Nord Est Haiti Lutheran School\$100,000
5. Jesus Our Savior Lutheran Schools, Winnebago Tribe, Nebraska\$58,553
6. I CAN — Serving At-Risk Children With Learning Needs.....\$99,000
7. Bible Story Books in Sign Language and Written Text\$100,000
8. Native American Outreach Training Center – Fairbanks, Alaska\$95,000
9. Strengthening and Expanding Campus Ministry.....\$100,000
10. Worship for Shut-Ins.....\$80,000
11. Preparing Leaders for a Diverse World – Concordia College, Selma, Alabama\$50,000
12. Voice of Care Ministry to the Developmentally Challenged.....\$50,600
13. Christ-Centered Tutoring Through Rebecca’s Garden of Hope (RGOH)\$100,000
14. Student Scholarships for MOST Ministries Mission Trips\$20,000
15. Building Homes and Hope in Haiti\$100,000
16. Support for Lutheran Public Radio.....\$40,000
17. Christian Education Support for Children – India.....\$85,000
18. Mission Outreach at St. Paul Community Lutheran Church – Pontiac, Michigan.....\$65,559

KEY: ● – grant paid in full
○ – grant partially paid

Check the latest updates for mites received and grants funded at www.lwml.org.