

# Epistle



South Carolina  
Lutheran Men in Mission

www.sclmm.org

May 2012

## SOUTH CAROLINA Lutheran Men in Mission

Check out the  
South Carolina Lutheran Men in Mission Website

[www.sclmm.org](http://www.sclmm.org)



### 2012 Cliff Bourguignon Golf Tournament



**Monday — June 4, 2012**

Hole sponsorship and Registration Forms  
can be found on the website.

Please support the golf tournament in anyway you  
can. Proceeds from our tournament will be added to  
our SCLMM Scholarship Fund at Newberry College.

Last year \$6,300.00 was raised for the SCLMM  
Scholarship Fund at Newberry College. All golfers  
are encouraged to solicit hole sponsorships from  
their team, LMM Unit and businesses in their  
congregation and community.

Your support in publicizing and soliciting hole-  
sponsorships will be greatly appreciated.

**Entry deadline is May 20, 2012.**

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## From the President **SAVE ME A SEAT**

<sup>16</sup> So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account."

<sup>17</sup> And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself

<sup>18</sup> Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty."

1Samuel 20:16-18

Several years ago a friend asked if I had any extra tickets to the Florida State game on a Saturday afternoon in Clemson SC. CJ Spiller, the featured running back for Clemson was billed as being the difference in the game. He was having a great year and the tickets were in high demand. I told my friend he could have one of my tickets and I would save the seat beside me just for him. He accepted the ticket but



declined my offer to ride with us to the game. "Just mail me the tickets and I'll meet you there," was his answer. I was so excited because this friend and I had a great relationship a number of years ago. We will have so much to catch up on. The day of the ball game was

electric as orange was all over the place, with sprinkles of Florida State red here and there. We left early for the seats and I was ready to see and talk to my friend. At kick-off he had not arrived. Since traffic was really heavy and many people were late getting to their seats, I delayed calling to see where he was. By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, he was still a no show. I decided to call to find out where he was. No answer. I tried several times. Still no answer. The seat was empty the whole first half as we thought he might show up late. After the second half we spread out and used the *empty seat* area to give us more room. I was really disappointed that he did not show.

A few days later, I called to find out what happened. I explained that I was concerned that something might have happened. His answer was, "Oh we had a change of plans and decided to go to the beach instead and watch it on TV there. I meant to call you, but we got busy." Graciously, I explained that he was missed, but we just used the *empty seat* I saved for him to give the rest of us more room to spread out.

While visiting a Church in the midlands last December, I saw some people I knew. We were talking and they mentioned that attendance had been good for the last few months. During the service I was looking over the congregation for other friends and something jumped out at me. There were *empty seats*! Not the obvious empty seat, but the ones

occupied by the men of the church. There were more women in attendance than men. A quick count stunned me as I figured there were about 50 men and around 90 women. Where are our men?



On visits to other churches, and talking to people in other denominations, Lutherans aren't the only church experiencing the *empty seat* syndrome for men. Men are finding something else to do other than church. When men need further spiritual sustenance, rather than turn to

the church, they go to the wilderness, the workplace, the garage, sports or the corner bar. They watch their heroes in the stadium or on the racetrack. They plunge into a novel or sneak off to a movie. Church is now one of the last places men look for inspiration. Men's disinterest in Christianity is consistent around the nation and the world; it can't be explained by pride, father issues, sin, or distraction. Neither can we say, "Well, men are just less religious," because this is untrue. Male and female participation are roughly equal in Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. In the Islamic world men are publicly and unashamedly religious—often more so than women. Of the world's great religions, only Christianity has a consistent, nagging shortage of male practitioners. What is it about modern Christianity that is not attracting men??

Will the tide turn with the attitudes of men towards the church? Yes! It not only can, but it must. JESUS built His church on twelve Spirit-filled men who changed the world. We must do the same: *you cannot have a thriving church without a core of men who are true followers of CHRIST*. If the men are dead, the church is dead. When you read the dire statistics on male participation, don't panic! This low ebb may be part of the church's natural cycle. Over time the church tends to get out of balance and lose its masculine spirit. Then GOD raises a lion—a Martin Luther, John Wesley, Charles Finney, or a Billy Graham—to drag the church back into balance. The men return. The great revivals of the past three centuries always transformed large numbers of men.

### EXPLORING THE INTERNET ON MEN'S SPIRITUAL ISSUES, THERE ARE SEVERAL SITES THAT OFFER THESE STARTLING STATISTICS:

- THE TYPICAL U.S. CONGREGATION DRAWS AN ADULT CROWD THAT'S **61% FEMALE, 39% MALE**. THIS GENDER GAP SHOWS UP IN ALL AGE CATEGORIES.
- ON ANY GIVEN SUNDAY THERE ARE 13 MILLION MORE ADULT WOMEN THAN MEN IN AMERICA'S CHURCHES.
- THIS SUNDAY ALMOST **25% OF MARRIED, CHURCHGOING WOMEN WILL WORSHIP WITHOUT THEIR HUSBANDS**.
- MIDWEEK ACTIVITIES OFTEN DRAW **70 TO 80 % FEMALE PARTICIPANTS**.
- **OVER 70% OF THE BOYS** WHO ARE BEING RAISED IN CHURCH WILL ABANDON IT DURING THEIR TEENS AND TWENTIES. MANY OF THESE BOYS WILL NEVER RETURN.
- MORE THAN **90 PERCENT OF AMERICAN MEN BELIEVE IN GOD**, AND 5 OUT OF 6 CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS. BUT ONLY ONE OUT OF SIX ATTEND CHURCH ON A GIVEN SUNDAY.
- THE AVERAGE MAN ACCEPTS THE REALITY OF JESUS CHRIST, BUT **FAILS TO SEE ANY VALUE IN GOING TO CHURCH**.
- **FEWER THAN 10% OF U.S. CHURCHES ARE ABLE TO ESTABLISH OR MAINTAIN A VIBRANT MEN'S MINISTRY**.

Empty seats disappoint. Empty seats do not reinforce the family structure. Empty seats do nothing for the children. Empty seats do not help the man be the complete man GOD wants him to be. The empty

seats mean men are missing the message; or as some may suggest, men do not see the need to fill the seat.

My feelings were hurt when my friend did not show and did not call. I have gotten over it, but what I see as more of a problems is that the *empty seat syndrome* is in our churches. Not much is being done to address it. Does it stem from a lack of commitment, not having good priorities, yielding to the next temptation, or is it just men are trying to find themselves in a challenging and changing world? Many solutions have been proposed, but this could be an individual problem that have become popular and has spread throughout manhood ....and has become the norm!

We recently celebrated one of the high times in the church and there were some empty seats. We read in the scripture, **Thomas was not with them when JESUS came.** Thomas's seat was empty. He did not see JESUS until a week later when he joined the other apostles. But he said to them, **"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."** And JESUS said to him, **"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

Who are the doubting Thomases in our world today, seeking the Lord on their own? There are many – people who are sincerely seeking the LORD, but who prefer to do so apart from the worshiping leaving empty seats in the churches. Religion, they say, is personal and private; in that they are half right-but only half. The religion of JESUS CHRIST *is* personal. But it is not private. People who neglect the communal dimension of our faith are constructing a private religion of their own, and a private church. They need to learn the lesson Thomas learned- that the LORD comes first and foremost when we are gathered together with our fellow believers.

There are many opinions on why men are not in church and twice as many ideas on how to correct the problem. My experience has been when I surrendered my human instincts, and trusted GOD, very similar to what JESUS tasked two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, who were fishermen casting nets into the sea, to drop their nets and To follow HIM, **"And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed HIM"**.



JESUS answered, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the FATHER except through ME"**.

*Lord Jesus Christ, you said that you are the Way, the Truth and the Life. Help us not to stray from you, for you are the Way; nor to distrust you, for you are the truth; nor to rest on any other than you, as you are the Life. You have taught us what to believe, what to do, what to hope and where to take our rest. Give us grace to follow you, the Way, to learn from you, the Truth, and to live in you, the Life. Amen.*

Erasmus

~Desiderius

Instead of seeing an empty seat, I see a seat that I am saving for my friend. Next time I will be more convincing to that friend.

Dan Camp



## Heber Rast Change

We have all heard the joke about "How many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb?" with the punch line being something to the effect of "Lutherans do not change!" There is a lot of truth in that saying because most of us are comfortable in our current surroundings and the status quo. We did, however, do thinks a little differently at our recent Convention by incorporating some interactive time during the business session. By all accounts this was well received by most attendees from what we have heard. Perhaps "change" is not too bad after all!

I for one, certainly do not agree in changing just for the sake of change. However if what we are doing does not seem to be working, then perhaps "change" should be on the horizon. If your men's ministry meetings are just the same old humdrum event that is not attracting any new interest, then maybe change should be considered. Our biggest challenge may be how to attract the younger men to SCLMM.

It is no secret that to reach the younger generation, something different must be done rather than the typical "old style" meeting. Today's younger generation grew up in an "instant gratification" society. They want action and a meaning for getting involved. They must consider the event worth their time if they are to become interested. Many of us complain that the younger generation (ladies as well as men) do not participate with us. Perhaps we should turn it around and admit that we do not participate with them!

For several years LMM has launched a concerted effort to reach the younger men. We have a Young Men's Specialist (Kyle Pedersen) as a part time contract staff person with LMM. Check out his column in each issue of the church wide LMM Newsletter, "FOUNDATIONS". You can view it on the web at [lutheranmeninmission.org](http://lutheranmeninmission.org). Another good resource is the book *Coming of Age: Exploring the Spirituality of Younger Men*. Both of these are excellent and will give you ideas of how to connect with the younger generation in your congregation and community.

Yours in Christ

Heber Rast,

Executive Director



**Send your articles for  
the next Epistle:**

**By Mail:** Ralph Wessinger  
709 Otis Blvd  
Spartanburg, SC 29302

**Or Email:** [epistlenews@sclmm.org](mailto:epistlenews@sclmm.org)

# SC Lutheran Men in Mission 2012 Convention

Living Springs Lutheran Church



## 2011 Distinguished Service Awards



Daniel H- (Dan) Sandel is a native of Newberry County He has served as president, vice president and secretary of the St. Thomas LMM and Secretary of the; Heartland Conference 5 for four years. He has been a member of the Committee of 100 for 9 years. He wrote the Lutheran Men song that was adopted as the official song for LMM of SC. He is 85 years old.



Joe DiMauro -Born on July 14, 1935 and raised in New Britain, Connecticut, his parents were wonderful, hard-working people who came to the U.S. from Sicily. They learned to read and write English and became U.S. citizens speaking both English and Italian.

He graduated from New Britain High School in 1953 and played baseball for the N.Y. Yankees Farm League before starting college. He has served as the Epiphany Conference President for eight years

## Omissions to the 2012 Directory

### Man of the Year

David Yoder, Epiphany Conference, St. Peter, Pawley's Island

### Outstanding Unit

Redeemer, Newberry, Heartland Conference

**SCLMM Committee of 100**  
**Supporting Mission Churches in S.C. Since 1976**



**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Conference:** \_\_\_\_\_

**e-mail (print clearly):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Loan Fund**

**New Mission Start Program**

**\*undesignated gifts go to the NMSP**

**Memory/Honor of:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to:           Kevin Wicker**  
**977 Quail Drive**  
**Walterboro, SC 29488**

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**SCLMM Theme for 2012**

***“This is good, and pleases God  
 our Savior, who wants all men  
 to be saved and to come to a  
 knowledge of the truth.”***

*1 Timothy 2:3-4*



**Check out our  
 revised website  
[www.sclmm.org](http://www.sclmm.org)  
 Everything you need  
 to know**



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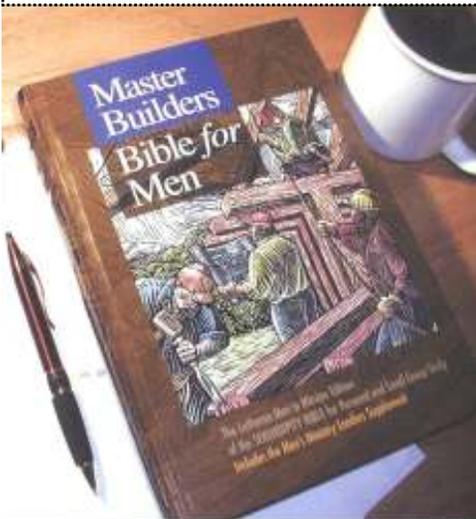


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## Changes to the Epistle Mailing Policy

**The Epistle has several publications a year, and is available to current Committee of 100 members. Non current members can continue to receive the Epistle from our Web site, [www.sclmm.org](http://www.sclmm.org).**

**If you are a current member, and wish to review the Epistle on the Web site, please send your mailing address (as it appears on the Epistle) to [epistlenews@sclmm.org](mailto:epistlenews@sclmm.org), or to Ralph Wessinger, 709 Otis Blvd., Spartanburg, SC 29302, so we can remove you from our hard copy mailing list.**

**Increasing printing and postage fee's are making this publication more expensive to print, and we are asking for your help in saving money in the Promotional Fund.**

## 2012 SCLMM DATE LOG

Saturday June 2 <sup>nd</sup>	7:00AM SCLMM Breakfast@ SCSynod Assembly Columbia Convention Center
Monday June 4 <sup>th</sup>	1:30PM 26 <sup>th</sup> Annual Cliff Bourguignon Golf Tournament (Deadline May 20 <sup>th</sup> ) Mid Carolina Country Club, Newberry Country Club
Sunday June 24 <sup>th</sup>	2:30PM SCLMM Executive Meeting SYNOD Office
Friday-Sunday Aug 24 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup>	SCLMM Executive Retreat Coastal Retreat Center Isle of Palms
Saturday August 25 <sup>th</sup>	10:00AM SCLMM Executive Meeting Coastal Retreat Center Isle of Palms

## 2012 GOALS as of 04/11/2012

CATEGORY	BUDGET GOAL:	% OF GOAL
Promotional Fund	\$23,000	17.4%
Loan Fund	\$22,000	5.3%
Gift Fund	\$35,000	11.3%
National LMM	\$ 9,000	7.8%