



DISTRICT NEWS

SOUTH DAKOTA

Meet our new president

By Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher
District President

Dear Saints,

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!

I am writing this the Monday after Easter, so the joyous Good News of the Easter Gospel is still ringing in my ears.

And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."

LUKE 24:5-6

The unchanging hope we have in all things is Jesus rising from the dead and declaring His eternal victory over our three great enemies — sin, death and the evil one himself. Because of Jesus' triumphant victory over sin, we stand forgiven before God. We are forgiven not by works or merit or anything we do, but by the love and sacrifice of Christ alone. We have hope that as certainly as Jesus rose from death's cold grasp on the first day of the week, we too might walk in newness of life. And we have the promises of our risen Savior that no matter what changes, no matter how hard the evil one attacks us, Christ is with us. Defending us. Encouraging us and forgiving us.

I will never leave you or forsake you.
HEBREWS 13:5

"And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age." MATTHEW 28:20



Pastor Sturzenbecher is pictured with his wife, Vonda.

What a confidence and comfort we have, knowing that when our relationships, health or vocation changes or disrupts our lives, our risen Christ is with us, just as He promised.

As you know, at the 63rd Convention of the South Dakota District, a few Board of Directors positions changed. After faithfully serving as district president for 10 years, Pastor Scott Sailer retired, and I was elected the 15th president to serve the Saints in the South Dakota District.

Let me introduce you to our family. Let's start with the most important things first. I am a Baptized child of

God. Every talent and ability I have been gifted with flows out of my identity as a redeemed and forgiven child of God.

I am blessed by my beautiful bride of 40 years and high school sweetheart, Vonda, who serves as the district LWML treasurer. Our son, Ryan, lives in Sioux Falls and works as a quality assurance engineer for an educational software company. Our daughter, Megan, and her husband, Dylan, live in St. Cloud, Fla. Megan works as a labor and delivery nurse and Dylan is an engineer for Lockheed Martin. Our grandson, Jett, will soon be a big brother to a player to be named in early October!

Except for three years at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and a year of vicarage in Iowa, we have lived in South Dakota. We have served God's people at First English, Centerville, and Zion, Hurley; and Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk. And now I look forward to serving you all as your new district president.

My prayer almost daily as a parish pastor was that I would serve God and His people faithfully. I can assure you that, as your district president, that prayer will continue.

With the new office comes a new address. You can reach me at dpsturcz@sddlcms.org.

God's richest blessings, dear Saints, as we live in Easter joy and forgiveness. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia! Amen.

“My prayer almost daily as a parish pastor was that I would serve God and His people faithfully. I can assure you that, as your district president, that prayer will continue.”



Rev. David Otten dedicates the remodeled nave and chancel at Emmanuel, Gettysburg, where Otten serves as senior pastor.

Palm Sunday dedication

On Palm Sunday, April 13, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Gettysburg, dedicated its newly remodeled nave and chancel. The remodel resulted in a bright, beautiful improvement of the 1948-1949 original, Tudor Gothic worship space.

There was a full house for the Dedication Service, which served also as a joyful observance of Palm Sunday. Rev. Dr. Scott Sailer, then district president, preached for the occasion. He noted:

Christ Jesus made His way into Jerusalem to the Hosannas of the people to become the crucified King Jesus, in order to pay the price to buy us back from sin, death and the power of the devil. God has given you this house of worship, now beautifully remodeled, that He might continue to make His way into your life, over and over again, always present in His Word ... always present in Holy Baptism ... and always present in the Lord's Supper to forgive and strengthen you.

Rev. David Otten is the pastor of the congregation, and Ed Wager is the chairman of the remodeling committee.



Farewell and Godspeed, Julie

On Sept. 17, 1987, Julie Pike began her service in the district office as the administrative assistant to the president, then Rev. Paul Wendling. Five district presidents, four executive secretaries and one assistant to the president later, she has decided to retire, effective after the June district Board of Directors meeting.

"Julie has served with excellence," said Rev. Dr. Scott Sailer, who recently retired as district president. "She had to work through emerging technological advancements over the decades and she did so with grace, without complaint. A few of us parish pastors from the start of her time of service remember ordering VCR tapes from the district office audio-visual library. Julie was the one to manage the library, and she was the shipper and receiver of the tapes.

"Some of us also remember the monthly *District Newsletter* that came out on mint-green paper. Julie was largely responsible for that every month, and more recently she has been the editor of our twice-a-month email newsletter."

Julie reflected on her years of service.

"It has been an honor and privilege to work with the pastors and people of the South Dakota District LCMS for the past 37-plus years" she said. "Many lifelong friendships have been made, and I look forward to keeping in touch with many of them in my retirement years. The most enjoyable and memorable times were those helping pastors, teachers, lay people and anyone who happened across my path. And I'll admit, even though I enjoyed the actual conventions, my least favorite task was convention preparation."

She also shared her plans for retirement.

"My husband (Gene) retired from Ford in March, and we look forward to doing, as we say, 'whatever, whenever we want.' We plan to travel across our great country and also abroad, visit friends and family, take time to enjoy our lakeside home, do some kayaking and fishing. We also have other hobbies that need some dire attention."



We thank God for Julie's long-time service to the Lord and His church in South Dakota, and we wish her and Gene every blessing in Christ!

Tributes

For 37 years Julie Pike has been the anchor of the South Dakota District office. It was my honor to work with her for nearly 10 of those years. Her smiling face was the first thing you saw as you entered the office building. She was a reliable, dedicated and professional servant of the Lord. I thank God for her many years of faithful service and her friendship. May God bless her with peace and joy in this next season of her life. — **Rev. Darren Olson, former district executive secretary**

I love Julie. She's so wonderful. She really has been such a true blessing to the South Dakota District. She handled her job with such grace and love and is so patient. Those are big shoes to fill. She's going to be missed. — **Paula Vostad, St. Paul, Spearfish, office secretary**

Blessings, Julie, as you make your transi-

tion into retirement after 37 years serving the Lord through serving pastors and other church workers, congregations, schools, district officers, board and committee members, and so many other individuals in this part of Christ's body known as the South Dakota District. As a parish pastor, whether I needed a resource from the district office or just needed information about upcoming events, you were one of the "go-to" individuals I could depend on.

In the years I spent as district president, your help with so many of the administrative details involved in district and Synod matters made my service a bit lighter. And your friendship both as a fellow Christian and as a co-worker in Christ's Kingdom and "our beloved South Dakota District" will always hold a special place in my heart. God's blessings to you and Gene now and in the years to come knowing His love and that you are in His care. — **Rev. Dr. Dale Sattgast, district president emeritus**

CALL INFORMATION

Rev. David Lindenberg, Peace, Rapid City, declined a call to St. Paul, Oak Lawn, Ill.

VACANCIES

- Zion, Chamberlain
- St. Paul, Freeman
- St. Paul, Plankinton/Trinity, White Lake
- St. John, Wagner/Trinity, Fairfax
- St. Peter, Wentworth
- Immanuel, Wecota/Concordia, Cresbard

Note: Zion, Canistota/St. John, Montrose; Trinity, Hartford; and Risen Savior, Tea, have called candidates from seminary.

Share your news with us!

Send articles/photos to
Kate Meadows:

- kate@katemeadows.com
- 420 E. Liberty Street;
Rapid City, SD 57701



Moments with Mary Jo

ALMOST TIME!

After months of planning, we are now just days away from the 41st Biennial LWML Convention in Omaha, Neb. (June 26–29). Delegates from all 40 LWML districts, along with guests, pastors and exhibitors, will gather at the CHI Health Center and grow in God's grace.



Mary Jo Stier
LWML District President

Each convention attendee will be “inspired to dig deeper in God's Word, be nurtured to share the love of Christ with enthusiasm, and be encouraged to support missions and our mission goal with joy.”

Along with myself and our junior pastoral counselor, Rev. Christopher McCarthy, two Young Woman Representatives — Katie Utecht and Danaca Schettler — will be in attendance. There will also be 10 delegates (one from each zone) representing the South Dakota District. Those delegates are:

- ▶ Betty Ochsner (Aberdeen Zone)
- ▶ Cari Garwood (Beard Black Hills Zone)

- ▶ Dora Harste (Brookings Zone)
- ▶ Betty Jean Mertens (Chamberlain Zone)
- ▶ Beth Brower (Huron Zone)
- ▶ Joyce Kasuske (Milbank Zone)
- ▶ Gina Bialas (Mitchell Zone)
- ▶ Cindy Fiechtner (Pierre Zone)
- ▶ Mary Dunlap (Sioux Falls Zone)
- ▶ Sandy Brandt (Yankton Zone)

If you are unable to attend the convention, you will still have the opportunity to watch online at lwml.org/convention.

I encourage you to reach out to your zone delegate and ask her to attend your meeting to share her experience. Please keep our delegates, along with all those from our beloved South Dakota District who are attending, in your prayers as they travel to and from the convention.



Stay connected to district, national LWML



Visiting our official website and social media sites, and connecting through email are the best methods for finding the latest information on national LWML and LWML South Dakota District news and events.

For the latest on events in our district, go to sdlwml.org and click the “Events” tab at the top of the page or make a selection from the drop-down menu. We are researching the option of registering for future events online. Stay tuned!

The “BOD” tab is a secure area for the Board of Directors — our elected officers, zone presidents and special appointed personnel.

We also share news through Constant Contact, our bulk email program. Do you know who the email contact is for your group (society)? Ask them for the latest news!

We also share information at facebook.com/sdlwml, including pictures of group (society) and zone events. Email your photos and a brief description to lwmlsd2020@gmail.com and I'll be happy to post them for you!

Nancy Bopenhagen
LWML South Dakota District Webmaster

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Growing in grace

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 2:18

What joy in the summer months as everything is green and growing, and what joy in our hearts as we grow in God's grace.

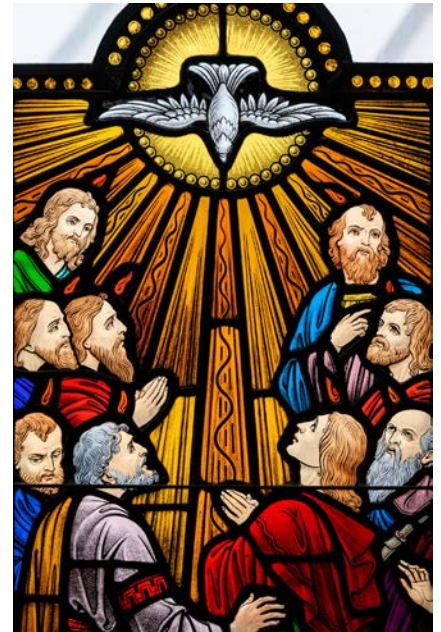
As we reflect on 2 Peter 3:18, the theme verse of the national LWML Convention in Omaha June 26–29, we find a call that resonates deeply with the vibrant themes of Pentecost — the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church. Peter, inspired by that same Spirit who descended like tongues of fire, urges us to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of Jesus Christ. This isn't a passive suggestion, but an active invitation to live in the transformative power of God's love, a power made manifest at Pentecost.



Rev. Dr. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor

Pentecost is the celebration of the Spirit's arrival — wind and flame igniting a fledgling group of believers into a bold community of faith. That same Spirit works in us today, nurturing our growth in grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor, freely given through Christ's death and resurrection. To grow in it means that the Lord's gifts have their way with us, shaping our hearts and lives. It's the Spirit who softens our stubbornness, opens our eyes to God's mercy and through us proclaims that grace to others. Just as the disciples spoke in new languages to reach the nations, we proclaim Christ's love in ways that transcend barriers.

Knowledge, too, is a Pentecostal theme. The Spirit doesn't leave us in ignorance, but reveals the truth of Christ — His lordship, His sacrifice, His victory. At Pentecost, Peter preached with clarity and conviction, drawing thousands to faith. Growing in knowledge isn't about amassing facts; it's about knowing Jesus and what He has done for us ever more



deeply, and trusting Him ever more for all things in our lives. The Spirit guides us into this intimacy through Scripture, the Sacraments, prayer and the fellowship of believers, whether in church or at the convention in Omaha.

Lutherans hold dear the truth that we're saved by grace through faith, not by our own efforts. Yet Peter's words remind us that this grace is dynamic; it calls us forward. Like the church born at Pentecost, we're not meant to stagnate, but to flourish, giving glory to Christ “now and to the day of eternity.” As the Spirit filled the upper room, He fills us still, fueling our growth until Christ returns.

Submit a grant proposal

Don't forget that South Dakota District Lutheran Women in Mission Grant proposals are due by Aug. 31.

Mission Grants may be proposed by individual members, groups, zones, Recognized Service Organizations and other LCMS ministries. Grants must emphasize the mission and extend the ministry of the Word. They must also be current, ready for implementation and well-documented.

You can find specific information on how to submit a grant proposal at sdlwml.org/mission-grant-application. Submit the application (postmarked) by Aug. 31 to:

LWML SD District VP of Gospel Outreach
Cathy VandeBraak
129 N. La Salle Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD 57110
vandebrak4@gmail.com



Rev. Dr. Chris Ascher, pastor of Resurrection, Sioux Falls, records a sermon for the Main Street Living television ministry. Main Street Living is a recipient of a 2024–2026 LWML South Dakota District Mission Grant.

Marching for life in the nation's capital

By Rev. Ryan Drevlow

South Dakota District Life Coordinator

Greetings, South Dakota District. Thanks to you and Lutherans For Life for sending me to the March for Life in Washington, D.C., in January. It has been a dream of mine to attend for the last 15 years of my ministry. I wanted to make my voice heard in D.C. on this most important issue.

The evening before the rally, our LCMS community gathered to hear important news regarding the fight against abortion. The past few years have brought legal victories but, in some areas, abortions have increased. We listened to presentations from Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, LCMS president; Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty; and Tim Goeglein, vice-president of External and Government Relations for Focus on the Family.

On the day of the march, I woke up early with excitement. My wife, Laura, and I boarded a bus to Immanuel, Alexandria, Va., where we attended a wonderful worship service. Then we boarded the bus to the Washington Monument, where the rally was being held. Many great speakers and musicians were there, as were pastors and priests. A young man had been a victim of an attempted abortion, yet survived and had a wonderful message to tell. Sen. John Thune gave a fine speech in support of life. President Donald Trump recorded a speech, announcing he had just pardoned Eva Edl and 22 other abortion protestors who were tried and convicted by the previous administration, and the whole crowd roared with cheers. Vice-President J.D. Vance delivered an in-person speech in support of life.

The March for Life was magical. We sang hymns. We spoke the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and Psalm 23. We recited sections from the Catechism by memory. I especially loved singing "I am Jesus Little Lamb." Young people all around us made up cheers for life. There were drums, big banners and bullhorns. There was a moment when I could see the U.S. Capitol building along the route and I knew that both legislative houses were in session, and that they could hear us as we sang and cheered for the end of abortion.

The march ended at the U.S. Supreme Court. LCMS attendees gathered for a prayer and short devotion. I sat and considered for a moment how wonderful it is that we can march for life and redress the wrong of abortion in our country. Thanks be to God.

There was a banquet later and the speakers were great, especially Bethany Dirks (formerly Bethany Hamilton, known as the Soul Surfer girl). She spoke about her life and her beliefs about life. A fun little thing was that we found out she had recently converted to the LCMS. She learned our doctrine from Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller, pastor of St. Paul, Austin, Texas, and host of a YouTube channel devoted to Lutheran theology. We were proud of our beloved Synod.



Rev. Ryan Drevlow (top) and his wife, Laura (left), were among thousands at the annual national March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 24.

Now that I have participated in March for Life, I want to go again. I would encourage all of you to go if you can.

Please continue to learn about and pray for March for Life and its ongoing efforts. Our leaders in Washington, D.C., need to know that we are not going away. We will continue to fight — for life.

LCMS South Dakota District Congregational Year-to-Date Report of Mission Receipts for the three months ending April 14, 2025, compared to the three months ending April 14, 2024

City, Congregation	Comm. Members*	2025 Intention	3 months 2025	3 months 2024	Avg/Per Comm. 2025	Avg/Per Comm. 2024
Circuit 1 – Aberdeen						
Aberdeen, Our Savior	277	10,000	3,065	3,050	11.06	11.01
Aberdeen, St. John	80	10,500	2,478	3,023	30.98	37.79
Aberdeen, St. Paul	450	20,000	6,105	7,372	13.57	16.38
Andover, Zion	106	—	1,050	2,200	9.91	20.75
Britton, St. John	146	3,000	—	—	—	—
Columbia, St. John	95	—	1,938	3,875	20.40	40.79
Cresbard, Concordia	58	2,750	—	—	—	—
Doland, Redeemer	29	2,000	500	500	17.24	17.24
Ferney, St. Paul	92	—	—	—	—	—
Groton, St. John	305	—	2,753	2,925	9.03	9.59
Leola, St. Paul	53	—	—	—	—	—
Mansfield, Trinity	270	25,000	6,288	5,894	23.29	21.83
Redfield, Messiah	140	2,000	1,000	1,000	7.14	7.14
Stratford, St. Paul	38	4,000	—	2,000	—	52.63
Wecota, Immanuel	87	9,500	2,599	—	29.87	—
Circuit 1 Totals	2,226	\$88,750	\$27,776	\$31,839	12.48	14.30
Circuit 2 – Watertown						
Brookings, Mount Calvary	420	56,000	14,263	13,771	33.96	32.79
Brookings, Peace	295	—	1,500	1,500	5.08	5.08
Corona, Trinity	132	2,000	353	—	2.67	—
Flandreau, Redeemer	28	3,800	950	—	33.93	—
Milbank, Bethlehem	64	300	—	—	—	—
Milbank, Emanuel	576	24,000	6,000	4,000	10.42	6.94
Revillo, St. John	119	2,000	—	1,170	—	9.83
Sisseton, Emanuel	101	4,400	—	—	—	—
Watertown, Mount Olive	387	28,000	7,000	6,250	18.09	16.15
Waubay, Zion	126	—	1,887	1,749	14.98	13.88
White, Zion	62	5,000	—	2,870	—	46.29
Wilmut, Our Savior	160	2,500	100	—	0.63	—
Circuit 2 Totals	2,470	\$128,000	\$32,053	\$31,310	12.98	12.68
Circuit 3 – Pierre						
Blunt, Trinity	40	—	500	500	12.50	12.50
Chamberlain, Zion	406	21,000	3,006	4,580	7.40	11.28
Draper, St. Paul	24	—	250	250	10.42	10.42
Gettysburg, Emmanuel	201	6,500	2,527	—	12.57	—
Gregory, St. John	246	—	5,000	—	20.33	—
Hamill, Zion	14	350	—	—	—	—
Harrold, Immanuel	20	—	—	—	—	—
Lebanon, Christ	23	—	—	—	—	—
Midland, St. Peter	46	3,000	700	950	15.22	20.65
Murdo, Messiah	71	3,000	3,000	—	42.25	—
Norris, St. John	70	2,500	—	1,804	—	25.77
Onida, Holy Cross	108	—	—	—	—	—
Phillip, Our Redeemer	50	—	—	—	—	—
Pierre, Faith	1,464	45,000	18,750	11,450	12.81	7.82
Presho, Zion	88	1,500	1,500	1,500	17.05	17.05
Reliance, Trinity	15	—	—	—	—	—
Rosebud, Rosebud Mission	—	—	318	746	—	—
Winner, Christ	25	—	500	1,000	20.00	40.00
Circuit 3 Totals	2,911	\$82,850	\$36,051	\$22,780	12.38	7.83
Circuit 4 – Black Hills						
Belle Fourche, Trinity	—	—	—	—	—	—
Black Hawk, Divine Shepherd	430	—	2,614	2,614	6.08	6.08
Creighton, Emmanuel	54	—	—	—	—	—
Custer, Our Redeemer	198	6,000	1,941	1,717	9.80	8.67
Deadwood, Grace	79	3,000	3,000	3,000	37.97	37.97
Hill City, Our Savior	29	1,000	1,000	1,500	34.48	51.72
Hot Springs, Bethesda	143	7,500	1,875	1,750	13.11	12.24
Rapid City, Bethlehem	451	31,325	7,831	7,847	17.36	17.40
Rapid City, Our Redeemer	124	5,000	6,951	1,170	56.06	9.44
Rapid City, Peace ¹	495	—	8,907	5,386	17.99	10.88
Rapid City, Zion	553	34,000	8,500	8,125	15.37	14.69
Spearfish, St. Paul	283	36,000	9,000	7,500	31.80	26.50
Sturgis, Blessed Emmanuel	22	600	1,567	2,235	71.23	101.59
Wall, First	229	2,100	2,100	—	9.17	—
Circuit 4 Totals	3,090	\$126,525	\$55,286	\$42,844	17.89	13.87

City, Congregation	Comm. Members*	2025 Intention	3 months 2025	3 months 2024	Avg/Per Comm. 2025	Avg/Per Comm. 2024
Circuit 5 – Mitchell						
Armour, Redeemer	199	9,000	—	2,000	—	10.05
Delmont, Zion	89	17,000	—	—	—	—
Dimock, Immanuel	127	15,000	3,895	3,400	30.67	26.77
Emery, St. Peter	56	3,000	1,830	1,513	32.68	27.02
Huron, Mount Calvary	781	70,000	8,760	8,862	11.22	11.35
Mitchell, Zion	507	20,000	5,315	7,713	10.48	15.21
Parkston, Faith	195	10,000	2,550	1,500	13.08	7.69
Plankinton, St. Paul	138	2,000	2,000	2,000	14.49	14.49
Tripp, Emmaus	42	—	625	625	14.88	14.88
White Lake, Trinity	115	8,000	4,400	1,900	38.26	16.52
Wessington Springs, Zion	75	—	—	—	—	—
Wolsey, St. John	233	—	3,904	2,594	16.76	11.13
Woonsocket, Mount Olive	11	—	—	—	—	—
Circuit 5 Totals,	2,568	\$154,000	\$33,279	\$32,107	12.96	12.50
Circuit 6 – Freeman						
Alexandria, St. Martin	88	—	—	—	—	—
Canistota, Zion	226	—	1,257	—	5.56	—
Centerville, First English	63	3,000	1,465	1,310	23.25	20.79
Freeman, St. Paul	275	—	—	—	—	—
Hartford, Trinity	87	—	—	—	—	—
Howard, St. John	122	4,000	—	—	—	—
Hurley, Zion	24	2,500	—	—	—	—
Madison, Our Savior	188	3,000	900	1,200	4.79	6.38
Marion, Bethesda	46	2,000	—	—	—	—
Menno, Immanuel	60	3,000	1,410	1,090	23.50	18.17
Montrose, St. John	109	—	—	—	—	—
Parker, First English	28	750	—	—	—	—
Scotland, St. Paul	34	300	75	200	2.21	5.88
Spencer, Trinity	79	2,000	2,000	—	25.32	—
Tea, Risen Savior	131	11,899	818	3,946	6.24	30.12
Wentworth, St. Peter	185	—	1,292	1,937	6.98	10.47
Circuit 6 Totals	1,745	\$32,449	\$9,217	\$9,683	5.28	5.55
Circuit 7 – Sioux Falls						
Brandon, Blessed Redeemer	269	—	3,750	2,500	13.94	9.29
Sioux Falls, Christ	122	3,000	—	536	—	4.39
Sioux Falls, Faith	592	—	12,123	14,500	20.48	24.49
Sioux Falls, Lord of Life	164	—	3,126	3,126	19.06	19.06
Sioux Falls, Memorial ²	770	68,820	13,952	9,030	18.12	11.73
Sioux Falls, Our Redeemer	314	25,200	8,400	—	26.75	—
Sioux Falls, Resurrection	245	10,000	2,500	2,500	10.20	10.20
Sioux Falls, Trinity of The Deaf	35	—	—	—	—	—
Sioux Falls, Zion	672	50,000	18,750	18,750	27.90	27.90
Circuit 7 Totals	3,183	\$157,020	\$62,601	\$50,942	19.67	16.00
Circuit 8 – Yankton						
Alcester, Peace	89	3,000	—	1,589	—	17.85
Avon, Zion	212	5,000	1,371	1,250	6.47	5.90
Dakota Dunes, Holy Cross	203	24,634	3,188	6,791	15.70	33.45
Fairfax, Trinity	77	5,000	—	—	—	—
Springfield, Our Savior	26	—	—	—	—	—
Tyndall, St. John	132	2,000	500	—	3.79	—
Utica, Martinus	68	2,000	—	—	—	—
Vermillion, Concordia	73	3,000	900	1,800	12.33	24.66
Wagner, St. John	182	9,000	4,500	2,250	24.73	12.36
Yankton, St. John	1,455	—	—	19,817	—	13.62
Circuit 8 Totals	2,517	\$53,634	\$10,459	\$33,497	4.16	13.31
GRAND TOTALS	20,710	\$823,228	\$266,722	\$255,002	12.88	12.31

¹ \$4,414 of Peace–Rapid City is for 2024 Missions

² \$4,953 of Memorial–Sioux Falls is for 2024 Missions

Comm. members: Confirmed membership as of Jan. 24, 2025 (LCMS congregational locator website)

10 WAYS TO WELCOME A CHURCH WORKER

By Rev. Dave Gunderson • Emeritus

Welcoming a new church worker is a transition for all involved, from the church worker to the church leaders to the members of the congregation. In May, we shared a true story that illustrates why communication is vital to welcoming a new church worker into your congregation. In part 2 on welcoming new church workers, we share 10 ways to welcome a church worker into your congregation and community.

1 Understand that clear communication between the pastor/church worker and congregation is critical.

Clear, continual conversations between a pastor and church leadership is essential. Church leadership needs to keep members informed on what is happening concerning the church worker's arrival, installation service and other related items.

2 Recognize that you're worker is "new" in many aspects

Don't assume the pastor or church worker automatically knows everything about the church's traditions, history and customs that have been going on for decades.

3 If the church has a parsonage/teacherage, make sure the place is ready for them on day one.

This includes making sure appliances, furnaces and air conditioners are working or replaced, if necessary. Have the house completely cleaned and painted before the church worker arrives. (The worker can change colors later if they want.)

4 Create a church worker support team.

This group should include at least one or two elders, and two other members who are concerned about the overall welfare of the pastor/church worker and their family. A good description of this group can be found in the book *Holding Up the Prophet's Hand*:



Supporting Church Workers by Rev. Dr. Bruce Hartung (available from **Concordia Publishing House**).

5 Welcome the new church worker with gift cards to local restaurants and grocery stores.

Instead of a food shower, have members give gift cards or cash gifts that allow the church worker to try some of the local restaurants and stores.

6 Have someone in the congregation give the pastor/church worker a tour of the community.

This tour can include the church worker's family and end with a meal at a local hang out, or maybe a picnic at the local park.

7 In the first few months of the pastor/church worker's arrival, take time to stop by the office for a short visit in order to introduce yourself.

Consider inviting the pastor/church worker to your own home for a visit, or take them out for coffee or lunch. One might even consider inviting the church worker and his or her family over for a nice dinner or backyard barbecue.

8 Respect boundaries established by the pastor/church worker and their families.

Supper time, evening hours and days off are to be respected and protected by the congregation. (Only in case of an immediate emergency should one contact the church worker.) Allowing

the pastor/church worker time with family will benefit the worker and the congregation.

If the parsonage belongs to the congregation, that does not entitle members, including church leaders, to stop by and invade the home. Proper respect includes setting up a time with the family for a visit or if repairs are needed.

9 Talk to them, not about them.

When the church worker/pastor does or says something that seems odd, before one speaks poorly about them (like the lady condemning the pastor over his use of sawhorses) take time to visit with them about the issue and share your concerns. In his explanation of the Eighth Commandment, Luther writes:

We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

When something good is happening in the church, share your joy with the church worker/pastor. If the church worker or their family experiences a blessing (like their oldest child scoring the winning touchdown), take the time to congratulate them. If you like the sermon, tell the pastor. Church workers need words of encouragement just like everyone else.

10 Participate and pray!

Participating in worship services, Bible studies and church activities is a great way of showing support to the workers God has called to serve the congregation. It is also a great way to grow in our relationship with our Lord and with fellow members. Praying for those God has called to share the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ is one of the joyful services all members can do.

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