

"...in Chicago."

By Rev. Dan Gilbert, Northern Illinois District President
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On August 1, a warm Saturday afternoon, I had the amazing blessing and honor of installing six LCMS pastors and commissioning and installing one LCMS deaconess in a single service at St. Paul Lutheran Church on Dorchester, on Chicago's south side.

You read it correctly: six pastors and one deaconess were installed and will work at six Northern Illinois District congregations.

Here are the words I spoke as I installed each one:

"Elizabeth Molotla, I consecrate and install you as deaconess at Tabor Lutheran church **in Chicago.**"

"Thomas Engel, I install you as senior pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church Austin **in Chicago.**"

"Thomas Gibbons, I install you as associate pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church Austin **in Chicago.**"

"Jeffrey Howell, I install you as senior pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church Dorchester **in Chicago.**"

"Keith Kinslow, I install you as associate pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church Dorchester **in Chicago.**"

"Philip Robarge, I install you as pastor at Concordia Lutheran Church **in Chicago.**"

"Andrew Rosse, I install you as pastor at Tabor Lutheran Church **in Chicago.**"

Did you catch the emphasized words, "**in Chicago**"?

LUKE – New Starts

This was truly an amazing event, the official beginning of LUKE (Lutheran Urban Kingdom Expansion), a new mission project being done by a partnership of various ministries **in Chicago.**

Hopefully you read about LUKE in the May/June edition of *The Northern Light*, or on this edition's front page, but here's a quick review.

Two years ago a wealthy LCMS member decided to fund a new emphasis of LCMS congregations in Chicago, especially congregations with Lutheran schools.

He made his offering through CLEF (Chicagoland Lutheran Educational Foundation), but both he and CLEF leadership insisted that this be done only with the NID president's office and staff doing the missionary coaching and all ecclesiastical supervision.

The donor also designated the offering to include the use of material from Life Spring Network, led by Vicar Jason Pankow of Trinity Lutheran Church in Roselle.

So leaders of the four ministries, CLEF, NID, Life Spring and Trinity, began meeting together to pray and to plan. LUKE is structured in such a way that all four partners must agree completely in the overall work of LUKE.

Several churches were prayerfully invited to participate, and those listed above plus Jehovah El Buen Pastor agreed, all in Chicago.

Jehovah El Buen Pastor had recently installed Pastor Fernando Gomez. Deaconess Elizabeth (Lisa) Molotla is called by Tabor but also will work at Jehovah El Buen Pastor. She speaks both English and Spanish fluently.

There are many details I'm not listing here, but this is the amazing thing: six pastors and one deaconess were installed in one service for ministry in six congregations ... **IN CHICAGO.**

By the Holy Spirit's Power

Will this succeed? Will these new starts result in new believers? I don't know. God gives no such promise in his Word. However, I do believe the potential is great and the risks and investment are worth it.

The six pastors and one deaconess are showing remarkable courage since each of them has a two-year term call. The donor said another two years of funding would be given—provided there is a clearly observable harvest of souls.

We know that new believers come into being only by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Church's ministry of Word and Sacrament. We also know that we are sent to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. We admire and respect these brothers and this sister for the risk they are taking.

We also think of the courage of our Lord Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Our new workers in Chicago are taking an economic and professional risk. Jesus did not take a risk; he knew for *certain* the outcome would be the cross. But he went forward and endured it for the Father's glory and for our salvation.

The fact is that by God's grace, a donor's generosity, the collaboration of several ministries and congregations, and the eager willingness of six pastors and one deaconess we are seeing a new mission initiative in the city of Chicago.

Clearly, the need there is great. We also know the need is just as great in the district's congregations in the suburbs, in the smaller cities, and in the rural areas and small towns of our western and southern areas.

I ask you to pray for these brave church workers: the deaconess, the six new pastors and Pastor Gomez. Please pray that the Lord would give to his Word impressive power and that many in Chicago would be brought to saving faith in Jesus.

And I ask you to do the same for *your own* congregation and community. Then add to your prayers your hard work and support for new starts in outreach by your congregation.

I ask you to look at these new workers as examples of courageous faith and godly willingness to risk much for the sake of the Gospel. And above all, we look to and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.