



# DISTRICT NEWS

## SOUTH DAKOTA



- ▶ I know that I should forgive my friend ... but I can't.
- ▶ I know that I should say something ... but I can't.
- ▶ I know that I should be more faithful ... but I can't.
- ▶ I know that there is work at the church for me to do ... but I can't.

Sometimes we even convince ourselves that we can't. But in Jesus, we don't have to say, "I can't," because we can. He gives us the power.

Think about the Day of Pentecost. Jesus had left His disciples 10 days earlier. They were afraid and had probably convinced themselves that they couldn't do the work Jesus had given them to do:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

MATT. 28:19-20

Can you imagine Peter saying, "I can't," and all of the other disciples saying, "And neither can we."

But then the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, just as Jesus had promised. With the Spirit, the disciples could proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ. And they did! Read about it in Acts 2. Empowered by the Holy Spirit they proclaimed the Good News. They baptized 3,000 souls.

The next time you are tempted to say, "I can't," catch yourself. Are you sure?



Rev. Scott Sailer  
District President

Once heard a story about a little boy who grew up in a family with several brothers and sisters. Each one of the children had certain jobs to do around the house, but whenever this boy was asked to do anything, he would say, "I can't." When his mother told him to pick up his toys, he would answer, "I can't." When his father would ask him to help with the yard work, he would say, "I can't." When his brothers and sisters would ask for help, his favorite response was, "I can't."

Needless to say, it didn't take long for the other children in the family to get upset. One day, they asked him, "Why do you always say, 'I can't' when you are asked to help?"

His answer? "Oh, 'can't' is my magic word."

He was right. As long as he said, "I can't," like magic, he got out of a job. He convinced others that he really couldn't do what they had asked of him. But the real problem was that at times, he even convinced himself.

How often have you used this trick to get out of something that you didn't really want to do? How often have you said, "I can't," when you knew you really could?

- ▶ I know that I should give up this pet sin ... but I can't.

See MESSAGE page 3



## All aboard for FFA Week in Groton

Ever drive to school in your tractor?

Members of the Groton High School FFA recently did just that in honor of National FFA Week, and they made a few special stops in town along the way.

One of those stops was at St. John's Lutheran Preschool, Groton. Students received special greetings from the high schoolers — and the excitement of being around the big-wheeled machines. The event was postponed a week due to a blizzard, but the continuing mean winter didn't stop these high schoolers from bringing bunches of warm smiles to the little ones at St. John's.

Tricia Keith is St. John's Preschool teacher. Rev. Jeremy Yeardon is pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church.



From left, Laiken Neigel, Collyns Dunbar and Taisley Hendrickson stand in front of a tractor wheel.

FFA member Kaleb Antonsen talks to the preschoolers about the tractor (with Porter Johnson and Turner Thompson behind him).



High-school student Porter Johnson stands in a tractor cab with, from left, Jax Ronning, Vic Fliehs and Evalynn Peterson.



High-school student Kamryn Fliehs shows preschoolers Harper Boerger and Scarlett Stubbs the inside of a tractor.

THE WORK OF A DCE

# Stand, Point, Duck!

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *We are in the midst of a roughly year-long series exploring the youth and education professionals who work in and bless the LCMS South Dakota District. This month, DCE Lorien Petersen, who serves at Zion, Rapid City, leans on some unconventional wisdom to help readers think a bit differently about the role and work of a DCE.*



Directors of Christian education (DCEs) are lifespan educators in our church body. DCEs are not just youth leaders. They work in a variety of ministry roles across the age spectrum.

Over the past 15 years I have served two congregations and schools in two states and worked with hundreds of God's people from all walks of life. I've been blessed to work with middle school and high school youth, young adults, confirmation students, Sunday school children and parents. I've taught religion classes and art, coached cheerleading, read to elementary school classes, directed musicals and programs and managed worship technology. I have had the pleasure of working alongside amazing church workers and lay people in all of these areas. I've done a lot in my career so far, but the most important thing I've done, the thing that means the most, is that I have been able to meet people where they are and point them to Jesus.

Youth ministry educator and trainer Dennis "Tiger" McLuen described youth ministry in this way: "Stand in front of the cross, get their attention and duck."

I love this description! It truly applies to the work of a DCE. To stand in front of the cross and get people's attention, we first must show up. Is the ministry we have been called to a priority? Are we focused on the cross of Christ and His message? Once we are solid in our purpose and standing firmly in front of the

cross, how are we getting people's attention? Once we have their attention, are we getting out of the way so people can see Jesus?

More than anything, we should want our people to be coming for Jesus and to grow in their faith and knowledge of Him. We as DCEs must keep our eyes on Jesus, stand firmly in front of His cross and get out of the way so He can work.

Keeping this in mind as I minister to God's people in my calling not only helps me to stay focused. I also find that it frees me up to be truly present and prioritize my work. We have an awesome opportunity to connect with the people God places in our ministries as they grow in their faith and baptismal identity. Whether we have a youth group of 30 or of four, our mission is the same.

Each of those young people is someone God dearly loves, a son or daughter of the King of Kings. The time we spend with them teaching, encouraging and praying matters, and God uses it all to impact their lives. As DCEs, our job is to be faithful to where God has called us to minister to His people. We are to show up with our eyes and hearts firmly set on Christ alone. When God places people in our paths, we should point them to the cross and then get out of the way so they can see Jesus.

As a DCE, I have the privilege of walking with members of my congregation on their lifelong journey of faith for the time that God has given me with them. Then, I trust that God will continue to water those seeds I planted to make them grow. God bless our South Dakota District DCEs as they do His Kingdom work. *Soli deo Gloria!*

**P.S.:** A huge shout-out to all the volunteer youth workers, Sunday school and confirmation teachers out there. We are so thankful you are willing to serve in your congregations. The South Dakota District DCEs love you and we are excited to be a resource for you. Please reach out if we can help you with anything!

## MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Isn't the very same power available to you that was poured out upon the disciples that day? Yes! The Holy Spirit was poured out upon you at your Baptism. He remains with you today. He guides you by the Word of God. He strengthens you as you partake of the Lord's Supper.

With the help of the Spirit, you can!

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

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

## Call Information

**Rev. Alan Ludwig**, emeritus, College Place, Wash., accepted a call as part-time assistant pastor to Our Savior, Aberdeen, and St. John, Columbia, March 12.

**Rev. Clint Thorson**, pastor of Our Savior, Madison, and St. John, Howard, is prayerfully considering calls as pastor from Calvary, Verona, N.M., and St. John, Bloomfield, N.J., March 5.

**Rev. Levi Willms**, associate pastor, St. John's, Yankton, is prayerfully considering a call as associate pastor to Trinity, Sauk Rapids, Minn., March 26.

**Rev. Jens Jenson**, pastor of Redeemer, Armour, declined a call to St. John, Germantown, Iowa, March 26.

**Rev. Doug Slavens**, associate pastor of Memorial, Sioux Falls, declined a call as associate pastor to Salem Lutheran Church, Salem, Ill., March 21.

**Rev. Samuel Thole**, associate pastor, Peace, Brookings, declined a call as pastor to Trinity, Des Moines, Iowa, March 20.

### VACANCIES

**Senior pastor**

- St. Paul, Aberdeen • Mount Calvary, Huron

**Sole pastor**

- Concordia, Immanuel/Cresbard, Wecota
- Grace, Blessed Emmanuel/Deadwood, Sturgis
- St. Paul, Trinity/Plankinton, White Lake
- Lord of Life, Sioux Falls

**Associate pastor**

- Zion, Rapid City



## PATTY'S PONDERINGS



# HATS OFF to our delegates!

The voting delegates of the South Dakota District will represent each of our 10 zones at the LWML 40th Biennial Convention. Each zone has its own way of deciding who the delegate is and how to support her. An alternate delegate is also chosen.

The delegates will vote on the LWML Mission Grant proposals a few weeks ahead of the convention, to be held June 22–25 in Milwaukee. Voting at the convention will be for new officers, the Nominating Committee for the 2025 convention, bylaws and the new mission goal. This is very important work for the LWML. Please review these topics at your zone and group meetings and share your thoughts with your delegates.



**Patty Peters**  
LWML South Dakota  
District President

The voting delegates are :

- ▶ Betty Ochsner (Aberdeen Zone)
- ▶ Patti Praeuner (Black Hills Zone)
- ▶ Dora Harste (Brookings Zone)
- ▶ Hope Lutter (Chamberlain Zone)
- ▶ Laraine Kahre (Huron Zone)
- ▶ Linda Remund (Milbank Zone)
- ▶ Michelle Lemcke (Mitchell Zone)
- ▶ Mary Jo Stier (Pierre Zone)
- ▶ Cathy VandeBraak (Sioux Falls)
- ▶ Sandy Brandt (Yankton Zone)

Thank you very much, delegates, for being a part of the convention and preparing for this important job of carrying out the work of LWML. May God bless our time at the convention!

## SEW Happy

### Faith, Pierre, boxes up handmade dresses for Mexico mission

Making dresses from new or gently used pillowcases has been a project of the Faith, Pierre, LWML group for over 12 years. Throughout the year, the pillow cases, buttons, lace and trim of all kinds are donated by Faith members while the LWML provides the elastic and bias tape.

LWML members gather to make kits that people can take home and sew into a dress, ranging from extra-small to extra-large. Each kit contains a pillowcase cut to a specific size and the materials needed to finish the project. When the dress is complete, it is returned to the church and another kit is taken home to sew.

Faith's mission team recently took the dresses to Mexico for its trip to help Ysleta Lutheran Mission Human Care of El Paso, Texas. The mission team has also taken shorts and flip-flops to give to boys they encounter. Handing out these tangible gifts in person has been rewarding for the mission team as well as



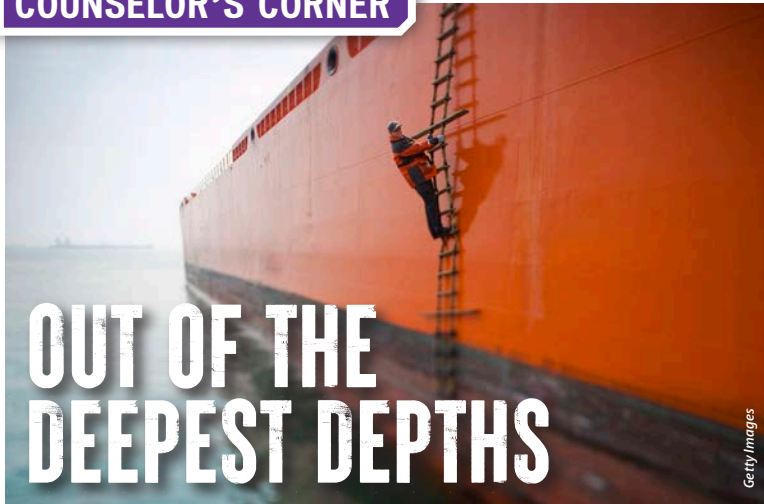
From left, Doreen Miller, Luann Zuercher, Jan Deal and Renee Knapp prepare dress kits.

the recipients. This has been a fun project for all the members of Faith Lutheran Church, and it's amazing to see how creative women can be!

The sewing typically starts in February and is completed by mid-May. In the beginning, up to 70 dresses were completed each year, but recently the number of completed dresses has been closer to 400! Doreen Miller coordinates the project for the group, but many hands go into serving the Lord in this event.

**Jan Larson** • VP of Gospel Outreach

COUNSELOR'S CORNER



**Greetings in the name of our victorious Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ!**

I want to start off by reminding and “hyping” you up for the LWML 40th Biennial Convention, to be held June 22–25 in Milwaukee. It isn’t too late to sign up. If you are able, please consider attending this wonderful event.



**Rev. Clint O. Thorson**  
LWML District Counselor

When you attend an LWML convention, you will see one mighty way that the Spirit works through His people — the way the phenomenal ladies of the LWML share His love and mercy with the rest of His creation. These conventions are wonderful experiences that everyone should attend at least once.

With that reminder, I have a question for you: Have you ever felt like you were in too deep in some area of life, or just in general? With everything the world throws at and expects of us, and with all the things that we want to do and expect of ourselves, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed, buried under a mountain of endless tasks. It gets even harder when we face disease and death in our own lives or the lives of our loved ones, not to mention the sins and temptations that weigh heavily on our hearts.

If you are feeling like you’re in too deep, take a minute to read Psalm 130. The author has found himself feeling this way. Sin and iniquity have piled up; he is buried. From this self-made grave he cries out to the Lord because he knows there is no digging himself out of depths he has fallen into. He cries to the Lord because help in the Lord is his only hope.

God wasn’t and isn’t afraid of the depths that we find ourselves in when we sin, or even when we’re buried underneath everything that the world has heaped upon us. In fact, He sent His Son Jesus to dive right into those depths, to take our sin and pain on Himself. Why? So that we would be free of it all. Why? Because of His love for us. Jesus even descended to the depths of hell so that you who believe and hope in Him would not just be rescued from the depths you regularly face, but so that you would be free from the deepest, darkest depths of death because Jesus gives you eternal life.

So out of your own depths, hope in the Lord. He isn’t afraid to plumb the depths of your life to rescue you from the darkness of death and bring you into His marvelous life.

Time to prepare  
**MISSION GRANT PROPOSALS**

The deadline for mission grant proposals for the LWML South Dakota District is Aug. 31. Although that seems far off, now is the time to think about how your zone or ministry could be helped by a grant from LWML.



Mission grant proposals should be sent to Jan Larson at 920 Woodridge Drive; Pierre, SD 57501, or [larson920@hotmail.com](mailto:larson920@hotmail.com). You may also contact Jan for more information or visit [sdlwml.org/mission-grant-application](http://sdlwml.org/mission-grant-application).

**MITCHELL ZONE UPDATE**

The Mitchell Zone finished 2022 with an Orphan Grain Train (OGT) fish feed Oct. 2 at Zion, Delmont. The event in many respects turned out to be more than we had bargained for.

The entire town of Delmont was in the midst of a major road project. As I looked out of the church window on Oct. 1, I saw that there was no possible way for vehicles to get into the church driveways. The road crew had pretty much shut down for the weekend, leaving one lone worker to diligently smooth out a path to the east driveway. But God is gracious. In spite of the road conditions, many people came.

By the end of the day, our ladies had the opportunity to work with some pretty amazing people who are now friends. We fed over 150 people, raised \$3,000 for OGT and filled a trailer with donations. It’s true: “With God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

On Oct. 8, Zion, Mitchell, hosted the district Christian Life Workshop, “The Tabernacle/ Temple in the Bible,” with 87 attending. Mitchell Zone members made and donated several items for a silent auction for the district mission goal. A mite offering of \$1,318 was collected.

I pray God’s blessings on all of you for 2023!

**Julie Kaufman** • Mitchell Zone president





Photos: Getty Images

## Dear friends in Christ,

I thank our Father and Creator for the gift of sight in Christ.

Recently my son, Mark, and I went to the doctor's office to pick up our new glasses. This is a regular ritual for me. I've needed glasses ever since my freshman year of high school. That's about 34 years of visits to the eye doctor and who-knows-how-many pairs of glasses and sets of contacts. I know I need help seeing.

For my son, this pair of glasses is a new experience. It was time for his routine eye exam, and so we scheduled it. Little did any of us know Mark would walk away from that appointment with a prescription for corrective lenses!

On the day my son and I picked up our glasses, I sat in a chair so a fitting specialist could match my new frames to the unique non-symmetrical features of my face. Mark sat to my left, at another table, to be fitted for his frames.

He was ready to go before I was. As I continued to sit through my fitting, I watched Mark. His new glasses on, he looked around the room at all the shelves filled with sample frames and mirrors. Then he looked out the window. He looked across the street and, through the window, he looked up at the snowy sky. He took off the glasses and looked around again. He put them back on and said, "Wow, I can see a lot more with these than I thought."

Who knows how long Mark's sight had not been perfect. He was unaware of his impairment until someone helped him see with these new lenses.

As I watched him, I thought about

how our work in life ministry is similar. We battle in the public square against those who would look at the very beginnings of a human being and call him or her a clump of cells. A letter to the editor in the *New York Times* last July typifies this attitude. The author rails against all of us "anti-choice activists," insisting that "pregnancy begins with a small cluster of undifferentiated cells that are not, in fact, a child." An argument like this comes from spiritually blind people who have no awareness of their impairment.

I am reminded of the blind man in John 9. Jesus made some mud, which He used to anoint the man's eyes. The blind man washed his eyes in the pool at Siloam and came back seeing. There was great confusion in the hearts of those who beheld the healed man — the man who could now see. Was he indeed the same man who had been born blind? Could it really be so? Neighbors, friends and even the Pharisees wondered. It was next to impossible to believe.



Unsure how to respond, the Pharisees began to interrogate the blind man about the miracle Jesus had performed. They made assumptions about Jesus' identity. They wanted the once blind man to support their derision of Jesus.

But the man born blind would not join their blasphemy. Consequently, he was ridiculed. At the climax of their conflict, the healed man says:

"Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." JOHN 9:30-33

The man born blind was never so blind as the Pharisees. The Pharisees could physically see, but they were blind to the person and work of the Savior in their midst. He came to bring them forgiveness, salvation and life to the fullest. Rather than receive those gifts, they preferred to live in their blindness.

I am not surprised by the blindness in the world around us. It is nothing new. I do, however, enjoy the opportunity to share Jesus's message of light and life with the spiritually blind. The crucified Christ promises to work through His Word and anoint through the Spirit. As He gives new eyes to the people He saves, it might be reminiscent of my son viewing his surroundings and saying, "Wow, I can see more than I expected." Or, even better, in the words of the man born blind, "Lord, I believe."

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), or  
► 605-352-7121



# Life grants again available

The fourth phase of the 1 John 3 Initiative Million Dollar Life Match is underway, with applications due by June 30.

The initiative, which began in early 2022, seeks to support LCMS congregations involved in providing beginning-of-life care in their local communities. Any LCMS congregation is eligible to apply.

The three-part process, which takes place over a period of months, consists of an application, an award and a follow-up report. The initiative was originally planned to have three phases, but a fourth phase was added to allow a greater window of opportunity for congregations interested in applying.

To date, grants have been awarded to help congregations:

- ▶ Care for families experiencing challenges at the beginning of life;
- ▶ Partner with an LCMS Recognized Service Organization in support of life;
- ▶ Collaborate with local agencies on foster care and adoption; and
- ▶ Collaborate with local pregnancy resource centers and maternity homes.

Awards range from \$1,000 to \$50,000. Grant recipients are selected via a process that considers a variety of factors, including:



LCMS/Errik M. Lunsford

- ▶ Whether the grant is for a new or existing project (both are eligible, but new projects receive more weight);
- ▶ Whether the proposal is complete, clear, specific, feasible and sound;
- ▶ How closely the project is connected
  - ▶ the Word and Sacrament ministry of the congregation; and
- ▶ How well the project provides spiritual, emotional or physical care for families vulnerable to abortion or facing challenges.

Grants will be awarded in September, and reports are due by March 1, 2024.

For more information, or to begin the application process, visit the Million Dollar Life Match webpage at [lcms.org/life-grant](https://lcms.org/life-grant). Address questions to Kris Freeman, manager of LCMS Life Ministry, at [lifeministry@lcms.org](mailto:lifeministry@lcms.org) or 314-996-1217.

## LWML selects young women for convention

Congratulations to Rebecca Scott and Vania Asmus, who were selected as the LWML South Dakota District Young Woman Representatives and will attend the LWML 40th Biennial Convention in Milwaukee in June.

Vania attends Memorial, Sioux Falls. She is interested in learning more about the LWML as well as meeting other women who have a similar interest. Vania has contributed to the LWML South Dakota District by designing logos and banners. She is also the daughter-in-law of Lisa Asmus,

former LWML district president.

Rebecca Scott attends Zion, Sioux Falls, and wishes to learn more about the LWML and get to meet other young LCMS women. She serves as an advanced emergency technician (AEMT) and is a clinical research coordinator for Sanford Health. She is the daughter of Cathy VandeBraak.

We are so glad to have these young women represent the South Dakota District!

**Laurel Schamber**  
YWR Committee Chairwoman

## Got news to share?



We are always in need of more submissions for the South Dakota District *Lutheran Witness* insert. Your stories remind us of what God is doing around the South Dakota District. They also share ideas for nurturing those God has already gathered into His church and for reaching those still outside of the flock with the Good News about Jesus. It finally reminds each of us that Christ's church is much larger than just our particular congregation.

We welcome pictures and stories of congregational events, youth events, outreach events, installations, events from your men's or women's group, servant events, conferences, anniversaries, church renovations or additions, and much more. If you would like an upcoming event publicized, please make sure we have the information at least two months in advance.

**Submissions for the August issue are needed by June 15.**

Send articles and photos to Kate Meadows at:

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



# Concordia, Cresbard to celebrate **75 YEARS**

The members of Concordia Lutheran Church, Cresbard, will observe the congregation's 75th anniversary of Word and Sacrament ministry and Christian fellowship on June 11. Worship begins at 10:30 a.m., followed by a noon meal and fellowship at the Cresbard Community Center. A short program begins at 2 p.m. For more

information and/or to let the planning committee know you would like to attend the meal, email Denise Melius by June 1 at [dmelius@nvc.net](mailto:dmelius@nvc.net).

Members are also collecting pictures of the church and past events to be included in a slide show. To contribute photos, please send to Claudia Scotter at [rcscotter@yahoo.com](mailto:rcscotter@yahoo.com).



## The Word at work

The Spring 2023 issue of *Lutherans Engage the World* gives a glimpse of how the Word of God is at work around the world, including in India, where Concordia Historical Institute is helping Lutherans preserve priceless historical documents going back to the first LCMS missionary to the country. As Indian Lutherans remember and celebrate the history of their church, so, too, can the entire church find encouragement in their stories.

In addition, read about Lutherans who are showing the love and mercy of Christ to those impacted by a tornado that hit Selma, Ala.; pro-life ministries that are serving families in Sealy, Texas,

and Clinton, Mo.; and a ministry that is reaching out to the Winnebago Tribe in rural Nebraska. The issue also includes information about the five Lutheran church bodies — in Ukraine, Finland, Sudan and South Sudan, Uganda, and Sri Lanka — that delegates will be asked to recognize or endorse fellowship with at the Synod convention this summer.

This issue can also be read online at [engage.lcms.org](http://engage.lcms.org). If you aren't currently receiving the magazine but would like to, visit [engage.lcms.org/subscribe](http://engage.lcms.org/subscribe) to sign up for a free subscription. Both individual and bulk subscriptions (for congregations) are available.