

My/Our Water Sunday Experience

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I first learned about Water Mission International (WMI) while attending the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) Convocation in Pittsburgh PA as a delegate for our congregation. Our congregation had previously been involved with a water ministry, but what caught my eye and interest was how “instantly” the WMI system can produce clean water. The other group we supported went into areas and dug wells. There seemed to be a lot of “red tape” involved with getting necessary permission to go in and do the work to get a well dug and producing for the people in need.

After returning from the NALC Convocation that year, God just placed on my heart a desire to serve through our Social Concerns ministry at Immanuel. I had learned of so many different needs and mission opportunities from the displays and talked to so many people involved with these missions, I just knew God was speaking to me – that I needed to share my experience.

Every year our congregation chooses a ministry to support with our Lenten offerings. I had received an email from WMI introducing Water Sunday and what was involved in this. It just so happens that parts of Texas have been experiencing drought conditions for several years – the area I live in too – and this email, again, caught my eye and attention. I talked with the Council representative for Social Concerns, and my husband, who happens to be the pastor of Immanuel, and proposed using WMI and Water Sunday as our choice for support through our Lenten offerings. The council gave their approval and we began our project.

On what we call “Purple Sunday,” the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, we have special activities during Sunday school that highlight Lent. It was here that we began our publicity of WMI and Water Sunday. I had ordered the water bottle wrappers to place on bottles of water to be handed out. We took some of the bottles, opened them and filled them with dirt, leaves, anything we could find on the ground. This was to highlight, as was suggested, what the water some people have to drink looks like. We handed those out randomly – they were taped shut to discourage actually drinking the water. We encouraged those who had received “good water” to drink it, then cut off the top of the bottle and collect money during Lent. We challenged members to drink only water during Lent and collect the money that they would normally use to buy their special coffees, teas, sodas. We handed out bottles of water at any activity that was going on that first week of Lent.

We made bulletin announcements, verbal reminders at services, and then on Water Sunday (which fell about the 3rd week of Lent) we showed a WMI video at the beginning of worship and again, highlighted the ministry that WMI does. We gave a brief history of World Water Day. We reminded the Sunday school children every week through pictures and material provided by WMI about the need for clean water and how our offerings would help children like themselves.

Palm Sunday was our target day to bring the water bottle offerings. We wanted to be able to count the donations and announce the total on Easter Sunday. Members brought their donations forward after the offering plates passed, and we collected the bottles in baskets near the altar. (Picture attached) It was amazing to see all the bottles! We had a special blessing of these offerings and prayed for the ministry of WMI.



After counting we had collected \$4,876.18. On Easter Sunday, we made our announcement, with resounding applause following. After our late service ended, one member came up to me and said that they were going to donate the remaining \$123.82 to make our total donation \$5,000.00.

Many commented how in just 6 weeks, amazing things can happen through our dedication and commitment to sharing from our abundance. And that's what it's all about – sharing with others from what we have in abundance. The biggest impact for me was that our members got it!! They are opening their hearts and minds to sharing to being missional!

At the NALC Convocation in Charleston SC this past July 2014, I was able to tour the WMI facility. I was so impressed with the facility and how it's run on solar power. I learned out that volunteers design and build the units. And the day we were there, they were preparing and loading units that would be sent to Kenya.

We continue to experience drought conditions here in Texas, despite our recent rainfalls. With that clearly on the minds of the people in our area, we're planning on doing a "Walk for Water" event through our Ministerial Alliance – a group of nine churches in our area. We plan to highlight the need for clean water – something that very well could impact us if these conditions continue. So, we think this is something that can bring our community together for something that we take for granted – clean drinking water. We can't wait to see what happens!