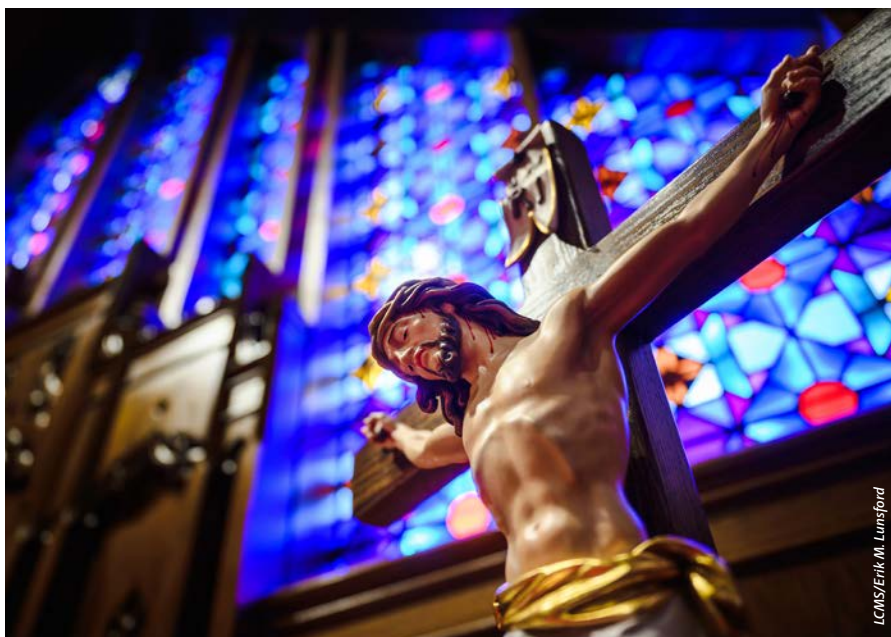




DISTRICT NEWS

SOUTH DAKOTA



LCMS/Erk M. Lunsford

GOD'S STRANGE WORK



Rev. Scott Sailer
District President

During Lent and Holy Week, we meditate on the greatest tragedy in human history: an innocent man being crucified for crimes He did not commit. Most people would consider the entire case against Jesus — His trial, His verdict, His sentencing and His crucifixion — to be very strange, considering they could find no wrong for which they could accuse Him. It even seemed strange to Pontius Pilate, as Matthew 27:14 says:

But [Jesus] gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

The Bible uses the word “strange” in a different sense. In Isaiah 26:21, God is described as rising up to do His strange work and perform His alien task. What is this strange and alien work? Since God’s will is for all people to be saved (what theologians call God’s proper work), it is His strange work to pronounce His judgment on the people He has created and redeemed. But He must do so because of their turning against Him in their sins.

God’s strange work is necessary because of our sinfulness, to bring us back to Himself again and to restore our relationship with Him again. This is succinctly described in Deuteronomy 32:39, in which God says:

“I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal.”

We as Lutheran Christians experience this “killing” and “making alive” as the Law is preached to us in all its severity (the strange work of God) and then the Gospel follows with its sweet announcement of forgiveness for our sins because of Jesus (the proper work of God).

Now, getting back to the word “strange” as it is interpreted in the more ordinary sense of the word, as *unusual*: The way of the cross was certainly one of those strange works of God, one which caused much offense for many people in Jesus’s time and which still causes offense.

In 1 Corinthians. 1:23, Paul says:

But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Greeks.

The Jews demanded a miraculous sign as proof that Jesus was the Christ (as seen in their mockery while He was being crucified). Instead, they received the sign of the cross.

The Gentiles could not understand how Jesus could be so powerful if He was nailed to a cross, a symbol of weakness in their minds. It didn’t make sense! Even Jesus’s own disciples had difficulty understanding their Master when He

See **MESSAGE** page 3

SLIMED!

Zion students have blast raising funds for capital campaign



From left, Becki Aker, Ann Solinsky and Hope Genzlinger were "slimed" by students to conclude Zion's Penny War, which resulted in \$4,153 for the congregation's building project.

Students and families of Zion Lutheran Church, School and Preschool, Rapid City, recently spent 15 days competing in a Penny War to raise funds for its Christ's Way Capital Campaign. The campaign goal of \$6.5 million over three phases would add classrooms and a gymnasium to the school, refurbish the sanctuary (which currently doubles as the school gym) and expand the narthex (which currently doubles as the school lunchroom).

Students and their families brought in

their money with the hopes of pushing their class to the top in points. Dollars and pennies counted as positive points and all silver coins counted as negative points. The students were very engaged in the competition and there was a lot of strategy involved. The kindergarten class was the big winner, earning the children lunch from McDonald's.

At the beginning of the event, the students were challenged to raise \$2,000 for the campaign. If they accomplished this, Principal Ann Solinsky would be

"slimed." The students reached this goal with a week to spare, so staff raised the challenge to \$3,000. If the updated goal was reached, General Ed teacher Becki Aker and Preschool Director Hope Genzlinger would also be slimed!

Overall, students raised \$4,153 toward the expansion project! Staff are incredibly proud of the students and their families and thank God for his many blessings! "Christ's Way Slime Day" was held on Dec. 21. It was messy fun for everyone!

Call Information



Rev. Samuel Bobby, senior pastor of St. Paul's, Aberdeen, is prayerfully considering a call from the LCMS Board of International Mission, Jan. 26.

Sierra Geistfeld, teacher candidate (Concordia University, Nebraska), is prayerfully considering a call to Sioux Falls Lutheran School, Feb. 6.

DCE Joshua Schmitt, St. John's, Yankton, declined a call as DCE to Fairlawn Lutheran Church, Fairlawn, Ohio, Jan. 16.

Rev. Christopher McCarthy, pastor of First, Wall, and Emmanuel, Creighton, declined a call to St. Paul, Aurelia, Iowa, Jan. 12.

VACANCIES

Sole pastor

- Concordia, Immanuel/Cresbard, Wecota*
- Grace, Blessed Emmanuel/Deadwood, Sturgis*
- St. Paul, Trinity/Plankinton, White Lake*

Associate pastor

- Zion, Rapid City (*associate pastor*)

The 'Generalist'

New DCE tends to many needs of the congregation

By DCE Michael Leapley
St. Paul's, Aberdeen



This is the textbook definition of a director of Christian education that I fondly learned to recite while studying at Concordia University Nebraska:

A director of Christian education is a Synodically certified, called and commissioned lifespan educational leader prepared for team ministry in a congregational setting.

(Ethical Guidelines for Directors of Christian Education, p. 3)

I knew the official definition while I was a student, but I always wondered what it would look like for me in my first call. On March 20, 2022, I was commissioned and installed as a DCE at St. Paul's, Aberdeen. I no longer had to wonder how that textbook definition would play out. I was finally living it.

I quickly discovered something that I had always known but had not fully realized until I experienced it myself, namely, the brilliance of that DCE definition. It is a broad definition — a “lifespan” is a large age group — but it is broad by design. In its broadness, it enables DCEs to meet the needs of the congregation to which they are called. For some congregations, that may look like a specialized focus in which the DCE is primarily responsible for youth ministry, family ministry or another area. In other cases, the DCE may be a generalist who serves in various capacities and roles as an educational leader. The latter of the two is an apt description of the ministry that I am involved with at St. Paul's.

As a DCE at St. Paul's, being a generalist is the best way I can serve. In any

given week, I may teach an adult Bible study, lead youth group, give a children's message, lead preschool chapel, teach a Bible story to our Sunday school class, lead a devotion for LWML or help our youth group host a chili cook-off. I count everything I do as a blessing. Meeting the needs of my church as a generalist brings me great joy.

In my brief time serving and meeting these educational needs, I have noticed a theme. One of the biggest educational needs at St. Paul's, and I believe in the church at large, is to learn how to faithfully interact with the entertainment media that we consume, whether that be literature, films, music or even commercials.

I realize I can teach people how to see Jesus in the stories that we love. Regardless of an author's or director's intentions, mankind cannot help but include elements in their stories that point to their Creator. In youth group, we have analyzed movies such as *The Dark Knight* and *The Matrix*, which are full of messianic themes. This coming summer at Camp Minneboji, we will learn how *WALL-E* is a movie about Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life — something I am very excited to teach!

DCEs meet the needs of the church, but a church is not required to have a DCE in order to start addressing its biggest educational needs. Every good story points to Christ's saving work in His death and resurrection. So the next time you read a book or watch a movie with your family, see if you can recognize Jesus's presence in the story. You may just be surprised!

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.*

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

told them that the way to glory was through such a despised and shameful way — crucifixion on a cross.

God's wonderfully strange and unusual work is present in our lives as we sinners meet Him at the cross, where our sins are put to death. There at the cross, God numbers His Son as a transgressor for us and miraculously numbers us as His children. There at the cross, Jesus takes our sins and gives us His righteousness. As Luther says, this is a great exchange. Great indeed!

And strange to a world that strives to avoid death at all costs. But Jesus suffers death for a purpose: to accept the punishment for all sinners in order to redeem them from sin, death and the power of the devil.

Through His wonderfully strange and unusual work on the cross we have been redeemed. Through His work on that first Easter morning — shared with us in Word and Sacrament — we are raised to live a new life in Him. God's works are not strange to us because we know that, as a result of them, we have abundant and eternal life.

Worship well this Lent, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ. You are among those for whom Jesus suffered, died and rose again. He lives! Get ready for the “Alleluias” to sound forth again soon!

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Scott Sailer

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

Share your news with us!

Send articles and photos to
Kate Meadows:

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

**May 2023 issue deadline:
March 15**

PATTY'S PONDERINGS



If you are a basketball fan, you know that March is full of high school and college basketball tournaments — and usually lots of snowfall in South Dakota.

But more importantly, we are in the season of

Lent, when we ponder the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us, His beloved children.

This is also a very busy time for LWML. Many zones and groups are using the **2023 LWML Prayer Service**, “My Soul Rejoices,” based on Psalm 5:11a. The service was written by Rev. Dr. Mitchell Schuessler, past LWML counselor (2017-21) and contains multiple hymns, Bible passages and prayers. It is available at lwml.org/prayer-service.

You have an opportunity to join your LWML sisters at the district **Spring Retreat**, to be held April 21-22 at Peace Lutheran Church, Brookings. The theme, “With One Voice,” is based on Romans 15:5-7. The retreat will include



Patty Peters
LWML South Dakota District President

singing, a mission/mite walk, a servant event, an 80th year anniversary party for our district and Bible study led by our district counselors, Revs. Clint Thorson and Brian Mosemann.

Pastor Thorson writes more on the retreat on page 5. Below his article are details about our retreat Gifts from the Heart.

Please find the registration form at sdlwml.org/district-retreats or use the form on page 6.

How many of you are going to Milwaukee for the **LWML 40th Biennial Convention** June 22-25? The convention theme is “Celebrate the Lord of the Nations,” based on Psalm 33:12-13. It is such a blessing to gather as the body of Christ to receive the Lord’s Supper, participate in Bible study, hear mission grant reports and vote on officers, bylaws and new mission grants. Also, it is a lot of fun! For more information and to register, go to lwml.org/2023-convention. Registration information is also available in the winter edition of *Lutheran Woman’s Quarterly*. Please help each other with registration, as you are able.

The LWML South Dakota District is

sponsoring a **MOST Ministries mission team** trip to Guatemala Oct. 27-Nov. 4. The team will provide families with a sustainable water purification system and information on how to use the system. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact your zone president or email me at lwmlsdprespatty@gmail.com.

There are many opportunities to be together in the Word and in service to our Lord and neighbors. Prayerfully consider what you can do this spring to celebrate your being a child of God through your Baptism. This is not “madness” to believers, but a gracious gift of our Triune God.



Down to the wire!

The new year brings the closing of our LWML South Dakota District biennium mite goal! The deadline for the national LWML’s biennium mite goal is March 15. Perhaps you can send in a special amount to help push us toward our goal of \$2,150,000! Such a blessing to so many ministries!

Jan Larson • VP of Gospel Outreach

The Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML)

is an official auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Since 1942, the LWML has focused on affirming each woman’s relationship with Christ, encouraging and equipping women to live out their Christian lives in active mission ministries and to support global missions. Visit lwml.org.



COUNSELOR'S CORNER



I encourage you to meditate on this Bible passage prior to the retreat. They are verses of blessing and hope that lead us as we gather from all corners of South Dakota.

How appropriate that these verses begin with the idea that God is the One who is patient and enduring, the One who is able to give us consolation and encouragement. He calls us out from wherever we are, from whatever we used to do and from whomever we used to be so that we may together as one glorify His name as we work in unity and peace to make His glorious work in Christ Jesus known.

Traveling across our beloved state can be daunting, depending on where you're coming from. Planning a large gathering can be stressful. The road, and life in general, can make us wary and weary of others. God the Holy Spirit, through the pen of Paul, encourages us to endure and build one another up.

We build one another up so that by our lives and our actions we might glorify God and welcome each other into God's loving care always. The encouragement Paul gives is Christ. By patient endurance Jesus welcomed me and you at our worst. He shed His blood on the cross so that we might know His mercy and in turn welcome others by that same mercy.

So next month, let's get to know Jesus and one another better in Brookings as we continue to work together in patient endurance and hope that one day every voice will glorify God through Jesus for His enduring mercy.

'With one voice'

God's richest blessings to all of you! I want to take a few minutes to promote the upcoming Spring Retreat for the LWML South Dakota District. The retreat will be held April 21-22 at Peace Lutheran Church, Brookings. The ladies of Peace, as well as the pastoral staff, have been preparing for our



Rev. Clint O. Thorson
LWML District Counselor

arrival! A big thank you to them for putting in the time and effort to host all of us involved and interested in the LWML.

As you may know, the theme for this year's retreat is "With One Voice," based on Romans 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 Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Gifts from the Heart

At the district retreat, we will assemble care packages and enclose a handwritten note of encouragement with each package. After the retreat, you are welcome to take some care packages with you and deliver them to a church worker near you!

Please bring items from the following list:

- \$25 Walmart or \$25 Visa gift card
- Trail Mix (individual servings)
- Cough drops (about 30 count)
- Water flavor packets of 10



- Tic Tacs
- Mustard Seed Devotions packets

In addition, please consider a cash donation for Sleep in Heavenly Peace of Brookings. Across the United States, too many children go without a bed or pillow to sleep on. These children end up sleeping on couches, blankets and even floors, which has adverse effects on their physical and mental health.

Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a group of volunteers dedicated to delivering to these children hand-built bunk beds free of charge. Oftentimes, the kids who receive one of the beds have never owned a bed of their own. For every \$250 collected, a child will receive a bed, mattress, pillow, set of sheets and comforter.

LWML SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT

Spring Retreat

April 21–22, 2023

Peace Lutheran Church, 1104 22nd Ave. South, Brookings

Theme: “With One Voice” • Scripture Verse: Romans 15:5-7



Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (____) _____ Email _____

Group _____ Zone _____

Deadline for registration and meals - April 1

Mark which applies:

- Member of the LWML SD Board of Directors
- LWML Member
- Young Woman Representative
- Heart to Heart Sister
- Pastor (no registration fee)
- Guest
- Special Dietary needs

Housing Information - You are responsible for

making your own hotel arrangements. Ask for the LWML rates. Rooms (two queen beds) are blocked at:

Country Inn and Suites

- 3000 LeFevre Drive, Brookings
- Phone: 605-692-3500
- \$ 75 + tax
- Reserve before March 20

Hampton Inn and Suites

- 3017 LeFevre Drive, Brookings
- Phone: 605-697-5232
- \$130 + tax
- Reserve before March 17

Registration Fee

	Quantity	Cost	Fee Total
Registration	_____	\$15	\$_____
Saturday Lunch	_____	\$ 9	\$_____
Total Enclosed			\$_____

Holiday Inn Express and Suites

- 3020 LeFevre Drive, Brookings
- Phone: 605-692-9060
- \$140 + tax
- Reserve before March 17

***Pastors please choose gratis meal.**

Make your check payable to: **LWML South Dakota District Retreat**

Mail your registration form with payment to:

Phyllis Porisch
307 Summit St. S.
Flandreau, SD 57028

LCMS South Dakota District Congregational Year-to-Date Report of Mission Receipts for the 12 months ending Jan. 14, 2023, compared to the 12 months ending Jan. 14, 2022

City, Congregation	Comm. Members	2022 Intention	12 months 2022	12 months 2021	Avg/Per 2022	Comm. 2021
Circuit 1 – Aberdeen						
Aberdeen, Our Savior*	329	10,000	13,085	12,325	39.77	37.46
Aberdeen, St. John	87	12,500	14,730	17,146	169.31	197.08
Aberdeen, St. Paul	780	50,000	51,120	39,310	65.54	50.40
Andover, Zion	106	–	1,800	650	16.98	6.13
Britton, St. John	155	–	5,438	7,000	35.08	45.16
Columbia, St. John	102	–	5,813	7,750	56.99	75.98
Cresbard, Concordia	58	2,500	9,170	9,250	158.10	159.48
Doland, Redeemer	43	–	2,000	2,000	46.51	46.51
Ferney, St. Paul	165	4,000	4,000	4,000	24.24	24.24
Groton, St. John	308	7,000	7,000	7,000	22.73	22.73
Leola, St. Paul	48	500	620	600	12.92	12.50
Mansfield, Trinity	280	25,000	33,020	32,936	117.93	117.63
Redfield, Messiah	152	500	1,000	–	6.58	–
Stratford, St. Paul	43	4,000	5,000	3,000	116.28	69.77
Wecota, Immanuel	86	7,150	6,362	11,939	73.98	138.83
Circuit 1 Totals	2,742	\$123,150	\$160,158	\$154,906	58.41	56.49
Circuit 2 – Watertown						
Brookings, Mount Calvary	375	43,500	49,789	47,249	132.77	126.00
Brookings, Peace	271	–	6,000	6,000	22.14	22.14
Corona, Trinity	146	2,000	3,421	3,222	23.43	22.07
Flandreau, Redeemer	37	3,800	3,800	3,000	102.70	81.08
Milbank, Bethlehem	62	300	360	430	5.81	6.94
Milbank, Emanuel	575	–	24,000	32,294	41.74	56.16
Revillo, St. John	126	4,000	3,894	3,519	30.90	27.93
Sisseton, Emanuel	161	3,900	3,900	4,585	24.22	28.48
Watertown, Mount Olive	389	30,700	30,700	30,700	78.92	78.92
Waubay, Zion	118	–	8,194	5,376	69.44	45.56
White, Zion	77	5,000	5,150	7,044	66.88	91.48
Wilmot, Our Savior	162	2,500	2,718	3,113	16.78	19.22
Circuit 2 Totals	2,499	\$95,700	\$141,926	\$146,532	56.79	58.64
Circuit 3 – Pierre						
Blunt, Trinity	37	2,000	2,000	2,000	54.05	54.05
Chamberlain, Zion	407	–	17,470	18,084	42.92	44.43
Draper, St. Paul	21	–	–	–	–	–
Gettysburg, Emmanuel	201	6,500	9,890	8,608	49.20	42.83
Gregory, St. John	258	–	5,600	4,090	21.71	15.85
Hamill, Zion	25	500	500	500	20.00	20.00
Harrod, Immanuel	19	600	600	600	31.58	31.58
Lebanon, Christ	23	–	300	300	13.04	13.04
Midland, St. Peter	40	3,000	3,200	3,072	80.00	76.80
Murdo, Messiah	76	3,000	3,000	3,265	39.47	42.96
Norris, St. John	68	–	2,500	2,500	36.76	36.76
Onida, Holy Cross	110	1,600	–	1,600	–	14.55
Phillip, Our Redeemer	50	–	–	–	–	–
Pierre, Faith	1,478	–	46,000	45,000	31.12	30.45
Presho, Zion	95	1,650	–	3,000	–	31.58
Reliance, Trinity	38	–	–	–	–	–
Rosebud, Rosebud Mission	–	–	1,560	2,141	–	–
Winner, Christ	68	2,000	2,000	2,000	29.41	29.41
Circuit 3 Totals	3,014	\$20,850	\$94,620	\$96,760	31.39	32.10
Circuit 4 – Black Hills						
Black Hawk, Divine Shepherd	364	15,681	14,374	15,225	39.49	41.83
Creighton, Emmanuel	52	–	352	306	6.77	5.88
Custer, Our Redeemer	195	3,000	5,240	3,000	26.87	15.38
Deadwood, Grace	73	3,000	3,000	3,447	41.10	47.22
Hill City, Our Savior	23	–	2,000	–	86.96	–
Hot Springs, Bethesda	308	7,000	7,000	7,000	22.73	22.73
Rapid City, Bethlehem	448	28,388	28,552	27,727	63.73	61.89
Rapid City, Our Redeemer	125	2,700	3,675	3,661	29.40	29.29
Rapid City, Peace	524	–	27,091	22,284	51.70	42.53
Rapid City, Zion	792	27,000	27,000	25,500	34.09	32.20
Spearfish, St. Paul	316	42,000	42,000	41,500	132.91	131.33
Sturgis, Blessed Emmanuel	27	800	–	1,612	–	59.70
Wall, First	201	2,100	2,562	–	12.75	–
Circuit 4 Totals	3,448	\$131,669	\$162,846	\$151,262	47.23	43.87

City, Congregation	Comm. Members	2022 Intention	12 months 2022	12 months 2021	Avg/Per 2022	Comm. 2021
Circuit 5 – Mitchell						
Armour, Redeemer	222	8,000	8,000	9,000	36.04	40.54
Delmont, Zion	99	16,000	16,000	16,000	161.62	161.62
Dimock, Immanuel	166	15,000	25,102	21,151	151.22	127.42
Emery, St. Peter	59	3,000	4,903	4,949	83.10	83.88
Huron, Mount Calvary	766	70,000	70,000	67,500	91.38	88.12
Mitchell, Zion	555	30,850	30,932	30,510	55.73	54.97
Parkston, Faith	191	10,000	12,500	10,200	65.45	53.40
Plankinton, St. Paul	145	–	4,474	4,000	30.86	27.59
Tripp, Emmaus	57	–	2,500	3,000	43.86	52.63
White Lake, Trinity	117	8,000	8,250	8,150	70.51	69.66
Wessington Springs, Zion	75	–	–	650	–	8.67
Wolsey, St. John	216	–	13,738	11,972	63.60	55.43
Woonsocket, Mount Olive	11	–	–	–	–	–
Circuit 5 Totals	2,679	\$160,850	\$196,399	\$187,082	73.31	69.83
Circuit 6 – Freeman						
Alexandria, St. Martin	81	1,100	825	2,200	10.19	27.16
Canistota, Zion	227	–	2,009	1,379	8.85	6.07
Centerville, First English	64	2,000	2,360	2,264	36.88	35.38
Emery, St. John	51	–	–	–	–	–
Freeman, St. Paul	265	9,000	11,918	14,957	44.97	56.44
Hartford, Trinity	96	3,000	3,452	3,000	35.96	31.25
Howard, St. John	111	–	4,845	4,600	43.65	41.44
Hurley, Zion	31	2,750	3,120	2,750	100.65	88.71
Madison, Our Savior	221	3,600	3,600	3,600	16.29	16.29
Marion, Bethesda	61	2,500	2,500	2,500	40.98	40.98
Menno, Immanuel	62	3,000	4,659	4,335	75.15	69.92
Montrose, St. John	88	–	219	–	2.49	–
Parke, First English	43	2,000	7,000	12,000	162.79	279.07
Scotland, St. Paul	31	600	600	600	19.35	19.35
Spencer, Trinity	77	2,000	2,000	3,000	25.97	38.96
Tea, Risen Savior	100	11,790	11,785	11,899	117.85	118.99
Wentworth, St. Peter	181	7,750	7,104	8,421	39.25	46.52
Circuit 6 Totals	1,790	\$51,090	\$67,996	\$77,505	37.99	43.30
Circuit 7 – Sioux Falls						
Brandon, Blessed Redeemer	285	15,000	15,000	13,420	52.63	47.09
Sioux Falls, Christ	90	2,000	2,000	4,511	22.22	50.12
Sioux Falls, Faith	619	43,500	43,500	39,875	70.27	64.42
Sioux Falls, Lord of Life	179	12,500	12,546	12,000	70.09	67.04
Sioux Falls, Memorial	725	50,000	47,820	47,199	65.96	65.10
Sioux Falls, Our Redeemer	324	24,000	25,833	25,866	79.73	79.83
Sioux Falls, Resurrection	214	10,000	9,167	10,000	42.84	46.73
Sioux Falls, Trinity of The Deaf	35	–	–	–	–	–
Sioux Falls, Zion	646	48,000	48,800	47,000	75.54	72.76
Circuit 7 Totals	3,117	\$205,000	\$204,666	\$199,871	65.66	64.12
Circuit 8 – Yankton						
Alcester, Peace	113	3,000	4,421	3,283	39.12	29.05
Avon, Zion	190	–	5,483	5,100	28.86	26.84
Dakota Dunes, Holy Cross	173	25,814	23,816	28,378	137.66	164.03
Fairfax, Trinity	71	4,500	4,500	6,500	63.38	91.55
Springfield, Our Savior	24	100	–	100	–	4.17
Tyndall, St. John	132	2,500	2,500	2,500	18.94	18.94
Utica, Martinus	65	–	2,011	1,904	30.94	29.29
Vermillion, Concordia	81	–	7,325	7,200	90.43	88.89
Wagner, St. John	231	9,000	9,000	9,000	38.96	38.96
Yankton, St. John	1,107	53,000	48,583	53,000	43.89	47.88
Circuit 8 Totals	2,187	\$97,914	\$107,639	\$116,965	49.22	53.48
GRAND TOTALS	21,476	\$886,223	\$1,136,250	\$1,130,883	52.91	52.66

Comm. Members: Communicant Membership as of Feb. 4, 2021, per locator.lcms.org
 *\$1,000 of Our Savior, Aberdeen, is for 2021 missions



Editor's note: For the next two issues, Alison Andreasen, wife of Rev. Jordon Andreasen, pastor of Our Savior, Aberdeen, and St. John, Columbia, will explore the symbolism and beauty of the olive tree as it relates to the sanctity of life. Alison is a Lutheran teacher who enjoys writing, reading and trying to grow things. She and her husband and their five children live in Aberdeen.



I am a transplant to South Dakota. My first time seeing cotton from a cottonwood tree fly through the air was a magical experience. The tree's silhouette in a prairie sunset and its leaves rustling in the summer sun made my heart feel at home.

My admiration quickly dwindled when I had one in my yard, however. As I vacuumed cotton fluff off my air conditioner, brushed sticky pods out of the dog's fur and picked flimsy branches out of the yard, I asked the Lord why He created such a tree. The most annoying thing about that tree was the ever-prolific saplings that sprung up along its root system. We battled those saplings all summer long. If you caught them when they were young, you could tear them off easily, but if you let them go for even a few weeks, they would be too sturdy to rip out with your hands and

you would be doomed to an afternoon with an axe in hand.

The saplings produced by an olive tree are even more numerous than those of a cottonwood tree. Unlike cottonwood saplings, shoots from an olive tree come from the tree's base and not from along the root system. Modern-day olive tree growers talk on various online forums about how best to get rid of these annoying shoots. Some say it is best to prevent them altogether by spreading an herbicide along the base of the tree. If the saplings are young and tender, they can be ripped out or deprived of water until they shrivel. Other growers prefer to remove the shoots when they are a bit more mature by twisting them until they gradually let go of their base. Regardless of how you get rid of it, the consensus is clear: an olive tree shoot is not a thing to be desired.

Yet in Psalm 128, it is these pesky little shoots to which the Lord compares children of the blessed man. In addition to a wife (a fruitful vine), the man who fears the Lord will have children like olive shoots around his table. This is definitely an image that God's people would have recognized as olive trees dotted the landscape of Israel.

Psalm 128 is a "Song of Ascents," sung by God's people as they traveled to Jerusalem with their families to celebrate the Feast of Weeks. Throughout the Feast's seven weeks, the people gave thanks to the Lord for their blessings of harvest and home. They probably

passed several olive trees along their way to Jerusalem.

While the world tells us that children can be bothersome or inconvenient, Christians are taught another reality: children are a blessing. The world tells us we can prevent them with morally unquestioned contraception methods or abortion. They are God's gift, created by Him, and we are to welcome and care for them. The world might tempt us to pinch our older shoots of the vine. But instead we seek to connect them even more to the root of God's Word so that they can withstand the trials of the world, especially as they seek answers to where their identity and values are founded.

What happens to the olive tree shoots that grow to full maturity? They become a part of the existing tree. Their being is still their own, but they naturally become a part of something much bigger than themselves. This is how ancient olive trees can still be living and bearing fruit after 2,000 years. Each generation of shoots grows up and into the larger tree. This, too, is how it is with the children in our midst. By God's grace and goodness they mature into members of our families and church families.

Lord, help us give thanks for the presence of children in our lives. May we receive them as the blessings they are and rejoice when we witness you nurturing them with your teachings and life-giving water of Baptism. Please keep them rooted in the faith throughout their earthly lives so that they may be united to you and to all believers now and forevermore in your Son, Jesus. Amen

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



Rev. Chris Navurskis
District Life Coordinator