



DISTRICT NEWS

SOUTH DAKOTA

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Real and down-to-earth for real sinners



Rev. Dr.
Scott Sailer
District President

The first Christmas, as reported by the evangelist Luke in chapter 2 of his Gospel, was as real as it gets — a real baby boy born of a real woman named Mary, in a real stable in the little town of Bethlehem. He was then lovingly cleaned up, wrapped in swaddling clothes, nursed and gently placed on the hay in a manger.

A stable is a shelter for livestock. Donkeys, sheep, cows — real, live animals occupy this place.

Talk about real and down to earth! Think of it: Christ Jesus, who is “very God of very God,” took on real human flesh in the womb of a woman He had a hand in creating. In nine months, He experienced a real birth. Why? “For us men and for our salvation,” as we confess in the Nicene Creed.

Christmas was God’s heaven-to-earth step in His plan for the provision of real-life salvation, by way of the eventual and very real crucifixion, death and resurrection of His Son.

You needed this, didn’t you? Because you know the sinner that you are. You know your doubts and disappointments. You know you fall short of God’s glory.

Dear friends in Christ, remember that first Christmas. Remember and celebrate that — then and there in Bethlehem — Jesus Christ, the world’s very real flesh-and-blood Savior, came into this world to bear your real sin and be your real Savior. Because of His saving work, your sins are forgiven. All of them.

And be assured this Christmas and every day that the One who was “incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,” having ascended to the right hand of the Father, lives and reigns over all things. He guides you with His Word and Spirit. He feeds you with His supper. He intercedes for you with the heavenly Father. He protects you with His holy angels.

Thank You, heavenly Father, for that very first, very real Christmas in Bethlehem, with a stable and a manger filled with hay, with Your dear Son, Jesus, nestled on that hay. Thank You that His incarnation was the heaven-to-earth step in Your plan for my forgiveness and salvation. Amen.

Your servant in Christ, Pastor Sailer

“Not ashamed of the Gospel”
Rom. 1:16; 16:25–27

‘You’ll want to be a part of this’



LCEF grant helps Faith Lutheran, Sioux Falls, reach out with VBS

“How do we reach more people in our neighborhood – especially the underserved and low-income families – with vacation Bible school?”

That’s the question members of Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, asked themselves as they planned their 2023 VBS program, which was held in July.

“We noticed that there was an opportunity to reach out to the Whittier neighborhood and foster those relationships,” said Rev. Corey Aker, Faith pastor. “We wanted to focus on natural opportunities that would get us in contact with the people in our neighborhood.”

Aker had heard of churches that purposely set up VBS in a different place each year, and never in the same place twice. He brought this idea to the congregation, making the case for Faith to think outside of the box in planning its VBS program.

“You’ll want to be a part of this,” Pastor Aker told his congregation. The members agreed to give it a try and they secured an ideal location – a middle-school football field behind the church, which Faith members could transform into the city of Jerusalem, complete with a stonework-like backdrop.

During the VBS week, children would travel through a “Jerusalem marketplace” with their “tribe of Israel,” participating in different activities each night. VBS stations would include carpentry, dye, bead bazaar, rock shop and learning at a synagogue school.

But funding this unique venture would be a healthy challenge.

“There were a ton of infrastructure things we would have to



▲ The Whittier Middle School football field was converted into the city of Jerusalem.

▲ In his role as rabbi, Rev. Nabil Nour, senior pastor of Trinity, Hartford, blows into a shophar (ram’s horn).

buy, but we knew it would be nice to have it all for the future,” Pastor Aker said.

While planning, district staff members reached out to Randy Gayken, who was then serving as LCEF district vice-president, about the possibility of applying for a LCEF Kaleidoscope Fund grant to help offset the cost.

“We didn’t know it at the time, but district loved what was going on at Faith and they wanted to help out,” Pastor Aker said. “They loved the concept and wanted to contribute however they could.”

District staff applied for the grant on behalf of the congregation, and the Kaleidoscope Fund awarded Faith \$5,000. The money allowed the congregation to not only provide the kind of VBS experience they’d hoped for, but also to make it happen for years to come.

Continued on next page

“The Kaleidoscope Fund grant answered a prayer we hadn’t even prayed yet,” Pastor Aker said.

Over several weeks of preparation and the week of VBS, 148 Faith members volunteered to construct the market-places; prepare the food; set up and tear down sets; make costumes; act as townsfolk/shopkeepers; and help with audio-visual needs, registration, logistics and decorations. Additionally, hundreds of people prayed for this outreach program and financially contributed to the mission.

Over five nights, the average attendance was 63 children, with more than 50 percent who do not attend Faith.

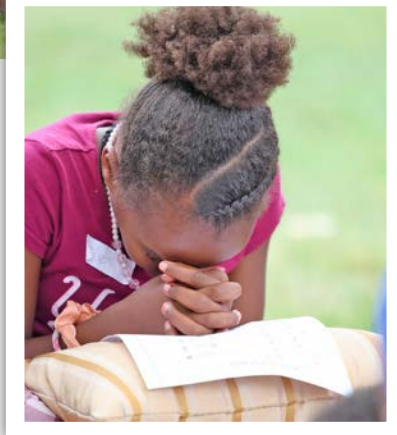
“Jesus [came] in a special way to the children and adults of our congregation and the Whittier neighborhood,” Pastor Aker said. “Thanks be to God for His rich blessings and provision!”

Church members hope that other Sioux Falls congregations will make similar plans for their VBS programs — and thanks to the generous funds received from the Kaleidoscope Fund grant, Faith is ready to share their supplies, plans and perhaps even some enthusiastic volunteers.



▲ Among the stations the students visited was the dye shop.

▶ A student engages in prayer.



“We want to see this replicated in other parts of Sioux Falls,” Pastor Aker said. “It can be a community model — it’s a great way to introduce yourself into the neighborhood, and we’ve even had families who want to get baptized. We can’t wait to see how the Lord leads us to follow up and grow these relationships.”

Expanding in Mitchell

After 20 years of dreaming and two years of dedicated planning, Zion, Mitchell, broke ground for its new Ministry Center on Sept. 21. Located across an alley from the church, the Ministry Center will provide up-to-date and ADA-accessible space for church fellowship, education and outreach. The project is funded by member contributions, an LCEF loan and a generous estate from a member who is now with Jesus.

Prior to the groundbreaking, students from Mitchell Tech and instructor Eric Schramm, a Zion member, plotted out the lot. The Mitchell Chamber of Commerce was present at the ceremony, which was led by Rev. Daniel Grimmer, Zion pastor. Included was the hymn, “Christ is Our Cornerstone.”



The members of Zion give thanks to God not only for the new center, but also for everyone who was involved in the fundraising and planning leading up to the September groundbreaking. After the ceremony, the Zion congregation celebrated with ice cream.

Pictured with shovels are, from left, John Fink, Zion congregation president; Eric Schramm, Building Committee vice-chairman; Adam Schulz, Building Committee chairman; and Pastor Grimmer.

PATTY'S PONDERINGS



Introducing women to the LWML

“As redeemed women in God’s Word, we engage and involve each woman in the congregation.”

This statement is part of the 2023-2025 Lutheran Women in Mission strategic plan. We also “recognize and reach out to all women as His children, each with God-given gifts.”

How do you reach out to a new woman in your congregation? This may be easy for some, but others may not believe that they have the gifts to strike up a conversation with someone new. One way to introduce women to LWML is to ask them to visit lwml.org. They can learn about LWML by going to the “About” tab at right and selecting “Who We Are” from the drop-down menu. On that page are links to the “About LWML” and “Introduction to LWML” videos.



Patty Peters
LWML South Dakota
District President

Many of our LWML groups are shrinking in membership or even disbanding because of the declining membership or the difficulties that arise due to aging. Most of you know women who faithfully come to the Sunday church service but have not been invited to an LWML activity. Are you engaged in service projects, social activities or Bible studies in which you can meet and have the opportunity to get to know each other?

Do you have women of different ethnic groups that attend your church? One way to familiarize yourself with a new culture is through participating in activities together, such as cooking or sewing. This can lead to laughter, friendships — and growing together in Christ.

Another way to help our groups survive and grow is to invite women from other Lutheran congregations that do not have an active LWML group to join you for meetings, retreats, rallies and social events. The LWML South Dakota District Convention, to be held June 7-8 in Aberdeen, is another great opportunity to invite women to join us in proclaiming Christ and supporting missions.

We are to “Serve the Lord with gladness and come into his presence with singing!” (Psalm 100:2). May God richly bless you as you invite women to your LWML activities.

BROOKINGS ZONE REPORT

The Brookings Zone hosted the District Retreat at Peace, Brookings, in April. LWML women from South Dakota gathered “In One Voice” to glorify God.

In the coming months, you will find our women preparing frozen meals for members, sewing bibs for the early childhood center, making Christmas bags for Sunday school and preschool children, quilting, serving community suppers, hosting zone prayer breakfasts, organizing “freewill” rummage sales for backpack programs, gathering free school supplies for children in the district, serving meals to seniors and more. It is amazing the many ways the women of the Brookings Zone societies are witnessing and showing their love of Jesus to others. These women also support the pastors and church workers in their congregations, collect mites for missions and hold Bible studies. They are busy ladies on a mission!

Four women of the Brookings Zone attended the national LWML convention in Milwaukee in June. Delegate Dora Harste gave her report at the Fall Rally, which was held on Oct. 7 at Zion, White. David Miller of Sleep in Heavenly Peace spoke about the organization’s mission of building and donating beds to children so that “No kid sleeps on the floor in our town!” Rev. Tim Rynearson, zone counselor and senior pastor of Zion; Redeemer, Flandreau; and Peace, Brookings; led the rally Bible study.

Nominations sought

The district LWML Nominating Committee is seeking women who are willing to serve the Lord as district officers. These positions require a four-year commitment, except for the Nominating Committee, which is a two-year term. Elections for the following positions will be held at the 2024 LWML district convention:

- President
- VP of Gospel Outreach
- Treasurer
- VP of Christian Life
- Nominating Committee

Information on each position can be found at sdlwml.org/structure (click “LWML South Dakota District Procedures Manual”).

For more information, contact a Nominating Committee member:

- ▶ Susan Swanson (chairman): smswanson@midstatesd.net
- ▶ Nyla Jurrens: nylakayj@gmail.com
- ▶ Patti Greenseth: tierrapaz.grnsth10@gmail.com

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Farewell

Dear ladies of the LWML South Dakota District,

In October I accepted a call to serve as pastor of Eternal Savior Lutheran Church, Lafayette, Colo. By the time you read this, I will have already moved on to Colorado and the Rocky Mountain District. I am writing to say thank you.

Thank you so much for almost four years of wonderful memories and allowing me to be your district counselor in the beloved South Dakota District.



Rev. Clint O. Thorson
LWML District Counselor

These past years have been wonderful watching Christ work through you to better your communities and the world. I have been constantly amazed by your faith in and fervor for Christ, your loving care and your magnanimous giving. It has truly been an honor to work with such wonderful Christians, and I have learned so much from you all.

I join Paul, in Philippians 1, in thanking my God for you all because of your partnership in the Gospel. The Lord has filled me with such joy in watching and helping you carry out your magnificent ministry.

I leave South Dakota in full confidence that God will continue to strengthen you in faith and in fervent love toward one another so that you may continue to fortify and strengthen His Kingdom by sharing the gifts and grace that He gave to you in Christ. I look forward to hearing about the great and wonderful things that our loving God accomplishes through you, his servants,

in South Dakota and in the rest of God's creation.

May God fill you all with the same joy that He has given me through you, especially as Christmas is right around the corner. My hope and prayer is that, as you race to accomplish all that must be done before Christmas, God gives you the peace and joy that comes only from Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection. Jesus took on flesh as a little babe to bring forgiveness and therefore peace with God and true joy for you.

Our Savior lived, died and defeated death for your sake, that as you serve in His Kingdom to His glory you might be able to do so with the peace and joy that comes from knowing your future is secure in Christ. Though we are parted for now, I look forward to that time when our joy will be complete and we will, with all of God's faithful, join in singing for the final time "Joy to the World! The Lord is come!" God's richest blessings to you all!

Ladies gather for workshops

The Christian Life Workshops were held at Peace, Rapid City, on Sept. 16 and Zion, Sioux Falls, on Sept. 30. DCE Josh Schmitt of St. John's, Yankton, presented on "The Impact of Original Sin." We learned that God created reality and morality; and that love and morality go hand-in-hand. Morality tells us how to love. We need Christ and His Word to love and help others. Forgiveness comes first, then faith. In the words of retired Concordia Seminary professor Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb, "The root of all sin is the human deafness to the work of God."

Rebecca Scott and Vania Asmus, our Young Woman Representatives (YWR) at the national LWML convention in Milwaukee, spoke about their experience. What a joy to see these young women become involved in LWML and bring their enthusiasm and love of Christ as they serve our Lord!

Forty-eight people attended the Rapid City workshop and 75 attended in Sioux Falls. A silent auction for mites was held at the Zion event, which totaled \$1,102! Mite offerings for both workshops totaled over \$1,500. We praise our loving Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for these generous offerings, which will go toward the district 2022-24 Mission Grants.

Susan Buxcel • VP of Christian Life



▲ From left, YWRs Vania Asmus and Rebecca Scott talk to Patty Peters about their experience at the LWML convention.



◀ DCE Josh Schmitt chats with Myrna Meyer, a member of Bethlehem, Rapid City.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. ISAIAH 9:6

Having the end-of-life conversation

PART III

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



This time of year, many are focused on preparing to celebrate Christmas. This celebration may or may not be centered on the birth of God's Son who came to be the "Savior ... Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Many miss the real gift of Christmas, the Good News that this newborn child came to save us from our sin and give us the gift of life forever with Him. The celebration we'll experience in heaven will be far greater than any we've experienced here.

For some families, this Christmas will be a time of thinking about what is happening in heaven. Either they will terribly miss their loved ones who won't be with them at the Christmas Eve service, or they will sit with those whose journey here on earth is soon coming to an end.

In the last couple of articles, I have written about the need to have conversations concerning end-of-life issues, because any of us could die at any time. I mentioned that we are not beings who get to make decisions for ourselves. We are a part of a community of believers and our actions have an impact on others. We are here to support and care for each other, especially those who are going through difficult times. On top of that, we serve the One who served us by giving His life for ours. "Our will is to do His will," as the LWML pledge so beautifully and succinctly says.

So how do we make decisions concerning end-of-life issues? This is a difficult

question. To answer this, we should pray. And when all else fails, pray.

We should make all decisions after prayer. After having conversations with medical staff, pray. After discussion with others in the church, pray. After discussion within the family, pray.

Then we go forward with a decision, trusting that God is in charge and will lead the way. And He always will do what is best in His eyes for His people. If, later on, we think we made a wrong decision, God still forgives and loves us always.

The challenge is knowing what God's will is in a particular situation. That's why I'm a fan of the "best interest standard." Simply put, when trying to figure out what to do for someone, we seek what's in their best interest. When our darling daughter was a child we asked her opinion about braces, but then did what we thought was best for her. She got to have some input, but the decision was ours. Perhaps someday the roles will be reversed and she will be asked what should be done next for the care of her dearest father.

I would expect that she would use the same guide — what's in his best interest. My best interest includes the earnest consideration of what medicine thinks is best, knowing full well that "I'm but a stranger here and heaven is my home."

This means we don't seek an easy way out. We're not concerned about our own dignity, nor are we looking for pain and suffering. We just want what God wants. Jesus suffered so that "by his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5d). He will bring us healing. That healing might be here or in the place He is constructing for us in heaven. We trust in His promise that He is with us now and always, and someday soon we'll be in His presence forever.

Christmas is a time of joy because of the birth of the one who died for us. Christmas is a time of sadness as we remember those who are with Him now. Christmas is a time of confusion as we are still here but waiting for our home above. Christmas is a time to support each other, no matter what we're going through.

Rev. Timothy Ryneason (peacelut@brookings.net) serves as senior pastor of Peace, Brookings; Redeemer, Flandreau; and Zion, White.



LCMS South Dakota District Congregational Year-to-Date Report of Mission Receipts for the nine months ending Oct. 14, 2023, compared to the nine months ending Oct. 14, 2022

City, Congregation	Comm. Members	2023 Intention	9 months 2023	9 months 2022	Avg/Per 2023	Comm. 2022
Circuit 1 – Aberdeen						
Aberdeen, Our Savior ¹	324	10,000	8,700	10,085	26.85	31.13
Aberdeen, St. John	82	12,500	10,952	11,114	133.56	135.54
Aberdeen, St. Paul	774	–	42,976	42,537	55.52	54.96
Andover, Zion	106	–	3,350	1,800	31.60	16.98
Britton, St. John ²	151	–	7,000	3,500	46.36	23.18
Columbia, St. John	101	7,750	7,750	5,813	76.73	57.55
Cresbard, Concordia	52	2,625	3,425	4,425	65.87	85.10
Doland, Redeemer	43	2,000	1,500	1,500	34.88	34.88
Ferney, St. Paul	165	–	4,000	4,000	24.24	24.24
Groton, St. John	303	7,000	7,000	6,988	23.10	23.06
Leola, St. Paul	51	500	–	–	–	–
Mansfield, Trinity	276	26,000	23,492	21,221	85.12	76.89
Redfield, Messiah	152	1,000	1,000	1,000	6.58	6.58
Stratford, St. Paul	38	4,000	4,000	3,000	105.26	78.95
Wecota, Immanuel	74	–	6,453	4,362	87.20	58.95
Circuit 1 Totals	2,692	\$73,375	\$131,598	\$121,345	48.88	45.08
Circuit 2 – Watertown						
Brookings, Mount Calvary	415	47,000	37,218	35,418	89.68	85.34
Brookings, Peace	289	–	4,500	6,000	15.57	20.76
Corona, Trinity	138	2,000	970	1,607	7.03	11.64
Flandreau, Redeemer	31	3,800	2,850	2,850	91.94	91.94
Milbank, Bethlehem	65	300	–	–	–	–
Milbank, Emanuel	582	24,000	16,000	16,000	27.49	27.49
Revillo, St. John	127	3,000	2,110	2,562	16.61	20.17
Sisseton, Emanuel	137	4,400	1,210	1,855	8.83	13.54
Watertown, Mount Olive	371	30,700	23,025	25,583	62.06	68.96
Waubay, Zion	127	3,000	3,567	4,985	28.09	39.25
White, Zion	60	5,500	1,250	900	20.83	15.00
Wilmot, Our Savior	163	2,500	2,235	1,772	13.71	10.87
Circuit 2 Totals	2,505	\$126,200	\$94,935	\$99,532	37.90	39.73
Circuit 3 – Pierre						
Blunt, Trinity	37	2,000	1,500	1,500	40.54	40.54
Chamberlain, Zion	407	–	15,016	12,961	36.89	31.85
Draper, St. Paul	27	–	250	–	9.26	–
Gettysburg, Emmanuel	201	5,500	–	2,517	–	12.52
Gregory, St. John	251	–	–	–	–	–
Hamill, Zion	22	500	–	–	–	–
Harrold, Immanuel	22	100	–	–	–	–
Lebanon, Christ	23	300	–	–	–	–
Midland, St. Peter	44	3,000	2,830	2,075	64.32	47.16
Murdo, Messiah	71	3,000	1,250	1,262	17.61	17.77
Norris, St. John	69	2,500	696	715	10.09	10.36
Onida, Holy Cross	109	1,600	1,600	–	14.68	–
Philip, Our Redeemer	50	–	–	–	–	–
Pierre, Faith	1,467	45,000	33,750	33,750	23.01	23.01
Presho, Zion	88	1,650	1,500	–	17.05	–
Reliance, Trinity	36	–	–	–	–	–
Rosebud, Rosebud Mission	–	–	1,404	1,306	–	–
Winner, Christ	67	2,000	1,000	2,000	14.93	29.85
Circuit 3 Totals	2,991	\$67,150	\$60,796	\$58,086	20.33	19.42
Circuit 4 – Black Hills						
Black Hawk, Divine Shepherd	343	16,600	11,761	10,454	34.29	30.48
Creighton, Emmanuel	51	–	–	–	–	–
Custer, Our Redeemer	194	3,200	1,698	2,210	8.75	11.39
Deadwood, Grace	82	3,500	2,500	2,500	30.49	30.49
Hill City, Our Savior	27	1,500	1,500	1,000	55.56	37.04
Hot Springs, Bethesda	140	–	5,250	5,250	37.50	37.50
Rapid City, Bethlehem	445	30,362	22,771	21,291	51.17	47.84
Rapid City, Our Redeemer	139	2,700	2,840	2,800	20.43	20.14
Rapid City, Peace	500	22,000	18,421	18,562	36.84	37.12
Rapid City, Zion	605	30,000	24,625	20,250	40.70	33.47
Spearfish, St. Paul	318	30,000	31,236	42,000	98.23	132.08
Sturgis, Blessed Emmanuel	18	600	–	–	–	–
Wall, First	223	2,100	2,100	2,562	9.42	11.49
Circuit 4 Totals	3,085	\$142,562	\$124,702	\$128,879	40.42	41.78

City, Congregation	Comm. Members	2023 Intention	9 months 2023	9 months 2022	Avg/Per 2023	Comm. 2022
Circuit 5 – Mitchell						
Armour, Redeemer	198	8,000	6,000	6,000	30.30	30.30
Delmont, Zion	92	16,000	12,000	12,000	130.43	130.43
Dimock, Immanuel	155	15,000	14,753	21,505	95.18	138.74
Emery, St. Peter	57	–	3,513	3,628	61.63	63.65
Huron, Mount Calvary	802	70,000	36,832	39,685	45.93	49.48
Mitchell, Zion	543	30,850	23,139	23,199	42.61	42.72
Parkston, Faith ³	190	10,000	10,000	10,000	52.63	52.63
Plankinton, St. Paul	140	2,000	2,000	–	14.29	–
Tripp, Emmaus	49	–	1,875	1,875	38.27	38.27
White Lake, Trinity	118	8,000	7,600	6,550	64.41	55.51
Wessington Springs, Zion	75	–	–	–	–	–
Wolsey, St. John	233	–	9,009	8,334	38.67	35.77
Woonsocket, Mount Olive	11	–	–	–	–	–
Circuit 5 Totals	2,663	\$159,850	\$126,721	\$132,776	47.59	49.86
Circuit 6 – Freeman						
Alexandria, St. Martin	81	–	275	825	3.40	10.19
Canistota, Zion	228	–	2,669	1,633	11.71	7.16
Centerville, First English	65	2,000	1,360	965	20.92	14.85
Freeman, St. Paul	262	9,000	7,372	8,056	28.14	30.75
Hartford, Trinity	105	3,000	–	–	–	–
Howard, St. John	122	–	–	–	–	–
Hurley, Zion	31	2,750	–	740	–	23.87
Madison, Our Savior	206	3,600	2,700	2,700	13.11	13.11
Marion, Bethesda	59	2,000	–	2,500	–	42.37
Menno, Immanuel	63	–	5,335	3,176	84.68	50.41
Montrose, St. John	91	–	–	–	–	–
Parker, First English	29	2,500	–	7,000	–	241.38
Scotland, St. Paul	39	600	500	450	12.82	11.54
Spencer, Trinity	77	–	2,000	2,000	25.97	25.97
Tea, Risen Savior	116	11,470	7,838	8,387	67.57	72.30
Wentworth, St. Peter	184	7,750	5,812	5,167	31.59	28.08
Circuit 6 Totals	1,758	\$44,670	\$35,861	\$43,599	20.40	24.80
Circuit 7 – Sioux Falls						
Brandon, Blessed Redeemer	282	15,000	10,000	11,250	35.46	39.89
Sioux Falls, Christ	106	2,000	1,000	2,000	9.43	18.87
Sioux Falls, Faith	618	43,500	36,250	36,250	58.66	58.66
Sioux Falls, Lord of Life	150	–	9,378	9,420	62.52	62.80
Sioux Falls, Memorial	740	–	41,564	31,705	56.17	42.84
Sioux Falls, Our Redeemer	266	–	12,600	20,800	47.37	78.20
Sioux Falls, Resurrection	229	10,000	7,500	7,500	32.75	32.75
Sioux Falls, Trinity of The Deaf	35	–	–	–	–	–
Sioux Falls, Zion	652	49,000	42,000	48,800	64.42	74.85
Circuit 7 Totals	3,078	\$119,500	\$160,292	\$167,725	52.08	54.49
Circuit 8 – Yankton						
Alcester, Peace	105	–	2,524	2,313	24.04	22.03
Avon, Zion	199	5,000	3,830	4,183	19.25	21.02
Dakota Dunes, Holy Cross	179	25,750	14,501	14,545	81.01	81.26
Fairfax, Trinity	77	4,500	5,000	–	64.94	–
Springfield, Our Savior	26	100	–	–	–	–
Tyndall, St. John	128	2,600	–	–	–	–
Utica, Martinus	70	1,500	1,500	1,551	21.43	22.16
Vermillion, Concordia	91	10,000	9,000	6,480	98.90	71.21
Wagner, St. John	182	9,000	6,750	6,750	37.09	37.09
Yankton, St. John	1,113	56,400	37,317	26,500	33.53	23.81
Circuit 8 Totals	2,170	\$114,850	\$80,422	\$62,322	37.06	28.72
GRAND TOTALS	20,942	\$848,157	\$815,327	\$814,264	38.93	38.88

¹\$2,000 of Our Savior, Aberdeen, is for 2022 missions

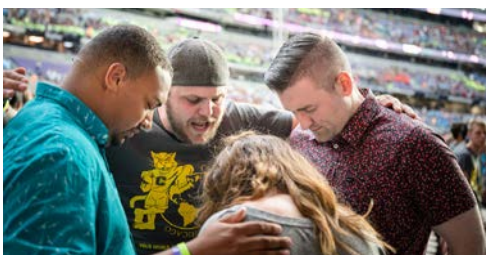
²\$3,500 of St. John, Britton, is for 2022 missions

³\$2,500 of Faith, Parkston, mission intention was paid in 2022

Comm. Members: Communicant membership as of Oct. 10, 2022 per LCMS congregational statistics report

SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT



Photos: LCMS Erik M. Lunsford

Matthew 9:38 urges us to:

“Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

On Sept. 27, LCMS leaders hosted a virtual town hall meeting to present on a new Synod-wide initiative called *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)*, which focuses on forming and recruiting full-time church workers. The initiative stems from the 2019 LCMS Convention Resolution 6-01, “To Support and Participate in the comprehensive church worker Recruitment Initiative.”

Nearly 250 people joined the town hall, including yours truly, to learn how *SAS* is striving to create an “intentional culture of church worker formation and recruitment in every congregation and school throughout the Synod.”

It’s no secret that the LCMS is experiencing a significant pastor and church worker shortage. The LCMS

reports that there are currently more than 800 pastoral vacancies, though about half of them are “non-calling vacancies” (meaning congregations not actively seeking a pastor).

In 2023, fewer than 80 pastors were sent into the field from both seminaries, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Here are a few facts that particularly struck me at the town hall:

- ▶ Thirty-four percent of pastors are between the ages of 55 and 64. This means that one-third of our LCMS pastors are near retirement age.
- ▶ Only half of church workers talk to youth about considering a church-work vocation.
- ▶ The top three influences for church-work recruitment are encouragement by a pastor (34.3%), a commissioned church worker (27.7%) and parents (25.4%).

The *SAS* initiative targets three groups of people to form and recruit for full-time church work: youth, second career and international.

A promotional flyer focused on recruiting youth for church work formation and recruitment states: “As the number of pastors and church workers continues to decline across the Synod, we need to be intentional about talking to our youth about opportunities to become church workers and supporting those who pursue these sacred and joyful vocations.”

Intentional seems to be the key word of this initiative.

To learn more about the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative, visit lcms.org/sas. Scroll down for the link for resources for you and your congregation.

“These resources are for you, to be used by every pastor, parent, church worker, lay person and LCMS entity,” wrote Rev. Dr. Jim Baneck, executive director of Pastoral Education, in a letter thanking attendees for participating in the town hall. A link to the town hall recording is available at the website as well.

— Submitted by Kate Meadows



Call Information

Rev. Doug Slavens, associate pastor, Memorial, Sioux Falls, is prayerfully considering a call to St. Paul Lutheran Church and School, Utica, Neb., Oct. 17.

Rev. Gary Schulte, candidate, has accepted a call as associate pastor to Zion, Rapid City, Nov. 6.

Rev. Brad Birtell, St. John, Columbus, Neb., accepted a call to Mount Olive, Watertown, Oct. 22.

Rev. Jordon Andreasen, Our Savior, Aberdeen/St. John, Columbia, accepted a call as LCMS missionary to Romania, Oct. 22.

Josh Schmitt, DCE, St. John’s, Yankton, declined a call to Faith, Pleasant Hill, Calif., Oct. 22.

Rev. Ryan Drevlow, pastor of Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls, is prayerfully considering a call as senior pastor to St. Paul’s, Aberdeen/St. Paul’s, Leola, Oct. 22.

VACANCIES

Senior pastor

- Mount Calvary, Huron
- St. Paul, Aberdeen

Sole pastor

- St. John, Britton/St. Paul, Ferney
- Grace, Deadwood/Blessed Emmanuel, Sturgis
- St. Paul, Plankinton/Trinity, White Lake
- Faith, Parkston/St. Peter, Clayton
- Concordia, Cresbard/Immanuel, Wecota
- Our Savior, St. John’s/Madison, Howard

Associate pastor

- St. John’s, Yankton

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

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