



Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



Information of Interest for Lutherans in the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod
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2009
Pre-Convention
Issue

NEW HOME FOR THE CONVENTION . . .

This year's Convention will be held in the newly completed Health, Human Performance, and Athletic Center (HHPAC) at Concordia University in Seward. This new building is better suited for hosting the Convention — offering a larger convention floor, ample room for registration, plenty of nearby parking, and the ability to have exhibitors under the same roof as Convention. Delegates are to register at the HHPAC on the north edge of campus upon arrival on June 4. A map of Concordia's campus showing the new building is available on the District Convention webpage, www.ndlcms.org/news/convention/index.html.



FLOOR COMMITTEE OPEN HEARINGS

. . . Two floor committees formed to work with the overtures submitted to this year's Convention will hold open hearings for all delegates and guests on Thursday, June 4, from 1:30-2:30 p.m. in the HHPAC. These floor committees met prior to the Convention to review the overtures and prepare them as proposed resolutions, which are on the *Convention Workbook* CD and on the website. Anyone wishing to listen to discussion or make comments on these proposed resolutions should plan to attend these open hearings.

FULL OF GRACE — SEASONED WITH SALT is the theme of the upcoming 2009 Nebraska District Convention, as well as the ministry focus in the Nebraska District for the next three years.

The Apostle Paul's words on which this theme is based remind us we are to *"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."* (Col. 4:5-6)

Paul's words urged the Colossians, and us, to be aware and wise in interactions with those outside the church, calling for a need to offer conversations filled with the grace of Jesus Christ and seasoned with the salt of good, solid doctrinal teaching.

Christians today have the same message of Christ to share that the Colossians did in Paul's day. The true and everlasting message does not change — Jesus is the only way to eternal life. As relationships are built with those who do not know this Good News of Jesus Christ, our conversations are to be "full of grace," sharing the story of salvation through Jesus Christ in a loving way.

A strong foundation of biblical and doctrinal knowledge is the "salt" that seasons and enhances the conversations we have.

The mission field in Nebraska is as large as ever, with nearly half of our neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances not worshipping at all, with others worshipping at non-Christian churches. God continues to give us opportunities to engage in conversations "full of grace" and "seasoned with salt" in our everyday lives.

The 2009 Nebraska District Convention promises to be a time of worship, prayer, and focus on the ministry opportunities God has given us in Nebraska and out into the world. Essayist Rev. Dr. Jack A. O. Preus III will focus the assembly on the solid theological teachings of the LCMS, as well as ways to reach out into the mission fields through conversations of grace. Everyone is invited to come for some or all of Convention. Registration forms are available from your church office or on the District website at www.ndlcms.org.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION . . . All rostered church workers and lay voting delegates should have received their Convention registration materials in the mail in early April. Those who did not receive a registration packet may contact the District Office at info@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961. **All registration forms are due back to the District Office by Monday, May 11.** If you are a guest, please include your payment with your registration form. Registration forms are available on the District website, www.ndlcms.org.

- Pastors and lay members who are certified voting delegates should complete and return a pink Voting Delegate Form.
- Non-voting pastors and rostered commissioned ministers should complete and return a blue Advisory Delegate Form.
- Spouses and other guests should complete and return a yellow Guest Form with full payment.



CONVENTION WORKBOOK . . . Everyone who received registration materials should have also received a *Convention Workbook* in the mail in late April. This year's *Workbook* was provided on CD and sent in a padded CD mailer. Anyone missing their *Workbook* CD is encouraged to contact the District Office at info@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961 to request one. Registered guests will receive a printed copy of the *Workbook* at Convention, but may view the information by downloading the sections of the *Workbook* from the Convention page on the District website, www.ndlcms.org.

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.

District President Nominees Share Thoughts on Nebraska/LCMS Issues

The nominees for District President were asked to respond in writing to a series of questions related to issues facing the Nebraska District and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Here are their answers.



Rev. Brent Kuhlman
Pastor
Trinity Lutheran Church,
Murdock

1. What, in your opinion, is the most pressing issue facing the Nebraska District today? How would you, as president, address it?

The imitation or adoption of American revivalist theology and worship practices that diminish the Lord's Good Friday "It Is Finished" work of forgiveness for sinners, that reject the delivery of the Lord's Good Friday forgiveness through the external Gospel in the Word and the Sacraments received through faith alone, and that discard the public office of the ministry the Lord Jesus instituted.

The highest of pastoral care would address this with a call for repentance, proclaim the crucified and risen Jesus for the afflicted conscience, provide catechesis according to the Scriptures, lead the church in prayer, and make regular visitations. Such pastoral care would attempt to resource the congregations in the district so that the Gospel be proclaimed purely, that the Lord's Sacraments be given according to His mandate and institution, and that the Law and the Gospel be properly distinguished.

Another issue just as pressing is what I call the "beast" of institutionalism whereby the institution/organization is tempted to live only for itself at the expense of others. Repentance and dying to sin is the answer because the Lord Jesus is merciful and abounding in steadfast love.

2. For more than a decade, funding has declined from congregations for the work of the Nebraska District and for Synod. How would you address this funding issue?

Being transparent and open in exactly how monies are spent. A good start would be to provide detailed, line-by-line, itemized reports from the District Office and insist that most of the monies donated to the district go to support missionaries, as well as help provide church workers and pastors for the proclamation of the Gospel here and all over the world.

4. What is your vision for ministry for the Nebraska District during the next triennium?

What's certain and sure is what the Lord's given His church, not any kind of "vision" that I might want to cast.

3. What is your opinion of *Ablaze!*, the five-year-old Synodwide initiative to share the Gospel with 100 million "unreached or uncommitted" people worldwide? How do you envision the Nebraska District's participation in this initiative over the next three years?

"For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who effects faith where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel." (Augsburg Confession, Article V)

We are given to trust the Lord and His work of creating faith through His Spirit-filled Word. When we become anxious, worried, fearful, or despairing about how that is going, Jesus speaks up and says: "O you of little faith." A bigger dose of Jesus and His promises are enough on which His church can live.

District Ministries Mission Dinner

How's your Spanish? How about your Nuer? Maybe you prefer Facebook or texting? Come spend an evening with the Nebraska District missionaries to hear how God is using conversations spoken in these and other languages in the mission fields of Nebraska.

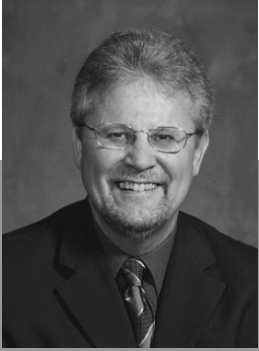
Everyone registered for Convention will have the opportunity to attend a special Mission Dinner following Convention business on Friday, June 5. The delegates and guests will gather to hear about the ministry taking place in the Nebraska District supported by the mission and ministry gifts from congregations of the District. It promises to be an exciting evening of seeing and hearing about the mission fields of Nebraska and the work taking place there. Come hear how the Holy Spirit is using conversations of grace to touch hearts in Nebraska.



× **Campus Ministry**
× **Hispanic Ministry**

× **Native American Ministry**
× **New Church Starts**

× **Sandhills Ministry**
× **Sudanese Ministry**



Rev. Russell Sommerfeld
President
Nebraska District

1. What, in your opinion, is the most pressing issue facing the Nebraska District today? How would you, as president, address it?

Today's pressing issue is being the Lord's church at this time of contradictions. Increasing is both the number of people not affiliating with Christian congregations and those open to conversations about Jesus. Tolerance for sin shows itself in regards to the sanctity of human life, marriage, and godly living, while more people are seeking moral absolutes. Christians of the Nebraska District have the clarity of God's Word. "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*" (Eph. 2:8) Now is a time for being grounded in the Word and witnessing with lives of faith. Leadership that builds up church members, pastors, teachers, and other workers through God's Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper is needed. Leadership is also needed that supports them to engage in conversations of hope in Jesus and the certainty of His unchanging Word. The Nebraska District is blessed with churches and schools in many diverse settings. This diversity is best addressed with biblically faithful and sensitive ways of confessing "*one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*" (Eph. 4:5-6)

2. For more than a decade, funding has declined from congregations for the work of the Nebraska District and for Synod. How would you address this funding issue?

It is vital that we recognize what God can do through our Synod of congregations and as one of its districts exceeds what can be accomplished through each congregation alone. It is even more vital that any focus on the Christian stewardship of giving for common efforts of mission and care of our churches, schools, and their workers be solidly biblical and grace-compelled. "*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*" (2 Cor. 9:7) I will work with the District Board of Directors to utilize the gifts entrusted for our common work to be prioritized for the encouragement of churches, schools, and workers, as well as spiritual renewal and new ministries. Such efforts would also include efficiency and stewardship that honors the Lord with a responsibility for transparency to those who sacrificially give. I want to learn from congregations of their stewardship needs and how the District can participate to build up their biblical stewardship. I will seek various inexpensive ways to clearly communicate what God is doing through our common work together as Synod and its Nebraska District.

3. What is your opinion of *Ablaze!*, the five-year-old Synodwide initiative to share the Gospel with 100 million "unreached or uncommitted" people worldwide? How do you envision the Nebraska District's participation in this initiative over the next three years?

I am convicted that the *Ablaze!* movement embraced by our Synod in convention in both 2004 and 2007 can encourage Nebraska District LCMS churches, schools, members, and professional workers in an outward mission focus. Congregational commitment to the spiritual care and growth of its members is vital. Equally as vital is congregational engagement of the mission fields into which God has placed them. Through the *Ablaze!* movement congregations, schools, pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers are being built up by God's Word to see the joy of being God's instruments in His mission. The *Ablaze!* movement is not and should not be a burden placed on anyone. It is a privilege to be in the Lord's service to give unreached and uncommitted people the message of Christ so that the Holy Spirit can work in them. I believe that this focus on Christian outreach can energize congregations to be at work in the mission field around them or to assist in a field around the world. I see churches being renewed in their mission zeal. I envision more new church starts and the strengthening of congregations and schools in mission in whatever setting God has placed them.

4. What is your vision for ministry for the Nebraska District during the next triennium?

Any vision I would have for the Nebraska District must be shaped and re-shaped by the Lord of the Church. I dare not and should not simply place before God's people my mere human ideas for the future. I need to listen to God's Word and observe the needs and opportunities He shows me. During the last triennium I was convicted by the Lord that He wanted us to see who He is placing in the Nebraska mission fields. Since these are times of contradiction, I believe the vision before us in this next triennium is to engage the mission fields around us with our distinctly Lutheran witness of God's grace in Christ Jesus seasoned with the salt of sound biblical doctrine. Hence, the reason for focusing the next triennium on Colossians 4:5-6. I am depending on God to sharpen the focus of this biblical vision with His Word and Spirit. I look forward to seeing how the Lord will bring it further into focus through those who so faithfully preach and teach in Nebraska District congregations and schools in rural, small town, and city settings; on campuses; among new immigrants; and in the midst of the trials of life.

MEDIA LIBRARY DISBURSEMENT . . . The Media Library of the Nebraska District stopped lending materials May 31, 2005. Since that time, congregations, schools, and RSOs have had the opportunity to become permanent custodians of these materials through listings in the *Nebraska Lutheran Reporter*. All remaining titles at the District Office will be made available to delegates June 4-6 at the District Convention on a first-come, first-take basis. The location of the materials will be identified for attendees upon registration. All claimed materials must be removed by the end of Convention. Any materials remaining after the District Convention will be permanently removed from the District Office. Contact Carol Oetting at carolo@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961 for more information.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTH . . . The Parish Health Committee of the Nebraska District would like to make delegates aware of opportunities for health at Convention. The American Red Cross will be holding a blood drive on June 4 from 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on the campus of Concordia University during registration time. Attendees wanting to donate blood can schedule an appointment by visiting www.givebloodgivelife.org and searching for sponsor code #1953 or by calling 1-800-GIVELIFE. Walk-ins are also welcome. An optional exercise opportunity is available to delegates Friday morning, June 5. Parish Health

Committee members will be available from 6:00-6:45 a.m. to lead delegates in light physical activity prior to the start of that day's business. Those interested in participating should bring comfortable clothes and shoes. More information on these opportunities, as well as location information, will be available at registration.



CONVENTION AGENDA . . . The broad agenda for the Convention has been set. All Convention attendees are encouraged to arrive at Concordia University by 5:00 p.m. on June 4 for registration. A detailed agenda will be available upon arrival.

Thursday, June 4

- 1:30-5:00 p.m. General Registration
- 1:30-2:30 p.m. Floor Committee Open Hearings
- 4:00-5:30 p.m. Supper Break
- 6:00-7:15 p.m. Opening Worship Service
- 7:30 p.m. Opening of Convention

Friday, June 5

- 6:00-7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 7:45 a.m. Convention Reconvenes
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch Break
- 1:30 p.m. Convention Reconvenes
- 6:30 p.m. Special Mission Dinner
- 9:00 p.m. President's Reception

Saturday, June 6

- 6:00-7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 7:45 a.m. Convention Reconvenes
- 12:00 noon Lunch Break
- 1:00 p.m. Convention Reconvenes if Necessary

Thank Offering and Ingathering

How often do we take salt for granted? It's cheap and easy to buy, and we use it daily, usually without thought.

How often do we take having Bibles or catechisms available for granted? Are these books just always there, ready for us to pull them off the shelf for study or meditation?

What if we didn't have a Bible or catechism available in English? How much greater is the depth of our understanding because we are able to read and study God's Word and its explanation in our language. These books help to "season" our conversations with others about Jesus Christ, the only way to eternal life.

You can help provide these same resources to those in Nebraska who don't have these books available in their native languages through the Nebraska District Convention Thank Offering.

There are many in Nebraska, as well as in our partner mission field of Sudan, who don't have Bibles or catechisms in their native languages. As God brings the mission fields to Nebraska, there is a **growing need to provide Bibles and catechisms in the languages of Nuer (for the Sudanese), Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese.**

The Thank Offering collected at the District Convention June 4-6, 2009, **will be used to purchase Bibles and catechisms** in these languages to be distributed among the ethnic ministries in Nebraska.

Efforts are also being coordinated with Lutheran Heritage Foundation to provide catechisms in the Nuer language to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan. These books, along with Nuer Bibles, will be used for education and study by the church there.

Your \$10.00 contribution to your congregation's Thank Offering collection helps make one of these books possible. Thank you for your partnership in the mission fields, and thank you for your generosity in helping to "season" the conversations of Lutheran Christians in Nebraska and in Sudan.

Delegates and guests to Convention are asked to bring a Bible and catechism as part of an ingathering of books to be shared with new mission congregations in Nebraska. More information on the Thank Offering and Ingathering is available on the District website, www.ndlcms.org.



"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

