

ABLAZE! - Tending the Flame Annual Conference

This year's weekend event is the third conference held to promote outreaching to the non-Christian world around us. A little about ABLAZE!:

Ablaze!® began as a vision of [LCMS World Mission](#) to involve every member of the LCMS, its partner church bodies, and partner [mission agencies](#) in one focused and concentrated effort to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who do not yet know Him. By joining together in this effort, not only would those who hear and receive the message of salvation in Christ be transformed by it and brought into the body of Christ, but our own church bodies, mission organizations and congregations would be strengthened as members grow in discipleship through mission involvement.

Additionally, all our Lutheran resources would be strategically coordinated, so that more can be accomplished in mission to the glory and honor of our one, true God. It was the desire of LCMS World Mission to give this vision away—to ignite a spark that would become a mission movement of individuals, groups, congregations, etc., all committed to the goal of reaching 100 million unreached and uncommitted people with the Gospel by 2017, which is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Our congregation may remember the 50 Days ABLAZE! program we conducted several years ago, the bracelets, our Conversations of Grace we have on our website, the sermon series, the Bible lessons, and most especially the responsibility we all have to witness, pray, and show God's grace to others by telling them about Jesus.

The Scripture reference for ABLAZE!:

Luke 24:13-35 (NIV)

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him. 17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They

went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." 25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. 28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" 33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

July 31- August 2, 2009

Out Fishin!

What an amazing conference! It was based on the Luke 5 fishing story when Jesus sent the disciples back into the waters to let down the nets only to have them filled with abundance and then to be sent forth – now to fish for people.

The two 'old fishermen', Tom and Art shared the scripture stories of fishing and led us to go back to the waters and try again. Phil Bickel taught the value of netfishing (Networking Evangelistic Teams) and Ken Medema sang the joy of sharing the story with others. Fisher, the worship team from Prince of Peace, Springfield VA provided music throughout the Gathering. Andrew Kassouf and his team of three led an incredible youth program. The children's program, led by Laura Kmitch and Martha Hiller sang for the Sunday morning worship service.

Next year's conference "Living Letters" features Reggie McNeal and will be held in Richmond, July 30-August 1.

Luke 5

¹NOW IT occurred that while the people pressed upon Jesus to hear the message of God, He was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee).

²And He saw two boats drawn up by the lake, but the fishermen had gone down from them and were washing their nets.

³And getting into one of the boats, [the one] that belonged to Simon (Peter), He requested him to draw away a little from the shore. Then He sat down and continued to teach the crowd [of people] from the boat.

⁴When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon (Peter), Put out into the deep [water], and lower your nets for a haul.

⁵And Simon (Peter) answered, Master, we toiled all night [^[a]exhaustingly] and caught nothing [in our nets]. But ^[b]on the ground of Your word, I will lower the nets [again].

⁶And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish; and as their nets were [^[c]at the point of] breaking,

⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and take hold with them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

⁸But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

⁹For he was gripped with bewildering amazement [allied to terror], and all who were with him, at the haul of fish which they had made;

¹⁰And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon (Peter). And Jesus said to Simon, Have no fear; from now on you will be catching men!

¹¹And after they had run their boats on shore, they left everything and ^[d]joined Him as His disciples and sided with His party and accompanied Him.

Commentary:

The miraculous draught of fishes, Peter, James, and John called.

When Christ had done preaching, he told Peter to apply to the business of his calling. Time spent on week days in public exercises of religion, need be but little hinderance in time, and may be great furtherance to us in temper of mind, as to our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling, when we have been with God, and thus have our worldly employments sanctified to us by the word and prayer! Though they had taken nothing, yet Christ told

them to let down their nets again. We must not abruptly quit our callings because we have not the success in them we desire. We are likely to speed well, when we follow the guidance of Christ's word. The draught of fishes was by a miracle. We must all, like Peter, own ourselves to be sinful men, therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us. But we must beseech him that he would not depart; for woe unto us if the Saviour depart from sinners! Rather let us entreat him to come and dwell in

our hearts by faith, that he may transform and cleanse them. These fishermen forsook all, and followed Jesus, when their calling prospered. When riches increase, and we are tempted to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for Christ is thankworthy. (Luke 5:12-16)

Conference Highlights (Pfancuff's)

Session on Searching for Spiritual Purpose/Prayer - learned about the power of praying for and with others and listening to God - plus the need for daily discipline for this.

Session on Disaster Response - learned about the work being conducted by SED in both preparing congregations for potential disasters and also responding to disasters with appropriate resources and training.

Session on Neighborhood Outreach - learned about two Circuit 9 churches doing intentional outreach (knocking on doors) in their community and also being a presence at a local shopping mall and praying for people they see and encounter there.

Session on use of Technology for Outreach - learned about tools, resources, and experiences of the importance of using technology to reach the masses. Today, most people consult the WWW before they use the phonebook so it is paramount that we engage our neighborhoods with our web site and other electronic media.

Session on Fishing in the Un-churched Pond of Today - Many statistics were presented about un-churched people around us (23% of people go to church regularly). The speaker urged Christians to reach out to others and be examples of their faith. The speaker talked about the faith the Amish people showed when their little girls were murdered - they even forgave the murderer and reached out to his family.

Session on Culture Around Me - The Culture around me talked about finding out about cultural groups in the area of the church. The speakers church had a completely different outreach than the church next door. One caution he made was reaching out to a group the church is extremely uncomfortable with.

Session on Prayer Shawl Ministry - This group of women knitted and crocheted shawls of all colors and styles for both men and women in nursing homes and hospitals. They also gave shawls to people with special needs. All of the shawls were prayed over as they were made and they were blessed by the pastor before distributor. They also added

a handmade angel pin and a note attached to each shawl. They were not part of a congregational healing ministry.

Conference Highlights (Dunnett's)

Session on Getting Messy for the Ministry – Tim Utton has a non-traditional church in downtown Norfolk, VA. He shared his “messy” stories with us. He talked about outreach for God’s kingdom not always being clean and sterilized. And how one had to stretch, grow, work out of their comfort zone, and get messy. We need to let the Holy Spirit work in us so that we can witness to those that are very different from us.

Session on Culture Around Me – We attended the same session at a different time as the Pfancuffs and learned the importance of creating a “come as you are” culture in our church.

Session on Mission U – Sarah Guldalian from the Lutheran Hour presented information about Mission U. The goal of Mission U is to have participants realize their unique God-given gifts, have increased confidence as His witness, recognize and identify the individuality of others, and express and relate the Gospel to individual people in individual settings.

Session on the Bethlehem Marketplace – Each year, Good Shepard in Olney MD, finds the community coming to a Bethlehem Marketplace they have set up. This is a ministry that involves active member’s participation and is an outreach activity to the community.

Session on A Candy Cane Canvas – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in York, PA, sends members out into the community with a Candy Cane invitation.

Session on Neighborhood Canvassing – Jerry Lucas share the tools he uses to do canvassing in the community around the church and at nearby malls.

Session on Who is My Neighbor? – The Lutheran Church Extension Fund has a wonderful resource to help learn about the neighborhood of the church. They provide the demographics of the area – who lives there, what programs or services would appeal to the people in the neighborhood and why they turn to church. This information will help the church with outreach activities.