

Readied for Service

- In His Time

by Donald Ritter



In 1987, I placed a little card above my desk at Charity Lutheran Church that read, “God Prepared Moses 80 years for 40 years of work.” How many times that little note brought snickers and even some laughter!

And oh, how that saying rings true for me. On October 28, 2007, one day short of my 77th birthday, I was ordained as a pastor into the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

My story began in 1944 when the seed to become a pastor was planted by Rev. L. H. Koehler during a confirmation class. Since that day, a great deal of growing, fertilizing, and pruning has been done by the Holy Spirit. The harshest pruning included our son being taken home to His Lord at the age of 18.

Over the years, changes in direction occurred through secular occupations, promotions, lay-offs, and re-assignments. The route was never a straight one either; there was no ‘straight line as the shortest distance between two points.’ Yet each turn had a purpose and direction. Delays occurred during college degree goals, but with the closing of each door, a new door opened. I also found that at each new opening, there was someone who encouraged, uplifted, directed, and prayed for me. Some of these people were parish pastors, parochial school teachers and principals, presidents of the District, and members of Koinonia groups.

In 1982, I walked through the door God opened as a new opportunity through the Michigan District for people interested in becoming trained church workers, The Michigan Lutheran Ministries Insti-

tute (MLMI). Shortly thereafter, Concordia University in Mequon, Wisconsin accepted those in the MLMI program as Lay Minister students. The door in Wisconsin was open only for a short time, but immeasurable blessings flowed during that tenure. I have found that no matter where I find myself, God has work to do in His fields.

Upon retirement, fellow co-workers would raise the question, “What do you plan on doing?” My response was, “I hope to assist somewhere in the Church.”

In 2004, I was asked to help the congregation of St. Matthew’s in Mancelona, Michigan. My first instinct was to say, “Where?” Like Jonah, I didn’t want to go to Mancelona. Then I found it was as if God was telling me, “You just wait and see!”

And now you and I can see, as I am an ordained minister, we have a God who is just full of surprises – if we allow Him to guide us. If you are searching and wondering what God has in store for you, my suggestion is to tell Him you are available and then stand and wait. While waiting, greet each morning in eager anticipation of what God has in store.

Can He use me? Let’s see ... Moses was 80 and spent 40 years in service to the Lord. Wow! That made him 120. I’m 77, so forty years of service would be ... 117? Ok Lord! If that is in your plans, I can hardly wait!

Can He use you? You bet He can and will! Anyone–young and old. Don’t give up on your Lord, for He fashions us for service in His church! Just remember His plans and purposes will be completed in you, in His time!

Rev. Donald Ritter serves as pastor at St. Matthews, Mancelona.