



Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



Information of Interest for Lutherans in the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

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April 2008

DISTRICT MISSION TRIP

SCHOLARSHIPS . . . The Nebraska District offers mission trip scholarships to pastors, professional church workers, and lay people of the District. Applicants must meet certain criteria, including completing a scholarship application, demonstrating personal financial commitment to the trip, and verifying their mission trip through LCMS World Mission. Applications and full guidelines are available by calling the District Office, 888-643-2961, or by visiting the District website at www.ndlcms.org/ministries/missiondev/trip.html.



CELEBRATE CONCORDIA . . . Join with other congregations in celebrating **Concordia Sunday** on April 20, or another Sunday of your choice. Concordia Sunday provides a special opportunity to celebrate the gift of colleges and universities that prepare individuals for service to the Church and world in a Lutheran context. To order materials to help celebrate Concordia Sunday, visit www.lcms.org/universities or call 800-248-1930.

CONSIDER GRACE PLACE FOR YOUR CHURCH WORKERS . . . Are you looking for a way to show your pastor and his wife or a teacher and spouse that you appreciate them? The Nebraska District and Grace Place Retreats is pleased to announce retreat opportunities for church workers and their spouses. The actual cost for these retreats is \$2,000.



However, through generous grants, church workers and spouses can attend a week-long retreat for only \$300. There are planned retreats for pastors and wives, teachers and spouses, single pastors, and ministers of music and spouses. For more information, contact Julie Roebke at the District Office at julier@ndlcms.org or visit www.ndlcms.org.

FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . *Cheerful Givers!*

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.
(2 Corinthians 9:7-8)



As five-year-old Timmy approached the kitchen table, he noticed his mother humming a hymn from church and his dad leaning over the table writing. He innocently asked, "What are you doing?" His father stopped writing, looked up with a smile, and said, "We are getting our offering for Jesus ready for when we go to church." Timmy asked his mom, "Why are you so happy?" Timmy's mom halted her hymn humming to say, "Timmy, Jesus makes life happy. He is our Savior. He died and rose for all people." Timmy's dad chimed in, "Everything we have is from God. And God makes it a joy to give back to Him so that our church can tell about Jesus." Timmy left, only to return minutes later. He had coins in his hand from his room. He announced, "I want to have fun, too!"

Does this story sound unreal, perhaps like an episode from a Christian version of *Leave it to Beaver* from a bygone era? Or does it beg the question of what example we are providing with our giving to the Lord? Are we the cheerful givers God gives us the opportunity to be for our families, our church, our community, and the world to witness?

When God inspired Paul to write his second letter to the Corinthians, he told them that he was sending some of his co-workers to them to make sure they had their special offering ready. Amazingly, Paul was gathering an offering from non-Jewish Christians for Jews who had become Christians. Those Christian Jews were suffering from drought and lack of food. The love of Jesus Christ was moving people to give money for people who had formerly criticized them. Paul told the Corinthian Christians that he had been boasting about how generously they would give, so he wanted to make sure they were ready. In fact, others had been giving because of his boasting about how the Lord was moving the Corinthian Christians to give.

Then Paul announced wonderful news! He said that God loves cheerful givers and can make grace abound. He proclaimed that God can equip His people at all times and in all circumstances to flourish in good works. Giving for the Lord is a joy!
Rev. Russ Sommerfeld

DR. NEIL SANDFORT HONORED . . . Neil Sandfort of St. Charles, Mo., is the 2008 recipient of the Lutheran Education Association's (LEA) Christus Magister (Christ the Master Teacher) Award, given by LEA to "Lutheran educators who have made significant contributions to Lutheran education." Neil served the Nebraska District as Assistant to the President in Education and Youth from 1983 until 2004.



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.

FANTastic Festival Orientation Workshops

Fan into Flame is the invitation for individuals and congregations to help fund *Ablaze!* projects that spread the Gospel message of Jesus Christ in their communities, in Nebraska, in North America, and around the world. Pastors and congregational leaders are invited to attend one of the scheduled *FANTastic Festivals* to gather additional information about *Fan into Flame*, as well as to explore the options for conducting an appeal in their congregation.

These festivals have been scheduled to celebrate and discuss congregational and District outreach opportunities, provide an overview of *Ablaze!* and *Fan into Flame*, give options for how every congregation can participate, and answer questions. The *FANTastic Festival* schedule is listed here. Congregational representatives are invited to attend whichever festival fits best in their schedule. All festivals begin at 7:00 p.m.*, and RSVP information has been sent to all church offices or is available at www.ndlcms.org.

It is very important that lay leaders attend one of these festivals along with their pastor. The congregational president, head elder, evangelism and stewardship chairs, and any other leaders who have a heart for missions are invited and encouraged to attend.

- Fremont**, April 8 - Trinity, Fremont
- Columbus**, April 9 - 1C Mission Start, Columbus
- Falls City**, April 10 - Trinity, Auburn
- Deshler/Beatrice**, April 14 - Grace, Fairbury
- Wayne/West Point**, April 15 - Grace, Wayne
- Grand Island/Hastings**, April 16 - Peace, Grand Island
- York/Seward**, April 28 - Emmanuel, York
- Lincoln**, April 29 - Faith, Lincoln
- Holdrege**, May 5 - Mt. Calvary, Holdrege
- McCook**, May 6 - Redeemer, Wauneta *(6:30 p.m. MT)
- Western Sandhills**, May 7 - Beautiful Savior, North Platte
- Kearney**, May 12 - Holy Cross, Kearney
- Norfolk/Plainview/Ainsworth**, May 14 - Christ, Norfolk
- Omaha North/South/West**, May 15 - Pacific Hills, Omaha

Nebraska District Circuit Coordinators

Circuit Coordinators serve the congregations as resource people and voices of encouragement throughout *Fan into Flame*. Please keep your hearts open as they contact your congregation. Thanks be to God for the following individuals who have generously accepted the role of Circuit Coordinator:

- Ainsworth Circuit* - Rev. John Ryding, O'Neill
- Beatrice Circuit* - Rev. Charles Schmidt, Fairbury
- Falls City Circuit* - Bruce Houghton and Rodney Robison, Pawnee City
- Fremont Circuit* - Glen and Mary Mueller, Fremont
- Grand Island Circuit* - Rev. Shawn Kitzing, Loup City
- Kearney Circuit* - Becky Mustard, Lexington
- Lincoln Circuit* - Rev. Brad Beckman, Lincoln
- McCook Circuit* - Rev. Gregory Stuckwisch, Wauneta
- Norfolk Circuit* - Bill and Bonnie Begeman, Norfolk
- Omaha North Circuit* - Rev. Ronald Holling, Omaha
- Omaha West Circuit* - Rev. Gary Werling, Gretna
- Plainview Circuit* - Rev. Duane Fahr, Bloomfield
- Wayne Circuit* - Rev. Terry Buethe, Wakefield
- Western Sandhills Circuit* - Dr. Marvin and Marcia Swan, Grant
- York Circuit* - Harold and Betty Renken, York

GIVING TOGETHER FOR OUR COMMON MISSION IN THE NEBRASKA DISTRICT

The 245 congregations of the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod together make offerings to the Lord to resource congregations, leaders, and related organizations in their mission of discipling the saved and proclaiming Christ to a lost and changing world. Various services to assist congregations, schools, and professional church workers in this mission are offered by the District. Some services are required, such as providing a superintendent for our Lutheran schools and maintaining the roster of called professional church workers. Other services assist with various ministries, including campus, Native American, Hispanic, and Sudanese, as well as new mission starts in Nebraska. Offerings also provide services for church worker health, missions, financial assistance, communications, and planned giving.



The Nebraska District Board of Directors and staff have rejoiced to routinely submit \$1.5 million of the combined congregational gifts to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, no matter how much the congregations of the District provide in offerings. This has again been done with joy in 2007.

However, we need to report that the undesignated offerings from the congregations of the District for the District's common work and giving onward to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was down from \$3,021,954 in 2006 to \$2,741,985 in 2007. Designated offerings for specific ministries and missions by District congregations, schools, and individuals were also down from \$530,283 in 2006 to \$527,622 in 2007.

Congregations around the Nebraska District, as well as individual church members and professional church workers, are very generous with their designated gifts for individual missionaries, mission projects, LCMS universities and seminaries, and LCMS relief efforts. God be praised!



The Nebraska District and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are grateful for the offerings which allow them to provide required and elective services, as well as assisting ministries and missions. The Synod and District also call upon the congregations to prayerfully consider making gifts to the Lord to provide for the teamwork of the Synod and District.

COMING EVENTS

Spring Pastors' Conference , Divots Conference Center, Norfolk	March 31-April 1
Church Reconciler Training , The Leadership Center, Aurora.....	April 13-19
Principals' Conference , The Leadership Center, Aurora.....	April 17-18
LCEF Circuit Directors' Conference , Holiday Inn Express, Columbus	April 18-19
Nebraska North LWML Convention , Lutheran High Northeast, Norfolk	June 6-7
LEA ECENet Institute , St. John, Seward	June 18-19
LCMS Worship Conference , Concordia University, Seward	July 22-25
Prairie Fire '08 , Concordia University, Seward	August 2
Orphan Grain Train Convention , Lutheran High Northeast, Norfolk	September 19-20
Nebraska South LWML Convention , Adams County Fairgrounds, Hastings	September 26-27
Music Workshop and Hymn Festival , Zion, Imperial	October 11-12
Teachers' Conference , Trinity, Fremont	October 23-24
Fall Pastors' Conference , Midtown Holiday Inn, Grand Island	October 27-28
District Youth Gathering , Holiday Inn Convention Center, Omaha.....	November 21-23

ANNIVERSARIES

Immanuel, Rising City, 125th, April 13, with a 10:45 a.m. worship service, followed by a catered meal and afternoon program.
St. Paul's, Wauneta, 100th, April 20, with Rev. Clint Poppe preaching at the 10:00 a.m. (Mountain Time) service.
St. Paul, Minden, 130th, June 8, with President Russ Sommerfeld preaching at the 10:15 a.m. worship service.
Immanuel, Beemer, 140th, July 13, with Rev. Clint Poppe preaching at the 10:30 a.m. worship service, followed by a noon meal and afternoon program.
St. John, Wakefield, 100th, August 31, with President Russ Sommerfeld preaching.
Peace, Waco, 100th, September 7, with a 10:00 a.m. worship service with guest speakers Rev. Roger Schlechte and Rev. Lloyd Stuhr, followed by an 11:30 a.m. lunch and festival of music service at 2:00 p.m.

CALLS IN THE DISTRICT

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

CALLS ACCEPTED

Andrew Bencoter (S'02), adult ministry coordinator, King of Kings, Omaha, to principal, Shepherd of the Desert, Scottsdale, Ariz.

David Bliss (S'79), principal/teacher, Immanuel, Hooper, to principal/teacher, Zion, Pierce.

CALLS DECLINED

Andrew Bencoter (S'02), adult ministry coordinator, King of Kings, Omaha, to principal, Messiah, Oklahoma City, Okla.

OTHER TRANSACTIONS

Lori Coufal (S'95), teacher, Mt. Calvary, Omaha, to non-candidate status.

Larry Oetting (S'62), reinstated to the roster as a candidate.

Donald Vos (S'83), non-candidate, Nebraska District, to non-candidate, Indiana District.

CALLED TO GLORY . . . Herbert Grabau,

teacher emeritus, Omaha, departed this life on February 6. During his teaching ministry, Herbert taught at Zion, Leigh; Mt. Calvary, Omaha;

Trinity, Lincoln; and Faith, Lincoln; as well as schools in Michigan and Illinois.



ORDAINED MINISTERS

CALLS ACCEPTED

Rev. Jose Flores (StLCqy'96), candidate status, to Grace, Wood River.

Rev. Martin Homan (StL'80), interim pastor, Divine Shepherd, Omaha, to interim pastor, St. Matthew, North Tonawanda, NY.

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. Keith Grimm (StL'91), senior pastor, Beautiful Savior, La Vista, to senior pastor, St. John, Chaska, Minn.

Rev. John Kunze (StL'96), associate pastor, Messiah, Lincoln, to senior pastor, St. Paul, Aurora, Ill.

Rev. Robert Schermbeck (StL'82), St. Peter, Elk Creek, to Zion, Hastings, and First, Plattsmouth.

Rev. Luke Schnake (FtW'78), senior pastor, Christ, Lincoln, to senior pastor, St. Paul, Boca Raton, Fla.

Rev. Timothy Steckling (StL'98), St. Paul, Winside, to Christ, Weyauwega, Wis.

ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Richard Bringewatt (StL'86) as senior pastor, St. Paul, West Point, March 9.

Media Library

Contact Kathy Melton at 888-643-2961 or kathym@ndlclms.org to request becoming custodian of one or more of these titles.

Sooper Puppy

Sooper Puppy
 Drink, Drank, Drunk
 Flying High
 Puff of Smoke
 Words Can Hurt

Survival Guide for Teenagers

Tape 1: Drugs and Alcohol
 Tape 2: Sex and Dating
 Tape 3: Goal Setting
 Tape 4: Our World: The Big Picture
 Tape 5: Depression and Suicide

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO OPEN DOORS



During 2007, the Nebraska District celebrated 125 years of work in the Lord's mission field. Throughout 2008 we will look to the future and the ministry opportunities the Lord is continually placing before us. During the coming year, the *Nebraska Lutheran Reporter* will include "follow-up" articles on the ministries featured in the series of anniversary articles published last year. These past articles may be reviewed on the District website at <http://www.ndlcms.org/news/communications/Reporter/archive.html>.

Q: What do you get when you combine a growing mission field, mission-minded congregations, an energetic second-generation church planter, and an empty school building?

A: *English as a Second Language and citizenship classes sponsored by community LCMS churches in a joint mission venture.*

A few years ago, the congregations of Cross in Omaha and Beautiful Savior in La Vista (then Omaha) decided to partner to reach out to the growing Hispanic population in the changing community around Cross. The congregation of Cross voted to donate their church building to a new Hispanic mission start in order to redevelop the ministry of Cross, and Beautiful Savior initiated the process of finding a Hispanic evangelist to come and begin working in the neighborhood.

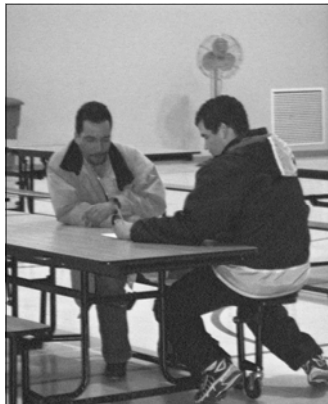
In January of 2007, Obdulio Felix arrived in Omaha from Nogales, Mexico, to serve as a missionary to the Hispanic population in Omaha. He also enrolled in classes at the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to begin his training for pastoral ministry. The Lord has blessed his work, and he currently gathers with 75 regular attendees each week for fellowship and Bible study. Obdulio is eligible to begin his vicarage this summer, and it is the prayer that he will be assigned to continue the work in Omaha.

As Obdulio worked among the Hispanic community in Omaha, the idea of helping these people adapt to their new culture through ESL and other classes began to grow. After many hours of hard work by many people, the ministry committee from Cross and Beautiful Savior is now coordinating free English as a Second Language and citizenship classes for anyone in the community, charging a small fee for materials.

Along with volunteers from various other churches in the area, these two congregations are reaching out to the Hispanic community of Omaha to build relationships that can open doors for sharing the Gospel message with those who attend. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the sharing of the Good News can lead to the regular hearing of God's Word and participation in His Sacraments at Cross Lutheran Church and, God-willing, eventually at a new mission congregation in Omaha.

Many volunteers from LCMS congregations in Omaha have stepped forward to teach the classes, offer snacks, provide childcare, and other tasks to help make these

classes happen. Another partner in this new outreach ministry in Omaha is the Nebraska District. When the Zion+Peace church and school closed, the District staff and Board of Directors believed it was very important to purchase the properties to keep a Lutheran presence in the two communities. The church property at 44th and Grover is now the home of the Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mission. The church and school property at 40th and Q Streets



has been designated as the Mercy Center and is where the ESL classes are held. The first ESL class was held there on Monday, March 3, with 20 adults registered. A task force made up of members of LCMS congregations in Omaha is developing ministry plans to meet human care needs that will lead to using the church for Word and Sacrament ministry.

Citizenship classes are also being offered on Saturday afternoons to help prepare those who are in the process of becoming American citizens. Many people are expected to come into contact with members of the churches in this way because no other organizations in Omaha are offering citizenship classes. In addition to the classes, the congregations are also providing childcare and a connection to a Christian church. God is presenting wonderful opportunities for these congregations to build relationships with the unchurched and disconnected people in the community.

As the Lord blesses these partnerships and the ministry that is taking place, there are plans to start classes again in September, along with new classes that include basic computer competency, basic English, and life skills classes. It is the prayer that these classes will reach beyond the Hispanic community to provide needed education to others in Omaha, including the Sudanese, Asian, and Muslim populations.



As people come to the Mercy Center to learn English, American civics, or to meet other human care needs, relationships will form and doors will open for the sharing of the Gospel. By God's grace, these relationships and the seeds of the Gospel planted in this place will be nurtured and will grow in the congregations of Omaha. If you or your congregation would like to be a part of this ministry or financially contribute to this mission, contact Rev. Rich Boring at the Nebraska District Office, richb@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961, or contact

Steve Bartelt, president of the task force, at stephenbartelt@yahoo.com.