

District Resources

NORTH WISCONSIN DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

the Happenings



The President's Message - June 2019



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MAKE KNOWN THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Ascension Day has come and gone. It was the day that Jesus ascended into heaven. Before he left many of us know what He told His disciples. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This is the Great Commission.

Jesus called on His disciples to go and make disciples and baptize people. That is what He continues to call on us to do as well. Pastors are to preach God's Word. All of us are to be His witnesses. We are to evangelize and let the Holy Spirit do the work of making people followers of Jesus (1 Corinthians 3:3-9). The result of our evangelizing efforts may not reap many souls but that doesn't mean we stop. "The critical question is not whether the church is adding to its numbers, but whether people are sharing their faith with their neighbors, friends, and co-workers" (pg. 224, The Forgotten Church by Glenn Daman).

By U.S. Census Bureau standards, 85% of our NWD congregations are in a rural area. We have over 40 dual parishes and it appears more on the way because congregations are getting smaller & older and the cost of ministry keeps rising. Your congregation may be rural but there is no reason to stop being faithful in proclaiming the Gospel from your pulpit and being the Lord's witness during the week. We are to be salt and light in this world.

Each & every congregation in this district are a vital mission outpost and whether a big or small congregation, there is a concern that God's kingdom gets built up rather than merely maintained. We need our small congregations just as we need the large ones. "Small church mission is integral to the whole life of the church. Working as it should, small church mission is inspired through worship, informed through education, and carried forward by the member's care for one another. It is not a separate activity done by a separate group of people" (pg. 125, The Big Small Church Book by David Ray).

Congregations may need to look at how to do ministry differently than they have in the past. Strategic planning may mean the bigger churches in town working TOGETHER with the small and rural churches. It means that rural churches come together with a plan on how to do ministry TOGETHER in their community, which is more than merely sharing and paying for a pastor. If we are the body of Christ, we should act as if we are a body – working together to proclaim the Gospel in our church and in our community.

We have seven new pastors coming into our district from the seminary. Two of them will begin ministry at a dual parish in a rural setting (I started the same way). They have the opportunity to serve not only the people of their congregations but the communities in which they live. It means gaining their respect and building relationships so people come to trust them as a good shepherd who cares for and values all people inside and outside the church. As one professor from Nebraska shared, "It means that the pastor is willing to share his story with his people as he learns about their story." Welcome to the rural church!

Churches cannot stand idle and wait to die. We need to take the words of our Lord's Great Commission seriously whether we are urban or rural, small or big. We need to continue to be faithful to preach the Word, offer the sacraments, get into God's Word, and "love one another" as Christ also commanded.

May God bless you as the body of Christ to "make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities, and the world" (taken from the LCMS Mission Statement).

Rev. Dr. Dwayne M. Lueck, District President

Re:Vitality

“Where are we and where are we going?” is a question often asked by lay leaders. The LCMS has heard the question and continues to provide tools for congregations to explore the answer to those questions and resources to act on what they discover. If teaching and learning how to live your life as a witness to the hope we have in Jesus Christ is important to your ministry, consider reviewing the re:Vitality resources provided in the Ministry Corner of this newsletter or on the Synod website here... <https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/witness-and-outreach-ministry>.

In the past we have shared the Synod resource **Every One His Witness**. That resource is an excellent study to use with the re:Vitality resources. The Synod page shares the following:

The “&” in Witness & Outreach underscores that there are two different elements to this ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Witness is the work we have been given to do as the church scattered. We have opportunities to speak of Jesus with the people in our everyday lives who are our friends, co-workers, neighbors, family members, etc.

Outreach is the work we do as the church gathered. It is our collective effort through ministries, services, events and other activities as the church through which we invite and include others into Word and Sacrament ministry.

Witness & Outreach are distinct, but they work together so people will know of Jesus and be gathered into His Church through us.

When churches consider their outcomes or big targets to guide their work, there is no doubt witness and outreach are to be included. Review the above resources and consider a plan for your leaders and members to study and grow.



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RE:VITALITY LUTHERAN REVITALIZATION

Program Overview

"Vital" is the key component of "revitalization." Wherever the Word is proclaimed in its purity and God's Sacraments are rightly administered, there is spiritual vitality. But is spiritual vitality enough for a congregation to be vital? Congregational vitality starts with spiritual vitality, but it also includes factors that affect the congregation's ability to begin, increase or continue activities that convey the spiritual vitality of Word and Sacrament ministry.

re:Vitality systematically addresses congregational vitality to determine a congregation's stage of vitality and the most effective ways to maintain, increase, or restore it through a three-part approach: planting, watering and God providing the growth.



"What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building."
(1 COR. 3:5-9 ESV)



Objective, Consistent Self-Assessment

The needs and circumstances of congregations vary. *re:Vitality* guides the congregation through a self-assessment process to objectively answer the question "Where are we, really?" It is initiated by the congregation, and the results are confidential to the congregation. The self-assessment provides a baseline toward increasing the reach of Word and Sacrament through existing and new ministries.

Action-Oriented Training

re:Vitality provides action-oriented training for the congregation, based on its assessed stage of vitality. Training modules are deployed based on the needs of the congregation and on actions likely to provide the greatest benefit. Each training module makes use of current training technology and adult learning methods in a five-part approach:

- MULTIMEDIA INSTRUCTION
- ADULT LEARNING ACTIVITIES
- EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
- PROMPTED JOURNALING
- STRATEGIC COACHING

Recognizing that the best training is of little value if it is cost-prohibitive, *re:Vitality* training resources are provided at little to no cost to the congregation.

Equipping God's People for Outreach-Integrated Witness

In outreach-integrated witness, members of the congregation embrace their call to be witnesses of Christ to people in their everyday lives, and the congregation systematically incorporates those who respond into Word and Sacrament ministry. It combines a relational approach to sharing God's Word with people built on the LASSIE* approach for witnessing, with the *Connect To Disciple* program for improving the effectiveness of congregational outreach by intentionally creating connections, building relationships and making disciples.

* Stands for Listen-Ask-Seek-Share-Invite-Encourage, which is the witnessing approach of the *Every One His Witness* evangelism program.



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Managing God's Money

Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.
- Proverbs 13:11

Because large, unforeseen expenses can be devastating for our families, financial advisors urge us to set aside at least three months of living expenses in an emergency fund. Let me be the first to admit that I'm not there, but wish I was given the month my family just had. Anyone else want to testify?

Most of us would agree that we'd like to have a bit more on hand for that inevitable "rainy day". To that end, I'd urge you to follow my recent lead and start an LCEF Family Emergency Steward Account.

I'm staying realistic and starting small, but am encouraged in that every dollar invested supports the ministry of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod! The Family Emergency Steward Account through LCEF requires as little as \$25 to open, with a minimum \$25 per month investment until the account reaches \$10,000. Interest on the account (currently 1.375% - so much better than, say, that 0.03% on your typical savings account) is compounded and paid monthly.

Al Einstein I'm not, but it still took me only 10 minutes to complete the paperwork; it would have taken me less had I had my current checking account number handy (you'll need that information to set up EFT for your monthly investment). Once completed, everything is mailed to LCEF in a handy, postage-paid envelope.

Are you interested in receiving the information, application and prepaid envelope for the Family Emergency Steward Account? Just call or email me at the NWD office.

God's blessings to you -

Bill Jordan

LCEF Vice-President & NWD Business Manager

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LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks.



News and Events

Graduation

Congratulations to all the students from our North WI District LCMS high schools and churches who have graduated and are moving on to the next chapter of their lives. Please pray that God will continue to lead them on the path He has prepared for them! Congratulations graduates!

NWD Church Workers' Annual Golf Outing

Registration is now open for the annual NWD Golf Outing on July 29, 2019 at Merrill Golf Club. Church workers and friends of the NWD are encouraged to participate. **Registration for golfers & sponsorships** is available on our website. Thanks to Pastor Lance Hoelscher & Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Weston for once again organizing this event. Join us for this annual event as we celebrate the amazing church workers of our district!

Hearts for Jesus 2020

Thanks for supporting Camp Luther this February! Totals for Camp will be out soon, but now is the time to submit an application to be considered for Hearts for Jesus 2020! The ministry will be selected early fall, in time for schools and churches to plan for the February 2020 Hearts for Jesus annual gathering. Application forms can be found on the homepage of the NWD website at nwdlcms.org. Also posted are the ministries and support received through the years.

Ready for the National Youth Gathering?

The NYG is right around the corner! Critical updates continue to be posted on the NWD Facebook page or contact District Coordinators Samantha Tracy samanthakaytracy@gmail.com or Tara Barret tbarrett@immanuelrapids.com with any questions.

Access to District & LCMS News

- The **NWD newsletters** and the **Lutheran Witness supplement, District News—North Wisconsin**, are available on our [NWD Publications page](#).
- The **Lutheran Witness** magazine interprets the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective. -[Read More](#)
- The **LCMS Reporter** is the official newspaper of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Access it [on-line](#).

Upcoming Events & Save the Dates:

- NWD Golf Outing - Monday, July 29, 2019 - @ Merrill Golf Club
- All School Summit - August 15, 2019 - St. Paul, Bonduel
- Fall Pastors' Conference - Sept. 23-25, 2019 - Holiday Inn, Marquette
- NWD Adult Gathering - October 1, 2019 - Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Weston - *Featured Presenter - Former LCMS President, Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick*



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Counselor Corner

MARIJUANA...OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

One could argue that this debate has roots in the first Garden. It was a perfect place with perfect plants (and animals). God gave mankind a special place in His creation... and formed their bodies. All was good... all was in harmony.

And then the great deceiver came on the scene. His broad goal was to corrupt what was healthy and holy. And he posed an alternative—Eve (mankind in a broader sense) could be “like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5b).

What lay in the balance was control—who would decide “good and evil.” Also in question was whether mankind was qualified for such a pivotal position.

The “rest of the story” was not good. One outcome was the corruption of perfect creation. Unhealthy vegetation would now plague mankind (vs.18). Now all was not good. Conflict with God also had its beginning.

Now we jet forward 6000 years. In the year 2019 we face a controversy over a certain plant. It is the marijuana plant, with all its intrigue and complexity. We have entered a time when mankind wants to define its goodness—for medical purposes. A growing body of research points to its unique benefits. This research is relatively new, lacking fully conclusive results. [We might consider how long it took to determine that nicotine was addictive.]

So how does a Christian respond to this controversy? What position should be taken regarding the medical use of this plant? [The concern only grows when the recreational use of marijuana is promoted as another liberal step.]

A clear and direct answer is not found in Scripture. A specific reference to marijuana is not given by God.

An alternative is to use what God does offer. A pivotal reading is the following—

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

We have a responsibility for the welfare of our God-given bodies. We should not intentionally do anything to corrupt what is holy. What we put in our bodies must be examined carefully. Side effects, including spiritual, need to be considered.

This moves us into another arena with spiritual implications. A very contemporary agenda is “individual rights.” More specifically, it is the cry—“It’s my body, I can do with it as I please!” As previously stated, it is really God’s body.

Another matter deserves consideration. God gives us what we need, not what we want or desire. He recognizes our fleshly tendency to pursue, sometimes impulsively, what is not in our best interest.

God is in ultimate control over our lives, and we are to be good stewards of what He has entrusted to us—including the welfare of our human bodies. May all we do, honor Him as we live holy, healthy lives.

Pastor Dan Kohn

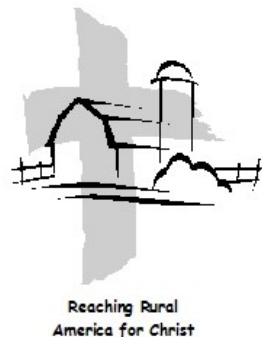
revkohn@gmail.com / (715) 610-2400

Pastor Kohn was a licensed addiction counselor for over 30 years before becoming an LC-MS pastor. He is now a contracted counselor for church workers in the North Wisconsin District.



Rural & Small Town Mission

To check out the latest 'Reaching Rural America for Christ' Newsletter [click here](#). This month's edition includes the following article entitled...



“What’s New in Witness & Outreach?”

When it comes to Witness & Outreach, there is nothing new under the sun. (Actually, according to Eccl. 1:9, that’s true of everything!) But there are trends in the current work of sharing the Gospel that we should pay attention to.

A recent report from Barna Research, “Reviving Evangelism,” highlights the importance of sharing the faith in the context of relationships. While this is not new, it shows that some of the ways we share the Good News of Jesus are not well received by people in our culture. Non-churched people even find some of our traditional evangelism approaches offensive or off-putting. Worse than that, Barna reports that negative experiences of “depersonalized methods of sharing faith... significantly depress openness to exploring questions of faith.”

What’s the takeaway from this report? We need to consider how non-churched people prefer to discuss matters of faith and spirituality. There are a lot of lost people who are open to discussing spiritual matters. Although 49 percent of people who say that spiritual matters are unimportant to them are not open to any form of evangelism, 27 percent of them are willing to have a “casual, one-on-one conversation” about faith.

Unfortunately, evangelism that gets this personal is not something we have always emphasized in the past. This has left us unprepared for evangelism in our current context. But there is good news. The Synod’s evangelism program, *Every One His Witness*®, is designed to equip Lutherans to be witnesses of Jesus to the people in their everyday lives. The LASSIE (Listen-Ask-Seek-Share-Invite-Encourage) approach of *Every One His Witness* is focused on intentionally engaging non-churched people in “casual, one-on-one conversations” about faith.

Everything that a congregation or group needs to conduct the basic *Every One His Witness* workshop is available as a low-cost kit from Concordia Publishing House. Since their release in September 2017, over 900 workshop kits have been distributed. Additional materials for witnessing to people in specific contexts (e.g., witnessing to Mormons, Muslims or adult children who have left the church) are available to workshop participants at no cost through the Synod’s *Every One His Witness* website.

Every One His Witness isn’t really new — it’s a renewed effort to equip God’s people to speak about Jesus as they go about their everyday lives, in a way to which the lost will really listen. By God’s grace, that listening may lead to the Holy Spirit working faith in those who hear the Gospel. When and where He does, people are made new!

Contributed through the LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission monthly newsletter by Rev. Dr. Mark Wood, director of LCMS Witness & Outreach Ministry.



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Rural & Small Town Mission - Upcoming Events

Don't forget that Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Witness & Outreach Resources** on June 13, followed by **Active Stewardship in the Rurals** on July 25. Find past webinars in our archive and watch for information on all our upcoming events!



Register for one of our Engaging Your Community (EYC) or Engaging the Wandering (ETW) events at lcms.org/rstm. These partner events offer practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to wandering members and our communities with Christ's love. Online registration is available for both types of events. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Register now for the 2019 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, *Running With Endurance: Eyes Fixed On Jesus*, Nov. 14-16 in Minneapolis at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

To see our calendar, visit lcms.org/rstm. Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.

LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission supports and encourages rural and small-town congregations in engaging their communities and growing together in Christ through Word and Sacrament. Learn more about RSTM at lcms.org/rstm or by calling 888-463-5127. "Like" us on our Facebook page at facebook.com/lcmsrstm.



- Check out the [CPS website](#) for a wealth of information or head right to the '[Blog & News](#)' section for the latest info!

- Visit the NWD website for a CPS corner listing the main contacts for churches using CPS, as well as links to the most important news and answers found on the CPS website. Bookmark it so you have it! <http://www.nwdlcms.org/concordia-plan-services.html>

NWD Financial Box Score

May 2019

May Offering	\$157,545.68
May Budget	\$142,500.00
Year-to-date total offerings	\$545,813.16
Year-to-date budget	\$629,812.50

North Wisconsin District Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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