



THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Missouri Synod

September 8, 2011

## **A Hopeful Lamentation**

A Statement on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 9/11

On Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, the world will stand still as the first post-9/11 decade comes to a close. As I pause to pen this note to the church, I'm flooded with a swirl of disparate and even conflicting thoughts and feelings. I recall the progression that morning from interest that a "small plane" should have hit the World Trade Center, then the shocking news of a jet airliner hitting the first tower, by mistake? Then the second. The Pentagon. The plane down in Pennsylvania. Confusion. Disbelief. Fear. Frustration. Anger. Revenge. All of that took place for me in the LCMS International Center from which I write now. We all have a story.

Having visited Manhattan the week after the event, and then Ground Zero later, speaking with our LCMS brothers and sisters who lost family and friends (one dear brother shared with me, as we surveyed Ground Zero on an anniversary years later, that he had lost 30 friends that day), I feel ashamed even to write of my own insignificant thoughts. This week the pain that invaded the lives of thousands upon thousands is re-lived, as though the event were just last week. Our own struggles in the Missouri Synod at the time cause me deep lamentation still. Lord, have mercy upon us all. But it is a hopeful lamentation.

The people of the LCMS responded in overwhelming generosity. Thousands upon thousands were assisted through Lutheran Disaster Response of New York (LDRNY), to which we provided funding. We assisted children who lost parents, provided tuition, counseling, care and much more. LDRNY concentrated on help for victims' families, and was a major force in the September 11<sup>th</sup> Families' Association, which throughout it all has been committed to attending to the concerns and needs of affected families.

The Lord Jesus Himself, in the face of the profound suffering He would undergo for the sins of the world, prayed, "Take this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Thine be done" (Matt. 26:39). And so it is human and by no means wrong for those so terribly hurt by the senseless carnage 10 years ago, to lament their loss and pain even today, and to cry out, "Why, Lord?" Somehow, in an unfathomable way, the Lord's hand is not shortened and His universe is still His, despite the carnage of a few madmen. And like His very cross—which appeared senseless and pointless and an end of all hope—so this suffering is purposeful. "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). At the last, we have one thing to say. One thing to hope. One thing to trust. And that is Christ.

Let us join in prayer for the LCMS Atlantic, Southeastern and Eastern Districts, and for all their leaders and people, for the witness of the Gospel in New York from Ground Zero, to the Pentagon, to Pennsylvania and beyond. Let us pray for our nation, our president and the military, for faithfulness in duty and an increase of all honorable vocations in public and military life. Let us pray especially for those who still suffer the loss of loved ones. Grant faith, O Lord, in the resurrection and in Your blessed Gospel. Let us pray for our enemies, for justice and for peace. And finally, as we lament this sinful world of pain and loss, let us lament in hope. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

*"Through [Christ] we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).*

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