

# Looking for results

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This short video and the corresponding paper details some of the work the Christians in the Green Bay area and the Holy Spirit have accomplished. The paper provides an overview of the work; the video provides a more personal, intimate look. God alone receives the glory for all he accomplished!

The Spirit's  
fruit at  
Messiah Luth.  
Church in  
Bellevue, WI

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## The scope and process of this project

In May of 2009 Messiah Lutheran Church in Bellevue celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. For this anniversary, Pastor Sauer and myself decided to produce a short video displaying the wonderful work God has accomplished at the congregation in the last fifteen years. We knew that a paper could display the facts, but a video would do a much better job displaying the spirit of the congregation. It would also be much more accessible to the members of the congregation.

With that thought in mind, I began the long process of producing the best video possible. I worked under the title 15 Years of Grace. I interviewed eight families or individuals from the congregation; not all made it on the final video.

After gathering nearly eight hours of interesting and applicable content from the members and Pastor, I began the mammoth task of whittling down the material. We knew fifteen minutes would be the longest anyone would want to watch. The long process of selecting the right clips began. With the right clips, we could work on transitions, introduction, and a conclusion. In all, nearly 40 hours was spent on the video.

On May 3rd between the services, we presented the video. It was well received. The members spent the next thirty minutes reminiscing about the early days. The discussion was lively and warm.

This video was incredibly beneficial for me as the vicar. I readily admit that I had very little idea, on a personal basis, of the roots of Messiah. I knew the facts; I had read them in papers. But this video gave those facts a personal side.

This video also exposed to me the challenge of working with video technology in a congregation. I know that sounds like a small point, but it isn't. It will certainly make me think twice before I jump into video production in a congregation. I managed to pull this project off with hardly any cost, but only because I knew the right places to find good free video editing software (Linux) and was willing to go through the pain to make it work. On a week to week basis, a congregation would never want to go through that work. A good amount of money and time would be necessary to make it work.

Most importantly, I learned about the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit among God's people. Sometimes I forget the personal nature of the gospel. This project made it alive to me again, in a very real way. I could not miss the joy, comfort, and maturity all these people had found through the gospel at Messiah.

# Looking for Results

## *The Spirit's fruit at Messiah Lutheran Church*

The spirit imbibed in a mission congregation is unique. It doesn't take long for a person who is in the mission to catch that spirit. It's a spirit that invigorates people for all the work that needs to get done. It's a spirit that displays people who rely on their Savior

Messiah Lutheran Church in Bellevue, Wisconsin, displays just that spirit.

### **A Brief History<sup>1</sup>**

Talk of a mission on the east side of Green Bay started back in the late 70's and early 80's. It took until August of 1992 for the Northern Wisconsin District Mission Board to propose a mission. It was only then that those who wanted a mission received the support they needed.

A number of men were called to the location. Finally Pastor Stephen Sauer accepted the call and began to organize the congregation.

By May of the same year, the congregation held its first worship service. One and a half years later the congregation was incorporated and the constitution approved (December 10, 1995).

The congregation continued to grow quickly. In March of 1996 it launched its first website, a major milestone for a church at that time. Only two months later, in June, it was accepted into the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The congregation was growing so rapidly that building plans were already beginning to form. Land was purchased, architectural drawings created, and in May of 1999, the first building was dedicated. Even this story was a story of ingenuity, drive, and perseverance. The process Messiah went through to build this church was a change from what had been the standard up to that time. The members wanted to build their own church, their own way, but needed help financing. They tried the usual WELS sources, but ran into roadblocks. They ended up going to another organization, but their wants are part of the reason WELS changed some of its church building practices.

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed history of the beginning of Messiah is found in the paper written by David Karow in 1997, cf. works cited.

With a new building, the church really blossomed. The church had roots that neighbors could see. The church expanded so much that it needed a new addition. In the fall of 2003 Messiah dedicated a fellowship hall, 5 classrooms, a few bathrooms, and 2 offices.

The church continued to expand and they began to talk about more workers. In late 2004 and the beginning of 2005, the church decided to enter the vicar program. Since the fall of 2005, Messiah has assisted the worldwide mission of the WELS by taking a vicar. It is now one of only a dozen that pays the full cost of a vicar.

The list of all that Messiah has accomplished, and that God has accomplished through Messiah could go on. For all the details of that history, a person can look through the records at Messiah. One thing that person won't find is controversy or serious issues. On the other hand, the fruit of the gospel is plentiful.

### **The gospel produces fruit in the people**

In the spring of 2009, Messiah celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In order to remember all of God's goodness over these last 15 years I put together a video with pastor's help. This video vividly displays the fruit the gospel has produced at Messiah. The video shows, in the members' own words, what the written word cannot always show: the Christian spirit.

### **The gospel produces a spirit of love**

Messiah is well-known as a friendly church. All a person has to do is walk through the doors and the love and friendliness of the members is evident.

But the love that members display for each other goes far beyond the surface. Members are interested in each other's lives. They show concern for each other's problems. They go so far as to take the burdens of others upon themselves. One great example is the handicapped man they employ simply so he can have a job. As they gradually show love to this man, the Spirit is convincing him regarding the truth of Jesus Christ.

### **The gospel produces a spirit of peace**

Everyone is of the opinion that churches ought to be places of love and peace. Yet all too often churches, even our own, are rife with factions and cliques, fighting and infighting.

I would not go so far as to say such problems do not exist at Messiah. But I could almost go that far. I have never been at a church with so few problems. There are no cliques. There is no 'alligator', so to speak. The gospel has produced a spirit of peace.

## **The gospel produces a spirit eager to share the gospel**

The members of Messiah are also eager to share the love of Jesus that has so warmed their hearts. This is obvious by the numerical growth of the congregation. In fifteen years, the congregation has grown from no one to nearly 700 members.

It is more encouraging though to see the way that the members share the gospel with others. They find their friends and relatives, coworkers and neighbors, and share the gospel with them. Sometimes the people they spoke to were quickly persuaded. Sometimes it took years. In some cases, the members are still waiting to see the fruits of their witness.

The members still have this spirit. Messiah continues to primarily grow through what many call friendship evangelism. But they are looking for new ways too. During late 2008 and early 2009, the evangelism went through the process of creating a professional mass-mailing system: a targeted audience, a specific message, a professional look, and a direct invitation. This resulted in a few visitors and more community knowledge about Messiah. It also directed and focused the members' efforts as they learned to advertise in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

## **The source of all this fruit**

Only one tool is powerful enough to produce this much fruit: the gospel. Any confessional Lutheran pastor would give such an answer to this question, but a person needs to also have a conviction that this is the truth.

The law can certainly produce many good things. It directs the members of Messiah in their lives as they endeavor to serve their Savior. And sometimes they do these things because of the law. But only the gospel can produce all these things from a good motivation and all at the same time.

It is truly amazing to see the gospel at work, especially in a mission congregation. The pastor and the other workers continue to proclaim, expound and apply the gospel and the Holy Spirit does all the work that is necessary to produce believers. There is so much pressure on a pastor, especially in a mission setting, to produce a thriving church. It's so easy to resort to human methods in order to produce results. Instead, simply rely on God's gospel and trust him to produce the results.

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*The raw footage of all interviews are available upon request.*