

For the Life of the World

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

November 2011, Volume Fifteen, Number Three



Life Together—Gift

By Rev. J. Bart Day

Experiencing Life Together in Christ

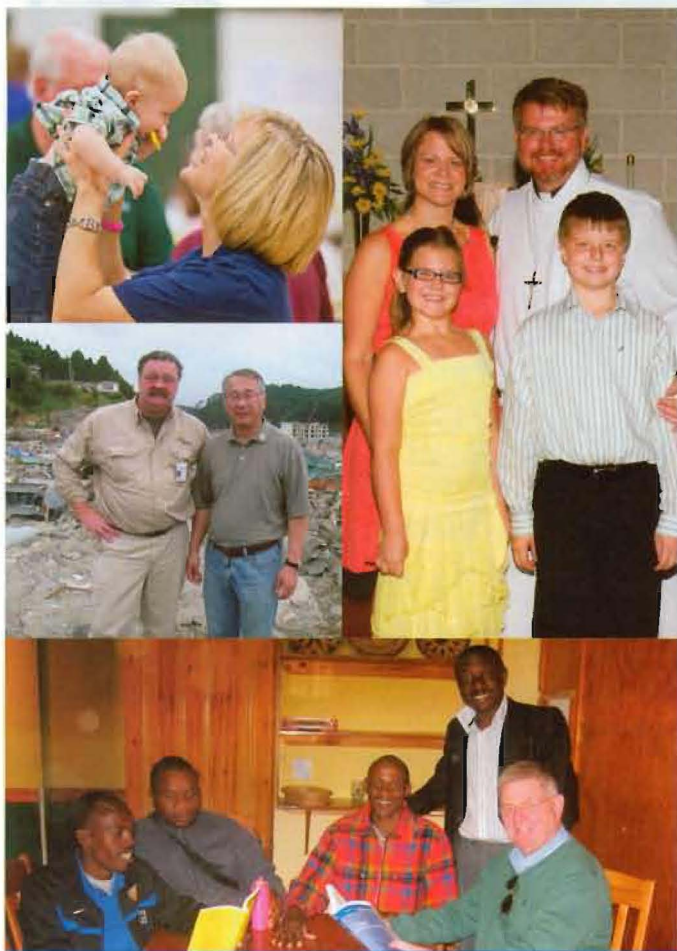
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Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries: Witness, Mercy and Life Together in the City

By Rev. Joshua R. Gale

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PUBLISHER
Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
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Jayne E. Sheaffer

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
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COPY EDITOR
Trudy E. Behning

ART DIRECTOR
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By Rev. J. Bart Day

The Office of National Mission is doing the work of “Home Mission.” The world is at our door. The challenges facing the church in our post-Christian culture can appear overwhelming. In the face of such challenges, the church must stand ready to proclaim the Gospel boldly. Being a faithful Lutheran has never been more critical.

6 Experiencing Life Together in Christ

By Rev. Brian D. Roberts

God’s people are uniquely empowered to model life together in Christ. Not only is the church where we abide in community with Christ (Matthew 18:20), but we also abide in community with one another (Ephesians 2:19). And then, we take that power of life together in Christ into a world around us (Matthew 22:39)—a world parched for meaningful relationships (Isaiah 32:2).

9 Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries: Witness, Mercy and Life Together in the City

By Rev. Joshua R. Gale

Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries (PLM), the organization that has recently called me as their mission developer, is a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of the LCMS, daring to pursue Witness, Mercy and Life Together in the name of Christ into the Philadelphia metropolitan area. The project at my direction, known as the “Northeast Philly Project,” seeks to realize this purpose through reaching out to the homeless in and around the city of Philadelphia.

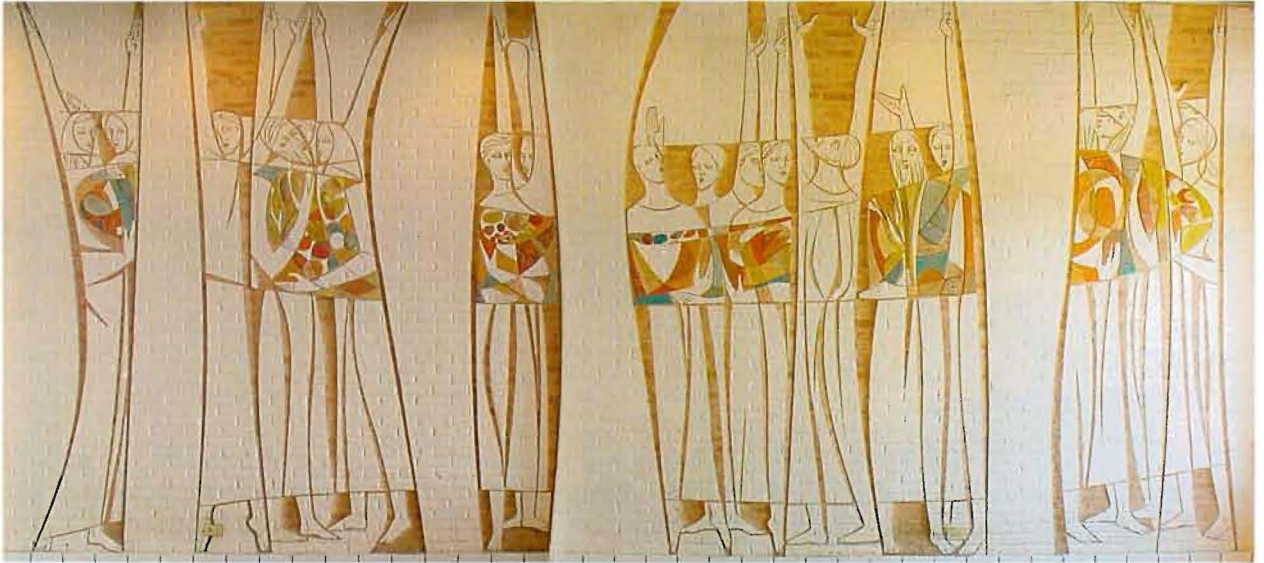
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What is Life Together?

Dr. Albert B. Collver III



For peace and harmony, every society needs to be able to live together. Much political debate tries to persuade a nation on the best way for the people to live together. Families work out ways to live with one another. And not surprisingly, churches also work on ways to live together. Particularly in America, society has tried to strike a balance between rugged individualism and the voluntary cooperation of like-minded people to have a life together. This approach has been applied to church, community, government and society. Yet the Apostle Paul intended more than cooperation among like-minded people when he said, “You were called into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9).

In the church, having a LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*) with Jesus creates a LIFE TOGETHER among people. Rather than being composed of like-minded people who voluntarily cooperate, we are united more closely than the coming together of similar minds because as St. Paul writes, “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

The theme of LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*) arose in the church, particularly after Jesus ascended into heaven, as people of different backgrounds came together into the church. It isn’t surprising when different cultural backgrounds influence how key teachings were understood, such as the differences between the Jews

and the Greeks. Such was the situation in Corinth, which St. Paul addressed in his letters. Some in Corinth said, “I follow Apollos,” others said, “I follow Paul” (1 Corinthians 3:4). The church in Corinth did not have much of a LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*). On the basis of the names mentioned, some of those in Corinth gravitated towards the Greek way of doing things (Apollos), while others toward the Jewish way (Cephas) (1 Corinthians 3:22). Others trying to steer a middle course gravitated toward Paul. Yet the pull of people toward other like-minded people did not make for a LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*). St. Paul directs the

congregation to see the foundation of Jesus Christ.

The church's LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*) is connected directly to the confession (*homologein/martyria*) of Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection brings us the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. We hear the Lord's word and the witness about Him (*martyria*) and then say it back to Him (*homologein/confession*). This confession of Jesus tied to His Name in Holy Baptism gives us a life together. The witnessing activity of the church and the confession, creedal and doctrinal activity of the church intersect in our LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*), where the church is created and sustained through the Lord's forgiving gifts.

The Psalmist writes, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity" (Psalm 133:1). The unity described here in the Psalms is the Old Testament equivalent for LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*). Indeed, how good and pleasant it is when the church has peace and unity. Fortunately, such peace and unity, although good, is not the foundation of the church, which is Jesus Christ. At times, our inability to have a LIFE TOGETHER (*koinonia*) is the result of us not caring for one another. As members of the body of Christ, even when the littlest member hurts, such as the little toe, the entire body hurts and responds to help.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about how the body of Christ cares for one another by listening in his book *Life Together*:

The first service one owes to others in the community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God's Word, the beginning of love for other Christians is learning to listen to them. God's love for us is shown by the fact that God not only gives us God's Word, but also lends us God's ear. We do God's work for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them. So often Christians, especially preachers, think that their only service is always to "offer" something when they are together with other people. They forgot that listening can be a greater service than speaking. Many people seek a sympathetic ear and do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking even when they should be listening. But Christians who can no longer listen to one another will soon no longer be listening to God either; they will always be talking even in the presence of God. (Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. "Life Together." In *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, 5:1-139, 1987, 98)

May the Lord give us ears to hear His voice through His Word and the proclamation about Jesus, that we may listen to one another, and we too may have fellowship with one another; "and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). 🏡

Dr. Albert B. Collver III serves as Director of Church Relations—Assistant to the President for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in St. Louis, Missouri. You can contact him at Albert.Collver@lcms.org.



CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY Calendar of Events

November 2011

- November 3–6 **Christ Academy College/
Phoebe Academy College**
November 6 **First Sunday Brunch**, Katherine Luther Dining Hall, 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
November 6 **All Saints Choral Vespers**, Kramer Chapel, 7:30 p.m.
November 6–8 **Good Shepherd Institute**
November 8 **Seminary Guild**, Luther Hall, 1:00 p.m.
November 8–9 **Advent Preaching Workshop**

December 2011

- December 4 **Sunday Brunch**, Katherine Luther Dining Hall, 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
December 4 **Advent Candlelight Choral Vespers**, Kramer Chapel, 4:00 p.m.
December 13 **Seminary Guild**, Luther Hall, 1:00 p.m.

January 2012

- January 15 **Epiphany Lessons and Carols**, Kramer Chapel, 4:00 p.m.
January 16 **Lenten Preaching Workshop**
January 17–20 **Symposia Series—2012**

For additional information concerning any of these events, please visit www.ctsfw.edu or phone 260-452-2100.

