



# Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



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

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**FAN INTO FLAME . . .** Linda Reiser of Grand Island and **Rev. Chip Winter** of Norfolk have been named as co-chairs for the *Fan Into Flame* campaign which will take place across the Nebraska District in 2008. This campaign to financially support the *ABLAZE!* initiative was supported by the Synod in convention in 2004 and will help provide funds for new mission starts, mission field staff, and other opportunities world-wide, as well as returning funds for outreach to participating congregations and districts.



More information will be shared with congregations through the *Reporter* and church offices.

**RECONCILER TRAINING . . .** The Nebraska District, in partnership with Ambassadors of Reconciliation (AOR), is offering Church Reconciler Training in 2008. This training will equip pastors and laity to apply biblical approaches to conflict. Participants will learn reconciler techniques such as coaching, mediating, arbitrating, and setting up their own congregational reconciling ministry. This training will be helpful preventative training for all congregations, not just those currently in conflict. The registration fee includes professional instructors from AOR, six nights' lodging, meals, and program materials. Participants attend a full week of training at The Leadership Center in Aurora beginning on April 13 for dinner and concluding at 11:30 a.m. on April 19. Total registration fee is \$890. Contact the Nebraska District Office at 888-643-2961 or visit [www.ndlcms.org](http://www.ndlcms.org) for a registration form or more information.

**LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND RESCHEDULED . . .** The Lutheran Marriage Encounter weekend in Grand Island has been rescheduled from February 29-March 2 to February 22-24. Contact Arnold or Yvonne Nilsen at 308-452-3002 or [aynilsen@nctc.net](mailto:aynilsen@nctc.net) to learn more.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . Epiphany King Cake!

A couple of years ago on January 6, a package arrived in the Nebraska District Office from the Southern District of the LCMS. It contained the gift of a King Cake. Some of us in the office had never seen nor eaten a King Cake. Quick research was completed. We were reminded that Epiphany is the climax of the Advent/Christmas season and the Twelve Days of Christmas, which are usually counted from the evening of December 25 until the morning of January 6 — which is the Twelfth Day.



However, there is also an older custom of counting the days beginning at sundown, making the evening of January 5 the Twelfth Night. Twelfth Night is an occasion for feasting, including the baking of a special King Cake.

We also learned that a King Cake has a small trinket (usually a small plastic baby) inside. The small baby trinket represents the infant Jesus upon whom the Light of Epiphany dawns with Wise Men bringing the Savior lavish gifts. Now, the person who gets the piece of cake with the trinket in it is declared king or queen of the Twelfth Night party, and is sometimes given a paper, plastic, or costume jewelry crown or tiara and various privileges for the day.

The privileges we receive because Jesus was born as an infant, killed as an adult, and resurrected as the only Savior are even better! We receive the joy of forgiveness and the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! Epiphany has long been the mission season of the Christian church. The Lord just may give you the opportunity during this Epiphany season to show someone whom He puts in your path that they, too, can have King Jesus and the privileges of forgiveness and eternal life.



President Russ Sommerfeld

## FRIENDSHIP SUNDAY MATERIALS AVAILABLE . . .

Friendship Sunday materials written and produced by the Center for U.S. Missions are available to download for free from the **Friendship Ablaze!** website at <http://friendshipablaze.com/fa/index.html>.



These materials will encourage and enable congregations to equip their members to reach out with the love of Jesus Christ and embrace their unchurched friends. Contact the Center at 949-854-8002 x1780 or [office@centerforusmissions.org](mailto:office@centerforusmissions.org) for more information.

**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.**

## FINANCIAL AID FOR NEBRASKA STUDENTS

Nebraska District financial support is available to anyone preparing for full-time service in the church. Applicants must be enrolled full-time at a Concordia University System school or Concordia Seminary at Fort Wayne or St. Louis, demonstrate financial need, and have completed their FAFSA (federal student aid documentation).

The Concordia University System consists of the 10 LCMS-operated universities located in Ann Arbor, Mich.; Austin, Texas; Bronxville, N.Y.; Irvine, Calif.; Mequon, Wis.; Portland, Ore.; River Forest, Ill.; St. Paul, Minn.; Selma, Ala.; and Seward, Neb.



Application forms may be obtained from the District Office, by printing the application form from the District website, [www.ndlcms.org/education/education/aid.html](http://www.ndlcms.org/education/education/aid.html), or from the universities and seminaries. The deadline for completing the application process is **June 1**.

The **LWML North** provides scholarships for students preparing for church ministry careers. The Nebraska District Student Aid Committee administers the grants on the basis of residence in the LWML North region, financial need, and full-time enrollment. Application is made by completing the District financial aid application process by **June 1**.

The **LWML South** offers assistance to students from the LWML South region who are going into full-time church work. Applications may be obtained from the student's local LWML society or from Helen Glinmann, Box 644, Gibbon, NE 68840 or 308-468-5368. Completed applications are due **June 3**.

**LLL** is offering scholarships to members of the Nebraska District LCMS who are going into full-time church work (i.e. teacher, pastor, DCE) and will be attending one of the LCMS schools. Send requests for applications/inquiries to Ron Hilgenkamp, 23325 Co Rd 26, Arlington, NE 68002 or 402-478-4682. The deadline is **May 1**.

The **Gil and Blondie Vogt Scholarship Fund** is designed to assist Nebraska students preparing for LCMS church vocations at any LCMS university or seminary. Requests for information or applications should be sent to King of Kings Lutheran Church, c/o Pat Hofer, 2012 South 164th Avenue, Omaha, NE 68130. Application deadline is **April 15**.

**The Center for Liturgical Art (CLA) at Concordia University is offering answers to questions they hear most frequently from congregations in regards to the decoration and design of worship areas. These questions and their answers will periodically appear in the Reporter. For more information on these topics or to ask your own question, contact the CLA at 800-535-5494, ext. 7453.**

*I have heard there is interesting symbolic meaning with Christmas being at the time of the winter solstice. Please explain.*

Indeed, there is meaning here. The biblical order is inherently from darkness to light. During the early winter, when the days are short and the nights long, we are reminded of the centuries of the half-light before Christ's coming. Then, during the winter solstice, our darkest day, Jesus was born. Immediately following Jesus' birth, the days lengthen and the sun's light increases in the world. A reminder of the light and redemption brought by the Messiah is manifest in the world around us.

This progression from dark to light is also evident at creation. When the earth was created there was darkness, and then the first record of God speaking brings forth light. Even the mention of the days at creation reinforces this idea. In Genesis Chapter One it repeatedly says, "And there was evening and there was morning. . . ." We reflect this today by beginning to celebrate the holy day of Christmas during the evening before Christmas morning.

Finally, the days in December, called Advent, reflect on the waiting time of the ancient world for the Messiah, as well as our own waiting for Christ's return. It is appropriate that the church year starts in the darker days of waiting for the Lord to come. Then, with the birth of Christ, we begin to celebrate His light with joy.



*William Wolfram, Center for Liturgical Art, Concordia University*

## Media Library

Contact Kathy Melton at 888-643-2961 or [kathym@ndlcms.org](mailto:kathym@ndlcms.org) to request becoming custodian of one of these titles or series.

### *Life on the Edge*

Finding God's Will for Your Life  
The Myth of Safe Sex  
Love Must Be Tough  
The Keys to a Lifelong Love  
Emotions: Can You Trust Them?  
When God Doesn't Make Sense

### *Luke*

Christmas  
Miracles  
Parables

### *McGee and Me*

Back to the Drawing Board  
Beauty in the Least  
The Blunder Years  
Do the Bright Thing  
In the Nick of Time  
Not So Great Escape  
Skate Expectations  
A Star in the Breaking  
Take Me Out of the Ball Game  
'Twas the Flight Before Christmas  
Twister and Shout



News items and ministry stories for the Reporter are always welcome. The deadline for submission for the February 2008 Reporter is **Wednesday, January 2**. Please submit items to [Reporter@ndlcms.org](mailto:Reporter@ndlcms.org) or PO Box 407, Seward, NE 68434.

## TEACHING THE FAITH COURSE . . .

The Lay Leadership Program of the Nebraska District is offering the course "Teaching the Faith" in two locations across Nebraska. Ben Vineyard, DCE at Mount Calvary, Holdrege, will teach the course at Mount Calvary on January 12 & 26 and February 9 & 23.

Dr. Mark Blanke, Director of DCE Ministry at Concordia University, Seward, will teach the course at Concordia on

January 12 & 26 and February 16 & 23. For more information, contact Kathy Melton at [kathym@ndlcms.org](mailto:kathym@ndlcms.org) or 888-643-2961, or Marvin Bergman at [marv.bergman@cune.edu](mailto:marv.bergman@cune.edu) or 402-643-3724.



**YOUTH, YOU HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED . . .** It's time for District youth to prepare to attend the Nebraska District Youth Gathering at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Omaha on November 21-23 under the theme *Identified*. The gathering theme verse, 2 Corinthians 5:17, will be the basis for youth to explore their personal past, present, and future identity in relation to the gracious call of our Heavenly Father in Jesus Christ. Keynote speaker, DCE Jeffrey Meinz of Colorado Springs, Colo., will be on hand to guide the youth through this weekend of discovery as the Holy Spirit uses his insights and humor to stir hearts. A new Gathering format will make this event "guest-friendly," so congregations are encouraged to use this opportunity for outreach into their communities and bring friends along! Watch for more information to come in the months ahead and for registration to open in August 2008. Early questions can be directed to Kathy Melton at the District Office at [kathym@ndlcms.org](mailto:kathym@ndlcms.org) or 888-643-2961.



## COMING EVENTS

<b>Women's Retreat</b> , St. John, Seward .....	February 2
<b>Church Reconciler Training</b> , The Leadership Center, Aurora .....	April 13-19
<b>Principals' Conference</b> , The Leadership Center, Aurora .....	April 17-18
<b>LCEF Circuit Directors Conference</b> , Holiday Inn Express, Columbus .....	April 18-19
<b>LEA ECEnet Institute</b> , St. John, Seward .....	June 18-19
<b>Prairie Fire '08</b> , Concordia University, Seward .....	August 2
<b>Orphan Grain Train Convention</b> , Lutheran High Northeast, Norfolk .....	September 19-20
<b>Teachers' Conference</b> , Trinity, Fremont .....	October 23-24
<b>District Youth Gathering</b> , Holiday Inn Convention Center, Omaha .....	November 21-23

## CALLS IN THE DISTRICT

### COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

#### CALLS ACCEPTED

**Tracy Skoog** (SCQ'97), teacher, Christ, Lincoln, to teacher, Christ, Phoenix, Ariz.

#### OTHER TRANSACTIONS

**Karen Clausen** (S'64), teacher, Our Redeemer, Staplehurst, to emeritus status.

**Ruth Fittje** (S'98), teacher, Immanuel, Columbus, to non-candidate status.

**LeeAnn Genrich** (S'63), teacher, St. Paul, Beatrice, to emeritus status.

**Julie Korte** (S'91), reinstated to the roster as a candidate, Nebraska District.

**Lisa Moreno** (S'89), candidate, New England District, to candidate, Nebraska District.

**Heidi Stockmeyer** (AA'04), teacher, St. John, Columbus, to teacher, Christ the Vine, Herculaneum, Mo.

**John Suhr** (S'60), teacher, Concordia University, Seward, to emeritus status.



### ORDAINED MINISTERS

#### CALLS ACCEPTED

**Rev. Keith Burk** (StCath'98), candidate status, to Faith of Our Fathers, Roca.

**Rev. Stuart Burt** (FtW'06), candidate status, to assistant, Grace, Grand Island.

**Rev. Robert Hedtke** (Spg'73), candidate status, to missionary, Thailand, Board for Mission Services.

**Rev. Marcus Mackay** (StL'04), Friends in Christ, Bryant, Ark., to Peace, Hastings.

**Rev. Jeff Shanks** (FtW'89), associate, Divine Shepherd, Omaha, to Director of Worship, Royal Redeemer, North Royalton, Ohio.

#### CALLS DECLINED

**Rev. Steven Hayden** (StL'86), Mt. Calvary, Indianola, Iowa, to First, Plattsmouth.

**Rev. Robert Kasper** (StL'83), administrative pastor, St. Peter, Macomb, Mich., to senior pastor, Messiah, Lincoln.

**Rev. Shawn Kitzing** (StL'00), Immanuel, Loup City, to Peace, McCook.

#### STATUS CHANGE

**Rev. Randall Russell** (FtW'91), navy chaplain, Eastern District, to navy chaplain, Nebraska District.

#### ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

**Rev. Fredrick Simon** (StL'84), as senior pastor, Pilgrim, Bellevue, November 11.

# WORKING SIDE-BY-SIDE IN THE MISSION FIELDS



During 2007, the Nebraska District celebrated 125 years of work in the Lord's mission field. As we begin 2008, we look to the future and the ministry opportunities that 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>.

The Omaha congregations of Bethany and Bethlehem Deaf share a special history. Bethlehem was organized to minister to the deaf population in the area. Nearly 15 years later, this church became the meeting place of the hearing congregation that became Bethany. From these beginnings, several churches in Omaha were formed.

Today these two congregations continue to partner in ministry, along with a third Omaha congregation, St. Paul. Not only is Pastor Ron Holling called to serve St. Paul, he is also serving the vacancy at Bethany. In addition, the vicar assigned to St. Paul and Bethany is studying to enter deaf ministry and is working at Bethlehem Deaf.

Vicar Mark Winkelman made plans to enter the seminary with an interest in ministering to a specific mission field – he just didn't know which one. The summer before entering the seminary, he visited a deaf church and decided to learn sign language at the same time he was studying to be a pastor. Now he is spending his year of vicarage as a traditional vicar at St. Paul and Bethany, as well as leading the signed and spoken worship service at Bethlehem Deaf each week.



While the bonds that first united these congregations remain, the community around them has seen change throughout the years. Couples who bought houses in this area decades ago and raised their families have seen their children leave to raise families of their own, usually in the suburbs. The houses are being sold once again to young families who are starting out, changing the socio-economic landscape of the neighborhoods.

To engage in this changing ministry field, these congregations have begun some intentional mission work. St. Paul has taken advantage of the demographics study offered by Lutheran Church Extension Fund to help them better understand the make-up of the area around them. Bethany, the hearing congregation that started in the basement of Bethlehem Deaf, has begun a new youth

praise service every other Saturday night. While right now this service is made up mostly of youth from Bethany and St. Paul, the intent is to use this service to connect with the deaf youth and youth from the surrounding areas as well. Youth from any Omaha congregation are invited to come and bring friends along for a fun and enjoyable evening of Christian fellowship and worship.



Bethany is also organizing volunteers to survey the neighborhood house to house to discover the needs of the community and how the church can best serve these needs. It is the congregation's prayer that the Lord will use them to reach out to their community and shine the light of Christ into the homes of those who are not connected to a church.

Bethlehem Deaf, the mother congregation of Bethany, is once again at work on her mission of reaching out to the deaf community with the Good News of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the partner congregations of St. Paul and Bethany are exploring ways to assist in this outreach ministry to the deaf community of Omaha. The other 242 congregations are also involved as partners in this ministry through their mission and ministry gifts to the Nebraska District. These offerings are used in part to help provide resources and support the ministry taking place there.

Today, God is using the history He wrote years ago to connect these congregations in ministry partnership for the future. Even as Bethlehem Deaf struggled in her early years during the Great Depression, she became a congregation strong enough to support another starting congregation. Today, Bethany is in the position to come back and offer hands and hearts to work side-by-side with Bethlehem Deaf in the Lord's mission field.

