



DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Order and Structure in the Church

“All things should be done decently and in order.” 1 COR. 14:40

There was disorder and confusion among the early Christians at Corinth, especially during their times of worship. That’s why the apostle Paul gives some simple direction for how the church is to organize herself and conduct her life. He knew disorder makes it easier for things to go wrong in a congregation. It makes it easier for the devil to sow division and to cast temptations to abuse power or one’s position.



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians details a multitude of their congregational issues, including the various divisions that resulted from their congregational disarray and disorder. He writes to make sure “all things be done for building up” (1 Cor. 14:26), that they exult in the Means of Grace rather than tear one another down. Thus, his exhortation is for them to put order not only to their formal worship gatherings, but to the emerging organizational structure of their congregation. I’m not sure if this prompted them to produce a congregational constitution, but it is certain they examined the order of their life together.

These verses continue to help guide the church today. Our formal gatherings for worship continue to have an order (the

Latin word *ordo* is used to refer to our shared liturgical structure). Likewise, the organizational structure of our congregations (think constitution and bylaws) is arranged in such a way that “decency and good order” can guide life together so that the saints of God are built up through the Means of Grace.

In fact, these verses guided the first leader of our fledging immigrant church from Germany when they were wrestling with how to form themselves as a church on American soil. Rev. C.F.W. Walther would become the first president of the LCMS, but before that he had to first hold the church together as it experienced controversy and challenges. He employed these verses to prevent chaos and disorder from breaking them apart. To that end, in 1852 and then more formally in 1862, Pastor Walther used these verses to establish

See **MESSAGE**, Page 8

CELEBRATIONS



160 years of St. John's

"Now Thank We All Our God" is the theme for the celebration of 160 years of faithful worship at St. John's, Corcoran/Maple Grove. The celebration began on April 14 with guest preacher Rev. Christopher Lieske, pastor of Trinity, Fergus Falls, presiding over the Divine Services. Pastor Lieske attended St. John's Lutheran School and was confirmed at St. John's in 1995. Following services, a luncheon was held. Pastors pictured are, from left, Revs. Dr. Steven Briel (St. John's pastor emeritus), Matthew Moss (senior pastor), Christopher Lieske and Matthew Johnson (associate pastor).



100 years of St. Paul's

St. Paul's, Prior Lake, celebrated its 100th anniversary on April 21. Praise God for the work in His kingdom! Pastor presiding over Divine Service is Rev. Greg DeMuth.

Welcome to the district!

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), held Call Day and Vicarage/Deaconess Intern Assignment services in April. The Minnesota South District received three pastoral candidates and three vicars.

Please keep these faithful servants and their families in your prayers!



CTSFW

Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Minnesota South District president, is pictured with those who were assigned to serve as vicars, from left, Ian Habicht, University Lutheran Chapel, Minneapolis; Nicholas and Kacy Totenhagen, St. James, Howard Lake; and Mark and Jennifer Langton, Trinity Evangelical, Waterville.

CSL



Luke Onken
Campus Pastor
Mayer Lutheran School,
Mayer



Daniel Thao
Senior Pastor
Cornerstone Light of
Life, Maplewood



Joel Her
Associate Pastor, Cornerstone Light of Life, Maplewood

LCMS chaplain receives promotion

Rev. Merlin Stephan, U.S. Navy chaplain, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander on April 14 at his home congregation, Trinity Evangelical, Elgin.

Chaplain Stephan has served on active duty with the Navy since February 2015. His previous deployments include the USS Ashland, Sasebo, Japan; 2nd Marine Logistics Group, Camp Lejeune, N.C.; and the Naval Service Training Command at Great Lakes, Ill. Chaplain Stephan and his wife, Renee, are currently assigned to the U.S. Marine Corps Detachment at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Prior to service in the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, Rev. Stephan served as pastor of St. Mark, Rushford (2007-2015). The promoting officer was Dayton



Chaplain Merlin Stephan, left, is congratulated by Dayton Nelson for his promotion to Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy.

Nelson, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander. Nelson is the Navy Officer Programs recruiter who brought Merlin into the Navy in November 2014. Thank you to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church for graciously hosting this special event! To God Be the Glory!

Serving with gladness

The 2022-2024 LWML Minnesota South District Biennium is quickly coming to a close. It has been a busy two years of joyfully proclaiming Christ, supporting missions and equipping women to honor God by serving others.



Lisa Kamrath
LWML District President

This article will cover the district highlights, but much more is done in the groups of our district congregations. What has the LWML Minnesota South District been doing? Our district is divided into 20 zones. Each zone hosted two to three events, totaling 71 zone events. Each event included a guest speaker, Bible study and devotion, Gifts from the Heart collection, and fellowship.

Upcoming zone events are listed at mnskwml.org/events. The LWML 2024 Prayer Service, “Grace, Mercy, Peace,” was written by Rev. Michael Mattil and is available at lwml.org/prayer-service.

Lutheran Women in Mission have annual prayer services in the district’s zones and groups.

Our mission goal of \$270,000 has been accomplished! Thanks be to God! By His grace, we funded 13 mission grants:

- ▶ The Food and Clothing Co-op–Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- ▶ The Dwelling Place
- ▶ Minnesota South District Student Aid
- ▶ Mission Central–LCMS Missionary Support
- ▶ Mayer Lutheran High School–Timothy Scholarship
- ▶ International Students at Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis
- ▶ Trinity First Lutheran School, Minneapolis
- ▶ Lutheran Heritage Foundation–Bible books for Indonesia
- ▶ Martin Luther High School, Northrup
- ▶ Twin Cities Blind Fellowship
- ▶ Concordia Classical Academy, North Mankato
- ▶ Hope Lutheran High School, Winona
- ▶ Nigerian Seminary Tuition Assistance

To equip Lutheran Women in Mission, there are resources available for all of us at lwml.org/resources. Bible studies, devotionals, skits, litanies and program-planning guides are free to use. No password needed!

We hosted our district convention, “Rejoice in Hope,” attended the Milwaukee LWML national convention, “Celebrate the Lord of the Nations,” and enjoyed a district retreat, “Promised Rest.”

To honor God by serving others, Gifts from the Heart were distributed to many organizations in Minnesota. Many quilts were lovingly created and distributed locally and around the world. Time was spent serving our local congregations. We thanked our church workers for their work among us and for encouraging us to grow in our faith with God’s Word and Sacraments.

The new 2024-2026 biennium is here. Join us! It begins with the LWML Minnesota South District Convention, “Walk in Love,” to be held June 20-22 at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato. The convention theme verse is Ephesians 5:1-2:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

We will vote for the new mission goal, mission grants and officers for 2024-2026. You will find registration and convention information at mnskwml.org (link is on the right side of the page).

Are you interested in finding out more about serving the Lord with gladness?

Vision statement:

The LWML is the leading group for LCMS women where each woman is welcomed and encouraged to use her unique God-given gifts as she supports global missions and serves the Lord with gladness.

If the LWML vision statement interests you, please contact me at president@mnskwml.org. I look forward to talking with you and encouraging you to serve the Lord with gladness!



An LWML Mission Grant is supporting the ministry of Trinity First Lutheran School, Minneapolis.

Your District Mission Gifts at Work

Sudanese pastor serves **WHEREVER GOD LEADS**

There are days when Rev. Gatluk Reat wakes up and asks himself, “Where am I?” Since being ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry in 2019, Pastor Reat has participated in a great variety of ministry which has almost always involved travel.

From his home base in Faribault, Pastor Reat has traveled to Albert Lea, Mankato, Austin, Rochester and St. Cloud to lead worship and minister to Sudanese people. He also travels extensively out of state to participate in larger gatherings of Sudanese Lutherans. One of his recent highlights was attending the LCMS convention in Milwaukee in July 2023 to be present as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Sudan and Sudan was officially welcomed as an LCMS partner church.

In just about any endeavor, it’s often not what you know but who you know that counts. Pastor Reat’s numerous connections and acquaintances among the leaders of the Gambella region of western Ethiopia have been very helpful to the Lutherans in that region as they seek to improve their lives by expanding their crop-growing capabilities. He has traveled extensively in the region to support the pastors and congregations there and to help them improve their living conditions.

Back home in Faribault, Pastor Reat is supported by his wife and five children and he continues to work two jobs to support his family. A number of churches and individuals in the Faribault and

Austin circuits of the Minnesota South District have also provided support for Pastor Reat’s ministry over the years, especially Trinity Lutheran Church, Faribault.



Rev. Gatluk Reat

Rev. Kirk Griebel, emeritus, who has worked closely with Pastor Reat for several years, says, “Working with an immigrant pastor has been eye-opening in many ways. I have learned a lot about the faith and culture of our fellow Lutherans from Africa and have been blessed in my own faith. I

am convinced that other LCMS pastors and churches can also be blessed by getting involved in ministry with immigrant believers.”

One element of African culture unfamiliar to many Americans is tribal identity. Tribes give Sudanese people a strong sense of identity and belonging, but they can also become a source of conflict both here in the United States and back in Africa. Inter-tribal violence caused Pastor Reat to postpone a recent trip to Gambella. When he finally was able to travel to the region, deadly violence erupted again along a road on which Pastor Reat had traveled numerous times.

“I thank God for the strength and protection he gives me to share the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ wherever he leads me,” says Pastor Reat, “and for the ongoing support that so many churches have given me.”

— Submitted by Pastor Griebel

CONFERENCE RECAP

Planting seeds

By Dr. Phil Johnson

Assistant to the President, Mission Formation

What a great time of the year this is! In small backyard gardens, in small patio planters and over vast rural fields people are planting seeds with an eye on the hope of a harvest. They plant and water and watch over their crop, and miraculously the Lord brings forth growth and, in time, fruit.



In 2 Corinthians 9:6 and 10-11 Paul reminds his readers:

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ... He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

There was also an abundance of seed scattered this spring at the *Go First!* Ministry Conference. People from all across our Minnesota South District gathered at Concordia Academy in Roseville to learn from one another as seeds of learning were generously sown in more than 50 learning sessions by leaders who freely gave of their time and experience to encourage and equip the more than 300 people who attended.

Over the span of two days disciples from congregations across our district learned from one another about the work of scattering the seed of God’s Word to bless others in the name of Jesus. Alongside the session leaders were the volunteers who served so generously behind the scenes to help make the experience so memorable. Why, we even learned more about Twinkies that we perhaps ever wanted to know!

In light of all this, and so much more, we invite you to join with us in giving thanks to God for the people who on this occasion so generously gave of themselves to bless others as we “joyfully serve together to make disciples of Jesus Christ,” all to the glory of God. And we look forward to the harvest of thanksgiving that this spring-time planting will bring.

Defending life through art

The purpose of the Lutherans For Life (LFL) Lifelines poster contest is to give students of all ages the opportunity to address life issues, based on the Word of God, through the medium of posters. Lifelines is an LFL chapter in the district.

The five participating Lutheran schools were Emanuel, Hamburg; First Lutheran, Glencoe; St. John, Norwood Young America; Trinity, Waconia; and Zion, Mayer.

A total of 36 posters were submitted from fourth through eighth graders. Each grade competed against their peers from the five schools.

Three independent judges were responsible for evaluating the posters. The posters with the highest points were given first and second place in each of the grades.

Winners in grades 4-6 were given \$15 for first place and \$10 for second place.

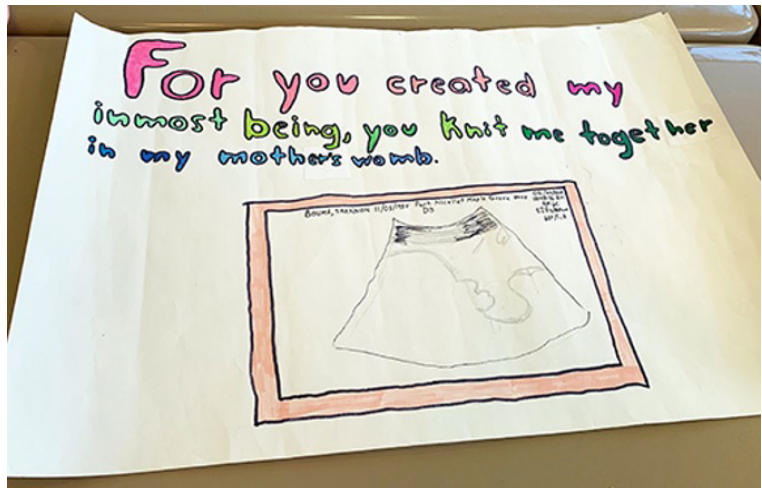
Winners in grades 7-8 were given \$20 for first place and \$15 for second place.

The judges were impressed with the maturity and depth of understanding portrayed in the posters from all the grade levels.

Grade 4



First place: Evelyn Bergman
Trinity Lutheran School, Waconia

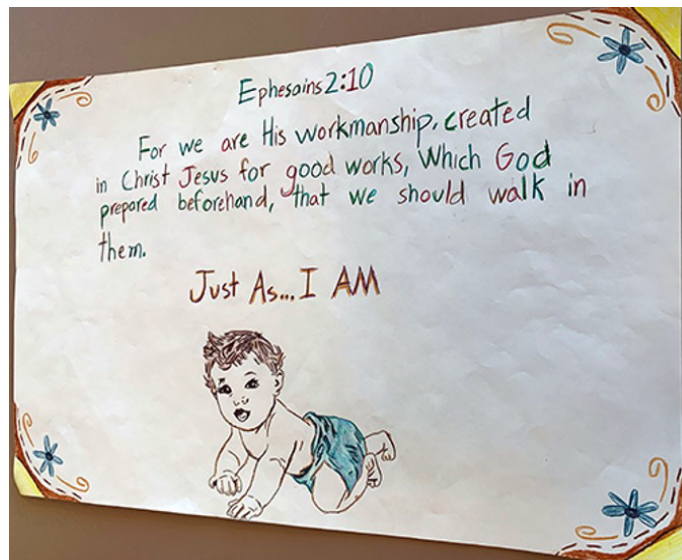


Second place: Autumn Bergman
Zion Lutheran School, Mayer

Grade 5



First place: C.J. Hart
Zion Lutheran School, Mayer

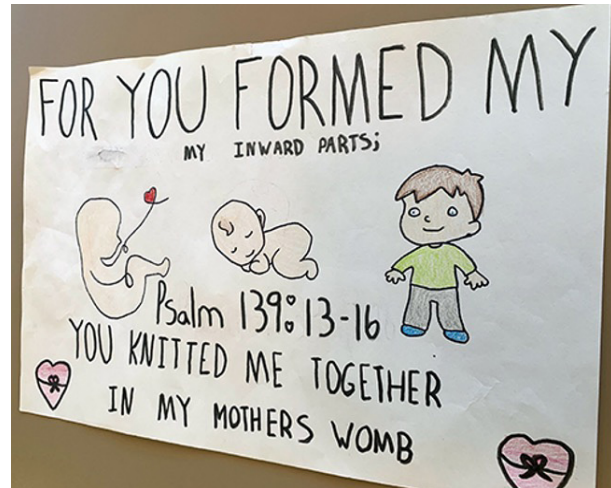


Second place: Reilly Wouters
Emanuel Lutheran School, Hamburg

Grade 6



First place: Elisa Louma
Zion Lutheran School, Mayer

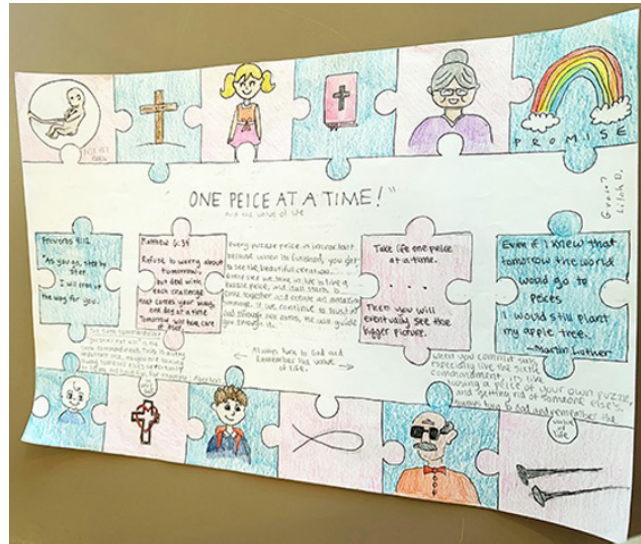


Second place: Ruby Graf,
First Lutheran School, Glencoe

Grade 7



First place: Sara Jacobs
Zion Lutheran School, Mayer

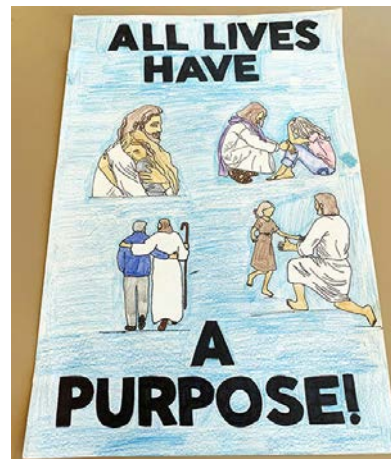


Second place: Lila Dehn
Trinity Lutheran School, Waconia

Grade 8



First place: Baden Niedzielski
Zion Lutheran School, Mayer



Second place: Erika Groche
First Lutheran School, Glencoe

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

and reaffirm the governing principles of the new immigrant congregations in their American context. Likewise, they would later guide the organizational structure that would become The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In 1862 he wrote a work titled *The Right Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Congregation Independent of the State*. Chapter III, part five, of this book is titled *Concerning the Exercise of the Duty of a Congregation to See to It that It Does All Things Decently and in Order*. (This was before the days of short and catchy book titles). The whole goal of this endeavor was to ensure rightly called pastors, the Means of Grace were administered, the members of the congregation are properly cared for, and the whole church and her mission was built up and promoted.

He does not prescribe how congregations must shape their constitutions, but simply emphasizes the importance of the Word of God and the right administration of the Means of Grace. In fact, Walther recognizes the freedom that congregations have to shape their governance structures as long as they ensure and prioritize that the Word of God is rightly preached and the Sacraments properly administered. In short, the structure is there to serve the mission of the church, namely, making disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19).

The importance of these verses remains today. Even though congregations have variously structured constitutions, some with “working boards,” some with “managing boards,” and others with “policy based” governing boards, they are all structured to ensure congregations have called pastors who administer the Means of Grace and carry on the mission of the Holy Christian Church.

Likewise, the Synod has a formal governance structure to serve the mission of the church and the congregations that are members of the Synod. The district, which is “Synod in this place,” also has a governance structure to serve the mission of the church and her mem-



LCMS/Errik M. Lunsford

ber congregations. Like many of our congregations, the Minnesota South District has gone through various forms of governance structure changes over the years, and even now the current Board of Directors (BOD) has voted to revise its currently dated and cumbersome governance structure specifically for the sake of doing ministry “decently and in good order.”

To make sure the board is transparent and open about this process, the district BOD has been having open forums to explain what this process involves, why we are going through it, the benefit of making these revisions, and how delegates will have a voice on this at the district convention. More on this can be found on the district website, with another open forum being held on Sept. 16.

The goal of governance structure considerations, like for the Corinthians as well as for Walther and those immigrant Lutherans, is to make the best and most efficient use of the structure to serve the congregations of the district as we together *Go First!* in furthering the mission of the Holy Christian Church in the Minnesota South District.

Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending April 30, 2024

Actual receipts.....	\$216,596
Budget receipts	\$170,833
Over (under) amount	\$45,763

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$700,209
Budget receipts	\$683,332
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	\$16,877

Use of mission receipts (year to date)

50% designated to district and Synod.....	\$532,951
100% designated to district.....	\$145,730
100% designated to Synod operations.....	\$21,528
Total receipts	\$700,209

Mission receipts—2024 vs. 2023

Mission receipts — YTD 2024	\$700,209
Mission receipts — YTD 2023	\$664,332
Over (under) last year	\$35,877

2024 congregational receipts budgeted — \$2,050,000 (does not include designated to Synod)

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

March 2024

New investments	\$2,058,756
Withdrawals.....	\$3,179,158
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$1,042,442)

Year-to-date July 1, 2023–Feb. 29, 2024

New investments	\$22,663,348
Withdrawals.....	\$23,921,108
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$1,257,760)

