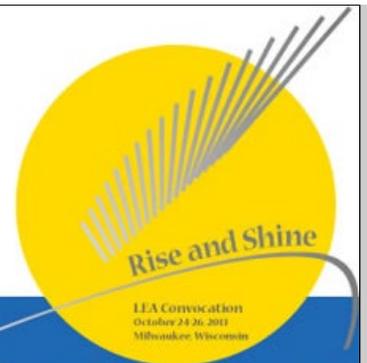




Shaping the Future



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Start planning for the 2013 Convocation!



Passionate Believers: Life Together

by Mark L'Heureux

What do you envision when you reflect on the words, *Life Together*? As the Body of Christ, we see and live it on a daily basis – whether that is in the “life” of your church, school, or job.

My definition of being in *Life Together* is serving those within the circles you run – a common definition that most would accept. We find comfort and enjoyment in being with others who have the same values, beliefs, and at times traditions, as we have. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with this thinking and practice, but do we limit our reach to others who don’t “fit” in our circle?

Since arriving at the South Wisconsin District two years ago, I’ve taken the above approach in identifying our circles of *Life Together*, as it involves education in our District. And proudly, I can say we have great schools that are missional to families who don’t necessarily “fit” the thinking or beliefs our “traditional” Lutheran schools were founded upon. Our schools are reaching out to families who may not have a connection to the Lutheran church. In fact, across Synod, 36 percent (87,556 students) of the children in our schools are from a non-Lutheran background. Even more wonderful, 17 percent (41,346) of the children being served have no church affiliation – meaning they now have a connection to hearing the Gospel! Being a state where vouchers are offered, our District percentages are similar, if not higher, than those above.



According to Matthew 28, Jesus describes *Life Together* in its truest sense – “Go and make disciples of *all nations*...” – note the emphasis. Reaching out in brotherly and sisterly love with the gospel is Christ’s call to us. With this calling, school ministry in South Wisconsin has recently been reaching out beyond our nation’s borders to be more missional to those whom we can serve and resource.

Over the past six years, the South Wisconsin District has been very instrumental in the efforts of the Lutheran Church in the Dominican Republic (DR). At times, our schools have supported this initiative, but not to the level of our congregations. In partnership with other LCMS organizations, great strides have been made – church buildings



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Review, Reflect, Resolve

What examples of “life together” can you identify in your school or congregation?
What would you like to do?
How can you accomplish that goal?

Links & Resources

Are you considering international education as a vocation? Visit [LCMS's source](#) for information about how you can serve.



Other articles you might be interested in in this issue of *Shaping the Future*:

[A Day in the Life](#) by Paul Miller and Carrie Miller (Feature)

[Accepting Failure](#) by John Chilman (SEcNet)

[Here I Am, Lord – Surprise Me!](#) by Tom Giordano (EncourAGeNet)

and group homes have been built.

Two years ago, the first Lutheran school (Escuela Luterana La Concordia) opened in Palmar Arriba, ministering to 96 students with the Gospel. The initial support came from St. Michael's Lutheran Church and School in Fort Meyers, Florida. This year, they opened with more than 130 students. With limited resources (financial, material, certified staff), the need was great for our schools to become involved. Kissayris Gebhard is the principal of Concordia Lutheran.

Last October, Mary Irish (principal, Our Redeemer, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin), Dawn Walker (principal, First Immanuel, Cedarburg, Wisconsin), Jim Breitung (principal, Our Redeemer, Delevan, Wisconsin), and I traveled to the Dominican Republic in coordination with representatives from St. Michael's Lutheran Church and School in Fort Meyers, Florida (principal Bob

Ziegler and mission advocate Larry Ryan). Our task while there was to develop ways to resource staff, students, and families by providing them opportunities to increase their effectiveness as a Lutheran school. From this visit, we strategically developed plans and initiatives to move this ministry forward, making it the school of choice in the community.

This past June, we were able to send four teachers from Divine Redeemer, Hartland, Wisconsin, to begin the initial professional development program: Love and Logic training, lesson plan development, and integration of technology. There will be a follow-up visit this October and then again in March 2013, with additional teachers reinforcing the June training and giving "next steps" to the program. The goal is to send three

groups of teachers throughout the year. This *Life Together* initiative has created excitement within our schools, as now they can not only support with dollars and needed supplies, but also bodies to see this in action!



From the initial visit, five goals were developed to reinforce our purpose of assisting Concordia Lutheran.

1. To help missionaries and school leaders understand Christian (Lutheran) education. Our purpose is not to make schools in Latin America "Americanized," but to provide a framework of instruction that fits the culture. It is the desire of the Director of Missions to Latin America, Pastor Theodor Krey, that Concordia become the model for many more school starts in the Dominican Republic and Latin America.



4. Apply cross-cultural emphasis and passion in the South Wisconsin District for School Ministry. Like many of our congregations and schools, we are comfortable with ministering to our "own." However, providing education and "boots on the ground" opportunities are life-changing experiences. Lives and ministries are changed when cross-cultural opportunities are experienced.

5. Seek additional funding models to assist with future trips.

Concordia Lutheran has a limited budget for providing educational materials, let alone professional development training. It is our hope and desire to find granting organizations to assist in providing the needed educational materials to conduct a high quality professional development program as well as assistance for educators in the form of scholarships. Scholarship support would cover a third of the cost

Our purpose is not to make schools in Latin America "Americanized," but to provide a framework of instruction that fits the culture.

2. To assist staff at existing and new schools with professional development in education. Our initial efforts need to extend to the care and preparation of the teaching staff. Without properly trained teachers and materials for them to access, the school model for Latin American schools (one of the worst in the world) will continue to be poor educational programs.

3. To help schools and congregations understand missions. Part of the ongoing support is to be able to communicate plans and initiatives to ministries (congregations, schools). Without this support it will be difficult not only to help meet their needs but to build other school ministries in the Dominican Republic and Latin America.

(travel and accommodations). The other two-thirds would be the responsibility of the educator.

Life Together is mission and ministry and should be an easy task for the Church. In fact, if we really look, mission and ministry is everywhere. There are opportunities to share the Gospel in your communities, neighborhoods, backyards, and even beyond our borders. Thriving congregations and schools are reaching and teaching. As Christ commands in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation." Reaching and resourcing with the gospel is *Life Together!*

There are opportunities to share the Gospel in your communities, neighborhoods, backyards and even beyond our borders.



Mark L'Heureux is District Education Executive, South Wisconsin District. Mark also serves on the 2013 LEA Convocation Steering Committee.

Photos courtesy South Wisconsin District.



ShapingtheFuture is published three times a year by Lutheran Education Association and distributed to members of LEA.

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