



MAY 2026

# SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT NEWS

## The Gift of a Pastor

By Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher, President, SD District

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed and continues to give good gifts to His people.

When we think about the good gifts of God, we go immediately to Jesus, God's only Son incarnated into our world to be our Savior and the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

We think of God's Word preached to us. And in that Word are eternal, unchanging promises to us such as, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

When we think of God's precious gifts, we think of Baptism that connects us to the cross of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our



**Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher,**

President,  
SD District

Savior, so that, being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3: 4-7).

The Lord's Supper is truly a divine gift where our risen Lord meets us personally to give us forgiveness. "Take and eat this is My body." "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26: 26b-27).

Dear Saints, your pastor is a good gift from God as well. He delivers the Words of eternal life to you. He pours water over the head of our loved ones and in God's Name and by His command sinners are regenerated into Saints. Your pastor delivers to you

Jesus in with and under the bread and wine. He meets with you when you are struggling and encourages you through God's Word and promises. He celebrates with you and mourns with you as well. He prays for you.

Jesus said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

Our Lord hears our prayers and continues to provide for His Church. He not only gives us His divine gifts, but He also sends the one that will deliver them.

On Wednesday, April 29, at the Concordia Theological Seminary placement service, St. John Lutheran Church in Wagner and Trinity Lutheran Church in Fairfax, received the gift of a pastor. Pastor-Elect Morgan Phillips has received his first call to serve God's people. He is an answer to many prayers. Pastor-Elect Phillips is married to Amelia and they have two children, Kelsey and Felicity.

We rejoice with the Phillips and with St. John and Trinity that God has supplied another gift to serve his people. Installation and Ordination information will follow soon.

Rejoicing in the gifts that God gives to us,  
President Sturzenbecher





L to R, back row: Revs. Marcus Ring, St. John, Gregory; David Otten, Emmanuel/Gettysburg and Christ/Lebanon; Wade Harr, Christ, Winner and Circuit Visitor for Circuit 3; Randy Sturzenbecher, South Dakota District President; and Andrew Utecht, Missionary at large, Rosebud.

L to R, front row: Revs. Ray Greenseth, Messiah/Murdo, St. Paul/Draper and Zion/Presho; Greg Hinners, St. John/Norris, St. Peter/Midland/Our Redeemer/Phillip; Tom Mueller, Zion Chamberlain; Mark Mischnick, Emeritus; Don McKillop, Vacancy Pastor, Trinity/White Lake and St. Paul, Plankinton.

## Remembering Rev. Glenn Denke

By Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher, South Dakota District President

On Friday, April 17, the funeral for our dear brother, Pastor Glenn Denke, was held at Christ Lutheran Church in Winner. Pastor Denke served at St. John, Norris, and St. Peter, Midland, from 1997-2015.

Rev. Denke graduated Concordia Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity in 1982. Along with his tenure 18-year in South Dakota, he also served churches in Montana, Nebraska and Iowa.

Rev. Marcus Ring, St. John, Gregory, was the preacher for the funeral. Rev. Sturzenbecher was the Celebrant, and Rev Harr the Liturgist.

We are thankful for his service and the gift of eternal life God gave to him. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."

## CTSFW Organ Workshops Hit the Road



This year, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), is taking **organist workshops on the road!** Due to a summer 2026 construction project to replace windows in Kramer Chapel, the building is unavailable for our regular weeklong summer workshops. Instead, we will host a [series of nine workshops](#) across the country! For more details about this year's organist workshops and to register for a workshop near you, please visit [ctsfw.edu/organist-workshops](https://ctsfw.edu/organist-workshops).

## Christ Academy Family Institute



Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), is excited to host Christ Academy Family Institute (CAFI) June 11-13, 2026, which leads into the week of Christ Academy High School.

CAFI focuses on providing resources to parents, families, and youth-focused church workers who are interested in passing on the faith to future generations and growing in their care and love for one another. This year, CAFI will focus on "Faith in the Home," featuring sessions on family devotions, hymn singing, Christian hospitality, and more.

For more information and to register, visit [ctsfw.edu/CAFI](https://ctsfw.edu/CAFI).

We hope you can join us for a weekend of faithful instruction, Lutheran worship, and Christian community this June!

## SERVING THE DISTRICT IN NEW WAYS



Dawn Wombold, who has been serving since August 2025 as the part-time South Dakota District Education Executive, has taken on an additional role within the District. She will now also serve as the District President Administrative Assistant (DPAA), while continuing her work as Education Executive, bringing a wealth of experience and a heart for service to both positions.

A 1997 graduate of Concordia College in Seward, Nebraska, Dawn has faithfully served in a variety of roles, including teacher, mentor, youth leader, and administrator. She lives in Rapid City with her husband, Randy, and enjoys spending time with their four daughters, sons-in-law and their three (soon to be four) grandchildren.

Dawn will work remotely, thanks to the gift of technology; however, she remains easily accessible. You may reach her or the District office by calling 605-361-1514 or by emailing her at [dpaa@sddlcms.org](mailto:dpaa@sddlcms.org).

We also extend our sincere thanks to Lori Hoffman for her faithful service in this role over the past several months.

## OUR SCHOOLS IN SERVICE

By Dawn Wombold, Education Executive for SD LCMS District

The students in our Lutheran schools learn more than just academics; they learn about how Jesus was a servant. Many of them are provided with the opportunity to serve others in communities near and far.

Recently, students in our South Dakota Lutheran schools had the opportunity to:



Students helped collect and organize food pantry items at Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk.



Students get ready to make meals for Orphan Grain Train at Sioux Falls Lutheran

- prepare meals which will be used by Orphan Grain Train to feed those in need
- learn about and help at the local food bank
- sew pillowcases for people on the reservations
- put together food boxes for their community

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's grace. Peter 4:10*



# DID YOU KNOW? SOUTH DAKOTA HAS...

1 Lutheran middle school and high school (Grades 6-12)

5 Lutheran elementary schools (Grades Pre-K - 5)

7 Lutheran Early Childhood Centers (Infant - Pre-K)

8 Stand-alone Lutheran Preschools

148 Lutheran educators

1500+ Students in our SD Lutheran Schools

## ARK OF FAITH FUNDRAISING IN PROGRESS AT SIOUX FALLS LUTHERAN SCHOOL

Sioux Falls Lutheran School is building an Ark of Faith, a joyful new preschool playground where the littlest disciples can laugh, explore and grow in a safe, faith-filled environment for generations to come.

The Ark of Faith, inspired by Noah's Ark, is a playground reflecting SFLS's mission of teaching God's love and promises to its youngest students.

Donations are being accepted for the \$160,000 project. Donors choose a level to give, from \$50 to \$25,000. Each level represents an animal: \$50 for Doves, \$100 for Ants, etc. Elephants is the theme for the \$25,000 level.



Each gift, from mighty elephants to diligent ants, helps bring this vision to life. Through May, your gift goes further with a \$5,000 match from the SFLS Parent Teacher Fellowship.

Climb aboard the Ark of Faith at <https://bit.ly/ark-of-faith>. Contact Bree Makepeace with questions: [bmakepeace@sflutheranschool.com](mailto:bmakepeace@sflutheranschool.com).

## Moments with Mary Jo

### RENEWED IN CHRIST'S LOVE



**Mary Jo Stier**  
LWML District  
President

Sometimes, it seems like there is never enough time in a day. I always have great intentions of getting a lot of projects done but I get easily sidetracked and lose all sense of time.

A fellow LWML member encouraged me to sign up for 365 days of healing email that I receive every morning at 9:00. Today's email was this: "Even before you experienced your loss there were days when you wanted to take time off from life. Having the ability to turn off your brain and your emotions to

just enjoy your morning coffee, watch the sun rise and listen to the birds without planning or worrying about your day is a great start for taking time off from life."

It would be wonderful to take time off from life; however, time goes on and it seems to go faster every day. In reality it is not impractical to close your eyes and let everything disappear for a moment or an hour.

How are you spending your time?

I hope you are making plans to attend the LWML SD District Convention in June. Members of the Black Hills Zone and members of the EC Convention Committee have been working hard to prepare for the arrival of LWML members from all areas of the South Dakota District along with pastors and guests.

We pray that you are able to join us as we come together and being "Confidence in His Grace".

## YANKTON ZONE UPDATE

By Sandy Brandt, Yankton Zone President

St. John's Yankton SD LWML hosted the Yankton Zone Spring Christian Growth Workshop on March 8. Pastor Steve Weispenning opened with devotions entitled, "For such a time as this." The speaker, DCE Jessica Blocker from Luverne, Minn., shared a presentation about Esther to a group of 50 sisters and brothers in Christ.

After the presentation, a feast was provided by the Anna Circle that included Jewish foods from Esther's time. Our zone president, Sandy Brandt of Avon, shared information about upcoming events.



DCE Jessica Blocker sharing presentation on Esther

## 64<sup>th</sup> LWML South Dakota District Convention Fast Approaching

By Elaine M. Hankel, Host Committee Chairwoman

Have you made plans to attend the 64th LWML South Dakota District Convention, to be held at the Best Western Hotel and Convention Center in Rapid City, June 5-6?

We have a few fun servant events planned for the convention. We will make hand puppets to be given to adults and kids following each puppet show at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron. We will also make mission bead bracelets. These bracelets are shared by MOST Ministries with individuals who go on foreign mission trips. Each bead, placed in a specific order, tells the Gospel message.

The third servant event planned for the convention is decorating paper bags for the Evergreen Reformation Carnival. The decorated bag will be filled with gift items later.

The worship service this year will be held at Zion, Rapid City, a request from our district president.

If you come early on Thursday, you have a chance to attend the light show at Mt. Rushmore. Simply sign up on the registration form. Maybe you will even stay a few days extra and enjoy the beautiful Black Hills!

We are in the final planning stages and look forward to hosting the 64th convention in Rapid City.

### Grace in Time of Need

On Mother's Day, we celebrate the tireless love of mothers—those who nurture, protect, and gently draw their children toward growth.

In the wild, the mother eagle embodies this beautifully. She builds a high nest on rocky cliffs, then watches over her eaglets with fierce tenderness. As they grow, she stirs the nest, making it uncomfortable so they will learn to fly.

Yet she never abandons them. She hovers nearby, spreading her powerful wings to catch them if they falter and carrying them on her pinions until they gain confidence. The eaglets learn boldness because they trust their mother's watchful care.

Our heavenly Father invites us to approach Him with that same childlike confidence. Hebrews 4:16 declares, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Because of Jesus our great High Priest, God's throne is no longer a place of terror but a throne of grace—a place of welcome, mercy, and timely help. Just as a mother's arms are always open to her children, God's throne overflows with compassion. He sees our weaknesses, our fears, and our failures, yet He does not push us away. Instead, He calls us to come boldly, like eaglets



**Rev. Dr. Brian Mosemann**  
LWML District Counselor

stepping off the edge of the nest, trusting that His grace will uphold us.

On Mother's Day, many of us feel the weight of life's demands—raising children, caring for aging parents, or simply navigating daily struggles. Some hearts ache with the absence of a mother or the pain of motherhood's challenges. Whatever your need, remember: you have a loving Father whose throne is full of grace. You don't have to hesitate in shame or fear. Like the mother eagle catching her young, God is ready to bear you up with mercy when you fall and strengthen you with grace when you are weak.

Today, draw near with confidence. Spread the wings of prayer and faith. At the throne of grace, you will find the help you need—exactly when you need it. Let the mother eagle remind you of God's tender yet powerful love. You were created, in the waters of baptism, to fly into His presence, upheld by His mercy and empowered by His grace.

At the throne of grace, mercy and help are waiting for you. So, rest in the confidence that the God who stirs the nest also catches and carries you.

This you will hear and see at the LWML SD District Convention, in June, where we will, "with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace."

### FAREWELL NOTES

It has been a joy to serve as your Vice President of Communication for the past 4 years. I have learned a lot and enjoyed working with the board members to carry out the work of the LWML South Dakota District. Thank you for entrusting me with this job and supporting me over these past few years. I can't wait to see how the Lord continues to use me and the ladies of the South Dakota LWML to spread the Gospel!

**Heather Miller, VP of Communication**

Serving as secretary for our LWML SD District has been a rewarding four-year journey for which I am grateful. This experience has deepened my knowledge of district level operations, improved my secretarial skills and blessed me with the guidance and support of dedicated, mission-minded sisters in Christ. To everyone who provided me with background knowledge, reviewed minutes and supplied information, thank you. Praise be to our God and Lord for His steadfast guidance as the LWML continues its Gospel centered outreach through service and mites.

**Luann Zuercher, LWML SD District Secretary**

## *Our Identity, Our Purpose, Our Security*

by Deaconess Chrissy Gillet

**A**s Christians, we know our identity, purpose, and security are not rooted in circumstances or routines—they are grounded in who we are in Christ and whose we are. Scripture reminds us that we are in the world but not of the world (John 17:14–16). When life feels uncertain, we do not look to temporary anchors; we look to the eternal One who never changes.

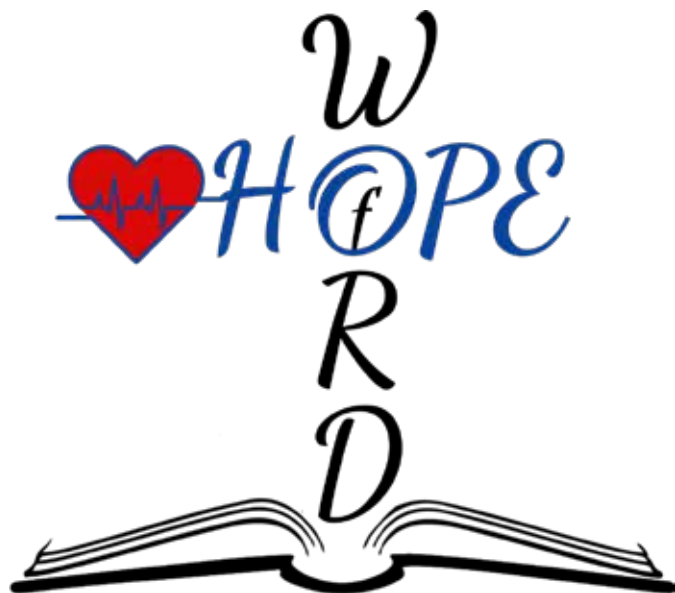
The Bible prepares us for suffering and upheaval: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33). Our Lord Himself suffered, and we share in His sufferings (Romans 8:17). Therefore, when major changes shake us, we do not despair—we turn our eyes to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

### Our True Anchors According to Scripture

- Identity in Christ: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Peter 2:9). Our worth is not tied to jobs, relationships, or health.
- Purpose in God’s glory: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Even in transition, our calling remains to glorify Him.
- Security in His promises: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). When the world feels unstable, His Word is our firm foundation.

### How We Respond in Times of Change

- Fix our eyes on Christ: “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2).
- Stand on God’s Word: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).



- Pray without ceasing: “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).
- Lean on the body of Christ: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Life changes may shake our routines, but they cannot shake the Kingdom of God. Our hope is not in stabilizing the present moment—it is in the eternal security we have in Jesus Christ. When the world feels uncertain, we cling to the truth: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19).

Deaconess Chrissy Gillet is Director of Word of Hope Ministries. Learn more at <https://word-of-hope.org/>.

## Share your news with us!

**NOTE:** With the new part-time Communications Director position comes a new email address to share your news. Please email articles/photos to Kate Meadows at [communications@sddlcms.org](mailto:communications@sddlcms.org).

## BRINGING EXPERTISE AND CARE TO YOUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

*Lutheran Family Service's Christ-centered presentations help congregations and church workers through complex issues*

Lutheran Family Service offers a wide range of Christ-centered presentations designed to support church workers, families, educators, and congregations as they navigate complex cultural, mental health, and life issues. All presentations are grounded in Scripture, informed by clinical or pastoral expertise, and can be tailored to your needs.

Presentations may be delivered as: Single or multi-session workshops, conferences, webinars, school assemblies and trainings, LCMS District events, and support groups.

Current presentations include:

- Understanding Anxiety with Rev. Nathan Grewe, tLMHC
- Becoming Screen Wise: Living Beyond The Pixel with Rev. Jonathan Conner



- Artificial Intelligence And The Need For Real Wisdom with Rev. Jonathan Conner
- Life At Its Beginning And End with Rev. Alex Post
- Male And Female He Created Them: Creation And Identity with Rev. Jonathan Conner and Cassie Beltz, LMHC

To learn more, visit <https://lutheranfamilyservice.org/outreach/>.

### CALL INFORMATION

#### PENDING CALLS

The following are prayerfully considering calls:

**Rev. Steve Andrews Jr.**, St. Matthew, Lee's Summit, MO, to Peace, Rapid City, March 23.

**Rev. Jens Jenson**, Redeemer, Armour, to Faith-Stanton, NE/ St. Johns-Pilger, NE/First Trinity-Altona, NE, April 7.

**Rev. Jordon Andreasen**, Office of International Missions, serving in Romania, to Mt. Calvary, Huron, April 9.

**Rev. Michael Miller**, Bethlehem, Lebanon, OR, to Mt. Calvary, Brookings, April 12.

#### DECLINED

**Rev. Paul Cain**, Immanuel, Sheridan, WY, to Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk, April 11.

#### VACANCIES

- South Dakota District Office, Assistant to the President

- Trinity, Blunt/Immanuel, Harrold, Holy Cross, Onida
- Mt. Calvary, Brookings (associate pastor)
- St. Peter, Wentworth
- Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk (senior pastor)
- St. Paul, Plankinton/Trinity, White Lake
- St. John, Wagner/Trinity, Fairfax
- Mt. Calvary, Huron
- Peace, Rapid City
- Emanuel, Sisseton/Zion, Waubay
- Emmaus, Tripp/Zion, Delmont
- Mt. Olive, Watertown
- Trinity, Corona/Our Savior, Wilmont
- St. John, Revillo/Bethlehem, Milbank
- First, Wall/Emmanuel, Creighton

## Stay Informed with Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty



Keep up to date on what's happening with the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) at [LCRLFreedom.org](http://LCRLFreedom.org), or visit the "Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty" Facebook page.

The LCRL's mission is to ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the church, while educating, encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom.

Receive regular updates by subscribing.

"Word from the Center—Mondays" will give you a devotional reflection. "Word from the Center—Fridays" will send you a two-kingdom reflection from the LCRL about a topic, issue or court case that concerns the issues of liberty, life, marriage and occasionally education.

TO SUBSCRIBE visit [LCRLFreedom.org](http://LCRLFreedom.org), email [info@lcrifreedom.org](mailto:info@lcrifreedom.org) or text "LCRL" to 833-821-5329.

# DISTRICT NEWS

## PARENTING TOWARD THE KINGDOM



Kyle Townes

All parents are invited to a free one-day workshop with Kyle Townes, author of *The Road Less Traveled: Reclaiming Childhood for Christianity*. She will present topics such as godly discipline, our role as parents, screen time, socialization, influential books, education and more. Throughout this course, we will refocus on what is truly important and eternal in our parenting. We will examine how secular parenting strategies and beliefs have led many Christian

families astray, and outline a different, Biblical path forward for you and your children.

Kyle is the wife of a military veteran, Richard Townes, and the mother of five children. After spending years in the public school system teaching middle school, she left the profession to classically educate her children at home. Townes is now a conference speaker and freelance writer. In addition to the previously mentioned book, she also maintains a blog at [Kidsarecapable.net](http://Kidsarecapable.net).

The workshop will take place at St. John's, Britton, on May 9, with registration beginning at 8:30 am and sessions from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. This workshop is free, but so we may plan for the noon lunch, we ask you to register by May 5 with Pastor Robert Moeller by email [Seelsorge8@aol.com](mailto:Seelsorge8@aol.com) or call or text (605) 321-1641.

## MAIN STREET LIVING PROGRAMMING – MAY



"Main Street Living" is a liturgical worship service broadcasting a different local pastor each Sunday morning. It airs along with the classic Lutheran Hour program, "This is the Life." Both can be viewed on KDLT (NBC) & KEVN (FOX).

NBC airs "This is the Life" programs at 10 a.m. and "Main Street Living" programs at 10:30 a.m. Central Time. KEVN (FOX) airs "This is the Life" programs at 8 a.m. and "Main Street Living" programs at 8:30 a.m. Central Time. The "Main Street Living" programs are interpreted and closed captioned for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Visit [www.mainstreetliving.com/](http://www.mainstreetliving.com/) to view current and past episodes.

### May 3, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Hope Enough to Live By"

A medical research scientist falls into despair after an accident and subsequent events.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Joseph Moore, pastor at Zion, Mitchell, presents a message titled, "The Holy Trinity Is Your God." The sermon is based on John 16:5-15.

### May 10, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "The Now Crowd"

A soldier on leave helps his brother work through struggles in his life.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Gregory Lehr, pastor at Zion, Sioux Falls, presents a message titled, "Grace, Mercy and Peace to You." The sermon is based on John 14:15-21.

### May 17, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Poisoned Banquet"

Vicious rumors look to ruin a nurse's career and marriage.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Jason Rensner, pastor at Faith, Sioux Falls, presents a message titled, "The Message is Always Jesus." The sermon is based on Acts 1:12-26.

### May 24, 2026

\*\* NOTE TIME CHANGE FOR THIS WEEK

9 a.m. (KEVN/FOX and KDLT/NBC) – "The Smashup"

A group of friends struggle with lingering guilt after an accident.

9:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX and KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Bart Day, CEO of Lutheran Church Extension Fund in St. Louis, MO, presents a message for Pentecost Sunday.

### May 31, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Awake with a Stranger"

A guilt-ridden man is confronted and haunted by a lapse in judgment.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Chaplain Craig G. Muehler, Director, Ministry to the Armed Forces in St Louis, MO, presents a Memorial Day message based on John 3:1-17.