



# Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



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

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March 2008

## LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT . . .

Members of the Nebraska District are invited to join together at **Prairie Fire '08** to celebrate the miracle of their baptism and to be equipped to live as children of light, just as the Apostle Paul calls us to live in Eph. 5:8. Participants will hear from Rev. Gerald Kieschnick, president of the LCMS, as well as choose from over 40 resourcing break-out sessions. This inspiring and fun-filled day is open to everyone and will be held at Concordia University, Seward, on Saturday, August 2. Registration materials will be mailed to all church offices, past participants, and teachers in early June, and will also be available online. Watch the *Reporter* and the District website, [www.ndlcms.org](http://www.ndlcms.org), for more information.



## LCEF TO AWARD OUTREACH MINISTRY GRANTS . . .

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund, a non-profit ministry of the LCMS, is blessed with strong investors and faithful borrowers. It's an effective partnership that, with the Lord's blessings, is able to use fiscal year-end operating results to offer Outreach Ministry Grants to congregations and other LCMS organizations within the Nebraska District. Thirty-five \$1,000 LCEF Outreach Grants will be awarded. More information has been sent to each congregation and is available on the District website, [www.ndlcms.org](http://www.ndlcms.org), or by contacting Gene Gierke at 402-641-1485. The application deadline is April 1.



**STAFF CHANGES . . . Susan Bray**, who served the Nebraska District for nearly 15 years as secretary in the education department and then as bookkeeper, has left her position for new ministry opportunities. . . **Sandy Ruether** joined the District staff as bookkeeper in early February. The District Office staff looks forward to continuing to serve the congregations, schools, ministries, and members of the Nebraska District.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . *Securing Each Child's Future!*

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11

In a time and place long ago, God revealed to a young man in his late teens or early twenties, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." The boy responded, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." Jeremiah 1:5-6

Jeremiah was that shy boy who was then emboldened by the Holy Spirit. He was able to assure people exiled from their homes to have confidence in God and to settle into the foreign land in which they found themselves. They would be God's light in that strange place. He proclaimed that God had plans of a hope and a future for them.

National Lutheran Schools Week will be observed March 2-8 under the theme *Securing Each Child's Future* based on Jeremiah 29:11. During this time, praise and thanks will ascend to the Lord for Lutheran schools where children and youth are taught how to speak, emboldened by the Spirit, about the One True God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Nebraska District is blessed with 44 Lutheran schools, and the Word that God gave to that young man, who said he couldn't speak, is announced with tremendous confidence in each of these schools.

Imagine what it would be like to be a Lutheran school teacher, a Sunday school teacher, or a pastor who taught Jeremiah's words and received a letter like this:

"The war has changed me. I am a different person than I was just three months ago. My theology has not changed, only deepened and broadened. War is a testimony to sin and God's grace in the midst of it. His power was manifested a million times over in the events of those days. There have been many foxhole conversions as always. I believe many will stick. I have one chaplain who has baptized about 100.

A soldier showed me a letter from a sixth-grade student the other day. She said, 'Thanks for making me safe from terror.' The war on terror isn't over, but I like this girl's desire to believe that we have made the world a little safer since 9/11. Our military may be on the forefront of that battle, but there are many others in government and out, ordinary citizens who play a part in our great democracy by doing their jobs, making our country strong and safe. I thank them, because we have felt their labor, love, and prayers in this ordeal."

Pax Christi,  
CH (MAJ) Tom Waynick, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
24th CSG [Combat Support Group], USA  
+Strength Through God's Support+

Letter quotes from "LCMS Notes" e-News of the LCMS Board for Communication Services, May 16, 2003.

Rev. Russ Sommerfeld

**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.**

## SPRING PASTORS' CONFERENCE . . . Pastors of the Nebraska



District will gather for their Spring Pastors' Conference at Divots Conference Center in Norfolk on March 31 and April 1 under the theme, *Walking Together in Christ*. The conference will offer presentations from Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasy and Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, as well as a panel discussion on "Twenty-First Century Stewardship and the Pastor." Elective workshops on stewardship will also be offered Tuesday afternoon following the close of the conference for those who wish to stay. Registration materials have been emailed or mailed to all pastors in the District and the deadline for registering is March 14. For more information, visit the District website at [www.ndlcms.org](http://www.ndlcms.org) or contact Connie Borchers at [connieb@ndlcms.org](mailto:connieb@ndlcms.org) or 888-643-2961.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE—WHAT FAITH COMMUNITIES CAN DO . . .

Everyone is invited to attend this final training about domestic violence on Monday, March 10, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Kearney. Experts from Family Violence Council and Friendship Home will provide key information on how faith communities can effectively reach out to those affected by domestic violence. Training, materials, and lunch will be provided at no cost to participants through a grant from the Faith Communities Outreach Project. Registration materials and seminar content is available on the District website at [www.ndlcms.org](http://www.ndlcms.org) or by contacting Julie Roebke at 888-643-2961 or [julier@ndlcms.org](mailto:julier@ndlcms.org). The registration deadline is March 3.

**LAY LEADERSHIP COURSES OFFERED . . .** The Lay Leadership Program of the Nebraska District is offering two courses in two locations this spring. *Mission Outreach* will be offered at Mt. Calvary, Holdrege, and will be taught by Pastors Dean Hanson, Kenton Birtell, Jeffrey Ernstmeyer, Michael Gruhn, and Lay Ministry Assistant Verle Hennings. *Worship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* will be offered at Concordia University, Seward, and taught by Dr. David Held, Pastor Tim Gierke, and Dr. Joseph Herl. Both courses will be held on March 1, 8, 15, and April 5. Tuition is \$200 per course. 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.



**PLANTING SEASON IN NEBRASKA . . .** "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: . . . a time to plant and a time to uproot." (Ecc.3:1-2) What a joy it is that God has designated right now as a time to plant churches in Nebraska through two different congregations in two different ways.

### **1C, Columbus** (A church plant of Peace, Columbus)

Evangelist Jerry Steger was commissioned and sent by Peace, Columbus, last summer to begin an outreach ministry to the disconnected and unchurched people in the Columbus community. January 13 marked their first public fellowship time, and God blessed them with a turnout of 165 people, only to grow to 175 the next week.

This group will continue to meet and spend time in the study of God's Word and in fellowship as the Lord prepares them to grow into a congregation. **1C** is touching a broad spectrum of people, young and old alike. To date, the Lord has blessed the stewardship of the launch team and those supporting this mission start in that all funds used to plant this church have been donated without the mission plant incurring any debt.

### **Word of Life, Lincoln** (A church plant of St. Paul, Malcolm)

In 2005, St. Paul, Malcolm, felt the Spirit's call to plant a congregation in the Fallbrook area of northwest Lincoln. To accomplish this, the congregation is providing a DELTO vicarage to Dr. Larry Oetting, and he is studying to be a pastor in the context of a mission planter.

On January 13, St. Paul pastor Rev. Craig Whitson called upon congregational members to place their hands on Vicar Larry and Kitty Oetting and those who were being sent as the mission start group while he fervently prayed for the Lord's will to be done with this new mission start. The financial generosity of the Nebraska District – LCMS congregations made it possible for the District to grant funds to help this new church plant get established in its mission field.

**FAN INTO FLAME IN NEBRASKA . . .** *Fan into Flame* will secure new funds to reach the lost with the saving message of the Gospel through mission work locally, nationally, and internationally. A campaign coordinator has been identified in each circuit, and congregations will be notified of their respective coordinator soon. Pastors and congregational leaders will also be invited to attend an orientation meeting in their area in April or May to learn more about this unique way to support mission work. Current information is always available at [www.ndlcms.org](http://www.ndlcms.org).

## Media Library

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

### *On the Aging of Parents*

On the Aging of Parents  
Closing the Gap  
Love Can Hurt



### *On the Air*

The Blame Game  
I Am Not Angry  
Passport to the World: Nicaragua  
Racism: Going Color Blind

### *Parenting Teenagers*

What Makes Your Teenager Tick?  
Parenting: How Do You Rate?  
Communicating With Your Teenager  
Your Teenager's Friends and Peer Pressure  
Effective Teenage Discipline  
How to Talk About Sex and Dating  
School: Helping Your Kids Measure Up  
Building Christian Faith in Your Kids

### *Present Time*

The Adventure Begins  
The Fiery Stranger  
The Lost Prophet



## COMING EVENTS

Nebraska LLL Convention, Lutheran High Northeast, Norfolk .....	March 28-30
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
District Youth Gathering, Holiday Inn Convention Center, Omaha.....	November 21-23

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Immanuel, Rising City**, 125<sup>th</sup>, 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**, 130<sup>th</sup>, June 8, with President Russ Sommerfeld preaching at the 10:15 a.m. worship service.  
**Immanuel, Beemer**, 140<sup>th</sup>, July 13, with Rev. Clint Poppe preaching at the 10:30 a.m. worship service, followed by a noon meal and afternoon program.  
**Peace, Waco**, 100<sup>th</sup>, September 7, with a 10:00 a.m. worship service 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

**David Kumm** (S'01), principal/teacher, St. John, Battle Creek, to principal/teacher, Christ the King, Sebawaing/Unionville, Mich.

#### CALLS DECLINED

**Bill Meyer** (S'80), principal, Christ, Norfolk, to principal, Immanuel, Palatine, Ill., and principal, Zion, Bethalto, Ill.

#### OTHER TRANSACTIONS

**Margie Erickson** (S'75), teacher, St. Paul, West Point, to candidate status.

**Bethany Huff** (S'05), DCE, Trinity, Lincoln, to candidate status.

**Debra Leech** (SP'78), candidate, Nebraska District, to candidate, Missouri District.

**Carol Spaeth** (RF'65), emeritus, Nebraska District, to emeritus, Michigan District.

### LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE SCHOLARSHIP CORRECTION . . .

Applications for scholarships from the Nebraska LLL for those entering full-time church work are available by contacting the Nebraska District LLL Student Assistance Committee Chairman, Mick Onnen, at 2220 Rd. 5000, Davenport, NE, 68335; 402-364-2523, or [mickonnen@alltel.net](mailto:mickonnen@alltel.net). Please note, this address is different from the one shared in the January 2008 Reporter.

### ORDAINED MINISTERS

#### CALLS DECLINED

**Rev. Jon Bender** (StL'04), assistant, St. John, Cudahy, Wis., to St. Peter, Deshler.

**Rev. John Pasche** (StL'02), associate, Grace, Wayne, to Zion, Stillwater, Okla.

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

**Rev. Robert Swearer** (StL'83), senior, Holy Savior, Lincoln, to senior, St. Paul, Ida Grove, Iowa.

#### ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

**Rev. Randall Knuth**, (Dub'83), as pastor, Hope, South Sioux City, Oct. 28.

**Rev. Marcus Mackay** (StL'04) as pastor, Peace, Hastings, Jan. 13.

#### STATUS CHANGES

**Rev. Patrick Burt** (StL'91), candidate, resigned from roster, effective December 26, 2007.

**Rev. Keith Christiansen** (FtW'83), candidate, Missouri District, to candidate, Nebraska District, effective October 5, 2007.

**Rev. Jorge Santamaria** (StCath'93), Cristo Cordero de Dios, Grand Island, to resigned from roster, effective January 1, 2008.

**Rev. David Spaeth** (FtW'85), emeritus, Nebraska District, to emeritus, Michigan District.

#### CALLED TO GLORY . . . Rev. Leon Zimmerman,

Merna, was called to His heavenly home on February 2. He served congregations in Canada, as well the Nebraska congregations of Immanuel, Loup City, and Immanuel, Merna, during his 39-year ministry. He also served in many and various ways for the Nebraska District and Synod.



# MISSIONAL SCHOOLS TRAIN MISSIONARIES



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>.

When people are asked to name the blessings of Lutheran education, the list can become very long. Not only are students well-equipped academically, they are also taught fundamental biblical truths, given a strong moral base, and nurtured in their relationship with Christ. Some schools also have an emphasis on equipping students, from preschool through college, to be witnesses for Christ.

As the number of people in Nebraska who are not connected with a Christian church continues to grow, the need for individuals who are willing and able to clearly confess their faith in Jesus also continues to grow. Lutheran schools in Nebraska maintain a focus on preparing students to be lifelong missionaries.

Lutheran schools in Nebraska will observe National Lutheran Schools Week during March 2-8 with the theme, *Securing Each Child's Future*, based on Jeremiah 29:11. During this time we remember and celebrate all of the wonderful lessons taught in Lutheran schools and the blessings these schools are to the students, their families, and the communities where they are.

Zion Lutheran School in Plainview is one school with such a missional attitude. Head teacher Clee Wolske shares the following account of how some of the students were involved in witnessing to others around the world and how that witness helps tell a story back home:

The fourth through seventh grade students of Zion Lutheran School of Plainview, Nebraska, recently received a surprise thank you. Their intentions were to show appreciation for the efforts of one civilian who works for the United States government in the country of Qatar, a country that lies east of Saudi Arabia and extends into the Persian Gulf. However, the appreciation had a "rippling" effect.

The children were assigned to write letters as a Veteran's Day tribute to Stacie Wolske who is in Qatar for a deployment of four months working with the U. S. military there. Students wrote letters of encouragement to those fighting for freedom, along with the message of Christ who sets all of us free from sin, death, and the devil.



Because this was before Christmas, the students had the opportunity to join others in collecting snacks and homemade goods. The total came to be three large boxes that were sent as a thank you for their sacrifice to our nation.

Upon receiving the children's letters, Stacie shared them with the others she works with and the results created contagious joy and interest. Immediately, the children received an e-mail from Staff Sergeant Danny Weaver who is stationed at an American Air Force Base in Qatar.

He answered the children's questions and sent photos of Qatar and its desert area. In thankfulness for the children's efforts of encouragement, the 9<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Bomb Squadron sent the school a flag that was flown over Afghanistan on November 11, 2007 (Veteran's Day). With the flag, Zion received a document of authentication. The document states:

*"Let it be known this flag was flown over Afghanistan onboard a B-1B in support of Operation Enduring Freedom on 11 November 2007. In Honor of Zion Lutheran Church and School, signed by Aircraft Commander Capt. "Touchdown" Digiolia; Offensive Systems Officer, Capt. "Blue" Steele; Pilot, 1Lt. Nicholas Wabeke; Defensive Systems Officer, Capt. "Lucky" Dyer; and Lt. Col. USAF Michael "Eli" Eliason, Commander, 9<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Bomb Squadron."*

The flag and document now hang in the hall of Zion as a reminder to the students and their families of the opportunity God gave them to witness to these civilians and soldiers in the Middle East, and the opportunities for outreach He presents daily in their community.

As schools across the District celebrate National Lutheran Schools Week this month, we have an opportunity to thank God for the outreach that is taking place through Lutheran schools today. Not only are these schools nurturing the children of the congregations, but the teachers and the students of these schools are going into their communities and living as children of light, as witnesses for Christ, in response to the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life God has given them.

