

February 2015

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ALSO INCLUDED...

Bridges Newsletter
Operation Barnabas
Ordination Anniversaries—2015
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Calendar of Events

February 15 — LERT Training, Trinity, Algona
February 17 — District Board of Directors, Fort Dodge
March 22 — Missions Banquet, Our Savior, Denison
April 14 — Kapfer Symposium, Shepherd of the Valley, West Des Moines

ORDAINED MINISTERS

CALL DECLINED

The Rev. Luke Timm, Clive, to Trinity, Shawnee, KS.

CALL ACCEPTED

The Rev. Eric Moeller, Storm Lake, to intentional interim Newell/Fonda/Pomeroy.
The Rev. Dan Vogel, District Missionary to Hispanics, to Amigos en Cristo Lutheran Church, Denison.

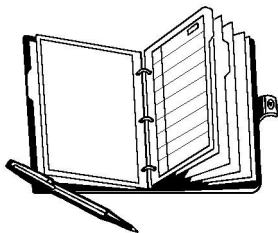
CALLS RECEIVED

The Rev. Steve Benson, District Chaplain, to Luther Park Campus, Des Moines.
The Rev. Christopher Nitzel, Bloomington, IL, to Hartley.

COMMISSIONED MINISTER

TRANSFERRED IN

Romaine Marquardt, Emeritus, South Wisconsin District, 1/12/15.



Future Events in Iowa District West

June 21-23...District Convention, Camp Okoboji

June 25-28...National LWML Convention, Des Moines

Follow Iowa District West on these social media websites.



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iowaDistrictWest](http://www.facebook.com/iowaDistrictWest)



[www.twitter.com/
iowaWest](http://www.twitter.com/iowaWest)



[www.youtube.com/user/
iowaDistrictWest](http://www.youtube.com/user/iowaDistrictWest)

Iowa District West, LCMS
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Fort Dodge, IA 50501

515.576.7666 Phone
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Please note: The inclusion of items from outside sources in *The Monthly* is for information purposes only. Inclusion of such items does not constitute District endorsement.



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD

Planting Together

February 2015

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

The mission of Iowa District West is **Connecting, Resourcing, Optimizing, Partnering** and **Serving** with the member congregations for the extension of the Gospel within our communities, throughout the District, and into all the world.

Love Your Neighbor



This Lenten season we hear again our Lord's command to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

What does loving your neighbor look like?

Eusebius, an early Church historian, records the wonderful example of James the brother of our Lord. "James used to enter the temple alone and was often found kneeling and imploring forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like a camel's from his continual kneeling in worship and in prayer for the people" (Book 5 of his *Memoirs*). James prayed, not because the Lord commanded it, but in response to God's love for him. This love he had for God and his neighbor came at the price of his life. The scribes and Pharisees took him to a temple parapet, where his witness converted many, and pushed him over the side and clubbed him to death.

Loving your neighbor is more than assuring their personal well-being, it involves their spiritual well-being. Jesus is our example. He spent His life in service to God and His fellow man. Among His final words from the cross were words of salvation, not condemnation, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:31).

Are you prepared to love as He did?

Rev. Paul G. Sieveking, President

District Mission Supporters

As you plan your outreach efforts for 2015, don't overlook the valuable partnership that exists with the District. Congregations, schools, and circuits are eligible. If you have an opportunity you'd like to create or seize in reaching the unchurched in your community, apply for financial partnership with IDW today! Preference is given to those efforts targeting unbelievers, men, vocations, former LCMS, or utilizing technology. Deadline for submitting an application (available at www.iowamissions.org) is March 1.

\$1,000 LCEF Scholarships Available

Six \$1,000 LCEF scholarships will be awarded to the upper Midwest districts this year. Your college choice can be anywhere, as long as it is accredited. Awards are not based upon the type of degree you are pursuing. Students must be a current LCMS member in Iowa District West. Apply before February 28, 2015. For information go to www.lcefuppermidwest.org/scholarships.

News from Camp Okoboji

- ◇ **Family Ministry Cabins** – check out our website to see if we have any Family Ministry Cabins available. Winter at Camp Okoboji can be a beautiful time to rest and relax! Contact Kellie Jones by calling the Camp office or by email.
- ◇ **C.H.A.O.S.** (Christians Hyped About Our Savior) is scheduled for February 27-28, 2015. This event is for students in grades 6-8. The Reverend Scott Jensen, pastor at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Mapleton, IA will again be our Bible study leader. For the schedule and to register online go to our website www.campokoboji.org

Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization

We are pleased to announce that the Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization (ILSTO) met its 2014 goal and raised over \$816,000 for Lutheran elementary and secondary school tuition assistance. Because of your support, many more families and students will receive financial help to attend Lutheran elementary and secondary schools in Iowa for the 2015-2016 school year. Thank you for your generosity and your part in the Lord's work.

Missions Banquet

How about traveling to Our Savior, Denison to hear what other congregations are doing in IDW to connect with their communities? Sunday, March 22 (registration 4:30, program 5:00) is the date for this year's Missions Banquet. Not only will this year's mission grants be awarded, but you'll have a chance to hear from some of last year's recipients, network with those present, and enjoy a FREE meal! Go to www.idwlcms.org to register.

District Calendar

February 15...LERT Training, Trinity, Algona
February 17...District Board of Directors, Fort Dodge

For more information on Iowa District West activities, view *The Monthly* at <http://www.idwlcms.org/publications.php>.

Dear Fellow Followers of Jesus,

No treachery is worse than betrayal by a family member or friend. Julius Caesar knew such treachery. Among the conspirators who assassinated the Roman leader on March 15, 44 BC was Marcus Junius Brutus. Caesar not only trusted Brutus, he had favored him as a son. According to Roman historians, Caesar first resisted the onslaught of the assassins. But when he saw Brutus among them with his dagger drawn, Caesar ceased to struggle and, pulling the top part of his robe over his face, asked the famous question, “You too, Brutus?”

Betrayal hurts! If you have ever been betrayed, I am truly sorry. I think we all have experienced some degree of the disappointment of others turning their backs on us. In the vernacular of the day, we may say that they “threw us under the bus.” Those times of betrayal cause grievous wounds to our hearts. It destroys our trust in the betrayer. They lose credibility as one no longer believes in their words. One is left in a state of skepticism.

Where was Samson’s healthy skepticism in his relationship with Delilah? [Read Judges 16] Samson and Delilah is a story of betrayal, but who was the real betrayer?

Delilah lived in the Valley of Sorek. Samson loved her deeply, but Delilah was a true daughter of Philistia. Some of her people came to her and said: ***“Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.”*** So Delilah said to Samson, ***“Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.”*** The people hoped to subdue Samson to kill

him, so Delilah grants their request and asks Samson about the source of his strength and how one might overcome him. Met with failure, Delilah implores him three other times until Samson finally reveals his Nazarite heritage and how no razor has ever touched his head.

With this information of vulnerability, Delilah has Samson’s head shaved and the soldiers capture him and gouge out his eyes. Delilah would undoubtedly not have gone ahead with her betrayal of her lover unless she had had the definite assurance that the money she coveted would be forthcoming. She, the weak woman, was strong enough to manage him which leads to her betrayal.

Was Samson a man blinded by love? Is he the innocent victim who was foolishly misled by his trust in a woman? Or is there more betrayal that is less obvious?

As our accounting of Samson’s story opens, we see him seeking the services of a prostitute. Paul eloquently states and summarizes the sixth commandment in 1 Corinthians 6: ***“Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.”*** Samson betrays God by violating this commandment given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Yet Samson commits a greater betrayal, for it is the beginning of severe transgression for a believer to put his trust in his own ability. He thought that his strength came from his hair instead of the God who loved him and

provided for him. With the clipping of his hair, with the end of his Nazarene state, God had gone from him.

As Ash Wednesday and Lent approaches later this month, we must ask ourselves those same provocative questions regarding our relationship with our heavenly Father. Like Judas who betrayed Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane, like Peter who denies ever knowing Jesus, we too betray Him as we sinners.

Samson was brought to repentance, ***“Then Samson called to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes’”*** (Judges 16:28). God in His grace grants Samson’s request. God restores his strength so that he might avenge those who captured and blinded him. Though his own life is snuffed out by the debris of a collapsing building, all his avengers perish with him. Ultimately Samson is carried back home and buried among his own people.

Lent, my friends, is our journey through repentance to forgiveness. We acknowledge our own betrayal of family, friends, and even of our God. We are sorry for our betrayal that led to Jesus’ crucifixion on Calvary’s cross, since it was for us that He was betrayed into the hands of sinful man, suffer these things and die. It was for us His hands and feet were pierced with nails.

Through Jesus’ selfless act of kindness of giving up His life for us, God has worked forgiveness for you and me. Jesus bore no grudge against His betrayers, but grants us restoration. We are God’s people, His children, and heirs of His eternal kingdom.

Chaplain Steven K. Benson

THE LAMPLIGHTER



THEME: SAMSON AND DELILAH

FEBRUARY 2015

“Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.” So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.”

Judges 16:5-6

*A Publication of The Lutheran Service Auxiliary
4505 Applewood Ave
Sioux City, Iowa 51106*

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

KSCJ	–	1360AM	Sioux City at 8 am
KLEM	–	1410AM	Le Mars at 8 am
KAYL	–	101.7AM	Storm Lake at 8:30 am
KVFD	–	1400AM	Fort Dodge at 8 am

NEWS FROM THE BUSINESS MANAGER
Iowa District West Congregations' Mission Receipts



For the Month Ending December 2014	
Anticipated Amount	\$ 145,000
Actual Receipts	\$ 160,657
Fiscal Year-to-Date Receipts	
Anticipated Amount	\$1,595,000
Actual Receipts	\$1,480,702
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$ (114,298)
Use of Mission Receipts	
Remitted to Synod (47%)	\$ 695,928
Balance for District programs/operations	\$ 784,774
Total Receipts	\$1,480,702
Mission Receipts Compared With Last Year	
Year-to-date 2014	\$1,480,702
Year-to-date 2013	\$1,605,245
Over (under) last year	\$(124,543)

Lutheran Church Extension Fund

The mission of Lutheran Church Extension Fund is to provide opportunity to make funds and services available in support of the Great Commission through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

As of December 2014, 1084 investments in Iowa District West totaled \$29,924,874. These investments are providing opportunity for 32 loans totaling \$8,318,971 plus commitments totaling \$2,069,698. LCEF puts invested dollars to work in mission and ministry right here in Iowa District West.

If you are interested in investing in the ministry of LCEF or if you have questions on the loans and services provided to our congregations, please contact Carole White. **Come, Join the Ministry!**

Pastors and Church Secretaries: How about including a brief note about LCEF in your church newsletter or bulletin? Please use the following short paragraph—thank you!

Supporting Your Ministry Needs

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) offers ministry loans for Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations, schools and organizations. Achieve your ministry’s goals while partnering with an organization committed to sharing the Gospel.

LCEF helps you through the loan process, whether you need to build, remodel, purchase equipment or refinance. We are committed to empowering ministries in Kingdom work.

Learn more at lcef.org or call 800-843-5233.

LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. Neither LCEF nor its representatives give legal, accounting or tax advice.

Stewardship Spark / Monthly Mission Moment

Did you know that almost \$28,000 (3% of Iowa District West congregations' mission receipts minus Synod support) is forwarded to Lutheran Family Service for ministry in Iowa? LFS is your partner in ministry bringing the healing presence of Jesus Christ to those in need. The District has and will continue to support the ministry of LFS. You are encouraged to spring forward and support this worthwhile organization that has been caring for families in Iowa since 1901. For more information about LFS contact them at 515.573.3138, 800.622.7285, www.lfsiowa.org or <http://helpingmarriageswork.com>.

Financial Quick Notes

- 2015 Mileage Rate: **57.5 cents** per mile for all business miles driven (more details on the next page and at www.irs.gov).
- New receipt vouchers were mailed mid-January. Please use these for remittances from February 1, 2015-January 20, 2016. Donations for organizations outside the District (for example Camp Okoboji, Lutheran Family Service, Lutherans for Life and other Lutheran ministries) should be sent directly.
- Need a W-4 or other IRS form quickly? Several forms are in the Treasurer's Manual, but you can also download the current forms directly from the IRS website. Go to www.irs.gov/Forms-&-Pubs and download the PDF file.
- Need a Form I-9? Find the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf. All church staff including pastors need a copy on file.
- New State of Iowa W-4 form (IA W-4 Employee's Withholding Certificate and Centralized Employee Registry 44-019) is online at <https://tax.iowa.gov> (search W4). All new employees must complete this Centralized Employee Registry Reporting Form. Questions, email idr@iowa.gov or call 515.281.3114 or 800.367.3388. The direct link is <https://tax.iowa.gov/sites/files/idr/IA%20W-4%20%2844019%2915.pdf>
- The Iowa minimum wage remains at \$7.25. State and federal posters are no longer provided by Iowa Workforce Center. More information is online at www.iowaworks.org/reqposters.htm.
- Tax calendar: January 31 deadline...
Issue Form W-2 to each employee
Issue Form 1099-Misc to all independent contractors/self-employed individuals
(those that earned \$600 or more during the year 2014)
- Complete Employers Quarterly Federal Tax Return Form 941 (be sure to proof the Form 941 totals with W-3 summary statement).
- Tax calendar: February 28 deadline...
Complete Copy A of each 2014 Form W-2 Wage and Tax Statement and W-3 Transmittal of Wage and Tax Statement to Social Security Administration (mail to address on summary form or file electronically).
- Complete Copy A of each 2014 Form 1099-Miscellaneous Income and Form 1096-Annual Summary and Transmittal of U.S. Information Returns to IRS (mail to address on summary form or file electronically).
- Complete online the 2014 State of Iowa Verified Summary of Payments (VSP) to the Department of Revenue. The deadline is March 2, 2015. Questions call 800.367.3388.
- Housing Allowance Ruling update – congregations can continue to designate housing allowance for pastors and professional church workers. The original ruling (for WI, IL, IN) that it was unconstitutional was reversed in the courts; they concluded the plaintiff lacked standing and their injury was speculative. According to church attorney Richard Hammer, the case will most likely be appealed to the US Supreme Court to be applied nationally.



2015 IRS Mileage Rates

Beginning January 1, 2015, the standard mileage rate used to reimburse workers' business miles under an accountable reimbursement arrangement will increase 1.5 cents to **57.5 cents** per mile. The accountable reimbursement is the most favorable because the congregation does not have to report the reimbursement as compensation paid to the employee on Form W-2. The employee should document the amount, time and place, business purpose, and business relationship. Employees should substantiate miles at least every 60 days. The standard medical and moving mileage rate has decreased ½ cent to 23 cents per mile. The rate used for charitable deduction purposes, set by statute rather than IRS, remains at 14 cents per mile.

Churches may choose to reimburse a lower rate without any tax consequences. If the church chooses to reimburse at a rate higher than the IRS approved rates, the church must add the excess amount to the employee's taxable income. To read the complete IRS announcement, go online to www.irs.gov and search "2015 Mileage Rates" or the direct link is www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/New-Standard-Mileage-Rates-Now-Available;-Business-Rate-to-Rise-in-2015.



Is your church incorporated?

Every congregation should have received in early January a postcard from the Secretary of State (SOS) office. At their website (www.sos.iowa.gov) enter your ID and password and update your registered agent and officers. To keep your incorporation status active, you must complete this form every other year. It is important to complete this form to provide legal protection for your leaders. It is due March 31, 2015. For more information, contact the SOS at 515-281-5204 or email sos@sos.iowa.gov.

Be Well Rewards Continues!



Thank you for your participation in 2014 to earn the maximum reward. The Be Well Rewards is coming back in 2015 and is getting "back to the basics." In 2015, you will be able to report your activities by going directly to BeWellServeWell.com or continue using myCPS.org portal. In addition, CPS has changed the health assessment to make it much shorter and easier to access - and it will no longer be a gateway for you to earn any points. In fact, you can earn points for taking the assessment. Participants can still earn a maximum of \$250 and the employer match will still be in place. For more information, the 2015 "menu" of options is online at www.concordiaplans.org/graphics/assets/documents/menu.pdf.



LCMS Statistics Report

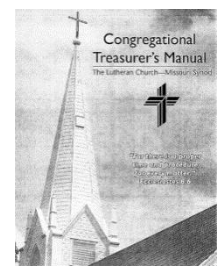
Now is the time to complete the 2014 Congregation Statistics Report. Congregations received a notice from the Synod in January regarding the requirement to submit their annual data online. The Statistics Report is due February 28. The report includes membership data, gains/losses, and education enrollment figures. Not only is the form necessary for the Synod statistics, but the number reported for confirmed membership is also used for convention assessments.

The Lutheran Witness Subscription Rate

The rate for *The Lutheran Witness* increases slightly for May 2015-May 2016. Including the insert, the total is \$22.01. The LW is available as an app, online, and in print. The flagship magazine of the LCMS, *The LW* is a monthly publication (11 issues per year) that offers Synod news, features, columns, Q&A's, and more. If you have any changes or questions, contact Concordia Publishing House circulation at 800.325.3040 ext. 1419 or email Becky.Laumand@CPH.org.

Congregational Treasurer's Manuals

A few *Congregational Treasurer's Manuals* are available for only \$10.00 (shipping charges will be waived). These manuals are extremely helpful tools for staff, treasurers, and church councils to better understand many aspects of the congregation's business needs. Available while supplies last!





What is Happening at Your Camp?

1531 Edgewood Drive
Milford, IA 51351
712-337-3325

Email: camp@campokoboji.org Web site: www.campokoboji.org

Our Promise of Jesus at the Lake
A friendly, safe, refreshing and relaxing Christian experience
An excellent value for you and your family

Calendar

February 1 Omelet Brunch at Trinity Lutheran Church in Algona
February 7 Canal clean up
February 8 Camp Sunday at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Mapleton (Alternate Date is February 14)
February 16 NLOMA Conference begins at Camp Lone Star
February 27-28 CHAOS

Registration for 2015 ONLINE

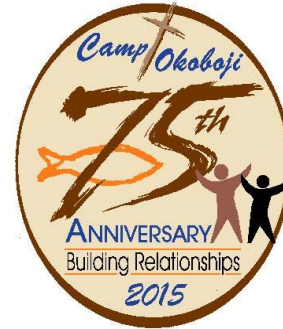
All registrations for 2015 will be online! There will NOT be a mailing with registration forms sent to homes and congregations. There WILL BE a mailing with a postcard giving the Camp Okoboji website address. From there you will be able to register for events. The only exception will be the Ginny DeWall Joy Camps.

2015 Camp Theme

**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;**
Lamentations 3:22 (ESV)



Family Ministry Cabins – Check out our website to see if we have any Family Ministry Cabins available. Winter at Camp Okoboji can be a beautiful time to rest and relax! Contact Kellie Jones by calling the Camp office or by email.



2 Corinthians 4:5

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

75th Anniversary Happenings!

Several events are being planned for the 2015 75th Anniversary of Camp Okoboji! The kickoff for the Anniversary will be at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 11, 2015. There will be a special worship service on that day at 9:45 am with Reverend Leroy Riemer serving as the preacher. More events are listed on our website or Facebook page.

C.H.A.O.S. 2015 Date

C.H.A.O.S. (Christians Hyped About Our Savior) is scheduled for February 27-28, 2015. This event is for students in grades 6-8. The Reverend Scott Jensen, pastor at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Mapleton, IA will again be our Bible study leader. For the schedule and to register online go to our website www.campokoboji.org.

FACEBOOK!

"LIKE" us on Facebook - www.facebook.com/CampOkoboji-LCMS
Watch for upcoming events. See pictures of events and more!

Camp Staff Contact Information

Executive Director: Doug Kading - doug@campokoboji.org
Office Director: Kellie Jones - kellie@campokoboji.org
Program Director: Lori Gamble - lori@campokoboji.org
Ministry Advancement Director: Paul Golke - paul@campokoboji.org
Financial Director: Karrie Mullenburger - karrie@campokoboji.org

2015 C.H.A.O.S.

Christians Hyped About Our Savior

February 27-28, 2015



**BIBLE STUDY!
FRIENDS!
GAMES!
FOOD!
MUSIC!
FUN!
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES!**

**Students in
Grades 6-8**

And

Adult Chaperones

Bible Study Leader

Pastor Scott Jensen

Register Online

www.campokoboji.org



!AMIGOS EN CRISTO!

News from *La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Amigos en Cristo: Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church*
Pastor Daniel Vogel, Denison, Iowa

Iowa District
 West, LCMS

Year 11, Issue 2
 February 2015



CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY BLESSINGS

Our Advent, Christmas and Epiphany celebrations each year are a blessing. This year was special again. We began the Advent season with three weekly home gatherings, a tradition called Posada. The Posada is the reenactment of Joseph and Mary's search in Bethlehem for a place of birth for Baby Jesus. It is an evening of Bible study, food and fellowship. Because it is such a popular tradition in many Hispanic countries we were thankful that many visitors came.

On Christmas Eve we had our traditional candle light service with special music. The nine members of the Perez family came and took their annual family pictures including a picture with Paula and me (top). Their friend Marta is also in the picture. What a great family tradition! We are so thankful for this family and all of our families that have been so faithful to our church over the past year.

The middle photo shows some of the children of our congregation at our Epiphany celebration. Hispanics traditionally celebrated Epiphany with the visit and the gift giving of the Wise Men as a big part of their Christmas. We always celebrate with the procession and the children's bilingual message of that great event to make sure they understand the true Christmas story. Each child was also given two bilingual Christian books to help them grow in their faith and to share with their families.

Pictured in the bottom photo are Maru and Paula cutting the Epiphany cake called the Rosca. After the worship service we gather for fellowship and the cutting of the Rosca cake. It is a round traditional cake with little plastic baby figures baked into it. Those who get a piece with a baby figure in it will have to prepare tamales for the celebration of the Presentation of the Lord 40 days after the birth of Baby Jesus. This year that will be February 2. I got one of the baby figures along with Jose & Marbella and Arcadia and so our three families will be working on our tamales. I then used the time while we were eating the cake to teach and review the Christmas story, the chronology of the early life of Jesus and especially the story of the visit of the Wise Men.





SPECIAL WEDDING IN STORM LAKE

I had the honor of officiating for the wedding of Jose and Irma Ibarra. Both have been members of our Hispanic church in Storm Lake for many years. I worked with Irma at the Tyson plants in both Denison and Storm Lake. I agreed to marry them before I ended my work in Storm Lake. The wedding was a Christmas wedding with two very happy families. Many blessings to Jose and Irma.



WELCOME MISSIONARIES SHARP

Last month I wrote about Missionaries Rick and Gema Schuller on their way to Puerto Rico. This month, our thoughts and prayers are for another special missionary family, Jim and Angie Sharp on their way to serve in Uruguay. Pastor Jim has a very diverse background having studied at the seminary in Brazil and Argentina. Jim's wife, Angie is from Zion, Denison. They have been in the area raising funds for their new mission. Please pray for these missionaries and, if you are able, support them.

MY TYSON CHAPLAINCY AT THE PLANT IN DENISON: "Remembering Others"

The picture at right is a Baby Shower for two workers during the noon lunch break. All is not work at the plant as lots of fun and fellowship takes place during break time. God bless the ladies who put on the party and Lucy and Angelina who are expecting babies.



TO CONTACT ME

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32678 Aspen Ave.

Manning, IA 51455

712-653-2354 or

Cell: 712-309-1292

or Email me at:

Dan.Vogel@idwlcms.org

* Please forward this newsletter to a friend from
www.idwlcms.org



PLEASE PRAY

+ In thanksgiving for the blessings of our traditional Advent, Christmas and Epiphany services. + For the honor of preaching at Immanuel, Schleswig and at the January Pastors Conference of the Denison/Mapleton Circuit. + In preparation for our Call meeting with President Sieveking. + For the leaders of our new church, Amigos en Cristo and our future in 2015. + For my work as a Chaplain at Tyson and for opportunities to share the Gospel in the workplace. + *In thanksgiving for the mission hearts of the many individuals and congregations of Iowa District West who monthly support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants in Denison and in our other three Hispanic missions.*

IOWA EAST & WEST
LCEF



For more information on LCEF loans, investments, and services, please contact:

Carole L. White LCEF
V.P. Iowa East & West
1150 Home Park Blvd #7
Waterloo, IA 50702

Toll Free Phone:
1-877-439-5233
carole.white@lcef.org



Rev. Bob Riggert
Director of Customer
Services
bob.riggert@ialcef.org



Ruth Gerken
Promotions Director
Iowa East & West
ruth.gerken@ialcef.org



Lutheran Church Extension Fund
> where investments build ministry

February 2015

Mullen is IDW LCEF \$1,000 Scholarship Winner!



“Connor is a cancer survivor whose faith has come alive as a result of his life and near death experience. He is a leader among his peers,” wrote his pastor, Rev. John Burger in his letter of recommendation.

Congratulations to the Iowa District West Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) 2014 \$1,000 Scholarship winner, Connor Mullen. Mullen was presented with the scholarship December 21 at his home congregation - Faith Lutheran Church in Adel. An Eagle Scout, leader in Faith’s youth group, and a technician for the church’s audio visual equipment in the sound booth, Mullen graduated from Adel-DeSoto-Minburn High School and attended the University of Iowa this last semester. “I cannot emphasize strongly enough how he stood out as a model student in confirmation,” continued Burger.

“I became familiar with LCEF in Sunday School where I participated in [LCEF’s] stamp program. . . . It was a tangible way for me to see how my investing was making a difference for [LCMS] churches and schools. I like that even young people can feel they are able to contribute and make a difference. It provides a sense of community and unity in one shared goal and mission:

growing God’s Kingdom,” wrote Mullen in his scholarship essay. “LCEF is impacting the lives of many people: those who utilize the invested funds as well as those who are making the investments. It provides the necessary funds for churches and schools to grow and improve, which benefits current and future members of that organization. It also gives investors of all ages the ability to save for their own future and share what God has given [them]. Both parties benefit, and that is something to get excited about; a win-win for all!”

LCEF is blessed to provide annual scholarships to our outstanding LCMS students throughout the upper Midwest districts of Iowa East, Iowa West, Minnesota North, Minnesota South, North Dakota, North Wisconsin and South Wisconsin. The online scholarship application is posted at lcefuppermidwest.org/scholarships/. Application deadline for the 2015 scholarship is February 28, 2015.



Connor Mullen and family

LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. This offer is made solely by LCEF’s Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. Lutheran Church Extension Fund-Missouri Synod (National Office) (NMLS# 3444) 10733 Sunset Office Drive, Suite 300, St. Louis, MO 63127-1020, (800) 843-5233, www.lcef.org.



Small Stewards - Big Blessings
By Rev. Bob Riggert
Biblical Stewardship Lesson for and with Children

(You are invited to share these lessons with children in Sunday school openings, classroom devotions, children's worship lessons, or other church settings. They can also be used in the home for family devotions. Each month a Biblical "small steward" will share a "big blessing" as a Spirit-blessed example of stewardship).

February text: Luke 2:41-52

How did the boy Jesus use His time? The Bible tells us very little about Jesus' life as a little boy in Nazareth. The Bible tells us that "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." As a human being Jesus was a typical child (except that He was perfect!). He probably played with other children in the neighborhood. He helped His father and mother.

We know that Jesus loved to learn. He loved to learn about God's Word and wanted to grow as a Child of His heavenly Father. When He was twelve years old Jesus was in the temple exploring the truths of the Old Testament with the temple teachers. Jesus, who fulfilled God's promises, was learning about those promises.

Jesus is an example of being stewards of our minds. God has given us our minds to learn about the wonder of God's world, but to especially learn the truths of His Word. When small stewards (children who see God's gifts and take care of those gifts) increase in wisdom, they experience big blessings. God wants us to use our minds to not only learn math, reading, social studies, and other subjects, but especially to use our minds in Sunday school, worship, and family devotions to learn more about God's love for us in Jesus.

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund Young Investors Club encourages us to be good stewards of our money as we add to our savings accounts but also encourages us to be wise stewards of our minds. Y.I. Club members help others learn about Jesus and can also earn up to \$25 per year for good grades.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, open up my heart to learn about You. Fill my mind with the truths of Your Word. Keep my heart and mind pure like Yours. Amen.

Small Stewards Bring Big Blessings Home—Notes to Family

Jesus loved to learn! The small boy Jesus was a steward (caretaker) of His mind. Families have the joy of seeing hearts and minds develop as parents encourage reading and learning times in the home. Parents can ask: What did you learn in school today? What was your Sunday school lesson about? Do you have your homework done? Is that television program or internet game good for your mind?

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund Young Investor Club encourages wise stewardship of money and minds. Find out more about the good grades incentive from your church's Y.I. Club coordinator or by visiting www.lcef.org. Let me learn like Jesus. Let me learn of Jesus!

Carole White, District Vice-President (carole.white@lcef.org)
Rev. Bob Riggert, Director of Customer Services (bob.riggert@lcef.org)
Ruth Gerken, Promotions Director (ruth.gerken@lcef.org)

Lutheran
Church
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\$1,000 LCEF Scholarships Available!

2014 Scholarship Winner from the Iowa District West

Connor Mullen of Faith, Adel, Iowa



"I participated in [LCEF's] stamp program.... It was a tangible way for me to see how my

investing was making a difference for [LCMS] churches and schools. I like that even young people can feel they are able to contribute and make a difference. It provides a sense of community and unity in one shared goal and mission: growing God's Kingdom."

Read more about last year's scholarship winners at lcefuppermidwest.org/news-feed.

Apply before Feb. 28, 2015 lcefuppermidwest.org/scholarships

Six \$1,000 LCEF upper Midwest districts scholarships will be awarded this year. Your college choice can be anywhere, as long as it is accredited. Awards are not based upon the type of degree you are pursuing. Students must be a current LCMS member in Iowa District West.

A one page essay and two letters of recommendation are required. Graduating seniors and current college students should visit lcefuppermidwest.org/scholarships for qualification details and application.

Who wins? Want timely updates on deadlines? Like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/LCEFuppermidwest](https://www.facebook.com/LCEFuppermidwest) or follow our tweets @LCEFMariaH. *Questions?* Contact Maria. Hendrickson@lcef.org.

Lutheran
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Play the Y.I. Challenge!

**Win \$1,000 for your
next youth trip!**

The 2015 Young Investors (Y.I.) Challenge kicks off Jan. 25 in celebration of national Lutheran Schools Week.

The Y.I. Challenge is a 10 question online quiz on the basics of good stewardship & finances. The quiz will be 'live' for three weeks: Jan. 25 through Feb. 14, 2015.

The congregation in Iowa District East or West with highest score (based upon a combination of correct answers and percentage of participation) will win \$1,000.



IMPORTANT! To participate, your congregation/group needs a volunteer Y.I. Leader. **Sign up today at lcefuppermidwest.org/yichallenge.** Y.I. Leaders will receive Leader Board updates during the Challenge via email once/week for three weeks and are expected to share the updates with their LCMS congregation/school to encourage participation.



 **Lutheran Church Extension Fund**
> where investments build ministry




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 **Lutheran Church Extension Fund**
> where investments build ministry

Mission Opportunities

A newsletter of resources, events, and ideas to help God's people passionately, intentionally, and faithfully extend the Gospel within our communities, throughout the District, and into all the world!

February 2015

God is love! Seems like a natural connection with Valentine's Day which just "happens" to fall right before the beginning of Lent. What if you seized the world's focus to build a bridge to Christ and your congregation? Several congregations are holding marriage retreats that weekend, but what if you simply recognized lengthy marriages in your community? Distributed care packages to college students? Did random acts of kindness (good "training wheel" exercises to prepare individuals for personal outreach) and shared a valentine's card connected to an info card on your congregation? What if . . . ? Why not start brainstorming for plans for Holy Week to connect with your community?



FREE - Arizona in February!

Like to hear from and network with others in the LCMS who have reached out into their communities? You are invited to a **FREE** conference on **February 26-28, 2015** at **Christ Church Lutheran** in **Phoenix, AZ**. Go to www.bestpracticesforministry.net for complete information regarding registration, schedule, speakers and accommodations. Did I mention it's **FREE**? District **scholarships are available** from our District office to help with the cost of transportation and lodging. I attended last year and am planning to attend again – well worth your time!

The BPM Network

BEST PRACTICES
FOR MINISTRY

BIBLE-BASED, GOSPEL-CENTERED, MISSION-DRIVEN & FUTURE-ORIENTED

For those who love:
The local church,
The unchurched,
The LCMS

Don't want to travel to Arizona? How about traveling to Our Savior, Denison to hear what other congregations are doing in IDW to connect with their communities? Sunday, March 22 (registration 4:30, program 5:00) is the date for this year's **Missions Banquet**. Not only will this year's mission grants be awarded, but you'll have a chance to hear from some of last year's recipients, network with those present, and enjoy a **FREE** meal! Go to www.idwlcms.org to register.



Mission Grants! - The deadline is March 1 to apply for a mission grant for 2015. Congregations, schools, or circuits are eligible. If you have an opportunity you'd like to create or seize in reaching the unchurched in your community, apply for financial partnership with IDW today! Preference is given to those efforts targeting unbelievers, men, vocations, former LCMS, or utilizing technology. Go to www.iowamissions.org to download an application and see what other congregations have done in the past.

Vocation - releasing members into your community! What if we focused on equipping our members to know, live and share their faith 24/7? What if we released those people from our church out into the world to do mission in their workplaces, in their neighborhoods, and in their homes? If our members are released out into the world as witnesses, what might God do?



I'd welcome your thoughts on a free eBook. Though not written from a Lutheran perspective, it claims to give you:

- A vision to release everyday people into the mission of God in the world
- A clear picture of the declining state of the church in America today, and what you can do about it
- Vision and tools to raise the bar for mission and discipleship.

Click here to get your free eBook: <http://www.vergenetwork.org/released/>



Sexuality - Domestic Abuse – Immigration

These are all hot issues in society right now. The church is often known for what we are against, rather than being known for what we are "for." Helpful resources on these and other issues are available at www.lcms.org/freetobefaitful. Also, pages 20-21 of the January Lutheran Witness can be extremely helpful with ideas and resources.

Don't leave free money on the table! The Be Well Rewards Program is back for 2015, providing covered workers and their employers up to \$250 each. Access will be through BeWellServeWell.com (your



username will be your birthdate, last name and last four digits of your Social Security number). You can also still use the single sign-on access through myCPS.org if you choose.

Free guest mission speaker! I'd be honored to preach, teach, or speak at your congregation – perhaps at a mission festival. Call me today and let's partner in raising the mission vision within your congregation!

Rev. Mark Gerken, Exec. Asst. for Missions & Human Care
Mark.Gerken@idwlcms.org or 515-570-2331



The 10 Best iPad Apps for Pastors

Using my iPad as a pastor for the last three years has sent me on a journey. I've spent countless hours roaming the iTunes App Store looking for the next app that will make my iPad better than ever. After trying many different apps, I have compiled a list of my favorite iPad apps for ministry. These are the ones I believe every iPad-packing pastor needs. **By Brandon Hilgemann**



Day One Journal – Day One has won various app awards for a reason. It is the best app for journaling. If you are not into journaling, consider using Day One for recording prayer requests. Another great use: recording

your reflections and insights, so you can pull those thoughts for sermon preparation later.



Evernote – Never forget anything again. This is the best note-taking app hands down. I use Evernote for keeping a database of every sermon I have ever preached. I also use it to capture random ideas for sermons,

illustrations, and blog posts. Evernote helps you capture great ideas before you forget them.



Downcast – The best podcast listener out there! If you want to grow as a pastor, listen to free podcasts from your favorite preachers. It automatically syncs across your iPad and iPhone. The best feature is the

ability to speed up podcasts. By going up to 2x speed you can cut an hour-long message to 30 minutes, or a 30 minute message to 15. This is a great time saver, and you will be surprised at how quickly your brain adjusts to the increased speed.



Logos Bible – Logos Bible Software gives you the power of an entire research library with you wherever you go. If you haven't purchased the Logos software you can still do Hebrew and Greek studies and read the Bible for

free. However, if you use Logos software, this app will sync with your entire book library.



Feedly – After Google Reader closed down, Feedly quickly became my favorite RSS reader for the iPad. Feedly allows you to subscribe to all the posts from your favorite blogs. I use this app to sift through hundreds of blog posts

a day. Leaders are readers. Why not take advantage of the great free content some of the best minds on the Internet are producing every day? (Other option: Flipboard does the same thing, but puts it together in a visually appealing magazine that also includes news feeds and social media.)



Planning Center – Planning Center is the best worship service and volunteer management system available. If you have never heard of it, do yourself and your worship pastor a favor and go to PlanningCenterOnline.

com right now. I use this app weekly to manage the service order and coordinate the scheduling of hundreds of volunteers. Makes planning services and coordinating volunteers easy.



Presentation Clock – I love using this app for timing my preaching. I speak a lot in environments with no clock. Instead of bringing a big clock and mounting it in the back of the room, I use Presentation Clock. It counts down

the remaining time, and changes color to warn you when you are nearly out of time. If you tend to preach too long, your church will thank you for using this app.



Genius Scan – Genius Scan turns your iPad into a scanner. I have gone paperless at home and at work. No more messy stacks of paper scattered across my desk! Genius Scan takes a picture of the document, and

then exports it to your destination of choice. (I use Evernote). Rather than searching through a messy pile of paper, I can now just search Evernote and BAM! there it is. This is great for tracing receipts, meeting handouts, or saving a picture of a whiteboard.



GoodReader – I love preaching with an iPad. GoodReader is a great PDF reader that I use for all of my sermon notes. I write my sermon notes in Pages, but word processors are terrible

to preach from, because with one tap you could accidentally delete or rearrange all of your notes. GoodReader allows me to crop, highlight, and read my notes without fear of messing them up.



iMovie – Being able to create video is more and more important in churches. If you want to shoot and edit video announcements, testimonies, skits, video of service projects, or whatever, iMovie is the best. This app can handle

just about any video project a church has (other than 3D animations and more technical videos like that).



7 WAYS TO THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2015

1. IT'S NOT A DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL.

Social networks are not digital billboards. They are not one-way channels meant to blast information into the faces of people connected to those channels. Social media is a living, breathing connection people have to your organization.

2. IT WILL PLAY A ROLE IN THE LEGACY OF OLDER LEADERS.

As baby boomer leaders prepare to transition out of ministry leadership roles, one aspect of the shift they'll need to account for is social media. Established leaders must be able to say, "This is how I lead a church that accounts for the reality of social media."

3. IT'S A RELATIONAL CONNECTION POINT.

Most churches have some sort of greeter or hospitality team to welcome new and returning community members. A friendly "Hello!" or a gift or a handshake—whatever. Social media is a new "greeter" for your church—it is a viable relational connection point. It is now likely someone will make a decision on whether or not to return to your church based on whether they can find you on Facebook (and like what they see).

4. SOCIAL MEDIA RESULTS CAN (AND SHOULD) BE MEASURED.

Church leadership has every right to ask social media advocates, "How do we know it's worth the time/effort/money?" It's their job to ask that question. Answering it can be tricky (and downright frustrating) if you don't have a plan.

5. WITHOUT A PLAN, IT'S A WASTE OF TIME.

You need a thought-out, intentional, intelligent strategy to connect social media content to organizational goals (more new people, more activity among members, more dollars, etc.).

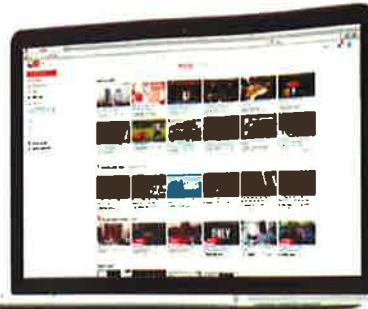
6. IT'S A LANGUAGE, NOT A SET OF TOOLS.

If we believe social media (noun) is the sum of its parts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), we are wrong. They are simply manifestations of the language of social media. Social media as a language—a mindset—is here to stay.

7. IT'S UNCONTROLLABLE.

You cannot control the social media conversation. You can only hope to influence the conversation, which, incidentally, requires a plan.

—Justin Wise, *JustinWise.net*



YOUTUBE OR VIMEO?

YouTube and Vimeo are the most popular tools for storing, sharing and playing video media on the Web. But which service is better for your church? Although there is no clear answer, here's a helpful list of their strengths and weaknesses and how they can best be utilized.

YOUTUBE

STRENGTHS

- the second-largest search engine in the world
- the third most-visited website in the world, making its functionality very familiar to users
- easy for users to subscribe to your channel and keep informed about new content you upload
- good HD video quality; accepts and playbacks 4k video content
- straightforward upload utility and quick encoding times
- easy-to-share videos with options for email, website embedding, Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and more

- channel can be stylized to match your brand
- audience can interact with you by giving your video a thumbs-up and leaving text and video comments
- YouTube statistics are a great way to see how your videos are performing

WEAKNESSES

- lots of distracting ads
- no paid subscriptions for added features or the removal of ads on your videos
- some features not available to all users (only when specific number of views is reached)
- little Web player customization and an undesirable landing page when videos are done playing

VIMEO

STRENGTHS

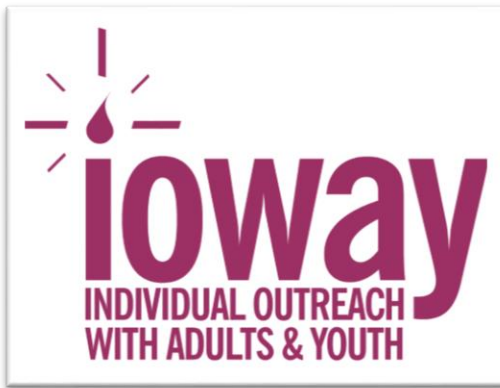
- high-quality online video encoding (the Pro account offers "two-pass encoding" for cleaner videos that require less bandwidth to view)
- with paid accounts: priority uploading, no banner ads, HD embedding, player customization, advanced statistics, privacy settings and more (having at least a Vimeo Plus account is a must for church media.)
- brand the playback of video with logo overlays, outros and website URLs
- few to no ads

- embed videos on external websites without any advertising or link-backs

WEAKNESSES

- small user base (audience probably won't have an account to comment or "heart" your videos)
- caters to the professional community and has restrictions on what can be uploaded to the site
- video player can be "buggy," not always streaming videos properly
- video upload size limitations on all accounts

—Jeff McIntosh, *ChurchMotionGraphics.com*



Pasadena Mission Trip Reflections 2015

God blessed 38 amazing people with the unique experience of being a Petal Pusher. We served God in Pasadena from December 28 to January 4 by decorating the Lutheran Hour and other floats for the famous Rose Parade. While in California, at devotion time, each person was asked to list their thoughts about the experience. I wish space would allow sharing all the fantastic comments they wrote. Following are short excerpts of their reflections.

- This has been beyond my expectations. When we walked into the tent with thousands of flowers, I could not fathom how they would all get onto the floats. As the day passed, it all took on a fluid motion and I realized it was “not their first rodeo”! At first I was hesitant about going on the trip. I am so glad I did. I feel so blessed!
- This trip was my first plane ride! What a beautiful view of God’s creation from the window of the plane! I find it interesting how 38 people from different places and backgrounds have become one family working, joking, laughing, crying and praying together.
- Ellie shared that over the past 13 years IOWAY has earned a reputation of working hard and having fun doing it. This year, the team pulled together and kept the tradition intact!



- Last night going in for our “second shift” at 11 pm to help with the last minute flowers was unbelievable. It was kind of a rush and it was crunch time. Everyone worked so well together! We worked until 2:30 am!
- I so much enjoyed our front row seats on Colorado Boulevard for watching the parade.
- “Inspiring Stories” was the theme of the parade. I am sure the Lutheran Hour team had an enjoyable time deciding which inspiring stories to include on the only Christian float in the parade!
- I love every minute of it! You have everything so well organized!
- I am amazed that 38 people can get along so well for a whole week. Motels and food were great! Having the matching shirts gave us many opportunities to share about Jesus and what we were doing.

- I enjoy the harmony the group has!
- I will never look at the parade the same again. The average viewer has no idea how much work is involved!
- I enjoyed sharing the witness/bead bracelets.
- I am amazed that we as a group put together 537 health kits for the homeless! Each kit had nine or ten hygiene items. That's a lot of stuff!
- Long days but I'd definitely do it again!
- I expected the traffic to be worse than it actually was.
- I enjoyed the new friendships, fellowship and the daily devotional discussions.
- The beautiful flowers that God created are something I just love and could not have been more enjoyable for me.
- We rate the trip as an A+. We had lots of laughs, prayers and the study time was rewarding.
- Seeing the Lord's hand, feeling His guidance and counsel along the way has once again reaffirmed my belief in One who, not only stands alongside me, but is there to hold me up and even pull me along in His ways.
- It was amazing how we scrambled to get all the hygiene items purchased, sorted, and counted for the homeless at the Union Rescue mission.



- I love being part of a group of Christians.
- Intense planning and meticulous tasks have been involved for a year on each float.
- This trip is truly a dream come true. I never imagined I would have so much fun on a mission trip. I've been given the opportunity to minister and spread the good news of Jesus Christ.
- May God bless the message on this float as millions see it!
- Being able to also see the Rosemont building was enjoyable because it is so huge and we were able to see more floats close up.
- It is a very organized operation, truly an uplifting experience!
- People see our shirts and ask questions about what we are doing. It is a great way to share our faith in Jesus Christ!

Check out the photos and adventures of the team at: www.servinggodbyservingothers.blogspot.com

Ellie Menz
ellie.menz@idwlcms.org
 807 W. South Street
 Jefferson IA 50129
 515-370-1159



+ being Christ's hands and feet in times of need +
Sponsored by Iowa District West of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

LERT needs you!

"..through love serve one another." Galatians 5:13

If you are eager to help in times of natural disaster, or are a pastor who needs to be prepared and have certification to be on site if your members are affected – we need you!

Iowa District West has immediate need for LERT-certified volunteers to respond after natural disasters by giving spiritual comfort and emotional support while providing food, water, clean up, debris removal and helping with basic repairs. This is an opportunity to exercise your Christian faith and use your God-given gifts and talents to help others in need.

It's easy to become a trained Lutheran Early Response Team volunteer! Take this opportunity to join members throughout IDW in this unique Christ-centered mission. Attend the disaster orientation training event to become FEMA certified through LCMS World Relief and Human Care.

LERT TRAINING

Facilitator - Ellie Menz, IDW Disaster Response Coordinator

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2015

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

520 N Garfield Street

ALGONA, IOWA

11:30 AM Registration & Lunch

12:30-3:30 PM Training

Register online at www.idwlcms.org or contact

Jill Davis at the IDW office: 515-576-7666

Please register by Monday, February 9 to help with a count for meals.
Late registrations and walk-ins are welcome.



+ being Christ's hands and feet in times of need +
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AMAZING HESTERMAN & JENSEN FAMILIES COME FOR A SPECIAL VISIT!

What a JOY to welcome Jeff and Lynette Hesterman all the way from Prattville, Alabama, as they came to visit Mission Central. It was such a surprise for old Missionary Gary to realize that the Hesterman family's pastor at one time was our very own missionary Rev. Dale Kaster. Pastor Kaster and his wife Suzanne are faithfully serving the Lord Jesus in northern Ghana in West Africa. It was such a blessing to see that the Hesterman Family wanted to personally support the Kaster Family.

Jeff and Lynette are the parents of Lauren Jensen, wife of Pastor Scott Jensen. Pastor Jensen is old Missionary Gary's very own personal pastor at St. Matthew in Mapleton, Iowa. Pastor Scott Jensen and Lauren came out with her parents and their children. Together they presented a gift for a special China Bible project. What a blessing that the Jensens are also supporting one of our finest Missionaries in China. It was indeed a special afternoon.

Pictured is the entire group in Gary's office in front of our Boss at Mission Central. It was a day we will long remember.



FIRST MISSIONARY VISITORS COME TO MISSION CENTRAL ON JANUARY 2, 2015!

Who would be willing to drive from Indiana to Mission Central on NEW YEARS DAY? Who would be willing to come to Mission Central and spend the afternoon on the 2nd of January for an interview and to make a DVD interview with our volunteer Video Directors, Dr. Lloyd Boettcher and his wife, Elnora? It had to be a family that is truly NOT NORMAL!

Well, that's the kind of people that God is calling to carry out HIS work. The Rev. Michael Paul, his wife Irene and their children Rachel (age 18), Jonathan (age 16) and Elizabeth (age 13) were all here for that wonderful afternoon. They are our newest missionaries going to Taiwan to tell people about Jesus! Rev. Paul will be teaching at the China Lutheran Seminary and helping with outreach in Taiwan.



Here you see the family in our "TRADEMARK" pose in front of our Boss here at Mission Central. They so much enjoyed their tour of the facilities. It was a JOY to pray with them and to send them off from our little prayer chapel. Pastor Paul indicated that he has many family contacts in the southeast part of Nebraska. His uncle is our dear friend Gerald Rinne at Friend, Nebraska and his cousin is the Honorable Rev. Rex Rinne, our new missionary in the Czech Republic.

RECORD SET AT MISSION CENTRAL ON JANUARY 2, 2015

The volunteers started working a just before 9 AM on Friday morning, January 2, 2015. However, none of us were prepared for the huge volume of miracles that God was about to unleash on Mission Central that day. When the mail arrived, we were shocked to see over 300 envelopes with gifts for the Lord's mission work! This was the most gifts that have ever come in the mail on a single day in the 20 year history of Mission Central...what a blessing! Each letter was personally opened by Gary. The volunteer staff then properly recorded each and every gift.



The volunteers and staff worked until 8 PM without a break for lunch as they wanted so badly to record all the gifts that the Lord had sent that day. What a miraculous outpouring of God's blessing with nearly \$600,000.00 in gifts of love coming in that day! This is something only God could do, and we are humbled by His power and blessings.

Pictured are the volunteers recording these gifts of love. "Thank you" letters will be sent to each of these dear friends that God called to help with His work.

Mission Central – LCMS World Mission

40718 Highway E16
Mapleton, IA 51034
712-882-1029

Gary Thies
gary.thies@lcms.org
www.missioncentral.us

MISSION CENTRAL EVENTS PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Rev. Shauen Trump & Family

Kenya, East Africa

Saturday, July 11, 2015

1 PM



Dr. Steve Oliver & Family

Taiwan

Saturday, July 18, 2015

1:30 PM

Sharon Owens & Family

Macau and China

Saturday, August 8, 2015

1 PM



Rev. Shaun Daugherty & Family

China

Saturday, August 15, 2015

1 PM

Mission Central-LCMS World Mission

40718 Highway E 16
Mapleton, Iowa 51034
Phone: 712-882-1029

gary.thies@lcms.org
www.missioncentral.us

HISPANIC OUTREACH IN SIOUXLAND

Rev. Henry and Ruthie Witte
1013 South Newton Street
Sioux City, IA 51106
712-202-4751
Henry.Witte@idwlcms.org



FEBRUARY 2015

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.” Matthew 15:19



In various songs and poems, Spanish writers encourage people to do what their heart tells them or to listen to their heart. They assume that one’s heart will give the best advice, and that feelings or emotions will be the best guide for one’s plans and decisions. Deep down inside one’s heart they think that one will be guided by goodness and love. Sad to say this is not the case, as Jesus warns us in the verse above.

Valentine’s Day seems to be a celebration of love symbolized with all kinds of heart-shaped designs. Yet it can be a day of disappointment, selfishness, manipulation, and rejection. From tradition we learn that Valentine was a person of self-sacrificing love and that he was martyred for his confession of the Christiana faith. Yet, his example of faith and love is not necessarily followed nor taught on his day.

Many think that their own hearts have enough goodness, and that they need no outside help. They fail to see that all people by nature have sinful hearts, lacking in true love and good desires. Only in Jesus can we come to know of God’s love for us and have true love in our hearts. We receive His love in His forgiveness and life. We are freed from the slavery to a wicked and selfish heart. We are given the Spirit of God who changes our heart. We can love because He first loved us and has brought us into His love.

The everyday Valentine which we can give to others is God’s love. Guided by God in our words and actions we can be His living Valentine by letting others know that He loves them and wants them to live in His love. Let us decorate ourselves not with colored hearts, but with the heart and mind of Jesus who loves us and all people and wants us to live in His communion of love.

In his seal Luther put a cross in the heart showing that Jesus died and rose again to change our hearts. We thank you for supporting the various ministries of our church so that the cross can be placed into the hearts of people from all countries. May God grant us the courage and strength to bring His love to all the nations.

We began our English classes again the second week of January. In spite of the cold we have had a good attendance with new students and returning former students. May God help us to communicate His love in language and action.

EYES on Youth Ministry

Educating Youth, Encouraging Servants

The play is *St. Joan*. The year is 1429. The location is France. The setting is a castle where Charles, King of France, confronts Joan of Arc. The king is standing before the young girl trembling with rage. He can't believe, it seems, that God has had the audacity to select a nobody to become his vehicle for revelation in the land instead of using himself.

Standing before Joan, the king roars out in anger:

"O your voices, your voices. Why don't the voices come to me? I am king, not you!"

"They do come to you," replies Joan, "but you do not hear them. You have not sat in the field in the evening listening for them." Finally, the king grits his teeth and clenches his fist.

The year is approximately 1075 BC. The location is Shiloh, a village that is perhaps 20 miles north of Jerusalem. The setting is the meeting place where the Ark of the Covenant is located and an old priest named Eli and a young lad named Samuel are lying awake. Voices are heard here as well. Finally, after receiving advice from Eli, Samuel responds, *"Speak Lord, for thy servant hears"* (1 Samuel 3:10).

You are not listening, Joan says to the king. Speak Lord, I am listening says Samuel to our God. Which one more resembles us, Charles or Samuel? It is easy to find ourselves not taking the time out in the middle of our busy lives, our full schedules, to listen. It is hard to stop all the demands of the day, all the noise that fills our lives and to listen for God. We sound like Charles angrily asking "Why isn't He telling me?" The reality is that God does speak to us and is still speaking to us today. No, I am not talking about hearing voices like Joan claimed or as Samuel did. However, God does promise to speak to us today through His Word and Sacraments. In Scripture we hear God's voice assuring us of His care and promising His presence. In the Sacraments we receive His real love and forgiveness for all of our sins. In the Word made flesh, whose birth we just celebrated, we receive life and salvation. The question is not "Is God speaking to us?" The question is "Are we listening to Him?"

"Speak Lord, for thy servant hears." It is the Spirit-empowered response of God's people to His Word. Helping our youth listen to God's Word is what our gatherings are all about. Our gatherings are centered on Word and Sacrament. Our gatherings are our attempt to help our youth join Samuel in saying, "Speak Lord, for thy servant hears." In His Word and through His Sacraments God is speaking to us today. The question is, are we listening?

Pastor Steve Hayden – Executive Assistant for Youth

steve.hayden@idwlcms.org



Recently I was made aware of a resource available on the Synod's website from the Stewardship Department that I thought was worthy of investigation. Written by Rev. H. R. Curtis, "*Stewardship Under the Cross*" is designed to be used by pastors and stewardship committees to help their congregations learn God's Word and become much more aware of what God teaches concerning the matter of our financial stewardship from a biblical perspective.

As readers of this monthly article are well aware, I have been trying to help pastors and people recognize that the whole life of a believer lies within the understanding of who we are as modern day disciples of Christ. Financial Stewardship is one area of that entire life as a disciple. I would therefore encourage our pastors and members of congregations to look through this little book. It can be found at <http://www.lcms.org/stewardship>.

In it can be found some valuable considerations. One such example regarding "Stewardship and Vocation" reads as follows:

"Christian stewardship begins with the understanding that all we have is God's (Ps. 24:1) and that "we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world" (1 Tim 6:7). Since all we have is God's, we should use it for His purposes. God's purpose for us in our lives is expressed in the various vocations, or callings, that we have. So, for example, a father and mother use their income to feed, clothe, and protect their children; all of us as citizens use part of our income to pay our taxes faithfully. Each vocation makes a claim on each part of our lives, including our income.

Besides the vocations that each of us have in our family life and under the government, we are also all Christians and members of this parish. How do we use our income faithfully in regard to this vocation? To learn this we must look to God's Word."

(*Stewardship Under the Cross - Stewardship for the Confessional Lutheran Parish* - 2nd Edition by Rev. H. R. Curtis - Coordinator, LCMS Stewardship Ministry – p. 27)

Rev. Curtis goes on to address that very issue on the basis of God's Word. Consider that a part of our vocation is that as members of a parish, how we use our income faithfully is addressed in God's Word. Rev. Curtis also lays out some of the ways and resources he has used in his own congregation to address the issues of Biblical Financial Stewardship.

This author certainly doesn't write the final word on the subject, and in some matters there are probably some who would potentially disagree. But at the same time, this is a resource that holds many wonderful and valuable teachings for modern day disciples who need to be taught and reminded of biblical truths regarding the financial stewardship of our lives. What's more, the resource is free and downloadable.

If you become aware of resources that you believe are biblically beneficial for individuals and congregations in our District pertaining to our lives as modern day disciples, even in the area of biblical teachings for financial stewardship, please let me know. As your Executive Assistant in the area of Christian Stewardship/Discipleship in Iowa District West, I would like to share them as together we investigate various ways of helping all our members grow in aligning the purposes of our congregation with God's design and help us all grow in discipleship and in the area of Christian Stewardship. Please contact me for more information.

Rev. Phill Andreasen
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BRIDGES

Crossing Cultures to Share God's Word » Winter 2014-15



Learning About Harvest, Small Towns and "Real Americans' Character"

Over the weekend of October 25-26, a group of internationals and Hannah were hosted in northwest Iowa by St. Paul Lutheran Church, Ida Grove. They visited Mission Central, toured GOMACO trolley factory, rode in their trolley, had a potluck dinner with church members and stayed with host families in their homes.

The highlight for many, however, was helping Don and Sue Schultz with their corn harvest. Each international got their own ride on the tractor, combine and even John Deere gator, and one even accompanied the grain truck to the elevator.

A huge thanks again to the members of St. Paul for their wonderful hospitality, mission hearts and hard work to make the weekend possible. After coming from mega cities around the world, internationals always comment how small and quiet Ames is. Now they know towns can get even smaller. And it's in those places that you find some of the very best people.

Here are some thoughts from the internationals:

From Sam:

The tour of Ida Grove was one of my precious experiences in the United States. It was surprising when I heard that Ida Grove was even smaller than Ames, but it was definitely peaceful and tranquil. I can relieve my stress from lots of assignment and exams. Also, people of St. Paul's Lutheran Church gave much love and were dedicated helping us. It must be the real Americans' character, not in Hollywood films. When I go back to my country, I will definitely help people who need love and care, especially international students.



▲ Group of internationals with Hannah, Pastor Salcido, Pastor Winterrowd and Pastor Salcido's wife Sue.

From Eunjeong:

I experienced many things on this trip. I visited the corn field, the trolley company and the missionary center. Among them, the most memorable memory for me is visiting the corn field. I rode the tractor and combine – the huge machinery. It was so fun and now I can understand better the people's life in Iowa. The people in Ida Grove church were so nice and kind, and I had a great time with my host also. It was a wonderful trip. I thank God and everyone.

From Xinmei:

On Oct 25-26, I am lucky to have an interesting trip in Ida Grove. After the kind service of church's pastors, the interesting thing was experiencing the combine harvester which is highly efficient compared to China. In China, every farmer has a small and limited field to plant, and they depend on manual work. In the trip, the meaningful thing is to talk with my host Ellen and Carl. Their warmth and mentality influenced me deeply through our talk. I learn so much from them. All experiences give me warmth and love. This trip becomes an unforgettable memory in life.

The Gift of Quilting & Quilts

A few years ago, the Women's Memorial Quilters Group dwindled, so former ISM director Bessie Fick approached them about shifting the group to international women. Two members, Norma Buss and Sally Hartman started to lead. They invited women who were coming to English to join them and learn how to sew quilts. The finished products could then be given out to their fellow English students. The idea stuck, and soon they were making all kinds of quilts from donated fabrics and materials.

Norma was a seamstress who worked with hotels to collect their old sheets and use them for the inner layers. When she retired, she donated most of her supplies which they still use today. Linda Vogtlin then joined Sally to co-lead. She enjoys quilting with a purpose and learning from the internationals. She says that she "learns more from them most days" than what she teaches them. The biggest challenge for the group is that most of the women don't come consistently. This means that they have to spend time every meeting to teach newcomers the basics, but she views that as a blessing as well.

Linda specifically remembers a woman named Sonja from Egypt who was here for several years and went consistently to quilting. Throughout the years, she remembers watching Sonja's family grow and expand with two children, and Sally and her husband were the ones who were especially close to her. Once Sonya returned home, they kept in contact over email, but it slowly died out as hostilities in Egypt grew in 2011 and communication became difficult.

The highlight for Linda is how excited the internationals get over the finished quilts. They are so appreciative about getting a quilt that most of them don't use it as a blanket but rather treasure the quilts as decorative pieces for their homes. She said that is the best part – knowing how much they are loved and cherished. As a special touch, they also attach a label on the back that says "Made by international women at Memorial Lutheran Church, Ames, IA (year)" with a cross. Both Sally and Linda have huge hearts for the international women and families that they come in contact with which shows in the love they put into their quilting.



▲ Paula with her dear friends Grace, Chandler, their two boys and Paula's friend Sue Kemmer.

Paula Haase's Baby Quilts

Over seven years ago, Bessie Fick, former ISM director, and Paula Haase were at the same event tying quilts for World Relief. While there, Bessie asked offhandedly if anyone tied little quilts. Though no one did, Paula wondered if she wanted baby quilts for something, and Bessie explained her thoughts. She felt it would be a nice gift for the many new international moms, something they could use for their baby and keep when they went back home to their country.

Soon Paula was making countless quilts for the many new moms who are part of our programs. Because she is a member at St. Paul Lutheran in Boone and lives there, she has only had the chance to meet a few. Once she attended a baby shower, and several times she met some new moms while helping with F.I.S.H. dinners. For the most part, though, Paula is an anonymous angel. One that many love without ever getting the chance to meet her and say thanks.

She remembers the time an Egyptian woman asked if she could have three more quilts for family members back home. Though it was a flurry, her request was granted, and Paula finished three more baby quilts in three days before the woman left. She also remembers sewing a special quilt for her dear friend Grace who was expecting her first child at the time. Grace's two boys have since adopted her as Grandma Paula and made a trip



▲ Linda Vogtlin and Sally Hartman teaching the basics of quilting.

— Continued on page 4

Jean McRae

– From Jean McRae

Jean McRae moved to Florida in August. While she was a member here, though, she was a faithful English teacher, host to Japanese students and friend to many internationals. Here are some of her thoughts on reaching out to the nations:

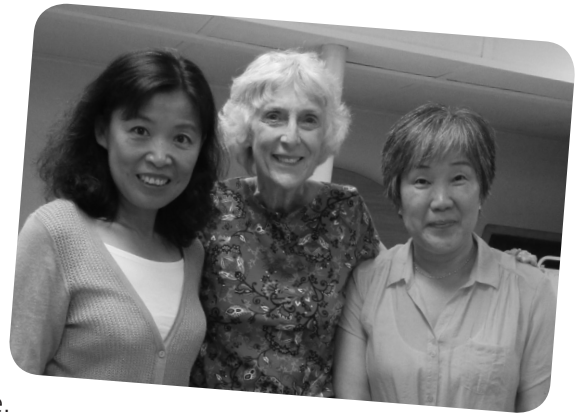
I first remember being aware of Internationals visiting our country in 1949 when I was a kid and my family hosted two Israeli graduate students for a week in the summer. That was a great week straightening out all the funny miss-communications. Each year our high school had a senior exchange student, and my senior year the student was a girl from Finland. We became best friends, really cementing my desire to spend time with internationals. In college I was active in the International Club on campus and my “little sister” was from Hong Kong, so my experiences with internationals broadened greatly.

When my children were each in middle school we had exchange students from Colombia stay with us, and my children went to Colombia with them, so we had much Spanish chatter in the house those two summers.

Coming to Ames five years ago, I met Pam Millen one of my first days at Memorial Lutheran Church, and she invited me to visit her International English class in hopes of inspiring me to teach class of my own. That seemed a bit daunting but fun. I have been teaching level 1/2 for an hour each week ever since.

I receive so much more than I give, and I thoroughly enjoy the internationals I have met. They know so much, learn so quickly, and eagerly help each other and me, so it is extremely rewarding and satisfying for me! I am very grateful for the other teachers and the dear friends who have substituted for me when I needed. These have been a very good five years.

Additionally, this has led to my housing an International on a couple of occasions. That is challenging but truly satisfying for their success requires that they converse. It is very good to see how quickly their vocabulary, sentence structure and comprehension improve as they are surrounded by and involved in English conversation every day.



▲ Jean with two of her students this past summer.

I believe their success in the English language is directly reflective of the quality of an International's time here in the US, and the better their time here, the better the international relations between our countries. I believe this is also true in their relationship to God and understanding of Christianity. It may be an incremental process, and we never see the final results of our time with them, but I'm glad to have had a part in that influence. I appreciate the gift and mission Memorial Lutheran has devoted to that end. Thanks to you all.



▲ International Mom's Group at Thanksgiving.



▲ Xinmei, Werxia and Sunseeker's mom with their host mom Ellen Schable in her choir robe Sunday morning.

— *Continued from page 2*

back to the states in 2013 to visit her.

When asked what she enjoys most, though, Paula said without hesitation, "Giving them away. Knowing they are going to people and that they're something to remember Ames with. To remember someone here loves them." And they absolutely, most certainly do.

BRIDGES

International Student Ministry
Memorial Lutheran Church

2228 Lincoln Way

Ames, IA 50014

Phone 515-292-5005

e-mail: ism.mlchurch@gmail.com

Hannah Moore, ISM Coordinator

If you would like to contribute to the support of this ministry, please send contribution to the address above.

Prayer Requests and Praises

- For the Chinese women involved in Bible study on Friday and on Sunday morning. That God would continue to work in their hearts and lives and bring them to faith. They are at the church for activities, Bible study, English, Sunday School and fellowship every day but Saturday.
- For students to continue coming to English and Bible study even though the winter gets cold. It is lonely for them to stay home by themselves, but they don't like to go outside either.
- For all of the FISH dinners served this semester and the cooking groups involved – Korea, India, Ecuador and South America.
- For the mom's group to continue strong. They built a wonderful and close-knit community during the fall, and we hope winter doesn't deter the women from coming.
- For the many wonderful volunteer teachers, conversation partners, Bible study leaders and ISU students involved in our ministry. Praise and thanks for them.
- For God to provide students who are eager and able to go to the In-Depth Bible Conference in May.
- For the South Sudanese community to continue turning to God in all situations, struggles and heartbreaks.

OPERATION BARNABAS



Operation Barnabas National Conference
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church
San Antonio, TX
February 9-10, 2015

You are cordially invited to join us for the third annual Operation Barnabas conference to be held in San Antonio on February 9-10! This past year has seen explosive growth among our ministry to military families, and has seen the construction of a strong foundation for the future! A few highlights of our conference will include the following:

- Step by Step how to build a program in YOUR congregation
- Overview of national trends by Kathleen Moakler from National Military Family Association
- The impact of a congregation on a military family: CAPT Blaine and Anna Hooper
- The role of women in the military: female service member and spouse 2LT Kim Rodriguez
- Lutheran Church Charities partnership with Operation Barnabas: K-9 program for veterans
- Funding the mission: opportunities with Wheatridge ministries, and Thrivent
- AND - what are other churches doing? You will be able to hear from other congregations and their outreach efforts

Our Speakers



Kathleen Moakler, Government Relations Director, National Military Family Association
Mrs. Moakler has been associated with the National Military Family Association since 1995 and has served as Government Relations Director since 2007. She monitors the range of issues relevant to the quality of life of the families of all components of the seven uniformed services. She represents the interests of military families on a variety of advisory panels including the Military Family Readiness Council.



Captain Blaine Hooper

Born in Ft. Benning, GA. While leading a platoon, he was severely injured by RPG fire and immediately medevaced to Walter Reed Army Hospital. He spent 8 months at WRAMC before being transferred back to Ft. Campbell and assigned to its Warrior Transition Unit. He is now in his final year at Dallas Theological Seminary. He currently serves as a youth minister, and disciples recovering substance abusers, including veterans and the homeless. He hopes to pursue the pastorate and continue working with veterans after graduation.



2LT Kimberly A. Rodriguez is a US Army Reservist assigned at Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) WA. She is an avid jogger and enjoys spending time with her family. Kimberly's goals are to- honestly and accurately represent the values and beliefs of the US Army, HHC 1-364th CS/CSS Commander, and Families; creating an all-inclusive avenue of mutual support and assistance. Also, have fun while using her energy and people skills to teach, encourage, motivate and support the HHC MAMC Families in her role as the HHC Madigan Army Medical Center Family Readiness Group Leader.

Operation Barnabas National Conference
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church
San Antonio, TX
February 9-10

Lodging Information:

Hyatt Place, 7615 Jones Maltsberger Rd, San Antonio, TX 78216

phone: (210) 930-2333

link: <http://sanantonioairport.place.hyatt.com/en/hotel/home.html>

use group code G-BARN or call and tell them you are with the Barnabas group

Cost: \$120 per night

The secondary hotel is the Courtyard by Marriott
(210) 828-7200

Suggested arrival date is Sunday, February 8.

There is no charge for the conference.

In order to assist those who wish to help Operation Barnabas grow, there are a limited number of scholarships available in the amount of \$500.

Scholarships are available on a first come, first served basis. If you would like to be considered for a scholarship, you may note that desire on your registration materials.

One attendee per congregation is eligible for the scholarship. If two or more members attend, the scholarship may be divided among those members.

TO REGISTER: You can visit

<https://operationbarnabas.wufoo.com/forms/operation-barnabas-conference-registration/>

OR

Call Nancy Rowley at 314-996-1337

Ground transportation is available from the airport to hotel, and hotel to the church. Rental cars will NOT be reimbursed.

Hotel provides shuttle from airport. Please call number of YOUR hotel above upon arrival at airport, they will send shuttle.

The conference will close at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 10. If you choose to depart via air, please arrange for your flight to leave no earlier than 7 p.m., or you may wish to depart on Wednesday. This will allow us ample time to provide travel to the airport.



Ordination Anniversaries – 2015

We share with the leadership of our congregations the names and ordination dates of Iowa District West pastors who will celebrate “special” ordination anniversaries during 2015. Congregations are encouraged to observe these ministry milestones with an appropriate celebration.

If we have erred or failed to include someone who is observing an anniversary this year, please contact Jill Davis at the District office.

We rejoice and give thanks to God with these gifts to His Church.

Five (5) Years

The Rev. Michael Bodkins, Christ the King, Altoona	12/19/2010
The Rev. Lincon Guerra, Shepherd of the Valley, West Des Moines	11/14/2010
The Rev. Seth Kaiser, Trinity, Glenwood	8/29/2010
The Rev. Adam Peck, St. Paul, Ida Grove	7/11/2010
The Rev. Jesse Burns, St. John, Sanborn	6/27/2010
The Rev. Nathan Peitsch, St. Paul, Fort Dodge	6/27/2010
The Rev. Ross Fritz, Trinity, Manilla	6/20/2010

Ten (10) Years

The Rev. Kenneth Schmidt, Trinity, Van Meter	7/10/2005
The Rev. Kendall Meyer, Mt. Olive, Des Moines	7/10/2005
The Rev. Jonathan Riggert, Trinity, Cherokee	7/10/2005
The Rev. Nathan Sherrill, St. Paul, Council Bluffs	6/19/2005
The Rev. Donald Peterson, Emmanuel, Lake View	6/19/2005

Fifteen (15) Years

The Rev. Stephen King, Perry (Candidate status)	7/30/2000
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Twenty (20) Years

The Rev. Ralph Shorey, Faith, Sioux City	7/23/1995
The Rev. Joseph Meyer, Gloria Dei, Urbandale	6/25/1995
The Rev. Timothy Schiller, Shepherd of Peace, Sergeant Bluff	6/25/1995

Twenty-five (25) Years

The Rev. John Burger, Faith, Adel	7/1/1990
The Rev. Paul Egger, St. John, Galva	6/17/1990

Thirty (30) Years

The Rev. David Simonson, Jefferson	7/15/1985
The Rev. Steven Turner, Trinity, Algona	7/7/1985
The Rev. Robert Eggers, Fort Dodge (Emeritus)	6/30/1985
The Rev. David Bergquist, Immanuel, Lone Rock/St. Luke, Cylinder	6/16/1985
The Rev. Mark Eichler, St. Paul, Webster City	6/15/1985

Thirty-five (35) Years

The Rev. David Schoop, St. John, Climbing Hill	6/15/1980
The Rev. Paul Johnson, May City (Emeritus)	6/1/1980

Forty (40) Years

The Rev. Phill Andreasen, Spirit Lake, IDW Executive Assistant	6/22/1975
The Rev. Larry Lemke, St. Paul, Aurelia	7/13/1975
The Rev. Philip Ritter, Redeemer, Corning	6/9/1975
The Rev. Eric Schillo, West Des Moines (Emeritus)	6/29/1975

Forty-five (45) Years

The Rev. Rolland Pillack, Des Moines (Emeritus)	6/21/1970
The Rev. Leroy Riemer, Bethel, Sutherland/Faith, Sioux Rapids	6/14/1970

Fifty (55) Years

The Rev. Henry Kuhn, Alta (Emeritus)	8/15/1960
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THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Editor: Cynthia Woolever - www.TheParishPaper.com

February 2015 - Volume 23, Number 2

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How to Avoid the Potholes on the Road to Retirement

Gordon, a pastor in his late sixties, ignored all the warning signs. Despite his waning energy, he believed he was the exception to every retirement rule. The congregation's anxiety grew with each passing year and concerned leaders braced for the brewing crisis. Would the pastor have a medical emergency that suddenly suspended or ended his ministry? Would the church's financial and mission vitality outlast the pastor's "treading water" years? Would the congregation eventually confront Pastor Gordon and force him to exit?¹

Big Potholes for Pastors to Avoid

If the pastor, along with the congregation, prepares for the next chapter, they likely will encounter only a few minor bumps. However, six issues repeatedly pose problems along the way.

1—The hasty or unplanned exit. One of the biggest errors is starting retirement planning too late. Pastor Mark took his first step toward retirement planning at age 50. He participated in a denominational workshop that assessed four aspects of his life linked to a healthy retirement: financial concerns, health issues, spiritual life, and call or vocation. Before addressing the latter three aspects, Pastor Mark reviewed his financial retirement package to identify an age when he could realistically retire without undue hardship. His wife took part in the planning—would she retire before, after, or about the same time? Which options would be financially possible for their family?

Once a timeline for the ideal retirement age is in place, a second assessment process begins about five years before retirement. At this point, pastors should be thinking about a number of things:

- What is the status of available retirement funds? Are we as a family still on track with our financial planning?
- Are there indications of future medical problems if some lifestyle issues are not addressed?
- What spiritual practices currently nurture my ministry that I want to carry over into retirement?

What kinds of non-church activities, interests, and friendships are being developed?

- What is my sense of call or vocational discernment now? Where do I feel my energies should be focused in the remaining years of my ministry? Where do my gifts and the church's greatest needs intersect?

Answering these questions and having an understanding of what life after work looks like is important to ease the anxiety that comes with retirement. Pastor Mark took his mentor's advice to think of retirement not as quitting but as "answering a new call, with a different income source."² He investigated volunteer opportunities for the causes he deeply cared about. Always avid travelers, he and his wife discussed the long list of places they still wanted to see. He also looked forward to spending more time with family and friends and supporting them in ways he was unable while he was in full-time ministry.

2—The "I'm indispensable" syndrome. One year before retirement a pastor should start thinking of a date when he or she will lead worship for the last time. Pastor Gordon kept postponing making this determination, even to himself, because of his concern for the church's future. He didn't think the



church could afford a full-time pastor after his retirement and worse—the church might close. But his inaction increased those probabilities.

3—*A spouse on the sideline.* Too often a spouse doesn't get to be a part of retirement planning (such as participating in workshops). If the pastor's moves dictated where the family lived, perhaps retirement is a chance for the spouse to set the agenda. Many denominations stipulate that the pastor and spouse join another church immediately upon retirement. This rule can be difficult for the spouse who loses long-term friendships and meaningful church leadership roles. Experience shows that a spouse that remains in the church suffers many awkward moments—hearing all the deserved and undeserved criticism of the new pastor—without being able to respond. In some cases, the family sells their home and relocates to a new community. If the spouse wants to keep working, that option complicates the timing of separation from the church and community.

4—*The lame duck problem.* Generally, lay leaders know the pastor's retirement is coming. In a healthy church, retirement conversations come up in the pastor's annual performance review. Every church situation is different and opinions about "best practices" vary. But the guideline for how far in advance to announce a retirement date is somewhere between three to six months. If the pastor announces earlier than six months, the church stalls because the pastor's ability to lead the flock is compromised.

5—*Unclear communication and boundary issues with the congregation.* The pastor sets the tone for this major transition and his or her attitude is what matters. The pastor should communicate hope and enthusiasm for the church's next chapter. An optimistic message of faith that the congregation will continue to live out their mission in significant ways should come from the pastor. The pastor's retirement gives everyone a time to express thanks for their ministry together and to seek forgiveness for any past conflicts.

One way to insure that everyone gets the retirement news at the same time is a pastoral letter to the congregation (see the NW Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center for an excellent example).³ The pastor is responsible for making clear that the pastoral relationship will end and after the retirement date, he or she can no longer conduct funerals, weddings, and baptisms for former church members.

6—*The grief tsunami.* Despite doing all the right things, Pastor Don was not prepared for the tidal pain that washed over him. Before retirement, his answering machine blinked with multiple mes-

sages each day. But in retirement, the machine light read "zero" day after day. He confessed, "That's how I felt."

A pastor forms deep attachments in ministry and officiates at long-time members' funerals. Retirement then opens up a space for "carried grief"—unacknowledged and unmourned loss.⁴ Another part of the emotional response stems from identity loss. Pastors hold the privilege of being an important part of people's lives. One pastor wrote, "My collar says our conversation could be very important. You can trust me to know that now could be the time for the moment of truth."⁵ Those sacred moments and conversations cease to be central to the pastor's daily life.

How the Congregation Can Help

The pastor and governing board meet to discuss concerns and issues related to the transition. In most cases, the governing board appoints a transition team (this is not the same group as the search committee) shortly after a retirement date is announced. The transition team takes charge of reviewing denominational policies, planning a celebration event and appropriate gifts for the retiring pastor (for example, cash in the form of a love offering helps defray moving expenses), assisting the pastor with housing, and updating members about the process. The church benefits if the governing board chair or key lay leader conducts an exit interview with the pastor.

Every family believes that they are the exception to the policy that prohibits the retired pastor from officiating at weddings and funerals. When the retiring pastor has baptized their daughter, led her confirmation class, and known the parents for decades, the family naturally wants that pastor to officiate at their daughter's wedding too. Nevertheless, an exception request is always awkward for the retired and current pastor. Simply don't ask.

1. Many thanks to the anonymous pastors and leaders who shared their insights and experiences.

2. Marcia Clark Myers, former director of the Office of Vocation, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

3. http://synodresourcecenter.org/admin/personnel/retirement/0001/transition_and_retirement.html

4. Alan Wolfelt, *Living in the Shadow of the Ghosts of Your Grief* (Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press, 2007), 7.

5. Samuel Wells, "Dressed for the Moment," *Christian Century*, November 26, 2014, 33.