

# The day the running stopped

By Wayne N. Miller, bishop

*The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. . . . Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb (John 20:4,10,11).*

It's that time of year again. Along with digging into the garden; longer, warmer days; and opening day at Wrigley, it is running season again. And am I ready.

Actually, I'm at that point where every year I decide that I'm getting too old for this stuff and should give it up for good. But even though I don't run nearly as fast or as far anymore, I miss the fresh air, the time in the woods away from it all, the exhilaration. The only trouble with running is that for some reason no matter how far or how fast I run, I have this funny way of ending up pretty much where I started.

Still, running has been a good thing in my life. And knowing how, when and where to run is a very useful skill (even if you aren't a runner) because goodness knows there are plenty of things in this life to run from—just as far and as fast as you can. And because this is true, most of us assume there is a better place somewhere out there that we should be running to so we aren't left behind.

We run from bad jobs with impossible expectations. We run from broken relationships that are weighing us down. Sometimes we run from a world of hurt to a lifestyle that keeps us comfortably numb. At other times we run from the specter of poverty by buying a few lottery tickets or going shopping with our handy-dandy Visa card.

But at the end of the day, for all the swiftness and strength and breathless effort, it's easy to finish the race pretty much where you started.

It is hard to read the various gospel accounts of Easter morning without noticing all the running that is going on, from here to there and back again. Mary runs from the open tomb but changes her mind and runs back—this time with Peter and another disciple, who seem to be in a race to get there.

No sooner do they get to the tomb than they turn right around and run back, leaving Mary to stand alone, breathless and weeping beside the open tomb that she had already run away from once. It's easy to notice the running. What is less clear is why. Why were they all so frantically running?

It is curious, to my eye, that in all three of the other gospel accounts of Easter morning, the angels encountered in the empty tomb sent the disciples out running yet one more time. But in John's telling of the story, the two angels never got a chance to send Mary down the road, sprinting.

When she turned around, Mary discovered the risen Christ was not to be found back there or up there or out there or over there or anywhere, but right



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here—standing firmly beside her own shoulder. And for at least this one disciple, Easter became the day that the running stopped. All that remained was for her to learn how to stand firm and bear witness to the truth she had seen and heard.

So our sister, Mary, offers an alternative to the usual hunt for life and meaning, for hope and freedom. Mary offers an Easter for the days when you are weary and breathless from your endless flight from the thing you most fear, or from your frustrating attempts to find an escape from your pain or grief, from your boredom or self-doubt.

Mary offers an alternative to the perpetual chase for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, or the shiny brass ring that you hope will be your ticket off the merry-go-round.

Mary offers an Easter for the moment you discover that no matter how fast or well equipped you may be, wherever you go there you are. □

## Metropolitan Chicago



### Friends of Lutheran World Relief hosts its first Sharefest

Although the morning weather reports held warnings of widespread storms, tornados and power outages throughout Chicagoland, 55 of the 77 registered participants arrived right on time on Oct. 26, 2010, at All Saints Lutheran Church in Palatine. They came for a morning of sharing ideas, fellowship and learning more about the projects of Lutheran World Relief (LWR).

The “Sharefest” event was the idea of Cindy Parkin of All Saints and Paula Spengler of Christ Lutheran Church in Palatine. They noticed at the annual Friends of Lutheran World Relief luncheon last spring that most of those attending seemed more interested in viewing and talking about the quilts on display and the kits projects for LWR than in eating lunch.

“We should have a gathering just focused on these projects,” Parkin said.

Spengler picked up on the idea, and Mary Anderson, a member of Lutheran Church of the Atonement, Barrington, Ill., joined them in planning.

Participants were invited to bring projects for “show and tell” or participate as newcomers simply to learn. Although LWR instructions for quilts and kits are very specific on their website ([www.lwr.org](http://www.lwr.org)), there was no lack of sharing tips from many years of experience. Some groups had been making quilts for LWR for more than 50 years.

The results of evaluation sheets showed that many participants want a similar event every year, with several suggesting their congregation might be willing to host.

All are welcome to the Friends of Lutheran World Relief’s spring luncheon on April 8. To learn more, visit [www.lwr.org/friends](http://www.lwr.org/friends). □

**Norma Kenney (left) and Ruth Blank are members of the Lydia Circle at Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Barrington, Ill., and attended Sharefest. Lydia Circle has made quilts for Lutheran World Relief for about 50 years.**

#### Save the date

On May 11, Lutherans from across the state will once again gather for Lutheran Day in Springfield. This year, Lutheran Day organizers, led by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), will focus on advocacy, helping participants raise their voices for people in need in our state.

The day will include a training session at St. John’s Lutheran Church, the presentation of the Paul Simon Courage in Public Service Award, a prayer service in the Capitol Rotunda and the opportunity for participants to meet with their legislators.

Information about this event will be available on [www.lssi.org](http://www.lssi.org) and [www.lutheranday.org](http://www.lutheranday.org), or contact Dan Schwick, LSSI director of government relations, at 847-390-1418. □

# Leaders for the global church



**Mary Tororeiy, a student from Kenya, studies at her carrel at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.**

**O**n a hot August afternoon last year, Mary Tororeiy exited O'Hare Airport carrying just two suitcases filled with clothing and a few books—all she was allowed to bring from her native Kenya. She had traveled more than 24 hours, changing planes in Turkey because there is no direct flight to Chicago from Kenya, to begin doctoral studies in Old Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC).

When she completes her degree she will become a professor of Old Testament at the seminary of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

“The transition from being a priest and teacher in the Eldoret Diocese of the Anglican Church of Kenya, leaving behind family and a familiar environment has been challenging,” Tororeiy said. “But the community, the welcome and friendliness of my professors and fellow students have made for a soft landing.”

During her first semester, Tororeiy

successfully completed a full load of courses despite the challenges of adjusting to a new place and a new climate.

“When the work seems overwhelming, I just think of the end product, and I smile. I stay focused on where I’m going,” she said.

## **Advanced studies**

Approximately 70 students are enrolled

in the master of theology and doctor of philosophy degree programs at LSTC. Almost half of them are international students who, when they return to their countries, become leaders and teachers who bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ at seminaries and universities. Students from 17 different countries are currently studying for advanced degrees at LSTC.

Students come to LSTC because of its excellent faculty and the resources available through the Association of Chicago Theological Schools, an 11-seminary consortium that allows students to cross-register at no additional cost. Students also have access to a number of outstanding libraries, including the JKM Library on LSTC’s campus and the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago.

## **Supporting graduate students**

“As our Th.M. and Ph.D. students faithfully seek to engage God’s voice with the voices of the world, LSTC seeks to support them through gen-

erous scholarship assistance,” said Esther Menn, LSTC’s director of Advanced Studies and the Ralph W. and Marilyn R. Klein Professor of Old Testament.

In the current economic climate, students need scholarship assistance more than ever. LSTC’s graduate students rely on scholarship support to assist them in providing for themselves and their families as they study. When scholarships and grants are not available, they must take time away from their studies to work at whatever jobs they can find to meet their living expenses. The more scholarship support they receive, the more time they can devote to their studies.

Congregations may provide direct support to international or American graduate students or contribute to one of the many scholarship funds already established. For more information or to invite a student to visit your congregation, contact Rachel Wind, LSTC regional gift officer, at [rwind@lstc.edu](mailto:rwind@lstc.edu) or 773-256-0690. □

## **Sign up for Metro e-Word**

While rostered leaders and congregations are already signed up to receive Metro e-Word, the weekly electronic newsletter of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, individuals can now sign up. Get reminders about events, notification about when the monthly newsletter and supplement to *The Lutheran* are available online, and more. Visit [www.mcselca.org/news/](http://www.mcselca.org/news/) to subscribe.

## Moving toward health in body and mind

“Turn to the right and swim. Good. How about the backstroke? Open up those shoulders. Very good.”

It looks—and sounds—like a typical exercise class. The teacher is athletic, enthusiastic. The participants are older, maybe less coordinated, but also enthusiastic. They count along with the teacher. Still, there’s something different.

The class takes place Friday mornings on Chicago’s Northwest Side at the Portage Cragin Counseling Center, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI). What’s different about this class is that instructor Cathy Karnuth, a YMCA employee and a certified exercise instructor, has designed it specifically for people who face barriers to exercise.

The class is part of a health and wellness program offered to Portage Cragin’s clients who have mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, depression and bipolar disorder. The goal is to motivate them to incorporate exercise into their daily lives, said Yolanda Nuñez, a nurse who was hired last year, thanks to a grant from the VNA Foundation, the Aigner Foundation and Advocate Charitable Foundation.

“Our clients are at risk for premature deaths, type II diabetes and cardiovascular diseases,” Nuñez said, and exercise is the most effective way to help prevent these diseases.

Already, one participant, Karen\*, has lost 5 pounds. And the class also provides the opportunity to interact socially—another important benefit.

Nuñez has introduced a diabetes education class that meets twice a week. She also conducts health assessments of all clients and monitors their blood pressure, glucose

levels and weight. The program was shaped by LSSI’s *LifeBalance*<sup>SM</sup> programming, which is offered at many sites statewide to engage individuals in effective activities to improve their overall health and quality of life.

“It’s wonderful to have a nurse here,” said Cheryl Oseguera, director of outpatient services at Portage Cragin. “It gives us a feeling of confidence.”

Having an on-site nurse with connections to medical services is a lifesaver for the center’s clients. Julie Kovacin, director of development for LSSI’s Mental Health Services, said people with mental illness die 25 years earlier than the general population. This disparity, researchers suspect, can be partly attributed to the symptoms of mental illness and psychotropic medication use, both of which can mask or suppress a person’s ability to sense medical problems. Additionally, the medications themselves can have problematic side effects.

“Many of our clients also often have a sedentary lifestyle and poor nutrition, which often leads to weight problems,” Kovacin added.

Recently a new client came to the office to meet with one of the psychiatrists. Nuñez conducted a health screening and found that his blood



**Instructor Cathy Karnuth (standing) puts the class through its paces, stretching muscles.**

pressure was sky-high. Instead of seeing the doctor at Portage Cragin, he was sent to the hospital for emergency treatment.

Now that the health risk assessments have been completed for 65 percent to 70 percent of Portage Cragin’s clients, “our next step is to determine what else we can do to help them improve their health,” Kovacin said, “such as offering a smoking cessation class and a nutrition class.”

But for now, the exercise class is a big hit with clients. “I like the feeling [of exercising],” Patrick\* said. “It’s working for me.”

“We’re going to be the next Harlem Globetrotters,” another client said as he worked with an exercise ball.

“Whoo-hoo!” chants the rest of the class in unison.

For more information on the Portage Cragin Counseling Center, visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org). □

*\*Name changed to protect confidentiality.*