

# reflections

LAST MARCH the Concordia University A Cappella Choir performed in Des Moines, Iowa. The Rev. Paul Sieveking, President, and The Rev. Earl Pierce, Executive Assistant for Missions and Stewardship of the Iowa District West of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, were two of the persons in attendance. President Sieveking was wearing an *Ablaze!* necktie. Rev. Pierce had on an *Ablaze!* lapel pin. Some good-natured teasing ensued about the new apparel line they were promoting.

Paul and Earl told me that Iowa District West is marketing a wide array of shirts, ties, pins, pocket crosses, and other items to encourage each congregation of the district to get involved in identifying ways to tell the Good News about Jesus Christ. What a creative idea! As we talked, President Sieveking reached into his pocket, pulled out an *Ablaze!* pocket cross, and handed it to me. He gave the cross and the message of the cross *away!* What a powerful action! Today the *Ablaze!* pocket cross remains in my pocket as a constant reminder of the One who loved and gave his life so that all people might have the free gift of eternal salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

But this dare not be the end of the story! If the cross only remains in my pocket, it is a blessing to me. But what if I share it with another and that person shares it with another and that person with yet another! The goal of *Ablaze!* is to reach 100 million people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ by 2017! It is a marvelous vision and a daunting task—yet it is the call and commission of every baptized child of God.

The late president of our Synod, The Rev. Dr. A. L. Barry, often talked about his daily “goal” of sharing the Gospel with one other person. He had a goal and he fulfilled it—in airports and restaurants and the highways and byways of our church and world. This edition of *Issues* highlights the LCMS World Mission’s *Ablaze!* as a major thrust of the Synod during the coming decades. The edition presents some of the challenges and opportunities, areas of possible controversy, areas for ministry within and between congregations, and occasions for greater outreach and evangelism for clergy and laity alike. In 2017, when we look back to the beginning of *Ablaze!*, I hope and pray that then, as now, we will repeat with the early disciples: “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road, and while he opened the Scriptures to us?” And as our hearts burn, so may the Holy Spirit empower us in every way and in every place to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

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TYPEFACES USED IN THIS PERIODICAL  
Titles set in 22 point Mrs. Eaves Roman (Imigree of Sacramento). Tracking normal.

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By-lines and author information set in 13/13 point Mrs. Eaves small caps.

Footers and folios set in 11 point Mrs. Eaves.

Feature articles set in 11/13 point Mrs. Eaves.

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Brian L. Friedrich, President