

DISTRICT NEWS

December 2024



(What not to miss this Christmas)



Rev. Dr.
Scott Sailer
District President

For many people, the one thing you don't want to miss at Christmas is family. Getting the extended family together, remembering times and loved ones past, sharing a meal around the table, opening presents near the tree — that's what Christmas is all about.

Ask a child and those presents are likely the things they don't want to miss at Christmas. What would Christmas be without presents? Sure, the tree is nice and all, but come on, show me the presents!

For many others, even those who aren't Christians, it's the "feeling" or spirit of Christmas that really matters. Lots of folks who have never set foot in a church still set up a tree, exchange gifts and maybe even sing a few carols. For them, it all helps to create a good feeling, some sense of happiness during the season.

But there's more, much more. (There needs to be much more!) Today, we humbly offer another "don't-miss-this" proposition for this particular Christmas — something that most people would seem to be missing in a world where war and political battles

light up our TV screens, where illness and death are at the forefront in the minds of many of us. Read Luke and one important phrase seems to jump out. Whether you're reading Luke for the first time or you've read it a thousand times, linger on these two words: "Fear not."

Luke uses this phrase three times in the first two chapters of his Gospel. Each time, those words "fear not," are spoken by an angel. Twice the angel is identified as Gabriel. The phrase "fear not" functions as a kind of thesis statement for the story that will follow: the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It's because of the newborn King that we need no longer be afraid.

We don't want to miss out on family or presents or the "feeling." But Christmas is an opportunity not to miss out on being unafraid.

This is possible for you. Yes, you! And why is that? Because God loves us with an everlasting love. He loves us enough to come as one of us, die for us, and live with us and in us. It's not favor that we earn. Instead, it is the ultimate gift — better than all the presents under the tree. We call that gift "grace," and God offers it to us lavishly. He gives us what we don't deserve through Jesus Christ: forgiveness of all our sins, not punishment for them; heaven, not hell — because Jesus took our sins upon Himself and died for them, and even suffered eternal punishment for them. Through faith in Jesus, God the Father

See **MESSAGE**, page 8



Lindy Hinckley, who serves as a Lutheran Family Service counselor, has encouraging words for the wives of South Dakota District pastors who attended the retreat. Lindy's husband serves as a pastor in the district.

Pastors' wives have first retreat



Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **HEBREWS 12:1-3**

In late September, LCMS pastors' wives from across South Dakota met in Pierre for a weekend retreat of refreshment and renewal. Lutheran Family Service (LFS) provided homemade meals, meaningful presentations and restful activities, all centered around "RACE" (Rest/Renew/Restore/Rejuvenate, Adversity, Community and Endure).

The event kicked off with a fellowship dinner, followed by a Bible study led by Angela Kollbaum, LFS counselor and wife of Rev. Todd Kollbaum, pastor of Trinity, Madison, Neb. The Bible study sparked insightful conversation and connection centered around resting/renewing/restoring/rejuvenating

through God's Word. It set the focus of the weekend on God and what He can do to help us run our "race."

The next day, following conversations over breakfast, Lindy Hinckley, LFS

counselor and wife of Rev. Robert Hinckley, pastor of Grace, Deadwood, and Blessed Emmanuel, Sturgis, encouraged the ladies to consider what adversity they were facing. She then sent them out on a prayer walk in various parks around Pierre. The ladies focused on who they are in Christ and what that means for them as they face adversity.

Next came lunch and a craft to enjoy fellowship with each other. Guest speaker Emily Woodall focused on community, sharing about her experience growing up as a pastor's kid and how her community supported her. She focused on the power of the community of Christ in our lives.

Finally, Lindy wrapped up the weekend with a presentation that led into a discussion about endurance. The ladies talked about their prayer walks and how they face adversity with endurance rooted in their faith.

The retreat weekend was blessed with beautiful weather, empowering conversations and lasting connections between those who understand what it means to be a pastor's wife — and run the "race" that God sets before them.



From left, Shelee Warner, Cathy Handschke, Steph Schulte and Jolene Erickson work on a craft.



Welcome, Pastor Schopp!

Rev. Chad Schopp was installed as senior pastor of Our Savior, Aberdeen, and St. John, Columbia, on Oct. 13. Pastor Schopp has previously served as an admissions counselor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, from which he is also a 2013 graduate. He and his wife, Tami, have three sons and two granddaughters. Chad and Tami are pictured with their son, Brayden.



Mortgage sent to 'ash heap' of history

Our Redeemer, Rapid City, conducted a "mortgage-burning" ceremony on Aug. 18, having fully paid its mortgage 10 years ahead of schedule. Rev. Luke Edwards conducted the special service. While several charter members were absent, the congregation was well represented. Pictured are, from left, Wanda Wiechmann, Jim Kurtz, Ted Ruffedt, Joan Bares and Pastor Edwards.

Academy opens in Black Hawk

Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church and School, Black Hawk, was blessed to open the doors of its kindergarten through fourth-grade Classical Academy on Sept. 3. The congregation had been praying and seeking God's will earnestly for nearly two years beforehand. God answered prayers by sending a teacher, Erin Norman, who holds degrees in special education, and agricultural education and communications from the University of Wyoming. She and her husband, Scott, are members of Divine Shepherd. Their two boys, Marshall and Garrett, are also academy students.



Erin Norman

in the trivium, comprising grammar, logic and rhetoric. Students are taught to gather information, critically reason, and express information. Classical Lutheran education acknowledges God as the source of all knowledge and learning and expresses this back to the Triune God.

The Academy opened as a microschool with five students. Rev. Dennis Mercer, Divine Shepherd associate pastor, serves as headmaster. He completed the Specific Ministry Pastor program through Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Pastor Mercer and Norman were installed in their respective positions on Sept. 8 at Divine Shepherd.

Thanks be to God for His continued blessings to His church!



Rev. Dennis Mercer (left) and Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher, pastors at Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church and School, Black Hawk, offer a blessing for the congregation's new Classical Academy.

Moments with Mary Jo

Gifts will be easier for you — and the recipients

Full is in the air as I write this article, but it's also time to think ahead to summer. The LWML Nebraska North and Nebraska South districts are thrilled to welcome each of you to the **41st LWML Biennial Convention**, to be held June 26–29 in Omaha! The theme, “Growing in God’s Grace,” is based on 2 Peter 3:18:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

The banner procession always sets the tone for the LWML convention as it beautifully expresses the theme while highlighting the God-given talents of our districts. The LWML South Dakota District is looking for women who would be interested in making banners. Banner ideas are due to me by Jan. 1. Details are available at sdlwml.org/lwml-convention-2025, or reach out to me.

Gifts from the Heart Gifts from the Heart is getting a makeover for Omaha! What does this mean? Change. Yes, change — positive and necessary change. The days of packing and hauling boxes across the country are over.

This year, we will use Amazon to shop for physical items for our three recipients. Each recipient has selected their top nine item needs and put them



Mary Jo Stier
LWML District
President

on an Amazon wish list. The 10th item for each recipient is Visa gift cards (any dollar amount). This will allow us to work smarter and not harder during the convention.

Gifts from the Heart shopping opens on Feb. 1 and remains open through the convention.

Please use Amazon wish lists to shop online and ship directly to our recipients before the convention. The link will soon be provided. Shop individually or make it a group event.

Physical items will still be accepted at the convention, and we will have volunteers ready to help. But our hope is that we can cut the number of items to be handled in Omaha.

Why the change? The physical burden for the Gospel Outreach Committee, volunteers, and the recipients themselves has become a burden. Recipients are thankful and blessed by the truckloads of items. But coordinating transportation to their facilities and unpacking and storing so many items received at one time can be difficult. This new system will provide our recipients with their top needs over the course of several months during 2025 and not all in one weekend.

I hope you will join us in Omaha. It's going to be an incredible time of worship, and learning more about our Lord as we unite in fellowship with one another.

Funding help available

Do you know of a need in your congregation or in a group? Do you have a preschool, early-education center, or school? Is there a mission that is dear to you? The LWML South Dakota District wants to help.

Throughout the years, the LWML South Dakota District (LWML SD) has received monetary gifts, bequests and honorariums. These have always been grouped together as a Special Gifts Fund. Through an application process, some of these funds could help a need of which you are aware.

Here are the criteria to request these funds:

- ▶ Requests from the Special Gifts Fund may be proposed by LWML members, groups and zones; and the district executive committee and Board of Directors.
- ▶ Requests will be considered by the LWML SD Finance Committee and taken to the district Board of Directors for approval.
- ▶ Use of the funds shall be for mission emphasis, extending the ministry of the Word; and be current and ready for implementation.
- ▶ Recipient(s) of an approved request shall provide a written report to the LWML SD Finance Committee chairman following the spending of the funds, verifying the use of the funding. This could include photos.
- ▶ Written reports shall be submitted every six months after receipt of funds, until the funds are fully used. Once all the funds are spent, please submit a written report within two months.
- ▶ Funds shall be used within a year's time of receipt. If an extension is needed, contact the LWML SD District Finance Committee chairman.

The LWML SD District Special Gift Fund application may be found at sdlwml.org. Go to “Resources” and select “Special Gifts/Subscriptions” from the drop-down menu.

Vonda Sturzenbecher • Treasurer, LWML SD

BROOKINGS ZONE UPDATE

The Brookings Zone was well represented at the LWML South Dakota District Convention — “Inexpressible Joy, Matchless Savior” — in Aberdeen in June, proclaiming that “joy” to our LWML sisters and congregations.

The Brookings Zone LWML also had the opportunity to witness and help at the Puppet Place during the South Dakota State Fair. Ten of our Brookings Zone congregation members helped by inviting and greeting fair goers to the puppet show. Hand puppets, devotions and whistles were given to those who attended the show.

Mount Calvary, Brookings, hosted our Fall Rally on Oct. 5. Our theme was based on Matt. 25:35: “For I was hungry

Continued on next page

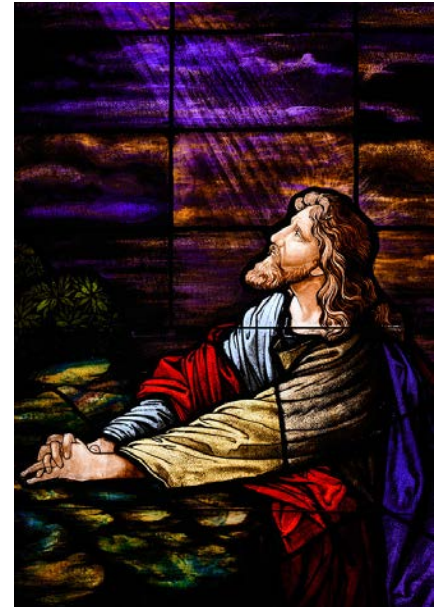
COUNSELOR'S CORNER

First and foremost — JESUS IS SAVIOR



“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

MATTHEW 1:20-21



Listen to Christ's mission statement again: “For he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew wanted to get Jesus' job description clear from the very beginning: Jesus was coming as a Savior.



Rev. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor

That's it.

It's funny, and somewhat depressing, that in the intervening years, we've come up with all sorts of other things that Jesus is — healer, lover, example,

unifier, friend. Jesus is all of those things. But above all else, Jesus is Savior. Period. That Jesus is anything else is a by-product of His saving work.

It's interesting that the angel inserted Jesus' ultimate job into what is basically His birth announcement. Traditionally, we don't start hearing about Jesus as Savior until the end of His life. At His birth, we're much more interested in magi, gifts and there being no room in the inn.

However, the very first thing God, through His angelic messenger, told Joseph about His son is that He's coming to save people from their sins. The angel didn't say Jesus was coming to lead them or teach them or even to love or comfort them, but to save them.

That is what John was talking about in Revelation, when he says that Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. That was always the plan!

Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension isn't a story about God making the best out of a bad situation. It is about a plan working to perfection and an ultimate triumph, and it's a plan instituted at His birth announcement. We take comfort in the words of the angel to Joseph: Into this sinful world a Savior has come, and His name is Jesus.

UPDATE

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

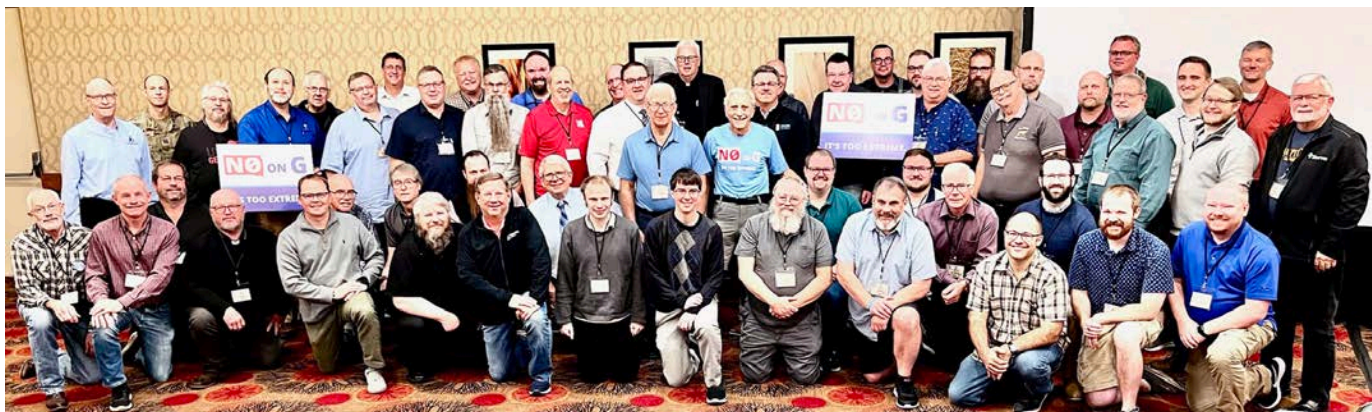
and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Rev. Tim Rynearson led our Bible study. Linnea Schwandt and Joyce Kasuske shared about the mission and outreach of Orphan Grain Train (OGT). An ingathering of teachers kits, waterproof pants for infant kits and other items were donated to OGT. Mary Jo Stier, LWML district president, gave a district news update. A short business meeting and election of officers closed the meeting.

The district Christian Life workshops gave us opportunities for growing in our faith. Rev. Dr. Jacob Bobby presented on “Understanding Mass Media from a Christian Perspective.”

Kathy McKinney • Brookings Zone President



The 2024–2026 LWML South Dakota District Executive Committee consists of, from left (seated) Kristy Ring, VP of Christian Life; Dianne Hemminger, VP of Special Focus Ministries; Mary Jo Stier, president; Vonda Sturzenbecher, treasurer; (standing) Rev. Brian Mosemann, senior pastoral counselor; Rev. Christopher McCarthy, junior pastoral counselor; Cathy VandeBraak, VP of Gospel Outreach; Paula Warren, financial secretary; Heather Miller, VP of Communication; and Luann Zuercher, secretary.



UNITED FOR LIFE

Life is a gift given by our Almighty and All-gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Psalm 139 gives all human beings, born and unborn, dignity and God-given worth:

*For You formed my inward parts;
You knitted me together in my
mother's womb (v. 13).*

Jesus Christ Himself, our gracious Redeemer, entered the world, sheltered in the womb of His mother, Mary.

So begins the statement, “No on G,” that in October was affirmed by more than 50 pastors who attended the South Dakota District Pastors’ Conference (pictured above).

As heated as the Amendment G debate had been in our state, such statements played a crucial role in encouraging the voting public to think critically about

their voting choices — and encouraged pro-life citizens to show up to the polls.

A separate, interdenominational statement urging a “No” vote on Amendment G was signed by 200 South Dakota pastors, including more than 40 pastors in the LCMS South Dakota District. The statement was a strong response to a statement published earlier by proponents of Amendment G, which was signed by 35 clergy members across five Christian denominations, including the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The statement put out by the South Dakota District reads, “Make no mistake: This is an abortion

amendment, hiding in highly deceptive ‘women’s health’ language.”

The interdenominational statement standing against Amendment G reads, in part: “Instead of our constitution safeguarding the weakest and most vulnerable in our society, it would entirely remove all the basic rights of the most defenseless South Dakotans. This is not the kind of ‘freedom’ we want in South Dakota. ... As leaders of many different faith communities, we stand united behind the truth that God is the Author of Life, and every life He creates deserves a place at our table. God does not make ‘mistakes.’”

PRAISE GOD! Voters in South Dakota eventually rejected the amendment. “I give thanks to the Lord of Life for guarding the lives of the smallest and most vulnerable among us by way of the defeat of Amendment G,” said District President Rev. Dr. Scott Sailer in reaction to the outcome.



March in Washington, D.C.

You are invited to join Rev. Ryan Drevlow, district life coordinator and pastor of St. Paul’s, Aberdeen, and St. Paul’s, Leola; Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, LCMS president; and other Lutherans at the National March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 24. Your presence will help provide a public witness to the sanctity of life and God’s design for marriage and family.

First, join your brothers and sisters in Christ for Divine Service at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Va., followed by brunch in the church fellowship hall before heading to the march.

To LEARN MORE and REGISTER, scan the QR code or visit thelc.ms/march-for-life-2025.



LCMS South Dakota District Congregational Year-to-Date Report of Mission Receipts for the nine months ending Oct. 14, 2024, compared to the nine months ending Oct. 14, 2023

City, Congregation	Comm. Members	2024 Intention	9 months 2024	9 months 2023	Avg/Per 2024	Comm. 2023
Circuit 1 – Aberdeen						
Aberdeen, Our Savior	277	10,000	10,050	8,700	36.28	31.41
Aberdeen, St. John	80	10,500	8,616	10,952	107.70	136.90
Aberdeen, St. Paul	450	20,000	18,877	42,976	41.95	95.50
Andover, Zion	106	–	3,300	3,350	31.13	31.60
Britton, St. John	146	3,000	–	7,000	–	47.95
Columbia, St. John	95	7,500	5,812	7,750	61.18	81.58
Cresbard, Concordia	58	–	5,640	3,425	97.24	59.05
Doland, Redeemer	29	–	1,500	1,500	51.72	51.72
Ferney, St. Paul	92	5,000	2,500	4,000	27.17	43.48
Groton, St. John	305	7,000	5,607	7,000	18.38	22.95
Leola, St. Paul	53	500	–	–	–	–
Mansfield, Trinity	270	25,000	17,426	23,492	64.54	87.01
Redfield, Messiah	140	–	1,000	1,000	7.14	7.14
Stratford, St. Paul	38	–	4,000	4,000	105.26	105.26
Wecota, Immanuel	87	9,000	7,146	6,453	82.14	74.17
Circuit 1 totals	2,226	\$97,500	\$91,474	\$131,598	41.09	59.12
Circuit 2 – Watertown						
Brookings, Mount Calvary	420	45,000	39,487	37,218	94.02	88.61
Brookings, Peace	295	–	4,500	4,500	15.25	15.25
Corona, Trinity	132	–	1,221	970	9.25	7.35
Flandreau, Redeemer	28	3,800	1,900	2,850	67.86	101.79
Milbank, Bethlehem	64	300	–	–	–	–
Milbank, Emanuel	576	24,000	12,000	16,000	20.83	27.78
Reville, St. John	119	2,000	1,420	2,110	11.93	17.73
Sisseton, Emanuel	101	4,400	2,200	1,210	21.78	11.98
Watertown, Mount Olive	387	25,000	20,833	23,025	53.83	59.50
Waubay, Zion	126	1,000	3,673	3,567	29.15	28.31
White, Zion	61	5,000	4,870	1,250	79.84	20.49
Willmot, Our Savior	161	2,500	1,044	2,235	6.48	13.88
Circuit 2 totals	2,470	\$113,000	\$93,148	\$94,935	37.71	38.44
Circuit 3 – Pierre						
Blunt, Trinity	40	2,000	1,000	1,500	25.00	37.50
Chamberlain, Zion ¹	406	–	10,829	15,016	26.67	36.99
Draper, St. Paul	24	250	250	250	10.42	10.42
Gettysburg, Emmanuel	201	6,500	–	–	–	–
Gregory, St. John	249	5,000	–	–	–	–
Hamill, Zion	14	–	–	–	–	–
Harrold, Immanuel	20	–	–	–	–	–
Lebanon, Christ	23	300	–	–	–	–
Midland, St. Peter	46	–	2,650	2,830	57.61	61.52
Murdo, Messiah	71	3,000	–	1,250	–	17.61
Norris, St. John ²	70	2,500	2,374	696	33.91	9.94
Onida, Holy Cross	108	1,600	1,600	1,600	14.81	14.81
Philip, Our Redeemer	50	–	–	–	–	–
Pierre, Faith	1,460	45,000	33,950	33,750	23.25	23.12
Presho, Zion	88	1,500	1,500	1,500	17.05	17.05
Reliance, Trinity	15	–	–	–	–	–
Rosebud, Rosebud Mission	–	–	1,686	1,404	–	–
Winner, Christ	25	2,000	2,000	1,000	80.00	40.00
Circuit 3 totals	2,910	\$69,650	\$57,839	\$60,796	19.88	20.89
Circuit 4 – Black Hills						
Belle Fourche, Trinity	–	500	–	–	–	–
Black Hawk, Divine Shepherd	430	16,320	14,343	11,761	33.36	27.35
Creighton, Emmanuel	54	–	–	–	–	–
Custer, Our Redeemer	198	4,000	3,361	1,698	16.97	8.58
Deadwood, Grace	79	3,000	3,000	2,500	37.97	31.65
Hill City, Our Savior	29	1,500	1,500	1,500	51.72	51.72
Hot Springs, Bethesda	143	7,000	7,866	5,250	55.01	36.71
Rapid City, Bethlehem	451	31,387	20,925	22,771	46.40	50.49
Rapid City, Our Redeemer	124	3,500	4,299	2,840	34.67	22.90
Rapid City, Peace	495	–	17,141	18,421	34.63	37.21
Rapid City, Zion	651	32,500	24,750	24,625	38.02	37.83
Spearfish, St. Paul	272	30,000	22,500	31,236	82.72	114.84
Sturgis, Blessed Emmanuel	22	600	2,235	–	101.59	–
Wall, First	229	2,100	2,100	2,100	9.17	9.17
Circuit 4 totals	3,177	\$132,407	\$124,020	\$124,702	39.04	39.25

City, Congregation	Comm. Members	2024 Intention	9 months 2024	9 months 2023	Avg/Per 2024	Comm. 2023
Circuit 5 – Mitchell						
Armour, Redeemer	199	8,000	6,000	6,000	30.15	30.15
Delmont, Zion	89	17,000	12,750	12,000	143.26	134.83
Dimock, Immanuel	127	15,000	11,688	14,753	92.03	116.17
Emery, St. Peter	56	3,000	4,025	3,513	71.88	62.73
Huron, Mount Calvary	781	70,000	53,730	36,832	68.80	47.16
Mitchell, Zion	507	30,850	23,204	23,139	45.77	45.64
Parkston, Faith	195	10,000	2,350	10,000	12.05	51.28
Plankinton, St. Paul	138	2,000	2,000	2,000	14.49	14.49
Tripp, Emmaus	42	–	1,875	1,875	44.64	44.64
White Lake, Trinity	115	8,000	6,800	7,600	59.13	66.09
Wessington Springs, Zion	75	–	–	–	–	–
Wolsey, St. John	233	3,400	8,225	9,009	35.30	38.67
Woonsocket, Mount Olive	11	–	–	–	–	–
Circuit 5 Totals	2,568	\$167,250	\$132,647	\$126,721	51.65	49.35
Circuit 6 – Freeman						
Alexandria, St. Martin	92	1,200	1,700	275	18.48	2.99
Canistota, Zion	226	–	1,069	2,669	4.73	11.81
Centerville, First English	63	2,000	3,165	1,360	50.24	21.59
Freeman, St. Paul	275	9,000	5,877	7,372	21.37	26.81
Hartford, Trinity	110	500	–	–	–	–
Howard, St. John	122	4,000	–	–	–	–
Hurley, Zion	24	2,750	–	–	–	–
Madison, Our Savior	188	1,000	3,000	2,700	15.96	14.36
Marion, Bethesda	46	2,500	2,500	–	54.35	–
Menno, Immanuel	60	3,000	4,975	5,335	82.92	88.92
Montrose, St. John	110	–	–	–	–	–
Parker, First English	28	2,000	1,000	–	35.71	–
Scotland, St. Paul	34	600	500	500	14.71	14.71
Spencer, Trinity	86	2,000	2,000	2,000	23.26	23.26
Tea, Risen Savior ³	131	11,970	16,760	7,838	127.94	59.83
Wentworth, St. Peter	185	7,800	5,021	5,812	27.14	31.42
Circuit 6 Totals	1,780	\$50,320	\$47,567	\$35,861	26.72	20.15
Circuit 7 – Sioux Falls						
Brandon, Blessed Redeemer	269	15,000	10,000	10,000	37.17	37.17
Sioux Falls, Christ	122	2,000	3,536	1,000	28.98	8.20
Sioux Falls, Faith	592	43,500	37,914	36,250	64.04	61.23
Sioux Falls, Lord of Life	164	–	9,378	9,378	57.18	57.18
Sioux Falls, Memorial	770	62,150	37,396	41,564	48.57	53.98
Sioux Falls, Our Redeemer	314	25,200	25,200	12,600	80.25	40.13
Sioux Falls, Resurrection	245	10,000	7,500	7,500	30.61	30.61
Sioux Falls, Trinity of The Deaf	35	–	–	–	–	–
Sioux Falls, Zion	672	50,000	50,000	42,000	74.40	62.50
Circuit 7 Totals	3,183	\$207,850	\$180,924	\$160,292	56.84	50.36
Circuit 8 – Yankton						
Alcester, Peace	89	3,000	2,749	2,524	30.89	28.36
Avon, Zion	212	5,000	6,083	3,830	28.69	18.07
Dakota Dunes, Holy Cross ⁴	203	22,498	14,738	14,501	72.60	71.43
Fairfax, Trinity	77	5,000	5,000	5,000	64.94	64.94
Springfield, Our Savior	26	100	–	–	–	–
Tyndall, St. John	132	2,600	–	–	–	–
Utica, Martinus	68	2,000	1,100	1,500	16.18	22.06
Vermillion, Concordia	73	–	5,400	9,000	73.97	123.29
Wagner, St. John	182	9,000	6,750	6,750	37.09	37.09
Yankton, St. John ⁵	1,039	62,500	50,558	37,317	48.66	35.92
Circuit 8 Totals	2,101	\$111,698	\$92,378	\$80,422	43.97	38.28
GRAND TOTALS	20,415	\$949,675	\$819,997	\$815,327	40.17	39.94

¹ \$2,299 of Zion, Chamberlain, is for 2023 missions

² \$1,804 of St. John, Norris, is for 2023 missions

³ \$3,946 of Risen Savior, Tea, is for 2023 missions

⁴ \$500 of Holy Cross, Dakota Dunes, is for 2023 missions

⁵ \$4,700 of St. John, Yankton, is for 2023 missions

Comm. Members: Communicant membership as of May 2024 per LCMS congregational statistics report

Coming to Mount Calvary, Brookings: **Higher Things LGBTQIA(NSWERS)**

What do you do when people you know announce they identify as part of the LGBT community? What do you do when you start questioning who God has created you to be?

We live in a world of darkness and confusion that needs the light of Christ. But how do we faithfully bring the light of Christ? This retreat will dig into how we ended up here culturally, what Scripture has to say about these topics, and how to live in Christ despite the confusion and suffering that surrounds us.

A Higher Things retreat on talking about gender and sexuality will be held Jan. 19-20 (beginning at 6 p.m. on Sunday and ending at 3 p.m. on Monday) at Mount Calvary, Brookings, and is open to high school and college students. The cost is \$40 per person.

For more information, contact Rev. Matthew Wurm, Mount Calvary senior pastor, at pastorwurm@gmail.com. Learn more and register at higherthings.org/events/retreats by Jan. 10.

Youth musicians invited to LSM

Enrollment for Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) 2025 is open now! LSM is a faith-based residential music academy for high school students who come together to immerse themselves in musical excellence and build a supportive and fun community.

Musical experiences include large ensembles (band, choir, orchestra), chamber music, private lessons, and electives like handbells, jazz, musical theatre, composition, conducting, church music and more. The enrollment deadline is March 1. Learn more at lsmacademy.org.



CALL INFORMATION

Rev. Robert Moeller, St. John, Trosky, Minn.; Our Savior, Pipestone, Minn.; and Trinity, Jasper, Minn., has accepted a call to St. John, Britton, and St. Paul, Ferney, Oct. 13.

Rev. Scott Spiehs, St. John, Wolsey; Mount Olive, Woonsocket; and Zion, Wessington Springs, has declined a call to St. Matthew, Clarissa, Minn.; and Immanuel, Eagle Bend, Minn., Oct. 5.

VACANCIES

Sole pastor

- Zion Canistota/ St. John, Montrose
- Concordia Cresbard/Immanuel, Wecota
- St. Paul, Freeman
- St. Paul, Plankinton/Trinity, White Lake
- Risen Savior, Tea
- St. John, Wagner/Trinity, Fairfax
- Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls
- Zion, Chamberlain • St. Peter, Wentworth

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

counts you righteous. Yes, you have found favor with God! Fear not!

The most famous angel announcement of “fear not” takes place in the fields beyond Bethlehem. Shepherds, who are the poorest of the poor, are watching over their flocks when the angel appears and, as the King James Bible says, they were “sore afraid.”

“Fear not,” says the angel, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (LUKE 2:10). Why were the shepherds to “fear not”? Because the world’s Savior had been born!

Then, notice the angel song: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace.” Peace. Not despair, not fear. It is good news for all the people, not just for some. For you! The newborn King would become the King on the cross. And in earning forgiveness for us there, He brings us peace with God. We are reconciled to God through the death of His Son (ROMANS 5:10).

Reconciliation with God brings peace. And such peace brings us joy, an inner peace that sometimes shows up on our faces and is extended to others when we forgive them, serve them and help them to be unafraid.

Have a very Blessed and Merry Christmas!

Your servant in Christ • Pastor Sailer

“Not ashamed of the Gospel!”

Rom. 1:16; 16:25–27

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Send submissions to Kate Meadows:

kate@katemeadows.com, or

420 E. Liberty Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

The deadline for the February 2025 issue is Dec. 15. Please ensure photos are high resolution.