

Mission Builder Messenger

CSM Unit of the ELCA

msnbuilder1@gmail.com

Director of Mission Builders

Bill Graves

119 Gulf Hibiscus Drive

Port St Joe, Fl. 32456

Return Requested

### In this issue 1/2017:

- ◆ Director's Update
- ◆ 2017 Reunion Scheduled– New Braunfels, TX.
- ◆ Marketing Initiatives
- ◆ Membership Recruiting
- ◆ MB displays at 2017 Synod Assemblies
- ◆ Articles written by Hofers, Graves, Osts, Smiths, submitted for publishing in various magazines
- ◆ New Gifting Opportunity
- ◆ Call for projects
- ◆ Recent Loss/Sympathies, Prayers, Concerns , Gifts, Updates, and Welcomes

**To those Mission Builders , Spouses, and Volunteers who are considering answering the call for this years projects we hope you choose to share your God given gifts with others.**

**To God be the glory!**

Volume 26 Issue 1, January, 2017

# Mission Builder Messenger



Mission Builders is a Ministry within the Congregational and Synodical Mission of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## **Mission Builders Has Many Opportunities For You...**

We are full for 2017 the number of 2018 projects looks very positive we will have to turn away projects for 2018 unless recruiting picks up this year.

*From the Director, Bill Graves... Thank you to all Mission Builders who accepted the call for, and worked on projects in 2016. We ended the season having constructed or completed 9 structures at 5 locations in 4 states.*

*Our recruiting efforts involving a more active presence on the internet and advertising via RV sites has yielded a few new recruits, the most effective recruiting source continues to be you....the people who know who we are and what we do. People from congregations and camps we have worked with in the past as well as volunteers we have had the pleasure to work beside are the second best source.*

*For 2017 I have had to turn away a couple of projects for fear of doing what I did last year...overtax our core Mission Builders. As you will see later in this newsletter we will have less projects for 2017 than 2016. While commitment deposits for 2018 have yet to come in, we have the potential for substantially more projects than we can currently handle. In late 2016 post a visit to Chicago to address all US Directors of Evangelical Missions for the US as well as over a dozen people at the Church-wide office and then discussing with the board, the decision has been made to expand our presence significantly in print and online media and produce our 1st you tube. These initiatives take money, so I have written grant requests to the Lilly Foundation as well as The Thrivent Foundations. At this time I do not yet know the outcome of those requests.*

# Mission Builder Reunion... Registrations almost due

We are excited to invite you to the 2017 Mission Builder Reunion, a celebration of the first 30 years of Mission Builders and anticipation of the next 30 years. The reunion will be held at T Bar M Retreat Center just outside of New Braunfels, Texas, **Wednesday, March 8 to Saturday, March 11, 2017**. We plan programs remembering past projects and our founding Mission Builders, celebrating improved ministry made possible by Mission Builder projects, and dreaming of new or proposed projects for Mission Builders in the coming years. There will be time to visit and reminisce on the lovely grounds of the retreat center as well as opportunities to explore the history and/or natural beauty of the surrounding Texas Hill Country. And we don't want you to leave this part of Texas without enjoying an evening of Texan music at historic Gruene Hall.

The Reunion will begin early Wednesday afternoon and conclude after breakfast on Saturday morning. The cost is:

1 person in room	\$343
1 couple in room	\$431
2 couples in room	348.50/couple

Meals only \$88.00

Cost includes room with queen or king sized beds, use of retreat center facilities (except some sports field/courts), 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners.

Those arriving by plane can fly into San Antonio (30-40 minutes away) or Austin (70 minutes away).

Early March is a great time to visit the Hill Country of Texas. While you will have time to visit a few of the local sights, we recommend that you plan some extra time to visit San Antonio, Austin, Fredericksburg, LBJ Historic Ranch, or one of the many Texas State Parks in the area. Registrations are almost due, so if you are planning to attend, please get your deposits into the mail. Questions? Jim and Chris Dyess 713-206-6218



## Initiatives you may see in the next couple of quarters ...

A Mission Builder You Tube Video showing what we do (pictures from the last couple of years). A link will go out to you for viewing within the month

Web listings (free) describing what we do and inviting new participants to join Mission Builders currently on three web sites

Display booths, at least one national RV rally Escapees in Tucson worked by Dennis & Barb Smith and Rich & Lindsey Hofer and possibly the Family Motor Coach Association event in Indianapolis.

WELCA National Conference hosted by Lindsey Hofer

Multiple power point visual presentations in the sunbelt states this winter such as Rally in the Valley in Phoenix led by Rich and Lindsey Hofer

Paid advertisements in the following publications...

Escapees Magazine, Family Motor Coach Magazine...Where To Next, The Thrivent Magazine, The Lutheran Magazine, Workamper Magazine

“Placed free articles” in some of the following magazines..

Escapees Magazine...“Staying Active and Giving Back While on the Road” , Family Motor Coach Magazine...“Where to Next “

The Lutheran Magazine...“Retirement,” Workamper Magazine,

The Gather Magazine...Learning & Sharing Time With Others, The Thrivent Magazine...“A Couple That Volunteers Together”

More short communications via Face Book from the ELCA and from selected synod offices to pastors and participants of social media

A letter going to all pastors, current and retired discussing Mission Builders, our ministry and why people should become involved. Written by the Rev. Stephen Bouman Executive Director of Congregational and Synodical Mission for the ELCA within the United States

Specific publicity communicated through synod offices regarding projects in states where initiatives will be underway soliciting help from adult as well as youth groups. **“With Mission Builders You Don’t Have to Leave the Country to Help Others”**

# Retirement

December 31<sup>st</sup> 2008 marked the last day in a career of almost 30 years with the same company. Eli Lilly and Company gave my family and I, the opportunity to do things I could have only dreamed of doing, growing up on a farming and cattle operation in Western Kansas. The path post retirement however was one, I had chosen almost 18 years ago. The future for my wife Becky and I, was not going to be a second career in corporate America, not golf, not getting involved in over 55 community activities. It needed to be for us, pay it forward. In 1990 I was working long hours in a pharmaceutical new product planning role, which often involved travel, I did not think I had time for leisure activities and I was not very involved in organized religion. Early that spring, I went to do a yard project and could not find many of my yard tools. My wife Becky informed me that a pastor serving a Lutheran Mission Start up church had borrowed them to use in clearing part of the acreage for a new church to be constructed in the Geist area of metropolitan Indianapolis. I was intrigued to learn more as to how I might be able to do something on weekends as well as being interested in getting back my wheelbarrow and other tools.

I decided to visit the new Servants of Christ church site on Oaklandon Road on the NE side of Indianapolis and see what was going on. A temporary arrangement had been made with local city officials to allow 7 RV's to temporarily move into place on the job site. The people came from 6 states, and from all walks of life. The people called Mission Builders were there to oversee and assist in all aspects of building a place of worship. Initially overseeing the utilities, plumbing, and foundation going in. Within days they started framing the building, working with sub contractors to do the remaining HVAC, plumbing and electrical installation. I was humbled and fortunate to find many dedicated Christians, had chosen to come to our community willing to work for minimum wage in all types of weather for a common goal, giving a new start up congregation a place to worship. Over the course of six months the sanctuary narthex and a few additional rooms were completed. Along the way doctors, lawyers, judges, nurses, teachers, salesmen, small business owners, and members of the congregation were welcome to work alongside the Mission Builders building a structure that would ultimately serve, many other organizations in the community....Boy scouts, girl scouts, Pioneers, serving as a voting location. Mission Builders eventually came back two more times to build a fellowship hall and a preschool.

It turns out that Mission Builders was formed 30 years ago by the pastor of that church and others in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Their vision was to help congregations, camps, and social ministries build their own facilities at substantial cost savings, but also to get people more involved in community outreach, giving back, and sharing with others how they may have been able to help others in their own communities back home. Today Mission Builders have constructed almost 300 structures for almost 200 organizations in the US and Caribbean, structures ranging from 1,000sq ft to 26,000 sq ft. Nine of ten Mission Builders own an RV, but the organization works hard to find local lodging if needed by an individual wanting to help out. Our crews include men and women, and we are now open to non-denominational membership and will if asked consider building for Full Communion Partners.

Back to retirement, how has that gone over the last eight years? Mission Builders & Laborers For Christ have given my wife and I a gift that we will never be able to re-pay. We have been allowed to work on 16 projects around the country in nine states. We have been blessed to meet many other people mutually interested in working side by side with others....to help build Structures, Community, and Faith. Along the way we have driven around 70,000 miles, and have still found time to allow sightseeing along the way in 26 states We, have met some really great Christians, people of faith, people also interested in helping others. We have met people we now vacation with, people that will be lifelong friends. **Bill Graves Submitted to The Lutheran Magazine**

## Learning and Sharing Time with Others...

How would YOU like to spend a summer doing something rewarding and worthwhile? Does coming home feeling like you accomplished a goal and made positive changes in the lives of others urge you to volunteer or even work? Do you want to travel and meet new people who value your beliefs and skills? But mostly have fun and laugh?

Personally, this how my last 8 years have been spent along with my husband during the warmer months of the years! We joined Mission Builders to make our lives more rewarding and meaningful during our change of direction years...(retirement).

In 2009 Bill and I retired from the hectic life of working in the pharmaceutical industry to take on the adventure of travel and mission work. Our working years were a blessing and thriving time but 30 years was enough and we wanted to use those blessings to do some good. During these 30 years we belonged to churches that strengthened and renewed our commitment to our faith in Jesus. We also helped in many construction and fixer upper projects when possible. What better way to give back than to travel to churches to share our faith journey and skills with congregations in need.

In need of what you might be thinking? Many congregations want to add on or build a new addition or a new sanctuary to further their message of Christ in a community. With rising construction costs it is difficult for congregations to attain a building dream or goal. Enter Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America Mission Builders!! They can help cut the costs of a building by 30 percent with Mission Builder crews and volunteers from the church.

Mission Builders is made up of people who are retired and have time to come to your faith organization to build a facility to meet your needs to serve Christ. We live in our recreational vehicle as we help a church build. Usually around 3-5 months a time frame. While on site we work for the supporting congregation to build your structure. After a foundation is laid Mission Builders puts up your walls and building. During this process we become friends with other crew members and the volunteers from the congregation who help put up the structure. So when you make friends you laugh and have fun working also learning you have much in common with the people who have joined the project as well. There is time for sightseeing the area we serve and eating at congregation members homes. Look out for all kinds of delicious foods and new recipes.

The crews are made up of people from all walks of life who have been in other careers as businessmen, farmers, bankers, engineers or retired from the construction industry in some capacity. Crews start their day in prayer and breaks together in the morning and afternoon. Spouses of the crew can be part of a crew if physically able or help sustain the crew by preparing breaks or meals and becoming interested in activities provided at the church Mission Builders is serving.

Bill and I have traveled to Texas, Iowa, North Dakota, Minnesota, Washington and Montana to help Mission Builders build many different structures. We have made friends and acquaintances that fulfill our lives even today. Joy and happiness enter our lives each project in constructing for other congregations that need a new facility. Coming home fulfilled and enriched is such a blessing.

You the reader might be looking for an adventure and place to make your life richer and widen your horizons. Mission Builders needs crew members to continue our ministry and Bill and I can use more friends.

Check out the Mission Builder website at <http://www.elcamissionbuilders.org/>

Come along for the adventure and see where your faith journey can go!

Becky Graves- Mission Builder

Submitted to the Gather Magazine

## **Staying Active and Giving Back While On the Road**

Have you ever asked yourself the question – “What am I going to do when I retire”. It is an exciting time of our lives, but we want to add value and do something meaningful in our retirement. We were in that position almost nine years ago. We were ready to retire, but needed a purpose. We found our purpose through a Christian organization called Mission Builders.

Mission Builders are people from all walks of life who are interested in learning construction techniques. They work along side members of congregations or social ministries to help them construct or remodel their facilities. So not only does the facility get constructed or remodeled, but the people also grow and many great relationships are made.

That’s just what we were looking for. We knew a little about construction and remodeling, having done that to the homes we owned and several investment properties as well. And we also wanted to share our faith and be able to touch lives for the Gospel. In addition, my father had been actively involved with Mission Builders for many years and we saw how it changed his life and the lives of those he worked with.

So...we signed up, sold everything that wouldn’t fit into a Fifth Wheel and started our new retired life as Mission Builders. Our first project was a large addition to a church in Indiana. In most cases, the Mission Builders and the church they are serving set up a little RV park right on site or close by so we can be near our work and available to help whenever needed.

We discovered the construction work to be challenging, fun, physically demanding at times, fulfilling and a blessing to both ourselves and others. We worked a 40 hour week with many volunteers from the church working alongside us. Not only did the new addition get built, but we saw the church volunteers become excited about their church again. Many lasting friendships were made and it was a sad day when, the project was completed and we had to leave.

Since that first Mission Builder project, we have been on many other projects both new church construction and remodels of existing structures. With each project, we have lived in our little "Mission Builder RV Park" on or near the job site. So as you can imagine, we have gotten to know the other Mission Builder couples very well. What a blessing it has been for us. Our faith in God and people has grown over the years as we have been privileged to live side by side with the other Mission Builders. What a great group of dedicated Christians!

We feel that we have the best of both worlds. We do Mission Builder projects during the spring to fall seasons, living in our motor-home. And over the winter months, we have a home in a 55+ community in Tucson, AZ. Being from the Midwest, we really enjoy the warm, sunny weather in Tucson. It sure beats the cold, snowy winters from our "previous life".

So why should you consider being a Mission Builder? We found many reasons – a sense of purpose, growth in our faith in God and people, good physical work, fun, great Mission Builder friends, and living the RV life. You can't beat it!

Barb and Dennis Smith– Mission Builders

Accepted by Escapees Magazine

Learn more about Mission Builders at their website... <http://www.elcamissionbuilders.org/>

## WHERE TO NEXT??

Little did we know 40 years ago when we purchased our first camper, a 16 ft. travel trailer, that we would be enjoying the RV lifestyle as we are today. Nor did we know that we would spend the last nine summers working on 11 church and camp construction projects, now enjoying the winter months in an RV resort in Arizona. Since we first towed our little Fleetwing out to county parks for the weekend, we have owned 7 RV's, each one of them a bit bigger than the last. Six years ago we sold our primary residence so we could full-time in our motorhome.

It all began for us when our home congregation in Fond du Lac, WI built our church with the help of a group of retired people staying in our church parking lot in their RV's. This group, Mission Builders, is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). Mission Builders come from all walks of life, not necessarily from construction backgrounds. I was a banker and my wife was a teacher for over 30 years. We joined Mission Builders with few building skills but a desire to travel, learn new skills, meet new people, and serve others in our retirement years. Our summers have taken us to church construction projects in North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Indiana, and Montana and camp projects in



Pennsylvania, Nebraska, and Indiana. Projects have run from 2-6 months and our length of stay is based on our availability and the need for builders. We enjoy the work because we get to spend time in different parts of the country and stay long enough to explore the area. We also get to meet some great people on these projects as volunteers from the church or camp come to help build. Mission Builders provide the on-the-job training for those without construction background.

One of the biggest financial benefits for being part of Mission Builders is free camping for the duration of your stay. In most cases, a temporary campground is set up with full-hookups on the jobsite. That provides easy access to the construction site and also allows for interaction with other workers on the project. Rostered Mission Builders are paid minimum wage and covered by workman's compensation. One can sign up as a volunteer if working for less than a month. This option is great for those traveling during the summer.

While the work is physical and tiring, there is a great sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. It is exciting to see dreams become reality as these projects reach completion. Not everyone can climb a ladder or work on a roof so jobs are assigned based on skills and ability. We work 40 hours a week and take breaks in the morning and afternoon. There is a job for everyone. Spouses have the option of being part of the construction crew or volunteering when needed and pursuing other interests. We have often said the hardest part of the job is saying goodbye to the people we have met and worked with over the summer.

During the winter months we either spend time at a retirement resort in Surprise, AZ or travel the southern states. It's our time of the year to relax with another group of friends, but each spring we get the urge to do another project. We know it will take us on an adventure.

There are many great organizations that help build. This is one that we have thoroughly enjoyed for many reasons. We would encourage you to look at the Mission Builder website at <http://www.elcamissionbuilders.org/> for more information or call Mission Builder's national director at 800-643-5295 if you have questions. There are many worthwhile organizations that could use your time and talents while you enjoy the RV lifestyle. It's a great life and we feel privileged to be able to enjoy it.

Rich & Lindsey Hofer- Mission Builders      Accepted by Family Motor Coach Magazine

## A Couple That Volunteers Together.....

*The following article tells a story about a couple that recently co-managed building/ finishing out several cabins at Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria, MN. This project received a grant from Thrivent for \$25,000 and was blessed by many experienced area volunteers who answered the call for help. Many of the volunteers had previously worked on Thrivent/ Habitat for Humanity Builds in western Minnesota. 5 of the Thrivent building projects experienced individuals donating > 150 hours each. Volunteers overall provided >50% of the total hours devoted to the project.*

We first learned about the ELCA Mission Builders program in 2009, when members of the group were building retreat cabins for Our Savior's Lutheran Church on the Rocky Boy's Reservation near Havre, Montana, where we live. An announcement at our church presented us with the opportunity to get involved with the project and during the time we volunteered, we got to know Clarence Strabel. Later we met Rich & Lindsey Hofer when they visited our congregation, First Lutheran in Havre. What these people were doing sounded like something we would enjoy. At that time, we were both still working – Allan as Assistant Operations Manager at the Hill County Electric Cooperative, and Sue as Chief Financial Officer at Montana State University – Northern. The idea of becoming Mission Builders went on the shelf as a possible future retirement plan. When we both retired in 2013, it was not Allan's first retirement, in his previous jobs at the electric cooperative the city of Havre he had done a lot of diverse things as well as having volunteered with an organization named Mutual Self-Help Housing, where volunteers help low income families build their own new homes. The two of us had renovated several homes all experiences preparing us to become Mission Builders. People in our organization come from all walks of life, amazingly when everyone puts their various skills and experiences together on a crew, it just works. There is a place for volunteers of all skill levels on a Mission Builders job. Shortly after we retired, we learned that a building project was taking place at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp in northwestern Montana. After a bit of discussion, we decided to sign up for the program, since we were familiar with the Camp, and it was only 300 miles away. On that first project, (5 weeks) we learned a lot about the program, the local area, and we made some lifelong friends. Living in our RV for an extended period of time has been fun, and we've really enjoyed the social aspect of living near the other builders.

Women can have many different roles in this program. Supporting our husbands, preparing snacks, devotions, and organizing outings to local attractions are valuable ways that women participate. Others enjoy volunteering or working on the job site. It's important for local volunteers to have a role in the project, but when there aren't enough hands, I have enjoyed volunteering. I have done many construction activities alongside the men, many things taught by others., I have even learned to operate some heavy equipment. The role of women at a Mission Builders work site is evolving and flexible, I have also volunteered in local communities, at camps working in the camp kitchen, at food banks, making Lutheran World Relief Quilts, and playing in a

A flute choir. This is a great way to get to know local people and contribute to the community as a whole. We have the opportunity to participate in whatever ways we feel called.

Written by Sue and Allan Ost

Submitted for consideration to The Thrivent Magazine

# OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

**Luther Springs– Hawthorne, FL**, 2 buildings (sleeping rooms and bathrooms, plus an outdoor pavilion and associated decking. Howard McCartha manager, Steve Schenk foreman, additional individuals committed to coming for part or all of the project, Ziegenhagens, Rantulas, Grills, Thompsons, and Graves/ Johnsons / Swartzbaughs, part time. **Anticipated start date Feb 1**

**Metigoshie Ministries– Bottineau, ND**, 5-7 modern sleeping cabins Bob Risberg manager, 5 additional builders needed. **Anticipated start date May 2nd**

**Montana Synod House– Great Falls, MT**, offices and conference center for the Montana Synod. Jim Dyess manager, 4 additional builders needed. RV parking will be at the local KOA, 2 miles away. The following is a link to view plans of the building <http://www.montanasynd.org/synod-house.html> . **Anticipated start date May 30.**

**Nebraska Outdoor Lutheran Ministries– Ashland, NE.** Springs Lodge entertainment facility 3885 sq. ft. Steve Schenk manager. 4 additional builders needed. **Anticipated start date May 15.**

**Want to build?** Please e-mail me.... your 1st, 2nd, and 3rd priority choices.

**Membership Recruiting...** As you have read by now, 2017 will reflect more efforts and expenditures dedicated to recruiting that probably ever before in our 30 year history certainly true if we receive either or both of the grants we have applied for. Your efforts are appreciated in providing leads (name, phone number, e-mail, or mailing address). One out of two future Mission Builders come from your efforts.

## Anticipated presence at Synod Assemblies this coming year...

Kansas, Missouri, Steve & Carole Schenk,

W-N Dakota Bob & Chris Risberg

Nebraska, Steve & Carole Schenk and Don and Dorris Foster,

Montana, Sue Ost

S. Dakota & NW Western Minnesota Tom & Arline Chase

We hope to see additional displays at the following synod assemblies in 2017... E. North Dakota, NW Minnesota, SE Minnesota, all of Iowa, and Wisconsin. If you would like to do a display at any of the synods suggested above, or another venue please contact me for materials.

## Prayers and Concerns...

Elaine Doell recovery from shoulder surgery

Chris Dunker undergoing Prostate Surgery....Chris asks all of us guys when we last had a PSA done?

Sherie Hienie recovery from By-pass surgery

Nancy Thiele recovery from illness

Marilyn Erkenbrack recovery from surgery, Ted a broken ankle

Ann McCartha recovery from foot surgery

## Memorials & Gifts...

### In memory of Arlene Dinsmore

Bill & Becky Graves

Ollivette Levan— Stockton, IL

### In Memory of Gary Neuman

Paul & Catherine Neuman

Ronald & Constance Neuman

Bill & Becky Graves

Rich & Lindsey Hofer

John & Sandy Sharp

### To Mission Builders

Daryl & Gwen Daugs

The Klein Family

Spencer & Sharon Ruff

Paul Price Eaton, OH

Lucille Loftesnes— Granville, ND

Gloria Dei Lutheran -Williston, ND

Stanley & Shirley Lyson -Williston, ND

Highland Luth Ch -Hingham, MT

Robert & Jackie Sorenson— Bottineau, ND

Donations to Mission Builders can now be made through the Thrivent Choice Program