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MINISTRY PARTNERS

Camp Okoboji

ALSO INCLUDED...

Around the District

Clergy Wives Retreat

Youth Gathering Dates



CALLS RECEIVED

Rev. Matthew Kruse, Faith, Adel, to Shepherd of the Hills, Crossville, TN
Rev. Ryan Roehrig, St. Paul, Carroll, to St. Paul, Fort Dodge

CALLS ACCEPTED

Rev. Matthew Christian, Immanuel, Murphysboro, IL to St. John, Galva

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. Ezra Grabau, Faith, Sioux City, to Trinity, Rupert, ID
Rev. Matthew Kruse, Faith, Adel, to Shepherd of the Hills, Crossville, TN

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

CALLS RECEIVED

Kathryn Schneider, Zion, Manning, to Divine Shepherd, Omaha, NE
Ellie Lehr, to Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School, Spencer
Hannah Kruse, to St. Paul's Lutheran School, Sioux City

CALLS ACCEPTED

Lydia Wallace, Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School, Spencer, to Trinity Lutheran School, Davenport

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 3... District Office Closed in Observance of Independence Day
July 4...Independence Day
July 18-23...Synod Convention, Phoenix AZ



2026 Upcoming Events

August 7...Early Childhood Conference, Gloria Dei Lutheran, **Urbandale**
August 28-29...Spiritual First Aid, **Fort Dodge**
September 21-22...Fall Pastor's Conference, Gloria Dei Lutheran, **Urbandale**
September 29...Administrative Assistants Conference, **Fort Dodge**
October 2-4...Senior Youth Gathering, **Camp Okoboji**
October 9-11...Pastor's Wives Retreat, **Camp Okoboji**
October 24-25...Junior Youth Gathering, Sheraton Hotel, **West Des Moines**



Follow Iowa District West on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/IowaDistrictWest



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AMERICA!

Iowa District West, LCMS
409 Kenyon Road, Suite B
Fort Dodge, IA 50501
515.576.7666
emilie@iowadistrictwest.org
www.idwlcms.org

Please note: The inclusion of items from outside sources in *The Messenger* is for information purposes only. Inclusion of such items does not constitute District endorsement.



On a Mission
to Support
Christ's Mission!

July 2026

409 Kenyon Road, Suite B — Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501
515-576-7666 Fax 515-576-2323 www.idwlcms.org
Contact email: emilie@iowadistrictwest.org



Engaged in Mission: Congregation and Community

Step into a gathering alive with purpose and possibility—where passionate voices, heartfelt prayers, and practical wisdom converge. The "Engaged in Mission: Congregation and Community" conference on September 18–19 at St. Paul in Carroll is for clergy and laity from across the region who are eager to ignite new energy for evangelism and outreach. From the first plenary session to the closing prayer, participants will

be immersed in dynamic discussions, hands-on workshops, and inspiring fellowship, all designed to equip and empower every believer for the mission field—both within the congregation and beyond its walls. The event is a partnership with the Office of National Mission of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. It will feature plenary sessions and targeted sectionals led by Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe and Rev. Dr. Quintin Cundiff.

Key sessions will include:

Evangelism and Outreach: Rev. Dr. Trampe with strategies for effective outreach.

Outreach at the Congregational Level: Clergy will explore practical approaches, while laity will discuss the "Priesthood of All Believers and Evangelism" with Dr. Cundiff.

The Church and Mission: Dr. Cundiff will the Church's role in mission work.

Discipleship Ministry and Church Planting: Clergy will focus on discipleship, laity will be introduced to the LCMS church-planting process.

The Rev. Dr. B.Keith Haney—Assistant to the President for Mission, Stewardship, and Human Care
keith@iowadistrictwest.org

It is never too early to be thinking about a donation to the Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization. Our students are enjoying summer, but we are busy ensuring every student has the proper funding to make Lutheran education possible. Help our organization serve a record number of students by planning your 2026 donation to ensure future students have ample tuition assistance. More students are able to hear the gospel daily when you give today!



IOWA LUTHERAN SCHOOL
TUITION ORGANIZATION

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me..."



The Iowa District West Office will be closed on Friday, July 3 in observance of Independence Day. We wish everyone a safe and happy 4th of July!

Lutheran Singles

Adults ages 21–41 are invited to join us for the 4th Annual LCMS Lutheran Singles Retreat August 21–23! Enjoy a weekend of fellowship, faith-building, and fun at the beautiful setting of Camp Okoboji. Cost is \$100 for the weekend (includes lodging, meals, and activities) This retreat is an opportunity to grow in your faith, experience uplifting worship, engaging conversations, and relaxing time in God's creation. Contact Rev. Dr. Keith Schweitzer for more information at 641-745-5143 or keithlcms@gmail.com.



JULY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 3...District Office closed

July 4... Independence Day

July 18-23...Synod Convention, Phoenix, AZ

Upcoming Events

August 7...Early Childhood Conference, Gloria Dei, **Urbandale**

August 28-29...Spiritual First Aid, **Fort Dodge**

September 21-22...Fall Pastor's Conference, Gloria Dei, **Urbandale**

September 29...Administrative Assistants

Conference, **Fort Dodge**

October 2-4...Senior Youth Gathering, **Camp Okoboji**

October 9-11...Pastor's Wives Retreat, **Camp Okoboji**

October 24-25...Junior Youth Gathering, Sheraton Hotel, **West Des Moines**

For more information on Iowa District West activities, view *The Messenger* at www.idwlcms.org/publications.php

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

The Rev. Paul Egger

Iowa District West, LCMS

paul@iowadistrictwest.org / 515-576-7666

Whatever is Right

Who do you know in this picture?

Here they are – our delegates preparing for this summer's Synod convention in Phoenix. A pastor and a layperson from each of our sixteen circuits in Iowa District West.

Convention preview: How can we best prepare men to pastor God's dear sons and daughters? Family, youth and campus ministry opportunities. Social and political issues affecting Christ's church. Scriptural closed communion practice. Divine service lectors. National and international witness. Mercy opportunities. Life together.



Our Heavenly Father is well aware that, every day, your life is like a synod convention: Issues and opportunities. Discussions, celebrations praising God, questions looking for Scriptural answers, and prayers.

Knowing you, God has His apostle write to you, “Whatever is RIGHT, think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:8.

Whatever is “RIGHT.” Greek: Dikay; Dikaios. Right. Righteous. Righteousness. ***My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and RIGHTEOUSNESS.*** Definitions: Just, equitable, fair, innocent, pious. “Right” means duty faced = duty done. Like when the Jewish court commands Peter and John to stop speaking about Jesus because this riles people up – Peter and John reply using the word “right.” They say, “Judge for yourselves whether it is RIGHT in God's sight to obey you rather than God.” And then of course they go on working in God's kingdom – spending their years bringing Jesus' righteousness to the unrighteous. Their duty faced = their duty done. RIGHT.

Peter quoting Psalm 34 writes, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the RIGHTEOUS. 1 Peter 3. So here Peter defines “RIGHT” as keeping tongue from evil, as turning from evil and doing good. Peter defines “RIGHT” as seeking peace. And as you think about these things (whatever is RIGHT), God promises that His eyes are on you, and God promises that His ears are attentive to your prayer.

Where does RIGHT, RIGHTEOUS, RIGHTEOUSNESS come from? God's apostle tells you! Righteousness comes from God. Righteousness comes from God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. All have

sinned and fall short of the glory of God – and are MADE RIGHT freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. Romans.

And thinking about what is RIGHT, Paul looks to the end of his work in God’s kingdom. Paul writes, “Now there is in store for me the crown of RIGHTeousness, which the Lord, the RIGHTeous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing. 2 Timothy 4.

And when He comes with trumpet sound, O may I then in Him be found, clothed in His RIGHTeousness alone, redeemed to stand before His throne! Clothed in His righteousness alone. Think about that! “Whatever is RIGHT, think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:8.

As Jesus lives,
Pastor Paul Egger



Education Youth Family Life

Rhonda J. Mohr Assistant to the President 515-573-0010
rhonda@iowadistrictwest.org

Legislative Updates That Affect Our Lutheran Preschools in Iowa

This month, I want to share with you that the Iowa Legislature passed Bill SF2231, which Governor Kim Reynolds signed into law on May 19, 2026. Jan Doellinger, Iowa District East Education Executive, and I were invited to be at the bill signing. I was unable to attend because I had a vacation planned to Ireland during that time. I asked Pastor Paul Dare, Chair of the IDW Education Committee, to attend in my place. Pictured below with Governor Reynolds are Jan, Pastor Dare, and Jackie Illian, Preschool Director at Immanuel, Waterloo.



Key Components of the Bill

1. Compels districts to work with quality preschool providers and prevents them from boxing out competition from now on. "Upon the request of a community-based provider, a school district shall enter into a chapter 28E agreement with a community-based provider to allow the community-based provider to provide high-quality instruction as part of the approved local program." (Before this, one of our preschools could ask to be part of the four-year-old statewide program and be denied. This happened to a couple of our preschools who wanted to participate.)

2. Prevents districts from limiting or capping enrollment to keep a community provider's enrollment artificially low:

"A chapter 28E agreement entered into pursuant to this

paragraph shall not limit the number of eligible students who

may receive high-quality instruction from a community-based

provider as part of the approved local program." **(Previously, community school districts could limit how many children a faith-based preschool program could enroll in the Statewide Preschool Program.)**

3. Protects religious liberty. Here is about half of the language that addresses that in the bill:"(a) This paragraph shall not be construed to authorize the state or any political subdivision of the state to exercise authority over any community-based provider or construed to require a community-based provider to modify its academic

standards for admission or educational program in order to receive preschool foundation aid pursuant to section 256C.4, subsection 1, paragraph "h". (b) This paragraph shall not be construed to expand the authority of the state or any political subdivision of the state to impose regulations upon any community-based provider that are not necessary to implement the community-based provider's participation in the preschool program." **(In the past, the guidance from the community school district stated that religious teaching had to be outside a certain time of day and voluntary for families to participate.)**

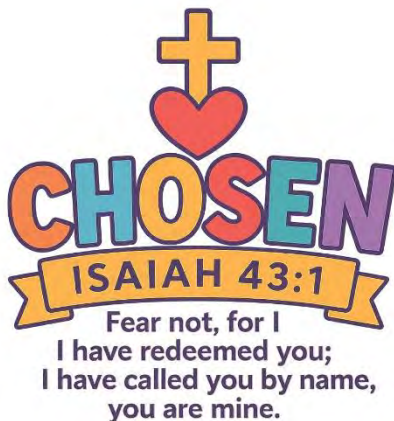
4. Religious Liberty Education

Every year, the Department must send the U.S. Department of Education's religious liberty document to principals and districts.

Also included in the bill is conforming language to make sure instances of "nonsectarian" throughout the code do not run afoul of Supreme Court case law.

We are grateful to Governor Reynolds and the legislature for working together to make this bill a reality. We are also grateful for the work of the Iowa Association of Christian Schools lobbyist, Eric Goranson, who lobbies for our Christian schools at the state capitol.

2026 Early Childhood Conference



Join us for the Annual Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Education Conference on August 7, 2026, at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Urbandale, IA. Teachers, assistants, directors, board members, and pastors from congregations with preschools are all encouraged to attend. This is a wonderful opportunity to network with early childhood educators and pastors from across the state while participating in informative sessions designed to enhance your school's educational offerings and overall experience. Register today at <https://iowadistrictwestlcms.regfox.com/iowa-districts-east-west-lutheran-early-childhood-conference>. Cost is \$65 per person. Registration deadline is July 8.

IOWA DISTRICT WEST

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GATHERING

UNSHAKABLE

LIGHT

"I am the light of the world..." - John 8:12



October 3-4, 2026

📍 **CAMP OKOBOJI**

OPTIONAL EARLY ARRIVAL: OCTOBER 2



MAIN SPEAKERS

Pastor Ryan Roehrig &
DCE Hailey Jo Miller



WHO

Senior High Youth
(Grades 9-12)



COST

\$90 (1 night)
\$120 (2 nights)



PAYMENT

One check per church
payable to
Iowa District West

Save the Date!

MORE DETAILS AND REGISTRATION COMING SOON!



For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10



Pastor Wives Retreat

October 9-11 | Camp Okoboji

Guest Speaker: Diane Bahn

Cypress, TX

SPEAKER | COACH | PASTOR'S WIFE

Seeking to grow daily as a follower of Jesus

Who and Whose are you?

How is God's workmanship evident in your life?

On what path is God leading you now and with whom?

As we consider these questions together in the context of our identity as children of God by his grace in our Lord Jesus, we may also discover a path to renewed health, healing, and hope as women and as ministry wives. In the process we'll also have some fun, get to know one another better, and celebrate each other as God's precious creations.



Registration Details to Follow

**LOVE
GOD**

**LOVE
PEOPLE**



**IOWA DISTRICT WEST
JUNIOR YOUTH
GATHERING**

**Sheraton Hotel
West Des Moines, IA
October 24-25, 2026**

Unreasonable Hospitality: Rooted in Grace, Realized in Presence

In a world that prizes efficiency over presence, the Church is called to be different. As ministry leaders, we are not called to climb a ladder of spiritual success or build a flawless, corporate ministry. Instead, we are invited to embody a kind of hospitality that goes beyond the expected—hospitality that is, in the best way, unreasonable.

This isn't about human extravagance or moral perfection. It is about the cross. It is about the radical truth that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. True hospitality is a fruit of the Gospel: because we have been completely welcomed by God's grace, we are free to lower our defenses and welcome others.

Let's explore three foundational truths that shape this Lutheran posture of hospitality, using Jesus—our Savior and Justifier—as our ultimate template.

1. Be Present: Embodying the Theology of the Cross

The world operates on a "theology of glory"—a constant rush for bigger, faster, and more successful outcomes. Jesus, however, operated on the Theology of the Cross. He noticed the broken, the hidden, and the small.

Jesus was never in a hurry. Whether He was walking through a crowd, sitting at a well, or reclining at a table, He was fully present with the people in front of Him. In Luke 8, when a woman touches the hem of His garment, He stops everything to acknowledge her. He doesn't rush past her need to get to a more "important" strategic meeting—He sees her.

As leaders, we often juggle administrative burdens, budgets, and cultural expectations. But unreasonable hospitality begins with the discipline of presence. It's choosing to slow down, look people in the eye, and let them know: You matter. I see you. Being present is not passive; it is an act of love. It mirrors the Incarnation—Christ coming down into our messy reality to dwell with us.

2. Embracing People: Simultaneously Saint and Sinner

One of the greatest gifts of Lutheran theology is the understanding that we are *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously saint and sinner). Because we know that everyone walking through our doors is a beautifully broken saint-and-sinner, we don't have to expect perfection.

Jesus embraced people exactly where they were—mess and all. He dined with tax collectors, touched lepers, and welcomed children. He didn't require people to clean up or sanctify themselves before coming close. He met them in their humanity with compassion and joy.

Unreasonable hospitality means embracing people without pretense. It means laughing with them, crying with them, and sitting in the tension of their grief without trying to offer cheap, moralistic fixes. It also means not taking ourselves too seriously. Jesus, though fully God, washed feet. He lived among the people.

As leaders, we must resist the temptation to lead from a pedestal of perceived holiness. True hospitality is humble. It creates a space where people feel safe to confess their brokenness because they know the leaders at the front need the exact same free grace.

3. Hospitality Listens: Receiving the Neighbor as a Gift

In his definition of Christian community, Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously noted that the first service one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as our relationship with God begins with hearing His Word, our relationship with our neighbor begins with listening to their story.

Jesus was a master listener. He asked questions. He let people speak. He responded not just to their words, but to their hearts. Think of the woman at the well in John 4. He listened beyond her defensive theology to her soul, and in doing so, He offered her the Living Water of the Gospel.

In our churches, people are starving to be heard. Unreasonable hospitality means listening deeply—not to fix, debate, or correct, but to understand. It is the kind of listening that says, You are known. You are valued. You belong in this community.

Practical Application: Hospitality as a Fruit of Faith

Because we are justified by faith alone, these practices are not a new set of laws to burden you. They are invitations to let God's love overflow through you into your community.

1. Schedule Margin for Presence

- Practice the "Ministry of Interruption": Treat unexpected conversations not as distractions from your real work, but as divine appointments where Christ is meeting you in the neighbor.

- Block open time: Build unstructured time into your calendar specifically for walking the halls, sitting in the lobby, or lingering after Divine Service.

2. Create a Culture of Gospel Welcome

- Train and equip: Encourage volunteers and staff to greet people by name, make eye contact, and offer genuine warmth.
- Design with intent: Think through your physical and digital spaces. Do they feel confusing and institutional, or warm and personal?
- Celebrate grace stories: Share testimonies in staff meetings or newsletters of times when someone felt welcomed in their brokenness.

3. Embrace People Where They Are

- Lead with absolution, not judgment: Create environments where authenticity is prioritized over a polished image.
- Host "come as you are" gatherings: Emphasize casual meals, small groups, or events where neighbors and seekers feel no pressure to "act churchy."

4. Practice Intentional Listening

- Ask open-ended questions: Pivot conversations toward the heart with questions like: "What's been weighing on you lately?" or "How can I pray for you this week?"
- Remember names and stories: Follow up with a text or a note later in the week to show that their words didn't fall on deaf ears.

5. Anchor Hospitality in Daily Vocation

- Disciple through relationships: Invite people into your everyday life rhythms—a cup of coffee, a walk, or a simple meal. Hospitality is a spiritual discipline, not an event checklist.
- Outdo one another in honor: Model Romans 12:10 as a core team value, lifting up others ahead of yourself.

Final Thoughts: Anchored in Unconditional Grace

Jesus didn't just teach hospitality; He embodied it. He welcomed the outcast, honored the overlooked, and made room for those the world rejected. This hospitality was entirely unreasonable because it was driven by a grace that demands nothing and gives everything. It is the scandalous grace of the cross—where Christ takes our sin and hands us His righteousness as a completely free gift.

As ministry leaders, we are called to extend this same posture to the world—not because it's efficient and not to drive up our attendance numbers, but because we have first

been utterly overwhelmed by the grace of God. Let us offer a world weary of performing a glimpse of that unreasonable, unstoppable, and unconditional grace.

Discussion Questions for Leadership Teams

Be Present

1. When was the last time you felt someone was truly present with you? How did that mirror the comfort of the Gospel?
2. What are the biggest "theology of glory" distractions (metrics, busyness, status) keeping us from being fully present with our flock?
3. How can we adjust our weekly schedules to prioritize people over productivity?

Embrace People Where They Are

1. Are there any "unwritten rules" or cultural expectations in our church that make people feel they need to clean up their lives before they can show up?
2. How does the reality of being *simul justus et peccator* free us to be more vulnerable and approachable as leaders?
3. What does it look like to lead with genuine joy, even in high-pressure or formal settings?

Hospitality Begins with Listening

1. How well are we listening to the actual needs of our congregation and local community rather than assuming we already know what they need?
 2. What practical steps can we take to become a church known for listening rather than just talking?
 3. Who in our neighborhood or church might feel completely unseen right now, and how can we actively reach out to them this week with the hospitality of Christ?
-

News and Notes:

Engaged in Mission: Congregation and Community Conference

September 18-19, 2026, St. Paul Lutheran Church 1844 Highland Dr. Carroll, IA 51401

Registration Deadline: August 21, 2026

Mail \$30.00 registration fee to: Michelle Hammersland, Iowa District West LCMS, 409 Kenyon Road, Suite B, Fort Dodge IA, 50501

Registration Form: [Engaged in Mission: Congregation and Community Conference – Fill out form](#) – I have also attached the QR code.

Deadline to register is August 21, 2026

Conference fee is \$30.00 and checks are sent to:

Michelle Hammersland

Iowa District West LCMS

409 Kenyon Road

Suite B

Fort Dodge, IA 50501

Accommodations:

Carrollton Hotel & Event Center

1730 US Highway 71 N

Carroll, IA 51401

You must call the hotel directly at 712-792-5600 and request the Iowa District West Room Block

Special pricing: Single/King=\$125.00/night and

Double/Queen=\$105/night **Deadline to reserve room is September 1, 2026**

Concordia Deaconess Conference

The annual Concordia Deaconess Conference will take place June 15–18 at St. John Lutheran Church in Dublin, Ohio. The conference will feature multiple keynote presentations, breakout sessions and additional activities for education and fellowship.

[Learn more](#)

LCMS CHURCH PLANTING

How does a church plant begin?

First, a church planting team must be created. A church planting team can start as an offshoot of an existing congregation or simply when individuals talk about their desire for a church with those around them. The next step is to reach out to the church plant's district. Once the district is aware and supportive of the work, LCMS Church Planting offers tools, training, resources and education to help the plant move toward a clear proclamation of the Gospel in its community.

[Learn more](#)

BUSINESS MANAGER NEWS

Iowa District West Congregations' Mission Receipts



Month Ending May 2026	
Anticipated Amount	\$110,000
Actual Receipts	\$118,111
Year-to-Date Receipts	
Anticipated Amount	\$440,000
Actual Receipts	\$460,772
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$20,772
Use of Mission Receipts	
Remitted to Synod (45%)	\$176,000
Balance for District programs & ministries	\$284,772
Total Receipts	\$460,772
Mission Receipts Compared with Last Year	
Month ending May 2026	\$460,772
Month ending May 2025	\$466,083
Over (under) last year	\$ (5,311)

Partners in the Gospel - Monthly Mission Moment

The District supports a number of worthy mission projects, programs, and activities. This month, the part of the budget "Preparing Church Workers" is highlighted. When I started 28 years ago, the District's annual support for students studying at Concordia schools was around \$60,000. Today, that amount has grown to over \$300,000. The increased support has come from endowment and restricted funds, as well as support from the LWML, individuals, and congregational gifts.

At the end of August, the schools and students will begin to receive the fall financial aid support from the District. Thank you for your congregational and individual gifts as we joyfully support our future pastors and church workers so they can pass the Christian faith on to the next generation.

Stewardship Spark - by Ron Chewning, President of Stewardship Advisors, which provides year-round stewardship education [resources](#) for LCMS churches (248.644.6150 - stewardshipadv@aol.com)

Firstfruits or priority giving expresses the special relationship that we have with Jesus.

"The best of the firstfruits of your [income] you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God" (Exodus 23:19).



69th Regular LCMS Convention



The 69th National Convention is almost here. Pray for IDW delegates as they travel to Phoenix for the Synod's Convention July 18–23. Everyone is encouraged to support the LCMS National Offering. Gifts to the 2026–2029 National Offering will directly benefit ongoing domestic work carried out at the local level by LCMS congregations, districts, and others, and supported by LCMS Family Ministry, Youth Ministry, Campus Ministry, and School Ministry. More information is available at www.lcms.org/national-offering.

Everyone can read Convention highlights in the current Reporter and *The Lutheran Witness*. To read the proposed resolutions, convention workbook, and other information, go to www.lcms.org/convention. You can also watch the convention proceedings live online from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

Secretarial/Administrative Assistants Fall Conference

The Iowa District West Secretarial/Administrative Assistants Conference will be held at St. Paul, Fort Dodge, this fall. Mark your calendar for Tuesday, September 29, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. All ministry assistant professionals are invited to enjoy a relaxing, inspirational, and educational day. We are excited to announce that our special speaker for the day will be Shannon Zetterlund (our highly rated speaker from 2018). More information will be coming this summer.

Concordia Plan Services (CPS) Summer Education Events

Health care continues to evolve, and it can be challenging to stay informed about the complexities of today's health care options. Each ministry has important decisions to make—including selecting the best health care option for the upcoming year. Now is an ideal time to review the changes to the health plan options for 2027.

Anyone interested in learning more about Concordia Health Plan options, special coverages, and what's new for 2027 is encouraged to attend a workshop this summer. Please plan to join one of our virtual education sessions:

Thursday, July 30 at 4 pm
Wednesday, August 5 at 11 am



Register online for the summer presentations:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CPShelp>

Mark your calendar for [Employer Benefits Elections](#) (website goes live July 1). The health plan enrollment timeline for 2027 health care option offerings is September 7–18. Employee/member open enrollment will be November 2–13.

Employer renewal packets with rates will be sent electronically via email in early July. As you plan your 2027 budget, please note the Concordia Plans rate adjustments:

- The estimated health plan rate increase is 8%
- The retirement rate will increase by 1% of compensation

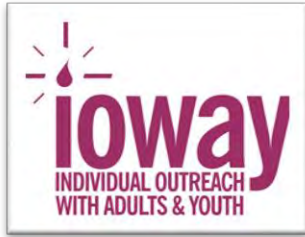
You can explore a wealth of information anytime at www.concordiaplans.org. Additionally, the *Congregational Treasurer's Manual*, Chapter 4, provides extensive information at www.lcms.org/ctm.

Free Resources and Support from Concordia Technology Solutions (CTS)

Church office staff are responsible for a lot. Getting more done during the workday is more important than ever before. Technology can help give you back some time in the day, but where do you start? That's why Concordia Technology Solutions is offering [free Church Office Technology Assessments](#) for churches looking to increase their productivity with managing their congregation records, attendance, offerings, financial records, or church communications.



To make the writing part easier, CTS put together a free, ready-to-edit set of [Communication Templates for Every Church Event](#). Download it, drop in your dates and details, and most of your fall calendar is already written.



Julie Mann, IOWAY Coordinator
julie@iowadistrictwest.org
515-408-9696

Ah, the joy of summer! Purchasing from roadside produce stands, kayaking in Colorado, and watching fireworks ignite are all things I am looking forward to in the next several weeks. I am choosing to find beauty and joy in the everyday, small things in life. God in His love for us, gave us a beautiful world to explore.



Now, if you are a consistent news follower on any platform (I'm not), you know that the news media's focus is often negative; I'm encouraging a summer 'cleanse'. Yes, watch the weather – that's important here in the Midwest, but other than that, what positives can you share out with the world? Share some pictures of what is going on in your congregation this summer, and I will add them to my July and August articles. (julie@IowaDistrictWest.org) Sometimes it can feel like "we're the only ones doing..." or "we've done the same thing every year..." and you might give and/or get some inspiration from what is going on around IDW.

- Stop by your church/school/preschool with a fun summer treat for whoever is around that day!
- Volunteer to do VBS clean-up, because the people who are running it will be tired, in the best way.
- Pray for the new pastors, vicars, DCEs, teachers, and deaconesses in our district, as well as church workers coming to do internships in our congregations.
- Step up to be your congregation's Set Apart to Serve contact.
 - <https://www.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve>
- Reach out to Pastor Pedro to help with the taco fundraiser on July 11
 - Pedro@IowaDistrictWest.org



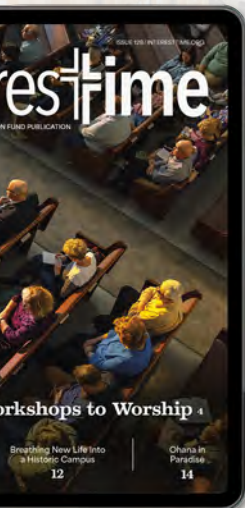
shutterstock.com - 2313495553



Inform. Connect. Inspire.

Your ministry doesn't grow in isolation. Neither does ours. *Interest Time* is a digital resource by LCEF looking at how LCMS communities across the country are sustaining and strengthening their ministries.

Subscribe for free at interesttime.org





MISSION CENTRAL

LCMS Mission Advancement

40718 County Highway E-16

Mapleton, Iowa 51034

www.missioncentral.us



Missionary Gary Thies, *Director and Mission Counselor*
Rev. Steve Schulz, *Mission Advocate and Pastoral Advisor*
Mr. Jim Schroeder, *Gift and Estate Planning Counselor*

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July 2026



We celebrated the Ascension of our Lord on May 14, 2026, with a special meal and a worship service in the barn/worship center. And what a celebration it was! We were blessed to have Rev. Richard Snow, President of the Nebraska District, as our guest preacher, and he shared the Good News about Jesus with a barn full of missionaries from Iowa and Nebraska.

Cody Mock, originally from Pella, Iowa, was here to provide us with a mission update on May 16. Cody serves our Lord in Eurasia as a computer (IT) expert who works with our missionaries to help them use the latest technology to reach out to people with the Gospel. It was so great to have him, and his family visit us at Mission Central.



Pastor Martin Hill and members from Trinity, Martinsburg, NE, plus a few folks from other surrounding congregations, brought a busload here to celebrate a special Ascension "Mission" Sunday on May 17, 2026. They also had a full tour of our campus and a fabulous noon meal. It was a wonderful, joyful time of fellowship and celebration that we will always remember.





May 23, 2026, was a day filled with joy and thanksgiving, as we were blessed to have TWO veteran missionaries here with us. Paul and Gena Nelson came all the way from Indonesia, AND Adam and Christine Lehman and their family are serving in Puerto Rico. They had such wonderful pictures to show and stories to tell of how the Lord Jesus is blessing their work in truly miraculous ways.

A very special group came to visit us on May 27, 2026, from Winterset, Iowa—the Bucchop and Niklasen families. Every single one of those young people knew the story of our dear Savior Jesus. They enjoyed a full tour of our campus, and we so very much enjoyed their visit. It will be a day they will always remember.



On May 12, 2026, we had several visitors from Pierce, Neb. Ryan, Brooke, and Brock Collison came to visit us in the morning, and Gahlen and



Diane Anderson came in the afternoon. They had a full tour of our facilities because some of them had never been to Mission Central before. It was a very special time that they will always remember.

!AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from *Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas*
Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake

Pastor Pedro Lopez

July 2026



Rev. Pedro Lopez

Assistant to the President
Missionary at Large

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Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! During this Pentecost season, I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened in your walk of faith. We give thanks to the Lord for the many ways He continues to bless our ministry.

We are excited to share that we will join St. Paul Lutheran Church and the sister churches in Council Bluffs in their effort to reach out to the Hispanic community. St. Paul's Church has opened their Learning Center location for us to use for Hispanic ministry. We met with the pastors and a group of future volunteers on Wednesday, May 13. We are super excited about this new outreach and will keep you updated on dates.

At St. Paul Carroll ESL, the last day of class was June 9th. We thank our teacher volunteers who work hard to teach our students. One of our teachers had the wonderful idea of teaching while volunteering to do some yard work at the church. We had two new students, Angelo and Clemencia, who were faithful in attending class. We have advertised the basic guitar lessons but have not had anyone join. Our Saturday evenings of praise, prayer, and Bible study remain a meaningful time together, and we continue to enjoy our monthly fellowship gatherings as well.

At St. John in Storm Lake, we continue supporting the Swaddling Clothes program on the second Saturday of each month. By doing this, we have the opportunity to invite families to our Sunday worship service at Grace. Home Bible studies with families continue—it is such a blessing to share time together in God's Word. We continue working with a family that we met during our ESL class in Deloit. I was honored to be asked to take part in her Quinceañera, where I shared the Word of God with her, her family, and friends—about 100 people.

Thank you for continuing to remember our Hispanic ministries and the communities we serve in your prayers. Your faithful support is a great encouragement, and we give thanks to the Lord for each of you. I also ask for prayer on our new plan to work at Council Bluffs - for the new contacts we are meeting so that the Lord brings them in close relationship with him. And, as always, your continued prayers for my wife and me, that the Lord would graciously guide, strengthen, and equip us for the work He has entrusted to us.

Bendiciones,
Pastor Pedro Lopez





Update

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- June 14-18: CUB WEEK 1
- June 20: Auxiliary Quilt Auction - 12:30 pm
- June 21-27: Minneboji
- June 28-July 3: 4TH OF JULY FAMILY RETREAT
- July 5: OMELET BRUNCH - 9:30 AM TO 1:00 PM
- July 5-11: JUNIOR HIGH WEEK
- July 9-12: J.O.Y. CAMP 2
- July 12-18: CUB WEEK II
- July 19-25: Youth Week

REGISTRATION IS STILL OPEN AT CAMP OKOBOJI! Registration information is available online at campokoboji.org. Have your youth join us for Junior High Week, Cub Weeks, or Youth Week, as well as our Family Retreats.

Summer Chaplain Schedule
Join us for worship - 9 am

Thank You!

THANKS to volunteers and groups who give so generously of their time and talents in serving Camp Okoboji.

- A big thanks to Dean Peterson for helping us take down several dead trees and trim up some others. I'm glad he's not afraid of heights!

We give thanks to God for 5 years of service from Benjamin Brakenhoff, our Maintenance Director. We also praise God for 30 years of faithful service from Kellie Jones, our Operations Director.

- June 14 - Rev. Dr. B Keith Haney – IDW
- June 21 - Rev. Andrew Noble – Arcadia
- June 28 - Rev. Chris Ascher – Sioux Falls, SD
- July 5 - Rev. Charlie Adams – Omaha, NE
- July 12 - Rev. David Beagley – Ames
- July 19 - Rev. David Matthews – Paullina/Sutherland
- July 26 - Rev. Mark Lund - Garner
- August 2 - Rev. James Travis – Sioux City
- August 9 - Rev. Dr. Kristopher Morris - Seward, NE
- August 16 - Rev. Dr. Joshua Lowe – Hawarden
- August 23 - TBD
- August 30 - Rev. Benjamin Dose – Algona
- September 6 - Rev. Robert Zellmer – Lawton



“He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.’ And they remembered His words” (Luke 24:6-8).

What a Celebration!

We have a lot to celebrate!

This is a special year for us as a country. Much like every year we observe the anniversary of freedom here in the United States. However, as we all know, this year is special. It’s the 250th anniversary of Independence from Great Britain and from the tyranny and injustices that many Americans were enduring at that time.

I guess that it’s a big deal. After all, 250-year observances certainly are memorable and worthy of remembering.

Or are they? Certainly, everyone remembers the 250th anniversary of Captain James Cook’s voyage on the HMS *Endeavour*. In 2020, the celebration of Captain Cook’s discovery of Australia and New Zealand is legendary. And the remembrance of him circumnavigating the globe was revolutionary. All maps were changed forever!

What? You don’t remember this? Why not? It was such an important event that truly affected the entire world.

But let’s be honest, celebrations tend to be observed by people who are personally and intimately connected to the occasion. Dates and celebrations are lost upon those who aren’t moved or affected by these events.

Please don’t misunderstand. It is truly wonderful to have celebrations. We need them. How magnificent it is to gather together with one another and celebrate how God has effectively used people to bring joy into our lives. Celebrating anniversaries, birthdays, local events, national observances, and global accomplishments unite us as a people with a common bond. We remember people; their words and their lives and how much they have touched us. It is all definitely worthy of celebration.

But there is definitely a celebration that transcends all time! It’s a celebration that we not only celebrate every 250 years or even just every year. We celebrate it every day of our lives!

God’s people, Christians, never forget the words that were spoken by the angel to the women and the disciples that very first Easter. They celebrated the fact that Jesus was no longer dead but alive! They celebrated this every day. They told other people the fact that Jesus died on the cross to forgive all sins. And they celebrated the fact that Jesus was and is alive. The celebration continued every day. The Bible tells us that they met every day and worshiped Him.

That worship was definitely a celebration. For they remembered His words and they knew that their sins were totally forgiven and that they will live forever in Heaven!

And they told other people in joy and celebration; who told other people; who told other people; who told ... you and me! And we celebrate! We celebrate our forgiveness and salvation that He won for us.

What a celebration! It certainly is momentous that we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America’s Independence. But, let’s be honest, no matter what we do to celebrate, it doesn’t even come close to the celebration “with angels and archangels and all the company of heavenly hosts praising God and singing ...”

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Hallelujah! What a celebration!

To God alone be the glory! Amen.

Prayer:

Now all the vault of heav'n resounds
In praise of love that still abounds:
"Christ has triumphed! He is living!"
Sing, choirs of angels, loud and clear!
Repeat their song of glory here:
"Christ has triumphed! Christ has triumphed!"
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Adoring praises now we bring
And with the heav'nly blessed sing:
"Christ has triumphed! Alleluia!"
Be to the Father and our Lord,
To Spirit blest, most holy God,
All the glory, never ending!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Amen! (LSB 465, vv. 1 & 4)

-Rev. Michael Awe
Peace Lutheran, South Sioux City, NE

THE LAMPLIGHTER



Theme: "What a Celebration!"

July, 2026

*A Publication of The Lutheran Service Auxiliary,
Sioux City, Iowa*

The Good Shepherd Hour airs every Sunday
morning on the following radio stations:

KSCJ – 1360 AM & 94.9 FM	Sioux City at 8 a.m.
KLEM – 1410 AM & 96.9 FM	LeMars at 8 a.m.
KAYL – 101.7 FM	Storm Lake at 8:30 a.m.
KVFD – 1400 AM	Fort Dodge at 8 a.m.

Main Street Living airs Sunday mornings on KCAU
Channel 9 at 10:30 AM & Programming at 10 AM.

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Iowa District West

June 2026

The following events are hosted by District congregations/circuits.
Contact information is provided.
To include your church's event, send information to emilie@iowadistrictwest.org.



Plan now for the 4th Annual
LCMS Lutheran Singles Retreat
Ages 21-41

Friday - Sunday, August 21-23
Camp Okoboji, Milford, Iowa
campokoboji.org

\$100 pays for everything
Register at faithwinterset.org
Questions?

Contact Dr. Keith Schweitzer
641/745-5143
keithlcms@gmail.com

Be There!



Church Closing Special Worship

Christ the King Lutheran Church, 500 4th Ave. SW, Spencer, will officially close in August 2026. You are invited to Join the congregation for its Closing Worship Service on Sunday, August 2 at 2:00 p.m. They would be honored to have you attend this special time of worship, remembrance, and fellowship. Refreshments will follow the service.