



Pastor Hanke's Blog

November 18, 2018

LWML – Understanding Letters

Bible Reference: Hebrews 10:11-25

I am not sure when we decided it was cool to start abbreviating names of groups & organizations with letters, but it is often done. This practice can be so exclusive. The minute we use letters rather than full words, we exclude those who are not a part of that community. Outsiders often have no idea what that group or organization is or does. In some ways it makes the “insider” community tighter, as they are the only ones “in the know.” The challenge we face, however, is that we are in a culture of non-joiners, and in that environment, an unrecognizable name is a turn off.

It is not possible, nor would it be easy, to change all the groups with initials back to groups with names, so instead we need to be constantly explaining things. The LWML – Lutheran Women’s Missionary League – was developed in a much different season. It was officially established in the 40s, but they had done a century of work leading up to its official establishment. As you are already aware, the world looked much different then, even inside the church. The roles of men and women were more defined. Some of the early roles for LWML ladies were mending clothes for the seminaries, equipping hospitals, establishing schools, assisting orphanages, and funding mission endeavors.

Over the years the role of leagues/clubs have changed, and so has the role of women. These changes have affected the church as well. For a long time women could not hold official board positions, so the LWML was a place for them to serve and support the mission of the church. Quietly the ladies built an empire of support through mite boxes. Through these small purple boxes, these ladies have helped college students, seminary students, and missionaries...including me. Every year I was in school preparing to be a pastor, I would fill out a LWML scholarship application and receive funds to help pay for my tuition. I also had one specific LWML group from my home church that sent me money regularly. The change that people dropped into these boxes changed the lives of so many heading into ministry. This past weekend we spent time talking about the Bible passage this is all built on—the widow who gave her last mites to the church (Mark 12:41-44).

The letters of the organization may be confusing, but the work is not. The LWML has prayed for and supported many people preparing for or working in ministry. As culture is constantly changing and it can be hard to keep up, we decided to intentionally explain the work of the LWML rather than just collecting mite boxes (which we will also do this Sunday).

The book of Hebrews in Scripture is often seen as one to encourage believers. It is fitting that on LWML (*Lutheran Women's Missionary League*) Sunday we would take time to talk about encouragement. Our Epistle lesson this week (also from the book of Hebrews) encourages us to meet with one another and to encourage one another. For years the LWML has been a great source of encouragement. This Sunday we will take time to break down their example to us, and give them our appreciation and encouragement.

God's Peace,

Pastor Will