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"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

Easter blessings in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Each Easter season we are able to joyfully exclaim, "He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!" The *Ablaze!* movement throughout the LCMS is the initiative for each believer to share the hope he or she has in Jesus and His free gift of salvation. ***Fan into Flame*** will help educate people about *Ablaze!* while securing new funds for mission work to take place locally, nationally, and internationally.

As the congregations of the Nebraska District continue to learn more about ***Fan into Flame*** and consider their participation, twelve congregations from a cross-section of the District have stepped forward to lead the way, providing examples of what ***Fan into Flame*** can look like in Nebraska. These congregations committed to begin their congregational appeals after Easter and will be wrapping them up early this summer.

These pilot congregations are spread out across the District, placing a participating congregation in your circuit or in a nearby circuit. The pastor and members of these congregations are willing to visit with you and encourage you as your congregation makes plans to participate. They will be able to share with you things that worked well for them and answer questions you might encounter as you plan your appeal.

The Nebraska District ***Fan into Flame*** congregations currently running or planning spring appeals are:

- × **St. John, Battle Creek** (Norfolk Circuit)
- × **First Trinity, Bloomfield** (Plainview Circuit)
- × **Lord of Life, Elkhorn** (Omaha West Circuit)
- × **Grace, Fairbury** (Beatrice Circuit)
- × **Trinity, Fremont** (Fremont Circuit)
- × **Peace, Grand Island** (Grand Island Circuit)
- × **Immanuel, Loup City** (Grand Island Circuit)
- × **Pacific Hills, Omaha** (Omaha North Circuit)
- × **St. Paul, Omaha** (Omaha North Circuit)
- × **Zion, Pawnee City** (Falls City Circuit)
- × **St. John, Tecumseh** (Falls City Circuit)
- × **Immanuel, Tilden** (Norfolk Circuit)

God will give these congregations opportunities for their hearts, eyes, and ears to see and hear the mission field opportunities in their communities, in the Nebraska District, and throughout the world. As the members learn more about *Ablaze!* and the opportunities they have to "give witness about Jesus of the hope that is within him or her to another person so

that person may encounter Christ," the Gospel message is being shared and hearts are being touched.

Please keep these twelve congregations in your prayers as they take the lead to model, inspire, and set the pace for ***Fan into Flame*** in the Nebraska District. Other congregations are still considering the timetable for their participation. If your congregation would like more information about starting ***Fan into Flame*** this spring or at any time this year, I encourage you to contact the District Office or attend one of the remaining **FANTastic Festivals**. A schedule of workshops is available on the District website at www.ndlcms.org.

It has been exciting to see the miracles God is doing in these lead congregations as they prepare and implement their appeals. I am moved by the level of commitment and the hearts for work in the Lord's mission fields that have been evident so far. I pray the Lord will continue to bless the efforts of these congregations, and that their examples will be a spark that catches and burns throughout the congregations of Nebraska. Please join me in that prayer.

Partnering with you in the mission field,

Rev. Russ Sommerfeld
Nebraska District President