



DISTRICT NEWS

IOWA WEST

We focus on Christ

Dear friends in Christ,

I write these words about a week before the predicted peak of infections caused by the COVID-19 virus in Iowa. This has been a challenging time for all of us. If you have had loved ones who have died of this disease, you have my deepest sympathy.

We have never seen a time such as this. I hope by the time you are reading this article, our churches are once again able to gather for worship. I hope your pastor is preaching and Bible study groups are once again meeting. I hope our professional church workers are laying out plans for engaging their congregations and schools for group activities. I hope that many of you are planning to reach out to your communities through vacation Bible school.



Rev. Dr. Steven Turner
District President

When I say I hope, it does not mean that I am one who looks for the silver lining in every cloud. Neither am I a pessimist who sees a storm in every raincloud. People who know me know that I am a realist. A realist is a person who accepts a situation as it is and is prepared to deal with it accordingly. The reality is we live in a fallen and broken world. The moment Adam and Eve chose to rebel against the good and gracious will of God, our world was and remains broken.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

— Rom. 8:22

The COVID-19 pandemic is part of the brokenness of this world.

We hope and pray that a pandemic like COVID-19 never happens again. We hope that God will open the minds of the scientists and researchers, that they will be able to discover and apply a vaccine that brings healing into our lives. This act of discovery and application of what is learned is a work of God.

The first article of the Apostles' Creed reminds us that God takes care of the world He created and still preserves it. God takes care of His world by farmers feeding us, carpenters building us shelter, parents raising children, nurses taking care of the sick and dying, and scientists discovering ways to cure the sick. We hope not because of these people; we hope because of God. This is all the work of God!



He does it simply out of “fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me” (from Martin Luther’s explanation of the first article of the Apostles’ Creed).

Christians are the most optimistic people in regard to the future because our hope is not centered on the things of this world. Our hope is in Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior. The apostle Paul knew this very well. He says:

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every

See **CHRIST**, Page 12

'Let the children come to me'

By Rev. Richard Merrill

Pastor, St. John, St. Paul and Immanuel,
Charter Oak

At St. John Lutheran Church, Charter Oak, they've been coming!

A few years ago, church leaders noticed that several new families with children had moved into the neighborhood. The children were attracted to the church's playground, which was built when St. John had a preschool. A committee was formed to look into improving the playground and adding some options for older children.

Members of St. John responded. Trustees sanded and painted the old equipment to give it a fresh look. The teens of Lutheran Youth Fellowship painted lines on the basketball court and added space for hopscotch and four-square. Members built a swingset in the shape of a cross, a jungle gym in the shape of Noah's ark, a colorful teeter-totter and a climbing wall that resembles the two tables of stone on which Moses received the Ten Commandments.

The new playground equipment was dedicated on Rally Sunday 2016. The congregation served hot dogs and root beer floats. The children of the neighborhood were invited for games and fun. A slide was added in 2017 as a memorial from the family of a faithful St. John member who had passed away in November 2016.

Neighborhood children soon became regular visitors to the playground. I and other members would visit with and invite them to vacation Bible school. The children even took VBS fliers to their neighbors and friends. Soon, one family was sending their children to Sunday school and confirmation classes. Others have continued to come to VBS and have occasionally visited for worship.

Members of St. John saw the playground as a real outreach opportunity. It seemed almost as if God was bringing unchurched families into our neighborhood so the children would have a



St. John, Charter Oak, welcomed seven children into God's family on Jan. 12 through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.



chance to hear about Jesus.

Sometimes the children will come into the church for a drink of water and ask to go up into the sanctuary. Some of them have never been inside a church before, and they have a lot of questions. We talk about the stained-glass windows and the artwork in the sanctuary and teach them about what Jesus did for them.

On Jan. 12, St. John baptized seven children from two neighborhood families. All but the youngest had their first contact with the church through the playground.

Elder Ralph Dorale, a member of the playground committee, was the elder for the baptism of the seven children.

"I think it was really neat that something so simple could help bring people into the church," Ralph said, noting that the church has rarely seen so many souls received in faith at one time.

The playground ministry continues to produce fruit, as the parents of the children who were baptized are also beginning to become involved with the church.

Patience has been key. The Holy Spirit has been working as these children learn about Jesus. When He's ready, we're ready to welcome these children and their families, as Jesus did.

A closer look at

GENERATION Z



Getty Images

What constitutes Generation Z and how do they differ from Millennials? Generation Z are people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s (while Millennials were born in the 1980s and 90s).

How they are viewed by employers

The following is from an article, titled “Millennials are Begrudgingly Making Way for Generation Z,” posted at macleans.ca in 2017:

What these generational representatives will probably tell you is that kids these days are nothing like their immediate elders. Where Millennials were searching for meaningful toil, Gen Z are money-minded. The former like working together; the latter believe it’s every entry-level drone for themselves. Raised on participation trophies and gold stars, Millennials would rather focus on what they’re good at; having seen how cutthroat the economy can be during the most recent downturn, Gen Z are more open to working on their faults.

Generation Zers in America have been homeschooled more than the last several generations and most are close to their parents.

According to a Goldman Sachs study, they have more conservative ideas than the previous Generation X; and according to a Harvard Business Review study, nearly 70 percent were “self-employed” (teaching piano lessons, selling goods on ebay, etc.).

In an article at thetruthsource.org titled “Why the Generation Z Population will be Non-religious,” it was reported that:

Gen Zers’ participation in religion is up compared with previous generations. When asked about spirituality, 47 percent said they were religious, and an additional 31 percent said they were spiritual but not religious. Church attendance is also up during young adulthood, with 41 percent saying they attend weekly religious services, compared with 18 percent of millennials at the same ages, 21 percent of Generation X, and 26 percent of baby boomers.

But all is not rosy

This generation has grown up with a new cultural sense of normal. One study by Dr. Joan Hope, editor at Dean & Provost, pointed out that there is a big spike in church attendance by Gen Z. It is too

early in their development to see if this trend holds true long-term. Studies also show that this will be the largest non-white generation in America’s history, with Hispanics as the fastest-growing group among Gen Z.

“Hispanic mothers have an average of 2.4 children, compared to black mothers (2.1), and Asian and white mothers (1.8),” points out Thom Rainer, former president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources. Due to this large number of non-white population growth, more of Gen Z will be interracially married. Estimates project that at least one in 10 of this generation will marry across ethnic and racial lines.

The social challenges of this generation

Rainer also points out that, “homosexual marriage will be embraced as normative. But we cannot tell yet what percentage of Gen Z will be in a homosexual marriage. Two historic events have shaped Gen Z. Most of them were not born when 9/11 took place, but their parents and others have made the event a part of their lives and insecurities. The Great Recession is still a reality though the recession is officially over. Gen Z parents, and thus, their children still feel the impact of a weak jobs economy.”

This information paints a much more hopeful picture for the church, but it is not without its challenges. Generation Z is a highly tech-savvy generation, growing up with the internet and smartphones as a part of their very existence.

Unlike Millennials, they tend to crave more personal contact.

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Rev. B. Keith Haney

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Sewing is vital activity

Servants responding to COVID-19 crisis

Since our nation hasn't been through a pandemic in our lifetime, we are going through uncharted waters every day. It started out slowly and we didn't know what to expect. At this writing, we still don't know what to expect. Everyone had and has many questions. Is this real? Will it affect our community? How careful do I need to be? Is it necessary for everything to shut down?

Many people were told to stay home and work from home. The kids are home from school. How is that going to work? How can parents homeschool and care for their children while working from home? Some families needed to get reacquainted and work creatively to make the new situation work.

Each day we look at the number of new COVID-19 cases, and the number of deaths there were the previous day in Iowa and the nation. How should we respond? How can we help? Each person has a different answer. Pastors and church leaders prayed and tried to figure out how to share the love of Jesus. Technology kicked into a new level for most. Video conferencing and conference calls through Facebook, YouTube and Zoom were in high demand!

Some people responded by setting up conference calls for prayer groups and for visiting with families.

Many looked at their sewing machines collecting dust, and as pleas for masks and gowns came from nursing homes, hospitals, family and neighbors, they were put into action! A T-shirt logo said it well: "Sewing is not a hobby! It's our COVID survival skill."

As I tried to figure out how to best get involved with making masks and gowns, I looked at the different pieces



The Seipold assembly team work together to make masks for their family, neighbors and the Takin' It To The Streets outreach to the homeless in Council Bluffs. Pictured are, (seated) Emma; (standing, from left) Walter, Martin and Klara.

to the puzzle. Some people had material to donate. Some were willing to cut the material into the size needed for the masks and gowns. Others were willing to sew. It became a group effort. I created a database as people called, texted and emailed asking how they could help. Each day presented new opportunities. Numerous people, young and old, have been involved in making masks and gowns.

One example of how this worked: Mary Ree from Burt had material and cut rectangles to make over 300 masks. I gave her addresses of people who were willing to sew. Mary sent 50-plus sets of cut pieces to Bret and Karen Seipold and family of St. John, Hastings. Karen shared that her children enjoyed being part of making a difference by helping others. Helping the homeless in Council Bluffs has a special meaning

for the Seipold family as they joined the IOWAY mission team last August to serve the homeless in Council Bluffs and Omaha.

A huge thank you to all who have worked long and hard to make masks and gowns. God's blessings and a huge thank you to all who are working the frontlines to offer necessary services in their communities.

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“Alec’s leadership ability is evident in his service to our church as a caretaker of our facilities and peer leader for our student group LCMS U at UNI.”

Rev. John Wegener, campus pastor, University of Northern Iowa

Deppe is 2020 scholarship winner

Congratulations Alec Deppe, the 2020 LCEF Iowa District West \$1,000 scholarship recipient. The son of Daniel and Wendy Deppe, Alec is a member of St. Paul, Ankeny, and a student at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls.



Alec Deppe

Impact on community

In his scholarship application, Deppe wrote the following about the Lutheran Church Extension Fund and its impact:

“LCEF has fulfilled their mission by helping fund the renovation of College Hill Lutheran Church (CHLC). This has changed the lives of college students, specifically at the University of Northern Iowa, by providing students with a place to study God’s Word in a safe environment where students know they are cared for. CHLC is used for many events, two of which are Fall Fling and High School Weekend. Both events provide an opportunity for students to learn about the challenges faced on college campuses and how to handle them from a Lutheran perspective. LCEF has also provided CHLC with a space for the congregation to hold potlucks and student organiza-

tions to host events. By providing funding to [construct] or improve buildings, LCEF creates a space where I, and others, have an opportunity to receive Word and Sacrament.

“By taking part in the campus ministry at CHLC, I have experienced the impact LCEF’s ministry has on college students and the congregation. LCEF has provided me with a place to

grow in my faith, and I would like to do the same for others. As I look toward my future and starting a career, I will gain resources to make investments. Investing in LCEF and its mission gives me the incredible opportunity to support the sharing of the Gospel and furthering God’s kingdom.”

Student leadership

In her letter of recommendation for Alec, Kristina Kofoot, MA, CNP, Community Engagement Program Coordinator and Adviser for Nonprofit Leadership Alliance (NLA) Student Association at UNI, wrote the following:

“Alec joined the UNI NLA in the fall of 2019 and is continuing his work with this organization. During the fall semester, Alec was a leader on the student

organization’s resource development committee. On this committee, Alec had the chance to work with and manage peers interested in the nonprofit sector. Alec also learned how to steward donations that he and his group members received from their fundraising efforts. Alec and his team assisted in raising over \$25,000 for the campaign, passing the student association’s goal of \$22,000. His efforts have shown that he is capable of building strong donor and interpersonal relationships.”

Annual LCEF district scholarships

LCEF is blessed to provide annual district scholarships to active, faith-filled students who



are members of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations. Those interested in the 2021 LCEF district scholarships can learn more at lcefcentral.org. Applications will be available online beginning in September.

Learn how you can help support ministries through your LCEF investments at lcef.org.

MISSION STATEMENT

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 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.

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EDUCATION, YOUTH and FAMILY



Christian education carries on!



Sue Barlow, a second-grade teacher at Mount Olive Lutheran School, Des Moines, instructs her students on Zoom.

I'm not sure what things will look like when you're reading this. We're in the COVID-19 pandemic and we're all wondering how long it will last and when things will get back to normal. In spite of all the craziness this virus brought to our communities, incredible things have been happening in our Lutheran churches, day schools and preschools. All of us were thrust into doing things a different way. Pastors, teachers, youth and education leaders, lay people and families stepped up to the challenge.

COVID-19 did not stop the Gospel from being proclaimed or students from being educated. It's safe for me to say many more people are now familiar with Zoom meetings, YouTube, livestreaming and Facebook Live. These are all methods that our churches and schools are using with families and students.

Here is a peek into some of the things that happened during our time of not being able to gather at schools and churches.

I hosted regular Zoom meetings for our district principals and preschool directors. I'm proud of the work these school leaders carry out in each of their settings. Through these meetings, they gained ideas from each other. After one of our preschool director



◀ Zion Lutheran Church and School, Denison, staff wished their students and families a Happy Easter as well as let them know they were praying for them, and missed them.

▶ A Mount Olive Lutheran School student is shown learning at home, working on his money-counting skills.



Zoom meetings, a director sent me the following note in an email:

My teachers are all doing such a great job staying connected with their families. I'm so proud of them. Each teacher has a different style and I like that. One teacher posted on the class's closed Facebook page "How are YOU doing? It's ok to be ok and it's ok to not be ok. I'll share first." She had so many responses it was amazing! Parents were being honest and sharing. I just loved that.

Thank you for hosting the director meetings too. I was inspired by the directors who had Zoom meetings with their classes. I wouldn't have ever thought I would do it. I loved all their tips for having the meeting with preschoolers. I hosted my first one this morning and it was a success! We had talk time, show and tell, sang a song, read a book, and said a prayer together. I wouldn't have done it

without the encouragement of all of you. Thank you!

Many of our schools have Facebook pages to communicate with each other and encourage families to post pictures of their children learning at home. Some of the staffs had creative ways to greet their students and wish them Happy Easter. Several of our schools had chapel leaders or pastors record messages on video for the children and families to watch at home. Zoom meetings were held so teachers could not only see and teach their students, but the students had a chance to see and share with each other.

District congregations met the challenges of reaching families for Sunday school by sending parents packets with material that they could go over with their children. Marilyn Shults, director of Family Ministry at Shepherd of the Valley, West Des Moines, shared how they used Zoom for large-group time for 30 minutes with two groups — preschool-grade 1, and grades 2-4. They also had 20- to 30-minute devotions with the junior youth Monday through Friday.

Others recorded video messages and shared them midweek for the children to watch. Concordia Publishing House offered free resources during

this time for families to use. Leaders met with their youth groups for Bible study, devotions and games. Pastors throughout the district led online Bible studies where members could interact with them as they walked through sections of Scripture.

Did Christian education stop during our time of social distancing and staying at home? No. It happened in many creative ways as the Gospel continued to be proclaimed and education carried on in the home.

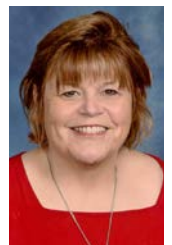
I am thankful for all the dedicated pastors, teachers, DCEs and families who didn't let the coronavirus stop them from sharing the Gospel with and educating our youth and children.

Rhonda J. Mohr

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Take a deep breath



By Rev. Dr. Jim Lamb
Life Advocate, Lutheran Family Service

Have you ever had occasion to say to someone, “Now, calm down. Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be alright?” Maybe you spoke it to a child after a skinned knee, or to your wife after telling her you would fix that leaky faucet yourself — no need for a plumber. These days, we may need to speak it to someone on the verge of panic because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We may need to speak it to ourselves because of growing concerns about our health and the health and safety of our loved ones; or, perhaps the sudden ill health of our financial condition.

“Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be alright.” Really?

Yes, really, says your God.

Comfort, comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.” — **Is. 40:1-2**

The primitive root behind the Hebrew word for “comfort” is to sigh or breathe deeply. It is the Hebrew equivalent of “cool it” or “chill.” And it is repeated. That’s the Hebrew equivalent of the Energizer bunny — it just keeps going and going. God wants Isaiah to speak

to His people and tell them to take a deep breath, everything is going to be alright. God tells him to “speak tenderly.” Literally this is “speak to the heart.” God’s word of comfort does more than sound nice. It does things. It speaks to our hearts, fears, struggles and griefs. It says, “Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be alright” in regard to very real things going on in our lives.

God continues and tells Isaiah and us why we can take this deep breath. First, our “warfare is

ended.” Warfare continues against this virus, but obviously that’s not what God is talking about. Another warfare intertwines itself in all of this — spiritual warfare. The devil delights in fear and doubt and uncertainty. Such things allow him to launch his favorite line, “Did God really say? Did God really say He’s in control, He’s with you, He’s at work in your life? It sure doesn’t look that way.”

Take a deep breath, God ended warfare against this old evil foe.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

— **1 John 3:8b**

Because of Jesus’ cross and empty tomb, that’s a done deal says Luther. “He can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done.” We do not strive for victory over the devil. We strive in victory already won! Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be alright. “One little word can fell him.”

Take a deep breath. Your “iniquity is pardoned.” The virus of iniquity eats away at the soul. We know we do not trust God as we should during these troubled times. We doubt and question and grumble. And that’s just the First Commandment. There are all those other ones we break in thought, if not in word and deed. When we confront our iniquity, and the sickness of our soul, we realize we can do nothing about it. But God has done something.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. — **Is. 53:6**

“You have comfort, not because your circumstances are all good, but because your God is all good.”

God pardons our iniquity, not because of good behavior, but because Jesus suffered the judgment and paid the penalty in our place. Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be alright. Your iniquity is pardoned.

One final reason we can take a deep breath. We have “received from the LORD’s

See **COMFORT**, Page 12

Blessed by LWML

At the Lord's Mission Central, we have the privilege and honor of truly witnessing real miracles! On March 13, the Lord provided another example of what He can do — and it has nothing to do with what we can do!

Our goal in calling, assigning and praying is that the Lord will allow us the privilege of helping support our dear missionaries sent by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Jesus answered our prayers when He sent some very special *not normal* visitors to deliver a miracle gift of love from the Iowa District West LWML that will support 10 women missionaries in Asia. Delivering a check for \$10,000 were Jane Morris, district LWML president, and Revs. Merle Mahnken (Immanuel, Schleswig) and Mitchel Schuessler (St. John, Clarinda) who serve as district LWML pastoral counselors.

The funds were from a Mission Grant for the 2018-20 biennium.



From left, Jane Morris presents the check to Gary Thies. Jane was joined by Revs. Merle Mahnken and Mitchel Schuessler.

Following is a list of the missionaries who will be blessed by this grant:

- ▶ Hannah Shull, Taiwan
- ▶ Noel (and Andrew) Schaff, Taiwan
- ▶ Carol Halter, Hong Kong
- ▶ Aimee Cima, Cambodia
- ▶ Debi (and Tom) Going, Japan
- ▶ DeeDee (and Matt) Wasmund, Korea

- ▶ Julia Lutz, Papua New Guinea
- ▶ Melinda Thews, Taiwan
- ▶ Maggie (and Rev. Steve) Oliver, Taiwan
- ▶ Irene (and Rev. Dr. Michael) Paul, Taiwan

We thank God for the love, prayers and support of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

Creation Museum gets new addition

As you all know, we have real miracles happen here at the Lord's Mission Central! Recently, a "flock" of unusual birds arrived.

These birds are called oxpeckers and they live in Africa. The name derives from their habit of landing on buffalo and other large mammals and pecking out ticks that attach themselves to the animals. They can be seen "riding along" on these animals. The Lord has a special job for each of His creations!

Many who visit can now see these special birds that the Lord made during the days of creation.

The Lord sent an amazing artist, Michael Burger of Davenport, Neb., to Mission Central. He was able to create this flock of birds to land on our two Cape buffalo in the Lord's Creation Theater. Burger is the one who created some of the "bodies" for our animals in the theater, which helped make the animals really come alive!



Pictured are the Cape buffalo with their new "friends," who will help to keep them clean of those ticks!

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Gary Thies

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The struggles are real

As I write this, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We can all list struggles we are facing. Are we impacted by the health struggles? Has the virus caught up to us or will it catch up to us? Are our mitigation efforts going to be enough to keep us from getting the virus? Are we in need of health services that must be delayed due to the pandemic?

Are we impacted by the economic struggles? Have we been furloughed or laid off? Are we going to have enough income to pay our bills and meet our financial obligations? Has our business been forced to close? How long must we face the economic uncertainty?

Are we impacted by the social struggles? Is the self-isolation and social distancing creating anxiety and stress? How are family and friends coping with the turmoil brought about by the responses to COVID-19 and mitigation efforts? Are we uncomfortable being forced to restructure our social interactions?

Are we impacted by our faith struggles? Has the limitation of gathering for worship services caused us to spend less time in God's Word? Are we uncomfortable with new realities of virtual worship and sharing Jesus' love and the Gospel through technology. Are we feeling more susceptible to Satan's temptations?

Yes, the struggles are real.

However the struggles manifest themselves for each of us, we are all facing the same uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Yet, I ask, is this Easter season not a perfect time to struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic? How many times do we hear our Lord offer His words of reassurance?

In John 14:1, Jesus comforts His disciples with these words:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."

In Mark 16:6, Mary Magdalene is told:

"Do not be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here."

In Luke 24:36-37, Jesus appears to His disciples.

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled and why do doubts rise in your minds?"

We too should know the reassurance that Jesus offers! What great comfort it should be for each of us as we walk with Jesus while He carries our sins to Calvary, suffers and dies on the cross for those sins, and then is raised from the dead with a clear victory over sin, death and the power of the devil.

As you read this article, I pray that we are no longer in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. I pray that our personal relationship with our Lord, Jesus has been strengthened and renewed in ways we could never have imagined before COVID-19. I pray that the Gospel and the message of Jesus' love will be heard by a sin-filled world that so desperately needs the truth. I pray that we have searched for and found a new normal in sharing Jesus' love and the Gospel as we serve our Lord and His kingdom. And I pray that we have been able to return to gathering with our faith communities, knowing that those relationships are so very important!

Kirk Warnke

Executive Director, Camp Okoboji

HEALTH

Blood transfusions



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A blood transfusion is a potentially life-saving procedure that can help replace blood due to surgery and injury. It can also help if an illness prevents your body from making blood or some its components correctly.

Blood has several components. Red cells carry oxygen and help remove waste products. White cells help your body fight infections. Plasma is the liquid part of your blood. Platelets help your blood clot properly. A transfusion provides the part(s) of blood you need, with red blood cells being the most commonly transfused.

Some common reactions to a transfusion include allergic, which causes hives and itching, and fever. Blood banks screen donors and test donated blood to reduce the risk of transfusion-related infections.

Blood transfusions are usually done in a hospital, an outpatient clinic or a doctor's office. The procedure typically takes one to four hours, depending on which parts of the blood you receive and how much blood you need. An identification check will ensure you receive the correct blood.

During the procedure, a nurse will monitor you and take measures of your blood pressure, temperature and heart rate. Tell the nurse immediately if you develop fever, shortness of breath, chills, unusual itching, chest or back pain, or sense of uneasiness. Contact your healthcare provider if you develop shortness of breath, chest pain or back pain in the days immediately following a blood transfusion.

You may need further blood testing to determine how your body is responding to the donor blood and to check your blood counts. Some conditions require more than one blood transfusion.

Be safe. Be healthy. Follow state and community health alerts and recommendations.

In His Service,

Darlene Rueter, RN

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In this together



Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler, speaker of “The Lutheran Hour,” provides a word of encouragement in a video posted on LHM’s COVID-19 resource page. The page has more messages from Dr. Zeigler, along with other resources including those for teachers and students as they finish the school year from home. Go to lhm.org/covid-19.

Events

The shutdowns our world has been experiencing due to the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on our churches and Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) events in Iowa District West.

Due to social-distancing guidelines, we were unable to hold our breakfast Bible study in April. At the time of this writing, we are still encouraged by our state government to practice social distancing. In the hope that the crisis has peaked or passed, we are still anticipating our Burgers for the Booth cookout fundraiser from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 27, at Peace, Glidden. You can check our Lutheran Layman League of Western Iowa Facebook page for updates.

LHM COVID-19 resources

As we face a global health crisis, we encourage you to think about the importance of inclusion during a time when we can’t be close together because of shelter-in-place orders.

Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler, speaker of “The Lutheran Hour,” reminds us that in times like these, we need to look out for our neighbors in love ... just as God looks out for all of us.

Use and share resources found at lhm.org/covid-19 to grow with God during these trying and challenging times. These free resources are made possible by generous donors like you! When you support LHM, you are supporting our mission to share the Gospel with people all around the world. Thank you!

Three years ago, LHM began a three-year partnership with Barna Group to better understand how faith is impacting people in America during the 21st century. In the second year, we delved into “Households of Faith.” The research surveyed 2,347 practicing Christian adults and teens to “learn from households that appear to be exceptionally engaged in communal

and consistent faith expression in the home.” In its monograph, “Households of Faith: The rituals and relationships that turn a home into a sacred space,” Barna developed a custom metric that sorts households by reports of collective, frequent engagement in key behaviors:

- ▶ Spiritual Practices — defined as praying every day or two and reading the Bible weekly all together;
- ▶ Spiritual Conversations — defined as talking about God and faith at least weekly all together; and
- ▶ Hospitality — defined as welcoming non-family guests regularly, or at least several times a month.

Households that frequently participated in all these activities are what Barna refers to as spiritually vibrant. Only a quarter of respondents in this study described a household environment that is spiritually vibrant. Others described homes that are devotional (only participate in spiritual practices and spiritual conversations), hospitable (only practice hospitality) or dormant (do not participate in any of these practices on a frequent basis).

While it’s tempting to dwell on the dormant households in America, for LHM President and CEO Kurt Buchholz, the findings on spiritually vibrant households were much more encouraging.

“Spiritually vibrant households share traits that can be nurtured within any household,” he said. “It’s this finding that has me particularly excited. The qualities of these vibrant households where faith is nurtured in a beautiful, lasting way are obtainable for any household, no matter the size or make up, which is good news for the cause of the Gospel. Any spiritually vibrant household can become, over time and with intention, a spiritually vibrant household of faith.”

While the research offered some timely, high-level insights, it also only scratched the surface about fostering a vibrant home. Buchholz authored a soon-to-be released book titled “The Spiritually Vibrant Home.” For more information on this book and other resources, go to lhm.org. There is a wealth of resources to assist you in developing a “Spiritually Vibrant” household.

CHRIST

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. — **Phil. 4:11-13**

Paul drives home the main point of hope and contentment in these three verses. “I am to be content” means that we have a hopeful attitude for all situations. This hope is intentional and comes through faith in Christ. “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” is a hope engraved in our hearts and minds. When we focus on Christ, we respond with hope to all circumstances. Christ is our Savior; He will never let us down. He will strengthen us to be content.

During his 25 years of ministry, Paul had known times when he lived with plenty and times when he was in need.

And Paul had learned that neither condition made any real difference. Whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want, Paul had learned to be content and live in hope. This freedom from being controlled by the circumstances of life grew out of the reality that God meets all our needs “according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (v. 19), and the conviction that “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

There are times in life when it feels like the future looks bleak. I certainly hope that by the time you are reading this, the COVID-19 pandemic is over and our world seems a little more normal. I remind you that no matter how

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ordinary our world may become again, it will be broken until the day Christ returns. The greatest hope in the Christian faith is that of eternal life. This hope is based on Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. — **1 Peter 13-5**

**Always in Grace and living in Hope,
President Steve Turner**

COMFORT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

hand double for all [our] sins.” To understand the comfort of these words, we need to brush off a little Algebra. If we deserve x amount of punishment because of our sins, God will give us 2x the amount of His grace! Twice as much as we need! Overflowing! Boundless! God surrounds us with His grace. We live in it. Nothing can touch our lives without passing through the grace of God in Jesus. Viruses, fears, uncertainty — He touches them all with His grace and uses them for our ultimate good. Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be

alright. You live in double grace!

“Comfort, comfort...” You have comfort, not because your circumstances are all good, but because your God is all good. He speaks His Word of comfort to your hearts, right into your lives. He defeated the devil. He pardoned your iniquity for Jesus’ sake. You live in His boundless grace. He’s got this! Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be alright.

The Greek equivalent to the Hebrew for “comfort” is *paraclete*. A literal meaning is someone called alongside to speak for you, defend you, help you. Not surprising then that Scripture gives

the name *paraclete* — Comforter — to the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent Him to walk beside us and help us.

Lutheran Family Service uses 2 Cor. 1:3-4 as our theme verse:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Our mission statement flows from this. “We walk with people who are experiencing hard times and are there for them just as God has been there for us.” We reduce that even further to “We will walk with you.”

Life may be changed for us and not for the better. But God does not change, nor does His Word. “Comfort, comfort my people says your God.” Take a deep breath. Everything is going to be alright.

