



DISTRICT NEWS

SOUTH DAKOTA

Dual, Tri *and* Quad



“joint-parish agreements” — to be able to afford a pastor.

But budgets are not the only reason congregations enter into joint-parish

The sun sets over Doland. Redeemer, Doland, is in a dual-parish agreement with Messiah, Redfield, 20 miles away.

agreements. Take a look at this common statement in many of the joint-parish agreements in our district:

The purpose of this Joint Parish Agreement is to ensure that pastoral care of _____ Lutheran Church and _____ Lutheran Church is adequately met. That is, the Word of God is proclaimed, the Sacraments are faithfully administered, the young and old are instructed in the Christian faith, the spiritual needs of the sick are

met, and an effort to reach the lost and erring with the Gospel is made.

The parish agreement certainly expresses the concern that a pastor is available to preach and teach the Word of God and perform other pastoral tasks. But it also emphasizes the opportunity — yes, the joyful responsibility — we all have to bless others with words of witness and deeds of love. Multi-point parishes have the special privilege of working together as ambassadors of Christ, reaching the lost and the erring with the Gospel.

There is no doubt about it: multi-point parishes are tremendous blessings to us

See **MESSAGE** page 8



Rev. Dr. Scott Sailer
District President

The headline for this article is shorthand for the phenomenon of ministry in the LCMS South Dakota District. Most of our congregations have voluntarily joined in ministry agreements as dual parishes, tri-parishes and, yes, in even one situation, a quad-parish.

Our district has 105 congregations. Of them:

- ▶ 32 are sole congregations — one church being served by one or more pastors.
- ▶ 24 are dual-parishes, involving 48 of our congregations.
- ▶ Seven are tri-point parishes, involving 21 of our congregations.
- ▶ One is a quad-parish, involving four congregations.

Let's see: $32 + 48 + 21 + 4 = 105$.

In dual-parishes, two congregations share a pastor. In tri-points, three congregations share a pastor, and in the quad-parish, four congregations share a pastor. And this is one of the reasons (most often the main reason) congregations band together via

75 YEARS OF CONCORDIA, CRESBARD



Members of Concordia (and Immanuel, Wecota) sing praises to God.

‘Built on the Rock’

Concordia, Cresbard, marked its 75th anniversary on June 11, under the theme “Built on the Rock the Church Shall Stand” (based on Psalm 118:22: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”).

The celebration began with a joint worship service with Concordia’s sister church, Immanuel, Wecota. Bob and Trisha Rausch served as hosts and greeted around 120 members and guests who filled the pews and joined in praise. Rev. David Otten, Concordia vacancy pastor, led the worship while Rev. Timothy Koch, pastor of Zion, Linn, Kan., and former Concordia pastor (2011-19), was the guest preacher. He based his sermon on Jesus’ parable of the wise man who built his house upon a rock. Concordia, Cresbard, has stood for 75 years, built on the rock of Jesus Christ.

Claudia Scotter was the organist, and special music was provided by Tracy Otter on violin and Deirdre Scotter on flute, including an instrumental of “The Church’s One Foundation.” This piece was composed by Rev. Dr. Alan Ludwig, assistant pastor of Our Savior, Aberdeen, and St. John’s, Columbia, during his service at Concordia (1992-98).

The service’s offering was designated for Rev. Samuel Bobby’s mission to Latvia.

He previously served as senior pastor of St. Paul’s, Aberdeen.

Symbolic of the Holy Spirit, red paraments were assigned for the church’s anniversary celebration. Red roses adorned the altar, along with a red and gold banner created by Scotter specifically for this day.

Following the service, a noon meal was catered at the Cresbard Community Center. The wooden crosses that adorned each table were commissioned from Mark Levson, Milbank, for the occasion, each carved with the theme verse. Following the meal, the crosses were presented as gifts to service participants, with the remainder to be used in the church for special occasions.

A program, planned by the anniversary committee consisting of Scotter, Denise Melius and Jill Wittmeier, followed the meal. Pastor Otten opened with a prayer and welcome. Church chairman Wynn Holsing introduced the pastors that were present and recognized current and past congregation members. He also read a letter written to Concordia from Rev. Dr. Scott Sailer, district president. Grace and Abby Rausch sang “The Wise Man Built His House Upon a Rock.” A church history was read by Angela (Melius) Johnson, after which greetings from former Concordia pastors who could

not be present were delivered by Doug Wittmeier. The program included a slide show that chronicled the building of the church and the church’s history. Gwen Braddock recited a poem written in 1998 by Irene Hanson for the church’s 50th anniversary. The poem was still timely for the 75th anniversary.

People were invited to share memories and sentiments, after which closing remarks were given by Scotter. After the benediction by Pastor Otten, the program ended with the singing of the hymn “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less.” Many attendees stayed after the program for refreshments and more fellowship.



Vicar serving Zion

Benjamin Wessel was installed as vicar of Zion, Mitchell, on Aug. 6. Benjamin is a student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. He and his wife, Jenny, were married this year, just before moving to Mitchell.

Rev. Daniel Grimmer, Zion senior pastor, is Benjamin’s supervisor.

The vicarage is a pastoral internship in which a seminary student serves a congregation, assisting a pastor for a full school year. The student then returns to the seminary for a final year of on-campus education, after which most receive their first call into the pastoral ministry.

DCEs

Embracing **CHANGE** in confirmation program

By DCE Hailey Jo Miller
Memorial, Sioux Falls

I have served as director of Christian education (DCE) for 12 years, and I currently serve as director of Student Ministry at Memorial, Sioux Falls. I love teaching students about Jesus and their new life in Him. We are encouraged by these words from 2 Timothy 3:14-15:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Here at Memorial, we made some big changes in our confirmation ministry to help continue to connect students to God's Word. Kids are so busy with extracurricular activities that Wednesday nights are no longer reserved for church year-round. Students are forced to make a choice and a lot of the time they miss important lessons concerning their faith and never have a chance to make them up. So I asked, "What can we do differently?" We wanted a model that increased commitment and had less gaps in attendance without compromising content.

Our answer was to adjust our calendar and how we offered our confirmation education. We broke up the content into eight units, including the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer. Each unit is offered twice a year and consists of two to three class periods each. We offer each unit on a Wednesday night and on a weekend, encouraging students and their parents to come at whatever time works best for them.

At the beginning of the school year, we gather for orientation. Parents complete a registration form and commit to attending each class to complete the unit. No change is perfect, and there are always details to tweak. But we've seen an overall increase in commitment to the confirmation program, with fewer attendance issues. Most importantly, our content is still rich and purposeful.

My favorite change, however, is in our capstone project. Once



Hailey Jo takes a joy-filled selfie with Memorial students on the day of their confirmation, and pastors Revs. Aaron Asmus (left) and Doug Slavens.

a student has met all the requirements and completed all the units, they're invited to begin their final project. Students choose a project that reflects the faith that God has given them. Our goal is for students to see that God has equipped them to serve with unique gifts and experiences that point people to Christ — not 10 years down the road, but today! It's also beneficial for our congregation to see how our students participate in the ministry and life of our congregation.

On the day of the Rite of Confirmation, students present their projects (like at a school science fair) to the congregation and their own families. Students have gathered donations, served on committees, made baskets for shut-ins, crocheted prayer shawls — the list goes on and the opportunities are endless!

The joy of seeing our students connect what God has done for them with the ways He uses them for the Kingdom is encouraging news for the church. I'm grateful that God has blessed me with a front seat! I'm grateful to serve on a team that works through challenges together, and I'm grateful to serve in a congregation that trusts in God's Word and is willing to try new things.

If you're interested in learning more about our confirmation model, please don't hesitate to reach out! My prayers are with you as you continue to share God's love through parish education and equip the saints to build the Kingdom!

STEWARDSHIP

Reaching out and in at Zion

Recently, members of Zion Lutheran Church, Rapid City, voted to combine what had been the church's Board of Outreach and Board of Stewardship into one Board of Discipleship. Rather than having one board focused on reaching out and another focused on reaching in (as in, into the congregation to nurture and serve congregation

members), the Board of Discipleship simplifies the focus to go along with Zion's mission of "Knowing Jesus, Growing in Faith and Serving with Love." The Board of Discipleship is responsible for cultivating strong relationships and service opportunities,

See **ZION** page 7

PATTY'S PONDERINGS



Surprise gift from Grandma

Do you ever find a treasure when you are cleaning your house for things to sell at the rummage sale? I did, and I want to share my joy with you!

My maternal grandma, Irma Weisenburger, was a faithful LWML member at Bethesda Lutheran Church, Hot Springs, and a dedicated witness for Christ in her family and community. I discovered a bound, 158-page booklet in my grandma's handwriting. It was all about reading the Bible, living in God's love and sharing this awesome Good News.



Patty Peters
LWML South Dakota District President

On page 23, Grandma writes about growing in the faith, and she gives us the tools for it. So get out your Bibles and hear God's Word about this topic — growth! You may want to add your favorite verses that pertain to each command.

- G** Go to God in prayer daily (JOHN 15:7).
- R** Read God's Word daily (ACTS 17:11).
- O** Obey God, moment by moment (JOHN 14:21).
- W** Witness for Christ by your life and words (MATT. 4:19).
- T** Trust God with every detail of your life (1 PETER 5:7).
- H** Holy Spirit—Allow God to control and empower your daily life (GAL. 5:16-17, ACTS 1:8).

Whether Grandma was the author of this or not, I am encouraged in my faith by reading the thoughts she recorded in that special book about so many Bible passages. This treasure is amazing! The Holy Spirit was certainly working in her heart and mind.

Perhaps we should all consider writing our thoughts in our Bibles or in a special book for our future generations to discover. What a wonderful way to pass on your love of Jesus!



Women of the LWML South Dakota District joined in a sea of teal down the escalators, heading out for the river walk during the 40th Biennial Convention in Milwaukee in June. Many strangers along the river asked who these ladies were. They responded: "We are Lutheran Women in Mission, on a Saturday evening stroll by the river to raise money, for missions is our goal!"

Preserving our memory as 'women of faith'

We can count it all joy to celebrate and meet together. This year I celebrated with my husband, youngest son and his wife at their first LWML convention. What an incredible illustration to share with them why I'm a woman on a mission for the Lord!

One mission grant recipient could not get to the convention fast enough. He drove from California to Milwaukee to say thank you for the startup grant money that will help him and his family share the love of Jesus with others. He drove hundreds of miles for a five-minute thank you. That's dedication!

We remember our "firsts" in life. They mean a lot to us. By keeping records of these "firsts," we can pre-

serve history, start traditions and share great causes, memories and stories with more people.

The records we keep in the LWML are not just notes and numbers on paper. They represent people dedicated to keep us growing in the Lord. We also keep records so we can be remembered as women of faith who did God's work and who share the love of Jesus with others.

We keep our records in manila file folders marked by years, and we keep those manila folders in a banker's box to preserve them. We mark on the outside by years what's inside each box.

Please remember that your yearly reports are due by Nov. 1. Please send them to me at lmnden.3840@juno.com.

Thank you for your dedication to the mission of the Lord!

Lurene M. Denke
LWML District Archivist/Historian

COUNSELOR'S CORNER



Over 500 years ago, Martin Luther began the Reformation. Can you imagine something so significant that it continues to influence people after five centuries? I'm no history buff, but it's safe to say that the Reformation was an incredibly impressive event. How amazing that we get to celebrate Luther's strength and vision through the Holy Spirit and see how God continues to use what Luther and his fellow reformers did for our good today!

Along with the Reformation, many congregations will also celebrate LWML Sunday on the first Sunday in October. While the LWML has been around for only 80-plus years (a far cry from the Reformation's 500!), the Lord also continues to use the women of our congregations to work for a lot of good in the world. Hopefully, we all have the privilege of celebrating both LWML Sunday and the Reformation every year. But we need to do it right and well.

So don't forget, when we celebrate the Reformation or the LWML, we celebrate something that is far older and longer lasting than either of them. We celebrate the freedom that



Rev. Clint O. Thorson
LWML District Counselor

Christ won for us some 2,000 years ago. We are celebrating God's lasting love to make good on His promise that He gave long before Jesus died and rose again. Because when we celebrate the Reformation or the LWML, what we are actually celebrating is that God has freely made us His children through His Son Jesus Christ and released us from our slavery to sin — all out of His love for us.

As we look once again at the Reformation and the work of the LWML, we are thankful that God gave us these servants, Luther and our lovely ladies in purple, to make His lasting love in Christ clear. We thank God that Dr. Luther's work in the Reformation reminds us that Jesus is our sole source of salvation and peace. We thank God that now we walk in the Spirit, doing the things that He teaches us to do without making those works of love and faith into works of Law, trying to work for our salvation. And we thank God that the LWML helps to lead the way in those wonderful works of faith and love.

Read Romans 1:17. Luther gives thanks for this verse as it led to his discovery of the Gospel. In the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed! It isn't hidden away as some secret. No, the power of salvation is unleashed where the Gospel is proclaimed! God's awesome power to save and His lasting love is what both the Reformation and the LWML with all of its loving labors help us to celebrate.

Let us remember God's everlasting love, not just in October but always!

ABERDEEN ZONE REPORT

The Aberdeen Zone held its spring Christian Life Workshop on April 29 at Immanuel, Wecota. Twenty-two women attended from eight groups. Rev. Jacob Smith, associate pastor of St. Paul's, Aberdeen, led opening devotions, "Waiting for God to Act."

The speakers were Linnea Schwandt and Joyce Kauske, coordinators of the Orphan Grain Train (OGT) branch in Milbank. They told us about the or-

ganization and what OGT could use: clothing, pillowcase dresses, T-shirt diapers, crocheted caps, school kits, personal-care kits, layette kits, quilts, plastic sleeping mats and 20" bikes. Visit ogt.org/branches/south-dakota.

Ingathering collections went to OGT. We collected quilts, diapers and other items, along with \$291.

Rev. Samuel Bobby, who recently served as senior pastor of St. Paul's, talked to us about his call to the mission field as a theological educator and missionary

pastor in Riga, Latvia. He and his family left in August.

The few women from our zone who attended the LWML Convention in Milwaukee had a great time with other LWML women in mission, worship, singing and Bible study.

We had another zone meeting in July. We are beginning to plan for our district convention in Aberdeen, scheduled for June 7-8, 2024.

Betty Ochsner • Aberdeen Zone President



Having the end-of-life conversation

By Rev. Timothy Ryneerson
South Dakota District
Second Vice-President



Among the many serious conversations we should have with our loved ones is about end-of-life decisions. God grants great wisdom to doctors, nurses, scientists and other health professionals. We are blessed with tremendous advancements in health, as well as higher life-expectancy rates than generations past. Where people once commonly died from war, famine or plague, today people more commonly slowly fade away from sight. They fade away from others and from life. As a result, conversations about end of life are crucial to have with our loved ones.

Luther lived some 500 years before us, but even then he promoted thinking about such things ahead of time. “We should familiarize ourselves with death during our lifetime, inviting death into our presence when it is still at a distance and not on the move,” he wrote in “A Sermon on Preparing to Die”

(AM ED. VI 42, PP. 101-102). “At the time of dying, however, this is hazardous and useless, for then death looms large of its own accord. In that hour we must put the thought of death out of mind and refuse to see it, as we shall hear. The power and might of death are rooted in the fearfulness of our nature and in our untimely and undue viewing and contemplating of it.”

But how do we go about such a conversation? Perhaps the ancient questions — the five Ws and one H — make for a good starting point.

1. Who to have the discussion with

This includes family and friends, or whoever has been chosen to be the health care agent(s). The agent(s) will help make decisions when the individual can no longer make decisions on his or her own.

2. What should be discussed.

This includes the treatment possibilities and when they are appropriate (if applicable), and our common faith in the One who is in control of life. You might also discuss a last will and testament, as well as the durable power of attorney for healthcare issues (each of us needs

these). Remember that God is present and heals through the hands of doctors and nurses. That is, medicine is God’s gift. The words of *Lutheran Service Book* #748 ring true: “I’m but a stranger here, Heaven is my home.”

3. When to discuss

Now. The sooner the better. None of us knows the span of our life. Any of us could be blessed with heaven at any time. One idea for a particular day to have this conversation is the day after Thanksgiving, because the family is often together and have been reflecting on God’s blessings.

4. Where to have the conversation

Ideas include around the kitchen table, or where other important conversations have taken place over the years.

5. Why to have the conversation

Everyone needs to know what is really important, and that includes our faith in the One who has blessed and saved us, and our desire to follow His will at all times.

6. How to have the conversation

Talk to your pastor about resources. Visit Lutherans For Life at lutheransforlife.org or the LCMS at lcms.org for resources. Or email me at peacelut@brookings.net and I’ll be glad to point you to a variety of resources.

The apostle Paul wrote:

It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind stiving side by side for the sake of the faith of the gospel.

PHIL. 1:20-21, 27

God’s blessings on all of your conversations.

Rev. Timothy Ryneerson serves as senior pastor of Peace, Brookings; Redeemer, Flandreau; and Zion, White.

THE CHURCH LIVES!

Teaching children about INTERNATIONAL MISSION

A new edition of *Missions Unpacked for Kids*, produced by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) Short-Term Mission unit, is now available. The new curriculum — “The Church Lives!” — is designed to help children learn about the Synod’s international mission work.

“Teaching kids about international mission makes them aware ... that [the Great Commission] is carried out in countries around the world by missionaries just like their own pastors, who share the same saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people on the other side of the world,” said Heidi Paul, LCMS missionary to the Cayman Islands.

Each lesson focuses on a different region of international mission — Africa, Asia, Eurasia, and Latin America and the Caribbean — and was written by a few missionaries who live in the region. Building on the theme, each lesson shows how the church lives and grows in different parts of the world.

Each lesson emphasizes that despite differences in culture, language and geography — and in what the church building looks like or what songs are sung — the church’s one foundation is in Jesus Christ.

The curriculum was written to be adaptable to a variety of age levels and learning environments. It could be used for a religion class or a chapel presentation at a Lutheran school, or for homeschool instruction, Sunday school, family devotions and more.

Each lesson contains:

- ▶ A Bible story, along with questions, activities and background notes for the teacher;
- ▶ Suggested prayers and memory work based on the lesson’s theme;
- ▶ Videos that focus on the life and work of the missionaries in each region;



- ▶ Crafts and games that highlight each region’s culture; and
- ▶ A geography lesson, with the optional supplement of a Google Earth presentation.

Google Earth presentations are a new addition to *Missions Unpacked*. These interactive visuals will help give students a sense of the geography of the mission field.

The presentations also provide pictures and information about the missionaries and churches in the mission field, allowing students to put names to faces and places.

Missions Unpacked began as an interactive online resource, developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, to help individuals, families and groups learn about international mission work without leaving home.

Now the program has expanded to include online events and presentations; free, downloadable resources like devotions and study guides; and two sets of the *Missions Unpacked for Kids* curriculum (the first was published in 2021).

Learn more at international.lcms.org/missions-unpacked.

ZION

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

inviting others to join in Christ’s mission and find their part in God’s kingdom.

For years, members of Zion weren’t clear on what the Board of Stewardship actually was. “Outreach” is clear enough, but “stewardship?” Was that the board that prompted people to give money to the church?

“Part of what makes stewardship so misunderstood is that it encompasses so much,” said Lynette Epp, a longtime member at Zion who serves on the Board of Discipleship.

“Discipleship” points us back to the New Testament and the first followers of Jesus. When Jesus called those first disciples, he did so with two simple words: “Follow me” (John 1:43). A disciple is a student or a learner who follows the teachings and practices of another. Zion’s Board of Discipleship encourages others (both within and outside of the church) to hear God’s Word and to trust, love, and obey Him.

“Love is an action,” Epp said. “It listens. It obeys. And it steps out in faith.”

“If you’re listening, you’re going to be doing,” she added.

Such “doing” includes stewarding (managing) what God gives to us in abundance. What He gives to us is not ours; it’s His, to be used in service to God and our neighbors. It includes our time, our talents and our treasures. Those treasures certainly include the money and possessions God provides, but they also include the treasure of the Gospel. In giving away our time, money or skill, we are not impoverished. Instead, we are being a blessing to others.

“I have learned over and over that God’s economy is always better than my economy,” Epp said.

Growth at Bethesda

August marked the 44th year of ministry for Bethesda Lutheran School, Hot Springs, with notable growth and exciting changes.

In 2022, Bethesda was accredited with the South Dakota Department of Education. This year the school will renew its accreditation with National Lutheran School Accreditation.

The 2023-24 school year started on Aug. 21. Rachel Utecht returned for her third year and will teach grades kindergarten through one.

The school also welcomed two new teachers. Staci Pokorski is a kindergarten through eighth-grade certified teacher with 20 years of classroom experience. Melody Leibbrandt holds an early childhood education degree and has over 26 years of teaching experience.



▲ Melody Leibbrandt teaches her students.

▶ Students pray during chapel.



MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

in South Dakota! But they require the members of the respective congregations to work hard at exhibiting the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (GAL. 5:22-23).

They require understanding and patient pastors who love their congregations and who teach and encourage the saints in their saint-sinner lives together.

I am so impressed how, in our beloved South Dakota District, God's Spirit is active to bring about the spiritual fruit necessary for His people to dwell together in unity in these special multi-congregation arrangements. And I am so impressed with our pastors who so lovingly serve them.

Most of all, I am grateful that God has brought about this kind of unity and cooperation through the ministry of "duals," "tris," and "quads." I'm also grateful, of course, for you who are blessed to be in "sole" congregations, working together with your pastor(s) within one congregation to shine the light of the Gospel in your part of South Dakota.

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Scott Sailer

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



SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Send articles and photos to
Kate Meadows:

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

Call Information

Rev. Clint Thorson, Our Savior, Madison, and St. John, Howard, is prayerfully considering a call as pastor to Eternal Savior, Lafayette, Colo., Aug. 30. He declined a call as pastor to St. Paul, Batavia, N.Y., Sept. 2.

Rev. Brad Birtell, St. John, Columbus, Neb., is prayerfully considering a call as pastor to Mount Olive, Watertown, Sept. 10.

Rev. Jordan Andreasen, Our Savior, Aberdeen, and St. John's, Columbia, is prayerfully considering a call as pastor to Immanuel Lakefield, Minn., Aug. 27.

Rev. Daniel Grimmer, Zion, Mitchell, declined a call as pastor to Our Redeemer/Immanuel/St. John's, Herington, Kan., Aug. 3.

Rev. Kevin Koester, Mount Calvary, Huron, declined a call as pastor to Trinity, Medford, Minn., Sept. 3.

Rev. Kyle Whaley, Mount Calvary, Poison, Mont., and Zion, St. Ignasius, Mont., declined a call as pastor to Concordia, Cresbard, and Immanuel, Wecota, Aug. 26.

Rev. Andrew Jones, First, Concord, Calif., declined a call as pastor to Mount Olive, Watertown, Aug. 19.

VACANCIES

Senior pastor

- Mount Calvary, Huron • St. Paul, Aberdeen

Sole pastor

- St. John, St. Paul/Britton/Ferney
- Grace, Blessed Emmanuel/Deadwood, Sturgis
- St. Paul, Trinity/Plankinton, White Lake
- Mount Olive, Watertown
- Faith, St. Peter's/Parkston, rural Emory

Associate pastor

- Zion, Rapid City • St. John's, Yankton