



/ APRIL 2024

DISTRICT NEWS

NORTH WISCONSIN



LENS/Erin M. Lunsford

HOW SWEET IT IS!

In his 1969 book *Hosanna in the Whirlwind: Devotional Readings for Times of Change*, O.P. Kretzmann wrote an Easter devotion titled "It was Very Quiet that Morning in the Garden." He penned these thoughtful words:

The tomb tells us
What we need to remember about earth ...
The stone rolled away tells us
What we need to know about God ...
The angel ties them together ...
"He is risen! He is not here!"

Easter is a day that we most likely will not appreciate enough until we reside in heaven, which will be glorious. No more tears. No more sickness. No more death. No more wars. No more hatred. No more crimes. No more sin!

The apostle John gave a description of heaven in Revelation. Read chapter 21.



**Rev. Dr.
Dwayne Lueck**
North Wisconsin
District President

The tomb came about because of sin. Sin brought death. God had warned Adam and Eve not to eat or even touch the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden "lest you die." They ate and death was the result. God told Adam the words that we hear on Ash Wednesday:

"For you are dust, and to dust you shall return." **GENESIS 3:19**

Adam and Eve died and were buried. Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross and was buried in a tomb on Good Friday.

That first Easter, that quiet morning in the garden, Matthew wrote:

There was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. **MATTHEW 28:2**

The Lord had His messenger roll back the stone. The tomb that was closed was open. Jesus who had been in the tomb was alive. When the women looked inside that open tomb, Jesus was not there. The angel was able to tell the women why the tomb was open:

"He is not here, for he has risen."
MATTHEW 28:6

The empty tomb certainly tells us what we need to know about God. He loved us enough to send His Son. He sent Him to die on the cross and then rise and conquer death by rising from the tomb that first Easter morning in the garden. Jesus said whoever believes in Him will not perish and have everlasting life. The stone could not stop Jesus.

See **MESSAGE**, Page 2

Merrill native is new mission director

Upon careful evaluation of organizational needs, prayerful deliberation and the concurrence of the LCMS Board for International Mission (under Synod Bylaw 3.3.1.3[e]), Rev. Dr. Cory J. Rajek has been appointed and accepted the call by Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, LCMS president, to serve as the executive director of the LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM).

Rajek, who is from Merrill and has served two North Wisconsin District congregations, most recently served with excellence as OIM Eurasia region director, residing in Riga, Latvia. He had first joined the Eurasia team as a called

missionary theological educator in 2021. He previously served as senior pastor of Faith, Pierre, S.D. (2017–21) and in sole pastorates at Mount Calvary, Janesville, (2009–17), Grace Evangelical, Augusta, (2004–09) and Trinity/Calvary, Millersburg/Deep River, Iowa (2001–04). He also served as adjunct faculty for Viterbo University in La Crosse (2009–21).

Rajek earned a PhD in leadership for the advancement of learning and service from Cardinal Stritch University (Keller College of Education) in 2014 after having completed an MDiv from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 2001 and an MA in servant leadership from Viterbo University in 2010. He also holds a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry from Concordia University Wisconsin (1997). He and his wife, Jennifer, have two daughters, Emiley and Alexis.



Rev. Dr. Cory Rajek preaches in Wittenberg, Germany, in 2021.

erbo University in 2010. He also holds a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry from Concordia University Wisconsin (1997). He and his wife, Jennifer, have two daughters, Emiley and Alexis.

CHURCH-WORK STUDENTS: APPLY FOR DISTRICT AID

The purpose of district student grants is to reduce the financial burden for men and women enrolled at an LCMS university or seminary preparing for professional church work — pastor, teacher, deaconess, DCE, music director or other vocation.

An application must be filed each year. Students simply

need to contact the school's financial aid office to get the district financial aid application and return it to their school before May 15. The form and other information can also be found at nwdlcms.org. Go to the "Financial" tab and select "NWD Resources" from the drop-down menu. From there, scroll down to "Financial Aid."



MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Guards did not stop Jesus. Death did not stop Jesus. "He is not here, for he has risen." Easter is truly awesome!

Paul summed the real story line of Easter so well:

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. **1 CORINTHIANS 15:14**

No resurrection of Jesus would mean no heaven for you and me as believers and all the believers in the world. Easter is the ticket!

Obviously funerals are a sad occasion. We are there because we have lost a loved one. But something I really love is when we sing Easter hymns at a funeral. They are powerful. I have shared with my family what I want sung at my funeral, and one of the hymns is "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." I tear up every time I sing it. It is powerful. It expresses what we need to know about God. He sent His Son as our Redeemer.

He lives, all glory to His name!

He lives, my Jesus, still the same;

Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:

I know that my Redeemer lives! **LSB 461 V8**

We are told to make our funeral plans as it certainly will make it easier for the loved ones. I encourage you to do it. I hope you pick out your favorite Easter hymn to be sung. I know I am. How sweet it is that "I know that my Redeemer lives."



Disaster Response Sunday is April 28



By Rev. Andy Weden
Disaster Response Coordinator,
North Wisconsin District

Natural disasters are nothing new. Whether we are simply more aware of them or if there really are more disasters, they have become almost routine. Since LCMS Disaster Response began Lutheran Emergency Response Training (LERT) after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005. Volunteers have helped those impacted by tragic hurricanes from Houston to Atlantic City, and tornadoes from Tuscaloosa, Ala., to our very own Merrill. North Wisconsin District congregations have been represented by hundreds of volunteers who have served.

Many of our members willingly become Jesus' hands and feet to those who need the loving presence of our Lord during tragic events. We partner with our LCMS brothers and sisters to impact lives with the love of Jesus while helping to pick up the pieces after such devastation.

Disaster Response Sunday is set for April 28. Building awareness of this critical ministry is our priority. This special Sunday offers members of the North Wisconsin District to financially



support this mercy ministry. Your gifts labeled "NWD Disaster Response" provide a resource that is instantly available when disaster strikes.

What can you do?

- Pray for people suffering through disasters.
- Consider your congregation's plan to serve those in need and contact Pastor Weden at 715-345-6510 to request training, support and networking.
- Donate to Disaster Response online on the "GIVE NOW" tab at nwdlcms.org or mail to 3103 Seymour Lane, Wausau, WI 54401.
- Review the Bible studies and links at nwdlcms.org/disaster-response.html.

Share your news with us!



We are always in need of more submissions for the North Wisconsin District insert of *The Lutheran Witness*. They help remind us of what God is doing around the district. It is also a way to share ideas for nurturing those God has already gathered into His church and for reaching those still outside of the flock with the Good News about Jesus. It finally reminds each of us that Christ's church is much larger than just our particular congregation.

We welcome pictures and stories of congregational events, youth events, outreach events, installations, events from your men's or women's group, servant events, conferences, anniversaries, church renovations or additions, and much more. If you would like an upcoming event publicized, please make sure we have the information at least two months in advance.

Submissions for the June-July 2024 issue are needed by April 15.

Send submissions to Karol Selle:

- selleks@gmail.com
- 3177 State Hwy. 66
Rosholt, WI 54473

2022-24 mission grants paid in full



From left, Rev. Chad Czychke, U.S. Army captain and chaplain, visits with a fellow soldier at Camp Buehring in Kuwait in 2015. An LWML North Wisconsin District mission grant will help families of LCMS chaplains attend wellness retreats.

At the end of January, I fell in our bedroom closet and fractured my right foot in two places. Sheesh! That was quite a surprise. Wearing a boot for eight weeks and limiting activities — including driving — was enlightening. It makes one aware of how others cope with limitations. God willing, with time my foot will heal and I will be back to my regular activities.

At our February executive board meeting, we voted to pay the balance of our 2022-2024 Mission Grants. North Wisconsin District President Rev. Dr. Dwayne Lueck attended our meeting and received a check in the amount of \$12,500 to pay in full the grant for professional church worker students. We also paid in full the requested amount of \$3,000 to Worker Wellness for Chaplain Families.

Plans are in progress for our district convention, to be held June 13–15 at the Hilton Appleton Paper Valley Center. Zones 12 and 18 are joyfully preparing for us to meet. The registration form and convention details are in our winter *Mission Tidings*.

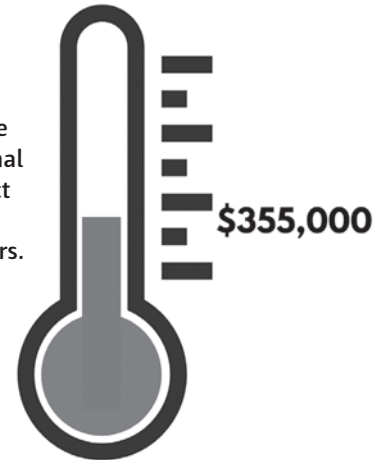
When we meet in convention, the delegates will vote on our district mission grant goal and the Mission Grants, which we will support with our Mite offerings for the 2024-2026 biennium. Also, we will elect new officers. Guest speakers, luncheons, and Friday-night banquet entertainment are all on the schedule. You won't want to miss this opportunity to gather as Lutheran Women in Mission!



Joan Berquist
LWML District
President

Labor of Love \$1,000,000

This graphic shows actual gifts through January 2023 to help reduce the educational debt of district professional church workers.



Actual dollars received through January 2024

Need funds for your mission project?

The North Wisconsin District's Board of Directors has earmarked budgeted dollars for mission grants. These grants are a significant way to encourage and equip our district ministries to vigorously make known the love of Christ. The purpose is to encourage and support local outreach and evangelism and to help proclaim the Gospel to non-Christians.

This year there is nearly \$50,000 to distribute, with grants ranging from \$200 to \$10,000. Grant requests will be evaluated according to their outreach/evangelism potential. Examples include canvassing the community and giving away T-shirts; hiring a preschool teacher; developing a marketing video; sharing a youth worker with another congregation; expanding VBS to include intentional outreach goals; hosting a community youth event; developing radio commercials or Facebook advertisements; and hosting a community Christmas event.

Grant requests must be received by Aug. 15 and the grants will be awarded in September. The grant must be used by Dec. 31, 2025. Find the application at nwdlcmcs.org under the "Events and Info" tab.