



Mission to Biloxi

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Jerusalem's Journey with Christ to the Poor of Jamaica

Ketchup for Your Pizza?

Going Deeper; Going Farther – TEY Summer Retreats

Building a Computer Room - Part II

Celebrate Social Ministry – And Outstanding Social Ministry Efforts!



By Harold "Sandy" Roth, Jr.

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, my wife, Oraine, suggested that we send a check to Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR). I agreed, but added that I wanted to go to Biloxi as an LDR volunteer. Several days later, my long-time friend Bobby Raidline and I were headed to Biloxi, Mississippi, with a loaded-to-the roof motor home and a small car.

A friend of mine, who wishes to remain anonymous, contributed the motor home and car for us to leave in Biloxi. We had accumulated donations from many caring individuals and organizations, and the motor home and car were packed with goods. I had chosen not to tow the car with the motor home, so needed a second driver. Bobby volunteered and was a gift worth his weight in gold!

Bobby and I left Hecktown at 5 a.m. on Monday, September 12, and completed the 1,248-mile trip to Bethel Lutheran Church, Biloxi, at noon on Wednesday, September 15. We had an excellent trip on several major interstates and had only one blowout on the car and experienced only one major two-hour traffic delay near Biloxi due to Katrina storm damage on the famous US 10.

In Biloxi, both vehicles were titled to the Rev. Gerald Bultman, pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church. Pastor Bultman is chair of the board of The Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen



in Biloxi. He will see that both vehicles are put to good and frequent use.

Bethel Lutheran Church sustained damage to the roof, but otherwise was not seriously damaged. The Bethel Distribution Center is located in the church social hall. This center offers water in various sized bottles (water is in great demand because the Biloxi water system is currently contaminated). It also provides nonperishable food items and household supplies of all types. The health clinic, in the church's library, is operated by a volunteer doctor and several nurses. All services and supplies are provided free of charge.

Most victims had extensive damage to their homes; many lost their homes completely. Teams of volunteers from Bethel Lutheran Church and visiting volunteers like Bobby and me are currently aiding in the clean up of storm damage for those victims whose homes are repairable. More than 300 lives were lost in the Biloxi, Gulfport, and Long Beach area, an area comparable to the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton area.

The cleanup in the Biloxi area will take many months and lots of effort. The unfortunate storm victims — and there are many — will need continuous aid and supplies. Bethel Lutheran Church continues to distribute a tractor trailer load of food and supplies each day as well as operating the medical clinic. These supplies are being provided by LDR and other local community and church organizations, as well as groups, churches, and organizations from states as far away as Pennsylvania, Washington, Maine, Florida, Virginia, Iowa, Colorado, and California.

The heavy rains of Hurricane Rita aggravated the Katrina damage to the temporarily repaired roof. The volunteers at Bethel are currently working hard to secure the roof.

Bobby and I returned home by plane on Wednesday, September 21, avoiding Rita, another nasty storm affecting our Gulf Coast brothers and sisters.

The eight days of volunteer service with Lutheran Disaster Response were a wonderful experience, offering us extreme emotional highs and lows. The folks who received the various services and supplies were extremely appreciative.

We shared many tears and expressions of thanks with them.

I plan a return trip to Bethel Lutheran Church as an LDR volunteer in mid-November, returning to Hecktown by November 22. We are also looking at ways we at Trinity can continue to help our sister congregation, Bethel Lutheran Church, in Biloxi, Mississippi.

My heartfelt thanks and appreciation go to the members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Hecktown, our interim pastor, David Newhart, and my very helpful and supportive wife, Oraine. Thanks, too, to friends and relatives for their generous financial support, donations for the victims, prayers, and words of encouragement. Without all of this support, our trip and help to the victims would not have been possible.

If you have any questions or want to learn more about our trip, you may contact me at 610.759.0923 (home) or 610.442.4394 (cell), or email me at sandyroth@enter.net.

(The author, Harold "Sandy" R. Roth Jr., and his wife, Oraine, are members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Hecktown. Sandy retired four years ago from Lucent Inc., after 40 years of service. Currently he works at Caring Connection, Inc., as a caregiver for seniors and as a board member.)



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By Leslie Wagner, member of Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven, and the
Leadership Development Ministry Team

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With these words, printed on the title page of our agenda, our group of pilgrims from Jerusalem realized the long-planned trip was really happening. From June 20-24, 2005, we would be on a pilgrimage to the poor in Jamaica.

Our final meeting at the church was an exciting one. We were given name tags, travel instructions (meet at the church at 3:30 a.m.) and the agenda. A group of five adults and eight teens, we posed for a photo in our mission t-shirts and were off.

A pilgrimage is “a long journey or search, especially one of exalted purpose or moral significance.” Our trip was, indeed, a pilgrimage. While we had scheduled a work project for one of our days, the journey itself was more a pilgrimage than a mission trip. We may have lifted the spirits of the dejected or forgotten temporarily, but those whose lives were changed were not the visited, but the visitors. We were seeking a better understanding of third-world poverty; to become more enlightened about the state of the world and to find our place in it (from the small corner we currently occupy).

Our Jamaican trip was arranged through Food for the Poor (FFP), a Christian charitable organization headquartered in



Florida. Food for the Poor is the fifth-largest international charity in the USA. A multi-denominational relief and development organization, its primary service areas are South America, Central America and the Caribbean Islands. For 21 years FFP has ministered to the poor of Jamaica. It partners with more than 5,000 churches, schools, orphanages and service organizations throughout the island to help meet the needs of “the poorest of the poor.”

We traveled throughout much of the city of Kingston on a bus with Sylvester, our FFP guide, and experienced first-hand the desperate economic reality of Jamaica — where the weather is hot, the people warm, and the children beautiful (with soft brown eyes and amazingly long, curly eyelashes). This was not the Jamaica of cruise ships and resorts. This was the REAL Jamaica.

We were kept very busy from 7:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. as Sylvester shepherded us from site to site. We toured private and government-run facilities, girls and boys group homes, homeless shelters, group homes for the handicapped, the mentally ill and the elderly, a fishing village, a school, the FFP central warehouse and offices, and newly developing communities, bound together by mud and cardboard.

At each place we were given a tour and overview of their mission by the staff and then had time to interact with the residents/patients/community members. It was these moments that had the most impact; sometimes leaving us tearful and frustrated, sometimes breathless and awe-struck by the resilience and beauty of the human spirit.

As brothers and sisters of Jerusalem, we are forever bound together by this shared experience. We all have our own stories to tell about this journey and would gladly share them with any group that is interested. We come prepared with PowerPoint presentation, lots of amazing photos and memories of a country bowed down by need, but lifted up by spirit and a strong sense of national pride. (“So how do you like my country?” was a frequent refrain.)

If you would like a presentation about our trip, contact the Jerusalem church office at (570) 385-2657.

The pilgrims: Pastor Daniel Bell and daughter, Christiana; youth leader Sandy Seitzinger and daughter, Cali; Leroy

Coleman and children, Kevin and Meredith; Jaira and Alison Tobash; Noelle Augustine; Leslie Wagner; Lauryn Shay; Jane Arcalay

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By Deaconess Deborah Graf, Trinity, Reading

[Editor's note: This story was printed in the August issue of *Steeple Notes*, the newsletter of Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading. Another story about the trip from one of the youth participants will appear in the November issue of *Partners in the Spirit*.]

On June 13 a group of eleven high school youth met at the synod office to travel to experience life in one of our companion synods. They hailed from all over our synod territory — from outside Reading to Mountain Top.

The first part of our trip was spent in the Borna area just outside Leipzig, and the second half was spent in the Loebau/Zittau district, which is situated on the Polish/Czech border.

My husband, Peter, and I accompanied them as we saw many sights including the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig and the Wartburg Castle where Martin Luther translated the Bible, and took a short trip into Poland and the Czech Republic.

Led by two youth ministers from Germany, we visited schools, participated in youth group activities, and hiked around castle ruins.

Why do we do this? I think a comment from one of the German youth sums it up well. "All my preconceptions about



Americans have been wiped away.”

Everything he had seen on television or read in the newspaper was simply not true about our group (no, we are not all like the people on MTV’s “Pimp My Ride”). His simple example was ketchup. He assumed all Americans ate everything doused in ketchup.

At dinner one night, when one of the German youth proceeded to put ketchup on her pizza, the Americans exclaimed, “EEEEEEWWWWW!!,” appalled at the thought. Preconception gone.

The youth exchange was a time to experience how God’s Kingdom extends beyond our national borders and to get a glimpse of the feast to come. What a blessed journey it was.

[In addition to Deborah and Peter Graf, participants from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod were Jason Kates (St. Andrew, Allentown), Christie Kaufman (St. Paul, Mountain Top), Jessica Keinert (Jordan, Orefield), Sarah Keinert (Jordan, Orefield), Linda Jo Lonaberger (Advent, West Lawn), Gillian Marx (Jordan, Orefield), Lorien Moura (St. Paul, Mountain Top), Nettie-Rose Reynolds (St. Paul, Easton), Catherine Rusuitti (St. Paul, Mountain Top), Nathan Solt (Huff’s Union, Alburdis), and Elizabeth Ziegler (New Jerusalem, Hellertown).]



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By Pastor Bill Bixby, director, Theological Education with Youth

Twelve youth disciples of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod went deeper and farther in faith in the two summer retreat events of Theological Education with Youth (TEY) this summer.

Real transformation and fresh motivation for serving emerged following the two-week Summer Theological Academy, held July 2 to July 16 at Muhlenberg College, and the one-week Crossroads Event, held June 19 to June 25 and hosted at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. For the second year in a row, all 12 participants received scholarship support for growth in faith from the synod, coordinated through the synod's Leadership Development Ministry Team.

In the **Crossroads Event**, seven youth from Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod — Nathan Derr (Friedens, Oley), Sierra Fogal (Christ, Jim Thorpe), Heather Miller (St. John, Slatington), John "Gabe" Newman (St. Paul, Easton), Karen Ward (Trinity, Pottsville), Samantha Wertz (Trinity, Pottsville), and Jonathan Wolff (Holy Spirit, Emmaus) — took part in a lively community comprised of 24 youth from eight synods across Regions 7 and 8, ELCA, and in four immersions for ministry exploration and dialogue on vocation.

Creative encounters were offered on advocacy in conjunction with the Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA, on



urban hospitality and justice ministries hosted at Luther Place in Washington, DC, on international relief and development hosted at the Lutheran Center in Baltimore, MD, and on lifecare communities at the Lutheran Retirement Village in Gettysburg. Highlights included a team presentation on “Advocacy in a Real World Congregation” by a contingent of lay ministers and community activists from Union Evangelical Lutheran Church, York; a homelessness simulation (staffed in part by persons who had formerly been homeless) at Luther Place; a fair trade chocolate exercise and a community gardening project in Baltimore, and preparing health kits at the Lutheran Retirement Village, concrete signs of love bound for persons served through Lutheran World Relief.

Comments from youth participants reflect new insights about vocation and public witness. “I was surprised at how many different ways there are to combine your faith and your work;” said one participant. Another remarked, “I was surprised to learn about the great number of ways that people can help or serve in the church without being pastors. I learned that I have a voice, and things I say matter.”

Crossroads Event youth have continued to reflect on and share their transforming experiences in sermons and in congregational newsletters, at congregation council and youth group meetings, and in a special presentation at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. A number of them will also participate in future TEY events as co-leaders. Many echoed this comment of one participant who went farther in faith: “It’s a life-changing and eye-opening experience that I would recommend to anyone.”

At the **Summer Theological Academy**, the accent was on theological exploration in creative courses, including a study of the book of Exodus and Christian identity for all 17 youth and 10 staff, as well as three elective courses on worship, practicing theology in your own voice, and the faiths of our neighbors in a multicultural world.

Servant learning and neighborhood ministry were experienced in new partnerships with St. Stephen and Christ Lutheran Churches, Allentown. Academy youth scholars and staff were invited to a deeper understanding of urban ministry issues and theological foundations for contemporary

mission, led by Rev. Maritza Torres Dolich of St. Stephen, and by AiM Leesa Wimmer and the Rev. Sam Zeiser of Christ. At St. Stephen, academy youth joined a diverse group of young people and adults for a day of sprucing up and planting in the community park and play area adjacent to St. Stephen. At Christ, academy youth were carefully oriented, prepared, and sent with outreach folks of the congregation for neighborhood visitations with invitations to participate in VBS and a community picnic.

Life at the academy also included Morning and Evening Prayer each weekday, held in Muhlenberg's Egner Chapel, small reflection groups for processing all the discoveries and new ideas of the academy, and opportunities for creative expression in song and music, dance and fabric art.

Presentations, testimonies and new forms of ministry continue for these participants as well. One Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod youth, Drew Chaveas (Allegheny, Mohnton), is now leading a youth Sunday school focus on Exodus, and two synod youth, Jennifer Andrews (St. John, Nazareth) and Katie Kane (Zion, Brodheadsville), are initiating ministry leadership projects in their home congregations. In addition to those three youth, two other Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod youth — Amanda Bernecker (Trinity, Pottsville) and Amanda Tompkins (St. Paul, Tannersville) — participated in the academy.

The Summer Theological Academy is a profound experience of going deeper in personal faith and in faith-seeking community. Comments from two participants capture its depth and dynamic power:

“ It forces you to dig deep in your faith and helps you realize what you truly believe. It shakes your foundation a little also. It introduces new views and prospects of faith that help you to remold your theology.”

“ Uplifting, awesome, faith-challenging, memorable, outstanding, worthwhile. I would do it again any day.”



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By Cheryl Statham, member of Prince of Peace, Johnsonville, and the
Worship and Spirituality Ministry Team

(Part 2 of 2 articles)

The first part of this article, published in the **September issue** of *Partners in the Spirit*, gave information on how to set up a computer room physically. This part will deal with what happens after your computer room is up and running.

What do you do next? How do you integrate the computer room into your normal Sunday school curriculum? What programs are out there and which ones are worth the money? Do you train the teachers to use the programs or do you have only one or two people responsible for running the room?

How you settle these questions will be different depending on your own church's situation. However, there are some options to consider.

Programs

Sunday Software has an excellent line of CD-ROMs that cover a wide range of Old and New Testament stories, as well as some programs on the Bible itself. These are geared for middle-to-upper secondary level students for the most part, and most are beyond the understanding of most K-third



graders. Programs for younger children can usually be found in the Augsburg Fortress catalog and at local Bible book stores. Before you buy from anyone, check the return policy. If the program isn't what you expected it to be, you will want to be able to return it. Remember, too, that you need to buy a CD-ROM for each computer that will be running the software or you will be violating copyright laws.

Teacher Training

Whether you train all of your teachers to use the room or have just one or two teachers designated to run the computers depends on your congregation's situation and on your teachers' computer comfort level. Either way, the teachers must be familiar with the programs and be able to integrate them into the desired lessons.

To become familiar with the programs, your teachers need to spend time on the computers playing with the programs. This works best if you schedule a special meeting for teachers where the only thing they will be doing is getting comfortable using the machines. Allow at least two hours for this so there is plenty of time for teachers to explore all of the programs' options.

Integrating the Computer Room into the Schedule

Integrating the computer room into your lesson schedule will again take place in different ways in different Sunday schools. If you are using the rotation workshop model (see September Partners), the computer room can be added to the workshops if you have a CD-Rom program that can supplement the lesson you are teaching. However, even with the traditional Sunday school format, a computer room can be integrated easily into your weekly schedule.

The important thing to remember is that a computer room is always to be used as a supplement to your regular lesson, not as a replacement. All sessions in the room should begin with the teacher giving a short lesson, emphasizing the major points of the story and explaining how the computer program they will be using ties into that lesson. Then, and only then, the students can be allowed to start running the program. Remember also to allow a few minutes at the end of the time to go over the major points of the lessons once again.

Hopefully these articles will give you some ideas on how to proceed if you are interested in integrating a computer room into your Sunday school program. There are several books on the subject that are available in catalogs if you are interested in learning more. Good luck!

(For more information, contact Cheryl Statham at mstatham@ptd.net.)



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The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

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Honorees who have made outstanding efforts in social ministry on behalf of the church will receive awards at the second annual Celebrate Social Ministry event.

The dinner and presentation will be held Sunday, October 23, at the Holiday Inn in Fogelsville at the intersection of Route 100 and 78. Festivities begin at 4:30 p.m. The dinner and program will end about 7 p.m.

Barbara Lieberman, a member of St. James, Coopersburg, is the recipient of the Bishop Wilson Touhsaent Award. This award is given in honor of the Rev. Dr. Wilson Touhsaent to recognize persons who have made outstanding contributions in social ministry.

Barbara has been an active member and leader of social ministry activities in her home congregation. She has worked on multiple refugee resettlements and the pastoral care team. She has been a tutor and a significant part of a variety of outreach programs to the community. In big projects and small acts of kindness, Barbara has reflected the love of Christ to everyone she encounters.

The honorees for the "Love in Action" awards represent a diversity of age and kind of service to the church. The honorees from the Witness and Service Ministry Team are Doris Branson, parish nurse at St. Paul, Coopersburg; Dani Doll, Matt Houck, and John Sandt, prison ministry through St. Paul, Easton, to Northampton County Maximum Security



Prison (males); the Disaster Response Team from Zion United, Brodheads ville, and a service group of youth called the Raising Hope Committee of Trinity, Hecktown.

The Presidents' Awards lift up those who have provided outstanding service to the social ministry organizations on our territory and Muhlenberg College.

The award from Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries goes to Thomas Handwerk, a member of Atonement, Wyomissing. Tom provided leadership in the building of the facilities of the Lutheran Home at Topton and on their board of directors.

Good Shepherd Home is giving their award to Bishop Harold Weiss, a member of Redeemer, Allentown. Bishop Weiss has been a dedicated worker and board member and president for this facility.

Lutheran Congregational Services recognizes Sue Weber, a member of Jordan Lutheran Church, Orefield. Sue has served as chair of the board and provided program services for the organization.

The President's Award from Muhlenberg College cites the work of SHARE, a group of students that is dedicated to making a difference in the community.

The dinner will consist of tri-color cheese tortellini w/garlic oil and fresh basil, garden salad, stuffed chicken breast with vegetable medley and chocolate mousse for dessert. Vegetarian meals are available. The cost of the meal is \$22.50. The deadline for reservations is **October 5**. Call Carol Moyer at the synod office (610-395-6891) to make your reservation.

Last year this event was well attended and was a marvelous opportunity to see all the wonderful ministries in which people in our synod are involved everyday.

Join your friends at the Holiday Inn in Fogelsville on October 23. Be inspired by people who view service to their Lord and those around them as the natural extension of their faith. Learn how we can do similar kinds of ministry in our own congregations. Invite youth so that they can see how other young people live out their faith. There is something for

everyone. It is an event you will not forget.

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