



Nebraska Lutheran Reporter



Information of Interest for Lutherans in the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod
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November 2011

A FITTING MEMORIAL . . .

The congregation of St. John's in Pender was saddened to hear of the sudden passing of the Rev. Terry Timm, their former pastor, earlier this year. As the congregation began to recall the blessing Pastor Timm was to their congregation during his years of service, an idea took root. The congregation wanted to honor his memory with a gift to the Nebraska District to be used for scholarship assistance for another man studying to be a pastor. Not only did they want to honor Rev. Timm, but another pastor, the father of a member, who had also been called to the Lord's side. The congregation's gift of \$1,000 was given in memory of these two faithful pastors' lives of service. It is their prayer that the seminarian who receives this gift will be a blessing to another church someday. If you or your congregation is interested in making a similar gift in memory of or in honor of a faithful servant of the Lord, contact Neal Koch at the Nebraska District Office, nealk@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961, ext. 1002.



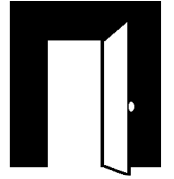
STUDENTS TAKE PART IN LUTHERAN SUMMER MUSIC ACADEMY . . .

The 30th Annual Lutheran Summer Music Academy (LSM) took place at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, from June 26 to July 24, 2011. David von Behren of Christ in Falls City; Joshua Brumm of St. John in Seward; and Laura and Joshua Hedstrom of St. John's in Oxford were four of 151 students accepted into the program. LSM is the pinnacle of the Lutheran Music Program and is one of the nation's premier music training programs for young people. The program's mission is to transform lives and connect people through faith and music. LSM fosters musical excellence and spiritual growth in a caring community for high school band, orchestra, choir, piano, and pipe organ students.



FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." Revelation 3:7-8



When you hear the name "Philadelphia," what comes to your mind? Do you immediately think of the largest city in Pennsylvania, known as the "City of Brotherly Love"? Do you remember its peace-loving founder, the Quaker William Penn? Or perhaps you think of one of the most famous founding fathers of the United States who lived in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin – author, printer, politician, postmaster, inventor, musician, diplomat, satirist, statesman, and scientist with his kite and key in a lightning storm. Then again, you may salivate at the thought of famous Philadelphia foods: hoagies, scrapple, soft pretzels, Tastykake, and the famous Philly cheese steak.

Long before there was a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, there was Philadelphia of the Bible, noted in the third chapter of The Book of Revelation for its Christian congregation. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 contain seven letters to seven different congregations. Jesus is speaking to each of these churches in these letters. He reminds how each is uniquely blessed, what each of them needs, and how He responds to them.

The letter to the Philadelphia church was to a congregation that was faithful to God's Word and confessed full trust in Jesus' Name. But this same church had not been taking advantage of the mission opportunities it was being given by the Lord. Jesus talked of the "open door" before them. That "open door" was the various occasions for the Philadelphia congregation to engage its community in order to bring the people the message of Jesus' perfect life, suffering, death and resurrection for the salvation of humanity.

Christian congregations today need this same biblical message. A church can be faithful internally and not do so externally. Both are vital! Churches are called upon by the Lord to bring the ministry of the Word to its members and at the same time to take that same Word out into the community. Jesus called upon the church at Philadelphia to be renewed, revitalized, yes, transformed for mission through the "open door" He provided.

Even as Jesus exhorts congregations to be in mission, so He makes promises to be with them to empower them and to strengthen them internally and externally in community engagement. Jesus said, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:20) 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.

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)

From the LCMS 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.” The purpose of TCN is to **assist the LCMS in reaching its goal of revitalizing 2,000 churches in the U.S. by 2017.**

The Nebraska District has partnered with TCN to make changes to the process to fit the Nebraska District congregational culture. We are now piloting with rural congregations to develop a process that will help rural churches transform for mission.

How does it work? Pastors join together in a Learning Community that meets once a month and have a coach/mentor walk alongside them. The Learning Community is a collegial, regionally-based small group of pastors, ideally between 8 and 12 individuals, with the purpose of developing and honing leadership skills related to church transformation for mission. Pastors will develop physical, mental, spiritual, and relational disciplines for their leadership in the congregation they serve.

The pastor and congregation will assess the community mission opportunities and develop a vision to being God's salt and light to the community He has placed them. They will build bridges into the community by listening and developing relationships outside of the congregation. They will do this as they remain grounded in God's Word and His Sacraments.

Congregations may choose to do a Consultation Weekend. It is designed to identify specific strengths, growth areas, and to give recommendations to the congregation with regard to its ability to reach out to unchurched individuals in its community with the Gospel of Jesus. The consultation team is on-site Friday morning through Sunday afternoon — gathering information, teaching the principles of congregational mission transformation and offering a report tailored to the local congregation.

Currently, there are three TCN Learning Communities — one in the Omaha area, one in the Holdrege area, and one in the Falls City Circuit. The cost is \$500 per congregation for the two-year process.

Unfortunately, as this process was introduced to congregations in Nebraska and has now been in place for two years, some misunderstandings have occurred. Following are some “common myths” regarding Transforming Churches Network and how the Nebraska District is using this revitalization process.

MYTH #1: All you care about is numbers.

The goal of revitalization is to provide training and resources to pastors and congregations to enable them to be the “salt and light” into their communities, just as Jesus instructs His followers in Matthew 5. As God uses His faithful followers to share His love in word and deed, it is our prayer that hearts will be touched and God's Spirit will work faith in those outside of a relationship with Him. To count these souls saved would be the greatest blessing of all!

MYTH #2: You can't say the church is dying; the church can't die.

God's invisible church can't die, but earthly, visible congregations have a life cycle. A congregation must be aware as the make-up of the community around it changes, and continue to remain connected with those outside its walls. God's Word never changes, and this is the truth that every congregation has the privilege to share.

MYTH #3: Your prescriptions are all the same; you don't treat churches as individuals.

After months of individualized coaching between the pastor and his coach, the congregation takes part in a “Consultation Weekend.” During this three-day period, a consultation team comes to the congregation and spends time listening. Through specific small-group and one-on-one meetings, the team hears what is on the hearts of the pastor, the congregational leadership, and the people. After two days of listening, prescriptions to help in mission are written specifically for that congregation in response to what was heard.

MYTH #4: If a congregation doesn't grow within 2 years, TCN forces the pastor to resign.

TCN doesn't have the authority to make any called church worker resign. It is not the desire of TCN for any pastor to resign, nor is it the intent of the process. While a congregation that is being salt and light to its congregation can expect more people to want to learn about who they are and the God in whom they believe, TCN does not measure success by the growth of the church. TCN is a process designed to walk alongside the pastor and the congregation, offering encouragement and resources as their ministry focus continues to see the opportunities both inside and outside of their church.

MYTH #5: The church transformation process is nothing more than applying secular business practices to the church.

While the church transformation process does invite congregations to observe what is occurring in their communities and encourages pastors to be leaders, it calls upon them to address the spiritual needs of the communities in their mission fields with the Word of God and salvation only through Jesus Christ.



Neighborhood
Missions

MYTH #6: TCN is just another version of church growth; it is not spiritual enough.

The revitalization process is grounded in God's Word, prayer, and biblical confession and absolution. It is designed to encourage congregations to refocus on God's mission for them. Time in prayer and Bible study helps pastors and members realize why God has put them in their place at this time, and how He will be with them as they transform into a congregation bringing Christ's presence out into the community. It's not about growing the local church, but about impacting the kingdom of heaven.

MYTH #7: The constitution and bylaws will be put in abeyance for two years.

It is neither wise nor practical for a congregation to operate at any time without a constitution and bylaws. These are helpful tools God has given to organize His earthly church. The TCN process has no authority to suspend or override the congregation's constitution or bylaws. It is possible that recommendation for changes may be made as part of the prescriptions given by the consultation team. However, should a congregation choose to accept the prescriptions, these changes are to be made in an orderly way as described in the congregation's existing bylaws and in accordance with the bylaws of both the LCMS and the Nebraska District.

To learn more about the revitalization process or to ask other questions you may have, contact Rev. Rich Boring in the Nebraska District Office. He may be reached at richb@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961, ext. 1009.

COMING EVENTS

- District Regional Gathering, Our Savior, Norfolk November 6
- District Regional Gathering, Christ, Lincoln November 12
- High School Youth Gathering, Embassy Suites Convention Center, LaVista..... November 18-20
- Regional DCE Conference, Beautiful Savior, LaVista..... March 22-24, 2012
- Spring Pastors' Conference, Younes Convention Centre, Kearney April 16-17, 2012
- Nebraska District LCMS Convention, Concordia University Nebraska, Seward..... June 8-9, 2012
- LWML Nebraska District North Convention, Lutheran High Northeast, Norfolk..... June 29-30, 2012
- Lutheran Hour Ministries' Reformation Rally, Concordia University Nebraska, Seward November 4, 2012

ANNIVERSARIES

- Our Savior, Norfolk, 50th, January 7-8, 2012, with President Russ Sommerfeld preaching at 5:30 p.m., 8:00, 9:15, and 10:30 a.m. services.**
- Beautiful Savior, LaVista, 50th, January 8, 2012.**

"NOTHING BUT NET" SAVES LIVES . . .

The swish of the net at a basketball hoop shoot contest secures more points for the contestant, but the "Nothing But Net Basketball Hoop Shoot" at Our Redeemer Lutheran School (ORLS) in North Platte on Saturday, March 19, was held to secure the swish of a net to needy families in malaria-prone Africa. In coordination with Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI), a partnership mission effort through Lutheran World Relief and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Lutheran organizations are hosting events to raise awareness of malaria's impact and bring in donations to buy mosquito nets for needy families in Africa.



Every forty-five seconds, a child dies of malaria. The World Health Organization statistics indicate there are more than 200 million cases of malaria each year, with nearly a million cases that result in death. It is a disease that is preventable, but families in poverty-stricken areas often do not have the information or means to provide preventative measures to protect their family from malaria. Use of an insecticide-infused net to hang over the bed at night can dramatically reduce the exposure to mosquitoes that carry malaria.

The bite of a malaria-carrying mosquito can bring deadly results. The mosquito's bite actually introduces a parasite into the blood. The microscopic parasite migrates to the liver where it becomes a cell that divides to form daughter cells. When this cell bursts and the daughter cells are released, then a person feels ill. Flu-like symptoms with high

fever and headaches begin, and if left untreated, it results in extremely low blood sugar and low blood pressure as the parasite invades the red blood cells. For some, the symptoms develop within a short time after the mosquito bite, but it is also possible for the disease to lay dormant for weeks or months.

The week prior to the hoop shoot, students learned more about malaria and its devastating effects. "We researched it at school on the Internet, so I learned about malaria that way," said Lucas Friedrich, ORLS student. "I went to the hoop shoot because of malaria. It is a pretty deadly disease . . . To help a child feels pretty good."

The "Nothing But Net Hoop Shoot" at Our Redeemer raised \$400, which was used to purchase 40 nets for families in Africa. Participants were also involved in a basketball clinic coached by school sports coaches, ORLS alumni and ORLS parents.

Our Redeemer Lutheran School principal and event organizer, Janet Livingston, said, "All the participants had a great time, especially because they knew their efforts were serving God and saving lives."

The Lutheran Malaria Initiative publicly launched its awareness campaign in mid-September in an effort to educate congregations and schools about malaria and to mobilize them to help eliminate malaria deaths worldwide by 2015. To learn more about the initiative and how your congregation or school can be involved, visit

www.lutheranmalaria.org.



CALLS IN THE DISTRICT

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

OTHER TRANSACTIONS

Betty Galen (RF'59), professor of music, Concordia University Nebraska, to emeritus.

Eunice Goldgrabe (S'66), teacher, Concordia University Nebraska, to emeritus.

Mark Lemke (MW'74), teacher, Concordia University Nebraska, to emeritus.

E. David Dolak (S'64), University Provost, Concordia University Nebraska, to emeritus.

Mira Wiegmann (S'69), teacher, Concordia University Nebraska, to emeritus.

Marvin Plamann (S'56), teacher, Concordia University Nebraska, to emeritus.

Martha Sunderman (S'05), teacher, St. John, Battle Creek, to candidate.

CALLED TO GLORY . . . Martin Honig, commissioned minister emeritus, of Seward was called to glory on September 15. Throughout his career he served as a teacher/principal in many Lutheran schools around the country, retiring from teaching to Seward in 1996.

ORDAINED MINISTERS

CALLS ACCEPTED

Rev. James Gruber (FtW'78), Peace, Marcus, Iowa, to St. Peter, Hampton.

Rev. Claude Houge (StL'96), candidate status, Nebraska District, to Mount Calvary, Omaha.

Rev. James Irwin (StL'97), senior pastor, St. Mark, Omaha, to senior pastor, Holy Savior, Lincoln.

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. Jeff Scheich (StL'85), associate pastor, Christ, Lincoln, to senior pastor, St. John, Ocala, Fla.

Rev. Michael Stahl (StL'07), candidate status, Michigan District, to Trinity, Amherst.

STATUS CHANGE

Rev. Christopher Ahlman (StL'06), candidate status, Texas District, to candidate status, Nebraska District.

Rev. Gregory Hinnert (FtW'98), candidate status, South Dakota District, to candidate status, Nebraska District.

ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Calvin L'Heureux (FtW'91) as sole pastor, St. Peter, North Bend, September 11.

PLACEMENTS or ASSIGNMENTS

Gary Dunker (StL-SMP) as SMP vicar, Faith, Lincoln, September 2.