

LMM Bridge Walk 2017

As many of you may know, The Mackinac Bridge Walk has been an annual event, which began in the late 50's right after the bridge to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan was built. Lutheran Men in Mission took this walk on in 2009 as a project, proposed by Richard Straub, to earn money for Luther Home of Mercy and Filling Home. Last year we added Lutheran Social Services to those we support. This year there was a major change in the Bridge Walk. With all the trouble in the world and with the size of this event Homeland security decided to close the Bridge for 5 ½ hours during the Walk except for emergency vehicles and the return buses. This was a first in the history of the Bridge Walk. With this closure we were concerned that traffic would be backed up both north and south of the bridge and we would not be able to get close enough to the bridge to begin the walk. Also because of this we decided to eliminate the meeting of our groups at 9:30 AM Monday before the walk and instead accept an invitation from people coming from the south for a meeting Sunday evening at "Nonna Lisa's" restaurant in Mackinac City. More on this later.

As usual our group that stays in a "cabin" about 70 northwest of the bridge went up on Friday September 1. On Saturday we ate lunch at a small restaurant in Newberry, near our cabin. We then visited Whitefish Point near where the iron ore freighter, Edmund Fitzgerald, sank and toured the museum. We also visited Lower Tahquamenon falls in the area and took some photos. As supertime approached we went to our favorite restaurant in the area, The "Bear Trap". After this we returned to our cabin for the night.

On Sunday we decided to try out a new church to worship at in Newberry at Redeemer Lutheran Church. Pastor Melinda had a very nice service and the church was very welcoming. Sunday evening we met those coming up from the south at Nonna Lisa's for supper. The food was good but a little pricey.

We got up early Monday morning because it was over an hour drive to the bridge and this year we could not start later than 10:00 AM. This was because the bridge had to open again at noon. As we approached the bridge there were flashing police lights for miles in anticipation of the traffic backup. The people must have heeded the warnings, though, because there was no backup or many other cars for that matter. It was the lightest traffic we had ever seen. We parked close and went across the bridge. For me in the wheel chair it was the easiest crossing I have ever had. It is 2.5 miles to the peak of the bridge and 2.5 miles down. My energy is usually down by the top but I was surprised at how easy it was to the top. Because our return car for the trip back to the north side of the bridge could not cross this year we did not meet at the Dairy Queen in Mackinac city and went directly to the school buses for our return trip to the north side. Being in a wheel chair had some advantage here because the regular buses had long lines but the handicapped buses had no line. The bus trip to the north side was great because I sat right behind the bus driver who was very friendly. On the way back we saw the southbound buses picking up those who were still on the bridge so the bridge could open up again. After this the four of us that stayed in the cabin returned north again in my van to the cabin and then came home on Tuesday. We did learn later that some of the walkers in our overall group that did not stay in Mackinac City over night and drove in from the south were not so lucky. Traffic did backup below the bridge and some were not able to do the walk. Roughly 11 walked the bridge for Men in Mission. 2 walked from the north and 9 from the south side of the bridge.

For those who think that it is a long way to go to just cross a bridge, consider making this a vacation to a cool and beautiful place in the middle of the summer's heat and tour places like Big Springs and Picture Rocks on Lake Superior as well as Whitefish Point. And while there consider supporting Luther Home of Mercy, Filling Home, and Lutheran Social Services by walking the Mackinac Bridge on Labor Day. Also consider supporting Lutheran Men in Mission through your financial gifts. For by supporting LMM you are bringing more men to Christ. Hope to see you there.

Richard Noll
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