



Northern Illinois District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Ministry UPDATE

SPRING 2022

President's Commentary *Raising Up Workers of the Word*

The question caught me off guard. I was surprised at the young man who asked it. It was asked at an adult instruction class. ***“What was it that led you to be a pastor?”*** It was a really good question and for a moment I wondered if he doubted my suitability to be a pastor.

Your professional church workers will have varying responses. Why not ask them? Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit who is at work through the encouragement of people. Have you ever thought about being a Lutheran teacher? Director of Christian Education? Pastor? In my case I was blessed by the example of faithful pastors. I not only had examples but words of encouragement from teachers, family, and friends. They saw what I did not see.

Every church worker is an answer to prayer. So pray! Pray earnestly! Jesus sees the large harvest and desperate world and he commands, *“Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest field”* (Matthew 9:38). This sending Lord is the One who sent Jesus to save the world ... and you to bear witness to Him.

“Why would you want to be a pastor? Sounds like a boring life to me,” questioned my childhood friend. That question made me think and someday still does. Serving in full-time church work is a calling by God. It is more than a career choice. It is a calling which is confirmed by the church who also calls and places the workers. Another friend, ***“Allan, I am not sure you are good enough to be a pastor.”*** That is true of me and every servant! Amazing Grace in Christ!

Fifty percent of current LCMS pastors are 55 or older. Many of our schools lack the called and

commissioned teachers they desire. There is a shortage of principals for our schools.



Somebody should do something. Well, our convention offering associated request is designated for the support of the men and women from the NID preparing for full-time church work. This year we are supporting 19 students from all over Northern Illinois. I invite you to look at the bigger church, pray, encourage, and support these future servants financially. This gift reduces their indebtedness. ***“Raising Up Workers of the Word”*** is one special way. Marie and I have made a gift and we invite you to do so as well.

The LCMS also has an initiative, “Set Apart to Serve.” (lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve)

And for the workers we have, pray for them, encourage and help them be effective in their God-given calling. I’ve been amazed at how much time and effort the NID staff is asked to provide for and support church workers who serve in our congregations, schools, and ministries. It’s beautiful and humbling! See the resources provided by the NID Worker Wellness Team. (nidlcms.org/care-team)

All we are doing is because we desire the work of the Kingdom to go on faithfully in our midst and worldwide. It is humbling and exciting to see new workers in the church...and the not so new!

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss

President
LCMS Northern Illinois District

Workers of the Word: A Future and a Hope

Our upcoming 60th District Convention will be an exciting time of renewed hope and ambitious plans for the future of our church workers and ministries. “Workers of the Word” is an offering being taken before and during the convention that will financially help our next generation of workers as they receive their training from Concordia universities and seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The LCMS is experiencing a sobering decline of ordained and commissioned workers, but we can work to turn that around with prayer, financial gifts, and focused efforts to recruit future workers. We need to intentionally talk to, inspire, and ignite passion in our youth, to motivate potential candidates to seek a vocation based on God’s Word.

“Teaching and serving in the Lutheran Church is not only a job to me, it’s an honor and privilege. Each day, I am filled with passion, purpose, and surrounded by a community of believers. This community, young and old, helps to mentor me, develop me, and draw me closer to God.”

~Katie Pece

2nd Grade Teacher, Saint John’s Lutheran School, La Grange, IL

Our Lord calls for us to pray for laborers for the harvest field, that all might hear the Good News of Jesus. It is part of the Church’s work in every generation to encourage church workers to proclaim the Gospel to the next generation. However, research shows that only half of current pastors and church workers talk to the youth in their congregations about considering a vocation in the church.

“It’s awesome and humbling seeing real lives changed by Jesus. Team ministry is pretty fun, too!”

~Randy Rozelle

Associate Pastor, Saint Peter Lutheran Church, Arlington Heights, IL

Church workers are primary influencers in leading our youth toward full-time church work. We have untold opportunities to create and use curriculum in our schools that explains the roles available to future workers. Of course this begins with encouraging them to be involved in church regularly. Through conversations with young people and their parents, we can raise awareness of the opportunities available and encourage our young people to consider the blessing of serving in the church.

Encouraging workers to tell their personal stories is a meaningful way to engage youth. Storytelling is one of the most natural, relatable, and influential ways to speak with authenticity about the joys and challenges of life as a pastor or church worker. We have included comments from some of our church workers on what serving in ministry has meant to them.

“When I accepted my call to be a DCE at Saint John’s, I gained another group of people to call family as we connect to our Triune God, grow in our faith, and live life together. And the NID feels like an extension of this family as I make connections with other church workers that support and encourage me as I serve our gracious God.”

~Hannah Russell

Director of Christian Education, Saint John’s Lutheran Church, Union, IL

We encourage churches and individuals to contribute to the “Workers of the Word” offering. The proceeds from this crucial offering will be deposited into the NID Education Endowment Fund where each year, a distribution is made to eligible full-time church work students who attend Concordia universities and LCMS seminaries. Currently, 19 Concordia University and Seminary students are supported by these scholarship funds and we hope to support many more in the future!

“The many blessings of our Synod continue to provide for all who desire to faithfully proclaim the Gospel of our Lord.”

~Rev. Walter Otten

Hope Lutheran Church, Countryside, IL

We want our children in future generations to know the love and forgiveness of Jesus. This is our opportunity to help raise up the next generation of church workers!

Along with the work we are doing in our District, “Set Apart to Serve” (SAS) is an initiative of the LCMS to recruit church workers. The primary goal of SAS is to serve God in the proclamation of the Gospel. It seeks to raise up pastors, teachers, Directors of Christian Education, and other workers of the highest character and talent to serve Christ’s Church for the sake of the kingdom of God.

As a retired (partially) parish pastor, I look back on the parish ministry and am in awe that God provided me the opportunity to serve Him and His people. Parish ministry is so full of opportunities to see how His Word works in the lives of people. As a parish pastor, I have had the privilege, and I do mean privilege, to walk with people during hard times and good times. We are invited into peoples’ lives to walk with them during heartache and sorrow, during challenging times and good times. The Good News of Jesus is life-changing. Over the years, God has given me the privilege to watch the power of the Gospel turn hard hearts to faith. It is always the power of His Word. But, the privilege of being the bringer of that Good News is humbling and amazing.

~ Rev. Richard A. Wagner

Pastor Emeritus

March for Life Chicago 2022

Brings to Light Life Support Ministries



Lutherans were well represented among the thousands of life advocates who gathered at the March for Life Chicago on January 8, 2022. Many of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod faithful were decked out with lime green LCMS Life Ministry stocking caps, bright beacons among those gathered on Federal Plaza. They heard LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison and other pro-life leaders encourage pursuit of life-affirming action to save women and children.

"This is the moment to be pro-life in Illinois," Harrison declared, "and we're going to do it through prayer."

He prayed for those who are tempted to seek to end lives through abortion, for Illinois' governor and legislators, and that God would open eyes and turn hearts and grant forgiveness for those advocating a culture of death. The enthusiastic chorus of "hear our prayer" rose from the Lutherans in the crowd.

Harrison's rousing speech was followed by an LCMS video feature highlighting Lutheran life affirming efforts and the LCMS Million Dollar Life Match. Beginning early in 2022, the Synod is offering \$1 million in matching grants to LCMS congregations to foster sanctity of human life programs and partnerships.

A premier sponsor of the Midwest's largest pro-life gathering, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was prominently featured in the accompanying activities. The March for Life Chicago Convention showcased LCMS Life Ministry, the Northern Illinois District Life Task Force, and several LCMS Recognized Service Organizations including Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries, Lutherans for Life of Illinois, Voice of Care, and the Coalition for Life, a new St. Louis-based ministry with Lutheran roots.



The Synod also hosted an informal gathering following the march at which President Harrison answered questions along with Deaconess Tiffany Manor, Director of LCMS Life Ministry. Northern Illinois District President Rev. Dr. Allan Buss welcomed and encouraged those in attendance, as did NID Life Task Force Chairman Rev. Cory Estby.

President Harrison was also a featured speaker at the evening March for Life Chicago banquet.

We have never before seen such excitement for life ministry in the NID. Life ministry became an established ongoing mission of the LCMS Northern Illinois District in 2015 when the group was given the broad assignment of creating a life affirming climate within the NID. Educating people about life issues and providing opportunities to put faith into action is the dual focus. The Northern Illinois District Life Task Force connects the District's church workers and congregations with educational and outreach opportunities promoting the sanctity of human life. The NID Life Task Force has formally accepted the following mission statement:

Affirming God's Will to create and sustain mortal life in the anticipation of Life in Christ, The Northern Illinois District Life Task Force's mission is to connect with church workers and their congregations by presenting unique educational and outreach opportunities about the reverence of life from conception though natural death.

Rev. Cory Estby is serving as Triennial Chair of the NID Life Task Force. A District Vice President will serve as a triennial chair (the other three regional Vice Presidents as advisory helpers) in rotation for the LCMS Northern Illinois District Life Task Force.

Today, congregations in the NID are currently supporting life ministries in varied and specific ways that meet their communities' needs.

Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries, a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS, has been planning to expand a maternity home program by opening a location in Northern Illinois. This new home is critical to protecting the lives of unborn children in Chicagoland.

Other congregations have established Breakfast with Baby outreach programs. Breakfast with Baby is a faith-based ministry for babies and their families. The program strives to meet the essential physical and spiritual needs of economically disadvantaged families. Breakfast with Baby provides families with a healthy breakfast, diapers, baby wipes, clothing, and a faith connection.



Swaddling Clothes is a program run by various congregations to share the mercy of Christ with neighbors through the gifts of clothing, food, friendship, and the forgiving Word of God.

Supporting life issues does not only include the beginning of life. For end of life issues, some work with agencies for local area resourcing for seniors.

Many locations are working on partnerships with local crisis pregnancy centers. These initiatives include baby bottle coin drives (fundraising) and diaper drives. Some are even working on opening new regional satellite crisis pregnancy center locations.

Mission Target Grants to Provide New Funding

We never know where God will lead us, but we always know He has a plan. The unfortunate closing of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Des Plaines in April of 2021 will nevertheless enable a dynamic continuation of our Lord's good works. After the sale of their property, the members of Good Shepherd entrusted some of the proceeds in a generous gift to the LCMS Northern Illinois District. The NID is using these funds for new Mission Target Grants.

These grants will offer a further way to assist our mission starts, congregational plants, expansion of current outreach focused ministries, enhanced school connections to their communities, and Recognized Service Organization (RSO) launches and expansions. The Mission Target Grants are being developed to assist NID partners in their Word, Wellness, and Witness initiatives.

"The grants give us the ability to move forward," said Rev. Kris Whitby. "We can take what may be a sad time for the closing church and give back to fellow congregations by putting resources right back in the ministry right now."

Whitby explained that Mission Target Grants will be different from Partnership and Endowment Grants in that there will be no cap on the amount requested. This will allow ministries to take the next step in bringing the Gospel to their communities.

"We want churches to ask for what they truly feel they need," explained Whitby. "We want to come alongside these ministries on a strong level, to do work that takes a serious investment."

The language that will establish the fund and application process is still under review with the Administrative Services Committee and will eventually go before the NID's Board of Directors for approval. The goal is to accept grant proposals by spring of 2022, solicit for grant applications through the summer, and have the grant approval team consider the grant proposals in the fall of 2022.

"It is my hope that this grant fund will be used by our Lord to bring the Good News of the Gospel to the lost among us in the NID in major ways," said Whitby.

Look for details on the NID website this spring!



Education MINISTRY UPDATE

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:14).

The schools and congregations of the Northern Illinois District are blessed with faithful workers, called and contracted. Teachers, DCEs, Deaconesses, and Parish Musicians share the love of Jesus each day. These Workers of the Word are dedicated to their ministry and the people they serve.

One important way that Jesus is shared is through weekly chapel services in our schools. Faithful men and women teach the learners God's Word and pray God's blessings on them as they grow.

To God be the glory for our Workers of the Word!



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Colossians 3:16:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

We can take comfort in Colossians 3:16 knowing that God's words surround and clothe us. We look more like Christ in that we share with others compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. He works through His Word to give us a hope and a future through Him. We can have confidence in His Word. His words will not pass.



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OUR MISSION:

Filled with living hope in Christ, Confessing, Praising, and Advancing His Kingdom

As LCMS Lutherans in Northern Illinois, we will carry out this mission by upholding three pillars. These pillars direct our work together in the vision laid out for us.

- **WORD:** Helping congregations be more centered on a rich life of Word and Sacrament, with congregational support in transitions as well as time of joys and sorrows.
- **WELLNESS:** Promoting and encouraging health and vitality in congregations, schools, ministries, professional workers and lay-leaders.
- **WITNESS:** Encouraging personal witnessing, congregational engagement with their community, support of our NID partnerships and missions and sharing in a world mission field together.