



Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



Information of Interest for Lutherans in the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod
PO Box 407, 152 South Columbia, Seward NE 68434
Phone: 1-888-643-2961 ♦ Fax 1-402-643-2990 ♦ Website: www.ndlcms.org

February 2006

SPRING PASTORS' CONFERENCE . . .

The Spring Pastors' Conference will be held Monday and Tuesday, March 20-21, at the Holiday Inn in York. Again this year all necessary information regarding the conference will be made available on the District website, www.ndlcms.org, and pastors will be notified of its availability by email. Registration materials may be sent to pastors through the postal service at their request.

"MISSION FIELDS . . . MISSION PARTNERS" . . .

is the theme of the 2006 District Convention at Concordia, Seward, June 1-3. Keynote co-speaker Rev. Mike Ruhl of the Center for U.S. Missions will address our "Mission Field Nebraska" opportunities, while Rev. Yohannes Mengsteab, Director of North American Missions for LCMS World Missions, will address "Nebraska Mission Partners" around the world. President Kieschnick will also be at Convention, preaching at the opening worship service and sharing his synodical report. This Convention will also provide an opportunity to celebrate the ministry in mission with which the Lord has blessed the Nebraska District. All congregation members are invited to attend any or all of Convention. Registration forms will be mailed to church offices and made available on the District website in early May.

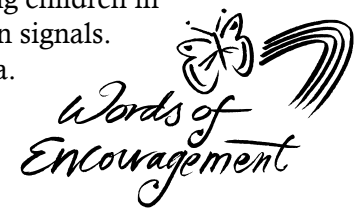
FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . In June of 1993 Reuters News Service reported that Lori Carlson was stopped by a police officer in South Windsor, Connecticut. As the policeman approached her car, she wondered what she had done wrong. To her amazement, the officer handed her a ticket and said, "Your driving is GREAT! --- and we appreciate it." What Lori didn't know was that the authorities of that Hartford suburb had begun a new program to give safe drivers a ticket with a two-dollar reward for obeying the speed limit, wearing safety belts, having children in protective seats and properly using turn signals. The police of Windsor had a good idea. Encouragement is powerful.

The Apostle Paul wrote of encouragement to the Thessalonian Christians: "*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Is encouragement a fact in your life, in your family, in your church? For Christians, encouragement is more than a compliment or kind word – it is heartfelt support for one another resulting from Christ Jesus at work in us and through us. Jesus' sacrificial suffering and death binds us together into an encouraging relationship with Him and one another.

God inspired Paul to offer more divine words to the Thessalonian Christians and to us: "*Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-18) . . . President Russ Sommerfeld



JUNIOR HIGH RETREATS . . . Junior high youth from across the District are invited to join together for one of two retreats being planned especially for them this spring. Under the theme, "Different," based on Matthew 20:28, campers will explore the Word of God to learn that because Christ was different, they have been made different and are called to live in a different way. One retreat will be held at Camp Comeca near Cozad on March 10-11 and the other will be held at Camp Luther near Schuyler on March 17-18. More information and registration forms for both of these retreats are available on the District website, www.ndlcms.org/education/youth/jrhigh.html.



The mission of the Nebraska District is to resource congregations, leaders, and related organizations in their mission of discipling the saved and proclaiming Christ to a lost and changing world.

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S SCRAPBOOKING WEEKEND . . .

Women from across Nebraska are invited to Camp Luther near Schuyler for a Christian Women's Scrapbooking Retreat on February 3-5. The retreat begins at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and ends at noon on Sunday. Cost for the retreat is \$65 per person, which includes meals, snacks, lodging, and use of camp trails and grounds. Along with scrapbooking time, participants may also participate in devotions, Bible studies, and campfires. More information is available on the Camp Luther website, www.campluther.org. Women interested in attending the retreat are encouraged to contact Camp Luther by calling 1-402-352-5655, emailing campluther@campluther.org, or visiting www.campluther.org as soon as possible for a registration form.

DID YOU KNOW? . . . The second most important heritage one can leave his or her family is the example of a lifestyle of Christian stewardship. What does this look like? Such a lifestyle may include daily family devotions, faithful weekly worship, group Bible study/fellowship, Sunday school, considering and talking about the fact that God is the Owner of all we are and have and making our decisions accordingly, and setting aside the first ten percent of income to support the Lord's work through the local congregation, in addition to setting aside extra for other charities. In one family, each child had a "Jesus bank" that received the first ten percent of "income" from which they filled church and Sunday school envelopes. Such a Christian stewardship lifestyle, an important heritage we can share now and leave behind when our Lord calls us home, can come only from a heart and life that has received God's life-changing forgiveness.

NEBRASKA DISTRICT SEMINARIANS . . . Congregations in the Nebraska District sent eight first-year students to the LCMS seminaries this school year. Five new students enrolled at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. They are: Brian Earl of Messiah, Lincoln; Lonnie Felcher of Our Redeemer, Staplehurst; Peter Jurchen of St. John's, Cordova; Andrew Schermbeck of St. Peter's, Elk Creek; and Zachary Zehnder of King of Kings, Omaha. Three new students are attending Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. They are: Gregory DeMuth of St. John, Seward; Mark Duer of Good Shepherd, Lincoln; and Heath Trampe of Trinity, Amherst.

VISITING THEOLOGIAN WEEKEND . . .

Pacific Hills, Omaha, welcomes Dr. Dale Meyer, president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as its visiting theologian February 24-26. Dr. Meyer will present two 90-minute talks on February 25 beginning at 10:00 a.m. Registration for both sessions and lunch is \$15 and may be made by emailing pastormoorhead@pacifichills-lcms.org. Dr. Meyer will also preach at the 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. services February 26. Contact the Pacific Hills church office at 402-391-9625 for more information.

CALLED TO GLORY . . . Frances Janzow, wife of pastor emeritus Rev. Dr. Ted Janzow, received her crown of life on January 3. She served as Rev. Janzow's faithful helpmate during his ministry in Minnesota, Illinois, Canada, and at Concordia, Seward, Nebraska.

. . . **Rev. Louis Martin**

Luther Doctor of Idaho was called to his eternal rest on November 14, 2005. During his ministry he served the Nebraska parishes of St. Paul, Concord; St. Peter, Humphrey; St. Paul, Lindsay; and St. Matthew, Cedar Bluffs.



CALLS IN THE DISTRICT

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

CALLS ACCEPTED:

Rebecca Brockman (Irvine'86), DCE, Divine Shepherd, Omaha, to director of youth ministry, Peace, Hurst, Texas.

Holly Strudthoff (S'88), candidate, to teacher, Trinity, Fremont.

ANNIVERSARIES

First Trinity (Altona), Wayne, 125th, June 11, with guest preacher President Russ Sommerfeld.

ORDAINED MINISTERS

CALLS ACCEPTED:

Rev. Luther Biggs (StL'84), senior, Messiah, Lincoln, to senior, Prince of Peace, Carrollton, Texas.

CALLS DECLINED:

Rev. John Kunze (StL'96), associate, Messiah, Lincoln, to Peace, Faribault, Minn.

Rev. Clint Poppe (StL'98), senior, Good Shepherd, Lincoln, to Shepherd of the Hills, Centennial, Colo.

Rev. Phillip Vance (FtW'93), senior, Trinity, Fremont, to Trinity, Fairfield, Calif.

Rev. Tim Wangerin (Edmonton'90), Zion, Downs, Kan., to Trinity, Hebron, and Zion, Shickley.

News items and ministry stories for the Reporter are always welcome. The deadline for submission for the March 2006 Reporter is **Wednesday, February 1**. Please submit items to Reporter@ndlcms.org or PO Box 407, Seward, NE 68434.

COMING EVENTS

Nebraska District LLL Convention, Holiday Inn, Beatrice.....	March 10-12
Pastors' Conference, Holiday Inn, York	March 20-21
Principals' Conference, Leadership Center, Aurora	April 20-21
Nebraska District LCMS Convention, Concordia University, Seward.....	June 1-3
Nebraska District LWML North Convention, Midland College, Fremont.....	June 23-24
August Teachers' Retreat, Concordia University, Seward	August 8
Teachers' Conference, Faith, Lincoln	October 19-20

OPERATION HURRICANE RELIEF UPDATE

~DEMONSTRATING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH GENEROUS GIVING AND RESPONSIVE CARING~

Action Teams Continue to Organize in Nebraska

Seth Kaiser, DCE from the Nebraska District (Our Savior, Norfolk) who is on "at large" status assisting Operation Hurricane Relief in the New Orleans area, sums up the needs of the devastated area this way: "As a local secretary put it, 'We need three things; prayers, money and volunteers.' Truer words could not be spoken. My prayer is that you would consider coming and joining in the rebuilding effort." It is recommended that the minimal stay for action teams is five to ten days. Housing is provided, and at most sites two meals a day are also provided.



St. Paul, New Orleans

On January 8, Pastor James Ertl held the first service at St. Paul since Katrina. The church had to be gutted and they have "make-shift" arrangements, but the members wanted to worship in their church. This was the hardest hit church of the four churches the Nebraska District is sponsoring. Half of their members are still displaced, but they are determined to begin their ministry again. **Chancel furniture is needed, as well as replacement pews (approximately 28 pews, 12 feet each).**

Sponsor a Family

Would your congregation be interested in the **Family to Family** program, a chance for congregations to help affected families get back to "normal"? Following is an example of how this program can make a difference:

A mom whose family lost their home and all their possessions said that the first normal night they had in their borrowed home was when the kids were fighting over a game of Risk. The game of Risk and a few other things were a gift from someone across the country who was paired with this family to help provide things that were a part of "normal" life before Katrina.

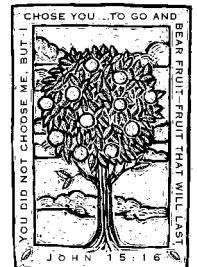
Orphan Grain Train

In February the Orphan Grain Train expects to send their 75th semi-load of supplies to the hurricane area. They continue to need CDL drivers to haul the supplies. Additionally, they need equipment supervisors who are familiar with construction equipment and who can drive a pick-up and trailer to be on site one to three weeks at a time. Please prayerfully consider these special needs and contact Orphan Grain Train for more information at 1-402-371-7393.

"Love One Another" (John 15:17)

Seth Kaiser summed up the importance and the impact of the relief work in this way:

"We typically complete about five work orders per week. Each job we do is for a different family and different stories of unimaginable loss and sorrow. Each time we pull up for the first time with a work crew, the expressions on the faces of the folks we are helping are priceless. From beaming faces to tears of joy, it is hard to describe how much it means to the victims when they see that help has arrived. It redefines the word 'relief.' We are told so often by those we are helping what a blessing we are to them as they look to pick up the pieces of their lives. It is truly an amazing feeling to be used by the Lord in such a substantial way. To be certain, our job may look like we are a bunch of volunteers here to simply gut houses, hang drywall and haul out trash, like so many other work crews, whether paid or unpaid. In reality, that is only a fraction of what we are accomplishing here in New Orleans. To be very plain and simple, we offer hope. We literally offer hope by the scoop full as we 'muck' out someone's home. What we do is share with them something that they can be certain of-- God's love. With each swing of the hammer and conversation with a homeowner, we remind them of the hope we have in Christ. It is truly an awesome thing."



Dr. Larry Oetting has accepted the part-time position of Nebraska District Hurricane Relief Coordinator and is available to assist you in understanding what you can do to make a difference. Contact Dr. Oetting at the Nebraska District Office at 888-643-2961 or larryo@ndlcms.org with questions or for more information on these opportunities.

“GO AND SEE” GOD’S WORK IN SUDAN

In Acts 11 Luke reports that the message of Christ crucified and risen was preached by persecuted Christians in Antioch with these words, “*The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.*” (Acts 11:21) When news of this reached the Christian church in Jerusalem, Barnabas was sent to “go and see” God’s work in Antioch. Barnabas was glad and encouraged the Antioch Christians.

In 2004 the Lord put upon the heart of Nebraska District President Rev. Russ Sommerfeld and Assistant for Missions and Outreach Rev. Richard Boring to “go and see” what God is doing in Sudan, Africa. The news of an emerging Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan had reached their ears from persecuted Sudanese Christians who had come from refugee camps to Nebraska and become members and leaders in area Lutheran churches. Sommerfeld, Boring, and Sudanese Vicar John Deang from Christ, Lincoln, visited with Nebraska native Rev. Ken Greinke, LCMS Executive Director for Africa Missions. The vision to “go and see” came more into focus. Soon Rev. Ray Wilke of Norfolk, director of Orphan Grain Train, was also eager to “go and see” God’s work through His Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan, as was Rev. John Fale, former Nebraska District pastor and current associate director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Then came Charles Kiersch of Fremont, Nebraska, a developer for LCMS World Relief and Human Care.

As this group waited for peace and safety to come to Sudan, the team to “go and see” grew to include representatives from Lutheran Heritage Foundation, the Sudanese Lutheran Mission Society, MOST (Mission Opportunities Short Term) Ministries, LCMS World Relief, Children’s Christian Concern Society, Concordia Theological Seminary – Fort Wayne, and the LCMS Board of Directors. Rev. Andrew Mbugo Elisa, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan (ELCS), also traveled with them.

By December 3, 2005, the LCMS “go and see” team gathered in Nairobi, Kenya. The team traveled near a refugee camp of 80,000 in Kenya, then on to Juba, Yambio, and Khartoum, Sudan. During their time in Sudan the team and ELCS representatives worked out an agreement of understanding on how to help the emerging Lutheran church in Sudan and met with South Sudan national leaders. They visited the headquarters of the ELCS, St. Paul Lutheran Charity Hospital, and Lutheran congregations in the Internal Displaced Persons Camp of 500,000. They were also able to worship with the congregation in Khartoum.

Members of the team who made the December 2005 journey to “go and see” God’s Gospel at work in Sudan are now at work considering how they can partner with the emerging Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan to assist the mission and ministry God has entrusted to them. A number of needs were identified by the team and the list will continue to be refined and updated.

This is truly a growing mission field, according to Rev. Andrew Elisa. In 2001, his church body had about 5,000 members in 23 congregations, and he was the only ordained pastor. In 2005, the Sudanese church has more than doubled in size, with some 10,000 members worshipping in 70 congregations. Elisa is now one of eleven ordained pastors serving the church. More than 60 evangelists, a dozen deacons, and one deaconess also serve the church.

Since this LCMS team has “gone and seen,” the Lord can lead His people of the LCMS in Nebraska to see the role He could give them with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan. It is the vision of President Sommerfeld that the Nebraska District follow the Lord’s will to possibly partner with the international mission field that is emerging through God’s hand upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan, LCMS World Missions, and the Sudanese Lutheran Mission Society of the United States. He asks that you join him in prayer for God’s clear and certain direction.

More information on this trip and the ministry in Sudan is available on the Nebraska District website, www.ndlcms.org. Additional photos from the trip are also available.



A choir welcomes the group



Rev. Wilke and the children



The LCMS group



Visiting with the people



A group of children



Inside a Sudanese refugee camp church