

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISTRICT NEWS

Partners in the Gospel—Julie Mann

1. President's Page—Rev. Paul Egger
2. Education, Youth, and Family Life—Rhonda Mohr
3. Mission Possible!—Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney
4. Business Manager—Roger Curtis
5. IOWAY—Julie Minn
6. Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF)
7. Mission Central—Rev. Steve Schulz & Gary Thies
8. Amigos En Cristo—Rev. Pedro Lopez

MINISTRY PARTNERS

Camp Okoboji

Lutheran Family Service

Iowa Lutheran Schools Tuition Organization (ILSTO)

ALSO INCLUDED...

Life Advocates

Siouxland Hispanic Ministry



CALLS RECEIVED/EXTENDED

Rev. Mark Resner, St. Paul, Whittemore, to St. Paul/Our Redeemer, Oakabena, MN
Rev. Matthew Lehman, Zion, Albert Lea, MN to St. Paul, Fort Dodge

CALLS ACCEPTED

Rev. Lyle Buettner, Trinity/St. Paul, New Athens, IL to Peace/Trinity, Glidden/Coon Rapids

CALLS DECLINED

Rev Craig Neimeyer, Zion, St. Libory, NE, to First English, Spencer
Rev. Kyle Lewis, St. Martin, Winona, MN to St. Paul, Fort Dodge
Rev. Brett Satkowiak, Faith, Demotte, IN to St. Paul, Sioux City
Rev. David Matthews, Zion/Bethel, Paulina/Sutherland to Concordia/St. Paul, Bourbon/Cuba, MO

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 5...Board of Directors Meeting, District Office, **Fort Dodge**
November 7...Conflict/Difficult Conversations Workshop, **District Office, Fort Dodge**
November 7...Fall Treasurers Workshop, **Online**
November 26-27...Thanksgiving, **District Office Closed**



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 28-January 3...IOWAY Pedal Pushers Trip, **Pasadena, CA**
January 9, 2027...Elders Workshop, **Trinity, Cherokee**
January 9, 2027...Treasurer Workshop, **Our Savior, Denison**
January 11, 2027...Kapfer Symposium, **St. Paul, Carroll**
January 28, 2027... Board Of Directors Meeting, **District Office, Fort Dodge**



Follow Iowa District West on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/iowaDistrictWest



Iowa District West
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!

November 2026

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Contact email: emilie@iowadistrictwest.org



November is punctuated by so many opportunities to share our thanks and gratitude publicly; in fact, it's widely encouraged. I pray that you share God's goodness with those around you on a daily basis. He presents us with so much beauty and joy every day, take time to notice. If you are in a season of life that is overflowing with wonderful things – celebrate and be grateful.

If you are in a season of struggle, which most of us can empathize with, I'm going to encourage you to look for God's abundance even in this difficult time and lean into His presence. Serve in gratitude if you are able. Taking a walk with my mom shortly after she had been diagnosed with cancer, I asked her, "Are you mad at God because of this?" My wonderful mom, in all of her faith driven wisdom, replied, "I've never questioned His blessings, why would I question Him now?" Wow – gratitude overflowing in a really difficult season. And yes, she was healed completely, but it was by going to be with our Lord a mere three months later.

A song for you as you go into this Thanksgiving holiday mindset, and one that I pray you keep all year long. "All my words fall short, I got nothing new, How could I express, All my gratitude?... And I know it's not much, But I've nothing else fit for a King, Except for a heart singing hallelujah Hallelujah" [Gratitude - song link] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQdfs5S6jyA>)

-Julie Mann, IOWAY Coordinator
julie@iowadistrictwest.org

Elders Workshop

Individuals serving as elders, as well as those interested in learning more about this vital role in the church, are invited to attend "Elders: Guardians of the Ministry & Ministers of the Word" on Saturday, January 9, 2027, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, Cherokee, Iowa. The workshop will be led by Rev. Paul Dare and hosted by the Iowa District West Education Committee. Topics will include the pastoral ministry, the ministry of Christ's Church, biblical expectations of pastors, and how elders support and provide accountability for their pastor. The workshop is free, and lunch will be provided. Register online at: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/BBb8VWJema> or scan the QR code



Conflict & Difficult Conversations Workshop



There is still time to join Rev. Dr. Todd Jenks for a practical and faith-centered workshop on navigating conflict and difficult conversations with wisdom, confidence, and Christ-centered communication on Saturday, November 7 at the IDW District Office in Fort Dodge. Participants will learn research-backed strategies and biblical principles for handling disagreements, reducing anxiety in challenging conversations, and fostering healthier relationships in families, workplaces, and congregations. This free event is open to all church workers and laity. Scan QR for more information and registration. Please register by Monday, November 2.

Treasurer's Workshop

A Treasurer's Workshop will be held online on Saturday, November 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. On Saturday, January 9 a program will take place at Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Denison, with a snow date of January 16. Pastors and all individuals within the church who have financial responsibilities are encouraged to attend. Please register at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/treasworkshop>. If you have any questions, please contact Roger at 515-576-7666 or Roger@IowaDistrictWest.org.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 24-25...Junior Youth Gathering, Sheraton Hotel, **West Des Moines**
November 5...Board of Directors Meeting, IDW Office **Fort Dodge**
November 7...Conflict & Difficult Conversations Workshop, IDW Office, **Fort Dodge**
November 7...Treasurer's Workshop, **Online**
November 26-27...Thanksgiving, District Office closed for holiday

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 28-January 3...Petal Pushers Service Trip, **Pasadena, CA**

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 Admirable



Finally, whatever is ADMIRABLE – think about such things – and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4. The Greek word *euphymia* actually means “good report”. This word deals with passing along good information – good news – good reports. One commentator explains that this word means “worth talking about”. Another translates it, “Things which are fit for God to hear”.

Finally, whatever is admirable (a good report), think on such things, and the God of peace will be with you. A couple days before soldiers crucify Jesus, when Mary pours perfume for Jesus’ burial onto His head, Jesus declares, “This good report will be spoken in memorial of her”. God’s apostle Paul writes, “I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” Solomon writes, “A good report makes the bones healthy”. Proverbs 15:30

You share good reports to give your hearers healthy bones. You share good reports to lead others to the God of peace.

And of course what is most admirable – the greatest good report: Christ is Risen Indeed. 1 Corinthians 15. Reverend Doctor Lucas Woodford, District President of Minnesota South, gives a good report from this summer’s Synod Convention. Think about his good report of what is admirable, and the God of peace will be with you.

The 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod met July 18-23 in Phoenix. Its theme, “Christ is Risen Indeed” was drawn from 1 Corinthians 15:20-22: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

The convention began with the Divine Service. Thousands joined in singing “This Joyful Eastertide,” accompanied by organ, brass and a choir of 55 children from congregations across the Synod. Throughout the week, daily prayer, hymnody, international greetings and remembrance of church workers called to glory helped keep the convention grounded in Christ.

Especially inspiring were the standing ovations and singing of the Common Doxology after the Synod recognized the altar and pulpit fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Christian Church of Bolivia and expressed support for the same with Lutheran Missions – Australia.

Actions Taken

The Synod adopted “Tell the Next Generation” as its new mission and ministry emphasis and approved resolutions encouraging parish-level church planting, campus ministry, ministry among youth and young adults, congregational revitalization and stronger digital witness. The convention’s national offering for this emphasis surpassed \$740,000 during the week.

The convention also reinstated the Commission on Worship, providing the Synod with a formal means to evaluate worship resources and encourage faithful, beautiful and doctrinally sound hymnody and liturgical practice.

Other significant resolutions condemned political violence, encouraged responsible Christian participation in public life, directed the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to examine pressing political and social questions, and called for careful theological and ethical consideration of artificial intelligence. The convention also addressed sexual misconduct by rostered workers, seeking clearer procedures and spiritual care for those harmed.

The Synod reaffirmed its historic teaching and practice regarding closed communion. The seminaries were asked to study questions surrounding the public reading of Scripture in worship.

Pastoral Formation

The convention reaffirmed the Synod’s traditional residential approach to preparing pastors while responding to concerns raised throughout the church.

Resolution 6-04A affirmed the residential Master of Divinity and Residential Alternate Route as the Synod’s normal, preferred forms of pastoral formation and rejected an online M. Div. model. Resolution 6-05A reaffirmed that the LCMS will continue to own and operate its pastoral-training pathways rather than outsource formation to independent institutions. These resolutions passed with more than 75% and 80% support, respectively.

The convention also affirmed the current parameters of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, encouraged SMP pastors to pursue General Pastor Certification and urged congregations and districts to help fund that continuing education. The Pastoral Formation Committee was broadened to include additional seminary, parish and district representation, thereby strengthening consultation across the Synod.

Finally, Resolution 6-13 encouraged exploration of multi-point-parishes, circuit-riding and other cooperative arrangements that can provide faithful pastoral care and appropriate compensation, while acknowledging that bi-vocational ministry will remain necessary in some settings.

Of course, no convention settles every question, nor does every delegate agree with every decision. Yet we can give thanks that the Synod gathered around God's Word, received Christ's body and blood, sang the faith together and conducted its work beneath the joyful confession that we certainly do all agree upon: Christ is risen indeed!

Whatever is admirable – whatever is of good report – think about such things, and the God of peace will be with you.

As Jesus lives,
Pastor Paul Egger
District President, Iowa District West



Education Youth Family Life

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

It's not too late to take advantage of registering and attending this beneficial workshop offered by the IDW Education Committee. Register by Monday, November 2.

District Workshop: Conflict and Difficult Conversations

The District Education and Family Life Committee is sponsoring a workshop on Saturday, November 7. Details are provided in the flier included in the *Messenger*. It will be a very helpful event for both church workers and laity. We encourage you to save the date on your calendar and register to attend. If you have any questions, contact Rhonda at the district office. Scan the QR code for more information.



Congratulations to Chelsea Adams!



The **Teaching 4 Life Award** was presented to **Chelsea Adams**, a kindergarten teacher at Mount Olive Lutheran School in Des Moines. Chelsea is helping young children learn to recognize and treasure the gift of life God has given them. Her work is a reminder that teaching the value of life can begin at an early age.

Pictured L to R) Cori Meier, Interim Director of Y4Life, Chelsea Adams, Diane Albers, President of Lutherans for Life, Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans for Life

FUN FACTS ABOUT OUR IOWA LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

- **We have 9 day schools in the district and two of them include high school.**
- **We currently have 1,105 students in our schools**
- **We have had an increase of 415 students between the 2020-2021 and the 2026-2027 school year. (Praise God!)**
- **We have 35 preschools with over 1300 children enrolled.**
- **More of our preschools are participating in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program because of the Legislation Bill Senate File 2231 that was passed allowing religious freedom.**
- **Last year, 14 baptisms took place because of our school ministries.**

YouthLead

Teens leading teens

For 40 years, YouthLead has equipped teens to develop and use their leadership skills as they serve Christ within their congregations and communities. We offer resources, training, and mentorship to equip high school youth to lead now and into the future.

Our annual leadership training event is facilitated by the YouthLead Executive Team. With a different focus each year, the event gives teens the tools they need to mature in their faith, become leaders in their congregations, and reach out to their peers with the love of Christ.

Please let Rev. Ryan Roehrig, chair of Youth Services Committee, or Rhonda Mohr know if you have a youth interested in attending. The registration is opening soon. Spots fill up fast so don't delay in contacting us and get your registration in – students who have participated in this LOVE this event!

LCMS Youth Ministry will host a YouthLead Training event Saturday, March 13, to Tuesday, March 16, or Saturday, April 24 to Tuesday, April 27, 2027, in St. Louis.

IDW Senior Youth Gathering at Camp Okoboji



What a wonderful weekend at Camp Okoboji! **127 youth and adults** gathered under the theme **"Unshakeable Light,"** based on **John 8:12: "I am the light of the world."** Throughout the weekend, we were reminded that Jesus is the Light who shines in every circumstance and whose love and promises can never be shaken. It was a joy to see youth and adults worshiping, learning, laughing, building relationships, serving and growing together in faith. We give thanks to God for everyone who participated and for the opportunity to encourage one another to follow Christ and reflect His unshakeable light in our homes, churches, schools, and communities.

Conflict & Difficult Conversations Workshop

Saturday, November 7, 2026 | Iowa District West Office | 409 Kenyon Rd, Suite B, Fort Dodge
A Free Event For All Church Workers & Laity

Session 1

Coping with Conflict Constructively & Productively: Communication Strategies & Christian Principles

How do you handle conflict in life? Are you a conflict dreader, a conflict spreader, or a conflict solver and resolver? Conflicts happen - in our families, in our workplaces, and in the church - but we are so often unprepared for how to handle conflict. Too often, conflict becomes destructive, rather than productive. Learn research-backed strategies from the field of Communication Studies, and God-given wisdom from Scripture, on how to make conflict less harmful and more helpful.

**Participants will head home equipped with wisdom on how to navigate conflict situations with God-serving communication. They will learn how to reflect on and improve their personal approach to conflict with new tools for their conflict management and with Biblical knowledge of Christ-centered conflict management.*

Session 2

Dealing with Difficult Conversations Calmly & Effectively

Certain conversations are, by their very nature, more difficult. It is not easy to talk with someone when there are high emotions, strongly different opinions, or a feeling of friction. In this session, a communication expert shares research-backed tips and beneficial Biblical insights to make uncomfortable conversations less uncomfortable and more successful, in a way that brings people together, rather than tears them apart.

**Participants will head home equipped to face difficult conversations more calmly and less anxiously, with insights on how to make these conversations unfold more smoothly. Participants will receive specific strategies to communicate more comfortably when engaging in uncomfortable conversations, as well as Biblical knowledge of Christ-centered principles for dealing with difficult conversations.*

Schedule

10:00-10:15 a.m. Arrival / Coffee, Juice & Light Snacks
10:15-10:30 a.m. Welcome & Opening Devotion
10:30-11:30 a.m. Session 1
11:30-12:00 p.m. Discussion Time (Conflict)
12:00-12:45 p.m. Lunch
12:45-1:45 p.m. Session 2
1:45-2:15 p.m. Discussion Time (Difficult Conversations)
2:15-2:30 p.m. Closing Devotion & Sending

Copy Link or Scan QR to Register

Online - Fill out form



About the Speaker



Rev. Dr. Todd Jenks is Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ames and Teaching Professor Emeritus of Communication Studies and Psychology at Iowa State University. With 30+ years as a pastor and communication professor, his areas of focus include conflict management, leadership communication, and intercultural communication. Todd earned his PhD in Communication at Bowling Green State University.

*"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."
— Romans 12:18*

Hosted by IDW Christian Education Committee



Elders: Guardians of the Ministry & Ministers of the Word

On January 9, 2027 from 9:30am - 1:30pm, Rev. Paul Dare will lead an Elder workshop, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 230 N Roosevelt Ave, Cherokee, IA. The workshop is hosted by Iowa District West Education Committee. The workshop is free and lunch is provided.

Topics Include

- The Pastoral Ministry
- The Ministry of Christ's Church
- Worldly Expectations of a Pastor vs. Biblical Expectations
- Why and How Elders Support their Pastor
- Called vs. Hired
- How Elders serve as Biblical Accountability for their Pastor
- Pastors & Elders: Truly Talking to One Another
- An Examination of Call Documents

Sign up at:

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/BBb8VWJema> or
scan the QR code below.



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SWOD



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Rev. Paul Dare currently serves at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Spirit Lake. He is chairman of the IDW Christian Education Committee and serves on the IDW Board of Directors. Pastor Dare has a passion for Lutheran Education. He authored "Christians in a Woke World: A Call to Courage, Confession and Love," has spoken at many events throughout the country and is currently writing a book about Church Discipline. He is married to Rachel and blessed to have three children.



WE ARE SUPPORTING MORE STUDENTS AND MORE SCHOOLS THAN EVER BEFORE.



1,800

STUDENTS IN OUR IOWA
LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

16

SCHOOLS IN OUR SCHOOL
TUITION ORGANIZATION
(2 NEW!)

DONATE NOW

Make a charitable gift to the Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization and receive a 75% Iowa tax credit.



IOWA LUTHERAN SCHOOL
TUITION ORGANIZATION

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

Questions? Contact Program Manager Dewey
deweytorkelson@gmail.com

(712) 260-2991

iowalutheransto.com

MISSION POSSIBLE!

Thanksgiving from the Trenches

Scripture: Psalm 107:1 — “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!”

What does real gratitude look like when life is heavy? Not the polite “thank you” at the door or the seasonal caption over pumpkin pie, but the kind of thanksgiving that can sit in a hospital room, receive difficult news, and still whisper, “Lord, You have been faithful.”

1. A Hymn Born in Devastation

German pastor Martin Rinkart served the walled town of Eilenburg during the Thirty Years’ War. When refugees crowded inside its walls, famine and disease followed. In 1637, the Great Pestilence came. Of the four ministers serving the town, one fled, two died, and Rinkart buried them both. As the only pastor left, he often conducted forty to fifty funerals a day, about 4,480 in all. In May, his own wife died. By year’s end, the dead were being buried in trenches without services. We can only imagine the sorrow he carried.

*Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom this world rejoices.*

That hymn was not born in comfort. It was born in devastation. And that is why it still speaks so tenderly to us. Rinkart reminds us that Christian gratitude does not deny grief. It clings to God in the middle of it.

2. Pain, Dependence, and Grace

Was Rinkart pretending everything was fine? No. He was doing something more honest: confessing his dependence on the Lord.

Pain has a way of putting thanksgiving into proper perspective. When life is beyond our control, and so much of it is, we are gently brought back to what Martin Luther knew: “We are all beggars. That is true.” A beggar does not earn his bread. A beggar receives it.

True gratitude begins not with what we have earned, but with what we have been given.

Here our Lutheran theology brings real comfort. Faith is not self-improvement. Faith is gift. The Holy Spirit works through the Word to create what He commands. He opens ears, softens hearts, gives understanding, and bears fruit in us, sometimes quietly, sometimes slowly, always by grace.

Rinkart was not manufacturing gratitude through willpower. He was receiving it from a God who remains faithful even when the world falls apart.

To cultivate thanksgiving, we learn to receive every blessing as a gift, not as a self-help technique, but as a discipline of faith. Above all, we give thanks to the Father who sent His Son as a ransom for many, restoring us to Himself now and forever.

3. Seeing What We Miss

Gratitude is not only a theology. It is a way of seeing.

Courtland Sayres once reflected on the ordinary goodness of life and wrote of “five thousand breathless dawns,” flowers fresh with dew, sunsets wrapped in gold, snowflakes, friends, music-haunted dreams, stars, bees, and one heart that “loved and understood.” Then he asked, “How ... in God’s name ... I could pay.”

That is the right question. Not “How can I earn this?” but “How can I possibly repay what has already been freely given?” The answer is that we cannot. We can only receive and give thanks. Sayres was not counting accomplishments. He was noticing ordinary mercies: dawns, flowers, sunsets, friends, love, stars, and quiet beauty. Perhaps our struggle with gratitude is not that God has been stingy, but that sorrow, hurry, or weariness have made it harder for us to see His gifts.

A Word to Carry Into November

Martin Rinkart buried thousands and still wrote a hymn of thanksgiving. Not because he was untouched by grief, but because he knew where his bread came from. He knew he was a beggar, and he trusted the gracious hand of God.

Sayres woke up overwhelmed by beauty and asked how he could repay it. The Gospel answers: you cannot. You can only receive.

That is the invitation before us this November. We do not have to manufacture gratitude, minimize our pain, or pretend everything is easy. We open our hands like beggars and receive what God has already given: His Son, His grace, and His steadfast love that endures forever.

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

May that gratitude gently reshape our homes, our work, our ministry, our witness, and our prayers. A heart that has truly received grace will, by God’s own Spirit, learn again and again to give thanks.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving.

Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney



Rev. Cory Kroonblawd

As our society continues to push and cross ethical boundaries on many fronts related to life issues, we continue to see cases in which medical "malpractice" has devastating and irrevocable effects. Throughout the summer, some of these stories made national and international headlines regarding euthanasia and IVF. Whether it is [a Canadian woman who was involuntarily euthanized](#) despite her objections to assisted suicide based on her religious convictions (with her own family also protesting), or [a couple who chose IVF only to discover that their child was not biologically theirs](#), these cases demonstrate the confusion and heartache that can result when we overstep in areas where God has not given His blessing. We do not have the authority to end life. Administering death is neither mercy nor medical care. Lord, have mercy.

As faithful Christians, it is important to be informed and equipped to discuss these topics. As we speak with couples bearing the cross of infertility, may we be prepared to speak biblically and faithfully so that they may find the peace of Christ. As we sit at the bedside of a loved one who has received a terminal diagnosis, may we remind them of the value and worth bestowed upon them by our Lord Jesus Christ. Thankfully, there are faithful voices within our LCMS circles addressing these matters thoughtfully and at length.

Some Lutheran Resources

IVF Resources

- Over 62 *Issues, Etc.* interviews regarding IVF:
<https://issuesetc.org/?s=IVF>
- Lutherans For Life:
<https://lutheransforlife.org/lutherans-for-life-on-in-vitro-fertilization/>
- IVF: A Lutheran Theological Perspective (*LCMS Witness*):
<https://witness.lcms.org/2025/on-ivf-a-lutheran-theological-perspective/>
- IVF: A Lutheran Medical Perspective (*LCMS Witness*):
<https://witness.lcms.org/2025/on-ivf-a-lutheran-medical-perspective/>

Assisted Suicide and Life Issues Resources

- Over 90 *Issues, Etc.* interviews regarding assisted suicide:
<https://issuesetc.org/?s=Assisted+Suicide>
- LCMS Life Ministry Resources:
<https://www.lcms.org/resources/post/life-library>

BUSINESS MANAGER NEWS
Iowa District West Congregations' Mission Receipts



Month Ending September 2026	
Anticipated Amount	\$110,000
Actual Receipts	\$116,379
Year-to-Date Receipts	
Anticipated Amount	\$880,000
Actual Receipts	\$911,125
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$31,125
Use of Mission Receipts	
Remitted to Synod (40%)	\$352,000
Balance for District programs & ministries	\$559,125
Total Receipts	\$911,125
Mission Receipts Compared with Last Year	
Month ending September 2026	\$911,125
Month ending September 2025	\$871,183
Over (under) last year	\$ 39,942

Partners in the Gospel - Monthly Mission Moment

Did you know that in addition to your congregational mission dollars, the District budget is supported by other income sources including an estate from the Soenksen Legacy Fund? This account has provided support for Synod Missions, World Missionaries, Ministerial Health, Lutheran School Outreach, Technology, and Professional Church Worker Loan Repayment. Since 2013, the account has supported these mission and ministries totaling nearly \$1.8 million. This fall, the budget includes at least \$50,000 for student debt reduction (known as the Ministry Excellence Fund). If you would like to fund important missions and ministries after your death, [contact](#) Gift Planning Counselor Leon Schoenfeld to develop a plan.

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)

“We are often exhorted to focus on Christ and not to look at our own circumstances in order to maintain an attitude of thankfulness, yet the Apostle Paul counsels, *“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Regardless of what this past year has brought you, we can give thanks for it, bad or good, because we know that it is God’s will for us.



Church & Clergy Finance/Treasurer's Workshop

The next Treasurer's Workshop will now be held online on Saturday, November 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

The Saturday, January 7 program will take place in person at Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Denison, with a snow date the following Saturday. Pastors and all individuals within the church who have financial responsibilities are encouraged to attend. The guest speaker will be Mr. Bob Joy, CPA. He is very knowledgeable and has nearly 30 years of financial experience. Bob owns his own accounting business specializing in clergy taxes and is the financial manager for a large church. Please register [online](#). If you have any questions, contact Roger at 515-576-7666 or Roger@IowaDistrictWest.org.



What are Scholarship Granting Organizations?

Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) are nonprofit organizations that raise and distribute scholarship funds to help K-12 students access educational opportunities, including private and religious schools such as Lutheran schools. Recent changes enacted through the federal tax credit program included in the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" created a new federal tax credit of up to \$1,700 for qualifying contributions to approved SGOs, beginning in 2027. This new incentive is expected to increase scholarship funding available to eligible Iowa students and families while complementing, rather than replacing, existing state tax-credit scholarship programs such as the Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization (www.iowalutheransto.com). This election season, Iowa voters should support candidates who share the vision of leaders such as Governor Kim Reynolds and who advocate for educational choice and scholarship programs that help families access the schools that best meet their children's needs. To learn more, go to www.iowaace.org/iowa-scholarship-granting-organization.

Concordia Plan Services Update

It will soon be Annual Compensation Reporting (ACR) time with Concordia Plans. Providing accurate and updated compensation information is very important so that both the ministries' billing for the Concordia Plans and workers' benefits (retirement, disability, and death benefits) will be correctly calculated for 2027.

ACRs should be completed by December 31, 2026, for accurate reporting in the new year. Be sure to visit ConcordiaPlans.org/ACR for additional ACR information and resources or call 888-927-7526 or info@ConcordiaPlans.org.

Open Enrollment is a great time to review your health care benefits, along with additional insurance and retirement savings benefits. Log into your member portal November 2-13. In summary, Open Enrollment is a great time to review:

- HealthEquity Personal Spending Accounts (PSA).
- Current life insurance coverage.
- Supplemental life or other additional injury/critical illness insurance benefits.
- Review pension/Concordia Retirement Savings Plan (CRSP) 403(b) savings.
- Dependents and beneficiaries.

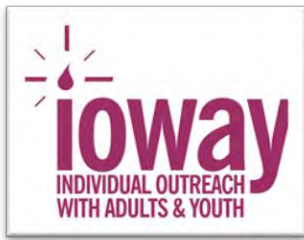


An additional resource for your ministry is a webinar – "Preparing Employers for Member Benefits Open Enrollment" – at 1 p.m. on October 28. You'll get the details you need to help your workers through Open Enrollment. [Sign up today!](#) To learn more about Open Enrollment, go online - [Employers link](#).

Giving Tuesday - December 1, 2026

Mark your calendars for Giving Tuesday on December 1, 2026, a Global Day of Generosity and an opportunity to support ministries and causes that share Christ's love with others. As you consider your year-end charitable giving, we encourage you to explore the helpful planning and generosity resources available through Thrivent. Visit thrivent.com/resources for articles, tools, and guidance on charitable giving, financial stewardship, and making a meaningful impact through your generosity.





Julie Mann, IOWAY Coordinator

julie@iowadistrictwest.org

515-408-9696

“Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen.” **James 5:7** Interestingly enough, my thoughts turned to this verse after driving past countless corn and soybean fields over the last few weeks thinking of how harvest was pushed back later by our September rains this year. I found myself marveling at the intricate details of God’s creation. I understand not wanting to get your combine stuck in the mud, but my



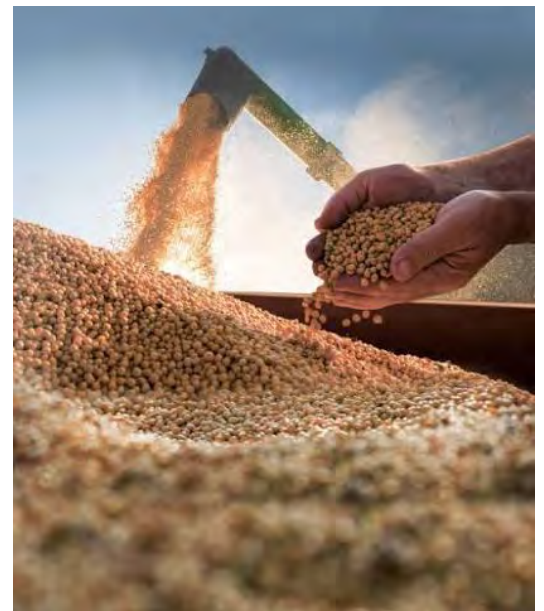
big question was, “How do corn and soybeans know when to stop absorbing water, so they’re dry enough to harvest?” That also led me to think about Ecclesiastes 3 “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens”, and God’s perfect timing.

But those drives also reminded me of something important: God is our magnificent Designer. He created each plant with purpose, providing what it needs to grow and produce at the right time. And

just as He thoughtfully designed the world around us, He created each of us with beautiful creativity and purpose.

Ephesians 2:10 reminds us, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” What a wonderful reason to give thanks! We are God’s handiwork, lovingly created by Him and redeemed through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our salvation is a gift of grace, not something we earn. In gratitude for all He has given us, we respond by serving our neighbors and sharing His love through the good works He has prepared for us.

As we celebrate this season of thanks and gratitude, I am especially grateful for the many ways you live out that calling through IOWAY. So many of you have reached out with, “I have this little project...” or “We’d like to do a little something...” Please know that when God works through your generosity, those little projects can have an extraordinary impact. A simple act of kindness, a donated resource, a willing volunteer, or a new community partnership can grow into something far greater than we might imagine.



Through your generosity, God continues to provide for families and communities across our district and beyond. Your willingness to share your time, resources, and gifts helps connect people with care and reminds them that they are not forgotten. These efforts are needed, deeply appreciated, and worthy of thanksgiving.

So, the next time you pass a cornfield or watch a soybean harvest, take a moment to marvel at the wisdom of our Creator. Consider the thought He put into every detail of that cornstalk or

soybean, right down to the timing of the harvest. Then reflect on the care and purpose He has woven into you.

This Thanksgiving, may we give thanks not only for what God has provided, but also for the opportunities He gives us to share those blessings with others. What we may consider a little thing can become a beautiful expression of God's love when He works through our hands.

The Kingdom is thriving

Ministry missions are fueled by LCEF investors

LCMS churches, schools and organizations grow more each day, extending the news of Christ's love and mercy further into their communities. LCEF solutions drive ministry empowerment through investor support. Explore real partnership impact stories by visiting the LCEF Ministry Stories Map.

See where your support makes a difference:
lcef.org/SeeTheStories



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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*

Gary.Thies@lcms.org (712) 251-1264
Steve.Schulz@lcms.org (712) 882-1029
Jim.Schroeder@lcms.org (515) 490-7371

November 2026



What a joy and blessing it was to once again welcome our special missionary friend, Margaret Schroeder of Worthington, MN, along with her dear daughter, Kerry Sauer of Lismore, MN, for Kerry's first visit to Mission Central. It was 17 years ago that Margaret made her first visit, and she *never forgot* her experience here! Now, she and Kerry are planning to bring others to Mission Central for a tour.

It was so wonderful to welcome Al and Linda Krahn, who came all the way from Gleason, Wisconsin, because an LWML member told them they simply had to stop and visit Mission Central during their travels out West. Yes, it's all about "word-of-mouth" connections here at Mission Central. We have not spent a single cent on advertising during these past 32 years! Our visitors do the advertising, sharing with others what the Lord Jesus has done out here in the middle of nowhere.



Rod Husman, of Cherokee, Iowa, stopped by for a visit because he is interested in going on a short-term mission trip. If *YOU* would like to go on a similar short-term mission adventure, you can contact our LCMS Director of Short-Term Missions, Erin Alter, at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis. Her number is 314-996-1746. She would be happy to help you get started!

What a blessing it was to welcome our Latin America Business Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, Stan and Dana Stigdon, who live in the Dominican Republic. They arrived here on September 19, 2026, and gave an excellent presentation on their work throughout *all* of Latin America. Their photos were outstanding, and they were able to share stories about the people, congregations, and countless individuals involved in the growth of many new congregations. This amazing couple serves as "missionaries to our missionaries" and is involved in important behind-the-scenes work that helps keep our missionaries on the mission field. Please remember to pray for this special couple as they continue to serve our Lord Jesus in Latin America.



What a special, special day it was on Friday, October 2, 2026, in the hills of western Iowa at the world-famous Mission Central!!! We were so blessed to welcome the 8th Grade class from Cornerstone Christian School in Omaha for a complete tour of the Creation Theater, the Barn Museum, and the Ministry Center. Here you see the group in the Barn Museum, as well as the entire class that was sworn in as missionaries for the rest of their lives by our world-famous sign! It was truly a day that this entire group will never, never forget!



It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon on October 4, when special friends of Pastor and Sue stopped by to see Mission Central on their way home to Fargo, ND. Lydia, Elsie, James, and Marcella Trandem enjoyed a full tour of our campus and were reminded once again WHY we send missionaries to tell people about Jesus all over the world. It was so wonderful to see them again, and we pray that they will have an opportunity to come and visit us again sometime! It was truly a day that we will always remember.
miss

!AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

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



Rev. Pedro Lopez

Assistant to the President
Missionary at Large

pedro@iowadistrictwest.org
571-606-7600 (cell)

November 2026

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! We give thanks for the many ways God continues to work through this ministry and for each person who supports it through prayer, encouragement, and faithful service. As we share these updates, we look ahead with hope and trust, eager to follow wherever the Lord leads us next.

Ministry Updates

- **St. Paul, Carroll**

Last month, we changed our regular Bible study that day to a worship service so that we could gather with friends and former ESL students in remembrance of Gibran's mother, who passed away a year ago. Remembering loved ones who have died is an important tradition in Mexican culture. For this service, rather than praying for the dead, we thanked God for the time she was with us and prayed for Gibran and all his siblings, asking the Lord to comfort and strengthen them. Our Saturday evenings of praise, prayer, and Bible study continue to provide meaningful time together, while our monthly fellowship gatherings help strengthen our community. Rigo, together with other youth from St. Paul, also attended the District Senior Youth Gathering at Camp Okoboji. He shared that he felt blessed to attend, learn more, and grow in his faith.

- **St. John, Storm Lake**

We continue to support the Swaddling Clothes program and help on the second Saturday of each month. This past month, we served more than 70 families and 145 children. Through this outreach, we meet families, make a meaningful difference in the community, and invite them to Spanish Sunday worship at Grace. We are also planning additional in-home Bible studies to make them more accessible to families.

- **Holy Trinity, Farnhamville**

Please continue to pray for the congregation of Holy Trinity as we plan an English as a Second Language (ESL) program for Farnhamville and the surrounding area. We pray that this outreach will help us build relationships with Hispanic residents and people from other ethnic communities and welcome them into the life of the church.

Prayer and Thanksgiving

Please join us in prayer for:

- The Hispanic Ministry of Iowa District West and the communities we serve.
- Fili and Adrian, as they explore opportunities to continue their education—possibly through seminary—and prepare for ongoing service to the Lord; and for Fili's safe return from Mexico after spending two weeks visiting his family.
- Our volunteers, whose faithful prayers and service encourage and strengthen this ministry. We thank the Lord for each of them.
- My wife and me, that the Lord would continue to guide, strengthen, and equip us for the work He has entrusted to us.

Bendiciones,
Pastor Lopez





CAN WE COME VISIT?

Let's Talk Hispanic Outreach!

We would love to come visit your congregation!

Yasmin is hoping to visit congregations throughout the Siouxland, Wayne, and Le Mars areas to share a little about the Siouxland Lutheran Hispanic Ministry, who we are, what we do, and why we do it.

But we don't just want to tell you about us, we want to talk about YOU! How can we help your congregation reach the Hispanic neighbors and families in your community? Please reach out to Yasmin to schedule.

PASTORAL CALL UPDATE

We have finalized all the required paperwork and are awaiting government approval. We have been given an estimated time of response by January of 2027. We continue to move forward in thoughtful prayer, trusting that the Lord knows the plans He has for our ministry and for Frank's family.

Donations may be sent to:
Siouxland Lutheran Hispanic Ministry
218 W. 18th St.
South Sioux City, NE 68776

Spanish Word of the Month

.....

Santos

Pronounced "santos"

English: Saints

"Celebramos el dia de los Santos."

"We celebrate All Saints' Day."

ALL SAINTS' DAY & REFORMATION DAY

As we celebrate All Saints' Day (November 1), we give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith and for the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

On Reformation Day (October 31), we remember Martin Luther and his efforts to bring the Church back to the truth of God's Word. We celebrate the beautiful promise that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

As the Siouxland Lutheran Hispanic Ministry, we rejoice that the Gospel unites people of every nation, language, and culture in Christ!



“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

Prayers

- + For open doors to share the Gospel in our daily life.
- + For the calling process, that God may send the workers He has prepared for our work here and in other places.
- + For immigrants around the world, that they may find a place to live and have Christ in their lives and homes.

DCE Intern Yasmin Osterholt
605-941-8965
Yosterholt@outlook.com

Hope Lutheran Hispanic
Ministry
218 W. 18th St.
South Sioux City, NE 68776



Update

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Oct 17: BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

**Nov 27-28: OFFICE CLOSED FOR
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

**Nov. 30-Dec 1: GIVING TUESDAY
MATCHING CAMPAIGN**

Camp Executive Director, Adam, loves to visit congregations to share greetings and tell the members more about Camp Okoboji. I have the following Sundays available this fall: Oct. 11; Nov. 15; Nov. 22.

The Camp Okoboji LCMS Foundation Board of Directors met on Oct. 10, and approved a distribution of more than \$30,000 for Camp programs, camper scholarships, and facility needs. Behind every dollar of that is a legacy of dear friends of Camp that have helped to grow the Foundation through generosity, and behind every dollar is a story of how Camp changes lives, and God-willing, will continue to impact lives with the Gospel for many more generations. Visit campokoboji.org to find out more about the Foundation.



PERSONNEL: We are actively recruiting for our 2027 Summer Staff! Please encourage youth (at least 16 years of age) and college students to consider serving with us. The NLOMA Joint Recruitment will be open on October 15 at 8 am. Those interested in serving at Camp Okoboji, or any LCMS camp in 2026 should complete a NLOMA profile. That is the first step in being considered for a summer position.

Thank You!

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

- We are grateful for Dale Kimball and Steve Frank for taking on an important project – rebuilding (and expanding) the back deck for cabin Marflow. We are thankful for their work and support of the project.



We loved having the IDW Senior High Youth Gathering this year! What a great group!

Helping Youth Thrive Through Faith, Connection, And Prevention

by Stephanie Grade, LMHC



Our children today face pressures at school, online, among friends, and sometimes at home. They may experience anxiety, loneliness, stress, depression, trauma, or pressure to fit in. For some, substances can become a way to cope with emotions or situations they don't yet know how to handle.

As parents, caregivers, educators, churches, and communities, we have an important role in prevention. Prevention isn't simply about telling youth what *not* to do. It means helping them understand their worth, building safe relationships, teaching healthy coping skills, and making sure they know where to turn when life becomes difficult.

Understanding Substance Use And Mental Health

Youth substance use may include alcohol, nicotine and vaping products, cannabis, prescription medications used outside medical guidance, and other drugs. Early substance use can create serious challenges and may develop into more harmful patterns.

It's important to respond without shame. A teen struggling with substance use is not a "bad kid." They may be facing difficult circumstances or using substances to cope with something they don't know how to express.

Mental health and substance use can also affect one another. Anxiety, depression, trauma, loneliness, and stress may increase the desire to escape difficult emotions, while

substance use can contribute to changes in mood, relationships, school performance, and overall well-being.

Connection Is Prevention

One of the most powerful forms of prevention is connection. Teens need adults who know them—not just their accomplishments, but their hopes, fears, questions, and struggles.

Protective relationships and activities may include:

- Parents, caregivers, mentors, and trusted adults
- Positive friendships
- Church, school, sports, arts, or community activities
- Healthy coping skills and routines
- Consistent boundaries and expectations
- Access to mental health and substance-use resources
- A sense of belonging and purpose

Tight-knit communities can create spaces where youth feel welcomed, heard, and valued. Sometimes prevention is as simple as a parent having an honest conversation, a mentor checking in, or a youth leader making sure a student feels seen and valued.

Start The Conversation

Talking about substances doesn't have to be a one-time lecture. Conversations can happen naturally and repeatedly. Even having conversations when this topic is addressed on a movie you may be watching together. Ask questions such as:

“What pressures are kids dealing with at school?”

“What do you do when you're really stressed?”

“Is there anything you're worried about that you haven't known how to talk about?”

Listen before responding. A harsh or judgmental reaction can cause a teen to shut down. James 1:19 reminds us to be “quick to listen, slow to speak.” A calm, compassionate response can help youth feel safe enough to keep talking.

Our children need healthy alternatives for managing stress and difficult emotions. These may include prayer and time in God's Word, talking with a trusted person, exercise,

activities, time in nature, healthy routines, journaling, counseling, serving others, and spending time with close family and friends.

As a parent, you may notice when your teen starts to withdraw, have significant mood or behaviors changes, have declining school participation, changes in sleep or other routines, increased secrecy, or loss of interest in activities. These are signs a conversation needs to happen. It does not mean that your child is using substances or experiencing a mental health condition, but it does mean they need to be heard to with curiosity and compassion.

Leading With Grace And Truth

We can teach the next generation the risks of substance use while refusing to define them by their mistakes. We can establish boundaries while offering forgiveness and encourage responsibility while showing compassion.

Psalm 139:14 reminds us that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Every adolescent deserves to hear that message, not only when they are succeeding, but especially when they are struggling.

Prevention is about more than saying “no.” It is about helping our youth say yes to healthy relationships, faith, hope, purpose, support, and a future worth protecting. Our children do not need adults who pretend struggles don’t exist. They need adults willing to walk beside them through those struggles, just as Jesus walks along side us in our dark valleys.

Remind your children (and yourself):

You are loved. You matter. You are not alone. You are worthy. You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

If you or someone you know would benefit from support navigating the complexities of family life, contact us today.

Stephanie sees clients in person in Carroll, Iowa, and throughout the state via telehealth.

sgrade@lutheranfamilyservice.org | 712-276-9000 | lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact

Not located near Carroll or in Iowa? Visit our website to explore our other locations and learn whether telehealth or distance counseling may be an option for you:

lutheranfamilyservice.org/mental-health-counseling.

Lutheran Family Service walks alongside individuals and families through difficult times, offering mental health counseling, marriage counseling, crisis pregnancy counseling, and adoption services.



Autism Caregiver Support Group

Led by: Janel Lincoln, LMSW

Location: Online/Worldwide

Date(s): Continuous Monthly Meetings, Every First Tuesday

Time: 12:00pm Noon CT

This new group provides a welcoming, Christ-centered community for parents and caregivers raising a child with autism. Together, participants can connect with others who understand the journey, share experiences, find practical guidance and trusted resources, and talk honestly about the challenges and joys of caring for their child. The group explores topics such as navigating school, home, and community supports, strengthening family relationships, caring for yourself as a caregiver, and finding encouragement and hope rooted in Scripture and the promises of Christ.

Learn more and register at: <https://lutheranfamilyservice.org/autism-support-group/>