By Tim Wright

“Is Aslan quite safe?”

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ’Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.” *

During a men’s retreat several months ago one of the older men complained, “All women want to do is tame men!”

My initial response was, “Can you blame them?” When you look at the way men and boys have been behaving, and the destruction they are leaving in their wake, why wouldn’t we want to tame them?

At the same time I had to admit that he had a point. I gave him an example: I was watching a cartoon with my granddaughter designed for young preschool children. Each episode teaches a lesson about getting along with others. The main character is a girl and she has three male animal friends.

In this episode, one of the boys was expressing his testosterone. He was a bit rambunctious. He wanted to move, to play and to make noise. The other two boys were having nothing to do with it. Each time he splashed them or ran a circle around them, they would whine and say, “He’s being rough!”

The girl character taught them a new song — “Don’t be rough… be gentle.” Each time the boy got rough (and he was never really rough, just a boy moving and playing) the other boys would whine, berate the “rough boy” and sing the song, “Don’t be rough… be gentle.”

Consider how a little boy might internalize that message — boy behavior is always bad!

One blogger asked this question in her post on boys: “What are you doing to raise kinder, gentler boys?”

There’s nothing wrong with boys being kinder and gentler. But is that what we really want? Do we really want to program out of boys the dynamic, risk-taking, get it done, competitive spirit God created in them? Have we really thought through the unintended consequences of a generation of boys who grow into tamed men, stripped of their male energy?

Imagine, for example, a kinder, gentler Jesus. There’d be no cleansing of the temple. No battle against demons. No in-your-face subversive teachings. No decisive move to the cross. No world-changing vision.

The better option, rather than taming our boys, is to build character in them; to give them the tools they need to harness their male spirit for good and noble purposes. And that comes down to us, men. Our call is not to tame boys, but to God-father them; to look them in the eye and say, “Follow me as I follow the roaring Lion Jesus.”

Tim Wright is one of the featured speakers at Guys, Guts and God’s Glory, the Lutheran Men’s Gathering in Nashville, July 18-20. He is the author of “Searching for Tom Sawyer: How Parents and Congregations Can Stop the Exodus of Boys from Church.”

www.TimWrightMinistries.org

* From “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,” by C.S. Lewis.
This newsletter is sent to all who contribute to the ministry of Lutheran Men in Mission.

Your contribution ensures that foundations will continue to be sent to you.

It is our desire that foundations will be a source of personal spiritual growth, as well as a source of information for those involved in congregational men’s ministries.

Please drop us a line or e-mail us, and share your stories of men’s ministry that we can use in this newsletter. We’re also interested in knowing what topics and issues you’d like to see featured.

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From the Executive Director

See what God has in store for you

Some of the best times I have had with my son have been at men’s events, and it hasn’t always been by hearing the speakers. One of the first events was a Promise Keeper’s event at Texas Stadium. His teenage eyes were wide open as he saw over 50,000 men — many doing goofy stuff before the program even started. They were doing things like trying to fly paper airplanes from the third level just to see how far they would go!

As we settled in, some of the speakers were outstanding in proclaiming God’s love and grace and others, well, preaching more about what I need to do as a man rather than what God has done for me. I kept my opinions to myself and the highlight of my day was the after-hours conversation. I asked for my son’s response to what we had heard and experienced that day. What I discovered was that all the Sunday school, confirmation and home teaching had taken more root than I expected.

Several years later, he was with me at the Lutheran Men’s Gathering in San Antonio. Friday night we had heard some of the greatest Christian speakers and musicians in North America. That was great, but it was what happened afterward that remains the highlight. There was Jerry, my life-long friend since college. He’s dangerous. He knows me well, especially from those early years, and the number of stories exaggerating the stupid, embarrassing things I have done could fill a book by him. Then there was Bernie, another friend who also knows me well and thinks making fun of me is a hobby. Until that night, I thought it was a good thing these guys had never met each other. But there I was, Jerry on one side, Bernie on the other with friend Tom and Secretary Kim... and my son.

With one story after another coming from my right and left, my son’s eyes got wide and he roared with laughter as he saw the true love between father and friends, and that “old guys” can really have a good time. With what he heard, funny as it was, my son came away knowing me and my friends better. New friends were made and old friendships grew deeper.

Yes, in San Antonio, we had an outstanding program as we will this year in Nashville. But as great as it will be, we are planning an event where the highlights will be in those moments with the men who are with you — your son, your dad, the guys from your church or the men in your friendship circle.

We’re planning more than speakers and musicians. We’re planning for — and praying for — atmosphere, experiences and encounters that God will use to deepen your relationships and change your life.

So, I dare you — to come to Guys, Guts and God’s Glory — and I dare you to bring your son, your dad, your friends and just see what exciting things God has for you. I dare you to load up the van and come. I’ll see you in Nashville.

Doug Haugen, executive director
Lutheran Men in Mission
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While growing up, I was a member of the same congregation until I was 31. I sponsored the high school youth and served on church council. People have asked me why I was so involved in the congregation in my young adult years when so many others drop off at that age. My response has always included the presence of the reliable, genuine men that we had active at church. In David Anderson and Paul Hill’s book, “Frogs Without Legs Can’t Hear,” they label these people as AAA Adults (or Triple A Adults). These are people who are Authentic, Available and Affirming.

One such person for me was a man named Larry Pohl. After a worship service in 1995, Larry grabbed my brother and me. He said, “You know, I had a problem during the service today, guys. The problem was that I couldn’t see the altar or the pulpit with you two in front of me. You’re so tall and have such broad shoulders I just couldn’t see past you. That’s a good problem! We need more strong young men like you in church.” I stood a little taller the rest of that day. Telling a 16 year old kid that he is tall and broad-shouldered is quite an esteem booster. What Larry was doing was affirming my brother and me. We were being told that we had a very valued place in the congregation.

Then there were several other men who took the time on Sundays during fellowship hour to ask me about school. They wanted to hear about a special project or report that I had to do. Then, the next week, they would make sure to ask how it turned out and what grade I received. These men were getting to know me and were investing time in building a relationship with me. They had interest in scholarly topics, and therefore were being authentic and showing availability to me. Even to this day, I guarantee those men are engaging in conversations with young adults about school, and encouraging them to excel in their studies.

This is where my role with Lutheran Men in Mission comes into play. I am responsible for coordinating the certification of Men’s Ministry Specialists. This is an advanced training for men who want to improve the men’s ministry in their congregation and beyond. These are men who want to learn how to be Triple A Adults and develop other skills. I’m searching for men that are available active listeners, understand authentic individual relationships and want to affirm the faith of others. With these traits, a Men’s Ministry Specialist will be a catalyst for new and innovative ministry. This is a very engaging process leading to certification. There is a commitment of time that carries a reward of quality relationships and experiences with other men involved in this training and process.

I’ve gathered several books, writings and programs from experts, and activities that will help fully train applicants. If you or someone you know is interested, please talk with me or your regional LMM representative.

Larry Pohl passed away in January, and I never expressed to him how he was an important in my faith formation. His legacy will live on with all the men he inspired. I hope you will take a minute to think about the Triple A Adults you have had in your life. If you have the opportunity, thank them for what they did in helping you. Encourage them to keep doing it and to continue affirming others. Then follow their lead, and become a Triple A Adult for those around you.

Peace and God’s Blessings,
Kevin Burke - Phone: 920-562-1411
Program Manager, Lutheran Men in Mission
kevin.burke@elca.org

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Thrivent challenge helps LMM grow into future

Lutheran Men in Mission is the recipient of a generous capacity building grant from Thrivent Financial. After the initial portion of $25,000 was received last year, the challenge was that Thrivent would match $1 for every $2 raised, up to $100,000 — and we did it!

While capacity building has to do with strengthening Lutheran Men in Mission’s financial base, it is also directly tied to Lutheran Men in Mission’s robust, growing ministry doing things that few other ministries are doing. LMM is providing Spanish language New Testaments to congregations throughout the country. The Master Builders Bible for Men with its 20,000 study questions is now in the hands of 57,000 people. Men are laughing and talking while using the ManTalk playing cards. Men’s lives are being changed by attending LMM’s One Year to Live retreats. Guys are having outrageous fun while getting to know themselves, each other and God at High, Deep and Wide!

Congregational leaders are being taught about men’s issues and how to reach them in Building Men for Christ workshops.

But all of this is only the beginning!

The goal is in five years for Lutheran Men in Mission to be “the ministry” anyone can turn to learn about men’s issues and how best to minister to men of all ages, ethnicities and geographic areas. To build on what we have already done, Lutheran Men in Mission is convening 30 leaders who are creative “out of the box” thinkers and dreamers who understand men’s ministry. Their role will be not just to share what they are doing, but to do research with men and our organization to find what’s working in men’s ministry and to find the gaps in ministry that we can fill.

We are very grateful to Thrivent Financial — and to our donors — who helped us meet the challenge. Thanks to you, this ministry is thriving and building for the future!
The 2014 Lutheran Men’s Gathering will begin Friday, July 18 at 7 p.m. with Tim Wright, pastor of Community of Grace Lutheran Church, Peoria, Ariz., challenging us on what it means to keep alert and help our boys and younger men to stand firm in our faith. Tim’s latest book is “Searching for Tom Sawyer: How Parents and Congregations Can Stop the Exodus of Boys from the Church.”

Jesus laid down his life and asks us to do the same. The Christian life is not for sissies. Here you’ll consider what great things God wants to accomplish through you. Saturday morning Stephen Handy and Jay Gamelin will speak to the courage it takes to be a Christian man. Stephen spent several years in corporate America before becoming a United Methodist Pastor. He currently serves McKendree United Methodist Church in Nashville and is a visionary strategist and passionate communicator who desires to speak God’s truth so people of different cultures, experiences, neighborhoods and all of God’s unique diversity can be reconciled through unity in Jesus Christ. Jay Gamelin is a gifted storyteller, an engaging leader, a humorist and energetic presence with an unusual ability to describe the complexity of God and the walk of the disciple in simple, down-to-earth teaching. He is a pastor who ‘gets’ men — and challenges them.

11 a.m. to mid-afternoon on Saturday will be spent in workshops built around our theme and the theme verse.

Saturday evening we will gather to hear Larry Clark. Larry is the pastor of St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Chicago, Ill. He has a rich history of leadership having served as campus pastor, congregational pastor, youth director, active member, Associate to the Bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, and executive director of the Lutheran Theological Center of Atlanta. He serves on the Board of Lutheran Men in Mission. Larry will preach, as only he can, on our call to do all we do with courageous love.

God’s glory will be present throughout the weekend, but especially present as we close together with worship Sunday morning. The Gathering will close just before noon.

We invite you to come early and enjoy the banquet at 5 p.m. The cost is $40 and is limited to the first 200 to register.

Register today at lutheranmeninmission.org

General Secretary Gil Hanke of United Methodist Men will be leading workshops at Guys, Guts and God’s Glory. United Methodist Men and LMM have a growing relationship and we expect to have a number of United Methodist men at the Gathering in Nashville this year.

We will be live streaming the Lutheran Men’s Gathering. We want to see you in Nashville, but if you cannot make it, check out the keynote presentations and worship service on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/LutheranMenInMission
Guys, Guts & God’s Glory
Lutheran Men’s Gathering
Nashville - July 18-20, 2014

Register by mail: Registrar, Lutheran Men’s Gathering
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
Register by fax: (773) 380-2115
Register online: www.elca.org/lmm

Registration Fee: (Early registration fee before June 1st in red)
- Participant $119 / $139 ea.
- Participant with Banquet ticket (Friday, 5 PM) $159 / $179 ea.
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- Participant plus Spouse with 2 Banquet tickets (Friday, 5 PM) $224 / $244 ea.
- Participant (Pastor or Rostered Staff) $49 ea.
- Participant (Pastor or Rostered Staff) with Banquet ticket (Friday, 5 PM) $89 ea.
- Participant (Pastor or Rostered Staff) plus Spouse $74 ea.
- Participant (Pastor or Rostered Staff) plus Spouse with 2 Banquet tickets (Friday, 5 PM) $154 ea.

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Register online: www.elca.org/lmm
**Buy experiences—Part 2**

In the last newsletter, my column advocated buying experiences rather than buying “stuff.” I began by saying that I was leaving the next morning for a one-week vacation at Disney World with our daughter, her husband and our two granddaughters. I am happy to report that we had a wonderful time. I will always remember the grandkids ‘whoopin’ and ‘hollerin’ at the Hoop-de-Doo Musical Review, spinning round and round on the Mad Tea Cups with Laurel, and riding on Splash Mountain with Kyra. These memories will never go away; they will only get better with time.

July 18-20 is the Lutheran Men’s Gathering in Nashville, and an opportunity for your own experience! The planning team has been putting together a strong program to make this a memorable weekend rather than a just another meeting or convention. There will be several great speakers along with lots of opportunities to do something active and share an experience with someone you know, or even someone you don’t know. So, ask a guy from your family such as a son, grandson, father, grandfather, nephew or uncle and a couple of guys from your congregation to join you in Nashville for three days of memorable experiences. I hope to share an experience there with you, too.

In conjunction with the Gathering will be the Lutheran Men in Mission Assembly, July 17-18. The Assembly is the highest legislative body of LMM and will help set the direction of the ministry for the next three years. The delegates will hear reports from the executive director, officers and several LMM ministry leaders. They will elect the officers (president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer), and the regional delegates will caucus to elect their regional LMM Board member. They will also be asked to approve a three-year strategic plan and spending plan.

You may ask, who is a delegate or how do I become a delegate? Each synod is entitled to send six voting delegates to the Assembly. Some synods have a very formal process to determine who will attend while others struggle to be represented. Historically, we have had about 33% of the possible delegate positions filled. If you are interested in being a delegate, please contact you’re the LMM leadership in your synod, if there is one, or contact the office of your synod’s bishop. If you do not know who your synod leader is, go to our website www.lutheranmen.org and look under “Contact Us” > “Synod Leaders.” There is no cost to attend the Assembly, but registration by June 1st is required. Here is your chance to help guide the future of LMM.

The Assembly is also a bittersweet time for LMM leadership, as it marks the end of the term for the current officers and Board. For the last three years, this group has worked tirelessly to further our ministry. I am gratefully for all their efforts and feel blessed to have been associated with them. It has been a wonderful experience. They have taught me a lot and I value their friendship now and in the future. I especially want to recognize Bernie Bresson, Lon Buss, Tom Green, Dan Joy and Fred Bohls who have served in their current positions for the past six years and are thereby term-limited. Thanks be to God for their dedication and commitment!

Yours servant in Christ,
Rich White, President
Lutheran Men in Mission
rwhite743@aol.com

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2014 Lutheran Men in Mission Events

Go to lutheranmeninmission.org for updated events, program information and registration details, or to submit Lutheran Men in Mission events.

One Year to Live Retreats

May 30-June 1
Camp Zimmerman
Gnadenhutten, Ohio

July 17-18
Lutheran Men in Mission Assembly
(triennial business meeting)
Loews Vanderbilt Hotel
Nashville, Tenn.

July 18-20
2014 Lutheran Men’s Gathering:
Guys, Guts & God’s Glory
Loews Vanderbilt Hotel
Nashville, Tenn.

Six great things to do in Nashville

- Attend the Lutheran Men’s Gathering — a must! (pages 7 & 8)
- Do your best gravelly voiced imitation of Johnny Cash while wandering the Johnny Cash Museum.
- Need more country music? The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum or the Grand Ole Opry should do the trick.
- Believe it or not, Nashville is called the “Athens of the South,” so check out the full-size replica of the Greek Parthenon? Opa!
- Walk, jog, toss a football around or snooze outdoors in Centennial Park, Percy Warner Park or Shelby Bottoms Park.
- Belly up to an order of Nashville hot chicken, a type of fried chicken that is a local specialty.