



# Falling short

By Wayne N. Miller, bishop

*... since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*

It was the chance of a lifetime. I was actually asked to toss out a ceremonial opening pitch in August at Wrigley Field. A good friend of mine, a season ticket-holder with whom I have attended opening day almost every year for a very long time, had been in a conversation with some of the management personnel at Wrigley. He revealed to them the fact that before there was a Wrigley Field on that famous corner, it had been the site of Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary. One thing led to another, and I ended up being invited to toss out a pitch.

Now I am baseball fan — not a baseball player and certainly not a pitcher. So I practiced and got lots of advice about how not to humiliate myself, most of which was a little surprising.

I was advised to stand on the grass in front of the mound so I wouldn't have to throw as far. And I was advised to put a nice high arc on the ball instead of actually trying to pitch it because everyone agreed that the ultimate failure would be to have the ball fall short.

But really! Once in my life I have a chance to stand on the rubber at Wrigley Field and I'm supposed to stand on the grass? Once in my life I have a chance to throw my blinding 40 mph fastball in a major league park, and I'm supposed to lob it in? I think not. So I ascended the mound, wound up, hurled the pitch and ... well, hopes were high, expectations were low, and I did not disappoint the expectations. The pitch fell short.

In a letter to Philipp Melancthon in 1521, Martin Luther famously adjured his young colleague to "sin boldly." But it is important to remember that Luther wasn't trying to glorify sin. His point was that the assurance of grace and forgiveness should give us the confidence to act, even knowing that our best efforts will fall short of the glory of God. The courage and confidence of faith, for Luther, was more precious to God than perfection.

We, as heirs of this Lutheran tradition, are now being called to speak and



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model this spirit of courage and confidence in a world paralyzed with anxiety — anxiety about violence, anxiety about the future, anxiety about scarce resources and anxiety about not being "right." Yet, the greatest danger to the gospel in this time is that we, as the church, will cave in to these anxieties and lose our heart to reach and risk, to create and to attempt for the sake of the one who risked everything for us.

So, sin boldly sisters and brothers. You will certainly fall short of the glory ... but there is no glory in sitting on the bench. And even when you do fall short, know beyond doubt that there is always next year. □

## Reverse collection

In May, Jay Trygstad, pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Worth, Ill., launched an experiment called the “St. Mark Stewardship Giveaway.”

During worship he held a collection plate filled with \$7,000 and urged each member to grab a \$50 bill from the stack. Then he offered up a few ground rules: don’t spend the money on yourselves; do good deeds in your community; have fun.

Trygstad, who dubbed his invitation a “financial experiment,” took part in what is sometimes called a “reverse” collection. He wanted to

do one for years but said his vision only became possible because of an anonymous donor.

“I looked at it as a teaching experience,” Trygstad said. “The Christian concept of stewardship means that all of our money belongs to God anyway. We are just the caretakers. That was kind of the theme of this giveaway: This is not your money. Invest it in the kingdom of God.”

The bigger the impact the money could make outside of the church, the better. “I was hoping if your church gave you \$50, you might tell your

hairdresser and whoever else would listen,” he said. “We wanted to convey to people, as loud as we could, that we weren’t after their money. The best way to do that was to say, ‘Here, have some.’”

The congregation embraced the concept and went to work.

“I loved it,” member Marcie DeChristopher said. “It made people take a minute to pause and say, ‘Wait, are we doing God’s work?’ I found the whole thing very refreshing.”

Trygstad received periodic updates along the way.

A member bought supplies to make, bottle and sell marmalade, with the proceeds going to the church. Another helped a friend with medical bills. Two sisters, ages 9 and 5, stocked a vending machine with M&Ms at the church entrance, donating all their profits to St. Mark. One woman revived a dormant fund to assist a struggling family that lost a father and a child in separate tragedies.

Trygstad wasn’t looking for a return on his investment. “I did say if their neighbor is out of a job and needs money for food, that’s OK,” he said. “A lot of people did that—helping people in need.”

Three months to the day after Trygstad began his experiment, all of Sunday’s worship services were devoted to parishioners sharing stories on what became of the \$50 bills.

“What impressed me was that all of the people started out by saying they didn’t know what they were going to do with the money,” Trygstad said. “I was delighted with the creativity.”

For more, see *The Lutheran* (November, page 34; [www.thelutheran.org/feature/november](http://www.thelutheran.org/feature/november)). □

Guy Tridgell

*Tridgell is a freelance writer in the Chicago area.*

### Advocacy opportunity

## Spend a Wednesday in Springfield

During the just-completed fall legislative session, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) participated in a six-day “rally” at the state Capitol

in favor of comprehensive tax and budget reform. Each day of the legislative session, LSSI supporters were invited to rally with other delegations from the Responsible Budget Coalition to visit legislators with the message about needed tax and budget reform.

During the 2011 legislative session, LSSI invites everyone interested in investing a day in face-to-face advocacy to join LSSI’s government relations staff in visiting with their legislators. From mid-January through May, the Illinois General Assembly is usually in session at the Capitol on Tuesdays, Wednesdays,



and Thursdays.

LSSI invites *you* to spend a Wednesday in Springfield. Its staff will help you set up appointments with your legislators, assist you in navigat-

ing the corridors of the legislative offices, prepare you for your visits with legislators, and accompany you on the visits for additional support.

We recommend that you plan to spend about three hours at the Capitol. That will give you lots of time to take in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and still make it a day trip.

Please let LSSI Government Relations staff know what date you are planning to come to Springfield. Register your date with Joy Medrano ([joy.medrano@lssi.org](mailto:joy.medrano@lssi.org) or 847-635-4653).

## Synod Youth Team offers leadership training, programs

The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Youth Team held its annual youth worker appreciation breakfast at the Lutheran Center in Chicago on Sept. 18. It was a morning filled with deep discussion, networking opportunities and, of course, breakfast.

The discussion topic was led by the Rev. Dr. Nathan Frambach, associate professor of youth, culture and mission at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. He led the group into the findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion on the most recent trends in ministry with young people.

Visit [www.youthandreligion.org](http://www.youthandreligion.org) to get more information about this research on youth spirituality and youth ministry.

The synod youth team is currently planning two lock-ins. First for the South and Southwest conferences on Jan. 16-17, 2011, and a second for the North, Northeast and Northwest conferences on Feb. 11-12, 2011.

Did you ever wonder what it is like to lock in 150 youth? Come and see for yourself.

Also, mark your calendar—the synod's youth team will hold its annual Fresh Fire on March 5, 2011. This event is a full day of workshops for youth leaders and youth alike.

For more information, e-mail [youthministry@mcselca.org](mailto:youthministry@mcselca.org) or visit the youth ministry page on the synod website at [www.mcselca.org/what/ministry/youth](http://www.mcselca.org/what/ministry/youth).

Information will be posted in advance of the event. □



Participants at the synod's annual Youth Worker Appreciation Breakfast.

## LSSI teams up with Advocate to offer 'encompassing care'

Intouch Home Care Services, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) and Advocate Home Health Services (AHHS) created "Encompassing Care," which will offer a full range of home-based care, including services from Advocate Hospice (part of AHHS), to people throughout metropolitan Chicago.

Through this alliance, LSSI and AHHS are working together to broaden access to a spectrum of services that will help people—particularly older adults—to remain in their homes.

Marilyn Elliott, executive director of LSSI's Senior Services, said, "Our primary goal is to help individuals remain independent and living at home—and connected to their communities—for as long as possible."

Intouch Home Care offers non-

medical assistance for older adults in their homes. Its trained home care assistants help seniors with tasks such as personal care, housekeeping and meal planning and preparation, along with providing companionship and facilitating wellness through exercise and nutrition.

Denise Keefe, president of AHHS, added, "We welcome this opportunity to partner with LSSI and to offer people our full spectrum of outstanding, quality home care services."

Both organizations are faith-based and share common missions, philosophies and values. Both organizations are also affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

For further information, contact Clara Hubbard (LSSI) at 773-873-3400 or Connie Polke (AHHS) at 847-812-1629. □

# Metropolitan Chicago



Youth attending Lutheran Summer Music perform.

## Synod musician attends Lutheran Summer Music Academy

The 29th annual Lutheran Summer Music Academy (LSM) took place at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, June 20 to July 18. Ben Woolsey of Faith Lutheran Church, Homewood, was one of 149 students accepted into the program.

LSM is the pinnacle project of the Lutheran Music Program, one of the nation's premier music training efforts for young people. The program's mission is to transform lives and connect people through faith and music. LSM fosters musical excellence and spiritual growth in a caring community for high school band, orchestra, choir, piano and pipe organ students from all faith backgrounds.

LSM students were immersed in:

- **Music instruction.** Led by a faculty of 34 educators, esteemed profes-

sional musicians and teachers from across the country, students received two private lessons each week and played in both large and small ensembles. They were also placed in a musicianship class led by LSM's composer-in-residence. Students were given elective options such as conducting, church music, handbells and more.

- **Worship and devotions.** LSM's 2010 chaplain, the Rev. Michael Costello, led students in liturgically rich worship twice daily and devotional study weekly. Evening Prayer, Compline and Holden Evening Prayer settings were used centrally. Worship during the month also included a Hymn Festival and Bach Cantata.

LSM also uses a commissioned

musical arrangement of Martin Luther's Morning Prayer by Carl Schalk. Written expressly for LSM and introduced in 2009, this piece is sung by the entire community each morning and is already a favorite tradition.

LSM culminated in Festival Week, the final week of the program that included the hymn festival, student solo and chamber recitals, and evening concerts by the band, choir and orchestra. More than 2,000 people attended.

Lutheran Music Program's national offices are located in Minneapolis. LSM rotates its location among various Lutheran colleges.

Since its founding in 1981, more than 3,000 students have attended LSM.

Hundreds of these alumni have pursued careers in music education, church music and performance. LSM 2011 will mark the program's 30th anniversary and will be held June 26 to July 24 at Luther College.

New for congregations is the Young Musicians Partnership (YMP), which encourages churches to set up local scholarships for youth interested in attending LSM. In return, students in "partner" congregations receive a 10 percent discount plus matching dollars for the locally seeded scholarship. In the YMP's third year, 38 percent of the students who attended LSM 2010 came from partner congregations.

To enroll in the Young Musicians Partnership or for more information on LSM, please visit [www.lutheransummermusic.org](http://www.lutheransummermusic.org) or contact Sue Olstad, director of admissions, at 888-635-6583 or [solstad@lutheransummermusic.org](mailto:solstad@lutheransummermusic.org). □



Ben Woolsey