

Circuit Counselors' Reports

Ainsworth Circuit

Rev. John Ryding

Rural ministry is alive and well in the Ainsworth Circuit. We deal with the issues of distance and low population as we spread the Gospel in the Sandhills.

Rev. Rudy Schaff covers the western end of the circuit; Rev. Georg Williams is in Ainsworth and continues to offer educational opportunities to those in the District. Rev. Richard Kothe has become the new LWML zone pastoral advisor as well as serving Atkinson and Butte. Spencer and Lynch have been served by a number of vicars, all of whom have learned from their experiences. Bill Serr continues his classes as he covers Jamison and Burton. With Pastor Bergstrazer accepting the call to Faith Lutheran in York, the vacancy is being covered by the pastors in O'Neill. Christ Lutheran in O'Neill continues to have a growing outreach with their midweek program, Christ~Light. There are more than 90 students and another 30 adults involved in the program. Fall of 2008 was the opening of their preschool, LEAP (Learning, Exploring, and Playing in Christ). Enrollment has not been great, but the preschool had a late start and expects a greater enrollment for the 2009-2010 year. Pastor Jerry Meyer, although retired, serves as the supervisor for Bill Serr and for the vicar at Spencer/Lynch. Pastor Ryding has been appointed circuit counselor and is also the LWML Nebraska District North senior pastoral advisor.

Beatrice Circuit

Rev. Paul Beyer

The saints of the Beatrice Circuit rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ is merciful and gracious.

He has provided workers for the congregations:

- The Rev. Mark Williamson was ordained and installed as pastor of Our Savior, Odell, on June 25, 2006.
- Teacher Bryan Polzin was installed as teacher at Zion, Tobias, in July 2006.
- The Rev. David Brinkmeyer was installed as pastor of First Trinity, rural Beatrice, on April 22, 2007.
- The Rev. Ryan Meyer was ordained and installed as pastor of Zion, Tobias, on June 24, 2007.
- Teacher Nancy Risinger was installed as teacher at Zion, Tobias, in July 2007.
- Teacher Haley Kindrex was installed into the teaching position at Lambs of Christ Preschool, Bethlehem, Crete, in August 2008.

Other workers have had a change of status:

- The Rev. Mark Rockenbach of First Trinity, rural Beatrice, accepted a call to serve as Nebraska District Church Worker Health Executive in June 2006.
- Teacher Rhonda Burk stepped down as teacher of Zion, Tobias, in July 2006 to raise her family.
- Teacher Bryan Polzin accepted a teaching position at Faith, Eustis, Florida in May 2007.
- Teacher Michelle Dale stepped down as teacher of Lambs of Christ Preschool, Bethlehem, Crete, in May 2008 to raise her family.
- The Rev. Keith Burk of Zion, Tobias, accepted a position at Immanuel, Lincoln, in October 2006.
- The Rev. Arthur Schauer moved into the circuit in June 2008, after retiring from service at Faith, York.

Congregations gave thanks for many years of the Lord's grace:

- In 2008, Grace, Fairbury, recognized Rev. Charles Schmidt for his 25 years as ordained minister and 20 of those years at Grace, Fairbury.
- In 2008, Bethlehem, Crete, recognized Rev. Nathan Ristvedt for 15 years as ordained minister (8 at Crete) and teacher Michelle Dale for 5 years as commissioned teacher.

At least five congregations participated in the Synod-wide *Fan into Flame* campaign in 2008.

Columbus Circuit

Rev. Terry Timm

The Columbus Circuit began this triennium with nine parishes—two large multiple-staff parishes located within the city of Columbus, four single-pastor congregations, and three dual parishes located in the outlying communities and rural areas. They had the privilege of celebrating the addition of a new mission congregation, 1C, also located in Columbus. 1C was organized under the able leadership of church planter Mr. Jerry Steger and has requested a vicar to serve them this coming year.

The dual parish of Immanuel and Trinity, Schuyler, continues to be served by DELTO Vicar Bill Mattfeld. By the time of our convention, Vicar Mattfeld plans to have completed his course work, accepted the call to be pastor, and will be awaiting his ordination and installation. The dual

parish of Grace, Platte Center, and St. Peter, Humphrey, was ably served by two vicars, and then called their first vicar, now Rev. Michael Stockmeyer, to be their pastor.

Immanuel, Columbus, saw the departure of their senior pastor Rev. Richard Bringewatt, and Peace, Columbus, said farewell to their associate pastor Rev. Thomas Volker. In addition, Christ, Columbus, became vacant when Rev. John Nelson accepted a call. As of this writing, none of these vacancies have been filled. There have been no other pastoral changes in the circuit since our last convention.

The congregations of our circuit continue to maintain three Christian day schools, four preschools, and three daycares. Other congregations are exploring early childhood opportunities. One circuit congregation belongs to the Lutheran High Northeast Association in Norfolk, and two circuit congregations have members who attend the school.

God continues to bless the Word and Sacrament ministries of the Columbus Circuit, and we look forward to the opportunities for ministry that God will continue to provide the members of our circuit.

Deshler Circuit

Rev. Richard Kelm

The Deshler Circuit is made up of ten congregations. Although we struggle with numbers to meet the guidelines for a circuit, it is our privilege to be God's instruments of Word and Sacrament here in south-central Nebraska. The new *Lutheran Service Book* has been adopted by most congregations in our circuit.

In November 2007, a Circuit Reformation Festival was hosted by St. John Lutheran Church in Chester. Rev. Wesley Baumeister was the preacher for the Reformation worship service. Preceding the worship, St. John's pipe organ (purchased and dedicated in 1946) was highlighted with an organ recital.

In November 2008, a Circuit Mission Festival was hosted by St. Peter, Davenport, with Rev. John Reehl as the preacher at an opening worship service. Pastor Reehl also shared a mission presentation on Orphan Grain Train's work in the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. A wonderful supper followed this Christ-centered afternoon.

A look at the congregations in the Deshler Circuit include:

Faith, Hebron, is served by Pastor Richard Kelm. He came to Hebron in 1999 from the seminary, thus serving his first call. Faith had a

building project which was finished in 2007, enhancing the entrance and adding a large meeting room and office space. Faith is at work with community outreach and support of the Haiti Lutheran Mission Society.

St. Peter, Davenport, is served by Pastor Tim Prince. St. Peter is an active congregation, operating a Lutheran day school for grades K-8. St. Peter has a very active LLL, LWML, and youth groups. Pastor Prince came to the Circuit in July 2005.

St. Peter, Deshler, began the triennium served by Pastor Kurt Van Fossan, who in October of 2006 took a call to England. The vacancy was filled by Pastor Richard Kelm. We were, however, glad to welcome Brian Francik to Deshler. Brian received his first call to serve in Deshler. He was ordained at his home congregation in California and then installed as pastor at St. Peter on June 22, 2008. Deshler is in association with Trinity, Friedensau, in operating Deshler Lutheran School.

Trinity, Friedensau, was served by Pastor Stuart Burt, who was ordained at Trinity in August 2006. He took a call to Grace in Grand Island in 2007. Pastor Prince served as vacancy pastor. B.J. Fouts was ordained into the Holy Ministry and installed as pastor at Trinity on July 13, 2008. Trinity has just finished a building project updating its entryway and narthex. Trinity has also completed a successful *Fan into Flame* campaign in support of missions.

Zion, Shickley, was also served by Pastor Stuart Burt. Pastor Burt took a call to Grace in Grand Island. In early January of 2008, Zion voted to dissolve the dual parish agreement they had with Trinity, Friedensau. Zion is being served by Pastor Jim Moll in an ongoing vacancy. The members of Zion have worked hard on special projects, including support of Orphan Grain Train.

The dual parish of St. John, Chester, and Zion, Hubbell, continues to be served by Pastor Brad Boyer. Both congregations in Chester and Hubbell have been able to reach out into the community, especially through Vacation Bible School, during the past three years. Pastor Boyer came to Chester/Hubbell in September 2003.

Centennial, Superior, has been faithfully served by Pastor Paul Albrecht for 18 years. It was however, the Lord's will to call Paul to his heavenly home on August 30, 2008. Centennial is presently served by Vicar Joel Pike, with Jim Moll as vacancy pastor. Centennial is assessing its ministry to the Superior community and in early 2009 began moving toward calling a new pastor.

St. Mark, Ruskin, has been served by Pastor Albrecht, as well as Vicars Tom Kraemer,

James Groleau, and Joel Pike. St. Mark is also seeking the Lord's guidance and direction as they reach out in the Ruskin community in the years to come.

Shepherd of the Plains, Fairfield, is served with Word and Sacrament ministry by Pastor Bill Larsen. Vacation Bible School has been offered to reach into the community in 2007 and 2008. Pastor Larsen has served 18 years in the Deshler Circuit.

In November 2008, Pastor Kenneth Benson, retired and the former pastor of Faith, moved back to Hebron with his wife Virginia. May God bless his retirement in our midst.

I thank the Lord for the faithful service of the pastors of the Deshler Circuit and pray that God would embrace and strengthen each of them and their families. I also pray for growth in our congregations and the District spurred on by faithfulness to God's Word and the Sacraments, thus in faith expressing itself in love and service to the people around us, and sharing the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. To God be the glory and praise now and forever!

Falls City Circuit

Rev. Bob Schermbeck

The past three years have been a time of continued growth and change for the Falls City Circuit. We have again experienced both farewells and welcomes in terms of the pastoral ministry in the circuit. Rev. Bryan Gies arrived as vicar in Pawnee City, and served his year as a deferred vicar at Zion Lutheran Church. He then received a call to Zion, accepted the call, and is in his first year of pastoral ministry. Rev. Hal Hintzman accepted a call to Rushford, Minnesota, leaving Faith Lutheran, Humboldt, in a vacancy situation. The vacancy was filled in August 2008, by Rev. Matthew Mortenson, a candidate from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. As he arrived, Rev. Merelyn Snider, of St. Paul Lutheran, Falls City, was preparing to retire and move to Michigan. He departed at the end of August, and we are currently reviewing how the vacancy might best be filled.

Prison ministry continues at Tecumseh State Correctional Institution. Once a month, one of our churches conducts a worship service on Sunday afternoon. This involves both pastors and lay people from our circuit congregations. Individual visitation and group Bible study are also a part of the ministry being conducted. Circuit Reformation services were conducted each year with different congregations serving as hosts. We were able to utilize choir members from

various congregations, bell choirs, and instrumentalists to enhance the worship. Speakers for the services were Rev. Charles Blanco of Concordia University, Nebraska; Rev. Reed Lessing of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and Rev. Tim Puls of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Each did an excellent job of conveying the timeless message of the Gospel.

Mission support and activity continued in the circuit as well. Continued financial support for the Jamaican ministry and the Jamaican Lutheran Hour broadcast was provided through congregations and local LLL groups. Trinity Lutheran, Auburn, spearheaded an exploratory mission team to Honduras which included Pastor John Rathjen and several members of Trinity. An ongoing mission outreach is being established there. Members of St. Peter, Elk Creek, and Faith, Humboldt, provided funds for Pastor Bob Schermbeck and seminarian Andrew Schermbeck to conduct a spoken English workshop at Concordia Seminary in Nagercoil, India. DELTO vicar Elmer Smith traveled to Kyrgyzstan on an exploratory trip in regard to renovating a building to serve as an orphanage. That renovation is currently in progress.

All of our congregations continue to effectively carry forward ministry in their particular communities. Witnessing together as a congregation, and individually as they live and move in their particular setting, always mindful of the words of Jesus, "*You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.*"

Fremont Circuit

Rev. Bruce Schut

In 2008, the Fremont Circuit hosted a convocation at North Bend with a presentation by Rev. Jim and Edna Moll on mission outreach in Southeast Asia. Annually, with a scholarship fund, the circuit assists five to eight circuit members studying to enter professional church work. Lutheran Family Services, in partnership with Good Shepherd, Fremont, established an outreach to help families with young children in the community and neighboring areas. (See details below.)

St. Paul Church and School, Arlington, installed its first ever Director of Christian Education in July of 2008. Their worship and Bible class attendance are on the increase. They continue to support Rev. Claude and Rhoda Houge, missionaries serving in East Africa. In January of 2009, they celebrated their 140th Anniversary.

Trinity Church and Preschool, Blair, dedicated a new fellowship hall in October of 2006. The hall seats 300 people and has already been a blessing in reaching out into the community, as events have been held at the fellowship hall bringing people to the church who might not otherwise have come. They have also been blessed with the opportunity each year to raise at least 80 percent of the payments for the new building by operating a fireworks stand in Blair. This has also resulted in a number of evangelism contacts and several families becoming members through the contact with them. They continue to look for ways to reach out into the community and share the message of Jesus Christ.

St. Matthew, Cedar Bluffs, continues to grow in God's grace. This past summer they moved VBS back to the mornings, and attendance tripled—with many non-churched children from the community attending. In September, they celebrated their 130th Anniversary with a special service, a picnic dinner, games, and a softball tournament with the other churches in Cedar Bluffs.

Good Shepherd, Fremont, has experienced powerful blessings from the Lord over the past three years. The congregation seeks to “Connect People With Jesus.” The Lord has enabled this to happen in two wonderful ways. The first of those came about very unexpectedly through God’s timing. The vision of Lutheran Family Services and the vision of Good Shepherd congregation were enabled to mesh perfectly as LFS brought to Fremont a ministry to families with young children (prenatal through five years old) to help their parents learn healthy parenting skills, on their expanding campus, with the support of the Fremont faith community and social service agencies, producing a synergy that has been showered with blessing far beyond the most optimistic dreams. In its first year of operations, this ministry, called the “Building Families Boutique,” has reached out to more than 200 families in the Fremont community and surrounding area to meet their needs and bring them into contact with God’s people who are sharing His love with them. It is an added blessing that the location of this ministry on the campus of Good Shepherd allows Lutheran Family Services to return to the place where they had their origin in Nebraska, the location where the original Lutheran orphanage first stood more than 100 years ago.

The second blessing involved the completion of the first of three phases of a building process. This phase included a community life

center and chapel, dedicated in June of 2008, the culmination of 14 years of planning by a Master’s Plan Ministry Team, and two years of intensive design and then construction effort. The intention for the building is for the congregation to use it for activities that will enable outreach into the community, and thus the Good News of life in Jesus can be shared with those who have never been connected with Him.

Trinity Church and School, Fremont, installed Pastor Dan Heuer as Director of Ministries late in 2006. Mike Meyer serves as the associate pastor and Eric Gerken was added as a DCE in 2008. The congregation continues to have a vibrant day school ministry and looks at ways to minister to the community. They look forward to eliminating their existing debt and expanding the ministry. Volunteers made trips to the Gulf Coast to assist in rebuilding efforts. God continues to be faithful.

Immanuel Church and School, Hooper, sent a group of six to a Heartland Rural Ministry Conference on “Reaching Rural America for Christ.” They pray the Lord will help them to use what they learned to tell people about Jesus and to find ways to cooperate to accomplish the Lord’s mission in the surrounding area of their rural setting.

St. John, Hooper, resides in the rolling hills of the Elkhorn Valley of Hooper, and is one of the Nebraska District’s oldest congregations. It was where the District had one of its first meetings to found the District. It will celebrate its 140th Anniversary this year. St. John continues to minister to the needs of its congregation, especially an aging rural population, through a Word and Sacrament ministry.

Trinity, Howells, and St. Peter, Snyder, installed seminarian Gerry L. Weaver as their pastor in July of 2007. Pastor Weaver also serves as a supply pastor for the permanent vacancy at Immanuel, Dodge. The congregations and pastor have actively encouraged more involvement together in special services, youth education, and activities. New adult educational opportunities have started in both congregations.

St. Peter, North Bend, completed the exterior bricking of the church building, interior repainting of the sanctuary, and improvement of the lighting. A committee is working to find a new organ and sound system with recording capability so that shut-ins can worship with the services at home. The endowment fund committee disbursed funds for the third year in a row to college scholarships and to community projects.

St. Peter, Scribner, members enjoy working in the community with the county fair food stand. A percentage of the profits is given to LWML mission projects each year. Volunteers make monthly trips to Orphan Grain Train with many bags of clothing collected from throughout the community. Annual mission festivals provided music and insight from Sudanese Lutherans in Omaha, current District mission updates, and a summary of area involvement at Camp Restore in New Orleans. In 2009, plans move ahead for the congregation's 125th Anniversary celebration.

Our Redeemer, Wahoo, continues to provide Word and Sacrament ministry. The congregation has a strong Sunday school and midweek program, along with two adult Bible studies. The members actively support the Orphan Grain Train.

Grand Island Circuit

Rev. Glen Keylon

Colossians 4:6 *“full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

The Grand Island Circuit has continued to present the grace of God in many and various venues. The circuit held joint Reformation services and communion the past two years at Heartland Lutheran High School for all the area-wide LCMS churches. Participants included not only the Grand Island Circuit, but others who were Heartland Lutheran High School Association members. In the spring, we proclaimed Christ's Easter victory as a mass choir of circuit and Heartland Association laity, students, teachers, and pastors singing a post-Easter medley of hymns proclaiming victorious joy and the glory of our risen Lord. The post-Easter celebration was graciously led by a volunteer school choir director and member of Zion Lutheran, Worms, and was sung at Heartland Lutheran High School and open to the public. Joint services continue to be held in varying locations of the circuit and on various occasions.

Another emphasis of the Grand Island Circuit has been the desire to provide an opportunity for the circuit high school and junior high youth to get acquainted with one another. The last two years, several of the circuit church youth have gathered at Calamus Outfitters, Burwell, Nebraska, for two days of Bible study, tanking down a river, socializing, and good food. This event will continue this August, and increased participant numbers have occurred each year. The circuit continues to support Heartland Lutheran

High School as volunteer devotions are led throughout the school year by rotating association and Grand Island Circuit pastors. Many of our circuit congregations have outreach through daycare and preschool facilities. Four of our circuit churches have elementary school outreaches.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Grand Island, has served as host to a new Sudanese outreach and worship setting. The Hispanic ministry outreach continues through Cristo Cordero de Dios, Peace Lutheran Church's trailer court VBS ministry, and personal mission opportunities to Mexico. Presently, an area-wide Orphan Grain Train organization is beginning to function for the tri-city area and surrounding communities with the continuing outreach to Russian orphanages through Rev. John and June Reehl of Trinity Lutheran Church. With the establishment and completion of a Good Samaritan Retirement Center close to Heartland Lutheran High School, additional opportunities of ministry to the elderly will become available to the circuit in the near future. Many of the local care facilities are served with devotional time and Bible study by our circuit pastors. The circuit churches continue to support and provide ministry to our armed forces veterans at the Nebraska Vets Home in Grand Island.

Circuit pastors gather for regular meetings, Bible study, topical studies, and worship. We try to get together a few times during the year for social events and fellowship. The circuit has seen several pastors continue their ministry in other locations or retire. We currently enjoy a relatively full circuit looking to fill vacancies for senior pastors at Trinity and Peace in Grand Island at the present. May God receive the glory.

Hastings Circuit

Rev. Ron Kuehner

There were no vacancies in the three years prior to the 2006 District Convention. Since the last convention, Pastor Don Boeschon retired in 2006 after many years at Peace, Hastings. Pastor Marcus Mackay was installed at Peace in 2008. Pastor Bill Caughey of Trinity, Campbell, and Calvary, Rosemont, accepted a call in 2006 to Grace, El Dorado, Kansas. Candidate Michael Stock from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was ordained and installed at Trinity and Calvary in 2007.

Pastor Dan Heuer of Zion, Hastings, accepted a call to Trinity, Fremont, in 2006. Zion has been served by a vacancy pastor and supply pastors for over two years, having issued a number

of calls during that time. In 2008, Pastor Jim Witt of Trinity, Blue Hill, went to emeritus status but still assists Trinity as visitation pastor. In August, candidate Joshua Lowe from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was ordained at Immanuel, Lockwood, Missouri, and installed as Trinity's full-time pastor.

A special event was the Circuit-wide Reformation service held on October 26, 2008, at Zion, Wanda, near Juniata. Pastor J. Dirk Reek was the guest preacher at the well-attended service. Pastor Ron Kuehner, Zion, Red Cloud, and Grace, Franklin, has announced his retirement effective July 31, 2009.

We thank God for the many blessings that He has showered upon His work and His workers in the Nebraska District and in the Hastings Circuit during the past three years.

Holdrege Circuit

Rev. Jeff Ernstmeyer

If you gave a definition or descriptor for the Holdrege Circuit it would be: A unified gathering of congregations and pastors with varying ministry abilities. We are blessed to have leadership that promotes and supports Word and Sacrament, rural ministry, military chaplaincy, lay leadership training, missions, and a joint Circuit Confirmation retreat. Each congregation extends its talents and gifts to support not only the Holdrege Circuit, but also other circuits and congregations. The pastors meet monthly from September to May. Meetings alternate between day and evening meetings to allow families to get together for activities to support the wives and children. Each gathering focuses on God's Word, fellowship, and encouragement.

Kearney Circuit

Rev. Dean Hanson

Grace Lutheran, Pleasanton, and Faith Lutheran, Hazard: Grace, Pleasanton, and Faith, Hazard, continue to be blessed in their partnership ministry in so many wonderful ways. Faith, Hazard, celebrated their 125th Anniversary in August of 2007. In September of that same year, they purchased the elementary school in Hazard and made plans to remodel it into a fellowship hall. LCEF loaned Faith, Hazard, the money for this project; and the transformation from a school into a multi-use facility in service to Christ and His church is beautiful. Laborers for Christ arrived in July 2008, and we enjoyed their assistance in construction and companionship in our church family at Faith, Hazard. The members have

donated well over 2,000 volunteer hours, and the quality of their work is outstanding. A dedication date will soon be determined. You are invited! Grace and Faith continue a strong outreach into the communities through a joint VBS. The number of adults and children total approximately 80 people. Midweek school is conducted at both churches. As a partnership, we also support missionaries Rev. Robert and Diane Hedtke in Bangkok, Thailand. They are our present focus of support and prayers. In all things to God be the Glory.

Holy Cross Lutheran, Kearney: God continues to bless the ministry of Holy Cross Lutheran, its preschool, and partnership with campus ministry at University Lutheran at UNK. During the last three years, Holy Cross Lutheran saw the retirement of its senior pastor Tom Mroch. As of this report, this vacancy is at 1½ years, with staffing being covered by existing staff. Holy Cross and the Kearney area were spared during a tornado in May of 2008 from any loss of life or more serious damage. A garage was destroyed on campus and rebuilt by volunteers from the congregation. One new ministry area has been to send mission trip teams that included members from Holy Cross and University Lutheran students to areas affected by Hurricane Rita and in Greensburg, Kansas. The Wednesday family night ministry during the school year continues to be a blessing, involving almost 300 adults and children during each evening event. Vacation Bible School continues to grow each year as well, with almost 300 children in attendance. The congregation is also taking a greater financial responsibility for the University Lutheran campus ministry. They went through Strategic Ministry Planning (SMP) and fine-tuned their mission statement to "Reflecting the Grace of Jesus" with a three year goal to build intentional relationships through small groups. There are also plans to increase staff in the area of assimilation upon the arrival of a senior pastor. Continued growth presents exciting opportunities and challenges as spacing issues continue with the need for more facilities, while they presently find themselves land-locked at their current location. A new senior pastor should assist with these and other ministry opportunities as they move forward into the future.

Trinity Lutheran, Amherst: Over the past three years mission and ministry at Trinity, Amherst, has been interesting and challenging. They consistently have offered a Lutheran information class, having confirmed nearly a dozen adults, and also revamped their midweek curriculum. The fifth and sixth grades spent two

years learning the Scriptures; while the seventh and eighth grades spent two years learning the catechism. They have started a tape ministry that shut-ins enjoy. Twelve youth went to the National Youth Gathering. They pray that the Lord would lead them to see needs in the community, while continuing to confess the name of Jesus to the community around them.

Bethlehem Lutheran, Ravenna, and Zion Lutheran, North Shelton: In May 2006, Rev. Steve Schlund left the dual parish at Bethlehem and Zion. Rev. Shawn Kitzing served as vacancy pastor at Bethlehem, and Rev. Tom Mackey served at Zion until July of 2007, at which time Rev. Micah Gaunt was ordained and installed to serve these congregations. In January of 2008, some members of Bethlehem and Zion worked with the members of St. Paul, Shelton and Lowell, to provide hurricane relief in the New Orleans area. In addition, Zion celebrated their 120th Anniversary in 2005. Also, the Zion Ladies Aid celebrated their 75th Anniversary.

First Lutheran, Buffalo: The church of Buffalo, led by DELTO vicar Victor Rasmussen, is nestled into the countryside of northern Dawson County, in the middle of good hardland, grass-covered hills, and serves the surrounding area including the small towns of Eddyville, Oconto, and Callaway, along with the outskirts of Lexington, Cozad, and Gothenburg. During the past two-and-a-half years, I have witnessed the Holy Spirit working His wonders within the congregation of Buffalo. They have grown in attendance from about 35 people to now having an average attendance of 60. They have many fellowship events, such as an annual trailride with a feast afterwards, a one-day Vacation Bible School with a feast afterwards, and of course there is the Christmas caroling with...you guessed it, a feast afterwards. They are a mission-minded congregation and have supported not only- Mr. Gary Theis and his "Boss" at Mission Central, but have also supported a couple of local ladies this past year who were called to Kenya, Africa, to minister and witness to the ladies of that country. They have also given to the Sandhills ministry, Boystown, and the Lutheran Hour; and look forward to further supporting endeavors that help others not only tell the Good News, but also present an example of what it means to be a believer in Christ Jesus. The LWML ladies are a vibrant and active part of the congregation, which continues to grow and now consists of well over 2/3 of the female members, with offices being held at zone, district, and national levels. These ladies

are exemplary in their worship and in showing what it means to be Christ-like in their daily living. Thrivent membership is important as well, and has contributed greatly to fundraising for various projects and personal assistance in the area. It is not so much the dollar amount that matters in these projects, but the personal contact that presents itself when people are in need. It's the knowledge that people truly care and are willing to help each other in times of need that makes a difference in hurting people's lives. This is an exciting time to be a part of Christ's Church. Vicar Rasmussen is honored, humbled, and so happy to not only be their spiritual shepherd, but also a part of their family.

St. Paul Lutheran, Shelton, and St. Paul Lutheran, Lowell: Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ, from His churches in Shelton and Lowell. The Lord has faithfully sustained these two rural ministries. They have experienced moderate, numerical growth, and their people have eagerly accepted the call to serve their neighbors. They have sent numerous members to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and during the last three years have had both long-term and short-term mission experiences. Additionally, God's people have reached out to their local neighbors as well, through numerous projects and fundraisers. Both churches are actively involved in supporting Heartland Lutheran High School in Grand Island, and currently have four students in attendance. St. Paul, Shelton, and St. Paul, Lowell, have been involved with the preaching station in Gibbon. When this mission began on Easter eve of 2008, they were worshiping in the local funeral parlor. In December, they moved to Good Samaritan and the Lord has opened up new opportunities at this location. Routinely, there are 7-8 residents in attendance and average worship is 15-16 souls. They praise God for the opportunity to minister to these people who crave the love of God at this time in their lives. They continue to pursue the Lord's will, through mission and ministry, and look forward with eagerness to our Lord's return.

Grace Lutheran, Sumner: The past three years at Grace Lutheran, Sumner, have seen blessing after blessing showered down upon her by a very gracious and loving God. Since the last report, five juniors and seven adults have been confirmed, and four members have been received by transfers from sister congregations. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism has been administered to three infants and one adult, and there have been three funerals. The physical appearance has also

changed. They have enlarged their facility by adding on to the church building. This included adding a Sunday school room plus storage space in the basement, as well as two Sunday school rooms on ground level. The entire church has been recarpeted and repainted. The weekly attendance has been steadily increasing, as has Sunday school and the adult Bible class. But perhaps most exciting is the spiritual growth of the congregation. Three years ago, giving to missions was absolutely zero. They began by resolving to give five percent of their offering (before expenses) to a mission project. The second year, the congregation raised the mission budget to seven percent; and this past year it was raised to ten percent. And being faithful to His promise, have not lacked or wanted anything in the way of offerings! As a matter of fact, they have received \$15,000 from wills and insurance policies! We can only say; "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever." And to that we shout "AMEN!"

La Trinidad, Lexington: Continues their work among the Hispanic in the area, with regular services every Sunday, Bibles studies, and music ministry to teach children the worship music. They offer to the Spanish community special services like Quinceaneras, Baptisms, funerals, jail ministry, etc. In 2007, they confirmed six and have three people in confirmation class this year.

North Platte Hispanic Mission: In June 2006, outreach work began in North Platte with a letter to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Pastor Simon, and leaders of the church asking them to support work with the growing Hispanic community. They supported this outreach, and allowed the use of part of their church for Bible studies. The first Bible study had two people in attendance. In 2007, they had their first confirmation in North Platte. In June 2007, they started a Baptism class for the Rendon Family, and had several classes with them, one being the Lutheran view of the Biblical Doctrine; and the family found peace in their souls, through Jesus Christ our Savior. On September 18, they had their first Baptism service. There were 25 people in attendance, including Pastor Boring from the District Office and Pastor Simon from Our Redeemer. On March 11, 2008, they had their first Confirmation with nine confirmed. Regular services on Tuesdays continued with participation of the elders from Our Redeemer. They have also continued their Bible studies and the preparation of leaders for the future church in North Platte. In July 2008, they started Bible studies and worship

services on Sundays. On Thursdays they have Bible study and music practice. Currently, there are more than 28 people in attendance in Bible studies and worship services, with five people in confirmation class. They have continued Bible studies and sharing Christian materials, *Good News* magazine, flyer promotions for the Bible studies, and brochures with Lutheran teaching in different places in the city.

Kearney/Crete Hispanic Missions: In Kearney, Bible studies were started in September 2006 in two places, Vallarta Market (Hispanic store) and Alberto Banos' home. In Vallarta Market, they share Christian literature and contact people to share the Good News of our Lord. In the Alberto home, there were six people in the Bible study. In Crete, they started a Bible study in the Aldana family home. In the middle of 2007, they continued their activities at Bethlehem Lutheran Church by contacting people in the laundromat, Hispanic stores, and restaurants, sharing with them, and giving them a flier with church activities and Christian literature. In 2008, missions in Crete and Kearney were closed to concentrate on the work in Lexington and North Platte.

Zion Lutheran Church, Kearney: In 2006, they hosted the Concordia Choir from Concordia University, Ann Arbor, MI; Rev. Ryan Wendt accepted God's call to serve Christ the King, Billings, Montana; hosted CTS-FW Continuing Ed with guest professor, Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenschier; and Zion Lutheran School celebrated its 75th Anniversary. This year also marked 48 ½ years of service as a Lutheran teacher by Miss Lavonne Peterson, who retired after serving Zion for 37 ½ years. Mrs. Kristen Mueller joined Zion's staff as they added a three-year-old class to their early childhood ministry. Mr. Anthony Splittgerber was installed as head teacher, and Mrs. Lisa Splittgerber installed as part-time seventh and eighth grade teacher. Zion served as a Nebraska District host site for a *Lutheran Service Book* introductory workshop, and hosted Concordia University, Nebraska's wind ensemble. In 2007, they repainted the interior of their sanctuary and narthex; hosted the Nebraska District Spring Pastors' Conference worship service; celebrated the retirement of Mrs. Margaret Smith, a Zion teacher for over 37 years; and hosted CTS-FW Continuing Ed, with guest professor, Rev. Dr. Naomichi Masaki. Miss Tracie King was installed as Zion's first and second grade teacher and expanded their early childhood ministry by offering a second pre-k class. In 2008, they celebrated the retirement of Mrs. Kathy

Kowalczyk, who served as teacher, teacher aide, or volunteer at Zion for more than 30 years; repainted the interior of the school; and began replacing carpet in hallways and classrooms. Zion was the host site for CTS-FW Continuing Ed and guest professor, Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier III. Zion celebrated the retirement of Rev. North P. Sherrill, a Zion pastor for nearly 10 years, and celebrated the installation of Rev. James H. DeLoach to serve as Zion's pastor.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Lexington: Rev. Joel Hormachea was ordained. Trinity held a Last Supper pageant, had an Easter egg hunt for the community, had the Marachi singing group that performed numerous places, and celebrated Pastor Gruhn's 25th Anniversary. In 2007, again, had a successful Last Supper pageant, and for their 30th Anniversary celebration had Mark Kempff as visiting pastor. In 2008, Pastor Gruhn took a sabbatical, and they celebrated Christ's birth with a Christmas program.

Lincoln Circuit **Rev. Craig Whitson**

Three years can bring many changes in a circuit the size of Lincoln's. Pastoral leadership has changed in many congregations during the last triennium. Brad Beckman replaced Mark Hannemann at Faith, Lincoln; Bob Swearer, who served for a short while at Holy Savior, Lincoln, has moved on to Washington state and Holy Savior is again vacant; and Keith Burk replaced Charles Borcharding at Faith of Our Fathers, Roca. Messiah, Lincoln, is still in the process of calling a senior pastor to replace Luke Biggs. John Kunze, Messiah's associate pastor, has served them all through the senior pastor vacancy. He's been ably assisted by a number of men who have served with him on a part-time basis. Calvary, Lincoln, whose former pastor Steve Heinsen took a call to Alaska, is now being served by Lonnie Jacobsen. Pastor Jacobsen came from Christ Lutheran Church in Arlington, TN, and was installed shortly after Easter 2009. Word of Life Lutheran Church is a new mission start in Lincoln's Fallbrook community and was received as a member of synod March 15, 2009. Word of Life was sponsored by St. Paul, Malcolm, and organized by DELTO vicar Larry Oetting. Larry graduated from seminary in St. Louis in May and is now serving Word of Life as an ordained member of synod.

Lincoln Lutheran Middle and High School's new Executive Director Scott Ernstmeyer replaced former executive director Gary Hammack.

Two congregations in the Lincoln Circuit

embarked on building programs in the last three years. Calvary, Lincoln, added a beautiful narthex that is large enough to also serve as a meeting area. Christ, Lincoln, is adding both a worship and education space.

The congregations of the circuit held their Circuit Convocation in September of 2008. Matthew Harrison, Executive Director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, served as the keynote speaker. Many congregations of the circuit presented displays on the outreach that they are conducting. Lincoln Lutheran Middle and High School hosted the convocation. The circuit also established a website.

www.LincolnLutheranChurches.org will take you to a homepage where you can find basic information about the circuit and then navigate to any of the individual congregation's websites.

McCook Circuit **Rev. Paul Warneke**

Our good and gracious Lord and Savior continues to pour His blessings upon the congregations and people of southwest Nebraska.

As of this writing, only one of the eight congregations in the McCook Circuit has a vacancy of the pastoral office. I serve Peace Lutheran Church, McCook, as vacancy pastor, while Vicar Tom Albertson serves the congregation daily with his on-site presence. In 2008, DCE Erica Boleen submitted her resignation to pursue a teaching vocation. The vacancy at St. John, rural McCook, (Ash Creek) was filled in 2007 when Rev. Kevin Schnakenberg accepted the call. Vicar Matt Makela has been serving Zion, Imperial, under the guidance of Rev. David Kahle, Zion's pastor since 2005. Rev. Greg Stuckwisch has been serving the dual parish of Redeemer, Wauneta, and Trinity, Palisade, since 2001. Rev. Keith Wellman has been at St. Paul, rural Wauneta, (South Divide) since 1999. The pastor of St. John, Culbertson, Rev. Brad Rick, has been there since 2005. Rev. Paul Warneke has been the pastor at St. John, Curtis, since 1996.

Both Peace, McCook, and St. Paul, Wauneta, celebrated their 100th Anniversaries in 2008, while St. John, Culbertson, celebrated 100 years in 2007. St. John in Curtis celebrated 60 years in 2008; and St. John, Ash Creek, will be celebrating their 125th Anniversary later this year.

The unique ministry of KNGN radio in McCook was dealt a devastating blow in 2008 when the LCMS Executive Director of Communications abruptly canceled the station's number one program, *Issues, Etc.* The program is

now being produced independently and is back on the air at KNGN, an LCMS recognized service organization. Also in 2008, the station hired Mr. Adam Spanier as its full-time station manager. Rev. Brad Rick recently replaced Rev. Greg Stuckwisch as president of KNGN's Board of Directors. Exciting events for KNGN's near future include finding a new tower site, streaming on the internet, and producing more programming locally. In 2010, KNGN will celebrate its 20th year of broadcasting the Good News of Christ's salvation to southwest Nebraska and northwest Kansas.

Zion, Imperial, had its annual *Abendmusik* workshop in October with the theme "Marriage Matters: Weddings, Wars, and Winning Ways." The workshop featured Dr. Jeffrey Blersch, who led the music portion of the workshop, and Dr. Michael Eschelbach, who led the theology portion.

We thank God for continuing to provide opportunities for ministry among the people of southwest Nebraska.

Norfolk Circuit Rev. Gordon Bruce

The Norfolk Circuit is composed of 12 congregations and is being served by 15 pastors, 2 DCEs, and over 50 teachers in 4 elementary schools and 1 high school. As of the first of the year, there were two vacancies in our circuit, Mt. Olive in Norfolk and Trinity in Madison.

The Lord continues to bless the Norfolk Circuit in many wonderful ways. Over the last three years, there have been many wonderful examples of how God continues to work among His people. These would include mission festivals, LWML rallies, Lutheran Hour zone rallies, Orphan Grain Train conventions, workshops, circuit pastors conferences, and youth events.

In the past triennium, there have been the following installations: Rev. Chris Asbury as associate pastor at Grace, Norfolk; Rev. Adrian Hanft as associate at Our Savior, Norfolk; Rev. Jason Wolter as Director of Spiritual Life / theology teacher at Lutheran High Northeast; and Rev. Keith Christiansen as part-time administrative assistant pastor at Our Savior in Norfolk.

Rev. Frank Brink also retired from full-time parish work at Mt. Olive after many years. He now serves as visitation pastor at Our Savior in Norfolk.

Lutheran High Northeast completed its 12th academic year in 2008-2009. Enrollment has remained steady at around 150 students in grades 9-12. Typically, students attend from 15 or more communities throughout northeast Nebraska.

About 90 percent of the students are LCMS. During the past three years, LHNE has had students from both the Republic of Vietnam and Republic of China. Attending Lutheran High provided these foreign exchange students the opportunity to learn about the love of Jesus and see what it means to live as His children. The addition of a Director of Spiritual Life has been a blessing for not only the theology program, but also the overall mission and ministry of students, faculty, and staff. "Body Builders," a program which enables students to volunteer their services at agencies such as Orphan Grain Train, Norfolk Rescue Mission, Habitat for Humanity, and others, has seen steady growth. LHNE also sponsored a group of students who attended the 2009 Right to Life March in Washington, D.C. and learned first-hand about the Lutheran Mission Society. Highlights of our co-curricular program over the past three years include our mock trial team qualifying for state competition in 2008, and our Lady Eagles volleyball team qualifying for the state tournament for the first time in 2008. LHNE continues to receive first-hand testimonials about their graduates' success in their college, military, and other vocational pursuits.

The locally founded Orphan Grain Train (OGT) continues to reach out in this country and around the world with humanitarian aid for those in need. The longstanding efforts of OGT have opened the doors for Gospel outreach in many parts of the world. Through OGT, quality used clothing and much needed medical supplies and equipment have been shipped to all parts of the world. Since 1992, Orphan Grain Train's [18 regional divisions](#) have delivered nearly 30 million pounds of humanitarian aid to needy people in [more than 40 countries](#) on [5 continents](#). For more information, you can visit their website at www.ogt.org.

The Norfolk Circuit Bible Institute is now in its 59th year. It's held on three consecutive Sunday afternoons in January and also offers a "Children's Institute" for children from preschool through the fourth grade.

Sadly, in July of 2008 one of the congregations of our circuit closed. After more than 100 years, Zion Lutheran in rural Hoskins closed its doors for good. It was a sad day for many, but many wonderful memories live on. The church bell and perhaps the steeple cross are to be incorporated into a memorial at the church cemetery. The members of Zion were also delighted to learn that the altar and pulpit would be moved to a chapel at the Johnson – Stonacek

Funeral Home in Norfolk. The congregation has since merged with St. John Lutheran in rural Pierce.

May God continue to be with us and bless us as we labor together in the Lord's vineyard.

Omaha North Circuit Rev. Richard Gudgel

The congregations of the Omaha North Circuit rejoice as they have received the blessings of God poured out in many different ways during the past triennium. The pastors of the circuit appreciate the opportunity to meet regularly with one another, using the time to share joys and needs with one another, to encourage one another, and to grow in their faith as well as in their ways of serving. We have met occasionally also with the pastors of the other two Omaha Circuits and have appreciated getting to know one another better and to grow together. The three circuits worked together to provide a joint service of the proclamation of the Word and beautiful music in the fall of 2007.

Atonement, Mt. Calvary, Pacific Hills, St. John, St. Mark, and St. Paul are all members and supporters of Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha, Inc. Mt. Calvary and St. Paul, which support their own elementary schools, give support to Concordia High School. All the other congregations consider the schools of Concordia Omaha "their" schools.

Atonement has seen various changes. Rev. Cory Eckstrom served faithfully as vacancy pastor during 2006 and into 2007. Rev. Keith Dusheke was ordained and installed in July 2007, and during that time he has been focusing the congregation on reaching not only into the Keystone neighborhood, but also having "ministry outposts" into the Carter Lake community. Vacation Bible School and Bible studies have been very important to the congregation's ministries.

Bethany is celebrating their 70th Anniversary in 2009. The congregation continues to support a preschool with 25 students. It serves the community with an annual Trunk-and-Treat, Vacation Bible School, and garage sale.

Bethlehem Deaf and *Hope* continue to be non-calling vacancies. Bethlehem Deaf celebrated her 70th Anniversary in June 2008. She is in the second year of sharing a vicar with St. Paul and Bethany, and this year the pastoral responsibilities for her are being filled by Vicar Ryan McDermott. During the triennium, her facilities and communication equipment have been upgraded. We give thanks for Bethlehem's many years of

ministry in the deaf community of Omaha, and we pray that God would grant much opportunity to continue this work. Hope is served by Rev. James Wilkens.

Mt. Calvary hosted the *Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ* in the early spring of 2008 and has been researching other ways of reaching out into the community. Guests regularly receive letters thanking them for worshiping with the congregation. There are 61 students enrolled in their K-8 day school which has four teachers, all commissioned ministers of the LCMS.

Mt. Olive has emphasized outreach by becoming more community and neighborhood sensitive. It has joined the neighborhood association and encourages its members to volunteer in the immediate area of the church building. A new carillon system sounds out to the neighbors five times a day.

Pacific Hills continues to work with the District on Omaha campus ministry. Don Bader became the new campus ministry coordinator in August 2008. A house purchased on a lot bordering the church is now The Gathering Place for campus ministry students. The congregation continues an annual Reformation festival, hymn festival, and visiting theologian weekend. Preschool education is offered to the community, including the children of many international families. It continues to be active in Sudanese ministry. Pastor Moorhead serves on the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Synodical Structure and Governance and the Omaha Mayor's Clergy Advisory Board. The congregation also has an active music ministry, including two series: Courtyard Jazz (summer) and Third Sundays at Three (spring and fall).

St. John filled their pastoral vacancy, which occurred when Pastor Jim Rasmussen accepted a call to be the administrator of what is now Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha, with a call to seminarian Wendell Stavig. Wendell and his family are originally from Kansas City. Pastor Stavig and one of the elders attended the National Outreach Convention in San Diego, CA, in 2008. Pastor Stavig recommends the convention to all. Recent changes to the worship services include adding a worship assistant to assist with the prayer of the church every Sunday. In early 2009, the congregation plans to establish a short and long-term mission vision, evangelism and stewardship teams, and a revised constitution with personnel manual.

St. Mark has a new senior pastor and a new associate pastor with Pastor James Irwin,

former associate pastor, accepting the call to be senior pastor, and Pastor Greg Moyer, a 2008 graduate of Concordia, St. Louis, being placed as associate pastor.

St. Paul celebrated their 120th Anniversary during this triennium. It also continues to support a Pre-K through 8th grade school with 85 students. A new jr. high gym was built and dedicated in 2007. The congregation serves the community with an annual clothing give-away, garage sale, and free Thanksgiving turkey dinner. *St. Paul* and *Bethany* combine ministries in several areas. For example, they have supported a vicar for two years to serve at *Bethlehem Deaf*.

God's greatest blessings that He has for us to share are joyfully shared as the Gospel is proclaimed and as the Sacraments are administered. Physical blessings are also shared with others as we have given support to Project Hope which is within our boundaries, as well as to other agencies. God has been good and gracious and merciful in so many ways. To Him be the glory!

Omaha South Circuit
Rev. Karl Ziegler

There are nine parishes in the Omaha South Circuit.

Of the nine parishes, we have one non-calling vacancy in the circuit at *Cross Lutheran, Omaha*. That vacancy is being served by Rev. Ralph Guetersloh.

In this last triennium, three pastors have left the circuit either to begin new ministries or for other reasons. They are Rev. Norman Friedmeyer (*First, Plattsmouth-retirement*); Rev. Daniel Ritter (*Pilgrim, Bellevue to Mt. Hope, Bloomington, MN*); Rev. Jose Flores (*Zion+Peace, Omaha-closure to Grace, Wood River*).

Also, three pastors came to the Omaha South Circuit, they are Rev. Lloyd Stuhr-*First, Plattsmouth* (candidate placement); Rev. Fred Simon-*Pilgrim, Bellevue*, from *Our Redeemer, North Platte*; and Rev. Ryan Brons-*Beautiful Savior, LaVista* (candidate placement).

Sadly, one congregation and school closed in the Omaha South Circuit, *Zion+Peace Lutheran Church and School*. However, God has blessed the Omaha South Circuit with a new congregation, the *Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mission*, which meets at the old *Peace Lutheran Church* site.

The former *Zion Lutheran* site is currently being used for ESL classes; and ministry options continue to be explored for that facility and for the south Omaha community.

Also, *Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church* is working with *Cross Lutheran Church* to develop a Hispanic ministry on the site of *Cross Lutheran Church* in south Omaha. Vicar *Obdulio Felix*, from *Beautiful Savior*, is providing leadership in that area.

The pastors of the circuit gather monthly for *Winkels*, which are often filled with much spirited discussion, not to mention coffee and donuts.

Congregations of the Omaha South Circuit continue to join in a circuit-wide *Ascension* service.

Finally, two congregations have moved from their former locations within the circuit to new buildings. They are *Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church* and *Lamb of God Lutheran Church*.

God has and continues to bless the congregations of the Omaha South Circuit through His Means of Grace, and through the servant leadership of the pastors and commissioned ministers who are called to serve the congregations of the Omaha South Circuit.

<u>Congregations</u>	<u>Pastor/Pastors:</u>
<i>Beautiful Savior, Omaha</i>	Rev. Keith Grimm
	Rev. Timothy Heupel
	Rev. Ryan Brons
<i>Christ, Nebraska City/</i>	
<i>St. Paul, Weeping Water</i>	Rev. John Cotton
<i>Cross, Omaha</i>	(Vacant)
<i>First, Papillion</i>	Rev. Karl Ziegler
	Rev. Ronald Benson
<i>First, Plattsmouth</i>	Rev. Lloyd Stuhr
<i>Lamb of God, Papillion</i>	Rev. Philip Houser
<i>Pilgrim, Bellevue</i>	Rev. Fred Simon
	Rev. Danny Nietfeld
<i>Sudanese Evangelical</i>	
<i>Luth. Church in Mission</i>	Deacon Peter Bur

Omaha West Circuit
Rev. Gary Werling

"We who are many, are one body in Christ." (Romans 12:5)

"Diversity" is an apt description of the ministries of the eight congregations that comprise the Omaha West Circuit. God has called this circuit to minister to a variety of folks in various settings including urban and suburban, small town and bedroom community, and rural and agricultural.

There were several professional church worker changes in our circuit during this past triennium. *Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church*, in west Omaha, bid farewell to their long-standing senior pastor *David Block* in a retirement celebration in 2006. In addition, *Jeff Shanks*,

associate pastor, took a call to North Royalton, Ohio, in 2008. Following a period of interim ministry, the members of Divine Shepherd called Rev. Dr. Mark Hannemann from St. Louis to be Divine Shepherd's senior pastor. Pastor Hannemann accepted the call and was installed in June of 2008. In addition, Mr. Matt Koenig accepted a call to serve as DCE of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at Divine Shepherd this past triennium.

In January 2009, Matt Conrad, associate pastor of Good Shepherd, Gretna, accepted a call to St. Paul, Skokie, Illinois.

Pastor James DeLoach of Immanuel, Louisville, accepted a call to Zion, Kearney, in 2008. The Lord called Pastor Jon Sollberger from Orchard, Nebraska, to fill the pastoral vacancy of Immanuel. His installation service was celebrated in November 2008.

There were several changes at King of Kings in west Omaha. Burt Garwood, associate pastor, accepted a call to Leawood, Kansas; Jon Trinklein, associate pastor, accepted a call to Shelby Township, Michigan; and John Sproul, associate pastor, took a position with a capital stewardship campaign organization. Pastor Brad Knorr accepted a call to King of Kings to serve as Associate Pastor of Student Edge Ministries.

Nicole Koenig, who served her DCE internship at Lord of Life, Elkhorn, accepted our Lord's call to serve as DCE with specialization in youth ministries at Lord of Life in 2008.

The remaining congregations in the Omaha West Circuit which did not see any professional church worker changes this past triennium include Our Redeemer, Springfield, served by Rev. Thomas Javor; Trinity, Murdock, served by Rev. Brent Kuhlman; and Zion, Omaha, served by Rev. Thomas Schmitt.

Three congregations in our circuit have preschool ministries: Divine Shepherd and King of Kings in Omaha, and Good Shepherd, Gretna. In addition, member congregations of the Omaha West Circuit support the Concordia Lutheran School system of Omaha. We are also in the process of partnering with other Omaha Circuits in supporting a new social ministry center at the former Zion+Peace property at 40th and Q Streets, whose aim would be to help meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of many people in Omaha.

One of the highlights of our circuit this past triennium was a joint worship celebration at Divine Shepherd in September of 2007. This Omaha tri-circuit Eucharistic celebration served as

a wonderful way to gather and unite our LCMS brothers and sisters in Omaha around our common mission in Christ through a magnificent worship experience.

May our Lord continue to bless the mission and ministries of the Omaha West Circuit congregations as we live and share the glorious Gospel of His saving love in Christ!

Plainview Circuit Rev. David Kuhfal

The Plainview Circuit continues to follow the Lord's bidding to preach the Word in its purity and administer His Sacraments faithfully. The Circuit LWML and LLL have remained active. The pastors of the circuit gather monthly for Scripture study of the upcoming Gospel texts and book study which is currently *Fire and the Staff*. The pastors and their families have gathered regularly for a Super Bowl party, a 4th of July party, an end of summer campout, and a Reformation party.

The Plainview Circuit has been blessed with very little pastoral change this past triennium. The only pastoral changes have been St. Peter, Orchard, and St. Paul, Venus, with Rev. Jon Sollberger installed as their new pastor in December 2005. Then in November 2008, Pastor Sollberger accepted a call to Immanuel Lutheran, Louisville. Pastor Jerome Leckband and Pastor Dan Gifford are serving the vacancies. Christ Lutheran, Bazile Mills, and Bethlehem, Verdigre, are served by Rev. Terell Huber; First Trinity Lutheran, Bloomfield, is served by Rev. Duane Fahr; Concordia Lutheran, Clearwater, is served by Rev. Dan Feusse; Trinity Lutheran, Foster, is served by Rev. Jerome Leckband; Grace Lutheran, Neligh, and Trinity Lutheran, Elgin, are served by Rev. David Kuhfal; Immanuel Lutheran, Osmond, is served by Rev. Gary Trowbridge; Zion Lutheran, Plainview, is served by Rev. Jon Meraz; and Golgotha Lutheran, Wausa, is served by Rev. Dan Gifford.

Zion Lutheran School in Plainview is being served by Krista Masat, Margaret McCoy, and Monique and Clee Wolske, all Concordia graduates. Zion Lutheran Preschool is served by Lois Gloe.

Grace Lutheran, Neligh, and Trinity Lutheran, Elgin, have been served by vicars Nathan Muehlberg (2006-2007); Marty Measel (2007-2008), and James Voorman (2008-2009).

Things to note: Christ Lutheran, Bazile Mills, celebrated its 125th Anniversary in 2007. Bethlehem Lutheran, Verdigre, added a steeple to

its church in 2007. That same year, Pastor Terry Huber celebrated 25 years of ministry. First Trinity, Bloomfield, hosted a live nativity for the past two years and their pastor, Duane Fahr, served *Fan into Flame*. In 2008, Pastor Dan Feusse celebrated 10 years in the ministry and Pastor Jon Meraz five years in the ministry. Immanuel Lutheran, Osmond, had a major addition of a parking lot during the triennium and also started Immanuel Lutheran Preschool. Finally, St. Peter Lutheran, Orchard, is planning their 100th Anniversary in May of 2009.

Seward Circuit

Rev. Arnold Jurchen

The Seward Circuit had an active and productive triennium. The circuit faithfully carried out its assigned meetings and tasks. A number of joint workshops dealing with outreach, marriage enrichment, and education occurred in the circuit.

Pastoral changes in the circuit are Pastor Randy Wahl serving Good Shepherd Lutheran, Milford; Pastor Scott Bruick serving St. John Lutheran, Seward; and Pastor Brian Tuma serving St. John Lutheran, Cordova. For the sake of improving mission outreach, the dual parish of St. John, Cordova, and Holy Cross, Goehner, were divided, with St. John, Cordova, calling Pastor Brian Tuma, and Holy Cross, Goehner, calling Pastor Arnold Jurchen. It is hoped that this will better serve the mission needs of the Highway 6 corridor.

We also have the joy of a new mission in Seward called The Rock Lutheran Church. Though this mission is receiving pastoral care from the Lincoln Circuit, we welcome their work in reaching the unchurched and under-churched in the Seward area. A useful relationship between The Rock Lutheran Church and the St. John congregation has been established, which will prove instrumental in facing the variety of challenges in mission outreach in Seward.

Concordia University, Nebraska continues to be a blessing to our circuit with six of our congregations having students involved in ministry. Several of our pastors also serve as adjunct instructors at the University. At the present we also have two building projects underway, with a new church being built at Good Shepherd, Milford, and a new addition being built at Holy Cross, Goehner.

God has continued to bless His work in the Seward Circuit, and we look with anticipation toward what He will do in our midst in the next triennium.

Wayne Circuit

Rev. William Engebretsen

The Wayne Circuit revels in our relative obscurity, tucked away in our little northeast corner of the District. But it can present a problem when it comes to filling vacancies and calling pastors. As Gunny Highway from the movie *Heartbreak Ridge* says, "You need to improvise, overcome, and adapt." So when the two smallest churches in the circuit became vacant, (Trinity, Altona and St. Paul, Carroll) in the middle of the summer 2006, we tried just that tactic. We called on Pastor David Ohlman from St. John, Pilger, and the West Point Circuit to fill in at Altona; and Pastor Timothy Steckling from our own St. Paul, Winside, filled the vacancy at Carroll. Plans were put into the works very soon to have St. John, Pilger, and Trinity, Altona, become a dual parish. This was finally accomplished and Pastor Ohlman was installed at Altona on August 19, 2007. St. Paul, Carroll, continues to remain a "permanent vacancy" filled by Pastor Steckling. On January 14, Hope, South Sioux City, became vacant; and again it was time to improvise, overcome, and adapt. Pastor Randy Knuth was able to fill the vacancy. Pastor Knuth was finished with his colloquy training and waiting to be placed by Iowa District West. After filling the vacancy for a short time, Hope called Pastor Knuth and he was installed October 28, 2007.

With a full contingent of pastors, we continue to enjoy our monthly meetings with an exegetical study, Divine Service, and a practical study. Starting in September 2007, we began reading through and discussing the *Augsburg Confession* for our practical study. This practice still continues to date.

Pastor Pasche and Pastor Lilienkamp of Grace, Wayne, continue to work with the campus ministry. They are looking to start a sort of "coffee shop" for weekly devotions, to attract the college crowd and familiarize them with Christian teaching. In November 2006, Pastor Willie Bertrand of St. Paul, Concord, and Immanuel, rural Wakefield, along with Mr. Charles Maier of Grace, Wayne, and Mr. Fred Mann of St. Paul, Winside, planned our 2006 Circuit Bible Institute. We had Dr. David Held of Seward give a presentation about the new hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*. As of this date, all but one congregation in our circuit now has the *LSB*. Our 2007 Circuit Bible Institute was planned by Pastor Steckling, Pastor Terry Kenitz of Trinity, Martinsburg, and Charles Maier. We had a Reformation theme with Pastor Georg Williams of Ainsworth talking about

Kati Luther; Pastor Jerome Leckband of Foster talking on the infallible Word; and Pastor Dan Feusse of Clearwater talking about A.C. IV.

In August 2008, we held our Circuit Convocation at St. Paul, Winside, with a presentation on contemporary worship by Pastor Jon Sollberger of Orchard.

Our Circuit continues to sponsor Claude and Rhoda Houge, who are missionaries in Kenya, through the Together in Mission project.

There are many other things going on in the individual churches of our circuit; but this overview, be it a rather sketchy one, will have to do. God has indeed granted rich blessings to the people and churches of our circuit, and we are truly thankful to Him.

West Point Circuit Rev. James Carretto

The last triennium was a good triennium, and yet also there was some sorrow. At the beginning of 2008, we were a full circuit! There were no pastoral vacancies in our circuit and everything was running smoothly. But then came 2008.

St. Paul, West Point: Pastor Richard Bringewatt accepted the call as senior pastor on January 7, 2008. He was installed on Sunday, March 9, 2008. He joined the staff that included Pastor Kevin Cook as associate pastor. However, Pastor Cook received a call from Holy Cross Lutheran Church of Livingston, Illinois. He accepted the call to Livingston on July 14, 2008.

St. John, Lyons: Pastor Chris Bushre received a call to St. John Lutheran Church of Geneseo, Illinois, and accepted that call on August 5, 2008. Pastor Philip Hale of St. Paul, Bancroft, has served the vacancy left by Pastor Bushre. The congregation is in consultation with President Sommerfeld on the options of a sole pastorate or a dual parish situation.

Zion, Bancroft, and My People Lutheran Outreach (mission to the Omaha tribe): Pastor Jeff Warner has served this dual ministry for the past few years. In an agreement made by the West Point Circuit and Zion, Bancroft, the circuit supported half of this dual ministry. It became a very difficult task to gather funds for supporting this ministry and the agreement was then terminated on December 31, 2008, after about one year of deliberations. At the present time, the mission at Macy is being covered part time by pastors of the West Point Circuit, most especially Pastor Ricky Jacob of Winnebago, Nebraska, and Pastor Warner, following his recent release from

disability due to health concerns. Consultations are also being held with President Sommerfeld on the status of Zion, Bancroft.

Zion Lutheran School, Bancroft: Due to recent decreases and a decrease in students at the school, Zion Lutheran School decided to close its doors in September of 2008. This was a great loss to our circuit, and we thank our Lord for the tremendous work of this school over its history. Many children learned about their Savior from the dedicated staff of this school. May the Lord bless the work that was done there so that His Kingdom may be advanced.

West Point Circuit Bible Institute: Led by Pastor David Ohlman, the West Point Circuit Bible Institute Board decided on a one-day event on October 26, 2008. The featured speaker for the afternoon and evening Reformation service was Bishop Walter Obare of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya. The afternoon included a paper written by Bishop Obare, as well as a great Q&A session with him. The evening Reformation Divine Service included participation by eight area clergy with Bishop Obare preaching. A soup supper was served between the afternoon and evening sessions. This institute was truly one of the high points of our circuit's work in 2008.

Western Sandhills Circuit Rev. Robert Pierce

Since the last Nebraska District Convention, a few changes have occurred.

Rev. Fred Simon received and accepted the call to Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Bellevue. That left a pastoral vacancy at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, North Platte. Our Redeemer has called several times, but has a vacant pulpit yet. Rev. Robert Deardoff is the vacancy pastor, while Rev. Carl Pullmann is helping their school.

St. John Lutheran Church, Brule, became a new congregation in the Western Sandhills Circuit after ending its dual parish arrangement with Zion Lutheran Church, Big Springs. After several returned calls, St. John requested a pastor from spring placement from one of the seminaries in 2008. The Lord has blessed them with Rev. Jon Dickmader, a second-career man. He, with his wife Amy and four children, moved to Brule. He was ordained and installed by Rev. Russ Sommerfeld in July 2008.

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Ogallala, discontinued grades seven and eight in its school. Mr. Stan Wehling, the principal and teacher of those grades, retired along with his wife, Paula. Mrs. Glenda Dobbertein was the head teacher until Mr. John Johnson accepted the call to be their

principal. Eileen Johnson, his wife, is teaching grades three and four at St. Paul. When the 2008 school year ended, Mrs. Dobbertien resigned from teaching the preschool class at St. Paul school, yet helps out once a week.

At Our Redeemer Lutheran School, Bill Leach, principal, took a call out of Nebraska. Their new principal is Janet Livingston, who was already a teacher on staff.

Andy Safarik, DELTO vicar at Hyannis, continues in his studies with Rev. David Dobbertein while doing congregational work at three locations. He is expected to be ordained July 2009.

Pastoral Winkels are held in revolving locations from September to May. Circuit congregations are receiving and passing along the Good News of Jesus Christ and His forgiveness to their areas.

York Circuit

Rev. Loren Cooper

As we go to press, the York Circuit enjoys a time of no pastoral vacancies. The recently formed dual parish of Gresham and Thayer helped alleviate some of those concerns. New to the circuit since last Convention are Pastor Randall Smith at St. Peter, Hampton; Pastor Karl Hollibaugh, St. Paul, Utica (intentional interim); and most recently installed, Pastor Al Bergstrazer at Faith, York.

The circuit is aware of mission opportunities on the fringe areas of the circuit, and may be to one degree or another involved in further investigation of these possibilities.

The circuit's regular conferences rotate between congregations, and current studies include working through the book of Hebrews as well as *The Augsburg Confession*. This study time has engendered a strong spirit of fellowship and appreciation for our brother pastors, our circuit congregations, and our commitment to the Word and the Confessions. This bond has been a blessing to our congregations as well in appreciation of sister congregations and circuit pastors.

We ask the Lord to lead and guide us as we move into the future and seek His guidance in the realm of potential mission endeavors.

Administrative Assistants' Reports

Church Worker Health

Rev. Mark Rockenbach M.Div., MAC, LMHP

Research funded by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod indicates that about four in ten LCMS pastors and about a third of teachers and DCEs leave the ministry due to their own personal, family, and ministry crises. These professional church workers reported feeling lonely and isolated due to the stresses and challenges they faced as called church workers. It is a joy for me to serve in a position that directly supports church workers in the name of Christ. I thank the Nebraska District for calling me to serve in this most humbling vocation.

During this past triennium I have made regular visits upon our called workers, assessing their psychological and spiritual status and offering counseling to address those needs. This work has been producing great fruit. For example, feuding pastors confessed their sins to each other and began working together rather than against each other. Teachers and DCEs struggling with burnout are learning to set healthy boundaries. Church workers struggling with personal issues that were negatively impacting their work are now managing both personal and work issues in a more Godly way. The list is endless of how many church workers have been helped who are better able to serve in the call that God has given to them.

In addition to my counseling sessions with workers, I also provide educational workshops and sermons to address various issues. I have made more than 50 presentations throughout the District, educating both church workers and laity with topics such as responding to conflict; setting boundaries; teamwork; dealing with crisis; supporting called workers; and how to deal with anger, gossip, and depression.

I continue to promote Grace Place Retreats. Approximately 15 couples attend this event each year. This was the first year they offered an event for single workers, and various single church workers from Nebraska attended this event.

We have begun to offer a yearly retreat for the wives of our pastors. It is an overnight event that is designed to support women who faithfully serve in a most unique vocation. This year they decided to call themselves Helpmates In Ministry (HIM).

The Parish Health Committee regularly meets and assesses ways to support health ministries in the District. A grant has been received

to conduct training events about domestic violence. Various trainings took place that both church workers and laity attended. Domestic violence material was also purchased that can be checked out from the District Office. The committee also purchased a curriculum that addresses bullying. This resource would be useful for youth programs and schools in the District.

In order to promote godly responses to conflict, a conflict reconciliation training was held in the District. Ambassadors of Reconciliation conducted the training which provided education and hands-on opportunities. Eighteen people from 13 Nebraska congregations participated in the training, and we were also thrilled to have 12 people from congregations outside of Nebraska participate in the training. I made follow-up visits on all the Nebraska participants, and encouraged them to conduct a Bible study on this topic and report other ways they can use the tools in their personal and congregational life. It is my hope that further trainings will take place in Nebraska and that reconciliation ministries can be established in every congregation in the District.

I give thanks to God for our partnership in the Gospel. And I pray that our Lord continues to strengthen you in His Word.

Communications

Nichole Hetz

The mission of the Nebraska District Office is to resource congregations, leaders, and related organizations in their mission of discipling the saved and proclaiming Christ to a lost and changing world. The Nebraska District Communications Office is committed to contributing to this ministry by informing the District membership of what God is doing through our ministry together. One resource offered by the District Office is the sharing of information on events, happenings, ministry ideas, and stories with the church workers and lay leaders of the Nebraska District.

Nebraska Lutheran Reporter

The *Nebraska Lutheran Reporter* is a monthly newsletter sent to congregations of the District at no charge to them. It contains news and information on happenings across the District, as well as ministry stories, congregational anniversaries, and other news items supplied by District congregations, schools, and ministries. Congregations are asked to distribute this newsletter to each member or family unit of the

congregation, usually through the newsletter, bulletin, or church “mailbox.”

The *Nebraska Lutheran Reporter* is printed on 11” x 17” paper, then folded in half, creating a four-page newsletter. This format allows the print to be larger and more stories to be included, along with photographs when appropriate.

As of December 2008, over 40,000 *Reporters* are printed and distributed each month. Each congregation is encouraged to help distribute this informational newsletter to its members monthly. A print-ready copy of the *Reporter* is also available on the District website each month, as well as being emailed to those in the District and around Synod who have requested to receive it. Some Nebraska congregations print the *Reporter* in-house and distribute it, while others send the electronic copy to their email list along with their monthly newsletter.

District Website

The Nebraska District website, www.ndlcms.org, continues to be a usable ministry resource for those looking to gather information on the Nebraska District from the Internet. The number of searches on the website each week remains fairly constant, indicating that people are aware of the District’s web presence and regularly visit the site for information.

Email Update

The *Email Update* is an electronic newsletter sent out weekly or as the need arises to pass along information important to the members of the District. It contains prayer requests, in-depth information on upcoming events in the District, and information from Synod and other LCMS entities across the country.

The *Email Update* continued to grow in the past triennium. At the present time, there are over 1,100 individuals receiving the *Update* weekly. This list includes pastors, teachers, DCEs, missionaries, church office staff, lay members, Synod employees, and those from around the LCMS who are interested in the ministry taking place in the Nebraska District.

Anyone can be added to the mailing list by sending their email address to communications@ndlcms.org with a request to be added to the list, or by visiting the District website at <http://www.ndlcms.org/news/communications/update.html>. An archive of past newsletters is also available at this site.

The Nebraska District takes seriously the opportunity to provide resources to the workers, congregations, and members of the District. The Communications Office continues to work at providing these resources in the most accessible and economical ways possible.

Education and Youth

Mr. Don Weber

Commissioned Workers

The Nebraska District LCMS is blessed to have 440 teachers, both rostered and non-rostered, serving in the District Lutheran schools. Of those, 129 serve in preschools, 244 in elementary schools, and 67 in high schools. A total of 546 rostered commissioned ministers call the Nebraska District LCMS home. Of these, 240 are active teachers, 49 are on candidate status, 50 on non-candidate status, 61 serve at Concordia University, 28 serve as DCEs, and 118 are on emeritus status.

Education

Two committees seek to help the District education efforts of congregations. The School Committee looks to the interests of District Lutheran schools, while the Parish Education Committee seeks to support and resource District congregations in parish education areas of confirmation, midweek programs, Vacation Bible School, Sunday school, adult education, singles ministry, and age-wave ministry.

Nebraska District Lutheran Schools

The Nebraska District LCMS School Committee serves the 38 free-standing preschools, 39 elementary schools, and four high schools operated by congregations and associations in the District. Two congregations closed their elementary school operations—St. John, Madison, and Zion, Bancroft. Two congregations initiated preschools—Christ, Cairo, and Christ, O’Neill. The purpose of the committee is to develop Christ-centered school ministry; provide meaningful and effective resources to congregational school ministry leaders; develop leadership opportunities for school ministry; develop quality District-wide school ministry experiences; connect District school ministry to national opportunities and events; and cooperate with Concordia University, Nebraska in the recruitment of students for full-time ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Committee objectives are the following:

1. To develop a fall conference for all Nebraska District LCMS school teachers.
2. To develop a fall teacher retreat for all teachers at the beginning of the new school year.
3. To develop a spring conference for all District school administrators.
4. To develop a conference for early childhood center administrators.
5. To develop a workshop for all new District teachers.
6. To encourage school administrators toward professional growth and to have monthly circuit meetings.
7. To encourage school improvement through National Lutheran School Accreditation.

8. To develop a plan for District-wide school improvement.
9. To assist schools in preparing for major emergencies and government mandates.
10. To encourage development of technology use in Nebraska District Lutheran Schools.
11. To annually select an educator to be the Outstanding Nebraska Lutheran Educator.
12. To select a project for the annual Hearts for Jesus Project for District schools.
13. To help coordinate District-wide school events in sports; music; and curriculum area fairs, bees, and contests.
14. To encourage the opening of new Lutheran schools in the District, using the Genesis Project when possible.
15. To provide services and opportunities for service to emeritus teachers in the Nebraska District.
16. To flexibly respond to the school ministry needs in the Nebraska District, sometimes adding new programs and activities and at other times discontinuing those programs and activities which are no longer helpful or supported.

The committee has a chair for each of the objectives. The chair gathers an action team to address the assigned objective. During the last three years, the committee has encouraged and noted growth in fourteen of the sixteen areas. Of special note is the increase in the number of schools successfully accredited by the National Lutheran School Accreditation process. Nearly half the elementary schools and half the high schools have been accredited. Two new preschools have been initiated and two more are under study. Emeritus teachers have been organized to begin some meaningful ministry. The principals have begun to participate in professional growth activities sponsored by the District.

Parish Education

The Nebraska District LCMS Parish Education Committee seeks to assist congregations to offer a quality program of education in the parish. The purpose of the Nebraska District Parish Education Ministry Committee is to develop Christ-centered parish education ministry; provide meaningful and effective resources to congregational parish education ministry leaders; develop leadership opportunities for parish education ministry; develop quality District-wide parish education ministry experiences; connect District parish education ministry to national opportunities and events; and cooperate with Concordia University, Nebraska in the recruitment

of students for full-time ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Objectives for the Parish Education Committee include developing support to District congregations for ministries in:

1. Sunday School
2. Vacation Bible School
3. Adult Discipleship
4. Confirmation Instruction
5. Midweek School
6. Single Ministry
7. Age-Wave Ministry
8. Family Ministry

The committee also works to flexibly respond to the parish education ministry needs of congregations in the Nebraska District by adding new programs and activities and at other times discontinuing programs and activities which are no longer helpful or supported.

The Parish Education Committee is currently assessing congregation needs and developing standards for various aspects of parish education. Committee members have been active presenting workshops at the District Prairie Fire events and in congregations.

Youth

The Nebraska District LCMS Youth Committee works to enhance youth ministry in the District at the congregation level, the District level, and the national level.

The purpose of the Nebraska District Youth Committee is to develop Christ-centered youth ministry to provide meaningful and effective resources to congregational youth leaders; develop leadership opportunities for youth; develop quality District-wide youth experiences; connect District youth to national opportunities and events; and cooperate with Concordia University, Nebraska in the recruitment of students for full-time ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Committee objectives include:

1. Identification of service opportunities.
2. Cooperation with the LCMS Youth Ministry Department in promoting the triennial National Youth Gathering.
3. To plan, develop, and offer a triennial Nebraska District Youth Gathering.
4. To plan, develop, and offer junior high camps and retreats for students in Grades 6-8.
5. To plan, develop, and offer leadership training opportunities and events for District youth.
6. To plan, develop, and offer training events for congregational adult youth counselors.
7. To provide consultation, print, and media resources to congregational youth ministry leaders.

8. To encourage students to enroll in church worker training programs at Concordia University.
9. To flexibly respond to the youth ministry needs of congregations in the Nebraska District, sometimes adding new programs and activities and at other times discontinuing those programs and activities which are no longer helpful to or supported by congregations.

Members of the Youth Committee have been actively involved with implementing leadership training opportunities for District youth, junior high youth activities at Camp Luther, the Nebraska District LCMS Youth Gathering, and organizing District youth for the National Youth Gathering.

District Youth Gathering Report Rev. Timothy Heupel

The 2008 Nebraska District Youth Gathering Steering Committee was comprised of the following individuals: Andrew Rohwer, Adam Peters, Steve Prescott, Stacey Swan, Rhonda McClellan, Scotte Hansen, Tara Hess, Dave Ricke, and myself. We received extraordinary help from Don Weber, Kathy Melton, and Nichole Hetz of the District Office. Special thanks need to be offered to Kimbrie Vlach of Concordia University, Nebraska and the students she brought to be of assistance.

The theme of the gathering was *Identified*. The theme was broken into three concepts with one concept presented each day. The first day was “Who I was.” The second day’s concept was “Who I am in Christ.” The third day centered on a time of celebration of “Who we will be in Glory.”

There were over 900 individuals in attendance. An emphasis was made this year to invite individuals who do not have a church home. We were pleased to welcome 20 such guests as a part of the Gathering.

The Gathering band was Room 211 Band of Christ Lutheran in Lincoln. The main speaker was Jeffery Meinz of Colorado Springs, Colorado. The message of *Identified* was also shared through an improv group and devotional leaders. Pastor Ryan Matthias of Concordia University, Nebraska proclaimed the message of God’s Word at the closing celebration.

Young people and counselors were given the opportunity to attend breakout sessions dealing with the following topics:

- Strengthening Your Dating Relationship
- Youth-Led Youth Ministry
- Confirmation
- Teens and Mental Health
- Helping Friends Who are Hurting
- Meet the Band
- Teen Bridge Building
- Feed the World!
- Why are You a Christian?
- Adjusting to College Life
- Sharing Jesus With Your Friends
- Social Networking Sites

Thrivent presented an opportunity to do a service project at the gathering in conjunction with Orphan Grain Train. Food packets were assembled to be distributed to Mexico and Russia.

A host of evening activities presented the young people and adults with an opportunity to socialize with others at the gathering. These fellowship activities included karaoke, bull riding, inflatable games, a coffee house, and a high school praise band concert. On Saturday, about half of the students made use of the Coco Keys Water Resort, while the other half used the facility’s swim area.

The steering committee will meet on January 15 to evaluate the event, which many have already stated was a huge success. To God Be the Glory!

Principals’ Conference Mr. Don Weber

The 2006 Nebraska District LCMS Principals’ Conference met at the Leadership Center in Aurora on April 20 and 21, 2006, under the theme *Take Up Your Cross – A Renewal of Your Mind, Body, and Soul*, from Matthew 16:24. The conference officers Dean Plummer, chair; Joel Witt, chair-elect; Bob Brauer, secretary; and John Seim, treasurer, helped to lead conference devotions at appointed times. Mr. Bill Chandler led a Bible study on the theme passage. Principals new to the group included Mrs. Sharon Witt, St. Peter, Davenport; Mr. Merv Dehning, Trinity, Lincoln; Mr. Paul Krueger, St. John, Battle Creek; and Mrs. Glenda Dobbertien, St. Paul, Ogallala. The conference also said goodbye to Jane Gronau, retiring from St. John, Columbus; and Susan Kelber, Immanuel, Columbus, who moved out of the District. Mr. Terry Schmidt, associate director of School Ministry for the LCMS and director of National Lutheran School Accreditation process for the International Center in St. Louis gave three presentations “Tools For Lutheran School Leaders-

-Focus and Execute,” “Dealing With Difficult People,” and “Team Tag—Leadership With Purpose.” Dr. Ron Bork of Concordia University, Nebraska presented information for a program called *STAR-Online*. The conference conducted elections with the following results: Joel Witt, chair; Bob Saeger, chair-elect; Dave Koopman, secretary; and Kathy Gloystein, member-at-large. Don Weber distributed the principals’ report and briefly discussed some of the items in it. Mr. Weber asked the conference attendees to consider the value of the Synod to schools in the District. He emphasized the power and benefits of working together. Mr. Gary Thies concluded the conference presentations with his report about mission opportunities in the world.

The 2007 Nebraska District LCMS Principals’ Conference met at the Leadership Center in Aurora on April 19 and 20, 2007. The theme was *Open Your Eyes And Look at the Fields, They are Ripe For Harvest* from John 4:35. The conference officers Dean Plummer, chair; Bob Sager, chair-elect; Dave Koopman, secretary; and Kathy Gloystien, member-at-large, helped to lead the conference. Nebraska District President, Rev. Russ Sommerfeld, led opening devotions from Romans 12:1-8 entitled “Living Sacrifices” and continued with a review of the mission fields in the Nebraska District and the mission effort in Sudan sponsored by the Nebraska District. Ed Grube, the director of publications/communications for LEA, was the guest presenter. He presented the following sectional topics “I Witness,” “Getting People to Read What You Write,” and “Somebody Loves Me: Self-Esteem for Principals.” Principal Emeritus Bill Chandler from Grand Island led the afternoon Bible study on John 4:4-42 entitled “When and How Do We Harvest?” The conference decided a District principals’ conference will be held next year even though the LEA Convocation in Minneapolis is a week later in April 2008. The date of April 17-18 was announced as the conference date. Merv Dehning (Trinity, Lincoln) was elected president-elect and Barb Cook (St. Paul, Arlington) was elected secretary. It was decided to make the Sudanese mission in the Nebraska District the 2008 Hearts for Jesus Project. Rev. Gene Gierke, representing the Nebraska District Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), reviewed the demographic study program available through LCEF. Each principal received an individual demographic study report for their school. Rev. Richard Boring, executive for missions and outreach for the Nebraska District, spoke about the Nebraska mission field on the

topics “*Witnessing to Family and Friends.*” Closing devotions were led by Bob Saeger (Immanuel, Polk).

The Nebraska District LCMS principals met at the Leadership Center in Aurora, Thursday and Friday, April 17 and 18, 2008. The conference theme was *Partners in the Harvest! Sowing and Reaping for Eternity* from John 4:36 and Isaiah 55:10-11. The 37 principals in attendance heard from District President Russ Sommerfeld on partnering with the Nebraska District LCMS; Pastor Chip Winter about partnering with parents; Pastor Mark Rockenbach about partnering with pastors; and Pastor Richard Boring about partnering in mission. In addition, Mr. Hank Raedeke gave a presentation about organizing for ministry with the Fast Direct System, and Frieda Lang and Chris Cassel presented about Rule Fourteen and the *Nebraska Student and Staff Record System* (NSSRS) requirements of the State of Nebraska. Mr. Kurth Brashear gave information about the Children’s Scholarship Fund of Omaha. Rev. Gene Geirke told about programs the Lutheran Church Extension Fund has available to churchworkers. Mr. Bill Chandler led a Bible study based on “Passages.” Rev. Keith Christansen told about a website for families called *Faith Moments*. Devotional times were led by Barb Cook and Merv Dehning. Mr. Paul Leckband presented for the Resolutions Committee. Election results showed Merv Dehning as chair, Annette Sonntag as chair-elect, Tony Splittgerber as secretary, and Kathy Gloystein as member-at-large for the planning committee. The group elected to conduct a fall workshop for principals at a time and place to be named later, and hold the regular principals’ conference at the Aurora Leadership Center on April 23-24, 2009. The principals also selected the 2009 Hearts for Jesus project to be shared equally between two Nebraska based missionaries serving in foreign fields: one-half each to Dr. Al Schmidt and Sharon Owens.

Teachers’ Conference

Mr. Don Weber

On October 19-20, 2006, 385 the Nebraska District LCMS teachers met at Faith Lutheran School in Lincoln for their fall conference under the theme *Hope and A Future: Lutheran Schools ABLAZE!* taken from Jeremiah 29:11, “*For I know the plans I have for you,*” declares the Lord, “*plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*” The keynote presenter, Director of School Ministry for the Texas District Dr. William Hinz, gave an

inspirational message using the “Fish Philosophy” material. Dr. Hinz encouraged the teachers and gave them a message of commendation for their ministry service. The devotional leader was Pastor John Schmidt of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Lincoln, who was serving as the vacancy senior pastor at Faith, Lincoln. The preacher for the worship service was Pastor Bill Steinbauer who serves as campus pastor at the University Lutheran Chapel at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Twenty-three sectional workshops were offered on the second day of the conference. During the business meeting, the officers for the next conference were determined: Bill Meyer, chairman, Christ, Norfolk; Connie Meyer, chair-elect, Faith, Lincoln; Jeanette Schipporeit, secretary, Christ, Norfolk; Suzanne Riedel, secretary-elect, Christ, Norfolk; Bill Masters, treasurer, St. John, Battle Creek; Lyle Sharman, treasurer-elect, Immanuel, Columbus. Evaluations showed a positive reception of the program from the teachers at the conference.

In 2007, the Nebraska District LCMS commissioned workers joined the All Professional Church Workers Conference as they met on October 22-24 at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln.

Approximately 370 teachers attended the 2008 Nebraska District LCMS Fall Teachers’ Conference held October 23-24, 2008, at Trinity Lutheran School in Fremont. Principal Jim Knoepfel and the faculty of Trinity Lutheran School hosted and facilitated a smoothly run conference. The conference theme was *Be Still and Know* from Psalm 46:10. Rev. Dan Heuer and Rev. Mike Meyer from Trinity led the conference worship and devotions. The offering of \$1,053.11 was designated for school uniforms for students in Sudan. Rev. Dr. David Paul Zimmerman presented keynote addresses and small group discussions. The assembly replaced the office of treasurer with the office of member-at-large. The assembly elected Merv Dehning, chair-elect; Judy Bartels, secretary-elect; and David Koopman, member-at-large elect. This group joins Sandy Armstrong, chair; Krista Barnhouse, secretary; and Cleo Wolske, member-at-large, in planning the 2009 conference. Cassie McMahan was announced as the 2008 Nebraska Lutheran Teacher of the Year.

Lay Leadership Program Rev. Marvin Bergman

Since its beginning in 2003, the Lay Leadership Program has offered a series of courses in four locations: Holdrege, Norfolk, Omaha, and

Seward. Nearly 100 participants have enrolled in courses.

The ten courses that have been offered are: History and Theology of the Old Testament, History and Theology of the New Testament, the Lutheran Confessions, Interpreting the Bible, Teaching the Christian Faith, the Caring Ministry of the Church, Mission Outreach in Multicultural Contexts, Worship in the 21st Century, History of the Church’s Mission, and Proclaiming the Word (for DELTO and SMP candidates). Courses have been taught by pastors and directors of Christian education of the Nebraska District and faculty of Concordia University.

In the fall of 2008, two courses were delivered online, History and Theology of the Old Testament and History and Theology of the New Testament.

In response to the Specific Ministry Program (SMP) offered by the two seminaries of the Synod, the Lay Ministry Program curriculum is being revised to accommodate changes with new courses being added.

At this time, six participants in the Lay Leadership Program are serving as DELTO vicars. A seventh participant is entering SMP in a neighboring district. One participant serves as a church planter, with the congregation, 1C Mission Church of the LCMS in Columbus, being received as a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in January 2009. Another participant is engaged in planting Word of Life Lutheran Church in Lincoln which expects to be received as a congregation by the Synod in 2009.

Two Sudanese men who participated in lay leadership classes are serving as vicars in Nebraska congregations while enrolled in the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) program of the seminaries. Another two Sudanese men are enrolled in the same program.

Participants of the Lay Ministry Program are serving their congregations and communities in various ways, such as chairing a mission outreach committee, serving as an elder, and directing a congregation’s Stephen Ministry.

What distinguishes the Lay Ministry Program of the Nebraska District are the support of pastors who actively recruit members for classes, a high level of commitment by gifted lay participants, and excellence of instruction.

Possibilities for laity to use their gifts in service, as in visitation and outreach ministries, are multiple. More of the gifts of laity who wish to serve await being tapped and invested in service to their Lord, the Church, and the world.

Missions and Outreach

Rev. Richard Boring

I thank each of you for the opportunity to serve the Lord and you in missions and outreach in Nebraska. I have had the privilege to share about mission work in Nebraska and Sudan in several of your congregations this past triennium. This has given me the opportunity to let you know what God is doing through you and the 245 congregations in the District as we partner together to be Christ's witnesses to all people.

Two new mission email newsletters were developed this triennium titled *Mission Fields Nebraska* and *Nebraskans Reaching Out to Sudan*. If you would like to receive the newsletters, email missions@ndlcms.org and request the mission newsletters. To find archived newsletters go to <http://www.ndlcms.org/ministries/district/index.html>.

As I travel around Nebraska, I am reminded of Revelation 7:9, "*After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb....*" I see a glimpse of heaven in Nebraska as I see Hispanic, Sudanese, Asian, and Anglo people moving into Nebraska. The fields are ripe and ready for harvest.

This triennium, three Anglo churches were planted in Nebraska. The District partnered

with Peace, Columbus, to plant 1C Mission Church of the LCMS, in Columbus; and St. Paul, Malcolm, to plant Word of Life Lutheran Church in Lincoln. The District partnered with Christ, Lincoln, to assist The Rock Lutheran Church as a church start in Seward. In the fall of 2008, a group of people in Aurora started Bible study with the hope of starting a worship service in Aurora in the fall of 2009.

Eight churches in the Omaha and Lincoln areas have started revitalization through Transforming Churches Network (TCN). The District is working with TCN and St. Paul Institute for Education (SPIFE) to develop revitalization for rural churches.

The Nebraska District continues to do mission work among the Hispanics, Sudanese, Native Americans, people of the Sandhills, and college students. This past triennium, there has been a shift for the mission ministries to partner with local congregations or become established congregations in the District. This has helped the missions to take local ownership of their ministries. The District continues to resource and grant funds to these missions from the offerings we receive from you. Each mission ministry has written a report. I encourage you to read those reports.

I want to thank the 245 congregations in the District for your support. You are the ones that God works through to make sure mission work is done in Nebraska and to the ends of the earth.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund

Paul Pettit, Vice President

Greetings and God's blessings to each of you from the volunteers and staff of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. LCEF is the unique ministry-through-investment organization that offers Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod members the opportunity to invest their money, earn interest, and at the same time help build churches, schools, and other facilities for ministry.

The mission of Lutheran Church Extension Fund is *“to support the Church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner of the LCMS, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.”* LCEF is a ministry. Everything we do revolves around “building the Kingdom of God.” We take our mission very seriously, and thank and praise God for His many servants in the Nebraska District, as well as across the country.

God has richly blessed LCEF through the ministry of volunteers, making it possible to expand the ministry in Nebraska through the work of these dedicated Christians who give their time, hard work, input, and advice to reach out in support of the Great Commission. Over the years, we have been blessed with countless volunteer workers and couples in the LCEF family who have served as K.I.D.S. stamp managers, congregational representatives, circuit directors, regional directors, District committee members, and more. We have also been richly blessed by the National and District staff serving God through their work with LCEF. Serving the Nebraska LCEF program as Promotion Director is Rev. Eugene Gierke, and serving as support staff at various times over the last triennium have been: Carol Oetting, Carrie Parr, and Jan Bruick. We thank God for each of our dedicated volunteers and staff!

The ministry of Church Extension within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod began in 1902, when members of several LCMS congregations pooled their funds and gave \$400 to a new congregation in need of a worship facility. The Lutheran Church Extension Fund was incorporated in 1978 to efficiently fulfill state and federal regulations regarding investments and loans.

God has truly blessed the ministry of LCEF. To date, 28 of the 35 LCMS districts have consolidated their Church Extension activities with LCEF. The Lutheran Church Extension Fund has grown to an organization with total assets

exceeding \$1.8 billion, invested dollars approaching \$1.6 billion, net loans receivable in excess of \$1.5 billion, and net assets of over \$150 million. The Nebraska program has grown to over \$68 million in total assets and net assets of almost \$9 million. God has accomplished all this with approximately four percent of LCMS members as investors. Dream about what could be accomplished with more members encouraged to invest in the ministry. Earn a fair rate of return on your investment **and receive a ministry dividend** – your investment will provide funds to help others spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The LCEF Nebraska Program has been active during the triennium. I would like to share the following as a sample of the activities during the last three years:

- The LCEF Nebraska Program participates in the annual LCEF Fall Leadership Conference. This annual conference is an opportunity for the leadership of the LCMS and LCEF across the country to join for a time of education, discussion, dialog, and celebration of God's blessings. We also continue to participate in educational and training events for our workers, including: annual promotion workshops, continuing education workshops, and administrative assistant workshops.
- The LCEF Nebraska Program has been active in the area of stewardship. In addition to participation in the annual District Stewardship Leaders' Conference with other stewardship leaders from around the country, we hosted the Upper Midwest Stewardship Leaders' Conference and have been active in supporting personal financial planning opportunities. We have funded the training for the guest leaders for the Consecrated Stewards Program and continue to encourage congregations to take advantage of the benefits of the program. We continue to provide grant support to congregations that have successfully completed their first year of Consecrated Stewards.
- LCEF continues to be a strong supporter of activities in support of *Ablaze!*, including encouragement and financial support of activities such as Prairie Fire, revitalization, and new mission starts.
- The LCEF Nebraska Program had the opportunity to host the National LCEF Board of Directors during this triennium, providing them

with an on-site look at the ministry impact of LCEF in the Nebraska District. The Board was provided a bus tour of selected ministry sites and a presentation of the LCEF Nebraska Program ministry.

- Concordia University, Nebraska seniors were provided information on LCEF through an ice cream social activity. Information was shared on the opportunities for church worker loans in addition to the other loan, investment, and service opportunities through LCEF.
- Regional investor thank-you breakfasts were held to provide a thank you to our investors and share with them some of the ministry impact supported through their investments.
- LCEF circuit directors joined together to encourage each other and receive an update on the many loan, investment, and service opportunities available through LCEF.
- LCEF congregational representative meetings were held to update and encourage volunteers and share enhancements in the available investments, loans, and services through LCEF.
- LCEF sponsored congregational treasurer/business managers' conferences, providing opportunities for networking and educational topics impacting the treasurers/business managers and their congregations.
- LCEF has held LCMS school faculty meetings across the District to discuss the opportunities for LCEF and the schools/faculty to partner together for ministry. The K.I.D.S. stamp program has been an integral part of those meetings.
- In the three years ending with this report, more than 30 Nebraska congregations and schools were directly impacted by loans or services provided through LCEF. Over 20 percent of our congregations used the services of LCEF during the last three years alone. Many more congregations and schools received consultation and/or initial presentations which did not result in contracting for loans or services. In addition, every congregation within the District received an iMark Demographic study to assist with planning and projections within their community. Over 80 percent of all congregations across the country have been impacted by loans or services through LCEF.
- In the three years ending with this report, new or refinanced loans totaling over \$16 million have been approved for congregations of the Nebraska District through the LCEF Nebraska Program. In addition, the national office of LCEF approved several loans or guarantees for recognized service

organizations of the LCMS within Nebraska during the same period.

- LCEF provides funds to each district program from earnings for use in supporting mission and ministry opportunities within the district. LCEF has provided nearly \$170,000 during this triennium for expanding and supporting mission and ministry opportunities. In addition, LCEF has participated in and/or provided support for numerous meetings, conferences, and events across the District including: pastor and teacher conferences; all professional conference; administrators' conference; Prairie Fire; LLL, LWML-N, LWML-S, and Orphan Grain Train conventions; secretaries conferences; and others.
 - LCEF funds have been used to award 85 Outreach Ministry Grants of \$1,000 each over the last triennium, to congregations and schools with the desire to reach out to their community in many unique ways with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ministry grants and other support has also been provided in support of ministries that are making a difference in reaching the lost, in support of *Ablaze!*, and in support of new mission starts and revitalization. God's people are inspired and creative in various opportunities to reach the lost.
- LCEF's primary purpose is to make low-cost loans available in support of the Great Commission. Besides offering low-cost loans to LCMS ministries and professional church workers, LCEF also strives to make the entire loan process as easy as possible for the borrower. We understand the unique situations of churches and church workers and act as a lending partner throughout the lending process.
- Permanent and construction loans are designed to assist organizations with new construction, remodeling and expansion projects, land acquisition, or refinancing.
 - Lines of credit are available to organizations for operational and cash flow needs.
 - Specialized areas of ministry loans are available for those opportunities meeting eligibility requirements.
 - The professional church worker loan program provides direct housing, home equity, and consolidation loan opportunities to rostered church workers.

LCEF continues to expand and improve the services we make available to the LCMS. I would like to share the following summary of the services. Please feel free to contact me if you have need of more detailed information on an available service.

- Architectural Advisory Committee – architectural advisors and liturgical-artist consultants are available to offer free counsel on architectural design, planning, construction, repair, remodeling, and the preservation of facilities.
 - Capital Funding Services – professional CFS consultants work one-on-one with organizations, using biblically-based capital campaigns and stewardship emphases to raise spiritual and stewardship awareness among church members.
 - Consecrated Stewards – an affordable stewardship education emphasis that is founded on our Lutheran understanding of biblical stewardship principles.
 - Demographic Services – LCEF provides two forms of demographic information for use by congregational members. The first, iMark Demographics, is an Internet-based demographic program which provides community data to assist leadership in making informed decisions about the future of their ministry. LCEF also makes a detailed demographic product called “*In Our Community*” available. This study includes the option for a congregation to compare its membership with the community and provides parish data, area data, Prizm lifestyles, a religious survey, and guides for a systematic planning process. Assistance is available to interpret the data received through the study.
 - Gift Planning Services – professional and knowledgeable gift planning counselors are available to help investors who want to include the church in their current gifting and estate plans.
 - Laborers For Christ – a ministry of dedicated Christians (both men and women), the laborers of LFC spend a portion of their retirement years working for LCMS congregations, assisting them in building new or remodeled facilities.
- Strategic Ministry Planning – a faith-based process which asks congregation members to seek their agenda from God, not from consultants or planning experts. The fully participatory process develops a congregation’s foundation for making decisions about its mission, values, goals, and strategies for the future.

The loans and services provided by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund are made possible by God’s people investing a portion of God’s blessings with LCEF. Invested dollars support the ministry of LCEF while providing a fair rate of return to assist in providing for loved ones. Investors receive interest **and the ministry dividend**. If you are interested in making an investment in LCEF, please feel free to contact me

for our current Offering Circular. Several of our investment options are outlined below:

- StewardAccount – one of our most popular investments, the StewardAccount provides demand access to funds while receiving a competitive interest rate, allows for limited check writing, has an optional ATM/Visa check card, and many other features.
- Family Emergency StewardAccount – another popular investment, the Family Emergency StewardAccount meets the needs of a family emergency fund by providing demand access to funds on a limited basis while maintaining many of the features of the regular StewardAccount.
- Term Notes – fixed or floating rate notes, with terms of six months to twenty years, earning competitive rates of return.
- FlexPlus Certificate – a demand certificate used exclusively for Health Savings Accounts.
- Congregational Cemetery Perpetual Care Account – the cemetery perpetual care account is a demand certificate designed to meet the needs for Cemetery Perpetual Care Funds.
- K.I.D.S. Stamp Program – the Kids Into Discipleship and Stewardship (K.I.D.S.) savings stamp program provides children a fun way to learn about saving money, while educating them about stewardship principles and the mission and ministry of church extension.
- Tax-deferred Investments – notes offered to individuals may also be available as investments for tax-deferred plans.
- *Joyful Response* – this is a free service allowing LCMS members to send their tithes or tuition electronically to their church or school, eliminating the time and expense of writing checks while improving cash flow for your church or school.
- *MyAccount* – this is LCEF’s online financial service giving investors and loan customers access to their LCEF account information via the Internet 24 hours per day. *MyAccount* can be used to view balances and history, request fund transfers between LCEF investments, initiate wire transfers, and communicate with LCEF securely.

Mission and Ministry: Throughout the fast-paced changes of this world, LCEF remains focused on its mission—to *support the Church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner of the LCMS, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future*. The only reason for LCEF is ministry . . . not dollars, not size, and

not success. To me, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund is one of the most exciting opportunities within our church. One of the most gratifying aspects of LCEF is that God makes it all possible through His people who invest their savings in LCEF. Again, thank you to the many volunteers who make LCEF a productive and enjoyable ministry activity, making a difference in

God's time. I would also like to thank each investor in LCEF for making their savings available to expand God's Kingdom through LCEF. I invite you to join or increase your participation in the ministry of LCEF through your invested dollars, your volunteer service, and especially your prayers. God's blessings to each of you!

Mission Development

Gary Thies, Counselor

More and more of our people and congregations are becoming aware of the "mission field" right here in our Nebraska District. Three of our many missionaries supported by our District are Rev. John Deang, who heads up our Sudanese ministry; Rev. Bill Steinbauer, our campus ministry pastor at UNL; and Vicar Andy Safarik, who works out in the Sandhills mission field.

Mission Central works to support these missionaries. Located in the hills of western Iowa, Mission Central is a set of old farm buildings that serve as the largest mission supporting agency of LCMS World Mission. Two miles east of Mapleton, Iowa, which is about 86 miles northeast of Omaha, a group of 44 volunteers, 7 volunteer pilots, and a host of others work to "raise the level of mission awareness."

During the course of the year 2008, there were more than 3,000 people who came to see the museum at Mission Central and tour the facilities. Groups are always welcome to come for a tour. More than 22 bus loads of "not normal" people came to visit Mission Central in 2008. These were peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9 KJV) who are special, who want to know more about what God is doing

in the mission of His church, using people to tell more and more people about Jesus, our Savior, who died for the sins of the whole world!

Also, a part of Mission Central's responsibility is helping the people of God's Church to take it more personally. Three Nebraska international missionaries who help to accomplish this are Rev. Claude and Rhoda Hogue in Kenya; Dr. Allan and Sandy Schmidt in Hanoi, Vietnam; and Rev. Brent and Jennie Smith working in Russia and Eurasia.

One primary purpose is to encourage more and more families to be faithful in prayer for our missionaries in the field. Mission Central is now the largest mission support agency in the entire LCMS, having had 33 furloughing foreign missionary families stay at their facilities this past year! For more information on Mission Central—40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, Iowa 51034—call 712-882-1029 or send an email to Gary.Thies@lcms.org and check the website at www.missioncentral.us "Every heart with Christ is a missionary, and every heart without Christ is a mission field!"

Gift Planning Services Neal Koch, Counselor

Grace, peace, and mercy be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

2009 marks the 30th Anniversary of gift planning services to the congregations and individuals of the Nebraska District LCMS. Gift Planning strives to link Christians with giving opportunities. Much of that work is done with individuals, as we practice Christian stewardship and use all of life's resources to the glory of God. Ministry has been supported through will bequests, family trust distributions, beneficiary designations of life insurance and retirement accounts, charitable trusts, gift annuities, donor advised funds, and other personal endowment funds. Gifts of cash, rental homes, land, machinery, grain, and securities have all been used by inspired stewards to fulfill their charitable goals.

Introductions of potential donors to gift planning come in many ways. They come from Christian estate planning seminars and presentations, referrals from present donors, professional advisors, family members, and pastors in the District.

In addition to individual gifts, Gift Planning Services has worked with many congregations in the District as a resource to help begin and implement congregational funds or endowment funds.

The newest service is *Transfer the Blessings*. Through *Transfer the Blessings* we encourage congregations to view gift planning services as a stewardship responsibility toward its members. We assist congregations in this very

important stewardship process, and are offering LCMS Foundation support to ensure personal gift plans are completed in the very best possible way.

The most recent addition to the *Transfer the Blessings* resources is a multi-media packet entitled "Ministry Endowment Funding." This web-based, printed material, and CD-integrated package is provided complimentary to all congregations. Please contact us if this valuable resource is not part of your library.

For additional information, please visit us at www.ndlcms.org/financial/planning/index.html to explore the services we provide to individuals and congregations of the Nebraska District. We also encourage you to be a frequent visitor to the LCMS Foundation website, www.lcmsfoundation.org/New/. This site is updated regularly and is an excellent way to stay on top of current happenings in gift planning support of the Lord's work.

It is our pleasure to provide this report and to be available to answer any questions you might have during the Convention. We are also available for personal contact at the Nebraska District Office at 888-643-2961. It will be our joy and extreme pleasure to visit with you personally upon request.

We ask for your prayers and support. Thank you for the opportunity to serve congregations and their members throughout the Nebraska District by providing opportunities to implement sound gift planning ideas and concepts for the future work and ministry within Synod, the Nebraska District, and related ministries.

Committee Reports

Constitution Committee

Rev. Roland Jank, Jr.

The Bylaws of the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod provide that the Constitution and Handbook Committee shall, as provided for in the Bylaws of the Synod, advise the District, Circuit Forums, and individual congregations in constitutional matters, and shall study new constitutions and constitutional revisions regarding conformity with synodical regulations. It shall maintain a liaison with the synodical Commission on Constitutional Matters. The Constitution and Handbook Committee shall keep the District handbook up-to-date and in harmony with the Synodical handbook and the resolutions of the District.

In the performance of its duties, the Committee, during the calendar years of 2006, 2007, and 2008, held five meetings during which constitutions and/or bylaws of 30 congregations, church agencies, and the Nebraska District were studied. Of these, 27 were sent with our approval to the District Board of Directors for final approval and ratification. The other three are awaiting revision and are either to be sent back to the secretary before being sent on to the Board of Directors, or sent back to the Committee for further review.

It is necessary for a congregation to submit an entire document (constitution and bylaws), even when only minor changes are being proposed. This allows the committee to review these changes in context. Constitutions and/or bylaws are frequently returned to congregations with suggestions for clarification or with proposals to make the policies comply with the Synodical handbook, District bylaws, or Nebraska state laws. We respectfully ask that congregations not operate under new constitutions or bylaws until they have been approved by our Committee. Once the approval process is complete, a signed copy of the new constitution and bylaws should be forwarded to the District Secretary.

To assist congregations who wish to update their governing documents during the next triennium, a newly revised edition of *Guidelines for Constitution and Bylaws of Lutheran Congregations* is available from the synodical Commission on Constitutional Matters.

The present Committee consists of Mr. Mark Fahleson, Christ Lutheran Church, Lincoln; Rev. Terell Huber, Christ Lutheran Church, Creighton and Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

Verdigre; Rev. Roland Jank, Jr., Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Omaha; Rev. James Rasmussen, Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha; and Mr. Wil Tewes, Messiah Lutheran Church, Lincoln. Mr. Fahleson was appointed as a replacement for Mr. Tim Moll, who resigned. Mr. Wil Tewes was appointed as a replacement for Mr. Larry Matthews, who moved outside the Nebraska District.

Parish Education Committee

Dr. Bill Preuss, Chair

The Parish Education Committee members were chosen for their expertise in specific areas of parish education. Each member then recruited other individuals with experience in, and passion for, that particular area of ministry. Each action team thus formed, then set goals and strategies to further expand each ministry, and responded to needs identified by Nebraska District congregation leaders. The action teams utilized the Zoomerang survey as one means to help identify those needs.

The areas of ministry addressed by the Parish Education Committee are: Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, adult discipleship (including adult Bible class), Confirmation, midweek school, singles, family life, age-wave, and small group ministries. Action teams scheduled and led workshops at gatherings such as *Prairie Fire*. They worked with congregations and circuit leaders to respond to expressed needs. They encouraged broad participation in regional conferences. They provided resources as requested. They strongly encouraged congregations to revitalize the various ministries needed in their parish.

School Ministry Committee

Mr. Don Weber

During 2006, the School Ministry Commission became the School Ministry Committee. The committee established 16 goals and appointed a volunteer action team chairman for each goal. The goals included planning the Fall Teachers' Conference, the August Teachers' Retreat, the Principals' Conference, an Early Childhood Educator Conference, New Teacher Workshop, professional growth opportunities for principals, National Lutheran School Accreditation Commission, District-wide school improvement, preparation for emergencies and government mandates, development of school technology,

annual selection of an outstanding teacher, planning the annual Hearts for Jesus projects, encouraging District-wide school events, encouraging the establishment of new schools, developing opportunities for emeritus teachers, and flexible response to school needs.

During 2007, the School Ministry Committee met four times. Each time they heard reports by Dr. Ron Bork from Concordia University, Nebraska; the Nebraska District LCMS Early Childhood Consultant, Eunice McCarty; and the District Education Executive, Don Weber. Each action team chairman for the committee goals established in 2006 also reported. Of note during this year, Bob Saeger was selected as the Outstanding Educator, two new preschools were initiated, and about 40 percent of Nebraska District LCMS schools were accredited by National Lutheran School Accreditation.

During 2008, the School Ministry Committee saw several changes in action team assignments. The August retreat was removed as a committee goal and will be discontinued. Bill Leech and David Mueller both left the District. Tom Hiegel assumed the chairmanship of the school technology action team. Of note during this year were the following: the two new preschools initiated in 2007 began operation in 2008; a new Fall Leadership Workshop for Principals' Professional Growth occurred in November; the ECE LEA Institute for ECE directors that was so successful in 2006 and 2007 was cancelled in 2008 due to lack of registrations; Mrs. Cassie McMahan was selected as the Nebraska District LCMS Teacher of the Year; Ron Royuk, chair of the action team for emeritus teachers, initiated some successful events for retired commissioned workers; and a new Genesis study is underway in Auburn, Nebraska.

Student Financial Aid Committee

Mr. Don Weber

Mr. Tom Pruitt chairs the six-member Student Financial Aid Committee. In 2006, the committee met on July 13 to distribute \$92,000 of District funds, \$8,750 of LWML funds, and funds from several private scholarships to more than 80 students from the Synod colleges and seminaries. The committee appreciated the use of the computer in assisting with this task.

In 2007, an amount of \$75,000 was distributed to the 66 eligible applicants for District aid. In 2006, \$92,000 went to more than 80 applicants. The committee reaffirmed that applications were due June 1, and those missing this deadline are encouraged to apply for aid for second semes-

ter. The actual work of awarding scholarships was done with help of the computer, as the lists of students eligible for each grant were arranged according to financial need. The committee calculated formulas for distribution and amounts to be given for each grant available. The group looked back over total awards given to each student in an effort to be equitable. This was done before 28 LWML North grants were awarded. Next year's committee meeting was scheduled for June 12, 2008.

In 2008, the committee agreed to have Don Weber seek one more pastoral representative to this group. It was noted that the LWML Nebraska North has increased their scholarship grant to \$10,000 for 2008-2009 and \$10,000 for 2009-2010. The committee again agreed not to consider applications submitted after June 1, or applications without a FAFSA for scholarship grants. The committee distributed \$70,500 in special scholarships. Attention was given to requirements of each grant, and using the computer-generated lists based on student need, the committee matched awards to these needs in distributing the money available to qualified applicants. With some revision of the previous year's formula for distribution according to level of need, and with consideration of percentage of need met by scholarships, this money was designated to qualified students. The date of June 11, 2009, at 1:00 pm was set for the next committee meeting.

Youth Committee

Mr. Don Weber

In 2006 the Nebraska District LCMS Youth Commission became the Nebraska District LCMS Youth Committee. The committee met three times, establishing eight objectives for itself. The committee formed action teams to promote and help facilitate District youth in the National Youth Gathering, the Nebraska District Youth Gathering, leadership training, service project opportunities, lay counselor training, junior high camps and events, involvement with Concordia University, Nebraska, and adapt to youth ministry needs in the District. 2006 was a formative year for the committee.

The Nebraska District Youth Committee met in February, May, August, and October of 2007. The Nebraska District planned for 842 youth and 170 adults from 60 District congregation youth groups to attend the National Youth Gathering. A youth trained at the 2006 Council for Lutheran Youth Fellowship Representatives (CLYFR) presented a session at the District Prairie Fire event for the first time. Although no youth

attended the national event in 2007, plans were laid for participation in 2008. Plans were developed for a strategy to help adult counselors of District congregation youth groups.

The Youth Committee of the Nebraska District LCMS met four times during 2008. The committee recognized the need to budget more carefully for the events and activities they planned. The committee also recognized that the greatest attention given to the youth of the District this year was through the Nebraska District LCMS Youth Gathering in November. Although Camp Luther has faithfully planned and conducted successful

junior high youth events, more District offerings for this age group are in order. The committee is also developing a plan to resource adult lay leaders of youth groups in the District congregations. Strides were made this year to develop leadership skills in District youth through national and District activities. Two youth attended the national event for the Council for Lutheran Youth Fellowship Representatives. Those two trained three others for presentations to more than twenty youth at the District Prairie Fire event. The committee continues to conduct self-evaluation to increase effectiveness.

Ministries of the District

Christian Student Fellowship Wayne State College, Wayne Rev. John Pasche

Greetings from the students and faculty of Wayne State College (WSC)! The Christian Student Fellowship (CSF) has been blessed with another great year of serving the Lord. We completed the strategic planning process, presented our ideas and plans to Grace Lutheran Church as well as our District office, and with their blessing we are ready to try some new things.

Starting in the fall of 2009, the CSF will introduce a new worship service at the Lutheran Student Center. We are looking at implementing media sources (digital images, movie clips, etc.) when presenting God's Word. Our prayer is that the Center will become a weekly setting for the Word of God to be shared and a place of fellowship throughout the week. We will offer coffee, a place to study, and a place for meetings. This will be open to the students and faculty of WSC as well as the general public.

Remodeling will begin during the spring semester of 2009. We will paint and decorate to create a coffee house feel. Our prayer is that our weekly traffic will warrant an actual coffee house. We believe this will be a great way to promote CSF and communicate its activities, and WSC will be blessed to have a Christian atmosphere for students to meet.

Faith Regional Health Services, Norfolk Rev. James Wonnacott, District Chaplain

Greetings from Faith Regional Health Services, Norfolk, to our delegates of the 2009 Nebraska District Convention, partners in the mission and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank you for your support, fellowship, and resource in the hospital chaplain ministry in which I have been blessed to serve during the past triennium. It is a blessing to partner with you in the ministry of the Gospel.

During the past three years, I attained Board Certification as a professional chaplain through the Association of Professional Chaplains. I appreciate the support, intercession, and help of the District and synodical offices, the professional conversation with the Lutheran committee whose input and counsel have proven to be helpful, and the support that I've known from fellow servants in the Lord's vineyard throughout the state of Nebraska.

It has also been a continued blessing to serve within a medical care organization whose rare mission statement reads:

"The mission of Faith Regional Health Services is to serve Christ by providing all people with exemplary medical services in an environment of love and care."

It has been my privilege to travel to congregations throughout Nebraska to lead Bible study, conduct Divine Service, and proclaim the life and hope freely given to us in Christ Jesus.

One of the blessings known at Faith Regional Health Services has been the introduction of the Palliative Care Team to provide ongoing comprehensive, inter-disciplinary health care to patients living with chronic illness and their families. Since this health care team began providing direct service to patients and their families on January 7, 2008, 256 patients and their families have been served during the course of its initial year. This patient-centered, patient goal-oriented model of care promotes health and patient well-being by decreasing patient experience of

medical impingement and by embodying the spirit of our Lord's instruction recorded in Matthew 25:36.

In addition, the Behavioral Health Unit has expanded to include a Progressive Psychiatric Unit. It has been my privilege and pleasure to work with colleagues and health care professionals from other disciplines to develop this unit which provides life skills, health education, individual and group process therapy, and spiritual care resources to help individuals living with persistent illnesses to be able to better negotiate challenges and experience a higher level of wellness.

Other responsibilities at Faith Regional Health Services have included serving on the Faith Regional Health Services Ethics Committee and Consultation Team and on our Process Improvement Group.

In the community, I have had the special joy of serving on the Advisory Council of the New American Center in Norfolk, which serves residents of northeast Nebraska. The center is sponsored by the community of Norfolk and Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. Today it is served by a full-time legal professional who provides affordable legal help to documented, legal aliens living in this corner of Nebraska. This resource helps to safeguard against immigrant vulnerability to exploitation, including the "slave trade," and makes it feasible for working immigrants to maintain their legal status while they reside in the United States of America.

It has been a joyous privilege and a great blessing for me to serve in northeast Nebraska at Faith Regional Health Services. It is amazing to witness the faith resource that patients and their families bring to the hospital, and to respond to the spiritual hunger of the same. Christ's Kingdom of grace appears by faith to have deeply embraced the lives of many Nebraskans, and the Word and Spirit continue to profoundly touch the lives of its people.

Hispanic Ministry in Nebraska Rev. Richard Boring

Above all, we want to give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for the privilege He has given us to be His servants in Nebraska among the Hispanic people. During the last three years many things have happened.

Rev. Joel Hormachea was ordained and installed to serve as missionary-at-large to Hispanics in the Lexington area. Rev. Hormachea continues to serve in Lexington and has started a Hispanic worship service at Our Redeemer, North Platte, and Bible studies at Kearney and Crete.

Rev. Jorge Santamaria, who served at Cristo Cordero de Dios, Grand Island, retired in 2007. Cristo Cordero is in the process of calling a pastor. The members have been very busy remodeling the inside and outside of their church. If you are in Grand Island, please stop and look at the remodeled church.

Cross Lutheran Church, Omaha, and Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, LaVista, partnered with the Nebraska District to start Iglesia Luterana Jesus es el Senor congregation in Omaha. The church is being served by Vicar Obdulio Felix. He is a student at the Center for Hispanic Studies at the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Beautiful Savior has also started ESL classes at the Tree of Life Center in Omaha. They have 100 students registered for the classes, and are using Bible stories to teach English to their students.

During this triennium, the Lord called home two faithful servants of Hispanic Ministry. Abel Valenzuela was one of the first members of La Trinidad, Lexington. He served as an elder of La Trinidad, and was a student in the Center for Hispanic Studies. He started the ground work for Cross Lutheran, Omaha, to start a Hispanic Ministry out of their facility. He then moved to Madison and started to develop Hispanic Ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church, Madison. It was during this time the Lord called him home. Rollen Knapp was also called home in this triennium. Rollen was a member of Peace Lutheran, Columbus, and was instrumental in encouraging Pastor Santamaria to implement a radio program in Spanish on a local radio station. He also planned local events to connect to the Hispanic community in the Columbus area. The Lord called Rollen home at the start of developing Hispanic Ministry in the Columbus area.

Hispanic Ministry, with the help of God, is willing to continue to work to accomplish His mission "to share the hope of eternal life" to all nations through His Word and His Sacraments.

Members of the ministries are very grateful for the support that the Nebraska District congregations have given them the last three years.

Jesus Our Savior Lutheran Outreach
Rev. Ricky Jacob

Instead, “*Wogixetiaja wogizok horak ra, speaking the TRUTH in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*”
Ephesians 4:15

Over the past 16 years, the Nebraska District has been speaking the TRUTH in love to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Since the 2006 Nebraska District Convention, God welcomed into His family twenty individuals through the water of Holy Baptism, two of whom were adults. Two have also confirmed their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Praise God for His amazing grace!

We have reached and surpassed the tenth year of our preschool. In May, we completed our eleventh year with Mrs. Jana Inglehart as our teacher/director. Thirty-eight students have graduated and nearly one hundred other children have attended our preschool for a time. Several of our students have expressed a desire to become pastors or teachers. Many remind their families to pray. They also have shared the Good News of the TRUTH through singing and telling the stories they have learned.

I continue to share the word of God’s truth through weekly Bible studies and Divine services, both here at the Outreach Center, as well as at the youth shelter. The Winnebago Tribe has its own newspaper, and they invite me to write and include my Christ-centered articles every other week. I also have lunch each week with our senior citizens, visit the sick, those in the nursing home, as well as those in jail. Since we live right in the community, I have countless opportunities to shine the Light of Christ among those I serve.

Our dreams and prayers for the next three years are: *that our outreach center may mature into a vibrant congregation; and that our preschool would expand into a Lutheran grade school so that our children may live as disciples of Christ Jesus our Savior and serve Him in our church, their homes, community, and the world.* Thank you for your ongoing support through your financial donations, your loving service in Word and deeds, as well as your heartfelt and heaven-directed prayers!

God bless our continued mission to speak the TRUTH of God’s love here in northeast Nebraska.

Lutheran Campus Ministry “Living H₂O”
Don Bader

We are very privileged to have the opportunity to be a witness to the students in the metro Omaha area on behalf of the Nebraska District LCMS and Pacific Hills Lutheran Church. The area provides us with a mission field of approximately 50,000 students. Research tells us that 48% of college students nationwide are unchurched. That would translate into 24,000 students in Omaha area colleges and universities who don’t have a relationship with Christ! “*Our mission is to engage, equip, and encourage students to seek and share Christ*” is our mission statement and it reflects our commitment to the work that the Lord has given us to do.

We live out our mission by being dedicated to Bible study, worship and Sacraments, prayer, fellowship, and service to others. We have been busy with our Wednesday evening fellowship meals and Bible study. These studies include an overview of Scripture that is directed toward being more purposeful about witnessing our faith with others. We have also begun taking a look at Peer Ministry Leadership Training material in 2009. Our service activities include city park care and maintenance, fundraising activities for organizations that help developmentally handicapped individuals, and canned food drives for the food bank. We also went on a week-long service/mission trip to Camp Restore in New Orleans, Louisiana, in January of this year.

We are in the process of expanding our ministry from UNO out to the campuses of Creighton University, Bellevue University, UNMC, and Metro Community College. Initial contacts have been made at these locations and work continues in an effort to serve an increasing number of students in the metro area.

We invite all of you to visit our website at <http://living-h2o.org> and you can contact us by calling (402) 578-4177 or by e-mail at don@living-h2o.org.

We continue to marvel in the richness of the grace of God and how it equips us to serve Him. Thank you for your support and please remember us in your prayers!

Sudanese Mission Ministry in Nebraska
Rev. Richard Boring

This past triennium, there has been a lot of activity among the Sudanese around Nebraska. They are living among us after being driven out of their homes in Sudan because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

The 2006 District Convention started with Rev. John Deang being ordained in the opening worship service. He is serving as missionary-at-large to African immigrants in Nebraska. He has been very busy working with the immigrants in Omaha, Lincoln, and Grand Island. He has also spent time in Sudan developing the District's partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan.

The Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mission, Omaha, became an established congregation in the LCMS. They are worshipping in the old Peace Lutheran Church building in Omaha. Peter Bur is their leader and a student in the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) that leads to ordination. There is also a strong group of Sudanese holding worship services at King of Kings Lutheran Church, Omaha. Riek Marwang is serving them as their vicar and a student in the EIIT, and is on track to be ordained the winter of 2009.

In Lincoln, there is a strong African Immigrant Ministry worshipping at Christ Lutheran Church. James Rieng is serving them as a vicar and a student in the EIIT, and is on track to being ordained in the winter of 2009. Gabriel Bol and Vincent Paul are students in the EIIT and serving as vicars through Trinity Lutheran Church, Lincoln. Vicar Bol and Vicar Rieng are working with the group that is worshipping at Christ, Lincoln, and Vicar Paul is starting a new mission among African Immigrants in Lincoln.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Grand Island, is where the newest group of Sudanese has started a worship service. Rev. John Deang has worked with their leaders to develop this new mission and identified one of their men to enter the EIIT.

The Sudanese have enjoyed traveling around Nebraska singing and sharing about their mission in Nebraska and Sudan, and are very thankful to the District congregations that financially support District missions.

**University Lutheran Chapel, Kearney
Ms. Judy Wellman**

What a blessing and a privilege it has been to share in campus ministry with the Nebraska District here at University Lutheran at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Some of the things happening in ministry here at University Lutheran are:

We have a very exciting and challenging ministry happening here with Chinese students. We collected approximately 75 bikes from

throughout the Nebraska District to give out to these students who have no other form of transportation. They are very grateful to receive a bike to ride. We have given out all of our bikes, and are always looking for more.

- We have handed out more than 45 Chinese/English Bibles.
- The Adopt-A-Student program has been a real blessing for students. They are matched with families from Holy Cross Lutheran Church. These families invite students to worship with them, eat with them, and some give the opportunity to do laundry in their homes. There have been some wonderful friendships built between the students and the members of Holy Cross in this program.
- Students are involved at Holy Cross in a number of ways – they help with music, teach Sunday school, help with the youth program, the nursery, and Family Night.
- Some of the service projects the students have worked on the last few years include helping with Habitat for Humanity and preparing meals for the Safe Center here in town.
- Some of the exciting things happening the past three years were our mission trips. Two of them were to Texas during spring break. Students from University Lutheran along with members from Holy Cross spent their spring break helping people who have lost almost everything in the hurricanes. Last year our trip took us to Greensburg, Kansas, to help rebuild and teach Vacation Bible School after the devastating tornado tore through this town.
- Weekly activities include: SOS – Supper on Sunday with Bible study; Jesus & Java – Bible study or video series while enjoying your favorite coffee; International student Bible study; Friday afternoon get-togethers; small group Bible studies; and many other monthly activities.
- Yearly activities include a mini retreat, where the students have a chance to grow in their faith and in relationships with each other. The students also look forward to the Lutheran Student Fellowship Retreat which is held at the Living Water Ranch, near Manhattan, Kansas, each spring. They gather together with other Lutheran college students from Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

Campus ministry is a very challenging, but also a very rewarding ministry. I feel very blessed to be a part of these students' lives, to watch them grow in their faith, and see them share that faith with their friends.

University Lutheran Chapel Rev. William Steinbauer

I'm writing this on January 14, the end of an exceptional day, not because it was two degrees above zero and I froze my brain walking to the Recreation Center. My routine begins early in the morning on a blue chair in the front room of my house. I'm working through Philippians and I end my solitude with the simple prayer, "Lord, today, interrupt my plans with Your plans." I arrive at the Chapel and begin returning emails and phone calls. Paul, whom I helped transition out of homelessness into a low income apartment two years ago and ever since have become friends, knocks on my door. He's an inspiring believer who fixes appliances free for the poor. He closes the door behind him and I know it's serious. He needs prayer. He's struggling with loneliness and internet porn is beginning to take root. He confesses. I absolve. We pray. Honesty is so beautiful.

After lunch I have coffee with a student. I've known him sporadically for four years. He's never without a girlfriend, usually an international student, and he's known to be abusive. His latest girlfriend has dumped him and he's broken, at least for the moment. I hear him out and hit him upside

the head with the Law. He's serious about wanting to grow as a Christian man. He agrees to let me mentor him and so we will walk together this semester once a week in the Cook Pavilion. I pray, "Lord, give me wisdom to build into his life."

Mid-afternoon I meet with a female student. She wants to be baptized. I nearly weep at her story. She's an American student with absolutely no Christian background. She spent last summer in Australia away from family and friends. Her loneliness led her to despair. She decided to buy a Bible and started reading the Gospels. By the time she finished Romans, she knew this was truth. She started coming to the Chapel in August and found it to be an easy place to ask questions. So on January 25, this beautiful sister in Christ will be named in Baptism and Susanna will be mentoring her weekly throughout the semester.

Mark Meyer, director of men's and international ministries; and Susanna McCormick, director of women's ministry, have their own stories and we wish that every day was this eventful. But please know this, the Spirit of the living Christ is moving in our midst. We have a deep love for college students. We pray and support each other. We're seeing lives transformed. Please pray for us.

Special Reports

Aging and Family Ministries Dr. Renea Gernant

Currently, there are three parts to the aging and family ministries programming: continuing education through the Lutheran Institute on Aging and Family, the Family Life Ministry master's degree, and the certificate program and family life emphasis in gerontology.

Functioning independently of the degree programs in aging and family, the Lutheran Institute on Aging and Family continues to work on the congregational and synodical levels under the leadership of Dr. Shirley Bergman. The current program emphasis is on aging. Multiple challenges and opportunities for age-wave families of all ages and stages are currently impacting the church and community with the pressing needs for family and aging education seen in resources, crisis intervention, prevention, and referrals. Communities are struggling to prepare for the unique challenges for and with age 50-plus individuals and families. Opportunities abound for retired boomers and older adults in congregational and community ministries.

The Lutheran Institute on Aging and Family mission is to strengthen lifespan aging ministries for and with church professionals and lay leaders. The purpose of the institute is to provide quality Christian education and training leading to continuing education certification of non-credit opportunities such as care-giving through various options designed for clergy, boomers, retirees, deaconesses, parish nurses, DCEs, and family ministers. Currently, the institute is collaborating with the Nebraska District and LCMS national organizational leaders and preparing for the "age-wave" ministry opportunities which are an unrecognized middle-age and older gift of 10-30 extra years of life in the church and community. Contact the Institute on Aging and Family for additional information at 1-800-535-5494, ext. 7432.

On the graduate education level, in 2007 Rev. Kevin Kohnke assumed leadership of the family life ministry program and the program moved out of the umbrella of the Lutheran Institute on Aging and Family (explained below). Rev. Kohnke is working on extending the accessibility

of the family life ministry program by offering courses in new locations and formats. Students are now able to take face-to-face classes in Lincoln, Nebraska, at the Concordia Lincoln site, and in California, as well as on campus at Concordia University, Nebraska. The program also offers a variety of online study options and new coursework in professional ethics.

In the master's degree program, we have granted 33 degrees since the 2006 Convention. Currently, we have 71 students in the degree program, including 39 active church workers. Students in the program come from 19 states including California, Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri, Texas, Michigan, Illinois, Washington, New York, Tennessee, Iowa, North Carolina, Arizona, Ohio, Colorado, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Oregon. Family ministers in the District fulfill a wide variety of functions including pastors, directors of Christian education, young adult ministers, and youth and family ministers.

As indicated in the last convention report, the family life department offers the C-PREP workshop which was last offered in June of 2006 and will be offered again in June 2009. The Pastoral Care Specialist Program is "inactive" at present with no indicated restart date.

In late 2007, a gerontology certificate program was introduced through Concordia University, Nebraska under the leadership of Dr. Renea Gernant, and in 2008 an emphasis in gerontology was added to the family ministries program. Currently, there are six graduate or non-traditional students and 12 undergraduate, pre-professional, or behavioral science students pursuing these certifications or degrees. Since 2007, eight gerontology courses have been taught, including faith development in older adulthood, adult development and aging, issues in aging and gerontology studies, social gerontology, health aspects of aging, mental health and aging, death and dying, and nutrition and the older adult. In 2009, two additional courses, retirement and lifespan financial concerns, and programs and services will be introduced into the program. Courses are offered in traditional, intensive, and online formats with the bulk of the programming offered online.

The first certificates are scheduled to be granted in 2009. Current non-traditional students come to us from Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa. The students include Catholic sisters, a DCE, a seminary student, a former teacher hoping to work in hospice care, and a nursing home administrator.

Camp Luther, Schuyler **Mr. Hank Rausch, Executive Director** **Purpose of Camp Luther**

Camp Luther serves the Lutheran churches of the Nebraska District by providing facilities and programs that:

- Strengthen the educational programs:
Outdoor education for schools,
Confirmation retreats
- Create a greater mission interest and support:
Service projects like Missio Dei
- Strengthen worship and prayer life:
Bible study, chapel, TAWG, candlepower, campfires
- Develop talent and leadership qualities:
Summer ministry teams, JS programs, leadership programs
- Offer Christian fellowship:
College age role models leading games, canoeing, archery, waterslide, hiking
- Encourage group play, planning, and work within groups of God's people:
Service projects, cooperative course, group activities

“LET THE CHILDREN COME” Matthew 19:14

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

The Board of Directors of Camp Luther has adopted a new program called “Let the Children Come!” The main goal of this program is ambitious: to raise enough funds to bring 100 children who have never before been to the Camp's summer program.

The role of individual gifts in this program is vital. The Camp will use this program to reach out to families in District congregations. This child can be a member of a congregation, from a family in need of encouragement in their faith walk, a child who attends a Lutheran school, or a child from the community who will benefit from time at camp.

Program Offerings

Camp Luther continues to offer camps and programs for all ages and seasons. Programs include special events such as Camp Luther's annual picnic/quilt auction/golf tournament and the annual association meeting.

Programs for youth include Confirmation retreats for small churches, Jr. high retreats/servant events, Jr. servant program, and a new summer intern program.

Adult programming provides for a men's woodcutting retreat/Christian women's

scrapbooking retreat and a men's retreat, as well as summer grandparent/grandchild camps.

Schools are able to use Camp Luther for outdoor education, either attending one of two Camp sponsored three-day programs or by scheduling their own individual program.

In addition, Camp Luther partners with the Columbus YMCA to provide Christian day camps throughout the summer.

Camp Luther's summer staff is made up of young, energetic, college-aged men and women, many of whom are planning for full-time church work. All summer staff members are former campers who have a love and passion for the Camp's ministry to young people and many other people. Almost all are born and raised in Nebraska or attending school in Nebraska. Their dedication to sharing their faith provides for an awesome impact on each person who attends camp.

Summer camp programs are provided for children going into grades one through high school. Additional programs are offered for parent and child, as well as grandparents and grandchildren to experience time together.

Camp Luther summer staff is also available to help Nebraska District congregations with their VBS programs. The Camp staff will come to the local congregation and work with volunteers and staff to provide an exciting program for congregational outreach into their own community.

A Special Ministry

His Kids Camp is a rewarding outdoor experience for special needs individuals. Developmentally disabled "kids" of all ages enjoy recreational activities geared to meet and challenge their individual abilities. Motivating, Christ-centered activities encourage and enhance each camper's spiritual growth.

Our goal at His Kids Camp is to give each individual camper the best outdoor experience possible. They will make new friends, experience new adventures, build self-esteem and confidence, challenge their physical abilities, and know that God loves each and every one of them! All campers must be able to maintain their own activities of daily living to include: showering, toileting, personal hygiene, dressing, and eating. Campers requiring help in these areas may attend with a personal caregiver and there is no charge for the caregiver.

Youth and adult volunteers work with the His Kids Camps. They are trained by our nurse coordinator and are paired up with their "buddy" for the whole time at camp. Some youth groups

even come and work with the campers.

Activities at the three summer programs and two weekend programs may include hayrack rides, barn dances, talent shows, flying kites, fishing, adult tri-cycling, fishing, swimming, canoeing, paddle boating, playing basketball, crafts, games, and more!

Concordia University, Nebraska

Rev. Brian Friedrich, President

Welcome to *your* Concordia: Concordia University, Nebraska. We are pleased to host the Nebraska District Convention. The Convention theme *Full of Grace—Seasoned with Salt* reminds us that our work together to prepare students for lives of service and leadership to the church and world enables them to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior of the world. May God bless richly the Convention and our mutual efforts to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ here and throughout the world.

Some highlights at Concordia University, Nebraska during the past triennium include:

Academics

- The University received re-accreditation from the North Central Association of the Higher Learning Commission for ten years, the maximum period allowed.
- The business department received full accreditation from the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education and celebrated its 25th Anniversary of preparing students to serve the marketplaces of the world.
- The Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival was named the 2007 Jane Geske Award winner by the Nebraska Center for the Book.
- Prof. James Bockelman had two of his drawings selected for the highly competitive Sioux City (Iowa) Art Center's 60th Juried Exhibition and was honored with a Nebraska Arts Council 2007 Individual Artist Fellowship Merit Award.
- Dr. Kregg Einsphar was named 2007 NAIA Region 3 Women's Cross Country Coach of the Year.
- Drs. Eunice Goldgrabe and Janell Uffelman were recognized for educational excellence in the 2006 edition of *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*.
- Dr. John Jurchen published a paper titled, "Measuring Salty Samples Without Adducts With MALDIMS" in the *International Journal of Mass Spectrometry* as part of a special issue on mass spectrometry imaging.

- Dr. Mark Meehl, with two co-authors, published a book covering the archeological digs in Biblical Ekron entitled *Tel Migne-Ekron Excavations 1995-1996 Field INE East Slope Iron Age*.

Administration

- Called Dr. Jenny Mueller-Roebke as provost, Dr. Mark Blanke as associate provost, Mr. Scott SeEVERS as vice president for enrollment, student services and athletics, and Rev. Ryan Matthias as campus pastor.
- Through the leadership of Dr. Mark Blanke established the Institute for Religious Education that has as its mission “to enhance the intentionality and effectiveness of Christian education efforts in the church and school.”
- Added the following majors and programs: B.A. in marketing, B.A. in ecclesiastical art, pre-deaconess, wrestling, and competitive dance programs.
- Ranked in the *U.S. News & World Report* top tier of baccalaureate colleges (#18 in the Midwest region and #1 Nebraska school in the category).

Facilities

- Remodeled Weller Hall to more effectively serve the university’s administrative needs.
- Completed construction of Jonathan Hall, a 144-bed suite style residence hall.
- Renovated Philip and Timothy residence halls.
- Renovated Heine Recital Hall and installed a 38-rank Casavant Frères organ and Steinway grand piano.
- Renovated the dining area and bookstore of the Janzow Campus Center.
- Constructed the arena, classroom, and field house phases of the Health, Human Performance and Athletic Center (HHPAC).
- Reduced capital debt by more than \$6 million by paying off the Thom Leadership Education Center mortgage ten years early.
- Opened a campus in northwest Lincoln at the Fallbrook development used for both classes and as leased space to a church plant of the Nebraska District, Word of Life Lutheran Church.

Institutional Advancement

- Exceeded the *On A Mission* campaign goal of \$60 million for endowments, capital projects, scholarships, and operations. As of January 1, 2009, gifts and pledges to the campaign totaled more than \$61 million.
- Grew the endowment to \$29 million by October 2007.

- Served more undergraduate and graduate students (1,344) during the 2008-09 academic year, our largest enrollment in the past five years.

Service to the Church

- Dr. Shirley Bergman and Rev. Dr. Orville Walz were reappointed to the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations.
- Dr. Jeffrey Blersch was the featured recitalist at the opening hymn festival of the 2007 Convention of the American Guild of Organists, was commissioned to compose three hymn arrangements for the 2007 LCMS National Youth Gathering, and had four new publications with CPH.
- Dr. Vicki Boye wrote the introductory chapter in the new curriculum guide for health titled *Health Education: Embracing the Human Species* by CPH.
- Professor Paul Berkbigler was selected to design the logo, marketing materials, website, video graphics, and location signage for the 2007 LCMS National Youth Gathering.
- Dr. Joseph Herl had several compositions in the *Lutheran Service Book*, including three original hymn tunes, 19 tune settings, one liturgical setting, and one hymn translation. He also had an award-winning choral piece, “When to Our World the Savior Came,” accepted for publication by MorningStar Music Publishers.
- Dr. Kurt von Kampen was selected to conduct the 2007 and 2010 LCMS National Youth Gathering choirs.
- Continued to lead the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System in the placement of full-time workers for the church.
- Placed 305 teachers in Lutheran schools, directors of Christian education, and directors of parish music in the last three years.
- Served roughly 60-70 pre-seminary students each year in preparation for the pastoral ministry.
- Seven graduates of the past three graduating classes are serving as long-term LCMS missionaries.
- Hosted the 2008 LCMS Commission on Worship’s Institute on Liturgy, Preaching, and Church Music.
- Wheat Ridge Ministries awarded a grant to fund the Generations Project, an initiative to establish new, long-term, senior ministry projects through an action-based gerontology curriculum.

- The Center for Liturgical Art launched the Bibelot Project and has now distributed thousands of hand-crafted ceramic pieces as witnessing tools.

Student Life

- The University Wind Ensemble traveled to China, its first international tour in its 100+ year history.
- The University A Cappella Choir released two CD recordings under the direction of Dr. Kurt von Kampen, *The Light of Morning* and *In Thy Sweet Humility: A Concordia Christmas*. The choir was also selected to perform during the Nebraska Music Educators Association's annual convention.
- The forensics team took first place in debate sweepstakes for small schools at the National Christian College Forensics Invitational Tournament.
- The theatre program was honored by the Alpha Psi Omega and Delta Psi Omega National Theatre Honorary Societies in their annual journal *Playbill*. The program has been included in *Playbill* each year for more than 20 years.
- Students in Free Enterprise were awarded a SIFE USA Regional Championship for the first time. The honor was given for their community outreach projects and their presentation at the regional competition.
- Michael Saalfeld was the 2008 NAIA indoor and outdoor national champion in the 800m run.
- Chris Tegmeier was the NAIA indoor champion in the 3K race walk and USA Race Walking Champion in the 15K event. He qualified for the U.S. National Team event and competed in the U.S. Olympic Trials in 2008.
- Jon Ziegler became the all-time leading scorer of the Bulldog basketball program with 2,099 career points.
- The men's cross country team finished in sixth place at the NAIA Men's Cross Country National Championship in 2008 and tied the highest finish ever by a Concordia cross country team at nationals.
- The women's basketball team finished in the Final Eight NAIA Division II in 2008.

District Archivist

Rev. David Palomaki

This past triennium brought the opportunity to celebrate the Nebraska District's 125th Anniversary. Worship resources were developed so that congregations could mark the occasion in their own settings.

During 2007, the anniversary year, a series of 12 articles were published in the Nebraska District *Reporter*. Each monthly issue featured a historical survey of a particular mission venture in our District. Topics ranged from mission work among Native Americans and various ethnic groups to chaplaincies in Lutheran hospitals and German POW camps. Each article served as a vignette of the way the Lord has blessed over the years.

As we look ahead to the next triennium, let's remember to keep alive the story of our work together as congregations of the Nebraska District. The archive would benefit from receiving materials from congregations which would help us preserve and retell the story of our Lord's faithfulness.

Lutheran Family Services

Ruth Henrichs, President and CEO

"Building and strengthening individual, family, and community life" is more than a mission statement...it is what we do every day at Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska!

Every day, LFS serves children and families in drug/alcohol treatment, mental health counseling, immigration legal services, refugee services, foster care, in-home family support, incest treatment, and pregnancy counseling. Every day, LFS provides safety to children who have been abused and neglected. Every day, LFS counsels adults in crisis towards a future of hope. Every day, LFS champions justice for those who are marginalized, fear persecution, or have been trafficked across the border.

Our focus this past triennium has been on services for children. LFS has developed a prevention and early intervention program—the Building Families Boutique—in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Fremont, Nebraska. A third boutique is in the planning stages for Omaha in 2009.

At the boutiques, expectant and parenting moms (and dads) earn points for participating in healthy lifestyle behaviors such as taking their baby to well baby checkups, immunizing their child, reading to their child, attending church or Bible study, participating in parenting classes, completing a GED, and finding a mentor. Their

points are redeemed at the “boutique” stores for baby items such as cribs, car seats, strollers, baby clothes, diapers, and formula. Congregations are great partners in this program, gathering items to “stock the shelves” of the boutique stores. Women hold their small group meetings at the boutique, and sometimes actually have the opportunity to visit with a young mom in the program. The Fremont Boutique is located on the property of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church—site of our agency’s original orphanage! Just ask Pastor Tim Gierke or Pastor Tim Anderson about our partnership at the boutique!

In 2007, LFS was awarded a major grant to begin development of statewide outreach services for “those who are pregnant or think they might be pregnant.” Implementation began in Lexington with “Well Mothers, Welcome Babies” marketing materials in three languages (English, Spanish, and Arabic). A 24-hour hotline was staffed. In 2009, LFS will continue this marketing and service development statewide.

In 2008, LFS began recruiting foster parents for a very specialized program serving children ages 4-16 who have been acting out sexually. Almost all the children have been sexually abused themselves. It takes very special couples to foster parent these children with special needs. Would someone in your congregation be one of those couples? If so, have them phone 402-661-7100.

Other significant activities during the past triennium include the expansion of immigration legal services in Omaha, Grand Island, and Lexington; the hiring of an immigration attorney; the closing of “The Bridge,” a prisoner re-entry program in Lincoln; and the grand opening of a HUD-funded housing facility in North Platte for persons with severe and persistent mental illness.

In 2007, LFS was named the Nebraska Nonprofit of the Year by the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands. In 2008, LFS received reaccreditation by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services. During the next triennium, LFS will continue expansion of services to children statewide and move towards the fulfillment of our vision to develop a Campus for Healthy Families, at 24th and Dodge Streets in Omaha. Join our journey! Share the hope!

**Lutheran Laymen’s League
Burnell Von Seggern, President**

Lutheran Hour Ministries has one mission, and that is “Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church.”

We are here to help you in spreading the Word through a multitude of ways.

First of all, we invite persons to become sponsors of Lutheran Hour Ministries. Many are already. We hope to have more. All these help the financial needs of spreading the Word in so many different countries, as well as right here in the U.S.

But we have a District organization that does even more. To name a few:

We conduct two worship services each year at the Nebraska State Fair. Speakers have included Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus, Lutheran Hour Speaker; Rev. Wes “Bo” Baumeister, former chaplain at Concordia University, Nebraska; Rev. Richard Boring, Assistant to the Nebraska District President in Missions and Outreach; and Rev. Steven Siegel, who served as director for the U.S. Ministries of Lutheran Hour Ministries. This past year, Rev. Duane Fahr, our pastoral advisor, and Rev. Dr. Robert Roegner, Executive Director of LCMS World Missions, delivered the sermons in the open air theatre.

Our state fair activity also included a booth in which *Project Connect* booklets and other literature were made available, and much was picked up. One man indicated that the materials he picked up from the booth were the only worthwhile materials he had received during the fair. Volunteers from across the District manned the booth. Youth and many others across the state were involved in making bracelets and necklaces that were given away.

We also offered 41 \$500 scholarships this year to Nebraskans planning to attend one of our church’s colleges and then entering full-time church work. These have been much appreciated.

We also provided financial assistance for a banquet for seminarians just before graduation.

We have 11 zones in the Nebraska District, each with officers and each meeting once or twice a year for inspiration and fellowship. Many congregations have what we call an “Ambassador” who encourages others in his or her congregation to help by becoming a Lutheran Hour sponsor. We are endeavoring to have such an individual in each congregation in the District. Many congregations also have a club where its members are eager to serve their Lord.

We have a number of congregations that are sponsoring the broadcast of the Lutheran Hour each Sunday on stations not covered by the International LLL. Many have made arrangements to download Lenten and Advent devotions and give them to their members. A number of non-Lutheran congregations have even found them valuable and used them.

There are also daily devotions written by Rev. Ken Klaus, Lutheran Hour speaker, that can be downloaded each day by seeking www.LHM.org. Your members might like to know about that site also.

There are many things occurring on the International level which will help in spreading the Word. And by the way, Nebraska is proud to have one of its own serving as president of the International LLL—Mick Onnen of Davenport.

Under way right now is a program where teams of two LLL members are visiting every congregation in Nebraska to share more information about Lutheran Hour Ministries with members of the congregation. If they have not yet made a visit to your congregation, please welcome them when they do come.

Current members of the Board of Governors of the Nebraska District are charged with conducting the business of Lutheran Hour Ministries in Nebraska. If you have any questions, or want to discuss the LLL, please contact me.

Lutheran Tape Ministry and TalkingScriptures.com

Rev. Fred Naumann III, Executive Producer/CEO

This ministry sends audio Bible study resources worldwide.

During 2008, Bible study resources were sent to 43 states and 31 countries.

Bible study resources produced in 2008 include:

- Study and review of the Gospel of Luke
- Chapter summary and discussion of the Acts of the Apostles
- Devotions on grace, mercy, and peace

New for 2009 is “God and Country a Devotion for Men and Women in the Military and Those who Love Them.” Celebrating 37 years of providing talking Scriptures for a closer relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Lutheran Women’s Missionary League Nebraska District North Monique Wolske, President

Nebraska District North Lutheran Women’s Missionary League has 1,983 members and 104 active local societies in ten zones across northern Nebraska. These women have truly “served the Lord with gladness” by meeting and exceeding mission grant goals.

The 2008 District Convention was held June 6 and 7 at Norfolk with the theme *We Are God’s Workmanship* from Ephesians 2:10. This event

was hosted by the Norfolk Zone at Lutheran High Northeast. Mission projects selected for the biennium total \$71,500 plus \$10,000 for scholarships for future church workers.

The projects funded in the 2006-2008 biennium were: Orphan Grain Train- \$8,000; LCMS World Mission, Leadership Training, Kenya- \$5,700; Camp Luther - \$6,500; Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Food and Clothing Co-op- \$10,000; Trinity/HOPE, Haiti-\$4,750; Alaska Mission for Christ-\$3,000; Lutheran Blind Mission-\$5,000; Refurbishing of the Lutheran Student Center, Wayne State College-\$1,000; LCMS World Missions, Kyrgyzstan-\$5,000; Lutheran Family Services for FACES-\$25; and International Student Ministry, Bibles-\$25. These last two were tied, so the remainder of the mission grants goal (\$50) after the other grant selections was divided between them.

The 2007 National LWML Convention was held June 21-24 at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, with the theme *Rest On Christ the King*. The mission project goal was set at \$1.7 million for the 2007-2009 biennium. Janice Wendorf, Wisconsin South District, was elected president. Attendance exceeded 5,000.

The 2010 District Convention is in the initial stages of planning for June 10-11 at King of Kings, Omaha. A new president will be elected, as well as new mission grants goal.

Through servant events, mission trip opportunities, mite giving, projects such as quilting, marking Bibles for prison ministry, making bandages, Bible study, fall retreats, spring and fall rallies, and workshops, Lutheran women have been blessed. Teen LWML is underway and gaining strength as groups are formed, and reaching out to ethnic sisters is another chance to share the gospel through LWML. We thank God for His many blessings, and ask for His guidance and help as we serve Him through LWML.

Lutheran Women’s Missionary League Nebraska District South Sharon Goertzen, President

Greetings from Nebraska District South LWML! Our district includes 12 zones, 137 societies, 9 individual members, and approximately 3,400 total members.

In June 2007, many of our LWML members and their families attended the 32nd Biennial LWML Convention June 21-24 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It was also the 65th Anniversary celebration of the LWML. The theme was *Rest On Christ the King* taken from Psalm 31:1-3. Linda Reiser from Grand Island completed

her four-year term as our LWML President. Nebraska District South thanks Linda for being such a dedicated, Christ-centered president whose passion for the mission of the LWML was evident in all she did. She was a mentor and modeled Christ's love to everyone she worked with.

Jesus says, I AM was the theme of the 2007 retreat held September 22-24 at The Leadership Center in Aurora, Nebraska. The theme was based on Matthew 28:20b.

My Rock, My Refuge... Nebraska District South's 34th Biennial Convention was held September 26-27, 2008, in Hastings, with 412 in attendance, including 27 young women representatives (YWRs) and 9 teens. Two convention offerings were taken. The first offering collected of \$3,476.83 will go toward the 2008-2010 District mission goal. The second offering that was collected of \$2,160.85 will go to the Sandhills ministry. An additional amount of \$1,773.26 and many boxes of ingathering items were collected for Orphan Grain Train. A mission grant goal of \$90,000.00 was adopted with ten mission grants approved for the next biennium. The mission grants chosen were:

1. Nebraska District South LWML Scholarships for Nebraska District South Students—\$30,000
2. Nebraska District LCMS/Word of Life Children's Ministry, Lincoln—\$5,000
3. Lutheran Blind Mission/Large Print Materials—\$5,000
4. Lutheran Bible Translators/Computers for Translation Teams—\$7,500
5. LCMS World Relief/Themba Girls High School, South Africa—\$7,500
6. LCMS Mission Central/Slovakia Family Center—\$7,200
7. Family Shield Ministries/Outreach to the Unchurched—\$7,500
8. Nebraska District LCMS/Church Planter Training—\$9,000
9. LCMS World Missions/Team China—\$6,500
10. LCMS Mission Central/School in India (partial funding)—\$4,800

The YWRs voted on a mission grant of \$1,500 to be paid from the special gifts fund for the University Lutheran Chapel's ministry, Bikes For International Student Outreach. Karen Christner completed her four-year term as LWML President, and we thank her for her loving and dedicated service to the LWML.

A Time To Lead was the theme of the LWML Assembly of Leaders that was held in St. Louis, October 24-26. This theme was taken from

Ecclesiastes 3:1. Willa Brinkmeyer, Linda Fees, Elinor Kuehner, and Sharon Goertzen attended from Nebraska South. They are planning to present three district Assembly of Leaders events in our district in 2009.

The 2009 LWML Convention (33rd Biennial) will be held in Portland, Oregon, June 25-28, and plans to carry out the theme *Look to the Hills...God Reigns* are moving forward. Rev. James and Edna Moll have once again agreed to organize a chartered bus to Oregon, and we thank them for their dedicated service to our district.

Walk in Love, taken from 2 John 6, will be the theme of the 2009 District Retreat to be held at The Leadership Center in Aurora, Nebraska, on September 25-27. Virginia Von Seggern will be the featured speaker for the retreat that will provide Bible studies, fellowship, workshops, and quiet time as you "WALK IN LOVE" with the Lord.

We have started planning for the 2010 District Convention which will be held at the Ramada/Kearney Convention Center in Kearney, Nebraska, on September 24-25. Advanced planning has also begun for the 2012 District Convention, with details available soon.

The district's 12 zones conduct spring Christian life workshops and fall rallies each year focusing on Bible study and missions.

Nebraska South's website is up and running! It includes general information about our district, updates on our mission grants, links, and various resources and forms. For additional information, go to www.lwmlnesouth.org.

We are so blessed to have women of all ages, in all stages in their lives, who joyfully work together, and have a passion for the mission of the LWML. It is my prayer that by the grace of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, we daily grow in our relationship with God, so we are enabled to use our gifts in ministry to all the people of the world!

"Serve the Lord with gladness!" Psalm 100:2

Lutheran Ministry Foundation Paul Pettit

The Lutheran Ministry Foundation continues to celebrate its partnership with each of you through its mission: *To empower and partner in mission, Lutheran Ministry Foundation of Nebraska receives gifts, manages assets, and awards grants in support of Lutheran ministries as they share the love of Christ.* Your partners serving as members of the Board of Directors of Lutheran

Ministry Foundation include: Mr. Kermit Brashear, president, Omaha; Mr. Robert Bloechle, vice president, Omaha; Mr. Paul Pettit, treasurer, Lincoln; Mrs. Linda Reiser, Grand Island; Rev. Russell Sommerfeld, Seward; Mr. Delmer Toebben, Omaha; and Mrs. Virginia Von Seggern, Orchard. In addition, Mr. Kurth Brashear serves as secretary for Lutheran Ministry Foundation. Your Lutheran Ministry Foundation team is excited about continuing to partner in the growing mission field our God is placing before us in the Nebraska District, reaching out with the Good News of Jesus.

During the three years ending January 31, 2009, the Lutheran Ministry Foundation awarded 26 grants for nearly \$470,000 in support of mission and ministry across the Nebraska District. Since its inception in 1981, Lutheran Ministry Foundation has awarded more than 230 grants totaling nearly \$2,066,000 partnering in mission with congregations, the Nebraska District, and other organizations as they seek to share the love

of Christ. To provide these grant awards, the foundation relies primarily upon the performance of its investments. You are all aware of the difficulties of the investment markets in recent months. As grant needs grow, we are also seeking gifts that will grow our investments, allowing more grants to be awarded. Gifts from individuals, congregations, and other entities are used by the foundation to partner in mission with ministries throughout the Nebraska District.

The financial statements of the Lutheran Ministry Foundation are consolidated with the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod financial statements for audit purposes. You will find the consolidated audit report as of and for the years ended January 31, 2009 and 2008 included as part of the District Treasurer's report. A brief summary of activities for the Lutheran Ministry Foundation is included below for your information: