

## MINUTEMAN TALK - JANUARY 27, 2008

### Kickoff date for celebration of FL-GA District 60th Anniversary

#### Theme: Recruitment of church workers

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 4:12-25

Some of us remember the old WW II posters that depicted the stern-looking old man with goatee and top hat, representing the United States, pointing his finger and saying "Uncle Sam Wants You." This was a highly successful recruiting poster for the US military - before our age of clever 45-second TV film clips.

In your mind's eye, form a poster or picture of today's Gospel lesson from the Book of Matthew. As Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee he sees two brothers, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. He stops and says, "Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Now put the scene in poster form. Jesus is looking right at you with eyes that are not stern like "Uncle Sam," but with eyes that are intense, blazing with seriousness, but filled with compassion. His right arm is stretched out, not with a pointing finger, but with an open hand that gestures an invitation. The title of the poster is: "Jesus wants you."

He does! He has a job for every citizen in the Kingdom of God. He calls us to serve him in the world with our words and our deeds. He also may ask us to serve in a special way in the congregation as a Sunday School teacher, or choir member, or usher, or a volunteer office worker. But then again it might mean that he wants you to be a full time church worker. Today all over the Florida - Georgia District our congregations are emphasizing the need for full time church workers. They are gifts of God to the church, as Paul reveals to us in his letter to the Ephesian Christians:

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11).

The word "apostle" means "missionary." A prophet is simply someone who declares God's Word to a certain issue. An evangelist is someone who focuses on direct Gospel proclamation. And we all understand the need for pastors and teachers. In the Lutheran Church -Missouri Synod we especially need missionaries because our denomination is currently in a "no growth" condition. Even in the "no growth" mode, projections indicate that we will need 350 new full time pastors every year *just to replace the men who retire or leave the parish ministry!* The latest figures project that there will be 250 pastor-graduates from our two seminaries in 2008. This is approximately 80 more graduates than we usually have, but still short of the goal! Jesus wants you!

Have you ever considered being a missionary, pastor, teacher, director of Christian education, or other full time church worker? The ministry is hard and challenging, but rewarding - not unlike being in the military during time of combat. Like the military, the pay is not high. And it is not for the lazy or undisciplined person. Only you can know whether God is calling you - but each

one of you today might well consider if Jesus is inviting you to drop the “fishing nets” of what you are now doing in life, and following him full time service in the church.

Or it may be that you recognize that you do not have the gifts for such a calling, but you know someone who has the personality and gifts to consider such a church work profession.

There is an envelope inserted in your bulletin [hold up the envelope]. It asks for a response from you. If you think that you might be interested in full time church work, check the appropriate box. Or if you wish to recommend the name of someone else who you believe has the gifts to become a servant for the Lord’s church, please write his or her name in the space provided.

And all of us can consider a financial gift to support the District goal of \$1,000,000 for the Servants for the Future Endowment Fund that will fund church worker scholarships, the Concordia House of Studies, and campus ministry. This fund will make it possible on a long-term basis to continue raising up more leaders. If you are making out a check today, make it payable to “Florida-Georgia District” with a memo “Servants for the Future.” Whether you give a check or cash, your gift will be personally acknowledged.

Or, if you would prefer to think and pray about the response envelope, return the envelope next Sunday or mail it to the Florida-Georgia District. The funds are important, but what is more important is praying for and identifying those people who might be gifted to serve as leaders in the church. Perhaps Jesus is calling you to full time ministry.

Imagine that poster once more in your mind’s eye. Jesus looks directly at you, right arm extended, hands open in invitation. Jesus wants you.

Bruce Lieske  
December 18, 2007