



“A Time To Dance”

by *Damian B. Burkhalter*

The fifth annual Christian Prom was held on Saturday, May 2, at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in East Bethel.

The gathering space of Our Saviour’s was transformed into a beautiful dining area and dance floor where almost 100 senior high youth from area schools and churches enjoyed an evening that included a full sit-down dinner, a dance, entertainment, valet parking, door prizes, photography and a keepsake fluted glass with the theme, “A Time To Dance,” printed on them—all for \$30 per person!

This annual event has been primarily sponsored by Our Saviour’s, but is open to young people of all faiths who wish to attend. This is the second year that a group came from Maple Grove, and one of the women stated, “I went to my school prom this year, too, but I will definitely come to this next year instead. This is so much more fun!”

Because no dates are required, many of the youth do not feel the normal social pressures of a prom. The DJ is instructed that only church appropriate music (but not just Christian) is allowed, along with dance favorites such as the Chicken Dance, Hokey-Pokey, Electric Slide and others. One of the highlights during this year’s dance was one couple teaching the others how to polka and waltz!

Many thanks go out to all of the sponsors, volunteers, and everyone on the prom committee; “A Time To Dance” would not be possible without the many volunteer hours and donations. Next year we hope to host over 120 youth.

For more information about “A Time To Dance,” contact Kay Carlson at kcarlson@oursaviourslc.org, Susan Ahlers at sahlers@oursaviourslc.org or Damian Burkhalter at dburkhalter@glencary.org.

Burkhalter is the youth ministries director at Glen Cary Lutheran Church in Ham Lake, and a member of the Christian Prom committee.

Veteran Offers Tips for Parents of Recent Veterans

by *Amy Blumenshine*

The coming home process for veterans returning from war is facilitated by the loving embrace and demands of significant relationships. Bob Schirm, a military veteran and father of a recently returned Iraq veteran, noticed that single soldiers had particular needs upon their return. Along with his son, he developed some guidelines for parents of recent veterans in how to help their adult children re-integrate after war, which they’ve shared at many Minnesota National Guard re-integration workshops.

The Schirms offer suggestions for parents. Like it or not, due to the circumstances, parents need to put extra effort into communicating with their veteran child. Don’t expect the effort to be balanced. “Being there” means to make the effort to be physically together. The Schirms planned father-son dinners together weekly upon the son’s return. Parent and adult child should find some common interest and engage in it together.

Listening is the key. Sometimes the listening will help solve problems or clarify expectations. Always ask permission before offering advice. That shows respect and recognizes that the parent remembers that their child is now an adult. Indeed demonstrating that respect is fundamental. Parents need to learn not to expect perfection and to fully accept their child as is.

Schirm sees five phases that war veterans navigate in their transition period: habit breaking, exploration, celebration, projects, and reality check.

- Some habits may need breaking. Behaviors related to hygiene, personal body functions, cursing, military speech and eating that are common during military deployments are seen as inappropriate in civilian society.
- Those who have been away need to explore familiar landmarks and relationships, and observe how they may have changed.
- During the celebration stage, the veteran treats him/herself. Many have made promises to themselves while surviving overseas. Schirm recommends that the returnee complete their promises to themselves as a form of closure, but that they plan out and pace their fun and spending. They should resist the urge to buy unnecessary things and plan for the future, he says.

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Synod Gathering Celebrates Global Companionship

by Kris Perry

Thanks to the efforts of the Global Companion Table of the Minneapolis Area Synod, the second annual Global Companion Congregation Celebration Event was held April 23 at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Minneapolis. Nearly 50 people representing 23 different congregations of the Minneapolis Area Synod gathered to celebrate congregational partnerships around the world.

In a large group discussion, Rev. Dale Howard from Normandale Lutheran Church, Edina, shared that congregation's principles of mission, with additional insights provided by ELCA guests, Rev. Lanny Westphal, director, ELCA global formation-relationships, and Rev. Barbara Berry-Bailey, ELCA director for companionship, education and advocacy-Africa. Those principles included:

- Focus on a few missions with long-term commitment to each rather than sending money to a variety of different missions each year.
- Look for places with the greatest human need and fewest resources.
- Involve the entire congregation in the missions selected.
- Form personal relationships, which is foundational to mission, rather than simply traveling to a foreign land to engage in a mission project.
- A visit to a mission sight is integral to building personal relationships, recognizing that being there to listen, learn and develop relationships provides sufficient reason for the visit.
- Mission is both ways. We engage in mission, and ministry transforms us

Participants then broke into small groups based on the country or continent where their congregation engages in mission and ministry. They shared ways in which they involved their congregations in mission and ministry as well as brainstorming ideas on how to keep the lines of communication flowing with their global companions.

Based on feedback received from the participants, this event will be offered each year. Watch future publications for next year's date and place.

Perry is the companion synod coordinator for the Minneapolis Area Synod.

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- As part of the celebration process and to combat boredom and feel a sense of accomplishment, the veteran often engages in projects. Problems arise when a veteran has started too many projects and cannot finish them, or otherwise cannot feel a sense of accomplishment.
- The reality check of re-integration is when the veteran resumes employment and self-support in civilian society. Schirm notes that this process generally takes four months to a year and should be carefully planned.

Schirm shared his wisdom at a recent Veterans Ministry Roundtable and is available to speak to church gatherings. He has been a key organizer of support to veterans in his congregation, North Heights Lutheran Church, Arden Hills. The next roundtable is September 9.

Schirm is also working with an ecumenical group (affiliated with the Warrior to Citizen Campaign of the Humphrey Institute) to provide a special "Healing of Memories" workshop for veterans of all eras, October 23-25. Nominations of potential participants and patrons for this very special opportunity are being sought. Pastoral care providers know that many veterans continue to be troubled by memories from years prior. This workshop provides an opportunity to reach peace in the company of other veterans. The workshop facilitator, Anglican Father Michael Lapsley, will share helpful wisdom from his own victim-survivor-victor journey after being attacked and becoming handicapped during the apartheid struggle in South Africa.

For more information related to this article, contact ListenToVets@comcast.net.

Blumenshine heads up the Coming Home Collaborative in the Minneapolis Area Synod.