



DISTRICT NEWS

SOUTH DAKOTA

Praying for our **MISSIONARIES**

The Epiphany season of the Church Year extends well into February. “Epiphany” means to make manifest.



Rev. Scott Sailer
District President

And what is made manifest, or known?

This: The One born in Bethlehem is God and man. Christ Jesus is the world’s Savior, giving all people access to God. And so Epiphany takes on a mission emphasis.

Why not make it your aim to pray for our missionaries this Epiphany season? Why not pray for them throughout the year!

During our last district convention, our South Dakota congregations decided to financially support Rev. Dr. Cory Rajek — who serves as missionary in Riga, Latvia — through 2025. Dr. Rajek teaches at the Luther Academy, the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, and serves with his wife, Jennifer, and their daughters, Emily and Alexis.

Dr. Rajek previously served as senior pastor of Faith, Pierre.

We also support Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram, who serves in Asia with his wife, Joan. Dr. Jastram coordinates



Hayden Rensner, then a student at Concordia University, Nebraska, plays with children while serving on an LCMS Mercy Medical Team in Sierra Leone in 2018.



LEFT: Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram helps children follow the liturgy during worship in Taiwan in 2019.

BELOW: Rev. Dr. Cory Rajek preaches in Wittenberg, Germany, in 2021.



Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

efforts to make Lutheran resources of theology and worship available in all of Asia.

Please pray for the Rajeks and the Jastrams.

In addition, Hayden Rensner, a member of Faith, Sioux Falls (where her father,

Rev. Jason Rensner, serves as associate pastor) is an LCMS missionary in the Czech Republic. Pray for Hayden, too.

What might you pray?

► **THANK GOD** for them — for their calls

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Rev. Bryan Meadows, lead associate pastor of Zion, Rapid City, gives a children's message during a service to kick off the congregation's capital campaign.

'CHRIST'S WAY'

Zion Lutheran Church, School and Pre-school, Rapid City, recently launched the \$4.5-million Christ's Way Capital Campaign, with goals of growing its school, refurbishing its multipurpose area into a dedicated sanctuary and expanding the narthex to accommodate more children and a growing congregation.

The \$4.5 million will cover the first phase (the school expansion) with an additional \$1 million each to be raised for the dedicated sanctuary and the expanded narthex. The first phase of the

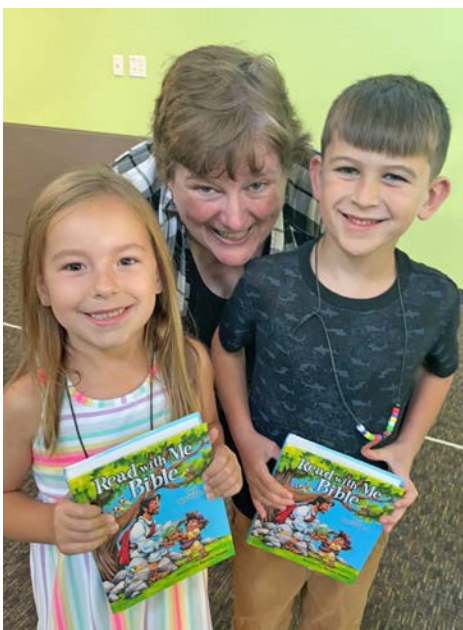
campaign is expected to last three years. The U.S. Census Bureau recently named Rapid City as the fastest growing city in the Midwest. As the Rapid City area braces for an estimated population growth of 30,000 to 40,000 over the next 10 years and demand for private Christian education continues to increase, Zion wants to be prepared to welcome exponentially more elementary aged students than it is currently able.

Current Zion school and preschool students are also involved in and excited for the campaign! In December the children raised more than \$4,000 during a three-week Penny War competition. Students

brought in loose change and bills and deposited the money into buckets. The two kindergarten classes brought in the most money, earning the kindergarten students lunch at McDonald's.

The campaign kicked off in October with a presentation chronicling Zion's history. Congregation members have pledged various amounts to the campaign, above and beyond their regular church offering, for the next three years. Zion is grateful to be guided in its campaign by Rev. Phill Andreasen of Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

To learn more and to donate, visit zionrc.org/christsway.



FOCUS ON DCEs

'Best job ever!'

By DCE Liz Peters
Memorial, Sioux Falls

I have the best job ever! I have served as a director of Christian education (DCE) in the beloved South Dakota District for 23 years. My current call is to Memorial, Sioux Falls, where I serve as the director of Children's Ministries.

I received my DCE training at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn. Each DCE is called to a congregation for their specific needs and works alongside the pastor to serve in educational ministries.

My first call was to St. John's, Yankton. I served as a DCE doing cradle-to-grave ministry, which means I oversaw all the educational needs from infants to the seasoned seniors. Youth ministry was my primary focus, yet I was also involved in Sunday school, Vacation Bible school, Christmas services, adult Bible studies, confirmation — you name it, I did it! The relationships I formed at St. John's are still strong and I loved my time there.

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MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

and for their obedience to His leading in their lives.

- ▶ **PRAY** for their daily lives — they are subject to the same temptations and weaknesses you have. Pray for their spiritual, mental and emotional health, for their safety and inter-personal relationships. Pray for their financial needs.
- ▶ **PRAY** that our missionaries will have wisdom in the use of their time. With many concerns beckoning their attention, the missionary must make decisions as to what to do and what to leave undone. Pray that they will be able to gain rest and renewal for their bodies and minds.
- ▶ **PRAY** for the missionary's children — for their education and adaptation to the culture.
- ▶ **PRAY** that barriers are minimized so that the Gospel may go forward.

In addition, consider emailing them or sending them messages through other electronic platforms. We here at the district office are happy to provide contact information, upon request. Ask our missionaries about special needs and opportunities.

Then, pray for more missionaries.

Finally, pray for your own missionary work. *What? My missionary work?*

It has been said that there are two categories of people — missionaries and those who need a missionary! Your story includes God's work in your life to bring you to faith in the world's Savior. You, therefore, have something to share with someone else about the hope that is in you: Good News concerning forgiveness, purpose and life everlasting because of God's grace on full display in Jesus, His Son.

May God bless your missionary work, even as you ask Him to bless other missionaries!

**Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Scott Sailer**

"Not ashamed of the Gospel"
Rom. 1:16; 16:25-27



From left, (front row) Rev. Scott Sailer, Rev. Christopher Davis, Vicar Jacob Friedrich; (back row) Revs. Nathan Neugebauer, Larry Johnson, Tim Rynearson, Samuel Thole, Arthur Drehman and Tom Mueller.

Rev. Christopher Davis was installed as pastor of Emanuel, Milbank, on Dec. 11. He is a 2004 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., and had since been serving First English Lutheran Church, Dorset, Minn.

Pastor Davis earned a bachelor's degree from the University of South Dakota in 1989. He was then commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marines,

and while serving met his future wife, Karrie. He studied law at the University of South Dakota, receiving a doctorate in 1992. He practiced law in Brainerd, Minn., before answering the Lord's call to study for the pastoral ministry.

We thank God for sending to Emanuel the gift of a new pastor, and ask God's rich blessings upon the Davis family and the Emanuel congregation.

DCE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Now, as Memorial director of Children's Ministries, I primarily serve families with fifth-grade children and younger. My call is to share Jesus and help connect our families to Jesus and each other. I oversee many volunteers, training and providing them with tools that they need, while investing in the families that attend Memorial. I get to hold lots of babies, sing lots of songs, visit folks in good and bad times, and share God's Word. Every year, we give Bibles to our kindergartners and third graders. We even meet with the third graders and parents for a "What is the Bible" class and teach them how to read and use the Bible.

I am so thankful that God nudged me

to be a DCE. I always knew I wanted to be a teacher, but God called me to a more specific vocation within the teaching field. He wanted me to teach in a church, and I heard His call.

If you would like to know more about DCE ministry or want help with Sunday school or educational ministry, please reach out! I am here to help and encourage.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *January kicked off a roughly year-long series exploring the youth and education professionals who work in and bless the LCMS South Dakota District.*

PATTY'S PONDERINGS

Plan to attend district retreat

“With One Voice” is the theme for the LWML South Dakota District Retreat, to be held at Peace Lutheran Church, Brookings, April 21-22.

The theme is based on Rom. 15:5-7:

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord



Patty Peters
LWML South Dakota District President

Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

The retreat will start the evening of Friday, April 21, as we celebrate the 80th birthday of our district. We will sing, shop in the LWML store and share evening devotions. District pastoral counselors Revs. Clint Thorson and Brian Mosemann will lead the Bible study on our theme. Then we will get moving with a mission/mite walk inside the church and learn about our mission grants. The ingathering and servant event will support the church workers of the LCMS South Dakota District.

Also on Saturday, we will learn about a program called SMILE, which stands for Share Stories, Mentoring, Involve/



Invite, Listen/Love and Encourage.

You don't want to miss the fun of gathering with your LWML sisters. More information about hotel rooms, items to collect for the ingathering, Saturday noon meal, and cost will be available at sdlwml.org. I look forward to seeing you and praising God “With One Voice.”

Updated email addresses wanted

As your vice-president of Communication, I would like to encourage you to send me your most up-to-date email address. We in the LWML use email to effectively communicate with our zones and groups.

If you are the zone president or secretary, please send me an email updating your zone emails. If you are a group president, please send me an updated email I may use to reach your group. Send the information to heather.m.miller2020@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing from each group and zone!

God's blessings,
Heather Miller



“Bylaws are Beautiful” — have you heard that song before?

No, it's not really a song but an old saying meant to remind people that bylaws aren't the work of Satan. Bylaws truly are important to an organization and essential at every level.

The LWML is organized according to the following levels:

Groups

Each local group should write basic bylaws that best describe its structure and method of transacting business. The person responsible for drafting the zone bylaws may contact the zone or district bylaws chairman for help and information as needed. Articles on object, membership and parliamentary authority must conform to national bylaws.

Zones

Each zone should write basic bylaws that best describe its structure and method of transacting business. The person responsible for drafting the zone bylaws should study the district bylaws to determine the parameters set by the district. If help is needed, the Structure Committee chairman should contact the district Structure Committee chairman for guidance.

Articles and sections on name, object, membership, representation at LWML conventions and parliamentary authority must conform to LWML bylaws.

Now is a good time to take a look at your bylaws and standing rules. There is a lot of information regarding the governing documents at lwml.org. Go to the “About” tab up top and select “Structure” from the drop-down menu. The LWML Structure Committee is always willing to help answer any questions. If I can be of assistance, please feel free to reach out to me.

Mary Jo Stier • Structure Chairperson

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Defined by love



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

We all have a desire to be someone. To be something. To make a name for ourselves.

We all have a desire to be loved.

Valentine's Day is coming, and we tend to focus on our love for one another. Yet as we ponder a different day this month, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, we see an even greater love. Our Lord Jesus willingly laid down His life on the cross and poured out His love for us.

If you have ever driven across the country, you have probably entered a state or a town where you saw a sign by the side of the road that read, "Welcome to such-and-such place, home of so-and-so." Wouldn't it be nice if your hometown thought it worthy of putting a sign up for you?

The apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:2:

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have



Rev. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor

all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If you had all those gifts, it would certainly warrant a sign outside your hometown. But Paul said that even though you might have all those gifts, if you don't have love, you are nothing. Notice the wording, which cuts us deeply to our core. He did not say that you have nothing. He said without love, you *are* nothing.

In order to be someone, in order to make a name for yourself, you must have love! Love makes you who you are. The love that God has for you created you, and recreated you in the waters of Holy Baptism, and His love flows from you to others whereby you acknowledge His creation.

In the Gospel, we have a love that is given, not required. When we are unloving, Jesus is love incarnate for you. We are not defined by the love we generate for others. We are defined by the love that Jesus gives us, which flows from us to others. Because of Jesus, your name is on a sign outside your heavenly hometown — it's written in the Book of Life.

This season, let us reflect on the greatest love ever given, Jesus Christ, God's only son.

Send in your Mites!

It is that time again when our national Mites are almost due. I need to receive them by March 15. Please pray that we will all give generously to meet our national Mission Grant goals!



To God be all glory! Thank you.

Paula Warren • Financial Secretary

HURON ZONE UPDATE

The Huron Zone kept busy in 2022! The spring retreat was held on May Day, May 1, at Messiah, Redfield, and featured guest speaker Nancy Schwartz, executive director of the Family Crisis Center. The 15 of us who attended learned about the services the Family Crisis Center offers to domestic violence victims across three counties.

The Fall Rally was held at Zion, Wessington Springs, with Rev. Richard Weeman speaking about "Close(d) Communion, the 'Age' Agreement." Twenty-four attended the rally, with four of our five groups represented. We sat in church pews covered by quilts made by the ladies of Zion, which were to be donated to those in need.

Men and women from Zion cleaned the Puppet Place in preparation for the South Dakota State Fair, held Sept. 1-5.

The ladies of St John's, Wolsey, have monthly mission work days in which they assemble health kits, school kits and layette sets. Mount Calvary, Huron, has work days to assemble quilts and pack clothing. Youth of Mount Calvary loaded the items, packed in over 150 boxes, onto a truck destined for Orphan Grain Train. School kits were donated to local schools. Mount Calvary held a diaper derby from Mother's Day to Father's Day, with all diapers being donated to families and the Plus One Pregnancy Guidance Center in Huron.

Finally, the annual Christmas tree exhibition at the Huron Event Center had a beautiful tree decorated and displayed by Huron Zone sisters.

Our LWML Huron Zone sisters are thankful to be able to gather in His Word, and continue to serve Him with gladness.

Ann Cruse • Huron Zone President



On Nov. 5, a pro-abortion rights group called Dakotans for Health launched a campaign to collect 60,000 signatures by July 1 to put a *Roe v. Wade* constitutional amendment on the 2023 South Dakota ballot. This would allow the people of South Dakota the opportunity to vote for whether to legalize abortion in our state through an entire pregnancy.



Rev. Chris Navurskis
District Life Coordinator

As I typed this, Dakotans for Health organized a signature drive at our Huron Public Library with the hopes of adding many signatures to their petition.

Please fight against this movement. How? Decline to sign! Then tell your fellow congregation members not to sign. Tell your family, friends and neighbors not to sign. If *Roe v. Wade* comes up for a statewide vote, vote it down and spread the word for others to do the same.

This petition is loud and it is easy to become fixated on the issue. Nevertheless, declining to sign this petition and voting no on the ballot (should it come to that) is only a small part of our work.

The real battle starts, continues and ends with a weapon the enemy cannot wield. Our battle is waged in prayer by the Word of Christ. Therefore, this article and future articles will be devotions on God's precious gift of life, priming you for the battle at hand.

A passage that I have been using in my own devotional time is from Psalm 127, which begins:

Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.

These verses might remind you of the houses from Matthew 7, one built on the rock and the other on the sand. Perhaps you recall the words that begin the great hymn "Built on the Rock" (*LSB* #645):

Built on the Rock the Church shall stand,
Even when steeples are falling.

As you hear these words, they might make you feel unsteady under the Law. That's OK. Don't flee from the test, even if the words convict you. This may be the very test you need so that you are drawn close to the One who, as St. Peter says, uses us as "living stones" to build His kingdom. This could be the timely proclamation that causes you to heed Jesus' words in Mark 13 so that you stay awake in the church with all the saints who await His coming.

While the first verse of Psalm 127 points generally to "those who build" and "the watchman," the second verse points straight at me. It says to me:

It is in vain you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives to his beloved sleep.

I repent. Yep, that is me. I often get caught up in my work and believe ev-

erything depends on me. I can get consumed by my work to the extent that it is a sense of obligation rather than vocation. The truth is, we are only stewards of His work, and it is a privilege to be one worker in His kingdom — His family.

The psalm continues:

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward. v.3

Dear Christian, your presence in His plan and your place in the world are by His design. By the parents He chose, you were brought into the world. By the Word Christ declared to you, He has called you to Himself. By the Spirit He gave you in Baptism, He has sent you into battle against the evil one.

Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. v.4-5

Think about the way one sends an arrow down range. The image suggests the way each generation sends the next into the future, with direction and momentum. A family is built from one generation to the next as a house is built from the foundation to each brick or board. One cannot help but think back to the beginning of Psalm 127. The house we are in is an everlasting house, and from generation to generation the faithful one builds. The Lord promised that He Himself would build a house for His servant, David. And Jesus, son of David, promised that not even the gates of Hades would be able to stand against the confession of His church.

We will not be put to shame. We will share in His victory.

**Your friend and fellow worker,
Pastor Chris**

Have you been blessed to know the difference Jesus has made using your work and witness in His name? I'd enjoy hearing that life story. A fellow worker may need to hear it. Contact me at:

► pcnavurskis@gmail.com, or

► 605-352-7121

North and South Dakota youth gather for circuit retreat



On Dec. 4, St. Paul's, Aberdeen, welcomed 32 youth from Aberdeen Circuit congregations and youth from North Dakota for a youth retreat. Providing events for youth is always a struggle in small congregations and rural areas, and this retreat offered an opportunity for high school and confirmation students to connect on a deeper level with their faith.

The retreat offered a simple and joyful time of fellowship and growth in the Word of God, beginning with Matins and ending with Vespers. The confirmation students spent their time with Rev. Samuel Bobby working on ways to aid in their memorization of the Small Catechism. DCE Michael Leapley led the high school students in analyses of song lyrics from a Christian perspective. Rev. Jacob Smith led sessions in Old Testament history, and Rev. Jordon Andreasen guided students through a study of 2 Peter.



Rev. Jordon Andreasen, pastor of Our Savior, Aberdeen, and St. John's, Columbia, leads a study of 2 Peter.

Trinity welcomes Vicar Ahart

Keegan Ahart was installed as vicar of Trinity, Belle Fourche, on Nov. 27. Rev. Don McKillop is his supervisor. Keegan is enrolled in the Specific Ministry Pastor program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. With his entry into the program, the South Dakota District now has seven men serving as vicars or pastors in this bi-vocational route to the ministry. Trinity, a daughter congregation of St. Paul, Spearfish, was accepted as a member congregation last year.



Vicar Keegan Ahart (left) is pictured with Rev. Don McKillop.



The Ahart family, from left, (front row) Eliza, Iantha, Lucille, Gretchen; (back row) Evelyn, and Jean and Keegan.



Mortgage becomes ashes

On the last Sunday of the Church Year (Nov. 20) — a Sunday when we often remember that the Lord has told us that on the Last Day fire will consume this old creation — fire consumed the mortgage of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Dakota Dunes. As a result of the generosity of God’s people, the outstanding mortgage debt was joyously paid off years ahead of schedule.

This is the first time since not long after the congregation formed in 1994 that Holy Cross is without a mortgage

The congregation gives thanks to God for all who have shared the resources He has given them, allowing Holy Cross to build such beautiful buildings to gather in and receive the even more beautiful gifts of our gracious God in Word and Sacrament.

Rev. Jeremy Richert (left) and Dr. Dick Hildebrand pray in thanksgiving to God for the burning of Holy Cross’s mortgage (pictured below).

Call Information

Rev. Bryan Meadows, associate pastor of Zion Rapid City, accepted a call as Zion lead associate pastor, Dec. 18.

Rev. Darren Olson, Sioux Falls, accepted a call as pastor of Christ, Juniata, Neb., Dec. 15.

Rev. Christopher McCarthy, pastor of First, Wall, and Emmanuel, Creighton, is prayerfully considering a call to St. Paul, Aurelia, Iowa, Dec. 18.

VACANCIES

- Concordia, Immanuel/Cresbard, Wecota (*sole pastor*)
- Grace, Blessed Emmanuel/Deadwood, Sturgis (*sole pastor*)
- St. Paul, Trinity/Plankinton, White Lake (*sole pastor*)
- Zion, Rapid City (*associate pastor*) • Lord of Life, Sioux Falls (*sole pastor*)

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

We love to feature a wide variety of news occurring in our district congregations. We welcome pictures and stories of events, installations, anniversaries, church building projects and more.



Send articles and photos to Kate Meadows:

- kate@katemeadows.com
- 420 E. Liberty Street, Rapid City, SD 57701

April 2023 issue deadline: Feb. 15