

September 28, 2004

Rev. Russ Sommerfeld
District President

Dear Congregational Chairman,

“I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.” John 4:35-36

When you look out the window of your home or car, what kind of fields do you see? Corn? Soybeans? Milo? Wheat? Do you see steel and concrete, without a field in sight?

Do you see the incredible field God has placed in front of every one of us in the Nebraska District? It is not a field of crops to be tended and harvested or a city to be developed, but a mission field that starts at our door and spreads as far as our eyes and our hearts can see.

Just as there are different crops, there are different people in this mission field before us. Some may be from countries or cultures different than our own, some may be from a different social or economic environment than us, and some may be from a generation not our own. Many people make up this mission field through the simple fact that they don't have a relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Just as farmers need special tools to harvest the crops of their fields and city developers need to be equipped to grow a town, each of us need special tools to help us as we approach the mission field. The Nebraska District has been developed by the congregations of Nebraska to be a place to turn for these tools. Each person in your congregation receives the tools he or she needs to enter the mission field through Word and Sacrament worship, Bible studies, Sunday school, training in outreach and evangelism, youth activities, and all the other ministry opportunities your congregation offers.

The Nebraska District offers resources to congregations and schools to help equip members and professional church workers for the mission field in these essential ministry areas. These resources assist your congregation with its very important ministry to your members and in your community. A partial list of resources is available in the brochure included with this letter.

The portion of your congregation's budget that is specified for support of the District goes to provide these and other resources, which in turn are offered to your congregation and the other congregations of the District. The resources are designed to strengthen your congregation as it looks to the mission field God has placed before it. Events such as "Prairie Fire" and conferences to educate, inform, and uplift laity and church workers are also made possible by your congregation's gifts to the District.

In addition, your mission and ministry dollars make possible scholarships to seminary and university students studying to serve the Lord as full-time church workers, ministries to share the love of Christ with ethnic groups in Nebraska, and ministries that take the Good News of salvation to the students on the university campuses of Nebraska.

Each dollar your congregation commits to the District, along with special designated gifts, fees, and income from investment returns, is used to do ministry in the following ways:

\$0.37 goes to support direct-to-congregation and school benefits.

\$0.32 goes to support District ministries, new missions, and human care.

\$0.31 goes to support the ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The Lord has used the people of the Nebraska District in His mission field in many ways over the years. He has blessed them with very generous hearts that have been moved to support wonderful ministries here in Nebraska, across the country, and throughout the world. Ministries such as Orphan Grain Train, Lutheran Family Services, LCMS World Relief, the Concordia University System, and numerous missionaries have all been blessed by the generosity of Nebraska District members. In fact, the Nebraska District is second of all LCMS districts in direct, designated gifts to LCMS World Mission. I thank God for these blessings and I pray they will continue.

Congregational commitments to the District have remained level for the past ten years. Throughout the past several years, the Nebraska District, in an effort to practice God-pleasing stewardship, established investments which are able to help undergird congregational offerings. Still, due to lack of increase in offerings and investment returns, the Nebraska District has not been able to respond to some of the mission opportunities the Lord has placed in our midst.

Please encourage your members to prayerfully consider increasing your congregation's mission and ministry commitment when it comes time to pass your congregation's budget. The mission support from the congregations in the Nebraska District shows a strong financial partnership existing between congregations and their district as we partner to go into the mission field of Nebraska. Consider copying the enclosed bulletin insert and brochure to distribute to your congregation members. Bulletin blurbs to be reprinted in bulletins or newsletters are also included to help you share this information with your congregation. This same packet has been sent to your pastor.

When we begin to see the fields God has placed in front of us, we can see the harvest He has called us to gather. May the Lord bless our efforts as we work together in the mission field He has placed before us here in the Nebraska District.

Your fellow worker in Christ,



Rev. Russ Sommerfeld
Nebraska District President

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