




*The Case
for Support*



*Nebraska
District*

Our Mission

The Nebraska District resources congregations, leaders, and related organizations to encourage in them a passion for Gospel-focused mission to reach all people with the Good News of Jesus.

Abilaze![®]

**An initiative to ignite
100 million hearts with the Gospel!**

125 Years as Mission Partners

Since the district's beginning in 1882, the Lord has given the people of the Nebraska District opportunities to partner together in the common mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Nebraska and beyond to the ends of the earth. The congregations that form this dynamic partnership are firmly rooted in the Word of God and seek to remain faithful to their biblical Lutheran heritage by announcing, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by [God's] grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24)

Our Church Today

Each week, 106,742 members of 245 congregations have the opportunity to confess Jesus and partner in service with nearly 750 ordained and commissioned ministers of the Gospel. Together with schools and other agencies, the district partners to reach out with Jesus in cities, towns, and villages large and small, many of which are vastly different than they were 100, 50, or even 20 years ago.

Growing numbers of lifelong Nebraskans living in our communities do not believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. In fact, every other person in Nebraska is not regularly worshipping in a Christian church. Indeed, our neighbors, co-workers, or family members are in need of a saving and growing relationship with Jesus. In addition, there is a rapid influx of people from around the world immigrating into towns big and small across the state.

Our Challenge

Our district's landscape reveals a population shift from the rural areas of the state to the cities and areas along Interstate 80. Of the 93 counties in Nebraska, over 75 percent show a population decline, while the percentage of unchurched across the state continues to increase. More and more families in the neighborhoods of Nebraska are considered unchurched and disconnected from the Lord's church, and many do not profess Jesus as Savior.

The church faces ministry challenges in all areas of the district. Ministries are challenged to welcome new faces, non-traditional families, and different cultures. Many families are not connected or related to the people who are moving into their communities, creating the need to develop relationships with these new people.

The Lord is also bringing the mission field to the neighborhoods of Nebraska with the arrival of immigrants

from countries around the world. The Nebraska District is examining ways to assist congregations, schools, and church workers to minister to these groups. Word and Sacrament ministry needs to be offered in the "heart language" of these ethnic immigrants. Training of ethnic church workers is also a ministry priority.

Our Opportunities

Opportunities abound for the Lord to move congregations and schools to be revitalized by Word and Sacrament for renewed ministry to their changing communities. Opportunities to plant new churches and schools, both ethnic and Anglo, exist in various communities of our district. Lutheran education opportunities are present throughout the district and scholarships to use Lutheran schools to reach out with the Gospel and support the training of church leaders are also needed. The Lord has also provided opportunities to partner in ethnic ministry, both with those ethnic groups moving into Nebraska and with the emerging Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan.

Our Mission and Ministry Needs

Throughout the district, several areas of need have been identified through a prayerful planning process by the District Board of Directors and staff. In partnership with the Synod's *Ablaze!* goals, the following mission projects provide a pathway to achieve the goals of the Nebraska District's strategic plan. Only the Lord can and does move hearts to be generous for the following mission and ministry needs:

1. Renew District Congregations and Schools Minimum Goal – \$525,000

In the book of Revelation, Jesus called upon Christian congregations to be renewed in their commitment and stand firm in their confession of Him. The renewing or revitalizing process for congregations developed by our Synod and modified by the Nebraska District is a journey of biblical and practical discovery designed to help the people of participating churches or schools to grow in God's Word and in intentional outreach. Through this process, participants will be able to identify what ministry values their church holds. This information is used to help the congregation review its current mission and develop a ministry plan for the future. This process may be especially helpful to the congregations in Nebraska that are experiencing ministry in a changing or new mission field. It is the goal of the Nebraska District to aid 80 congregations in the mission assessment, planning process,

and education for renewal and revitalization by the year 2017, at a minimum cost of \$12,000 per congregation.

Fan into Flame would help gather financial resources to:

- Allow congregations, along with their pastors and teachers, to work through this process with a trained consultant;
- Train and support professional and lay church workers to serve in the specific mission fields that are identified;
- Offer conferences for intentional mission outreach;
- Provide biblical, Gospel-motivated stewardship education;
- Offer rural ministry Bible study module training for pastors and congregational leaders; and,
- Train biblical reconcilers for ongoing biblical peacemaking as a part of congregational life.

2. Plant New Churches and Schools

Minimum Goal – \$500,000

The opportunity to reach out to the lost with the message of salvation through Jesus Christ is as urgent now as it has ever been. Nearly half of the population of Nebraska is not attending any church on a regular basis, with others worshipping at non-Christian churches.

While existing congregations of the district continue to disciple the saved and reach out to the lost, there is a need for new mission starts where population shifts have increased community numbers and where various ethnic groups have moved and settled.

Opportunities for new church plants have been identified in Columbus, Northwest Lincoln, Seward, Sutherland, Omaha, and Elm Creek. Ethnic mission start opportunities exist in Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, Norfolk, North Platte, Crete, and the Highway 30 Corridor between Fremont and Columbus. As God opens doors, more opportunities will present themselves. New school opportunities currently exist in Auburn, Winnebago, O'Neill, Cairo, and other locations yet to be identified.

Your gifts to *Fan into Flame* will be used to provide funding for these new mission and school starts. The ARC (Association of Related Churches) model offers up to \$110,000 to eligible mission starts as a loan to be paid back within a specified amount of time, with the mission start matching the first \$30,000 of the loan. This model allows the same money to be loaned out time after time, increasing the ministry effect of these dollars. *Fan into Flame* funding will also be made available to congregations who choose to initiate planting a new school through Synod's Genesis Project at a cost of \$3,000 to \$5,000 per school start.

3. Provide Lutheran School and Church Worker Scholarships

Minimum Goal – \$525,000

The Nebraska District has a long and rich heritage of Lutheran Christian education. Preschools, elementary schools, and high schools provide ample opportunities to sow the seeds of the saving work of Jesus on the fertile fields of children's hearts. Trained pastors and teachers are needed to serve in these congregations and schools. Triennial goals of the Nebraska District include providing assistance to five congregations and five schools to develop scholarship programs to financially assist potential students, while recruiting and training three professional church worker students from the ethnic groups represented in Nebraska. As our Lord blesses *Fan into Flame*, the Nebraska District will provide scholarship monies for the following:

- Children of all ethnicities to attend Lutheran day schools or high schools in the district;
- Support for scholarship programs as needed for congregations and schools that take part in the revitalization process;
- Ethnic, African American, Anglo, and Native American students studying at a Concordia University System school or seminary to enter church work as a teacher, DCE, or pastor; and,
- Church planter training for those who will work to start new mission congregations.

4. Plant and Support Ethnic Ministries

Minimum goal – \$450,000

The Lord is bringing people from around the world to the Nebraska District, creating a mission field on our doorsteps. The Nebraska District is committed to sharing the love of Christ with all people, including those from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere. Nebraska District involvement would include partnering with district congregations through grants to help with resources for facilities, worship needs, educational materials, worker training, and human care. With God's blessings, support of these ethnic ministries will lead to planting at least one new ethnic mission congregation or school each year.

- Hispanic Ministry
 - There are opportunities for new Hispanic mission starts in North Platte, Crete, Madison, Omaha, and the Columbus area along Highway 30, as well as other communities
 - Workers are needed to be trained to serve these new mission starts

- African Immigrant Ministry
 - African immigrants are moving from Omaha and Lincoln to Norfolk, Grand Island, and other communities
 - Worship facilities and trained church workers are needed to support and start new ministry sites
- Asian Ministry
 - The Asian population in Nebraska is proportionately the fastest growing ethnic group in the district
 - Currently there are no church workers in the district trained to work in this mission field
 - Funds are needed for facilities, worship needs (music, Bibles, Catechisms, etc.), and a mission planter to start this ministry
- Muslim Ministry
 - Lincoln has been designated as an official city of entry for refugees from Iraq
 - Immigrants from other Islamic countries are moving to Nebraska and settling in our communities
 - Funds are needed for facilities, worship needs (music, Bibles, Catechisms, etc.), and a mission planter to start this ministry

Partners in Mission in Sudan

As committed partners in the mission field of Sudan through the coordination of LCMS World Mission, a portion of the “LCMS World Mission – Ends of the Earth” gifts gathered through *Fan into Flame* will be designated for work with the emerging Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan (ELCS). Mission agencies including Orphan Grain Train, LCMS World Relief and Human Care, LCMS World Mission, and Lutheran Heritage Foundation have been involved in supporting the ELCS. Your gift to *Fan into Flame* will contribute additional financial support to this rapidly growing and quickly changing mission field. Projects in line with the goals of *Ablaze!* include the translation of Lutheran educational resources; distribution of Lutheran school curriculum; theological education for pastors, evangelists, and teachers; roofs for churches and schools; a church-wide radio communication system; a clean water system for the new mission medical clinic and several other ministry needs.



Fan into Flame

The Nebraska District joyfully joins with other Missouri Synod Lutherans throughout the country in support of the *Fan into Flame* campaign to be able to collaboratively continue ministry work in support of our people and in response to the opportunities for new mission work God is placing before us. To fully fund this mission plan, gifts of \$2 million in addition to the continued support of the mission and ministry efforts of the Nebraska District is required. Fifteen percent of net unrestricted gifts offered by members of the Nebraska District through congregation appeals will be allocated to the mission plan to reach this goal. Additionally, campaign leaders will be seeking individual major gift commitments to fund these specific strategies to bring the Good News of Jesus to those who have not yet heard of His saving love.

Consider this appeal as your personal invitation to covenant together with the Nebraska District in this historic effort that, seeking the Lord’s blessing, will bring Jesus Christ into the lives of millions and a renewal through His Word to His congregations and missions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

+ **To God be all the Glory** +

For more information, call the
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Source of Christian statistics: Krantz, Les and Jim McCormick. The Peoplepedia: The Ultimate Reference on the American People, Henry Holt and Company: New York and Gallup Poll, 10909 Mill Valley Rd, Omaha

Source for immigrant information: US Census Bureau