
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISTRICT NEWS

Partners in the Gospel—Josh Remington

1. President's Page—Rev. Paul Egger
2. Education, Youth, and Family Life—Rhonda Mohr
3. Mission Possible!—Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney
4. Business Manager—Roger Curtis
5. IOWAY—Julie Mann
6. Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF)
7. Mission Central—Rev. Steve Schulz
8. Amigos En Cristo—Rev. Pedro Lopez
9. The Lamplighter—Rev. Alex Kaldahl

MINISTRY PARTNERS

Camp Okoboji
Lutheran Family Service
Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization
Lutheran Federal Credit Union

ALSO INCLUDED...

Life Advocates



CALLS RECEIVED/EXTENDED

Rev. Lyle Buettner, Trinity, New Athens, IL to Peace/Trinity, Coon Rapids/Glidden
Rev. Brett Satkowiak, Faith, Demotte, IN, to St. Paul, Sioux City
Rev Kyle Lewis, St. Martin, Winona, MN, to St. Paul, Fort Dodge
Rev Craig Neimeyer, Zion, St. Libory, NE, to First English, Spencer

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. Martin Davis, Trinity/St Paul, Anthon/Battle Creek to St. Paul/Faith, Jasper/Woodville, TX
Rev. John Rutz, Trinity, Creston, to St. Paul, Jerome, ID
Rev. Lucas Miller, to Prince of Peace, Fort Dodge

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 29...Administrative Assistants Conference, St. Paul, **Fort Dodge**
October 2-4...Senior Youth Gathering, **Camp Okoboji**
October 9-11...Clergy Wives Retreat, **Camp Okoboji**
October 24-25...Junior Youth Gathering, Sheraton Hotel, **West Des Moines**

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 5... Board of Directors Meeting, District Office, **Fort Dodge**
November 7...Conflict/Difficult Conversations Workshop, District Office, **Fort Dodge**
November 7...Fall Treasurers Workshop, **Online**
December 28-January 4...IOWAY Pedal Pushers Trip, **Pasadena, CA**



Follow Iowa District West on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/iowaDistrictWest



Iowa District West, LCMS
409 Kenyon Road, Suite B
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

515.576.7666
emilie@iowadistrictwest.org
www.idwlcms.org

Please note: The inclusion of items from outside sources in *The Messenger* is for information purposes only. Inclusion of such items does not constitute District endorsement.



On a Mission to Support Christ's Mission!

October 2026

409 Kenyon Road, Suite B — Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501
515-576-7666 Fax 515-576-2323 www.idwlcms.org
Contact email: emilie@iowadistrictwest.org



In Matthew 25, we read the Parable of the Talents and how a master entrusts his wealth to his servants according to their abilities. It is very common to discuss this parable, and rightfully so, as we talk about being faithful stewards of the rich resources with which God has so generously blessed us.

Our human nature often leads us to pull back, distrust our Lord and Father, and prepare for a rainy day. And yes, here in Iowa lately, we have certainly seen several rainy days! Our Heavenly Father reminds us to trust the One who sends the rain, knowing that He holds us in the palm of His hand and will give us precisely what we need at the appropriate time. By no means is this meant to encourage anyone to be frivolous with their resources. Rather, trusting our Father helps us prepare to serve His will.

At LCEF, we are blessed to serve the members of Iowa District West and the LCMS. We are humbled to support so many of you with the resources God has entrusted to your stewardship and care. Because of the investments of nearly 1,000 Iowa District West LCMS members, we are currently helping 19 congregations with facility improvement projects and 24 rostered pastors with home mortgages right here in IDW, not to mention numerous other projects across the nation.

An investment with LCEF is a direct investment in the ministry of the LCMS while also providing an excellent return on your investment. I invite you to join us!

While LCEF is known for our lending and investment solutions, we also support congregations through financial planning, strategic planning, capital campaigns, facility feasibility studies, demographic studies, and much more. We are here to help YOU! God's richest blessings to you and your congregation as we serve the Lord with gladness!

Josh Remington— LCEF Vice President
josh.remington@lcef.org

IOWAY Service Trip to Pasadena

Join Iowa District West for an exciting mission trip to Southern California, December 28 through January 3, in partnership with LOT318 (Loving Others in Truth). This unique opportunity combines service, fellowship, and fun as participants help decorate Rose Parade floats, build relationships with LOT318 youth, enjoy daily devotions, and experience beautiful Southern California during the holiday season. The cost is \$2,000 per person, with a \$500 deposit required upon registration. For more information or to get a registration form contact Julie Mann at Julie@IowaDistrictWest.org or 515-408-9696. Come serve, grow in faith, and experience a week of Christian fellowship and mission work!



Conflict & Difficult Conversations Workshop



Join Rev. Dr. Todd Jenks for a practical and faith-centered workshop on navigating conflict and difficult conversations with wisdom, confidence, and Christ-centered communication on Saturday, November 7 at the IDW District Office in Fort Dodge. Participants will learn research-backed strategies and biblical principles for handling disagreements, reducing anxiety in challenging conversations, and fostering healthier relationships in families, workplaces, and congregations. This free event is open to all church workers and laity. Scan QR for more information and registration.

Treasurer's Workshop

A Treasurer's Workshop will be held online on Saturday, November 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Saturday, January 7 an in-person program will take place at Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Denison, with a snow date of January 16. Pastors and all individuals within the church who have financial responsibilities are encouraged to attend. Please register [online](https://www.idwlcms.org/registration). If you have any questions, please contact Roger at 515-576-7666 or Roger@IowaDistrictWest.org.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 2-4...Senior Youth Gathering, **Camp Okoboji**
October 9-11...Pastor's Wives Retreat, **Camp Okoboji**
October 24-25...Junior Youth Gathering, Sheraton Hotel, **West Des Moines**

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 5...Board of Directors Meeting, **Fort Dodge**
November 7...Conflict & Difficult Conversations Workshop, **Fort Dodge**
November 7...Treasurer's Workshop, **Online**
December 28-January 3...Petal Pushers Service Trip, **Pasadena, CA**

For more information on Iowa District West activities, view *The Messenger* at www.idwlcms.org/publications.php

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

The Rev. Paul Egger

Iowa District West, LCMS

paul@iowadistrictwest.org / 515-576-7666

Vacancies, Pastors and the Table of our Lord

Jesus meets with His faithful!

Whether you are being served by a called pastor or vacancy pastor, where two or three...you know the rest. Whether God is currently giving you a pastor on site or supplying you with a vacancy pastor, love God and each other. Each Lord's day Jesus says, "Come." You either do, loving Jesus and each other, or you don't, walking away from Jesus and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus meets with His faithful at His table. Jesus sat at table with His disciples most every day. What a blessing to sit at table with Jesus during our days. More and more congregations around Iowa District West and throughout our synod are returning to our historic, Lutheran, Biblical practice of the Lord's



Supper for the Lord's people each Lord's Day. Yay! Jesus meets with God's dear sons and daughters at His table to clear minds with what is true, warm hearts with godly love, heal bodies as our Great Physician, and restore souls with His cleansing blood. Such gifts! Even during pastoral vacancies!

One thousand Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod congregations face vacancies

currently. 80% of these vacancies have been for over a year. Our Lutheran Witness magazine devoted its February 2026 issue to the topic of vacancies.

Here's a few ideas for congregations as you

patiently await God's will for calling your next pastor:

- + Be flexible, willing to change service times to adapt to your vacancy pastor's schedule.
- + Continue congregational activities and check up on each other.
- + Communicate with regular bulletin and social media announcements.
- + Explore partnerships with neighboring congregations. Think short term AND long term.
- + Love your vacancy pastor and, in time, your called pastor. Hebrews 13:17: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." Never adopt the godless attitude, "We'll care for our pastor conditionally – IF he does what we want or WHEN he does what we want. Instead, care for and love your vacancy or called pastor BECAUSE God has given him to you. Care for your pastor BECAUSE he is God's servant. Care for your pastor BECAUSE He brings you God's living Word; BECAUSE he sets the very body and blood of Jesus into your hand and mouth.

LW editor Stacy (Egger) Eising, who also happens to be my niece, writes: In preparation for this issue, I spoke to several district presidents, circuit visitors, vacancy pastors and laypeople about vacancies and how congregations can weather them well... Among it all was one constant refrain: Christ is the Lord of His church, and He holds you always in His tender care. No matter what the numbers may look like, we can take heart – He will never let the testimony of His Word pass from His earth.

Jesus loves your pastor and cares for your pastor's family – you can too! And each Lord's day, Jesus meets with His gathered faithful and He sits with you at table, holding you always in His tender care.

As Jesus lives,

Pastor Paul Egger



Education Youth Family Life

Rhonda J. Mohr Assistant to the President 515-573-0010
rhonda@iowadistrictwest.org

New Policy for Youth Chaperones

For some time, Iowa District West has encouraged background checks for all staff and volunteers who work with minors. **Beginning this fall, *all* volunteers who attend our district youth gatherings must have a background check on file at their church that was completed within the last three years.** Congregations that register for our district youth gatherings will receive a form to verify that the required background check has been completed and is on file at the church.

The district Youth Services and Education Committees have been champions of safety policies in our congregations and have encouraged every congregation to conduct background checks for anyone working with minors. This is all in the spirit of protecting God's precious children. Now, the district is requiring background checks for our district youth events, not just encouraging them. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me, Rhonda Mohr, at the district office. If you have questions about where to obtain background checks, we suggest using Protect My Ministry: www.protectmyministry.com.

District Workshop: Conflict and Difficult Conversations

The District Education and Family Life Committee is sponsoring a workshop on Saturday, November 7. The details are provided for you in the flier that's included in the Messenger. It will be a very helpful event for both church workers and laity. We encourage you to save the date on your calendar and register to attend. If you have any questions, contact Rhonda at the district office. Scan QR for more information.



Zion/St. John Lutheran School Opens New Addition in Paullina

Zion/St. John Lutheran School in Paullina opened the school year with a 10,444-square-foot addition that includes six classrooms, a school office, a commons area, and two restrooms. The project supports continued growth, as enrollment rose from 62 students in 2020–2021 to 119 in 2026–2027 and is expected to increase further.

Zion/St. John will be having their Validation Team visit for National Lutheran School Accreditation September 27-29. The school has worked through the rigorous self-study process and will host the Validation Team for a three-day visit.

We pray that God would continue to bless the staff, school board and families of Zion/St. John Lutheran School. We commend Zion and St. John congregations for their commitment to Lutheran education. Please see the following page with pictures from their new addition.



ZION-ST. JOHN
LUTHERAN SCHOOL

**BUILDING TODAY.
TRANSFORMING
TOMORROW.**

*Invest in the future.
Leave a lasting legacy.*

We have **expanded** our facilities to create a space where students can grow in faith, knowledge, and character for years to come.



MORE SPACE

New classrooms and enhanced learning environments.



STRONGER COMMUNITY

Supporting our students, teachers, and families.



FAITH-FOCUSED EDUCATION

Building a Christ-centered foundation for future generations.



LEAVE YOUR LEGACY

Your gift helps shape lives and strengthen our mission.

ZSJ

Every gift makes a difference,
EVERY NAME LEAVES A LEGACY.



DONATE TODAY

Every gift — big or small —
makes a lasting impact.



**SCAN TO GIVE
ONLINE**

or visit our website:
zs-j-paullina.org



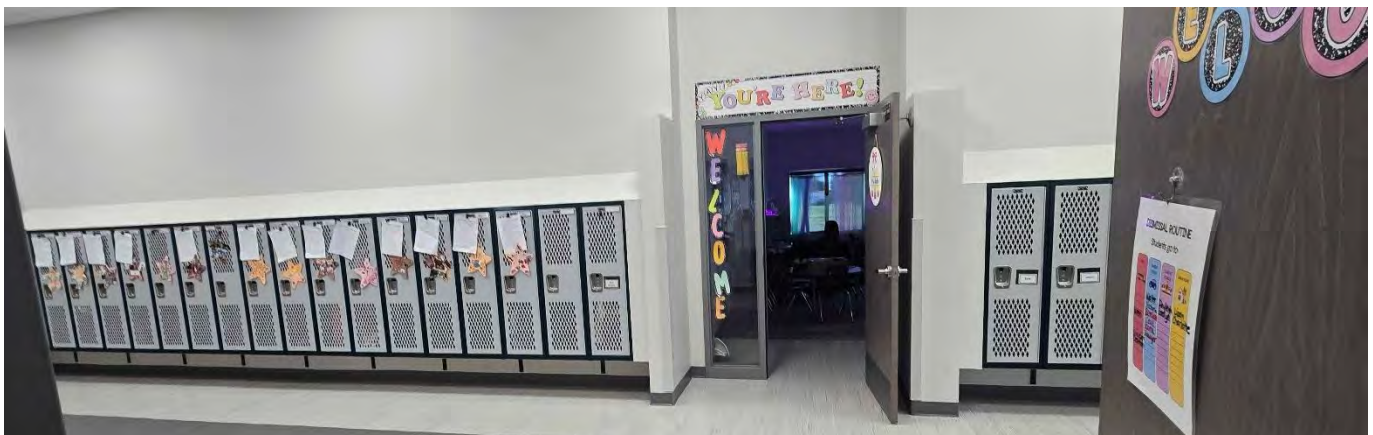
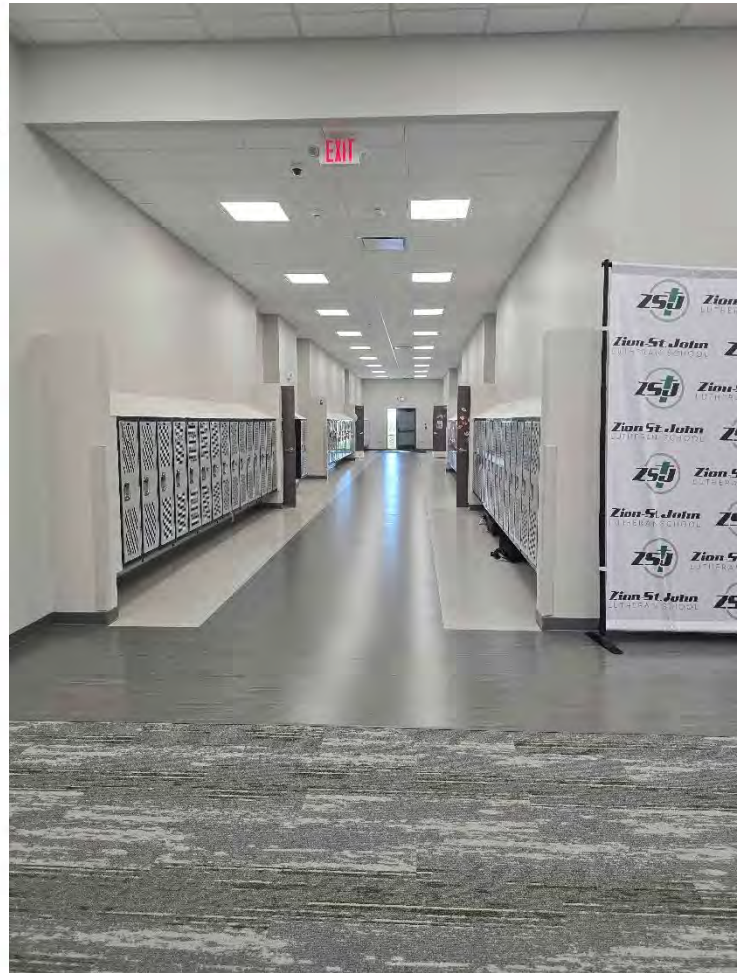
OUR MISSION

In partnership with parents and the congregation, the mission of Zion-St. John Lutheran School is to provide a Christ-centered educational program which ministers to the needs of the whole child in nurturing them to grow in service to God and man.

Nurturing Hearts. Equipping Minds. Serving the Lord.

**BE PART OF
SOMETHING ETERNAL.**

Donors of \$250 or more will be honored with a
nameplate on our new ZSJ Donor Wall



Conflict & Difficult Conversations Workshop

Saturday, November 7, 2026 | Iowa District West Office | 409 Kenyon Rd, Suite B, Fort Dodge
A Free Event For All Church Workers & Laity

Session 1

Coping with Conflict Constructively & Productively: Communication Strategies & Christian Principles

How do you handle conflict in life? Are you a conflict dreader, a conflict spreader, or a conflict solver and resolver? Conflicts happen - in our families, in our workplaces, and in the church - but we are so often unprepared for how to handle conflict. Too often, conflict becomes destructive, rather than productive. Learn research-backed strategies from the field of Communication Studies, and God-given wisdom from Scripture, on how to make conflict less harmful and more helpful.

**Participants will head home equipped with wisdom on how to navigate conflict situations with God-serving communication. They will learn how to reflect on and improve their personal approach to conflict with new tools for their conflict management and with Biblical knowledge of Christ-centered conflict management.*

Session 2

Dealing with Difficult Conversations Calmly & Effectively

Certain conversations are, by their very nature, more difficult. It is not easy to talk with someone when there are high emotions, strongly different opinions, or a feeling of friction. In this session, a communication expert shares research-backed tips and beneficial Biblical insights to make uncomfortable conversations less uncomfortable and more successful, in a way that brings people together, rather than tears them apart.

**Participants will head home equipped to face difficult conversations more calmly and less anxiously, with insights on how to make these conversations unfold more smoothly. Participants will receive specific strategies to communicate more comfortably when engaging in uncomfortable conversations, as well as Biblical knowledge of Christ-centered principles for dealing with difficult conversations.*

Schedule

10:00-10:15 a.m. Arrival / Coffee, Juice & Light Snacks
10:15-10:30 a.m. Welcome & Opening Devotion
10:30-11:30 a.m. Session 1
11:30-12:00 p.m. Discussion Time (Conflict)
12:00-12:45 p.m. Lunch
12:45-1:45 p.m. Session 2
1:45-2:15 p.m. Discussion Time (Difficult Conversations)
2:15-2:30 p.m. Closing Devotion & Sending

Copy Link or Scan QR to Register

Online - Fill out form



About the Speaker



Rev. Dr. Todd Jenks is Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ames and Teaching Professor Emeritus of Communication Studies and Psychology at Iowa State University. With 30+ years as a pastor and communication professor, his areas of focus include conflict management, leadership communication, and intercultural communication. Todd earned his PhD in Communication at Bowling Green State University.

*"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."
— Romans 12:18*

Hosted by IDW Christian Education Committee





IOWA LUTHERAN SCHOOL
TUITION ORGANIZATION

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me..."

PLAN YOUR 2026 TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIFT TODAY

\$1,000 donation

*75% tax credit on Iowa state income
taxes = \$750 tax write off*

Ways to give



*mail a check
or donate
online*



*grain
donation*



*stock
donation*

**LEARN MORE AT: IOWALUTHERANSTO.COM
QUESTIONS?: DEWEYTORKELSON@GMAIL.COM**

Support Lutheran School Students

MISSION POSSIBLE!

Two Shifts Every Pastor Should See: Young Men Are Coming Back — and Church Size Is Polarizing

The landscape of modern church attendance is undergoing a rapid, layered transformation. Recent findings from [Lifeway Research](#) point to two prominent trends reshaping congregations: a narrowing historical gender gap driven by young men, and a growing structural division between megachurches and neighborhood congregations.

The Rise of Young Men in the Sanctuary

For decades, demographic data consistently highlighted a notable gender disparity in church pews, with women outnumbering men across most age groups. Current data suggests that this gap is finally beginning to close, driven by a surge of young men—particularly Gen Z and younger millennials—returning to church or actively exploring the Christian faith.

This shift is fueled not only by what churches offer, but by what young men are fleeing. Exhausted by the hyper-individualism of hustle culture, the superficiality of online-only communities, and a pervasive loneliness epidemic, many are seeking an antidote. They are looking for grounded community, moral clarity, and structured spiritual guidance that digital screens and secular self-help fail to provide. This hunger reflects more than just a cultural recoil; it signals a genuine spiritual movement, echoing the persistent truth that God is actively drawing people back to Himself (John 6:44).

However, these men walk into sanctuaries during an era of profound skepticism. With general trust in pastoral leadership dropping to a historic low of 30%, young seekers are often hyper-vigilant regarding authenticity.

The "Polarization of Scale" in Church Size

Alongside demographic shifts, where and how people gather is also splitting into two distinct models—a dynamic described as a "polarization of scale."

- **Expanding Megachurches:** Large churches continue to attract steady streams of attendees. These institutions leverage vast operational resources, high-production worship experiences, comprehensive youth programming, and digital streaming infrastructure that lowers the barrier to entry for newcomers.
- **Neighborhood-Focused Congregations:** Conversely, the average local church is becoming smaller in headcount, pivoting away from broad promotional programming to serve as direct community anchors. Rather than relying on generic outreach, smaller churches are building trust through tangible, hyper-local engagement—such as hosting recovery ministries,

organizing neighborhood meal programs, and forming mentoring partnerships with local schools. In an era of low institutional trust, smaller settings offer an inherent advantage: pastors and leaders are known personally, making relational integrity visible.

The Practical Challenge: A Discipleship Deficit

While the arrival of young men seeking structure presents a massive opportunity, it also exposes an operational vulnerability. The same Lifeway research indicates that only 30% of churches have specific methods for measuring spiritual growth or discipleship effectiveness. The irony is stark: young men seeking intentional, disciplined spiritual formation are entering institutions that frequently lack clear frameworks to track whether their discipleship efforts are actually working.

What This Means for Church Leaders

Navigating these dual trends requires church leaders to align their strategies with today's cultural realities:

- **Emphasize Tangible Relationships over Programs:** Whether in a mega ministry's small group or a neighborhood chapel, ministry must move past aspirational rhetoric to hands-on local presence and personal accountability.
- **Build Transparent Discipleship Pathways:** To retain young men and overcome the institutional trust gap, churches must move beyond passive attendance and establish clear, measurable pathways for mentorship, accountability, and spiritual maturity.
- **Leverage the Advantage of Scale:** Smaller churches can thrive by doubling down on relational accessibility, while larger institutions must work intentionally to create intimate, highly accountable sub-communities within their larger structures.

The convergence of a culture weary of digital isolation and a generation searching for authentic anchor points presents the church with a rare moment of opportunity. The calling for today's leader is to cultivate environments where institutional skepticism meets radical transparency, and where open doors lead directly into transformational, measurable discipleship. The churches that thrive in this next era will be those that stop relying on passive attendance and start building bridges of genuine, accountable community.

-Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney

Life Issues and the Ballot Box

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1st Timothy 2:1-4

It is not breaking news that it is election season in Iowa and across the country. The ads fill TV programming, the signs propagate the yards of our towns and cities, and the

conversations with friends and family often turn quickly to politics and politicians. There are many policies to consider when approaching the ballot box in selecting our public servants. May God give us all wisdom this election season. I would encourage you not to neglect the life issues as you go about your duty as a citizen. It seems that in what I have seen and heard, life issues are not the foremost topics that are being considered this political season. And yet life issues are very much pressing in our state. Abortion is still legal up to six weeks in Iowa. Every year legislation is put forward in our legislative body to legalize physician-assisted suicide like our neighbors MN and IL. As we live in the “Post Roe v. Wade Era,” the state elections matter all the more for the protection of the lives of the most vulnerable. The recent progress that has been made in pro-

life legislation in Iowa can be unwritten and reversed very quickly. Lest one should decry this sort of conversation coming from a pastor or church newsletter article, consider that we are “two kingdom people” who hold dual citizenship in the kingdom of the right (the Church) and the kingdom of the left (the World). There is one King over the two kingdoms: King Jesus. He established and grants the authority that oversees both on earth. Thus, we cannot simply be pro-life Christians within the Church, but we have a responsibility to carry our convictions into the public square. For Caesar has no authority from God to cross the boundaries God has established. Caesar is not Lord; Jesus is.

The rhetoric in election season can often use terms such as “fight,” “enemy,” “darkness,” and “evil” to portray a candidate or party. God’s Word speaks of how our fight, as Christians, is not against flesh and blood but against “the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). Yet sometimes those spiritual forces of evil work within the earthly authorities to make and administer laws that are contrary to God’s Word. Think of Acts 19 when devotion to Artemis in Ephesus is used by the local authorities to stir up a mob, with the intention of targeting and persecuting the Christians. Having a country or a state that has laws that choose a culture of death over a culture of life is contrary to God’s will. Lord, have mercy upon us. What can we do? First, pray for those individuals aspiring for the offices of public service in our state of Iowa and across the country. Pray that, if elected, they might have wisdom from on high so that they would support and enact policies and laws that would allow all people (from the moment of conception



to natural death) to lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. Pray that they might have humility in their public service. Pray and engage. Send letters to your politicians. Visit the capitol in Des Moines and give them your perspective. Perhaps the most significant way your voice is heard is at the ballot box. Reaffirm leaders who have been faithful in their service. You will not find a perfect candidate. You will not find a perfect political party. You will be voting for a sinner in an imperfect political system; make no mistake. But go and engage in the process we, as Americans, have agreed upon to place our leaders over us. Use your vote to uphold what God upholds. Life. Freedom of Religion. The Conscience of a Christian in their workplace or school. Vote informed. Study the policies. See what the candidate says about protecting life in the womb all the way through life to natural death. Cast your ballot with confidence, not in an earthly prince or ruler, but knowing that King Jesus reigns over all.

Resources: <https://lutheranfamilyservice.org/outreach/life-advocacy/>

<https://thembeforeus.com/>

<https://iowartl.org/blog/2026/06/08/2026-candidate-pro-life-questionnaire-responses/>

Iowa District West Life Coordinator – Rev. Cory Kroonblawd

BUSINESS MANAGER NEWS
Iowa District West Congregations' Mission Receipts



Month Ending August 2026	
Anticipated Amount	\$110,000
Actual Receipts	\$93,776
Year-to-Date Receipts	
Anticipated Amount	\$770,000
Actual Receipts	\$794,746
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$24,746
Use of Mission Receipts	
Remitted to Synod (40%)	\$308,000
Balance for District programs & ministries	\$486,746
Total Receipts	\$794,746
Mission Receipts Compared with Last Year	
Month ending August 2026	\$794,746
Month ending August 2025	\$778,671
Over (under) last year	\$ 16,075

Partners in the Gospel - Monthly Mission Moment

Your faithful mission giving is making a real difference in our community. Through our District's shared ministry, your congregation directly supports Lutheran Family Service (LFS), an important partner that brings the healing presence of Jesus Christ to people and families facing life's toughest challenges.

Your Generosity in Action: With our current District budget, your congregation's mission dollars give over \$23,000 directly to LFS, plus free office space worth more than \$18,000 each year. In addition, our District has given another \$450,000 over the past few years to help these important ministries grow.

A Lifeline of Hope and Healing: LFS has four regional offices across Iowa and supports our neighbors by offering:

- Mental Health & Marriage Counseling: Offering hope and support to individuals and couples.
- Pregnancy & Adoption Services: Helping expectant mothers and giving financial support to adoptive parents as they build loving families.
- Congregational Outreach: Helping local churches serve their communities more effectively.

When life feels overwhelming, LFS is here to remind us that nothing is impossible with God.

Get Involved & Learn More: To discover how LFS can serve you, your family, or your congregation: contact them at 515.573.3138 or visit www.LutheranFamilyService.org.

Stewardship Spark - by Ron Chewning, President of Stewardship Advisors, which provides year-round stewardship education [resources](#) for LCMS churches (248.644.6150 - stewardshipadv@aol.com)

**AS GOD'S GIFTS TO US GROW,
WE ARE TO INCREASE OUR
GIVING AS WELL.**

"Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine" (Proverbs 3:9).



Stewardship Program: Blessed to Advance God's Church

Thanks to Stewardship Advisors, the District has a new three-week stewardship emphasis. The three-weekly themes for **Blessed to Advance God's Church** are:

Week 1: "Blessed with Time"

Week 2: "Blessed with Abilities"

Week 3: "Blessed with Resources"

For each of the three weeks, the following are available: Bible study with answer guide, Bulletin message, Lay reader talk, Power point, Children's message, Sermon, and Worship helps. Click this [video link](#) to preview the program. All the materials are on the District stewardship [website](#).



Compensation & Benefit Recommendations

The Board of Directors approved the suggested compensation recommendations for 2027. To view the salary schedule, [click here](#).

Another option to consider is the LCMS compensation tool used by congregations around the Synod to help determine fair and appropriate compensation for your workers. [Click here](#) for the direct link.

Be Well Serve Well - Let's Walk!

It is time to register for the State of Iowa [Healthiest State 16th Annual Walk](#) on Wednesday, **October 7**. Walking is one of the best ways to stay healthy. Walking together gives us an opportunity to catch up and refresh our minds, and the physical benefits add up, too! How awesome is walking? Walking improves memory, curbs inflammation, spurs creativity, increases physical performance, improves attention and concentration, lowers stress, and helps with losing weight. If you are on the Concordia Health Plan, remember to record your steps on [Vitality](#)!



Church & Clergy Finance/Treasurer's Workshop

The next Treasurer's Workshop will now be held online on Saturday, November 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The Saturday, January 7 program will take place in person at Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Denison, with a snow date of the following Saturday. Pastors and all individuals within the church who have financial responsibilities are encouraged to attend. Please register [online](#). If you have any questions, please contact Roger at 515-576-7666 or Roger@IowaDistrictWest.org.



Taxes can be confusing for pastors, and one helpful resource is a Church Law & Tax [online](#) article titled "*The Top 3 Confusing Tax Issues for Clergy—and Practical Tips to Handle Them Effectively.*" It offers practical guidance that many will find beneficial.

Lutheran Federal Credit Union – A Blessing to Our LCMS Community

Our own LCMS-founded Lutheran Federal Credit Union (LutheranFCU) continues to be a blessing to the church, providing competitive auto and mortgage loans to LCMS church workers and members. This summer, LutheranFCU generously supplied "Christ is Risen, Indeed" insulated water mugs to Synod Convention delegates and continues to donate back to the church, supporting ministry in meaningful ways.

We encourage you to explore their many financial options and services. Congregations can now easily promote LutheranFCU using their new "Congregational Resources" page, which offers bulletin announcements, newsletter blurbs, graphics, and other ready-to-use materials. Visit: www.lutheranfcu.org/congregation-resources.



We are *the* credit union of The LCMS.



Cruise into **fall** with our low Auto Loan Rates!

Rates Start At

4.316 % APR*



LF LUTHERAN
CU FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

We are *the* credit union of The LCMS.

LEARN MORE

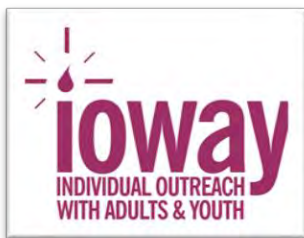


Scan the QR code or visit:
www.LutheranFCU.org



*APR is the Annual Percentage Rate. Rate referenced above is the lowest rate possible for qualified borrowers and is based on underwriting criteria and term of loan. There is a one-time \$50 processing fee charged on all automobile loans. Additional terms and conditions may apply. Rates are subject to change at any time.





Julie Mann, IOWAY Coordinator

julie@iowadistrictwest.org

515-408-9696

Have you ever wanted to do mission work with others from the district and surrounding states? Your chance is here! If you have ever been interested in this trip, now would be your year to go as we are evaluating whether or not we will continue hosting on an annual basis. Grab a friend or 3, come on your own (you will get a roommate), and let's share the love of Christ in the California sunshine. If you have any specific questions, please contact me 515-408-9696 or Julie@IowaDistrictWest.org



SoCal Mission Trip

December 28 ~ January 3

What's Included

- Flight (out of Des Moines)
- Ground Transport
- Hotel
- Most meals
- Petal Pusher T-Shirt
- New friends and lots of fun
- Walkable activity options

Highlights

- 2 shifts of float decorating
- Relationship building with the kids from LOT318
- Fellowship and devos
- Front row parade seating
- Concordia Irvine campus visit
- Beautiful winter weather

\$2000/PP
(\$500 deposit due 10/2)



Register Now - Grab a Form from Your Church office

OR email Julie@IowaDistrictWest.org

Registration Form IOWAY Petal Pushers trip 2026-27

(min age 14, and must be accompanied by an adult for the full trip)

Please print all information clearly

Legal Name _____ (as it appears on your driver's license/passport)

First Name you usually go by, if different _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Birth date (airline requirement) _____ circle: M / F

Cell phone _____

E-Mail _____

Home congregation & city _____

***IF they get registered, I'd like to have _____ as a roommate.**

I would prefer a: (please mark **ONE** choice, if you want others, I will provide the link later once registrations are set...Petal Pushers gear must be worn as your outer layer when working on floats)

short sleeve tshirt - size _____ long sleeve tshirt - size _____

Consent: I agree to participate and cooperate with group activities on this IOWAY mission trip.

SIGNATURE _____

Date _____

Please send this registration form AND a deposit check for \$500 by October 2nd

payable to IDW, memo Pasadena Trip 2026-27 to:

Iowa District West C/O Julie Mann 409 Kenyon Rd #B Fort Dodge, IA 50501

***If you would like to pay the full \$2000 up front you may,**

and the trip must be paid in full by November 6th.

LCEF Loves Church Workers

It's Church Worker Appreciation Month, and we're celebrating those who keep LCMS ministries running. Our financial and wellness resources equip church workers to navigate the realities of life in ministry work through every season.

See how LCEF supports church workers year-round at lcef.org/resources.





MISSION CENTRAL

LCMS Mission Advancement

40718 County Highway E-16

Mapleton, Iowa 51034

www.missioncentral.us



Missionary Gary Thies, *Director and Mission Counselor*
Rev. Steve Schulz, *Mission Advocate and Pastoral Advisor*
Mr. Jim Schroeder, *Gift and Estate Planning Counselor*

Gary.Thies@lcms.org (712) 251-1264
Steve.Schulz@lcms.org (712) 882-1029
Jim.Schroeder@lcms.org (515) 490-7371

October 2026



What a JOY to welcome groups from Kansas, Wisconsin, and Illinois for a full tour of our campus. This group of ladies came on August 4, 2026 and several said, "Hey, we had NO IDEA it would be this totally and completely amazing....NO IDEA AT ALL!" It was truly a very, very special group of ladies!

It was a glorious day on August 8 when we welcomed a group of folks from Glenwood, Iowa to hear the exciting mission update from Missionaries Britt and Micah Odemba, who are serving Kenya. We also were blessed to have members from our Sudanese Lutheran Church in LeMars, IA (and other area Sudanese congregations) lead us in a hymn sing and also report on what our Lord is doing to reach out to Sudanese immigrants right here in Iowa.



It was a day to celebrate, and so many of these visitors had never been here before. They were so excited to have a full tour of our entire campus. It was a day that we will always remember.



August 15 brought a busload of visitors from Fremont, NE to see our missionaries, Bryan and Keah Payne, who are serving in Tanzania. Many of these folks had never been here before, so we gave them "the whole load of hay" and a complete tour of our campus. The Paynes presented some excellent pictures on their work teaching at the seminary in Shinyanga, and here you can see some pictures of our day together!



On Saturday, August 22, we were so happy to welcome a bus load of dear folks from Zion, Memorial, and Our Redeemer Lutheran Churches in Sioux Falls, SD. They were blessed to hear a mission update from Ashley Lehr, who is serving in Puerto Rico. Many of them had never been to Mission Central before, so we also gave them a tour of the campus. What a beautiful day it was!



!AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from *Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas*
Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake

Pastor Pedro Lopez

October 2026



Rev. Pedro Lopez

Assistant to the President
 Missionary at Large

pedro@iowadistrictwest.org
 571-606-7600 (cell)

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! As we enjoy this wonderful harvest season, we look forward with gratitude and anticipation to what God is preparing for us and where He will send us next.

Community Outreach and Service

Along with other volunteers, I continue to serve with Timothy Lutheran Church in Council Bluffs through its Swaddling Clothes program. Programs like this throughout Iowa District West provide wonderful opportunities to meet new people, serve families, and share the Word of God.

Ministry Updates

• **St. Paul, Carroll**

In September, we joyfully celebrated Mexican Heritage Month with a mariachi-style worship service. Mariachi San Pablo led the service at a park in Carroll. Our Saturday evenings of praise, prayer, and Bible study continue to provide meaningful time together, while our monthly fellowship gatherings help strengthen our community.

• **St. John, Storm Lake**

We continue to support the Swaddling Clothes program on the second Saturday of each month. Serving an average of 50 families monthly, the program is making a meaningful difference in the community. Through this outreach, we meet families and invite them to Sunday worship at Grace. We are also planning additional in-home Bible studies to make them more accessible to families.

• **Holy Trinity, Farnhamville**

Please continue to pray for the congregation of Holy Trinity as we plan an English as a Second Language (ESL) program for Farnhamville and the surrounding area. We pray that this outreach will help us build relationships with Hispanic residents and people from other ethnic communities and welcome them into the life of the church.

We are also partnering with other churches in our district to develop outreach programs, Bible studies, ESL classes, and other opportunities to serve our communities.

Prayer and Thanksgiving

Please join us in prayer for:

- The Hispanic Ministry of Iowa District West and the communities we serve.
- Fili and Adrian, as they explore opportunities to continue their education—possibly through seminary—and prepare for ongoing service to the Lord.
- Our volunteers, whose faithful prayers and service encourage and strengthen this ministry. We thank the Lord for each of them.
- My wife and me, that the Lord would continue to guide, strengthen, and equip us for the work He has entrusted to us.

Bendiciones,
Pastor Lopez



“And (Jesus) was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Lk 22:41-44)

“Not my, but Thy will be done, O Lord,”

What a difficult prayer. In praying these words, we follow the example of our Savior himself before His Crucifixion. We know what good Jesus’ suffering on “Good Friday” brought about: the salvation of the world. But how about my suffering? That doesn’t bring salvation for others, so what good is it that I am diagnosed with diseases, that loved ones around me die, that I feel hopeless and lonely? What good is it that I total my vehicle on top of a medical bill without the means to pay either? What good is it all?

The answer is... it isn’t. The bad things that happen in our lives aren’t good in themselves, obviously. God did not create a world with sin and chaos and brokenness and call it “good.” He created an orderly, perfect world without sin and called it “very good.” But ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve, all the world was cursed. This curse is not what God designed, but even in Adam and Eve’s sin, God did not lose control. He had an answer for them the moment they were discovered in their shame. *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15)* God would remember this first proclamation of the Gospel promise across many centuries.

From that moment, God would work all things for the good of those who love him through His one and only Son, Jesus

Christ, but there was a long time to wait before that promise came to fruition. You can imagine how Adam and Eve felt waiting for a Messiah they wouldn’t live to see be born, **but God did not forget His promise.** You can imagine the Israelites enslaved in Egypt for 430 years, entire generations born and buried in bondage, **but God did not forget His promise.** You can imagine how the exiled Israelites, who were being punished for their own infidelity against God and His Prophets, waited in a foreign land for roughly 400 years before Christ was born, **and yet God did not forget His promise.**

Why did God allow Adam and Eve to eat the fruit? Why did God allow the Israelites to suffer in slavery for 430 years? Why did God not bring about repentance of all His children who were wandering from the faith in the Holy Land? I do not know the answers to these questions, and thankfully, I don’t have to because I am not God—the one in control. Instead, I have the comfort knowing that our God is great and holy and almighty, and more than anything, He is *good*. Our infinitely good and gracious God works in ways we don’t understand to accomplish His holy will. When our frail, mortal brains can’t fathom evil that occurs, we simply pray, “Not as I want Lord, but as you know what is best. Not my, but Thy will be done, O Lord.”

Jesus prays this prayer in the second garden (Gethsemane) that would give a new hope following the despair of the first garden (Eden). Jesus prayed in agonizing, bloody sweat, as He prepared to take on the sins of the whole world to His own body on that most cursed and most blessed tree. Just as all mankind was undone by the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, so also is all mankind reconciled to God by the fruit of the tree of Golgotha. Here, all sin is atoned for, as Jesus crushed the head of the serpent who deceived Adam and Eve into living

against God's command. This salvation was God's holy and gracious will, and it is now God's will that we believe this too, that we would be spared from this valley of sorrows and to be taken up with Jesus in Heaven. Thy will be done, O Lord!

This prayer is freeing because it removes the pressure and stress of needing to have the "right answer" or to do the "right thing" in situations that are far beyond our control. While we are powerless, God remains the Almighty. While we are uncertain, God is changeless. While we are faithless, God remains faithful. Praying, "Thy will be done" allows us to let go of things God already promises are in His perfect and good control.

After all, having God's will be done is the best thing that could possibly happen to you. How would we ever manage if God's Will *wasn't* done? How could we have any hope for a future if God somehow lost control? Despite what we may think, God has never lost control. Instead, He says, "*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand*" (Is 41:10). This is God's promise, and by the death and resurrection of His Suffering Son, God's will is always done.

Prayer: "Lord, despite what I may see with my eyes, and the doubt I may feel in my heart, help me to trust that you are in control. Not my will, O Lord, but Thy will be done. Amen."

Hymn: LSB #765 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

Pastor Alex Kaldahl
Trinity Lutheran Church, Marcus
Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Quimby
Trinity Lutheran Church, Hinton

THE LAMPLIGHTER



Theme: "Not My, But Thy Will Be Done, O Lord"

October 2026

*A Publication of The Lutheran Service Auxiliary
Sioux City, Iowa*

The Good Shepherd Hour airs every Sunday
morning on the following radio stations:

KSCJ – 1360 AM & 94.9 FM	Sioux City at 8 a.m.
KLEM – 1410 AM & 96.9 FM	Le Mars at 8 a.m.
KAYL – 101.7 FM	Storm Lake at 8:30 a.m.
KVFD – 1400 AM	Fort Dodge at 8 a.m.

Main Street Living airs Sunday mornings on KCAU
Channel 9 at 10:30 AM & Programming at 10 AM.



Update

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sept. 9-11: OUTDOOR EDUCATION SESSION 1

Sept. 16-18: OUTDOOR EDUCATION SESSION 2

Sept. 23-25: OUTDOOR EDUCATION SESSION 3

Oct. 2-4: IDW SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GATHERING

Oct 4: 9:30 AM TO 1:00 PM OMELET BRUNCH

Oct. 9-10: CAMP OKOBOJI FALL VOLUNTEER WEEKEND

Oct. 9-11: IDW PASTORS WIVES RETREAT

Camp Executive Director, Adam, loves to visit congregations to share greetings and tell the members more about Camp Okoboji. I have the following Sundays available this fall: Oct. 11; Nov. 15; Nov. 22; Dec. 13.

CAMP OKOBOJI FALL VOLUNTEER WEEKEND

October 9-10

Fall Volunteer Weekend is a great way to share your time and talents while you enjoy God's Creation at Camp Okoboji. Help prepare Camp Okoboji for the upcoming winter. Please save the date and make plans to come and help! Room and board will be provided for volunteers, please call the office at (712) 337-3325! We will also host a dinner at 5 p.m. on Saturday evening to honor and celebrate our volunteers that help us throughout the whole year. If you plan to attend the dinner, even if unable to help with volunteer weekend, please let us know by calling the office at (712) 337-3325 or emailing dawnf1531@gmail.com.

PERSONNEL: We are already thinking about staff for next summer! It's never too early to begin recruitment, please encourage youth (at least 16 years of age) and college students to consider serving with us in 2027. The summer staff receive a weekly salary plus free room and board. Even if the youth you know can't work the whole summer, we'd be happy to have them help us even for part of the summer.

Thank You!

THANKS to volunteers and groups who give so generously of their time and talents in serving Camp Okoboji.

- A huge thanks to the gentlemen that mow the grass for us throughout the season and treat our grass to prevent weeds to keep the grounds looking top-notch.



Meet Stephanie Grade



Meet Stephanie Grade, LMHC, a licensed mental health counselor who provides compassionate, faith-informed care for individuals, couples, and families. Drawing on extensive experience in mental health, addiction recovery, and crisis intervention, Stephanie helps clients navigate anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, relationship challenges, stress, and life transitions through personalized, evidence-based counseling rooted in hope and healing.

Location: Carroll, Iowa; throughout Iowa via telehealth

Email: sgrade@lutheranfamilyservice.org

Office/Scheduling: 712-276-9000

Every counselor has a unique story that shapes the way they care for others. Stephanie brings years of experience in mental health, addiction counseling, and crisis intervention, along with a lifelong faith that has always guided her heart for helping people.

We recently sat down with Stephanie to learn more about her path to counseling, why she's excited to join Lutheran Family Service, and the encouragement she hopes every client will find.

You've worked in several different areas of mental health. Can you tell us a little about your background?

I've had the opportunity to work in a variety of settings throughout my career. Much of my recent experience has been in substance use counseling, but I've also worked in mental health therapy, child and adolescent crisis counseling, and in a juvenile detention center.

One of the things I'm most proud of is helping build a mental health program where I've been working for the past several years. When I started, they only offered substance use services. I was able to help develop their mental health assessment process so clients could receive more comprehensive care.

Each experience has taught me something different, and I'm excited to bring those experiences with me to Lutheran Family Service.

When did you know counseling was the right career for you?

Looking back, I think it was always my calling—I just didn't recognize it at the time.

I remember having a close friend in elementary school who struggled with anxiety. I didn't understand what she was experiencing back then, but I always wanted to encourage her and help carry some of those burdens.

One day I realized she didn't have a Bible, so I asked my mom if I could give her one. I shared Matthew 6:25-34 with her, where Jesus reminds us not to worry because our Heavenly Father cares for us.

That's always been part of who I am. I've naturally been someone who wants to encourage others and point them toward hope. Before college, I thought I wanted to become a veterinarian because I love animals, but just before I started school, I knew God was leading me toward psychology instead.

What excites you most about joining Lutheran Family Service?

For most of my career I've worked in secular settings, so I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to openly integrate my faith into counseling.

I grew up in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and my faith has always been the foundation of my life. No matter what I've gone through, I've always turned to God first.

I'm excited to work in a place where, when clients want that faith component, I can freely incorporate Scripture and remind them that God's Word is a source of strength and comfort. The Bible isn't just something we read once and set aside—it's a tool we can return to every day.

What are you most looking forward to in this new role?

One thing I'm especially looking forward to is working with people who are actively seeking help.

In my current role, many of my clients are court-ordered or required to attend counseling. While meaningful change is certainly possible, it's often difficult when someone isn't ready or hasn't chosen to be there.

I'm excited to meet with people who have taken that courageous first step of asking for help and who are ready to work toward healing. It's a privilege to walk alongside people during that journey.

What do you hope every client experiences after meeting with you?

More than anything, I want people to leave feeling heard and valued.

So many people don't feel truly listened to, even by those closest to them. Sometimes people are quick to offer advice or solutions when what someone really needs is for another person to simply listen.

I want my clients to know they have a safe place where they are accepted, where their story matters, and where they are treated with dignity and compassion.

Is there a Bible verse that has been especially meaningful in your life?

Isaiah 40:30–31 has been my favorite passage since confirmation.

It became especially meaningful after my aunt passed away around that same time, and it's remained a source of encouragement throughout my life.

“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Those verses remind me that even when we feel exhausted or overwhelmed, the Lord renews our strength. That's a promise I've returned to time and again, both personally and professionally.

How do you like to recharge outside of work?

Right now, much of my free time is spent with my 15-month-old son, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

I also love reading, spending time with my family, and being outdoors. My family enjoys vacationing in Colorado, and there's something about being in the mountains that brings

peace and perspective. When I lived in Chicago, that place was the lakefront. Now, it's walking around the lake close to home.

Those quiet moments in nature help me slow down, reflect, and recharge before returning to care for others.

Stephanie sees clients in person in Carroll, Iowa, and throughout the state via telehealth.

sgrade@lutheranfamilyservice.org | [712-276-9000](tel:712-276-9000) | lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Iowa District West

October 2026

The following events are hosted by District congregations/circuits.
Contact information is provided.
To include your church's event, send information to emilie@iowadistrictwest.org.



Updated!

SAVE THE DATE

Sanctuary Dedication

SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

8:00 AM SERVICE	10:30 AM SERVICE
--------------------	---------------------

RECEPTION BETWEEN SERVICES
9:15 AM

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Iowa District West

October 2026

The following events are hosted by District congregations/circuits.
Contact information is provided.
To include your church's event, send information to emilie@iowadistrictwest.org.

IOWA DISTRICT WEST SWADDLING CLOTHES CONVOCATION

Sunday, October 18

3 PM – 6:30 PM

**St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1112 Bailey St. – Sac City**

**Pray. Study. Network. Learn. Be Encouraged.
Meal Provided!**

Pastors, Volunteers and Lay Members who are active in
Swaddling Clothes Ministry or want to learn more about this
mercy work should attend

Please RSVP for Meal Preparation
Call 651-295-7590 or Email pastorckroonblawd@gmail.com

