



New missionaries pose for a group picture while attending orientation July 5–15 at the LCMS International Center, St. Louis, Mo.

All photos courtesy LCMS Office of International Mission

SENT BY JESUS CHRIST

by ELIZABETH TRUONG

The LCMS has a rich history of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world. We introduce two new missionaries who will be doing just that.

God continues to use His people to share the Gospel overseas, preparing them in His ways and faithfully providing for all their needs. The Rev. Tony Booker reflects, "I have always had a heart for international missions; as a missionary kid growing up in Austria, I thought I would fly planes into jungle airstrips as a medical missionary. This call to the Czech Republic is a realization of dreams I've had for many years, but in a wholly unexpected way—as a missionary—not a businessman or government employee."

Booker was among the 32 new LCMS missionaries who attended New Missionary Orientation at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis, Mo., in July. Though the subject matter varied and covered a range of topics—including cross-cultural adaptation, distinctive qualities of Lutheran mission work, daily devotions and catechism study—the focus was the same in all



> **On the web** Go to lcms.org/Booker to read more about Rev. Booker.

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lcms.org/witness

WM Facts

- > The LCMS established its first mission board in 1851.
- > The LCMS is doing or has done mission work in more than 90 countries.
- > The LCMS currently endorses or supports 208 military chaplains.
- > As of September 2011, the LCMS sends, equips or supports a global mission team of more than 980 people.

sessions: equipping the missionaries to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people all around the world "for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself" (Acts 2:38).

Meet the Rev. Tony Booker

Booker and his wife, Connie, will serve in Prague, Czech Republic, where he will pastor a small congregation of English-speaking expatriates and help build closer relationships between the LCMS and local Czech Lutheran churches, so that they might work together in mutual mission and ministry.

Earlier in life, Booker served in the United States Army on active duty for five years. He majored in international studies and Russian area studies in college and graduate school. Then, after finishing college, he worked in sales and customer service positions for 13 years, which provided him with opportunities to travel internationally and manage diverse teams of coworkers.

Upon entering Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Booker had no intention of serving as an overseas

missionary, but the limited number of calls available prompted him and his wife to consider additional geographic areas of service. International mission recruitment staff soon got in touch with Booker after noticing his language credentials and cross-cultural experience.

Rev. Booker now sees how the Lord worked through the various phases of his life to prepare him and Connie for international service. He notes, "Both [Connie and I] have lived in central Europe for quite a few years and have traveled throughout the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. The Lord has given us a love for the people and the region that is difficult to explain. I remember praying for years for the people behind the Iron Curtain, just miles from our backyard—that they would hear the saving message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But I never seriously dreamed God would say, 'I'm sending you.'"

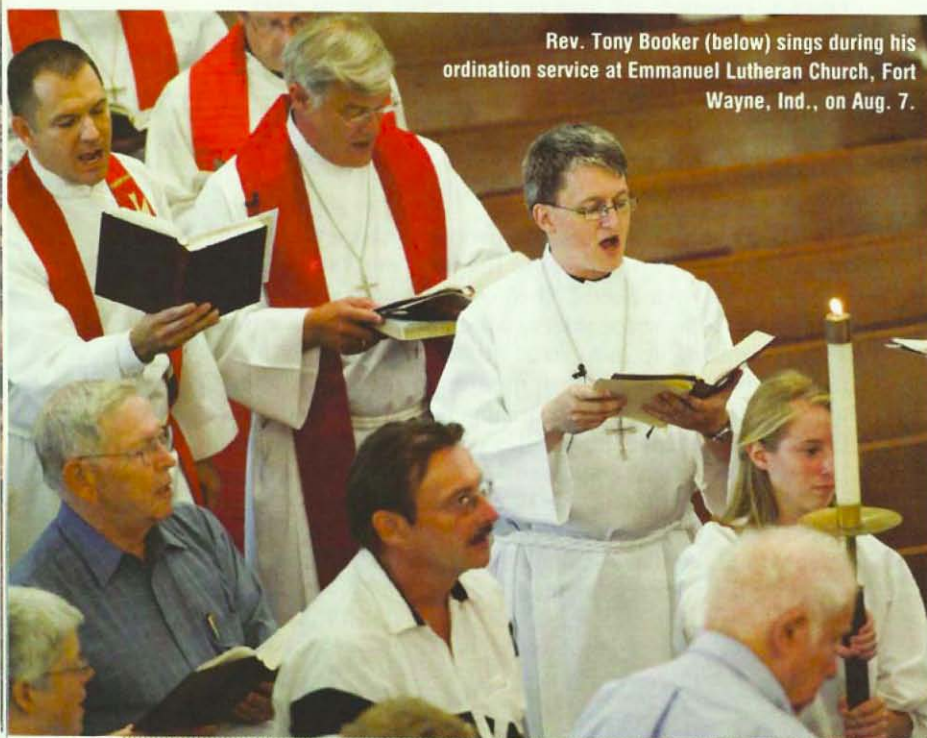
Meet Deaconess Deborah Rockrohr

Deaconess Deborah Rockrohr of Westland, Mich., is also among the new missionaries. She will soon be serving in Pretoria, South Africa, with her husband, the Rev. Dr. Carl Rockrohr, and the youngest of their four children, son Ted.

Their journey to South Africa began in the 1980s, as Dr. Rockrohr was completing his seminary studies. The couple discussed the possibility of foreign mission work, but Deborah was uncomfortable at the prospect since their children were very young and their family was still growing.

Her husband's first call was to a congregation in Columbia, Mo. Deborah recalls, "We were in a wonderful congregation, but about every three months Carl would say to me, 'What about missions?' I would always respond, 'Not yet.' Then, one sweltering day in August, when I was about eight months pregnant with our third child and yearning for cooler days, he asked again. I thought to myself, 'Are you crazy?'"

Rev. Tony Booker (below) sings during his ordination service at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., on Aug. 7.





Deaconess Deborah Rockrohr receives blessings and congratulations from LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison at the New Missionary Orientation sending service on July 15.

‘We have the prayers of our friends and church family, are sent by Jesus Christ and are hard-wired into our baptismal identity as children of God.’

“So, I amazed even myself when I said, ‘Let’s wait to see if the child is healthy, and then you can look into it.’ During that month, the Holy Spirit really worked in my heart; a month later, the process began that led to Carl being called as an evangelistic missionary.”

The Rockrohrs moved to Ghana, West Africa, about 15 months later. “We had the only grandchildren on either side of the family at that time, and weren’t sure what the grandparents would think about us taking the little ones so far away,” says Deborah. “Their immediate and unwavering support of us was a true blessing from God. We were in Ghana for five years, and left the field when national pastors were able to take over the work. But we always wanted to return to Africa.”

The Rockrohrs will now return to Africa as missionaries—this time to South Africa, where Deborah will be filling a new role in that field. She is tasked with helping to establish a deaconess-training program at Lutheran Theological Seminary. The Rockrohrs’ advanced degrees will

even help seminary students receive additional accreditation from the nearby University of Pretoria. “In the process of working on our degrees,” Deborah notes, “we were seeking to prepare ourselves better for whatever opportunities the Lord might provide, but we never imagined this type of connection with a world-class university as part of that.”

Preparing for overseas service

The Rockrohrs’ greatest challenge will be leaving their three oldest children, attending college and graduate school, behind in the U.S., but they are thankful for email and Skype®, which help them stay connected. Deborah also recognizes the daunting tasks of organizing a long-term, overseas move and raising

financial support for their work. She says, “Both of these tasks are enormous, and it is so obvious that we just cannot do it without the Lord’s blessing and guidance. So, it is a time of preparation for sure, but it is also a time that the Lord is daily teaching us the blessings of relying on Him for all things.”

When asked how he and Connie plan to face the challenges of foreign mission service, Rev. Booker says, “We have the prayers of our friends and church family, are sent by Jesus Christ and are hard-wired into our baptismal identity as children of God. We lack nothing! But I can start to feel what Peter may have felt as he stepped out of the boat and onto the water. ‘Help me, Lord!’ we cry, and He does.”

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> **On the web** Go to www.lcms.org/Rockrohr to learn more about the Rockrohrs.

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