



DISTRICT NEWS

SOUTH DAKOTA

‘Minister we must!’

No matter our challenges, we are blessed!

“The LORD is our keeper,” says the psalmist (Ps. 121:5). He constantly stands on guard for you, your family, and your congregation. “He who keeps you will not slumber” (Ps. 121:3b).



Rev. Dr. Scott Sailer
District President

What a blessing that the One who created you and has redeemed you by the blood of His Son is constant in His care for you! He sustains your physical life. He keeps you in the true faith, by Word and Sacrament. Yes, in all ways, the Lord is your keeper.

We number about 27,000 baptized souls in our South Dakota District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Our total confirmed membership is right around 21,000. We have 106 congregations and two preaching stations in the district, and, as we do the math, each of our congregations has, on average, around 70 in worship each weekend.

In 2023, our congregations, once again,



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Rev. Corey Aker leads Lenten service at Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, last March.

generously supported our ministries in South Dakota, including the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations and our Deaf Ministry. They helped us to do ministry on the campuses of the University of South Dakota (Vermillion) and South Dakota State University (Brookings). And they helped support our newest mission start: Trinity Lutheran Church, Belle Fourche.

You and your congregation have helped to get our new Mission and Ministry Council off the ground. The council is the entity charged with seeing that resources for the Lord’s work are provided to congregations and schools. The P.A.S.S. It On! workshops in November, as well as the Men’s Retreat in December, were results of the council’s work.

You have helped to grow the presence of Lutheran Family Service (LFS) in

our state. LFS provides biblically faithful individual and family counseling and adoption services for our church workers and congregational members alike. Your support has meant that LFS is able to maintain offices in Sioux Falls and Chamberlain.

You have helped to spread the Gospel to mission fields far away through the Synod’s “Together in Mission” program. And your congregation’s generosity has meant that our district in 2023 was able to send on to the LCMS about \$350,000 for unrestricted ministry needs in our church body.

Of course, we do have challenges and concerns. It is clear that our communities, schools and congregations, for the most part, have gotten smaller. Pastoral

See **DISTRICT** page 3

What is parish nursing?

By Rachel Aamold
Zion, Sioux Falls

This is the same question I asked myself four years ago. As a surgical nurse, I saw first-hand how a devastating diagnosis could shake the bedrock of a patient. Our healthcare systems are adept at handling the complexities of our physical needs. Yet whole-person health isn't simply physical health. Jesus declared:

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

JOHN 6:35 NIV

Christ showed us that proclaiming the Gospel and caring for the earthly needs of those who are hurting go hand-in-hand.

The roots of parish nursing are ancient. In the modern era, the LCMS has been at the forefront of this movement. In 1988, it became the first church body to name a national parish nurse coordinator.

The American Nurses Association defines parish nursing as a specialty of professional nursing that focuses on the intentional care of the spirit as well as the promotion of whole-person health within a congregation and the wider community.

Parish nurses are as unique as the congregations they serve. Some of the roles a parish nurse can fill include health educator, health counselor, referral source, facilitator, and integrator of health and healing or advocate. My congregation has partnered with others in the community to present health classes at our church. We offer monthly blood pressure screenings, and we host an annual walking challenge. During Lent, as a congregation we log our exercise hours and "journey to the cross." Our goal is to collectively travel the distance from Sioux Falls to Jerusalem. These are just a few of the unique ways a parish nurse can empower a church family to strive toward whole-person wellness.

Every congregation can benefit from parish nursing. It begins with a love for our Savior and a passion to encourage



Rachel conducts blood-pressure screenings at Zion, Sioux Falls.

Christ-centered wellness among our fellow brothers and sisters.

To find out more about parish nursing, visit lcms.org. Go to the "How We Serve" tab and from the drop-down menus go to "Mercy" and "Health Ministry." The "Parish Nursing" link is at the right. You may also contact me at raamold@zionlutheransf.com.

Rachel lives in Sioux Falls with her husband, Eddie, and two children, Brandon and Lauren. She has been a registered nurse for 20 years with experience in cardiology, operative services and nursing education. She is currently the parish nurse at Zion, Sioux Falls, and the district Parish Nurse Representative.

Share your news with us!

We love to feature a wide variety of news occurring in our district congregations. If you have announcements, special events or human interest stories, please share with your brothers and sisters in Christ of the South Dakota District.

Send submissions to
Kate Meadows:
kate@katemeadows.com
420 E. Liberty Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

The deadline for the March issue is Jan. 15.



Hearts for the Mission



Fundraiser helps Zion church and school

In October, Zion, Rapid City, hosted a silent auction fundraiser to support the growing mission of the church, school and preschool. The initial fundraising goal was \$25,000. By the event's end, donors exceeded the goal by \$12,000, bringing in a total of \$37,000.

"The fundraiser went way above and beyond what I ever could have imagined," said event organizer Natalie Graumann, who teaches kindergarten at Zion. "The blessings that God provided through this were so far beyond what I expected. I couldn't believe the support that came in and the generosity of the donors."

About 200 people attended the event, including church and school families as well as general community members. Along with the silent auction, there were multiple fun ways to give to the cause, including a wine pull, a \$10-per-person entry to play a heads-or-tails game, and a dessert auction. Zion members baked a wide array of desserts, which received

bids during the auction. Attendees then chose their desserts in order of highest-to-lowest bidder. The winning dessert, a smores cake with chocolate ganache, roasted marshmallow buttercream and toasted meringue, went for \$600.

Sponsors helped to make the event a success, with dozens of local businesses contributing. Top sponsors, contributing \$1,000 each, included Advanced Roofing Systems, LLC; All American Roofing & Sales, INC; Anderson Dental; Culver's; Hebron Brick Company; Rushmore OBGYN and Skyview Enterprises.

The money raised will help to sustain and grow Zion's mission to "Know Jesus, Grow in Faith and Serve in Love." Zion is nearing the end of the first year of its multi-million-dollar "Christ's Way" capital campaign to expand the school and narthex and provide a dedicated worship space.

— Kate Meadows, Editor

DISTRICT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

vacancies have increased (we currently have eight vacant parishes) while the supply of pastors has decreased. This concerns us.

But we must not become discouraged. Our smaller numbers might change the way we minister to others. But minister we must! There is always someone near us and someone far away who needs God's love and mercy.

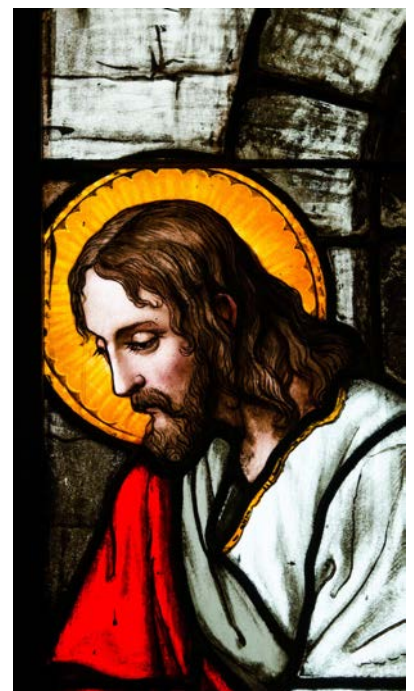
God calls us to do what we can, no matter how big or small our churches are, no matter how old or young each of us might be. For God loves us and He has blessed us with immeasurable mercies, including one very present, mighty and gracious Lord and Savior of us all — Jesus Christ!

He is our Keeper, after all. He is always caring for you so that you might be His hands and feet and voice to care for others. You are one of the Lord's vessels to bless and keep them, too! What a Keeper He is!

Your servant in Christ, Pastor Sailer

"Not ashamed of the Gospel"

Rom. 1:16; 16:25-27



PATTY'S PONDERINGS



Patty Peters
LWML South Dakota
District President

Do you have special plans for 2024? Maybe there will be a family wedding in the spring, or a new baby born this year! Are you planning your first winter vacation or cruise because now you are retired? How many graduations and confirmations will you plan or attend?

The list of activities can be long, exciting and sometimes tiring. Psalm 37:5 tells us to:

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act.

As we make plans for the new year, God wants to be the most important part of it. Ask God to help you read your Bible regularly, and never be afraid to ask Jesus to intercede for you in prayer. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

This is one of my favorite Bible verses because it is a wonderful

guide for daily life.

God wants us to proclaim His name to our neighbors just as the shepherds did after they saw baby Jesus in the manger.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 PETER 2:9

We should feel the urgency of telling others about the love and the forgiveness of sins that Jesus gives without any work on our part.

Joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions and equip women to honor God by serving others. That is the mission statement of Lutheran Women in Mission. You can use this statement to guide you and your LWML group as you make plans for 2024. Many resources are available for you, such as devotions, Bible studies, litanies and sketches at lwml.org/resources. Also check out the options at "The Word" tab at lwml.org.

Invite a friend to church or to your LWML activity so that she may learn more about the love of Jesus.

Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples! PSALM 96:3

May God bless your life and your plans for 2024!

Reports are due

It's that time of year again! Group presidents and secretaries, please send your completed officer reports to your zone secretary by **Jan. 15**.

Zone presidents and secretaries, please complete both the Group Officer Compilation Report form and the Zone Officer Report form, and send them to me by Feb. 1. I look forward to hearing from you!

The forms can be found at sdlwml.org. Go to "Resources" and select "Officer Report Forms" from the drop-down menu. Choose the appropriate report(s) for your group/zone and enter the information. My contact information is on the forms. Thank you.

Luann Zuercher • LWML District Secretary

CHAMBERLAIN ZONE REPORT

The Chamberlain Zone held its Fall Rally at Zion, Presho, on Sept. 23. Rev. Ray Greenseth, Zion pastor, led a Bible study on joy, based on Heb. 12:2b. Hope Lutter reported on her experience as a zone delegate at the 2023 national LWML convention in Milwaukee.

Our zone groups collectively decided to create Bible story craft kits for Rev. Andrew Utecht, who serves as a missionary to the Rosebud Reservation. They

will purchase or assemble 20 to 25 kits to be used every week for Pastor Utecht's mission.

In October, the Zion, Chamberlain, LWML group collected socks and underwear to donate to Orphan Grain Train.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the district convention in Aberdeen in June.

Susan Swanson
Chamberlain Zone President

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Jesus chose you



Do you have a piece of art in your house that says, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?”

Many people do. It’s ironic, if you think about it. After Joshua makes a great proclamation of the Lord’s faithfulness to the Israelites, he tells the people to choose whom they will serve. He says, “Choose this day.” And it seems as though they’ve made a good decision, right? They say:

“We also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.” JOSHUA 24:18

Yet the very next verse comes as a surprise. Usually, when we think of these verses, we stop right after the “choosing” part. But listen to Joshua’s response to the people:

“You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.” JOSHUA 24:19

Joshua tells the people that they are not free, even though they think they are. Sure, they are free to say that they will serve the Lord. But Joshua understands that because of their sinful human nature, they are not free to serve by their own strength. They are bound to sin, just as we are.

In spiritual matters, we might think we are free, but we cannot not sin. We serve other gods; gods of our own creation. Jesus said that we did not choose Him, but that He chose us and gave Himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God (John 15:16).

Even when we run from God, Jesus chooses us. Jesus died for us and rose again, that we might live to serve Him. He sets us free from our bondage to sin. He gives us eternal life so that we may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.



Rev. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor



Make plans to attend DISTRICT CONVENTION

The 63rd LWML South Dakota District Convention will be held June 7-8 at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Aberdeen.

The theme is “Inexpressible Joy, Matchless Savior” and the theme verse is 1 Peter 1:8-9:

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.



Donna Snow

We are pleased to announce that speaker and author Donna Snow will be the Bible study leader. She has written over 20 Bible studies (cph.org/donna-pyle-snow).

The Aberdeen Zone at work on the convention committees and we are getting excited to have you visit our city.

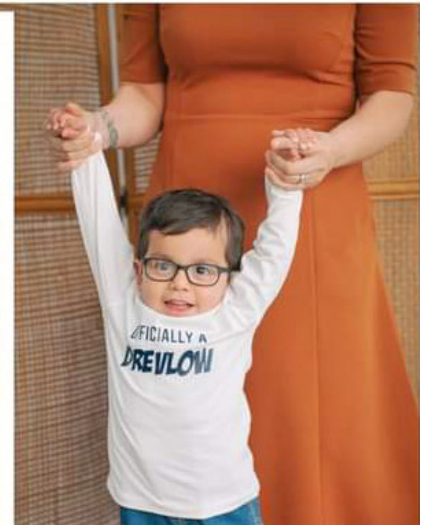
Betty Ochsner • Convention Chairman

Sponsoring Mission Grants since 1943...

The LWML Mission Grant Resume and Mission Grant history documents have been updated on the LWML website to include the 2021–2023 Mission Grants. The Mission Grants Resume is meant to help Lutheran Women in Mission with mission education and to motivate further service. It presents a quick reference and source of information for working on displays, mission fairs, skits, devotions, programs and reports.

The Mission Grant History is a listing of all the LWML grants from the 1943–1945 biennium through 2021–2023. The importance of this history is not to say, “See what the LWML has done,” but to point toward a future of service. Both resources are great documents to have available at your next zone event and district convention, and are available at lwml.org/mission-grant-history.

adoption 



The Drevlow family is pictured at left celebrating its newest addition, Eliezer (above), who was adopted. His shirt says "Officially a Drevlow."

Meet our new district **LIFE COORDINATOR**

Greetings! I am happy to serve as your new South Dakota District Life Coordinator. My name is Rev. Ryan Drevlow. I have served as senior pastor of Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls, and I will soon transition to serve as senior pastor of St. Paul, Aberdeen, and St. Paul, Leola.

My hope is to draw attention to pro-life efforts within the state and educate people within our district about opportunities to confess our pro-life stance as LCMS Christians.

I come from a large family. The blessings of valuing life have been a large part of my upbringing. Of course, we knew what we believed from our catechetical training, but for most of my childhood and into adolescence, I was largely naive about pro-life issues. I assumed everyone thought the same as LCMS Christians, on the simple truths of life. In high school and beyond, I realized that this issue is far from settled in our country. I argued with friends, teachers and classmates about life being sacred. I have always cared about pro-life issues, but

having children of my own brings those issues into even clearer focus for me.

And even though my wife, Laura, and I had four children biologically, we felt as though our lives were incomplete. So we sought to foster children. We imagined giving these children a warm and loving home where they were safe.

Eventually, our hearts turned toward adoption. We wanted to bring our adopted children out of the system to break the cycle and give them a safe, warm and loving home as well.

For us, it was not enough to talk the talk. We felt a desire to walk the walk and provide for children who had been abandoned by their families.

As the new Life Coordinator for the South Dakota District, I hope I can bring a two-fold perspective of pro-life issues into clearer focus. As pro-life people, we fight for children in the womb, but we also fight for children in foster care and group homes, as well as those who have aged out of foster care.

Life is worthy of protection at all stages — in utero, in childhood, in adolescence and also at the end of life.

So many children in our state need care. They need parents who will love and pay attention to them. Prenatal-care education is also a significant focus of ours. Laura and I have been brainstorming with many people in our foster-care system and other entities who could clearly show us these needs.

Laura also helps folks at the end of life at Avera. Together, we hope to shed light on the difficulties of hospice care and end-of-life issues.

There is so much to learn and think about when it comes to pro-life issues. There are many areas in which we can serve our district by focusing on this pro-life theme. There are many places where we can confess our pro-life stance.

I hope to make you aware of all these opportunities and prepare you to be leaders on this incredibly important topic. How can you be involved in pro-life issues in South Dakota and in your own communities? Come back to this section each month to find out! I am excited to serve you all in this way.

Pastor Drevlow

Engaging youth in our congregations



As congregations are shrinking in size, so too is the number of young people who regularly incorporate church activities and worship into their lives. A free on-line resource aims to equip youth leaders and lay people with ways to engage the younger population and encourage their participation in church activities.

Here is quick look at the “7 Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry.”

To thrive as God’s children, our youth in the church need:

1 Warmth

An open and honest environment in which young people can share joys and ask questions is vital.

2 Challenge

Congregations should be willing to engage in tough spiritual conversations.

3 Grace

When young people share their questions, problems and doubts, they can do so knowing that God’s Word will be spoken in love.

4 Supportive adults

Adults should seek to connect with and deliberately invest in long-term,

inter-generational relationships with youth.

5 Engaged parents

Parents should prioritize their children’s faith journeys by encouraging daily faith practices, participating regularly in worship and demonstrating a steadfast spirit of service.

6 Opportunities to serve and lead

Congregations should strive to recognize spiritual gifts and skills in youth that can be put to use inside and outside of the church.

7 Deep understanding of their baptismal faith

This is through recognition of the Holy Spirit’s work of bringing them to faith and into God’s family, with continuous opportunities to study and engage in that faith.

Learn more about each of these practices and help to cultivate a healthy youth ministry at your church by visiting youthesource.com/7-practices.

YouthESource is the resourcing website of LCMS Youth Ministry.



Call Information

Rev. Jacob Bobby, First Trinity, Bloomfield, Neb., accepted a call as associate pastor to St. John’s, Yankton, Dec. 6.

Rev. David Mommens, St. Paul, Melrose, Minn., is prayerfully considering a call to Faith, Parkston, and St. Peter, Clayton, Nov. 15.

Rev. Doug Slavens, Memorial, Sioux Falls, declined a call as senior pastor to Cross of Christ, Bloomfield, Mich., Dec. 2. He also declined a call as pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church and School, Utica, Neb., Nov. 13.

Rev. Ryan Drevlow, senior pastor, Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls, has accepted a call as senior pastor to St. Paul, Aberdeen, and St. Paul, Leola, Nov. 12.

DCE Joshua Schmitt, St. John’s, Yankton, declined a call to Immanuel, Hankinson, N.D., Nov. 20.

Katie Utecht, candidate, Belle Fourche, declined a call as teacher to Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk.

Rev. Jeremy Richert, senior pastor, Holy Cross, Dakota Dunes, is prayerfully considering a call as pastor to Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Nov. 26.

VACANCIES

Senior pastor

- Mount Calvary, Huron
- Our Savior, Aberdeen/St. John, Columbia

Sole pastor

- Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls
- St. John, Britton/St. Paul, Ferney
- Grace, Deadwood/Blessed Emmanuel, Sturgis
- St. Paul, Plankinton/Trinity, White Lake
- Concordia, Cresbard/Immanuel, Wecota
- Our Savior, /Madison/St. John’s, Howard
- Zion, Canistota/St. John, Montrose
- Faith, Parkston/St. Peter, Emery

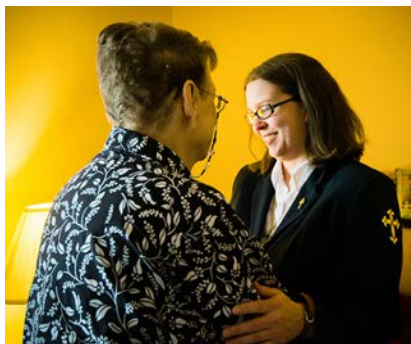
WANTED: Future church workers

SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

Set Apart to Serve (SAS) is an initiative of the LCMS to recruit church workers. Newly developed resources were recently introduced at a virtual event in September. If you weren't able to watch live, you may watch the recording at lcms.org/sas. Scroll to the bottom of the page to view the resources, which are intended for adults to help them encourage youth — and adults — to consider becoming a church worker. The resources will help you talk about church work and guide youth on their journey to a church-work vocation.

You may also learn about the various LCMS church-work vocations and access information directly from the Concordia University System programs that prepare our workers.



Educational debt relief available

*Ministry*FOCUS, a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) that provides student loan relief to LCMS workers, is accepting applications for 2024 grants. Since 2015, *Ministry*FOCUS has awarded grants to LCMS pastors, missionaries, schoolteachers and other rostered LCMS workers to help relieve the burden of educational debt and empower workers to focus on their ministry.

Applications for 2024 grants are now open and will be accepted until the end of the year. Rostered LCMS church workers with \$20,000 or more in student loan debt are invited to apply online at ministryfocus.org/apply.

“*Ministry*FOCUS recognizes that individuals often assume educational loans in order to serve the Lord and that, for some, such loans often distract from or even undermine their very purpose,” states the organization’s website. “As such, *Ministry*FOCUS has established a loan repayment assistance program so that these servants of the Lord can focus more on ministry, and less on money.”

This year, *Ministry*FOCUS has awarded \$131,000 in 52 grants across 23 states. Since its first year of operation in 2015, the organization has distributed 258 grants totaling \$645,000. Increased support over the years has allowed for increasing aid.

Earlier this year, the Synod in convention adopted Resolution 12-03a, “To Address Commissioned Minister—Teacher Student Debt.” Included in the resolution is encouragement for LCMS “congregations and schools ... to promote the various resources already available such as *Ministry*FOCUS and other debt retirement options to assist with student indebtedness.”

The resolution also includes a provision for an annual offering to be taken in support of commissioned minister—teacher debt reduction during National Lutheran Schools Week, with the offering being administered by *Ministry*FOCUS in consultation with LCMS Mission Advancement and LCMS Communications. A plan for carrying out that work is underway, and more information will be shared when it is available.

Learn more at ministryfocus.org.