
Executive Secretary's Report

Reverend Darren R. Olson, Executive Secretary

The theme of this South Dakota District Convention is: "Behold Your God! What Help! What Hope!" Working together as Synod, District, congregations, schools, professional church workers, laypeople, and auxiliary organizations we assist and support one another in our common goal: proclaiming the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ in our communities, South Dakota, and around the world through Word and sacrament ministry and through good works of mercy. This report will review our work together as The South Dakota District during this last triennium.

Service Areas

The District has four Service Areas that are each responsible for a particular area of ministry:

- Youth Service Area (ministry to junior high and high school youth)
- Young Adult Service Area (ministry to 18-30 year olds, including campus ministry)
- Outreach Service Area (including rural ministry, evangelism, and world missions)
- Parish Services Service Area (including stewardship, parish education, parish administration, and disaster response)

Each Service Area is made up of several pastors and laypeople from the District. Their primary responsibility is to provide District congregations and professional church workers encouragement, support, materials, education, resources, and assistance in their respective ministry areas. The District actively seeks opportunities to train and equip those serving on the Service Areas. The District has arranged for members of the Service Areas to attend conferences and receiving training in: youth ministry, campus ministry, stewardship, rural and small town ministry, and disaster response.

While most professional church workers and laypeople in the District would agree that the District's Service Areas have not been operating as effectively as they could, attempts were made in the last triennium to improve their usefulness to the District. The Executive Secretary, through the Circuit Visitors, surveyed pastors throughout the District about their knowledge of the Service Areas and sought their input on how to improve their service to the District. This provided a lot of helpful information and suggestions. The Executive Secretary presented a proposal to the District Board of Directors and Circuit Visitors regarding the future of the District Service Areas for discussion. Because the proposal was received with mixed reaction which did not generate enough support or opposition, the Executive Secretary did not pursue the proposal any further. The Executive Secretary did, however, revise and expand the "Responsibilities of The South Dakota District Service Areas" to provide the Service Areas with more direction on their responsibilities and duties.

Each Service Area is led by a chairman under the direction of the Executive Secretary. The Service Area chairman is appointed by the District President with the approval of the District Board of Directors. The Service Area chairman is responsible, in consultation with the District President and Executive Secretary, for selecting two other members to serve on the Service Area. Those two members may be ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, or laypeople. Appointments to the Service Areas are for three years. Please consult the reports of the Service Area chairmen to learn more about the work that each of the Service Areas has done in our District in the last triennium.

Subsidized Congregations and Ministries

The South Dakota District has not had opportunity to financially support a new mission congregation since 2012 when Blessed Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Sturgis and Risen Savior Lutheran Church, Tea became self-supporting congregations. Pastors in Sioux Falls Circuit H have indicated that they would like to explore the possibility of a church plant in northern Sioux Falls, even as far north as the communities of Crooks/Dell Rapids and in the southern Sioux Falls area around the community of Harrisburg. The Rapid Valley area around Rapid City has been identified as a location for a possible church plant. The congregation of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Spearfish has identified the community of Belle Fourche as an ideal location to plant a new church. Belle Fourche is the only community in South Dakota with a population over 5,000 that does not have an LCMS church.

President Sailer and Executive Secretary Olson recognized that many pastors and lay people in the District were not well informed on how their congregation could start a new ministry. They invited Reverend Dr. Peter Meier from the Center for US Mission to conduct two introductory workshops to help pastors and lay people learn the basics of beginning new ministries and planting churches. The two workshops were held in Sioux Falls and Rapid City in October 2017. Plans are being made to have Dr. Meier return to the District to conduct a two day church planting training seminar for those who would like to receive that training.

Campus Ministry

The South Dakota District continues to support two campus ministries within South Dakota: South Dakota State University, Brookings, through Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church and the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, through Concordia Lutheran Church. While not supported financially by the District, our local LCMS congregations in communities with institutions of higher education also reach out to those students in their communities in places such as: Aberdeen, Mitchell, Watertown, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Spearfish, Yankton, and Madison. The ability of our campus ministries to reach out and minister to students on campuses throughout our state is reliant on parents, pastors, and congregations sharing the names of their students with the campus ministry near them. In addition, for students interested in finding the campus ministry at the school they will be attending, they can find that information at: www.lcms.org/lcmsu. A listing of South Dakota congregations in communities that have institutions of higher education can be found on the District's website: <https://sddlcms.org/mission-ministries/service-areas/young-adult-service-area/campus-ministry>. You can find more details about the two District supported campus ministries in their reports located in the District Convention Manual.

Congregations must also remember those young men and women who forgo opportunities for higher education and choose instead to serve their country by enlisting in the Armed Forces. A list of LCMS congregations that serve military personnel from military bases around the United States can be found on the District's website at:

<https://sddlcms.org/media/files/Service%20Areas/Congregations%20Supporting%20Military%20Bases.pdf>.

Native American Ministry

Approximately 10% of the District's budget is earmarked for ministry on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations in South Dakota. Reverend Andrew Utecht, as of 2017, has been serving for 20 years on the Rosebud Reservation. Reverend Albert Sutton and his ministry team serve on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Both ministries receive much prayer, volunteer service, and financial support, not just from our South Dakota congregations, but from friends and congregations throughout the United States. In addition to Word and Sacrament ministry, our Native American ministries are engaged in works of mercy on both Reservations. For example, food donations are given out on a regular basis by both ministries. On the Rosebud Reservation, Reverend Utecht

has been extremely involved in the Harvest Winds Sewing Factory that brings work and wages to those sewing Native American quilts for local businesses to sell. Please continue to pray for and support our missionaries, Reverend Andrew Utecht and Reverend Albert Sutton, and their ministry teams, as they share the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations. You can learn more about Reverend Utecht's work on the Rosebud Reservation by visiting their website: <http://rosebudparmaleelutheran.com>. You can also learn more about their mission work through their written reports in the District Convention Manual.

Circuit Rider Ministry

The Circuit Rider Ministry for Northwest South Dakota has experienced a number of set-backs through the years. Reverend Gary Jacobsen, Pastor, Bethesda Lutheran Church, Hot Springs was assigned the role of Circuit Rider for Northwest South Dakota. In 2012, Pastor Jacobsen was diagnosed with cancer. After successful surgery, and we thank God for hearing and answering our prayers and restoring Pastor Jacobsen to health, it took some time for him to recover and resume his full time ministry. In addition, the vast amount of area for him to cover from Hot Springs all the way into Northwest South Dakota has proven to be too much ground to cover. Pastor Jacobsen has informed the District that he would like to hand off the Circuit Rider Ministry to another willing and able pastor.

There remains approximately \$30,000 of the \$56,000 initial LWML mission grant that funded the Circuit Rider Ministry. In the future, the District will have to consider ways to retool and reorganize the NW Circuit Rider Ministry. One potential option is, if a church plant is organized in Belle Fourche, that congregation could become a new base of operations for the Circuit Rider Ministry. While currently the Circuit Rider Ministry is not quite what the District was hoping it would be, the District remains steadfast in its desire to minister to the ranching families and communities in Northwest South Dakota.

District Schools

Historically The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has had a high regard for education. The LCMS enjoys the second largest parochial school system in the United States. There are 1,150 early childhood centers, 793 elementary schools, and 86 high schools in the LCMS. Congregations or associations of congregations within The South Dakota District operate 4 elementary schools, 2 middle/high schools, and 20 early childhood centers/preschools. A list of schools in The South Dakota District can be found in the District Convention Manual.

In each of the Lutheran schools and early childhood centers in the District children are taught about their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ while, at the same time, receiving a quality education. A testament to our Lutheran schools' commitment to share Jesus with students and their families while also providing top-notch instruction is found in the fact that three of the four elementary schools in our District have earned National Lutheran School Accreditation. Zion Lutheran School, Rapid City was accredited in 2016. Sioux Falls Lutheran School, Sioux Falls was accredited in 2017. Not only did Sioux Falls Lutheran School receive accreditation, but they were named a "School of Distinction" by the National Lutheran School Accreditation Commission. Sioux Falls Lutheran School earned the distinction because their overall accreditation score ranked within the top 5% of all LCMS schools receiving accreditation in 2017. Bethesda Lutheran School, Hot Springs is currently working through the National Lutheran School Accreditation process and should complete it in 2018. In 2018 St. John's Lutheran Preschool, Yankton will become the first preschool or early childhood center in The South Dakota District to receive National Lutheran School Accreditation.

One new Lutheran school was started in the District in the last triennium. Peace Lutheran Church and Early Childhood Center, Brookings expanded to include kindergarten in 2016 and kindergarten and first grade in 2017. 2017 also saw Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church, Black

Hawk expand their preschool program into a full early childhood program with preschool and childcare services.

Many of our Lutheran preschools operate in small towns like Milbank, Groton, and Canistota. These smaller preschools are providing a wonderful service to their communities. They are sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with their students and their families while also providing a solid foundation for the students to begin kindergarten. In many of our small towns our Lutheran preschools are the only early childhood program available in their community or they must compete with one or two other programs for students. This means that sometimes the student population makes enrolling students difficult and finding qualified teachers can be a challenge. In the last triennium two preschools in the District were not able to open their doors for those very reasons: Jesus Loves Me Preschool, Philip and Little Lambs Lutheran Preschool, Sturgis.

In 2017 Sioux Falls Lutheran School initiated their "Our Greatest Gifts" capital campaign. The purpose of the capital campaign was to raise \$8-10 million to purchase property in the Sioux Falls area and construct a new school, which would include an early childhood center, elementary school, and high school all on one campus. As of December 2017, Sioux Falls Lutheran School had raised over \$2.6 million in gifts and pledges. Also in December 2017, Sanford Health of Sioux Falls pledged to donate 30 acres of land and a matching gift of \$5 million for Sioux Falls Lutheran's capital campaign. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

The Executive Secretary is a member of the South Dakota Christian School Association (SDCSA) and currently serves as the organization's president. The SDCSA is an association of Christian schools throughout South Dakota. One of the primary duties of the SDCSA is to maintain a working relationship with the South Dakota Department of Education and with South Dakota's Secretary of Education. The SDCSA actively promotes and lobbies the interests of Christian education to the members of the South Dakota Legislature. The SDCSA was instrumental in creating the Partners In Education Tax Credit Scholarship program, which was passed by the South Dakota Legislature and signed into law by Governor Daugaard in 2016. Many of our LCMS schools in South Dakota have students who benefit from this tax-credit scholarship program.

District Student Aid

The South Dakota District continues to be one of the most generous Districts for providing tuition assistance to people enrolled in a church work program at one of the Synod's Concordia University System schools or theological seminaries. The District Board of Directors, who establishes the amount of student aid available, makes a concerted effort to increase the amount of tuition assistance each year in an attempt to keep pace with the increasing cost of tuition. For undergraduate students enrolled in a church work program the District provided student aid in the amount of: 2014-15: \$1,800; 2015-16: \$2,000; 2016-17: \$3,000. For men enrolled in seminary the District provided student aid in the amount of: 2014-15: \$6,000; 2015-16: \$7,000; 2016-17: \$7,500. In the last triennium The South Dakota District has provided the following in District Student Aid in total: 2014-15: 11 grants totaling \$30,000; 2015-16: 9 grants totaling \$23,000; 2016-17: 10 grants totaling \$41,000.

Pastors, other professional church workers, family members, laypeople are all encouraged to identify and actively recruit those people (of all ages) they think would be great candidates for the pastoral ministry or other areas of professional ministry within the LCMS.

Harvest Grants

In 2016 the South Dakota District Board of Directors pledged a total of \$100,000 a year, \$60,000 to District congregations and \$40,000 to District Lutheran schools, in a grant program to encourage congregations and schools to reach out into their communities with the Gospel of

Jesus Christ and to perform acts of mercy. The first grants were awarded in 2017 to 25 churches and 9 schools. In 2018 Harvest Grants were awarded to 26 churches and 11 schools. To learn more about the District's Harvest Grant program and to find the grant application, visit the District website at: <https://sddlcms.org/forms-applications>.

District Website

In 2016 The South Dakota District contracted with 44-Interactive, a Sioux Falls company specializing in website design and development, to update and improve the District's website. Not only does the District website have a new look, it also has many more resources that professional church workers and laypeople will find extremely helpful. One of the purposes of the new website is for it to be the first place people go to find information and resources. In addition to the new website, the District also entered the realm of social media with Facebook and Twitter accounts and a YouTube channel. You can connect with The South Dakota District through:

Website: <http://sddlcms.org>

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, find and follow the District under "SD District LCMS"

All Workers Conference

For the first time in decades all professional church workers in The South Dakota District (pastors, Directors of Christian Education, Lutheran school teachers and administrators) gathered together for a joint "All Workers Conference." The conference gathered in Rapid City under the theme, "That I May Be His Own." This phrase, taken from Martin Luther's Explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles Creed, reflects two important themes in the life of every Christian. First, as St. Paul says, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose again to take away the sins of his people. And second, as God's forgiven and redeemed people by faith in Jesus Christ, we are able to live in and serve God in His kingdom. Speaking about these two aspects in the lives of professional church workers was Reverend Dr. Darrell Zimmerman of Grace Place Ministries. Grace Place is a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS and focuses on teaching and training professional church workers to have spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational wellness. The All Workers Conference also provided the professional church workers with the opportunity to gather together for worship to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

Congregational Services

Reverend L. Scott Spiehs, Chairman

The Parish Services strives to be faithful in serving the Churches in the South Dakota District in the areas of Stewardship, Education, Human Care and Disaster Response.

In regards to **EDUCATION**, this area strives to provide resources to our congregations for all levels of Christian education and family ministry. Check out the LCMS website (www.lcms.org) or The South Dakota District website (<http://sddlcms.org>) for lots of great ideas.

In regards to **STEWARDSHIP**, the triennium began with the Reverends Curtis Garland and Kory Janneke as co-chairmen. Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes.

In regards to **HUMAN CARE**, a great deal of information comes from the LCMS World Relief and Human Care in Synod. Information is readily available to congregations either directly by mail, LCMS website or in the Lutheran Witness and Reporter. Pastors and individuals are encouraged

to contact the LCMS World Relief and Human Care for any questions or concerns in the Human Care area.

In regards to **DISASTER RESPONSE**, we continue to strive for coordinated and collaborative response to disasters on the local, district, regional and international levels. Successful response to any type of disaster is dependent upon voluntary local and congregational participation and training. Complete training programs are available to prepare for timely and effective disaster preparedness and early response.

On Sunday, May 10th, an EF-2 tornado blasted through Delmont. Officials report the damage total to 49 homes and structures that are either destroyed or have major damage. Another 29 homes and structures have minor damage, and residents may fix those buildings. On May 10th, following the tornado, the 12 Sunday School children and 3 adults exited safely from the basement of Zion Lutheran Church. Members and local clergy helped to secure church records and items from both the church and parsonage.

On May 11th and the following days, many items were removed from the church and parsonage and placed in storage units next to the Delmont Legion Hall, the church steel shed and members sheds.

May 12th, Reverend Bucklew and family returned and were housed at Terry Klumb home until the Hunting Lodge in Armor was available. Where they are currently residing.

Worship Services (May 14: Ascension Service; May 17th and May 24th) have been held at Emmaus Lutheran Church, Tripp SD.

May 18th a Decommissioning Service was held at (9:00 a.m.)

May 18th the Parsonage walls were removed and the basement was covered.

Residents of Delmont over the weekend celebrated the rebuilding of a church destroyed in a tornado more than two years ago. About 420 people attended a two-hour dedication service on Saturday in the new Zion Lutheran Church. The church was among many buildings that were damaged or destroyed by the May 10, 2015, tornado that also injured nine people.

Church building committee chairman Terry Klumb says the project was financed by insurance and nearly \$300,000 in donations.

At all times and in all places...giving thanks to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus does the Church worship in times of disaster, and in times of peace, preparing us to face the moments of calamity with the joy of sins forgiven, death destroyed, eternal life our certain inheritance.

Youth Service Area

Reverend Thomas Brown, Chairman

Over the past three years, the South Dakota Youth Service Area has continued in offering events aimed towards teaching and strengthening the faith of our District Youth.

Largely, District youth events continue to be offered and supported by our district pastors and congregations.

In 2016, District youth enjoyed the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans, LA. The convention worked under the theme, "In Christ Alone." The textual foundation for the Gathering was Paul's

letter to the Philippians. DCE Lorien Peterson (Zion, Rapid City) has been organizing bussing to help district youth affordably go to and from this event.

Also, the service area has organized Higher Things Confirmation Retreats in the district during each of the last six years. During the last triennium, these have been in Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk (2017), St Paul, Aberdeen (2016), and Resurrection, Sioux Falls (2015). These Friday/Saturday conferences have generally grown in attendance to between 60 and 100 youth! Bible Bowl continues under the able direction of Reverend David Knefelkamp. Students in grades 6-12 face off using question from appointed sections of the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism. For 2018, the theme was the Gospel according to St. John (ESV translation), and from the ESV edition of the Small Catechism with Explanation section on Confession (questions 261-284).

Camp Minneboji at West Lake Okoboji, IA has been a long standing staple of youth ministry in South Dakota. In 2018, we celebrate and give thanks to God that this ministry is now in its 70th year! All students who have completed grades 4 through 9 are eligible to attend the week-long camp in June. Camp Minneboji has been attended by thousands of our South Dakota and neighboring district youth. To make it easier to get there, a bus has been hired to drive kids to and from camp for a reasonable fee. Pickup locations are arranged based on need. The last three years, camp has been well organized by Reverend Greg Lehr and Reverend David Otten, as well as many other pastors, lay people, and volunteers. In 2018, camp will be from June 17 to June 23.

Young Adult Service Area

Reverend Samuel Bobby

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ of Our Beloved South Dakota District,

The focus and emphasis of the Young Adult Service Area (YASA) has shifted over the last triennium. Previously, we had engaged in providing "consistent discussion among district pastors concerning the challenges of young adult ministry." We achieved this goal primarily through bringing in a yearly speaker, making sure each circuit had a YASA circuit representative, and producing a bi-yearly newsletter addressing pertinent topics relating to the various young adult demographics. This publication was distributed to pastors at fall and spring pastors conferences and included articles to share with congregants and questions for pastoral consideration at monthly circuit pastors meetings. We found, however, that these resources were underutilized and that keeping YASA representatives active in each circuit was difficult. As a result, we began to focus on our annual speaking engagement. Instead of expending time and energy producing a newsletter, we focused on recording our various speakers for access on the District's website. This way, if any pastor or lay person wishes to view the speaker or use a presentation as a study resource, that resource would be available. We also achieve the added benefit of accruing good, Lutheran content over time to deepen the quality and quantity of young adult resources at the District's disposal. The first year, we brought in Mollie Hemingway to present on the 2016 election and the state of politics and its relation to the church. This year we had A. Trevor Sutton present on his book *Being Lutheran*, and in August of this year (2018), we are extremely pleased to bring in Reverend Dr. Jeffery Kloha from the Museum of the Bible to discuss the often-debated status of the Bible in our contemporary setting.

My special thanks to the brother pastors of Circuit A who help to brainstorm speakers and ideas and to Reverend Tim Koch who, in a bulldog-like fashion, makes contact with potential speakers and assures they will actually show up. Also, a note of praise and thanksgiving to God for the SD District Office and Reverend Darren Olson for working with us to make these events a success and for the blessed saints at Main Street Living who graciously give of their time and talents to record the presenters and, in so doing, work with us to advance the Gospel through the YASA.

Outreach Services Area

Reverend Aaron Asmus

“Behold Your God!” – The prophet’s timeless voice announces the presence of our saving God! The Sovereign Lord who created us comes with power to rescue us from sin. We join Isaiah as heralds of good tidings, faithfully reaching out with God’s Word in ministry to all!

Beginning in August of 2016 the Evangelism, Mission, and Rural/Small Town Ministry outreach areas began meeting together.

Evangelism

Krista Erickson, Reverend Jordon Andreasen, and Reverend Aaron Asmus focused efforts on planning an Evangelism workshop which was held in March of 2017. Reverend Bill Cornelius of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Milbank, SD, along with members of our District Outreach group, presented an “Every Day Evangelism for My Every Day Life” workshop at six locations throughout the District (Resurrection, Sioux Falls / St. John’s, Yankton / Zion, Chamberlain / Our Redeemer, Rapid City / St. Paul’s Aberdeen / Mt. Olive, Watertown). Approximately 125-150 people attended one of the 2.5 hour workshops.

Rarely a day goes by that we don’t come into contact with someone who needs to hear the message of hope that God has given to us in our Savior Jesus. Yet we don’t always feel as if we have an open door – or, for that matter, even the skills or the courage – to be an evangelist for that person. Even as congregations, we may sometimes feel that our community offers very few inroads for reaching people with the Good News of Jesus.

Our goal for “Everyday Evangelism For My Everyday Life” was to help one another recognize where those opportunities for sharing about Jesus are springing up; to consider the balance between patience and urgency as we look for ways to communicate our hope in Christ with people that we see every day; to encourage servanthood and relationship building as key building blocks for gaining opportunities to share the Good News of our Savior Jesus. Pastor Bill Cornelius of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Milbank, along with members of the District Outreach Board, will help guide our learning and discussion about how sharing Christ is part of our everyday lives.

Evaluation questions were very basic:

What was helpful for you today?

What were we missing? or What would you have liked to learn more about?

Response summary:

What was Helpful?

Simple, easy to understand approach / Emphasis on Relationships (gentle & patient approach) / emphasis on listening / group sharing time / sharing about and recognizing community opportunities to serve.

What would you like?

More group sharing, discussion, role play / list of resources / specific outline for witnessing / more time

Current plan for Spring 2018 – workshop including more specific outline for witnessing (several possibilities) / opportunities to share what’s taking place in congregations.

Rural / Small Town Ministry

Reverend Jordon Andreasen attended the Synodical Rural and Small Town Ministry Conference in Kansas City, MO in fall of 2015.

In 2017, two Rural and Small Town Ministry workshops were held in South Dakota. Reverend Todd Kollbaum, LCMS Director of Rural and Small Town Ministry was present to lead both workshops.

“Engaging the Wandering” was held at Zion Lutheran Church in Chamberlain in June 2017.

“Engaging Your Community” was held at St. John Lutheran Church in Wolsey in September 2017.

Missions

Reverend Dr. Peter Meier from Center For United States Missions (www.c4usm.org) presented the workshop “Mobilizing the Mission of God: Start New to Reach New” at Memorial Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls on Saturday, October 21, and at Zion Lutheran Church in Rapid City on Sunday, October 22. About thirty individuals attended the workshops. A strong case was presented for working hard to establish new mission starts (can be a variety of initiatives) in order to reach new people with the Gospel. He presented data that suggested high percentages of people in South Dakota that are “unclaimed;” that is, people not currently associated with any religious group.

Plans are underway to bring the C4USM training workshop “Churches Planting Churches” to our District. This workshop is designed to provide more in-depth training for congregations that are in the process of or are considering birthing daughter congregations.

Please also see a separate report in this workbook from Dr. Alan Ludwig, South Dakota TIM missionary at the Lutheran seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia, Russia.