



# Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



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

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## OUTSTANDING NEBRASKA

**EDUCATOR . . .** Cassie McMahan was honored as the Nebraska District 2008 Outstanding Lutheran Educator at the Teachers' Conference in Fremont this past fall. Mrs. McMahan serves Faith Lutheran Church and School in Lincoln as music teacher and director.



## OLD TESTAMENT CLASS IN

**HOLDREGE . . .** "History and Theology of the Old Testament" will be offered by the Lay Leadership Program of the Nebraska District at Mount Calvary, Holdrege, on January 10 and 24, February 7 and 21. The instructor is Rev. Dean Hanson of Faith, Hazard and Grace, Pleasanton. For more information, contact Marvin Bergman at [marv.bergman@cune.edu](mailto:marv.bergman@cune.edu) or 402-643-3724.

## PREPARE/ENRICH WORKSHOP . . .

A Prepare/Enrich training course for pastors will be offered on Saturday, January 17, from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the Lincoln campus of Concordia University, Nebraska (570 Fallbrook Blvd., Suite 203. Find a map at [www.cune.edu/about/473/](http://www.cune.edu/about/473/)). This workshop will be led by Rev. Kevin Kohnke, director of family life at Concordia University,



Nebraska. The deadline for registering is December 29 and the registration fee is \$175. Questions may be directed to [Kevin.kohnke@cune.edu](mailto:Kevin.kohnke@cune.edu).

## SPRING PASTORS' CONFERENCE . . .

The Spring Pastors' Conference will be held Monday and Tuesday, February 2-3, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Fremont. The conference worship service will be held in the sanctuary, while the remainder of the conference will be held in Good Shepherd's new Community Life Center. Pastors will be receiving registration information shortly.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . Partners of Care in Christ!

*"I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it... Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles."* (Philippians 4:10, 14)

The Apostle Paul was inspired to pen the above words to the Christian congregation in Philippi to display Christian affection for the manner in which the congregation cared for him.

*"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."* (1 Peter 5:2-3)

The Apostle Peter was inspired to pen the above words to pastors to guide them as shepherds for the Lord's sheep. Congregations and pastors, as well as other church work professionals, are partners in Christian care for one another.

The Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support of the LCMS reports that 246 parish pastors left parish ministry between 1993 and 2000, and 300 commissioned teachers left elementary/high school teaching between 1998 and 2002. Among Directors of Christian Education, 80 left parish ministry between 1998 and 2003. These departures occurred for a variety of reasons. Some workers left for other vocational directions. Others left for new ministry opportunities (cited by over a third of LCMS clergy), while still others left for family/personal reasons. Conflict and stress appear to account for roughly a third of all moves out of parish ministry. A majority of those who left agreed that they felt "lonely and isolated" in their work, or saw their work in the congregation or school "often not permitting them time with their family."

These departures also impact the congregations. Some congregations have reported feeling distanced from their pastor or other church workers. They say, "Our pastor knows the Bible, Lutheran Confessions, and our church's ministry plan, but he doesn't know us." The harried and often disconnected pace of life today cries out for relationships between people and church workers that are centered in Christ's care. Paul was inspired to speak of the care needed then and needed today:

*"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 1:3-8) 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.

**STAFF CHANGES . . .** Kathy Melton, who served the Nebraska District as assistant in the Education and Youth and Lay Leadership Program departments, has left her position for new employment opportunities. . . .



**Carol Oetting** joined the District staff as assistant in these ministry areas in mid-December. The entire District Office staff looks forward to continuing to serve the congregations, schools, ministries, and members of the Nebraska District. . . . **Andrea Essling**, who serves the Nebraska District as *Fan into Flame* consultant, has moved her office from the Nebraska District to the Michigan District as they begin their campaign. Andrea is still available as a resource for congregations who are in the midst of or contemplating appeals, as well as those who have questions about *Fan into Flame*. She may be reached at [Andrea.Essling@lcms.org](mailto:Andrea.Essling@lcms.org) or 616-389-7747.

**REPORTER AND PHOTOGRAPHER NEEDED . . .** Do you love taking pictures? Has God given you the gift of writing? The Nebraska District is looking for two individuals to serve at the 2009 District Convention June 4-6 in Seward. If God has given you a gift or interest in photography or reporting/writing, please prayerfully consider serving Him in this way. For more information, contact Nichole Hetz at the District Office, 888-643-2961 or [nicholeh@ndlcms.org](mailto:nicholeh@ndlcms.org), by March 1, 2008. Applicants will be contacted after April 1.



**RETIRED? LOOKING FOR A WAY TO SERVE? . . .** *The 72™—Partners on the Road* ministry invites those who answered “yes” to consider serving congregations of the LCMS as team members of *The 72*. Members of *The 72* serve the Lord and His Church by partnering with LCMS congregations to equip their members for effective outreach ministry through various stages of development. Those interested in learning more about *The 72* or requesting an application may contact *The 72* office by e-mailing [The72@lcms.org](mailto:The72@lcms.org) or by calling 800-433-3954, ext. 1286. Applications for the next training session, which will begin in February, are being accepted now. The training begins with some pre-study work done at home and concludes by meeting with all other new team members at Saint Paul Institute For Education in Concordia, Missouri, April 27-May 1.



**DISTRICT YOUTH “IDENTIFIED” . . .** 900 youth and adults from across the Nebraska District gathered in Omaha on November 21-23 to celebrate how they have been “identified” as children of God through the saving work of Jesus Christ and the waters of their baptism. The weekend events offered those who attended a chance for fellowship, reflection, and rejoicing with other youth from around the District. A special outreach emphasis this year included inviting non-LCMS member youth to come and hear more about the Savior, Jesus Christ. DCE Jeff Meinz led the Gathering through an entertaining and meaningful examination of who they used to be without Christ, who they are now as a child of God, and who they will become in Christ.



**CALLED TO GLORY . . .** Rev. Keith Kiihne, pastor emeritus, Omaha, departed this life on Tuesday, November 25. He served in ministry in Nebraska at Trinity, Scribner; St. Peter, Snyder; Immanuel, Dodge; Christ, Falls City; Peace, Omaha; Hope, Omaha; Faith Regional Health Services, Norfolk; and First Trinity (Altona), Wayne.

**LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND . . .** A Lutheran

Marriage Encounter Weekend is planned for March 6-8 at the Good Samaritan Retreat Center in Sioux City. Couples are encouraged to consider this opportunity to nurture their marriage and appreciate the blessings God gives through marriage. To learn more, visit [www.godlovesmarriage.org](http://www.godlovesmarriage.org) or contact Milton and Donna Kaufman at 605-651-3231 or [miltkauf@tnics.com](mailto:miltkauf@tnics.com).



**NEW CIRCUIT COUNSELOR . . .**

Rev. John Ryding, O’Neill, has been appointed circuit counselor of the Ainsworth Circuit following Rev. Allen Bergstrazer’s acceptance of a call out of the circuit. This term will end at the District Convention in June 2009.

**Media Library**

- Contact Carol Oetting at 888-643-2961 or [carolo@ndlcms.org](mailto:carolo@ndlcms.org) to request becoming custodian of one or more of these titles.
- Blessings and Opportunities*
  - Board for Human Care Ministries*
  - Bobby’s Choice*
  - Body, Mind, Spirit and Voice*
  - Born to Serve: Introducing Lutheran Services in America*
  - Boy on a Skate Board*
  - The Boys*
  - Bringing Christ to the Cities (2 copies)*
  - Building a Christian Family (2 copies)*
  - Bulletproof*
  - Burnout A and B*
  - California Prop 22 Ads*
  - Can a Guy Say No?*
  - Called to Be*
  - Called Out and Sent Back*
  - The Cap*
  - Carefully Hidden (2 copies)*
  - Caring Ministry Video Series*
  - Carmen: “Coming on Strong” Live in Concert*
  - Casey’s Revenge*

# COMING EVENTS

Spring Pastors' Conference, Good Shepherd, Fremont .....	February 2-3
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
Junior High Retreat, Camp Comeca, Cozad .....	April 24-25
Nebraska District Convention, Concordia University, Seward.....	June 4-6

# ANNIVERSARIES

- St. Paul Church and School, West Point, 125<sup>th</sup>**, 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, 100<sup>th</sup>**, 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, 70<sup>th</sup>**, 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 School, Seward, 125<sup>th</sup>**, 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, 125<sup>th</sup>**, August 9, 2009.
- St. John (Ash Creek), McCook, 125<sup>th</sup>**, September 20. President Russ Sommerfeld preaching.

# CALLS IN THE DISTRICT

## COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

### STATUS CHANGES

- Paul Herring**, reinstated to roster by COP, November 20.
- Linda Moriarity**, emeritus, Pacific Southwest District to emeritus, Nebraska District.
- Kathy Porath**, reinstated to roster by COP, November 20.

## ORDAINED MINISTERS

### CALLS ACCEPTED

**Rev. Allen Bergstrazer** (StL'99), St. Paul, Chambers, to Faith, York.

### CALLS DECLINED

**Rev. John Nelson** (StL'92), Christ, Columbus, to Peace, Park Falls, Wis.  
**Rev. David Renfro** (FtW'86), First, Missoula, Mont., to senior, Trinity, Grand Island.

### ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

**Rev. Jon Sollberger** (FtW'02), as pastor, Immanuel, Louisville, November 23.

# FAN INTO FLAME CONTINUES IN 2009

As of December 1, 2008, 35 Nebraska District congregations completed *Fan into Flame* appeals. These congregations, along with generous individual donors, provided **\$3 million to support sharing the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ**. Just imagine the outreach projects that could be supported to spread the Gospel message if your congregation joined in this effort!

Many other congregations are still contemplating their decision to participate or are in the planning stage of their appeal. If your congregation is still considering participation in this historical mission endeavor, it's not too late!

Interested congregations may choose to participate in any number of ways. Returning a completed and signed pledge agreement or intent to participate lets the District Office know of the congregation's plan to be involved, and provides time for the congregation to make a plan for



reaching their goal. Planning an appeal, beginning *Ablaze!* education, and implementing the appeal plan in the congregation either before or during Lent is another option.

Many voters' assemblies gather in January, which makes **NOW** a perfect time to discuss how your congregation plans to provide gifts and support for *Ablaze!* outreach projects that will share the message of free salvation through Jesus Christ.

Projects supported through *Fan into Flame* spread the Gospel message in your congregation's community, across the Nebraska District, and around the world, giving each congregation the opportunity to touch many mission fields with one gift or pledge.

Visit the *Fan into Flame* webpage at [www.ndlcms.org/news/FIF](http://www.ndlcms.org/news/FIF) to find contact information and helpful resources as your congregation considers ways to participate.

# PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS: HANDLE WITH CARE

Stress, burnout, and isolation of professional church workers can be reduced by a congregation's faithful support. Below are ways you can encourage your pastors, principals, teachers, and directors of Christian education in their ministry. Consider making 2009 the year your congregation will make an effort to support the church workers in your midst.

## **Pray for them**

During your daily devotions thank God for your professional church workers. Pray that God would continue to give them wisdom and strength as they serve the church.

*(2 Thessalonians 3:1)*

## **Pray with them**

Stop by their office or classroom and offer a prayer with them. Ask them "How can I pray for you today?"

*(1 Thessalonians 5:25)*

## **Treat them with Grace**

Professional church workers are sinners (*Romans 3:23*). When they fall short of God's glory, you can share with them God's Grace (*James 5:16*). In the name of Jesus Christ forgive them.

## **Work with them**

Volunteer to help fold bulletins, usher, clean, recess duty, chaperone a youth event, etc. This gives them more time to do ministry and be in God's Word and prayer (*Acts 6*).

## **Give them time off**

Vacation: regular time during the year for relaxation or pleasure.

Retreats: opportunities for the worker and their spouse to recharge spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Typically lasting a week and led by a team of professionals.

*(www.graceplaceretreats.org)*

Sabbaticals: period of time (1-3 months) when professional church workers set aside normal responsibilities for the purpose of study or renewal. *(www.wheatridge.org)*

## **Fair Compensation**

Properly paying professional church workers so that they are able to serve in the church (*1 Timothy 5:18*). Suggested minimal guidelines are available at:

*www.ndlcms.org/financial/office/compensation.html.*

## **Vocational Development**

Allow them time to attend District conferences, symposiums, workshops, and other continuing education events.

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*

Isaiah 52:7

## **GRACE PLACE RETREATS**

Grace Place Lutheran Retreats is a recognized service organization of the LCMS. The goal of Grace Place Lutheran Retreats is to offer preventative wellness skills, attitudes, and

resources to professional church workers and their spouses, so they can experience and live the abundant lives to which Jesus called them.

Various donors generously support Grace Place and its ministry, which keeps the costs down for attendees. Retreat costs per couple are \$345.

Can your congregation consider sending one or more of your church workers to be refreshed and renewed in ministry this year? For more information, contact Grace Place Retreats at 314-842-3077 or visit [www.graceplaceretreats.org](http://www.graceplaceretreats.org).

### **Nebraska Pastors/Wives**

July 6-10, 2009  
Aspen, Colorado

### **Lutheran Educators/Spouses Ministers of Music/Spouses**

July 13-17, 2009  
Aspen, Colorado

July 20-24, 2009 \*  
Trego, Wisconsin

### **Pastors/Spouses Lutheran Educators/Spouses**

July 27-31, 2009 \*  
Trego, Wisconsin

### **Single Pastors**

September 2-6, 2009  
Snowmass, Colorado



\* Thrivent members pay only \$175 for marked retreats