



# DISTRICT NEWS

## SOUTH DAKOTA

# GOD'S ROOT CELLAR



Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you.

Ps. 31:19a

**D**o you remember root cellars? Some still exist on farms in the region. Root cellars are both wonderful and scary — wonderful because they are a storehouse of food, and scary because they are underground and dark and have a dirt floor and maybe a spider or two.

Some of you are much too young and others are too much the city folk to really envision what I'm writing about. But farm folk on the Great Plains know well what root cellars are.

My Grandma and Grandpa Kraenzel had a root cellar on their little ranch on the east edge of Hebron, N.D. Most of the wonderful stuff that went into the big, sheltered hole in the ground that was their root cellar came from Grandma's large garden. In the summer, my sister, Kelli, and I used to raid Grandma's garden for peas and beans and radishes and carrots and an occasional kohlrabi. We'd stand there and eat those



Rev. Scott Sailer  
District President

veggies right out of the garden. We wiped off most of the dirt, but a veggie straight out of the garden can never be perfectly clean.

When we were brave enough, especially in late summer and early fall, we'd venture down into the root cellar (located not so far from the garden) and stare in awe at the canned beans and tomatoes, the chokecherry jelly, the canned chicken and beef. Oh, and there were dill pickles too. Bags of potatoes and carrots lay on the cool earth floor. (It was amazing how long those potatoes and carrots would last!)

Talk about an underground storehouse of goodness! That's what a root cellar is. That storehouse would provide food throughout the fall and winter and following spring, until the next harvest could be gathered from the garden and preserved for later use, stored there in the root cellar.

In Psalm 31, David, the psalmist, talks about God's goodness, which He has "stored up" for those who fear Him.

Hmm, could God have a root cellar, too, where His gifts are stored up? Sounds like it to me! Well, not a root cellar exactly, but God certainly maintains a storehouse, and it's for you. It's a supply of forgiveness that never runs out, flowing from Christ's cross. It's peace and hope, glowing out of Christ's empty tomb. It's a purpose, never-ending for the living out of your earthly days as you have opportunity, daily, to

See **MESSAGE**, page 2

# Bethesda welcomes Pastor Utecht

Rev. Peter Utecht was installed as pastor of Bethesda Lutheran Church and School, Hot Springs, on May 16. Peter's twin brother, Andrew (who serves as a district missionary on the Rosebud Reservation), served as preacher.

Rev. Scott Sailer, former Bethesda pastor who now serves as district president, was the officiant. Rev. John Merrill, pastor emeritus and Bethesda member who had served as vacancy pastor, was the lector. Rev. John Fries, circuit visitor and pastor of Grace-Deadwood and Blessed Emmanuel, Sturgis, was the liturgist.

Pastor Peter had served Messiah, Redfield, and Redeemer, Doland, for more than 20 years before accepting the call to Bethesda.



From left, (front row) Revs. Robert Gardner, John Fries, Peter Utecht, Andrew Utecht, Scott Sailer; (back row) Robert Mundahl, Dan Praeuner, David Warner, John Merrill, Gordon Goldammer, Randy Sturzenbecher and Thomas Brown.

# District has new editor

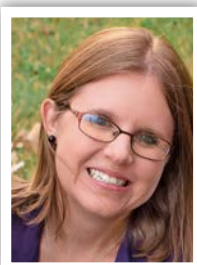


Vonda Sturzenbecher

After 19 years as the editor of the South Dakota District supplement of *The Lutheran Witness*, Vonda Sturzenbecher has announced her retirement from the position. Through her years of steadfast service, Vonda helped the South Dakota District announce an estimated 100 installations, 200 LWML events and a whole lot more.

Kate Meadows, wife of Rev. Bryan Meadows, associate pastor of Zion, Rapid City, has been hired as the new editor, effective May 31.

The South Dakota District welcomes aboard Kate and wishes her every blessing in Christ, and we thank Vonda for her long and faithful service. God bless and keep you Vonda!



Kate Meadows



The deadline for the October issue is Aug. 15.

Send submissions to Kate Meadows:

- [kate@katemeadows.com](mailto:kate@katemeadows.com)
- 420 E. Liberty Street, Rapid City, SD 57701

We love to feature a wide variety of news occurring in our district congregations. If you have any announcements, special events or human interest stories, please share with your brothers and sisters in Christ of the South Dakota District.

## MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

“proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

It is all, finally, “goodness” from God to you. That’s what David called it. He experienced it, and so do we. Every moment. Every day. Forever.

Take these words to heart, from Ps. 31:19, 23-24:

Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!

Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!

The Lord has a storehouse of goodness, and we are the ones preserved! Alive! Forever!

Your servant in Christ,  
Pastor Scott Sailer

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

# After 60 years, organist to retire

Norma Harer, 90, will retire after 60 years of playing the organ for Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Gettysburg.

A musician for much of her life, Norma began serving as Emmanuel's head organist in 1961. She accompanied the church choir and played for funerals and weddings.

Norma was always able and willing to play on a moment's notice for church events. Her dedication in serving her parish for so many years is a remarkable accomplishment.

The Emmanuel congregation has been tremendously blessed by her service and her music.



Norma Harer

## Call Information

### ACCEPTED

**Rev. Cory Rajek**, senior pastor, Faith, Pierre; accepted a call to serve the LCMS Board for International Mission, St. Louis, June 27.

**Amanda Korthase**, deaconess candidate, Huntington, Ind., accepted the call as deaconess to Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls, June 9.

### PENDING

**Rev. Matthew Bless**, associate pastor, St. John, Merrill, Wis., received a call as pastor from Concordia, Vermillion, June 27.

### VACANCIES

- ▶ Leola, St. Paul
- ▶ Mitchell, Zion (associate pastor)
- ▶ Redfield/Doland, Messiah/Redeemer
- ▶ Sisseton/Waubay, Emmanuel/Zion
- ▶ Vermillion, Concordia



# Rensner installed as associate pastor at Faith, Sioux Falls

Rev. Jason Rensner was installed as associate pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, on May 9. Rev. Corey Aker, Faith senior pastor, served as preacher while Revs. Joe Howlett, Dick Luttmann and Pete Sestak, all retired pastors who are Faith members, served as worship leaders. Rev. Scott Sailer, district president and also a member of Faith, was the officiant.

The "Faith" theme continues as Pastor Rensner had served for nearly 25 years at Faith Lutheran Church, Shumway, Ill., before accepting the call to Sioux Falls.

The South Dakota District welcomes Pastor Jason, his wife, Kris, and their family to their new home and church in South Dakota. God has once again answered the prayers of His people.

From left, (front row) Revs. Dick Luttmann, Pete Sestak, Scott Sailer, Jason Rensner, Corey Aker, Joe Howlett; (back row) Aaron Asmus, Ryan Drevlow, Chris Ascher, Dan Deardoff, Ed Clemens and Wade Meyer.

PATTY'S PONDERINGS

# What's your favorite psalm?



Identifying a favorite psalm can be tough, as there are 150 chapters with verses that praise God and others that speak to the painful times in our lives. Most likely you can find a verse in the Psalms for any situation in your life. God knows what we need and provides support and comfort in His Word.



**Patty Peters**  
LWML South Dakota District President

reading of the day. The psalm she read spoke to her so deeply, and she knew it was meant for her in this situation. She wrote it on a note card and displays it by her kitchen sink so that, to this day, she reads it over and over again. What an example for us!

Chapter 118 is quite an amazing Psalm for me. It encompasses praise to God, but it also includes a statement about God's discipline for us. Verse 22 points us forward to Jesus, the stone that was rejected but became the cornerstone. Verse 24 tells us to rejoice in the day the Lord has made. I am sure that you remember this chapter.

A friend of mine once endured a very emotional time of life and was very angry about it. She is a faithful daughter of Christ and wanted God to speak to her loudly and clearly. One day, she turned to the Psalms for her

I hope that you plan to attend the LWML **District Christian Life Retreat** Sept. 17-18 at Faith Lutheran Church, Pierre (*see article at right*).

The theme is “God’s Quilt of Comfort—Wrapping Up in the Psalms.” The Scripture verse is:

Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. **Ps. 119:76**

Please visit [sdlwml.org](http://sdlwml.org) for the registration form and the list of hotels to make reservations (the link will be at the top of the page). We plan to have lots of fun with our LWML friends from across the state. See you there!

## Get ready for retreat!

LWML members of South Dakota — bring a friend to Pierre Sept. 17-18 for the LWML Christian Life Retreat, under the theme “God’s Quilt of Comfort—Wrapping Up in the Psalms.”

Just as quilts comprise layers of fabric, the Psalms offer layers of meaning. Quilts, when pieced together, form elegant patterned designs. The verses of Psalms, when pieced together, form a beautiful picture of God’s grace and forgiveness.

The Psalms speak to our feelings and emotions. As we thank and praise God for all the wonders of His creation, we will each design our own quilt blocks to make a beautifully patterned quilt. Not only are quilts interestingly designed, they are also very useful. They provide comfort and keep us warm. We send quilts to those in crisis and those in need, to remind them that they are not alone.

Many hand-sewn quilts are tied so that all the layers will be kept together. Faith in Jesus is the thread that ties God’s Word together. Through the Bible study of Psalms, we will find Christ to be our Comforter. Revs. Daniel Grimmer and Clint Thorson, our district LWML pastoral counselors, will “wrap us up” through Psalms, where we will find God’s “Quilt of Comfort.”

Please plan to join us for a spirit-filled Bible study, joyful singing, crafts, skits, dancing and fellowship with our district sisters.

**Susan Buxcel** • VP of Christian Life

## Puppet Place schedule

The LWML Puppet Place mission has reached out to South Dakota State Fair attendees for nearly 50 years. The 2021 State Fair will be held Sept. 2-6. The Puppet Place work schedule is:

- ▶ Thursday, Sept. 2: Mitchell Zone
- ▶ Friday, Sept. 3: Pierre Zone
- ▶ Saturday, Sept. 4: Sioux Falls Zone
- ▶ Sunday, Sept. 5: Yankton Zone
- ▶ Monday, Sept. 6: Aberdeen Zone



Please contact me at [larsong920@hotmail.com](mailto:larsong920@hotmail.com) to let me know how many people will work on the day your zone is scheduled to help. Thank you for your willingness to help us reach so many fair attendees! Please join us in continuing to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ with this wonderful ministry.

**Jan Larson** • VP of Gospel Outreach

COUNSELOR'S CORNER



WELCOME BACK!

One of the things I love about August is that it's the time of year when a lot of things start up again. Even if we have been out of school for decades, most of us like to take a little break from some of our regular activities in the summer to free ourselves up for vacations and trips and other activities we enjoy.

But there is also so much joy when we settle back into our regular routine again. I know at my own congregation, Bible studies, confirmation, Sunday school classes and many other opportunities for study and fellowship will soon be starting up again. I imagine it is probably the same in your congregation, and hopefully also in your LWML group and zone, as well.

This fall, I pray that your congregation and LWML group might be filled with overwhelming joy. I pray that you may have joy from meeting together in Christ with friends and family that you might not have seen for months or years. I pray that the Holy Spirit may fill you with joy and thanksgiving and remove any fear that might prevent you from being together around His Word.



**Rev. Daniel Grimmer**  
LWML District  
Pastoral Counselor

We rejoice when we are together with our sisters and brothers in Christ because Christ has designed His church in that way. We need to be together. We are His body, each one belonging to the other and needing each other (1 Cor. 12:21-27). The author of Hebrews also urges us to gather together, exhorting us:

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not

neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**Heb. 10:26-27**

If you have been away for a while from your family in Christ, let me say welcome back! We have missed you! We are glad you are back and pray for God to give you His grace and blessing through the Word shared in your congregation, Bible study and LWML group and zone. He has promised to do so, and we know that God always fulfills His promises.

We also pray that Jesus would continue to call and gather His church together,

seeking in love those who have wandered to call them home. Perhaps you notice someone is still missing? As Jesus' ambassador, you have been equipped by the Spirit to seek and lovingly encourage them to come back to the Lord's house and table, where they will receive forgiveness and mercy and love overflowing, leading them to eternal life and fellowship with Jesus.

Welcome back and welcome home!

SIoux FALLS  
Zone report

With the blessing of vaccines, things seem to be opening up more and more in Sioux Falls. Several ladies in the Sioux Falls Zone planned to attend the national convention in Lexington, Ky., in June.

Zion, Sioux Falls, organized a 39-minute Mission Walk on May 1 to celebrate the LWML 39th Biennial Convention. A total of \$549 was collected and added to the Mission Walk total during the convention.

Lisa Asmus organized a group of Sioux Falls Zone members to help assemble mini mailboxes containing candy treats, which the Growth and Development Committee handed out at the Winner's Circle Celebration during the convention.

On May 26, Jan Larson, Vice-President of Gospel Outreach, presented a \$5,000 grant for an early-childhood playground to Tina Lenz, who applied for the funds to benefit Sioux Falls Lutheran School. The grant money will be used to purchase tricycles, sand toys and outdoor musical instruments. The early childhood staff of Sioux Falls Lutheran School is very grateful for the funds to further extend natural and outdoor play for the young children in their program.

**Tina Lenz** • Sioux Falls Zone President

## Christ's compassion through foster care

By Rev. Chris Navurskis  
District Life Ministries Coordinator

### Dear friends in Christ,

Last month I shared my friend Kim's story. Born in South Korea, Kim was abandoned by her parents. She was eventually adopted by a family in Milwaukee, to whom she was introduced via the family's involvement in the foster-care system.

The foster-care system is no small topic within the work of our Life Ministry. I felt bad I could only make a passing reference to it in my last story. However, not long afterward, I was in Aberdeen to record a sermon and service for the Main Street Living program. The video inset for these programs features our district's American Sign Language interpreter, Lynda Nix.

Lynda and I ended up walking to our vehicles together after the recording. I asked about her interpretive work and learned that she is also a full-time school social worker in the Harrisburg School District. Lynda's husband, Rev. Matthew, serves as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church and Trinity Lutheran Church of the Deaf in Sioux Falls.

The Nixes' story is wonderful. When Lynda and Matthew were first together, ministry was not on their radar. Lynda had studied accounting as an undergraduate student. Matthew worked as a computer programmer for a defense contractor.

One day, as Lynda tells the story, Matthew came home from work and said, "I think I need to go to seminary. I want to be a pastor."

As their story unfolded, Lynda was connected to the Church Interpreter Training Institute, a program organized by the Millneck Foundation and Lutheran Friends of the Deaf. The month-long adventure led her to a ministry serving high school youth in Toledo, Ohio. It was that work that prepared her heart for the social work she does now.



“Anything you offer is better than the nothing many of these children currently have.”

Lynda Nix

Lynda had always been a people person, but social work had never crossed her mind.

Now, though, she sees regularly how Jesus works through her efforts.

"I don't need to force faith on anyone," she says. "I simply wear my faith."

This story is amazing in itself (especially if you ever get a chance to hear about Lynda's internship work in Yankton), but there is more to tell. Like many couples, the Nix family had difficulty conceiving. Lynda puts it bluntly: "We had one child, lost two babies, had five, then lost another."

The three babies known to Jesus would be 19, 30 and 32 today.

Matthew's work in ministry, Lynda's social work and the continuous activity of five children makes for a busy household. Indeed, Lynda tells stories of their backyard activities that have included 20 or more children at a time.

As the Nixes prepared to become empty-nesters with their five children all nearly grown, they recognized a unique opportunity. Matthew and Lynda volunteered to be respite caregivers for a foster family. The foster family cared for a deaf, autistic child whose mother was addicted to meth. As the Lord would have it by His Spirit, the Nixes were moved to compassion. With one year to go until all of their children had moved out, Matthew told Lynda that he felt they should be this child's forever family.

The Nixes have only grown more involved in foster care since then. The need for neglected children to have loving homes moves them to act. Gov. Kristi Noem recently reported that there are 833 foster families in the state, but as many as 1,738 children in the custody of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The 833 families provide care for only 995 — or 57 percent — of the 1,738. According to a May 11 *Argus Leader* article, "Foster parents are needed in communities across the state especially for teens, sibling groups, Native American youth and children with special needs," a DSS representative said. "There are also 79 youth who are legally free and available for adoption."

To people thinking about fostering a child, Lynda insists, "Please do. Anything you offer is better than the nothing many of these children currently have."

Ask the Nixes what you need to do as a foster parent and they will tell you, "Just care."

Moreover, South Dakota District friends, the main reason the Nixes are investing themselves in this work is that the kids have such a hunger for the Good News of Jesus. The Gospel promises unconditional love in Christ and eternal belonging by God's grace to every newborn Christian through Baptism. Without that message, Lynda says, many of the older kids in the system have stopped trying to become attached because it hurts too much to continu-

See LIFE, page 8

# Mariachi San Pablo coming to South Dakota!

Mariachi San Pablo, an outreach and care ministry of Ysleta Lutheran Mission Human Care (YLM) in El Paso, Texas, seeking to serve, unite and reach others through unique Mariachi music, will perform three public concerts in South Dakota Aug. 27-29. The concerts are made possible through a district Harvest Grant received by Faith Lutheran Church, Pierre.

Mariachi San Pablo is an LCMS Recognized Service Organization. Youth and adult members proclaim the saving Gospel of Christ via music and message, shared in both English and Spanish. The group has performed at churches, community events, conferences and conventions in 18 states and 105 cities since it was formed in 2001. Their motto is “Changing Lives Through Music.”

Faith, Pierre, will host the band members and is coordinating with other South Dakota congregations to help with planning the concerts.

Ultimately, the Mariachi band aims to glorify God in song and Word and plant seeds of Christ’s love during its concerts. The band also hopes to raise awareness across the LCMS about YLM and its work. Members of Faith,



Pierre, recently returned from their fourth mission trip to Juarez, Mexico, where they worked with YLM to build two houses, distribute more than 2,000 Bibles and tracts and host a VBS.

Dennis Ryckman, who leads the mission group, said, “We are so happy to be used by God to spread His Word and then return to our daily lives ready to do the same. We pray that many more congregations will begin sponsoring mission teams to go to YLM after hearing about YLM through these concerts.”

## Schedule

The music will last for about 1 hour and 15 minutes, and food and family activities are included at each event.

**Aug. 27 • 7-9 p.m.**

Sioux Falls Lutheran School  
6715 S. Boe Lane, Sioux Falls

**Aug. 28 • 2-4 p.m.**

Memorial Park Band Shelter  
600-684 Omaha St., Rapid City

**Aug. 29 • noon-2 p.m. (meal served at noon)**

Steamboat Park Amphitheater  
Poplar Avenue, Pierre



Members of Faith, Pierre recently returned from their fourth mission trip to Juarez, Mexico, where they worked with YLM.

## Welcome to South Dakota!

Call Day 2021 services were held at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), Ind., and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), in late April. The South Dakota District was blessed to receive two candidates and one vicar, all from CSL. We wish all of these church workers and their families God's blessings as they pursue their vocations in the Mount Rushmore State.



**Albert Bakat**  
Assistant Pastor  
Resurrection,  
Sioux Falls



**Jacob Smith**  
Associate Pastor  
St. Paul's,  
Aberdeen



**Thomas Mueller**  
Vicar  
Emanuel, Sisseton  
Zion, Waubay

## LIFE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

ally build and break relationships. In Christ, they can know the bond of perfect love that drives out fear and gives meaning even to our brokenness and pain.

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



Someone is near you who needs your help in the name of Jesus. **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](mailto:pcnavurskis@gmail.com)
- ▶ 605-352-7121

## 'In All Things'

LCMS School Ministry has released the 2021–2022 edition of *Chapel Talks for Lutheran Schools*, an annual resource designed to assist Lutheran schools with weekly chapel.

Under the theme "In All Things," the resource includes devotions for every week of the school year as well as for Christmas. The theme, which will also be used during National Lutheran Schools Week and at the 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering, is based on Colossians 1:15–20:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.



"And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Drawing on the theme, each devotion is organized around various types of "things":

- ▶ "First Things" are introductory thoughts or activities that connect to the week's theme;
- ▶ "The Main Thing" shares Law and Gospel exploration of the text and brings Christ and His redemptive work to the students;

- ▶ "All Things in Jesus' Name" offers a petition relevant to the theme; and
- ▶ "More Things" provides suggestions for carrying the devotion beyond the chapel setting through additional activities, further reflection and study.

Chapel Talks was written by the Rev. Bob Riggert, a former Lutheran teacher, principal, parish pastor and district education executive who has written the last seven editions of the resource. It includes a new hymn by Jeffrey Burkhart, "In All Things Jesus Christ Is Found," sung to the tune WAS GOTT TUD ("What God Ordains Is Always Good," *LSB* 760).

Riggert writes in the introduction: "In All Things' is a confession of Christ's redemptive work ... a celebration of the Christ for youth, children and adults of the church ... [and] an opportunity for Lutheran schools to worship Christ in all things."

Chapel Talks is available for free download at [luthed.org/chapel-talks](http://luthed.org/chapel-talks) or [lcms.org/schools](http://lcms.org/schools).

Purchase a print copy for \$9.99 plus shipping at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).