

District Resources

NORTH WISCONSIN DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

the Happenings



The President's Message - September 2019



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THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

In the August 2, 2019 Wall Street Journal there was an article on the front page – “Middle-Class Debt Swamps Families” and the subtitle “Cars, colleges and housing have become more costly, but wages for many have barely budged”. It affects people both inside and outside the church.

The number that I was drawn to concerned student debt, which totaled about \$1.5 trillion last year, exceeding all other forms of consumer debt except mortgages. Tuition has gone up significantly at public and private colleges in the past 20 years - as of June 2018, *Forbes* reported that the average student debt was \$38,390. Our church workers are no exception to this.

The January LCMS *Reporter* published a recent survey that shows one of every two church workers in our synod experiences stress from financial concerns. Those concerns, in large part, come from significant education debt coupled with increasing living expenses associated with our workers' traditionally growing families.

It is not surprising that many of our church workers met each other at one of our Concordias, got married and both finished college with debt. Add the cost of seminary on top of that, and we have a problem.

On the LCMS worker wellness website, one author put it this way: “No one ever got into the ministry looking for the big bucks. It's true. But when we pulled out of the seminary parking lot and into the parsonage garage, I thought that with a regular paycheck and some savings in the bank, it might at least get a little easier. Truth: money is a struggle for all people, all the time.”

Talking about money is difficult. It is very personal. What's more, having financial problems is often perceived as a weakness, both in and outside the church. It's the elephant in the room, and all too often, our hesitancy to discuss it leads to financial crises that harm our workers and ministries.

To that end, the North Wisconsin District (NWD) has established the Professional Church Worker Debt Relief Fund for our called workers. This is in direct response to a resolution passed at our 2018 District convention, namely “That Professional Church Workers of the North Wisconsin District and congregations and/or entities that they serve be encouraged to engage in open and loving conversation regarding these issues...and that congregations be further encouraged to become aware of and utilize whatever resources may be available in order to alleviate this problem.” (Resolution 18-06)

Simply put, the goal is to render financial assistance to our neediest workers through a designated fund that addresses the issue head-on. To build it, we need your prayers and gifts.

May I encourage you to do the following? First, read Bill Jordan's article in this issue that explains a bit more about the Fund. Second, pray about it and see where the Lord leads you. It was the Apostle Paul who wrote the Corinthians encouraging them to help the saints in Jerusalem with an offering just as the Macedonians had contributed. He said, “But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also (2 Corinthians 8:7). I hope you prayerfully consider and will “excel”.

Blessings, Rev. Dr. Dwayne M. Lueck, District President

The Five Most Pressing Needs of Pastors

Heidi Goehmann and Rev. Richard Koehneke, The Reporter, August 8, 2019

Find the full article here: <https://blogs.lcms.org/2019/the-five-most-pressing-needs-of-pastors/?fbclid=IwAR0Sh1-ZzQY5rKTGSwdtOGbMfXJFFCScSXhP4a6t5qoo2ns3RJjsvqBH3Dc>

We each have very real physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, financial, intellectual, and vocational needs. At any given moment, one of these needs might require more attention than another.

If you are a pastor reading this, know that you are seen and valued by the Church on earth. How can we help you have your needs met so you can continue in joy and steadfast service to His Kingdom?

If you are a member reading this, consider how you might offer care to your pastor and other workers. What needs might your church workers have that go unmet because of limited resources of time, money, energy, or earthly consequences like embarrassment or shame?

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to have in-depth interactions — in person, on the telephone, and by email — with workers and asking, “What are the most pressing needs of LCMS pastors?”

Five needs emerged as the highest priorities.

1. Pastors need safe places and people with whom they can be transparent, express problems and needs, and find help and encouragement to carry on.
2. Pastors need a faithful, disciplined personal life of prayer and devotion.
3. Pastors need to lead by team-building, equipping, and mobilizing.
4. Pastors need help in reaching our postmodern, post-churched culture with the gospel.
5. Pastors need a healthy marriage, family, balance, and boundaries.



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Managing God's Money

NWD Church Worker Debt Relief

President Lueck's article makes a great case for the formation of a church worker debt relief fund in our district. My purpose here is to flesh that out a bit, and provide next steps should you feel led to partner with us in building it.

In brief, our goal is to build a dedicated fund balance, invest it, and award multiple debt relief grants annually from interest earned. The larger the fund balance, the more grants will be available for yearly distribution. Much has yet to be worked out by way of amounts and eligibility - but we envision information being made available on our website each year, with submitted applications being reviewed by a committee that considers each case based on financial need and available funding.

We would also ask the awardees' employers to provide a matching gift, therefore maximizing the financial impact and sending a strong message of loving and tangible support from the worker's home congregation.

Our success in this mission depends largely on contributions from NWD congregations and their individual members. At our NWD Adult Gathering on October 1 (please see our website for details), we'll be providing attendees with specifics on how to give to the fund. Should you wish to contribute immediately, please make your donation check payable to **NWD LCMS** with **Worker Debt Relief** written in the memo line. Mail to **NWD LCMS; 3103 Seymour Lane; Wausau, WI 54401**.

May the Lord richly bless our giving, and continue to uphold our NWD church workers!

Bill Jordan
LCEF Vice-President & NWD Business Manager
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News and Events

Annual NWD Golf Outing

The annual NWD golf outing this summer was great fun! Thanks to Pastor Lance Hoelscher and his team from Mt. Olive Lutheran, Weston for once again coordinating this event in partnership with the NWD.

Save the date for the 2020 outing on July 27, 2020 at Trapp River!



LCEF Reps - Present—Bill Jordan & Former—Denny Johnson

All School Summit Held

Back to school is a busy time for teachers and principals, preparing bulletin boards, scheduling field trips, revising curriculum, meeting with staff, open houses and home visits with families and more. Nearly all of the NWD schools set aside extra time to grow as professionals by attending a special Back to School Summit held at St. Paul, Bonduel just days before the start of the new school year. Teachers were split into grade-level groups for the day, collaborating on research-based best practices for classroom instruction. The break-outs were led by the high-quality teaching staff from Grace Lutheran School in Menomonee Falls, WI. Having already led similar sessions at the state teachers' conference and their principal having already led professional development for the NWD principals, the team from Grace was a great ministry fit for the Summit. God bless our Lutheran school teachers and all those who love and support them!



Back to School!

The [LCMS School Ministry](#) office has aligned the themes for the new school year, [National Lutheran Schools Week](#) and the suggested annual [Chapel Talks](#) to thematically connect our school and youth ministries! The theme for 2019-20 is **Joy: Fully Lutheran**, from 1 Thess. 5:16-18, coinciding with the LCMS National Youth Gathering and the Synodical Convention. Please celebrate and pray for the workers, students and families of our Lutheran schools. Even more, connect with the pastors and principals of your area Lutheran preschool, elementary and high schools, asking them how you can participate in their dynamic ministries.

**JOY:FULLY
LUTHERAN**
1 THESS 5:16-24

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News and Events

Upcoming Events & Save the Dates:

- *More information is available on the [homepage of our website](#) under 'Events & Information'.*

- 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*
- Early Childhood Regional Meetings
 - ⇒ October 3—Trinity, Wausau
 - ⇒ October 17—St. Paul, Fall Creek
 - ⇒ October 24—Pilgrim, Green Bay
- Retirement Workshop - October 18, 2019—NWD Office
- Lay Leadership Meeting - January 7, 2020—Pilgrim Lutheran, Green Bay
- Team Ministry Workshop - January 28, 2020—St. Mark's Lutheran, Wausau

2019 Fall Pastors' Conference

The theme of this year's conference is "Our Humanity in Christ in a Gender Neutral Culture". The event will be held Mon., Sept. 23–Wed., Sept. 25 at the Holiday Inn - Marquette, MI. The link to all the details and registration is available on our [homepage](#) or at www.stjohnpulaskiwi.org/nwd.

NWD Adult Gathering

Join us for the annual Adult Gathering being held on Tuesday, October 1, 2019 at Mount Olive Lutheran, Weston. Our keynote speaker will be Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, LCMS President Emeritus & CEO—Legacy Deo. Dr. Kieschnick will give an overview of worldwide population, worldwide Christian population, including the Lutheran population, and a look at Lutheranism in America. We will also take time for Q&A to follow the presentation. Details of the newly established "Professional Church Worker Debt Relief Fund" will be shared giving you the opportunity to provide much needed support to our NWD called workers.

-[Links to the brochure and on-line registration are available on our homepage](#)

2019 NWD Early Childhood Regional Conferences

This event is for the full EC staff and one or more additional congregational leaders (pastor, board member, congregational president, etc.). Events will be held this fall throughout the district, in the evenings. The training will have a split learning session, allowing teachers to attend professional development while directors and church leaders can attend a session specific to their leadership. The event dates and locations are: Oct. 3 - Trinity, Wausau; Oct. 17 - Fall Creek; Oct. 24 - Pilgrim, GB. -[Register from our homepage](#)

Are YOU Ready for Retirement?

Concordia Plan Services is offering you the opportunity to attend a pre-retirement workshop hosted by the North Wisconsin District. This workshop is designed to help you plan for that very important transition in your life: RETIREMENT! We encourage you to attend and start learning what you'll need to know about making plans for your future. Join us on Friday, October 18th from 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m. at the District Office. Visit our [homepage](#) for all the details.



News and Events

Professional Church Worker Grant Thank You

Over \$100,000 from special gifts and endowments was granted this year to assist 37 students as they prepare for full-time church work! Check out the difference it makes for this student, Kalynn. Here is an excerpt from her letter to us: *...This will be my third year at Concordia-St. Paul studying Christian Ministries. I want to personally thank you for the generous grant through the North WI District—LCMS. I have learned so much about who God is, about my vocation, and about how to serve those around me. My favorite class so far has been Speaking the Gospel. We looked at media in the world and saw how Law and Gospel apply. I made a book for my final project about how Law and Gospel appear in the mess of life. It is because of your grant that I am able to take classes like Speaking the Gospel that help me grow intellectually, creatively and spiritually. I am beyond grateful. Thank you for supporting me, Kalynn.*

LCMS Congregation & Rostered Staff Mailing

Congregations & rostered staff should have received communication from the LCMS regarding the LCMS Information Support Network for Congregations & the LCMS Church Worker Updates. For the rostered staff who requested paper forms or didn't have an email on file with the LCMS their letters were mailed mid-July. The LCMS is working on getting the schools fully online as well. For any questions, request for login information, or request for a paper form; please contact ros-ters.stats@lcms.org or the LCMS Church Information Center at 888-843-5267.

Rural and Small Town Mission Events

Some of our NWD congregations promote the work of the Rural and Small Town Mission (RSTM). President Lueck is preparing to provide more strategic support to this area of ministry. He and his staff will be attending the national RSTM conference in Minneapolis, November 14-16 and encourage your church to explore both the event and the resources RSTM provides. Learn more about their ministry, their conference, and their resources at <https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/rural-and-small-town-mission>.



Everyone His Witness

Do You Want To Share Your Faith in Jesus, but you're not sure of the best way to do it? Faith Lutheran in Marinette would like to invite and encourage you to attend *Every One His Witness, Lutheran Evangelism* on October 5th & 12th from 8:30am–1:00pm. This Core Module will help you understand why we witness and will teach you how the name LASSIE can help you to witness! The cost for each participant to attend is \$12 (to cover the cost of your workbook and snacks). After you've completed both sessions of this Core Module, you will have access to additional information on how to witness to people in more specific contexts, such as talking with adult children who have stopped attending church or helping those who are grieving. If you want to attend, please RSVP by calling Faith at 715-735-6506 by September 23rd!

Servants of Christ Seminar

Youth in grades 5-8 are encouraged to attend the "Servants of Christ Seminar" on September 28th from 9:30am-2:00pm at Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW). This free seminar will ground youth in the grace of their baptism, teach them about the doctrine of vocation, give them information about college and careers, and allow them to take part in breakaway sessions led by CUW professors and other guest speakers. These sessions are designed to strengthen their faith and help them to live as servants of Christ in our challenging world. Register at: www.cuw.edu/ServantsofChristSeminar. For more info contact: Rev. Ron Mudge, Ph.D.; Pre-Seminary Director, Concordia University Wisconsin, ronald.mudge@cuw.edu, (262)243-4301



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Counselor Corner

THE PEACE FORMULA

It is the desire of every pastor. It is the goal of Christ for His church.

We are talking about peace in the pews...and throughout the church. Unity and peace—these are attainable goals within Christ's church.

The apostle Paul offers a formula for such success in his letter to the Colossian church—

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.”
(3:12-15)

One body united in peace. This is a Christ-centered peace that transcended human design. It is forged and sustained in holy love.

Such love places a priority on Christ-centered forgiveness. This is unconditional forgiveness tied to the same form of love. One could define “for-give” as—“For” you I “give” full love, as Christ also gives to me and you.”

Here a human analogy can be applied. Doctors estimate that 70% of illness is tied to stress. In the church, 70% of conflict and division is tied to a lack of love. Forgiveness is side-lined. Personal agendas dominate over Christ's. Stress is present instead of peace. Stress--the great “dis-ease” within the church.

Pastors are impacted by the stress. They are one peacemaker among so many. Their impact can be lost amidst the critical minority and silent majority.

A pastor's heart can be hardened by the “dark” emotions of fear, frustration, guilt and loneliness. God's “light” emotions of joy and love can be over-shadowed.

What can be lost in the midst of the restlessness is resiliency. The “bounce” is deflated. What is lost is a vibrant ministry. Ministers can also be lost through burnout when the stress is unresolved.

So we reflect again on Paul's inspired formula for peace. Let it be a strategy for success—for the vibrancy of the church....and the pastor.

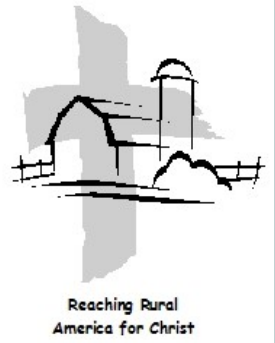
Pastor Dan Kohn
District Counselor
(715) 610-2400 / revkohn@gmail.com

Pastor Kohn was a licensed addiction counselor for over 30 years before becoming an LCMS 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...



"Church Reflections"

Check the Mirror, Pastor — After Five Years, Your Church Looks Like You." This was the headline of an article that caused me to stop and reflect. If it's true that after five years the congregation I serve will look a lot like me, is that a good thing or a bad thing?

If congregations begin to reflect their pastor over time, it might lead the pastor to think about what he should do to shape his congregation. The pastor will be tempted to think about how *he* can and should shape it: *How can I make my congregation enthusiastic for evangelism? How can I make my congregation take the Word of God seriously and want to study it? How can I shape my congregation to make an impact in our community?*

But if those are the first questions the pastor asks, his focus is in the wrong place. When I first read that headline and the accompanying article, the reality that my congregation would reflect me as a pastor felt like a heavy burden to bear. *Do I really want my congregation to look like ... me?* To paraphrase St. Paul, *Do I really want my congregation to look like the chief of sinners?*

And yet, St. Paul also wrote in 1 Cor. 11:1, "*Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*" How can Paul claim to be the chief of sinners and yet say, "be imitators of me"? How can a pastor do the same?

In short, Paul wasn't seeking to have the focus on him, but on Christ. He understood that the example he set would impact how those to whom he was ministering would see Christ. By speaking of himself as the chief of sinners and as the least of the apostles, Paul modeled the reality of the need for Christ and His forgiveness.

Pastors follow Paul's example not when they seek to hold themselves up as the perfect example to be imitated, but when they show the congregation that they too are sinners in need of Jesus. By spending time in God's Word on a daily basis, devoting time to prayer, forgiving and seeking forgiveness quickly, valuing and hungering for the Lord's Supper, and being honest about their weaknesses, pastors model the very things they want to see in the flock they serve.

There's much more to discuss concerning this topic, but I think it starts with pastors echoing the words of John the Baptist: "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30).

Contributed through the LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission monthly newsletter by Rev. Benjamin Meyer, Hope Lutheran Church, Sunbury, Ohio



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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 **"Church Reflections"** with the Rev. Benjamin Meyer on September 26, followed by **"Moving Beyond Survival: DOXOLOGY and Your Church's Future"** with the Rev. Dr. Harold Senkbeil on October 10. Find past webinars in our archives.



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 training in communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members and our communities with Christ's love. Online registration is available for both types of events. Contact your district office or ours if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Register now! The 2019 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, **"Running With Endurance: Eyes Fixed On Jesus,"** will be held Nov. 14-16 in Minneapolis. Watch for updates and more information at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

For more information about our events or to see the rest of our calendar, visit lcms.org/rstm or 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](http://www.cps.org) 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 August 2019

August Offering	\$101,401.53
August Budget	\$134,437.50
Year-to-date total offerings	\$909,822.97
Year-to-date budget	\$1,083,562.50

North Wisconsin District Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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