



# DISTRICT NEWS

## SOUTH DAKOTA

# DIRECTION

for our **life together**



**Rev. Scott Sailer**  
District President

Sarah and I like to hike. We also like to be on the right trail. Sometimes the right trail is not so obvious. We'll come to a fork in the trail and one pathway looks as good as the other. A map or directional arrows sure do help. They might even be lifesavers.

*Rooted in Christ, Abounding in Thanksgiving* was the theme of our district convention, held Dec. 5-7 (see page 8). This theme also provides direction for our life together in the South Dakota District as 105 congregations and 27,300 children of God.

As a church district and as individual congregations, consider that theme. *Rooted in Christ* is a powerful image. It shows us anchored in Christ. It reveals that we draw our strength from Him and our life from Him. To be rooted in Christ certainly means we are

connected to God's Word, where Christ is revealed. This means we draw our direction for ministry from the Word of God, emphasizing the Good News that we are declared righteous in God's sight by His grace in Jesus Christ, through faith. It means that we serve our neighbor by words of witness and works of love.

The second half of the theme, *Abounding in Thanksgiving*, also provides direction for our life together. It emphasizes the attitude we ought to have as we work and journey together, that of thanksgiving to God.

I once was a chaplain at the veterans hospital in Hot Springs. I met with men struggling with addictions. One man asked me, "Pastor, what is a way I can begin the day that ensures that I will live in a way that honors God and doesn't give in to my cravings?"

My answer must have been Spirit-given. It went something like this: "Begin it in thanksgiving to God, because when you do that, you focus on God's identity as the One who loves you and gave Jesus to be your Savior. Thanksgiving to our strong and loving God indirectly acknowledges your own frailty and your dependence on Him for all your needs. You focus on Him as the Giver of all good gifts. And you begin the day with an attitude of appreciation, and not with the attitude that this is just another day to endure."

What do we see as we hold up our life

See **DIRECTION**, page 3

## Off to the **CZECH REPUBLIC**

Hayden Rensner, a member of Faith, Sioux Falls, was commissioned as an LCMS missionary to the Czech Republic on Dec. 19. Rev. Jason Rensner, Hayden's father and Faith associate pastor, performed the Rite of Commissioning.



Hayden left for her service the next day. She will help provide outreach opportunities in English for the LCMS partner church in the Czech Republic, and tutor students from the Luther Academy in Riga, Latvia, in English.

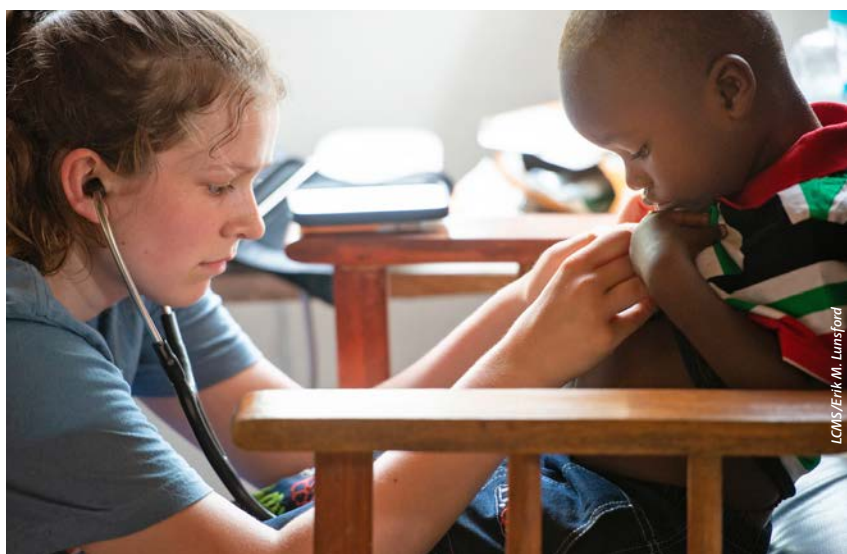
Please pray for Hayden and her work, especially that the Gospel seeds she sows will grow and bear abundant fruit.

To learn more about Hayden's work and how you can provide support, visit [lcms.org/rensner](http://lcms.org/rensner).



▲ Hayden is commissioned for missionary service in the Czech Republic by her father, Pastor Jason Rensner. Rev. Corey Aker, Faith senior pastor, is at left.

▼ While a student at Concordia University, Nebraska, Hayden participated on an LCMS Mercy Medical Team in Sierra Leone, West Africa, in 2018. She is pictured taking vitals from a young patient.



## Share your news with us!

Send submissions to Kate Meadows:

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

The deadline for the April issue is Feb. 15.



## Call Information

### PENDING

- ▶ Rev. Samuel Handschke, Faith, Pierre, associate pastor, was called by Faith to be senior pastor, Jan. 4.

### ACCEPTED

- ▶ Rev. Brent Keller, Peace, Alcester, accepted a call as pastor from Trinity/St. Paul, Guttenberg/McGregor, Iowa, Jan. 14.

### DECLINED

- ▶ Rev. Jeremy Yeadon, St. Peter's, Brownstown, Ind., declined a call from St. John's/Zion, Groton/Andover, Jan. 11.



# District offers tech assistance



Has your church or school ever had a technical problem and didn't know what to search for on Google? To help you, the South Dakota District has assembled a small team of tech- and media-savvy experts. With our years of knowledge and connections to other industry specialists, we can steer your church or school in the proper path for all of your media needs. This could include:

- ▶ Consulting
- ▶ Designing
- ▶ Researching
- ▶ Purchasing
- ▶ Configuring hardware

The media umbrella encompasses a wide range of activities. As the demand for media grows, the district office wants to provide assistance. Video recording, posting video, streaming video, online giving, licensing, software, capture devices, cameras, microphones, wifi, portable speaker

systems and audio enhancement are some of the topics in which the district's media team can provide support.

For more information, or if you have a special media assistance request, simply send an email to [mediasupport@sddlcms.org](mailto:mediasupport@sddlcms.org). Please provide as much information as possible, including images, videos and/or any documentation that would give us direction in helping you. One of our team members will contact you to assess the project. The district will provide basic consulting and ideas to you and your congregation at no cost. Depending on the project's complexity and timeline, the congregation may be able to acquire further assistance for a fee.

Even if you have a setup that works, do you need a media audit on best practices? Email your questions. We are here to help.



[mediasupport@sddlcms.org](mailto:mediasupport@sddlcms.org)

## DIRECTION

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

together in our congregations and in the LCMS South Dakota District alongside the theme *Rooted in Christ, Abounding in Thanksgiving*? Is it rooted in Him and abounding in thanksgiving?

How does your congregation's worship life measure up?

How do your Bible studies and ladies (and mens) meetings measure up?

How do your meetings of the church council and voters compare? Are they rooted in Christ and abounding in thanksgiving?

What about the district's Board of Directors meetings and pastors conferences and teachers conferences?

*Rooted in Christ, Abounding in Thanksgiving* gives a positive, biblical direction to all of those settings.

I'm wondering about something else: Do you think that theme can be the daily theme, or the personal mission statement, of the individual Christian?

In what ways might your day be directed in a positive way if that were true?

Try it!

"Lord, make this day, that You have given to me, to be a day that I am rooted in Christ and abounding in thanksgiving. Amen!"

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

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



LCMS/Erin M. Lunsford

## PATTY'S PONDERINGS

# The HEARTS we celebrate

February is traditionally the month to think about hearts and the color red. We should know our numbers as they relate to the conditions of our hearts — cholesterol and blood pressure — and maintain a healthy diet to keep those numbers in the optimal range. We also think about Valentine's Day — love, chocolates and flowers.



**Patty Peters**  
LWML South Dakota  
District President

In the LWML, we say, "I am the Heart of LWML" and think purple! Our vision is to promote a strong LWML identity among the women of the LCMS.

Our treasure is Christ. Our heart is with Him and we demonstrate that in our service to others. We are **HIS**:

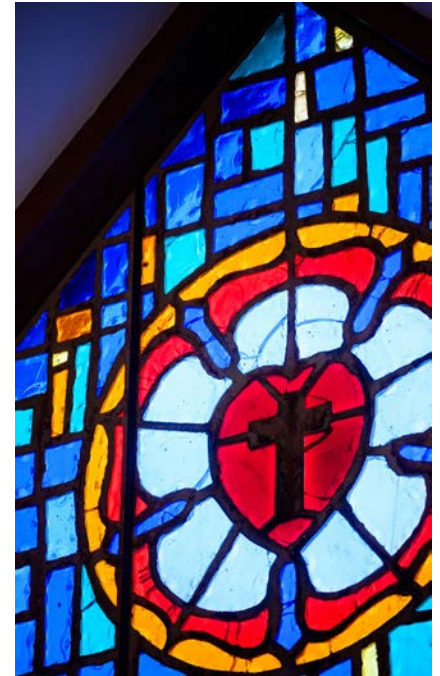
- ▶ **H**eld by His Word;
- ▶ **I**nspired to share His Gospel; and
- ▶ **S**urrounded by His grace

A February celebration in my family centers on my daughter, Sarah. Her birthday is on Valentine's Day, which was a particularly special day for me in 1990 as Sarah was born.

You can find information on how to put HIS into action at [lwml.org](http://lwml.org).

Did you know that LWML turns 80 years old this year? I think that is special, too! You could celebrate that event with servant events or gatherings with "80" as a theme. See what fun you can have with that!

Our district mission goal for this biennium is \$123,573. Please send your mites to Donna Harr, financial secretary, by March 15. We need to reach our



goal so that we can get the funds to our mission grant recipients. We will vote on a new mission goal at our district convention in June.

May your life reflect the love of Jesus that lives in your heart!

## HURON ZONE report

The Huron Zone has been keeping busy in 2021. We were able to meet in person for both the Spring Retreat and Fall Rally. The Spring Retreat was held at St. John, Wolsey, with Rev. Kevin Koester as our Bible study leader. He serves as associate pastor of Mount Calvary, Huron.

Our Fall Rally was held at Mount Calvary, Huron, on Aug. 8. Our guest speaker was Heather Miller, district LWML secretary. She shared with us her experiences with the medical mission teams in Guatemala with MOST (Ministry Opportunities Short Term) Ministries.

Ladies from Messiah, Redfield, along with a few helpers from Pierre and Huron, cleaned the Puppet Place in preparation for the South Dakota State Fair, which was held Sept. 2-6. The Utecht family prepared and presented the puppet show, which was themed "The Good Samaritan." The magic show presented before each Puppet Show was based on the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians.



From left, Beth Brower and Jill Johnsen help assemble kits.

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**COUNSELOR'S CORNER**

# Folly ... or faith?

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **1 COR. 1:18**

The Puppet Place will celebrate its 50th year of sharing the Gospel message in 2022. What a beautiful milestone we all can celebrate through this mission ministry!

The ladies of St. John's, Wolsey, plan monthly mission workdays in which they assemble health kits, school kits and layette sets. Mount Calvary, Huron, sets aside workdays to assemble quilts and pack clothing. A load of these items from these two congregations was taken to Orphan Grain Train. School kits were donated to schools. Quilts and sheet sets were given to Slumberland for their family bed giveaway.

We all are so thankful to be able to gather, be in His Word and continue to serve Him with gladness!

**Ann Cruse • Huron Zone President**



Top, Delores Eichstadt, and below, (from left) Janice Wagner and Vivian Klaschen work on packing items for Orphan Grain Train.



The wisdom of God is not the wisdom of the world. What human wisdom always regards as good, such as wealth and success, God often regards as harmful to man and his faith. And the opposite is true, too. What man regards as failure and loss, God often regards as good. In God's eyes, sickness, poverty and even death can be used for His good purposes.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints! **PS. 116:15**

Seen from the eyes of man, years of suffering leading to death is evil. Seen from the eyes of God, such suffering may actually be for our good.

This paradox is revealed especially in the "word of the cross," as Paul calls it. From a human point of view, we see in the cross nothing but suffering, weakness, torment, shame, defeat, the triumph of evil and the victory of death. From a human point of view, the events of Good Friday are folly.

But from a faith point of view, we see the power of God at work in the cross. We see that through the evil of Christ's death, Jesus Himself accomplishes the good work of forgiving sins and winning



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

life everlasting. What man regards as the greatest evil actually turns out for our greatest good.

Jesus bids us, too, to take up our cross and follow Him. This may not mean literally losing our lives for His sake, but it will certainly mean suffering. It will mean being

subject to mistreatment, weakness and shame. It will mean being led through the valley of the shadow of death.

Don't be afraid. Bearing our cross is not foolishness. It is, in fact, just the opposite: It is our salvation.

Martin Luther wrote, "When God brings to life, He does so by killing."

As we bear our crosses, as we suffer with Christ, we die to ourselves and our conception of what is good. We learn to trust in God to accomplish our good, even as we are being led to the cross. For the cross is the power of God at work among us to bring to us salvation and all the joys of God's heavenly kingdom.

Why should cross and trial grieve me? Christ is near  
With His cheer; never will He leave me.

Who can rob me of the heaven that God's Son  
For me won when His life was given?" (LSB #756:1)

# FIGHTING *for* HERBIE

Dear friends in Christ,

**W**hat is the greatest expression of love you have seen lately? As I write this article (on Dec. 14), my cousin, Rachel, and her husband are taking their 4-year-old son, Herbie, to the hospital for his very first chemo treatment.

Herbie has been diagnosed with medulloblastoma (a rare brain tumor). He has already had surgery and radiation, and he faces months of chemotherapy in 2022. By the time you read this, he will have two treatments down and perhaps eight to go.

I had a chance to visit with Rachel in November. We live states apart, but time off at Thanksgiving made travel possible. Both of her children, Herbie and his younger sister, were home and the house was busy as a result. Rachel and her family have a beautiful home in a nice neighborhood, and they have worked hard to make that happen.

During our visit, Rachel shared Herbie's story from symptoms to diagnosis to first interventions. As she talked, she managed her children's activities in various rooms of the house, fed them lunch and put little sister down for her nap. Wow! I could see her love and care in every capable and motherly move.

Rachel and I grew up miles apart, she in the city, me in a small rural town. I am her senior by many years. Our families met only for holidays and special occasions. Rachel and I are different in many ways, but sharing a conversation about what it means to be parents and the way we each love our children quickly revealed a fellowship greater than the sum of our differences.

After lunch, Rachel and I had the opportunity to discuss love more in-depth. Specifically, we talked about God's love. From my pastoral experience,



the most pressing question in a situation like this is something like: "If God loves Herbie, then how could he let Herbie have cancer?" Even before our visit, I had hoped and prayed that we could talk about that, because it was on my heart and I believed it would be on her heart as well.

As we came to that question, I did my best to revisit all that I had seen that day. Rachel is a mom doing everything God created her to do. She is fulfilling her calling to serve Him by blessing Herbie and showing him what God's love looks like. This side of heaven, we live under the curse of sin. This is a fallen world.

Cancer is dreadful. In fact, cancer actually shows us there is right and wrong because it's so terribly bad. Cancer and a host of other plagues and maladies show us that something is broken — that we are broken. In

**Four-year-old Herbie will receive months of chemo treatments this year for a rare brain tumor.**

Continued on next page



the midst of that brokenness the same loving Father, who sent His Son Jesus to be broken so that we would be rescued, sends mothers to love their babies and fathers to provide for and protect their families. God loves Herbie, so He gave Herbie the gift of Rachel to love him. Rachel is Jesus' hands and feet. The Father's sacrificial love in Christ is made known through the ministry of His people as the church — His body — lives for Him and loves in His name.

Apart from God's love and calling, who could bear to be a parent? A child who is ill would be an unbearable and fearful curse. Because of fear, many people seek an escape from the call to parent. Many people look for other choices in opposition to the life of another who could threaten planned-for prosperity or hoped-for tranquility.

As I see Rachel fight for Herbie with every ounce of her body, mind and soul, I see love that overpowers fear. I see love that exhausts itself and sacrifices itself unquestionably for another. I see love that bears any cost for the wellbeing of another.

I see God's love.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. 1 JOHN 3:1



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 [pnavurskis@gmail.com](mailto:pnavurskis@gmail.com) or 605-352-7121.

Pastor Navurskis serves as pastor of Mount Calvary, Huron, and is life coordinator of the South Dakota District.



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

## LCMS pledges \$1 million to BEGINNING-OF-LIFE CARE

The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, LCMS president, recently announced the launch of the 1 John 3 Initiative Million Dollar Life Match, a new grant program that will provide up to \$1 million in matching funds to LCMS congregations involved in upholding the sanctity of life in their local communities.

The program is specifically aimed at providing care for those facing beginning-of-life challenges. The amount of an individual grant will depend on the amount pledged by the congregation. More details about the application process will be announced in early 2022.

Deaconess Tiffany Manor, director of LCMS Life Ministry, said, "The purpose of the Million Dollar Life Match is to build and expand the network of LCMS congregations and individuals who are working to support those who uphold life in their immediate vicinity — for example, a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) that cares for needy families or a mercy organization that supports single parents or unwed mothers.

"The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod wants to help congregations support RSOs and other groups that are doing the hands-on work of defending life at the local level. And

ultimately, we want to point people toward what is most needful: the life-giving nourishment of Word and Sacrament ministry."

The theme for the Million Dollar Life Match is from 1 John 3: "Christ laid down His life for us. We love in deed and truth." The theme reflects the initiative's commitment to helping LCMS individuals and congregations have a greater impact on the cause of life as they walk with, strengthen and support local families.

The LCMS Office of National Mission's (ONM) has a new volunteer website at [lcms-onm.org](http://lcms-onm.org). Life Ministry is one of several ONM ministries that are using the new website to help volunteers stay informed about opportunities to serve.

Watch Harrison's announcement, download a bulletin insert and learn more about the Million Dollar Life Match at [lcms.org/life-grant](http://lcms.org/life-grant).

# Sailer elected to third term

The Rev. Scott C. Sailer was elected to his third term as president of the South Dakota District at the district's 62nd convention, held Dec. 5-7 in Sioux Falls. Pastor Sailer was elected on the first ballot.

Also elected were:

- Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher (Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk) as first vice-president; and
- Rev. Timothy Rynearson (Redeemer/Peace/Zion, Flandreau/Brookings/White) as second vice-president.

Both Sturzenbecher and Rynearson were elected to a second term.

The convention theme was "Rooted in Christ, Abounding in Thanksgiving," based on Col. 2:6-7. The convention adopted resolutions to:

- Amend the district's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to implement a new procedure for electing the vice-presidents of the district, account for new categories of Synod membership and account for action by the Synod convention regarding representation at Synod and district meetings;
- Realign the district's electoral circuits to fulfill communicant membership number requirements for circuits established in the Synod's Bylaws and to bring some parishes with congregations overlapping circuit lines into the same circuit;
- Continue support for the Rev. Dr. Daniel N. Jastram, missionary to Southeast Asia, and add support for the Rev. Dr. Cory J. Rajek, missionary to Eurasia, through the Synod's Together in Mission initiative;
- Establish a Mission and Ministry Council to explore new ways of providing support and ministry resources to churches, congregations and schools; and
- Recognize the importance of church workers, encourage care for worker wellness and encourage the recruitment of church workers through the district and the Synod's Set Apart to Serve initiative.



Rev. Doug Slavens, associate pastor, Memorial, Sioux Falls, leads the procession in the Opening Service.



The convention thanks Julie Pike, administrative assistant to the district president, for her work.



Rev. Corey Aker (left) and Jordon Jacobsen are the lay and pastoral delegates from Faith, Sioux Falls.



Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher, district's first vice-president, presents a bouquet of flowers to Sarah Sailer, wife of District President Scott Sailer.