



# DISTRICT NEWS

## IOWA WEST

# True

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



**Rev. Paul Egger**  
District President

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 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 2 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 Berean

Christians, reports, “They examined Scripture 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 which is firm and therefore solid, valid, binding. It means genuine, 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/she is dependable, trustworthy, devoted.

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# Caring for His servants

## Ideas to promote **WORKER WELLNESS** in our congregations

Lutheran congregations rely heavily on the faithful service of pastors, deaconesses, educators, musicians, other staff and volunteers. These workers often serve with deep vocational commitment, yet they face unique emotional, physical and spiritual stressors, including heavy care demands, limited staffing, role overload and compassion fatigue.

Promoting worker wellness is, therefore, not only a matter of institutional health, but also 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 our 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; and
- Mutual care within the body of Christ.

### **Challenges facing church workers**

Understanding common challenges helps congregations respond effectively. These challenges include:

- 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;



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

- Limited access to professional support such as counseling or continuing education; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- Encouraging participation in devotions, retreats, and worship without leadership responsibilities.

Resources available at [lcms.org/wellness](https://lcms.org/wellness) and the Lutheran Visitation Education Program 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; and
- Avoid "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;

*Continued on next page*

- Offering financial support for counseling when possible; and
- 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; and
- Promoting programs such as Doxology and active participation in circuit winks, DCE gatherings, and teachers conferences for those involved in ministry.

Education equips workers to serve effectively without becoming overwhelmed.

6. Recognize and affirm workers regular-

ly. Simple acts of affirmation contribute greatly to morale, and they can include:

- Public recognition of service milestones;
- Personal notes, emails, or verbal encouragement; and
- 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; and
- Modeling servant leadership grounded in humility and care.

Healthy leadership cultures create space for workers to thrive.

Promoting worker wellness in our 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.

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**MESSAGE**

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

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 opinion 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



Getty Images



# Intergenerational ministry adding elementary education

**By Mollie Clark**  
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Christ Lutheran Church, Perry, and Perry Lutheran Homes, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization, are expanding their shared intergenerational ministry in Perry through the addition of a kindergarten through second grade (K-2) elementary school at Acorns & Oaks Christian Academy. Beginning this fall, 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, 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 intentional-

ly 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.”

Acorns & Oaks elementary school is accredited through National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA), reflect-

ing 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.

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IOWAY

**'A light to my path'**

During my travels around our district, I have been in many beautiful and different places. I've noticed that many of our communities have put in paths — whether paved, wood-chipped or worn — into the natural landscape. As I was recently out walking before a meeting, I thought about all of the paths that we walk on, and how sometimes we pay attention to where we are going while at other times we wander.

From a biblical worldview, that image of paths carries deeper meaning. Scripture often speaks of the "path" as a reflection of our lives and choices. In Proverbs 3:5-6, we are reminded to "trust in the LORD with all your heart ... and He will make straight your paths." It's a simple but profound picture. When we walk with intention and trust in God, our direction becomes clearer, even when the terrain is uncertain.

There are also moments when we drift, much like wandering off a trail without realizing it. In those times, the Bible doesn't leave us without guidance. Psalms 119:105 tells us that God's Word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," gently guiding us back when we lose our way. The path may not always be easy, but it is never unlit.

As I continued my walk, I was reminded that every path — whether carefully designed or naturally formed — exists because someone went before us. In the same way, Christ calls us to follow Him; not just to admire the path, but to walk it with purpose. And as we do, we also leave a path behind for others — through our actions, our words and the way we live out our faith.

That also means being mindful of those walking alongside us or crossing our path each day. In Galatians 5:13 (NIV), we are encouraged to "serve one another humbly in love," and in Matthew 22:39, Jesus says the second great commandment is "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Sometimes the most meaningful part of the journey isn't the destination, but the moments when we pause to offer kindness, encouragement or a helping hand. Reaching out in Christian love can change the direction of someone else's path, reminding them they are not walking alone.

So perhaps the question isn't just where the path leads, but how we choose to walk it. Are we moving with intention, trusting the One who directs our steps? Or are we wandering without noticing where we're headed? Each step is an opportunity to walk more closely in alignment with God's will, knowing that He is both the guide and the destination.

As you begin your summer, trust in God to lead you on the right path for your life. Dig into His Word, connect with other Christians and enjoy the beauty He has placed in front of you.



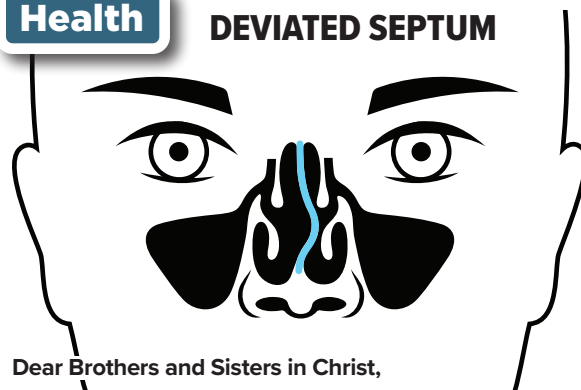
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Health

DEVIATED SEPTUM



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A deviated septum happens when the thin wall between the nasal passages, called the nasal septum, is off to one side. The nasal septum being off-center makes one side of the inside of the nose smaller.

The reduced airflow can make it hard to breathe. A deviated septum also can lead to a nose that looks crooked in some people. Most deviated septums have no symptoms, but sometimes the blockage can affect breathing, especially during colds and allergies when the nasal passages are swollen. The risk of nosebleeds is higher because the surface of the nasal septum becomes dry.

The narrowing or swelling of nasal passages can lead to noisy breathing during sleep. Some people may need to sleep on a certain side to ease breathing during the night.

A deviated septum can be caused by a condition present at birth, or the result of an injury to the nose. Trauma to the nose most commonly occurs during contact sports, rough play such as wrestling, or automobile accidents. Aging can cause a deviated septum to get worse over time. Swelling or irritation to the nasal/sinus cavities from an infection may narrow the nasal passage even more. Complications from a badly deviated septum include a dry mouth from breathing through the mouth, disturbed sleep and repeated nosebleeds.

Symptoms may be managed with decongestants, antihistamines or nasal steroid sprays. Surgery is the only way to fix a deviated septum. This is called a septoplasty, in which the surgeon straightens the nasal septum and puts it in the center of the nose. This may require cutting and removing parts of the septum before putting them in the right place. Sometimes, surgery to reshape the nose, called rhinoplasty, is done at the same time to change the bone and cartilage of the nose to change the shape or size of the nose.

See your healthcare professional for a blocked nostril that doesn't clear up with treatment, or if you're having frequent nosebleeds.

*(Information is referenced from Mayo Clinic website.)*

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# 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.**

**LCMS Foundation**  
GIFT PLANNING FOR YOUR FAMILY & MINISTRY





**March 14:** It was a real joy to welcome “mission-minded” friends from Christ Lutheran Church, Ankney, and their dear pastor, Rev. Paul Rieger, as well as a wonderful group of the folks from St. Paul, Ida Grove. 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.



**March 17:** Rev. Chris and Jenny Yang, our new missionaries going to Taiwan, and several of our LCMS Mission Advancement staff visited. We had an opportunity to pray for Chris and Jenny, and we made a lot of memories with our ministry partners who work at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis.



**Jan. 10:** Jason Schleis and his daughter, Beniah, of Fremont Neb., visited for a tour. When Jason was a boy, his grandpa owned the property where Mission Central now sits. Jason remembered exactly what the old buildings used to look like. His dad grew up on this old farmstead.



These dear servants are one of about five groups of volunteer cooks that prepare delicious meals for our guests. This cooking team is from Mapleton. 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.



**March 28:** What a joy and blessing to welcome members of St. John’s, Yankton, S.D., for full-day tour. Pictured second from right is Rev. Steven Weispfennig, St. John’s senior pastor.

# CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING

Summer camps are filled with energy, laughter and moments in which faith takes root. But behind it all are faithful volunteers who serve in ways that make this ministry possible.

Whether helping in the kitchen, cleaning cabins, maintaining the grounds or participating in a spring or fall work weekend, volunteers create the space where lives are touched by the Gospel.

And the blessing goes both ways. Volunteers can experience camp from a new perspective, build meaningful relationships and use their unique

gifts in service to others. There is a place for everyone — and every act of service matters.

If you're interested in volunteering at Camp Okoboji, we would love to hear from you. Please contact the camp office at 712-337-3325 or [covolunteercord@gmail.com](mailto:covolunteercord@gmail.com).

Come serve. Come connect. Come be part of the mission.

Adam Hengeveld, Executive Director  
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• 712-337-3325



## 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](http://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.

## WELCOME!

Call and vicarage/deaconess intern assignment services were held April 28-29 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL).

Iowa District West was blessed to receive a pastoral candidate from CTSFW. Lester Doak (pictured) was called as pastor to St. John's, Honey Creek.

