
District Archives

Mr. Wayne Steensma, Sioux Falls, SD

It has been a great honor for me to serve our South Dakota District as archivist for the past ten years and I thank those who have given me support to carry out the duties that are required of me in the South Dakota District's Policy Manual and those of the Concordia Historical Institute which is on the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO. I also thank our congregational historians for keeping up on the history of their congregation. I have read several of those histories and found them both very informational and interesting.

One of the questions I get asked often pertains to record keeping. "What do we save and what can we delete?" Over the years I have sent to a few congregations a listing of what records should be saved and for how long. Let the archives office know if you need a listing or have questions. The archiving of records has proved to be very important when being asked to find information such as dates of baptisms and confirmations.

The archives office maintains a file for each church which holds items of interest regarding their church's history. Some items are filed by our office, other items have been sent by the church. We appreciate receiving these articles.

I continue up-dating as changes occur in the databases listings of all the pastors, vicars, Directors of Christian Education and rostered school teachers who have served in our South Dakota District. To date we have been served by eleven hundred pastors which includes the early missionaries, one hundred thirty-eight vicars and thirty-one Directors of Education.

The district archives office is here to serve the District staff, pastors and church historians. If assistance is needed, please call the office or e-mail: sdarchives@midco.net.

Sioux Falls Hospital Chaplaincy Program

Reverend Matthew Nix, Sioux Falls, SD

I would like to thank all those who have allowed me to help in the spiritual care of their members during their time in the hospitals in Sioux Falls. I understand that all of you would prefer to be here and care for your members yourselves. But due to time, distance and other demands on your time you cannot be here as often as you would like. That is where the South Dakota District steps in to help. They have provided me the ability to help you when you cannot be here. It has given me great joy sharing Jesus with your members. It also brings me great comfort listening to your members tell about the wonderful work you are doing in your parishes. Below is an email shared with me by one of you:

Here's the text I received earlier today. ***** is coming home so I will be able to see them before he has surgery Monday. Thank you again so much for your pastoral care to them.

Fwd: I just want to share with you what I posted on FB yesterday: Today was an incredibly difficult day for ***** and me. Lots of ups and downs with uncertainty about what will happen and when. We thought he could have surgery tomorrow, but now it looks like Monday. We were definitely reminded how familiar *****'s situation has become to us and how unfamiliar it is to most medical people! We were angry and frustrated most of the day until God sent us the most wonderful gift requested by Pastor *****. The local Lutheran Chaplain paid us a much needed visit and gave us communion. I literally felt all the anger and frustration go away while my sins were being forgiven. ***** felt good most of the day and was even finally back to joking around with everyone. Psalm 147:11 "The LORD delights in those who fear him, who hope in His steadfast love."

I would ask that if you know you or a member of your parish are going to be in one of our Sioux Falls hospitals, that you inform your pastor so he can let me know. That way, I am able to make sure to see you and serve you in whatever way is best and possible.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your hospital chaplain here in Sioux Falls.

CHURCH EXTENSION FUND REPORT

Randall L. Gayken, Business Manager

CEF Activity 2015-2017

The Church Extension Fund (CEF) of our South Dakota District LCMS began the 2015-2018 triennium as it has in previous convention cycles, as a separate fund administered by the District's Board of Directors with its Mission or purpose to assist the South Dakota District LCMS, its congregations, associations of congregations, and schools by providing loans:

- for the acquisition of real estate property for future expansion of the Church,
- for the construction or improvement of church facilities used for preaching, teaching and outreach ministry of the Church.

Since 1907 our CEF has been in this special ministry partnership with individual members, congregations and the District. CEF has operated like a savings and loan institution; it received investments from our Lutheran members and congregations and then loans out these monies to our LCMS congregations, associations of congregations, and schools for their loan funding needs.

Some of CEF's accomplishments during this past triennium:

- The Board of Directors approved seven loan requests to South Dakota LCMS congregations over this period totaling \$1,888,250.
- CEF has met or exceeded all ten of the financial standards the Board of Directors has established.
- Over the past three years CEF has rebated \$29,595 of interest to congregations and schools whose interest rate was above CEF's published loan rate.
- Over the past three years CEF has provided over \$41,250 to the District's unrestricted operating budget for its mission and outreach ministries.

In 2016 the District staff along with the Board of Directors began discussing the major challenges that CEF will face in the next year or two. District was informed by its computer vendor that the banking hardware and software system CEF is currently using will have to be upgraded significantly to meet the new system requirements the vendor has established for its banking customers. This cost could exceed \$75,000. Looking to the future CEF should also provide its investors and borrowing congregations with online services, better reporting systems, and with much better internet security features. Additional insurance, bankers' professional liability, is required for CEF entities which may cost over \$15,000 annually. Our CEF's investor base is aging. A marketing campaign is needed soon to gain new investors, especially the younger generation, to replace investors who are leaving CEF because of death or end of life financial needs. Additional investors are also needed to increase the assets of CEF to enable our loan fund to be sufficient to meet any future loan request. Also the current business manager who acts as CEF's executive director has announced that he's retiring after the April 2018 District Convention, so a suitable replacement will be needed.

At the September 18-19, 2016 Board of Directors meeting President Sailer announced that he had appointed a "Future of the CEF" study committee given the goal to study the question "Should the District keep its Church Extension Fund as it has functioned from 1907 or should the District transfer the Fund's loans receivable, investor payables, and net asset balance to Synod's

Lutheran Church Extension Fund?” The members appointed to this committee were Reverend Brad Urbach (pastor from a congregation that has had many significant loans from CEF and whose members have been supportive of CEF), Reverend Scott Spiehs (a member of the Board of Directors and who has good knowledge of CEF operations), Mr. James Schnaidt (lay member of the District’s Finance Committee and has experience in private and commercial banking), Mr. John Mills (layman from a congregation that has recently received a loan from CEF), and Mr. Randy Gayken (current executive director of our CEF and business manager). Reverend Urbach was appointed chairman.

In January 2017 the Study Committee met with the CEO and CFO of Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Rich Robertson and Thomas Helfrich, to determine the advantages of joining LCEF. The advantages presented and discussed are;

- Larger loan capacity available to SD congregations, schools, etc. including access to joint loan pool
- Expanded variety of investment offerings to SD members while continuing to provide opportunity to support members ministries
- Borrowing congregations have opportunity to earn a 0.5% loan interest rebate
- Loan offerings to rostered church workers for housing, debt consolidation and education loans
- Streamlining the operations of the CEF utilizing the LCEF’s administration, computer systems and supporting staff which will enable savings to be utilized within the District
- Utilizing LCEF to streamline regulatory, insurance, legal and audit requirements
- District continues to approve loan requests from congregations and promotes investments through its appointed District Vice President and committee (Board of Directors)
- Opportunity for District to receive an annual distribution of LCEF’s operating results to support ministries within the District

After the presentation and their discussion it became clear to the committee that partnering with LCEF provided for a great opportunity to continue the ministry of Church Extension with expanded funding resources and investment opportunities for our members. The committee requested LCEF to make the same presentation to the Board of Directors at their March 5-6, 2017 meeting.

Based on the information that the Board of Directors received from LCEF’s presentation, an internal financial review by Business Manager Gayken, and the Committee’s proposal that the District should merge its CEF into LCEF, the Board of Directors at its March 5-6, 2017 requested President Sailer to get feedback from our church workers and CEF investors about the proposal to merge our CEF into LCEF. The Board also requested LCEF’s CEO to be present at the Spring 2017 Pastors Conference to answer questions about the proposed merger. Over the next 2 months following the Board meeting several questions were presented and answered by either the committee chairman, District staff or LCEF’s CEO. Throughout this process we had very few negative responses.

The Board of Directors met on June 11-12, 2017 to act on the “Future of the CEF” committee’s proposal. After discussing the feedback received from members and investors, reviewing again the pros and cons of merging our District CEF into LCEF the Board unanimously resolved to consolidate the South Dakota District CEF into LCEF and to become a member District of LCEF within this current fiscal year ending January 14, 2018.

The Board of Directors in negotiating terms of the Entry Agreement with LCEF agreed to complete consolidation as of October 15, 2017. From June 12, 2017 through October 15, 2017 all major tasks of the consolidation were completed by Chad Zinnel and Randy Gayken including correspondence to all investors and borrowers about the terms of the consolidation, physically transferring all computer data files, investors paper files and loan documents to LCEF by secured internet services or courier services. On October 15, 2017 South Dakota District no longer

managed a Church Extension Fund. It had been transferred to LCEF. On this date the South Dakota District became a member District of LCEF.

LCEF Organization Overview

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is an organization that empowers ministry. Incorporated in 1978, LCEF continues a long history of extension fund service to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and its individual and corporate members. Through the dollars invested by thousands of individuals, congregations, schools, organizations and businesses, LCEF assists ministries with custom loans and ministry support services. Together, these partnerships have grown total assets to \$1.8 billion.

There are many ways to become a part of the LCEF ministry, collectively doing the work God has planned for us. Historically, church extension operations have centered on loans made possible through investments and gifts from dedicated church members and supporters. Today, LCEF has expanded its offerings to include resources that help put ministry in motion. VisionPath, Capital Funding Services (CFS) and Laborers For Christ (LFC) are examples of services offered to enhance and support ministries.

Bart Day serves as president/CEO and reports to a 12-member Board of Directors. LCEF employs some 110 people located in St. Louis and more than 50 employees in 30 member districts throughout the United States. The organization also counts on the service of hundreds of volunteers, such as Laborers For Christ and LCEF Advocates, to fulfill its mission.

In the national office, the investment processing area cares for nearly 60,000 LCEF investors, including individuals, LCMS ministries and entities, Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs), businesses and partner churches. LCEF's loan department serves LCMS ministries and Rostered Church Workers (RCW), providing customized loans including mortgages, construction loans and lines of credit. LCMS ministries connect to LCEF through their District Vice President (DVP), who works through the district office—they are a part of the Lutheran communities in which they serve. District Vice Presidents are supported by their district support staff as well as the national office staff in St. Louis.

LCEF's Performance – Fiscal 2017 Highlights

Against the backdrop of the economic overview provided above, during fiscal year 2017 (FY17), LCEF was blessed to serve the ministries of the LCMS and achieved or exceeded many of the financial targets and goals outlined in the prior year Ministry and Business Plan. LCEF ended the year with total assets reaching \$1.8 billion and achieved net income of \$8.8 million. Once again, LCEF was able to distribute operating results to the LCEF Districts and to the Synod and also made an allocation approximating \$1.2 million to the Kaleidoscope Fund – a granting initiative sponsored by LCEF.

Details of the financial performance for FY 2017 are listed below:

- The Ohio District CEF consolidated its operations with LCEF effective April 01, 2017.
- The South Dakota CEF decided to consolidate its operations with LCEF effective October 15, 2017, the third CEF district entry in the past two years.
- Total Assets increased \$31.1 million or 1.7% to \$1.839 billion since June 30, 2016, due to the entry of the Ohio District CEF.
- Management continued to maintain high levels of liquidity with cash and investments totaling \$317.2 million or 19.6% of notes and support dollars payables at June 30, 2017.
- Maintained a strong capital ratio of 11.7%, an increase of .4% when compared to the prior year.
- Cost of Funds (COF - the base from which loan rates are set) remained stable at 1.875% during the year, translating to very low-cost loans to organizations and Rostered Church Workers in FY 17.

- LCEF continued the multi-year increase in investors, achieving a net increase of 1,264 new investor relationships. This increase resulted from the entry of the Ohio CEF transferring 765 investors, the continued success of ConnectPlus and PartnerPlus term notes and the Young Investors (Y.I.) offering during the year.
- Loans receivable increased by \$70 million to a balance of \$1.5 billion.
- LCEF's loan disbursements were \$95.7 million higher than the prior year, totaling \$270.1 million which exceeded loan principal repayments by \$50 million, resulting in a reduction in short-term investments.
- During FY 2017, the delinquency rate increased to .7% from .4% the prior year, still a historically low level of delinquencies.
- Impaired loans decreased from \$129.8 million at June 30, 2016, to \$104.8 million at the end of FY 2017. Impaired loans include nonaccrual loans and loans for which LCEF has modified repayment terms from the terms included in the original loans agreements.
- Nonaccrual loans decreased to \$72.1 million compared with \$87.3 million at June 30, 2017. Associated interest reserves totaled \$900 thousand.
- The total allowance, as of June 30, 2017, totaled \$29.4 million or 1.96% of the loan portfolio, compared to \$37.3 million or 2.6% at June 30, 2016. The decrease in reserves represent write-offs associated with the resolution of certain specific impaired loans.

LCEF continues to be blessed by the strong support of its investors and the dedicated commitment of its borrowers. Because of this partnership, LCEF is well positioned to serve the ministries of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod today and in the future.

Schedule of Current South Dakota Loans Receivable

The following congregations/schools have outstanding loans with LCEF as of January 31, 2018:

Black Hawk, Divine Shepherd	Rapid City, Our Redeemer (*)
Brandon, Blessed Redeemer	Rapid City, Peace
Brookings, Peace	Sioux Falls, Christ (*)
Centerville, First English	Sioux Falls, Our Redeemer
Dakota Dunes, Holy Cross	Sioux Falls, Resurrection (*)
Hartford, Trinity	Sioux Falls, Trinity
Huron, Mt. Calvary	Sioux Falls Lutheran School (*)
Madison, Our Savior	Sturgis, Blessed Emmanuel
Mitchell, Zion	Tea, Risen Savior
Pierre, Faith	Utica, Martinus

(*) Indicates that congregation or school has multiple loans

Core Initiatives for Fiscal Year 2018

As outlined in LCEF's Ministry and Business Plan for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2018 – 2020, LCEF is focused on the following core initiatives:

- Prepare for and adapt to internal and external change as we embrace the evolving needs of our customers and adjust to new leadership within the organization.
- Develop a greater partnership with LCMS entities and Synod, Inc., building upon synergies and strengths of the organizations in support of ministries we commonly serve.
- Ensure continued financial and operational health of the enterprise, having resources available in support of ministries and partner churches of the LCMS today and in the future.

Based on its financial forecast for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, and in line with the core initiatives outlined above, LCEF expects:

- Total assets to decrease \$14.1 million, or .01% to \$1.825 billion.
- Liquidity to remain strong, maintaining a ratio approximating 19% of notes & support dollars payables.

- Net assets to increase to \$223.1 million representing a capital-to-asset ratio of 12.2%.
- Loans receivable to increase to \$1.522 billion.
- Notes and support dollars payables to decrease to \$1.593 billion.
- Net income to total \$8.9 million.
- Loan delinquencies to remain at a level below 1.75% and non-income producing assets, non-accrual loans and real estate to decrease by \$12.1 million.

Other objectives include:

- Following three years of planning and preparation, two of three regional operations centers have opened their doors in Minneapolis/St. Paul, which is serving as the operational hub for Central Region and Mission Viejo, California, which is now serving as the operational hub for the West Region.
- One additional regional center is scheduled to open during the coming fiscal year with an office planned for Orlando, Florida. The East Region office will complete the first major phase of the larger de-centralization efforts designed to increase and improve LCEF's ability to first discern and then respond to the continually evolving needs of our customers across the country.
- National loan staff will actively engage and interact with district and regional support networks. They will seek increased opportunities with the non-congregational borrowing base, and in conjunction with the Lutheran Federal Credit Union, will expand the Rostered Church Worker (RCW) Loan Program to states beyond the current 16 where LCEF is licensed.
- Marketing will engage with and support the regional and district offices to better understand their unique needs so it can properly support their ministry efforts.
- Marketing will update the website to reflect a blog-centric content strategy and user-friendly 13 Annual Meeting 2017 experience. Marketing will implement a strategy to retire and/or redefine the investor products ensuring LCEF's product line remains strong and relevant offering investors a complementary mix of demand and term products.
- Laborers For Christ (LFC) will complete a comprehensive study and re-design of its business model to reflect current sociological and economic realities with a focus on long-term sustainability.
- Capital Funding Services will develop a capital campaign strategy utilizing a team approach of individual 'experts' within various components of a campaign for conducting campaigns in larger churches.
- District and National Operations (DNO) will continue dialogue with other synodical agencies to develop operational models for the future that seek to leverage the LCEF regional structure.
- Loans will seek opportunities to network with other synodical agencies in conjunction with product development, customer support and loan promotion efforts, and will actively participate in district and nationally hosted events, taking advantage of opportunities for key sponsorships.
- Loans will explore strategic partnerships with LCMS entities and partner churches and expand relationships with Recognized Service Organizations and associations of LCMS elementary and high schools.
- Information Technology will connect where appropriate with LCMS entities to increase communications in the areas of cybersecurity, customer relationship management and vendor management.
- Facilities Management will leverage existing relationships with partners such as Foundry Commercial, LCEF's real estate partner, to assist entities and customers with maintenance and management of physical infrastructure, analyzing building operations and suggesting improvements and opportunities for savings.
- Benefiting from networking opportunities with the Concordia University System through the National Student Marketing Competition, Marketing will host a high school entrepreneur competition in the St. Louis area with a desire to have a nationwide program in the future. They will also organize networking events and mutual learning sessions with various LCMS entities.

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- Ministry Support will consider partnering with the Office of National Mission (ONM) to develop a ministry geared to older LCMS members. In concert with the synodical stewardship group, Ministry Support will determine new stewardship opportunities for LCMS congregations.
 - DNO will continue to place a strong emphasis on growing the roles of investing partners with the LCEF. Cultivation, development and ongoing maintenance of these investor relationships will drive lending activities for the foreseeable future.
 - Loans will continue to work with impaired borrowers to return a significant portion of these loans to the active loan portfolio.
 - Finance projects LCEF will achieve sufficient net income that will provide for distribution of operating results and contributions to the Kaleidoscope Fund. Finance will also expand awareness and focus of LCEF's Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) process, ensuring accountability and engagement throughout the organization.

LCEF has truly been blessed with positive financial results, loyal support from its investors and faithful commitment from its borrowers. Through this support, LCEF has been able to meet the loan needs of ministries within the LCMS and maintain its strong financial position. LCEF once again distributed portions of its operating results to participating districts and the Synod along with ministry grants through the Kaleidoscope Fund. Management remains committed to supporting those ministries struggling financially, in a firm yet encouraging way, confident that God will provide a path for faithful ministries to continue to fulfill the mission of sharing the Gospel.

In closing, we are thankful for "the partnership" our South Dakota District has with LCEF. Our mission is one! For the Glory of Our Risen Savior! And looking to the future we raise our voices saying "Behold your God! What Help! What Hope!"

Continuing Education

Reverend Timothy Koch, Chairman

The Continuing Education Service Ministry to the South Dakota District is primarily responsible for organizing the Pre-Lenten Workshop that takes place each January at Zion Lutheran Church in Mitchell, SD. In 2015, Rev. Keith Bicknase of Emanuel in Milbank handed over the responsibilities of this Service Ministry to Rev. Timothy Koch of Concordia and Immanuel Lutheran Churches in Cresbard and Wecota, SD.

As we seek to place Christ before our people and say, "Behold Your God!" these are the projects that have been undertaken by this service ministry in the past triennium.

In 2016, Rev. Dr. James Bushur was our Pre-Lent speaker who presented on "Signs of the Holy Cross: Patristic Paschal Images."

In 2017, Rev. Dr. Charles Arand agreed to be our Pre-Lent speaker. His trip to South Dakota did not occur on account of inclement weather. His presentation, "The Art of Living By Faith" was made available online for all those who registered for the conference.

In 2018, Rev. David Petersen was our Pre-Lent speaker. His presentation was on the Penitential Psalms.

If the members of the SD District would like to see the Continuing Education Service Ministry take on and organize additional projects, then inquiries and requests can be emailed to Rev. Timothy Koch at revtimkoch@gmail.com.

Church Worker Education Debt Assistance Committee

Reverend Scott C. Sailer, for the Board of Directors

Since it was established by action of the 2004 District Convention, the Church Worker Education Debt Assistance fund – or CWEDA – has provided grants to rostered church workers in The South Dakota District. Such grants are needed by our pastor, teachers and DCEs because most of the new workers coming into our District are bearing significant debt from four to seven years of payments for tuition and housing from their college and seminary training. Typically, each of the workers assisted through CWEDA brings from \$30,000-80,000 in such debt with them into their brand-new ministries in South Dakota. With beginning salaries in the low-to-mid \$30,000s, it is easy to see that such debt is difficult for them to manage. Therefore, the CWEDA grants have been a tremendous blessing to our church workers.

The grants are funded by undesignated gifts to the District. In addition, there is a small CWEDA endowment fund, totaling about \$19,500. Congregations, church groups, and individuals are encouraged to consider a gift to the CWEDA endowment fund.

The Board of Directors set aside \$15,000 for CWEDA grants in 2015, and \$20,000 for CWEDA grants in 2016 and 2017. An average of 24 church workers received grants each of those years. In 2015, the average grant was \$600. In 2016 and 2017, the average grant was \$870.

The Lord has graciously given us full-time workers in the Church. His generous people in the District have been the Lord's instruments to assist these workers in this special way with CWEDA grants. I join these workers in the District in expressing our thanks to you for this needed, tangible support!

LAY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Reverend Darren R. Olson, Executive Secretary

In 2007 The South Dakota District began offering classes through its Lay Leadership Institute (LLI). The mission of LLI is to provide deeper instruction and special training for lay men and women of our congregations so that they may assist in the ministry taking place in their own congregations.

LLI has an 11-course curriculum, which includes the following courses: Old Testament, New Testament, Christian Doctrine, Interpreting the Bible in Translation, Church History I, Church History II, Lutheran Worship, Teaching the Christian Faith, Mission Outreach in Context, Pastoral Care, and Homiletics (Preaching). The cost to participate in an LLI course is \$150. The courses are taught by pastors and other professional church workers serving in the South Dakota District. Instructors and participants typically meet together on the first and last days of the class at Faith Lutheran Church, Pierre, SD. The remainder of the work is done through e-mail where the participants send their coursework to their instructor and participate in conversations with the instructor and other participants.

The LLI program was designed for three different levels of involvement. Level 1 is for anyone seeking a deeper knowledge of Scripture, Lutheran doctrine, and other general areas. Level 2 is designed to better equip laymen and women for service in their congregations. Level 3 is specifically for men who will, after completion and formal District approval, and under careful oversight of their called pastor, provide assistance to their pastor in one or several areas of ministry (e.g. teaching Bible class, visiting the sick or shut-in, leading a worship service, etc.). Level 3 is also designed to equip men who may be considering entering the pastoral ministry, either through regular residential seminary training or through an alternate route such as the Specific Ministry Pastor Program (SMP) or the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology Program (EIIT). The two SMP pastors serving in our District began their instruction for ministry in the

District's LLI program. One man, Mr. Albert Bakat, graduated from the LLI program having completed all 11 courses. He is now enrolled at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO in their EIIT program. Upon completion of the EIIT program, Albert will be ordained as a pastor in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and will serve the African immigrant group that worships at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls. Overall, since its inception in 2007, there have been 55 student participants, representing 35 congregations in our District. Seven individuals have completed all 11 LLI courses, four them in the last triennium, and several individuals are currently close to completing the LLI program.

Thank you to the following pastors who have taught LLI courses: Old Testament: Rev. Tim Rynearson, Peace Lutheran Church, Brookings; New Testament: Rev. Darren Olson, District Executive Secretary; Christian Doctrine: Rev. Micah Bauer, Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Brookings; Interpreting the Bible in Translation: Rev. Tim Koch, Concordia Lutheran Church, Cresbard and Immanuel Lutheran Church, Wecota; Church History I and II: Rev. David Otten, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Gettysburg and Christ Lutheran Church, Lebanon; Lutheran Worship: Rev. Jesse Davis, First English Lutheran Church, Centerville and Zion Lutheran Church, Hurley; Teaching the Christian Faith: DCE Eric Larson, Memorial Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls; Mission Outreach in Context: Rev. Curtis Garland; Pastoral Care: Rev. Terry Naasz, retired; Homiletics: Rev. Dr. Christopher Ascher, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls. A special thank you to Pastors Cory Rajek and Joshua Baumann and Faith Lutheran Church, Pierre, SD for hosting the LLI courses.

For further information on the Lay Leadership Institute, a listing of current class offerings, and for registration materials, visit The South Dakota District website: <https://sddlcms.org/mission-ministries/lay-leadership-institute>.

OPERATION BARNABAS

In 2007, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod's [Ministry to the Armed Forces](#) launched Operation Barnabas. Through this program – the only one of its kind in the U.S. – together with our congregations, three key goals are accomplished:

1. Care for Reserve chaplains and their families and congregations.
2. Train and assist local congregations in the care, support and outreach to all military-connected people in their congregations and their communities.
3. Serve as a resource to other organizations that provide care to military-connected people.

The District President is in the process of appointing an Operation Barnabas coordinator for the District.

TOGETHER IN MISSION

Reverend Dr. Alan Ludwig, Missionary

Dear pastors and congregations of the South Dakota District:

On January 1, 1998, my wife, Patricia, and I boarded a plane in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and began the long trip half way around the world to Novosibirsk, Russia. My parishes in Cresbard and Wecota graciously gave me a ten-week leave of absence to teach Hebrew and other Old Testament courses in a new seminary. We returned from that trip in March, little knowing that it would lead to other things.

A few months later I received a call from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne to serve as resident professor in Novosibirsk. With a mixture of joy and sorrow we left to begin a new life

in Russia. Over the years I have developed nearly twenty courses, including Greek, Hebrew, books of the Bible, and theology.

In 2011 I received a call from the Office of International Mission to continue the work in Novosibirsk, plus teach in other places as the need arose. Since then I have occasionally conducted courses at other seminaries in Russia, Ukraine, and Ethiopia.

While my major work has always been preparing native Russians for serving as pastors, I have done a fair amount of parish work as well—preaching, teaching Bible classes, teaching seminars to clergy and laity, and teaching the catechism.

I have been engaged in this work for nearly twenty years. Over that time our seminary has turned out some well-equipped pastors and deacons, plus a few really fine scholars. Our faculty has grown to four full-time teachers and several part-time teachers. Most of these, all native Russians, have gone through our seminary program. It is always a joy to me to hear my “children” echo in their sermons and presentations what they learned as students. I don’t think it is any exaggeration to say that Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk is a beacon of solid Lutheran doctrine in this part of the world. I’m thankful to our gracious God for allowing me to be a part of this. I am confident that the work will continue in a God-pleasing manner after my departure. I will leave behind many lectures, articles, sermons, and other writings, which I pray will be of lasting benefit.

Right now the future for Christianity in Russia looks bright. The preference is for Russian Orthodoxy, which has shaped so much of Russian culture and thought. Yet there are many unchurched people, many of whom want no part of Orthodoxy. The Lutheran faith has a long and venerable history in Russia. While Lutheranism is unlikely to become the dominant Christian confession in Russia, we are continually growing and attracting new converts. So far the need is still greater than what we can supply. This work remains vital. The Lutheran Church most clearly of all declares that salvation is not by our own works, but by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. This Gospel must continue to be heard in Russia and everywhere.

While it is with some sadness that I will retire in June of 2018, there is joy ahead as well. I don’t know what the future holds, but plan to do an occasional stint of teaching somewhere in the world. I will devote more time to helping Patricia, who has health issues. It will be a good time to pursue delayed writing projects.

I wish to thank all of you in the South Dakota District for your generous support. You have done a tremendous amount to make this work possible, and I am deeply grateful for support from the district in which I was proud to serve as a parish pastor. May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bless you richly and enable you to continue to spread the Gospel both at home and around the world.



Missionaries Gary Thies & Rev. Brent Smith
Mission Development Counselors

MISSION CENTRAL

Gary & Maxine Thies Mission Foundation
*Serving the Lord Jesus and representing the
office of National & International Mission
of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

Gary.Thies@lcms.org
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40218 Highway E-16 Maclester, Iowa 51234
Website www.missioncentral.us

Dear NOT NORMAL Co-workers for the Lord Jesus:

What a blessing to have this privilege of reporting to you on The Lord's MISSION CENTRAL and thanking you for what God has done through you for the mission of the Lord Jesus!



Triennium Quick Facts: (July 2015-Dec 2017)

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|------------|---|---------------|--|
| 626 | Divine appointments with individuals | 87 | Missionary Families Housed Overnight |
| 342 | Group Mission Events on the road | 98 | Volunteers |
| 250 | Mission Events at Mission Central | 12,500 | Visitors for Mission Events |
| 115 | Meals for Groups | 5 | per week stop to pray in Wayside Chapel |



This triennium a Creation Theater was dedicated for service in the Lord's mission to tell the story of Creation, especially to the school children who visit Mission Central. A wonderful family donated over 25 life-like animals from Africa, North America, and Canada. Mission Events start in the Creation Theater with stadium seating and then move into the Barn with artifacts from missionaries all over the world that remind us why it is so urgent and important to send missionaries to tell all people everywhere about Jesus!



Missionaries Gary Thies & Rev. Brent Smith
Mission Development Counselors

MISSION CENTRAL

Gary & Maxine Thies Mission Foundation
*Serving the Lord Jesus and representing the
 office of National & International Mission
 of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

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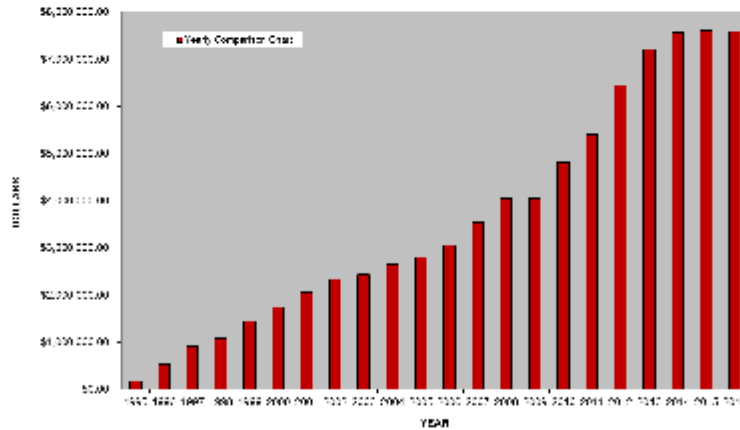


Visit the updated Website: www.missioncentral.us

- ◊ Schedule of events and visiting missionaries
- ◊ Downloadable content for each missionary
- ◊ Prayer Calendar
- ◊ Make Online Donations and much, much more...

On August 28, 2017, Old Missionary Gary turned 75 years old, BUT has no plans on retiring, and hopes to continue as long as he can "crawl across the road". On November 1, 2016 the Lord provided another helper. After 16 years of international missionary service and three years of mission work on the East Coast near Washington D.C., Brent Smith returned to work with Mission Central. Like Gary, Brent hosts mission events at Mission Central and spends most of his time on the road raising mission awareness at the invitation of the many people and congregations who are "not normal."

Year to Date Support Chart



We praise God for the thousands of individuals and congregations that provide the majority of support for over 100 missionaries. 100% of every gift continues to go 100% to the missionary's account. Through people like you we received the largest amount of donations in December 2017 ever in the history at Mission Central. This is God at work and comes at the perfect time because the number of called Missionaries has almost doubled over the this triennium to 137 plus spouses and children and, as you know, we are called to help them raise ALL of their support. Thank you for your faithful partnership with Mission Central!