

DISTRICT NEWS

February 2025



Rev. Dr.
Scott Sailer
District President

Be informed and edified

Every three years we come together for the convention of our LCMS South Dakota District. The next convention is this month, Feb. 16-18. The theme is “God’s Gospel: Salvation Power,” based on Romans 1:16-17.

Your congregation or parish will be represented by your pastor and one layperson, but you also may attend the convention as a visitor or observer. There is no fee for attending.

The portions of the convention that might be of special interest to you are:

- ▶ **The Opening Worship Service**, held at Christ Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls (4801 E. 6th Street) at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 16.
- ▶ **The Synod President’s Report**, given by Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, at 11 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 17.
- ▶ **The Bible study on Romans**, led by Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Oschwald at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 18. Dr. Oschwald serves as New Testament professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.
- ▶ **The Closing Service**, to be held at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 18. This service includes the installation of new district officers and a remembrance of the faithful departed, those church workers who served in South Dakota and have been called to glory since the last convention.

All sessions of the convention, except for the Opening Service, will

be in Exhibit Hall #2 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center, 1201 N. West Ave.

Please visit the district’s website for more information: sddlcms.org.

In my President’s Report, found in the convention *Workbook*, I write about the privilege we have of worshiping and working together as some 26,277 children of God in 105 congregations across the South Dakota District:

We get to do His Kingdom work in this marvelous part of God’s Kingdom called South Dakota. Most of the time, this work is done in our congregations and schools. But in February, we get to do the work of the Lord together in convention.

At the convention, we’ll get to worship, study, pray and make decisions together, converse over coffee together, and hear reports on what God is doing among us by His Word and Spirit and through you.

We’ll carry out those convention activities because of the Gospel, and only because of the Gospel — the Good News of Jesus’ saving work for dead-in-sin nobodies. Think of it! Christ made you and me alive, and He keeps us alive when He words His way into our lives. He uses words of forgiveness and salvation taught to you, preached to you, applied with water upon you and attached to bread and wine for you. Oh, yes, our theme is so true: “God’s Gospel:

See **MESSAGE**, page 8



Rev. Robert E. Moeller Jr. was installed as pastor of **St. John, Britton, and St. Paul, Ferney**, on Nov. 24 at St. John. A South Dakota native, Rev. Moeller had been serving as pastor of the Jasper-Trosky-Pipestone (Our Saviour's) parish in southwest Minnesota. He and his wife, Aimee (pictured at right), have four children and 13 grandchildren.

We welcome Bob and Aimee back to the South Dakota District. Bob had previously served at Trinity, Hartford, and as vacancy pastor at Risen Savior, Tea.

Pictured above are, from left, Revs. Jacob Smith, Ryan Drevlow, Robert Moeller Jr., Bret Bierman, Dr. Scott Sailer, Kevin Moore and Ray Anderson.



CALL INFORMATION

Rev. Nathan Henschen, St. Paul, Bancroft, Neb., and St. John, Lyons, Neb., declined a call to St. John, Wagner, and Trinity, Fairfax, Dec. 27.

Rev. Kurt Laskowsky, First English, Centerville, and Zion, Hurley, is prayerfully considering a call to Concordia, Forsyth, Mont., Nov. 24.

Rev. Brett Simek, Trinity, Hilbert, Wis., accepted a call as senior pastor to Our Redeemer, Sioux Falls, Dec. 27.

Rev. Thomas Brown, St. Paul, Spearfish, declined calls to Holy Cross, Moline, Ill.; and Messiah, Hays, Kan., Nov. 22.

Rev. Paul Schulz, Trinity, Mallard, and Zion, Ayrshire, Iowa, declined a call as pastor to Zion, Chamberlain, Jan. 11.

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
- Zion, Chamberlain
- St. Peter, Wentworth

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 April 2025 issue is Feb. 15. Please ensure photos are high resolution.





More than 200 women gathered Nov. 1–2 at Zion, Sioux Falls, as part of “IF: Sioux Falls.” According to Lisa May, Zion office manager, “IF” comes from the question, “If God is real, then what?”

“If God is real, then our lives should be focused wholly on Him,” Lisa said. “We should be in our Bibles daily and deeply —

discipleship is how the world will change. IF wants to be part of equipping women to live out their purpose, making disciples.”

The weekend was filled with hope, encouragement, laughter, joy and music. Women of all ages joined together in the name of Jesus Christ to learn through live and simulcast lessons, worship, and enjoy food and fellowship.

Faith offers support for widows



A new ministry of Faith, Sioux Falls, invites widows to connect with one another in fellowship and guided conversation.

“Widow Talks: Conversations with Those who Know” began in January. Meetings are held at Faith (601 N. Cliff Ave.) at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Upcoming topics are:

- ▶ Overcoming Your Fears (Feb. 5)
- ▶ What About Anxiety and Worry (Feb. 12)

- ▶ Lamenting Your Loss (Feb. 19)
- ▶ Heavenly Bottles (March 5)

This peer-led support group creates a safe environment where widows can grow and learn to thrive, and begin to live joyful, fulfilling and abundant lives.

For more information, or if you would like to attend, please contact Shelly Hoefs at health@faithluthersiouxfalls.org or 605-332-3401.



St. Paul's, Draper, celebrated 115 years as a congregation in October. It is part of a tri-parish with Messiah, Murdo, and Zion, Presho.

Moments with Mary Jo

PLAN TO ATTEND DISTRICT RETREAT

After all of the Thanksgiving and Christmas planning over the past few months, it's now time to look forward to the spring and the **2025 LWML South Dakota District Retreat**.

This year's retreat will be held at Cedar Shore Resort in Oacoma. The retreat committee has chosen as the theme "Living God's Praise," based on Psalm 119:175A: "Let my soul live and praise you."

We are working on getting registration forms out to all the zone presidents so that they will have the opportunity to share it with all their group presidents. Mark your calendars now for April 25-26.

Another blessing to look forward to is the **2025 LWML Prayer Service**, based on the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5:1-12. The Beatitudes are some of the most beloved words of Jesus. In them, Jesus highlights people in various situations of life, situations that are not always easy to endure — or even envision — as a child of God.

Yet our Lord calls the people in each condition "blessed" and assures each of them of their place in the kingdom of heaven. As you hear the precious Beatitudes from our Lord and pray for people in the various stages of life, may you indeed be blessed and encouraged in your life of faith. May your mind be drawn to the work of Christ — His life, and His death and resurrection — which blesses you each day until He brings you home to the kingdom of heaven forever.



Mary Jo Stier
LWML District President



CHAMBERLAIN ZONE UPDATE

On April 27, the Chamberlain Zone held its Spring Workshop at Zion Lutheran Church, Presho. Rev. Ray Greenseth, Zion pastor, led the Bible study. After lunch, everyone participated in a service event by making mitten puppets for the Puppet Place at the South Dakota State Fair. Chamberlain Zone ladies also worked at the Puppet Place on Aug. 29.

The ladies of the Chamberlain Zone attended the LWML South Dakota District Convention June 7-8 in Aberdeen.

The Fall Rally was held Sept. 14 at Zion Lutheran Church, Chamberlain. Pastor Greenseth led the LWML Prayer Service, themed "Grace, Mercy, Peace," along with a Bible study session. Susan Swanson was re-elected as the zone president, and Betty Jean Mertens was selected as the Chamberlain Zone delegate to the LWML 41st Biennial Convention, which will be held June 26-29 in Omaha, Neb.

Looking ahead, the Chamberlain Zone is busy preparing to host the district Spring Retreat, scheduled for April 25-26 at Cedar Shore Resort in Oacoma. All are encouraged to attend this event.

Susan Swanson • Chamberlain Zone President

Subscription forms are due

It is time to send in your *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* and *HiLites* subscription form for 2025. The form will be delivered to your mailbox. Please complete the form and send it to me along with your check as soon as possible. The deadline is March 15. Let's ensure that your district LWML continues to have two pages of LWML *HiLites* in every issue of our *Lutheran Witness* insert. It is a wonderful resource for all of us!



Thank you in advance for sending the subscriptions in. To God be the Glory!!

Paula Warren • Financial Secretary

Lutheran Women *in Mission*

41ST BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Omaha, Neb. | June 26-29



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.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER



L CMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Love made manifest

How do you know that God loves you?

Sometimes it may seem as if He doesn't, or at least not very much, especially when:

- Your life gets turned upside-down.
- Tragedy strikes.
- Each day you awaken to sorrow or loneliness, maybe during the holidays.



Rev. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor

- Fears outnumber joys and worry is your daily bread.

In the midst of such times, how do you know that God loves you?

God tells us in 1 John 4:9-21:

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

In other words, God loved you by giving His only begotten Son. He didn't have to do that. When Adam and Eve sinned, God could have let them go their rebellious way and die in their sin. And He would have been 100% justified in doing so. They deserved it.

But God didn't do that. Instead of send-

ing them away, He promised to send a Savior, a Satan-head-crusher, One who would undo what they did, though they did not in any way deserve it.

God did not forget His promise. When Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, the child was born, wrapped in swaddling cloths, and laid in a manger. God gave you a gift wrapped in swaddling cloths. That gift was unwrapped for you at the cross when He was stripped of His clothes and crucified for you.

That's how you know that God loves you.

It's not just that God sent His Son, but that He sent His Son to die — to pay the penalty for you, in your place. That's the love of God for you.

God wants nothing else for you but the greatest gift of all: life with Him; life in His Son, forever. A life that lasts beyond the grave and transcends the troubles of the world. A life where sin and darkness are no more. There is no darkness too deep, no trouble too threatening, no love too cold, no person too lost, no sorrow too profound for Him. For the God who came to us wrapped in swaddling cloths is the God who is with us still, to save, speaking to us His Word of forgiveness, washing us in His Baptism, and feeding us with His Body and Blood. These are His mangers today, where He is loving us and saving us.

As Christ the Lord comes to you and lives in you and through you, you find that His light shines in the darkness. His love warms your cold heart and turns your sorrow into joy. Therein is a small glimpse of the Paradise that awaits us.

Time for a bylaw check

How many of you cringe when you hear, "How old are your bylaws?" Should we look at them and ensure that they are current? Do your bylaws reflect what you want to accomplish as a group? Do your bylaws help you to make decisions as a group?

Having some guidelines written down will help the group decide on what action to be taken and how to regularly run a meeting. Following are LWML structure guidelines.

The structure taken by an LWML local group depends upon the needs of the women involved. Responsibilities include keeping members informed of and encouraging participation in LWML activities and submitting mite offerings.

What do your meetings include? For example, how often do you have a business meeting? Will your gatherings include Bible study? Refreshments? Who are your officers, and what are their duties? Do you support local charities?

See **BYLAWS**, page 8

Adoption



Getty Images

Trusting God's guidance and grace

*Editor's note: Occasionally, the South Dakota District insert will share a story about the work of **Lutheran Family Service (LFS)**, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that our district congregations regularly support. This is the first of these stories and was written by Brandon and Ashley, an adoptive couple sharing about the adoption of their fourth child, Clay, through LFS. The above image is a stock photo.*

My husband and I are blessed to have been connected to Lutheran Family Service for over eight years now. During our time working with LFS, we have been blessed with four beautiful children through adoption. We know that none of this would have been possible without God's hand in our journey — His guidance and grace — and the faithful work of Lutheran Family Service.

On a cold and dreary Thursday afternoon in early November 2023, our phone rang. We could not believe it. I looked at my husband with tears in my eyes and quickly flipped my phone around to show him who was calling. He reminded me that I needed to answer it. A social worker at LFS was calling to tell us that an expectant mother had chosen us to be the parents of her baby boy, due in just a few short weeks.

On the morning of Nov. 28, Clay was born via c-section. We were able to be with him within a few short moments after he was born and care for him during his days in the hospital. We loved him instantly. Staff members at the hospital were compassionate and mindful of the emotions that surrounded the adoption process.

Throughout the day in the hospital, we were able to meet with different members of Clay's family and those who loved him and his birth mom. There are always a lot of emotions that lead up to a meeting like this. We felt nervous and anxious and hoped that we were exactly who they hoped that we would be. We knew God's hand was all over Clay's story, and we trusted Him to lead us. Within moments of meeting Clay's birth family,

we hugged one another. The tears fell, and the nerves fell away. We knew in that moment that God had given us all the peace that He knew we needed. We shared stories, lots of hugs, tears, and laughter during those first few days of Clay's life.

We are thankful to Lutheran Family Service for helping all of us navigate the big emotions of that day and encouraging each of us to spend time together. It is so special to have those moments to be able to share with him, and to have had the chance to get to know those who had a hand in joining our lives with Clay's.

Oftentimes, it is misunderstood that birth families place their children for adoption out of not wanting them or simply not loving them. However, that could not be further from the truth. These birth families show incredible love, strength, selflessness and bravery in their choice to give their children life and place them for adoption. We have seen the depth of that love four times over, and it is not lost on us.

After returning home with Clay, we continued contact with his birth family and continue to do so. The contact has built trust and a growing relationship. We believe it will be so special for Clay to have that contact with them, and we are thankful God has allowed that relationship to grow.

LFS's service to us and Clay's birth family didn't end that day in the hospital. It has continued every day since.

Now, one year later, Clay is a beautiful, brown-eyed baby boy. He turned one on Thanksgiving Day.

He is loved. He is cherished. He is adored. And most importantly, he is a child of God.

We urge you to continue praying for those who struggle with unplanned pregnancies. Thank you for supporting Lutheran Family Service through prayer and financial giving so that stories like this are possible.

Continued on next page

Foster Care



Getty Images

A rewarding journey of **sacrifice** and **love**

By Rev. Ryan Drevlow
Pastor, St. Paul, Aberdeen

I would like to encourage everyone to consider foster care. My wife, Laura, and I believe it is the logical next step in being an advocate for life. For us, foster care was a journey that began long ago. I come from a large family, and I saw the value of foster care up close when my brother began providing it. Seeing the work my brother was doing, I knew foster care would be a great way to serve my Lord, my community and my neighbor.

Laura and I met during my vicarage year. One of the first things she told me was that she wanted to one day be a foster parent. It was one of the reasons I fell in love with her — she was willing to sacrifice to help children. Laura had been a foster child herself, and she wanted to pay that kindness forward.

Our first few years of marriage were devoted to each other and our biological children, but eventually we felt ready. We asked the congregation of Grace

Lutheran, Breckenridge, Minn. (where I was serving as pastor), if we could add a bedroom in the basement of the parsonage. Instead, the congregation wanted to buy a new parsonage with more room for those foster kids.

The congregation was kind to our foster kids. They offered respite care, time to do our training, and extra funds if we needed them. They embraced our new ministry as their own. If you consider foster care, you will also find supportive people who want to help you.

We were trained and started receiving foster kids. We have had many placements over the years, and each child came with different issues. But we found that God supplied what we needed in all situations.

Often, media offers a rather stereotyped image of foster care. Don't believe everything you see or read. Foster care training will prepare you for the things you don't already know. Many of the kids we took in were easy to care for

and were often accepting of discipline and order, and love and nurturing.

It isn't all sunshine and roses, of course. We have dealt with behavioral issues. Sometimes the kids miss their parents. It's common to grow attached to a child and then have to send them home or on to be fostered elsewhere. But when Laura and I look back on it, our experiences have been far more positive than negative.

If you consider foster care, do so with your heart open. Foster care doesn't always end up in adoption. But if you remember you are there to provide a safe home and help a child to feel loved, then you will have done a beautiful act of God. And what's more, the state puts children in your home and you get to teach them every day about Jesus.

Do you have a spare room in your house? Are you able to keep your house clean? Do you cook normal meals? Do you have patience? Do you have love to give? Can you keep a child safe?

You don't need to be perfect. You only must be willing to sacrifice to serve God's kingdom.

ADOPTION

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

If you or someone you know would benefit from LFS' Christ-centered adoption services or unplanned pregnancy support, refer to or contact us today. Call 515-571-9964 or visit many-hearts.com.

Lutheran Family Service walks with those experiencing difficult times through mental health counseling, marriage counseling, crisis pregnancy counseling, and adoption services. Visit lutheranfamilyservice.org.



Lutherans Engage the World

CHRIST'S LIGHT in the midst of trials



“I know that God works His greatest good when everything seems to be falling around us,” said Rev. Kevin Loughran, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, St. Petersburg, Fla. Grace’s church and school building suffered significant damage when Hurricane Milton blew through the area on Oct. 9. The very next morning, more than 40 volunteers from the church, school, community and even farther afield arrived to help.

The Winter 2025 issue of *Lutherans Engage the World* highlights a few of the ways that God comes to His people even at their lowest point, whether that’s after a natural disaster, while serving time in prison, or while seeking asylum in Germany. So far, hundreds of Persian migrants who are hoping to receive

▲ Rev. Kevin Loughran, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, St. Petersburg, Fla., hugs Destiny Harrold, a teacher at Grace, outside her flood-damaged home in St. Petersburg. Recovery efforts are featured in the Winter 2025 issue of *Lutherans Engage the World*.

asylum in Germany have found forgiveness and salvation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ thanks to the dedicated efforts of a handful of German pastors and LCMS missionaries. And these migrants can’t help but tell their friends.

The issue also includes stories about a new Lutheran school in Branson, Mo., and how LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces supports both military chaplains and military personnel in living out their faith.



The Winter 2025 issue began arriving in mailboxes in late December. Read it online at engage.lcms.org, or sign up for a free subscription at engage.lcms.org/subscribe.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Salvation Power.”

At the convention, we’ll consider what may lie ahead of us as God’s people, even as we thank Him for what He has already done for us in the 119-year history of our beloved LCMS South Dakota District. We are hope-filled because the tomb is empty. Christ is risen! He lives, and He is with us. We are hopeful because God has been faithful. He keeps His promises.

I encourage you to stop by the Sioux Falls Convention Center during the district convention. You’ll be glad you did as you are informed and edified.

Your servant in Christ • Pastor Sailer

“Not ashamed of the Gospel”
Rom. 1:16; 16:25–27

BYLAWS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

All these items should be included in your bylaws or standing rules.

Your zone also must have current bylaws. When I reviewed my zone’s bylaws, I found several items, officers, committees, etc., that the zone hasn’t used for years. So they were deleted and a line was added explaining that a temporary committee could be formed to complete a specific project, then the committee could disband.

I’m sure our zone is not the only one whose bylaws are not 100-percent up to

date. Make your bylaws reflect what you are really doing.

If you need help in creating or updating bylaws for your zone, visit kwml.org. Go to the “About” tab at the top right of the page and select “Structure” from the drop-down menu and you will find helpful information.

Once your review is completed and changes are made, the

Structure Committee must review them prior to implementation. The Structure Committee is always willing to answer questions, if needed.

Elaine M. Hankel
Structure Chairperson

