

From the Bishop

“...be doers of the Word and not merely hearers... (James 1:22).”

Earlier this month Anita and I participated in *God's Work – Our Hands* Sunday with members of First English, Appleton. It was a marvelous day as people moved from an abbreviated liturgy of Holy Communion to various sites for service projects. Anita and I joined 25-30 people in trimming bushes, painting porch railings, and power washing a concrete floor at Linwood Commons, a ministry of Fox Valley Lutheran Homes. It was a beautiful day and people left the work site knowing our services had been greatly appreciated.

We say at the end of the liturgy, “Go in peace. Serve the Lord.” And we do. We are at peace because we have received the comfort of God’s grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. We leave assured of God’s faithfulness and God’s ongoing presence and support in the life of the Spirit. And we leave in freedom. We don’t have to worry about our salvation. Our lives are secure in God. And so we follow Jesus and serve wherever the Risen Christ may lead. So on that September Sunday I pictured yellow shirts of ELCA members in communities and neighborhoods all across this country serving and touching the lives of people.

Another way we touch the lives of people day in and day out is through the ministry of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. LSS has a long history whose roots go back to 1882 and Pastor E.J. Homme in Wittenberg, Wisconsin. With compassion in his heart and the courage to take a risk, Pastor Homme founded the Home for Orphans and Old Folks as a ministry of the Lutheran Church. He did what needed to be done to reach out and touch the lives of people in need.

The bishops of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan recently met in Milwaukee with Hector Colon, LSS President and CEO, and several of his staff. We talked about the social issues we hear from pastors and lay leaders—mental health issues, teenage suicides, addictions, death from opioids, childhood poverty, homelessness. The list could go on and on. We are grateful for the long history and ministry of Lutheran Social Services and how LSS extends the ministry of the Church in caring for those in need.

Today LSS employs 850 people who serve in locations throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. LSS annually touches the lives of 37,000 people through a variety of services: adoption, foster care, refugee and immigration assistance, mental health counseling, youth and family programs, senior living, housing and homelessness, and disability services. You can learn more by visiting www.lsswi.org.

The ministry of LSS exists because God continues to raise up leaders in every generation and provides resources through the church and through public-private partnerships. LSS is funded today through the church budgets, direct gifts from

members, the United Way and government grants. We learned in our meeting the importance of leadership and funding by members of our churches.

Today let us give thanks for those who serve at Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan on our behalf. Let us remember to tell the story and generously support this outreach ministry of the Church. Doing so we bring hope and healing to people in need.