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### MINISTRY PARTNERS

Camp Okoboji

ILSTO

### ALSO INCLUDED...

Around the District

March for Life



CALLS RECEIVED/PENDING

Rev. Joseph Hanson, First, Missouri Valley, to Zion, Painesville, OH  
Rev. Jonathan Conner, Zion, Manning, to Emmanuel, Ketterling, OH

CALLS ACCEPTED

Rev. Jason Letsche, First, Kingsley, to Trinity, Cherokee

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. Jonathan Conner, Zion, Manning to Immanuel, Higginsville, MO  
Rev. Jonathan Conner, Zion, Manning, to Immanuel, Olivet, MO

**COMMISSIONED MINISTERS**

CALLS RECEIVED

Deaconess Amanda Nicks, to Lutherans For Life, Nevada

CALLS ACCEPTED

Abigail Velten, to St. Paul, Carroll

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

April 24-26...YouthLead Workshop—Hidden Acres, Dayton  
May 4-5...Spring Pastor’s Conference, Trinity Lutheran, Algona  
May 10...Mother’s Day  
May 18...Concordia Plans Retirement Workshop, Grace, LeMars  
May 24...Pentecost  
May 25...Memorial Day, District Office Closed



**2026 Upcoming Events**

May 4-5...Spring Pastor’s Conference, Trinity Lutheran Church, **Algona**  
June 10-13...District LWML Convention, **Camp Okoboji**  
July 18-23...Synod Convention, **Phoenix, AZ**  
September 21-22...Fall Pastor’s Conference, Gloria Dei Lutheran, **Urbandale**  
September 29...Administrative Assistants Conference, **Fort Dodge**  
October 2-4...Senior Youth Gathering, **Camp Okoboji**  
October 9-11...Pastor’s Wives Retreat, **Camp Okoboji**  
October 24-25...Junior Youth Gathering, Sheraton Hotel, **West Des Moines**



Follow Iowa District West on Facebook.

[www.facebook.com/IowaDistrictWest](http://www.facebook.com/IowaDistrictWest)



Iowa District West, LCMS  
409 Kenyon Road, Suite B  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501  
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www.idwlcms.org



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



## On a Mission to Support Christ's Mission!

May 2026

409 Kenyon Road, Suite B — Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501  
515-576-7666 Fax 515-576-2323 [www.idwlcms.org](http://www.idwlcms.org)  
Contact email: [emilie@iowadistrictwest.org](mailto:emilie@iowadistrictwest.org)



Oddly enough, the impetus for this little paragraph came directly from a fortune cookie, as I was wrapping up a working lunch at the Hibachi Grill in Des Moines.

For me, fortune cookies are just a bit of fun, but this one seemed a little profound. It read, “Encourage others to make a positive impact in the lives of those in need.” That is a statement that we can all use to motivate ourselves, family members, and friends.

As we're gearing up for summer volunteer work, start looking around. Can you help out with your VBS in some way? We are now up to 10 congregations involved in Swaddling Clothes Outreach—would you like to make a donation to help? Meals from the Heartland packages every month and would love to have your hands and energy involved. Or can you reach out to Orphan Grain Train, who supplies and supplement so many needs? Do you know someone 16 or older who would make a great summer staff person at Camp Okoboji? Take a peek around your community and see how you can make a positive impact in the lives of those around you.

**Julie Mann, IOWAY Coordinator**

[julie@iowadistrictwest.org](mailto:julie@iowadistrictwest.org)

### **LCMS Foundation Gift Planning Webinar**

Do your end-of-life plans provide for your family and the ministries you care about? Join the LCMS Foundation for a free online webinar, *Stewarding God's Gifts: A Plan to Care for Your Family and Support the Ministries You Love*, on Tuesday, June 16, from 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM CDT. Led by

Leon Schoenfeld, LCMS Foundation Gift Planning Counselor for Iowa District West, this session will help you understand the basics of Christian gift planning and how your will or estate plan can provide for your loved ones and support the ministries you care about.

To learn more and register: <https://www.lcmsfoundation.org/idw-giftplanning-webinar-2026>

Registering ensures you will receive a recording, even if you cannot attend live.



### **2026 Iowa March For Life**

All members of IDW congregations are invited to participate in the **Iowa March for Life** on Saturday, June 20. The day begins at Trinity Lutheran Church in Des Moines (3223 University Ave.) with a Matins Prayer Service at 9:00 a.m., followed by worship at 10:00 a.m. A lunch will be served at 11:00 a.m. After lunch, participants will travel to the Iowa State Capitol for the March, beginning at noon. All are encouraged to come, pray, worship, and walk together as witnesses for life.



Camp Okoboji is still in need of staff for the Summer 2026 camp season. Youth 16 and older and college students are encouraged to explore opportunities to serve on the Camp Okoboji team. Individuals interested in serving at Camp Okoboji should begin by completing a NLOMA profile. This is the first step in the application process for summer positions. Fill out a profile online at <https://nloma.org/employment/summer/serviceprofile/>



### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**April 24-26**....YouthLead Workshop—Hidden Acres, Dayton

**May 4-5**...Spring Pastors Conference, Trinity, Algona

**May 8**...Mother's Day

**May 18**...Concordia Plans Retirement Workshop, Grace, LeMars

**May 24**...Pentecost

**May 25**... Memorial Day—District Office Closed

For more information on Iowa District West activities, view *The Messenger* at [www.idwlcms.org/publications.php](http://www.idwlcms.org/publications.php)

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# PRESIDENT'S PAGE

The Rev. Paul Egger

Iowa District West, LCMS

[paul@iowadistrictwest.org](mailto:paul@iowadistrictwest.org) / 515-576-7666

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## What Is True?

What is true? Matt, Amanda, Julie, and Zach are laying on a train track. **True.** The train bearing down on them (not pictured) that they later photoshopped into the picture which endangered them. **False.**

What is true?  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Think about it. Jesus structures His creation to have order.  $2 + 2 = 4$ . **True.**

BUT WAIT! What if the first “2” in the equation—what if the first “2” in  $2 + 2$ —chooses to identify as an 11? Doesn't it have the right to identify as whatever number it wants, rather than whatever it is? So, if the first “2” identifies as, say, an “11,” then this particular  $2 + 2$  (identifying as an 11) = 13.

Or what if the second “2” has a grudge against the first “2”? What if the second “2” VIOLENTLY PROTESTS having to be joined together with the first “2”? And so this “2” protests and simply walks away, leaving an empty “0” in its place. So this particular  $2 + 2$  (protesting and then leaving empty) = 2.

And surely you can see the most obvious problem with  $2 + 2$  equaling 4. You see it, don't you? That horrific addition sign—that plus sign—well, it's shaped like a cross. DON'T SHOVE YOUR RELIGION ON ME! Get rid of that cross! Replace it with a minus sign because I'm into CANCEL CULTURE. So, this  $2 +$  (the addition sign now a subtraction sign)  $2 = 0$ . In the middle of our culture's identity crises, protests, cancel zealots, and claims that anyone's subjective truth is truth, who decides what is true? The loudest person? Then the Baal prophets, who yell and shout all through the day, must speak truth—instead of Elijah, who simply speaks God's Word without carrying on. Who decides what is true? The majority? Then Demetrius' condemnation of Paul is justified when he complains that Paul is saying man-made gods are no gods at all—when Demetrius riles up the crowd to shout in unison for two hours, “Great is Artemis (Greek god) of the Ephesians!”



**Thank God! He reveals and declares what is true.** John writes, “Grace and TRUTH came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Jesus promises, “I am the...TRUTH...” (John 14). John later writes, “I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the TRUTH” (2 John 4). And Paul, applauding the Berean Christians, reports, “They examined the Scriptures each day to see if what Paul said was TRUE” (Acts 17:11).

God’s apostle says to you, “First of all, whatever is TRUE, think about such things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4). The word Paul translates as TRUE means factual and correct. It means reality that is firm and therefore solid, valid, and binding. It means genuine and reliable. A planed board is true when it’s straight and smooth. A rifle sighting is true when it’s accurate. A friend is true when he or she is dependable, trustworthy, and devoted.

Paul understands that your thinking influences your life. Whatever you allow to occupy your mind will sooner or later determine what you say and what you do. How many brainwaves do you spend on fiction and fairy tales, and deceptive podcasts with lies or subjective opinions presented as truth? Instead, think about  $2 + 2 = 4$  and how God marvelously orders His creation. Think about Jesus (who is Truth) and His words and works, like His true birth and teachings and miracles and death and new life and scheduled return—all for you. Listen again to the apostle’s promise: “First of all, whatever is TRUE, think about such things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

***Pastor Paul Egger***  
***President, Iowa District West***



## Education Youth Family Life

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

### Iowa District West Lutheran School Highlight Intergenerational Lutheran Ministry in Perry, Iowa Expands to Include Elementary Education

Christ Lutheran Church, a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregation in Perry, Iowa, and Perry Lutheran Homes, a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS, are expanding their shared intergenerational ministry in Perry, Iowa, through the addition of a kindergarten through second grade (K–2) elementary school at Acorns & Oaks Christian Academy beginning in Fall 2026. This next step reflects the continued growth of a Christ-centered ministry serving individuals and families across all stages of life.



This shared ministry is lived out daily through the work of Christ Lutheran Church, Perry Lutheran Homes, and Acorns & Oaks Christian Academy, united in a common calling to serve people of all ages through faith, care, and community. Together, these ministries create an intergenerational environment where relationships are formed, faith is nurtured, and Christ’s love is reflected across generations.

Since opening in 2017, Acorns & Oaks has served more than 125 families through its intergenerational model, beginning as a Christian daycare and expanding to include a preschool program in 2023. Through these programs, children and older adults are intentionally connected in daily life. These relationships reflect the body of Christ in action, where generations encourage, support, and learn from one another.

The K–2 elementary school builds on this foundation by providing a Christ-centered educational environment where students are nurtured academically, socially, and spiritually. Built on a microschool model, the program is intentionally small and relationship-centered, allowing for individualized instruction and deeper learning.

Students develop strong foundations in reading, writing, math, and critical thinking while also growing in character, responsibility, and faith. A year-round learning approach supports steady progress and reinforces key skills.

“We recognize that children thrive in different settings and that families are looking for educational options that reflect their Christian values,” said Rev. Max Phillips, CEO of Perry Lutheran Homes. “Our goal is to provide a Christ-centered environment where children can grow academically and spiritually, while building relationships across generations through the love of Christ.”

The Acorns & Oaks elementary school is accredited through National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA), reflecting a commitment to excellence within the conservative Lutheran tradition of education.

Located within Perry Lutheran Homes, students and older adults interact regularly through shared activities, conversations, and daily moments of connection. These experiences support social, emotional, and cognitive development for both age groups and are a defining part of the Acorns & Oaks experience.

This intergenerational campus is more than a partnership—it is a shared ministry where children, families, and older adults are cared for, connected, and formed in faith, reflecting Christ’s love across every stage of life.



**Submitted by Mollie Clark of Perry Lutheran Homes**

## Iowa District West College Scholarships

The fall semester may seem a long way off, but now is the time to start filling out financial aid paperwork. Iowa District West is blessed to offer substantial student aid to our church work students attending a Concordia school. We also offer grants to non-church work Concordia students as funds permit.

Students must be a member in good standing of one of the congregations of Iowa West, must be enrolled at one of our Concordia University System schools or one of our seminaries, and turn in an application and pastor’s letter of recommendation to Pastor Joe Pierson, our student aid director, **by June 1**. You can find the application on the district website in the forms and links section under the resource tab. Email [revpierson@gmail.com](mailto:revpierson@gmail.com) with any questions.

A **new scholarship** has been established this year by a family in our district, which is open to LCMS students preparing for church work vocations attending any Christian college or university. The Gerald and Kathy Gehring Church Worker Scholarship is a private scholarship distinct from the IDW student aid fund. Applications for this scholarship are **due March 31**. For full details, including the application, please email [gkgcws@gmail.com](mailto:gkgcws@gmail.com).



## Tanner Olson Enjoyed by Many Across the District

Tanner Olson's recent tour across Iowa District West was a meaningful and inspiring experience for all who attended. Visiting four congregations and three Lutheran schools, Tanner shared his powerful poetry and messages of faith, hope, and purpose with more than 500 school children and over 600 youth and adults. Audiences were deeply engaged as they listened to his spoken word performances, which were complemented by live music from Blake Flattey or Matt Doering. Together, the blend of poetry and music created a memorable atmosphere that encouraged reflection, conversation, and connection across congregations and schools throughout the district.





For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10



## Pastor Wives Retreat

**October 9-11 | Camp Okoboji**

**Guest Speaker: Diane Bahn**

Cypress, TX

SPEAKER | COACH | PASTOR'S WIFE

*Seeking to grow daily as a follower of Jesus*

Who and Whose are you?

How is God's workmanship evident in your life?

On what path is God leading you now and with whom?

As we consider these questions together in the context of our identity as children of God by his grace in our Lord Jesus, we may also discover a path to renewed health, healing, and hope as women and as ministry wives. In the process we'll also have some fun, get to know one another better, and celebrate each other as God's precious creations.



**Registration Details to Follow**

# MISSION POSSIBLE!

## *Ideas to Promote Worker Wellness in Local Lutheran Congregations*

**Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney**

Local Lutheran congregations rely heavily on the faithful service of pastors, deaconesses, church staff, educators, musicians, and volunteers. These workers often serve with deep vocational commitment, yet they face unique emotional, physical, and spiritual stressors, including heavy pastoral care demands, limited staffing, role overload, and compassion fatigue. Promoting worker wellness is therefore not only a matter of institutional health but a faithful expression of Christian care for those who serve Christ's Church.

This article outlines effective, practical, and theologically grounded ideas to promote worker wellness within local Lutheran congregations.

### **Theological Foundation for Worker Wellness**

Worker wellness in Lutheran congregations is rooted in Christian anthropology and vocation. Scripture affirms that workers are gifts from God and are worthy of care and rest. Jesus Himself invites those who labor to rest in Him (Matthew 11:28), and Sabbath rest is woven into God's design for human flourishing.

Congregations that prioritize wellness affirm:

- The God-given value of the body, mind, and spirit
- The importance of sustainable ministry rather than burnout-driven service
- Mutual care within the Body of Christ

### **Key Challenges Facing Church Workers**

Understanding common challenges helps congregations respond effectively:

- Emotional and spiritual fatigue from ongoing caregiving and crisis response
- Blurred boundaries between personal life and ministry
- Isolation, especially in solo or rural ministry contexts
- Limited access to professional support such as counseling or continuing education
- Pressure to meet expectations without adequate rest or resources

Addressing these challenges requires intentional and systemic actions rather than reliance on individual resilience alone.

## Effective Strategies for Promoting Worker Wellness

### 1. Encourage Healthy Rhythms of Rest and Time Off

Congregations should actively support regular rest by:

- Ensuring workers take full vacation and continuing education time
- Respecting days off and avoiding unnecessary interruptions
- Limiting expectations of constant availability

Leadership bodies can model this by openly affirming rest as faithful rather than indulgent.

### 2. Provide Access to Spiritual Care and Encouragement

Wellness is deeply connected to spiritual support. Effective practices include:

- Regular prayer for staff by leadership and the congregation
- Intentional pastoral care for pastors, provided by circuit visitors or peers
- Encouraging participation in devotions, retreats, and worship without leadership responsibilities

Resources such as LCMS Life Ministry devotions and Lutheran Visitation Education can enrich spiritual resilience and caregiving skills.

### 3. Foster Supportive and Collaborative Work Environments

A healthy workplace culture promotes emotional and relational well-being. Congregations can:

- Encourage open communication and realistic workloads
- Practice constructive feedback grounded in Christian love
- Avoid a “hero culture” that glorifies overwork or self-neglect

Team-based ministry, where appropriate, helps distribute responsibilities and reduce isolation.

### 4. Support Mental and Emotional Health

Normalizing mental health care is essential. Congregations can support this by:

- Providing access to confidential counseling through insurance or local referrals
- Offering financial support for counseling when possible
- Educating leadership about burnout, depression, and compassion fatigue

Emphasizing that seeking help aligns with faithful stewardship of one’s health reduces stigma.

### 5. Invest in Ongoing Education and Skill Development

Continued learning contributes to competence and confidence, reducing stress. Effective actions include:

- Supporting continuing education opportunities
- Encouraging training in boundary-setting, conflict navigation, and self-care

- Promoting programs such as Doxology, PLI, and active participation in Circuit Winkels, DCE Gatherings, and teachers' conferences for those involved in ministry

Education equips workers to serve effectively without becoming overwhelmed.

## 6. Recognize and Affirm Workers Regularly

Simple acts of affirmation contribute greatly to morale:

- Public recognition of service milestones
- Personal notes, emails, or verbal encouragement
- Annual reviews that include spiritual encouragement, not only task evaluation

Feeling seen and appreciated strengthens resilience and joy in service.

## **Role of Congregational Leadership**

Congregational councils, elders, and boards play a critical role in wellness by:

- Setting policies that protect rest and boundaries
- Budgeting intentionally for staff wellness resources
- Addressing conflict promptly and pastorally
- Modeling servant leadership grounded in humility and care

Healthy leadership cultures create space for workers to thrive.

## **Conclusion**

Promoting worker wellness in local Lutheran congregations is an expression of Christian love, good stewardship, and faithfulness to God's design for human life. By cultivating healthy rhythms, supportive relationships, spiritual care, and realistic expectations, congregations help ensure that those called to serve can do so with joy, sustainability, and renewed strength.

Investing in worker wellness ultimately strengthens the congregation's witness, deepens community life, and honors Christ, who lovingly cares for His servants.

## NEWS & NOTES

### **Multiethnic Symposium**

On May 5–6, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, will host its annual Multiethnic Symposium under the theme “United in Praise.” This event will highlight the unity of faith and confession shared by believers from every culture, grounded in the unwavering love and faithfulness of God, as it explores praise in music, dance, art and more. If you are serving a multiethnic ministry and want to attend this event, contact Rev. Dr. Keith Haney for Scholarship assistance.

[Learn more](#)

Theme: United in Praise: Celebrating God’s Love and Faithfulness Across All Nations

In Ps. 117:1, the church is called to praise the Lord – all nations together. The praise of the multiethnic church becomes a powerful witness to the rich tapestry of peoples who together glorify Him. This praise highlights the unity of faith and confession shared by believers from every culture, grounded in the unwavering love and faithfulness of God. Through expressions of praise in music, dance and art, the **2026 Multiethnic Symposium** will explore how the church is equipped to bear witness to God’s love and faithfulness across all nations. “Praise the Lord, all nations!” (Ps. 117:1 ESV).

### **Festival of Scripture & the Arts**

Concordia University Chicago will host a Festival of Scripture & the Arts on its campus in River Forest, Ill., June 20–21. Featuring lectures, professional recitations, poetry and commissioned artwork on the Song of Songs, the event accompanies the world premiere of Jonathan Stahlke’s “Song of All Songs,” which takes the entire text of the Song as its basis.

[Learn more](#)

**SATURDAY, JUNE 20<sup>TH</sup>, 2026**

**TRINITY  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
DES MOINES**

# 2026 IOWA MARCH FOR LIFE LCMS RALLY

**9 AM - MATINS PRAYER SERVICE**  
**10 AM - SPEAKER**  
**11 AM - LUNCH**  
**12 PM - RALLY AND MARCH AT STATE CAPITOL**



**3223 UNIVERSITY AVE  
DES MOINES, IA 50311**

**GUEST SPEAKER**  
**MR.**  
**MARTIN**  
**CANNON**



**We show up.**  
**We confess Christ.**  
**We are Lutheran.**



**RSVP VIA QR CODE OR EMAIL**  
**PASTORCKROONBLAWD@GMAIL.COM**

**BUSINESS MANAGER NEWS**  
***Iowa District West Congregations' Mission Receipts***



<b>Month Ending March 2026</b>	
Anticipated Amount	\$110,000
Actual Receipts	\$110,597
<b>Year-to-Date Receipts</b>	
Anticipated Amount	\$220,000
Actual Receipts	\$225,508
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$5,508
<b>Use of Mission Receipts</b>	
Remitted to Synod (45%)	\$ 88,000
Balance for District programs & ministries	\$137,508
Total Receipts	\$225,508
<b>Mission Receipts Compared with Last Year</b>	
Month ending March 2026	\$225,508
Month ending March 2025	\$227,954
Over (under) last year	\$ (2,446)

**Partners in the Gospel - Monthly Mission Moment**

**Did you know?** Every dollar your congregation gives toward mission support makes a real difference across our District. Through the District budget, your generosity fuels vital mission and ministry work—both near and far.

In 2026 alone, **\$190,000** is dedicated to supporting our mission partners, including:

- **Christ Lutheran, Ankeny** — Rev. Paul Rieger
- **Calvary for the Deaf, Des Moines** — Rev. Tim Eckert
- **Grace Lutheran, Le Mars (Sudanese Ministry)** — Rev. Daniel Mapur
- **Shepherd of the Valley, West Des Moines (Multi-Cultural Missions)** — Vicar Niguse Alemayo and Rev. John David Mull

In addition, **District-wide Hispanic missions** are faithfully led by **Rev. Pedro Lopez**, extending the Gospel to even more communities.

Together, as Partners in the Gospel, your mission support is bringing Christ’s love to life across our District.

**Stewardship Spark** - by Ron Chewning - [www.StewardshipAdvisors.org](http://www.StewardshipAdvisors.org) - 248.644.6150

**STEWARDS ARE TOOLS IN  
 GOD’S HANDS TO DO HIS  
 WORK.**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).



## Synod Convention Assessment

Treasurers: please pay your Convention Assessment by June 1. Thank you to the 90+ congregations that have already paid. The remaining balance must be paid in full so that your lay and pastoral circuit representatives can attend and vote at the Synod's Convention, July 18–23 in Phoenix. The District has already paid over \$10,000 in delegate airfare and nearly \$75,000 for Synods Assessment which funds convention facility rent, electronic voting, postage, printing, floor committees, and more. The convention assessment also covers travel, lodging, and food for 6 days for 32 District delegates. To learn more about the 69th National Convention centered on the theme "Christ Is Risen Indeed," based on 1 Corinthians 15:20–22, visit [www.lcms.org/convention](http://www.lcms.org/convention).

### Secretarial/Administrative Assistants Conference



Mark your calendar for the District Secretarial/Administrative Assistants Conference tentatively scheduled for **September 29** (the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday this year) in Fort Dodge. More details will be shared in the next few months. All ministry assistant professionals are invited.

### Concordia Plan Services (CPS) Workshop – Focusing on Retirement

Need help planning for retirement? Concordia Plans is hosting a pre-retirement workshop on **Monday, May 18**, from **9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** at **Grace Lutheran Church in Le Mars**. Workers enrolled in the Concordia Retirement Plan pension—especially those age 50 or older who are considering retirement—are encouraged to attend. Spouses are welcome as well. The workshop will cover topics such as basic retirement finances, sources of retirement income, health care in retirement, tools and resources, and more. To register, email [MoneyMatters@ConcordiaPlans.org](mailto:MoneyMatters@ConcordiaPlans.org). See the poster for complete details.

### Have a legal question?

One of the most valuable — and often underutilized — resources available to churches today is [Legal Assist](#), a complimentary service provided by Brotherhood Mutual. Designed specifically for ministry needs, [Legal Assist](#) gives churches access to a team of experienced legal and risk management professionals who understand the unique challenges you face. Whether you have questions about child protection policies, employment practices, facility use agreements, or governance documents, you can submit a question and receive a personalized response at no cost. This is not just a resource—it's a reflection of Brotherhood Mutual's commitment to strengthening and protecting the Church. At Lightwell Insurance Advisors, they encourage every ministry they serve to take advantage of this trusted tool as part of a proactive approach to risk management, helping you focus on your mission with greater confidence and peace of mind. Visit: <https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/legal-assist>

### Annual Church Legal Checklist for Governance and Compliance

This [online](#) article at Church Law and Tax provides a comprehensive annual checklist to help churches stay legally compliant, protect their tax-exempt status, strengthen governance, and reduce risk across financial, operational, and safety domains. The checklist emphasizes that legal compliance is ongoing, not occasional. An annual structured review helps churches:

- Protect tax-exempt status
- Strengthen governance
- Reduce liability and regulatory exposure
- Maintain trust with congregations and donors

### Join the Lutheran Federal Credit Union Today!

Did you know that our very own Lutheran Federal Credit Union celebrated its 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the annual meeting held in St. Louis this March? The credit union offers the same services you'd expect from your local credit union or bank but LutheranFCU supports the LCMS — and your funds are fully insured.

The District is an active member of the credit union. Are you?

Lutheran Federal Credit Union provides competitive auto loans and is currently offering excellent short-term Certificates of Deposit with rates up to **3.75%** (new money only; \$1,000 minimum opening balance required). Check out [www.LutheranFCU.org](http://www.LutheranFCU.org) or call 877.737.3576.





# Thinking about retirement?

Attend a pre-retirement workshop sponsored by Concordia Plan Services.

Understanding the retirement process can be complex, so Iowa District West and Financial Educator Keith Duesenberg from Concordia Plan Services are hosting a pre-retirement workshop for individuals serving in LCMS ministries. **Who should attend?** Workers enrolled in the Concordia Retirement Plan pension, especially those age 50 or older who are thinking about retirement. Spouses are strongly encouraged to attend also.



**Monday, May 18, 2026**  
**9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

**Grace Lutheran Church**  
1430 7th Avenue SE  
Le Mars, IA 51031

All materials, beverages, snack, and a light lunch will be provided. Spouses are also welcome to attend!

**Register by**  
**Monday, May 11, 2026**



## Topics include:

- Envisioning your retirement.
- Basic retirement finances.
- Sources of retirement income.
  - Pension
  - Social Security
  - Savings
- Health care in retirement.
- Initiating your retirement.

**Advance registration by May 11 is required.** To register, email the following information to [MoneyMatters@ConcordiaPlans.org](mailto:MoneyMatters@ConcordiaPlans.org): your name, phone number, spouse's name (if attending), and any special dietary or mobility needs. Contact Roger Curtis at [Roger@IowaDistrictWest.org](mailto:Roger@IowaDistrictWest.org) with questions.



# Stewarding God's Gifts: A Plan to Care for Your Family and Support the Ministries You Love

## Have you put off making a plan for what God has entrusted to you?

Your home, savings, land, and other resources are gifts from God, given to you to care for your family and bless His Church. But many of us have not yet made a plan for how those gifts will be used when we are called Home. This webinar will help you take a faithful first step. Led by LCMS Foundation gift planning counselor Leon Schoenfeld (Iowa District West), this session will explore ways to steward your resources in a manner that honors your faith, provides for your loved ones, and supports the ministries you care about.

In this webinar, you will:

- Understand what it means to steward your assets as a Christian
- Learn the difference between gift planning and estate planning
- See how thoughtful planning can care for family while also supporting ministry
- Walk away with simple, practical next steps

**Register for the  
webinar today!**

**June 16, 2026**

**11:30 AM-12:30 PM CDT**

**Online Webinar**

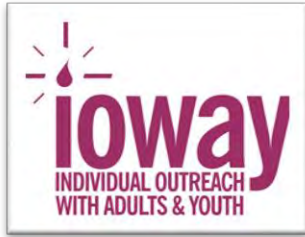


**Leon Schoenfeld**  
*Gift Planning Counselor*  
Phone: 712-830-7481  
Leon.Schoenfeld@LFND.org



**Register today to begin putting a faithful plan in  
place for your family and the work of the Church.**





**Julie Mann, IOWAY Coordinator**  
[julie@iowadistrictwest.org](mailto:julie@iowadistrictwest.org)  
515-408-9696

Spring is here...well, most days.

If your community is like mine, I am seeing many farmers out working to get their fields prepped for planting season, which may have already started by the time you read this. In the Midwest, we are blessed to see this cycle of God's provision in full. But since I'm not a farmer, how does God ready me for growth?



We have all been through situations where we prayed and then expected something to happen immediately. I'm not saying that He can't, because we know that miracles happen by His word alone. However, that would be like a farmer consistently planting in late April and expecting a crop every year by Mother's Day. I struggle with remembering that God's timing is not mine. And His plan for our lives—how He is growing us through life's challenges and celebrations—is always better.

The story of the sower in Mark 4, for example, is basically saying that growth depends on the Holy Spirit's work inside you—and on what we do with our mindset, our habits, and the environment we put ourselves in. If our life is full of worldly distractions, which we often get caught up in, it's like trying to grow something in bad soil, on a rocky path, or in thorns. But if you're intentional and focused on God's word and will, you give yourself a real chance to thrive. Then there's the idea that growth takes time, like a seed growing quietly underground. You don't always see progress right away, but that doesn't mean nothing's happening.

I believe one way to grow is to gather and do activities together with your fellow Christian believers. Outreach and fun often go hand in hand; they enrich our lives, and we build strong relationships that encourage our faith. If you want ideas or would like to share some things you are doing, please reach out to me.

Isaiah 61:11 "For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

# Invest Together in Faith

Now is the time to make the most of the blessings God has entrusted to you. With Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), you gain a trusted partner who shares your Lutheran values, helping you achieve financial growth while making a meaningful difference in the LCMS community.

**View rates and terms  
at [lcef.org/OurRates](https://lcef.org/OurRates)**



**LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF Investments are not FDIC insured, are not a federally insured savings or deposit account or insured by any state or federal agency.** 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.



# MISSION CENTRAL

*LCMS Mission Advancement*  
40718 County Highway E-16  
Mapleton, Iowa 51034



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

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

### May 2026



Jason Schleis of Fremont, Neb., and his daughter Beniah came for a tour of Mission Central, and it was a very special day. When Jason was a boy, his grandpa owned the property where Mission Central now sits. Jason remembered exactly what the old buildings—the barn, house, and outbuildings—used to look like. His dad grew up on this old farmstead. It was a day we will never forget.



What a blessing to welcome some dear friends from the E-Free Church of Arthur, Iowa. They came for a special full tour on Thursday, March 5, 2026. These dear Christian friends began their visit with a prayer in our Wayside Prayer Chapel, followed by a full tour of the office area, the Ministry Center with all its pictures, the Creation Theater, and the Barn Museum. These special friends will always remember their tour and our time together!



It was a real joy to welcome “mission-minded” friends from Christ Lutheran Church in Ankeny, Iowa, along with their dear pastor, the Honorable Rev. Paul Rieger, as well as a wonderful group of folks from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ida Grove, Iowa. They arrived on March 15, 2026, and gathered in our office, which features the picture of the world-famous *Sallman’s Head of Christ*. They enjoyed a tour of our offices, the Ministry Center, the Creation Theater, and finally the Barn Museum, where they saw many visible reminders of *why* we send missionaries around the world to tell others about Jesus!



These dear mission volunteers are one of about five groups of volunteer cooks who prepare super delicious meals for our guests who come for tours of our campus. This cooking team is from Mapleton, Iowa. What a wonderful blessing these ladies are to our work here at Mission Central. They are loved and appreciated more than they will ever know!

It was Tuesday, March 17, and the weather was nasty. Rev. Chris and Jenny Yang, our new missionaries going to Taiwan, and several of our LCMS Mission Advancement staff from St. Louis, came to visit us at Mission Central. Some of them had never been here before! They received the full tour of our campus and shared a wonderful noon meal with us. It truly was a very, very special day! We had an opportunity to pray for Chris and Jenny Yang, and we made a lot of memories with our ministry partners who work at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis.



What a JOY and blessing it was to welcome the folks from St. John Lutheran Church in Yankton, SD for a full day tour on March 28, 2026. These special people were given a full tour of the facilities, and our volunteer ladies provided a meal for the group. What a wonderful opportunity to share the miracles of what the Lord has allowed to happen at this place in the middle of the hills of western Iowa! It truly was a day we will never forget!



# !AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

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

Pastor Pedro Lopez

May 2026



Rev. Pedro Lopez

Assistant to the President  
Missionary at Large

[pedro@iowadistrictwest.org](mailto:pedro@iowadistrictwest.org)  
571-606-7600 (cell)



Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I pray this Easter season has been a joyful one and that you are feeling encouraged in your walk of faith. We are truly thankful for the many ways the Lord continues to bless our ministry.

This spring, we kicked off our 2026 ESL classes at St. Paul in Carroll and were happy to welcome back several families from the fall session. We have also added something new—basic guitar lessons—with one eager student already learning! Our Saturday evenings of praise, prayer, and Bible study remain a meaningful time together, and we continue to enjoy our monthly fellowship gatherings as well.

At St. Paul in Hartley, ESL classes are on pause for the spring, but we are looking forward to restarting them this fall, God willing.

At St. John in Storm Lake, we continue supporting the Swaddling Clothes program on the second Saturday of each month and remain involved in Sunday worship at Grace. We are also thankful for our ongoing home Bible studies with families—it is such a blessing to spend time together in God's Word.

We are especially glad to share that Adrian Velazquez has returned to the area after working in Indiana and is once again active in our church. He is now living near Storm Lake and working on local farms, and he gives thanks to the Lord for bringing him back. We are also immensely proud of Maria Sepeda, who took part in both the National and District Youth Gatherings. Recently, she gave a speech at her school, sharing her gratitude for our support and speaking about her faith and church community—it was a wonderful witness.

Thank you for continuing to lift our Hispanic ministries and the communities we serve in your prayers. As always, we ask for your prayers for my wife and me, that the Lord would continue to guide, strengthen, and equip us for this work.

Bendiciones,  
*Pastor Pedro Lopez*



**MISSION: SHARING GOD'S WORD AND LOVE IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY.**

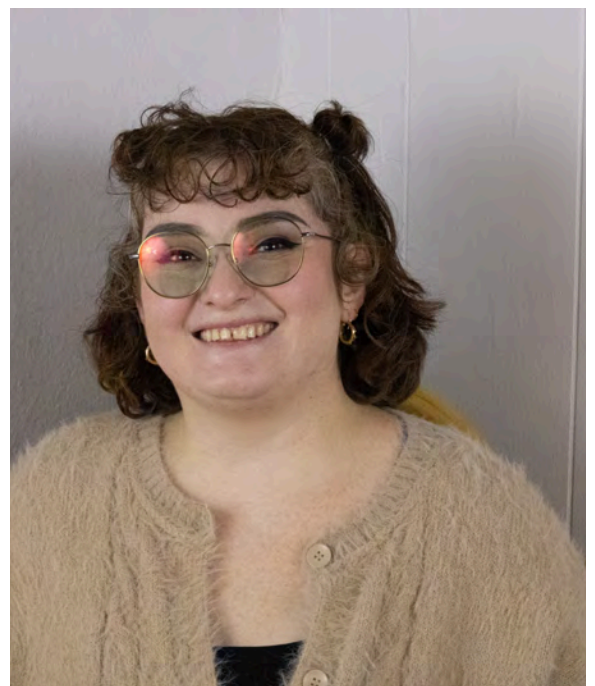
## PASTORAL CALL UPDATE

We are pleased to report progress toward bringing Frank to the United States. We have finalized all the paperwork needed and are just now in the waiting period for government approval. Pastor Awe has been in communication with the District regarding plans to help Frank complete his vicarage and be ordained as a pastor. We continue to move forward with thoughtful prayer, trusting that the Lord knows the plans He has for our ministry and for Frank's family.

As we continue working through this process, we will provide updates regarding legal fees, housing, and living assistance for them. We ask for your continued prayers for this process in the days ahead, as well as for all those who have helped us reach this point.

## YASMIN OSTERHOLT DCE UPDATE

Our Director of Christian Education Intern is in her final semester at Concordia University Irvine and will officially begin her one-year internship this summer. Through this internship, she will continue to grow through hands-on ministry while taking on increased leadership responsibilities. She is also a valuable resource for churches seeking to reach their communities through Hispanic outreach. We ask for your prayers as she completes her semester.





## HOLY LAND TOUR OPPORTUNITY

Join Pastor Myq Awe in this once in a lifetime journey to the Holy Land. Here we will see the Bible come alive with the names and events that we have heard all of our lives. Dare I say that we will enjoy awe-inspiring places of interest like the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, and Mt. Zion, to name a few. We will also enjoy the Sea of Galilee, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jericho, and Jerusalem. The dates for this wonderful tour are 12-21 January 2027. We will be departing from and arriving back at the Omaha airport. The price for this tour, which includes transportation, tours, hotels, and most meals is \$4299 per person based on double occupancy. If you would like to receive a brochure, please contact Pastor Awe at [thelrevma@gmail.com](mailto:thelrevma@gmail.com) or call him at 531.218.5793.

### Prayers



- + For Daniel, grandson of Pastor Víctor De La Rosa, as he continues his recovery, and that God may help the family with His mercy and grace.
- + For open doors to share the Gospel in our daily life.
- + For the calling process, that God may send the workers He has prepared for our work here and in other places.
- + For immigrants around the world, that they may find a place to live and have Christ in their lives and homes.



DCE Intern Yasmin Osterholt  
605-941-8965  
[Yosterholt@outlook.com](mailto:Yosterholt@outlook.com)

Hope Lutheran Hispanic Ministry  
218 W. 18th St.  
South Sioux City, NE 68776

### ***We pray for rain. Why not pray for those young in faith?***

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the Sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11

We are in the middle of spring. Spring is a time for planting seeds that we hope to harvest later in the year. We plant the seed then we pray for rain. We pray that the Lord will water the seed and give growth to the plant. That there would be an abundant crop when the time for harvest comes in the fall. Especially here in Iowa around this time we hear people and farmers coming up to pastors and saying, "Pastor, would you pray for rain at the church service today?" Sometimes as pastors we see just how dry it has been, so we pray for rain without being asked. We can see that there is a drought that is hurting our land. We know we desperately need the rain. So, we pray to our heavenly father for rain. We know he answers our prayers, so we pray with all our might asking him for rain. Especially in these first few months of the year.

Good early spring rains bring what we hope to be a bountiful crop in the fall. Growing up in Denison, I can't tell you how many times I would be walking around town in the spring and summer, and I would hear one of the farmers say "we could use a good rain to help move the crop along."

We pray for rain and for all sorts of things. Do we remember to pray for those young in faith? Those who are still new to the faith and trying to figure out this world with their faith at the forefront of their minds? They hear the Father telling them one thing but the world says something that is totally different.

The end of April and the beginning of May are always a big time in the church. A lot of confirmation classes are wrapping up, and a new bunch of children are getting ready to confirm that faith that they have been learning for the past several years. They have learned about the faith, about how we teach the faith in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, how we hold the scripture to be the true Word of God. On their confirmation day we will be asking them to suffer all - even death - rather than fall away from the faith. We ask them this question, then sometimes we forget to pray for them as they take the next step in their faith journey. We forget that they need prayers too.

Also, our high school students. Many young LCMS high schoolers are going to be heading off to college in the fall. When you are not home it is sometimes easy to fall away when you do not have an accountability partner to make sure that you are staying in the faith. When I was in college the first thing I did was scope out the church scene. Where were the LCMS churches in town and what was the best route to get there.

Paul writes to a young Pastor Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 1, "I urge then first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people." Paul urges Timothy to pray; he says the same thing to us pray for people. As our confirmands and high school graduates begin the next step in their life and faith walk they need our prayers. Prayers that they stay strong in the faith even when Satan attacks them for it. We pray for rain. Why not pray for our young people in the faith? Let them know that we care about them and that we are praying for them as they walk through this journey of life in Jesus.

*Heavenly Father, we pray that you be with those young in the faith, those who have in these last few weeks or soon will confirm their faith in you. We pray for our high school youth, especially those who are getting ready to move to college.*

*We pray that you give them strength and courage in their faith during the next step in their journey. Be with them and give them all they need to defend their faith for those who would attack them for it. Walk with them and walk with us every step of the way. In Jesus name we pray it amen.*

**Rev. Alex Smith**

**Calvary Lutheran Church Sioux city Iowa**

# THE LAMPLIGHTER



**Theme: Falling Asleep in Jesus**

**March AD 2026**

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

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

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

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



# Update

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**April 22 - 25: WITTENBERG ACADEMY RETREAT**

**May 1 - 3: VOLUNTEER WORK WEEKEND**

**May 3: OMELET BRUNCH**

**May 29 - May 31: KIDS' KAMP**

**REGISTRATION FOR CAMP OKOBOJI IS OPEN!**

Registration information is available online at [campokoboji.org](http://campokoboji.org).

**PERSONNEL:** We need 2026 Summer Staff! Please encourage youth (at least 16 years of age) and college students to consider serving with us. Those interested in serving at Camp Okoboji, or any LCMS camp in 2026 should complete a NLOMA profile. That is the first step in being considered for a summer position. Visit [NLOMA.org](http://NLOMA.org) for the profile link.

**New Staff:** I am excited to share we have added a new full-time, year-round team member to the Camp Okoboji staff. Nichole Delgado-Hart has joined us this month as our Guest Services Manager, overseeing housekeeping and kitchen operations. She is no stranger to Camp, having worked here before in the office several years ago, and most recently as a contracted housekeeper.

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

- We extend a very special "THANK YOU" to Reverend Ezra Grabau, Reverend Marty Davis, Kerry Burmeister, and Mark Kramer for allowing their names to be placed in nomination for the Camp Okoboji Board of Directors.

There were 55 delegates at the Annual Meeting April 11. Scott Ebel and Dalton Niemeyer were reelected to the Board of Directors and a new pastor was elected, Rev. Jason Letsche. Kirk and Delaine Warnke were named "Friends of Camp". The Auxiliary Grocery Shower and Basket Auction were very successful events to assist Camp.



## **Summer Chaplain Schedule**

Join us for worship - 9 am

May 24 - Rev. Alex Smith – Sioux City

May 31 - Rev. Daniel Harders – Holyrood, KS

June 7 - Rev. Mark Resner – Whittemore

June 14 - Rev. Dr. B Keith Haney – IDW

June 21 - TBD

June 28 - Rev. Chris Ascher – Sioux Falls, SD

July 5 - Rev. Charlie Adams – Omaha, NE

July 12 - Rev. David Beagley – Ames

July 19 - Rev. David Matthews –

Paullina/Sutherland

July 26 - Rev. Mark Lund - Garner

August 2 - Rev. James Travis – Sioux City

August 9 - TBD

August 16 - Rev. Dr. Joshua Lowe – Hawarden

August 23 - TBD

August 30 - Rev. Benjamin Dose – Algona

September 6 - Rev. Robert Zellmer – Lawton

# STOCK DONATION

## WHY DONATE STOCK?

- Donor avoids income tax on the capital gains on the appreciated value of the stock
- Donor gets a receipt for the full value of the stock donated as of the date of the donation
- Gift may be used as an itemized deduction on the tax return if the individual itemizes deductions
- If you make a gift larger than 30% of AGI, the unused portion of the deduction can be carried forward to use in future years for up to five tax years after the date the gift was made



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Iowa Lutheran STO  
PO Box 176 Terrill, IA 51364



IOWA LUTHERAN SCHOOL  
TUITION ORGANIZATION

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

# LSM Choral Gathering

A Day of Singing in Community



LUTHERAN  
SUMMER  
MUSIC ACADEMY  
& FESTIVAL

at

St. Olaf College



Featuring Dr. David Cherwien

*Lutheran Summer Music, faculty*

*National Lutheran Choir, former Artistic Director*

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

St. Olaf College • Northfield, MN

Sing works by Abbington • Cherwien

Krentz Organ • Palestrina • Rizza

# Around the District...



Plan now for the 4th Annual  
LCMS Lutheran Singles Retreat  
Ages 21-41

Friday - Sunday, August 21-23  
Camp Okoboji, Milford, Iowa  
[campokoboji.org](http://campokoboji.org)

\$100 pays for everything  
Register at [faithwinterset.org](http://faithwinterset.org)  
Questions?

Contact Dr. Keith Schweitzer  
641/745-5143  
[keithlcms@gmail.com](mailto:keithlcms@gmail.com)

**Be There!**

— *The Allen Henderson Memorial* —  
**Pastors Golf Day**  
— (Where theology meets tee time) —



**Monday, May 18th @ 9:00 AM**  
**Ida Grove Country Club**  
Ida Grove, Iowa

**\$25** • includes *TWO* rounds of golf + lunch  
(yes, even pastors need fuel)

**CONTACT / REGISTER:**

 **Pastor Neil Wehmas**  
 [pastorwehmas@gmail.com](mailto:pastorwehmas@gmail.com)  
 (text) **515-201-3753**

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:**

**Friday, May 15th**

**What to Expect:**

- Fellowship with fellow Lutheran pastors
- Dubious golf skills (grace alone, not by works... especially your swing)
- Friendly competition (no excommunication for bad putting... probably)
- Plenty of laughs, stories, and maybe a few theological debates on the fairway



Join us for the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Confessional Lutheran Homeschool League  
Conference

**We All Believe in One True God**  
*Cultivating Lutheran Unity*

Conference  
Highlights:

*Matins Service*

Preaching  
Rev. Kevin  
Johnson

Keynote  
Speaker  
Rev. Jason  
Braaten

Special Guest  
Speaker  
Rev. Jacob  
Benson

Exhibitor  
Presentations

Information  
Booths

*Suffrages*



**Keynote Speaker: Rev. Jason Braaten**

Pastor Braaten has a BA in Theological Languages and Philosophy, and an MDiv from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. He is currently working toward an STM in Historical Theology and teaches for Wittenberg Academy. Pastor Braaten shepherds Immanuel Lutheran Church, Tuscola, Illinois.



**Presentation topic:** Raising Confessors

**Session 1:** Truth that Unites

**Session 2:** Forming Children to Think and Speak Faithfully

**Guest Speaker: Rev. Jacob Benson**

The Rev. Jacob H. Benson serves Luther Classical College as Chief Advancement and Admissions Officer. He is an assisting pastor at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Casper, Wyoming. He has a BA from the University of Wyoming and an MDiv and an STM from Concordia Theological Seminary. He currently studies early modern English poetry at Trinity College Dublin.



**Presentation topic:** The One True God of Fairy Land:  
Cultivating Lutheran Unity Through Epic Poetry



**Registration and Additional Information:**

Go to [www.holycrosscarlisle.org](http://www.holycrosscarlisle.org) and click on the  
'Homeschool Conference' button

Registrar: Ceci Johnson [johnsonceci@gmail.com](mailto:johnsonceci@gmail.com)



**May 9, 2026**  
**Holy Cross Lutheran Church**  
**1100 Market Street**  
**Carlisle, Iowa**

## **125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Trinity Lutheran Church - Des Moines, IA, is celebrating its 125th anniversary on Sunday, June 7, 2026 with a 10AM Divine Service featuring special music and guest preacher IDW President Paul Egger. A BBQ catered luncheon will follow. RSVPs are requested.**



**For more information, email [trinityofficedsm@gmail.com](mailto:trinityofficedsm@gmail.com).**