



DISTRICT NEWS

IOWA WEST

‘Synod’ is a Strange Word

Kyle was one of our best ballplayers that year. Strong at the plate. One of our best two pitchers. Great range at shortstop. A great kid from a hard-working family.



Rev. Paul Egger
District President

We worked on cut-off throws when balls were hit into gaps in right-center and left-center

fields. Ball hit to right field, second baseman goes out for the throw and shortstop covers second base. Ball hit to left field, shortstop goes out for the throw and second baseman covers second base. Simple. Well, it should have been.

In one of our early games Kyle is at shortstop. Ball is hit into right field and a bad hop takes the ball to the fence. Kyle covers second base, right? Not this time. Adrenaline pumping, Kyle is on the move from shortstop to almost beating the right-fielder to the ball. Then he decides to be cut off instead. So here stands Kyle ... and a few steps away stands our second baseman scratching his head. No one is covering second base. The right fielder stands there with the ball trying to decide which cut off man to throw to. Meanwhile, runners are circling the bases. We finally get the ball in to the pitcher. Time out. “Kyle...” A nice discussion follows.

“Synod” is a strange word. It means “walking together.” Jesus walked together with his twelve disciples during His earthly ministry. Easter afternoon Jesus walked together with the two men on the road to Emmaus. Today Jesus walks together with us as we walk together with each other. As we “synod.”

Walking together, we agree to love and care for each other in certain ways. Together we agree to be normed by a constitution and bylaws. We are in this together and for each other and cared for by God Himself. We are “same team.” Formed by God’s holy Word and leaning

on our Confessions, we agree on objectives. From our constitution, our first team objective reads: The Synod ... shall ... conserve and promote the UNITY of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10) ... and provide a UNITED DEFENSE against schism, sectarianism (Rom 16:17) and heresy. Schism includes any who would talk unity but then do their own thing that disrupts unity. Sectarianism draws others into cliques that disrupt unity. Heresy means “other teaching” — something that distracts or leads away from God’s Old Testament and New Testament words with Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone. And soon the enemy is circling the bases and our team stands

See MESSAGE, Page 8



Guided by grace



This story was written by Aaron and Maria, parents sharing the account of the adoption of their son, Russell, through Lutheran Family Service.

A seed planted early

Our adoption story began when Maria and I were high school sweethearts. For several years, Maria had volunteered at a summer camp for children in the foster care system, and one summer she invited me to join her. That week at camp was life-changing — not only for our relationship with each other, but for our relationship with God. We saw His hand at work through the children and the volunteers in ways we couldn't ignore.

I vividly remember driving home from camp and talking with Maria about the possibility of foster care or adoption someday, far in the future.

Fast-forward a handful of years to when we were married. We knew — with God's help — that we were called to start and grow a family. We began the long process of doctor's appointments, filled with frustration and countless prayers asking God for clarity on how we were meant to fulfill that calling.

After a couple of years of waiting, we decided to pursue a less-traditional path: adoption. Because we had siblings, aunts, and uncles whose lives had been touched by adoption, and because of our camp ex-

perience, we felt God confirming that this was the path for us. For the first time in a long time, we felt peace. We felt direction.

Beginning the adoption journey

Shortly after deciding to adopt, we contacted Lutheran Family Service (LFS) on the recommendation of a family friend. We were impressed by their commitment to faith and their dedication to both birth families and adoptive families.

We were introduced to our caseworker, Cathy, and immediately knew we were in good hands. The paperwork was completed as quickly as possible — filling it out at home, in the car, even while on vacation — and we were officially eligible to adopt in April.

God's faithfulness became even more evident when we received The Email just three months later in July. Something about this email — the birth mother's situation, the timing, the feeling — stood out from the others. After more prayer, we felt certain God was intertwining our story with hers when we got the call for a match meeting.

We walked into that meeting excited, hopeful and terrified. But as soon as the conversation began, our nerves calmed. We instantly connected with the birth mother and her family and could genuinely see a future together. Not long after, we received the call that she had chosen us to be her baby's adoptive parents.

Preparing For Russell

The two months between matching and the birth were a whirlwind of preparation, prayer and praise. We were blessed to build a relationship with the birth mother — talking about hopes and dreams for the child, choosing a name together, and even attending an ultrasound. These were experiences we never expected to have and are incredibly grateful for.

One Wednesday night, while serving in kids ministry at church, Cathy called to tell us the baby would be born two weeks early. Time was of the essence — and thankfully the bags were packed, the car seat was in the truck, and the diaper bag was ready.

The next morning, Russell Henry was born. We were able to spend precious, sacred moments with him and with the birth mother in the hospital. These are moments we treasure deeply — ones we don't take for granted, ones we look forward to sharing with Russell someday, and ones that continually stir us to praise God.

A continuing story of connection and grace

Today, we're blessed to have an open-style adoption. We send regular updates to the birth mother, her family, and even the birth father, as they've requested. We're grateful to foster these relationships so that one day Russell will know his birth parents and understand the love and sacrifice that shaped his story.

Through it all, there is no doubt that God has had His hand over Russell and everyone involved in his adoption journey. We are deeply thankful for the birth mother, her family, and Lutheran Family Service for giving us the opportunity to raise Russell and fulfill our calling to grow a family.

As a supporter of Lutheran Family Service adoption ministry, we urge you to continue praying for those in an unplanned pregnancy and are struggling. Thank you for your financial support so our worker could develop a relationship with this birthmother and help her as she made the decision that was best for her and her child. Your support and prayers made this possible.

lutheranfamilyservice.org

St. Paul's

LUTHERAN SCHOOL

'Christ-Centered Academic Excellence'

Located in the downtown area of Sioux City, St. Paul's Lutheran School consists of students in preschool–3 to fifth grade. The school had its start in the 1800s in the church basement. The current enrollment is 43 students. Over the last three years, enrollment has grown 10% each year, and another 10% is projected for next school year.

Each day is filled with joy and struggle. The struggles we face are the same as many Lutheran schools. We work diligently to find and hire called teachers, but struggle at times to secure them. Another struggle we and many other Lutheran schools face is creating and maintaining a balanced budget.

While these struggles continue, the joys are seen each day. Seeing the students learn and grow, and hearing from the teachers on how the students incorporate our Lutheran beliefs into real world situations brings great joy to me and the teachers. A kindergartener said this week after listening to how a character in a book acted poorly, "We don't act like that because we know Jesus." That kind of joy is worth all the struggles.

Many exciting things are happening at St. Paul's. The gym is now fully air conditioned and heated. The school is finishing a rebranding campaign. During this campaign the school updated its logo; changed the school colors to maroon and gold; changed the mascot to a lion; and developed a new website (spl-s-sc.com). In addition, we have produced four new informational postcards. The gym has been repainted to display the new colors. Plans for a new sound system in the gym and a new gym floor are in progress.



Our mission statement, "Preparing Every Student for Life and Eternity with Christ-Centered Academic Excellence," has been expanded to include the following five pillars:

- Christ-Centered Learning
- Academic Excellence
- Strong Community Connection
- Safe and Nurturing Atmosphere
- Preparation for Future Success

St. Paul's is especially proud to share that one of our teachers is currently enrolled in the LCMS colloquy program. Next year, St. Paul's is hoping to enroll another teacher in colloquy.

St. Paul's continues to provide quality

Lutheran education in the Sioux City area.

— Submitted by Pam Whightsil
Principal, St. Paul's

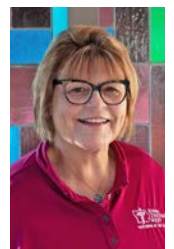
.....

Rhonda J. Mohr

Assistant to the President for Education, Youth and Family Life

► 515-576-7666

► rhonda@iowadistrictwest.org



Embracing change

Fresh ideas for the HISTORIC CHURCH

How do we define the historic church? The LCMS teaches that the church exists where the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered, and that its mission is the proclamation of the Gospel to the world. The LCMS:

- Affirms that the church's purpose is the ministry of Word and Sacrament, through which the Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith.
- Further teaches that the church's mission includes edification of believers and evangelistic outreach, flowing from Christ's command.

With that understanding in mind, churches are places of memory, meaning and mission. Yet even the most faithful congregations can struggle when new ideas arise or when change becomes necessary. Whether the change involves a new ministry or a fresh approach to outreach, many congregations ask the same question: "How do we honor and deepen our confessional past while moving into God's future?"

Below are five practical steps that help an established church embrace meaningful change without losing its identity.

1. Looking Back – Honoring Our Historical Past

Before a church can move forward effectively, it must understand its history. Every congregation has a story that is shaped by faithful saints, sacrificial giving, hard-won lessons and spiritual milestones such as baptisms, confirmation classes, weddings and funerals.

Taking time to look back:

- Acknowledges the contributions of earlier generations.
- Reminds the congregation of God's faithfulness.
- Identifies strengths that are worth carrying into the future.



- Uncovers patterns that may need to be reshaped for future missions.

This step is not nostalgic wandering. It is a purposeful reflection that answers the question, "What core values and lessons from our past should continue shaping our future?"

2. Looking Forward – A New Strategic Vision Toward the People We Are Called to Reach

Once the church understands its heritage, it can turn its eyes outward and forward. Change must be rooted in our shared confession and mission, not preference. Churches grow stronger not by asking, "What do we want?" but rather, "Whom has God called us to reach with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and serve?"

This involves:

- Learning the real needs of the community.
- Observing shifting demographics.
- Listening to unchurched neighbors.
- Understanding what obstacles keep people from stepping through our doors.

Looking forward does not dishonor the past; it fulfills it. Our history becomes

most meaningful when it propels us toward the people God is sending us to reach today.

3. Involving the Legitimizers

Every church has them — leaders, long-timers, prayer warriors, respected voices and those whom others naturally follow. These legitimizers may not always hold official positions, but they hold influence.

Involving them early in the organizational change process is crucial because they:

- Provide support that lends credibility to new ideas.
- Can help translate vision in ways others understand.
- Provide valuable insights, concerns and wisdom.
- Reduce quiet resistance by becoming early champions of change.

When the legitimizers are on board, change becomes less threatening and more trusted. Remember that any change in an organization is seen by many as a sense of loss, so take the time to nurture and strengthen relationships.

Continued on next page

4. Involving the Congregation – Spreading Ideas Methodically and Prayerfully

Change thrives when the whole church feels included and not surprised. Churches resist change when ideas come too fast or feel forced. But when new ideas are shared gradually and clearly, people have time to process and embrace them.

Effective ways to involve the congregation include:

- Townhall meetings and listening sessions.
- Small-group discussions focused on proposed changes.
- Testimonies from leaders who explain the “why.”
- Regular, open communication through video clips, newsletters, announcements and prayer times.

The goal is not simply to inform the members, but to invite them into a shared mission. When people understand the purpose behind change, their willingness to support it grows.

5. Generate Excitement – Let Hope Rise

Change is not driven by force or coercion; it requires patience, empathy, energy, hope and spiritual discernment. After all, the church is not a business that is simply updating policies; it is the living breathing body of Christ answering God’s call.

There are many ways to generate excitement:

- Celebrate small wins and early progress.
- Share stories of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts and lives of people.
- Remind people of the mission and the souls being reached.
- Create moments of joy, worship and gratitude.

When excitement grows, fear shrinks. When hope rises, resistance falls. When people see God at work, they gladly follow His lead.

“New ideas for the historic church” are not about abandoning tradition; they are about renewing purpose. By honoring the past, clarifying the future, involving leading influencers, inviting the congregation, and building excitement, any church can give change a real chance.

Healthy change is not rushed. It is shepherded. And when guided by prayer, unity and mission, it becomes a powerful tool for revival.

Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney

Assistant to the President for Missions, Human Care and Stewardship

- ▶ 515-573-0053
- ▶ keith@iowadistrictwest.org



Health



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Adrenal glands are two endocrine glands located on top of each kidney. They’re shaped like rounded triangles and are about a half-inch high and three inches long. The adrenal glands produce certain hormones that help regulate several important bodily functions, including metabolism, immune system, blood pressure, response to stress, and development of sexual characteristics.

They are responsible for producing and releasing the following essential hormones.

- **Cortisol** is a hormone that controls the body’s use of fats, proteins and carbohydrates. It also suppresses inflammation, regulates blood pressure, increases blood sugar, and helps control sleep-wake cycle. During stress, cortisol gives the body an energy boost and better handles an emergency situation.
- **Aldosterone** is a mineralocorticoid hormone that plays a central role in regulating blood pressure and the blood levels of sodium and potassium.
- **Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA)** and androgenic steroids are weak male hormones. They are converted into female hormones (estrogens) in the ovaries



and into male hormones (androgens) in the testes.

- **Adrenaline** and **noradrenaline** are known as “fight or flight” hormones. They increase the heart rate and force of heart contractions, increase blood flow to the muscles and brain and assist in glucose metabolism. They also control the squeezing of blood vessels which helps maintain blood pressure.

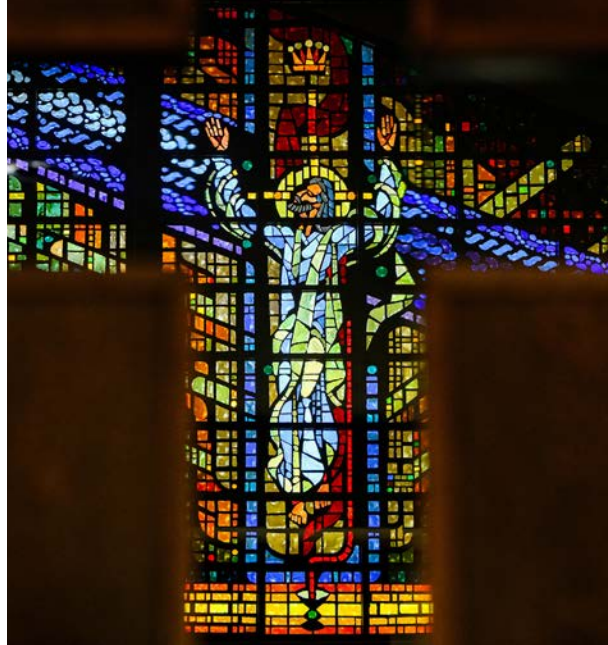
Early warning signs and symptoms of adrenal gland problems include unexplained weight gain or weight loss, fatigue, high blood sugar or low blood sugar, weakness, frequent infections, high blood pressure or low blood pressure, and females having male characteristics such as facial hair, balding and a deeper voice.

Contact your healthcare provider if you are experiencing possible adrenal gland issues. Certain blood and urine tests can measure the level of different adrenal hormones.

(Information is referenced from the Cleveland Clinic website.)

Darlene Rueter, RN • IDW
Parish Nurse Rep
drrueter@gmail.com

When faith wavers



I recently had several opportunities to think about what it means to have faith, and it really hit home that it conveys different messages to people, including non-believers. We have nice sentiments — “keep the faith” — and famous quotes — “faith is taking the first step, even when you don’t see the whole staircase” (Martin Luther King Jr.) — but those don’t really hit on the deep roots of a Christian faith.

A search of the Bible (NIV) reveals that the word “faith,” or a form of it, is used over 450 times, and sometimes I think I take it for granted that everyone I tell that my faith is foundational to my life knows what I mean. You can have faith in all kinds of random things, and we see that in our society today. Unfortunately, having faith in worldly things, people or ideas doesn’t get you very far.

I have seen the new movie “I Can Only Imagine 2” twice. If you haven’t seen it, I would strongly suggest you do. It shares the journeys of two characters, including the struggles along the way, and how holding steadfast to faith in Christ alone brings healing. It also has great music, in my opinion.

Faith in God is our bedrock for a life well lived! The belief that He is our source of hope, joy and comfort is all based on God’s willingness to send His Son Jesus to take our sins to the cross, defeat the devil and rise from the dead. Some

people think this is a fairytale or a nice little story, but we know it is the truth.

The tough part comes when, admittedly, our faith wavers. Sometimes I can beat myself up in those moments, but I am so thankful that God does not give up on me. In fact, when we turn back to the Scriptures, we don’t read of everyone always being bold in their faith. There were struggles even for the people we now use as examples of a strong Christian life. We see human frailty with faith even among the friends who were with Jesus on a daily basis during His ministry.

Our guy Peter walked on the water to Jesus until he became afraid, and multiple times denied that he even knew Jesus, yet he was a great leader in the early church. Thomas, who knew his friend Jesus well but most likely hid during the crucifixion, doubted when the other disciples shared news of the Resurrection. It took Jesus appearing again about a week later — when Thomas saw the actual wound marks and was told to stop doubting and

believe — for his lightbulb moment of “my Lord and my God!”

Faith is also not an easy fix to things or a promise that life will not have its bumps and bruises along the way. I was recently discussing the power of prayer with one of my college roommates. She’s been a young widow for four years now, so her life really isn’t going how she had planned. In her great wisdom, she reminded me that God often answers prayer with “no” or “not right now” because His timing and wisdom are infinitely better than ours. And that is what we hold faith in.

God wants what is best for us. He loves us and showers us with mercy, and we hold onto the belief we have in Him. Live boldly in your faith, share it with others, and know that God will continue to uphold you in your daily life.

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24–26



Julie Mann

IOWAY
director

▶ 515-408-9696

▶ julie@iowa.district.west.org

LUTHERANS ENGAGE THE WORLD

The Spring 2026 issue of *Lutherans Engage the World* magazine gives a few examples of how God uses His people’s imperfect efforts, both big and small, to draw the lost and wandering into His church.

The issue includes articles about efforts in Illinois, Florida and Texas to help children and young people grow in the faith; a maternity home in Illinois that is caring for new mothers and their babies; and LCMS School Ministry’s School Leadership Development (SLED) Project, which has benefited a school in Missouri; and more.

The issue started arriving in mailboxes in late March. Read it online at engage.lcms.org. If you aren’t currently receiving the magazine but would like to, visit engage.lcms.org/subscribe to sign up for a free subscription. Both individual and bulk subscriptions (for congregations) are available.

Meet our missionaries!

We are highlighting even more of the missionaries who will visit Mission Central this spring and summer. We hope and pray that many of you can also visit and learn about the exciting things that our Lord Jesus is doing in His mission fields around the world. Remember, there is no better time to visit Mission Central than when we have a missionary here.

Deaconess Jamielynn (Tinkey) Flores
July 11 • 2 p.m.

Deaconess Flores has served the Lord as a missionary in Latin America and the Caribbean region since July 2016. In 2020, Jamielynn married Rev. Rafael Flores, who now serves as a pastor in Chile. In her missionary role, Jamielynn uses her nursing background and deaconess formation to coordinate life ministry efforts and community health education in Lutheran churches throughout Latin America.



Ashley Lehr | Aug. 22 • 1 p.m.

Ashley Lehr serves the Lord in Puerto Rico (based in Mayaguez). As an outreach specialist, Ashley connects, equips and organizes local and international volunteers for service to Christ both on and off the island of Puerto Rico. These relationships of service and love create opportunities for sharing the Good News of Jesus in word and deed, as well as for forming a church body that is known for serving its communities. She also works to assist local communities by connecting them to fellowship, education and mercy activities and events.



Rev. Herb and Markie Burch
April 18 • 1:30 p.m.

Serving the Lord in Belize, Pastor Burch travels to several preaching stations, where he preaches, coaches pastoral candidates and teaches adults and children about the Christian faith through Luther's Small Catechism. He also works with leaders of partner churches in Venezuela, Guatemala and the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico to share the Gospel, plant new Lutheran churches and show mercy. In addition, Herb visits and mentors young leaders in newly planted Lutheran churches in Honduras to encourage them and help expand their capabilities.



Rev. Shauen and Krista Trump | July 11 • 1:30 p.m.

As director of the Africa region (based in Nairobi, Kenya), Pastor Trump regularly engages church leaders in more than 25 countries to equip and encourage them in their work to spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches and show mercy. He supervises the missionaries across the continent; coordinates with other entities; and communicates with LCMS boards and institutions. Krista serves as the region's project and grant secretary and coordinator of special events.



Rev. David and Jennifer Preus | July 8 • 1 p.m.

As director of the Eurasia region, Pastor Preus directs and supports the work to spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches and train church workers, and show mercy throughout the continent. He also directs and facilitates communication and the appropriation of resources for strengthening ministry and communion among missionaries, pastors and congregations of the region.

Bring the whole family to camp!

Camp Okoboji's family retreats have been growing family discipleship for generations! Camp Okoboji's family retreats exist to provide families with opportunities for household and personal faith formation, to strengthen family relationships and to create an environment of rest and refreshment at West Lake Okoboji.

During family retreats, you can expect a morning of youth and adult discipleship; an afternoon of family oriented activities; plenty of family free time to be at the beach and explore the Iowa

Great Lakes; and evening devotions that keep us reminded of who we are in Christ, and how He is sending us into our communities, families and congregations to bring more to know Him.

For more information and to register, visit campokoboji.org. Go to "Program and Events" and select "Family Camps" from the drop-down menu.

We can't wait to see you this summer!

Adam Hengeveld, Executive Director

- adam.campokoboji@gmail.com
- 712-337-3325



FAMILY RETREATS:
 June 28-July 3
 July 26-July 31
 August 2-7

Invest with Purpose Serve with Peace



\$100 MINIMUM



INTEREST COMPOUNDED AND PAID MONTHLY



UNLIMITED CHECKS



OPTIONAL VISA® DEBIT CARD



ONLINE ACCESS AND MOBILE APP

Church Worker StewardAccount®

A faith-based investment for LCMS church workers.

Align your financial goals with your values and choose an investment that reflects your Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) beliefs. A Church Worker StewardAccount makes it simple to contribute and manage your funds at your own pace and on your own time.

If you work for an LCMS church, school or organization, you are eligible to open a Church Worker StewardAccount.

Start earning 3% on every dollar.

Open your Church Worker StewardAccount today.

Contact us today.

800-843-5233
 Monday through Friday
 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT



LUTHERAN CHURCH
 EXTENSION FUND
 FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS. TOGETHER IN FAITH.

lcef.org/cwsa



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. StewardAccount products are not available to investors in South Carolina. StewardAccount access features are offered through UMB Bank n.a. Rates as of May 2026. Balance restrictions apply. Rates subject to change. Visit lcef.org for details.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

holding the ball not knowing what to do.

“Synod” is a strange word — and it is a wonderful word. As Jesus walks together with us, we walk together with each other. Walking together strengthens congregations to bring Jesus and His gifts to others. Walking together helps us to recruit and train pastors and other church workers. Walking together helps us compassionately meet needs of the hurting. Walking together helps us establish Lutheran schools and universities and seminaries. Walking together aids our congregations in developing and receiving resources to unify us in the one true faith. Walking together helps us worship in uniform ways so that we can easily engage during Divine Service in any of our congregations. Walking together provides needed supervision and counsel and care for church workers, which leads to protection and freedom for all God's children whom He gathers into congregations.

“Synod” is a strange and wonderful word. We thank God for His guidance in gathering us together into this Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. May He keep us faithful to His Word and loyal to each other as we walk together.

As angels sing • Pastor Paul Egger