



Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



Information of Interest for Lutherans in the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod
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April 2010

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE CROSS DISPLAY . . .

The Fremont Area Chapter of Lutherans For Life (LFL), the administrators of the 3,200-cross sanctity of human life display, is in the process of setting its 2010 sponsor schedule. The group is encouraging Nebraska LCMS congregations and LFL chapters to make plans to sponsor a display in their community. The crosses were set up in ten locations throughout the state in 2009, standing up for God's gift of human life and standing against abortion in our world. This is also a great event to help unite congregations, LFL chapters, and communities while supporting a very important cause. For more information or to schedule a cross display, call Lowell Bloemker at 402-721-8952 or Dave McCarty at 402-478-4725.



CHANGES TO MISSION SCHOLARSHIPS . . .

In an effort to encourage and increase interest in overseas mission opportunities, the Nebraska District offers mission trip grants to lay members and church workers of the Nebraska District. As a result of the reduced 2010 Nebraska District mission and ministry budget, the amount available has been reduced from \$5,000 to \$2,500, with the maximum grant award decreased from \$1,000 to \$500 per congregation/individual/group. Applications and guidelines are available at www.ndlcms.org/ministries/misiondev/trip.html or by calling Connie Borchers at 888-643-2961.



FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . *Happy Easter Birth!*

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

If you were going to encourage Christians who were going through tough times, where would you start? Jesus' disciple Peter started with the resurrection of Jesus. Not long before his upside-down crucifixion for faithfulness to Jesus, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write his first letter, which he addressed to persecuted congregations and pastors. Peter was brief and to the point with them. The Greek text of 1 Peter contains a total of only 1,675 words and a vocabulary of 547 terms, 61 of which occur nowhere else in the New Testament.

Peter zeroed in on Easter birth! While the Christmas message is the birth of Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of humanity in a lowly manger at Bethlehem, the Easter message God gave Peter is our birth from Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Easter Sunday is announced with, "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" Peter takes this great news the next step. Jesus' resurrection means that God is giving us a new birth. We have birth into a living hope to overcome trial, struggle, injustice, and even death itself.

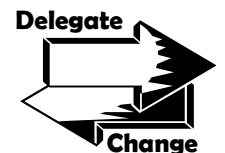
Martin Luther said it like this, "The resurrection is comfort against the devil, sin, death, and hell. The first commandment, not only to the women [on Easter], but to all baptized and believing Christians is: Fear not!"

In 1967, Al Hartley, a budding cartoonist, watched the Holy Spirit bring his dying father, Senator Fred A. Hartley, Jr., co-author of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, into faith in Jesus Christ. Al listened to his father announce from his death bed, "I am very happy." The Holy Spirit also spoke through God's Word to Al. He, too, was given the Easter birth into resurrection hope. He was also given the opportunity to draw the famous "Archie" cartoon strip in which he inserted messages of Christian faith. Hartley also drew and wrote Christian comics. Hartley said of his comics: "So yes, our job is to entertain, but our goal is to offer something far more important than slapstick and suspense. Folks by the thousands are in need. Our great motivation is to take a slice of life that the reader can identify with and then show precisely how God wants to be involved in that life experience."

Rev. Russ Sommerfeld



CONVENTION DELEGATE CHANGE . . . The following delegate change has been reported for the Synodical Convention in Houston in July: **Dean Raabe** of Concordia Academy in Omaha will be a commissioned minister advisory delegate in place of Mervin Dehning, who is unable to attend.



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.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION . . . When your ministry wants to reach out into its community, obtaining demographic information is a great place to start.



Lutheran Church Extension

Fund has partnered with MissionInsite to offer easy-to-use reports that combine updated census data, marketing research data, and religious data to give you a complete and comprehensive look at the people in your community—all at a price any ministry can afford. Visit www.lcef.org and soon you'll have a new "insite" into the beliefs, values, lifestyle preferences, and attitudes of households in the community you serve!

EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE . . . The 2010 Early Childhood Conference at Concordia University, Nebraska will be held June 16 under the theme, "Do You See What I See?" Keynote speakers Drs. Ellen Hall and George Forman will share how video documentation can be used to improve knowledge, support, and communication of children's learning and development. This conference is open to teachers and aides of students from birth to age 8, childcare providers, pastors, DCEs, and child ministry directors. Questions about the conference may be directed to Professor Annette Oliver at 800-535-5494, ext. 7474, or ECE@cune.edu.

AN EASTER LEARNING EXPERIENCE . . . Over 70 members of Zion, Plainview, are planning the presentation of a "JOURNEY TO THE CROSS" on Saturday, April 3. Visitors will be transported in time to 33AD to experience events of Christ's passion in 13 different stations where they can smell, taste, touch, hear, see, and experience Holy Week in a new way. The Journey takes about an hour and can be started any time between 3 and 7 p.m. on April 3. While it will be an Easter learning experience for Christians, it will also serve Zion congregation as an outreach program into the community. Zion extends a welcome to its Journey to the Cross.

LCMS WORLD MISSION SEEKS MISSIONARIES . . . More than 200 opportunities to serve in 30 countries are available to those who have a heart for service and can speak English. Among those needed are music and early childhood teachers, doctors and nurses, computer and finance specialists, and agricultural and construction workers. But the largest number of openings is for those who can simply converse with people who want to practice their English skills: U.S. Lutherans who are willing to share their faith as they build relationships with people across the globe. Those interested in learning more about serving as a missionary may contact LCMS World Mission at 800-433-3954 and ask to speak to a placement counselor, or visit their website at www.lcmsworldmission.org/service.

SPRING PASTORS' CONFERENCE . . . Pastors of the Nebraska District will gather for the Spring Pastors' Conference at the Holiday Inn in downtown Lincoln on April 19-21. The topic for the conference will be "Unity—Diversity—Harmony" with Dr. Jack Preus and Rev. Aurelio Magarino as presenters. Registration materials were emailed or mailed to all pastors in the District in March and are due April 5. Contact Kim Hofer at kimh@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961 for more information.

STAFF CHANGE . . . Julie Roebke, who served the District for more than 10 years as receptionist and administrative assistant in a number of ministry areas, most recently in gift planning and church worker care, has left her position for new opportunities. May the Lord bless her in her new endeavors.

SCHOOL CLOSING

COMMEMORATION . . . St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Davenport will be closing its Lutheran school after 97 years of nurturing students in God's Word and teaching about life in His world. On Sunday, May 23, they will celebrate God's blessings on and through their school these 97 years with a worship service of thanksgiving and praise at 10:00 a.m., a dinner at noon, and a program of remembrance at 1:30 p.m. Former teachers, pastors, and students are encouraged to attend. Prayers, memories of St. Peter's, and photos are welcome from those who cannot attend.

CALLED TO GLORY . . .

Gerald Freudenburg, pastor emeritus, was called to glory on Sunday, February 14. Residing in Peoria, Ill., at the time of his passing, he served the Nebraska congregation of Trinity, Grand Island, during his pastoral ministry.

SPANISH BIBLE/CATECHISM

AVAILABLE . . . The Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) has a free resource that will soon be available to those who serve Spanish-speaking people in their communities or for those who are planning a mission trip to Spanish-speaking countries: the Spanish edition of the *Holy Bible*, bound with *Luther's Small Catechism*. Visit the LHF website at www.LHFmissions.org/Spanish_Bible_Poll to let LHF know how many books are needed. LHF's materials are provided at no charge to those who need them.

SYNODICAL FLOOR COMMITTEES . . .

The following people from Nebraska have been appointed to serve on floor committees for the Synodical Convention:

Rev. Russell Sommerfeld, Seward — Registration, Credentials, and Elections Committee; **Rev. Mark Hannemann**, Omaha — Human Care; **Glenn Van Velson**, North Platte — Ecclesiastical Matters; and **Kent Warneke**, Norfolk — Structure and Governance.



PRAIRIE FIRE . . . Prairie Fire will be held on Saturday, July 24, in conjunction with the International Lutheran Laymen's League Convention at the Qwest Center in Omaha. The day will begin with words of encouragement from LCMS 1st Vice President Rev. Dr. William Diekelman and will end with the Lutheran Hour Ministries Celebration Event featuring Lutheran Hour Speaker Rev. Ken Klaus. Among the speakers scheduled to present breakout sessions throughout the afternoon are:

<i>Rev. Glenn Merritt</i> , LCMS World Relief and Human Care	<i>Rev. Keith Grimm</i> , International LLL pastoral advisor
<i>Rev. Dr. Paul Maier</i> , LCMS 2nd Vice President	<i>Gary Thies</i> , Mission Development Counselor
<i>Phyllis Wallace</i> , host of the <i>Woman to Woman</i> radio program	<i>Richard Jostes</i> , Orphan Grain Train
<i>Rev. Scott Snow</i> , LCMS World Mission	<i>Rev. Russ Sommerfeld</i> , Nebraska District President
<i>Rev. Dr. Mark Hannemann</i> , Divine Shepherd, Omaha	<i>Dr. William Diekelman</i> , LCMS 1st Vice President

More information on the sessions and registration materials will be available online and by mail in late spring.

COMING EVENTS

Nebraska LLL Convention , Heartland Lutheran High School, Grand Island.....	April 9-11
Blessed Are the Peacemakers Seminar , St. John, Seward.....	April 17
Spring Pastors' Conference , Holiday Inn, Lincoln	April 19-21
School Administrators' Conference/DCE Retreat , The Leadership Center, Aurora.....	April 22-23
Blessed Are the Peacemakers Seminar , Immanuel, Tilden.....	April 24
LLL Zone 10 Rally , Immanuel, Lincoln.....	April 25
LWML North District Convention , King of Kings, Omaha	June 4-5
Blessed Are the Peacemakers Seminar , Heartland Lutheran High, Grand Island	June 12
Early Childhood Conference , Concordia University, Seward.....	June 16
Convention Delegate Caucus , Heartland Lutheran High, Grand Island.....	June 19
Synodical Convention , George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, Texas.....	July 10-17
International Lutheran Laymen's League Convention , Qwest Center, Omaha.....	July 21-25
Prairie Fire , Qwest Center, Omaha	July 24
LWML South District Convention , Ramada Inn, Kearney	September 24-25
Educators' Conference , Christ Lutheran School and Lutheran High Northeast, Norfolk.....	October 21-22
Reconciler Training , The Leadership Center, Aurora.....	November 7-13

ANNIVERSARIES

First, Plattsmouth, 70th, May 23, with a 10:30 a.m. service.

St. John, Pender, 125th, June 6, with a 9:00 a.m. service.

Zion, Shelton, 125th, June 13. There will be a 10:00 a.m. worship service and 2:00 p.m. anniversary program.

St. John, Oxford, 125th, August 15. There will be a morning service followed by lunch and afternoon program.

Trinity, Madison, 125th, August 15. A celebration worship service will be held at 10:00 a.m. led by

Revs. Gerald Gottberg and Dennis Schmidt, sons of the congregation, followed by lunch.

St. Peter, Hampton, 100th, September 5, with a 10:00 a.m. worship service.

CALLS IN THE DISTRICT

ORDAINED MINISTERS

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. Matthew Berndt (StL'01), St. John, Burwell, and Peace, Sargent, to St. Matthew and Silver Creek, Almena, Wis.

STATUS CHANGE

Rev. David Otten (StL'84), Trinity, Arapahoe, to candidate status.

ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Michael Meyer (StL'06) as pastor, The Rock, Seward, February 14.

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

OTHER TRANSACTIONS

Julie Dahn (RF'97), non-candidate, Nebraska District, to non-candidate, Texas District.

Carol Dunklau (S'88), teacher, St. Paul, Arlington, to non-candidate.

Tracy Endorf (S'96), non-candidate, Nebraska District, to non-candidate, South Wisconsin District.

Kara Pingel (MQ'99), non-candidate, Nebraska District, to non-candidate, South Dakota District.

Ryan Voelker (S'01), candidate to non-candidate.

Rhoda Wahl (S'76), candidate to non-candidate.

Dona Zrust (S'88), teacher, Mt. Calvary, Omaha, to non-candidate.

Transform:

to change the outward form or appearance of

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Transforming Churches Network, or TCN, is a process currently being used by a small number of pilot congregations in the Nebraska District. This process is designed to give the congregation the tools to **refocus on God's mission** for their congregation, allowing them to go beyond being only inward-focused and changing their appearance to a **congregation bringing Christ's presence out into its community**, all the while remaining **grounded in God's Word and His Sacraments**. Transformation takes place as the congregation spends time in **prayer**, the study of **God's Word**, and through biblical **confession and absolution**.

A few congregations in Nebraska have started this process of transformation, and following are some stories that share the blessings congregations have received from the hand of God even this short way into the process.

The church secretary at **Trinity, Lincoln**, shares how this process has helped open communication and open eyes to ministry opportunities in their midst:

Trinity, Lincoln, is in a unique situation by having two separate locations, one for the church and one for the school. Because the office staff at the school are not members, I shared the Revitalization Bible Studies with them so they could be included in the process. This truly opened the communication between us. I was able to share with them some of the church history, as well as the school history, from all the information we had gathered for the Revitalization Reports. (That portion was an eye opener for me, because I could see how a situation from our past has effected how we do things today.) Because they enjoyed the interaction, we are continuing to meet for Bible study. This interaction has helped to increase communication between ourselves.

In February, this congregation took a **big step** in their revitalization process. The following was reported in a recent congregational newsletter:

We came together before the Lord and repented of our failure to be the people He wants us to be. We confessed that we are not always as loving and caring as He asks us to be. We confessed that we often place ourselves first not only in our home lives, but even in our church. We confessed that we do not reach out with the gospel the way we should. We confessed and we were forgiven! And we are forgiven every single day! This is a big step!

This act of repentance and forgiveness is a key element in the transformation of the people of God. Confessing sins and receiving forgiveness allows the pattern of the world to drop away and minds to be **renewed through the power of the Holy Spirit**. What a wonderful way to move forward in ministry!

This congregation is in the early stages of transformation, and better communication, teamwork, and time spent together in God's Word are all positive outcomes. These are but a few of the many examples of how God is strengthening this congregation to be out in her community telling the hurting and disconnected about the love of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Keith Dusheke, pastor of **Atonement, Omaha**, tells how the ministry at this congregation has begun to be refocused through the process:

The TCN ministry process has been such a blessing for Atonement Lutheran. Not only have some ministries begun to recharge (revitalize), but TCN has also walked alongside and given direction to those ministries. New ministries with a missional heart for the Lord are also being developed within the congregation. Revitalization has given us different tools to focus on 21st Century ministry and how we can engage people where they are at.

Several ministries are being revitalized – our eldership ministry is being redeveloped to once more being the ministry that handles the spiritual needs of our congregation and into the community. There are new opportunities being developed within our prayer ministry.

The sermons are focused on the Gospel message of the Cross, but then also connected with our response to God's mercy on us. Our response is reaching, connecting, and building relationships with those who don't know Jesus, walking beside them and showing them what the world can't – authentic love that can only come from God!

As a pastor, TCN continues to prepare me to be a missionary within our community. It equips me to not only minister in my community, but to equip my people to also minister. We have increased Bible study participation, as well as attendance for weekly service, because the people have a hunger for being equipped by God's Word to serve.

TCN reminds us how ALL saints are to be equipped for ministry, and then sent by His light to minister to the lost. Something that was burned into my memory is that 75-80% of the community doesn't have a church home! There are so many ministry opportunities out there, the Church must find ways to connect with them – it's an eternal issue God has put us in the middle of.

To learn more about the TCN process or to find out how your church can be involved, contact Rev. Rich Boring at the District Office, 888-643-2961 or richb@ndlcms.org.