



## Finding Strength Amid Brokenness

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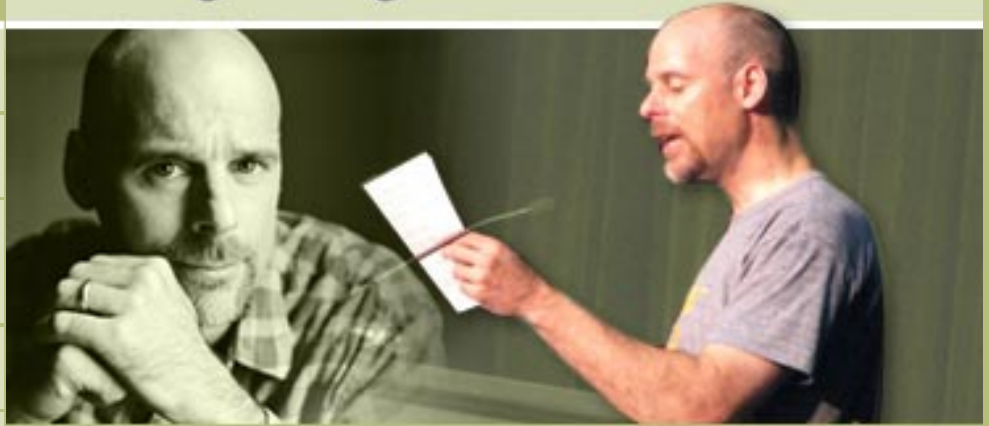
A Letter from Katie Luther

Lutherans in Faith Together: A Celebration!

My Crossroads Experience

A Ministry Built on HOPE

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod  
Women Give Gift to Companion Synod



By John Smith

(Reprinted by permission from the June 23 issue of the *Reading Eagle*.)

Bart Campolo figured he was hired to give a pep talk to the 715 Lutherans gathered at Muhlenberg College two Saturdays ago. It was not the expected kind of pep talk.

Instead, Campolo spent most of his 40 minutes tearing them down — but in a way they seemed to appreciate.

Campolo, who wears several hats relating to inner-city mission work, was keynoter for Lutherans in Faith Together, or LIFT, a first-of-its kind program for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or ELCA.

The day, modeled after the national Global Mission event, included a bushel of workshops, five half-hour concerts, music by Bread for the Journey, games, a chance to chat with the bishop and historical characters, and a closing worship.

“The evaluations were absolutely glowing,” said Priscilla Schlenker Kinney, Rockland Township, synod vice president.

Two complaints: that it hadn’t been done before, and that so much went on that hard choices had to be made.

Campolo, 44, is living with his wife and two children in a downtrodden section of Cincinnati, “building a faith community of people nobody wants.”



He made only one passing reference to his famous father, evangelist-activist Tony. But Bart's mannerisms, inflection, quotable phrasing, exaggeration for effect, personal stories — and rapidly receding hairline — were clearly reminiscent of him. It's hard, though, to imagine Tony on a platform in jeans and a "Free Jesus" T-shirt.

Bart's thesis was that he's a lousy Christian, like everybody else in the audience, and our pretending that we aren't both worries us and prevents us from sharing God's love with the world.

"We embellish all the time," he said. "We never let the facts stand in the way of truth.

"I'm weak; I'm inconsistent; I'm selfish. I'm wracked with doubts I can't shake. And I'm not the only one who can't get his act together. Everybody's faking it."

He admitted his biggest problem is with lust, sometimes succumbing to video porn. In the book he co-wrote with his father 18 years ago, "Things We Wish We Had Said," Bart wrote, "The most destructive things are the images I have allowed to fill my mind through magazines, movies and particularly television."

He suggested that though many in the audience might not have that problem, they would have others — like getting along with their children, a long-ago affair, alcoholism.

He stressed that such problems need not hinder one's relationship with God. "God values desire more than competence," he asserted.

Bart deduces this from observing that Jesus "had no time for the people who seemed spiritually secure," but "always responded to those who wanted it bad. ... He doesn't just accept the messed-up; he prefers them."

So he has chosen to "live among losers." He's started a house church which, he said, you could call "The Thursday Night Dinner Party Church for People Who No Church Wants."

"We worry we don't have enough to make people love us," he said. "But God loves us because it's his nature. It's what he does — it's who he is.

“Baptists (of which Campolo is one) are obsessed with who’s saved. You Lutherans don’t care, because you didn’t earn it in the first place.”

His closing story was about one messed-up fellow who accepted Jesus as savior on a retreat — in the van on the way, when he watched Bart “lose it” in the frustration of trying to fix a flat in the rain on the wrong road. His reasoning: “If he can be a Christian, anybody can.”

There are many Bible verses encouraging Christians to be good examples, but Bart can argue the flip side: “If they think you’re righteous and pure, they won’t come. Lead with your brokenness.”

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JULY 2007



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

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Ed. Note: This letter comes from Katharina – Katie – von Bora Luther, Martin Luther's wife. Katie (known to the people at St. James Lutheran Church, Coopersburg, as Vickie Richter) strolled the campus at Muhlenberg College during the LIFT event.

*Guten Tag!*

Isn't life glorious?

On Saturday, June 9, I experienced my soul being rejuvenated and up-**LIFT**-ed as only the Holy Spirit can provide.

I "came alive" again in the flesh, to delight in the beautiful summer weather, to see the Glory of the Lord streaming down from the clouds and feel the Power of God emanating from the earth.

I am reiterating those magnificent phrases from a melody that Bread for the Journey provided at this wonderful **LIFT** event. From Caribbean beats, spectacular organ music, bell choirs and the voices of angels, this diversity of music reminds me that God is awesome and greatly to be praised.

Everyone was so friendly to me and all those assembled. I saw classes and genders and races and cultures intermingling so freely. People were witnessing to one another, laughing and learning. This did not happen so easily when I walked the earth. I remember too many times how humans sought to hurt one another because of their affiliations or beliefs.



As Bart Campolo spoke about his “Come for Thursday Night Dinner” gatherings, I was reminded of all the meals Martin and I provided for students and travelers at the Black Cloister. I smiled to think that someone in Bart’s Cincinnati neighborhood would ask “Who is going to hug me?” Being German, Martin and I did not always hug our guests, but I hope that the Good Doctor’s teachings and the fellowship of our table provided those who sat among us with the spiritual hugs for which we all yearn.

Thank you to all who asked about my children. They are all fine and at peace with their maker.

Thanks also for those of you who recalled my escapades as a young woman escaping the convent. I had more than one laugh with you, recalling the stench of the fish and how the odor stayed in my skin for days. I must have been every cat in Wittenberg’s biggest disappointment.

The exhilaration of gaining freedom and the anticipation of meeting the famous Doctor Martin Luther are memories that I enjoyed sharing with you.

On a final note, a big “thank you” to the person who told me that I “didn’t look a day over 399”!

Together in His Service,  
May the Father Bless and Keep You,  
Katie Luther



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By Karen Matthias-Long

"This is theeee BEST event I have ever attended. Everyone was having a great time – children, youth and even old timers like me."

"There were opportunities for learning and sharing and seeing old friends from other churches."

"I really enjoyed the LIFT! Let's do it again!"

"It was one of the first times I'd been to a synod function, and it was a great day! The guest speaker was awesome and the planning team thought of everything from terrific topics and discussion leaders to childcare to events for the middle-aged youth (especially the games)."

These are just a few of the comments about **LIFT** (**L**utherans in **F**aith **T**ogether), the synod-wide celebration that took place on Saturday, June 9, on the Muhlenberg College campus.

The event was very ably coordinated by Ruth and Ken Miller and Judy and Herb Gifford. "Many, many people had a hand in planning and carrying out the event," noted Herb. "No one had control over the weather, but our prayers for good weather were answered beyond what we might have hoped.



The day was perfect. There wasn't a cloud in the sky."

"The purpose of **LIFT** was to bring Lutherans in northeastern Pennsylvania together on one day, in one location, to celebrate their Lutheran faith," Herb continued. "People throughout the synod, as well as the planners and leaders, had great expectations. I think that everyone was surprised at how most of those expectations were not only met, but exceeded."

In fact, the evaluations were so overwhelmingly positive that people had a hard time saying how it could be made better. One person suggested that "the next time you have popsicles for a snack, have napkins."

### **Something for Everyone**

As promised, there was something at **LIFT** for everyone – and more!

For some, the day began with a walk for world hunger, where \$1,257.00 was raised.

Most participants began their day in the Muhlenberg Field House. That site was alive with robust singing led by Bread for the Journey.

At the morning gathering, Bart Campolo shared with the crowd that "God loves us – not because of what we do, not by what we achieve, and not by who we are – but, because God is love. That's what he does."

Participants welcomed Pastor Robin McCullough-Bade, who serves on the synod staff in the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod. She came to express her thanks to those in our synod who have supported and continue to support the people in that region – either through dollars or people power – as the region recovers from 2005's devastating hurricanes.

### **Choices, Choices**

After the opening gathering, folks had some tough choices to make. There were special programs for children and youth. There were workshops, games, and concerts for people of all ages. Ministry displays were available in the field house.

For 25 cents, children and adults could ask Bishop David

Strobel theological questions. One of his favorite questions came from Goliath: "Do dogs go to heaven?" Another came from a 9-year-old boy, who stood in front of the booth and asked the bishop, "What color is my underwear?" Over \$145 was collected at his stand for the World Hunger Appeal.

Several famous personalities – Martin Luther, Katie Luther, Davey and Goliath, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, two deaconesses, J. S. Bach, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and even the LBW – walked the grounds and conversed with participants. A local band, SWiM, gave a concert in the Red Door Café.

People's comments that there were too many choices can be a compliment, too, Ruth Miller noted. "I'm glad that people were interested in so many different things." Her suggestion for next time? "Perhaps they will try a different option, like going to the chapel concerts instead of attending a workshop or playing outdoor games instead of talking with the strolling personalities. Or maybe you can do a little bit of everything. Now that people know what a **LIFT** event can be like, maybe it will be easier to make choices next time."

### **Lutherans in Fellowship Together**

"Of all the great activities at **LIFT**, I was especially pleased with the lunch hour," Judy Gifford remarked. "It was exciting to see people get their bag lunch and head for the out-of-doors, joining others on the lovely Muhlenberg College lawn. Good fellowship is shared around a meal and that was certainly the case. 'Lutherans in Faith Together' were 'Lutherans in *Fellowship* Together,' whether inside the Field House, the tent, on the lawn, or anywhere else on the campus."

Participants gathered at the end of the day for more singing and a closing celebration. The offering taken at that closing celebration, in the amount of \$618.86, was earmarked for the World Hunger Appeal.

At the closing, Pastor Edith Roberts (St. Peter, Bethlehem) was presented with the Muhlenberg Medal from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Storyteller Tracy Radosevic was on hand to tell the story of Pentecost and the commissioning of the disciples, a fitting conclusion to the daylong celebration.

"The people came with enthusiasm and departed with joy," said Herb Gifford. "And almost to a person they asked,

“When will **LIFT** happen again?”

Perhaps this comment from a participant sums up the overall feeling about **LIFT**: “One thing I would change: more Lutherans at this GREAT event!!”

(Be sure to check out all the great pictures from **LIFT** on this website.)





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By Aaron Matthias-Long (St. John, Emmaus)

For a week in June, 16 youth from Regions 7 and 8 experienced a week of Theological Education with Youth called "Crossroads" at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. I was one of those fortunate youth.

Of the 16 youth who participated, nine were from our synod.

I arrived at the seminary thinking that I was in for an experience like past experiences: fun, interesting, and maybe I'd learn something. I was in for a shock. I experienced an intense week of learning, bonding, and growing in my faith.

I thought the event was going to be a couple of service projects around the Pennsylvania and Maryland area with a few learning experiences about what it means to serve. In my essay for the event application I expressed my reasoning for wanting to go to this event. But I didn't think I would actually "discover ways of serving, explore themes of justice, and experience public ministry where the gospel intersects the world" in the way that I did.

After meeting the other participants and creating unbreakable bonds of friendship, we traveled to Maryland to learn firsthand about homelessness, seeking justice, call and vocation, the importance of community, and amazing ministries like Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.



We listened intently to many speakers from the Lutheran Center in Baltimore, and had a meal with volunteers from the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. After learning and sharing a dialogue with many people, we experienced some physical labor at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in Baltimore.

Personally, I learned a lot from this experience. I left the event wanting to change the world but understanding that it may involve changing one person at a time.

This event was very intense when learning about worldwide issues, and yet fun when spending free time with friends playing games. We not only learned from our adult speakers, but also from each other in reflection groups, which was a time in which we could ask each other questions about anything or what someone else learned from the day.

This event inspired and renewed me and I now want to use what I learned to make a difference in the world. I know that since this event I am a changed person and hopefully a better one.

I now want to take that next step from loving service to seeking justice.



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By Dale Zmijewski

"Is there a need for a Lutheran radio station in the Wyoming Valley?"

This was the question posed by a few people from around the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Our response was — and is — that there is a need to tell people about Jesus, whenever and wherever possible.

The story of HOPE Radio began several years ago. A small group of Lutherans in the Wyoming Valley had a dream filled with hope. The dream was to operate a low-power FM radio station in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Mission District as a witness tool as well as a community service.

An application was filed with the FCC in Washington and the process began.

Warren Storosko and members of Saint John's Lutheran Church in Nanticoke championed the project. With no money but a lot of hope, they reached out to other congregations in the Wyoming Valley for support.

The call was answered by congregations in Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, Mountaintop, and Dallas. An informational meeting was held to explain the proposed project. "This is not a ministry of St. John's, Nanticoke, but rather a ministry of several ELCA congregations in our mission district." said Warren Storosko. "Working together, we can achieve the impossible."



The HOPE-FM team, comprised of members of several churches, has done just that. In less than a year from the time the FCC granted a construction permit, the team has raised the funds to build the soundproof studios, erected a radio tower inside the spire of Saint John's, Nanticoke, and purchased over \$25,000 worth of equipment.

They raised the money through donations from the Worship and Spirituality Ministry Team, individuals, churches, and a variety of projects. Messiah and Saint Mark Lutheran Churches in Wilkes-Barre baked cookies. Saint Paul in Mountaintop had a dinner and Saint John in Wilkes-Barre donated funds.

These projects and many others, coupled with prayers, brought about a miracle. At midnight on March 19, 2007, *A Mighty Fortress* broadcast loud and clear at 94.5 megahertz as HOPE-FM took to the airwaves.

In a brief service the following week, the station was dedicated to the use of ELCA congregations in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area.

Hope-FM plays a mixture of popular Christian music with solid theological foundations. Twice weekly, the radio station broadcasts *GRACE Matters*, the radio ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, featuring host Peter Marty.

Volunteers are now the key to the success of the radio station. With more hands, the radio station can branch out and offer more programming. Plans include a daily hymn hour and weekly radio messages from pastors in the mission district, as well as live broadcasts of Lutheran worship services.

The station offers a community newsletter available to all churches as well as nonprofit groups such as the Scouts. This offers a new and exciting way to communicate church happenings to the general public.

The opportunity to be in people's homes, cars, and offices 24 hours a day with messages of HOPE is truly a gift not taken lightly by the staff of WVHO.



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By Gail James, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod WELCA president

At their May meeting, the executive board for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Women of the ELCA made a decision to use the interest earned from investment funds as a benevolence gift.

The recipient of that gift will be the South Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. A check for \$650.00 was deposited in the account of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, where it will remain until the proper arrangements can be made for its transfer to the church in South Central Tanzania.

This gift to our Partner Synod in Tanzania was made in conjunction with the 2007 Convention of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod's women's organization. At that gathering on June 23, a special offering was received from many women's groups in the synod. A part of that offering was designated for the women's organization in another Partner Synod, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida of Argentina and Uruguay.

The decision by the executive board to make cash gifts to our Partner Synods was greatly influenced by a visit from Señora Graciela Stein, from the church in Argentina and Uruguay. When she was here with her husband at the 2006 Synod Assembly, Señora Stein pointed out that, many times, cash gifts can be put to good use more easily than tangible items. The funds can be used to buy local products,



which can then be distributed quickly and with less expense than purchasing and shipping from the USA would require.

We are grateful to all the women across the synod who have made this gift possible.

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