



DISTRICT NEWS

SOUTH DAKOTA

The Benefit of a Pastoral Vacancy

By Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher, President, SD District

It has happened recently, or it will happen again in your congregation. Your pastor has accepted a Divine Call to serve in another congregation. When the news is announced, a mourning process begins. Your shepherd has celebrated with you as he said, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” and poured water over the head of that little one whom you love. He has preached Christ crucified and resurrected to you. He has pronounced forgiveness to you. He has served you a holy and precious meal of Christ’s body and blood, in, with, and under the bread and wine for the strengthening of your faith and the forgiveness of your sins. He has been your shepherd and walked with you through the valley of the shadow of death. He has prayed for you, and you for him.

There is no doubt you will miss this shepherd who has cared for you.

Now things will change in your congregation. There will be a new face preaching from the pulpit and visiting the shut-in Saints. Depending on the availability of pastors in your area, it might not be the same face each week. You may well be asking, “How can any of this be beneficial to the life of a congregation and the care of the Saints whom God has redeemed?”

In the time when you and your congregation do not have a full-time shepherd, or even the same shepherd each week, keep in mind that the promises of God are still the same. **The gifts of God are still given and received.** The forgiveness that Jesus accomplished and has given to you is still pronounced to you. God and His promises do not change when a different pastor delivers them.

When a congregation does not have a full-time, permanent pastor shepherding the flock, it becomes necessary to consider some foundational questions and gives the congregation an opportunity for faithful reflection. This is where the



Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher,

President,
SD District

benefit begins. During a pastoral vacancy, it is good for a congregation to consider a few questions concerning pastoral ministry in the congregation and community.

Question one: Have we expected our pastor to carry responsibilities that God’s people are also able to fulfill?

Pastors are, by nature, servants. They want to help. Because of this, it is easy for a congregation to expect the new pastor to take on a particular task simply because the previous pastor did it.

The early church faced this same challenge in the book of Acts:

“And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word’”

(Acts 6:2-4).

The pastoral office has very specific responsibilities that only the man in that office is given the authority to carry out. Dear Saints, remember that ministry in the church and outside the church is centered in these things, but these are not the only works of ministry. There are countless ways God’s people can serve the church and the community.

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DISTRICT NEWS

Small Church Clarity Program Launches in the Freeman and Mitchell Circuits



By Lutheran Church Extension Fund

In partnership with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) the South Dakota District is excited to announce the launch of the Small Church Clarity program within the Freeman and Mitchell circuits. This initiative is designed to encourage, equip and strengthen small congregations as they navigate ministry opportunities and challenges within their local communities.

Small Church Clarity provides participating congregations with practical tools, guided conversations and collaborative support focused on ministry health, congregational identity, stewardship, leadership development and community engagement. The program seeks to help churches rediscover clarity in their mission while building confidence for faithful ministry in today's changing environment.

Pastors and lay leaders from the Freeman and Mitchell circuits recently gathered for the first session, beginning a journey of

reflection, learning and encouragement alongside fellow congregations facing many of the same opportunities and realities. Through facilitated discussions and shared experiences, participants are exploring how God continues to work powerfully through congregations of every size.

“Small churches play a vital role in proclaiming the Gospel and serving

their communities,” said Kurt Primuth, District Vice President for LCEF.

Please keep the congregations, pastors, and leaders participating in this initiative in your prayers as they continue this important work together. May the Lord bless these conversations and guide each congregation in faithful ministry for years to come.



MISSION: ROMANIA!



A team of seven volunteer workers spent last week in Braşov, Romania, completing renovations to the Braşov Lutheran Outreach Center in preparation for activities aimed at engaging the community in Gospel-centered outreach. This short-term mission team did yard work, painted walls and installed new flooring on two levels of the building, fixed the front gate, installed a safety gate for the basement stairs, and did some general cleaning to make the center bright and welcoming!

The mission was sponsored in part by the South Dakota District through the Mission & Ministry Council to support

the work of South Dakota missionaries Rev. Jordon and Alison Andreasen and their family. Pastor Andreasen serves as an Area Facilitator in Romania and the surrounding area, focusing on planting congregations.

In addition to the work at the center, the team enjoyed worship, devotions, and fellowship with missionaries, their families, and local church leaders and members. They learned some of the history of Romania and of Christianity through the centuries there, as well as the work of LCMS International Missions in the Eurasia Region.

What a blessing to serve alongside the Andreasens for a short time as they do the Lord's work in Romania! To God be the glory!



New Development Update Newsletter Celebrates How God Is Working at SFLS

By the Sioux Falls Lutheran School Development Team

This spring, Sioux Falls Lutheran School shared its first Development Update, not simply as a report, but as a window into stories where faith, generosity and impact meet in very real ways.

Every student at Sioux Falls Lutheran School carries a story, and behind each one is something most people never see.

On average, tuition covers about two-thirds of the true cost of an SFLS education, leaving a gap of roughly \$5,000 per student each year. That gap is quietly filled through generosity – through people who believe deeply in what God is doing here.

Sometimes, that generosity takes the shape of a legacy.

Charles and Annette Jarratt lived lives marked by faithful service, deep generosity, and a love for Christian education. Today, their legacy continues through an endowment established in their name, helping meet real needs, support students and strengthen the mission of SFLS for generations to come.

It's a powerful picture of how God provides through His people, across time.

Learn more about where we believe God is leading SFLS next at:



SFLS JOB OPPORTUNITIES



Sioux Falls Lutheran School is hiring an Orchestra Teacher, head varsity girls basketball coach, junior high football coach and other positions for the 2026-27 school year. Learn more and apply: www.siouxfallslutheran.com/careers.

Graduation Season in our Lutheran Schools

Each spring, Lutheran schools across South Dakota celebrate important milestones as students graduate from preschool, elementary and high school. These occasions are joyful reminders that Lutheran education is about far more than academic success. From the earliest years through graduation day, our schools partner with parents and congregations to nurture children in both knowledge and faith, sharing with them daily the saving grace of Jesus Christ. In classrooms, chapel, music programs, athletics, and everyday conversations, students are continually reminded that their identity is found not in this world or their accomplishments, but in Christ, who has redeemed them and calls them His own.

As graduates look toward the next chapter of life, we give thanks for the faithful teachers, pastors, families, and congregations who support Lutheran education throughout our state. Whether students move on to another grade, higher

education, military service, careers, or other vocations, we pray they carry with them a life shaped by faith in our Savior. Lutheran schools remain a vital mission of the Church, preparing young people not only for future success in the world, but also for lives of faithful witness and service to their neighbors. "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established" (Proverbs 16:3).



LEGO COMPETITION COMING TO SFLS

Join us for a Bible-themed Lego building competition!

Dates:

July 14 – Elementary schoolers

July 15 – Middle and high schoolers

July 16 – Ages 18+

Teams of two encouraged to participate.

Competition takes place from 4-7 p.m. Doors open at 3 p.m.

Prizes: 1st place - \$500 + two-night stay at The Grizzly Den at Three Bears Water Park in Warrens, WI

2nd Place - \$150 + two medium Lego sets

3rd Place - two Bricks and Minifigs Gift Cards + two small Lego sets.

Sign up at:

bit.ly/sfls-lego-competition-2026.

◀ Preschool graduation from Divine Shepherd Black Hawk

Moments with Mary Jo

SUMMER BLESSINGS!



Mary Jo Stier
LWML District
President

The dog days of summer are upon us. In June, we will gather in the beautiful Black Hills, joining together and sharing the “Confidence in His Grace” at our district convention June 5-6. If you are there, I hope that the Spirit of the Lord fills your hearts as you hear the Word, participate in servant events, learn about the Mission Grants and enjoy fellowship with your LWML sisters.

This event can’t be accomplished without the help of many people. Thank you to the ladies of the Black Hills Zone and everyone who has helped to organize this convention in any way, big or little.

As we begin a new biennium, we say thank you and praise be to God for everyone who gives their time, talents and treasures to further the kingdom of God.

I thank the outgoing officers — Dianne Hemminger, Heather Miller, Luann Zuercher, and Paula Warren along with Pastor Mosemann (even though he is staying on for two more years). May God bless each of you as you continue to work in His harvest fields. There are many opportunities to share your gifts and talents within the LWML.

If you are interested in serving on a committee, please reach out to me.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

As we journey into the 2026-2028 biennium, I pray that you can participate in the many LWML activities and Bible studies in your groups, zones and the district.

Please continue to fill your mite boxes.

I hope to see you in Oklahoma City for the 2027 National LWML convention, “Transformed in Christ,” based on Romans 12:2.

May the Triune God bless you each day as you feel the “Confidence in His Grace.”

MITCHELL ZONE UPDATE



**By Diana Kieffer, Mitchell Zone
President**

The Mitchell Zone’s Christian Life Workshop was held at Zion Delmont on Saturday morning,

April 25. Rev. Dr. Brian Mosemann presented the Bible study called, “How to Handle the Sword,” based on Ephesians 6:11-17.

Each lady in attendance received a handheld inflatable sword, called “Swords of the Spirit,” at the beginning of the presentation.

The Bible study was engaging, with some humor intertwined.

A delicious noon luncheon was served by the Delmont ladies.

Mites collected were \$341 and Gifts from the Heart for Lutheran Braille Workers was \$915.

CELEBRATING RACHAEL’S CIRCLE

A golden event took place on May 4 at St. John’s Yankton, when Rachael Circle (part of LWML) celebrated 50 years. Thirty members past and present attended and shared memories by answering roll call “how you felt God’s presence,” followed by trivia and door prizes. A thank offering was taken to purchase a new Christ candle for the church. Cake and ice cream was enjoyed by all after a devotion by Susan Buxcel.

Throne of Grace

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

The writer of Hebrews paints a breathtaking picture of our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Unlike the imperfect priests of the Old Testament who had to offer sacrifices for their own sins first, Jesus is the sinless Son of God who has passed through the heavens and sympathizes with our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way we are, yet without sin. Because of His finished work, the invitation now stands; we can approach God's throne boldly.

Notice the contrast. In the Old Covenant, the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place only once a year, with fear and trembling, and only after elaborate preparations. One wrong move and he could die. But now, because Jesus has torn the veil through His own blood, the throne that once represented judgment has become a throne of grace.

Grace is not something we earn. It is unmerited favor poured out freely through Christ. Mercy is the compassionate withholding of the punishment we rightly deserve. At this throne, we don't receive what our sins merit – condemnation and wrath. Instead, we receive what we desperately need: forgiveness, cleansing, and strength.



Rev. Dr. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor

The phrase "with confidence" (or "boldly") is revolutionary. It means we can come without hesitation, without groveling in shame, and without fear of rejection. This confidence is not based on our performance, our spiritual maturity, or how "good" we've been this week. It rests entirely on the finished work of Jesus and His current intercession for us.

This invitation is especially sweet "in time of need." When temptation presses hard, when grief feels crushing, when decisions overwhelm us, when we've failed again – that is precisely when we are called to run to the throne. Not after we clean ourselves up. Not once we feel worthy. Right now, in our weakness and failure, Jesus invites us to come. We confess our sins honestly, rest again on Christ's blood, and receive mercy and grace through His word of forgiveness.

Too often we hesitate. We feel distant because of guilt, or we try to handle our struggles in our own strength. But Hebrews 4:16 is a standing invitation. The door is never closed. The welcome is never withdrawn.

Today, whatever your need is – whether it's forgiveness for a fresh failure, wisdom for a difficult situation, or endurance for a long trial – draw near. Come with confidence. The King on the throne is not a harsh judge waiting to strike you down; He is your sympathetic High Priest who understands your struggle and delights to give you mercy and grace.

The Benefit of a Pastoral Vacancy (CONTINUED from page 1)

Question two: How are we serving the people around us?

It is also beneficial to look at the church's life in the community. What is our congregation's outreach? What needs exist among our neighbors that we can help meet?

Our churches change, our lives change, and our communities change as well. There might be great opportunities to "love your neighbor" that did not exist the last time you evaluated your service in the community.

There is benefit in a pastoral vacancy because it encourages us to evaluate the mission and ministry of the church, both internally and externally.

Dear Saints, God be with you as you wait for your next shepherd to bring you God's precious gifts. I am praying for you. For all of you who are sharing your pastor with another parish, be patient. I pray for you also. God knows whom He is preparing to shepherd His people and when that time will come. The question for all of us is this: How can we faithfully serve so that more people may hear the hope and promises we have in Jesus Christ?

Questioning, so Christ's ministry can bring hope and healing.

President Sturzenbecher

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

South Dakota 12th Grader Wins Lutherans for Life National Essay Contest

by Jill Johnsen

A South Dakota high school senior was announced the winner of the national Lutherans for Life Essay contest, marking the first time a South Dakota participant has won the national award.

Olivia Brown of St. Paul, Spearfish, received first place in both the South Dakota Lutherans for Life essay contest and the national contest.

Olivia's essay competed in a field of 15 states and was declared the winning essay in the 9th-12th grade category.

Olivia will receive a check for \$700 and a certificate. A video of Olivia reading her essay will be shown at the Lutherans For Life Fundraising Gala in September in Des Moines, Iowa. Winners of the South Dakota Lutherans for Life essay



winners were announced in April. They are:

6th to 8th grade category

First Place - Joy Drevlow, St. Paul's, Aberdeen

Second Place - Kendall Johnsen, Faith, Sioux Falls

9th to 12th grade category

First Place - Olivia Brown, St. Paul, Spearfish

Second Place - Lydia Brown, St. Paul, Spearfish

There is very strong competition for this contest and Olivia has been entering and winning the South Dakota contest since middle school.

South Dakota winners received \$500 for first place and \$250 for second place.

CALL INFORMATION

PENDING CALLS

The following are prayerfully considering calls:

Rev. Jacob Smith, St. Paul, Aberdeen, to South Shore Trinity, White Bear Lake, Minn., May 10.

Rev. Jordon Andreasen, Office of International Missions, serving in Romania, to St. Peter, Wentworth, May 4.

Rev. Seth Kaiser, Trinity, Bay City, Mich., to Mt. Olive, Watertown, April 26.

DECLINED

Rev. Jens Jenson, Redeemer, Armour, to Faith/Stanton, NE; St. John's/Pilger, NE; and First Trinity/Altona, NE, May 13.

Rev. Jordon Andreasen, Office of International Missions, serving in Romania, to Mt. Calvary, Huron, May 7.

Rev. Michael Miller, Bethlehem, Lebanon, OR, to Mt. Calvary, Brookings, April 27.

Rev. Steve Andrews, Jr., St. Matthews, Lee's Summit, MO, to Peace, Rapid City, April 25.

VACANCIES

- South Dakota District Office, Assistant to the President
- Trinity, Blunt/Immanuel, Harrold, Holy Cross, Onida
- Mt. Calvary, Brookings (associate pastor)
- St. Peter, Wentworth
- Divine Shepherd, Black Hawk (senior pastor)
- St. Paul, Plankinton/Trinity, White Lake
- Mt. Calvary, Huron
- Peace, Rapid City
- Emanuel, Sisseton/Zion, Waubay
- Emmaus, Tripp/Zion, Delmont
- Mt. Olive, Watertown
- Trinity, Corona/Our Savior, Wilmont
- St. John, Revillo/Bethlehem, Milbank
- First, Wall/Emmanuel, Creighton
- Concordia, Cresbard/Immanuel, Wecota
- Faith, Pierre

INTERESTED IN A GREAT MISSION PROJECT? LOVE SHARING YOUR FAITH WITH OTHERS?

Consider volunteering at Blessed Emmanuel during the 2026 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally!

The many volunteers who have helped during previous years can attest to the wonderful fellowship we experience with our fellow LCMS members as well as the many visitors who attend breakfasts and suppers. We serve over 2000 meals during the week of rally. That's over 2000 opportunities to witness!

And we are greatly rewarded when we receive letters, weeks and months after the rally has ended, telling us that after seeing the joyful volunteerism we have during rally, they have been motivated to volunteer more at their home church.

Slots are available for BREAKFAST 6:00 am – 12:00 pm

Daily from Saturday, August 8th through Saturday August 15th

- 6 am – 12 pm — breakfast prep and cooking (4 people)
- 7:00 am – 12 pm — serving (15 people)
- 12 pm until done — clean-up (2 people)

[HTTPS://www.signupgenius.com/go/2026RallyBreakfast](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/2026RallyBreakfast)

Slots are available for DINNER 4:00 – 8:00 pm

Daily from Monday, August 10th – Friday, August 14th

- 4:00 – 8:00 pm—set-up/serve/clean-up (4 people)

[HTTPS://www.signupgenius.com/go/2026RallySupper](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/2026RallySupper)

Please call Blessed Emmanuel at 605-423-5870 if you would like more information.

Zion Rapid City's Ben Frerking Awarded LCEF Scholarship



The winner of the LCEF South Dakota District Scholarship is Mr. Ben Frerking. Ben will be attending Concordia University, Nebraska, and is currently pursuing a degree in Secondary Education, with a Lutheran Teacher Diploma (LTD) and a minor/focus in history. He anticipates graduating in May 2029. Thus far in his academic journey, he has maintained a solid GPA of 3.30 while demonstrating consistent dedication to his studies.

Lutheran Family Service's Grow & Go Campaign An Outreach to Pastors' Wives

For 125 springs, laypeople like you of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have answered the Lord's call to care for His beloved children in partnership with Lutheran Family Service. This spring, as we Grow & Go, LFS is responding to the needs of more LCMS pastors and churches by strengthening our ministry to pastors' wives — the often unseen, unrecognized women who carry heavy burdens in "glass house" life.

We'll send a VISA gift card to present to your pastor's wife, along with your own appreciation, when at least 10 households from your church make a gift of \$10 or more before June 30 as part of our Spring Appeal.

Learn more at

<https://lutheranfamilyservice.networkforgood.com/>



Share your news with us!

NOTE: With the new part-time Communications Director position comes a new email address to share your news. Please email articles/photos to Kate Meadows at communications@sddlcms.org.

DISTRICT NEWS

GET READY FOR LSM 2026!



Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) returns to St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., for its 2026 season, June 21–July

19. The series features more than 40 free concerts, recitals, worship services and special events open to the public.

Highlights include the inaugural LSM Choral Gathering, guest performance by Cantus, Bach's St. Matthew Passion, the Bach Cantata Eucharist and Festival Week concerts featuring LSM's Festival Band, Choir, and Orchestra. Most events will also be available online via Live from LSM.

View the season brochure, explore events, and reserve free tickets at LSMacademy.org/2026season.

LSM returns to St. Olaf College this year for the first time since 1994. The move marks a significant new chapter for LSM, returning the program to the site of its inaugural season in 1982.

Mission and Ministry Council Announces Upcoming Events

By Adam Schulz

The Mission and Ministry Council is planning several events geared toward various groups.

A Men's Retreat in Pierre is scheduled for July 31–Aug 2. Gospel Oriented Approach to Leadership (G.O.A.L.) will be hosted by Faith Lutheran and take place at The Ranch Ministries in rural Pierre. More information, including a registration page, is forthcoming.

The Mission and Ministry Council is also planning a family ministry retreat, tentatively scheduled for April 16–18, 2027.

Looking farther ahead, the council is working on coordinating dates for Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller to return to the district and present as part of the district's annual PASS It On Conference in the fall of 2027. Stay tuned!

MAIN STREET LIVING PROGRAMMING – JUNE



"Main Street Living" is a liturgical worship service broadcasting a different local pastor each Sunday morning. It airs along with the classic Lutheran Hour program, "This is the Life." Both can be viewed on KDLT (NBC) & KEVN (FOX).

NBC airs "This is the Life" programs at 10 a.m. and "Main Street Living" programs at 10:30 a.m. Central Time. KEVN (FOX) airs "This is the Life" programs at 8 a.m. and "Main Street Living" programs at 8:30 a.m. Central Time. The "Main Street Living" programs are interpreted and closed captioned for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Visit www.mainstreetliving.com/ to view current and past episodes.

June 7, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "No Place to Hide"
A pastor, who has to face the death of his wife, cannot find comfort.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Thomas Christopher, pastor at Trinity & St. Martin's, Alexandria, presents a message titled "In This Is Love." The sermon is based on 1 John 4:10-21.

June 14, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Dead End"
Because of frustration with his life, a man turns to drinking and another woman.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Matthew Wurm, pastor at Mt. Calvary, Brookings, presents a message titled, "Pray to the Lord of the Harvest." The sermon is based on Matthew 9: 37-38.

June 21, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "The Main Event"
A boxer who is hit by a car becomes embittered until he meets a cheerful 8-year old girl.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Samuel Thole, pastor at Peace, Brookings, presents a message titled, "The Blessing of Encouragement." The sermon is based on Matthew 10:5a, 21–33.

June 28, 2026

8 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "The Prisoners"
An elderly woman is attacked and terrorized by a teenage gang.

8:30 a.m. (KEVN/FOX) and 10:30 a.m. (KDLT/NBC) – "Main Street Living"

Rev. Jacob Bobby, pastor at St. John's, Yankton, presents a message titled, "A Sword of Division." The sermon is based on Matthew 10:34-36.