

DISTRICT NEWS

NOVEMBER 2025

‘Thou shalt not covet’

And *protecting your neighbor’s reputation*; gifts and Gospel in commandments eight through ten

For the last two issues, we have been walking through the 10 words of Moses, better known as the 10 Commandments. We know the purpose of the Law is to kill our proud old Adam so the new Adam, the baptized child of God, lives in repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Today, we take up the last three commandments, uncovering the Gospel these commands hold.

Commandment Eight

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

Lies, half-truths, little white lies all tear down, deceive and kill reputations. Many times when we spin the truth or lie about a person, it is to make ourselves or someone we love look better, or sadly to make the person we are talking about look worse. Tearing down our neighbors or not defending them is not loving them as we are commanded.



Rev. Randy
Sturzenbecher
District President

At the heart of this commandment is the power of Gospel truth. Jesus prays in His high priestly prayer: “Your Word is truth” (John 17:17). When we speak the truth in love, we are trusting that Jesus, the “Word made flesh,” will continue making new work in our lives and in the lives of those to whom and about whom we speak the truth in love. As Jesus has defended us on the cross, so we speak well of and defend our neighbors as we talk to and about them.

Commandments Nine and Ten

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his man servant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

These last two commandments have the same theme — coveting. Wanting something better for yourself or for your family is not a bad thing. Wanting a more reliable car or wanting a better paying job to provide for your family are good things. The want becomes coveting when we are no longer content with what we have, and we are not



willing to wait for God to provide.

St. James reminds us:

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. **JAMES 1:14-15**

The sin of coveting lays the foundation for other sin to build upon. Where is the Gospel in the ninth and 10th commandments? Through saving faith, we believe that God will continue to provide for all our needs of body and soul.

Jesus reminds us of that very thing in Matthew 6:30:

“But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and

See **LAW**, page 2



Sunday school KICKOFF

The Sunday school students of Bethesda, Marion, and First English, Parker, participated in a Rally Day on Sept. 7. After the congregation enjoyed food and fellowship, the kids gathered for music, a Bible story, crafts and a Bible scavenger hunt. A Thrivent Action Team grant provided funding for the event. — Submitted by Sharlene Orcutt

LAW

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you?"

The Gospel in the ninth and tenth commandments are in the promises He makes to us in His Word of truth. Being content with the gifts and promises God has given us today is a fruit of faith, a fruit of the Gospel.

In all the commandments, we see God's intent in the Law. The Law must do its work of killing the old man, the old flesh so we see our need for a Savior.

The Gospel in each commandment becomes clear when through faith we produce good works that are guided by the ten commandments to love God, (commandments 1-3), and serve our neighbor (commandments 4-10).

The Law of God is good. It kills and makes alive again so we see Jesus our Savior and know that through His sacrifice, He has fulfilled all the Law for each of us. Now because of Jesus we live at peace with God.

Let's be thankful that God loved us enough to give us the Law and then fulfill the Law through Jesus!

CALLED TO GLORY

On Sept. 27, Ivan and Margaret Jorgenson, members of Zion, Waubay, would have celebrated their 72nd wedding anniversary. Sadly, Margaret passed on Sept. 14, missing that anniversary celebration by just two weeks.

The Jorgensons lived on a farm near Waubay for their entire married lives before moving into a nursing home nearby. Their family legacy continues, with eight children, 54 grandchildren, 74 great-grandchildren (with four more on the way) and six great-great grandchildren. — Submitted by Lynn Holscher



LFS has office in Aberdeen

Residents of Aberdeen and surrounding communities have another resource to call when facing tough times. Lutheran Family Service (LFS), a provider of Christian counseling services, opened a new office at St. Paul's, Aberdeen.

Dreena Wertz, a licensed professional counselor, began seeing clients in this office in September.

People seek counseling for a variety of reasons, but according to Wertz, some people are hesitant about seeing a counselor. "We all have our own struggles and sometimes just need a safe, quiet place to talk," Wertz said. "I often tell people it is OK to ask for support in order to overcome tough situations."

Wertz explained that she and the other LFS counselors throughout South Dakota work with people who are experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety and trauma, or are struggling with unresolved grief, loneliness and other difficulties. In addition to mental health and wellness support, LFS provides counseling and resources for women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, leading toward a plan for either successful parenting with the family or by choosing another family with an open adoption plan.

Lutheran Family Service is a nonprofit organization that enjoys the financial support of churches, organizations and individuals throughout the state. Of particular note in Aberdeen is a partnership with Rural Gospel Initiative (RGI), a local nonprofit organization that, like LFS, is an LCMS Recognized Service Organization. Rural Gospel Initiative, an association of 15 LCMS congregations in the Aberdeen area whose goal is to share the Gospel and support outreach services of the church in northeast South Dakota, is responsible for bringing an LFS office to Aberdeen.



Dreena Wertz

Rev. Bret Bierman, a member of the RGI Board of Directors, shared his excitement about the new LFS outreach.

"Pastors wear many hats, but very few are trained counselors," Bierman said. "There have been times in counseling sessions with someone when it became apparent that this person had needs beyond my skills. I've also had parents who were seeking help for their child and wanted a counselor who was based in true biblical understanding, world-view, and counseled in that manner."

"The pastors and members of our LCMS churches saw a need for this type of counseling service. The RGI sought ways to help and through some very fortuitous (Spirit-led) events, we are able and excited to have LFS join us in the Aberdeen area. We look forward to a successful venture and pray for God's continued blessings and guidance going forward."

The members of St. Paul, Aberdeen are also integral in establishing this new outreach to the community within its walls. "Though we are a ministry outreach of the Lutheran church, we are not here only for Christians," Wertz said. "Our services are available to everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs or their ability to pay the full cost of counseling."

LFS counselors provide services throughout South Dakota via telehealth, and through offices in Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Sturgis. Fees for mental health counseling are based on a sliding scale, and Medicare, Title XIX and many insurance plans are accepted.

To visit with our team about how Lutheran Family Service might help you, to make an appointment or for more information, call 605-271-1081 or visit lutheranfamilyservice.org.

— Submitted by LFS staff

CALL INFORMATION

PENDING

Prayerfully considering calls:

Rev. Patrick Baldwin, Christ, Rawlins, Wyo., to St. John, Wagner, and Trinity, Fairfax, Sept. 3.

Rev. Dan Grimmer, Zion, Mitchell, to Zion, Mount Pleasant, Mich., Sept. 24

Rev. Nathan Henschen, St. Johns, Lyons, Neb., and St. Paul, Bancroft, Neb., to St. Paul, Freeman, Sept. 21.

Rev. Willis McCall, Mount Olive, Billings, Mont., to Mount Calvary, Brookings, Sept. 12.

Rev. Andrew Ratcliffe, St. Paul's, Perham, Minn., to Blessed Redeemer, Brandon, Sept. 21.

Rev. Doug Slavens, Memorial, Sioux Falls, to Mount Olive, Anoka, Minn., Sept. 12, and to Good Shepherd, Circle Pines, Minn., Sept. 25.

Rev. Paul Winckler, district president assistant, to St. Paul's, Marshfield, Mo., Sept. 21.

ACCEPTED

Rev. Jonah Domenichelli, LCMS missionary to Germany (supported by South Dakota District), to Peace, Camarillo, Calif., Sept. 17.

Rev. David Lindenberg, Peace, Rapid City, to Trinity, Fredericktown, Mo., and Zion, Gravelton, Mo., Sept. 7.

DECLINED

Rev. Dan Grimmer, Zion, Mitchell, to Immanuel, Sweet Springs, Mo., Aug. 31.

Rev. Greg Hinners, Our Redeemer, Phillip/St. John, Norris/St. Peter, Midland, to Immanuel, Trenton, Mo., Sept. 10.

VACANCIES

- Blessed Redeemer, Brandon
- Trinity, Blunt/Immanuel, Harold, Holy Cross, Onida
- Mount Calvary, Brookings (*associate pastor*)
- St. Peter, Wentworth
- Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk (*senior pastor*)
- Concordia, Cresbard/Immanuel, Wecota
- St. Paul, Plankinton/Trinity, White Lake
- Memorial, Sioux Falls (*senior pastor*)
- St. John, Wagner/Trinity, Fairfax
- St. Paul, Freeman
- Mount Calvary, Huron
- Peace, Rapid City
- Emanuel, Sisseton-Waubay

Nominations sought

By Cathy VandeBraak
VP of Gospel Outreach

Resources are currently being created for the **33 national Mission Grants** that were approved for the 2025-2027 biennium, with a new mission goal of \$2,622,270. The resources will be posted soon. You can learn more about the grants at lwml.org/mission-grants.

The LWML South Dakota District will **elect new officers** in June 2026 and is looking for women who are willing to serve the Lord with gladness. Positions available for election are generally four-year term commitments, except the Nominating Committee, which is a two-year term. Positions are:

► Vice President of Communication

This role involves maintaining communication between national, district, zone and group members through various platforms. Responsibilities include preparing the LWML district convention call letter and manual, compiling Board of Directors reports and assisting other vice-presidents in planning retreats and workshops. This officer also coordinates the Communication Committee.

► Vice President of Special Focus Ministries

She is responsible for initiating projects for Gifts from the Heart at district conventions and retreats. She helps coordinate servant events at the district convention and oversees the Young Women, Heart to Heart Sisters, and Structure committees.

► Secretary

She records minutes of all meetings and maintains a directory of district, zone and group officers, committees, and personnel.

► Financial Secretary

She maintains financial records and a mailing list for *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* recipients.

► Nominating Committee (three positions)

The responsibilities include securing nominations for offices that expire at the end of the committee's second year. The specific offices vary each year. We invite you to suggest a name for a position or to volunteer to have your name placed on the ballot.

Please contact a Nominating Committee member listed below or fill in the information and drop it off at the registration table. We will reach out to you before placing your name on the ballot.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Position(s) interested in: _____

Lori Hoffman
lorihoffman729@gmail.com

Jan Larson
arson920@hotmail.com

Lurene Mogler Denke
lmchenke@pie.midco.net

Moments with Mary Jo

'Your words of wisdom'



Mary Jo Stier
LWML District President

What comes to mind when you hear this phrase?

I attended a function in September and encountered another LWML member. I had not seen her since the passing of my husband. She came right up to me and gave me the best hug ever.

It was a very much needed hug. You see, my husband had been my driver to my meetings the past few years and this was the first time I had to go solo since August. Somehow, our conversation led to the articles I have been writing each month. She said how much she enjoyed them.

I replied, "Really?"

I am not a writer, but I write from the heart.

She said that is what she enjoyed the most. So my word of wisdom is this: Be yourself. And, as Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." He will give you the words.

BLACK HILLS ZONE UPDATE

The Black Hills Zone held its Spring Rally/Prayer Service, "Blessed are They," based on Matthew 5:1-12. Rev. David Warner, pastor of Our Redeemer, Custer, and Our Savior, Hill City, conducted the service at Our Redeemer with 50 ladies in attendance. The ingathering supported the Custer Community Food Bank at The Storehouse.

The rally included a zone meeting in which new bylaws and standing rules were passed. Information was also shared on the Black Hills Zone's planning to host the 2026 LWML district convention, to be held June 5-6 in Rapid City.

Nearly 30 members from the Black Hills Zone attended the LWML district spring retreat in Chamberlain. Several individuals also worked at the Puppet Place during the South Dakota State Fair in Huron.

The Zone Fall Retreat was held Sept. 13 at Bethesda, Hot Springs. Rev. Dr. Thomas Brown, pastor of St. Paul, Spearfish, presented the Bible study.

— Submitted by Elaine M. Hankel, Black Hills Zone President

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

God's mercy ENDURES FOREVER

On His journey to Jerusalem, where He would die and rise for the world's salvation, Jesus encountered 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Leprosy was not just a medical condition, but also a social curse. Incurable, victims were forced to live as outcasts, isolated from family, friends and worship. They lived outside the community, and were compelled to shout, "Unclean! Unclean!" when passing others. Their only companions were fellow lepers.



Rev. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor

The 10 lepers stood far off, calling to Jesus, "Master, have mercy on us!" They had likely heard of His healing power and hoped for restoration to their communities. Unlike His usual practice of touching the afflicted, Jesus didn't approach. Instead, He speaks a word, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." Priests acted as health inspectors, verifying cleanliness for reintegration into society through rituals and sacrifices. As the lepers went on their way, their skin cleared and their leprosy vanished.

Nine continued toward the priests, eager to offer thanks in Jerusalem's temple. But one, a Samaritan — also outcast as a foreigner — turned back. He fell at Jesus' feet, worshiping and giving thanks. This man sought God not in a stone temple, but in the person of Jesus, where God's mercy dwelt. Luke notes the miracle's mystery — healing occurred as they walked, yet only the Samaritan recognized Jesus as its source.

“
**God loves
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because
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because
He is
good.”**

Ten were cleansed, but only one returned to worship. The nine, healed, went their way, satisfied with physical restoration. They sought less than Jesus' full gift of salvation. The Samaritan, however, trusted Jesus not just for healing, but for life itself. Jesus told him, "Your faith has saved you."

This faith clings to God's Word in Christ, seeking Him where He promises to be in the Gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Surprisingly, Jesus healed all 10, knowing only one would return with gratitude. Their lack of thanks didn't undo their healing — Jesus didn't revoke His mercy. The nine trusted Him for health; the Samaritan trusted Him for salvation. This reveals the heart of the Gospel — our salvation rests on God's enduring love, not our fleeting devotion. God loves us not because we are good, but because He is good. His mercy, not our gratitude, endures forever, offering forgiveness and life to all who trust in Christ.

PUPPET PLACE 2025

'Good for the soul'

"The Old Man and the Garden" was the show's title at the Puppet Place for the 2025 South Dakota State Fair, held Aug. 27-Sept. 1. The show held the audience's attention while proclaiming the wonderful message of the change we experience when Jesus lives in our hearts. Children were thrilled to watch the preshow juggling performance and receive their special balloon animals.

Thirty-two workers representing nine zones volunteered at the Puppet Place. Attendance was about 800 over the six days. About 380 puppets were given away, along with 194 Bible studies.

"I had several comments about how people bring the kids every year, or 'We did that when we were little!,'" said Rev. Andrew Utecht, who oversees the ministry with his family. "One person told me their son asked someone at the fair if they had been to the Puppet Place yet. When they said no, this boy replied, 'It is the best place at the whole fair, and it is good for your soul too!'"

"Another man I met said, 'I am pretty sure I was supposed to talk to you today.' [We had] a brief but spiritual conversation that hopefully helped him with his grief. What a joy, being a Christian witness at the fair for 53 years! So, thank you to the LWML for sponsoring this. And for the ladies that came and helped!"



Rev. Andrew Utecht (left) and volunteers make balloon animals for visiting children to the Puppet Place during the South Dakota State Fair in Huron.

The Puppet Place ministry is our way of reaching people at the State Fair. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you to those who made the puppets and prepared the building, and to those who volunteered.

God bless you and your efforts for Jesus!

— Submitted by Jan Larson, Gospel Outreach Committee



Spouse, then pastor

By Rev. Dave Gunderson
Emeritus

Most church workers would say, “All members in the church are important to God.” That is certainly true, as God’s Word teaches that all are part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). However, I suggest that for the pastor or church worker who is married, the most important member in the church is their spouse.

A Humbling Story

In our first church, where we served for nine years, my wife and I were blessed with a wonderful congregation. On Sundays in that church, I often greeted people at the door as they came into the small narthex. However, when it was time for 9 a.m. service, the organist would ring a bell and I would walk down the aisle and begin. This was my tradition.

On one wintery day, my wife entered the narthex at 9 a.m. as the organist began to ring the bell. I smiled at her and said, “Good morning,” and then headed down the aisle to do my thing.

I left her with her hands holding our darling baby daughter, and she ended up having to unbuckle the baby by herself, hang up her coat by herself and then enter the church to find a spot to sit by herself.

At the noon meal that day, my wife told me, “If that had been any other young mother in the congregation coming into the church at that time, you would have

helped them with their coat and help them with their child.”

She was absolutely right! Like most pastors, I wanted to show kindness to every church member and guest. But on that Sunday, I had failed to do it for a member who is also my wife and the mother of my children, a member who I promised to love and cherish all my life. I had made that promise long before I became a pastor. But on that Sunday, I failed to show kindness to my most important member of the church.

To Have And To Hold

Your spouse is a church member, but also your partner, your helpmate and the one person in the congregation who knows you better than anyone else. When times are tough and church leaders may be upset with you, your spouse will be the one to hear your grumblings and frustrations. Your spouse will be the one to pray with you and for you

every day. Other members hopefully are praying too, but your spouse knows your needs better than anyone.

This “important” member is also the one person who can tell you the way it is, even if you don’t want to hear it. During a seminary class, Professor (Rev. Dr. Francis) Rossow once stated to the future pastors: “Your wife may not know theology well, but she can tell you when you have been a jerk in the pulpit.”

In my ministry, my wife shared constructive comments, but she also comforted me as I struggled with an upcoming voters’ meeting. I was struggling with doubt about the voters’ decision to build or not to build when my wife stated, “Why are you worried? God already knows how it will turn out.” Those words helped me that day and throughout my ministry.

God, Spouse, Family, Pastor

At the seminary, Rev. Dr. L Dean Hempelmann told his pastoral theology class that our attitude toward ministry should be, “God, spouse, family and then being a pastor.” Being a pastor or church worker maybe our career, but it is not who we are. We serve our Savior as we care for our parents and neighbors, and we serve our Savior when we care for and love our spouse and children.

Rev. Gunderson retired in 2017 after serving for 27 years as pastor of St. John’s, Yankton. He currently serves as a marriage and family therapist, via telehealth, for Lutheran Family Service. Part 2 of this article appears next month.



National March for Life is Jan. 23

The 2026 National March for Life will be held in Washington, D.C., on Friday, Jan. 23. Plan now to join other Lutherans to march and stand boldly together in the public square and confess our beliefs about the sanctity of life. More information and registration will be available at lcms.org/march-for-life.

70 years of blessings!



In May, Marvin and Jeanne Schweigert of Pierre celebrated 70 years of marriage — and 70 years of attending Faith, Pierre.

The two were married at Faith on May 1, 1955. They have served their congregation in many ways over the years. Marv was financial secretary for 50 years and served as an elder and served on the Board of Education. He also taught Sunday school and midweek Bible studies, and was facilities administrator. He also enjoyed playing on the church softball team.

Jeanne has played organ and piano at Faith for many years, including serving as accompanist for the church choir. She was a deaconess who visited shut-ins, and she enjoyed teaching Sunday school and midweek Bible studies.

The Schweigerts have six children, all who were baptized and raised at Faith. They have 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

All glory be to God for blessing the Schweigerts with good health and energy, and for them being able to call Faith Lutheran Church “home” for so many years!

Synod

Raising up CHURCH WORKERS

By Rev. Dr. James Baneck
Executive Director,
LCMS Pastoral Education

It is so exciting to have every LCMS congregation, family, school, district and entity be a part of the wonderful culture of church work formation and recruitment known as *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)*. At this year's national convention of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, everyone we talked with was familiar with SAS and shared their own excitement about it.

Future generations will give thanks to God that each of us has taken up the charge of Christ (Matt. 9:37–38) in supplying the church with pastors, teachers, musicians, deaconesses, DCEs and more. This charge is guided by the Holy Spirit through Christ and His holy Word.

To help everyone be even more invested and involved in forming and recruiting workers for Christ's church, *SAS* has recently released new resources. These resources are the outcomes of *SAS* pilot groups and have been reviewed and/or tested by various circuit visitors, district presidents, the *SAS* Advisory Council and others.

Resource #1: Forming a Congregation SAS Focus Team

This resource is both for congregations that are already focused on church work formation and recruitment and those that want to get started. Regardless of what name a congregation may use for its focus team — committee, working group, task force — this resource provides guidelines for building a foundation of church work formation and recruitment and examples of how



to make that foundation a part of a congregation's culture.

The resource begins with a brief history of the Synod's focus on church work formation and recruitment since its founding in 1847. It also offers ideas for forming a congregation *SAS* focus team; provides ideas of who might serve on the team, along with suggested responsibilities; and provides an agenda template and links to suggested *SAS* resources. Included in these resources are articles and papers for team education as well as ideas to develop action plans.

Resource #2: Next Chapter, New Calling: A Guide for the Wife of a Potential Second-Career Pastor

Last fall, *SAS* personnel went to the two LCMS seminaries to conduct focus groups with second-career residential pastoral students and their wives. We asked questions about the process of deciding to attend seminary, about enrolling and moving, and about seminary life. We also asked participants to identify, for each part of the journey, things that were roadblocks to the process, things that would have been helpful to the process, and who and what was most influential in the process.

SAS captured what we learned from these focus groups and developed a guide for wives of men who are considering studying for the pastoral ministry. The guide touches on a variety of topics while emphasizing that those embarking on this journey are not alone and have many resources and people available to assist them.

FIND THE RESOURCES described here, and many others, at resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.



‘You are the Man!’

Middle schoolers see **Law** and **Gospel** at work in real life

By Rev. Marcus Ring

Pastor, St. John, Gregory

Forty-one youth, seven pastors and eight adult chaperones gathered Aug. 8–9 at St. John, Gregory, for the South Dakota District Higher Things confirmation retreat. The purpose of the retreat was for the youth to hear Lutheran preaching, engage in honest conversation and build real friendships.

Rev. Brett Simek, pastor of Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls, spoke on the retreat theme, “You are the Man!” We all know those words can either make someone’s day or stop them in their tracks. The prophet Nathan said these words to David and exposed David’s sin. Pastor Simek taught on Confession and Absolution, using the life of David as an example.

He showed how the Law accuses until we must confess our sins. Yet, he pointed to how Jesus became sinful man for us, having paid for our sins on the cross. And now, Jesus sends pastors to pronounce on His behalf to His church that sins are forgiven and we are made new and redeemed in Jesus Christ. With the help of Pastor Simek, the middle schoolers unpacked God’s Law and Gospel in real life.

Additionally, there was time for games, good food, fellowship, a session of “Ask the Pastor,” and many opportunities for prayer, praise and thanksgiving in worship.

Welcoming **ALL** into an ‘eternal family’

On any given Sunday at many LCMS congregations, older members smile at the antics of the youngest Lutherans, while people from different backgrounds join together in worship and then mingle over coffee cake.

In the various stories in the fall issue of *Lutherans Engage the World*, the same kinds of scenes are playing out. “[The] children of God come in all ages, shapes and forms,” we are reminded in a feature story about how three congregations care for their shut-in and homebound members. In the articles about a youth camp in Cambodia, a new community library at a church in Illinois, and the recent LCMS Youth Gathering in New Orleans, we see how the church welcomes young people.

And in the features about two thriving Chinese ministries and outreach in Italy, we learn how all kinds of people are finding a home — an “eternal family,” according to Rev. Andy Wu — in the LCMS. To God be the glory.



Read the issue
online at
engage.lcms.org.

District insert to cease publishing

Following conversations with LCMS Communications, the LCMS South Dakota District has decided to stop publishing an insert in *The Lutheran Witness* (LW) magazine. December 2025 will mark the final LW insert for the South Dakota District.

HOWEVER, this does not mean the other sources for South Dakota District news is going away! The email newsletter will still be faithfully sent out, and district staff is currently discussing how best to continue to deliver important news and stories to our congregations.