



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

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CONGREGATION STATISTICAL REPORTS . . .

Congregation statistical reports have been mailed out and are due as soon as possible. Please make two copies of the completed form, mail the original to St. Louis, and mail a copy to the District Office. If you have not already done so, please complete and submit this report immediately to keep District and Synod records up to date. Contact Kim at the District Office at kimh@ndlcms.org or 1-888-643-2961 with any questions.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE COURSE IN OMAHA . . .

A study of Christian Doctrine based on the Lutheran Confessions will be led by Dr. Paul Vasconcellos of Concordia University Nebraska on February 14 & 28 and March 14 & 28. Classes will meet at Beautiful Savior, 7706 S. 96th St., La Vista. The course is sponsored by the Lay Leadership Program of the Nebraska District. For more information, please contact Marvin Bergman at marv.bergman@cune.edu or (402) 643-3724.

CONFIRMATION RETREAT AT CAMP LUTHER . . .

Camp Luther will be hosting a confirmation retreat on February 27-28 for small churches, especially those with 10 or fewer students in their confirmation classes. Rev. Keith Christiansen will be guest speaker on three of the six chief parts. Pastors and their students will meet to discuss each topic further after each presentation. In addition, camp staff (including some Concordia students) will provide group games, activities, and campfires. More details and registration information are on their website at www.camluther.org.



FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . Go Green in Epiphany!

Long before environmentalists of the 21st century were using “go green” to encourage people to take care of the earth, Christians were “going green” during the church year season of Epiphany. Epiphany is time to green up, yes, grow in seeing Jesus as the One True Savior for humanity. Epiphany, meaning “revelation,” began on January 6, with the visit of the wise men and concludes with Transfiguration on February 22, with Jesus shining as bright as the sun, standing between Moses and Elijah. Our sight of Jesus grows from an infant king to the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets, ready to go down to the cross to die for the sins of His people. The colors Christians use to observe Epiphany are white and then green. Green is the color of regeneration and growth.

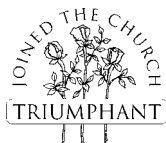


In 2008, environmentalists launched a “go green” website called www.ReGeneration.org. They have been counting hybrid cars, reusable shopping bags, and energy efficient products. Christians are dedicated to the care of God’s creation. And even more, Christians are moved by God the Holy Spirit to see how He can regenerate hope and life in people through reliance upon Jesus Christ. In fact, God the Holy Spirit through the means of God’s Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper can energize entire congregations to renewal in faith and mission.

The green days of Epiphany give us a sight of Jesus that we can’t wait to share during the next season of Lent when we focus on His sacrifice for us. So consider in these green days of Epiphany, who the Spirit is placing in your life to bring to Lenten worship and church events that begin with Ash Wednesday on February 25 to see Jesus, the suffering Savior.

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.” (Titus 3:4-6)

Rev. Russ Sommerfeld



CALLED TO GLORY . . . Rev. Juraine J. Hornig, pastor emeritus, departed this life on December 8. He served in ministry at St. Paul, Ogallala, from August 1969 to October 1985.

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 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, or from the universities and seminaries. The deadline for completing the application process is **June 1**.



Other Scholarships . . . 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. Applications may be obtained by contacting Joyce Lase, 1963 R Rd, Bancroft, NE 68004-4046, sparkle@gpcom.net, or (402) 648-7482. Completed applications are due **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 Elaine Royuk, 334 N 1st St, Seward, NE 68434 or (402) 646-9024. 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) and will be attending one of the LCMS schools. Send requests for an application/inquiries to Dr. Marvin Swan, PO Box 863, Grant, NE 69140-0863, mmswan@gpcom.net, or (308) 352-4666. The deadline is **May 22**.

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 Pat Hofer, hofpat@gmail.com or (402) 334-0320. Application deadline is **April 15**.

BOARD SUMMARY . . . The Nebraska District Board of Directors took the following action at its December 5, 2008, meeting:

- Ratified the Constitutions and Bylaws of Mt. Olive, Omaha; Good Shepherd, Lincoln; 1C, A Mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Columbus; and Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha, Inc.
- Accepted LCEF actions regarding Messiah, Lincoln; Peace, Grand Island; and Zion, Hastings.
- Affirmed the housing allowance resolution for Minister of the Gospel employees of the Nebraska District.
- Ratified the 2009 District participation plan for Concordia Health Plans worker choice options.
- Approved a new partnership model for ethnic mission starts similar to the new mission start grant process adopted at the September 2008 Board meeting.
- Continued providing new mission grant support to Lamb of God Lutheran Church and Academy, Omaha, and to Word of Life Lutheran Church, Lincoln.
- Approved 1C, A Mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Columbus, for membership in Synod.
- Approved the 2009 Nebraska District mission and ministry operating expense budget of \$4,272,179 and a capital budget of \$39,250.

Media Library

The following video titles from the Nebraska District Office's Media Library are available to congregations and RSOs of the Nebraska District – LCMS. If your congregation or RSO would like to serve as the permanent custodian of one or more of these titles, please contact Carol Oetting at the District Office (carolo@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961). Please consult the January *Reporter* for guidelines. Additional titles will be published in upcoming issues of the *Reporter*.

*Cathy
Caught in the Net
Centennial Pageant: Nebraska District 1982
Charles
Charlie's Christmas Secret
Chastity Challenge
A Christmas Story (Quigley's Village)
Chuckie
Cipher in the Snow
The Circuit Rider Report (September 1996)
The Circuit Rider Report (Fall 1997)
The Circuit Rider Report (Winter 1998)
The Circuit Rider Report (Spring 1998)
The Circuit Rider Report (Winter 1999)
The City That Forgot Christmas
The City That Forgot Christmas/I Will Take
You to the Christ Child
Clemente (Philippines)*

COMING EVENTS

Confirmation Retreat for Small Churches , Camp Luther, Schuyler.....	February 27-28
Junior High Retreat , Camp Luther, Schuyler	March 13-14
Nebraska District LLL Convention , Holiday Inn Convention Center, Sidney	March 27-29
Principals' Conference , Aurora Leadership Center.....	April 23-24
Junior High Retreat , Camp Comeca, Cozad	April 24-25
Nebraska District LCMS Convention , Concordia University, Seward	June 4-6

ANNIVERSARIES

- St. Paul Church and School, West Point, 125th**, February 14. A celebration dinner will be held at the Nielsen Community Center, West Point. For ticket information, contact the school office at 402-372-2355.
- St. Peter, Orchard, 100th**, May 3. Rev. Kelly Mitteis, son of the congregation, will be the guest preacher at the 9:30 a.m. service, followed by a catered noon meal and a 2:30 p.m. program with guest speaker Rev. Lynn Riege, son of the congregation.
- Bethany, Omaha, 70th**, June 7, 14, 21, and 28. Special guest preachers during the June worship services include: Rev. Kenneth Holdorf on June 7, Rev. Martin Greunke on June 14, Rev. Wallace Vinovskis on June 21, and Rev. J. Brad Urbach on June 28.
- St. John, Hooper, 140th**, June 14. Rev. Jeff Ernstmeier will be the guest preacher at the 10:00 a.m. worship service.
- St. John School, Seward, 125th**, July 5. Dr. David Peter will be the guest preacher at the 9:00 a.m. worship service in the Concordia University Arena. Alumni activities are planned throughout the weekend.
- Zion, Scotia, 125th**, August 9, 2009.
- St. John (Ash Creek), McCook, 125th**, September 20. President Russ Sommerfeld preaching.



CALLS IN THE DISTRICT

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

CALLS DECLINED

Robert Cooksey (S'84), executive director, Christ Community, Kirkwood, Mo., to principal, Christ, Norfolk.

OTHER TRANSACTIONS

- Don Bader** (S'76), non-rostered, Texas District, reinstated to the roster as a candidate, Nebraska District.
- Angela Becker**, non-candidate, Iowa District West, to non-candidate, Nebraska District.
- Holly Guilford**, non-candidate, resigned from the roster.
- Deborah Heuer** (S'79), non-rostered, Texas District, reinstated to the roster as a candidate, Nebraska District.

ORDAINED MINISTERS

CALLS ACCEPTED

- Rev. Matthew Conrad** (StL'05), associate, Good Shepherd, Gretna, to St. Paul, Skokie, Ill.
- Rev. Keith Christiansen** (FtW'83), candidate status, to part-time administrative pastor, Our Savior, Norfolk.

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. James Krueger (StL'03), St. Trinity, Clarkston, Mich., to Zion, Hastings.

STATUS CHANGE

Rev. Kenneth Benson (StL'49), emeritus, Northern Illinois District, to emeritus, Nebraska District.

ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Allen Bergstrazer (StL'99) as pastor, Faith, York, December 14.



A Loss
in the
Church
Family

CALLED TO GLORY . . . Bishop Andrew Mbugo Elisa, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan (ELCS) was called to eternal glory on December 31, 2008. Please keep his wife Linda, daughters and son in your prayers as well as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan.

MISSION REVITALIZATION

Ablaze! began as a vision of LCMS World Mission. The vision is to involve every member of an LCMS congregation, its auxiliaries, organizations, partner church bodies, and partner mission agencies in one focused and concentrated effort to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who do not know Him, or have been disconnected from Him. In 2002, LCMS World Mission adopted a new mission purpose statement, "Praying to the Lord of the Harvest, LCMS World Mission, in collaboration with its North American and worldwide partners, will share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017."

From this vision set by the 2004 Convention of the LCMS, the goal was to share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million people by 2017, with 50 million of them from the U.S. The 2004 Convention decided the means to help accomplish this goal would include planting 5,000 congregations worldwide with 2,000 of them in the U.S. The 2007 Convention passed the resolution to revitalize 2,000 churches in the U.S. by 2017.

From the goal of revitalizing churches came the organization, Transforming Churches Network (TCN). It was developed to provide training and resources to help congregations fulfill their role as "mission outposts." TCN is a non-profit partner organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod dedicated to revitalizing churches. The purpose of TCN is to assist the LCMS in reaching its *Ablaze!* goal of revitalizing 2,000 churches in the U.S. by 2017.

Churches enter into a time of revitalization with the assistance of TCN through learning communities for pastors, a consultation weekend, and a coach. A learning community consists of a cluster of pastors who participate in monthly meetings with four to eight other pastors who are also part of TCN.

A learning community has a threefold purpose: 1) to provide support and a regular place for pastors and leaders to share their aspirations and concerns about congregational transformation; 2) to assist the leaders in their own spiritual life with Jesus; and, 3) to provide opportunities for learning and skill-building relative to the revitalization process. These meetings offer leadership, outreach and spiritual development training.

The pastor then gathers a similar learning community in his congregation among his own leaders.

The next step is a consultation weekend. Congregations who wish to undergo revitalization must have a clear understanding of their present circumstances as well as a clear vision of where God can take them in their outreach with Jesus Christ. A consultation brings in an objective eye for assessment and helps the congregation to identify and adopt specific goals and strategies which, by the power of the Holy Spirit through God's grace, will bring new people into the Kingdom of God and new people into the congregation's ministry.



The final step involves a trained coach who works with the pastor regularly to help him grow as a leader. The coach holds the pastor accountable for the changes recommended by the consultation team. The coach also meets quarterly with the congregation to discuss its progress, answer questions and assist the members in their commitment to becoming a mission-focused church.

The Nebraska District Board of Directors and District staff have made revitalization of schools and congregations one of its critical targets. The vision God has given to the District is that *all congregations, schools and missions in the Nebraska District are passionate with a Gospel-focused mission to reach all people with the good news of Jesus!*

President Russ Sommerfeld; Rev. Michael Gruhn, Region A Vice President; and Rev. Richard Boring, District Missions & Outreach Executive; have observed TCN and especially the consultation weekend. Pastors Gruhn and Boring are finishing their training to be consultants for TCN. The District will start testing TCN January 20 with a learning community of churches from the Omaha and Lincoln areas. In the next year, you will continue to hear about the TCN pilot project in Nebraska. If you want to learn more about revitalization and TCN you can go to <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14571> or <http://portal.revitalization-lcms.com/>, contact Rev. Mike Gruhn at 308-324-4341 or the Nebraska District Office at 888-643-2961.

"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Colossians 4:5-6)