

President's Commentary Spring 2024

Just yesterday I was out and visited a couple of hospitals. One visit was to a secular hospital and the other to a hospital connected to the Roman Catholic Church. Having served in a pastoral role earlier in the day, I was wearing a clerical collar. Much to my surprise, I was greeted as “Father” no less than 10 times in less than an hour. Honestly, I was surprised and humbled!

Those greetings remind us that, even in this increasingly secular world, there is still at least some respect for those who serve as pastors and religious leaders. We are grateful for our pastors as men of God with a special calling from God in the Church and the world. We give thanks for our **ordained pastors** in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). *“Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest.”* (Matthew 9:38)

We are also grateful for our Lutheran school principals, called teachers, Directors of Christian Education, Parish Musicians, Directors of Outreach, and all who are designated as **commissioned workers** in the LCMS. *“Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His Harvest.”* (Matthew 9:38)

We all need to give thanks for the laity of our congregations who are called in Holy Baptism to the spiritual priesthood. The theological term is **“The Priesthood of all Believers.”** These are women and men, girls and boys who are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ and confess, “Jesus is Lord.”

As part of this priesthood, you have access to God and the ability in Christ to offer spiritual sacrifices to God and to pray for others. You have the privilege to speak the Word to others and offer the forgiveness which Christ gives to you. *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”* (I Peter 2:9,10)

I’m amazed and humbled when I see the holy work and service of our laity, men and women of God with a holy calling in Christ. **To every lay leader in the LCMS Northern Illinois District, we thank you! I thank you!** You have a high calling and responsibility! Your Holy Spirit led service is needed and a blessing.

I became a better pastor throughout my parish ministry, because there were men and women of faith around me who served with, guided, taught, and showed me the forgiveness of Christ in the many times I messed up! They loved and respected the Office of the Pastor and wanted the work of Jesus to go forward!

Blessed by my seminary education, I was refined and molded by lay leaders who showed me how to read a budget, be patient, engage with an unchurched person, lead a meeting and congregation, understand human resources, and be generous with time, talent, money, and so much more.

In both congregations I served, two lay leaders basically said the same thing to me: “Pastor, you are not the pastor you were when you came here. You have grown, matured, and become stronger in your calling.” Encouragement from Gordy and Tom, thanks guys! ...and from many others, especially when I wanted to give up or had no clue what to do!

What a gift it is to encourage the holy work of men and women who serve in both public and quiet ways as part of the priesthood. There is so much strength and hope in the Church and her mission connected to strong and faithful lay leaders! *“Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His Harvest.”* (Matthew 9:38)

Because of a conversation with Howard, a lay leader, we are planning to equip, better resource, encourage, and gather lay leaders from all around the NID for a “Lay Leadership Summit” on Saturday, August 24, 2024 at Walther High School in Melrose Park. WHY? Because the church of the future needs strong lay leaders who are ready to meet the opportunities and challenges all around us!

Pastors, commissioned workers, and lay leaders—we are put together by Christ for His glory, and we are “Stronger Together: Co-Workers for the Kingdom of God.”

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss

President
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