



# DISTRICT NEWS

## SOUTH DAKOTA

**‘Rooted and abounding’**

# You’re invited to our **DISTRICT CONVENTION**

“Rooted” and “abounding” are strong words. To be rooted is to be grounded, secure. To be abounding is to be active, overflowing.



**Rev. Scott Sailer**  
District President

During the upcoming district convention, to be held Dec. 5-7 in Sioux Falls, we will celebrate being rooted in Christ and abounding in thanksgiving. Rooted. Abounding. Grounded. Active. These are marks of God’s grateful, Christ-centered people.

Col. 2:6-7 is the convention’s theme passage:

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

We, the people of God of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who live in South Dakota, have experienced so many challenges in the three-and-a-half years since our last district convention, especially due to the pandemic and the increasing secularization of our society. But God has kept us rooted in His Holy Word and in His grace to

us in Jesus Christ. So rooted, we have abounded in thanksgiving by serving our neighbors here, near and far with deeds of mercy and words of witness.

At our district convention we will study and celebrate this God-given, dual reality of being rooted and being active in worship and good works, and we will plan our mission and ministry around this God-given reality for the next triennium.

Your congregation or parish will be officially represented by your pastor and one layperson. But we also invite you to attend the convention, as a visitor or observer. There is no fee to attend.

The portions of the convention that might be of special interest to you are the Synod report — given by our president, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison or one of the vice-presidents — at 7 p.m. on Dec. 6, and the convention essay by Rev. Michael Newman, Texas District president, at 9 a.m. on Dec. 7. You will learn that, from the beginning of our Synod in the 1840s, we have been a firmly-rooted but not stuck group of theologically sound Christians. The care of the soul has been regarded as our highest concern and the zeal to win souls our chief purpose. We



# Rooted in Christ, **ABOUNDING** IN THANKSGIVING

## 62nd Convention of the South Dakota District

Dec. 5-7

Sioux Falls Convention Center

will consider today’s opportunities to demonstrate such mission-centered concern and purpose.

All sessions of the convention, except for the opening service, will be in Exhibit Hall #2 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center, 1201 N. West Ave., Sioux Falls. The opening service will be held at 7 p.m. on Dec. 5 at the new campus of Sioux Falls Lutheran School, 6715 S. Boe Lane. Join us!

See **CONVENTION**, page 3

### Campus pastor installed at Concordia, Vermillion

Rev. Matthew Bless was installed as pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church, Vermillion, on Sept. 5. Rev. Steve Weispfennig, senior pastor of St. John, Yankton, and circuit visitor, was the liturgist and Rev. Paul Warnier (emeritus) Concordia vacancy pastor, served as lector. Rev. Scott Sailer, district president, served as preacher and officiant.

Pastor Bless, a 2018 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., comes to us from Merrill, Wis., where he served as associate pastor of St. John. His wife, Janelle, has a baccalaureate degree in music education.

**Pastor Bless also serves as campus pastor for University of South Dakota (USD) students.** District congregations are encouraged to send him contact information for their members attending USD at [pastor@lcmvermillion.org](mailto:pastor@lcmvermillion.org).



▲ Clergy in attendance are, from left, Revs. Jeremy Richert (Holy Cross, Dakota Dunes), David Ellis (emeritus, Yankton), Scott Sailer, Paul Warnier, Matthew Bless, Levi Willms (associate pastor, St. John, Yankton), Steve Weispfennig and Michael Kumm (emeritus, Sioux City, Iowa).

▶ Pastor Bless is pictured with his wife, Janelle.



### Dual parish has vacancy pastor

We welcome Rev. Charles (Charlie) W. Adams and his wife, Laura, to the South Dakota District. Pastor Adams will serve the Trinity, White Lake/St. Paul's, Plankinton, parish as the resident vacancy pastor. His first Sunday at Trinity and St. Paul's was Sept. 12. Charlie and Laura make their home in Ottawa, Kan., where Charlie served as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church before retiring from full-time ministry last year. Pastor Adams is a 1986 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



### Call Information

#### ACCEPTED

▶ **Albert Bakat**, Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology candidate, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, accepted the call of assistant pastor to Resurrection, Sioux Falls, Aug. 27.

#### DECLINED

▶ **Rev. Nathan Neugebauer**, St. John's/Bethlehem, Revillo/Milbank, declined a call of pastor to St. Peter's/Grace, Westgate/Fayette, Iowa, Sept. 25.

#### VACANCIES

- Groton/Andover, St. John/Zion
- Leola, St. Paul
- Mitchell, Zion
- Pierre, Faith
- Sisseton/Waubay, Emmanuel/Zion
- Sioux Falls, District executive secretary

# Who's a deaconess?



Amanda Korthase was recently commissioned and installed as a deaconess at Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls. From left, Rev. Darren Olson, district missionary; Deaconess Andra Gates; Korthase; and Rev. Ryan Drevlow, Our Redeemer senior pastor.

TO WELCOME Amanda to the district or ask her a question about the role of deaconess, email her at [akorthase@gmail.com](mailto:akorthase@gmail.com).

**By Deaconess Amanda Korthase**  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls

A deaconess is a woman who is theologically trained to care for and show mercy to God's people. The word deaconess comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning "servant."

In Rom. 16:1-2, Paul names Phoebe as a "servant of the church." Many consider her to be the first deaconess. As a servant of the church, a deaconess works alongside the pastor to serve others through works of mercy and spiritual care, and by teaching the Christian faith.

A deaconess may serve in one of three primary settings: missions (foreign and domestic), congregations and institutions (hospitals, retirement communities).

I was recently commissioned and installed as the full-time deaconess at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls. I was born and raised in Boyne City, Mich., where I was baptized and confirmed at Christ Lutheran Church. Before attending Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., I worked for 10 years as the office manager for a publisher. For eight years, I served on my church's council as the chair for youth ministry.

God has blessed me with wonderful opportunities. I never imagined that I would become a deaconess. However, my training at the seminary has prepared me to serve and care for those around me. Thanks be to God that this is the path He has chosen for me!

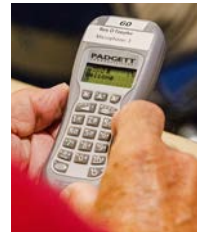
I have always enjoyed serving others and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead. The time spent serving my home congregation was a wonderful yet challenging experience. I anticipate that God has great things in store for my life as a deaconess. I look forward to serving Him and His people in Sioux Falls!

For more information about deaconess ministry, visit [lcms.org/deaconess-ministry](http://lcms.org/deaconess-ministry).

## CONVENTION

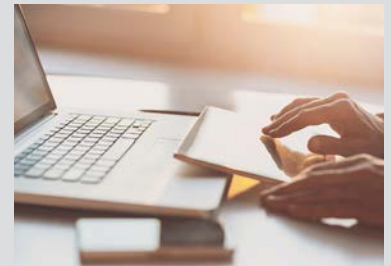
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Visit [sddlcms.org](http://sddlcms.org) for more information about the convention.



May God continue to bless and keep you. May He fill you with His hope in Christ Jesus. And may you continue to "walk in [Christ], rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

**Your servant in Christ,**  
**Pastor Scott Sailer**  
"Not ashamed of the Gospel"  
Rom. 1:16; 16:25-27



## Share your news with us!

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.

**Send submissions to Kate Meadows:**  
▶ [kate@katemeadows.com](mailto:kate@katemeadows.com)  
▶ 420 E. Liberty Street,  
Rapid City, SD 57701

**The deadline for the January issue is Nov. 15.**



## PATTY'S PONDERINGS



# Giving thanks in ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!

Join the full throng; Wake, harp and psalter and song;  
Sound forth in glad adoration! (TLH #444, v1)

This is such a favorite hymn of my family that it was sung at my wedding, all three of my children's weddings and the funerals of my mom and dad.

What do you think of when you hear "November?" For some, November may bring to mind scenes of sitting in a deer stand or walking in the forest looking for the perfect buck. But for most of us Americans, it is Thanksgiving and a time to be with family and thank God for the abundant gifts He gives us daily. Last year my husband, Scott, and I celebrated Thanksgiving together and joined our three daughters and their families on Zoom for a virtual visit. It wasn't the same, of course, but we saw that we still had so many things for which to give thanks. Hopefully, we will all be together in person this year.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. Ps. 145:3

This season I invite you to read Psalm 145. It is a beautiful poem of praise to God. I thank Him every day, especially for His Son. Jesus Christ came to earth to live among us, show love and compassion and become a servant. So deep was His love for us that He died and rose from the grave to give us the gift of eternal life with Him.

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore Him!  
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!  
Let the Amen sound from His people again; Gladly for aye we adore Him. (v.5)  
May God bless you with a special day filled with thanksgiving!



**Patty Peters**  
LWML South Dakota  
District President

## BLACK HILLS ZONE report

In spite of all that has been going on (or not going on), the Black Hills Zone has been doing our best to get together.

The 2021 Fall Retreat was held on Sept. 25 at Zion, Rapid City. Our theme, "Restore," comes from 1 Peter 8:10. Rev. David Warner, pastor of Our Redeemer, Custer, and Our Savior, Hill City, led the Bible study, while Rev. Thomas Brown, pastor of St. Paul's, Spearfish, offered opening and closing devotions and prayers. We were also blessed to have a guest speaker from the Black Hills Pregnancy Care Center share with us about the organization's ministry and current needs.

Our zone held its 2020 Fall Retreat on Oct. 24 at Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk, under the theme, "Where Is Our Comfort and Help?"

In February, we held a pre-Lenten prayer service at Peace, Rapid City, during a major cold snap. Even with temperatures falling below zero, those who attended enjoyed the service.

To get in the full swing of spring we had our Spring Rally on April 10 at Grace, Deadwood. We were blessed to have 32 ladies, two pastors and three guests attend.

Several members of the Black Hills Zone were able to attend the national convention in Lexington, Ky., held June 24-27.

**Casey Harvard**  
Black Hills Zone President



**The mission of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League South Dakota District** is to provide women opportunities for spiritual growth and to equip and nurture them to use their God-given gifts to serve the Lord in home, church, community and the world.

[sdlwml.org](http://sdlwml.org) [lwml.org](http://lwml.org)

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

# Why do you give thanks?

Hymn 806 in *Lutheran Service Book* encourages us to “give thanks with a grateful heart.” As we sing it, we lift encouragement to those around us as well.



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

Sometimes though, it's hard to give thanks, even during the season of Thanksgiving.

Normal life and the day-to-day routines wear us out and grind us down. Add disease or loss on top of that and giving thanks may seem next to impossible.

With that in mind, let me ask you: Why do you give thanks?

Hymn 806 tells us that we give thanks for the things the Lord has done for all of us. And what things has He done for us? 2 Cor. 8:9 answers this question by stating that Christ gave up riches, became poor and transferred His wealth to you and me. Though in this world we might have hardship after hardship, Christ has given us His riches — namely righteousness and everlasting life!

But since this is Thanksgiving I'm talking about, we don't need a simple appetizer. We need a feast, right?

Paul brags in 2 Cor. 12:9-10 about a “thorn in his flesh.” He brags! Why? Because he wants the Corinthian Christians and you, me and everyone else who reads and hears this to know that even in the midst of all kinds of suffering, we can rejoice in and give thanks for the gracious gift from Christ. We can do this because, as Paul explains, God sent Christ to reach into the hurt, the harsh and the hard of our lives so that when we're weak, Jesus would be our strength. This is why Hymn 806 encourages us to give thanks. Like Paul, we can give thanks and rejoice even when we're suffering and in pain.

Maybe this will be your first Thanksgiving alone, or maybe you'll have to contend with a disease alongside the holiday. Or maybe life is just hard right now. Even in these kinds of struggles, you can take comfort in the knowledge that God's power in Christ is more than sufficient to bring you through these hardships and into eternal, “thornless” joy. So in this season, no matter what you're facing, give thanks. Amen.



Photos: Getty Images

## Are you being called to serve?



It is that time again when the LWML South Dakota District is looking for precious sisters to serve on the district Board of Directors. Offices on the ballot for the 2022 convention include:

- ▶ Vice-president of Communication
- ▶ Vice-president of Special Focus Ministries
- ▶ Secretary
- ▶ Financial Secretary
- ▶ Nominating Committee

I can say that serving Christ on this board has been a great joy and learning opportunity for

me. It was not an opportunity that I thought would “fit into my schedule.” But our Lord had a different plan.

Perhaps now He is guiding you to a new opportunity. If you feel led to serve, please consider the opportunity, pray about it and talk with the 2020-22 Nominating Committee about these positions. The current Nominating Committee — Ann Cruse, Nancy Bogenhagen and Pat Reichert — would love to hear from you!

Listen ... is He calling you to serve? If He is, say “yes,” knowing the Lord's grace will guide you.

**Following His plan,**

**Ann Cruse • [anncruse84@gmail.com](mailto:anncruse84@gmail.com)**





# District, SFLS partner for church plant

The South Dakota District and Sioux Falls Lutheran School (SFLS) have partnered to begin work on a new church plant in an effort to share the Gospel with northern Lincoln County on the south side of Sioux Falls. Rev. Darren Olson was installed on Sept. 2 as the missionary at-large to northern Lincoln County and as campus pastor for Sioux Falls Lutheran School.

As the positive reputation of SFLS grows in and around Sioux Falls (the SFLS preschool has been voted the best in Sioux Falls for the past three years and has been in the top five local preschools for the past 14 years), the school is attracting more students and families. Some of the families enrolling their children indicate they do not belong to a Christian church. Also, according to 2010 U.S. Census data, the Association of Religious Data Archives reports that 60 percent of Lincoln County residents have no Christian church affiliation. Statistics have also shown that planting new churches is the single most effective way of



▲ Pastor Olson, with back to camera, is installed as district missionary by Rev. Scott Sailer, district president, at Sioux Falls Lutheran School.

◀ Pastor Olson and his wife, Susan, are pictured with their children, from left, Luke, Benjamin, Joshua and Ethan.

reaching new people and making new disciples for Jesus Christ.

The partnership between the South Dakota District and SFLS recognizes a tremendous opportunity to make more disciples for Jesus by planting a new LCMS congregation. As campus pastor, Rev. Olson will work with other LCMS school association pastors to provide spiritual care to the faculty, students and families at SFLS. He will build relationships with students and their families, especially with those families who have no church affiliation. He also teaches one high school course on the New Testament.

As missionary at-large, Pastor Olson will reach out to the unchurched families at the school, as well as reach out to the Harrisburg community. He will also work with a Planning Team to

begin laying the groundwork for a new church. The new church plant will use SFLS as its worship and meeting space as it begins to gather people together for worship, fellowship and service. As a symbol of this partnership and the hopes of a new church growing out of SFLS, a new tree was planted on the school grounds just outside of the chapel. We hope and pray that, as the tree grows in the coming years, the new church will also grow as the Holy Spirit brings more people to faith in Jesus.

Please keep SFLS, Pastor Olson and this church planting effort in your prayers. Ask God to bless SFLS and Pastor Olson's ministry, and ask that the seed of God's Word would be planted and bear fruit in the hearts of those who do not currently know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

# Gospel shared at Puppet Place

The Puppet Place ministry had to contend with some wet weather for the first day at the South Dakota State Fair, held Sept. 2-6 in Huron. The rain kept our numbers down, but no one can deny what a blessing from God the rain was!

The rain stopped after that first day, and the remaining days had wonderful weather for attending the State Fair. The theme of this year's puppet show was "The Good Samaritan," as was the Bible study that was handed out to adults. Children once again were given cross whistles.

Attendance at the shows were as follows:

Sept. 2 – 92      Sept. 3 – 188      Sept. 4 – 207  
 Sept. 5 – 184      Sept. 6 – 126

Also, 157 Bible studies were given away along with 370 whistles.

Thank you to everyone who helped with this wonderful outreach. It is such a great experience.

Please note: Next year will be the 50th anniversary of the start of this ministry by Rev. Robert Utecht. His sons, Revs. Andrew Utecht and Peter Utecht, along with their families and friends, are carrying on the ministry to reach people with the Good News of Jesus through magic shows and puppets.

Please plan on helping us as we celebrate this milestone with them next year at the State Fair, to be held Sept. 1-5, 2022 in Huron.

**Jan Larson, LWML Vice-president of Gospel Outreach**



Rev. Andrew Utecht is pictured with his wife, Lori, and their son, Isaac, at the Puppet Place entrance.



Above, Rev. Andrew Utecht and son Isaac perform a magic show at the South Dakota State Fair. Below, Pastor Utecht makes a balloon animal.





# Every heart matters to Him

Dear friends in Christ,

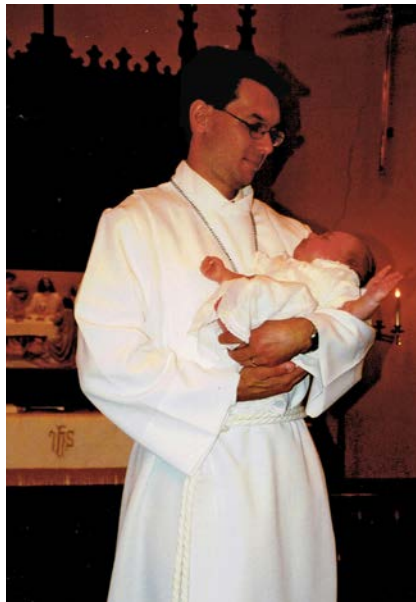
A few weeks ago, I was driving home after dropping off our oldest son at Mitchell Tech. As my radio scanned stations, it locked on the signal for NPR and I heard: “The Texas abortion law that went into effect this week reads: ‘A physician may not knowingly perform or induce an abortion on a pregnant woman if the physician detected a fetal heartbeat for the unborn child.’”

I stopped scanning to listen more. The host and guest were attempting to tell their listeners that the law was misleading because since the human heart does not have valves at six weeks of gestation, a fetus cannot have a heartbeat. The guest, an OB-GYN and associate professor at the University of California-San Francisco, insisted, “What we’re really detecting is a grouping of cells that are initiating some electrical activity. ... In no way is this detecting a functional cardiovascular system or a functional heart.”

I resisted the urge to punch the radio. But I could not hold back from shouting, “Seriously?” I started writing this article in my head at that moment, forming arguments against this ridiculous rhetoric.

Basic human development testifies to the value of that “electrical activity.” Such activity belongs to a unique individual, with his or her own intricate and wonderful neurological system. That activity is physiologically prophetic and predicts the yet unseen development.

As I was outlining my plan to counter every point of this blatant assault on truth, common sense and life itself, I thought of my son, Mark. He had been the other voice in the truck with me less than an hour before I stumbled upon NPR. I compared his voice to the



Pastor Chris baptized his son, Mark, in 2004.

NPR voices and the impact of each on my day.

Mark and I had talked about his college classes and the challenges of commuting in his 1991 Jeep Grand Wagoneer. Now I thought back to the day we first heard Mark’s heartbeat and saw the ultrasound — his cardiovascular system in action. He was seven weeks old then. I was in my last year at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and we had been told by a doctor during our vicarage year that we would not be able to have children. Yet there he was. We knew early on what his name would be — Mark Andrew. We could hardly wait to meet him.

He arrived before the due date, born with fists clenched and crying at the top of his lungs. You could see his heartbeat in the veins of his forehead and neck!

I baptized Mark the day I was ordained. As I held him over the font before the Lord and His people, Mark

fit in the space between the crook of my elbow and the palm of my hand. I felt his little head flinch in my hand as I poured on him the water included in God’s command. The congregation welcomed their newborn brother. I dried his head with the baptismal napkin provided by the Christ Lutheran Church altar guild. His heart beat fast, and the pace of his breathing increased as he responded to the sensations of that eternal moment.

That same heartbeat raced the first time he crawled on the hardwood floors of the parsonage, when I taught him to ride his bike and when he learned to tread water at swim lessons. His mother’s concern and irreplaceable embrace still calms his heart and heals his wounds like none other.

Adolescence has challenged his identity and tested his will, and often breaks his heart. I don’t think he’d mind me saying so. My heart breaks when his does. When my wife and children rejoice, so do I.

Life is like that for you too. This is why we are bold to acknowledge the Lord as the head of our household. His will and His identity give us life. He has created each of us to be members of our families, even as he has made us members of his own body — the church. In this body beats the heart of the Savior.

Every heart matters to Him. He hears them all.

**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

**Rev. Chris Navurskis**

- Life Coordinator, South Dakota District
- Pastor, Mount Calvary, Huron