

Reaching the Lost by Planting New Mission Churches

by Lynn Witt

"The other day I was surprised to discover that there are five times as many unchurched people in the USA today as there were people living in the USA when the LCMS was founded. What a challenge that represents for us today." This quote is from the Manual for Church Planters, furnished by the Board for Mission Services of the LCMS in the 1980s. The introductory letter to the manual goes on to say, "If our forefathers started this church body to share the Gospel in the mid 1800s, how much larger the task is for us now! If we had the image of being a mission frontier in the mid 1800s, how much more of a mission frontier we are today. Since we know that the most effective means of reaching the lost has been in planting new churches, it is time to become more aggressive in this venture than ever before in our history. In fact, we are challenging the church family to strive for a goal of 500 new churches each year by 1990! The need is there! The opportunity is there! It is time for a major response by all of us to reach the lost!" - Roger W. Leenerts, Board for Mission Services.

One of the reasons I went into the pastoral ministry was my passion for the lost. This became a driving force in my life while working at Chrysler Corporation and I became active with Lutheran Hour Ministries. Attending International Conventions and hearing about the great numbers of people who don't know Christ, I decided to retire from Chrysler to go to the seminary and plant mission churches.

Of course that possibility was way out there, but the Lord had plans for me. I was able to plant a mission church in Ludington during my vicarage year, and when I graduated from the seminary, I was fortunate enough to be placed in a new mission plant in Romeo, Michigan.

While I was Pastor at Grace Lutheran Fellowship in Romeo, our 1-5-10 year Vision/Mission plan had been to plant a new mission on the Van Dyke corridor, either in Almont or Imlay City. That unfortunately did not happen while I was there, so when

I retired from Grace in 2003, I felt discouraged that I did not succeed in carrying out that vision.

Shortly after retiring, Rev. Mike Ruhl, who at that time was working with the District, and I got together and looked at the area in Imlay City and felt it was open for a new mission plant. Mike asked me if I would consider coming out of retirement to start it. How could I refuse? After all, I wanted to finish that original vision we had at Grace.

In the spring of 2004, we laid the ground work for planting the new mission. I was doing what I love most, sharing Christ with new families and caring for the families that made up the new church, Family of Christ Lutheran Church, Imlay City. The rest is history.

Family of Christ has thrived; we recently dedicated a 7,000 square foot worship center. New Christians are continually becoming part of our family and I'm able to do what is a great joy to me personally and that is sharing, loving, and caring for God's people.



"New mission planting is still one of the number one ways of bringing new people to Christ," says Rev. Roosevelt Gray, Michigan District Director of Missions. "The Michigan District is more than ready and excited about partnering with Synod, circuits, congregations, and mission societies to plant new missions among the 60%, that is 6,000,000 million unchurched people, in the state of Michigan."

He adds, "To quote the words of the sainted Roger Leenerts: 'The need is there! The opportunity is there! It is time for a major response by all of us to reach the lost!' Thank God for pastors like Rev. Lynn Witt, who have a passion for planting new missions to reach the lost!"

