



# DISTRICT NEWS

## IOWA WEST

### Lutherans here, Lutherans there, Lutherans, Lutherans **EVERYWHERE!**

By Rev. Paul Egger • District President

God gave me opportunity to travel to Germany alongside five other new district presidents. The picture at right (above) is inside the Castle Church, where Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door, asking to discuss areas in which his Roman Catholic church had departed from God’s clear Word.

Thanks be to God — soon Luther translated the Bible into the people’s language so all could read. As God brings us into this new year, the year of our Lord 2026, read God’s Bible. God’s Word is our great heritage, and shall be ours forever. To shine its Light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor.

Through the decades, the Holy Spirit used faithful testimony to bring many to faith, into God’s eternal family.

#### The 2025 International Church Relations Conference

Our LCMS shares altar and pulpit fellowship with 44 Lutheran church bodies around the globe. A few countries include Brazil, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, Iceland, Russia, Sudan and Ukraine. We met with leaders of Lutheran church bodies from around God’s earth in Wittenberg Oct. 27–31.

The picture below shows the district presidents standing with two Lutheran leaders from India. The pastor in center, Rev. Dr. P.R. Selvaraj, is president of Concordia Theological Seminary in Nagercoil. To give you an idea of what Christians face around the world, fellow staff members at the seminary in India stormed the door to Dr. Selvaraj’s house, broke it down, dragged him out into the street and severely beat him. Sounds like a reflection of the Apostle Paul’s ministry in the Book of Acts.

Dr. Selvaraj was hospitalized for six weeks, and during his time in the hospital, some of the “good seminary staff” infected his family’s water supply with animal manure, causing sickness as

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▲ District presidents pictured are, from left, Revs. Randy Sturzenbecher (South Dakota), Mark Chepulis (North Dakota), Timothy Shoup (North Wisconsin), Dr. Nathan Meador (South Wisconsin), Paul Egger (Iowa West) and Ryan Wendt (Montana).

▼ The district presidents are pictured with representatives from the India Evangelical Lutheran Church — Rev. Dr. P.R. Selvaraj (left) and Ravi Jesupatham.





**3. Share your pain to build bridges**

Painful life experiences — loss, illness, divorce, addiction — can become powerful testimonies. When shared with humility and hope, they can resonate deeply with others who are struggling.

- Train church members to share their stories in safe, appropriate ways.
- Create support groups or healing ministries that welcome people from outside the church.
- Offer workshops or seminars on grief, mental health, or recovery.

Your scars can be someone else's lifeline.

**4. Serve — and ask for help**

Serving others is a hallmark of Christian love, but don't overlook the power of asking for help. It builds trust and mutual respect.

- Organize neighborhood cleanups or food drives.
- Ask a neighbor to help with a project at church or in your home.
- Partner with local schools or businesses for community events.

Service opens doors — and asking for help keeps them open.

The survey reminds us that the harvest is plentiful, but it's relationships that often bring people to the field. Church leaders, let's equip our congregations to be inviters, connectors and bridge-builders. The next person who walks through your church doors might just be there because someone took the time to say, "Would you like to come with me?"



**Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney**

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What **2,000 unchurched people** revealed, and what church leaders can do about it

A recent survey conducted by LifeWay Research, in partnership with the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center, revealed something both encouraging and challenging for church leaders — unchurched people are more open to attending church than we might think, if someone simply invites them.

- 55% of respondents said they would be likely or very likely to attend church if invited by a family member.
- 50% said they would be likely or very likely to attend if invited by a friend.

These findings underscore a simple but powerful truth: relationships matter. The door to faith often opens through personal connection. So how can churches leverage this insight to better connect with their communities?

Here are four practical strategies to help your congregation become more intentional about outreach:

**1. Maximize Your "Two-fers"**

Think of "two-fers" as opportunities to combine what you're already doing with intentional outreach. For example:

- Hosting a church workday? Invite

neighbors to help and share lunch afterward.

- Planning a community event? Encourage members to bring a friend or family member.
- Running errands or attending a local sports game? Bring someone along who isn't connected to a church.

Outreach doesn't always require extra time — just extra intention.

**2. Do what you love — with people who need Jesus**

Whether it's hiking, cooking, crafting or playing music, your hobbies can become bridges to meaningful relationships. Encourage your congregation to:

- Start a book club or walking group and invite unchurched friends.
- Volunteer together at a local nonprofit.
- Host a game night or potluck with neighbors.

Shared interests create natural spaces for connection and conversation.

# Registration is OPEN!

Now is the time to register for 2026 camps. Early Bird registration ends March 1 for \$20 off each registration.

As the camp for Iowa District West, we see ourselves as a partner with our congregations in assisting our youth with faith development. At Camp Okoboji, we believe we are an essential piece in Christian education. For our youth, a camp experience is one of many factors that can contribute to long-term engagement in faith communities.

For more information, visit [campokoboji.org](http://campokoboji.org).

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## MESSAGE

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they tried to drive them out of the seminary. As he gathered with us in Germany, his future remained very uncertain.

Yet his future with Jesus remains very certain. Jesus promises: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven” (Matt. 5:11–12 NIV). This faithful man’s future remains certain in Jesus — and so does yours!

Returning from Germany, more Lutherans! What a Divine Service at St. Paul, Aurelia, on Nov. 9. God has been caring for this congregation for 100 years. The service had former St. Paul pastor, Rev. Larry Lemke, leading liturgy and current pastor, Rev. Joseph Eggerman, preaching: Jesus Christ, our Sure Foundation! Wonderful! From Aurelia to Germany, from Brazil to the Dakotas, from Iceland to India — by God’s grace, Lutheran here, Lutherans there, Lutherans, Lutherans EVERYWHERE!

**As angels sing,  
Pastor Paul Egger**



The Castle Church, Wittenberg, Germany

## MISSION CENTRAL



**Oct. 23:** The Lord Jesus sent 21 volunteers from Iowa and Nebraska to help clean the Barn Museum (which is done twice a year). The group started work in the morning and by noon the entire barn was spic and span!



**Oct. 16:** Pictured are, from left, Dean and Pam Heiden, and Lynda and Paul Heiden, all the way from Lincoln, Neb. What a blessing and joy to spend this special time together with these *not normal* people!



**Oct. 29:** Visiting were, from left, Brian and Jennie Williamson of Frohna, Mo., and Bob Payne and Bev Vietor of Georgetown, Calif. Jennie is a Christian singer, songwriter and speaker, and with Brian is mission director of Saxon Lutheran Memorial in Perry County, Mo.



**Oct. 28:** Arriving on a rainy, blustery day were seventh-and eighth-grade students and staff of First Lutheran School, Glencoe, Minn. After a five-hour drive, they were reminded that we are *all* missionaries who can tell others the Good News about our Savior Jesus!



▲ **Oct. 14:** The nine newest LCMS missionaries enjoyed a full tour of the campus and learned about our role in supporting their work. Pictured are, from left, Kaelin Peralta (Africa); Rev. Jeff and Deaconess Gina Teeple (Germany); Dan and Marie Lowitz (Dominican Republic); Rev. Michael and Shanna Hageman (Tanzania); Sean and Hanna McHugh (Romania); and Gary Thies.



◀ **Oct. 15:** From left, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL) students John Trinklein, Jorgen Dahl and Cody Krueger; and CSL professors Rev. Joel Fritsche and Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden toured the campus and tried on some of the hats donated from nations where our missionaries have served.



**Oct. 31:** On Reformation Day, we welcomed Deaconess Kim Buelmann, LCMS missionary to Germany. She gave an update on how the Lord Jesus is using her gifts in helping congregations in Leipzig and Chemnitz to reach out to Persian-speaking immigrants from Afghanistan and Iran. Kim can speak Farsi and German. She is actively involved in worship planning and leading music for worship in Farsi, and she works closely with Persian musicians in these congregations to develop more hymns and liturgy in Farsi.

**MISSION CENTRAL STAFF**

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## Health

### STREP THROAT



#### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Strep throat is a bacterial infection that can make the throat feel sore and scratchy. If untreated, it can cause complications such as kidney inflammation or rheumatic fever, which can lead to painful and inflamed joints, a specific type of rash, or heart-valve damage. Signs and symptoms of strep throat can include throat pain that comes on quickly, painful swallowing, red/swollen tonsils, tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth, swollen/tender lymph nodes in the neck, fever, headache, rash, nausea and body aches.

Strep throat is caused by infection with a bacterium known as *Streptococcus pyogenes*, also called “group A streptococcus.” This bacteria is contagious and can spread through droplets when someone with the infection coughs or sneezes, or through shared food or drinks. It can also be spread from contaminated surfaces with the hands to the nose, mouth or eyes.

Strep bacteria flourish whenever groups of people are in close contact. Strep bacteria can cause infection in the tonsils, sinuses, skin, blood and middle ear. Illnesses caused by strep infection include scarlet fever (characterized by a prominent rash), kidney inflammation and rheumatic fever. To prevent strep infection, wash your hands, cover your mouth with an elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, don’t share drinking glasses or eating utensils, and wash dishes in hot, soapy water.

Diagnosis of strep throat by a healthcare provider is done by physical exam, observing signs and symptoms, and ordering tests. Treatment includes antibiotics and symptom relievers such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. However, children and teenagers recovering from chickenpox or flu-like symptoms should never take aspirin. Aspirin has been linked to Reye’s syndrome, a rare but potentially life-threatening condition in some children.

Self-care with strep throat includes getting plenty of rest, drinking plenty of water, eating easy-to-swallow or cold foods, gargling with warm salt water ( $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt in 8 ounces of warm water) several times a day, and use of a cool mist humidifier (clean daily to prevent bacteria and mold growth).

Notify your healthcare provider for prompt testing and treatment of signs and symptoms.

*(Information is referenced from Mayo Clinic website.)*

**Darlene Rueter, RN**

IDW Parish Nurse Rep • [drrueter@gmail.com](mailto:drrueter@gmail.com)

## IOWAY



### God’s goodness

This year, my New Year’s resolution is to stop making New Year’s resolutions! No, it’s not because I have trouble keeping them. I usually don’t make life-altering, hardcore, feel-like-a-self-proclaimed-failure-when-I-break-them-11-days-in kind of resolutions. I do think about what positive changes I’d like to make with my life, and I do believe it’s important to be introspective, but I’m going a (slightly) different route this year.

I am not going to set myself up with good ideas that I know won’t come to fruition. Is anybody else out there like me? You know, look around, where is your stack of beautiful journals you are going to write in daily? How dusty are your pickleball paddles? (OK — it’s winter in the Midwest, I’ll give you a pass on that one.)

Where is your stash of Post-it notes to mark up your Bible or devotional books? Does your calendar have relaxation and rejuvenation written in pen that didn’t manage to make it to reality? Again, all these things are wonderful if you choose to do them.

I’ve decided to cut myself some slack and be thankful. Yep, that’s it. I’m going to breathe deeply when I realize I’m standing in a moment of the goodness of God and be thankful in this new year. It might be seeing a creative pattern of frost on my window. It may be hearing a child laugh. It may be a hug from a friend. It may be the subtle ache of stiff muscles after a solid workout. It may be precious time spent with my grown children. It may be a personal connection to words from a sermon. It may be a gorgeous sunrise, sunset, or those Northern Lights. It may be sharing a great meal with someone I haven’t caught up with in a while. It may be belting out a favorite praise song. It may be a call from a sibling. It may be the reconciliation of a tough situation. It may be a quiet hour talking with, and listening to, my Savior.

God showers us with His goodness all the time. No, I’m not naïve and know that sinfulness brings a whole lot of darkness into our lives through our free will, but God never lets us down or lets us go. Many of you know that I love to sing, and I am going to encourage you to listen to one of my favorite songs as we begin this wonderful gift of a new year — “Goodness of God.” The rendition I enjoy the most is sung by the very gifted sister in Christ, CeCe Winans — [youtube.com/watch?v=9sE5kEnitqE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sE5kEnitqE).

In happy times, or in the most difficult times, we cry out as David did in Psalm 13:5-6 (NIV):

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me.

**Julie Mann, IOWAY Director**

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# Let's discover your financial path together.

Meet your LCEF representative

Your LCEF District Vice President (DVP) is

## Josh Remington

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Learn more about how we can work together at [lcef.org/lowa](https://lcef.org/lowa).



I am here to help **start, sustain and strengthen** LCMS ministries through financial and strategic partnerships.



LUTHERAN CHURCH  
EXTENSION FUND

“Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.” -PROVERBS 30:5



# Happy Ordination ANNIVERSARY

We share the Iowa District West pastors who will celebrate milestone ordination anniversaries in 2026. Congregations are encouraged to observe these ministry milestones with an appropriate celebration.

We rejoice and give thanks to God for these gifts to His church.

## 60 Years

Rev. Curtis Foreman – July 3  
Emeritus, Ankeny

## 55 Years

Rev. Dr. Richard Osslund – March 14  
Emeritus, Brooklyn

Rev. Stephen Ude – June 20  
Zion, Ogden, and Christ, Perry

Jerome Wagoner – Aug. 1  
Mount Calvary, Villisca

## 50 Years

Rev. David Ericksen – June 20  
Emeritus, Hartley

Rev. Dr. Paul Sieveking – June 20  
Emeritus, Fenton, Mo.

## 45 Years

Rev. Lyle Hansen – June 28  
Emeritus, Boone

Rev. Carl Hedberg – July 26  
Emeritus, Mason City

## 40 Years

Rev. Dr. Bruce Peffer – June 22  
Emeritus, Battle Creek

Rev. Glenn Bohmer – Aug. 3  
Emeritus, Estherville

Rev. Virgil Ewoldt – Aug. 3  
Emeritus, Milford

## 35 Years

Rev. Dr. Todd Jenks – June 16  
St. Paul, Ames

Rev. Merle Mahnken – June 23  
Immanuel, Schleswig, and  
Bethel, Sutherland

Rev. Alan Miller – July 14  
St. Paul, Alta

Rev. Steve Schulz – July 14  
Mission Central, Mapleton

Rev. David Zirpel – July 24  
Redeemer, Sioux City

Rev. Richard Merrill – Aug. 11  
Immanuel, St. John, and  
St. Paul, Charter Oak

## 30 Years

Rev. David Kottlowski – Aug. 4  
St. Paul, Ankeny

## 20 Years

Rev. Max Phillips – Feb. 12  
Christ, Perry, and Zion, Ogden

Rev. Kevin Roop – June 4  
Peace, Marcus

Rev. Chris Nitzel – July 2  
St. Paul, Hartley

Rev. David Doellinger – July 16  
Cleghorn, Iowa

## 15 Years

Rev. Thomas Marth – July 10  
Immanuel, Estherville

Rev. Timothy Frank – July 24  
St. Paul's, Council Bluffs

Rev. David Herald – July 31  
St. Paul, Clarinda

## 10 Years

Rev. Bill Clark – Jan. 10  
Timothy, Council Bluffs

Rev. Daniel Petrak – Jan. 10  
Living Faith, Clive

Rev. Merritt Demski – June 4  
St. Paul, Alta

Rev. Lucas Booher – June 19  
Zion, Storm Lake

Rev. Ryan Roehrig – July 17  
St. Paul, Carroll

Rev. Daniel Steeb – July 17  
Immanuel, Logan

## 5 Years

Rev. Cory Kroonblawd – June 12  
St. Paul's, Sac City

Rev. Jessten Heimer – June 20  
Trinity, Boone

Rev. Joseph Pierson – June 20  
St. Paul, Webster City

Rev. Christian Pieper – July 3  
Gloria Dei, Urbandale

*If we have failed to include someone who is observing an anniversary this year, please contact the district office at 515-576-7666 or [office@iowadistrictwest.org](mailto:office@iowadistrictwest.org).*