

# Mission Partners

Fall 2009



## Vibrant, involved GPS Faith Community prepares to organize as congregation

### YOU can help!

As a new mission congregation begins to hold worship services, you might:

- Consider the assets your congregation has that might be useful.
- Contribute hymnals or Bibles in the appropriate language.
- Add the mission start to your music and liturgy license.
- Encourage your friends and members of your congregation to worship with the new ministry and get acquainted.
- Supply liturgical furnishings, educational supplies, microphones, musicians, or choirs.
- Provide a space (or \$\$\$ for renting a location) for worship and meetings.
- Deliver flowers for the worship service.
- Join the congregation for service projects.
- Offer your talents.

**G**race Lutheran Church, Loves Park, Illinois, planted GPS Faith Community in 2006 in a nearby Machesney Park movie theater.

GPS (*God's People Serving!*) is where the lattes are optional, the atmosphere comfortable, the music admittedly loud, and where the people passionately reach out to the community with Jesus' love!

"Grace Lutheran took a risk following God into the unknown," said the Rev. Rob James, GPS' mission developer. "The church needs to do more of this in the 21st century."

GPS took risks, too, when it lost its worship band. James recounted, "We let a group of high school students play. They did great, including one teen who started playing drums with no training."

"GPS changed my life," he says, "and helped me grow as a person. I didn't know much about God or church, and I was curious. I have experienced hard times in high school and GPS helped me through them."

Added James, "Not only do we want your prayers, we want to hear that you are praying for us."

People from Grace supported GPS by



"Lively" worship, a supportive community, and various service opportunities have drawn people to GPS.

attending worship for the first year. James reports that the presence of a mass of people encouraged visitors to return.

Gifts of quality supplies for Sunday school, vacation Bible school, and music ministries—even trailers, would be appreciated, says James.

Grace currently shares office space and equipment with GPS as well as a budget through 2009. The two congregations partner for youth programs and some worship planning and educational opportunities.

Now, GPS is preparing to organize as a congregation in May. GPS' people also envision a ministry and worship

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To provide such transformative ministries, the Rev. Brent Dahlseng, Grace's pastor and the former ELCA director for evangelism, encourages constant communication between mission starts, sponsoring congregations, synods, and the ELCA churchwide organization.



**Our Mission** *The ELCA Mission Partners program establishes reciprocal relationships between congregations of the ELCA so that all partners might become strong centers for mission. These connections include various types of support and may occur within the same synod or across synod boundaries.*



A promotional photo for GPS Faith Community, which meets in a movie theater.

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## GPS Faith Community *from p.1*



center on land that costs about \$600,000. “We could find cheaper land outside the city, but we are committed to serving our socio-economically diverse community. That means we must be accessible,” said James.

“Those with endowments and money saved have the opportunity to help. We would love support or grants that allow us to keep growing in ministry!”

GPS started growing as a congregation when it stepped out into the community. The goal to host a mobile food pantry became—with Grace’s partnership—six, then nine, mobile pantries. GPS and Grace raised \$15,000 in four weeks in 2009 for the nine pantries, monthly meals for the homeless, and holiday food baskets. GPS’ outreach also has inspired Grace to adopt the elementary school across the street.

“We have seen a great number of people connect through our food pantry ministry,” said James, “both guests to the food pantry and the more than 50 volunteers who are invited to help serve. Sometimes that is their first entrance into the GPS Faith Community.”

James described how GPS also is

reaching men ages 18 to 45, husbands of women from Grace who suddenly would come to worship with them. The men recently held their third retreat, with approximately 30 attending.

“GPS has impacted my life immeasurably. I am reminded that God is good and has a plan and purpose for each of us,” said Bob Wilson, one of the GPS men. “I also am reminded that being a Christian is a living thing and not a once-a-week on Sunday thing. Thank God for GPS.”

James said, “We have a deep passion for reaching out to meet our neighbors, to build relationships, and to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in our community. As this happens, our worshipping community continues to grow.”

GPS has established a relationship with the local Boys and Girls Club, where the congregation has served free pizza weekly for three years. The congregation also is praying about helping the students of an area elementary school with many students living in poverty.

To become a Mission Partner, please contact [kurt.nordby@elca.org](mailto:kurt.nordby@elca.org) ●

[www.gpsfaith.com](http://www.gpsfaith.com)

## Our Saviour’s renews people

**T**he Rev. Linda Webster, pastor at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, near Havre and Box Elder, Montana, says “God is good all the time. All the time God is good!”

Our Saviour’s, located on Rocky Boy’s Reservation, hosts servant groups, retreats, and cultural immersion events. The volunteers, congregation members, and other reservation residents together work on construction/repair projects as well as vacation Bible school.

Volunteers—including a recent ELCA Mission Builders group (*See back page*)—enjoy their hosts, the gracious hospitality, and beautiful surroundings. One visitor reported feeling spiritually renewed after escaping “the rat race” for 10 days.

The congregation also sponsors an ELCA missionary to Japan—Eric Anspach-Hanson—who previously volunteered at Rocky Boy’s. To help, see the TeePee Smoke newsletter at [www.oslcrb.org](http://www.oslcrb.org) ●



# At a glance...

## Younger and older—all help

People of all educational backgrounds; young and senior; previously unchurched and underchurched; Latinos, African-Americans, and Anglo-Americans



All ages from Breath of Life pitched in during a synod service project.

have responded to the lively worship and variety of service opportunities at Breath of Life, Blythe-wood, South Carolina.

Started in 2007, the congregation distributes gift baskets to the hungry;

partners in community and Thrivent for Lutherans projects; and supports soldiers, including homeless female veterans.

To become a Mission Partner, please contact [bobmikki@aol.com](mailto:bobmikki@aol.com)

[www.breathoflifelutheran.org](http://www.breathoflifelutheran.org)

## St. Isabel brings a fresh start

Santa Isabel serves people from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Pilgrim Journey, which gathers for worship at the same site, is



Pastor Israel (Jose) Sanchez, St. Isabel mission developer.

composed of Portuguese-speaking West Africans.

These two congregations are receiving funding, administrative support, and building management from the ELCA New Jersey Synod. Food and

clothing for their pantry as well as friendship, encouragement, and occasional pulpit exchanges come from area congregations, especially Advent Lutheran in Warren. Other shared events promote multicultural understanding.

To become a Mission Partner, please e-mail [revisraelsanchez@yahoo.com](mailto:revisraelsanchez@yahoo.com)



Bill Lundgren, current pastor of St. Dysmas, on left, with George at 2008 walkathon.

## Community of St. Dysmas

Legend says the criminal Dysmas was crucified with Jesus, who promised him paradise.

The Community of St. Dysmas, a Lutheran congregation within the Maryland correctional system, continues to promise paradise, proclaiming repentance, acceptance, and forgiveness in Christ's name.

The Rev. Ed Nesselhuf, founder of Prison Congregations of America says, "There are a variety of wonderful prison ministries, but to me none equal congregations for changing lives."

To become a Mission Partner, please visit [www.stdysmasmd.org](http://www.stdysmasmd.org)

## Spirit of Truth

Mission developer Grant Stevenson and community organizer Pete Marincel are working with people active in community causes, but not always active in a faith community, to create Spirit of Truth, St. Paul, Minnesota.

"We both believe that the people we work with often live faithful lives, but don't receive affirmation for doing God's work," said Stevenson. "We hope Spirit of Truth gifts the church by inviting people who haven't found places inside traditional congregations."

To become a Mission Partner, contact [grantstevensen@yahoo.com](mailto:grantstevensen@yahoo.com)



## Church welcomes Oromo immigrants

"The Dallas Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas—since September 2006 and with Mission Partners' support—reaches out to Oromo immigrants in their language and culture and equips them for evangelism with discipleship training and solidarity," says lay developer Tsena Dinssa.

Many of the worship participants came to the U.S. because of the persecution of Christians in Ethiopia and Kenya.

To become a Mission Partner, please contact Dinssa at [tsenab@netzero.com](mailto:tsenab@netzero.com)



## Mission Builders

### Couple helps build RV campground on Montana reservation

**H**elping build an RV campground on an American Indian reservation in Montana is their most recent Mission Builder's project. But Clarence and Marlene Strabel have worked on 17 projects in 11 states—so far.



Clarence and Marlene Strabel.

“Each project gives us a feeling of satisfaction,” says Clarence, while Marlene adds that “We do our best to meet people. We serve tea in our campers, and we make crosses for people.”

Clarence assists with building; works with volunteers, workers, subcontractors, suppliers, and building committees; and shares his relationship with God.

Marlene listens to concerns, shares experiences and leads project support efforts. She also participates in Bible studies, and helps the congregation with office tasks, vacation Bible school, and Women of the ELCA projects.

At Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation at Box Elder in north-central Montana, the Strabels and other Mission Builders constructed a permanent RV campground for reservation volunteers, repaired four cabins, and remodeled a once-flooded basement.

“Perhaps our most useful contribution was not in the original agreement,” added Clarence. “We cooperated with the tribal water authority to install a 300-foot sewer line to make the cabins and campground functional.”

The Strabels are excited to see where the Lord will take them in 2010! ●



Volunteers from Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Montana helped ELCA Mission Builders construct a permanent RV camp and repair and paint cabins at the American Indian reservation in Montana.



**ELCA Mission Builders** are dedicated Christians who work for their Lord, helping congregations, schools, camps, and social ministry organizations of the ELCA build their facilities.

A typical project includes Mission Builders, members of the congregation, and various professionals working side-by-side. While building structures, Mission Builders also build up the kingdom.

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